THE NORTHERN MALAY STATES IN MALAYSIAN HISTORY

By Terry Hewton

VOLUME 2

(Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Adelaide in 1997.)

UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE LIBRARY

CHAPTER 6

NORTHERN MALAY STATE MALAY REACTIONS TO BRITISH INFLUENCE ON THE PENINSULAR

From their earliest encounters with the British the NMS Malay rulers resisted what they saw as encroachments into their domain. While the record does not reveal any strong overt raayat reaction to British influence there until the formal colonial period the NMS Malay elite was, well before 1909, in competition with British colonial authority. While British colonial authorities in the Straits and, from 1874 to the south on the peninsular itself, sought to protect their economic and strategic interests and particularly trade in and around the peninsular, they frequently cut across the interests of NMS rulers. The northern states were not hermetically sealed from the south in their economic and social life and their interests often collided with those of the British seeking to foster the development of production and trade in the southern and central peninsular states. Thus, while British concerns were focussed to the south on the peninsular and in the Straits Settlements, conflict came about with the northern state Malay elites when the British need to foster production and trade in these areas to the south overlapped the needs of NMS rulers. The pre and post 1909 history of the period reveals the latter, then, seeking to maintain their power and wealth while becoming peripherally involved in southern peninsular and Straits affairs.

British Bombardment of Trengganu

The indivisibility of peninsular affairs from the British point of view can be seen in the way that disturbances focussed in the east coast state of Pahang embroiled the British in a conflict with the Sultan of Trengganu in the early eighteen sixties. Between 1857 and 1863 the east coast state of Pahang was wracked by a civil war which threatened the economy of that state and, more to the point in terms of the response it invoked from British authority in the Straits, the economic interests of Straits merchants relying heavily on Pahang production and trade for their income.(1) The civil war centred around a succession dispute triggered when

---

1 For a broad account of the civil war see C.M.Turnbull, "The Origins of British Control in the Malay States before Colonial Rule", in John Bastin and R. Roolvink, Essays Presented to Sir Richard Winstedt on his Eighty-Fifth Birthday(London, 1964), pp 166-183. Turnbull focusses upon the effect of this disturbance in prompting the expansion of British influence on the peninsular in the 1870s.

the Bendahara of Trengganu died in 1857 and his eldest son was installed as the new Bendahara.([2]) Civil unrest broke out in the state when Inchi Wan Ahmad, the younger son of the deceased Bendahara, sought to oust his elder brother and to establish himself as the ruler of Trengganu by force.([3]) The dispute did not remain, as the Straits government had hoped, a localized one, and outside interest groups aligned themselves with, and actively sought to support, one or other of the contenders. The Temenggong of Johore and a group of merchants in Singapore led by William Paterson and H.M. Simons backed the Bendahara while the Sultan of Trengganu supported, or appeared to support, Wan Ahmad.([4])

Wan Ahmad conducted raids within Pahang and, because this seriously threatened production and trade and the wealth drawn from these by the merchant backers of the Bendahara the latter made representations to the Straits government to intervene in the dispute on their behalf.([5]) Certainly the Straits government was mindful of the need for the maintenance of stability in Pahang - a stability necessary for the prospering of production and

---

[2] Turnbull, "Origins", p.175.

Elgin, Kingardine and others to Wood, 8 December, 1862. CO273/5.

Turnbull gives the year of the Bendahara's death as 1857.

[3] The spelling of the name of the rebel son varies in the sources being written variously as `Ahmad' in Turnbull and `Amad' and `Ahmet' in the primary sources. For example, the name appears as `Ahmet' in the Elgin correspondence cited immediately above and `Ahmed' in Cavenagh to Secretary to the Government of India, 19 July, 1861. CO273/5.

For the sake of convenience I have chosen to use Turnbull's spelling in the text of my thesis except where quoting directly from the sources.

[4] See below.

Turnbull points out that by the middle of the nineteenth century `European merchants of Singapore began to scheme against one another to acquire a share in the growing wealth of Johore - and to a lesser extent Pahang'. Of two cliques of merchants in this contest it was the one led by Patterson and Simons, Turnbull points out, that supported the Bendahara as an intelligent ruler likely to develop a prosperous state and `to co-operate with European merchants.'

Turnbull, "Origins", p171.

[5] Ibid., p176.

trade, especially British trade. Blundell, the Indian Governor of the Straits Settlements who received the first appeal from the merchants for help, believed however that the Bendahara would prevail in office against the attack by his own devices and therefore refrained from offering British help to the Bendahara and opted instead for moves to deprive both Wan Ahmad and the Bendahara of outside help.([6]) Blundell's successor, Colonel Cavenagh, initially followed suit with a non-interventionist approach to the dispute.([7]) For a while this policy seemed to work. Wan Ahmad was defeated in his initial attempt to oust his brother and Pahang trade was restored for a short time as a result.([8]) The situation, however, became unstable again when Wan Ahmad, after his initial defeat, took refuge in Trengganu and from there continued to wage war on the Bendahara. The Trengganu Sultan assisted in this by imposing a blockade of rice and other supplies from Trengganu to Pahang.([9]) The situation was further complicated when Mahmud, the Ex-sultan of Singga, joined Wan Ahmad in Trengganu.([10]) Mahmud had previously spent time in Bangkok and his arrival in the state seemed to indicate Siamese support for the Pahang rebel.([11])

Tension developed between the Straits government and Trengganu when Cavenagh came under pressure to take decisive action to dislodge Mahmud from Trengganu.([12]) Egged on by Patterson and by the Singapore Chamber of Commerce, and convinced by their claim of a strong continued threat to Pahang production and trade posed by Trengganu support for the Pahang rebels, the Straits government resolved to take decisive action against the Trengganu

---

[6] Ibid., p176.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] See below.

[10] Turnbull, "Origins", p. 178.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., pp175-179

Sultan.([13])

Late in October 1862 the Chamber of Commerce in Singapore communicated its urgent concerns over the situation in Pahang to the Straits government.([14]) In this correspondence the chamber drew attention to Wan Ahmad's attacks in Pahang over a five year period at the instigation of the Ex-Sultan of Lingga and with the aid of `persons from Trengganu'.([15]) The correspondence specifically accused the Trengganu ruler of complicity in the attacks. The Chamber went on to report that, in addition to the attacks, the Trengganu Sultan was, `from his relationship to the Ex-Sultan of Lingga...taking active measures' to support Wan Ahmad by prohibiting `the importation of rice from his territories into Pahang under severe penalties' and `according to the statement of the Nacodah of a Singapore Cargo-boat, which lately visited Quantan' blockading the Quantan river using `armed boats from Kamaman in Tringanu'.([16]) The Chamber went on to stress that this state of affairs had caused a cessation of tin mining in Pahang, a severe rice shortage which threatened famine in the state, and that the very substantial property holdings of Singapore merchants involved in the State's tin trade was in jeopardy and that, as the approaching monsoon would soon close off access to rivers on the east coast, that `no time should be lost in sending a vessel of War to

---

[13] Ibid., p179

[14] Logan to Protheroe, 31 October, 1862. CO273/6.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

An undated but clearly contemporary deposition by Inchi Aming, Nacodah of a Singapore Tong-Rong, gives an account of the blockade. In the deposition Inchi Aming described his experience on being sent by Mr. Patterson `to take goods (rice, opium, and 2,000 dollars) to Quantan River'. While there he observed the presence of `two Kumaman prows' which `had been watching the moth'. According to Inchi Aming, `one of the boats had about 20, men, and the other about 15 and `there [were] also about twenty Kumaman people on shore'. The Nacodah also noted that `Tringanu boats [were] not allowed to go to Pahang or Quantan River' and that `if they [went] there and [sold], their rice they [were] fined, at the rate of $400 for a small boat and $1000 for a large one.

Deposition of Inchi Aming, Nacodah of a Singapore Tong-Rong. CO273/6.

Tringganu' with a view to forcibly removing the Ex-Sultan and Wan Ahmad from Trengganu.([17]) Cavenagh, convinced by these representations by the Chamber of commerce, reported to his superiors in the India Office that `active steps' on his part `had become essential for the due protection of British interests'.([18]) Accordingly on 3 November, 1862 Lieutenant - Colonel R. Macpherson, the Secretary to the Government in the Straits Settlements, made a request of the Senior Naval Officer in the Straits of Malacca, Captain John Corbett. He requested:

> the favour of [his] visiting with the Force under [his] command the Eastern Coast of the Peninsular, and, after raising the blockade of the Quantan River, proceeding to Tringanu for the purpose of requiring the surrender of the Ex-Sultan of Singa, with the view of his being conveyed back to Siam, and the immediate adoption on the part of the sultan of Tringanu of suitable measures for necessitating the early withdrawal of Trehi Wan Ahmed from Pahang.([19])

This naval force was duly dispatched for Trengganu on 6 November in the same year.([20]) That force consisted of HMS Scout, HMS Coquette and the Straits Steam Gun Boat Tonze, all under the sea command of Captain Corbett, the Senior Naval Officer. On arrival off the Trengganu Shore this force established that the blockading Trengganu vessels were no longer present in Quantan but had returned to Kamaman.([21]) Negotiations were commenced between Macpherson and the Trengganu ruler around the attainment of the British objectives.([22]) In the course of these negotiations the Sultan resisted the removal of his two guests on what seemed, to Macpherson, tenuous and inconsistent grounds.([23]) These

---

[17] Logan to Protheroe, 31 October, 1862. CO273/6.

[18] Cavenagh to Secretary to the Government of India, 11 November, 1862. CO273/6.

[19] Macpherson to the Senior Naval Officer Straits of Malacca, 3 November, 1862. CO273/6.

[20] Macpherson to Deputy Secretary to Government, Straits Settlements, 17 November, 1862. CO273/6.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Curiously, among the reasons offered by the Sultan for non compliance with the British desire for the removal of Mahmud was an inability to do so without the express permission of Siam. The Sultan claimed his state had, `from generation to generation...been under the power

negotiations broke down and the British vessels proceeded to carry out `the coercive measures' deemed necessary to force the Sultan's hand.([24])

On 11 November Corbett communicated with the Sultan of Tringanu:

`The Senior Naval Officer regrets that negotiations having failed, this matter should now be placed in his hands by the Resident Councillor of Singapore, but such being the case he has nothing to do but carry into effect the orders that he has received from the Government.

Should the small steamer arrive without the Ex-Sultan of Singa, or an intimation that he is following immediately, the English Men-of-war will move closer in, and commence hostilities against the Town and Fort of Tringanu.([25])

The Sultan did not respond in the way the British wanted to this demand and the British vessels accordingly bombarded the area in and around the sultan's fort from their off-shore position. In the event the firing was, by Corbett's account, somewhat inaccurate due to the unfavourable firing conditions existing at the time.([26]) According to Corbett the firing was initiated and sustained because the Sultan was unwilling to conduct serious deliberations and was stalling for a time when a British assault would become difficult due to the seasonal

---

and control of Siam'.

Sultan of Tringanu to Macpherson, 18 November, 1862. CO. 273/6.

Macpherson was, in the negotiations, extremely sceptical of this claim:

`I reminded him how much at variance this argument was with the statement made by him at Singapore on the occasion of his last visit there, when he complained of the threatened aggressions of the Siamese government, requested our interference, and protested his independence of Siam, save in the matter of a triennial ceremony when he sent presents, receiving others more valuable in return.'

Colonel R. Macpherson Esq., Resident Councillor at Singapore, to Deputy Secretary to Government, Straits Settlements, 17 November, 1862. CO. 273/6

As we have seen in Chapter 2 and 3 above there is agreement within the scholarship that Trengganu exercised considerable independence from Siam.

[24] Corbett to the Governor of Singapore, 14 November, 1862. CO.273/6.

[25] Corbett to the Sultan of Tringanu, 11 November, 1862. CO. 273/6.

[26] Ibid.

conditions prevailing at that time of the year.([27])

Clearly the Straits government had employed a strategy of aggressive gun boat diplomacy in its dealings with Trengganu on the Pahang issue. The bombardment was seen as unnecessarily heavy handed not only by the India Office but politicians in the House of Commons as well.([28]) While Corbett, in his account of the action, was at pains to stress the `very mild nature' of the bombardment, there is no mistaking the aggressive and destructive nature of the naval action as recounted in the Colonial Office record of the event.([29]) Perhaps there was a discrepancy between intention and effect on the part of the British Government in the Straits for, while Corbett reported that his intention was to carry out his instructions `to the letter' while at the same time inflicting `as little damage as possible on private property', he also made it clear in his report that, while two of the British vessels opened a slow and deliberate fire on the fort, this was done so at long range - `over 2000 yards' - and against `the excessive rolling motion caused by the swell off the bar' - difficulties which made it impossible to confine the fire to the fort itself.([30]) Certainly the Sultan subsequently complained on behalf of his subjects that Macpherson had broken off negotiations prematurely to fire indiscriminately on the town:`...our friend fired on our town, our families and all the subjects within our country felt much afraid and ran away in every direction to save their lives.'([31]) Material damage sustained during the bombardment was substantial and valued

[27] Ibid.

Corbett described the difficult seasonal conditions for a naval force attempting an off-shore bombardment in these terms:`...at this season of the year it becomes hazardous for vessels to lay off the Bar of Tringganu, and in the event of bad weather coming on, the bar itself becomes impassable'.

Ibid.

[28] Turnbull, "Origins", p. 179.

[29] Corbett to the Governor of Singapore, 14 November, 1862. CO 273/6.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Sultan of Tringanu to Macpherson, 17 November, 1862. CO273/6.

by the Sultan in 1869 at $80,000.([32])

The Straits Government certainly achieved its immediate aims with the bombardment. The shelling caused Mahmud to flee into the state's interior.([33]) Early in December Cavenagh reported on the consequences of the attack to his superiors in the India Office: `The last accounts from Pahang lead me to believe that the proceedings taken at Tringganu have not been without a beneficial effect, it being reported that Inchi Wan Ahmed has retreated for a distance of about ten miles from his former position, and that his supply of ammunition is failing'.([34]) The Straits Government had, with an eye to the future, wished to teach the Trengganu Sultan a lesson. After the bombardment Macpherson corresponded with the Sultan extending the hand of British friendship but with a proviso. Addressing the Sultan in the third person he struck a note of warning: `...but in the event of his persisting in following the course he has hitherto pursued, he must be prepared to abide by the consequences. The British Government desires peace and tranquillity throughout the peninsular, and it will cause its wishes to be respect.'([35]) Whether or not the Sultan was really cowed by the bombardment he was, shortly after the event, certainly adopting the submissive stance that the British wanted to see in him. Shortly after the attack the Sultan wrote to Macpherson: `Long ago we were aware that we have not the power to resist the British Government, and we have no intention to oppose the British Government'.([36])

---

[32] Hammond to The Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, November 6, 1869. CO273/34.

[33] Turnbull, "Origins", p. 179.

Sultan of Tringanu to Macpherson, 17 November, 1862. CO273/6.

[34] Cavenagh to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, 14 December, 1862. CO273/6.

[35] Macpherson to the Sultan of Tringanu, 22 November, 1862. CO273/6.

[36] Sultan of Tringanu to Macpherson, 17 November, 1862. CO273/6.

Throughout the negotiations the Sultan had adopted the same sort of submissive tone. On one occasion, for example, the Sultan, having pleaded the impossibility of handing over Mahmud

In the longer term, however, the Straits Government was unsuccessful in achieving the results it wanted in Pahang. Wan Ahmad was subsequently successful in his bid to topple his brother and was, by 1864, secure as the ruler of the state.([37]) Neither did the bombardment have the effect, as we shall see in more detail below, of making the Trengganu elite easily submissive to British objectives as the latter sought to expand their influence northwards on the peninsular early in the following century.

Clearly the attack might have ruptured the stable relations that the British had, and wanted to maintain, between themselves and Trengganu. No such rupturing seems to have occurred however and in 1869 the Sultan of Trengganu's envoy was in England seeking an audience with White Hall officials on various matters affecting the welfare of his state.([38]) The subject of the bombardment was raised by the envoy but not, apparently, with any hostility and without seeking retribution in the form of direct compensation for material damage caused during the bombardment.([39]) In the long run however the bombardment must

---

as the British Government in the Straits wished, concluded with the statement: `We hope that our friend will immediately give us instructions that we may act as our friend may order us.'

Sultan of Tringanu to Macpherson, 11 November 1862. CO.273/6.

The effusive, accommodating tone of the 17 November correspondence is not therefore necessarily any guide to the Sultan's intentions and feelings towards the British immediately after the attack.

[37] Turnbull, "Origins", p. 180.

[38] Hammond to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonial Office[?], November 6, 1869. CO273/34.

[39] The issue of the bombardment had been the subject of correspondence between the Colonial Office, the Indian Government and the Siamese Government in 1862 and 1863.

Ibid.

In 1869 however, the Foreign Office was unsure as to what extent the Sultan may have pressed any grievance he had over the bombardment with the Indian Government: `...whether the Sultan of Tringanoo has ever made any application for compensation does not appear so far as has been found on looking through the bound volumes of unindexed correspondence received from the India Office.'

CC to Sir F. Rogers, 17 November, 1869[?]. Paper labelled `12733 Straits Settlements [?]' CO273/34.

The Foreign Office correspondence penned early in the visit seems to indicate that its officials were disconcerted by the fact that the Sultan, through his envoy, was making a direct approach to the British monarch rather than operating through the Straits Government and that

have helped to make the Trengganu elite wary of British intentions and behaviour on the peninsular and in this way contributed to the tensions between the two evident in the formal colonial period. Cavenagh's bombardment of the Sultan's fort and the `great confusion and disturbance' caused thereby was in 1909 well within living memory and may well have helped stiffen the resolve of the Trengganu ruling class to hold out for as long as possible to secure their interests against British incursion into their domain.([40])

What were the Sultan's motives in assisting Mahmud and Wan Ahmad? Clearly the Sultan's motives and behaviour played an important part in the intrigue surrounding the Pahang Civil War though precisely what his motives were is not clear from the British colonial record of those events. Indeed, the Straits Government itself does not seem to have had a clear idea of why the Sultan was acting as he did to frustrate a British resolution of the Pahang conflict and the tone of much of their correspondence on the subject is speculative. Late in October 1862 Cavenagh, for example, was unsure whether the Trengganu Sultan was covertly affording support to Wan Ahmad or was 'guilty of gross neglect of his duty as the Ruler of a friendly country, in allowing that chief to make his territories the basis upon which

---

they were confused as to the purpose of the envoys visit.

Ibid.

It may well be that the Trengganu Sultan had opted for a strategy of moral blackmail in reminding the British of their past transgression in bombarding the fort with a view to obtaining British assistance in the rectifying of other grievances. For example, while in London the Sultan's envoy complained that the Sultan of Johore had occupied islands formerly held by himself and the Bendahara of Pahang.

Colonial Office correspondence addressed to Governor Sir H. Ord[?] 19 November, 1869. CO273/34.

The signature to the correspondence is indecipherable to me. It may be that the topic of the bombardment was raised with a view to pressuring the British to assist in the return of these islands.

[40] The phrase used by the Sultan of Trengganu to describe the effect of the bombardment. Sultan of Trengganu to Macpherson, 17 November, 1862. CO273/6.

his operations against Pahang' were being conducted.([41]) Certainly the British suspected that the sultan was an instrument for Siamese aims to weaken British influence on the peninsular and to strengthen their own and the bombardment of Trengganu was intended by the Straits Government in part as a deterrent to Siamese ambitions on the peninsular.([42]) While the Straits Government was unsympathetic to the sultan's claim during the negotiations leading up to the bombardment that he had no choice but to act at the direction of Bangkok because his state was under the domination of Siam we can not rule out the possibility that the Sultan was, in this instance, under some coercive pressure, at least from Mahmud if not directly from Bangkok to resist the British demands. It is possible that, at the time of the negotiations at least, the sultan was, as he claimed at the time, genuinely caught between British pressure to hand over Mahmud and a fear of inevitable physical conflict that would result if he were to attempt to force Mahmud from his state.([43]) In the period leading up to the bombardment there is a possibility that the Sultan had succumbed to moral pressure to support Mahmud and that this partly explains his involvement in the Pahang Civil War. The Straits Government took the view that it was the familial link between the Sultan and Mahmud that accounted for the Sultan having `been prevailed upon to take active measures' in support of the rebels in the

---

[41] Cavenagh to Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, Bangkok, 29 October, 1862. CO273/6.

[42] Turnbull, "Origins", p. 179.

Cavenagh to Her Britannic Majesty's Consult [Consul?] at Bangkok, 4 November, 1862. CO273/6.

Cavenagh to the Secretary of the Government of India, Foreign Department, 24 November, 1862. CO273/6.

[43] At the time the Sultan pleaded with the Strait's Government in these terms: `...we have tried, as have also our countrymen, to our utmost to persuade him, but he still refuses to comply with our wishes; suppose we now use force to take him, our fear is that it will be attended with loss, (i.e. bloodshed) and then our friend will blame us, because this was done without the advice of our friend; as in our opinion if we make use of force to take him, it is certain there will be loss (bloodshed), as he (the Ex-Sultan) has about 30 followers.'

Sultan of Tringanu to Macpherson 10 November, 1862. CO273/6.

Although the message here is a somewhat mixed one designed apparently to indicate a concern not to engage Mahmud in physical conflict without specific instruction from the British to do so, it does at the same time seem to indicate a genuine apprehension on the part of the Sultan at the idea of his forcing Mahmud from his shore.

Pahang Civil War.([44])

There is the possibility, too, that it was a succession dispute within Trengganu that helped force the Sultan to actively support Mahmud and Wan Ahmad.([45]) Ironically, in the year before the bombardment, the British had sought to forestall any attempt by the Siamese to depose the Trengganu Sultan. The Straits Government suspected that there was an intention on the part of `the Kings of Siam', to replace the Sultan of Trengganu with Mahmud.([46]) The suspicion within British Government circles in the Straits at the time was that the `Kings of Siam' and the Sultan of Trengganu had fallen out with one another because the Sultan `obstinately refuse[d] to appear before the kings' and that it was this which had led the Siamese rulers to form the intention of dispossess[ing] the Sultan of Trengganu of his fief.'([47]) If these suspicions were correct the Sultan of Trengganu was under some pressure from the

---

[44] The precise relation between the two is not accounted for consistently in the sources. Some correspondence describes Mahmud as the Sultan's nephew.

Logan to Protheroe, 31 October, 1862. CO273/6.

Chow Phya Argga Maha Sena Dhipate Aphaij Berig Para Krom Bahu Samulia Phra Kalahome, to Phya Bijay Bhahendr Naundr Bhacty Sri Sultan Manomed ratne Raj Patendr Surmdr Rawnoangsah Phya Tringanu, 25 September 1862. CO273/6.

Cavenagh, however, in 1861, described Mahmud as the Sultan's son-in-law.

Cavenagh to the Secretary to Government of India, Foreign Department, 19 July, 1861. CO273/5.

Cavenagh to the Sultan of Tringanu. No date. CO273/5.

Cavenagh to Her Britannic Majesty's Consul at Bangkok, 18 July 1861. CO273/5.

[45] An item of Foreign Office correspondence links the two events in time by implication without exploring the possibility of any causal connection between them:`...the relations between that state [ie Trengganu] and the neighbouring Malay States were in an unsettled condition, while the succe[s]sion to the throne of Tringanu seems to have been disputed'.

Hammond to the Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office[?], November 6, 1869. CO273/34.

[46] Cavenagh to the Secretary of the Government of India, 19 July, 1861. CO273/5.

[47] Netscher to the Governor of Prince of Wales Island, 16 July, 1861. CO273/5. Tense altered throughout.

Siamese; it is possible that by 1862 this pressure was being applied to the Sultan with a view to compelling him to play a part in effecting Siamese designs in the Pahang Civil War. Perhaps the Sultan was forced to support Mahmud and Wan Ahmad with the threat that he would be deposed if he did not. Certainly it is difficult to see that the Sultan had a direct personal stake in the outcome of the Pahang Civil War and the possibility that he was acting under Siamese compulsion seems a strong one. On this interpretation of events the Sultan of Trengganu was an unwilling victim caught between Siamese and British ambitions on the peninsular.

Whether the Sultan of Trengganu was a willing or unwilling participant in Siamese designs in Pahang did not matter to the Straits Government when they chose to curb Siamese ambitions and to deter Trengganu from any further action frustrating British trade on the peninsular with an attack on Trengganu. The bombardment was a clear illustration of the determination of the Straits government to protect British trading interests on the peninsular and of the way in which this frequently brought them into contact - often contentious contact - with Siam and the Siamese Malay States well before 1909 even though their major economic concerns were focussed to the south on the peninsular. While colonial administrators in Whitehall were wary of too direct an intervention in peninsular affairs the men-on-the spot in the Straits Government showed themselves willing to press their interests by involving themselves strongly in local affairs, including those in the north, where they considered this necessary for the protection of local British economic and strategic interests. In the late nineteenth century the Straits Government was, as peninsular trade burgeoned and the British stake in that trade increased, monitoring events in all the peninsular states and vigilant in locating and taking active steps to remedy, obstacles to British and other trade in the Straits. When the suspicion was raised that the Siamese intended to depose the sultan of Trengganu, for example, Cavenagh feared that the Sultan would not `yield his post without a struggle' and that 'the whole country would in all probability be soon involved in a civil war to the utter prostration' of British trade in the Straits.([48]) Accordingly he dispatched `the Steamer Hooghly

[48] Cavenagh to the Secretary of the Government of India, 19 July, 1861. CO273/5.

Elsewhere in the correspondence Cavenagh expressed concern that any deposition of the Sultan by the Siamese would `lead to serious disturbances in Tringanu, thus causing obstruction and interruption to British commerce'.

to Tringanu ostensibly for the purpose of warning the sultan against allowing Inchi Wan Ahmed to reorganize his Force within his territories, but in reality with the view of watching the proceedings of the small Siamese fleet of steamers [then] on its way to Singapore.'([49])

This was a more routine instance of the Straits Government taking active steps to ensure the security of their economic interests on the peninsular. The bombardment of Trengganu was on the other hand extraordinary in that saw the Straits Government to use physical force in order to have its way.

In general the Straits Government sought to protect its interests without direct and violent intervention in this way. It only took such drastic measures because circumstances - the pressure from the Singapore merchants and the unfavourable seasonable conditions - forced its hand. Still, in the late nineteenth century, as we have seen, the sort of detached control of peninsular affairs in the protection of trade that Whitehall wanted, and the Straits Government, with increasing reluctance, was seeking to implement, became progressively more difficult. While, at the behest of the Whitehall mandarins in the Colonial Office, the Straits government sought to maintain stable and friendly relations with NMS rulers those relations were, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, becoming increasingly strained as the British desire to protect expanding trade developing in the north, but focussed in the main to the south on the peninsular, caused the British to rub up against elite interests in the northern states.

<u>Kedah and Kelantan; Trade Dispute</u>

In the same decade the Straits Government quarrelled with both Kedah and Kelantan over the imposition by those two states of trade taxes - taxes which were seen by the British government in the Straits as having an inhibiting effect on British trade. In 1866 colonel H Man, Resident Councillor in Penang, wrote to the Raja of Kedah:`I have been desired by His Honour the Governor to bring to my friend's notice that complaints have been made of the

---

Cavenagh to Her Britannic Majesty's Consul at Bangkok, 18 July, 1861. CO273/5.

[49] Ibid. Tense altered.

levy by my friend's officers of an export duty on cattle, rice, paddy, [etc].' Colonel Man then pointed out in his correspondence that the tax was in violation of a treaty between Britain and Kedah and continued: 'I must request my friend to give orders to his officers at once to stop this practice, which has an injurious effect on the trade between Penang and Quedah.'([50])

A similar circumstance pertained in the year before when the Chamber of Commerce in Singapore corresponded with the Straits Government complaining that the Raja of Kelantan had recently established a 'monopoly or farm' on 'cotton yarn or twist imported into his dominions' and that 'native traders' dealing in the commodity 'anticipate[d] a very great falling off in the trade in this article and [were] afraid to buy it for export to that place'.([51]) The Chamber sought to solicit the help of the Straits Government into 'taking such steps as may appear necessary under the circumstances'.([52]) The Chamber's complaint was backed up by depositions from three Chinese traders. One of these described the way in which monopoly operated and how it was affecting the merchants involved in these terms:

> The Rajah of Kelantan about a month ago sold the monopoly of the cotton twist trade to the Chinese captain for 5 or 600 dollars a year, and now all importers of that article are compelled to sell it to him at a small gain, and very often his offers are even lower than the article can be purchased at Singapore, and he retails it to the people of the country at a large profit.([53])

The Straits Government accepted the Chamber's statement on the monopoly as correct on the basis of the depositions and referred the matter on to superiors in the Government of India as a matter requiring attention since the monopoly was operating 'to the detriment' of British trade with Kelantan.([54])

---

[50] Colonel H. Man, Resident Councillor, to the Raja of Queda, 30 July, 1866. CO273/5.

[51] Legan, Secretary to the Chamber of Commerce, to Macpherson, Singapore, 14 March, 1865. CO273/15. Tense altered throughout.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Depositions of Chinese traders on the monopoly of cotton yarn or twist by the Chief of Kelantan. Deposition of Hadjee Nga, Nakodah of a Tringanu boat, dated Singapore, 15 March, 1865. CO273/15.

[54] Secretary to the Government of the Straits Settlement, to the Secretary to the Government of India, 11 April, 1865. CO273/15.

This correspondence canvassed two possible courses of action - an approach for redress direct to Siam and, in the alternative, an initial approach to Kelantan - depending on whether

In 1867 the Straits government was still seeking redress of its trade problem with Kelantan. In that year, the British Governor in the Straits, Sir Harry Ord, complained of discourtesy on the part of the Kelantan ruler in the latter's response to British attempts to restore the `very large and important' trade between the Straits Settlements and Kelantan.([55]) Referring to previous and contemporary complaints raised by the Chamber of Commerce, and earlier correspondence protecting the monopoly forwarded to the Sultan from the Straits government, Ord accused the Sultan in formal, polite and diplomatic language of not only failing to remove the cotton yarn monopoly, but establishing a monopoly on tobacco, opium, gambier `(for eating)' coconut and betel nut as well.([56]) This `system of monopoly', Ord pointed out to the Raja, was `in the long run ruinous to trade' in that it prevented merchants `sending their goods where they have not got a free market.'([57])

We can see, then, that in the 1860s there were clearly strong tensions between the Siamese Malay States and the Straits Government. Disputes between British officialdom in the Straits arose especially where the latter felt it necessary to take active steps to protect production and trade in the area. The Straits government, while mainly concerned with the maintenance of production and trade in the southern and central peninsular states, clearly had a strong secondary interest in assisting the maintenance of production, and trade with, the Siamese Malay States as well. It was especially in the protection of British economic interests in both the northern and southern peninsular states that British officials in the Straits came into contact with the north and which was the cause of considerable tension between these

---

Kelantan was to be considered,`a Siamese province' or not. The correspondence indicates some confusion in the mind of British Straits authority on the status of Kelantan in relation to Siam.

[55] Ord to Her Britanic Majesty's Acting Council [Consul?], 19 November, 1867. CO273/17.

Ord to the Rajah of Kelantan, 22 October, 1867. CO273/17.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

officials and NMS rulers.

The need to keep the Siamese Malay States at bay in this regard is a recurring theme in the correspondence of the time. The record also reveals that British government Straits officials were unsure of the precise relationship between the Siamese Malay States and Siam proper and were consequently unsure of the extent to which the Malay rulers were being fractious in their own right and to what extent they behaved in this way towards British officials at the instigation of Siam. So, without interfering in peninsular affairs too directly they nonetheless exercised a firm hand to the general effect of conveying the message to both the Siamese and the Malay states under their dominion that they would stand no nonsense when British economic interests were threatened. Thus, when Cavenagh ordered the use of naval force against the Sultan of Trengganu as his part in the Pahang Civil War he did so very much with an eye to making an example of Trengganu to Siam and the other Malay States under its suzerainty. Shortly after the bombardment of the Sultan of Trengganu's fort, Cavenagh wrote, referring to the bombardment:

> ...I have little doubt that the measure will have a beneficial effect throughout the peninsular, more especially amongst those states, in any way subject to the influence of the Court at Bangkok, who have for some time past, indeed, ever since the visit of the Siamese Squadron last year, evinced a growing spirit of disrespect towards the British Government, and disregard of its remonstrances in cases where injury has been sustained by its subjects.([58])

---

[58] Cavenagh to the Secretary of the Government of India, 24 November, 1862. CO273/6.

In similar vein, the Straits government was relieved when the Siamese government agreed to assist in the resolution of the trade difference between Britain and Kelantan initiated when the latter imposed the monopoly on cotton yarn. In January 1868 Governor Ord wrote to his superior in the Colonial Office that the Siamese had agreed to `dispatch a special Commissioner...to Kelantan to investigate and arrange' a resolution of the monopoly dispute and to confer with Ord in Singapore on the monopoly, `and other matters connected with the Siamese Malayan states generally'.

Ord to the Duke of Buckingham [and?] Chandos 3 January, 1868. CO273/17.

The proposed step of Siamese intervention in the trade dispute was, according to Ord in his correspondence, `a judicious one, and likely to have a good effect on the Kelantan and other Rajahs dependent on Siam.'

Ibid.

Clearly then, the Straits government had a wider concern to hold in rein all the Siamese Malay states - not just Kelantan - in the trade monopoly dispute and welcomed Siamese cooperation in this.

Referring to British relations with the Siamese Malay rulers, Ord continued:

`In our dealings with these people their proceedings are of course liable to be

Malay Resistance to the Anglo-Siamese Treaty 1909

As was the case with the peripheral involvement of the British in northern peninsular affairs in the decades leading up to 1909 it was the Malay elite that was clearly reactive to the British presence in the post 1909 period. The record reveals little if any reaction to the new British presence at this time at the lower levels of NMS society.([59]) While the British colonial sources don't tell us much one way or the other on the initial response of the bulk of the NMS populations to the transfer it seems likely that the position was that there was no marked response and that it was not until the British were able to effect substantial changes to the internal administration of the four states that the non-Malay elite sections of those state populations began to register a reaction. From the outset of the transfer of suzerainty over the four northern states to Britain in 1909 the British can be seen making diplomatic efforts to overcome the resistance of NMS rulers to colonial supremacy. Although in their reports British officials were inclined to down play the degree of resistance encountered from this ruling class their anxiety on that score is nonetheless clear.

In Trengganu there was marked hostility to the treaty once news of it reached the state. The plan angered the Sultan who foresaw a marked loss of independence for himself

---

influenced by what they conceive to be the feeling of the Court of Siam, and I am happy to state that of late the Siamese Government has shown every anxiety to further the views of Her Majesty's Government in any question that has arisen between its tributaries and ourselves.'

Ibid.

[59] In 1907 a British consular official presumably with the impending transfer of suzerainty in mind, expressed the view that within Kedah the `trading classes and the more intelligent of the cultivators would, of course, welcome British protection'.

Frost to Beckett, 6 September, 1907. FO 371/332.

There is no evidence offered for this forecast and we need to be wary of its validity as a guide to the actual response of merchants and peasants in Kedah when the transfer became a reality. Its tone seems to reflect the Eurocentric assumption common in the Colonial and Foreign Office correspondence of the time that the coming of Pax Britannica to the peninsular was self evidently a boon to the native populations there and that, where reason prevailed amongst the natives, it would be welcomed to such. Elsewhere in the contemporary correspondence there is little to indicate any response within the populations of the four states at large, to the transfer.

and his state and resented what he saw as the high handedness of the Siamese in assuming that Trengganu was of its possessions to be disposed of as it saw fit.([60]) The first British Agent appointed to Trengganu was W.L. Conlay of the F.M.S. police force.([61]) His brief was to examine the affairs of the state, to collect information on its administration, and to negotiate an appropriate treaty for the effective implementation of the wider Anglo Siamese Transfer agreement in its application to Trengganu.([62]) In 1909 Conlay recorded an optimistic view of the evident strong reservations of the Trengganu Sultan at the imposition of British rule in his state indicating that these reservations were merely a matter of decorum for the ruler and therefore not to be taken too seriously by the British.([63]) In that year, Conlay wrote to the High Commissioner, Sir John Anderson:

> The Sultan's willingness to accept out of hand the position placed before him, does not, I think indicate an intention to obstruct the policy which has been marked out for the benefit of His Highness and his State; it is probably no more than a characteristic manifestation of the extreme regard paid by Malays to what they deem to be decorum in matters of State, and reluctance to surrender an independence maintained so long until the last moment.([64])

However, elsewhere in the official correspondence of that year we can see that the Sultan's attitude to the transfer was more strongly problematic for the British than this and

---

[60] Talib describes an incident in which the Sultan in reaction to the news of the plan engaged in a tirade against the implications of the agreement while in a conversation with a merchant.

Talib, Image, p. 178.

Talib deals with the initial hostility of the Sultan to the transfer and the British reaction to this on pages at some length in his thesis.

Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", pp 374-380.

The subject occupies several pages of the book.

Talib, Image, pp. 178 - 180.

[61] Ibid., p 179.

[62] Ibid.

Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p. 375.

[63] Ibid., p. 376.

[64] Conlay to High Commissioner 14 July, 1909, p.3. CO723/350 p.54.

went well beyond a matter of decorum in consultation over the transfer.

Talib points out in his thesis on the Trengganu Malay ruling class that the British had expected, and were prepared for, the Sultan's sensitive reaction to the treaty and that they were prepared to bide their time in tactfully going about bringing the Sultan round to their way of thinking on the new arrangement.([65]) The British clearly knew that they would not draw Trengganu, or for that matter the other Siamese Malay states covered by the 1909 treaty, into the expanded colonial state easily and from the outset trod very warily in their dealings with the Trengganu Sultan and other Malay rulers in the north. Thus, when the Sultan of Trengganu appeared to indicate a softening in his attitude toward the British during the treaty negotiations and offered a gift to the British government it was felt within British circles that the gift ought to be accepted for diplomatic reasons. In the words of one official:

> It would be a very great mistake to refuse. We expected trouble from the Sultan, who was infuriated at being handed over to us without his consent. He has to our surprise become quite calm and polite [and] this spontaneous offer shows that he is satisfied with the way in which he has been treated by Sir J. Anderson and Mr. Conlay. We should do everything possible to avoid disturbing this pleasant state of affairs. The Sultan has a reputation for being very touchy.([66])

In the same despatch another correspondent urged acceptance of the gift on the grounds that the `position of Trengganu' was of particular importance in that if that state `[made] trouble' for the British Government `the other new states [might have done] likewise.'([67]) In May of the same year Anderson reported that the Sultan of Trengganu, in an interview with him, took the view that Siam lacked the authority to transfer his state to Britain - `that he [ie the Sultan] could not understand how Siam could transfer to Britain what it never possessed.'([68]) In the

---

[65] Robert(Talib), "Malay Ruling Class" p. 376.

[66] RGS to Cox, 19 August, 1909. CO723/350.

[67] JR to Stubbs, 19 August, 1909, CO273/350. Tense altered throughout.

[68] High Commissioner Sir J Anderson to the Earl of Crewe, May 27, 1909. CO273/350. Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", pp375.

Robert discusses the interview on page 374 and 375 of his thesis.

same interview, in response to this attitude on the part of the Sultan, Anderson was clearly at pains to minimize the intended British influence on the state. It is clear from Anderson's account of the interview that he, Anderson, adopted a tone of gentle persuasion in his approach to the Sultan. Anderson told of offering a guarantee of independence for the Trengganu ruler in matters of internal administration in return for his cooperation in achieving the main British objectives in the state.([69])

In Kelantan, too, the record clearly shows the British deferring to Malay ruling class sensitivity at the British take over. There was in Kelantan mixed reaction to the transfer in that state, as Salleh points out, with one section of the Malay ruling elite resisting the transfer more strongly than others within the same elite. A minority group consisting of `the uncles of the Raja and some other interested parties in the state' were against the transfer and were responsible for petitions opposing it.([70]) While the Raja, according to Salleh, refused to become active in this protest, it is nonetheless clear from the official correspondence of the time that the Raja was not wholly acquiescent in his attitude to the transfer and the British clearly felt the need to be diplomatic in their dealings with him in 1909.([71]) Thus, when the

---

[69] `I then informed him that there was no intention on the part of the British Government to interfere with the internal administration of Trengganu so long as it was carried on satisfactorily, but that the protection which he would receive from Great Britain involved certain obligations on his part. One was that he should hold no communications with foreign powers except through the High Commissioner; and, secondly, that no transfers of land should be made, or concessions of land given to foreigners, without the consent of the High Commissioner'.

Anderson to the Earl of Crewe, 27 May, 1909. CO273/350.

See also Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p374.

[70] Salleh, "Kelantan in Transition", in Roff (ed), Kelantan, p56.

Salleh does not identify the `other interested parties'. Salleh points out that a petition praying that the State of Kelantan be not transferred to Britain had been presented to the King of Siam in May 1908, by the Kelantan Government'.

Ibid., p55.

[71] Salleh understates the degree to which the Malay elite in Kelantan, and in the north in general, resisted the transfer. Taking up a claim by Paget, the British Minister in Bangkok, denying a preference on the part of Kelantanese Malays for Siamese over British rule, Salleh states that `it is undeniable that the Malay rulers, and the majority of Malays in the states concerned who had dealings with Siam, had found Siamese control somewhat repugnant, and had they been given a free choice, would have preferred British rule'.

Raja indicated that he was `anxious to have his own head placed on his stamps' he received official approval of his request from the British, not so much because they saw any intrinsic merit in the proposal but because they wanted to encourage the Kelantan ruler (and those in the other newly acquired northern states) to accept the transfer.([72]) Thus approval for the Raja's request was recommended on the grounds that it would 'serve to smooth [his] slightly ruffled feelings and that it [couldn't] do any harm' though with the slight reservation that the other NMS rulers would want to do the same; it was thought that it would `serve to soothe him [ie the Raja] by letting him have this trivial pleasure' and thus assist in the attainment of British objectives in `the somewhat delicate affair of the transfer.'([73]) Although the stamps issue was relatively unimportant in itself the attention given to it by British officials does illustrate well the extreme sensitivity of the transfer with all the NMS rulers. In the words of one colonial official:`It appears to me a question of getting the Malay rulers to accept the fait accompli [ie the transfer] with the minimum friction: hence the postage stamp proposal becomes important.'([74])

Kedah and Perlis

In Kedah, too, the transfer was effected by the British against considerable

---

Ibid., p56.

It is clear from the primary sources that such a preference would only have been exercised as the lesser of two evils - a point that Salleh does not make clear in his writing.

[72] J.R. to Mr. [Tidds?], 31 August, 1909. CO273/350.

The signature to the correspondence is indistinct. The subject was first raised by the Sultan in a meeting with Sir John Anderson in Kota Bahru. On 19 July, 1909 Anderson records that `[h]is Highness...enquired whether he could not be allowed to have postage stamps with his head on them like the Sultan of Johore, and said it was a matter to which he and his Council attached great importance'.

Anderson to Crewe, 2 August, 1909. CO273/350.

[73] JR to Mr [tidds?] 31 August, 1909. CO273/350. Tense altered.

R.G.S. to Mr. Collins, 3 September, 1909. CO273/350.

[74] JR to Mr [Tidds?], 31 August, 1909. CO273/350.

resistance from within the local elite. While the Annual Report for Kedah for 1909 indicates that the transfer of that state went smoothly it does hint, in euphemistic terms, at the underlying tensions which were clearly present between British and local Malay authority in the state in the year or so leading up to the transfer and which clearly threatened to disrupt the transition to a British supervision of the affairs of that state.

It will be remembered from chapter 4 above that in 1907 the British and local Kedah elite were in conflict over the extent of the powers of the Financial Advisor operating in the state under the provisions of the Siamese loan agreement. In that year the Kedah ruler was complaining that the Siamese Financial Advisor at the time, a British national named Mr. Hart, held a brief from Siamese authority to advise on matters of finance only and that he, Hart, was operating beyond this brief and in effect usurping functions properly belonging with the Malay rulers of the state. The background to this dispute seems to have been a general disinclination on the part of at least some Kedah Malays to countenance outside interference from the British or Siamese in the running of the state. In 1907, for example, when the Anglo Siamese Treaty that was to be given effect in 1909 was being drafted, Meadows Frost, a British consular official based in Kedah, wrote to Beckett, the consular official based in Bangkok, describing the relations between British personnel and Kedah Malays in the state:`There has been a strong anti-foreign feeling in Kedah ever since the Raja Muda's death and the bearing of some of the Malays towards the European officers is altogether most insolent.'([75]) In the same correspondence Frost expressed the view that this anti European reaction within the Kedah Malay community was not specifically directed at the British within the state in particular, but was rather a `anti-foreign influence, whether Siamese or British' among `the higher classes' of Kedah Malays.([76])

While in this correspondence Frost seemed to be saying that the hostility of the Kedah elite Malays was focussed more on the Siamese than on the British (`...the longer I am here the clearer I see the dislike and fear they really have of the Siamese') in other correspondence Frost made it clear that there was nonetheless serious friction between

---

[75] Frost to Becket 6 September, 1907. FO.371/332.

[76] Ibid.

European officials and Kedah ruling class Malays in that year. Specifically, Frost made reference to Malays in the state's Public Works Department `who formerly waxed fat on letting contracts, and [who had] lost considerably through the appointment of a European engineer.'([77]) And in more general terms:`Since the Raja Muda's death, the anti-European spirit of the officials, especially of the smaller fry and of the Sultan's favourites, has been very manifest. Even the State Council look upon the Europeans as a necessary evil.'([78]) The outlook for the securing of British influence within the state, Frost wrote, was `not very encouraging.'([79])

As Frost stated, it had been the death of the Raja Muda which had triggered a souring of relations between the British and certain Kedah Malays. When the loan agreement was first implemented the relationship between Hart as Financial Advisor, and Tengku Abdul Aziz, the President of the State Council, the powerful body charged with the overall administration of the state, was a cordial one.([80]) When the Raja Muda, one of the State's powerful leaders and a leading reformer, died, a new President of State Council was appointed. Relations between Hart and the new President, Tengku Mahmud, were strained and it was at this point that relations between British officials and Kedah Malays in official positions began to decline.([81])

While Frost acknowledged that circumstances had turned against Hart in this way he clearly blamed him for failing to strongly exercise his role as Financial Advisor and saw this as contributing to the decline in Anglo-Kedah relations after the death of the Raja

---

[77] Frost to Beckett, 26 August, 1907. FO.371/332.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ahmat,"Transition and Change", pp. 239, 240.

[81] Ibid., p240.

Muda.([82]) When Hart became ill and left Kedah on sick leave his position was filled temporarily by a Dr. Hoops, the state surgeon, as Acting Financial Advisor.([83]) Under Hoops Anglo-Kedah relations became even worse. Hoops embarked on a reforming spree - an administrative approach which won the firm approval of Meadows Frost:

> The recent appointment of a European engineer was an excellent move, and I do not wish to belittle the great improvement which has taken place during the last few years in the state of the finances, the police, and the purity of the administration, owing to the dismissal of some of the most corrupt officials; this is chiefly due to the resolute attitude of Dr. Hoops.([84])

Hoop's firmness with the Malays in Kedah, then, met with the approval of Frost. However Hoops' manner was abrasive in his dealings with the Kedah Malay administration and this worsened the friction between the British and Malays within the Malay elite.([85]) Undeterred by this Frost took the view that on his return to Kedah from sick leave Hart should restore the strength and authority of the position of Financial Advisor within the State through firmness of action. In Frost's words:`A great deal will depend upon Mr. Hart's behaviour when he returns[now that he has returned ?]. If he takes up a strong line and properly supports his other European assistants, he may be able to recover the influence which the Adviser originally possessed, but which, I cannot help seeing, has been considerably reduced since his return from [?] leave.'([86]) Despite the confusion in the tense here Frost's disapproval of what he sees as Hart's lack of firmness in his administrative approach in Kedah is clear.

Clearly, then, the lead up to the transfer of authority in Kedah was not an auspicious one. The claim of the state's 1909 Annual Report (the first to be issued under the new arrangement) that Hart had presided over a `very difficult situation' during his term as Financial Advisor and that

---

[82] Ibid., p240.

Frost to Beckett, 26 August, 1907. FO.371/332.

[83] Ahmat, "Transition and Change", pp. 240-241.

Frost to Beckett, 26 August, 1907. FO 371/332.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ahmat, "Transition and Change", pp241-244.

[86] Frost to Beckett, 28 August, 1907. FO.371/332.

this period had been characterized by `misunderstandings' - which the report declined to detail - gave only a hint of the tensions existing between British and Malay functionaries within the state at that time.([87]) Kedah Malays did resist the transfer when the time came. Ahmat points out that this resistance to the transfer from Kedah Malays when news of the plan was received in the state in mid 1908 stemmed from the genuine fear that such a transfer would automatically mean that Kedah would become another Federated Malay State - something that was totally unacceptable to the Kedah Malays.([88]) Ahmat points out that when news of the plan arrived in Kedah in mid 1908 Kedah Malays immediately telegrammed a protest to Bangkok while preparing a petition to the Siamese government against the proposed change.([89]) Frost took the view that it was unnecessary to attach any importance to these protests and that they were certainly not indicative of any Malay preference for Siamese as opposed to British rule.([90]) In Frost's view resistance to the transfer came only from a few office holders who feared that the change would bring a stricter British regime which would put an end to their lucrative ways.([91]) Ahmat indicates that this was a misreading of the situation by Frost and that, while Frost may have been partly right, he had failed to realize that the real reason for Kedah's reluctance to accept the transfer was the genuine fear on their part that it would automatically mean that their state became simply another Federated Malay State.([92])

Meadows Frost was subsequently appointed Acting Advisor to the State of Perlis.

---

[87] Kedah Annual Report 1909, p64.

[88] Ahmat, "Transition and Change", pp. 246-247.

[89] Ibid., p.246.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid., pp246-247.

The sources have less to say on the reaction of Perlis Malays to the transfer. Meadows Frost was subsequently appointed Acting Advisor to the state and, in his annual report for the state for the year in which the treaty took effect, wrote of a warm Malay response to the change and of very cordial relations between himself and the state's Malay administration:

> In conclusion, I wish to record my thanks for the assistance which I have received from H.H. the Raja, Tuan Syed Salim and the other members of the State Council. Our relations have always been cordial and the Malay members have been most ready to accept my advice.
>
> It is noteworthy that at the time when the treaty was pending the Perlis people's only anxiety was lest they should not be included among the States to be handed over to the protection of Great Britain.([93])

Perhaps this was, indeed, the case in Perlis. However, in view of Frost's misreading of the situation in Kedah with respect to the transfer, and his inconsistent and generally flawed perception of the Malay elite reaction to the presence of British officers in Kedah under the loan agreement, we do need to be wary of his assessment here.

The Kelantan and Trengganu Rebellions: 1915 and 1928.

Social tensions in the NMS arising initially from new methods of administration and from the longer term penetration of colonial economic influences are clearly evident in two uprisings in northeast Malaya. These risings, while short-lived and mainly localized in their occurrence and effect, are nonetheless strongly suggestive of the way in which traumatic changes in social relationships were occurring under the early impact of the formal British colonial presence. Both outbreaks illustrate the release of hitherto latent tension building under modern colonial influences. Specifically: tension between direct producers and the colonial state making new and difficult demands on their productive wealth; and tension between British administrations and their superiors and the Malay elite in the two states as the latter resisted tenaciously British inroads into their wealth, power and prestige within the Malay community.

We can also see in these conflicts an earlier manifestation of intra Malay elite conflict as sections of the ruling class in the two states competed with each other for advantage within the context of a much more formalized arrangement for the holding of wealth and power within the state. We have seen that the NMS Malay ruling class had come

---

93 Perlis Annual Report 1909, p7.

into conflict with British authority much earlier in their efforts to protect their interests: what is especially significant about the two risings is that they represented the first major reaction to colonial influences at the lower echelons of NMS Malay society as the raayat reacted strongly to British led moves to regulate their existence and especially their economic existence - as the colonial state sought to draw on their productive wealth.

Thus, to properly understand these risings, they have to be seen in the wider context of the effect that colonial influences, and, most immediately in causational terms, colonial administrative influence, was having in altering the mode of existence of both rulers and ruled in the north. While the two conflicts were complex and multi faceted central to the social conflict in both states was the competition over the distribution of the productive wealth in the two states. While the raayat can be seen resisting moves to siphon off their surplus, now principally in the form of tax revenue, in order to maximize their margin above subsistence, the state on the other hand sought to draw as much of that wealth as possible onto its own hands in the interests of maintaining a self-sustaining state apparatus. For their part sections of the Malay elite can be seen fighting a rear guard action against the British colonial presence to control material wealth in the interests of their personal power and prestige. Not all the Malay elite in the two states accepted the transfer of power as a fait accompli and sections of the elite there can be seen acting to broadly similar effect with the raayat in an effort to defeat specific British measures to maximize the revenue underpinning the new colonial state.

These uprisings have not been fully accounted for in the literature and much about them remains unexplained. However, enough has been documented and interpreted in the sources for us to get a picture of the essential causes of, and the basic pattern of events constituting, these outbreaks.

The Kelantan Rising in 1915

The first of the two uprisings took place in the Pasir Puteh district of Kelantan in 1915. Pasir Puteh is one of seven smaller districts clustered to the north of Kelantan and juxtaposed with the very large single district of Ulu Kelantan to the south.

Resistance in the form of a boycott against the new taxation system introduced in Kelantan, and outlined above, had been organised in the Pasir Puteh district by To' Janggut, a

local trader. In response to the boycott the District Officer, Che' Latiff, sent a police sergeant, Che'Wan and several escorts to summon To'Janggut to the District Office to answer questions relating to the boycott. To'Janggut resisted a summons and killed the sergeant when he attempted to handcuff the rebel leader. The rebels then went into hiding and the rebellion began in earnest when the District Officer sent six policemen to arrest To'Janggut. The rebels launched an attack on, and sacked, Pasir Puteh town. When it was thought that these hostilities might become more widespread troops were sent from Singapore to help contain the unrest. The rising ended with the shooting of To'Janggut and several of his closest supporters in Kampong Pupoh on 24 May, 1915. At the same time, while this disturbance was focussed in the Pasir Puteh district, there were related incidents in the nearby districts of Pasir Mas and Ulu Kelantan as well.([94])

While the rising was localized and did not amount to a general popular uprising against the British colonial administration this limitation should not be overstated. Three out of the seven districts on the state's populous coastal plain were involved and the colonial authorities in the state at the time deemed it necessary to adopt strategies to stop the spread of rebellious discontent within the three districts - something which implied that the potential for a spread of the disturbances existed. One such strategy entailed the calculated placement of an armed force within Ulu Kelantan as a deterrent to any spread of the rebellion. In the words of the state's 1918 annual report:

> On news of the riot being received, the District Officer with a body of European volunteers and some Sikhs...and Javanese...marched down to near Kamuning, where the paths that connect Pasir Puteh district with Ulu Kelantan meet. The presence of this armed body did much to restore the confidence of the raiat and prevented To'Janggut's chief of staff, Paia, from obtaining more than a few recruits from neighbouring Kengs.([95])

Clearly the British fear here was that the rebellion would spread to the expansive Ulu Kelantan district. By implication it is clear that the British thought that the potential grievances for rebellion may be located in the southernmost district as well.

In broad terms the reason for the raayat involvement in this uprising is easily seen

---

94 Allen, "Kelantan Rising", p. 247.

There does not seem to be much information in the sources on the related incidents.

95 Kelantan Annual Report 1915, p2.

in the sources. Mahmood makes it clear that the peasantry in Pasir Puteh were reacting to the new method of taxation whereby a fixed land rent replace the produce taxes that had hitherto been collected.([96]) What is not clear from Mahmood's account is the precise nature of peasant objection to the new land tax. According to Mahmood `the substitution in 1915 of a fixed and limited land rent...in lieu of produce taxes would not necessarily [have amounted] to more than a marginal increase'.([97]) Mahmood seems to be following the stock response of British administrators to peasant resistance - that it can be explained away largely in terms of their ideological reactions to colonial rule, a reaction which was seen largely in terms of their backwardness and a lack of initiative in bettering their own position in society. For his information on the subject Mahmood relies on `the Kelantan state papers and other Malay materials, on the contemporary accounts of the rising of both Langham-Carter, the Advisor in Kelantan at the time and the official primarily responsible for the introduction of the tax, and his assistant, R.J. Farrer'.([98]) Mahmood cites Farrer on the subject with implicit approval. Accounting for the reasons for raayat resistance in Pasir Puteh Farrer wrote:

> The local Malay is first and last an agriculturalist. The land system is the framework about which are built his custom, his habit and his life itself. He shares with the peasantry of every other land on earth an affection for the ills he has in preference to others he knows not of. It is obvious that any attempt to change in the twinkling of an eye the system to which he is accustomed into an entirely new system (whatever its theoretical excellence) would arouse sullen and determined opposition.([99])

Now while such rationalizations to the effect that the British policy served raayat interests and that the latter did not know what was good for them served to salve the British humanitarian conscience against contrary indications of real hardship in raayat grievances. Mahmood seems to have taken Langham-Carter's claim that the new tax system should produce `a steady, if not very rapid, improvement in the land revenue' as indicating minimal

---

[96] Mahmood, "To' Janggut Rebellion", pp72,73.

[97] Ibid., p73.

[98] Mahmood, "To'Janggut Rebellion", pp. 62,72,73.

[99] Cited in Mahmood, "To' Janggut Rebellion", p.73.

hardship for the raayat. Still on the basis of Langham-Carter Mahmood continues: `As such, the new system was, in the last analysis, an added burden on the people as a whole, although in some ways a marginal one.([100]) Mahmood seems to have missed what Allen picked up researching the rising on the basis of then recently released Colonial Office documents that Langham-Carter's version of the rising was not trusted by Sir Arthur Young, Governor of the Straits Settlements and Commissioner of the Federated Malay States at the time of the rising.([101])

Kessler on the other hand sees a stronger measure of a objective hardship in the peasant response to the new land system in Kelantan in 1915 - a hardship arising not only from the imposition of the tax, but from a wider set of pressures that had been building on the raayat with the intrusion of colonial economic forces in the nineteenth century, and under the Graham and British regimes imposed in the twentieth.([102])

Neither Allen, Kessler or Mahmood, while agreeing that the new tax was the most proximate cause - the trigger - for the rising, are able to assist our understanding to any great extent on how the raayat's objective circumstances were altered by the tax. Mahmood, as we have seen, relies on an ideological explanation, accepting the statements of Langham-Carter and Farrer discounting any serious degree of objective economic hardship for the raayat. He relies instead on Farrer's claim that the raayat were set in their customary ways and were

---

[100] Ibid., p.72.

[101] Allen points out that Governor Sir Arthur Young did not have a very high opinion of Langham Carter and that therefore Singapore asked first Farrer, and then the Acting Colonial Secretary, to enquire further into the rising initially reported by Langham-Carter. According to Allen `[b]oth Farrer and Maxwell confirmed - what Langham-Carter denied - that the new tax system was a major cause of the trouble and that it had not been adequately explained'.

Allen, "Kelantan Rising", p.246.

Young's concern may have been, Allen continues, that Langham-Carter was playing the incident down, or that he, Langham-Carter, `ha[d] inventing a number of other, unnecessary causes for what occurred in order to exonerate himself of blame for introducing the new tax without explaining it properly'.

Ibid. Tense altered.

[102] Kessler, Islam and Politcs, pp.63-68.

Kessler's description of the intensification of Kelantanese agriculture and the hardship this caused the state's peasantry is referred to in chapter 5 above.

simply being reactionary by nature and custom in opposing the tax. Allen does address the issue of objective hardship partially but only to cast doubt on the contemporary claims of colonial officials that a bad rice harvest alone in combination with the tax introduction in 1915 caused significant hardship for the state's peasantry.([103]) In arguing the possibility that the rising was a popular one he focusses, not on the effect of the tax in motivating direct producers to join the rising, but rather on the motives and behaviour of the local leadership as an indication that the impetus for resistance came from nearer the bottom rather than the top of Kelantanese society.([104])

Kessler, in arguing that very general proposition that `the widespread opposition' to the new land scheme `found expression in the Pasir Puteh rebellion, motivated by a profound resentment of the pressures upon the peasantry that the new regime [ie the British regime] had suddenly intensified', does not closely examine the particular grievances engendered by the new land system. He focusses instead upon the more general pressures affecting the Kelantanese peasantry as a result of colonial influences.([105])

Nonetheless, we do need to know more about the specifics of the implementation of the tax in its effect on the raayat in the districts where outbreaks occurred in order to understand the motivations of the followers in the rising, and to more effectively gauge the degree and extent to which the rising was indicative of a wider grass roots reaction to the new administrative measures that came with the British supremacy in the state. In particular, we need answers to several important questions: What were the purely local factors operating to make the raayat reactive at the time of the introduction of the new tax system? How was the new tax collected - solely in cash or in both kind and cash? Were the methods of collection more systematic and rigorous than taxes previously collected ?

---

[103] Allen, "Kelantan Rising", pp.244,245.

[104] Ibid., pp.252-254.

[105] Kessler, Islam and Politics, p.68.

Kessler develops his account of the more general pressures affecting the Kelantanese peasantry on pages 63-68 of his book.

Allen seeks to discount the notion that the rising was `little more than a tax riot'. In so doing he is sceptical of British claims in despatches to London that a bad harvest and falling copra prices were significant factors in explaining the strong adverse peasant reaction to the tax in 1915. Paraphrasing Young on the sequence of events Allen states:

> The normal tax hitherto in the State had been a produce-tax. Thus unused land was not taxed and in a bad year the tax-burden was automatically lower. This had recently been relaced by a land-tax which had the advantage that it was much easier to work efficiently and that it provided a constant amount of revenue annually; but it was conceded that it might result in some hardship in a bad year. It looked as if it had been a bad year: the price of copra had fallen and padi-harvests were said to have been poor. This had led to disturbances in one of the outlying districts, Pasir Puteh,...([106])

On the basis of Graham's book on Kelantan Allen puts forward the view that `while it was true that unused land was untaxed, padi-land at least was taxed by acreage.'([107]) Allen argues that, since `most of the population lived by growing rice', and given Graham's suggestion that padi-land was already taxed, `it is hard to see why bad rice harvests should have led to hardship only as a result of the latest tax reform'([108])

Allen makes it clear that his article is hypothetical in its approach and not meant to be definitive on the subject of the rising. Certainly his tentative conclusions on the role of the new land tax as a cause of the rising warrant closer scrutiny. For example, while Allen's tone in the passage quoted above implies strong doubt as to the veracity of the bad harvest claim in the Young correspondence, evidence in the primary sources not cited by Allen does indicate at

---

[106] Allen, "Kelantan Rising", pp.244,245.

[107] The book written by W.A. Graham, the British national who was Siamese Advisor to the state from 1902 and whose reforming activity as a state administrator is referred to in chapter 5 above.

Ibid., p.244.

[108] Ibid., p.245.

Allen adds the qualification, ... unless, of course, it had previously been possible to pay one's tax the following year, in which case one could make up for a bad harvest by planting less for the next harvest and so paying less tax'. Ibid.

Still, this possibility seems hardly relevant, it could be argued, since by planting less the raayat would earn less and so any compensatory effect would be lost.

least a partial failure of the rice crop in the Pasir Puteh district in 1915. According to Farrer in his 1915 annual report for the state as Acting Advisor, while the padi crop for the state as a whole was `an average one' it was, `[i]n parts of the Pasir Puteh district...a partial failure.'([109])

Allen's suggestion that rice land was being taxed under Graham, and that the 1915 land scheme did not add substantially to the economic burden of the Kelantanese peasantry, also needs closer examination. While it is true that Graham does seem to indicate that there was a scheme in operation in the state in 1908 whereby padi land was taxed by acreage, that suggestion is extremely vague and ambiguous, and no details of any such system of padi land taxation are given by him.([110]) A better interpretation, I suggest, of what Graham was saying in his book is that it was the preliminaries to the new taxation process only that were being implemented in the state in 1908. Certainly this early implementation was enough to have an effect on the peasantry. Graham refers to `some uneasiness in the peasant mind' over the introduction of the new scheme. However, it is also clear from Graham that this uneasiness was focussed on the `future intentions of the Government' rather than on any policy actually being implemented at the time.([111]) The point that Graham was making in this passage was that the three years preceding 1908 had `seen a great rise in the value of rice land', a rise which had been `temporarily checked, in some degree, by the recent introduction of a graduated tax on such lands' and that it was the assessment of this tax, and the land measurement that went with it, that had set up the uneasiness in the mind of the peasants subjected to it.([112]) Graham also makes clear in his land chapter that the systematization of land tenure in the state in a more general sense was by no means complete in 1908. It is difficult to see how a comprehensive system of padi land taxation could have been in operation without the secure

---

[109] Kelantan Annual Report 1915, p.4. CO 827/1.

[110] Graham, Kelantan, p.74.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

basis of properly working formal system of land tenure across the state.([113])

It is clear from the state's annual reports for this period it was not until well after Graham's time that a determined effort was being made to implement a comprehensive land tax scheme. While it was not until 1915 that a Land Enactment for the implementation of a land tax was put in place, Langham-Carter reported - and there seems no reason to disbelieve him on this -that the enactment was in the planning stages in the years leading up to that of the rising, and that in those years steps were clearly under way for the partial implementation of such a tax on a less formal basis.

In his annual report for the state for 1913 Langham-Carter wrote:

> Both in 1912 and 1913 attempts were made to complete a Land Enactment under which titles could systematically be issued, and rents and fees be systematically collected... [T]he embryo of such an Enactment has taken the form of a notice; and under it, in 1915, serious work should be done to secure the reimbursement of some of the heavy charges the State is incurring for survey.([114])

While it had not been possible, Langham-Carter stated in the same report, `to present to the Council a comprehensive Land Enactment', the `framework of one, carrying the main principle of fixed rent and in the form of a notice, engaged a great deal of attention at the end of the year.'([115]) As we shall see in more detail below, the moves to adopt `the principle of the substitution of fixed rents for produce taxes' stemmed from an urgent desire on the part of British officials in the state to have the state pay its way, and a degree of haste in imposing the system of land taxation on the state before the wider system of land tenure had been systematized can be perceived in the annual reports for Kelantan in the years leading up to,

---

[113] Graham refers to the activities of a commission set up by the Sultan of Kelantan in 1899 `to inquire into the tenure of land already alienated by the State, with a view to the compulsory issue of deeds to all land holders'. The Commission, Graham pointed out, had been performing its task imperfectly and had been hampered by corrupt and perfunctory practices. Looking to the future, Graham observed: `It now devolves upon a reorganized Land Office to adjust, as far as may be possible, the errors of former days, and at the same time to continue in accordance with the original method, but without the accompanying corruption, the issue of deeds to cover the remainder of the occupied land in the state'.

Ibid., pp.93,94.

[114] Kelantan Annual Report 1913, p.2. CO827/1.

[115] Ibid.

and including, 1915.([116])

In 1913, for example, in Pasir Puteh, Langham-Carter reported `the imposition of fixed rents on applications [for land] received about or after the middle of the year.'([117]) Langham-Carter claimed that this imposition, in the view of the Pasir Puteh District Officer, `seemed acceptable to the people' and that this same officer looked forward `to its extension in and from 1915 to all alienated lands'.([118]) Langham-Carter added cryptically: `In Pasir Puteh, as in other land offices, the produce taxes find no favour'.([119]) While the comment seems intended to imply a comparison in the minds of the district's landholders that a fixed land rent was preferable to the produce tax, no evidence is offered for this, and a general dislike of taxes of any kind on the part of these producers seems a more likely interpretation of their reaction to produce taxes. We can see in it some hint of the rising to come - a hint that did not register with Langham-Carter.

Clearly, then, in the years immediately prior to 1915, the colonial administration in Kelantan was working towards, but not fully implementing, the new fixed land rent system and the scheme remained largely in the proposal stage until the year of the rising. While effecting some limited collection of land rent the state's administration was also directing its effort at paving the way for the wider adoption of the new scheme by systematizing the state's land tenure. It was a task which was clearly difficult for the administrators and its effect must have been to increase the kind of tension between producers and administrators arising initially from earlier changes to the land system under Graham, and hinted at by him in his 1908 book on Kelantan. In his 1913 report Langham-Carter referred to the `present rough and ready methods' being used to organize land tenure in the state and complained of the `want of

---

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., p.4.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

development of the land system' in Kelantan.([120]) In 1914, too, the new taxation system remained stalled by the irregularities in the land system. In his report for that year Langham-Carter wrote that `it was hoped that during the whole of the year under review the new land system (substitution of fixed rent for payment of produce taxes) would have been in operation' but that the system `could not be put into regular operation during the year.'([121]) One of the problems producing a serious short fall in land revenue was the `numerous serious cases of dishonesty on the part of collectors'.([122]) This same report gives the clear impression that in the year before the rising the colonial administration was rushing ahead with the fixed land rent principle before the general establishment of a modern system of land tenure in the state. In the report the Superintendent of Lands is cited as believing that increases in land revenue could be expected `as the issue of titles facilitate[d] the application of the fixed rent principle.'([123]) There can be no doubting that a special effort was being made to maximize the state's land revenue in 1914 on a strategy of increasing the amount of produce tax collected while at the same time pushing the state as far as possible towards a comprehensive system of land taxation. In congratulatory tone Langham-Carter wrote of an increase in collections in that year over that of the year previous in Ulu Kelantan (a $2000 increase) and Pasir Puteh (a nearly $5000 increase).([124]) Of the Pasir Puteh increase Langham-Carter wrote:

> ...the more important items of revenue [-] produce taxes [and] land rents recurrent [-] showed useful increases, and it is particularly creditable that these rents should in one year (and before the general adoption of the principle of fixed rents) have risen to over $700 from native holdings, all applications for State land being accepted on this basis and thereby preparing the way for an extension of the principle to occupied lands.([125])

---

[120] Kelantan Annual Report 1913, p.3. CO827/1.

[121] Kelantan Annual Report 1914, p.1.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid., p.5.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid.

Thus, while Allen is right to widen the focus away from the land taxation scheme of 1915 as a cause of the rising to encompass other factors as well it is important at the same time not to underestimate the very likely strong effect of taxation - both produce and land taxation - on the peasantry in the rebellious districts and we must approach Allen's denial that land taxation was a novelty in Kelantan in 1915 on the basis of Graham with caution.

The outbreak of violent protest was, in Pasir Puteh, certainly ferocious in its intensity. In his annual report for the state for 1915 Farrer wrote that `anarchy reigned' and that the `district was almost deserted' at the height of the disturbance and that the districts land tax records were destroyed in the protest.([126]) It seems reasonable to ask then, in the absence of any more general outbreak of resistance, what local factors were operating to produce such a strong reaction in the three districts to the new land tax scheme.

We might postulate for example, that the collection of produce tax, and the introduction of the new land tax scheme, was being implemented in the three districts with more vigour than in the other districts in the states. Or at least the implementation of these taxes was felt more strongly in these districts.

There is some evidence in the sources to suggest that the implementation was more vigorous in the three districts. Both Pasir Puteh and Ulu Kelantan districts are given some prominence in the years leading up to and including 1915, both in terms of their economic and social progress generally, and in terms of their land development. Both districts are dealt with separately in the annual reports.([127]) The state's annual report for 1914 indicated that, for the purposes of land administration, Kelantan was divided into `the Central District under the superintendent of Lands, and Hulu Kelantan and Pasir Puteh under District Officers'. The separation of the two districts from the remaining six in the state in this way carries an appearance that they were seen as being unique in some way by the British. This emphasis also suggests, in appearance at least, that the two districts were more important than the

---

[126] Kelantan Annual Report 1915, pp.13,7.

[127] Specifically the state's 1913, 1914 and 1915 annual reports.

others. In particular, it implies their considerable importance in the organization of land tenure within the state.([128]) It is also clear from the discussion above that, while the new tax scheme may have been `little more than a proposal' by 1915, it was the two districts - Pasir Puteh and Ulu Kelantan - that were the focus for the state's tax drive and bore the brunt not only of intensified produce tax collection, but efforts to phase in the new land tax scheme as well. Both districts were, as we have seen, singled out in the state's annual reportage as valuable sources of produce tax revenue. In line with this the state's 1914 annual report for example, praised `the achievement of Pasir Puteh's favourable results' in the collection of agricultural revenue for that year and observed that in the achievement of these results `the issue of revenue notices was nearly trebled'.([129]) As we have seen above, up until the time of the rising the colonial administration was stepping up on its revenue collection and relying heavily on produce taxes to maintain revenue while at the same time, with only limited success, endeavouring to phase in taxation of land and seeking to implement into existence a wider framework of a modern land tenurial system upon which a comprehensive system of land taxation would be based.([130]) Thus, the state's report for 1915 observed: `The scheme

---

[128] Kelantan Annual Report 1914, p.4. CO827/1.

[129] Ibid., p.5.

[130] The 1914 annual report to the state makes clear the very heavy reliance of the state on produce taxes and indicates that the administration looked forward to the substitution `in 1915 and onwards of fixed rent for the ... produce taxes' a substitution which, it was thought, would produce `a steady, if not very rapid, improvement in the land revenue'. In the table of figures given below we can read not only a steadily increasing pressure on the state's peasants to pay produce tax, but also the heavy reliance by the state on padi tax - a tax clearly aimed at, and affecting in varying degrees, the bulk of the state's population in their main area of productive activity - that of rice growing, in the four years prior to the rising. It is clear from the report that the table refers to produce taxes only.

	1911	1912	1913	1914
	$ c	$ c	$ c	$ c
Padi tax	36,071.57	46,166.33	52,847.74	53,996.02
Coconut tax	11,649.45	14,422.10	15,169.80	16,481.37
Durien tax	5,686.91	7,183.18	7,343.12	7,719.93
Sireh tax	1,650.20	1,255.49	1,044.14	545.99
Total	55,058.13	69,027.10	76,404.80	78,743.31

Kelantan Annual Report 1914, p. 4.

mentioned in the Annual Report for 1914 whereby land rent would be substituted for produce taxes from the beginning of 1915 has so far proved little more than a proposal'.([131])

There is evidence that the early implementation of the new land tax scheme was causing tension within the peasantry, both across the state in general and in some localities more than in others. In Ulu Kelantan the tension arising from the implementation of the scheme may well have leant the volatility within the district's rural population which saw it involved in the `related incidents' to the Pasir Puteh rising referred to above. The 1915 annual report for the state makes a comparison between the land administration in Kota Bahru and that in Ulu Kelantan which tends to suggest that this was the case. According to the report the implementation of the new land tax scheme in Kota Bahru was being frustrated by `a reluctance to pay for extracts from the Register and dislike of the idea of paying rent on fallow land' and that this disinclination saw the peasants of that district resorting to `formal trial in the Kota Bahru Land Office' - action that was followed `almost invariably by appeal first to the High Court and afterwards to... His Highness the Sultan'.([132]) Ulu Kelantan, by contrast, presented `a much simpler problem'. There, the report continued, the land was `of comparatively recent occupation' and its ownership was therefore `better known, the area under occupation infinitely smaller, and, where disputes [arose], a personal visit by the District Officer [established] the true facts far more certainly and speedily than was the case in Kota Bahru'.([133]) The report, then, focussed on an unevenness in response to the land tax in terms of its manageability from the British point of view: strongly problematic resistance in Khota Bahru; less problematic resistance in Ulu Kelantan. The report doesn't comment directly on the relative strength of resistance in the two districts: its focus is on the greater ease with which resistance was handled in Ulu Kelantan in comparison with such handling in Khota Bahru. What is important for us here is the fact that the British recorded resistance to the new scheme in both districts. We can surmise from the report that it was not so much that

---

[131] Kelantan Annual Report 1915, p.4. CO 827/1.

[132] Kelantan Annual Report 1915, pp.6,7.

[133] Ibid. Tense altered

there was less resistance to colonial land policies in the up river district but that the British land administration was able to cope more effectively with it. Whether the resistance in Ulu Kelantan was more or less than in Khota Bahru, it was resistance nonetheless and the report must count as evidence of a degree of active opposition to the new land tax in this contentious district. Ironically, the greater ease of collection in the upriver district may have actually added to the burden of the peasantry there though the report does not say this.

The annual reports for Kelantan in the years leading up to and including 1915 give few clues as to the response of the Malay peasantry to British land policies. Perhaps this is because it was in the career interests of the on-the-spot British administrators to convey an impression of viability in the working of these policies. Such viability would be seen in Whitehall as depending on a sufficient degree of cooperation on the part of the peasantry in working with colonial land authority to make the new policies work. Likewise, the suggestion of peasant `uneasiness' at the land measurement and tax assessment measures referred to by Graham in his book may well have understated the true peasant response to this aspect of his administration in the first decade of this century.

Similarly, Langham-Carter's claim of efficiency in the administration of the land tax in Ulu Kelantan in 1914 does no more than imply a degree of resistance to the policy in that district. In similar vein his account of the implementation of land policies in Pasir Puteh, the most contentious district of all, carry only a vague suggestion of Malay peasant resistance to the stronger drive for revenue collection prior to the 1915 rising. For example his annual report for 1912 acknowledges certain difficulties in the progress of the district in that year but without addressing squarely the topic of peasant reactions to colonial policy in the district. In that report he referred, as we have seen in chapter 5 above, to a `falling off in the applications for padi land of from 1280 to 320 acres, a decrease of some $1300 in the padi-tax collected, a failure in the crop and consequent rise in price of from 6 to 16 cents a gantang', the dying off of the districts sireh vines and the need to import sireh and rice from Siam and a `very large apparent increase in crime' in the district.([134]) No conclusions are drawn in the passage on the

---

[134] Kelantan Annual Report 1912, p.3. See also chapter 5 above.

For example, the report seems concerned to downplay any real suggestion of inordinate crime in Pasir Puteh. The District Officer, according to the report, explained the apparent increase in crime `as being due rather to a new system of case-numbering than to increased energy on the part of his people'.

Kelantan Annual Report 1912, p.3.

receptivity or otherwise of the district's producers to colonial policies and we are left in the dark on whether, for example, there was an increase in crime in the form of civil disorder arising from the implementation of colonial policies and whether the decrease in padi tax collections resulted from producers were defaulting on the payment of this tax. We can, perhaps, with hindsight read in this passage the vague outlines of brewing civil disorder focussing upon rural hardship caused by crop failure and increasing pressure to pay produce tax to the state, but not with any certainty since no detailed description is given of the peasant responses. If the increase in crime were real rather than apparent the juxtaposition in the report may indicate a connection between the crime increase and the problems in agriculture and its administration. No such connection is explored in the report. There is no reference, for example, to the nature of the crime recorded and we can only speculate that it took the form of minor civil unrest connected with the agricultural problems after the manner of that which occurred in the district some three years later.

The colonial sources make little or no reference to the capacity of the peasants in Kelantan to pay rent in the way that colonial administrators wanted and we therefore have little or no idea of what precise effect the drive to maximize taxation revenue was having on them in their domestic productive sphere. The implicit assumption on the part of the state's top administrators seems to have been that they did have the wherewithal to pay the tax and to continue to maintain themselves as producers. But did they? Were they sufficiently productive to pay the rent without severely undermining their standard of living? What was the difference between produce taxes and land tax from their point of view? Was there a situation for example where produce taxes were paid wholly or partly in kind but where land rent had to be paid strictly in cash? The secondary sources on the rising - specifically Allen, Kessler and Mahmood - do not address these questions squarely, perhaps because information is lacking in the primary sources on them.

Still, there are some clues in the primary sources. Farrer, in the state's annual report for 1915, for example, while making the point as we have seen that the new land tax scheme

---

We need to be wary of this qualifier since any real increase in the district's crime may have been seen by higher ups in the colonial administration as a reflection the effectiveness of the district Officer in running his district.

remained, for the state as a whole, `little more than a proposal' in that year, also indicated that in the district of Ulu Kelantan `the introduction of the land rent system [had] really begun, $5922 more than in 1914 being collected'.([135]) On the same page as this reference to Ulu Kelantan the report outlines the difficulty of the state's up-country people in obtaining cash:

> There can be no doubt that the native of Kelantan `eget aeris', the flocking of the `orang darat' (up-country people) to the daily markets does not imply cash. They bring their produce (sometimes of incredibly small value for extraordinary distances) and sell it, and then only have the cash to buy what they require. At one market I found a woman who carried 40lbs of betel leaves 6 miles in order to sell it for twice what it cost her, her gross profit, before deducting a market charge of nearly a penny, was 121/2 cents (say 3 ½ pence) with which she would buy her luxuries before trudging home again ! (and this is not a single outstanding case).([136])

This suggests the kind of economic difficulty that may have been posed for producers in Ulu Kelantan, Pasir Mas and Pasir Puteh in the years leading up to the rising. Clearly more research is needed on the availability of cash viz-a-viz the payment of land tax in the coastal plain districts and particularly those where there was strong resistance to the land tax.

While purely local factors as yet not fully explained in the secondary sources no doubt triggered the incidents in the particular districts, there can be no doubt that Kessler is right to draw attention to the broader colonial imperatives operating in the state from the time of Graham's regime as the wider more fundamental cause of the rising. It seems likely that, while the violence was relatively localized, discontent within the state's raayat was widespread. As we have seen in chapter 5 above, colonial administrators in the four northern states were, from the time of the transfer of power, under considerable pressure to organise the states into stable and economically self-sufficient entities drawing as little as possible on the resources of the wider colonial state in the Straits and on the peninsular. As with all the northern states the economies lacked large scale mining and plantation enterprise on a scale that would form an economic mainstay for the state and they relied, as we have seen, on the revenue producing capacity of raayat producers instead. Such concerns were clearly uppermost in the minds of Kelantan's administrators in the years leading up to and including 1915. The 1915 annual report for the state for example commented on the difficulties of developing a tin industry in Ulu Kelantan:

> The finding of good tin in Ulu Kelantan has been many times reported, but the

---

[135] Kelantan Annual Report 1915, p. 2,4. Tense altered.

[136] Kelantan Annual Report 1915, p.2. CO827/1.

> difficulties and expense of transport are such that nothing less than fabulous values will tempt the capitalist to venture his capital, or provide him with a certain profit.([137])

This comment is clearly linked with the need to balance the state's liabilities and assets - at that time out of balance to a figure of $3,416,426 liabilities in excess of assets.([138])

Accordingly, the very heavy reliance of the Kelantan administration on land revenue in 1915 is very clear from the state's report for that year. In that report Farrer makes clear that he `dealt at considerable length with land administration [ie in the report] because the question [was] undoubtedly the most important of all Kelantan problems.'([139]) Land revenue, along with that derived from Customs and Licences, were by far the most important sources of income revenue for the state in that year. A table in the 1915 report itemizing the states income for 1915 clearly illustrates in state budgetary terms the importance of land and land owners as a main prop to the state and its administration in that year:

Comparative Statement of Kelantan Revenue for the year 1915[140]

Heads of revenue/	Estimate / 1915	Revenue/ 1915	Revenue / 1914	Increase /	Decrease
	$	$ c	$ c	$ c	$ c
Land revenue	132,610	128,110.29	138,049.88	...	9,939.59
Customs	201,700	159,784.97	182,843.53	...	23,058.56
Port Dues	3,500	2.627.69	3,372.07	...	744.38
Licenses, Exise, etc	256,376	314,000.00	348,818.68	...	34,818.68
Fees of Court, etc.	138,565	24,432.15	32,628.21	...	8,196.06
Posts and Telegraphs	34,800	26,260.12	25,095.28	1,164.84	
Interest	1,565	2,177.73	1,767.09	410.64	
Miscellaneous Receipts	650	2,900.575	697.22	2,203.355	
Municipal	25,158	27,109.92	25,386.14	1,723.78	
Land Sales	3,650	5,153.50	4,114.00	1,039.50	
Total	698,574	692,556.945	762,772.10		70,215.155

---

[137] Kelantan Annual Report 1915, p.4.

See also page 2 of the same report for a comment on the uncertain timing of the future development of the state's mineral resources.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Ibid., p.6. Tense altered.

[140] Ibid., Appendix A, p iii.

The table shows that land revenue collected was significantly less in 1915 than it was in 1914 and that the 1915 land revenue figure was less than expected. While the report has little to say directly on the operation of the land tax scheme in relation to the rising it does express strong disappointment that the scheme failed to produce more revenue than it did.([141]) Indeed, the report makes it clear that the shortfall in anticipated revenue was due largely to the failure of the new scheme.([142]) The point, then, is that we can see in the expectation indicated in the table and elsewhere in the report that land revenue would increase through the vigorous and effective implementation of the land tax, the way in which the broad urgently felt need to balance the state budget was having the effect of putting strong pressure on the state's landowning producers.

The British administration in Kelantan, then, in the years leading up to the rising, took very seriously their reliance on the state's small producers as the main providers of state revenue and were, as a matter or urgency, working out methods of tapping into this source of state wealth. While as we have seen, there was an uncertain belief in the eventual emergence of alternative sources of state wealth - in the development of the state's mineral resources for example - they seem, in the years around 1915, to have accepted that state reliance on raayat productivity would continue indefinitely into the future. In 1914 Langham-Carter wrote, `Kelantan's great asset is its large number of small holders.'.([143])

The problem for the state's administrators was, then, how best to tap this asset in support of the state and they were clearly frustrated in their efforts to find an effective way of doing this. Speaking of the state's need in 1914 to recoup on its liabilities and the practical difficulties in so doing Langham-Carter wrote:

> Remembering that at present Kelantan is a purely agricultural State with its land system and agricultural interests even [ever?] hampered by enforced economy of expenditure it does not seem possible to indicate any method of early redemption of these liabilities.([144])

---

[141] Ibid., p.1.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Kelantan Annual Report 1914, p.2.

[144] Ibid.

We have seen above that the British administration had, in the years leading up to 1915 in Kelantan, proceeded too quickly with their measures to draw revenue from the state's landholders.([145]) Farrer's administration drew a lesson from the rising and took steps to ensure a more continuous, measured, approach to land issues in its wake. In 1915 the State Council included on its agenda an `[a]mendment of the Land Rents Rules in the direction of lightening the cost to the raiats of putting the State's house in order'.([146]) Clearly the 1915 administration had been shocked into the realization that, while policies aimed at drawing productive wealth from the state's smallholders were necessary, those policies needed to be implemented in a way which stopped short of alienating the population from whom the wealth was to be drawn.

Clearly, then, the implementation of the new land system was a gradual and difficult process for the British administration in Kelantan in the years spanning 1915. Here and there in the reports we are allowed more direct glimpses of the nature of the practical difficulties, though Farrer seems to have continued the tendency of Langham-Carter (and for that matter, as we have seen, colonial administrators in the four states in general) to understate the difficulties encountered in implementing the new system. In his 1916 report Farrer referred to `one obstacle to the keeping of [land] records up-to-date'. That obstacle was `the inveterate habit of the Kelantanese of transferring [their] property by word of mouth' - an

---

[145] Albeit misconstruing the way in which the too rapid introduction of the land rent system was creating hardship for the peasantry as I have indicated in this chapter above.

[146] Kelantan Annual Report 1915, p.8.

The amendment was one of a number of subjects dealt with in the 31 Orders in Council. The report indicates that State Council met 12 times in the year though we are not told when in the year these meetings were held, nor in which meeting the amendment was dealt with. Since the uprising was early in the year, and given, as we have seen in the text of this chapter above, Farrer's concern after the meeting to tread carefully with changes to the land system in the light of the peasants' strong natural and customary attachment to the land, it seems likely that the amendment post dated the rising.

obstacle which was beyond the reach of any remedial legislative action because `custom is stronger than law'.([147])

Some further measure of peasant resistance to the new land scheme can be seen in the fact that in 1919, some four years or more after the scheme `had begun in earnest', it had still not been fully implemented across the state as a whole. In Pasir Puteh the system had been thrown into disarray by the rising and it was not until 1919 that the whole district came effectively under the fixed rent system.([148]) In that year the districts of Kota Bharu and Ulu Kelantan were still not completely under the `permanent rent system'.([149]) In 1919 there was continued manifest resistance to the scheme from the state's producers. In Kota Bahru in 1914 for example, where the transition to the new land tax scheme was incomplete and where both land and produce taxes were being levied, over 6000 summonses were issued for the non-payment of land rent and 4000 for the non-payment of produce tax.([150])

It will be clear from the above, then, that the role of colonial taxation policies as a cause of the Kelantan Rising has to some extent been misunderstood in the secondary sources. Mahmood indicates that the Pasir Puteh peasantry were triggered into violent resistance by the sudden introduction of a land rent system which caused marginal objective hardship for them but which made them rebellious by running against their customs and inclination in land use. Allen underestimates the degree of objective hardship to the peasantry caused by the tax in a different way arguing that padi land was already being taxed at the time of the rising and implying that we therefore need to look more to other causes for their reaction - causes not specified by him.

The state's annual reports for the years spanning 1915 suggest, however, that the truth lies somewhere between the assertions of Mahmood and the tentative conclusions drawn by Allen. The reports lend credence to Kessler's claim that the state's peasantry had been coming under

---

[147] Kelantan Annual Report 1916.

[148] Kelantan Annual Report 1919, p.5. CO827/1.

[149] Ibid., p.6, 8.

[150] Ibid., p.7.

increasingly strong pressure from the time of Graham to furnish the state with revenue. While the precise nature and effect of this pressure is not clear from the reports it seems reasonable to assume that a more general and determined effort on the part of the Kelantan administration to maximize taxation revenue was creating strong objective hardship for them and it was this hardship which made them, as we shall see below, susceptible to the appeals of local leaders drawing them into revolt against the colonial state. Since it is clear from these reports that the land taxation system remained `little more than a proposal' in 1915 we must assume that it was the switch from a situation where, as we have seen in chapter 5 above, the state's population was subjected to `erratically collected produce taxes' to one in which there was an increasingly systematic rigorous and more general collection of produce tax, and to a limited but increasing extent land tax, that engendered a high degree of tension between the state's administrators and producers and which was one essential cause of the rising in Pasir Puteh and the incidents in Ulu Kelantan and Pasir Mas. Since there was no general rising of the state's raayat we must assume also that locally operating factor's triggered the resistance in the three districts: in Pasir Puteh the likelihood is that it was the more determined effort to step up the implementation of the land tax system coupled with a partial crop failure which acted as a trigger inflaming the district's producers to a high pitch of tension - a tension that was focussed by the local leadership as we shall see below, in a concerted act of retaliation against local colonial authority.

Mahood makes it clear that the rising in Pasir Puteh, at least, was not only the product of the hardship being experienced by raayat producers but stemmed also from the disaffection of traditional local leadership as well. Thus, the rising is to be accounted for in large measure in terms of the resentment of Engku Besar, a former district chief in Pasir Puteh district, whose economic and political position had been undermined with the coming of the Graham regime in 1902. According to Mahmood, Engku Besar had, before Graham's regime, `enjoyed the undivided loyalty of the people in and around Jeram, a settlement and surrounding area about three-and-a-half miles from Pasir Puteh town.'([151]) It was, Mahmood

[151] Mahmood, "To'Janggut Rebellion", p.65.

continues, `in reaction to the dislocation of his power after the District Office had been established, that Engku Besar instigated To'Janggut and others to stir the local inhabitants into defying the authorities'.([152]) In other words Engku Besar was dislodged from his position of power and status in the same kind of way that the NMS Malay leadership in general was undermined with the coming of a formal British presence in the north. With the installation of a District Office and District Officer Engku Besar was unable to draw wealth from the raayat as he had in the past: instead it was the District Officer who drew revenue - the source of power, `and the proof and purpose of political authority' in a Malay state.[153] With this economic basis of power undercut Engku Besar lost status and power and was provoked into a spirit of defiance against British authority in the state. In Mahmood's words:

> Like his predecessors, Engku Besar, as a territorial chief, and the aristocrats who surrounded him, enjoyed the allegiance of the people in and around Jeram. He drew his income mainly from taxes levied on the produce of and goods traded in the area. Right from the beginning, the district had been a source of personal revenue and benefit to a territorial chief, just as the state had been similarly regarded by the ruling class as a whole. This concept was not one easily surrendered. It was looked upon as a right hallowed by tradition, and any change which denied the chief this right would certainly provoke defiance.([154])

But the reaction of the Kelantanese ruling group against the British intrusion may have had wider expression in 1915. Allen speculates that the rising may have resulted from `an anti-British move, to replace the Ruler by one of his uncles'.([155]) Allen further suggests that it may have been that `the Ruler himself was, by 1915, heartily tired of British rule and prepared to join his relatives in a revolt against it if such a revolt looked like succeeding'.([156]) We can perhaps read in this the possibility that the rising was in part an expression of elite resistance to British moves to undercut their traditional status and power by robbing them of their ability to draw wealth from their subjects and by other means. Such resistance may, as

---

[152] Ibid.

[153] The phrasing used by Sutherland.

Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite", pp. 37, 38.

[154] Mahmood, "To' Janggut Rebellion", p. 67.

[155] Allen, "Kelantan Rising", p. 251.

[156] Ibid.

Allen suggests, have taken an opportunistic turn, with one section of the upper elite seeking to oust another British-backed section of the elite with a view, presumably, of establishing its supremacy within the new British dominated status quo. Still, the evidence forwarded by Allen is slender, and his conclusions speculative, and we must reserve judgement on the subject.

What is not clear from the secondary sources on the subject is the extent to which the grievances of the raayat were given religious expression in Kelantan in 1915. Neither Allen nor Mahmood in their accounts of the rising make it clear how the raayat grievances in Kelantan at the time were given verbal expression. Neither Allen on the basis of Colonial Office records, nor Mahmood on the basis of Malay materials are able to take us very far into the minds of the Kelantanese raayat in 1915. Mahmood describes an oration by To' Janggut on the day of the shooting of Che' Wan delivered to a crowd of people `mostly armed with parang and kris' but is not able to enlighten us on the content of the oration.([157]) It may well be that To' Janggut's address was couched in terms of an Islamic appeal to raayat grievances but in the absence of any further information on the subject we can only speculate that it was.

Still, it is clear from Mahmood and Allen that the rising had some religious overtones. To' Janggut rested his authority and prestige as the main leader of the rising on a belief amongst his followers that he possessed certain supernatural qualities. Mahmood reports that:

> according to one source, T' Janggut possessed all the features of a brave and intelligent man. He was well-built and about six feet tall. He had sharp brown eyes which, it is believed, are a sign of bravery. His head was rather big and bald, and his forehead broad, with thick eyebrows; all these are supposed to signify intelligence, thoughtfulness and firmness. He is said to have been invulnerable and to have boasted that he was so.([158])

Mahmood does not elaborate on the nature and origin of this perception but it is clear from his account that it had an Islamic aspect. That is to say, to some extent To' Janggut's leadership, at least as it was perceived by his followers, was cut in an Islamic mould.

---

[157] Mahmood, "To' Janggut Rebellion", pp. 73,74.

[158] Ibid., p. 65.

He had made the pilgrimage to Mecca.([159]) Other evidence in the sources suggests, though does not in itself confirm, the role of Islam as a vehicle for the expression of raayat grievances in Kelantan in 1915. Allen speculates that the driving force behind the 1915 rising may have been a religious leadership: `[T]he real initiators of the movement may all the same have been the hajis and the imams - especially those in Pasir Puteh but, also some elsewhere in the state - some of whom actually led the attack on May 23rd, 1915'.([160])

Allen further suggests a link between the religious leadership of the Trengganu rising in 1928 and the possibility of a religious leadership of the Kelantan rising of 1915. It will be recalled that Pasir Puteh had, prior to the British presence in Kelantan, an independent local leadership. Allen suggests that a strong share of that local leadership may have been exercised by local religious functionaries - the imams and the hajis - a fact which may point to a connection between the Kelantan and Trengganu risings. Speaking of the Kelantan rising, Allen says:

> Then if it is true that the rising was really led by penghulus and hajis of East Kelantan, there are possible connections between it and...the Trengganu Rising (also blamed on tax-reforms and also associated with a local haji who claimed invulnerability).([161])

It seems, then, from the rather limited information in the sources that Islam played some part in the manifestation of raayat grievances in the Pasir Puteh district of Kelantan, though it would appear that it was less important, or less obviously important, in providing a framework for the expression of local grievances than was the case in Trengganu in that states uprising some thirteen years later. However, more thorough research on the subject is needed. It may well be that such a closer scrutiny would reveal a nascent Islamic appeal to raayat hardship in 1915 of the kind being given stronger party political expression in the years

---

[159] Ibid.

[160] Allen, "Kelantan Rising", p. 254.

[161] Ibid., p. 255.

Allen also suggests here that the two NMS uprisings may have been connected in this way to the Pahang rising twenty five years prior to the Kelantan rising in 1915.

following Independence in the NMS as a whole.([162])

The Trengganu Rising 1928

Early in 1928 upriver Malays gathered at Kuala Brang on the Trengganu river `to raise the Bendera Stambul, the red flag of war, and to march on Kuala Trengganu'.([163]) The crowd occupied the police station in Kuala Brang and then, led by To' Janggut, advanced down river towards Kuala Trengganu.([164]) On 21 May the crowd, which was aggressive in its mood, encountered a police relief party from the capital which opened fire. Eleven rebels were killed, including To' Janggut.

There can be no doubt that some religious motivation was involved in the uprising. According to Sutherland, the crowd led by To'Janggut were chanting prayers and many of them believed themselves invulnerable.([165]) However, whereas it was convenient for British colonial observers to focus upon misguided religion as they perceived it as a major cause of the revolt, it was religion giving expression to the local Malay desire to remedy objective hardship created by colonial rule, specifically colonial land policy, that leant the demonstration its fire.([166])

Sutherland points out that the `1928 "disturbance" was the culmination of tension which had accumulated over six or seven years'.([167]) Thus the peasantry sought relief from the permit system which had been introduced in 1921. Under the 1921 land regulation peasants in

---

[162] For the emergence of radical Islam as a party political phenomenon see chapter 8 below.

[163] Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite", p. 79.
This outline of the basic events of the rising is based on Sutherland's account, pp. 78, 79.

[164] The namesake only of the leader of the 1915 Kelantan Rising.

[165] Ibid., p.79.

[166] For an example of the British colonial interpretation of religion as a motivating factor for the raayat in the Trengganu rising see my discussion of Bryson's account of peasant reaction to cash taxes below.

[167] Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite" p.79.

Ulu Trengganu were required to take out a permit for the temporary occupation of land. This hit the poverty stricken producers in Ulu Trengganu particularly hard since they depended upon the clearing of forest land to plant hill rice for their subsistence and the permit system operated to curb this activity.([168]) The building of tension between outside colonial authority and the ulu population in the years following 1921 had focussed upon a boycott of the permit system by the upriver Malays in Trengganu.([169]) The permit system had remained in force however, and the 1926 Land Enactment had further added to the burden of the Ulu producers. Sutherland lists these:

> [T]hey had to buy permits for clearing land; they could no loner freely gather firewood, leaves to wrap sweetmeats, or palm for thatching; their buffalo could not graze at will; and they could not grow rice where they chose.([170])

The Land Enactment added considerably, then, to the tension which had been building in the Ulu area, a tension which was increasingly being given a religious expression. Sutherland reports that in early 1928 the Ulu peasants were refusing to take out permits and that there were rumours of an impending Holy War.([171])

Talib, in his chapter on the Trengganu rising, strongly emphasizes the longer term build up of tension in Trengganu between direct producers and an agrarian elite in the state in the early decades of the twentieth century as a cause of the rising.([172]) Talib, drawing upon Gullick's social categorization of Malay society in his Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya as a basis, sees Trengganu society as being divided firstly into two broad groupings: a ruling class and a subject class.[173] The Trengganu ruling class, he says, was in turn divided into four main groups: Kerabat Diraja(`royalty'); Kerabat Am(`aristocracy');

---

[168] Ibid., p.73.

[169] Ibid.

[170] Ibid., p.78.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Talib, Image, Chapter 6. "The 1928 Peasant Revolt". pp. 134-175.

[173] Ibid., p. 10.

Ulama(religious scholars);and Orang Keistimewaan(`court favourites').[174] Talib sees the revolt as having an essentially anti-ruling class character being a reaction by the Trengganu peasantry to the economic hardships being suffered by them at the hands of the Trengganu indigenous elite and the British.([175]) Thus it was their resentment at being subjected to the cap kernia system - at being deprived of ancestral land, of being obliged to pay tithes to the new landlords who acquired land under the system, at being denied access to land where they lived outside the cap areas - that fired a basic resentment in the Ulu(up river) peasantry - a resentment which was fanned by the additional restrictions on land use introduced by colonial officials.([176]) In arguing his case in this way -by emphasizing the anti-indigenous ruling class

---

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid., pp. 134-142, 163.

Talib states the theme much more boldly in his thesis than in the book. In the thesis he says this, in rebuttal of the view of `some writers' that the rising was `essentially a movement of resistance to British rule conducted under aristocratic leadership': `The anti-British element was present, certainly, but it was not mobilized by aristocratic leadership. On the contrary the real essence of the revolt lay in its anti-aristocratic character'.

Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p. 464.

In the book Talib casts it in much more general terms. In so doing he places much more emphasis on the role of the peasantry and much less on that of the Ulama leadership than was the case in the thesis. He summarizes the revolt in these terms:

`It[the peasant revolt] was, from the actors'[the peasants'] point of view, a rural-based social movement that involved "socially shared activities and beliefs directed towards the demand for change in some aspect of the social order"'...
From the view of peasant history the revolt turned the spotlight on the peasantry as historical actors. Their dramatic but brief appearance on the centre stage was a manifestation of deeper social tensions as the agrarian society became increasingly absorbed into the colonial economy. They wanted mengadap(to have an audience with the ruler) their ruler, as tradition permitted, to redress the imbalances. Increasing population, commercialization, state centralization, social differentiation, and finally a natural disaster bought peasant dissatisfaction to the surface. The internal anatomy of the conflict reflected the ideology, leadership, and organization of a peasant society responding to crisis situations.'

Talib, Image, p. 134, 163.

Talib's use of the term `aristocratic' is problematic and this is no doubt the reason why he has adopted alternative words and phrasing in the book. Alternatives such as `ruling class', `indigenous ruling class', `anti-ruling class' and so on. See my discussion of this below in the text of this chapter.

[176] Talib, Image, pp. 137- 140. See my chapter 5 above for a fuller account of the operation of the cap kernia system in Trengganu.

character of the rising - Talib aims at refuting the view of `several scholars in recent years', that the rebellion was `yet another in the tradition of anti-British revolts' differing only in that it was led by religious leaders rather than members of the ruling class.([177]) Whereas Talib strongly emphasizes the longer term resentment of the Trengganu peasantry of hardship suffered at the hands of the aristocracy with the British reforms as a strong aggravating factor in their suffering Sutherland focusses much more on the anti-British reaction of the rebellious peasantry.([178])

Talib sees the grievances of the Trengganu up-country peasantry against the state's colonial administration as more broadly based than Sutherland. According to Talib the expansion of the Advisory system of government in Trengganu in the couple of decades following 1919 introduced `new rules, regulations, offices and officials into the countryside'.([179]) As a consequence of this the peasantry `resented having to make lengthy trips to government centres to register births and deaths or to obtain licenses for marriages and divorces which cost $2.00 and $1.00 respectively'.([180]) Talib points out that the peasantry

---

[177] Ibid., pp. 134, 163.

It is clear from Talib's doctoral study that he counted Sutherland among these scholars.

In his thesis Robert, as he was then known, is reacting to a paper by Sutherland dated 1976 (Sutherland, H.A. "Between Conflict and Accommodation : History, Colonialism, Politics and Southeast Asia", Lecture given in the Faculty of Letters of the Free University of Amsterdam, 22 October 1976, pp.13-16). In 1978 Sutherland published two pieces on the rising. One was an article prepared as a revised version of the paper and presented under the same title (Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs, vol.12 1978, pp.1-25). The other was the "Trengganu Elite" article referred to above. In the two articles Sutherland emphasizes the anti-British reaction of the peasantry. In the "Trengganu Elite" article Sutherland acknowledges the recent submission of Robert's thesis (p.32) but states that she had been unable to consult it. She had apparently seen Robert's thesis by the time she came to revise her paper and refers to it on pages 8 and 12 of the article though without acknowledging Robert's criticism.

[178] Though she does acknowledge that the Kuala Trengganu elite was alienated from the inland peasants because the former had accommodated themselves to the British on religious and other matters and the peasants felt that `the government [and the Kuala Trengganu elite] had abandoned [the Islamic] religion.'

Sutherland, "Conflict and Accommodation", p.13.

[179] Talib, Image, pp. 138-139.

[180] Ibid., p. 139.

`were also subjected to a variety of passes required, under the penalty of fines, for forest felling, collection of different kinds of jungle produce, planting of different types of crops, slaughtering of animals and the carrying of the weapons needed for personal protection against wild animals.([181]) Referring to these restrictions in his thesis Talib points out that the peasants were left with `a sense of disastrous uncertainty' since they interfered with `their critical requirements ... for stability and security of food supplies.'([182]) The peasants were also discouraged from their traditional cultivation of huma by regulations prohibiting forest felling in the hope that they would switch to wet padi.([183]) This was, however, an unrealistic expectation: it meant that huma cultivators not only had to `face the uncertainty of adopting an entirely new technique of padi cultivation' they also `competed for the little land left in the interior suitable for wet padi.'([184]) The peasantry lacked the confidence to change their method of cultivation since their margin of food supply was too low to sustain any losses on such a gamble.([185]) The collection of forest produce was, according to Talib, an activity critical to the peasantry for the raising of additional income but this activity was curtailed by the introduction of forest passes in 1921.([186]) While the maximum that a peasant earned from forest produce was fifty cents a day he had to pay a dollar a month for the pass.([187]) Talib also

---

[181] Ibid.

[182] Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p.471.

[183] Talib, Image, p. 140.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", pp.471,472.

[186] Talib, Image, p.140.

[187] Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p. 472.

Talib(Robert) points out there was a dramatic drop in government earnings from the export of forest produce in the year following the introduction of the forest passes and as a result the government introduced a system of free forest passes. The peasants apparently fared little better under this free pass system: they were required to register themselves and appear to continue making only limited use of the forests since timber export remained below the 1921

points to the issue of land titles for all occupied land and the introduction of survey fees and annual rent.([188]) These were unfamiliar practices to the peasantry and beyond their economic means.([189])

While the new regulations were in themselves a source of hardship to the peasantry the way in which they were administered by local officials added to their suffering. These officials were usually outsiders to the local community, and were unsympathetic in their treatment of the peasantry executing the regulations with little moderation and understanding.([190]) They exploited the peasantry through corrupt practices - it was necessary to give bribes in order to obtain good jungle land for padi cultivation or to overcome delays in their application - and they were tardy in processing applications for the passes thus causing the peasants added expense that they could ill afford.([191]) Talib points out that it was not only the cost of the pass but the cost of travelling to the office where the pass was obtained that taxed the economic resources of the peasantry. It cost the peasant $2.00 in travel to obtain a 20c pass.[192]

Clearly, then, while Talib sees the principle anger of the peasantry as being directed at a local rural Malay elite these peasants in his view clearly had strong grievances against the

---

level.

[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid.

In his thesis Robert(Talib) cites Bryson amongst others for his statement that the `peasantry were in no economic position to meet these demands,' though in a different piece of writing by Bryson than that cited by me above.

Ibid., p.472. Robert cites; encl 1 H.P. Bryson to S.U.K., 28 May 1928 in S.U.K. 1397/1346.

See also Talib, Image, p. 140.

[190] Ibid.

Robert(Talib) explains that these officials were usually appointed from Kuala Lumpur.

Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p. 473.

[191] Talib, Image, pp. 140, 141.

[192] Ibid., p. 141.

new colonial administration as well. In his thesis Talib sums up peasant grievances against the colonial administration in these terms:

> The peasantry saw these front line officers as corrupt, rude and unduly harsh and as representing the whim of the distant State Council. They saw the whole taxation system as an endeavour to fleece them to make the 'Raja' (ie the ruling class rich as they had little to benefit in return from the government.([193])

Noor Bee Binte Kassim, in a thesis on the rising, also gives a very good idea of the hardship caused to the up country Trengganu peasantry by the permit restriction and land taxation measures introduced into the state by the British administration.([194]) Kassim points to the passing, at the end of 1921, of a regulation aimed at controlling the indiscriminate clearing of forest for the temporary cultivation of food crops. Two conditions were imposed by the regulation: a Land Office Permit with an annual payment of fifty cents an acre was required for future clearing; and no forest of more than seven years growth could be felled.([195]) Kassim explains that the regulation `was a kind of land tax as the principle of huma cultivation meant that the piece of land cleared for cultivation was abandoned after a season or two'.([196]) Furthermore the regulation `restricted the kind of land available for ladang cultivation as virgin jungle, which was mosr [more?] productive' could no longer be cleared.([197]) The British, Kassim points out, misunderstood the rationale behind this kind of cultivation in that they considered it as wasteful and as a practice leading to deforestation. The Malays on the other hand took the view that it `was a method adopted to the tropical soils easily exhaustible

---

[193] Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p. 474.

[194] Noor Be binte Kassim, "The Trengganu Rebellion 1928", Academic exercise, BA Honours, University of Singapore, 1972, p.1, 2, 30-32.

[195] Ibid., p.30.

[196] Ibid.

[197] Ibid.

It will be remembered from Chapter 2 above that ladang cultivation was a form of shifting agriculture in which forest land was cleared and crops planted. After one or two harvests, the clearings were abandoned and cultivators moved to a fresh patch of forest for clearing and planting once again.

fertility'.([198])

Another source of discontent for the up country Trengganu peasantry in the 1920's, according to Kassim, was the permit required for extracting timber for the jungle - a requirement implemented by the government in an effort to conserve the forests.([199]) The hardship to the peasants from this permit requirement stemmed from the fact that they relied on the forest to provide them with firewood and building materials for building and thatching their houses. Kassim indicates that the regulation `was too rigidly implemented by the Malay land officials' and, as a result, there `were complaints that they [ie the Malay land officials] .. refused to let the peasants collect firewood without taking out a permit'.([200])

On top of all this the payment of land rent was a focus of discontent amongst the peasants in Trengganu in a way which had a direct bearing on the timing of the rebellion. Kassim explains that in 1927 land settlement had occurred in Kuala Brang and that the land rent on the alienated land was due in March. This, Kassim states, `explained the timing of the rebellion for when the rent collectors went to collect the rent which was due the peasants refused to pay' at the instigation of their leaders.([201]) Not only did they refuse to pay the rent

---

[198] Ibid., p.30.

Kassim adds that the `method need not lead to deforestation if the land abandoned was sufficiently fallowed for a period of fifteen years.'

Ibid., p.31.

He does not say, however, whether the Malay cultivators were in fact observing this fifteen year interval.

[199] Ibid., p.31.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Ibid., p.31.

According to Kassim `Haji Abdul Rahman told them not to pay the rent' and that `the peasants' had `said that the land belonged to Haji Abdul Rahman or to Syed Alsagoff' and that `therefore they need not pay the rent'.

Ibid.

See below for a reference to the role of Haji Rahman in the rising. I have been unable to find an explanatory reference to Syed Algasoff.

but they `returned the land titles which they had taken out earlier'.([202])

The imposition of the permit and land rent systems then `aroused the feelings of the people' in the years leading up to 1928. This was all the more so because the permit and land taxation measures exacerbated economic hardships being experienced in the district from other causes. A depression in their rural economy in 1922 and `the 1926 Great Flood' had both `further impoverished the people'.([203]) At the time of the flood a local penghulu alleged that the Government had not sent relief measures to assist in the recovery from the damage caused.([204]) Referring to the land tax and permit measures Kassim says, `the reforms were an extra burden to the people because they were very poor'.([205]) We clearly have, then, from the secondary sources, a much clearer idea of the grievances of the peasantry in the Trengganu rising than we do of those of their counterparts in Kelantan in 1915. It is clear from these sources that the Trengganu peasantry felt themselves aggrieved at their treatment at the hands not only of the Trengganu aristocracy but also colonial officialdom as well, though the secondary sources place differing emphases on these two aspects. In large measure we can see how, as was the case in Kelantan, the peasantry in Trengganu were being subjected to longer term colonial pressures as well as those which were more directly and immediately impinging on them in their productive sphere. Thus while we can see from Talib that the Ulu peasantry were being exploited by the aristocracy under the cap kernia system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century their suffering was brought to a head, and spilled over into rebelliousness, as a result of a series of specific measures, particularly those affecting land use, implemented by the colonial regime in the years leading up to 1928. While Talib sees a conflict between his interpretation of the reasons for the 1928 peasant response and that of Sutherland it is more accurate to characterize this as a difference in emphasis on the long

---

[202] Ibid. p.32.

[203] Ibid., p.32.

[204] Ibid.

[205] Ibid.

and short term causes of the rising rather than a head on clash in interpretation.

As was the case with the Kelantan Rising the Kuala Brang rising was also symptomatic of elite disaffection with colonial rule. Sutherland indicates that in the Ulu district it was the local elite which was cut adrift from its traditional wealth and power by the colonial administration which led the Ulu peasantry in revolt in retaliation.([206]) As we have seen the Ulu leadership had in the time before the transfer of power exercised considerable independence from central control.([207]) This independence had continued well into the early period of the transfer and it was when the new administration began its stronger drive to control the Ulu area, and in particular the revenues there in the ways described above, that a stronger local elite resentment against the colonial regime was invoked.([208]) Elsewhere in the state the local population and revenue they could provide, was more accessible. and the new administration had succeeded in drawing the local elites into the colonial administrative structure and, by affording them some sort of recognized official status and influence in this way, had mitigated the effect of the power transfer in engendering local elite disaffection.([209]) This was not the case in the remote Ulu Trengganu area where the local leadership remained on the periphery of the colonial apparatus.([210]) According to Sutherland it was the al-Idrus family who held sway over the settlements on the upper reaches of the Trengganu river until well into the early colonial period, a fact which, to their cost, the British failed to recognize when they made their determined push to extend a stronger colonial administrative control into the area.([211]) The Al-Idrus was an Islamic family which exercised temporal, as well as

---

[206] Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite", pp.69-80.

[207] See chapter 3 above.

[208] Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite", pp.69-73.

[209] Ibid., pp.70-73.

[210] Ibid., pp.71-73.

[211] Ibid., pp.71,72.

religious, authority in the region.([212]) It was the al-Idrus who, when they experienced the stronger British moves to control the area from the early 1920s led, in conjunction with other local religious leaders closely associated with the family, the peasant resistance to British rule which culminated in the 1928 rising.([213]) As with the Kelantan rising there is some suggestion that a wider section of the elite may have backed the revolt but, in view of the lack of evidence to support such an assertion, this does not seem likely.([214]) Sutherland does not discuss at length any possible link between the rising and the disaffection felt by the Trengganu elite in general towards the British. But, given the tension that existed at that time between the two it would seem that any strong challenge to British rule might have been backed by that elite if it had looked like toppling British rule. The likelihood of such a turn of events would seem to have been even more remote in Trengganu at this time than in Kelantan during the comparable situation which existed in that state in 1915. The Trengganu elite had, in 1928, been heavily compromised in their position between the raayat and the British, and it does not seem likely that they would have thrown in their hand with local elite and raayat rebels unless success was certain. A reading of Sutherland indicates that the most that can be said is that `certain notables appear to have hoped the protest would result in their advantage, but they were too impressed by British power, too comforted by colonial security and preference, and too unsure of their hold on their old followings, to respond openly to

---

[212] Bearing in mind that, as Sutherland points out, the `distinction between "secular" and "religious" was foreign to Islam, and the boundaries of competence were never clear cut in a traditional Malay state.'

Ibid., p.72.

[213] Ibid., pp.72-80.

[214] According to Sutherland 'suggestions that the former sultan [ex-Sultan Mohamed] had morally or financially backed the revolt had no hard evidence to support them, though it was noted that Haji Drahman had been a friend of Mohamed's, and some participants claimed to have been given arms by the ex-sultan's men.'

Ibid., p.79.

invitations for revolt.([215])

Talib casts his interpretation of local elite resistance to British rule in Trengganu in somewhat different terms from Sutherland. Like Sutherland, Talib addresses the role of local religious figures in leading the peasantry in revolt.([216]) According to Talib, prior to the transfer of power in the state local imams, Hajis, and other local religious functionaries were in a particularly strong position because the office of the penghulu - an office which had in the past complimented and rivalled them - had been allowed to decay during the reign of Sultan Zainal Abidin III.([217]) The position of these local religious leaders was threatened however when the colonial regime appointed penghulus to the district. This revival of penghulus challenged the power and influence of the religious leaders by usurping functions hitherto exercised by them at the village level and by shifting the centre of gravity of political power in the village away from a traditional Ulama religious base in the direction of secular colonial power based in the capital.([218]) But there were more tangible grievances as well. The local religious leaders were mainly local property owners and they shared the resentment of peasant proprietors at the exaction of land rents and survey fees by the government.([219]) Discontent with the ruling class over the new colonial circumstances meant that there was a more generalized leadership and inspiration for the revolt. Talib points out that the Ulama - the religious scholars within the state - were disgruntled because they did not share in advantages afforded other sections of the ruling class with the coming of colonial influences to Trengganu.([220]) The Ulama had not, because they had religious reservations, availed themselves of commercial advantages that became available in the late nineteenth century.

---

[215] Ibid., p.82.

[216] Talib, Image, pp. 146-148.

[217] Ibid., p. 145.

[218] Ibid.

Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p. 475.

[219] Talib, Image, p. 145.

[220] Ibid., pp. 146, 147.

Specifically, they had not taken up mining concessions and had not sought, or been given caps, under the cap kernia system.[221] Furthermore, they had not been given any official role, religious or temporal, in the new colonial administration and therefore felt themselves in a greatly disadvantaged position excluded from private and official sources of wealth, power and prestige in these ways, and their resentment over this in 1928 was strong.([222]) It was this resentment which led them to enter into, and to provide, according to Talib, a broader, less localized leadership of the rebellion in 1928.([223])

Talib singles out two Ulama individuals who played a prominent role in the rising as charismatic figures. One was Sayyid Sagap, who came from a well established Ulama family, and who `had a large and devoted following in Trengganu'.([224]) The other was Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong (Haji Drahman) who, while not belonging to any of the traditional Ulama families, had built his own reputation `for sanctity, religious scholarship and teaching' and who was reported by contemporary British officials to be, in Talib's words, `a Ghandi type leader, capable of rallying thousands of Malays who would stand ready blindly to follow his bidding'.([225])

While both Talib and Sutherland agree on the personal identity of the main leaders of the rising they characterize the wider affiliation and institutional identity of these leaders differently. Sutherland gives the main leaders of the rising - Syed Saggof bin Syed Abdul Rahman al-Idrus and Haji Drahman Limbong (Haji Abdul Rahman bin Abdul Hamid) - a

---

[221] Ibid.

[222] Talib highlights the fact that it was the inability of the British to absorb the Ulama into the colonial structure that fed their hostility to the new regime.

Ibid.

See also Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", pp. 478, 479.

[223] Ibid., pp.477-479.

Talib, Image, pp. 146,147.

[224] Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", pp.479, 480.

Talib, Image, p. 147.

[225] Ibid.

familial identity: Syed Saggof was a member of the al-Idrus family and Haji Drahman, while not a member of that family, was closely associated with it.([226]) Talib, on the other hand, more strongly stresses the religious identity and authority of these two figures, pointing to the fact that Sayyid Sagap was a member of a traditional Ulama family and implying that Haji Drahman had established a defacto status as one of the Ulama.([227])

Talib, then, stresses the religious grievances of the Ulama in leading the revolt. The Ulama objected to the commercial advantages of the Trengganu aristocracy based in Kuala Trengganu, the fact that this aristocracy had an official status within the new British colonial administration, and that they had aligned themselves with infidels (ie the British) and had thus, by association, and by modifying their own religious practices, lowered their standing in the eyes of Islam.[228] Talib gives strong emphasis to the religious motives of the Ulama and their ability to lead the peasantry in what was, he writes, to a large extent a religious rising against those not adhering to what was seen as true Islam.([229]) This, Talib says, was the

---

[226] Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite", pp. 73, 77.

[227] Talib, Image, p. 147.

Talib and Sutherland adopt different name spellings in their texts. There is no doubt however that Talib's Sayyid Sagap and Sutherland's Syed Saggaf are the same person. Talib points out that `Sayyid Sagap was the son of Tukku Sayyid Paluh' while according to Sutherland `Syed Saggaf was a son of To' 'Ku Paloh'.

Ibid.

Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite", p.77.

Sutherland does acknowledge religious prestige as a factor associated with the authority of the al-Idrus family.

Ibid., p.72.

[228] Talib, Image, pp. 143,144,146,147.

[229] Talib outlines the way in which aristocratic Malay governmental functionaries were perceived by the rebels as having lost their Islamic moral authority.

Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", pp.482-484.

Talib, Image, pp. 143,144.

See below in this chapter a fuller discussion of Talib's views on the role of Islam in the rising.

It is interesting to read in this connection something of the wider context for this kind of Islamic social dynamic in a colonial context in Muzaffar's study of resurgent Islam in the Malaysian context. Focussing on a world stage, not just Malaysia, Muzaffar draws attention to

motivation for the Ulama leading a revolt of peasants which was anti-indigenous elite first and only secondarily anti British.[230]

Sutherland, on the other hand, places less emphasis on the intra communal, anti Malay elite aspect of the revolt. Certainly she acknowledges that `the gulf between those with power - members of the elite and their followers - and those without, the common people or raayat' was an `overriding fact in Trengganu society' and that `this distinction between ruler and ruled was usually the deciding factor in any confrontation' prior to the commencement of British suzerainty in the state.([231]) But she indicates, more strongly than Talib, that the coming of the British administrator saw a new kind of social conflict emerging and new and different lines of social confrontation being drawn in Trengganu society. The broad thrust of her "Trengganu Elite" article, as we have seen in chapter 5 above, is that there was considerable tension between the British and the upper echelons of Malay society as the former sought to bend the later to its will. In the 1920s the British had reached an accommodation with some of the Malay elite families. The al-Idrus elite family lay outside this accommodation as we have seen and conflict between them and the British and their Malay elite followers resulted in part as a consequence of this. Thus, what Sutherland stresses, and what Talib draws out less strongly in his argument, is that there was an intra-elite conflict of interest which added an important dimension to social tension with the state. To Sutherland, the rising was less a rebellion of the Malay ruled against their traditional rulers as a first line of resistance to authority and more a reaction of the peasantry, and one section of

---

`a new elite ' which, after `the colonial epoch...emerged in Muslim and other colonized societies'. This elite, he writes, `dominated the administration, the economy, the education system and public life in general'. In stark contrast to them, he says, was `the conservative Ulama', a group `solidly entrenched in traditional religious thought'.

In this passage Muzaffar's main point is the inability of Islam to adequately respond to the changing colonial circumstance. A suitably adapted Islam between these two extremes was, he says, restricted in its capacity for popular appeal by the `hostile opposition of the Ulama' on the one hand and `the political suppression by the ruling elites' on the other.

Chandra Muzaffar, Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia, (Malaysia, 1987), p. 76.

[230] Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p. 464.

[231] Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite", p.40.

the Malay elite, leading a rising against both the British and another compromised section of the ruling class by then closely associated with the British administration. Talib, anxious to reject the notion that the rising was led by the ruling class against the British as was the case in other revolts on the peninsular, emphasizes the intra communal economic and especially religious divisions within the Malay community. In so doing he places less weight than Sutherland on the secular, anti-British, grievances of the rebellious peasantry and the section of the elite which led them and gives less recognition to the differential effects of colonial influences on the ruling class in Trengganu. Talib, perhaps because he wants to portray the rising as a popular one in the classic mould of traditional peasant uprisings in which the peasantry were pitted a against an indigenous ruling class, stresses indigenous ruling elite privilege as the main focus of peasant and Ulama anger with the British as secondary target for these groups.([232])

Certainly Talib does strongly see the rising as the playing out of tension within a society characterized by a `two fold agrarian class structure' that had `emerged during the first three decades of the twentieth century'.[233] He characterizes that class structure and the tension within it in these terms:

There existed a rural upper class consisting of bureaucrats and absentee cap kernia

---

[232] Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p. 464.

Talib draws attention to the fact that, on the eve of the rising, `the Commissioner of Lands and Mines, G.A.C. de Moubray, grimly warned the aristocrats that economic conditions in the Trengganu river were similar to those of France and Russia before their respective upheavals.'

Talib, Image, p. 138.

Talib also points out that the `movement had millenarian as well as messianic expectations - features which were common in peasant movements in Southeast Asia'.

Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p.484.

Talib, Image, pp. 143,144.

Sutherland, too, sees the rising as in many ways cut in the classic mould of peasant disorder but without focussing narrowly on the aristocracy as the enemy of the peasantry in he way that Robert does. Commenting on the situation in Trengganu immediately prior to the rising she writes:`The classic causes of peasant disorder were all there: poverty and sharp economic blows, alienation from government, religious unrest, and charismatic leaders who gave voice to popular grievances'.

Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite", p.78.

[233] Talib, Image, p. 141.

> landlords(both drawn largely from the traditional ruling class) and a rural lower class comprising peasants, tenant cultivators, landless peasants, and to a lesser extent wage labourers. The most serious implication of this major transformation was the lack of reciprocal relationships between the two social strata. The expectations of the bottom class were not met by the top class who were perceived by the former as corrupt, rude, harsh, exploitative, and as representing the whim of distant state council.[234]

While Talib does identify, in the Eurocentric terminology he employs, the Ulama as a commoner element - one of three main groups - within the ruling class early in his book, he none the less writes in his chapter on the rising as though a core within the indigenous Malay elite, and excluding the Ulama, were in a very much more dominant social position than any other group.[235] It seems to be this group he has in mind when he uses the term `ruling class' in the later chapter. This leaves the impression that this core elite was, effectively, the ruling class. The implication in the chapter devoted to the rising is that the Ulama were outside the ruling class. The use of the generic term `ruling class' then sits uncomfortably in the chapter in that it seems too narrow and inconsistent in its conception given his conceptualization of this group in his earlier chapter.

The origins of this confusion in terminology can be seen in the thesis. There, in the chapter on the revolt, he uses the term `aristocracy' and its derivatives to identify the oppressors of the peasantry. By implication it is clear that in the thesis by `ruling class' he means `aristocracy'. This is at variance with his chapter 1 where `aristocracy' denotes one of four main groups making up the ruling class. The impression in the thesis, then, is not so much of an intra elite conflict resulting in leadership for the rebellious raayat group, but more of a two dimensional division between rulers and ruled, between an agrarian privileged elite and the rest - the peasantry and their religious mentors, the Ulama. In the unpublished work Talib appears to be stretching his terminology to accord with a pre-conceived conception of the rising as essentially anti-indigenous Malay ruling class in its character. It is as if, in his

---

[234] Ibid.

[235] Talib, Image, pp. 10,13, 134-175(Chapter 6).

Talib argues by analogy from Gullick's description of the social hierarchy in the West Coast Malay States that the `commoner group' in Trengganu was divided into two groups, one of which was the Ulama.

Ibid., p. 10.

thesis, he lapses into narrowing his conception of `ruling class' to a core of aristocracy in order to maintain his position that the rising was first and foremost an intra-communal dispute, with oppressed commoners rising against a privileged, compromised, dominating aristocratic few who, for the most part made up the ruling class.

Thus, notwithstanding the fact that early in his thesis Talib has placed the aristocracy as one of four main groups making up the ruling class, he appears in the context of his thesis chapter dealing with the rising, to use the terms `aristocracy' and `ruling class' interchangeably as though they mean the same thing. For example, in summarizing the aims and effects of the rising in the earlier work he states:

> `The peasants in the six year period of social unrest aimed to redress an unequal relationship with the ruling class, which, as they perceived it, had turned unjustly exploitative, by overthrowing the government. The revolt failed in its challenge to the aristocracy's privileges'.([236])

In the book he does seem to have sought to rescue himself from the difficulty by dropping the term `aristocracy' in the chapter dealing with the rising using the term `ruling class' or similar more general terms instead. But while this marginally lessens the confusion in social categorization it doesn't help much because it is clear by implication that for him `ruling class' still has the narrower social focus of the thesis whether he uses the term `aristocracy' or not. Perhaps this is because in the book he still regards the aristocratic group he had in mind in his thesis as the dominant group within the ruling class and the main oppressors of the raayat - so much so, apparently, that without saying so explicitly he regards them as effectively being the ruling class.[237] Since he doesn't differentiate the differing elements of the ruling class in this book chapter very clearly we can't be sure which elements

[236] Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", p.518.

[237] Though Talib remains mindful in the book of the secondary importance in terms of social hierarchy of the Kerabat Diraja - the royalty - within the ruling class. He points out, for example, that it was this group that especially benefited when, under the reign of Zainal Abidin 111, the office of district chief was taken out of the hands of local leaders and given to members of the ruling class and particularly those of royal lineage.

Talib, Image, p. 23.

Talib's tone is derisive when he describes the Kerabat Am - the aristocracy:`Each aristocratic lineage was keenly aware of its descent in its relation to other families of the same class. They all aspired to move up the status ladder.'

Ibid., pp. 12, 13.

of the ruling class he has in mind as the targets for peasant hostility and resistance in the nineteen twenties.

What seems to have happened in the book and the thesis is that, having given a four part break down of the ruling class early in both works he has employed a looser terminology in the later study: `aristocracy' in the thesis; `ruling class' in the book. A reading of the preceding chapters in both works suggests, however, that in using both terms he has in mind both the Kerabat Am - the aristocracy - and the kerabat Diraja - the royalty - in the later chapter rather than the full four elements outlined early in both works. In short, it looks as though he has in mind the Kerabat class, as he calls the two together, when he refers to `aristocracy' in the thesis and `ruling class' in the book.[238] Certainly it is clear, in both the thesis and the book, in the chapters leading up to the one dealing with the revolt, that the two kerabat elements of the ruling class were the main participants in, and beneficiaries of, the exploitative practices that were the focus of peasant(and Ulama) anger and opposition. This would suggest that it was this royal and aristocratic hereditary elite that he has in mind when he refers to the ruling class in this chapter of the book. Without saying so directly it seems that by `ruling class' he is referring to the two most privileged elements of the wider dominant group. Of these two elements it was the Kerabat Diraja that most benefited from the exploitative activity.[239] The Kerabat Am benefited from this activity too but less so.[240] They did, he says in his early book chapter on the indigenous ruling class, form `the bulk of that class'.[241] They were, he says in the same early chapter, a self seeking and privileged group sharply distinct from the raayat.[242] It is clear from his detailed account of the main social changes in the decades leading up to the revolt why this hereditary elite made up of these two

---

238 See for example his use of the phrase `Kerebat class' in his book chapter on the indigenous ruling class.

Ibid., p. 13.

239 Ibid., pp. 51,104,220,221.

240 Ibid.

241 Ibid., p. 12.

242 Ibid., pp. 12,13.

groups would have been a particular focus for peasant(and Ulama) anger and protest. And so he has, not withstanding his earlier finding in the book that the Ulama were `a distinct element in the Trengganu ruling class', nonetheless seem to have drawn the conclusion that, for the purpose of defining the main point of demarcation between the disputants in 1928, they were with the peasant rebels and not, by implication, of the ruling class.[243] The fourth element - the Orang Keistimewa - seems to have been on the bottom rung of privilege and of lesser consequence in the upper social structure.

This blurring of terminology and the inconsistency that stems from it tends to distort our perception of the social hierarchy in that it leaves the impression that the ruling class - those with wealth and power beyond that of the mass of the population - was narrower than it really was. It is clear from Talib's description of the ruling class in his book Chapter 2 and Sutherland's description of the al-Idrus, that the Ulama families enjoyed considerable wealth, power and prestige in a way which clearly separated them from the raayat and went beyond mere hierarchical formality. They did, according to Talib, `enjoy great authority in the eyes of both the subject and the ruling classes'.[244] They `patronized the Kerabat class and were in turn patronized by them'.[245] `Some of them', Talib writes, `were associated with state institutions, holding office as such'.[246] Early in the book Talib seems to assert their position `as a separate element in the ruling class':

> That they did have collective power was seen in their influence on the succession of sultans. Their role in the political system was not merely confined to religious teaching nor for that matter were they mere chaplains to a devout sultan. They were ministers, state councillors, and district chiefs of sultans. They participated in the Trengganu body politic and at times played a major role in some aspects of British-Trengganu relations. The rulers and other members of the ruling class were known to have sought their support and were prepared in return to encourage religious education.[247]

It was, of course, the diminution of these advantages that was their main bone of contention with the coming of the British. And their loss of privilege, while significant, was not total.

---

[243] Ibid., pp. 13, 26, 134-175.

[244] Ibid., p. 13.

[245] Ibid.

[246] Ibid.

[247] Ibid., p. 26.

Notwithstanding the fact that their privileges were diminishing with the intrusion of colonial forces into Trengganu society they were nonetheless still there. They were, then, elite in the full sense, and with the onset of colonial influences they became disaffected elite. That is how they are best characterized. They were an alienated section of the ruling class, not, as Talib seems to imply in his later chapters, unequivocally of and for the subject class. Their interests were not in broad terms those of the raayat. They were merely able to cooperate with them at the point where the two class interests coincided. They undoubtedly served their separate interest by leading the peasantry against the British and favoured sections of the elite and we must question the extent to which their motives were primarily religious and untainted by material, secular considerations.

Part of Talib's difficulty may stem from the fact that he sees the Ulama as coming to occupy a genuinely socially ambiguous position somewhere between the ruling class and the raayat - that as a group they to some degree straddled the boundary between the two social categories in the nineteen twenties. But he does not argue this. To be credible any such argument would need to be presented directly in a clear and definite way.

Implicit, then, in the two accounts is a different perception of where the main lines of social cleavage were drawn in the Trengganu society of the time: primarily between the common people - the Ulama and the peasantry - and the ruling class(ie the aristocracy) in the case of Talib; and more strongly between the peasantry and a disaffected elite family on the one hand, and the British on the other, in the case of Sutherland. Since the personal identities of those involved are the same in both accounts the difference lies in he way in which the social position of the disputants is conceptualized by the two authors.

Still, in their differing emphases Sutherland and Talib usefully complement each other in their accounts of the rising and a reading of the two together does much to enhance our understanding of the rising in its wider aspects. While Sutherland is able to place the rising, and especially the elite involvement in it, within the wider context of the British drive to subdue the elite in the interests of effective British colonial administration, Talib gives us a thorough idea of the way in which earlier colonial influences affected the peasantry, the Ulama and the aristocratic elite. We can, on the basis of Talib(and with some further

definitional tightening in describing the lines of social conflict in Trengganu in 1928) move towards a better understanding of how a longer term tension between the aristocratic elite, and the peasantry and the Ulama, was a strong causal factor in motivating the revolt in 1928. In particular Talib assists us in our understanding by pointing out the way in which the peasantry were exploited under the cap kemia system as a longer term cause of peasant discontent and as a strong contributing factor to the peasant involvement in the rising. Despite some looseness in terminology in his later chapters his book(and unpublished thesis) remains a most valuable contribution to our understanding of the way this peasant rebellion was a response to material and religious grievances. We can see from both Talib and Sutherland (and Kassim) how the rising was, in its immediate focus in 1928, a reaction to British land reforms. A reading of the two indicates a need to further investigate the causes of the rising to clarify the question of what weighting is to be given to the agreed causes of the rising since Sutherland and Talib differ in this respect. If Sutherland's perspective is correct then Talib has, in his approach to the topic, given less than due recognition to the fact that fortunes under the British were not uniform within the Trengganu ruling class and that it was a disaffected section of this elite which led a disgruntled peasantry against the British and their Malay elite followers.

It is interesting to note in the light of the subsequent appeal of a radical and unorthodox Islam in the Northern Malay States later in this century that the rebels in Trengganu in 1928 espoused unorthodox Islam and perceived their grievances in terms of this religious ideology.

We have a much clearer idea of the role that Islamic religion played in the Trengganu rising from the secondary sources than we do for the Kelantan rebellion. Both Sutherland and Talib acknowledge the importance of the religion as a motivating factor though on a differing perspective in line with their respective approaches to the wider topic of the rising. Both historians acknowledge that Islam - unorthodox or unofficial Islam - shaped the raayat and elite perception of their secular grievances at the intrusion of colonial forces. According to Sutherland, `Islam was the focus and framework' for the anger of the Ulu people as `administrative pressures increased and British influence on the central establishment became more obvious'.([248]) Talib, referring to the leadership of Sayyid Sagap and Haji

[248] Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite", p.77.

UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE LIBRARY

Drahman writes:

> These two leaders gave expression to he grassroots movement which challenged the validity of the government to rule. From the beginning the response of the peasantry to the external pressures on the economy was expressed primarily in religious terms, as might have been expected in a society where religion contains the fundamental values which give meaning to life.([249])

Talib, however, sees these grievances as operating more strongly on an ideological level than does Sutherland, focussing more on Ulama and peasant discontent at what was seen as tainted religious practice and demeanor, than on Islam as the provider of a conceptual framework for secular anti-British and anti-elite sentiments. Thus Talib portrays the rising as having had a strong jihad (holy war) aspect to it with Sayyid Sagap and Haji Drahaman as leaders of a messianic and millenarian movement that looked forward to the coming of the Madhi or Saviour that would `restore tradition and true faith' and which aimed at the restoration of `a social order which was held to have been upset'.([250]) Thus, in this way Talib returns to his point that the rising was traditional in its nature portraying it as one in which religion provided a messianic and millenarian motivation `common in peasant movements in Southeast Asia'.([251]) Thus, for Talib the moral imperative was stronger than secular grievance on its own in the minds of the rebels:

> In the early stages of the struggle, the conflict in society was thus quickly redrawn on a moral basis between the people and the government. The two groups were divided between those who believed and followed the Hukum Syariah and the kafirs (unbelievers), irrespective of whether, they were Muslims or otherwise.([252])

Talib points to the role of Islam in the rising to underscore his rejection of the view he

---

[249] Robert, "Malay Ruling class", p.482.

Talib, Image, pp. 143,148.

[250] Ibid., pp. 143,144.

Robert, "Malay Ruling Class", pp. 482-485, 493.

Robert describes the personal religious qualities of the two leaders.

[251] Ibid., p.484.

Talib, Image, p. 145.

[252] Ibid., p.143.

attributes to Sutherland and others that the rising was essentially aristocratic-led and anti-British in its drive and motivation:

> The struggle was not merely an anti-British confrontation but was broadly directed against all those who had not followed the Hukum Syariah. In this way the supporters and followers of the movement were given religious and moral justification for the righteousness of their cause while the opponents were perceived as kafir [ie unbelievers] and Orang Neraka (people of hell).([253])

Sutherland acknowledges that the Ulu rebels were in part motivated by a belief that the state's leadership was not truly Islamic but places more emphasis on the secular basis of their religious protest than Talib. According to Sutherland the `main aim' of the rising was `to alleviate the pressures on the Ulu peasantry and to restore Trengganu by removing the kafir advisers and, possibly, the Sultan himself.'([254]) She points out that at the time of the rising letters were found one of which suggested `the replacement of kafir government in the state by the tripartite rule of Raja (ex-Sultan Mohamed), Syed (Syed Saggaf), and Fakih(Islamic legal experts; Haji Drahman)'.([255]) It was, according to Sutherland, `to non-official Islam and the al-Idrus that the raayat looked when, despairing of their ruler's ability to fend off colonial demands, they rose in protest.'([256])

Sutherland suggests that a secret Islamic movement - the Sahrikat-ul-Islam - played a key role in the rising.([257]) She sketches in the shadowy background to, and nature of, this involvement. The membership of the movement was extensive on the peninsular being located `along the coast in Pahang from Beserah to Kemamah,' and, according to `a list [which] was later found of Sharikat members dating from 1925', in villages along the length of the Trengganu river.([258]) The British `tended to assume it had connections with the

---

[253] Ibid.

[254] Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite", p.79.

[255] Ibid.

[256] Ibid., p.83.

[257] Ibid., p 83.

[258] Ibid., pp.76, 77.

Indonesian Sarekat Islam.'([259]) `Letters were found' instructing members of the Sharikat to gather at Kuala Brang for the rising. According to Sutherland it is `the first indication of some more or less politically oriented organization in Trengganu which seems to have had an anti-establishment as well as an anti-British cast.([260]) Still, none of this gives us a very clear picture of the nature of the Sharikat and the way in which it operated. Given that Sutherland concedes that `we know very little about its activities' we must approach her `key role' suggestion with some reservation.([261]) This is all the more so in the light of the fact that Talib takes a different view from Sutherland, seeing the Sharikat's influence in the rising as `minimal.'([262])

It is clear, then, from both Talib and Sutherland that Islam operated on two levels to motivate the Ulu people to rebel: as a vehicle for the expression of popular secular grievances; and as an ideological reaction against the infidel. It was not solely the latter, as a colonial official called Bryson thought, as we shall see below in this chapter. It was a combination of the two at once. While both Talib and Sutherland give a different emphasis to each level there is no doubting the importance of secular economic grievances as the basis for an Islamic outburst in both accounts.

There is ample evidence in the sources to indicate that economic grievances were given a religious expression. For Haji Drahman instructed the Ulu peasantry that the British land reforms were against `Islamic law and led them in their refusal to take out permits', clearly illustrating the way in which strict Islam was made to apply to land questions in the mind of the rebels.([263]) Talib, too, indicates that when the peasants in the Telemong river area

---

[259] Ibid., p.77

[260] Ibid., p.79.

[261] Ibid., p.77.

[262] Robert(Talib), "Malay Ruling class", p.479.

[263] Kassim, "The Trengganu Rebellion 1928", p.32.
See also Robert, "Malay Ruling class", p.485.

refused to take out permits, it was Haji Drahman who defended them in court on the basis of Islamic law.([264])

It is clear with the benefit of scholarly hindsight that on-the-spot British colonial officials had a limited, self interested, perception of the effect their new administration was having on the peasantry and local leadership in Trengganu. For example A.J. Sturrock, the British Adviser in Trengganu wrote dismissively of the rebels and their leadership:

> The leader behind the movement... was a fanatic named Haji Abdul Rahman. He is at present in Mecca. The raayat were ignorant of the reason for their quarrel with Government and accepted blindly the counsel of their leaders.([265])

The main cause of raayat rebelliousness was, Sturrock implies, the fact that they were insufficiently imbued with the British protestant work ethnic and as a consequence were poor and discontented. Immediate steps were taken to remedy this situation:

> They were, however, poor, lazy and even underfed, and as the speediest means of relief, work was found for them on the construction of a road from Kuala Brang to Kuala Trengganu... This relief work has been successful both in its primary object, and it is hoped, in instilling the working habit into a people naturally inclined to indolence.([266])

None the less, despite the perspective, we can read in such primary source materials valuable clues to the way in which colonial forces had been creating hardship for the rebellious Ulu population in Trengganu.

The account of one contemporary British observer, for example, H.P. Bryson, who was in charge of the state's Land Office at the time of the rising, is particularly instructive since it clearly indicates the way in which the demand to pay cash land rent to the colonial state caused hardship for the Trengganu peasantry in the early decades of Advisory government, and how the imposition of this land tax intensified the tension existing between direct producers and colonial administrators. Outlining the difficulties encountered by his office in implementing the new land rent system Bryson wrote:

---

[264] Ibid. p.486.

See also Sutherland, "Trengganu Elite", p74.

[265] Trengganu Annual Report 1927/1928, 1928/1929, pp.12, 13

[266] Ibid., p.13.

> Trengganu peasantry were poor (as well as in other forms of property), but thus were accustomed to paying rent of [on?] land in the form of a portion of the crop to someone who claimed rights over the area. A load of coconuts, or several gantang of rice, were worth much more than the 50¢ an acre we were demanding, but crop was one thing, hard cash was another. The hard cash idea came from the infidels, and that was enough.
>
> Opposition gradually built up. Rent collection in most areas (in Kuala Trengganu district at least) seldom topped 25-30% [of the full] potential. Stories were floating around about peasantry preparing for active opposition.([267])

In reading Bryson's account it is important to be wary of the pro-British colonial bias evident in his interpretation. This bias had led Bryson into inconsistency in his understanding of the peasant grievance. Certainly the value of the cash tax may have been less than the value of the tax in kind. But the point is, as Bryson states without comprehending its significance, the raayat did not have the cash to pay the tax.

Bryson's observation clearly illustrates one way in which the colonial state was forcing the raayat further into commodity production for cash, itself a source of discontent for the NMS Malay peasantry in a broader sense at this time as we have seen in Chapter 5 above. Still, we can not extrapolate too widely from Bryson's statement. The most immediate hardship indicated, but not fully comprehended by Bryson, was the obvious. The peasantry in Trengganu, as elsewhere in the north, were as we have seen, coming to rely on a cash surplus to satisfy their needs. They were, in 1928, in the earliest stages of this transition and were, as Bryson says, `poor in cash.' Cash handed over to the state meant less cash for themselves and the land rent was therefore resented.

Certainly Islamic mistrust of the British may have been important on an ideological level in the way that Bryson states but we must discount it as the sole cause of peasant resistance to the rent. Applying both Sutherland and Talib(Robert) to Bryson's remarks we can see that it was the more concrete economic hardship caused by the rent (and the land permit restrictions) that lay at the heart of their reaction rather than Islamic mistrust of the infidel per se. Thus the Ulu mistrust of the infidel intensified their dislike of the British as tax collectors and as the issuers of permits. At the same time a broader Islamic ideology served to shape the perception of the up river economic grievances including the hardship caused by the

---

[267] Bryson, "Trengganu `Rising' in 1928", p.2.

land rent. What Bryson contributes to our understanding of the rising, albeit unwittingly, is the precise way in which the imposition of a cash land rent created hardship for the Ulu peasantry and we must read between the lines of his Eurocentric interpretation of peasant circumstances at this time to see this vital point.

Bryson recounts the resistance he encountered in collecting the rent in these terms:

> ...I was having a little trouble in collecting rents in one or two of my areas. People claimed their land was pledged (sandar) to a man called Syed Sagop (?=Alsafoff), a rather shifty type but because of his Arab blood given the greatest respect in Trengganu (All Syeds in Trengganu were treated by the peasantry almost as if they were of royal blood).([268])

We can see in this further evidence that the distinction between the al-Idrus family - the Ulama families - and the aristocracy was not, at least in the mind of the peasantry, as sharp as Talib(Robert) assumes, and that in the perception of these peasants, the conflict was not clearly and exclusively between the common people - the raayat - on the one hand, and the elite on the other, but significantly involved other dimensions of conflict, including intra-elite conflict, as well. Bryson clearly asserts, what Talib seems to deny in the course of his argument, that the syeds were seen as bung elite, as members of the ruling class, at least in terms of the esteem in which they were held by the peasantry.

In the sum then we can see how the Trengganu Rising illustrates the way in which colonial forces were re-shaping Trengganu society and how the new social tensions invoked by this were reaching a traumatic intensity in the nineteen twenties. Especially important, in the light of the later appeal of unorthodox Islam of a different kind, is the fact that, within a context of social tensions arising from the transition to a stronger and consciously directed colonial economy in the early decades of this century, unofficial Islam was able to address the grievances of sections of the Trengganu population and to motivate them into a strong resistance to prevailing colonial authority.

Northern Malay Resistance to British Advisory Government.

While we have thus far examined two specific instances of Malay resistance to the formal British colonial presence and to wider colonial influences in Kelantan and Trengganu the question remains, to what extent did the two risings reflect a wider mood of like social tension in the northern peninsular states in the pre-World War II colonial period? It now remains to

---

[268] Ibid., p.3.

look at the broader picture of elite and raayat resistance in the north since this was a critical factor, as we shall see, influencing the colonial history of the NMS area as a whole.

Since, as we have seen, the British were dependent upon the moral authority of the NMS Malay elite to legitimize the utilization of raayat resources in support of the colonial state it was considered by the British necessary and desirable that they accommodate its members within the new administrative apparatus of state.([269]) Thus the British had sought, as we have seen, to perform a balancing act within the colonial administrations with some positions being held by the British, and some by Malays, but with overriding control of the state remaining in the hands of the British - a control which was very much limited by the wishes of the leading Malays within each state. Thus this balance of power did not rest easily with either party in the northern states and there was considerable tension as elite Malays and British officials contested control of the machinery of states.

The tussle for power within the colonial administrative apparatus is amply illustrated by Sutherland's account of the division of power between British and Malay officials within the Trengganu administration at the outset of British rule in the state:

> The adviser's immediate aim was to create an effective central administration. This meant the appointment of British officers to key departments, but since the abrupt displacement of Malay officials was unacceptable a rather uneasy period of dual control began. Four departments - public works, police, lands and post office - were regarded as particularly important by Humphreys, as their efficient functioning was pre-requisite for economic development and increased revenue. The council and Sultan attempted as best they could to stem the tide, stressing that Europeans should serve "as long as it is considered desirable or until a suitable native officer can be appointed to the post.([270])

The old idea of personal revenue, personal wealth, and personal power died hard in Trengganu. Sutherland cites the example of Sultan Mohamed who, in response to the Adviser's action in slashing his salary, declared that `he would shoot anyone who prevented his entering the Treasury [and] set off with his gun toward that building.' `On hearing of the sultan's response', Sutherland continued, `Humphreys [the Adviser], unarmed and half-dressed, hurried to the Treasury and physically blocked the door. Eventually, during what was

---

[269] See chapter 5 above.

[270] Ibid., p.68.

reported to be an extremely heated argument, Mohamed stated that he would not accept the constraints laid upon him by the new treaty: either he was to be given special liberty and higher status than other Malay rulers or he would take the unprecedented step of abdication. After considerable confusion, he was replaced by his younger brother, Suleiman, who was installed in 1920 with very subdued ceremonial.'([271]) While the incident was not without a touch of comic opera it does none the less illustrate the intensity of feeling that could be generated over competition between British colonial officials and Malay rulers for control of revenue. This display of intense anti-British feeling by Sultan Mohamed of Trengganu was indicative of the determined and sometimes fierce resistance of the determined and sometimes fierce resistance of the Malay elite to any further incursions on their independence, wealth and political power throughout the five decades of colonial advisory government and illustrates the strength of feeling behind the independent stance adopted by the NMS Malay elite a stance which was to prove such a thorn in the side of the British when they sought, in 1946, to impose a Malayan colonial administrative unity on the peninsular.

Clearly, the British had not, as we have seen in Chapter 5 above, in the decades following the transfer, set out deliberately to destroy the social and political position of the NMS Malay elite nor in any sense to dismantle the structures of NMS Malay society generally. They did not sweep the Malay ruling elite aside and sought to maintain village society in a form they believed to be traditional. Rather, they sought to relocate the NMS elite Malay population within a new colonial administrative hierarchy. In general terms they sought to maintain the status quo of northern Malay society because they believed it was in their interests to do so. But in so doing they none the less sought to make that society submissive to the objectives and structures of their colonial state and so they inevitably, albeit unwittingly, further altered it fundamentally by additionally changing the economic basis on which it operated. At the heart of this process were their moves to draw productive wealth, principally in the form of taxation revenue, from a mainly rural population increasingly producing for a cash return. Thus it was on the raayat and in particular the peasantry as the most populous element at the productive base that the colonial state, like the Sultanates before it, relied for support. These changes, initiated with the transfer of suzerainty in 1909, greatly

---

[271] Ibid., p.65.

exacerbated class tensions between the raayat and the Malay ruling class. It also introduced new social tensions: between the raayat and the British; between the traditional Malay elite and British colonial administrator; within the traditional Malay elite, between those sections favoured by the British and those not; and, later in the formal colonial period as we shall see, between old and new Malay elites - between Malays with traditional status and power and those socially upwardly mobile Malays from the lower class who came, as the formal structures of the colonial state developed, to make up a new, emergent administrative elite with its roots in the lower echelons of Malay society.

The principal manifestation of these tensions in north Malaya was the Kelantan rising in 1915 and the Trengganu rising in 1928. Whether these two risings are indicative of a wider pattern of resistance beyond the particular localities of unrest in the two states is not clear. Allen argues that sufficient evidence exists to suggest this may have been the case and that the common assumption amongst historians of Malaya that the raayat remained quiescent and relatively unresponsive to British rule needs re-examination.([272]) However, even if it is not possible to draw solid circumstantial historical links between the two main uprisings in the NMS, the shared experience of economic change, and the commonality of the immediate economic cause of Malay opposition to colonial rule in the two localities and in the NMS as a whole, strongly suggest that the Kelantan and Trengganu risings had the same essential long term causes - the changing colonial methods of surplus extraction - and that essentially similar latent tensions existed in common from one locality to another across all four states.([273])

---

[272] Ibid., passim.

It should be noted that the scope of Allen's thinking along these lines extended beyond north Malaya. In particular, he suggested a possible link between the two NMS uprisings and the Pahang rebellion of the 1890s. To sustain this wider theory Allen indicated that it was necessary to prove that `at least some of the outbreaks in Malaya were more serious than [had] been recognized'. The main thrust, then, of Allen's article is the suggestion that the Kelantan rising was more serious than historians and contemporary observers had allowed at the time of Allen's writing.

Ibid., p.24.

[273] Presumably these latent tensions manifested themselves in the Pasir Mas and Ulu Kelantan incidents though Allen gives no details. See my reference to these incidents in this chapter above.

The northwest seems to have been relatively free of Malay unrest throughout the 1909-1942 period. Allen accounts for this state of affairs in Kedah in terms of the greater efficiency of the administration in that state:

> Only in Kedah and, to a lesser extent Johore, did the traditional regimes manage to survive the pressures to which they were subjected during this decade and emerge in more or less full control of their states after 1919. Kedah, in particular, did so by having such an efficient administration that peasant grievances did not arise.([274])

However we need to be wary of any assumption that, because in Kedah and Perlis there is no record of raayat grievances manifesting themselves in any dramatically overt way that those grievances did not exist. We know that, because class tensions had a later manifestation in the Independence period - tensions whose causes have their origins in the period dating from the earliest penetration of colonial trade in the north western countryside - that class tensions, however latent, must have existed in the formal colonial period in that area. Greater efficiency of administration may have meant that colonial authorities in Kedah were able to outmaneuvre the raayat more effectively. And certainly greater efficiency would have lessened the hardship felt by the peasantry as their productive labour was being increasingly harnessed in the support of the state. However, the delayed emergence of overt class tensions in the north west is likely to have had more to do with the stronger penetration of colonial trade in the north west in the colonial period than in any greater effectiveness of the state administrations to minister to raayat needs. Though it is difficult to pin down with any degree of social scientific certainty, it seems likely that, since the Kedah and Perlis raayat experienced a stronger and earlier penetration of colonial trade, they experienced less difficulty in coping with the exactions of the colonial state, premised as those exactions were increasingly coming to be, on a significant degree of commoditization and monetization of the raayat economy. Put simply, it is likely that the Kedah and Perlis raayat had more cash than those in Trengganu and Kelantan and so experienced less hardship in meeting the demand for land and other taxes levied in the earlier decades of formal colonial rule.

---

[274] Ibid., p.255.

CHAPTER 7

NORTHERN MALAY STATE RESISTANCE TO THE MALAYAN UNION PROPOSAL

In 1946, with their reoccupation of Malaya, the British decided to push for the unification of the peninsular into one centrally organized and tightly administered state to replace the administrative trichotomy of Federated and Unfederated Malay States(FMS and UMS), and the Straits Settlements(SS) that had, it had long been felt by the British, become unwieldy and inefficient in its operation.([1]) It was a move which invoked an intense reaction on the peninsular and which saw very strong opposition from a Malay community which saw its interests threatened by the move.

Thus far the only major published study of the Malayan Union is the monograph written by James Allen entitled, The Malayan Union.([2]) While this excellent preliminary survey by Allen gives us a very good general idea of the conflict it was written before the bulk of the official British colonial source materials became available. It is therefore necessary to correct certain of Allen's assertions, and helpful to more strongly affirm others put forward somewhat tentatively by him in the absence of the stronger documentary evidence to back him up, in our consideration of the unique position of the NMS in the resistance to the Union proposals.([3])

---

[1] Though it should be noted that, while both the SS and the FMS had distinct identities, both administratively and otherwise, the two were in practice under the one administration headed by the Governor General of the Straits Settlements who usually doubled as the High Commissioner for the FMS.

[2] J. de. V. Allen, The Malayan Union, Monograph Series No. 10., Southeast Asian Studies(Yale University, 1967).

[3] Allen comments in his 1968 monograph on the proposal that the official correspondence between the Colonial Office and its officials in Malaya and Singapore was not due for release until 1975-1976. Consequently his study was based on `interviews, confidential papers [and] private papers.' In Allen's view, this material was enough for him to `piece together the story, not without gaps - perhaps not even with total accuracy - but with sufficient completeness to indicate which way the truth lies.' He saw his history as being `at worst a useful starting point for future historians, at best a reasonably faithful reconstruction of what occurred'.

In the sources generally the conflict is seen as a land mark in the history of colonial Malaya - one which saw the arousal of a hitherto quiescent Malay community and the beginning of a Malay nationalism which was to lead eventually to Independence in 1957. The perception is that the contentious Union issue gave rise to Malay nationalism where none existed before and that the organisational manifestation of this nationalism giving it shape, purpose and direction was the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), the Malay political party which arose out of the Malay resistance to union and which has remained the dominant force in peninsular politics, as we shall see, in the chapter below.

It is the unprecedented strength and extent of Malay resistance to Union which has led observers to see resistance to Malayan Union as the focus for the strong and sudden emergence of a Malay Nationalist movement inspired by a strong nationalist sentiment felt from the top to the bottom of the Malay community. Allen characterized the events surrounding the constitutional change in Malaya in 1945 and 1946 as a remarkable event in these terms:

> When all that is said, it is still remarkable that in 1945-46 a nationalist movement should have materialized so suddenly where there had been none to speak of before, poised to defend Rulers ..., remarkable, too, that this movement almost entirely led as it was by Malay civil servants and state officials, should apparently have commanded almost one hundred per cent support among the Malay masses.([4])

Allen appears, however, to have changed his perspective on this where he

---

Allen, Malayan Union, pp.v, vi.

Kessler indicates that, in 1975, the study of the Malayan Union was being held up by restrictions on archival material.

Kessler, "Muslim Identity", p.273n.

Sopiee, in his chapter on the Malayan Union in his 1976 published volume cites Allen's monograph with the recommendation that he `has presented the lengthiest and most sophisticated analysis of the Malayan Union thus far.'

M.N. Sopiee, From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation(Kuala Lumpur, 1974), p.16.

Funston, in his book published in 1980, cites no major published volume on the Malayan Union other than Allen.

N.J.Funston, Malay Politics in Malaysia A Study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam(Kuala Lumpur, 1980), pp.75-79.

[4] Allen, Malayan Union, p.66.

touches upon the Malayan Union issue in his later study - the one where he focusses on the Kelantan Rising. What he has missed in his monograph on the Union issue, and picked up in his article on the rising, is that the `sudden emergence' interpretation of the origins of Malay nationalism does not sufficiently account for earlier Malay resistance to British rule on the peninsular, and it is his later study which points the way to a better understanding of the origins of Malay opposition to the scheme. Thus, in his article, Allen acknowledges that English-language historians `have accepted Malay agitation against the Malayan Union scheme in 1945-6 ... as the origin of the Malay nationalist movement' and suggests an examination of the relationship between Malay resistance to Union and the pre-war outbreaks of Malay resistance to British rule as a fruitful line of enquiry for understanding the nature and causes of the Malay anti-Union protest.([5])

It is, perhaps, surprising that, given Allen's interest in pre-war Malay unrest on the peninsular as expressed in his "Kelantan Rising" article, that he didn't adopt a broader approach to the Malayan Union question in his monograph on the subject. His article post dated the monograph by only a year and in it he had clearly given some thought to pre-war resistance on the part of Malay rulers and the Malay establishment to the British encroachment on the peninsular embodied in the Clementi Scheme.([6]) Still, be that as it may,

---

[5] Allen, "Kelantan Rising", p.244, 255-257.

[6] Allen, Malayan Union, p.6.

See my discussion below in this chapter of the Clementi Scheme as a means to draw the UMS into the federation. One reason for the inconsistency, apart from the strengthening of Allen's interest in pre-war Malay unrest after he had written the monograph, was Allen's focus on grass roots Malay protest as the major (and, by the British, largely unrecognized) deterrent to the spread of British rule on the peninsular. Clearly Allen thinks of early Malay nationalism very much in populist terms, and believing as he does that the Malay masses were politicized by 1946, and that they were strongly instrumental in defeating Union, it was only when he came to scrutinize peasant resistance to British rule in his article that he saw a possible link between the emergent Malay nationalism of 1946 and the 1915 elite and peasant resentment at British rule. What Allen seems to be saying is that there was an inchoate nationalist sentiment emerging on the peninsular in the pre-war decades and that this may have been evidenced in the popular risings of that time. In so arguing, he appears to down play the importance of anti-British sentiments within the Malay elite as evidence of a nascent Malay nationalism - a nationalism which I argue was much more an elite than a raayat phenomenon, certainly in the pre-war decades, and which can only clearly be seen as touching the Malay masses to any

the point to stress here is that it is a reading of Allen's monograph and article together which allows us the better historical understanding of the Union conflict.

In the main, then, the interpretations of the conflict tend to be myopic in their historical perspective. It is a myopia characterized not only by the shortness of its time span, but also by a certain narrowness of perception in failing to place the reaction to the proposals against a wider background of social change on the peninsular in the colonial period. These sources fail, too, to give due weight to differing local responses to the innovation. It is for these reasons that we remain short of a fully credible explanation for the response, especially the Malay response to the proposal.(7)

---

significant degree in the post Union period.

Allen, "Kelantan Rising", passim and especially pp 256,257.

[7] Allen points out that while `most English language historians' have accepted `Malay agitation against the Malayan Union scheme in 1945-6 ... as the origin of the Malay nationalist movement, Roff, in his The Origins of Malay Nationalism, `traces it back a good deal further than 1945'. However Roff, Allen also points out, `does not set out to trace any possible important links between it and the Perak or Sunjei Ujong Wars, or the Pahang, Kalantan or Trengganu Risings'.

Ibid.

More recently still, John Funston, in a book on Malaysian politics, admits that the `reason for such diverse Malay groupings joining together [in opposition to Malayan Union] are perhaps not immediately apparent.'

Funston, Malay Politics, p.77.

Funston outlines reasons for the opposition previously stressed in the sources: the Malay fear of economic and cultural inferiority as a result of the citizenship provisions in the proposals; and their resentment at the loss of power of the Sultans and the manner (`thinly veiled' and `coercive') in which the British went about stripping this power.

Ibid.

In attempting to go beyond these reasons towards a more cogent explanation Funston attributes to the Malays a strong and general reaction on a level of abstraction which seems much less convincing as a significant additional cause of their response than the more concrete fears and hardship at the time of the proposal, not yet given emphasis in the sources, and put forward by me in this chapter below.

According to Funston, at the heart of the slight felt by the Malays was the non-recognition by the Union proposal that the British were `dealing with a nation (banysa) not a community, whose homeland was Tanah Melayu (Land of the Malays).'

Ibid.

See below for a discussion of the well-acknowledged causes of Malay resistance to the Union and my suggestion of an alternative approach to the topic.

It is important to stress at the outset of this discussion that the British had managed to achieve a very considerable degree of uniformity in land and other areas of administration on the peninsular well before the specific proposal for a Malayan Union in 1946. It will be clear thus far that where possible, the British sought throughout the 1909-1942 period to tie the NMS into a common approach to the economic and political development of the whole peninsular. As Emerson observed of Kedah and the peninsular states generally in 1937:

> To attempt to pretend that the substantial independence of Kedah is as great today as it was prior to 1909 or 1905 is to ignore the very considerable degree of Malayan Union which has been imposed on all the states by gradual stages.([8])

By 1945, however, when the British were poised ready to strengthen and formalize a Malayan unity, the four northern states had emerged, after a long and contentious period of gestation, as distinctive entities in a way which militated against the kind of Malayan state union proposed in 1946. The characteristics of the modern colonial NMS now stood in sharper definition as quite different from those which had existed in pre-colonial times and stood in stark relief against many of the distinctive characteristics of the states to the south. While the British had been able to achieve a degree of creeping uniformity of administration on the peninsular, that process had proved difficult, and had perhaps reached its natural limit by 1946 because the degree of north-south economic social and political uniformity which would have made for ease of further unification, in the way sought, was lacking. It was, in particular, the NMS elites that resisted being drawn into a unified state - a state which was designed more to

---

The more recent work by Mohamed Noordin Sopiee dealing with the wider issue of political unification in Malaya and Malaysia is likewise unable to fully explain the strength of the Malay opposition to the Union proposals in 1946.

Sopiee, From Malayan Union, passim.

Sopiee relies heavily on Allen's monograph on the Malayan Union and perhaps because Allen does not develop on the approach to the topic he advocated in his article on the Kelantan Rising, Sopiee accepts the view that the proposals saw an unprecedented Malay resistance to colonial authority. Accordingly Sopiee writes that, in response to the proposals, `the Malays at long last awoke from their deep slumber and burst forth in a frenzy of political activity.'

Ibid. pp.16, 21n, 24.

[8] Emerson, Malaysia, pp.237, 238.

accommodate the character and the needs of the more developed and, in terms of the Malayan export economy, more economically productive, states to the south. By 1942 the NMS Malay elites, as we have seen, still retained a strong measure of influence and control within their states. Having arrived at such an accommodation with British colonialism they were, in 1946, reluctant to concede to any further erosion of their acquired position of wealth, power and influence within the colonial state. While the studies thus far don't strongly address regional variation in the response to the Malayan Union, the differing character of the northern states must have proved a major obstacle to a tighter unification of the peninsular, and an essential cause of much of the resistance to the proposals. The Federated Malay States were the centre of gravity for the proposed unification.([9]) These states had been the hub of the colonial state for the nearly four decades of a formal British colonial presence across the peninsular as a whole, and it was a fear in the north that their interests would be subsumed by those of the larger and more solidly established states to the south that fuelled their reaction against the Union.

Whereas the British had succeeded in achieving some measure of de facto and de jure uniformity of policy on the peninsular before World War II, they had not been inclined to force a union of Unfederated and Federated Malay States before 1942. There were various reasons for this, but the fact that there was continuing Malay resistance to British rule on the peninsular, both generally and in particular of its aspects, was undoubtedly the major reason why the British were reluctant to push too forcefully for a tighter unification of the peninsular states under the British flag. While the more traumatic outbreaks of resistance were localized in their immediate aims and effect their longer term effects may have been more general in acting as a break on the spread of British colonial influence on the peninsular. As Allen suggests with the Kelantan, Trengganu and Pahang risings in mind, `Malay resistance may, after all, have played some part in preventing the spread of a purely colonial-type administration, such as associated with the FMS. all over the Peninsular.'([10]) Allen's

---

[9] Certainly the primary sources imply such a pull when indicating the longer term efforts of the British to unify the peninsular. See for example Maxwell's reference in 1920 to the futility of trying to force the Unfederated states to join the Federation quoted in the text of this thesis, immediately below.

[10] Allen, "Kelantan Rising", p.256.

suggestion is that, the British ought to have been wary of forcing a Malayan union in the pre-war decades on account of a real likelihood of popular resistance to such a move `in at least the Northern States'. They were not. The British stance was, Allen indicates, one of limited caution only. The evidence, Allen says, points rather to a wariness on the part of the British of non-violent resistance from the Unfederated Malay elite to unification of the peninsular, and an underestimation of any potential raayat resistance to such a move.([11])

In the pre-war period, then, British reluctance to push too strongly for a unified administration on the peninsular was founded, in considerable part, on the strength of Malay independence in the UMS. Not all those involved in British policy making for the peninsular thought the same way, nor did they speak with one voice on the issue, but the prevailing wisdom of officialdom up to 1942 was against any precipitate move in the direction of a formal political administrative unification of the peninsular, but favoured instead a gradual progression towards this goal.([12])

The deterrent to union represented by the independence of the Malay ruling class in the UMS can be seen in a memorandum prepared by Maxwell for the Colonial Office in 1920. In a deferential but strong criticism of the Residential system Maxwell drew a sharp distinction between the real power exercised by the sultans in the Unfederated Malay States and the nominal power of Sultan's in the Federation Malay States:

> The Residents really administer the states, and the Sultans stand by and watch them. In the Unfederated States, it is very different. There the Adviser states an opinion or makes a recommendation, and the Sultan (or his delegate) concurs or approves. The Adviser is most circumspect in avoiding all semblance of giving an executive order... In the Federated Malay States, the Resident's powers have, to a very great extent, been taken away from him and given to the heads of Federal Departments; and, even in matters solely connected with his state, he may find his orders reversed by the Federal Secretariat. Putting it bluntly, therefore, one may correctly state that the difference between the Ruler of an Unfederated State and a Ruler of one of the Federated States is that one rules his country and the other does not. It is in this light that one should view

---

[11] Ibid.

[12] Allen discusses the policy of pre-1941 British governments towards Malayan Union. While some people within, or connected to, the policy making machinery in Whitehall, or in Malaya itself, favoured unification of the peninsular, others were disinclined to take strong steps in that direction. See my discussion of the Clementi Scheme below.

Allen, Malayan Union, pp.2-8.

> Sir Arthur Young's statement (in his private letter of the 11th August to Mr. Dixon) that `it requires very strong reasons before taking the step' to force the Unfederated States to join the Federation, and certainly Johore `and Kedah will never join without compulsion'.([13])

It is easy to see, then, why the Sultans, and the wider dominant elite in the NMS and Johore were opposed to any moves which would have subordinated them to a central federal political and administrative structure.

It was largely because the NMS Malay and Johore elites were anxious to keep themselves beyond the sway of the Kuala Lumpur bureaucracy that British policy makers, reluctant to use physical force to get their way, decided on a plan of offering the Unfederated States considerable independence within a loose federation of all the states on the peninsular. Thus, from 1929 Sir Cecil Clementi, while Governor and High Commissioner, sought to operate a scheme of decentralization of the existing Federation of the four central Malayan states as a preliminary to a later emergence of a voluntary wider federation of all the peninsular states. By loosening the knot of the existing Federation in this way it was hoped that the Unfederated Malay State Sultans would be induced to join with the rest of the peninsular in the wider federation. The Clementi Scheme was, however, opposed by various groups both within and outside the British colonial policy making machinery, and by 1936 it was clear that the scheme had failed.([14]) The scheme was opposed by a group within the Colonial Office who had differing perceptions from Clementi on the path that Malayan development would and should take.([15]) Capitalist interests, too, were opposed to the

---

[13] Maxwell, "Notes", p.4.

[14] Allen discusses the opposition to, and the failure of, the Clementi Scheme on pp.2-8 of his The Malayan Union.

This group included the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Labour Colonial Secretary, Dr. Drummond Sheils, and his Assistant Permanent Under-Secretary, Ellis. Sheils believed that the Sultans were a reactionary force and Ellis specified that the future of Malaya belonged to the Chinese and the Indians. Together they held that the Colonial Office, in putting forward the Clementi Scheme, was backing the wrong horse.

This perception was echoed, too, in 1946. In that year one correspondent wrote that Malayan Union was a success for the British Labour Party and attacked the Tory mentality of the Malay elite and their disinterestness in the welfare of the Malayan masses.

Totalla to Freeman, 22 March, 1946 CO537/1548.

[15] Ibid. p.5.

Clementi concept of federation which, they felt, would bring into existence a unity too loose to allow for the required degree of efficiency in the working of the tin and rubber industries.([16]) And the Malay Sultans opposed, not decentralization which would have given more power to the Sultans in the Federated Malay States and allowed the Sultans in the Unfederated Malay States to retain much of the power they already had, but the recentralization which was to follow.([17]) It was the change over from the British Military Administration that had overseen the reoccupation of Malaya by the British at the end of the Pacific War to a civilian administration that signalled an opportunity, in the eyes of the British, to effect the Malayan union that had eluded the British in the pre-war decades of colonial rule.

It was the MacMichael treaties in the very early post Pacific War period that paved the way for the 1946 Malayan Union proposal that traumatized the Malayan colonial political scene between 1946 and 1948. In 1945 the British Government sent Sir Harold MacMichael to Malaya to lay the legal ground work for the new civilian administration by negotiating new treaties with the Malay Rulers. MacMichael negotiated treaties in all nine states on the peninsular providing that `such future constitutional arrangements for Malaya as may be approved by His Majesty' and `full power and jurisdiction' was to be transferred to Britain.([18]) The proposal for Malayan Union itself was contained in a government White Paper. This document `stated the case for a more equal treatment of the immigrant populations and proposed a more unified and centralized government in a union to include all the Malay states plus the former Settlements of Penang and Malacca.([19])

MacMichael's outline of the Malayan Union proposals indicates that the British intended to set up a Legislative Council to pass laws for the peninsular as a whole with State Councils

---

[16] Ibid. pp.5,6.

[17] Ibid. p.6.

[18] G.P Means, Malaysian Politics(London, 1970), p.52.

[19] Ibid.

legislating on matters relevant to the states. The legislative power of the State Councils was, however, to be greatly circumscribed by the British overlordship. In 1946 MacMichael reported:

> These Councils will be empowered to legislate first on all matters which, in the opinion of the Governor-in-Council, are of a local or private nature in the state or settlement, and secondly, on all subjects in respect of which power is delegated to them by law by the Legislative Council of the Malayan Union.([20])

Furthermore, each state was to have a Resident Commissioner as its principal British Officer.([21]) Each Sultan was to have the assistance of an Advisory Malay Council to advise the Ruler mainly on `matters relating to Mohammedan religion' and other matters incidental to religion.([22]) It is hardly surprising, then, that when this proposal became known in Malaya, the UMS Malay elites were alarmed at the loss of jurisdiction over their states it contained and that the Malay elite in the FMS, with the hope or expectation that the post war period would bring a restoration of a strong measure of power for them, reacted so strongly against the scheme.

This move towards Malayan Union was a precipitate action on the part of the British authorities. Consultation with the Malay Rulers and their populations was kept to a minimum and when news of the British Government's intention of proceeding with Malayan Union was released the reaction of the Malays was severe. According to Means, in response to the announcement of the proposed Malayan Union, `mass demonstrations and rallies were held throughout the country by Malays in all walks of life.'([23]) At the vanguard of this Malay opposition were Malay organizations who saw the union scheme as a strong threat to Malay interests on the peninsular. In 1946 these various organizations combined to send delegates to a congress held in Kuala Lumpur - the Pan Malayan Malay Congress - to voice opposition in

---

[20] MacMichael, "Report on a Mission to Malaya", by Sir Harold A. MacMichael, G.C.M.G., D.S.O.(October, 1945-January, 1946), (Kuala Lumpur, 1946), Appendix C in Allen, Malayan Union, p.166.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid. p.53.

the name of all peninsular Malays to the Union scheme. The conference, chaired by Dato Onn, a high ranking aristocrat who had been strongly active in the cause of Malay communalism up to the time of the conference, exercised a strong resolve to protect the interests of the Malay race.([24]) To that end the Congress agreed in principle to form the UMNO as a united front organization representing the interests of Malays on the peninsular and agreed on a memorandum of protest against Union to be sent to the British government.([25])

While this Congress was a powerful show of Malay strength and solidarity on a wider scale it did not succeed in stopping the Union in the short run. In the longer term it was however, strongly instrumental, in combination with other forms of protest to Union - protest from within the British ranks for example - in ensuring that once the Union was implemented it did not last for long.

Undeterred by this show of resistance the British pressed ahead with the implementation of the proposal. Orders-in-Council were issued which established the constitutional framework for the Union. The new constitution for Malayan Union became operative on April 1, 1946. Strong Malay resistance continued to frustrate the British aim of a swift transition from military to unitary civilian rule. A series of negotiations took place between Malay Rulers, British government officials and other interested and involved parties. Eventually the British were forced during the course of these negotiations to back away from their original proposal and, on July 3 the Colonial Office agreed to the adoption of a federal rather than the unitary state constitution originally proposed. The final constitution draft which emerged from the negotiations was ratified by the British Government on July 24, 1947 and signed by the Malay rulers in January, 1948. The Federation of Malaya came into existence in February, 1948.

---

[24] He had been active in protecting Malay rights while serving on the Johore Legislative Council and was the founder of the Peninsular Malays Movement, one of the largest of the Malay groups that combined to make up UMNO.

Funston, Malay Politics, pp.76, 110.

[25] Ibid., p.77.

In the end, then, the opponents of the new unitary state won the day and the Federation of Malaya - a looser administrative entity - was declared instead.

In particular it was the NMS Malay old and new elites who stood to lose from the Union and who led the resistance to it. By 1942 the traditional NMS Malay elites, as we have seen, had succumbed to the broad British objectives and policies on the peninsular. They had, in Sutherland's terminology, been `tamed'. They were not completely subservient to the British by any means and retained a strong measure of influence and control within their states. At the same time an emergent Malay administrative elite was securing a strong position of influence for itself within the now well developed colonial administrative structures. Having arrived at such an accommodation with British colonialism they were, in 1946, reluctant to concede any further erosion of their position of wealth, power and influence within the colonial state. It is harder to discern from the sources the motivation and role of the NMS raayat in the overall resistance to the Union proposals. However, it may be that, the rigours of war and the Japanese occupation, and the shortages and privations of the immediate post war period, meant that they were in no mood to accommodate renewed British pressure to produce rice in support of the ailing post war Malayan economy. It was perhaps because there was this pressure and perhaps because the return of the British revived a hitherto mainly latent spirit of anti British defiance of the kind manifest for a short time in the northeastern states in the earlier decades of the formal colonial presence that the raayat proved susceptible to elite appeals to resist the Union.

The NMS Malay elites had, along with others on the peninsular to the south, been developing a wider Malay, if not so much, Malayan, consciousness and the fact that on the broad basis of this sentiment they added their weight to the peninsular wide protest significantly added to the eventual defeat of the Union scheme. If the four states had retained an isolationist parochial stance in the controversy the problem to the British would have been less since they could have more readily applied a divide-and-rule strategy to get their own way. The irony is that, given that the British had the development of a national Malay, and overriding national Malayan, identity as one of their objectives it was the emergence of a common sense of Malay interest and identity across state boundaries that proved a strong obstacle to the unification of the peninsular in the way that the British wanted.

We can surmise that the NMS, with their much greater proportion of Malays, saw a

stronger emergent Malay nationalism in the post war period than in the more ethnically diverse states to the south. In this way they posed the stronger threat to the Union. Still, the relative strength of the development of a Malay national consciousness and the effect of this as a motivating force against Union is hard to gauge from the secondary sources since they do not provide us with a comprehensive and detailed coverage of local responses to the Union scheme. Any such assessment is beyond the scope of this thesis since making the judgement would require a thorough-going analysis from the secondary and primary sources of the Malay responses for all localities in Malaya.

What we can be sure of is that NMS Malays had, ironically, developed a strong sense of their position in their particular states in the decades prior to the war, and that the Union proposal prompted them to widen this awareness. It brought about the crystallization of a perception of their rightful place within the wider colonial state on the peninsular. The realignment of Malay politics and the changing basis on which power and influence was won and lost in the north produced a distinctive reaction from those states which drew its inspiration and confidence from earlier successes in resisting British intrusion and the retention of a significant measure of power and independence in Malay hands. Thus, while they made common cause with Malays from the southern states, principally through their participation in Dato Onn's Malay Congress, they did so on the basis of a very different colonial experience from their Malay counterparts to the south. Unlike the states in the Federation the Unfederated States sought to maintain as much of their pre-war independence from Kuala Lumpur as possible - an independence for which they had long fought, to which they had become accustomed, and which must have leant a particular emphasis to their resistance to the new scheme. The independence of the Unfederated Malay States must have served as an inspiration for the Malays in the Federation who fought to re-gain lost independence and power rather than the retention of a status quo. The Unfederated States clearly had a strong motive for joining in a united national Malay protest and their support for the resistance was decisive in the defeat of the scheme. If the Unfederated States had acted independently of one another the British could have out manoeuvred each state separately on a series of localized contests. As we shall see below, this was something the British sought to

do, but without success. By then a Malay national consciousness that leant itself to Malays making common cause across state borders on the issue was too strong. As a result of the colonial experience on the peninsular to that point in time, there had been, even in the north with its shorter exposure to direct British influence, a crystallization of ethnic national consciousness of the kind the British found difficult to control.

In all this it was not so much the stance of the traditional Malay rulers and the Malay masses that accounts for the strength of the Malay nationalist opposition to the scheme, though this was an important factor. It was more the sense of Malayness within the ranks of the colonial administrative elite - a sense of ethnic identity strengthened by a desire to protect their economic and social position within the administrative hierarchy from intrusion into the ranks by other races - that was the mainspring of Malay opposition to the scheme. It was the strength of this new elite which, in particular, meant that the four states were no longer functioning as mere appendages to the FMS - no longer a containable back water of the British Malayan colonial state - but were now in a position to assert a combined strength with the Malay administrative elite in the other states on the peninsular to present a formidable opposition to British plans for a reconstructed Malaya after the war.([26])

The fact that there was a new Malay nationalist feeling focussed on opposition to the union and embracing for the first time the northern peninsular states was clearly understood at least by some within the Colonial Office in 1946. In that year a Colonial Office labour official noted that the peninsular Malays appeared to be united as never before in `opposition to the method of imposition of the new policy and on certain details of the White Paper' and `very opposed to the principles of the union of the Malay peninsular'.([27]) The same official, in the same report, commented on the fact that for `the first time Kedah, Kelantan and even Trengganu favour combined action and approach their problems as part of a united

---

[26] Allen remarks on the fact that it was `Malay civil servants and state officials' that led the movement in Malaya against Union.

Allen, Malayan Union, p.66.

[27] John ... [? signature unclear], `Personal Impressions - Malayan Union', Labour [Department?], Malaya, 15 August, 1946, p.1. CO537/1548.

Malaya.'([28]) Hinting at the fact that to a significant extent it was the bureaucratic elite rather than the traditional rulers leading the Malay masses in protest the same report continued: `Equally novel is the conclusion reached by the majority of Malays that they can no longer leave their future in the hands of their hereditary rulers and they must now think and act for themselves.'([29])

Certainly the British remained acutely aware that it was the separationist tendencies of the UMS that was the principle obstacle to the administrative unification of the peninsular in 1946. In January, 1944 a sub committee of the British War Cabinet clearly elucidated the way in which the differing colonial history of the Federated and Unfederated Malay States to that year stood in the way of any further uniformity of administration. Referring to the Forward Movement of the British onto the peninsular through a succession of treaties with native rulers in the central states in the 1870s and the subsequent formation of the FMS, Colonel Owen Stanley, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, outlined in a sub committee memorandum the way in which the FMS and UMS developed in markedly different ways under differing degrees of British influence:

> The introduction of this system in the 1870s was followed by a rapid development of the resources of the States concerned (mainly by immigrant capital and labour), which resulted in the breakdown of their previous physical isolation. It was natural that this process should have led to proposals for administrative machinery for closer union and in fact the States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Penang did agree in 1895 to the formation of a Federation. Paradoxically enough the existence of the Federation proved an obstacle to further unification of the Peninsular. For the rapidity of the country's material development had outstripped the advancement in education and administrative capacity of the Malays, and the British Resident's found themselves compelled in fact to take over more or less direct control of the administrative system in the Federated States. As a result there emerged a highly centralized bureaucracy based on the Federal capital, and the Rulers of the States outside the Federation fought shy of the loss of power which they felt they would suffer in the administration of their States by joining the Federation. In the case of Kedah and Perlis the British Agreements of 1923 and 1930 respectively include, in fact, a Clause by which His Majesty's

---

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

The report points out that the `first manifesto of this' was the all Malay Conference, attended by representatives from every state and with representation from `most Malay organisations' on the peninsular and which, at the time of the report, had been in session for three days.

Ibid.

Government have undertaken not to merge or combine these states with other states without the written consent of the Ruler in Council. The attitude of the Malay Rulers was also coloured by the fact that in the main the penetration of Malay communities by immigrant races had gone further in the Federated than in the Unfederated States.([30])

In one way or another much of the correspondence of the time, both British and Malay, touches upon this separationist theme and we can see in this a strong causal factor inhibiting the successful implementation of the union proposal in the immediate post war period.([31]) While the causes of the failure of the Union were many - opposition to the scheme was widespread on the peninsular amongst the Malays and within the British camp both in Malaya and in Britain - it was the centripetal pull of the UMS, and in particular the northern states, that was the most important causal factor militating against the success of British designs to unify the peninsular up to 1946. It was in this sense that the failure of the Union had its roots in the earlier decades of British colonial influence on the peninsular and was, as Allen suggests in his article on the Kelantan Rising, symptomatic of a longer term resistance to British influence on the peninsular.[32] The Malays have never, as the conventional wisdom would have it, been acquiescent in their accommodation with British supremacy on the peninsular and it was particularly in the northern states that resistance to the British influence had been an enduring feature of the post 1909 decades up to the Second World War. Thus, the memorandum identifies the most important on-going focus of disunity on the peninsular at the time the Union was being proposed and implemented and clearly illustrates that the British War Cabinet was well aware of the main obstacle that lay ahead in their scheme for a unified colonial state on the peninsular. The wonder is that they embarked on precipitate action to unify the peninsular in the face of that problem and other related difficulties: clearly at the highest level the British were in touch with the situation in Malaya and their decision to proceed with the Union nonetheless is on the face of it surprising.

On closer examination, however, we can see that there were strong imperatives in

---

[30] War Cabinet. Committee on Malaya and Borneo, `Future Constitutional Policy for British Colonial Territories', 14 January, 1944. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, p.2. CAB 98/41.

[31] See below in this chapter.

[32] See above.

operation at the time favouring the Union from the British point of view and that it was these that meant the British decided that it was, on balance, better to `take the plunge' and to unify the peninsular in the hope that these very considerable obstacles could be overcome.

In 1944 Stanley stated that:

> The restoration of the pre-war constitutional and administrative system [would] be undesirable in the interests of efficiency and security and ... [the] declared purpose of promoting self-government colonial territories.([33])

The British clearly had cogent reasons for seeking a unitary system of government on the peninsular. They wanted a viable system of government on the peninsular capable of taking a Malayan nation into independence when the time came. In proceeding with the union scheme the British saw themselves as fostering a spirit of multi racial nationalism while providing at the same time the basic organizational structure which would enable a unified and independent Malayan nation to govern itself. The British had never conquered the Malay rulers and their states in any legal sense and they intended to, and did, follow, in 1946, the pre-war approach of a constitutional imposition of their will and authority on the peninsular. Malaya had never been a colony in the fullest technical, legal sense. Thus, while elsewhere in their Crown Colonies the legal basis of Britain's control over the subject territory was the Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1890, the legal basis of Britain's control over the Malayan states was a series of treaties or quasi treaties concluded between 1874 and 1930.([34])

These treaties varied in their conditions and the strength of authority that they gave Britain on the peninsular, and Britain sought, immediately after the war, to re-negotiate them to give herself a uniform, centralized civilian control of the peninsular through the principal

---

[33] War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, Draft of a Directive on Policy in Malaya, 5 April, 1944, p.1. CAB 98/41.

[34] Allen, Malayan Union, p.2.

Allen points out that jurisdictionally Malaya's position was unique in the empire: `There was no such thing, strictly speaking, as British, Malay, or even Malaya at all'.

Ibid.

constitutional means of legislating for Malaya under the Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1890.([35])

It is important to stress, then, that the British saw the opportunity in the interregnum of their administration forced on them by the Japanese to place their administration on a more secure footing on their return. Since it was clear that the post war military administration was to be a temporary one - an interim measure to bridge the gap between the Japanese occupation and the return of the British - the colonial planners were, in the preparations for the return to a civilian British administration, hard pressed to work out and implement the new constitutional scheme according to a timetable in large measure determined by the course of the war.

Stanley set out the need for constitutional change and the broad steps to be taken along this path in a memorandum prepared by him very early in 1944:

> Within Malaya considerations of dynastic pride and local particularism militate against the emergence within any foreseeable future of a union of the existing Malay States under a native Ruler; nor, for reasons explained above, would the emergence of a united Malay monarchy for the whole province be acceptable to other non-Malay communities with substantial interests in the country. The British Crown alone provides the common link of loyalty which will draw the separate communities together and promote a sense of common interest and the development of common institutions. It is therefore necessary that, as a first step, the old situation in which His Majesty has no jurisdiction in the Malay States should be remedied. The legal view is that our present Treaties with the Malay Rulers are at present to be regarded as still operative (though for practical purposes in suspension owing to enemy occupation of the territory.([36])

This `first step' was bound to be problematic. The British treaties with the northwestern

---

[35] In the short run the British could rely on the stronger powers of their military administration to secure their interests in the country. It was in the longer term transfer from military to civilian authority that the anxiety over constitutional authority for the British to organise the country in the way they wanted focussed.

In Oliver Stanley's words:

> Immediately on the reoccupation of Malaya, direct authority will be exercised by the Military Commander, who will carry with him sufficient authority to enable him to exercise such direct powers and control over the territory as will be necessary during the period of military administration. This military authority will, however, not enable His Majesty to legislate for the Malay States under the Foreign Jurisdiction Act, and, moreover, the jurisdiction of the Military Commander will not persist when the military administration gives way to a permanant civil administration.

War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, Draft of a Directive on Policy in Malaya, 5 April, 1944, p.1. CAB98/41.

[36] War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, Future Constitutional Policy for British Colonial Territories in South-East Asia, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 January, 1944, p.3. CAB 98/41.

states, as we have seen, ran directly contrary to the British aim of unification. The Kedah and Perlis British Agreements of 1923 and 1930 respectively included clauses by which the British government undertook `not to merge or combine these states with other states, or (in the case of Kedah) the Straits Settlements, without the written consent of the Ruler in Council.'[37] It was a measure of the determination of the British to unify Malaya under one constitution that they resolved to conclude a fresh treaty with each Ruler `as soon as possible after reoccupation under which much jurisdiction would be ceded to His Majesty as would enable him to legislate for the States under the Foreign Jurisdiction Act, notwithstanding, in the case of Kedah and Perlis', the restraining clauses.([38]) The new constitution, which was to be created by orders-in-Council under Statutory powers [i.e. under the Foreign Jurisdiction Act], was perceived from the outset by Stanley as providing for a strongly centralized government with residual power over local affairs only being left to `the several States and Settlements' comprising the union.([39]) Strong resistance was likely and the British knew this.

For the British there was inevitably a strong element of self interest in their advancement of the need for `efficiency and security in a reconstituted Malaya.' We can accept that there was a genuine desire to prepare the country for independence through the imposition of a tighter coherence in its government. But they also sought the constitutional change with one eye on their need to secure tin and rubber production, both of which were seen as being vital to the post war British economy.([40]) They wanted a constitutional arrangement which would help them secure the tin and rubber economy as the economic basis for an independent Malaya. Defensive considerations also influenced British planning for post war Malaya: it was felt that the fall of Malaya to the Japanese had been a governmental, as well as a military, failure and that a unified Malaya with its essential tin and rubber economy would be easier to

---

[37] Ibid., p.2.

[38] Ibid., p.3.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Allen, Malayan Union, p.8.

UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE LIBRARY

defend.([41])

Allen suggests that a bogus anti Malay sentiment in Britain, which saw the Malays, and especially their rulers, as collaborationist and in part responsible for the rapidity of the Japanese advance on the peninsular, together with a more genuine admiration for the Chinese on the peninsular, influenced British policy planners in their deliberations in weighing up the respective rights of the two ethnic groups in a newly constituted post war Malaya.([42]) Allen takes the view that the British were, in their push for Union, influenced by a belief that `the Chinese would leap at the chance of becoming citizens of the new Malaya' and that `the Malay Rulers' and their people would be less reliable allies of British power than other communities.'([43]) Allen also suggests that a pro-Indonesian inclination amongst Malays in Britain and Malaya - the idea that the Malays of Malaya and Indonesia should combine in a federation - leant some urgency to the union proposals in the minds of British officials anxious to unite the Malays on the peninsular exclusively within the British sphere of influence.([44])

We must be wary of Allen's claim that a bogus anti-Malay sentiment influenced Union policy at the time and, while it is true that the British were, in 1946, clearly motivated by a positive desire to secure the well being of non-Malay ethnic groups in the country through the citizenship provisions in the Union proposal, Sopiee is right to caution that `there is little in the papers of the War Office, the Cabinet Office and the Colonial Office, however, to indicate that there was a significant desire to punish the Malays or that strong anti-Malay feelings

---

[41] Ibid., p.9.

[42] Ibid., pp.9, 10.

[43] Ibid., p.19.

[44] Ibid., p.10, 11.

Allen points out that the idea that `"Malays in Malaya and Indonesia"' should strive for `"a federation of all Malay lands in Southeast Asia"' and that after the war `"British Malaya and Indonesia should have closer relations than [had] hitherto prevailed"', was put forward in a memorandum of the Malay Students' Society in Britain during the war. Allen quotes from this document.

Ibid.

significantly affected the political decision-making.'([45]) Certainly Stanley, in April 1944, stating the broad objectives of post war Malayan policy in preparing the ground for self government on the peninsular, pressed the need for even handedness in the treatment of the main racial groups under the restored British administration:

> ... self-government should not merely develop towards a system of autocratic rule by the Malay Rulers, but should provide for a growing participation in the government by the people of all the communities in Malaya, subject to a special recognition of the political, economic and social interests of the Malay race.([46])

Clearly, the most obvious reason why the British sought to rush through the imposition of Union was that the war and Japanese occupation of the peninsular constituted a clear break with the British colonial past on the peninsular and they saw the opportunity to insert the kind of government system they wanted into the vacuum left by the Japanese retreat, without going `through the lengthy process which the sponsors of the decentralization policy had to envisage.'([47])

Inevitably, the exercise in its planning stages took on an aspect of urgency since the post war administration - a military administration(the British Military Administration or BMA) - had the paramount and difficult task of restoring order out of chaos that would, and did, eventuate on the defeat and departure of the Japanese and the return of the British. Clearly pressure was, in late 1944, being put on Malayan planners in the Colonial Office to come up quickly with a scheme for the re-occupation of the peninsular. Earlier in that year the then Admiral Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia, urged the Colonial Office to make known its post war plans for Malaya in anticipation of the British return to Malaya in order that British military authorities be prepared when the time

---

[45] Sopiee, From Malayan Union, p.18.

[46] War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo. Draft of a Directive on Policy in Malaya 5 April, 1944, p.1., CAB 98/41.

[47] War Cabinet. Committee on Malaya and Borneo, `Future Constitutional Policy for British Colonial Territories', 14 January, 1944. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, p.2. CAB 98/41.

came for them to initiate British post war control of the peninsular.([48]) Stanley indicated that he attached `great weight' to Mountbatten's views and set in train `the preparation and distribution to selected circles of a broad statement of the fundamental problems in Malaya which [bore] directly upon the political, administrative and economic future of the country.'([49]) This was the policy memorandum quoted in the text above and which squarely addressed the question of the proposed unification of the peninsular: while it was, as we have seen, a reflective piece with a clear perception of the main problem standing in the way of Union - the separationist tendency of the UMS - we can see that in the circumstances in which it came to be prepared it inevitably took on something of the aspect of a war time contingency plan. It may well be that it was this urgency - this need to expedite the post war restoration of Malayan administration - that in larger measure accounts for the ineptness with which Colonial Office functionaries handled the Malay rulers, including the NMS rulers. It may be that it was the speed with which the British acted - a pace which was too rapid to be effective - which was the main broad factor provoking Malay opposition to the move and thus helping to defeat the successful implementation of the plan.

Allen seems to underestimate the importance of the pressure put on Malayan planners by the war-time situation in the Far East. While Allen does concede that the British planned the Union with the urgent need to preserve the rubber and tin economy he does not allow that there was a wider sense of urgency - a strong aspect of contingency planning - in the working out of the post war administration in Malaya. Presumably, because he was unable to see the documentation conveying this sense of urgency, Allen failed to recognize the extent to which

---

[48] War Cabinet, Committee on Malaya and Borneo, `Constitutional Policy in Malaya', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 December, 1944. CAB 98/41.

Mountbatten's desire for an early disclosure of Colonial office post occupation plans for Malaya was backed up in an earlier Cabinet Committee by the Secretary of State for War: `The Secretary of State for War said that the Military Commander must know what form of civil administration was intended. To this extent a directive was indispensable.'

War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, Minutes of the First Meeting of the Committee ... 22 March, 1944. CAB 98/41.

[49] Ibid.

planners responsible for Malaya in the Colonial Office were under pressure from personnel who had a wider responsibilitity for the conduct of the war, and for the restoration of peace in the region, and who saw the Malayan circumstances as one aspect of a wider war-time situation. Thus, Allen compares what he sees as the extensive consultations in India in 1945, and Nigeria in 1949, `with both central and regional non-European groups', with the lack of consultation with corresponding groups in Malaya in implementing the Union.([50]) The comparison is hardly a valid one, however, since the British had an accessibility to local groups in India and Nigeria in a way which was denied them in a Malaya occupied by the Japanese at a time when they were devising a blue print for re-occupation under civilian rule to be implemented as soon as possible on the defeat and ousting of the Japanese.

Because of the war time situation the Colonial Office planners preparing for reoccupation were constrained by the British War Cabinet to operate in partial secrecy and with minimum consultation. In 1944 the Committee of the War Cabinet charged with the responsibility of working out war time and immediate post war policy on Malaya gave an airing in its discussions to such a need for a degree of secrecy. In these discussions the fear was propounded that if the Japanese got to hear of the plan for Union they might seek `to go one better.'[51] The Japanese may have regarded these plans as `less welcome to the Malays than to the Indian and Chinese inhabitants of Malaya' and that the Japanese may accordingly have attempted to `stir up Malay feeling' against the plans.([52]) Reservations were expressed, too, in the same committee, on the advisability of informing the Americans of war plans for Malaya.([53]) The British were clearly apprehensive at the US reaction to their post war

---

[50] Allen, Malayan Union, p.20.

[51] War Cabinet. Committee on Malaya and Borneo. Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Committee, 19 December, 1944, p.2. CAB 98/41.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Sopiee comments, on a reading of the 1944 Cabinet Committee documents, that `British sensitivity to American feelings and attitudes as regards the Far East was obvious'.

Sopiee, From Malayan Union, pp.16, 17n.

Malayan plans and the Committee was divided on how best to deal with the Americans on the subject. One view within the Committee was that it was best to come clean and inform the Americans, who shared the Allied Military Command in Southeast Asia, in order to forestall any criticism from the Americans that lack of consultation had exposed US authorities to criticism that they `were supporting the British in a policy of territorial aggrandizement.'([54]) It was thought that the Americans within the command may get to know of the plan anyway and that the British could avoid embarrassment by appearing forthright with their ally on their plans for Malaya after the war.([55]) In the alternative, it was argued within the Committee that `to bring the Americans in at [that] stage [would be] to make too much of the problem'.([56]) In the same meeting `[t]he Committee were informed that the Foreign Office did not consider an approach to the US Government to be necessary'.([57]) The impression conveyed in these Committee records is that US attitudes to British Malaya policy were intimidating for members of the British war time cabinets and that Committee members were anxious that they be able to develop their Malayan policy unhindered by the demands of the war time alliance with the Americans. In the first of these Committee meetings there was unanimous agreement `with the Secretary of State for War that the area under discussion lay within the military sphere of His Majesty's Government and not that of the United States Government'.([58])

Still, while these deliberations in late 1944 on the advisability of openly declaring plans for post war Malaya were taking place, the cabinet, by its own record, was clearly under strong pressure not only to act quickly in deciding a course of action for post war Malaya - to come up with some sort of open statement of intention - from both sides of the Atlantic. What Mountbatten wanted from the planners was a timely, `fully explained', declaration of

---

[54] War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Committee ... Constitutional Policy in Malay 19 December, 1944. CAB 98/41.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, Minutes of the First Meeting of the Committee ... Draft Directive for Malaya, 22 March, 1944 CAB 98/41.

intention: `Admiral Mountbatten holds that the proper reception of our future policy in Malaya depends upon its being fully explained beforehand, and that the time is now ripe for this.([59]) According to the Committee record Mountbatten saw such a full explanation as serving to assist in creating a `favourable atmosphere' for the setting up of his military administration on the peninsular at the close of hostilities.([60]) And beyond this there was pressure for a popular enunciation of British intentions: `... the authorities engaged in Political Warfare and in the enlightment of the public both in this country and the United States of America have strongly pressed their need for a new Malayan directive which will be based on a forward policy and will reflect that policy.'([61])

In the end Stanley steered a middle course between full disclosure and secrecy adopting a cautionary stance in declaring a broad statement of intention and passing it to those whom the planners considered needed to know. To that point in time Colonial Office plans had `been disclosed only to those directly concerned in them'.([62]) It was the fact that `the increasing disadvantages of this secrecy [had] been urged with great weight from various quarters', and the `great weight' Stanley attached to Mountbatten's views, that the policy planning proceeded, not with openness, but with less secrecy than before.([63]) The decision was for an approval of circumspect disclosure and it was in late 1944 the Colonial Office, under Stanley's direction, drafted `a statement of fundamental problems in Malaya.'([64]) Stanley explained the reasons for limited disclosure in these terms:

---

[59] War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, `Constitutional Policy in Malaya', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 December, 1944. CAB 98/41.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid. Draft statement attached as `Annex 1'.

> I am not yet convinced that the time has come for our plans to be divulged in full, since this would involve committing ourselves to every feature of those plans, at a time when many relevant facts are by force of circumstances unknown to us. Nevertheless, I attach great weight to the Supreme Commander's views, and I believe that the essential needs of himself and others could be met for the present by the preparation and distribution to selected circles of a broad statement of the fundamental problems in Malay which bear directly upon the political, administrative and economic future of the country. At the same time there would be prepared, not for publication, but purely for the background use of restricted circles which can guide and influence thought and discussion of the subject, a brief statement actually setting out the main features of our proposed policy.([65])

Thus, while Allen implies that Whitehall drew a veil of secrecy around the plans for Union as a strategy to help force the new policy on an unsuspecting Malayan population the documentary evidence of high level Whitehall planning at the time gives no hint that this was the case.([66]) Nor was the secrecy total as Allen states. It was partial and operated on a need-to-know basis.([67])

This decision to adopt a cautious approach was consistent with the uncertainty felt within the War Cabinet from early in 1944 as to whether the post war situation in Malaya would be conducive to the successful implementation of the Union scheme. In April of that year Stanley had advocated a tentative wait-and-see approach to forward planning on Malaya. He argued that in formulating such a policy it was necessary to make `certain basic assumptions'. But at the same time he cautioned against too rigid an adherence to those assumptions. Where prior assumptions were found `to be wrong or incomplete' in meeting `a situation when the liberation of Malaya [had] been effected', it was, he argued, necessary to vary `the prepared plans' accordingly.([68])

---

[65] Stanley. Memorandum, Ibid.

[66] Allen expresses himself in strong terms on the subject:

> ... the Malayan Union scheme was a monstrous concept, for this if for no other reason, that it had been hatched in the depths of Whitehall, far from the light of the Malayan sun, and was now brought out to be imposed willy-nilly upon the people it most concerned.

Allen, Malayan Union, p.20.

[67] Ibid. p.vi.

[68] War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo. Draft of a Directive on Policy in Malaya, 5 April, 1944. CAB 98/41.

Stanley's reluctance to enter into a too specific and open disclosure of British plans for post war Malaya, and his belief in the need for a flexible approach to the implementation of post war policy, was clearly informed by, among other things, his awareness of disintegrative `local particularism' on the peninsular and the past inclination of the UMS to `[fight] shy' of the `centralized bureaucracy' of the FMS `based on the Federal capital' indicated in his 14 January memorandum of that year.([69]) Relatedly, Stanley was wary of the possibility of popular Malay backing for Malay rulers resisting being drawn, or re-drawn, into a tightly organized colonial state. Thus, accordingly in 1944, while Stanley did not want to finally judge the `future position and status of the Malay Rulers' before liberation, he operated for the time being on the assumption that `the Sultanates as an institution [would] continue to enjoy the loyalty and traditional respect of the Malays.'([70]) The implication is that Stanley thought this a reason for maintaining the Sultenates under the new British regime though no final decision would be made until they could more accurately read the situation on the ground with the actual liberation.

Elsewhere, too, in the Cabinet Office documents, there is evidence that the British were, at the highest level, well aware of the loyalty of the Malays to their Rulers and the power of the latter to disrupt British plans for the reoccupation of the peninsular and that they saw the need to tread warily in the treatment of the rulers to avoid provoking a back lash against their plans for Malaya. Early in 1944, for example, the Secretary of State for War `emphasized that if difficulty with rulers was apprehended, the right must be reserved to the Military Commander to advise the Secretary of State for the Colonies to delay an approach until the situation was ripe for it to be made, in the light of [the] current military situation'.([71]) Clearly

---

[69] War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, Future Constitutional Policy for British Colonial Territories in South-East Asia. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 January, 1944, p.3 CAB 98/41.

[70] Ibid.

[71] War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, Minutes of the First Meeting of the Committee ... Draft Directive for Malaya, 22 March, 1944. CAB 98/41.

this cautious approach was very much at odds with the actual heavy handed treatment of the rulers at the hand of the British negotiators seeking the agreement of the rulers for the Union scheme as we shall see below.

Colonial Office decision making and the Union.

Given, then, the cautious approach to Union planning at the cabinet level, how did these plans come to be implemented in such a precipitate manner? Who was responsible for the finer points of policy making and the actual implementation of the Union policy? It is clear that, given that much of the hostilities to, and reaction against, the Union was focussed upon the initial re-negotiation of the treaties with the rulers, and that it was this which ignited the opposition which was to follow, we can see that the principle failure on the British side lay not so much with Stanley and his cabinet colleagues but rested with MacMichael and his immediate superiors in the Colonial Office.

It is clear, then, on a reading of primary sources, that Allen was unable to read that, at the Cabinet sub-committee level at least, the British were aware that problems may be ahead when the time came to implement their post war policy in Malaya, even if they were unsure of the precise nature of what those problems would be. A reading of these sources reveals that, contrary to Allen's assertion that the British completely misread the situation and had proceeded to impose the Union scheme on completely false premises, Whitehall in fact reserved judgement on what the situation might be in post war Malaya anticipating obstacles in the future. The mystery remains, then, as to why the Union scheme was implemented in the way that it was in the face of these acute reservations. Allen's claim that `the methods by which it was intended to effect Malaya's New Deal ... were based on false suppositions' and that `dangerous rigidity prevented a plan designed for totally different conditions from being changed before it was executed with catastrophic results', may accurately reflect certain specific aspects of British thinking at the time. However, they are misleading as a guide to Whitehall's broad intentions for post war Malaya as we have seen.[72] The Cabinet and Colonial Office documents do not indicate that the `false suppositions' that the Chinese would `leap at the chance of becoming citizens of the new Malaya' and that `the Malay Rulers and their people would be less reliable allies of British power than the other communities' were

---

[72] Allen, Malayan Union, pp.12,19.

dominant concerns in Whitehall's planning for postwar Malaya.([73])

There is nothing in the primary sources to verify Allen's claims that the British negotiations with the Sultans `were never meant to be real consultations nor even to produce real treaties' and that the British had proceeded from the outset with the aim of eclipsing the Sultans.([74]) To the contrary, as we have seen, there was recognition at the top level in the Colonial Office that the Sultancy was an important institution in Malaya commanding strong loyalty from the Malay masses and that caution was necessary in achieving the British post-war objectives for Malaya: the aim was to attain these objectives without disturbing the position of the Sultans any more than was necessary; to unify the peninsular under British control with a minimum of destabilization in this regard. While the negotiations, in the event, did see the British adopting an overbearing and coercive posture that had more to do with necessary strategy in the exigency of the time than any deliberate aim subjugating the Sultans and their subject populations.

It is clear then, as we have seen from Stanley's recorded policy statements in 1944, that he favoured a feasible wait-and-see approach to Malayan post war planning and that any rigidities in policy implementation must have occurred at a lower level of implementation. At the same time it is clear with the same hindsight that in the event the British did not have the time, nor did they have sufficient vision, to find a way of quickly implementing an effective unification of Malaya, in the very complicated and difficult circumstances confronting them after the war. That there was inadequacy in policy implementation in this sense is certain: what is not clear is precisely where in the colonial administration that inadequacy was located. While Allen accurately programs the grave consequences of this inadequacy he wrongly lays the blame for the `monstrous concept' of union at the feet of Whitehall. It seems much more likely, however, that where the failure of Union is attributable to errors in British judgement and practice the fault lay much more with the negotiating entourage in Malaya in 1946 - with those officials charged with the responsibility of reading the post war Malayan situation on the

---

[73] Allen's assertions. Ibid., p.19. See above in this chapter.

[74] Ibid. pp.20, 29.

ground and implementing the Union scheme accordingly within the broad and flexible guidelines laid down by Stanley and his planning staff in Whitehall.([75])

The critical question, then, is that posed by Allen: `How far was MacMichael acting on orders from above and how far on his own initiative in implementing the Union initiative ?'([76]) The way in which the hierarchy of British authority operated in policy determination in relation to this matter is far from clear in the secondary sources. It is not easy, either, to discern in precise terms how it operated from the Cabinet and Colonial Office documentation. To Allen the origin of the Union scheme was a mystery. It was `evolved' in its details, Allen writes, by the Malayan Planning Unit(MPU) set up by the Colonial Office in July 1943.([77]) Allen seems to be suggesting that the unit, and those in the Colonial Office outside the Unit but working closely with it, were largely responsible for the scheme with the cabinet role a relatively passive one confined to the issuance of `directives on constitutional matters to the

---

[75] Allen relies heavily on the papers of old Malayans, as retired officials from the Malayan colonial service were known. These officials had ceased to be officially active in Malayan affairs by the time the Union proposal became an issue. In particular, Allen gained access to the private papers of Clementi and Sir George Maxwell and interviewed Richard Winstedt on the issue. Following the interpretation of these old Malayans on the subject Allen takes the view that Colonial Office planners, remote from and out of touch with the situation in Malaya, were mainly responsible for a debacle in Malaya in 1946. It may be that a necessary over-reliance on the views of these men by Allen (necessary because of the limited access he had to source materials) - men generally opposed the Colonial Office in its conception and implementation of the scheme - has coloured his judgement of the motives and behaviour of active Colonial Office functionaries and their role in attempting to create the Union.

The archival record, however, invites caution in accepting Allen's view formed in this way. Take, for example, the criticism of one old Malayan given an airing within Colonial Office circles in the year of the Union implementation. In February of that year H.T. Bourdillon, in a report assessing Malay reactions to the Government White Paper, wrote that Sir George Maxwell saw `the whole of Malaya' at that time `bursting into flames' but that he, Bourdillon, on the basis of a state-by-state analysis, could find no evidence of `the universal conflagration seen from afar by Sir George Maxwell.'

Bourdillon to Maxwell, 23 February, 1946. CO537/1548.

Bourdillon's report is a careful analytic piece and as such is a reminder that we must be wary of assuming that the old Malayans, with their prior knowledge and experience of Malaya, necessarily had a better grasp of the post war situation there than Colonial Office functionaries actively involved in the implementation of the scheme.

[76] Allen, Malayan Union, p.17.

[77] Allen, Malayan Union, p.1.

planners.'([78]) He takes the view that Edward Gent, at the time Under Secretary of State for the Colonies and head of the Far Eastern Department, was widely believed to be the creator of the scheme and that this `does not seem an unnatural assumption.'([79]) Elsewhere in his monograph Allen is unsure whether the broad policy framework within which the MPU worked was laid down by the Cabinet or by Gent `who was closely connected with the Unit though not a member of it.'([80])

Sopiee on the other hand cautions us that in `current literature, ... the MPU has often been attributed a role in policy-making on the Malayan Union which it does not deserve.'([81]) He claims that the role of the Colonial Office, and in particular that of Gent, was much more important in the formulation of Union policy.([82]) Both Allen and Sopiee, then, seem to agree

---

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., p.2.

[80] Ibid., p.14.

[81] Sopiee, From Malayan Union, p.14.

[82] Ibid.

Sopiee points out that the War Cabinet decided on 6 January, 1944 to set up the War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo and that it was at `the first and crucial meeting on 22 March 1944, the Committee decided on the Union Policy'.

Ibid., p.15.

It was however not the first but the second meeting of the Committee held on December 19, 1944 that unequivocally decided on the policy. The first committee merely expressed its `general agreement' with a very broad outline of a post war Union policy in Malaya.

War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, Minutes of the First Meeting ... 22 March, 1944. CAB 98/41.

It was not until the second meeting later in the year that the Committee agreed `to invite the Chairman to seek War Cabinet approval for' proposals which included `draft statements ... setting out ... the fundamental problems in Malaya and future policy in Malaya.'

War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, Minutes of the Second Meeting ... 19 December, 1944. CAB98/41.

Thus, while Sopiee claims that after the 22 March Committee decision `the concurrence of the War Cabinet on 31 May 1944 was more or less a formality, Cabinet approval for the scheme was not sought until much later and must have been given very late in 1944 or early in 1945.

that Gent was very influential in the formulation of the Union policy though they present differing views on the channels through which he operated to this effect - more through the Colonial Office according to Sopiee; and in Allen's perception more through the MPU. It is not clear from the Committee minutes whether the draft policy forwarded by Stanley for the Committee's consideration was mainly the work of his Under Secretary or not and no mention is made of the Planning Unit. Certainly Gent was present at both Committee meetings. The Committee minutes do not indicate whether he spoke or not or what he might have said and it would appear from this record that it was Stanley who advanced the Colonial Office point of view.

Still, it hardly matters whether Gent exercised an influence as the architect of the Union though his influence on Cabinet through Stanley or through the Planning Unit, since it would clearly have been to the same effect either way. What is important is that it is clear from the primary sources that the Colonial Office and Cabinet were firmly in control of the formulation, at least, of Union policy as Sopiee asserts, and that it was not an arcane plot `hatched in the depths of Whitehall' by bureaucratic slight-of-hand by bumbling Whitehall bureaucrats out of touch with the situation in Malaya in the way that Allen tentatively asserts.([83])

The failure of the Union, then, lay not so much in inadequate policy formulation in the way Allen describes but in the difficulties of implementation in the chaotic post war Malayan situation. While there was clearly in some sense a policy failure on the part of the British this needs to be seen in a different light from Allen: and it needs to be measured more against the difficult social circumstances (outlined in more detail in this chapter below) in which the British attempted to implement Union. Thus, while there were limitations in the way in which the British went about establishing the Union and this contributed to the degree of its failure, the position was more that even if policy had been devised and implemented in a fully competent way right down the line from top to bottom in the British Colonial hierarchy the Union in all likelihood could only have succeeded if the social circumstances in which all this

---

Sopiee, From Malayan Union, p.15.

[83] Allen, Malayan Union, p.20, passim. See above.

was taking place had been otherwise. Eventually, then, the success or failure of British policy formulation and implementation can only be perceived in terms of the circumstantial criteria which applied at the time. Given the caution being advocated by Whitehall planners at the top level we need to look elsewhere for the causes of the disaster in the British policy making hierarchy for any precipitate action in implementing the Union. That the top policy makers had decided to take a gamble in the face of the odds against success is perhaps understandable given the British frustrations at earlier efforts to unify the peninsular and the opportunity provided by the break in their rule to set the peninsular to rights. It was in a weaker sense only that the policy emanating from Whitehall was inherently unstable. That policy was inherently contradictory in that it acknowledged the tendency to divisiveness on the peninsular and advocated wait-and-see caution while at the same time urging clandestine haste as a measure necessary to meet the urgency of the war and post war situation in Malaya. It was this inherent tension between the two Whitehall objectives which placed the implementers of the scheme in, as it turned out, an impossible position. When it comes to the MacMichael negotiations, then, we can see why there emerged a disparity between the cautious unification policy of Whitehall and the precipitate and abrasive manner and tactics of Mac Michael and his negotiating team. It is not so much a question, then, of whether MacMichael exceeded his orders, or whether his immediate superordinates did. It is much more likely that MacMichael had been given a task which was in the event, impossible, and that this failure to pave the way for Union was doomed by the circumstances in which it took place.

The MacMichael Negotiations.

When MacMichael arrived in Malaya shortly after British reoccupation he not only carried a specific brief to re-negotiate the treaties but was also empowered to exercise his discretion in the recognition of the Malay rulers by the British government as well.([84])
MacMichael was empowered to recommend recognition of new rulers in the four northern

---

[84] Allen, Malayan Union, p.18.

Allen cites MacMichael's own report on his treaty negotiations where he refers to the terms of reference for the negotiations set down by Whitehall. MacMichael's report is discussed in this chapter below.

states where the pre-war rulers were no longer in office and of established rulers in the remaining states - in all cases where the incumbent was untainted by any suggestion of collaboration with the Japanese. Allen suggests that the manner in which MacMichael went about these negotiations was coercive with MacMichael threatening to withhold recognition from the rulers if they failed to sign the treaties.([85])

---

[85] Allen is clearly not wholly certain of his claim that MacMichael used coercion. He offers only one specific sample based on the observation of E.V.G. Day who was present with MacMichael throughout the negotiations and even then `not to illustrate MacMichael's methods but to show that, had an appeal against the validity of these treaties been brought before an English court, it could not have been lightly dismissed.'

Allen, Malayan Union, p.32.

Allen is wary of MacMichael's own report as an indication of the way in which the negotiations were conducted. Having caught MacMichael out on one aspect of his report(MacMichael's claim that the Kedah State Council was present throughout his negotiations with the Sultan was in direct contradiction to Day's claim in an interview with Allen that MacMichael barred the Council from one such meeting) Allen takes the view that the veracity of the report is `suspect on other points'.

Ibid.

Allen's implication is that MacMichael was less than forthright on the question of coercion in reporting on his negotiating tactics and that Day's version of the treaty negotiations is more reliable.

Allen's judgment on this may be a little harsh. The MacMichael report to which Allen refers is a published one and gives only a cursory account of the negotiations. MacMichael was, at the time, reporting periodically to his superiors more fully and, we would assume since the correspondence was private and confidential, more candidly on the negotiations and it is clear from these reports that MacMichael was using veiled coercion as an intimidatory strategy to obtain the Sultan's signature to the treaties.

It is possible, too, that Day may have had a personal axe to grind with MacMichael. There is some suggestion in the sources that MacMichael and Newboult were colluding to have Day removed from Kedah on the grounds that he lacked the firm hand needed for Union negotiations to succeed in that state. Early in 1946 Newboult wrote to the Colonial Office expressing reservations over Day's performance in assisting with the Union negotiations:`I ought to warn you that I think Day will have to be moved from Kedah as I fear he is not taking a strong enough line. He will be disappointed, I know, but I have a feeling, which I know MacMichael shared, that our path would have been smoother if we had had a firm hand in the state'.

Newboult to Lloyd, 7 February, 1946. CO 537/1548.

There may well, then, have been some tension between Day's approach to the Kedah negotiations, and that of MacMichael and Newboult, and Day may have been embittered towards MacMichael as a result. Day may well have felt that MacMichael exercised too much of a `firm hand' in his negotiations with that state. If there was personal animosity between the two Day may well have been casting aspersions on the latter's methods in Kedah in a less than wholly objective way when MacMichael interviewed him some many years after the incident(Allen does not foot note Day in the text where he describes the coercive tactic: he does, however, indicate in the preface that he interviewed Day in London on 12 March, 1964).

Day's impression of MacMichael's tactics may well, too, have been coloured by hind sight, and criticisms of MacMichael's tactics may well have augmented his impression that MacMichael overstepped the mark in Kedah. Certainly Day is on record as offering assurance with another British official to the Sultan of Kedah, and, by implication, the Colonial Office

Clearly MacMichael and those assisting him - Brigadier Newboult, then Deputy Chief Civic Affairs officer in Malaya; Colonel E.V.G. Day, at that time the senior British Military Administration(BMA) officer in Kedah; and Mr. Bourdillon of the Colonial Office - held a brief to negotiate the treaties with the Sultans as expedititiously as possible and this, in large measure, accounts for the timing and haste with which the negotiations were conducted.([86]) It also in large measure accounts for the strategies adopted by the negotiating team in order to outmanoeuvre the Sultans.([87])

Certainly in general terms the tactics used by MacMichael were harsh enough it is true. However, they were surely not all that exceptional against the wider sweep of determined - forceful - British colonial diplomacy, especially in view of the urgent circumstances in which

---

in London, that MacMichael `had sent to London full and faithful record of his two interviews in Kedah' though this is not necessarily a true reflection of Day's feelings at the time.

Hone to Colonial Office, 7 February, 1946. CO 537/1548.

Thus, while Allen draws the correct conclusions in broad terms - that MacMichael was coercive in his methods - it may well be(Allen gives few details of coercion and his precise notion of it is unclear) that Allen was influenced by Day into believing that MacMichael's negotiating tactics were harsher than they really were.

[86] Allen indicates that MacMichael was further assisted in the negotiations by former Malayan Civil Service(MCS) officers from the Malayan Planning Unit.

Allen, Malayan Union, p.17.

[87] As we have seen the British War Cabinet was under considerable pressure to move rapidly in devising and announcing their plans for post war Malaya. It is clear that it wanted to lay the constitutional ground work for the transition from military to civilian rule as quickly as possible and the correspondence of the time carries a sense of haste and urgency in line with this. The `fresh treaties' needed to bring the states within the ambit of the Foreign Jurisdiction Act were to be concluded `at the earliest opportunity on reoccupation.'

War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, Draft of a Directive on Policy in Malaya, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 January, 1944, p.1. CAB 98/41.

In keeping with this Allen points out that MacMichael `arrived in Malaya not only shortly after the Japanese surrender but also a mere day after the first mention of new plans for Malaya in the House of Commons.'

Allen, Malayan Union, p.17.

MacMichael, in his reports to his superiors in Whitehall, makes frequent reference to the timing of his negotiations and was clearly at pains to point out that he was avoiding delay in the conclusion of his mission as much as possible, as I indicate in the text of this chapter below.

the negotiations took place.([88]) MacMichael's approach with the northern state rulers at least was, by his own account, a carrot-and-stick one, emphasizing the positive benefits of Union to the Sultans on the one hand, and the negative consequences for them of not entering the Union on the other. Thus, his approach in the negotiations was not wholly coercive. He also put forward the general advantages of a united Malaya and those accruing to individual states within it as an incentive for them to join.([89])

On the negative side MacMichael, certainly in his negotiations with the four northern states, relied principally on the veiled threat that Britain would not recognize a ruler who did not sign the treaty on MacMichael's terms and the suggestion that any ruler who did not sign the treaty would be out on a limb and at odds with the other rulers on the peninsular. It was a divide-and-rule strategy in which the Sultans were not given scope to consult one another and which thus enabled MacMichael to more effectively play one Sultan off against another in this

---

[88] See my reference in chapter 6 above to British gun boat diplomacy in forcing their wishes on the Trengganu Sultan in the 1860s.

[89] For example, in the course of the negotiations with the Perlis ruler and the Perlis State Council, MacMichael stressed the fundamental purpose of the new policy - the end of parochialism and the working together of all permanent elements for the good of a united Malaya.

MacMichael, `Note of First Interview with Syed Putera and Members of the Perlis State Council (... December the 3rd 1945)' 3 December, 1945, p.2. CO 537/1541.

Likewise MacMichael assured `the Sultan elect of Trengganu' that there was `no intention to destroy the individuality of the several states, or to undermine that loyalty or esprit de corps among the advisers surrounding the Rulers.' `Nor', MacMichael added, `was there any intention to diminish the prestige of the Rulers themselves.

To the contrary, MacMichael emphasized that the British Government was `determined to enhance that prestige by giving the Rulers an interest and an influence beyond the confines of their own state.'

MacMichael, `Note of First Interview with His Highness the Sultan Elect of Trengganu (... December the 19th)' no date, 1945, pp.1, 20. CO 537/1541.

In his correspondence on the subject we can also see MacMichael mixing flattery with intimidation as part of his positive approach in the negotiations.

Thus, when negotiating with the ruler of Kedah MacMichael coupled the vieled threat that the British government might come to the conclusion, in keeping with `modern conceptions of democratic government - that the Sultanates were out of date', with praise for the Malay rulers as a whole as `a loyal body of men whose service to the country, and particularly in support of their own comparatively backward Malays, could be invaluable.'

MacMichael, `Note of First Interview with His Highness the Regent of Kedah (... November the 29th), 30 November, 1945. CO537/1541.

way. The strategy appears to have been one in which MacMichael sought to secure the treaties with each ruler separately and in rapid succession so that this basic preliminary constitutional measure for Union would be a fait accompli before those who might be opposed to the treaties had time to react. In this sense Allen is right in his surmise that MacMichael used coercion to secure the signatures of the nine Sultans on the re-negotiated treaties. For example, MacMichael noted in a report on his first interview with the Sultan of Kedah:

> ... I pointed out that in addition to my task of seeking his cooperation in the new policy (at this point I named in confidence the five Rulers who had already signed fresh Treaties), I had been granted discretion by His Majesty's Government in the matter of recognising him as Sultan of Kedah, his appointment to that office having taken place during the Japanese occupation. I expressed the hope that this would present no difficulty.([90])

And then in stronger terms, though still an implied threat that the British Government would not, on MacMichael's discretion, recognize the Sultan if he failed to sign the treaty:

> It was fortunate that His Majesty's government had not concluded - as would have been consonant with modern conceptions of democratic government - that the Sultanates were altogether out of date. They had not done so. They had realized that the Rulers were a loyal body of man whose service to the country, and particularly in support of their own comparatively backward Malays, could be invaluable; but were the policy to be modified, the change would not be in the direction of greater power for the Rulers.([91])

MacMichael's negotiating approach, then, was not without some subtlety entailing the use of flattery and implied coercion combined to obtain the ruler's agreement. MacMichael adopted similar tactics with the other northern state rulers though the degree of coercion used, if his own account is to be believed, was generally less than was the case with Kedah and varied in intensity from state to state.([92])

---

[90] MacMichael, `Note of First Interview with His Highness the Regent of Kedah (... November the 29th)' 20 November, 1945, p.1. CO 537/1541.

[91] Ibid., p.2.

[92] See: MacMichael, `Note of First Interview with Syed Putera and Members of the Perlis State Council(... December the 3rd 1945)' para. 4. CO 537/1541.

MacMichael, `Note of Second Interview with Syed Putera and Members of the Perlis State Council (... December the 4th 1945) p.1. Unsigned. para 2. CO 537/1541.

MacMichael, `Note of First Interview with His Highness the Raja of Kelantan (... December the 15th), 15 December, 1945, p.1. CO537/1541.

MacMichael, `Note of First Interview with His Highness the Sultan Elect of Trengganu(...

MacMichael's stronger negotiating stance in the case of Kedah clearly stemmed from the fact that he saw that state as having a stronger separationist tendency than other states on the peninsular.([93]) Certainly he was in his negotiating stance with Kedah, mindful of the fact that the state had `in the past ... prided itself on its separationist tendencies.'([94])

Allen argues by inference that the incompatibility of the two tasks - recognizing the rulers and seeking their willing agreement to the treaties - could not have been coincidence since the Colonial Office was not prone to this kind of mistake. The two tasks were combined as a deliberate strategy by the Colonial Office to gain leverage over the rulers. It was in this sense that MacMichael was `not sent to consult but to coerce.'([95]) This assertion by Allen that MacMichael was instructed by Whitehall to coerce the rulers into signing the treaties in this way is close to the mark though the record shows that it was more that MacMichael successfully sought and obtained permission from his Colonial Office superiors to do so. Certainly he requested and obtained permission to deal with three of the northern rulers in this way, though the collusion between Whitehall and MacMichael on the matter was nowhere

---

Wednesday December the 19th)' para. 3. CO 537/1541.

[93]. Allen comments that it `was in Negri Sembilan and more especially in Kedah that MacMichael met his toughest opposition' in negotiating the treaties.

Allen, Malayan Union, p.32.

Newboult, too, anticipated stronger resistance from Kedah. He singled out Kedah and Perak as being in his anticipation the focus of `one camp' of Malay states opposed to the negotiations.

Newboult to Lloyd, 7 February, 1946. CO 537/1548.

[94]. MacMichael, `Note of First Interview with His Highness the Regent of Kedah(... Thursday November the 29th)', para. 5. CO 537/1541.

[95]. Allen, Malayan Union, p.18.

Allen was unable to do more, on the evidence available to him, than to infer a coercive strategy of this kind and nowhere in his monograph was he able to substantiate his somewhat tentative assertion along these lines. For example Allen implies, much later in his study, that MacMichael omitted to point out in his report on his treaty negotiations that there was no evidence indicating a collaborationist taint on the four northern states because this would have given away the fact that he had deliberately withheld this non-collaborationist finding from the leaders of these states in order to use recognition as a bargaining tool. Allen was unable to assert his case more strongly than this because he lacked the evidence to do so.

Ibid., pp.29,30.

near as direct and obvious as Allen suggests. The fact of the matter is that Whitehall seems to have been ambivalent in its instruction to MacMichael, instructing him to secure the treaties with all possible speed while at the same time conducting himself with fairness and honour - or at least appearing to do so.

Allen rests his conclusions in part on a reading of MacMichael's report on his treaty negotiations.([96]) Paragraph 12 of that report refers back to the third paragraph of MacMichael's terms of reference (paragraph 10 of the report) requiring him to telegraph his recommendations of `competent and responsible' persons for recognition by the British government as state rulers.([97]) MacMichael indicates in the paragraph what he terms as `minor modification' in this communication procedure aimed, he says, at obviating `the delays and difficulties which would have been caused by periodic reference at a time when signal communications were somewhat congested and uncertain.'([98]) MacMichael does not say what the modification was and, since the paragraph is wholly misleading in its generality it is understandable that Allen was unable to see the significance of the modification to which it refers. It was in fact this modification which embodied the understanding between MacMichael and Whitehall that recognition was to be held over the head of rulers unwilling to sign.

In October 1945 MacMichael communicated with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, referring to paragraph three of his terms of reference and requesting a change in the procedure for communicating his recommendations for three of the northern states only. Having established that the rulers of Kedah, Kelantan and Perlis were `available' and `unexceptional as regards behaviour under the Japanese' (the case of Trengganu presented `special difficulties' and MacMichael excluded it from consideration in this correspondence) MacMichael then sought authority to open discussions with the three rulers according to a

[96] Ibid.

[97] MacMichael, Report, in Allen, Malayan Union, pp.157, 158.

[98] Ibid., p.158.

procedure built around the willingness or otherwise of the rulers to sign the treaties:

> Subsequent steps in each case should be in my view as follows. If personage selected is unwilling to co-operate I will approach you again. If, on the other hand, he gives pledges of readiness to sign treaty, I would, in case of Perlis, verify election of Syed Putera as Raja in accordance with local custom ... (B) Recognize all three personages as rulers on behalf of H.M.G. ... (C) Sign treaties with them.([99])

In the same correspondence he made much of the pressure of time and difficulty of communication as a reason for the granting greater discretion for him in concluding these agreements for Union with the three northern rulers in the way he wanted to. In making his request he advised the Colonial Secretary: `In view of the time factor I consider it essential that I should have authority to do this without further reference to you at this stage.' Furthermore, he made it clear that `in view of great delays in telegraphic communications' he would `be grateful for [the] earliest possible reply.'([100])

On the face of it, then, MacMichael's request seem reasonable enough, based on the need to move quickly in his bid to secure the treaties against the difficulties in communicating his moves and intentions. However, there seems little doubt that, while time and communication difficulties were valid considerations for MacMichael to raise, that they also served, in the manner in which MacMichael put them forward, as a smokescreen to hide his real intention of using recognition as a coercive device to obtain the signatures. While MacMichael already had the discretion to recognize rulers on the basis of competency, responsibility and non collaboration, his correspondence amounted to a veiled request to go a step further and use recognition as negotiating tactic. It seems likely that it was, in the manner of its diplomatic and careful wording, an invitation to the Secretary of State to read between the lines and to reply in similar vein thus leaving themselves an outlet if things fell apart and explanations were required afterwards. The Secretary of State's response to MacMichael was brief and gave no explicit acknowledgement of what he must have realized was an oblique request to use recognition as a negotiating tactic: `I agree to your proposed procedure for Kedah, Kelantan, and Perlis and that you open discussions as proposed with Tungku Badlishah,

---

[99] MacMichael to Secretary of State for the Colonies 25 October, 1945. CO 537/1541.

Step A is unlabelled in the correspondence. The correspondence is the form of a signal transmitted through the BMA.

[100] Ibid.

Tungku Ibrahim and Syed Putera.'([101]) In a deleted section of this correspondence it is clear, too, that the Secretary of State was under pressure in parliament to account for MacMichael's activities in Malaya and that he was anxious that MacMichael furnish him with information on his intentions in fulfilling his brief in general, and his plans for proceeding with the negotiations in the northern Malay states in particular. The deleted paragraph in the two paragraph cypher read:

> I should be glad of further information by telegraph as to you[sic] plans for Northern States particularly as questions in parliament about your negotiations had been put down for answer on November 21st and my reply will clearly be conditioned by the extent of your progress up to that date. Immediately following en clair telegram contains text of two questions, which I forward for your information and comment. You should also know that Viscount Marchwood is calling attention to the policy of H.M. Government in Malaya and moving for Papers in the Lords on 20th November.([102])

It is not clear why the second paragraph of the cypher was deleted or who deleted it. The most likely assumption however is that the record is a draft and that the deletions was made by, or on the orders of, the Minister himself. It may be that the Minister decided as an after thought that the less he knew about any coercion that MacMichael might apply the easier it would be for him to deny in parliament that coercion was being used; that it was a case of wanting results without knowing precisely how they were achieved - of turning a partially blind eye. Given the Minister's evident anxiety that he be adequately prepared to account for MacMichael's negotiations in Malaya he must have been grateful that the reference to coercion in the MacMichael correspondence was oblique. And as there was uncertainty as to the response of the Malay rulers and the Colonial Office foresaw the possibility of resistance on the part of the Malay rulers and complaints arising from this reaching Britain he must have been keeping in reserve the ostensible reasons that might be advanced for the coercive strategy hinted at by MacMichael in his October correspondence. MacMichael gave him the outlet in his plea that the recognition of the Sultans was conditioned in large measure by the time factor and the communication difficulties. If pressed, the latitude would have been there for the

---

[101] Secretary of State for the Colonies to MacMichael, 29 October, 1945. CO 537/1541. This reply is in the form of a cypher transmitted via the B.M.A. in Malaya.

[102] Ibid.

Secretary of State to deny to his parliamentary colleagues and to the British public that MacMichael was coercing the rulers by threatening to withhold recognition if they didn't sign.

Still, since this correspondence is clearly circumspect in its wording, we can only surmise the full motivation behind MacMichael's reference to both the treaty negotiations and the recognition of the rulers in connection with one another, and the Secretary of State's response to this. There is no reason, however, to suppose MacMichael and his Whitehall masters were not attuned to the parliamentary and bureaucratic stratagems premised, at best, then (as now) on a need for pragmatic honesty and that such necessary circumspection was dictated by the political sensitivity of the bold move to unify the peninsular. It clearly made sense for MacMichael to cover himself as much as possible by obtaining implicit permission to coerce the rulers into signing the treaties. The fact that he singled out the NMS in this connection must have been significant though there is no clue in this correspondence as to why he raised the question of recognition in connection with the three states only. He had not at that stage finalized treaties with all the states to the south(he still had to finalize treaty negotiations with Negri Sembilan and Perak) and was not proposing to visit the northern states in `the immediate future.'([103]) He claimed to be focussing on the four northern states because none of the rulers in those states were recognized by the British government before the Japanese occupation. However, there was no need to single out these states on the question of recognition per se since he already had discretionary power to deal with the issue. While he did plead the time factor his request for `[the] earliest possible reply' in his October correspondence could presumably have done for northern states as well as the remaining states to the south where he still had to finalize negotiations had he wanted it to, with minimal, if any, delay. It seems likely that MacMichael, with one eye on the separationist tendency of the NMS, anticipated that the stronger resistance to his treaties would come from them on that score. The fact that he singled out the northern states in this way does tend to suggest that he felt the need for a stronger hand in his negotiations with them and that he saw the opportunity

---

[103] The reference to the forthcoming negotiations with the two states to the south is contained in: MacMichael to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 November, 1945. CO537/1541 (This correspondence takes the form of a cypher transmitted through the BMA). MacMichael referred to his schedule for visiting the northern states in his `request to proceed' correspondence cited above (ie MacMichael to Secretary of State for the Colonies, signal dated 25 October, 1945).

in their unique status to gain extra leverage over them in the negotiations.([104]) Another possibility is that it was Kedah that was more the focus of his attention and that, while his awareness of the independent inclination of the four states in general was a factor prompting him to make the request, he was particularly concerned with his likely reception in Kedah - that it was in his negotiations with that state that he wanted the stronger hand, and that he found it expedient in making the request to anchor it on the fact that Kedah was one of four states where, at the outset of MacMichael's negotiations, the post war rulers had not been formally recognized as such.

In sum, then, it is important not to overstate the strength of the coercive strategies agreed to between MacMichael and the Colonial Office. MacMichael was not instructed to coerce the rulers in the crude sense that Allen suggests. The record suggests that there was a tacit agreement between MacMichael and the Colonial Office to apply coercion as a last resort and that MacMichael acted on this from the outset of his negotiations. Where a ruler was unwilling to sign the treaty MacMichael took it upon himself, with what he would have felt was the tacit approval of his superiors, to threaten the rulers gently and obliquely with non-recognition. In so doing, however, he used an element of bluff since it was beyond his capacity technically to threaten rulers with non-recognition in this way. MacMichael was not authorized to formally deny recognition of a ruler. He had discretionary power to recommend recognition only and the power to recognize or otherwise lay with the Secretary of State for the Colonies. There is no explicit conspiracy evident on the record for MacMichael to say one thing and to do another in the negotiations. Certainly MacMichael had in mind the need for him to adhere to his negotiating brief when he was preparing his correspondence to the

---

[104] Though MacMichael did not say so explicitly in his correspondence. In the event he encountered strong resistance from southern states as well, most notably from Negri Sembilan as we have seen in my footnote reference above. But the indications of strong resistance from northern states are there in the sources as well. Newboult, for example, commented early in 1946 on the `extremity' of the response of a Kelantan deputation in opposing the Union. I discuss the NMS resistance to MacMichael's treaties and the Union proposal in general more fully in this chapter below. The point here is that MacMichael in all likelihood anticipated strong resistance from these states in the light of their independent status in the past and that it was in response to this anticipation that he sought extra negotiating power from Whitehall.

Newboult to Lloyd, 7 February, 1946. CO537/1548.

Secretary of State for the Colonies. A deleted paragraph of his reads:

> In reply to your 24546 (CA1) of 30th October received 7th November the existing obligations and treaties if maintained would render new Malayan Union unworkable. The object of my mission is to explain fully and frankly to all the Sultans what is the policy of H.M.G. and if possible to obtain their willing cooperation in carrying it out. This I am doing and so far willing cooperation has been displayed in every case. Should the situation change the position will at once be reported to you.([105])

While the paragraph is not strictly speaking part of the record it does enable us to see that the need to adhere to his brief - or the need to reassure the Minister that that was his intention - was in his mind at the time he drafted the cypher. We can also see that the aim of `willing cooperation' on the part of the rulers as a first option - the desired outcome - was alive in his thinking when corresponding with his superior and tends to negate Allen's suggestion of an agreed aim between MacMichael and Whitehall to coerce the rulers into agreement from the outset of negotiations.

It was, then, MacMichael who had the principal responsibility for implementing the very broad and flexible Union policy directives of Whitehall. It was his task to read the situation on the ground and to react accordingly in implementing the demanding objectives of the Whitehall colonial and military administration. While he was successful in securing the treaties expeditiously that success was short lived as opposition to them and the Union policy as a whole gained momentum in the months and years following reoccupation.

While MacMichael had a wide discretion in carrying out his task he was none-the-less, as we have seen, careful to clear himself with Whitehall in adopting the procedures he followed. Allen may well be right that he was a bad choice for this task - that he was abrasive in his dealings with the Malays, ignorant of their language and customs and therefore the wrong person for such a difficult and sensitive undertaking.([106])

---

[105] MacMichael to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Cypher dated 7 November, 1945. CO 537/1541.

Again the likely assumption is that this is a draft cypher with alterations made by, or on the orders of, MacMichael. There seems no obvious reason for the deletion. Perhaps he felt that the paragraph was covering old ground: that it was redundant.

[106] Allen makes the point that MacMichael was abrasive in his manner in dealing with the rulers, had no Malayan experience prior to the negotiations (his previous experience had been with the colonial service in Africa and then Palestine), was ignorant of Malay language and customs and therefore `ill selected to lead' the negotiating team.

Allen, Malayan Union, pp.17, 29, 71.

In his correspondence on the subject MacMichael does not, naturally enough, acknowledge an abrasive manner on his part in his conduct of the negotiations. However, it is clear from his own account of the negotiations, that he could be blunt and even abusive in his manner towards the Malays when he felt they were adopting an obstructionist stance in the negotiations.([107]) Thus, when Syed Putera, the ruler of Perlis, while in the process of reading a State Council Minute giving that body's assent to the treaty, read out a clause which had been inserted without MacMichael's agreement, he reacted strongly:

MacMichael's inexperience in Malayan affairs does seem to have been manifest in his failure to understand the pre-war situation in Malaya in one very important respect: the differing degree of power being exercised by the Residents in the FMS and the Advisors in the UMS. MacMichael indicated in correspondence to Whitehall that the ruler of Kedah protested the loss of independence for Kedah under the new arrangement being proposed by MacMichael in part by arguing that, whereas in the federated states the ruler had handed over executive power to the President, no such transfer of power to Advisors had occurred in the unfederated states in the pre-war period.

MacMichael, `Note of First Interview with His Highness the Regent of Kedah (... November the 29th)', 30 November, 1945. CO537/1541.

MacMichael argued that whatever the technical situation there had been no such distinction in practice and that `the Rulers had been bound to accept the advice of the Residents (or Advisers) and it was only right that the power and the overt responsibility should be in the same hands.' According to MacMichael the British proposal merely sought to give a de facto situation de jure recognition.

Ibid.

This statement by MacMichael is clearly at odds with Maxwell's interpretation of the degree of power being exercised by the Malay ruling class in the Unfederated and Federated Malay States quoted above in this chapter. On the face of it, it reveals appalling ignorance on the part of MacMichael of the differing degrees of Malay independence and power inside and outside the federation. There is the possibility that MacMichael was deliberately putting forward a false proposition though the tone and feeling of the correspondence suggest that this was not the case.

While MacMichael did not concede in his correspondence that his lack of experience was a disadvantage in the negotiations Newboult indicated that he, Newboult, was out of his depth in the situation:`I shall be very grateful when some of our old MCS officers return as a tremendous strain is put on me in having no one with whom I can consult and discuss all these problems'.

Newboult to Lloyd, 7 February, 1946. CO537/1548.

[107]. Remembering that he mixed such bluntness with flattery in his efforts to win the rulers over to the British way of thinking on the treaties as indicated by MacMichael's reference to the Malay rulers as `a loyal body of men' during the Kedah negotiations in the instance cited above in this chapter.

> I thereupon spoke roundly to Syed Putera and Wan Ahmad in English and to the chief Kathi in Arabic. The words did not, I said, actually invalidate the Minute, and if they insisted on them I should hesitate to refuse their insertion. But they would be causing themselves shame. Were they children, or free citizens of the State of Perlis? Did they have the courage to acknowledge their own decision.([108])

He continued in this patronising vein to scold the Perlis ruler and the council over their presumption in adding the clause. To be fair, MacMichael no doubt saw himself here as taking a firm stand in line with normal negotiating procedure. It does none the less lend some weight to Allen's assertion that MacMichael was abrasive in his dealings with the Malay rulers and their councils.

Likewise the tone of MacMichael's account of his Kedah negotiations implies considerable friction between him and the leaders of that state. He made it known to the Colonial Office that he held the Sultan of Kedah in poor regard and it was perhaps this that coloured his approach to the Kedah negotiations and which contributed to the friction between MacMichael and the Kedah Sultan. Thus when, in the course of the discussion, the Kedah Sultan resisted the British approach on the grounds that he wanted to retain independence for his state, MacMichael reacted not only to the Sultan's argument for independence but against what he saw as the Sultan's undesirable personal qualities:

> Kedah gave considerable difficulty: the Regent (now Sultan) was obviously moved to the depths of his rather shallow being by what he seemed to regard as the surrender of proud independence to a state of ignominious subjection. He is of the small shy and retiring `failed B.A.' type, unnotable and inclined to be introspective and lonely. At times he presented rather a pathetic figure. ([109])

His attitude to the Kedah State Council, with whom he was also negotiating, was scarcely less contemptuous. According to MacMichael, the Sultan's State Council `had far too much common sense and acumen to share his [i.e. the Sultan's] sense of despair, but took refuge, instead, in every form of procrastination evasion and technicality.'([110]) It is also clear from the documentation that MacMichael was removed from the Malay conception of the meaning and significance of his proposals. His ineptness in this regard is amply illustrated by

---

[108] MacMichael, `Note of Second Interview with Syed Putera and Members of the Perlis State Council (... December the 4th 1945). Enclosure 6 to MacMichael to Gater, 8 September, 1945. CO 537/1541.

[109] MacMichael to Gater, 8 September, 1945. CO537/1541.

[110] Ibid.

the fact that he (somewhat smugly) argued the case for the Union to the Trengganu ruler using an English public school sporting analogy - a parallel which must surely have been missed by the Sultan who could not have been attuned to the notion of this kind of team spirit:

> In speaking of the necessity for Union I used the similes of a football team and a rowing crew (Brigadier Newboult adroitly translated the latter by reference to the paddling contests which are a favourite sport in Trengganu), and I added that, apart from the disadvantages of the old system in that each state might be apt to play its own game without regard to the interests of the whole side, the previous system had been cumbersome and fraught with delays.([111])

Curiously there is evidence clearly indicating that MacMichael felt the need to assure Whitehall, at least, that he understood the delicate nature of his task and the strong need for diplomacy in carrying it out. Very late in 1945 MacMichael wrote to his superiors reporting on his negotiations. In part that correspondence read:

> I am only sorry that I could not let you have the final results for all nine states by 19th, [sic.] but I can assure you I have wasted no time unavoidably, and any speeding up of things by brusqueness or the waving of big sticks, might have proved fatal and would certainly have left a feeling of resentment. This, I am sure you would agree, was to be avoided since it would certainly have made things far more difficult for those who will have to administer the Malays of the future.([112])

Whether MacMichael had got wind of criticisms of his style and manner of negotiation and this was reflected in his correspondence to Gater is hard to say. The tone of the letter does not seem particularly defensive and it seems more likely that the correspondence highlights a genuine concern on the part of MacMichael that he expedite the negotiations as rapidly as possible without engendering counter productive ill feeling - that he was genuinely a victim of the conflicting imperatives of speed and diplomacy imposed on him by Whitehall and that his abrasive manner and ignorance of Malay customs only exacerbated the inevitable tension between himself and the Malay rulers rather than being the sole cause of it.

<u>The Origins of Malay Nationalism on the Peninsular.</u>

Before moving on to look at the stronger outburst of Malay nationalism in the immediate post war period it is essential to establish more clearly in broader terms the way in which

---

[111] Note of First Interview with His Highness the Sultan Elect of Trengganu (... December the 19th) CO 537/1541.

[112] MacMichael to Gater, 19 December, 1945. CO 537/1541.

changing productive and wider social relations carried an emerging sense of modern Malay identity in the decades leading up to Japanese occupation. This emerging sense of a wider Malay identity was, in these decades, mainly an elite phenomenon and corresponded, in the particular forms it took within the elite, to the differing fortunes of different sections of the elite. As we have seen, with the coming of the British and the differing bases upon which power was exercised, and status acquired, there was considerable differentiation within the elite in terms of power and status. While some of the Malay elite were `tamed' and accommodated themselves to the new regime, others stood outside it. It was this basic division that was the source of intra-elite tensions within the Malay community and which gave rise to quite different kinds of emergent Malay nationalism.

On the one hand there was, by World War II, the Malay aristocracy retaining positions of subordinate power and privilege under the British who, together with the English educated orthodox Muslim administrative elite staffing the burgeoning colonial bureaucracy throughout the period accepted, albeit on the whole grudgingly, the new regime, and sought advantage within it. While these Malays certainly quarrelled with the British their contention was limited in its scope and aimed, not at the destruction of the colonial system, but rather at the maintenance of their desired degree of privilege within it. On the other hand there were also Malays active within the elite who were educated in the vernacular, who were adherents of unorthodox Islam, and who were in fundamental disagreement with the colonial regime and who sought a radically restructured social order for Malays within a wider alliance of Malay speaking peoples extending beyond the borders of the peninsular. While both these broad groups sought to lead the masses down a path of increased national self realization they did so in very different ways and with very different specific goals though neither was able to secure mass appeal for itself prior to the war.

Thus, in the decades leading up to World War II, there were two strands of Malay nationalism that were overtly political in their nature. Running parallel with these, and overlapping and reinforcing the strand of nationalism embodied in the views and activities of the Malay educated intelligentsia referred to above, was a third strand of Malay nationalism which was much more strongly religious in this orientation. This was the nationalism of the Arab-educated religious reform movement. The religious reform movement, according to Roff in his pioneering work on Malay nationalism, `found its ideological origins in the Islamic

renaissance which took place in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt and Turkey, around the turn of the nineteenth century.'([113]) While this reformist drive was primarily religious in its focus aiming to purify Islam by returning it to its original form, it carried with it secular, political, overtones as well. Thus converts to reformism returning from the Middle East to Malaya sought to `renovate Islam in their own society and to make it a fit vehicle with which to respond to the social and economic challenges posed by alien domination.'([114]) The aim was to `return to the purity of the original Islam cleansed of accretions of custom which stood in the way of progress', and to achieve `the social equality of all Muslims before God.'([115]) Roff further points out that the reformists (Kuam Muda) came into conflict with the traditional Malay establishment - `the rulers and their religious establishments' and `the rural ulama (Kaum Tau) and this contest was a many-faceted and long pursued argument which acted as an important modernizing force within Malay society and provided a terminology for innovation and reaction controversies which extended far beyond the purely religious sphere.'([116])

Still, while the contest spilled over beyond the purely religious sphere, the reformism itself was not specifically political, in Roff's view. But it did, Roff contends, have a slowly developing political aspect: `The politicization of the image of Kuam Muda began to make itself evident only in the 1920s notwithstanding the political implications inherent in reformist ideas prior to this time.'([117]) Still, the political aspect of Kuam Muda may have been stronger than Roff thought though the evidence to the contrary thus far in the sources is inconclusive: as we have seen, religious reformism, or something looking very much like it, seems to have

---

[113] Roff, Origins, p.254.

[114] Roff, Origins, p.254.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., p.87.

been a motivating factor in the Trengganu Rising though the way in which this operated is far from clear in the sources; and it may well have been a factor earlier, too, in the Kelantan Rising though here the role of religion is even less clear. Funston questions Roff's view that Kuam Muda were `never specifically political, with the exception of a few students at Al-Azhar University in Cairo'.([118]) According to Funston, while the published writings of the movement contain conflicting evidence on the subject - both for and against a specifically political approach - Funston concludes on balance that the latter was most likely. `It would indeed' Funston writes, `be strange if members of this movement did not hold political views.'([119]) Citing steps taken by British authorities to investigate the activities of the movement in 1923 as additional evidence for his view Funston concludes: `it seems then that political objectives were pursued by the reformists but that this be done covertly.'([120])

Still, the line between Roff's view and that of Funston is a fine one. By `not specifically political' Roff meant that the Kuam Muda `never succeeded in elaborating, either organizationally or programmatically, a political nationalism capable of attracting most support' and nothing that Funston sets down contradicts this.([121]) The evidence so far seems to be more with Roff than Funston. Active British suspicion is not in itself proof of covert political activity on the part of the reformists and more evidence is needed to support Funston's assertion. While Islamic reformism did lend itself to political activity on occasions in some way thus far unclear in the sources the fact is that it was largely inert as a political force in its own right in the pre-war decades: it was only when it merged with secular radical Malay nationalism in the very late pre war period that it started to become more of an overt political force aimed at purifying Islamic doctrine and practice on the peninsular as part of a drive towards a wider range of radical social goals.

Roff points out that there was a merging of this reformist strand with that being given

---

[118] Funston, Malay Politics, p.30.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Roff, Origins, p.87.

expression by the secular Malay educated intelligentsia and it was a combination of the secular and primarily religious views that gave rise to the radical Malay nationalist alternative to that represented by the views of the Malay colonial establishment. It was, then, the merging of these two strands which leant organized radical Malay nationalism a fundamentalist religious aspect in the years leading immediately up to World War II.([122]) While radical Malay nationalism was unable to draw widespread popular support its practitioners were none the less drawn in large part from the ranks of the peasantry and it is perhaps in this fact that we can see the reason for the populist appeal of the later derivation of this kind of nationalism since it was being shaped by educated Malays with their roots planted firmly in the rural sphere.([123])

In this way, then, Roff, and the scholars who have followed him, have identified three main strands to emerging Malay nationalism in the pre-war decades focussed around three Malay elite groups: the Arabic-educated religious reform movement; the largely Malay-educated autochthonous intelligentsia; and the English-educated bureaucracy, `itself drawn mainly from the traditional elite in metamorphosis.'([124]) By the time of the Malayan Union conflict this emergent nationalism had achieved, in large measure in response to the Union issue itself, a stronger organizational form, with fundamentalist and secular radical strands combined in the more radical Malay thrust against the new constitutional arrangements. By the years immediately prior to the Japanese occupation the English educated Malay elite were organized into Malay associations (the Persatuan Melayu) for the advancement of Malay rights against British interests while the radical Malays had formed the Kesatuan Melayu

[122] Ibid., p.255.

[123] Roff indicates that this radical Malay intelligentsia was `in large part the product of the centrally located Sultan Idrus Training College for vernacular teachers and two similar institutions for technical and agricultural education' and were `drawn from the peasant class in Malay society'.

Ibid., p.255.

[124] Taken from Roff's summary of his findings.

Ibid., p.254.

Muda as a `small, pseudo-political party.'([125])

The organized popular Malay protest to Union was, then, divided into two main camps: on the one hand there were the Malay Associations - the Persatuan Melayu; and on the other hand the Kesatuan Melayu. Immediately prior to the Japanese occupation the Persatuan Melayu had branches in separate states, was a quasi political movement in its orientation, and was dominated by an English-educated and traditional elite.([126]) These associations had a membership comprised mainly of government employees and had, therefore, the interests of these employees as the main focus of their policies. Their stance on Union was a relatively moderate one. The Kesatuan Melayu on the other hand was comprised of a membership of vernacular school teachers, students and journalists and was revolutionary and pro-Indonesian in its orientation.([127])

The moderate organized Malay resistance to Union was, Roff points out, prompted by the Clementi decentralization policy of the 1930s. That policy was, Roff says, seen by many Malays for what it was: `a prelude to further rationalization of the political structure of the peninsular and the creation of a common Malay nationality which must inevitably threaten specifically Malay interests'.([128]) These Malays advanced criticism of the policy which `took the form of special pleas for continued Malay privilege, not of anti-colonial nationalism.' The view advanced was that this stance would benefit all Malays on the peninsular in the long run.([129]) The Associations were formed, then, in the late 1930s to give expression to these sentiments held by the Malay elite.

It is clear, then, from Roff that the Associations were somewhat narrow in their composition and representation. Referring to the two strands into which the traditional elite

---

[125] Ibid., p.235-247, p.255.

[126] Allen, Malayan union, p.67, 90n.

[127] Roff, Origins, pp.232, 233.
Allen, Malayan Union, p.90.

[128] Roff, Origins, pp.235, 236.

[129] Ibid., p.236.

had begun to split in the 1930s - those whose role lay within the indigenous Malay establishment; and those who held positions in the English-educated bureaucracy - he points out that it was the latter group that was the mainspring of the Associations formed in the late 1930s.([130]) While the Associations purported to be broadly representative the self interested, careerist nature of their anti Union protest is clearly evident in their recorded protests as we shall see. While the Associations purported to speak for the Malay masses (in February 1946, the Perlis Malay Association protested `the White Paper for Malayan Union and Equal citizenship' in the name of 55,000 Malays) most of its energy was directed at protecting its sectional interests in the matter.([131])

It was on a very different approach and perspective to that of the moderates in the late 1930s that the smaller and less influential group of vernacular educated Malays who had not been `tamed' were pitting themselves against the British colonial establishment with their own organization. These were the disaffected Malays identified above - Malays of a more strongly traditional Islamic persuasion and who were strongly anti-colonial and bitterly resentful of what they saw as the privileged and compromised position of the Malays who had accommodated themselves within the British colonial establishment. The concept of nationality within this group was both ethnically and culturally narrower than that of the British and geographically more extensive. Instead of a union of different races on the peninsular in a common Malayan nationality they looked instead to a wider geographic national unity of the predominant race on peninsular Malaya and Indonesia. While this nationalist perspective of theirs was a later development in the period of colonial rule the disaffection of this group was a continuation of the purist Islamic protest evident in the Kelantan and Trengganu risings and a forerunner, in its religious and internal social aspects, to the brand of Islamic protest which took on electoral force from early in the Independence period. In 1946, however, this radical Malay elite protest was in the earlier stages of its

---

[130] Ibid.

[131] Perlis Malay Association to The Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 February, 1946. CO 537/1551.

organization and lacked the presence of the moderate Malay resistance in the Associations. While it directed its appeal to, and formulated protest policy on behalf of, the Malay masses, its active membership was very small being confined to a vernacular educated intelligentsia. In 1946 it was the fledgling Kesatuan Melayu, and organizations that grew out of it, which was giving expression to these more deep seated and radical Malay grievances against the Union. While the concerns of this group did not dominate in the overall Malay protest against Union they were none the less a major concern to the British and they monitored the activities of the radicals closely.

Thus, in Kelantan in 1946 there were two rival organizations resisting the Union: the Persekutuan Persetiaan Melayu Kelantan (Malay Patriotic Association of Kelantan) or PPMK; and the Persatuan Melayu Kelantan(the Kelantan Malay Association) or PMK.([132]) The PPMK was the more radical of the two and purported, like its rival organization, to represent the masses: and, like the latter, it fell well short of a mass membership.([133]) In reality the PPMK was, in terms of its membership and outlook, a sectional group comprised of pre-war radicals who had moved from the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) into the Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Muda(National Association of Young Malays), or PKMM, which was its successor organization. The PPMK was in effect a local front organization for the PKMM.([134]) The PKMM, like its counterpart organizations in other states, was hostile to the accommodation of the English educated Malay bureaucratic elite with British colonialism and which cast its protest in much wider social terms than the PMK. Thus the PKMM spoke - or purported to speak - for the Malay masses on the Union questions in quite a different way from that of PMK. The latter was much less radical in its stance and more specific in its demands.([135])

While the emergence of Malay nationalism in this way to 1946 was a peninsular-wide

---

[132] Kessler, Islam and Politics, p.105.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid., pp. 104,105.

[135] Ibid.; pp.105, 56-61. See also Chapter 6 above.

phenomenon the stronger impetus of Malay nationalism was located in the Unfederated and especially the Northern Malay States with their greater proportion of Malays to other races and their stronger Malay identity and character than was the case in the other states on the peninsular.([136]) As we have seen, these states had exhibited strong separationist tendencies throughout the post 1909 period as their rulers sought to retain, and an emerging group of English educated Malay administrators sought to acquire and maintain, power and influence within the British colonial regime. At the same time there is some evidence to suggest that the radical Malay elite strands were stronger in the north as we shall see below. While the impetus for Malay nationalism was clearly strong at this elite level in the north we can be less sure of its relative strength within the peasantry in the north during the Union conflict. Given the steady encroachment on the lives of the peasantry on the peninsular there must have been some developing Malay state consciousness on a more popular level though thus far we know very little of how this was developing and how strongly it was emerging in Malaya as a whole and even less of any regional differences in the development of popular Malay nationalist sentiment. The sources tend to give the impression that emerging Malay nationalism on the peninsular in the 20s and 30s was mainly an elite phenomenon and they are no doubt correct in this. Still, given the outbreaks of localized popular resistance in Kelantan and Trengganu, and as we shall see, the strong emergence in the early independence period of populist Malay Islamic radicalism in the north with strong links with the two radical strands of Malay nationalism in the pre-war decades, we can surmise that there was a stronger, largely nascent, popular Malay nationalism in the north. It may be that a stronger emerging popular nationalist consciousness was evidenced in a stronger popular protest against Union in the north though we can't be sure of this until further research enables us to gauge regional differentiation in the Malay peasant response to the Union proposal.

---

[136] Sopiee comments on the stronger separationist inclination of the Unfederated Malay States in these terms:`The power and separate identity of the Malay state were often important considerations by themselves. They were also seen, especially by those from the Unfederated Malay States, as the bastion against the encroachment of the other races and ensuring against deculturization'.

Sopiee, From Malayan Union, p.23.

Malay Resistance to the Union.

When Bourdillon wrote very early in 1946 that the Malay rulers were not resisting the Union in their own right but were responding to `popular pressure' he was seeking to offer reassurance that Malay resistance to the Union was of a limited and localized nature well short of the `universal conflagration' being forecast by Sir George Maxwell at the time.([137]) By `popular pressure' Bourdillon meant protest from `the more reflective Malays' and in particular those organized into state associations with a particular concern that the position of Malay government servants was under threat from the citizenship provisions of the union.([138]) In the event he underestimated the strength of that resistance overall but he was right that it was focussed much more around the concerns of the Malay administrative group than those of other sectors of the Malay population engaged in protesting the proposals. The protest was, as Allen observes, almost entirely led `by Malay civil servants and state officials'.([139]) while the activity of this group was clearly a peninsular wide phenomenon there can be no doubt that their influence was particularly strong in the north where these protagonists in the resistance had become used to the idea of a strong Malay influence within the structures of state and feared the intrusion of non-Malays into the administrative realm under the citizenship provisions of the Union.

While it appears that the old elite - the state rulers and their councils - were stampeded into signing the treaties and it seemed for a while that they had been won over it was the follow-up reaction of organized administrators that not only resisted Union in their own right but gave cause for the old elite to re-think its position and renounce their earlier agreement with the Union. While Bourdillon thought the rulers were being goaded into resistance from below it seems more likely that, while the impetus for the revolt came from below, the old elite did discover genuine reasons why it would not be in their interest to join the Union. We have to be careful, then, with the notion of a popular resistance on the peninsular to the Union. While there are reports in the sources of popular demonstrations against the Union it is clear

---

[137] Bourdillon to Paskin, 23 February, 1946 CO537/1548.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Allen, Malayan Union, p.66.

that the main impetus for anti-Union revolt came from a middle strata in Malay society and it was their interests which held sway as the protest against the move grew and Malayan Union was defeated. While there are claims in the scholarship that the Malay masses were actively supporting th anti-union protest the degree and extent of such involvement is not made clear - not spelled out - in these secondary sources and we must question the assumption that widespread peasant protest was a significant factor in the overall protest against Union. Apart from the lack of evidence of any such strong and widespread popular support for the anti-union cause at the grass roots level it is hard to see what would have motivated the peasantry to such resistance since they had no direct and immediate stake in the constitutional and administrative proposals being put forward and later implemented at the time.

The Resistance of the Old Elite to Union.

The record clearly reveals the traditional NMS Malay elite - the rulers and their councils - were resisting the Union strongly, both before and after the treaty negotiations were complete. In so doing, they cast their opposition both in terms of protecting their own interests as independent rulers of their states and also in terms of the interests of their subjects - an advocacy no doubt promoted in its popular aspect by the kind of resistance activities from the administrative associations that Bourdillon had in mind when he wrote of pressure on the rulers from below. Thus, when MacMichael cabled the War Office that the Kedah agreement had been signed he complained that the `[a]tmosphere was markedly glum' and of `difficulties greater than any hitherto experienced'.[140] He continued:

> There was much evasiveness and procrastination over a period of some days on the part both Regent and State Council [their] main if not only ground for objection being loss of independence and prestige implicit in new dispensation as contrasted with degree of separation enjoyed by Kedah in past.([141])

Likewise to the Colonial Office early in 1946 Newboult relayed news of continued resistance from the ruler of Kedah to the Union. Newboult had found `the ruler worked up' and arguing his case against Union with `deep conviction': `He said that he did not (repeat not) favour

---

[140] MacMichael to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8 December, 1945. CO 537/1541. Correspondence in the form of a cypher from BMA to War Office.

[141] Ibid.

Union but would not object to some kind of Federation which would ensure that local administration would remain in the hand of himself and his state'.([142])

If the kedah ruler was indeed `worked up' in his negotiations with MacMichael over Union his written response direct to Whitehall was a measured, though nonetheless determined, one - a response which rejected Union and, rather than looking forward to possible federation, seemed to be stressing the suitability of the pre-war arrangement between Kedah and Britain. The main purpose of the correspondence was to protest the MacMichael `agreement' between his state and Britain. He complained that he had signed the document under duress and stressed the suitability - the workability - of the 1923 Agreement which had governed relations between Kedah and Britain in the pre-war years. He seemed to be diplomatically implying that the agreement gave the British what they wanted in terms of kedah's cooperation with the other states on the peninsular, and protection of the interests of non-Malay racial groups within the state, while at the same time allowing a healthy degree of independence for Kedah to run its own affairs. A copy of the 1923 Agreement was attached to the correspondence.([143])

In the same year the sultan of Trengganu cast his protest at Union in paternal terms on behalf of his Malay subjects: `... what grieves us most is the fact that it appears we are being divested of our powers over our country, which thereby means that our Malay subjects will be cut off from us ...'([144]) In a reference to the citizenship provisions the Sultan put it to Newboult that his Malay subjects were `still too weak and backward to be placed on equal level with the aliens who [would] be given equal states in the Malayan Union'.([145]) In general in these discussions the Trengganu Sultan came across to the British as `consistently ... very

---

[142] Newboult to Colonial Office, 21 February, 1946. CO537/1555. Correspondence in the form of a cypher from Headquarters, British Military Administration in Malaya to Secretary of State for the Colonies in London.

[143] Sultan of Kedah to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 February, 1946. CO 537/1555.

[144] Sultan of Trengganu to Newboult, 3 March, 1946. CO537/1552.

[145] Ibid.

concerned about the economic future of the Malays.'([146])

New Elite Resistance to Union.

From the outset of Union negotiations the separationist tendencies of the NMS Malay administrative elite anxious to preserve and further consolidate its position within the now well developed colonial bureaucracy was a strong component of the Malay civil servant protest on the peninsular as a whole. Although these civil servants, through their Associations, often framed their protest against Union in more general terms, it seems that their principal fear was that the citizenship provisions of the Union would threaten their bureaucratic positions by opening them up to competition to outsiders from other ethnic groups of the peninsular.

Certainly Bourdillon saw this fear as the mainspring of popular opposition to Union on the peninsular as a whole. He accepted that a petition protesting the Union from `some Malays in Kelantan' was `inspired principally by Government servants who feared that the new policy of citizenship would result in nearly all the Government appointments being filled either by Europeans or Chinese' and claimed that this reinforced his own impression that `popular reaction amongst Malays [was] based almost entirely on fears, exaggerated but real, of the citizenship proposals.'([147]) Newboult, too, sought to impress upon the Colonial Office

---

[146] Hone to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 March, 1946. CO 537/1552.

[147] The petition referred to by Bourdillon was contained in `a despatch from the C.C.A.O.' and was part of the official correspondence (`No 4 on the Kelantan sub-file') that he was reading at the time. The commentary above on the inspiration behind the petition was advanced by Bourdillon as an `interesting passage' from an unnamed source and was part of the despatch read by Bourdillon.

Bourdillon to Paskin, 23 February 1946. CO537/1548.

The petition was presented to Ralph Hone, Chief Civil Affairs Officer in Malaya at the time, during his tour of Kelantan. Hone sent the petition with a covering note to Newboult asking that both be sent in a despatch to London and it seems very likely therefore that the `interesting passage' referred to by Bourdillon is from Hone's covering note to the petition.

Newboult to Lloyd, 7 February, 1946. CO537/1548.

Although this correspondence does not specify any organization as having been responsible for the petition, the job designation given in `the interesting passage' (government servants) strongly suggests that the Persatuan Melayu Kelantan (PMK) - the Kelantan Malay Association - was behind it. See below in this chapter for a discussion of the PMK in the context of a wider discussion of the Malay Associations and their place in organized Malay

the urgent difficulty posed to Union by the reaction of Malay government employees to the citizenship proposals and drew specific attention to the Kelantan petition as an indication of this: `You will see from the fears of the Kelantan deputation to what an extremity they have gone when they consider that in appointments in the future there will be a flood of Europeans and Chinese'.([148]) Clearly, then, the Kelantan protest was having a strong impact on the BMA and, through its despatches, the Colonial office in London.

Certainly this resistance by the Kelantan and other state government employees to the citizenship proposals was seen as a major stumbling block to Union back in London though not to the point where Whitehall was prepared to accommodate a BMA request to postpone the implementation of the proposals until the heat had gone out of the Malay opposition to them.([149])

At this time, early in 1946, the Colonial Office was in a difficult position: there was at that time very considerable tension between the pressure from the Malay government servants resisting Union and the anxious BMA response to this pressure on the one hand, and its own desire to expedite the Union scheme as quickly as possible. In addition to the Kelantan protest Bourdillon also drew attention to the activities of the Selangor Malay Association in protesting the Union (`... reported to be a considerable body and to reflect Malay opinion in Selangor generally'; it `protested vigorously and spontaneously'), "`Perlis Malays'" (`also protested spontaneously'), the Trengganu Malay Association and the Pahang Malay Association (`did the same') and pointed out that resistance to the Union was gaining ground in Johore.([150]) While he urged that `the surrender of jurisdiction by the Sultans and the

---

resistance to Union.

[148]. Newboult to Lloyd, 7 February, 1946. CO 537/1548.

[149]. Colonial Office to BMA, 1 March, 1946. CO537/1552. Correspondence in the form of a cypher telegram.

See also S. of S. Colonies to BMA, 28 February, 1946. CO537/1548. This correspondence is also in the form of a cypher telegram and includes basically the same message as the above: it also takes more the form of a directive issuing concrete instructions from the Minister to the BMA.

[150]. Bourdillon to Paskin, 23 February, 1946. CO537/1548.

creation of the Malayan Union [were] not the subject of deep Malay protest' he cautioned that the Secretary of State for the Colonies should know that `the citizenship proposals [were] regarded with genuine fear and dislike'.([151]) Bourdillon's report would have been little comfort for Whitehall as it weighed up its chances of getting Union accepted on the peninsular. There was, in March of that year, a Commons debate pending and this, too, added to the evident uncertainty in the Colonial Office that it could achieve its objective quickly and their response to the BMA request for postponement was tentative in its nature:

> Your recommendation for postponement of Citizenship order in Council has been considered here at highest level, but it has been decided to maintain as previously planned. Matter will be debated in House of Commons on Friday 8 Mar, and decision can not of course be regarded as final while proposals are still before Parliament.([152])

Thus, while the Colonial Office resisted BMA pressure to slow down the implementation of the citizenship provisions the Malay resistance to them was making its officials nervous and they urged the need in correspondence with the BMA in Malaya for effective publicity for these provisions in order to allay fears within the Malay community.([153]) In so urging the need for publicity it was clearly the kind of opposition from Malay civil servants indicated in the Kelantan petition (`... Kelantan Government employees who imagine that they will be henceforth swamped by Europeans or Chinese ...') that was uppermost in their mind.([154]) The Colonial Office rejected the postponement request because there was `no likelihood of immediate adverse reactions by Chinese and Indians to deferment of [the] citizenship Order' and it was felt that a `period of some six months during which opposing points of view would be canvassed up and down Malaya might cause racial discord rather than avoid it.'([155]) In other words the Colonial Office did concede that the potential for a reaction

---

[151] Ibid.

[152] S. of S. Colonies to BMA, 28 February, 1946. CO537/1548.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Ibid.

against the proposal existed but thought it better to attempt to forestall it by acting quickly to implement it - to enact a fait accompli which left no time for opposition to develop.

The British took heart, too, from the fact that the dominant groups protesting the Union were relatively moderate in their stance. Certainly there was stronger and more radical protest within the Malay camp and the British carefully monitored this: their intelligence at the time, however, was that this was being contained within the ambit of the less radical organized Malay protest and that the destabilizing threat this posed to the British regime and its proposal was being held in check. The irony was, then, that it was the less radical Malays themselves who held off an extremist Malay threat to the Union and which, in so doing, helped allow the British the confidence to proceed with their Union proposal. The British drew the conclusion that, by a fine margin, the dominant less radical Malay protest was containable, and that the danger of extremist and highly destabilizing elements within that protest plunging the country into chaos was minimal.

In January 1946 a `mammoth meeting' for Malays in Kedah organized by the Kesatuan Melayu Kedah unanimously rejected the Union. It was a protest which raised more comprehensive objections than those of the Kelantan Association and which was more broadly based in its representation than the latter in its protest. The Kedah protest urged the British to consult `the views of the masses of the Malay people and not [those] of the Sultan alone' and seemed to hint that the Malays in the state would become dispossessed in their own homeland - like the Palestinians in theirs - if the Union went ahead.([156]) In an oblique reference it also pressed the need for an independent Malay state government to help and protect the states `agricultural people' who would otherwise `be powerless' to defend themselves `against the industrialized and the commercialized peoples'.([157]) The appeal of this protest was clearly a much wider one for the protection of the state's Malay population at large, not just the civil servants, against what was seen as inevitable encroachment by immigrant races if Union went ahead. It was very much a state based argument and one informed by an awareness of the commonality of interest between Kedah and the other

[156] Kesatuan Melayu Kedah to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 January, 1946. CO 537/1555.

[157] Kesatuan Melayu Kedah to Hone, 3 February, 1946. CO537/1555.

Unfederated states in the north. No reference was made to the welfare of Malays in the Federated Malay States and the impression given was that the NMS had a special claim to separate sovereignty on the basis of their more strongly Malay character: `Kedah and the Non Federated Malay States are primarily Malay States with Malays predominating. We therefore see no ostensible reason as to why we should be called upon to change our status and forgo our privileges for the sake of the immigrant races'.([158]) Instead, the Kedah protesters argued the case for the bringing together `of all the Malays of the peninsular under one centralized system of constitutional Government.' A `"Malay union" and not a "Malayan Union"' was, they stated, `more in keeping with their nationalistic aspiration'.[159] Still, while the Kedah protest adopted a strongly populist tone in its protest (it was delivered in the name of `the Malays of Kedah') it had little impact on the British. While the British were monitoring the activities of what they saw as an extremist Malay element within the main thrust of the Malay protest movement they clearly relied on moderate leaders to keep extremists in check and pitched their own response at the reactions of the moderate Associations rather than those of Malay radicals. Thus, in February 1946 Major General Ralph Hone, Chief Civil Affairs Officer with the BMA, wrote to the Colonial Office in a tone which suggested that the Kedah protest had been conducted by an organization too recently formed to have credentials and support within the state's Malay population and which was led by nonentities:

> The second of the petitions ... was submitted by Kesatuan Melayu of Kedah, a Malay People's Association formed about 2 months ago. The petition was handed to me during my visit to Alor Star on 5 Feb 1946. Haji Husain, the President of the Kesatuan Melayu, who is a signatory to the petition is a Koran-teacher aged about 45. He has studied in Arabia and Egypt. Neither Haji Husain nor the other two persons who signed the petition are said to be men of any particular importance.([160])

This was in line with the general British view that extremist Malay opinion posed no major threat to their Union plans.

A little after Hone's visit to Kedah the Pan-Malayan Malay Conference was held to

---

[158] Ibid.

[159] Kesatuan Melayu Kedah to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 January, 1946. CO537/1555.

[160] Hone to Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 February, 1946. CO 537/1555.

decide on a combined Malay policy towards Union. The British found the conduct and outcome of this conference reassuring. In particular they noted that `Malay Communist Party Delegates and Indonesian elements were firmly controlled by the Chairman, Dato Onn ... who handled the very sensitive situation with great skill and avoided disturbances' that it was feared might occur at one stage in the conference.([161]) The same observer `was impressed by the fact that the bulk of the Malays were determined to adopt a moderate policy and have no time for Extremists or Indonesians'.([162]) The extremists referred to were based in north Malay - in Kedah - and we can see in this some measure of the relative strength of radical opposition to Union in that State. It was this group which, in their behaviour as conference delegates and as members of the fledgling UMNO) gave stronger voice to the views and aspirations of the radical strands of Malay nationalism emerging on the peninsular.([163]) Dato Onn, himself, was less sanguine however. He warned that a strong youth movement with Indonesian sympathies was seeking to form a section within his own movement. He had forbidden this but feared that if Britain pressed ahead with Union malcontents would rally to the pro-Indonesian cause and that he would be unable to control the direction of the anti-Union Malay protest.([164]) The identity of the youth movement is not specified in the correspondence but it seems likely that it is a reference to the Kedah Estate Youth Corps dealt with in this chapter below.

Thus, while the Kedah protest, and others like it, caused the British a certain amount of anxiety they saw them as posing only a limited threat to their scheme. They were in no mood to curb their plans on the basis of the more radical Malay objections and instead looked to the moderate -and from the British point of view at that time containable - protest of Malay

---

[161] John ... [? signature unclear], `Personal Impression - Malayan Union', Labour [Department?], Malaya, 15 August, 1946, p.1. CO 537/1548.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Ibid.

Funston observes that the left wing membership of Congress and UNMO was Kedah based. Funston, Malay Politics, p.77.

[164] H.Q. B.M.A. (M) to S. of S., 29 March, 1946. CO537/1548. Correspondence in form of a cypher.

government servants through their Associations. In the event they were wrong: the Associations were able to engineer the defeat of the Union. But at the time the British allowed themselves to believe that while extremists remained on the periphery of mainstream Malay protest they could push their scheme through, albeit with difficulty, contending with a certain manageable level of dissent but without the upheaval being predicted by critics within and outside the British camp - without the sort of upheaval foreseen by Winstedt and other old Malayan hands for example. In so proceeding they were right about the relative powerlessness of the Kesatuan Melayu and other radical organizations on the peninsular but wrong about the strength of moderate Malay protest and its ability to manipulate extremist groups and to sway popular opinion in its favour.

The Mass Response to Union.

Allen takes the view that strong anti-Union support on the part of the Malay masses was one of a number of paradoxes associated with the Union failure and the beginnings of UMNO Allen found it `remarkable' that the anti-union movement led by Malay civil servants and state officials `commanded almost one hundred per cent support among the Malay masses'.([165]) Funston, in his study of Malay politics in Malaysia, echoes a similar view in writing of `massive but orderly Malay demonstrations of protest in all states' within days of the release of the White Paper in 1946 and in more general terms implies a mass response in opposition to Union.([166]) The British Government White Paper referred to here contained, Funston tells us, `two proposals of great significance to the Malays: their Sultans were to be almost completely stripped of their powers and non-Malays were to be given virtually an unrestricted opportunity to obtain citizenship'.[167]

---

[165] Allen, Malayan Union, p.66.

[166] Funston, Malay Politics in Malaysia, p.76.

The implication is carried in his claim that, whereas UMNO was successful in mobilizing mass opposition to Union, this was not matched by an ability to attract supporters into the party. Funston's statement on this is quoted in full in the text of this thesis below.

Ibid., p.79.

[167] Ibid.

Likewise, as we have seen, Sopiee creates an impression of a strong reaction against Union that was general throughout the Malay community with his claim that, in response to Union, the Malays `awoke from their deep slumber and burst forth in a frenzy of political activity' and that on the formation of UMNO the Malays became `a race awakened'.([168]) He illustrates what he sees as the popular nature of the Malay awakening with two examples: a demonstration confronting MacMichael on his arrival in Khota Bharu on 15 December, 1945 reported to be 10,000 strong; and another involving 15,000 Malays conducted at the inauguration of Dato Onn's Movement of Peninsular Malays.([169]) However, while the upper and middle strata of the Malay community couched much of their protest in populist terms the actual nature and degree of Malay peasant involvement in, and sympathy with, the protest is far from clear and a much closer scrutiny of these mass demonstrations is needed in order to establish the degree of popularity of the anti-Union protest.([170])

---

[168] Sopiee, From Malayan Union, p.25.

[169] Ibid.

[170] While the scholarship generally seems to accept a high degree of popularity in the protest there is at least one dissenter from this. Daud Latiff cites a BMA monthly report to support his view that `the sacred cow of "public opinion", frequently bandied about in support of one course of action or another [in the Union dispute], in most cases means no more than the opinions and reactions of the ruling clique or strata within each community, and mostly only the Malay ruling clique at that.' He continues:

> To the majority of people in Malaya the politics of constitutional and administrative reform were very distant issues, their lives being dominated by the basic struggle for the existence in the face of acute food shortages, low wages and the activities of a repressive security apparatus. The dispute over Malayan Union was a dispute between various competing strata of the colonial ruling class, the emergent national and comprador bourgeoisie, and the Whitehall technocrats. Either way the workers and peasants were going to lose out, the "solution" to the problem ultimately being in the interests of British imperialism alone'.

Daud Latiff, `The British Military Administration 1945 to April 1946' in Mohamed Amin and Malcolm Caldwell (eds.), Malaya The Making of a Neo-Colony(Nottingham, 1977), pp.142, 143.

In general Latiff has a valid point in drawing attention to the elitist nature of anti-Union protest though he does not closely scrutinize the issue of worker and peasant response - or lack of response - to the issue and it may be that he has gone to the other extreme and underemphasized the role of these groups. Given the reported size of anti-Union demonstrations it does seem likely that the Malay peasantry, at least, was co-opted into resistance to some extent. The question is not so much whether there was some grass-roots involvement in the protests but the strength of that involvement. Latiff argues from an avowedly strong ideological position and it may be that this has led him into too crude an interpretation in discounting some sort of mass response altogether. There remains the possibility that the Malay peasantry, at least, were persuaded in significant numbers on the

Allen may well have found the Union failure less paradoxical if he had been in a position to more closely scrutinize the nature and degree of Malay mass involvement in the protests of the time. Certainly his claim of almost one hundred per cent support among the Malay masses for the anti-Union cause seems thinly based.

Allen seems to have in mind one particular popular demonstration which took place outside the Station Hotel in Kuala Lumpur in response to the inauguration of the Malayan Union early in April, 1946. According to Allen a `tremendous crowd' of wildly excited Malays massed outside [the hotel] screaming their loyalty [to their Malay Rulers]'.([171])

Allen may well be right to claim as he does that this demonstration was significant because the rulers, alienated from their British masters by the Union push, chose the occasion to for the first time to accede to the loyal acclamation of their subjects and to allow themselves a position as leaders of a popular movement against Union. But the extent of this loyal resistance to Union is unclear from this demonstration alone and Allen's assumption that the rulers from that time were at the head of an anti-Union mass movement reaching down to the grass roots level is unsubstantiated in his monograph. Much more information on the make up of the crowd - the social identity of its members, the degree to which their presence and response was representative of a wider geographic social cross section of the Malay community on the peninsular - is needed and is not given by Allen.([172])

It is true that Allen sees the Station Hotel protest as having largely symbolic significance - a significance drawing weight from the other popular demonstrations on the peninsular -

---

basis of a more concrete appeal related to, thought not arising directly from, the abstract constitutional proposal of Union, to take to the streets in support of the anti Union protest - a possibility not canvassed by Latiff.

[171] Allen, Malayan Union, p.42.

[172] Neither is it given by a report in The Straits Times on this demonstration. The demonstration was given middling emphasis in the paper and simply reports that a large crowds of Malays assembled outside the Station Hotel to protest the Union, that they were shouting slogans such as, `Long live the Sultans' and, `Long live the Malays' and that the demonstration came a few hours after the inauguration of the Union and the installation of Sir Edward Gent as its first Governor and Commander-in-Chief.

New Straits Times, 3 April, 1946.

though Allen does not make the connection directly. And it may well be that these other demonstrations - the 10,000 strong protest in 1945 in Khota Bharu and that conducted by the 15,000 Malays on the formation of the Peninsular Malay Movement in 1946 for example - may well have been indicative of an intensely loyalist, anti-Union sentiment amongst the Malay population at large. But again the details enabling us to make a judgement on this are lacking in the secondary sources.([173])

In general, then, while the secondary sources do assert the popularity of the anti-Union protest, they do not give a clear and precise account of the mass response to the move and their assertions remain largely unfounded. What we need, for a range of such demonstrations, is a clear idea of the composition of the crowd(especially the social strata to which they belonged), the particular local circumstances in which the demonstrations took place, and the precise motivation of those participating. If there were indeed large numbers of peasants represented in the demonstrations we need to know exactly what was said to them by way of incitement to join in the protest. We can surmise, for example, that they may have been persuaded to protest on the basis of a more concrete appeal by their leaders - leaders who were either of the Malay administrative elite or closely aligned with it. Perhaps these demonstration leaders were able to connect the abstract constitutional considerations of Union with the more immediate concerns of the peasantry: with food prices, the selling price of rice and rubber, the exactions of private and state landlords (indeed with the extraction of their surplus generally); with the disruption and hardship being experienced under the B.M.A. and later under the Union civil administration; and so on.([174]) Perhaps these leaders advanced the

---

[173] No doubt this is in large measure because they are not the kinds of details readily accessible to scholars relying more on English language sources.

[174] Apart from pointing out that the 1946 demonstrations included 450 women Sopiee offers no breakdown on the composition of the large crowd nor any clues as to their precise motivation. His sources are a Malay language newspaper for the 1945 demonstration and an English language newspaper for the one held in 1946 - sources not likely to give the kind of full exposition needed. It does seem that a useful starting point for a closer examination of the composition of popular demonstrations and the precise motives of those involved would be an examination of contemporary periodical sources, especially those in the vernacular, to see what information they yield. There is a case, too, for seeking some oral accounts of the demonstrations in the hope that participant observers still living may be able to throw light on the questions for which we need answers.

The only direct reference I have been able to find of peasant involvement in anti-Union demonstrations is that made by Denzil Peiris in an article on a dramatic demonstration involving rubber small holders in Kedah in 1975. Commenting on the unusual character of

argument that they would suffer more exploitation at the hands of Chinese entrepreneur if the citizenship proposals allowed more scope for this entrepreneurship in the NMS.

Thus, Allen is forced to rely on an oblique explanation for what he sees as Malay peasant activism against the Union: the Malay peasantry were not reacting to the Union proposals in their own right but rather were reacting to the effect of those proposals on the power and authority of their rulers.([175]) Allen's argument here focusses upon the fact that, whereas in other colonial countries - Indonesia for example - radical anti-establishment elite groups had been able to attract a mass following this was not the case in Malaya where the dominant emergent bureaucratic elite maintained a strong allegiance to the Sultanate. Thus, the peasantry were not drawn away from their traditional loyalty by emergent conflicting elites and this explains the strong demonstration of support for their rulers when the latter's interests were threatened by Union. The peasantry identified very strongly with their rulers, noted `blind loyalty to one's Ruler above all else', and, because they felt their ethnic identity under threat from the strong non-Malay presence on the peninsular, experienced a stronger sense of Malayaness than was the case in Indonesia where the proportion of non-Malays was less. `At the risk of tautology', Allen writes, `we may cite the conduct of the Malay masses in 1946 as proof of this assertion'.([176])

We need, however, to be wary of the `blind obedience' interpretation of peasant activism. Allen's argument appears here more of a non sequitur than a tautology since it does

---

this kind of peasant demonstration Peiris says, in passing: `It was the first time in 28 years that peasants had marched. Previously they had joined the massive popular opposition to the British proposal for a Malayan Union in 1946.'

Denzil Peiris, "The emerging rural revolution", Far Eastern Economic Review, January 10, 1975, p.29.

While this is strongly indicative of peasant involvement in anti- Union protest, in Kedah at least the source is a journalistic one and does not elaborate on the peasant involvement. The Baling rubber small holder demonstration which is the focus of the article is dealt with more fully below in the next chapter.

[175] Allen, Malayan Union, pp.66-69.

[176] Ibid., p.69.

not follow necessarily from what Allen sees as the strength of the 1946 demonstrations that their sole motivation was intense loyalty to their rulers. Allen has not been able here to offer historical proof that there was a strong and exclusive causational link between loyalty and protest and we must ask, assuming the peasants did take to the streets in significant numbers, whether there were other factors in operation causing them to do so. While we can readily accept that strong loyalty to the rulers could have been a significant motive for peasant anti-Union protest it is hard to see why, on the account thus far, it would have resulted in protest of the magnitude claimed, and it does seem likely that the loyalty factor needs to be seen as one amongst many which may have ignited a peasant reaction of the kind and degree claimed. Allen agrees that this kind of loyalist support was unprecedented to 1945: even if we accept that loyalty was the major motivation in 1945-46 we still need to know why there should have been such a vigorous demonstration of it in the immediate post war period.([177])

Certainly the answer does not lie in Allen's account of the relationship between the Malay peasantry and their superiors within the Malay social hierarchy. There is no indication that `the masses' were strongly led by the Malay elite in their protest and the impression left is that the mass demonstrations were spontaneous and largely unaided - more pro-ruler than anti-Union - spearheaded rather than incited, by the administrative elite. The role of the rulers seems, by Allen's account, to have been a relatively passive one. The initiative for what he sees as a massive show of loyalty did not, on his perception, lie with the rulers: rather they were, from the time of their symbolic actions in acknowledging crowd support during the Station Hotel demonstration, allowing themselves to ride the crest of a wave of popular support for them which was there fortuitously and not through any design on the part of the rulers. In the `After thought' section of his monograph Allen sees mainly a two tiered interaction between the rulers and the rest of the Malay population as providing the dynamic for mass protest against the Union with a middle strata of Malay elite serving only to focus and channel the long standing loyalty of the peasantry for their rulers. It was because, Allen asserts, the western educated Malay administrative elite were on-side with the rulers and had

---

[177] Allen writes of the sudden materialization of a nationalist movement in 1945-46, `poised to defend Rulers' and which, in his view as we have seen, `commanded almost one hundred percent support among the Malay masses'.

Allen, Malaya Union, p.66.

developed a good working relationship with them, that the former had been able, through their fledgling Onn-led UMNO to pull `the masses' - the peasantry - on side in protesting the Union. In Allen's words: `As far as the masses were concerned Onn's was the party which was defending their rulers, ...: they therefore followed Onn.'([178])

In all this, then, there is nothing to indicate that the masses protested from any direct self interest - nothing to indicate that they were being mobilized by others on that score and so the account of the strength of their reaction to Union and the motivation attributed to them (loyalty) do not seem to square with one another. Allen`s account of the motivation for the mass protest therefore seems unconvincing. His conclusion here is necessarily tentative and he is unable to offer an explanation as to precisely how the Western educated Malay elite was able to lead the Malay masses in loyalist anti-Union support. Neither has his argument been advanced significantly by later scholarship which also fails to spell out the nature of the link between the Congress, UMNO and the smaller radical Malay organizations and the behaviour of the masses at the time. Thus, while Allen, Sopiee and Funston all seem to agree that the embryonic Malay organizations failed to secure a strong support and involvement amongst the peasantry in the pre-war period - the period that Roff focussed on his study of the origins of Malay nationalism - they none-the-less go on to put forward, in the case of Allen, and assume, in the case of Sopiee and Funston, a remarkable elite-led popular activism, without underpinning this assumption with a close and discriminating examination of the behaviour of the Malay masses in the immediate post war period.([179]) Funston does, however, inadvertently

---

[178] Allen, Malayan Union, p.68.

[179] Allen deals only briefly with the pre-war Malay political awakening on the basis of Roff.

Allen, Malayan Union, pp.67,68.

By implication Allen seems to agree with Roff's conclusion that some of the elite groups attempting to mobilize the Malays - to foster a Malay national identity up to 1942 - `had been able to create or sustain a Malay nationalist movement' and that of these groups only `the English-educated administrators recruited mainly form the traditional ruling class ... was in the process of gaining a true mass following.'

Roff, Origins, p.211.

Allen's conclusion from this is that the allegiance of the Malay peasantry still lay firmly with

suggest the need for a re-assessment of the nature and strength of commitment on the part of the Malay masses to the anti-Union cause: `UMNO's success in mobilizing Malays in opposition to the Malayan Union had clothed it with the aura of an instantaneously successful mass political party. This is, however, misleading since success in utilizing the social ferment unleashed by the Union was not matched by an ability to attract supporters into the party.'([180]) Clearly from this the `awakening of the masses' was not the durable phenomenon in the early post war period generally portrayed in the secondary sources and some re-think of the strength of popular commitment to the basic principles of protest put forward by Congress and UMNO at the time is needed. Still, Funston does not follow up on this line of thought examining closely the nature and degree of popular Malay anti-Union in the light of his view that this fervour was short lived and instead adopts a forward focus in time examining the reasons for the failure of UMNO to secure a strong popular basis in the immediate wake of the anti-Union protest.([181])

Kessler ascribes in somewhat vague terms an independent motive on the part of the Malay peasantry in resisting Union: the peasantry, `angered by Britain's abrogation of its

---

their particular state rulers.

Allen, Malayan Union, pp.68,69.

Funston comments that by 1945 `each of the three streams of Malay nationalism [ie the three streams referred to by Roff: see above] had established its own particular niche though none had developed into a mass movement.'

Funston, Malay Politics, p.36.

Sopiee, in giving reasons for `comparatively so little opposition [to Union] up to the end of 1945' includes the fact that there `were no active mobilizers of mass Malay opinion, and no organizational leadership to organize whatever elite Malay opposition there was into a coherent, forceful whole.' He then goes on to argue that, by the beginning of 1946 `[t]he Malays started to launch a campaign of political mobilization and agitation such as had never before been seen in Malaya.'

Sopiee, From Malayan Union, pp.22, 23.

[180] Funston, Malay Politics, p.79.

[181] Ibid., pp.79-81.

commitments to the Malay people, were jolted from their political passivity.'([182]) Kessler sees the peasantry as having a sectional grievance of their own. It was a grievance that stood alongside those of the English educated elite administrators who saw their privileged position within the established order of Malay society threatened by the proposed centralized bureaucracy and the alien influences they saw as coming with it. These grievances in turn were lined up with those of the rulers who were being pressured to renounce their treaty rights to a privileged social position.([183]) There is no notion here of a peasantry being led by the nose to rebel by an elite accommodating itself to the wishes of the rulers - no suggestion that the peasantry were motivated mainly by a blind loyalty to their rulers. As we have seen, Kessler points out that neither of the two main rival organizations giving voice to Kelantanese Malay opposition to Union, the PPMK and the PMK, `could boast of mass membership' in 1946 and it was not until later in the immediate post war period that political parties newly formed and including elements from the above two organizations began to have substantial popular appeal from around the time of the pre-Independence 1955 elections.([184]) While Kessler may well be right that the Malay peasantry were aggrieved in their own right he does nothing to advance our knowledge as to precisely what those grievances arising out of the Union proposals were.

Precisely what, then, was the role of the masses in the anti-Union protest? Were they substantially involved in the Union protest or has the degree of such involvement been overstated in the secondary sources? If the mass of peasantry was strongly involved in a participatory sense what were the concerns that prompted them to be so? Precisely what appeal was made to them by the Malay elite leaders of the protest? Given that the Malay administrative elite was clearly pre-occupied with concerns of their own unrelated, or at least not directly related, to those of the peasantry in the rural sphere, in what way may they have

---

[182] Kessler, Islam and Politics, pp.25, 26.

[183] Ibid., p.25.

[184] Kessler, Islam and Politics, Chapter 7, pp.103-129.

convinced the peasant masses that Union was strongly against their interests? The sense of threat felt by Malay administrators is clear enough: but their what were basically careerist concerns - their dominant fear that their newly acquired wealth and status would be threatened by an influx of non-Malays under the citizenship provisions - had little to do with the return on rice or small scale rubber production, the cost of land rent and like considerations of more immediate concern to the Malay peasantry in the past, as we have seen for the NMS, and which we must assume remained the things of major concern to the peasantry in 1946.

It is hard to see how the Malay civil servants and the Malay peasantry could have made united cause on the basis of a common self interest to defeat the Union given the nature of the arguments of the former prevailing at the time. If we follow Allen in his `Kelantan Rising' perspective and apply it to the peasant situation in the Malayan Union conflict it seems much more likely that it was the more immediate and concrete social, and especially economic, factors impinging on their existence that most concerned the peasantry in the immediate post-war period and which must have been the main basis upon which they reacted to the BMA policy implementation that came with British reoccupation. It was, surely, these immediate and concrete concerns that determined their reaction to BMA policy implementation in general including the steps being taken towards Malayan Union.

Certainly we can surmise that the pressures on the peasantry due to Japanese, and then further British, occupation, were immense and that they were indeed in a volatile state in 1945-46 - that it was the trauma of Japanese occupation and the pressures arising from British post-war reconstruction which meant that the peasantry was indeed primed for strong overt anti-establishment reaction of some sort in the early years of the restored British presence. However, the available documentary evidence seems to suggest that the mainstream anti-Union protest did not address immediate peasant concerns: rather it focussed very directly on administrative elite concerns and it is hard to see how, if indeed there was a strong administrative elite appeal to the peasantry to protest the Union, this could have been anything more than a spurious appeal to peasant interests in order to coopt them in a show of strength in defence of the concerns of the elite. This may have involved some sort of transference of peasant anger and hostility - a deflection of peasant anger away from grievances with a more localized focus - the hardships created by rice marketing arrangements, food rationing and the like - onto the more general plane upon which the Malayan Union contest was being

conducted by some sort of rhetorical sleight of hand. Still, this is highly conjectural and any connection their may have been between the concerns of the administrative elite and those of the peasantry over the Union remain unclear in the published sources to date.

It is less difficult on the other hand to see how the enunciated protest of the radical Malay organizations may well have come closer to the down-to-earth concerns of the peasantry. By contrast with the protest statements of the Malay administration elite through their Associations, those of the more radical Malay organizations do tend to suggest that the latter may have been able to address peasant concerns directly on the Union issue and that in so doing they were successful in activating significant numbers of peasants to join in anti-Union demonstration. Perhaps the argument of these radical organizations ran along the lines that, whereas conditions were harsh under the BMA, they would remain so, or get worse, when power was handed over to a civilian Union government, with its tighter British control over the whole peninsular and the corresponding lessening of the power of Malay leaders to protect their people from the undesirable exploitive influence of the immigrant races and the British. Certainly the appeals of the more radical Malay anti-Union organizations to the British government were pitched in these terms: it will be remembered that in January 1946 the Kesatuan Melayu Kedah warned the British of the dangers of creating a Malay `Palestinian problem' with the state's `agricultural people ... powerless' to defend themselves `against the industrialized and the commercialized peoples' within its borders.([185]) The question must be asked then whether it was the radical Malay anti-Union organizations that were primarily responsible for mobilizing the peasantry in significant numbers into short term activism against Union even if they were unable to establish themselves as mass organizations on any sort of durable basis at that time.

Certainly there is some suggestion in the sources that this was the case. Early in 1946 Dato Onn cautioned the BMA that `a strong youth movement with Indonesian sympathies was

[185] Kesatuan Melayu Kedah to Hone, 3 February, 1946 CO537/1555. See above in this chapter.

gaining ground among Kampong Malays.'([186]) Furthermore, Onn warned that if Union were formed (though in the form then being proposed there would `be trouble from this youth movement within a few years' and that `all malcontents [would] rally to them.'([187])

Clearly, then, the possibility exists that it was not so much the moderate Malay organizations that sparked anti-Union activism at the grass roots level but those radical Malay organizations with a more direct and concrete appeal to the masses though on present research we can by no means be

---

[186] H.Q.B.M.A.(M) to S of S., Colonies 29 March, 1946. CO537/1548. Correspondence in the form of a telegram.

[187] Ibid. Onn's statements as reported in the telegram. The wording of the telegram, not Onn's original statements, quoted here in the text. The precise identity of the youth movement is not specified in the telegram though reference to its Indonesian sympathies clearly suggests some connection with Kesatuan Melayu Muda and the organizations it helped spawn in the early post war period. Certainly the Union government was preparing to be take action against at least two youth organizations it saw as a threat to public order in Kedah a year after the telegram containing Onn's caution. One of these organizations was the Harvard Estate Youth Corps of Kedah and the other was the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf, the youth wing of the newly formed radical Malay Nationalist Party (MNP). It may well be that Onn's reference was to these - or at least included these - two organizations.

Minutes of Executive Committee of Advisory Council, 10 March 1947. CO 576/79. CO 576/79.

The formation of post war political parties in Malaya is discussed more fully in the next chapter below. Funston comments that in mid 1947 the API was banned.

Perhaps the British were unnerved by the revolutionary activities of the pemuda in the Indonesian independence struggle at around this time and sought to forestall any such forceful youthful activism in Malaya. For an account of the role of the permuda in the Indonesian context see Anderson's excellent account of the subject within the wider context of the Indonesian independence struggle in the period 1944-1946.

B.R.O.G. Anderson, Java in a Time of Revolution. Occupation and Resistance 1944-1946(London, 1972), passim.

There is no indication in the telegram where in Malaya the youth organization was active. If Onn did indeed have in mind the Youth Corps when he cautioned the British then Kedah may have been one state, at least, where a radical anti-Union appeal was taking root at the Kampong level.

No doubt Onn chose to emphasize the danger in order to win concessions from the British on the Union question: the telegram also states that Onn was `strongly opposed to Union and in favour of federation on FMS lines.' None the less the indication that radical Malay opposition to Union was having at least some impact amongst ordinary Malays at village level remains.

sure of this.([188]) Further examination is clearly needed to see whether, while the moderate organizations representing the interests of Malay administrators were clearly at the forefront of the anti-Union push, it was the radical Malay leaders who were able to address the Union issues in terms of the concrete concerns of the peasantry in the difficult economic and social circumstances in which they were placed in the immediate post war years.

Either way, (assuming that there was, indeed, a significant peasant response to Union) whether the peasantry was responding to appeals from moderate or radical Malay leaders - or both - it seems most likely that it was their dislike of conditions under the BMA that leant heat to their displeasure of what was to come rather than any clear detached perception of what Union would mean for them at the local administrative, and at the national, level. In this sense the Union dispute may have provided an outlet for grievances that were firmly anchored in the present rather than in any contemplated hardship in the future.

Certainly there was a perception within British circles that there was a general unsettledness in the Malayan population in the immediate post war years, and that this unrest had a wider focus than the Union question per se. It was a perception which, while it did not

---

[188] Certainly the British feared the influence of the radical, anti-colonial Malay organizations and rigorously suppressed them, both in the pre-war period (Funston indicates that `Britain, on the eve of the Japanese intervention, was sufficiently alarmed by the KMM to hold in detention virtually its entire leadership') and in the immediate post war years, as the repression of the radical youth organizations referred to in the footnote immediately above indicates.

Funston, Malay Politics, p.32, 33.

The radical Malay youth organizations were not proscribed until from mid-1947 and it was not until 1950 that the MNP was banned. The scope and time was therefore there for them to act in inciting the masses against Union.

Ibid., p.40.

We can deduce from their eventual proscription that the British clearly saw them as a strong threat: what we don't know, however, is precisely in what way these organizations were dealing with the masses (Funston comments that there are no extant records of KMM policy) and the degree and extent to which they struck a responsive chord in the Malay populace.

Ibid., p.32.

It is a reasonable surmise however that, in contrast with the moderation of the Onn stance, these organizations were significantly involved in an incitement of the peasantry to participate in the anti-Union demonstrations and that the British moved to repress the organizations in large measure on the strength of this.

draw the conclusion directly, was non-the-less suggestive of a popular mood which was inauspicious for Union implementation - certainly in its citizenship aspect. The implication (not always intentionally) in these observations was that the new constitution was not in itself the single focus for popular discontent and that the hardships of the immediate post-war years weighed heavily with the populace and especially the Malays and augured badly for a favourable popular reception to the new British colonial state. Thus, in an ominous warning directed at Whitehall, the same labour official who saw commendable unity of purpose among the NMS in their approach to Union, cautioned his superiors on the likely reception of the new arrangements in these terms:

> Malaya at the moment is drawn between (a) the Union Government as regards the Malays (b) the very serious food and clothing shortage (c) the lawlessness of the Communist and subversive groups and continued intimidation by them and (d) external politics as regards Chinese and Indians that one cannot imagine a less opportune time to launch a new political experiment. In my own conversations with people of all races no one disputes the advantages of a Malayan Union for administrative purposes, but seem agreed that this is not the time for other experiments proposed in the White Paper (equal citizenship).
>
> I should perhaps add that there is still a considerable amount of inter-racial bitterness, the legacy of the Japanese occupation and of the interregnum before we arrived. To press the White Paper as it stands at present will be to risk driving the Malays to desperate action, partly in retaliation for previous action of highhandedness by the guerillas and others and partly from a sense of frustration. I make this statement after having listened to a great number of Malays, many of them holding senior appointments or who appear to be doing their utmost to preserve peace and to understand the present state of Malaya[.] I consider it essential that more of those who have its destiny in their own hands come and visit the country [sic].([189])

This is not by any means, to accept without question what this official claims to be the sources of popular, and certainly popular Malay, sensitivity to the White Paper provisions of Union in this correspondence: its usefulness lies in the fact that it points the way to a recognition of the wider causes of popular unrest associated with Union and that it raised the possibility that the response of the Malay masses to untimely Union implementation was an oblique one with its roots firmly in the traumatic social circumstances of the war and immediate post war years; that there may well have been popular Malay resistance to Union which arose from, or which in lay measure can be explained by, the troubled wider social circumstances in which it took place.

MacMichael, too, in reporting on his progress moving north on the peninsular to secure

---

[189] John ...[? signature unclear], `Personal Impressions - Malayan Union', Labour [Department?], Malaya, 15 August, 1946, p.1. CO 537/1558.

the treaties with the ruler acknowledged the wider social hardships and uncertainties of the post war period in the country, although his tone in so reporting was somewhat dismissive and he did not draw a direct link between post war civil disorder and hardship and the popular response to Union. In this correspondence he implied that a shortage of rice supplies, `inflation and the economic situation generally' was fuelling Chinese communist insurgency and that this in turn was `the subject of considerable anxiety to the Malays in general and the Sultans in particular.'([190]) He was vague on the subject of these wider social conditions and seemed to be suggesting that the impediment to Union lay not so much in the reaction of the Sultans and an unspecified wider group of Malays to economic and social instability directly but in their reaction to the Chinese insurgency which arose from this instability. Thus, where MacMichael turned his mind to the need to improve the deficiencies in the material well being of the country's population, he saw this, not as a humanitarian objective worthwhile in itself, nor as a measure which would have a direct effect in inclining them to accept Union, but as a strategy to undercut support for the insurgents thus encouraging them to lay down their arms and return to civilian life. MacMichael in the same report: `Once there are food and ways to be had (and that in due proportion to one another) the problem of getting these people to hand back their arms and return to civil life will obviously be much simplified.'([191])

If the views of the labour official and MacMichael are any guide, then, British officialdom operating on-the-spot had only a limited perception of the nature and causes of the grass roots response to Union. While they were aware of the more general social hardship and turmoil which existed in Malaya at the time they were unable to conceive of any very direct link between this and the popular response to Union, sensing only a vague and oblique relationship between the two. Their accounts (and more that of MacMichael than the labour official) of popular discontent on the peninsular were inevitably tendentious since they began with the assumption that Union would benefit the local populations as well as the British. What was at issue in their minds was not so much the principle of Union in its effect on the

---

[190] MacMichael to Gater, 4 November, 1945. CO 537/1541.

[191] Ibid.

populace but more the best strategies for achieving the constitutional change. It was perhaps because of this that they were unable to conceive of a very direct relationship between the social conditions affecting the population at the time and the popular reaction to Union. It is no doubt in large measure this shortfall in the perception of contemporary colonial observers of the grass roots reaction in 1946 (and that of officials in Whitehall relying on these recorded perceptions) that has limited the perception on the same subject in the secondary sources.

Still, while the perceptions of contemporary observers, and those of the published secondary sources, have failed to squarely and fully address the issue of a more general popular discontent on the peninsular vis-a-vis the Union issue, they serve to point us in the direction of a better understanding of what might have motivated the Malay peasantry into active anti-Union resistance. Here and there in the Colonial Office documentation of the time, and in the secondary sources, there are strong clues suggesting that the occupation and immediate post war period saw a sudden intensification of pressures on the peasantry - pressures which had been building up throughout the pre-war decade and which, in the traumatic occupation and reoccupation of the forties, may have reached a flash point rendering them highly susceptible to Malay elite appeals to take to the streets in anti-Union protest.

Of Allen, Sopiee and Funston it is the more recent study of Funston which most clearly recognizes the traumatic impact of war and re-occupation on the masses as the primary factor activating them on the Union issue though he is unable to enlighten us on exactly how this happened.([192]) Funston sees Malay anti-Union activism in the mid 1940s on a longer historical perspective arguing that it was the social rupturing caused by successive occupation and re-occupation that stimulated overt popular nationalism on the peninsular. prior to the war it had been the nature of British rule which had contained the popular nationalism within, from the British point of view, manageable limits:

> Social dislocation though widespread, was not so severe that it forced the masses into the political arena; Britain ostensibly pursued a pro-Malay policy and had some success in convincing Malays that it was acting as their protector vis-a-vis the non-Malays; and when the Malay political activity nonetheless surfaced repressive action was quickly

[192] In part this is because there has been insufficient research into why pre-war Malay nationalism failed to activate the masses. Funston comments directly on this lack of research and offers broad pointers only as to why nationalist organizations failed to activate the masses prior to the war and why they succeeded after it.

Funston, Malay Politics, pp.35, 36.

> taken. The Japanese occupation upset this fine balance and brought into being a politicized mass that could link up with the existing political elite. It was not to be long before the accumulated tensions of two colonial regimes gave rise to the first direct participation of the Malay masses in the political field.([193])

Funston comments on the fact that the effect of Japanese occupation of Malaya is under researched at the moment and points out that the occupation experience `politicized the Malay peasantry to the extent that they were available for mass mobilization immediately after the war.'([194]) He sketches in some important factors causing this including `the growth of social tension as a result of Japanese discriminatory attitudes against the Chinese; the virulent stirring-up of anti-European sentiment and indoctrination ... of patriotic feeling for both Malaya and the Japanese Co-Prosperity Sphere; and the traumatic impact of the prevailing terror, extremism and violence'.([195]) Significantly, Funston points out that the Japanese organized two Pan Malayan congresses of Islamic leaders and that this may have stimulated Islamic efforts to organize on a national basis after the war.([196]) Funston's reference here is vague but given that some radical Malay leaders opposing Union had a traditional, purist Islamic bent which must have been an integral part of their appeal to the peasantry it may well be that in some indirect way the two congresses significantly strengthened the appeal of these leaders in reaching at least some among the peasantry in support of the anti-Union cause though much more information is needed and we can not be sure of this. Perhaps the congresses did this by engendering a stronger unity of purpose, by helping to foster some sort of Islamic Malay national identity, and by preparing the way for some sort of organizational framework in the post war period. Of special significance is his claim that the KMM, under Japanese sponsorship, was able to maintain organizational coherence during the

---

[193] Funston, Malay Politics, p.36

[194] Funston, Malay Politics, p.35.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Ibid.

occupation.([197]) In the light of this, and the fact that the moderate Malay state Associations disbanded during this period, the questions is to what extent and degree the KMM was able to establish a link with the peasantry in this period and whether, indeed, this organization, and those which succeeded it, were able to continue this link in anti-Union protest after the war to mid 1947 with a strength currently underrated in the sources.

Funston is surely correct to the extent that this occupation experience must have been critical in priming the Malay population for post-war activism of some sort and it is essential for us to know about this in detail if we are to fully understand the Malay peasant response to Union. Clearly, though, there are problems here for the historian relying on English language materials since the interregnum of British rule on the peninsular left a gap in accessible and readable documentation on what was happening during the period. What is needed is more printed or published research which seeks out Japanese language and vernacular Malayan sources as the basis for a closer study of what was happening in Malaya at this time.

A 1971 paper written by Yoji Akashi based partly on Japanese language sources takes us significantly forward in our understanding of the effect of Japanese occupation in politicizing the Malay population.([198]) Akashi points out that there was a Japanization programme in operation at this time and that this had both a psychological and physical impact on the Malays. He indicates that on an ideological plane the Japanese sought to instill a pan-Asian pro-Japanese, anti-European outlook in the Malays and that to this end they encouraged the development of a Malay national consciousness. Furthermore, they inculcated these values through their control of the education system. The focus of that system was on Japanese language instruction. Through such instruction the Japanese aimed at the inculcation of the Japanese Spirit in the Malayan population.([199]) Thus, they opened a school, the Shonan

---

[197] Though under different titles. The KMM was dissolved by the Japanese but continued in spirit and approach as, firstly, the Japanese sponsored Malay army (Pembela Tanah Ayer or PETA) and then, towards the end of the occupation, as another sponsored organization, the Union of Peninsular Indonesians (Kesatuan Rayat Indonesia Semenanjong, or KRIS).

[198] Yoji Akashi, "The Japanization program in Malaya With Particular Reference to the Malays", paper presented to the Annual Meetings(sic) of The American Political Science Association, September 1971, Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago.

[199] Ibid., p.4.

Nippon Gakuen, for `all ages and professions' which, according to Akashi, `helped boost the morale of impressionable young Malays, implanting in them the seed of self-consciousness that they were the people of a new generation and a new Malaya' - a `self realization [which] had been hitherto non-existent among the Malays' and which entailed their `casting off their colonial mentality that the British had implanted in them [sic]'([200])

The Japanese also sought to educate the Malays into a Japanese work ethic in order to overcome what they saw as the inclination of the Malays to laziness - a laziness which had impeded the elevation of the Malays as a race. Although Akashi doesn't make the connection it seems clear that this indoctrination must have had a self serving pragmatic function for the Japanese since they were heavily reliant on Malay labour to support their occupation. Unlike the British, who had relied much more, as we have seen, on immigrants for the extra labour needed to support a Colonial state leaving the Malays by and large in place in their traditional rural occupations, the Japanese `recruited tens of thousands of Malays for labor and semi-military services.' These included working for a `grow more food campaign, ... the construction of the Kra Railraod, ... the Burma-Thailand Railroad, and ... the digging of air raid shelters.'([201])

According to Akashi the recruitment of labourers from rural areas in this way, and the regimentation and indoctrination of their training, `shook the foundation of the hierarchical system of the Malay community which was based on adat'.([202]) As a consequence, when the Malay Union proposal came along after the war, `the Malay people exploded.'([203])

While in a general sense we can see from Akashi how Japanese educational policies operating in the mentally and physically traumatic circumstances of the Occupation must have had a strong influence on Malays, especially young Malays, much more explanation is needed

---

[200] Ibid., p.5.

[201] Ibid., p.7.

[202] Ibid., p.7.

[203] Ibid.

to account for the view that it politicized the entire Malay population as Akashi claims. A much closer examination is needed to establish the degree and extent of Malay politicization and to show how this occurred. Roff established that there was, by the outbreak of war, the substantial beginnings of a Malay national consciousness within the elite and we can readily accept that the educational experience during occupation strengthened this elite nationalism. The position is not so clear, however, when it comes to the raayat. As we have seen, there is little evidence of popular nationalist sentiment prior to the war: if the peasantry were imbibing nationalist sentiments by the immediate pre-war years they did so with passivity; and, as we have also seen, there is little evidence that they were other than slow to become politically active on any durable basis in the immediate post war period being drawn strongly into the political process only when their vote was solicited for party political elections. It is only by the time of their participation in the pre-Independence elections that we can clearly see the peasantry beginning to become politically active on a sustained basis. Something looking like an overt peasant nationalistic awareness - an awareness which was no doubt nascent in 1946 and earlier but which, on the available primary evidence thus far, is not clearly visible - is not clearly recognizable as such despite assertions to the contrary in the secondary sources - until the period of these elections.

In the light of this Akashi's claim that the Japanese instilled a strong popular nationalism that surfaced as the motivating force behind vigorous anti-Union protest after the war seems thinly based and it may well be that he has overstated the ideological impact of Japanese rule on the Malay peasantry. We need a much more socially discriminating understanding of the effect of Japanese educational policies on the Malays than we have at the moment - than Akashi is able to give in his paper - since the effect of Japanese indoctrination in the traumatic occupation circumstances on the Malay population may well have been an uneven one. From which social strata in the Malay community, for example, did the students of the Shonan Nippon Gakuen come from ? Was this organization educating the sons and daughters of the Malay elites, or those of the peasantry, or both? The fact that Akashi says the school was open to `all ages and professions' may indicate that it was limited to an elite with prior vocational skills and education though not necessarily. He may have been using the term `profession' loosely to mean simply occupation. Akashi's paper indicates that some Malays claimed to have been greatly assisted by their Japanese training in their post war careers - in

administration and the like - and this, too, may suggest an elitist aspect to the school though again this was not necessarily so.([204])

We can not be sure, then, from Akashi where in Malay society the Japanese education programme was having an impact and it remains unclear whether the Malay peasantry was being politicized by such an experience. It does seem likely, though, that the Japanese indoctrination with its component of Malay nationalism was aimed more at, and drew its strongest response from, the more fertile ground of the pre-existing emergent Malay elite nationalism on the peninsular. However, having said this, it must be conceded that the more general Japanese indoctrination associated with the press ganging of the peasantry in support of the occupied state, and the physical and mental hardship that this and the regimentation of their society carried for the Malay rural population, must have had some lasting significant impact on their social outlook though any such effect along these lines is not clearly discernible in the Akashi paper and in the published scholarship to date. We can surmise that it was the physical and mental hardships of occupation that most affected the Malay peasantry in their post war political thinking rather than the ideological appeal being directed at them per se - that it was the more concrete traumas of their daily existence under the Japanese which helped to render them susceptible to the Malay nationalist component of Japanese propaganda and that of the post war Malay nationalist organizations.

While we are lacking a complete picture of this experience in the secondary sources to date there are further clues in the British colonial documentation which serve to give a better idea of the nature and degree of hardship being experienced by the peasantry under the Occupation. There was, for example, a significant decline in war time rice production in Kedah caused by `the absence of manure at the correct time, [the] occurrence of severe floods and droughts and [a] depletion in the number of draft animals'. Furthermore, `there was

---

[204] This information was obtained by the author in a preliminary survey during which he was told by a `prominent educator of Malaysia' that `many Malays who received Japanese training are very successful today.'

Ibid., p.14.

continuous Japanese interference and consequently an induced sense of insecurity'.([205])

For the peninsular in general conditions for the peasantry were harsh:

> During the years of occupation economic conditions changed for the worse. The[r]e was no market for rubber. The requisitioning of padi with or without payment resulted in land being left uncultivated. Law and order could not be enforced and robbery was common. The stock of goats and poultry was greatly reduced. Transport became more and more scarce. The re-occupation found the small holder with his clothing in rags, his house in need of repair, most of his goods and his health impaired. Some had sold their holdings in order to buy additional food.([206])

And for those Malay peasants coopted to labour on various public works conditions were even worse:

> Fully to appreciate the difficulties which confront this department [ie Labour Department, Malayan Union, 1946], it is necessary to survey the circumstances under which labour in this country has been compelled to work and live in this country during the Japanese administration, under the principles of which all labour was vertically indentured and was regarded as part of the essential equipment of the Japanese military regime without any claim to any rights, and not deserving of any humanitarian considerations whatever. Circulars were issued to Japanese supervisors of estates that labourers making complaints should be dealt with with the utmost severity. Floggings were the order of the day. Confidence was undermined by specious promises and in every conceivable direction labour became increasingly perplexed by the limitless variations of Japanese duplicity. Labour was frequently moved `en masse' into strange surroundings to undertake work oft times unfamiliar but which was regarded by the Japanese as of current military significance. Many thousands perished miserably in Siam in the notorious exploitation which the construction of the `Death' Railway occasioned.'([207])

In 1945, with the return of the British, the hardship being experienced by the Malay peasantry, while less extreme, did not end and there is ample evidence that they suffered considerably. This was partly because it took time for the British to overcome the dislocation caused by the Japanese occupation and partly because the British were operating on imperatives of their own to re-order Malayan society in a way which suited them. Thus, at the time the British were presenting the Union proposal, and later when they were beginning to

---

[205] Annual Report on the Malayan Union for 1947, p.11. CO576/74.

[206] Annual Report on the Malayan Union 1946, p.46. CO576/74.

[207] Ibid., p.8.

Certainly we may have a measure of Britain overstatement in these accounts. Clearly the British saw themselves as the liberators of the Malayan people on their return and were no doubt inclined to compare what they saw as the enlightenment of their regime as contrasting with the barbarity of that of the Japanese. Still, the suffering of the Malayan population is known in a general kind of way and the British account here is broadly in line with this even if cast in slightly propagandist terms.

implement the Union, a lack of law and order and its attendant uncertainty remained a problem on the peninsular. This lack of control meant that the repressive labour practices fostered by the Japanese continued under the early British reoccupation .([208]) The peninsular did not, it is important to remember, return to the kind of civilian administration that existed prior to the war: rather the BMA and the Union civil administration which followed was, perhaps inevitably, a repressive regime imposing its own kind of regimentation as it sought to restore order and economic stability to Malaya in the wake of the ending of Japanese occupation. While it can be argued that the returning British administration was benign in comparison with that of the Japanese it was clearly both the cause of, and presiding over, a harsh environment for the Malay peasantry and it is in this continued hardship that we see the most likely important single cause of any volatility there may have been in the rural population in their reaction to Union.

If Peiris, in his passing comment in Far Eastern Economic Review, is right and the Kedah peasantry did indeed take to the streets in their thousands to protest against Union, it seems likely that this had something to do with the pressure the state's rice producers were under in the immediate post war years. This was a period of acute rice shortage on the peninsular - a shortage due to the disruptive effect war time hostilities had in reducing supplies from home and abroad: as a consequence the British felt an urgent need to apply themselves rigorously to remedying the shortfall in the commodity.

The British were particularly concerned that the peninsular rice growers maximize their production and it seems evident from the sources that there was considerable urgency in reviving domestic rice production as a major prop supporting the Malayan economy and society and the British colonial policy which they were struggling to re-establish in the wake of the Japanese occupation.([209]) In 1946 the British were acutely aware of the importance of

---

[208] Ibid., p.8, 47.

[209] The degree of urgency is amply illustrated in secondary and primary sources alike. For example, The Straits Budget, for the months August to December in 1946, contains numerous articles on the subject reflecting the very great public importance of the rice shortage and suggesting the strong degree of urgency for British administrators in achieving a remedy for the situation.

home rice production as a foundation stone, not only of the domestic economy but to the colonial export economy as well. Their focus remained principally on the latter and there was a clear and direct link drawn in the 1946 annual report for the Union between rice production and the production of the all-important export commodities that was the main raison d'etre of the British Malayan colonial state on the peninsular as we have seen.([210])

Their major concern in that year was that the lack of an economic supply of rice to feed the working population in the export economy was a source of wider social instability. Given the massive war debt that Britain had incurred British administrators were under even more pressure in the post war years to re-build a self sustaining economy on the peninsular. To do so they had to cope with the competing interests of different sectors of the Malayan economy - a task they found extremely difficult within the tight budgetary framework within which they were forced to operate.

A principal concern of the British at this time was that the shortage of rice was putting upward pressure on the prices of essential commodities needed by the Malayan working population - something which tended, from the British point of view, to undermine industrial stability in that, while the British were conceding wage increases to the Malayan industrial working population these concessions did not keep pace with the inflation caused by the rice shortages. This, coupled in these pre-emergency years with a British concern at the leftist tendency of the Malayan trade union movement, caused the British great anxiety and they looked especially to the productive capacity of peninsular rice growers to provide a secure economic basis for the unsettled post war colonial state.([211]) In the words of the report:

> One of the most important single factors affecting the economy of the country since liberation has been the shortage of rice. The importance of rice to the peoples of Asia is greater than the importance of wheat in western countries ... In Malaya rice is the staple food of all but a small fraction of people ... The entire Malayan production of rice is

---

[210] Annual Report on the Malayan Union for 1946, p.3, 4. CO576/74.

[211] The British colonial government was inclined to see the peninsular labour movement as having a fifth columnist communist element - a perception in line with the emerging Cold War mentality in the western world at that time. Thus the 1946 Annual Report for the Malayan Union perceived the post war General Labour Union in these terms: `Upon the British re-occupation, the General Labour Union, whose leaders were associated with the Communist Party, opened premises in all major towns of the Peninsular and formed dependent Unions in each State and Settlement'.

Ibid., p.8.

> consumed locally and in addition it was necessary before the war to import large quantities to satisfy the need of the country. From 1931 to 1939 the increase which took place in production was counter balanced by an increase in consumption so that prior to the occupation Malaya was only producing some 34 per cent. of her basic foodstuff. By 1946 the natural increase in population had expanded Malaya's demand for rice but local production during the year was estimated to be only 66 per cent of the 1939 figure with the result that the country's degree of self-sufficiency at pre-war per capita rates of consumption fell to some 20 per cent. of rice requirements. Imports of rice for the year were approximately 23 per cent. of requirements so that only 43 per cent. of the estimated amount of rice needed to maintain the pre-war level of consumption was available ... It was found impossible to eliminate from wage discussions the factor of the inadequacy of the official rations and the price of black market rice. Labour unrest was widespread, and the need to settle and prevent strikes involved the administration and industry in having to make concessions in monetary wages which, with the very tight position in essential commodities, resulted in an upward pressure on the price level. Among the unskilled and semi-skilled workers monetary wages have increased from 125 per cent. to 200 per cent. and more of the pre-occupation levels but even so the real wage is below that earned in 1941. Thus the cost of production of basic export commodities has increased well beyond the 1941 figure without labour deriving any corresponding advantage. The effect on the economy of the country of this shortage of rice and inflation of money wages may be far-reaching, especially with a young and headstrong labour movement.([212])

We can see from this, then, why the British were, in the years of Union agitation, seeking `to encourage, by every means possible the production of crops locally to off-set the continuing short supply of imported basic cereal'.([213]) That `encouragement' took several forms including the facilitation of the extension of credit to rice producers and schemes to increase the amount of land under rice cultivation. It also took the form of price control aimed at keeping the price of padi high enough to be an incentive for rice production while at the same time minimizing the cost of rice to others essential to the rice and wider economy (the rice millers, and the consumers in the tin and rubber industries for example).([214]) We can also see how the failure of external supplies of rice drew peninsular rice growers even more closely into the colonial state: while their production had always been very important as a basis of

---

[212] Ibid., p.3, 4.

[213] Ibid., p.45.

[214] To increase acreage under rice the Government in 1946 `sponsored the development of eight farms in State land suitable for the purpose of promoting short term crops. At the same time the cultivation of short term crops was encouraged through the Peninsular. In the States and Settlements by the end of the year 24.012.10 acres [were] reported to have been brought under cultivation'.

Ibid.

economic support for the colonial state with the acute post war shortage their position became critical to the survival of the post war British administration. While the British accounted for their efforts to encourage rice production in benign and positive terms that encouragement clearly had its coercive side as we shall see below. Behind the encouragement lay the urgency of the circumstances and the muscle of the BMA and some tension must have existed between the rice growers and the reestablishing British colonial state. It is clear from the passage quoted above, and elsewhere in the colonial documentation, that the stage was set for continued and intensified tension between rice producer and the state even if the precise manifestation of this tension in relation to Union remains unclear in the secondary and British colonial primary sources.

Clearly, then, the British thrust at increasing rice production must have been felt especially strongly in the rice producing areas in north Malaya, particularly in the north west, and it may well be that it was the peasantry in these areas that were more strongly reactive against the BMA and the Union proposals. While the relative strength of the Malay peasant response on the peninsular in this way is not addressed squarely in the secondary sources and is not easily discernible in the colonial documents of the period what is clear from the latter is that the north was indeed a particular focus for the drive for increased production and that there may indeed have been in the north considerable tension between British authorities and the peasantry as both sought to secure their respective interests arising from rice production in the area.

Kedah and Perlis were the two main rice producing states with Kedah producing two thirds of the Malayan purchase in 1947 and it is not surprising that the British focussed considerable effort in that area of the peninsular in seeking to boost the peninsular's stocks of rice.([215]) It carefully monitored the progress of rice production in the area and was clearly taking active measures to step into the breach where barriers to efficient rice production were evident. The 1946 annual report for the Union noted with cautious optimism and approval that credit societies on the peninsular had for the most part survived the occupation with their funds in tact and that for those in Kedah and Perlis `the proportion of their funds on loans to

---

[215] Government of the Malayan Union Annual Report on the Supplies and food Control Departments for the year 1947, p.8. CO576/78.

members [was] higher than was the case in similar societies in the former Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements.'([216]) In the north western states the British government did much to assist rice growers overcome their problems with production: they distributed manure when supplies were low, `assisted in the distribution of fresh seed and surplus seedlings' when there was a shortage, and assisted with the eradication of pests adversely affecting the rice crop.([217]) In Kedah, in 1946, the British Government relied heavily on monetary incentives to increase the rice acreage. The annual report for the Union for that year noted:

> As a special encouragement to padi planters to plant more padi, the Government agreed to award a bonus of $10 for every relong which a planter had cultivated above 9 relongs ... This, coupled with the increased Government buying price of $20 per picul for padi, ... changed the whole aspect of padi cultivation in the State, and it is safe to say that a very considerably increased acreage will result during the seasons when such price is operative (sic).([218])

Still, while official British reporting on rice production in the north was sanguine in its tone it is none the less clear that the period saw much hardship for the rice growing peasantry there and it is doubtful that they saw their economic position as the British saw it. Rather, there is evidence to suggest that there may well have been economic hardship for them sufficient to turn them against the British on the Union question when egged on by anti-Union Malay elite leadership to do so. Trengganu and Kelantan were without credit facilities altogether to fund rice growing and even in Kedah where, as we have seen, there was credit available, it is not by any means clear that the peasantry were secure in their loans.([219])

---

[216] ie. higher than was the case before the war.

Annual Report on the Malayan Union for 1946. p.46. CO576/74.

[217] Ibid., p.11.

[218] Ibid., p.11.

This section of the report deals with rice cultivation on the peninsular on a state-by-state basis. The sub section cited here on British assistance for rice growers appears to deal with both Kedah and Perlis and it is not always clear whether reference is being made to one of the two states or both. I have accordingly framed my citation of the reference in line with this ambiguity. The sub-section begins with a specific reference to Kedah and that is almost certainly `the state' referred to as offering monetary incentives to rice growers.

[219] Ibid., pp.46, 47.

Indeed, the same official report that noted with approval the existence of these credit facilities, carries a hint at the possibility of insolvency amongst Kedah peasants unable to pay back their loans.([220]) The report clearly indicates that rice production was being hampered by severe problems - lack of fertilizer and fresh seedlings; and the incursion of pests - and while the British moved to counter these difficulties it is not clear from the report how effective these counter measures were. What we do know is that the 1945-46 rice crop in Trengganu and Kelantan was a poor one and that the rice crop in Kedah for the same season was, in its yield, significantly below its pre war level.([221]) At the same time the peasantry were being offered what they considered a low official price for their crop and in response many turned to the black market instead.([222])

There can be no doubt that the rice marketing arrangement was a bone of contention between producers and purchasers of their product. The British Government purchased rice not directly from the peasantry but indirectly from private bulk handlers of the commodity. In so doing it sought not only to purchase rice supplies of its own for distribution to sections of the Malayan population but was concerned also to regulate the whole process of the sale and distribution of rice - a process upon which the survival and well being of the reestablishing British colonial state depended. To do this it needed to regulate the commercial activities of a chain of middlemen which stood between the peasant producers and the eventual consumers of the rice - the licensed rice purchasers who bought the rice in the field or at the mill, the mill owners, those transporting the rice from the field to the mill or from the mill to a point of distribution, and so on. It sought to supervise - to regularize - the purchase and distribution activities of these groups in a systematic way so as to ensure sustenance for the Malayan

---

[220] The report makes a general reference to the relief of members who had `lost nearly all their possessions' at finding their funds in the societies in tact after the war. On the same page it indicates that the societies in Kedah and Perlis would be financially sound `provided ... loans [could] be recovered in full in Malayan currency'.

Ibid., p.46.

[221] Annual Report on the Malayan Union for 1947. pp.10,11. CO576/74.

[222] `Prices of all rural products have been high, though the official purchasing price of padi in 1946 was considered by growers insufficient to attract more people to plant padi.'

Annual Report on the Malayan Union for 1946, p.47. CO576/74.

population at large.([223]) It was a difficult task in the chaotic circumstances that prevailed after the war. The British(with only limited success) sought to enforce their regulatory system of rice purchase and distribution and this clearly was a source of some tension at least, between the Government on the one hand, and peasant producers and middlemen on the other. It was a source of tension between the Union government and those on which it sought to impose the regulation; and by default between private bulk handlers of rice and peasant producers at the point of sale.

We can see some of this tension in British moves to limit the irregular sale and purchase of commodities in the post war Malayan economy. For example, in 1947 British authorities were implementing primitive measures to curb black marketing in rice. In that year:

> Prosecutions totalled 1,445 and 855 convictions were secured including 531 for unauthorized movement, 53 for bogus rice cards, 24 for unlawful milling and 113 for unlawful possessing or hoarding. 95 cases were cautioned or discharged, 400 postponed, 51 acquitted and 43 withdrawn or struck out. Fines totalled $118,827 and confiscations included 4,214 piculs of rice, 274 piculs of padi, 1,248 piculs of flour and 91 piculs of sugar.[224]

With measures such as these the Government claimed that `excessive black-market dealing on the part of the producer population [had] been discouraged'.[225] Success in food and price control was, however, generally limited (`... complete and effective enforcement is extremely difficult') and was hindered by a lack of public cooperation (`There is no indication that the public are prepared to assist in making food or price control effective").[226]

The British official commentary on the subject at the time had, then, a euphemistic ring; its tone of typical British understatement implies considerable tension between the Union government and those involved in rice production and distribution including Malay peasant

---

[223] The way in which this worked is outlined in some detail in the 1947 annual report of the relevant government department.

Government of the Malayan Union Annual Report on the Supplies and Food Control Departments for the Year 1947, pp.7-10. CO576/78.

[224] Ibid., p. 7.

[225] Ibid.

[226] Ibid.

growers.([227]) Clearly the failure of the British regulatory moves in this sector of the economy limited, as we shall see, the return peasants got on the sale of their rice and tempted them in the direction of the black market, especially in a situation where, as we have seen, rice yields were low.

From the above we can see that an important source of social tension was that located in the relationship between rice producers and those directly purchasing their rice. And that furthermore it was the failure of the British Government to control rice distribution which exacerbated this tension. Clearly the potential for exploitation was there as the various middlemen sought to maximize their profit from the rice purchase and handling. Certainly the British sought to maintain a sufficient return to the grower to provide an incentive to produce the crop but they did so against the competing wishes of the intermediaries involved who sought to maximize their gains from the rice deals. The trouble was that the British were unable to maintain a suitable balance between these competing demands. The British were having difficulty ensuring that their rice marketing procedures were working properly - a failure which left considerable scope for the unofficial exploitation of the rice producers.

In 1947 the Union administration complained of a lack of available trained personnel to check the quality of the rice purchase in the field.([228]) The government was unable to effect the purchase of rice in the field directly using their own trained functionaries and relied instead on the offices of private licensed padi buyers buying for a mill. Because it lacked trained functionaries of its own the government had no choice but to seek to control the purchase in the field at a distance through the milling contract. While the principle concern of the government was with the quantity and quality of rice purchased its secondary concern was that the absence of government buyers left scope for middleman exploitation of the producer. For example, the government gave consideration to imposing a regularization of prices for inferior rice. It decided, however, against any imposition of such a regularization in the form of a percentage deduction on the price of inferior rice because `this [would have placed] a weapon in the hand of the buyer which might [have been] used to the disadvantage of the padi

---

[227] Ibid.

[228] Ibid., p.8.

grower.'([229]) The Union government's reporting was not specific on this question of exploitation but presumably it had in mind a danger that had the government imposed a percentage deduction buyers may have enjoyed an aura of official sanction in demanding the percentage deduction on the purchasing price by claiming unfairly that the rice was inferior quality. The implication is that the bulk purchasers may have had an unfair advantage if the deduction policy were implemented. On this matter the Union was caught in a dilemma: to regulate in this way may have been counter productive in the manner just described; on the other hand to fail to do so also left the peasantry at a disadvantage in these transactions. For even without this deduction move the scope would have been there for buyers seeking maximum private profit to demand a lower price for rice on a spurious claim that the rice was of inferior quality or on some other specious basis. Had the government indeed been able to effect the purchase through salaried government officials the risk of unfair reduction of the sale price of rice would have been absent - or minimal. The absence of this kind of direct government intervention at the point of sale left the peasant significantly at the mercy of the bulk handling entrepreneur. It seems that at this time there was little the Union government could do to limit the private exploitation of the rice grower at the point of sale.

The potential, if not the actuality, for this kind of exploitation is clearly indicated by the account of one British participant observer in the padi purchasing scheme in Kedah in the months immediately following the British re-occupation of the state. In mid 1946 Colonel E.V. Day, for the BMA Region (Kedah and Perlis) requested from the Deputy Food Controller in Kuala Lumpur that he be given `complete discretion within defined price limits, to handle the purchase of the current season's crop' in his region.([230]) Day sought permission to achieve this purchase `through the agency of the millers checked by the employment of a Government buying agent'.([231]) Day recorded in his diary a meeting between himself and fourteen millers

[229] Ibid.

[230] "Notes of Telephone Conversation with Mr. F.A. Shelton, Dy. Food Controller, K.L.", Note 5, "Day papers".

[231] Ibid.

representatives which took place at Alor Star in December 1945 during which the purchase price of padi was discussed:

> All those present dislike the idea of the fixed price of $3.60 per picul at the roadside and prefer to abide by the previously agreed figures of $3.20 p.p. in the field [and?] $4 p.p. at the mill door. Both these figures to be minimum prices and to sell rice at $8 p.p. with the by products at their disposal... All express strong preference for the earlier arrangements.(232)

Now, although the diary doesn't say what price was eventually agreed upon the negotiations described do carry the suggestion that the millers were holding out for a lower buying price for themselves against the interests of the rice growers who wanted more for their product. As a consequence some at least of the states rice growers opted for the black market. In Day's words:`... the producer now finds it more profitable to produce, by the most primitive methods, broken rice for disposal in the black market.'(233)

In sum, then, while the government expressed a concern to oversee a fair padi marketing system, the difficulties it encountered in so doing in practice meant that it had only limited control over the rice purchase at first contact and that there was considerable scope for middleman exploitation of the producer in these transactions.

The picture suggested by all this is that rice growers in north Malaya certainly, and no doubt those to the south as well, were experiencing considerable economic hardship in the later months of 1945 and into 1946 and that British attempts to alleviate these difficulties did not take effect until later - until 1946 and beyond. We can therefore surmise that these conditions under the British, following closely upon the trauma and privation of the Japanese occupation, did see the rice growing peasantry at least, in a distressed and volatile state and that they were therefore easily aroused to an agitation focussed upon Union in the immediate post war period. While my account here is highly conjectural, it would offer a partial plausible explanation for the journalistic claim that peasants marched in thousands in Kedah to protest against Malayan Union.

In sum, then, I am suggesting here that the mass Malay response is problematic to our understanding of Union protest and that its treatment in the sources thus far is inadequate.

---

232 "Notes of a Meeting at the SCAO's Alor Star, 5th December 1945 - 4 p.m. Subject - Padi Buying Scheme for Kedah", "Day papers".

233 Day? to Newboult, 10th June, 1946, in "Day Papers".

Much more research is needed - research examining the post war situation of the Malay rice growers in greater depth and detail and encompassing the condition and reactions of a wider range of Malay peasantry including rubber small holders - more research than is within the scope of my more general study of the Northern Malay States here - to more fully and accurately explain the popular Malay involvement in the protest and the motives for such an involvement. While we can safely assume that Malay peasants did take part in street demonstrations we need a much more discriminating and detailed picture of this and other aspects of the response before we can be quite sure of the popularity of the anti-Union protest. I am suggesting, too, that we will achieve a more lucid understanding of popular Malay involvement if we go further in examining it in its wider historical context - a context in which the peasantry were being drawn, at times painfully for them, into a wider set of production relations overseen, by 1909, by a formal colonial British state. Such an approach would yield a more plausible explanation for the mass involvement than the rather narrow `blind obedience' argument put forward by Allen in his monograph, and the cursory and somewhat short sighted explanations put forward by Funston and Sopiee.

A better approach would indeed be to draw inspiration from Allen's Kelantan Rising article (curiously, as we have seen, Allen's approach seems inconsistent on the subject when we go from the article to the monograph) and to hypothesize a link between anti-Union protest and, not only past Malay resistance to the British, but also anti-establishment Malay behaviour which came after. The successful appeal of radical Islam to the Malay peasantry only a decade or so after the Union protest does suggest that radical strands of Malay nationalism had struck a responsive chord in the Malay peasantry to a degree and extent which, while clearly limited, was none the less stronger than has hitherto been recognized in the secondary sources. It suggest that it had an appeal strong enough to activate, or to strongly contribute to the activation of, the peasantry even if that activism was short-lived and lay dormant in the intervening years leading up to the early popular elections when radical peasant nationalism emerged on a more durable basis in party political form. Future research may indeed show that the 1945-46 peasant response, at least in north Malaya, was a preliminary outburst of radical Malay nationalism in spirit similar to that manifest in the early Independence elections.

Such a hypothesis would be premised, in part, on the assumption that the more radical nationalist Malay message with its secular appeal to the material condition of the peasantry and its more militant Malay chauvinism, was a stronger draw for the peasantry than the elitist concerns of the moderates. It may well be that future research will show that radical Malay nationalism of the extreme kind did indeed take root among the Malay masses as a result of war time and immediate post war hardship, and, perhaps war time indoctrination - that it was more to a fundamentalist Islamic appeal rather than that of the orthodox moderates that the Malay peasantry was responding in resisting the Union; and that while this fundamentalist inclination was given short lived popular expression in 1946 it went into an inactive phase once the Union conflict had been resolved only to surface again in party political form in the 1950s. Still, this is highly speculative and insufficient evidence has been unearthed to date to support such a hypothesis.

One important avenue of enquiry in pinning down the response of the Malay peasantry to Union in definitive terms would be an examination of the extent to which ethnic tension existed at the base level in Malayan society in 1946. Where as it is clear at the Malay administrative elite level that a communal careerist resentment of the citizenship provisions of the Union existed the reaction of the Malay peasantry to these provisions is less clear. While this peasantry may not have responded to the citizenship proposals directly (certainly they could not have responded in the same way as the administrative elite) there may have been a sense of threat from other races of a different kind and a pre disposition to respond to elite agitation against Union along ethnic lines. Perhaps the Malay peasantry felt itself threatened by Chinese middlemen in economic transactions in which both were involved; perhaps this peasantry was intimidated - or felt itself intimidated - by the actions of Chinese communist guerillas; perhaps the Chinese community as a whole was still smarting from the discriminatory treatment they had experienced during the occupation and were reacting in a way the Malay peasantry found antagonistic.

The state of race relations in the Malayan population in general at this time is, however, far from clear in the sources. Generally the British participant observers conveyed an impression of limited communal tension. MacMichael found that, where as a degree of communal tension existed on the peninsular it was less than he expected. He had gone to Malaya expecting `to find a state of high tension between the various racial groups' but `did

not find it.' His dominant impression was that of `men, women and children of every race ... mixing amicably and confidently, in street and village, in work and play, at all hours of the day.'([234]) Day, too, recorded an impression of racial harmony in Kedah in November, 1945: `The most noticeable feature of the State as a whole is the harmony in which all races are living ...'.([235])

Still, we need to be extremely wary of perceptions such as these. MacMichael's report to his supervisors may well have been self-serving to a degree: he may well have been disinclined to see racial disharmony of a degree that would have impeded the passage of the Malayan Union proposals; and Day, too, may well have been seeing what he wanted to see and have been reluctant, even in his private reflections, to see a degree of racial disharmony that might reflect on the efficiency of the BMA in Kedah. Certainly this optimism in MacMichael and Day does not square with the evident strong communal aspects of the anti-Union protest at the time. Even Day's own account of a particular incident in Kedah seems somewhat at odds with his sanguine conclusion on the states race relations:

> In the afternoon representatives of the Chinese community from Baling, Kulim, Sungei Patani, Alor Star and Perlis called to see me on the question of relations between Malays and Chinese generally. They had no specific complaints to make of overt acts of hostility by either side though those from Baling stated that they were apprehensive following a certain amount of stone throwing and parading by Malays in the area of Kupang. From what I could gather from them this appeared rather bravado than open hostility. I assured them that full forces of the law would be employed against those who broke the peace, be they Chinese, Malays, Indians or anyone else. Finally I promised to visit the area and meet the leading Chinese, Penghulus and Ketua Kampongs of Malays the following day.([236])

Clearly the British were prepared to act quickly at the first sign of communal unrest and the tone of Day's remarks here implies that he and his administration had addressed the possibility of such an outbreak. The inconsistency suggests that race relations in Kedah could not have been as harmonious as Day's earlier note suggested and as he perhaps wanted to believe they were.

---

[234] MacMichael, "Report", in Allen, Malayan Union, p.163.

[235] Day Diary, 8 November, 1945, p.2.

[236] Day Diary, 17 November, 1945.

Still, whereas the tendency in the sources is to emphasize the communal aspect of anti-Union protest and to do so somewhat narrowly on the basis of the communal anxieties of the Malay administrative elite, such ethnic tension needs to be viewed on a wider social perspective in order to more fully account for the response of the Malay peasantry in this regard. Ethnic tension needs, too, to be considered more in relation to other social factors in operation at the time. A fruitful line of enquiry would be to examine whether it was an interaction of class and race factors which, in the stringent and traumatic occupation and post war circumstances, triggered long-standing and hitherto mainly latent, social tensions in the rural sphere. More research, then, is needed, to test the hypothesis that it was these two main broad factors in interaction with one another, especially in the more populous Malay community in the north, which sparked a demonstrative volatility in the Malay masses and which rendered them receptive to the anti-Union appeal of Malay elite nationalism.

Conclusion.

To sum up, then, it can be seen from the above that, while there were many immediate causes of the failure of the Malayan Union the most obvious and important cause lay in the strong and long standing centripetal pull of the unfederated, and especially the northern, Malay states. While the starting point for this analysis of the place of the NMS in the Union conflict has been Allen's excellent preliminary study it has been necessary to re-examine his tentative conclusions in the light of documentary evidence more recently available and not accessible to Allen at the time of his research. These documents reveal that Union failed not so much as a result of Whitehall bungling as Allen suggests, but more as a result of disintegrative tendencies on the peninsular - tendencies which arose from the unique colonial circumstances there and which had the centripetal pull of the UMS, and especially the NMS, as a major factor. It was, then, the differing historical development of the states on the peninsular, and especially the differing nature of the northern states from those in the south, that was the fundamental cause of the unification problem rather than Whitehall blundering. It was a problem acknowledged by the British though not one that was understood by them in any thorough going analytical sense and this no doubt contributed to its intractability. However, their failure to effectively unite the peninsular until 1948 was much more a result of the fact that the interests of Malays in the UMS were genuinely irreconcilable - or not easily reconcilable - with the British aim of unification until changing circumstances and differing

perceptions allowed a compromise shortly before Independence.

This is not to say that there was no error on the part of the British in their handling of the Union negotiations. Certainly there was mishandling on the British side (MacMichael, for example, clearly lacked the diplomatic skills necessary to push negotiations along rapidly without alienating the Malay leaders he was seeking to draw on side) and they had indeed, we can see now with hindsight, for the most part miscalculated the post war situation in relation to their plans. But they remained true to form in their perception of the situation in post war Malaya and their approach to Union does not seem so surprising when measured against the prevailing British colonial attitudes of the day. There was bound to be considerable uncertainly in Malaya immediately following the Japanese occupation and it appears that British officialdom took a gamble that Union would work - a gamble that may well have worked if British pre war assumptions about the nature of peninsular society were accurate at the time they were formed and had held true for the period of British reoccupation. They were in the end defeated in their Union plans by the social uncertainty of the immediate post war period - an uncertainty they could not have comprehended and which developed in ways they could not have foreseen. The British did not understand the fundamental social tensions arising from colonial influence and their strategies were premised on the comfortable assumption that Malayan society was best organized in a manner cut in the mould of the British constitution and imbued with a spirit of nineteenth century British liberalism. They therefore sought a constitutional and political framework for Malaya which replicated that in Britain and which was anchored firmly on an economic base of British inspired capitalism. Clearly their actions in seeking to impose Union in the vacuum left by the defeat of the Japanese was broadly consistent with this fundamental perception and approach. It was what was, for the British, hidden forces of social contention arising from past decades of colonial influence, that defeated them in their Union endeavour - a contention which reached high pitch on British reoccupation and which was not likely to have been foreseen clearly by them in the form and intensity that it took.

The irony in the post war situation in Malaya, given the intensity of the conflict between British administrators and mainstream Malay protest, lay in the fact that they were

fundamentally on the same side. Dato Onn and his followers broadly supported British colonialism in its centralist move differing not on the basic need for unification but on the nature of that unity and the way in which it was to be implemented, and in particular on how citizenship was to be defined in the new constitution. It was for this reason that British officialdom was able to look on Malay protest in a positive light seeing it only misguided in the exclusiveness of its nationalism. Thus, while the British baulked at the frustration of their Union plans by Malay protestors they also saw such protest as a healthy sign since it served to give shape and focus to a spirit of Malay nationalism and unity of purpose that in broad terms were positive developments from the British point of view. Still, the British could also see that the development of Malay nationalism was not going all their own way. For them their fostering of Malay nationalism was only a step along the way towards a unified and ethnically integrated Malaya: they wanted this Malay nationalism subordinated to a multi racial Malayan identity. The risk, they could see, was that too strong a Malay nationalism could upset the ethnic balance upon which the new state would depend for its stability.

In hindsight we can see that, while the prevailing British view was that Union should be stampeded through, some British officials read the signs correctly and foresaw the self defeating nature of such a course of action. Thus, the Labour Department official cited above who wrote optimistically of the new mood of independence within the Malay community and of the fact that for the first time Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu favoured combined action in resisting the Union, also cautioned, on the basis of information from `a great number of Malays, many of them holding senior appointments' that `to press the White Paper as it stands at present will be to risk driving the Malays to desperate action.'([237]) This official clearly saw,

---

[237] John... [? signature unclear], `Personal Impressions - Malayan Union', Labour [Department ?], Malaya, 15 August, 1946, p. 1. CO 537/1548.

As we have seen in this chapter above, that `desperate action', according to this official, would arise `partly in retaliation for previous action of high handedness by the guerillas and others and partly from a sense of frustration'.

Ibid.

These foreseen causes of `desperate action' are not wholly clear from this document. Presumably the reference to high handedness and frustration had in mind two things: the ethnic tension between Malays and Chinese - a tension which, it was thought by some at the time, was being exacerbated by the actions of Chinese Communist guerillas; and a feeling of frustration created by a perception that the White Paper with its citizenship provisions would disadvantage Malays in favour of the other ethnic races on the peninsular.

then, that the emergent Malay nationalism would not at that stage be easily integrated into a wider Malayan nationalism and that there was a need to proceed at a measured pace in the creation of a Malayan national unity of the kind his masters in Whitehall wanted. This official clearly thought his superiors in London out of touch with the situation on the ground in Malaya and considered it essential that `more of those who have its destiny in their own hands come and visit the country.'([238])

If the top administrators in the Colonial Office in London had heeded that more cautious advice from some officials on the spot in Malaya and had been more attuned to the strong grievances of Malay public servants Union may have succeeded. It was not by any means certain, however, that a more cautious and responsive British strategy would have produced the result they wanted and the greater likelihood is that the historical development of the colonial state on the peninsular meant that the odds were stacked against the British from the start. In the event Whitehall saw the ascendancy of moderate Malay protest on the peninsular as a green light to proceed with Union post haste. Clearly this precipitate action created problems and limited the British chances of success. But we should not over emphasize this. The evidence strongly suggests however that the Union policy was doomed to failure from the outset and that the way in which the British went about seeking to install the new constitution merely exacerbated the failure.

Had the UMS been less resistant to unification the British may well have been able to create the sort of state they wanted on the peninsular before the war and at the measured pace they would have preferred. For the British the problem was two fold: to get the UMS to accept in principle the idea of joining the Federated states in some sort of union; and then to win all the states over to accepting a particular constitutional framework - one which accommodated British economic and strategic interests in the area while at the same time meeting with a sufficient level of approval from local groups within the states in order to ensure the necessary stability in the new arrangement. Still, whereas the British had succeeded in achieving some measure of de facto and de jure uniformity of policy on the peninsular before World War II they had not been inclined up to that time to force the

[238] Ibid.

Unfederated Malay States into an expanded colonial state on the peninsular as we have seen, in Chapter 5 and this chapter above. The British were well aware, as the Maxwell memorandum cited above in this chapter shows, of the strongly independent inclination of the traditional ruling elite in the UMS and were wary of encroaching too far on this independence. They therefore sought more subtle strategies to draw in the five states - to no avail. The failure of the Clementi Scheme in the twenties and thirties showed that subtle strategies to join the Federated and Unfederated states would not work. Against this background it is not surprising that the British decided to grasp the nettle and to avail themselves of what they saw was the opportunity provided by the interregnum of Japanese occupation to unify the peninsular under British rule. As we have seen, the two aspects to the achievement of the desired unification were seen as the two successive stages in which unification would be achieved though such an orderly progression towards Union failed with the restriction of the Clementi Scheme in the 1920s.

The 1946 Union push can not be seen, then, as a single attempt at unification (though it is easy to get this impression on a reading of the secondary sources): the 1946 debacle was in fact the penultimate stage in a longer effort to unify the peninsular. Certainly in 1946 there were other factors - the renewal of Malay opposition within the FMS being foremost among them - which impeded Union but the fact remains that it was because the separationist tendencies of the UMS had seen the British coming to the end of their tether in finding a solution to the unification problem that they took forceful and precipitate action in 1946; that they understandably perceived that their options for achieving their desired unity were running out and that rapid and decisive action was called for in attempting to impose a unitary state in the constitutional vacuum left by the Japanese retreat.

In seeking to understand why Union failed, then, we need to focus less on the mistakes of Whitehall per se and more on the differing historical development of the states on the peninsular - a differing development which had produced states in the north with a markedly differing character from those in the south and which had been strongly resistant to centralization from the time of their formal inclusion under the British Colonial aegis. In line with this we can better understand the reason for the Union failure if we get away from the notion that it was associated with a sudden and unprecedented awakening of Malay nationalism triggered by the particular circumstances of the occupation and post war period

and look instead to the way in which the Union conflict was a stronger outburst of Malay opposition to British rule of the kind that had been a factor in the Malayan setting from the earliest colonial period - an opposition which, while a feature, too, elsewhere on the peninsular, had a stronger manifestation in the NMS and which in large measure served to keep those states more resistant to British encroachment in the pre war decades when the British were seeking to consolidate their extended state on the peninsular as a whole. We can more readily understand the Union conflict if we see it as a later manifestation of a continuing social tension as the old order came up against the new in the NMS. It was the distinctive way in which this tension between opposing forces - between the old economy and the new, the old political structures and the new colonial state, between old privilege and groups with newly acquired wealth and status, between peasant producers and those extracting their surplus in new and different ways - which produced states in the north which were markedly different form those in the south and which meant that the degree of social uniformity necessary for a tighter administrative control on the peninsular was lacking and that the desired constitutional changes lay beyond the British grasp. Ironically, in terms of its perspective, it is Allen's `Kelantan Rising' article rather than his monograph on Malayan Union which holds out promise of a more synoptic perception and therefore a better understanding of the Union conflict in 1946. Following the tentative lead in Allen's article we can see that the Union upheaval, the Trengganu and Kelantan risings, and the less dynamic and more sustained tension between Malays and British throughout the period, were symptomatic of the changing social situation in the north stemming ultimately from the intrusion of a colonial economy onto the peninsular and the later formalization of that economy and society within the structures of a British colonial state.

The NMS Malay resistance to the post war Union proposal was, then, a continuing direct manifestation of the new social relations spawned by the British endeavour to operate a colonial economy, especially the colonial export economy, and the response this drew from Malays seeking to draw benefit for themselves within the new colonial apparatus of state. The Union dispute was in this sense a clear manifestation of new class relations within these states - relations which had been contentious throughout the period of colonial rule and which had, by 1946, taken on a specific character corresponding to the general economic and social

circumstances of the time. Specifically: from early in the formal colonial period power was no longer being wielded in the traditional way, no longer being exercised on the basis of direct, forceful and personal control of wealth and people but was being exercised in a more diffuse, less personal and less direct way, through the instrumentality of a colonial bureaucracy; furthermore, that bureaucracy, while lorded over by the British, was heavily dependent upon an army of Malay civil servants to fulfill its function. By 1946 there was, then, on the peninsular and especially in the north, a new and powerful group of Malay civil servants occupying the middle and lower strata of the colonial ruling apparatus - a group which was able to exercise considerable power in its own right and which was well organized and able to assert itself against what it saw as a strong threat to its interests posed by the Union move.

Ironically, this group was both reactionary and radical at the same time. It was moderate and reactionary in the sense that it accepted the basic colonial arrangement and sought to maintain its interests within this status quo - in accepting the British colonial presence and the colonial structure within which they operated, seeking merely to maintain this structure in a form which was to their advantage. They protested in opposition not only to British administrators who were, in their view, threatening their position within the colonial bureaucratic apparatus but also in opposition to radical Malay Islamic elements within the Malay anti-Union protest who went much further in their protest in challenging the nature and function of British colonialism on the peninsular. Thus, this bifurcate division in Malay elite opposition to British rule echoed in a different form the division that existed in Malay opposition to British colonial rule in previous decades. In the earlier stages of formal colonial influence in the north it will be remembered that the principal contest had been between the British on the one hand, and the traditional Malay elite competing with the British for the retention of as much of their power, wealth and influence as they could, on the other.

Added to this was another dimension of conflict in the form of a split between those elite Malays who were becoming part of the British colonial establishment and those who stood outside it and were alienated from it. While the sources are not of one mind as to where the line is to be drawn in Trengganu between traditional elite on the one hand, and the peasantry on the other, it is none the less clear, as I have argued above, that there was a discernible intra-elite split during the Trengganu rising. The split divided those who sought

and obtained advantage from the British colonial establishment and those who were radical, fundamentalist Muslims who scorned the former group for their accommodation with the British and who wanted to bring that establishment down in favour of a more purely Islamic state. Broadly the same kind of intra-elite schism can be seen in the Kelantan Rising though the role of religion was much less clear in that state at that time.

By the time of the 1946 conflict however this elite contest had broadened out to include a new and powerful group of Malay civil servants on the conservative elite side and a much less influential radical Islamic intelligentsia on the militant anti-colonial side. Both of these new groups contested the British for power and influence though from very different political and philosophic stand points and following a very different methodology. The latter group appear, on the face of it, to have taken up the standard against what they saw as a compromised and impure Malay Islamic accommodation with British colonialism similar to that which was being wielded by fundamentalist Muslims - their forerunners in outlook - during the Kelantan and Trengganu Risings. We can thus see in broad outline from the above the historical continuity of the 1946 anti-Union protest even if much more research is needed to establish the links more clearly. Aligned on one side against the British proposal in 1946 was the old Malay elite - the traditional ruling group - those belonging with or connected to the leading Malay families formerly enjoying long standing inherited wealth, privilege and power - together with the moderate Malay administrators drawn from a wider cross section of the Malay population: and on the other stood a somewhat shadowy group of radical Islamic intellectuals - teachers, journalists and the like - who operated a seemingly arcane, behind-the-scenes opposition not only to the British establishment in general and Malayan Union in particular, but also against what they saw as the compromised Malay middle and lower component of the British colonial establishment. They were not able, in 1946, to have much impact on the colonial status quo (though they did, in the north, cause the British some degree of anxiety and the need was felt to monitor their activities as the British response to the Kedah KMM protest vote against Union shows). They had to contend not only with British suppression but also with the collaborationist designs of Dato Onn and the Associations to keep them in check as well and it was not until the first stirings of party politics within a pre and post Independence constitutional framework that this largely nascent, radical,

fundamentalist Islamic strand of Malay nationalism came to the fore in northern Malaya.

When we come to the response of the peasantry to the Union the position is much less clear in the sources. While we can clearly see a strong elite reaction against Union we must treat the claim in the secondary sources that there was a mass reaction against Union in the sense that the peasantry were activated against the proposal en masse with caution since the assumption that this was the case is thinly based. While these sources are able to point to several mass demonstrations they give little idea of the composition of the demonstrating group. While it is true that the protest of elite groups was often cast in populist terms we can not be sure of the extent to which such claims genuinely reflected the outlook of the mass of peasantry.

There is little evidence to back the claim that by 1946 there had been the sort of popular political awakening based on a widespread sense of Malay nationalism at all levels of Malay society of the magnitude claimed. Emergent Malay nationalism, to the contrary, on the evidence to light thus far, was much more a phenomenon within the Malay elite: it is not until the immediate pre and post Independence years that we can clearly see an emergent Malay nationalism at the base level within the community.

Still, a lack of evidence not withstanding, it does seem likely that there was some significant degree of peasant involvement in the anti-Union protest. There had, after all, been peasant protest against the British in Kelantan and Trengganu in 1915 and 1929 respectively and this clearly suggests some degree of political awakening at this level of the Malay community in the early decades of formal colonial rule in the north which in turn would seem to indicate a general predisposition on the part of the peasantry to protest certain aspects of British rule at least. But what could have been the motivation for peasant involvement in the anti-Union protest? If there was a mass peasant reaction against the Union we must assume a very strong motive - a strong grievance - arising from the proposal and its implementation. It is hard to imagine that there could have been peasant protest of the kind and degree claimed without a strong motive of some kind arising directly from the constitutional proposal - something in the proposal having a strong bearing on the peasant situation in the post occupation period. The peasantry did have specific material grievances during the two earlier risings and it seems implausible that they would have rebelled in 1946 over anything less direct and immediate in its effect on them. It is difficult to believe that they would have been

fired into protest action only through blind obedience - by traditional feelings of strong loyalty - to their rulers alone, as Allen suggests. It seems far more likely that the real motivation for what peasant involvement in anti-Union protest there was sprang from the hardships experienced by them during the Japanese occupation period and during the immediate British reoccupation period when the protests took place.

It is important to stress at this stage that, while my account here focusses on changing social relations in the NMS as a strong long term factor impeding unification of the peninsular, that the opposition to Union which came from the FMS also sprang from changing social relations in those states. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the changing social situation to the south but the point must be emphasized that, in 1946, it was the combined effect of Malay opposition from both north and south which was the immediate cause of the defeat of Union and no attempt has been made to weigh up the relative strength of opposition in the two areas. The NMS response was, as the British response to the Kedah and especially the Kelantan protest shows, clearly a strong inhibiting influence on the Union: but so, too, was the protest in the southern states and it was the fact that the British had opposition to their aim of unification on two fronts, not one as before, that was the immediate cause of the defeat of the Union.

Certainly we might expect that there would have been a strong Malay resistance to Union in the north due to the stronger Malay character of the states there. However, the sources do not unequivocally indicate that this was the case and we can not be sure on the present state of our knowledge one way or the other. The secondary sources do tend to create an impression that Malay resistance to Union was fairly evenly spread across the peninsular. If this was indeed the case then this may be attributable in large measure to the fact that such protest within the Malay community was largely an elite phenomenon and that the communal demographic factor - the greater proportion of Malays in the north - did not come into play at the time. In the light of the later electoral successes of radical Islam we can hypothesize that there was, at the least, a stronger oppositionist popular Malay nationalism in the north which was largely latent in 1946, and at most that popular Malay nationalism of this kind was indeed activated within the peasantry there at that time in a way which added greater intensity to the overall Malay protest against Union. This is, however, highly speculative and awaits

confirmation or otherwise by future research.

The point to remember, however, is that on a longer historical perspective it was the distinctive way in which society was changing in the north in its external manifestation which was, in terms of the geographic location of resistance, by far the strongest factor in frustrating British efforts to pull all the states together into a single unified state.

What can be clearly seen, then, in broad outline, if not in all its details, is the way in which NMS Malay resistance to unification was part of a wider and longer term resistance to the encroachment of the British State into their domain. It was a resistance which arose directly from the way in which a new set of social relationships had begun to emerge from the time that the first traders had come to the area and which were emerging even more strongly as the British were consolidating their control over production in the interests of developing and maintaining economically viable and socially stable states in the area. While the principal objective - the raison d'etre - of the British on the peninsular was the fostering of the colonial export economy, a secondary objective, and one necessary for the latter, was the re-arrangement of the economy and society in the north and it was the contentious nature of the social relations that arose from this which impeded the spread and consolidation of British rule on the peninsular throughout the post 1909 decades to 1946. It was especially the British who both by design and accident altered the basis upon which power within the Malay community was exercised - no longer through the direct and physically forceful appropriation of wealth from the productive base but by gaining and maintaining a place in the colonial apparatus of state which, through its own machinery for surplus extraction, maintained itself on the basis of direct production.

By 1946, then, the traditional NMS Malay elite had been `tamed' holding little residual power: the main struggle for power was not now so much between the British and the defenders of the traditional Malay state but took place more within the British colonial establishment itself, between the British who dominated that state and Malays who had for the most part been absorbed into it. While there remained a residualized group of fundamentalist Malay Muslims who contested both the British state and Malay elements within it with a view to replacing the colonial edifice of state with one of their own structured along purist Islamic lines the main contest for power and influence took place within the colonial establishment as contenders manoeuvred for position within the administrative apparatus of the colonial state,

and according to the practices of that apparatus. Thus, when it was thought that under the citizenship proposals the then Malay dominated civil service would be swamped by Chinese, the twin motives of ethnic antipathy and career ambition galvanized an emergent administrative elite into action through their associations. Later, starting in the immediate pre-independence period, a new political process began to provide another avenue of access to power and wealth. But at the 1946 stage of historical development it was narrower cause orientated combined action that was the means of acquiring and maintaining advantage and the new class of administrators threw themselves into such agitation with considerable vigour.

All this was a far cry from the situation where power depended upon the direct physical control of human and material resources at the productive base of social and social conflict in large measure arose from the tension between individuals and groups seeking to exercise such control: control of wealth and the attainment and retention of power now took place in a fundamentally different way and the nature of social conflict was correspondingly different. The Union dispute was a clear manifestation of these changed social circumstances. The Kelantan and Trengganu risings arose basically from a tension between the old Malay polity and the British colonial state as the latter, having declared itself into existence and having formalized its supremacy, struggled to consolidate its hold over state productive wealth and Malay social groups engaged in this production, as a matter of practical reality: against this offensive of the British colonial state the Malay social groups affected by this competed with the British, and each other, to maintain the status quo they desired - or at least to retain as much of that status quo as they could. However, by 1946 the battle lines had been drawn in a fundamentally different way: the hold of the British colonial state had been established and social contention, now without most of its traditional vestiges, took place mainly within the parameters of the British colonial state, with those outside the British colonial structure relegated to the periphery of the contest with no real hope of demolishing that edifice and replacing it with one of their own.

In all this, while social tensions are clearly visible at the level of the productive base throughout the period (clearly the peasantry can be seen resisting new colonial methods of surplus extraction in the Kelantan and Trengganu risings for example) there was no mass political awakening of the kind seen elsewhere in East and Southeast Asia in a corresponding

period of time and we must be wary of claims that there was a sudden outburst of popular Malay nationalism in response to Union.([239]) Neither were the Malay masses - at least in the north - totally quiescent in the pre 1946 period and the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes. On the evidence thus far it would seem that the sudden upsurge of Malay nationalism in 1946 was mainly an elite phenomenon and the clear emergence of a popular Malay nationalism on the peninsular was a later development coming more with the emergence of party politics and acquiring sharper definition in the Independence decades as ethnic and class tensions became more acute as we shall see in the next chapter.

Maxwell's assessment in 1920 was, then, both indicative of the problem posed to the British in their aim of unifying the peninsular by combining the FMS and the UMS in the pre-war decades, and prophetic in the light of the Union push and its consequences in 1946. His basic approach to the problem of that year seems eminently reasonable in the light of the difficulties facing the British in seeking to unify the peninsular - difficulties acknowledged by Maxwell (quoted above in this chapter) in the same document:

> It is submitted that the British policy should be directed to fostering these friendly feelings [between the FMS and UMS], with the hope that as common interests and powers of mutual assistance come more and more into being and into light, there may naturally and spontaneously be evolved the true federal feeling, which in process of time will link all the Malay States into a loose-knit federation, wherein each State can preserve its separate entity, its dignity and self-respect, whilst combining with all the other States in matters of common interest. It will be of interest to note the matters in which the Malay States - as a whole - have already shown a common interest, or perhaps the rudiments of a federal feeling.([240])

It was a measure of the accuracy of his assessment and that of those who prevailed over British policy in the period that the separationist tendencies of the UMS kept the desired unity beyond the British grasp up until the outbreak of World War II and which forced the abortive 1946 attempt to impose the Union.

---

[239] Nothing in Malaya in this period of time matching developments in China, Vietnam and the Philippines for example where peasant political consciousness was reaching a more developed form in the pre-war and post-war period and where strong and overt peasant activism was a feature of those societies within this period. Specifically, for example: there was nothing in Malaya at this time to compare with peasant participation in the `Soviet' Republic of Kiangsi in China proclaimed in 1931 and the historic `Long March' retreat from Kiangsi to escape superior nationalist forces; nothing to match the revolutionary activities of peasants in the Huk movement on Central Luzon in the 1930s, 40s and into the 50s, and nothing comparable with the defeat of French forces at Dien Bien Phu by Ho Chih Minh's peasant army in Vietnam in 1954.

[240] Maxwell, Notes, p.5.

In the event what came into existence in 1947 on the defeat of the Union was a federation move in line with the British concept of federalism for the peninsular in the 1920s and the peninsular went into Independence with a federal constitution which allowed the states to retain, to a significant degree, their separate identities and considerable control over their own destinies. It has remained as we shall see in the next chapter, something of a loose federation, with the northern states able to assert their political will within the parameters of a constitution which gave them the room to do so. This was to cause some discomforture in Kuala Lumpur as Independence politicians and administrators inherited some of the problems that had beset the British administration before them.

It was fortunate from the British stand point that when, in 1946, the four states were becoming aware of their commonality of interest and the similarities they shared with one another, that they did not move in the direction of forming a formal separate unity of the four states perhaps within a wider Malayan Federation. Exactly what kind of constitutional arrangement the Kedah Malays who petitioned the British government for the bringing together `of all the Malays on the peninsular under one centralizing system of constitutional Government' had in mind is not clear from their correspondence.([241]) In the short run their objective clearly was to gain time - to achieve a postponement of Union to give time for special consideration of the Malay position with regard to Union.([242]) Their demand for a `Malay Union' rather than `Malayan Union' may have indicated a desire for a NMS constitutional unity though it seems more likely that it referred to a peninsular-wide unity with the Malays in a dominant position over other races. Still, a separate unity of the four states within some sort of federation must have been a tempting proposition for radical and moderate NMS Malays alike. The proximity of the four states to one another would have

---

[241] Kesatuan Melayu Kedah to Secretary of State for the colonies, 19 January, 1946. CO537/1555.

See above in this chapter.

[242] `We demand that a special commission be sent to Malaya as is being done to countries similarly situated, pending which, questions affecting the Malay States should be postponed ...'

Kesatuan Melayu Kedah, to Hone, 3 February, 1946. CO537/1555.

leant itself to this and it is hard to believe that the possibility wasn't canvassed at the time.([243])
However, the sources throw little light on the subject: while there is evidence in that there was, in the minds of at least some NMS Malays, a perception of a common Malay identity across the four states, this perception does not appear to have extended as far as devising any concrete constitutional proposal to link the northern states as a discrete constitutional entity within a wider British colonial state.

Certainly there was nothing in the imperial history of the four states that would have inclined them towards the formation of a separate NMS unit in this way. In 1946 the four states to the north, unlike those centrally located to the south, had no pre-existing administrative unity of any kind. They had under the British hegemony to 1946 a purely residual status and they remained separate entities without any basis for inter state cooperation in the direction of forming some sort of secessionist unity at a time when the strong emergence of Malay nationalism might have drawn them in that direction. Prior to 1909, their position under the Siamese, located as they were at the southern extremity of that hegemony, was too peripheral to have imbued the four states with a developing sense of common identity and purpose in any functional sense. It is true that the four states under the British had been becoming less residual in the decades leading up to 1946 - that they were being drawn by slow degrees towards the centre of an expanding British state on the peninsular. But this had not occurred in such a way, or to the point, where a functional degree of cooperation between the four states would have enabled them to effect, as a block, a secessionist move away from Union. Ironically, then, it was the individualist nature of NMS separatism that served to keep the four states apart at a time when it might have been in their interests to take strong concerted action to secure their continued independence from a tightly structured British colonial state.

The federal constitution which came into existence in 1947 was, then, both a consequence of the new social relations emerging under colonialism on the peninsular and the provider of framework within which those social relations further developed in the

---

[243] Leant itself to this to some extent though this should not be overstated: the upward jutting portion of Perak meant that, in geographic terms, the northern states were divided into two groups of two states; Kedah and Perlis in the northwest; and Kelantan and Trengganu in the northeast.

Independence period. In particular, it gave scope for fundamentalist Islam, which had been a weaker force protesting its cause very much on the periphery of the colonial establishment in the pre-Independence decades, to enter the mainstream of the Independence state through the party political process and to give strong expression to the regional and state concerns of its constituents. While we can see in broad outline the origins of the later fundamentalist Islamic electoral successes in the 1950s and 1960s in the conflict of earlier decades - in the Trengganu rising, in the Kelantan rising(seen less clearly), and in the Union conflict - the published record on the subject remains thin and much more research on the way in which this group was developing in the pre-Independence decades is needed for a better understanding of it.

CHAPTER 8

THE NORTHERN MALAY STATES IN MALAYSIAN HISTORY: THE INDEPENDENCE PERIOD 1957-1980

Introduction

Turning now to the contemporary decades on the peninsular we are in a better position to examine and understand the unique character of the NMS in the modern Malaysian context. A reading of modern Malaysian history provides clear evidence of the distinctive character of the four states within the contemporary national state entity - a distinctiveness which, at base, derives its character from the way in which, under an outside impetus, the old society in the north was transformed into the new within the changing wider social context on the peninsular. Much of this distinctive development has shaped itself in a way which has proved problematic for the national Malayan, and later Malaysian, governments and to the present time the main planks of government policy have been greatly influenced by a perception of actual and potential instability located to a significant degree in the NMS. In this chapter, then, I will demonstrate how an understanding of the distinctive long term effects of the penetration of western economic influences in north Malaya is essential to an understanding of present day Malaysian society. The main emphasis, then, in this chapter will be on the continuity of the effect of European influence in the north from the late eighteenth century as base determining factor in Malaysian history and society.

In the two decades or so since Federation the independent state of Malaya and Malaysia has managed to cohere. But not without some difficulty. Disintegrative forces within the Federation have been strong and to the time of writing there has existed considerable anxiety that internal sources of instability will disrupt and destroy national unity. This instability has in one way or another, directly or indirectly, presented a challenge to the conservative status quo presided over by the elite groups that have exercised an economic political and administrative hegemony within the federation since 1957.

These challenges to the status quo fall into two main categories:

(1) Challenges mounted within the constitution from opposition parties and pressure groups to government in Malaya and Malaysia and the wider social order of which this government was a part and upon which it depended. Of particular concern to the government here has been a radical Islamic electoral

challenge to conservative national and state political power and authority which began taking effect in the late 1950s.

(2) More direct and often unconstitutional challenges to central and state authority. Recent decades have seen Kedah peasants protesting their economic deprivation by taking to the streets in protest, race riots in 1969 and continuing ethnic tension in their wake. There has also been, up until recently, a sustained residual, localized and small scale though nonetheless troublesome from the point of the national government, communist insurgency based in the Thai-Malaysian border area.

The national government has sought to defuse these challenges to its authority by various means. The government seems to have relied heavily upon the twin strategies of economic reform coupled with a strong measure of authoritarian control to hold Malaysian society together, with continued, though at times uncertain, success.

The NMS have been of key significance in Malaysia's independence history both as a major source of instability and, concomitantly, as a major focus of government regional strategy aimed at securing the federation as a whole. While in the South East Asian context Malaysia has seen less social rupturing than certain other countries in the region -Vietnam, The Philippines and Indonesia for example - significant social tensions arising from the colonial past and the way in which the old society on the peninsular was transformed into the new have been and still are, clearly evident.

This chapter examines, then, the distinctive position of the NMS in the wider context of independent Malaya and Malaysia in the light of the preceding analysis of social transformation in the four states in the wider peninsular context. It seeks to demonstrate the essential historical continuity in this distinctiveness and to indicate the way in which the longer perspective in time better enables us to understand the unique role of the four states in the contemporary national context, and, as a consequence, modern Malaysian society as a whole.

Inevitably, in bringing this enquiry up to the near present in this way, it is only possible to sketch in something of the broad pattern of events and no pretence is made to

anything approaching a definitive explanation of the contemporary situation in the NMS in the wider national context. While there are gaps in our knowledge and understanding of modern Malaysia, and a degree of superficiality in both from the historian's point of view, it is nonetheless possible, and illuminating, to sketch in something of the link between the place of the NMS in the Malaysia we read about in the newspapers, and the pre-colonial and colonial past on the peninsular. In so doing we can go some of the way towards a thorough understanding of the present and forward direction of the federation in the 1990's.

This chapter is, then, an invitation to perceive the 23 years since Independence not as a period isolated in time but rather as a dynamic interval in a continuum in time during which basic social tensions have been, are being, and will be, worked through.

The Independence period to 1980 had seen nearly a decade of a new economic direction set down by the state in the early 1970s. As we shall see below this new policy was spelled out in a series of national economic plans and the year 1980 marked the end of the period of operation of the third plan in the series and the onset of the fourth. The period also saw a major re-alignment of the main political parties active in the system.

Both the new economic direction and the party political realignment were prompted to a greater or lesser extent by the influences indicated above in broad terms at the beginning of this chapter. Of particular importance were the traumatic race riots in 1969 since they had the effect of highlighting, in the eyes of national government, the need for a sustained and sequentially co-ordinated economic policy that would ensure a more equitable spread of wealth and a widening of economic function across the communal boundary. The riots also helped to pave the way for the party political realignment in the early 1970s. While the topic of the riots still awaits a definitive understanding some things are clear. In broad terms they stemmed from a range of complex causes relating closely to the other instances of social conflict on the peninsular arising from challenges to the status quo - the resurgence of radical Islam as a party political force, the peasant hunger demonstrations in Kedah, the communist insurgency, and so on. These challenges to the system, together with the riots, have all been seen, collectively and individually, as a threat to national unity.

The disintegrative forces on the peninsular need to be seen then, not as separate phenomena, but as belonging with broader and more fundamental social tensions operative within the period and having their origins in the pre-colonial and colonial past on the

peninsular. In their effect in prompting a new economic policy and a party political realignment they lie behind the modern face of the Malaysian state. Together they have been responsible for the basic manner of operation and direction of the contemporary Malaysian state.

In these important respects then the Malaysian state of 1957-1980 was the immediate precursor to the Malaysian state in existence today. It was in these two decades or so that the fledgling independent state found its feet and set itself the basic direction it follows today.

In functional scholarly terms it is a period for which sufficient time has elapsed to the present for an accumulation of some systematic and reflective analysis enabling us to draw some conclusions about the recent past in Malaysia and enabling us to bring our historical understanding of peninsular society forward into the contemporary, or near contemporary, period. Thus, while there is, certainly, a degree of arbitrariness in the choice certainly, the turn of the decade does, for these reasons, represent a convenient marking off point in choosing the time span for this chapter.

Our broader focus in this chapter, then, will be on the social relations that characterize modern Malaysia and in particular on the way in which these have been, at base, a response to economic conditions developing on the peninsular in the colonial period and into modern times. This dissertation, in this chapter especially, remains inspired by a curiosity prompted by some of the major questions posed by recent Malaysian history and will seek to advance further in the direction of a partial answer to them. Questions such as these: why, for example, when alternative strategies for organizing society continued to exercise such a strong influence in corresponding periods of time in say independent Vietnam, Indonesia and The Philippines, has revolutionary politics continued to be comparatively weak in independent Malaya and Malaysia ?;and why, given the later politicization of the Malay peasantry with the coming of party politics on the peninsular, has this not developed into the sort of revolutionary political involvement that has featured so strongly in other countries in the region ? To be sure, part of the answer to these questions is to be found in the much stronger operation of communalism on the peninsular within the period. But, as Stenson, Kessler, Funston and others have argued, and as we shall see below, the situation is more complex than this and we

have to look at the interaction of both communal and class factors if we are to adequately understand social conflict on the peninsular. So, while in these relative terms challenges to the system in Malaya and Malaysia have been less dramatic than those elsewhere in the region their significance should not be underestimated. They deserve attention because they contain clues to the broader characteristic dynamic of Malaysian society. That is to say, we need to understand the essential nature of these conflicts - the underlying relationship between them - if we are to understand why Malaysian society is as it is today.

An examination of recent Malaysian history in this way clearly indicates the important role of the NMS in their distinctive development in influencing the nation's recent history. Accordingly, while this chapter presents very much in outline the broader picture for the peninsular as a whole its central focus will be narrower than this seeking to identify and describe the particular significance of the NMS in the wider context of national social conflict shaping the federation in the post 1957 decades. This chapter will show, then, how the genesis of much of this social contention on the peninsular in the Independence period lies in the way social relations (social relations anchored in the first instance in production but having ramifications well beyond the level of the productive base in those state societies) in the NMS have been changing over a longer period of time. It will demonstrate the continuity of the long term social change occurring as the four states were drawn into the vortex of a wider imperial and later western world economy - change that occurred as they were drawn onto first the periphery of, and then into, an expanding colonial state on the peninsular: change that came as they experienced modern influences within the independent nation state into which the colonial state came to be transformed.

The Radical Islamic Challenge: Religion and Politics in the NMS 1948-1980.

For more than a decade following Independence, the Alliance, a coalition of the parties representing the major ethnic groups in Malaya - the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), was electorally the most successful of the parties and, under the Westminster system adopted by the new state, has governed the country accordingly. Of the three parties in this coalition, it was by far the first two - UMNO and the MCA - which wielded the stronger influence. In the early nineteen seventies the Alliance was widened to include other parties as well as the National Front (Barisan National) as the wider combination of parties is called, has continued

as the dominant party in Malaysian politics to date.

While the popular conceptions of Malayan and Malaysian politics remain that it is primarily a function of communal divisions there is an emerging understanding in later academic writings of the way in which politics on the peninsular has been a response to not only communal factors, but, inter-relatedly, class factors as well.([1])

Throughout the Independence period UMNO has been the dominant party in the Alliance and the National Front. Although seeking and obtaining support from a wider section of the Malay populace UMNO has generally been conservative in its policies as it has sought to advance what it sees as the communal interests of Malays, and beyond that, inter-communal interests, in fulfilment of its role as partner in the coalition. As we shall see in more detail below UMNO has tended more to champion the cause of a Malay elite and to ally itself with the cause of the upper echelons of Chinese and Indian society that has partnered it in the National Front.

Within the period UMNO was dominated initially by a traditional Malay aristocratic ruling elite while the MCA has continued to be dominated by a group of large and small Chinese businessmen.([2]) The least influential party in the Alliance, the MIC, has continued

---

[1] Apart from the sources cited immediately below see for example the seminal accounts of Swift and Stenson pointing to the importance of class in Malaysian society.

M. G. Swift, "Economic Concentration and Malay Peasant Society", in Maurice Freedman(ed), Social Organization Essays Presented to Raymond Firth(London, 1967), passim.

Michael Stenson, "Class and Race in West Malaysia", Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, Vol. 8., No. 2.,(Part 11 April-June, 1976) pp. 45-54, passim.

While the importance of class is now securely anchored in the scholarship there is still much further to go in understanding how it has functioned in Malaysian history and how it continues to be a factor in that society today. As Funston indicated in 1980, whereas it has been frequently observed that the Alliance bodes were privileged and there have been few attempts to extend this analysis and show ways in which class cuts a cross communal considerations in the functioning of Alliance government.

Funston, Malay Politics, p.14.

[2] Means makes the point that the traditional Malay elite were able to exercise a strong measure of political influence by adapting to the new political circumstances that followed the colonial period.

Means, Malaysian Politics, p.21.

into the period of wider coalition a party of the Indian upper class with no roots in the Indian labouring class to any great extent.([3]) In the words of Wheelwright, describing the allotment of power in Malaya and Malaysia to 1974, the country has been mainly in the hand of `two controlling groups - the Malay aristocracy and Chinese capitalists'.([4]) Funston comments on the similar class background and outlook - pro- British and free enterprise - of the Alliance leadership across the three parties.([5])

Since 1974 the composition of the Malay elite leadership has altered. Gullick points out that the traditional aristocratic membership of UMNO has been diluted. According to

---

Milne and Mauzy refer to the elitist nature of the MCA.

R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, Politics and Government in Malaysia(Singapore, 1978), p.133.

They also give a good description of the class of Chinese whose interests are represented by the MCA in the modern Malaysian context.

Ibid. pp.127, 250.

[3] Gullick comments on the MIC as the party of the Indian upper class.

John Gullick, Malaysia: Economic Expansion and National Unity(London, 1981), p.128.

Milne and Mauzy refer to the separation between the MIC and the Indian labouring class.

Milne and Mauzy, Politics and Government, p.134.

[4] Wheelwright describing the Malaysian Government in 1974.

Wheelwright, Radical Political Economy, p.340.

On this page Wheelwright presents a crudely Eurocentric sketch of social and political relations which, it will be seen from my chapters above, clearly needs considerable qualification. According to Wheelwright `[t]he three main pillars of UMNO are the feudal landlords who constitute the Malay aristocracy - the sultans, organizations of rather backward, tradition-dominated Malay peasants and small holders, who are still intensely loyal to their feudal landlords; and the official religion Islam, which acts as a kind of social cement helping to bind the other two together. The backbone of the MCA is the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, especially the rich Chinese merchants and financiers.'

Ibid.

Wheelwright does appear to ignore the importance of the shifting sympathies of a middle group of peasants within the Malay community in its effect on the UMNO elitist hegemony. See below for a further discussion on this point. Still, the passage does echo a wider body of opinion that Malaysian politics is strongly elitist in character.

[5] Funston, Malay Politics, pp.13, 14.

Gullick, `[t]he Malay upper class is now a group of Western-educated civil servants, officers of the armed forces and of the police, technocrats, and professional men such as lawyers and doctors ... It is no longer a group of hereditary aristocrats though it includes some of them.'([6]) Gullick also recognises a middle elite exercising influence at the state and local level. This group includes the larger land-owning small holders, small businessmen and middle ranking civil servants, particularly teachers in the Malay school.([7])

At the same time there were within the system parties - both secular and religious - aiming at a more genuinely broadly based appeal. Of these it was, to 1980, radical Islam in party political form which was having most impact in reacting to the elitist inclination of the three dominant parties within the Alliance, and later, the National Front. Indeed, as Funston has explained at length in his book on the subject, it was the tension between radical Islamic party politics on the one hand, and that of UMNO on the other, which was primarily responsible for the tone and direction of Malay politics within the period of this chapter.([8])

The predominance of UMNO in the coalition and the country as a whole did not go unchallenged for long.([9]) From the late 1950s a radical populist Islamic party, the Pan

---

[6] Gullick, Malaysia, p.126.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Funston, Malay Politics, passim.

Funston's focus is on the period, 1945-1976.

[9] Funston offers a clarification of the position regarding Malay dominance in Malaysian government pointing out that in the past that degree of supremacy has been much overrated. He points out that any such notion of Malay supremacy is defeated by the fact that throughout the period of his study (1945-1976) the demands of many Malays had not been met by Alliance and NF governments which included UMNO. At the same time, he points out, there were significant gains by the other communities on the peninsular. Funston argues that UMNO acceded not only to the (mainly elite) concerns of its coalition partners but those of a wider bureaucratic elite and foreign (especially British) interests as well. UMNO has been, Funston concedes, the dominant partner in the coalition in purely formal procedural terms but we mustn't mistake this, he cautions, for dominance in terms of real power being exercised.

Funston, Malay Politics, pp.1-17.

Certainly we need to avoid an unsophisticated interpretation of the way in which, in the earlier Independence period, benefit was apportioned between the races on the basis of a constitutional formula bequeathed by the British. We need to be wary of overstating the

Malayan Islamic Party (known by the acronyms PAS or PMIP - later renamed Partai Islam (PI)) has succeeded in exerting a strong influence on Malay and hence Malaysian politics operating on a strong base of electoral support in north Malaya.([10]) PAS was the product of a combination, at different stages, of several Islamic and Malay nationalist groups in the early to mid 1950s. Up to 1954 PAS was a purely religious and Islamic welfare movement with no political affiliation. In 1955 it registered itself as a political party in order to contest the election of that year.([11]) The subsequent electoral successes of the party for a decade lasting from the late nineteen fifties to the late nineteen sixties enabled it to control two state governments in the northern peninsular, to exert a strong influence in two other NMS states, and by winning seats in the federal parliament, to exert a degree of influence directly at the

---

degree to which in real terms Malays got power through the instrumentality of UMNO and a very strong presence in government departments. Funston is right to argue the need for a more discriminating understanding of how power, wealth and influence have been distributed within and beyond the three communities.

Still, UMNO has, in party political terms - in the sense that it has in terms of the formal distribution of power within the coalition(the greater number of parliamentary seats held; the greater number of cabinet posts; the fact that it has tended to take the lead in policy decisions; and so on) - been dominant in the running of the country and that is my point in the text of this thesis. Certainly Funston is correct that the position of UMNO in terms of the actual exercise of power is complex and needs to be seen in a broader context of competing interests in which a wider elite extending beyond the party political, and running across communal divisions, holds sway notwithstanding the commentary in the literature which tends to see Malayan and Malaysian politics as running along more communal lines. Indeed, it does appear, as Funston suggests, that UMNO's moves to effect grass roots reforms has always been subject to a non-official, undeclared allegiance to - or at least a coincidence of interest with - a wider elite as I explain more fully in the text below.

[10] Kessler points out that the party is generally referred to as the PMIP in most accounts in English but is generally known in Malaysia as PAS, acronym of Persatuan Islam Sa-Malaya, (or, later, Sa-Tanah Melaya) - in English: the Melaya-wide or Pan-Malayan Islamic Association. By late 1972(when Kessler had completed the research on which his book is based) the party had changed its name to Partai Islam (the Islamic party), or PI.

Kessler, Islam and Politics, pp.26n, 242.

Funston indicates that in 1971 there was a change of name from Persatuan Islam Sa Tanah Melayu(literally, Pan Malayan Islam Union) to Partai Islam(later, Partai Islam Se Malaysia - literally, Pan Malaysian Islamic Party).

Funston, Malay Politics, p. 244.

Kessler refers to the party as PMIP and PI when dealing with the later period of time. I follow Funston's usage and refer to the party as PAS throughout.

[11] Milne and Mauzy, Politics and Government in Malaysia, pp.142, 143.

national level as well. This electoral success provided a severe embarrassment to UMNO as the main representative in the political arena for the Malay populace and a strong challenge to UMNO's position of political leadership of Malay and Malaysian society.

The party has not, however, sustained this high level of independent electoral success in recent decades. In the early seventies the fortunes of PAS waned and it ceased to operate outside the dominant inter-communal coalition. Instead it responded to overtures made by the Alliance and, in the wake of the 1969 race riots, and as a part of a further widening of the Alliance coalition, combined with other opposition parties and those in the Alliance to form the National Front.

While changes in the character of both UMNO and PAS provided some basis for commonality of approach in coalition the alliance between the two remained tenuous and, in 1978, PAS split from the coalition to function independently in the political arena once again. While radical Islam has had a less direct electoral impact on Malaysian politics since that split - to 1980 and beyond - it certainly can not be negated as an alternative political force shaping Malaysian society in that time.[12]

The emergence of radical Islam as a party political force has appeared as problematic both in terms of its influence as a disintegrative force within the federation and in terms of understanding the phenomenon. The question that arises for both observers and those playing their part on the Malaysian political stage is this: How are we to account for the fluctuation in PAS fortunes in the Independence period? In particular there is a need to understand why a significant number of Malays chose the radical Islamic party over the more conservative party purporting to represent their interests. Given the limited ability of radical Islam to effect a sustained mobilization of the peasantry in the colonial period - during the Malayan Union protest for example - why has it been able to greatly increase its impact within the party political context? Early interpretations of PAS success were dismissive and superficial. And

---

[12] Notwithstanding the diminution of its influence as an independent force in Malaysian politics once again PAS has remained a force to be reckoned with. The most recent signs in the Federation point to a continued resurgence of radical Islamic feeling in the NMS and it remains to be seen what effect this feeling in general, and the activities of PAS in particular, will have on Malaysian party politics and the governmental process in general in Malaysia in the future.

indeed to the present it is portrayed in some quarters within Malaysia, and especially by its opponents, as a movement which is backward and xenophobic in its character, having fanaticism as its hallmark, and, more recently, as an organization tending to bring about a destabilization within Malaysia of a kind more associated with the Middle East. On these interpretations it was, and is, seen as a product of the backwardness of the NMS and symptomatic of the failure of these states to adapt to the modern world.

Recent scholarship has sought to offer an alternative to what it sees as these superficial interpretations by showing how PAS has exercised a rational appeal to the Malay peasantry based on a recognition on an Islamic perspective of class differences particularly in the NMS countryside. While these studies have taken us some considerable way down the path towards a full understanding of the PAS phenomenon a definitive, more general, analysis of the PAS appeal in the north has yet to emerge. While there is one major study of the role of PAS in one NMS - Kelantan - there is only a general understanding of how the party has been operating in the other three states with much of this perception drawn by extrapolation from the Kelantan study.

There is no doubt that in the emotionally charged atmosphere of racial tension in Malaysia, particularly after 1969, PAS, with its stronger communal stance, has been seen by national government as a destabilizing influence both within and then outside the coalition. While not acknowledging explicitly any class basis for the PAS popularity the fact that the national government has, from the early nineteen seventies, run an economic programme having as a principal aim the elimination of Malay poverty in the northern states, suggests that the economic basis of the PAS appeal to the population in these states has been taken seriously by the National Front.

Social Contention in the Modern Malaysian State: the Context and Background.

Before proceeding to advance our enquiry further into the changing nature of the period it is first of all necessary to set down the basic constitutional and political context within which these social relations operated from 1948 and through which, in large part, they gained expression, and by which they were greatly influenced. It was this formal context which set the parameters within which social conflict could legally take place and needs to be fully understood if we are to understand why this conflict took the course that it did. It is also necessary to trace in outline the broad political processes within which, and in large part

through which, this social contentiousness was given expression.

The Merdeka Constitution.

In 1948, as we have seen, the NMS were formally integrated with other states on the peninsular into The Federation of Malaya. The 1948 Federation of Malaya constitution, though it marked a temporary respite in the wrangling between the various contending parties seeking to impress their own notions on how government should be organized, certainly did not set the seal on a final constitutional formula for the federation. Constitutional debate continued between 1948 and 1957 in response to the developing political circumstances of the emerging state.

Within the period the framers of the independent state sought to flesh out the 1948 constitution with some parliamentary political activity. Gullick points out that a nominated Federal Council gave to nascent political parties the opportunity of practicing parliamentary political manoeuvres against each other; and to their leaders some practice in the function of ministers.([13]) It was in this period that the Alliance - a coalition of three parties representing each of the three main ethnic groups on the peninsular (outlined in more detail below) came to the fore. To some extent, then, it was a case of working out the new governmental consensus in practice and elections were held on two occasions prior to 1957 on the basis of the 1948 constitutional rules. In 1954 municipal elections gave Malayans their first experience with the ballot box and in the following year the first elections to Federal and State Councils was held. In 1955, in a partial implementation of the new constitution, voters went to the poll to elect representatives to state and federal Legislative Councils. While this represented a significant phased step forward down the path of Westminster-style democracy in that it was the first time that a national election had been held it was still limited in that the election was held for just one legislative house and only a portion of the members with votes in the house after the election were elected.([14]) The 1955 election was also particularly significant in

---

[13] Gullick, Malaysia, pp.94, 95.

[14] In that election 52 seats were to be elected out of a total membership of 98. Gullick, Malaysia, p.97.

that it decided on the basis of popular vote who would lead the new state into Independence. That election was won by the Alliance marking the beginning of the domination of coalition politics through to 1980 and beyond to the present (the coalition was later widened going under the name of the National Front) as we shall see in more detail below.

Within the period the constitutional debate was formalized in the shape of the Reid Commission set up to consider and report on constitutional recommendations submitted to them. The Reid Commission report was handed on to a Working Committee, a Conference of Rulers and the Legislative Council before negotiations in London between representative of the Alliance, the Rulers and the Colonial Office in 1956 produced an agreement on a draft constitution which was finally adopted as the Independence constitution and which set out the basic rules whereby government has been organized in the country since 1957.

With the granting of independence Malaya began operating on a Westminster style of parliamentary government. The 1957 constitution provided for a federal parliament comprised of a constitutional monarch, the Yang di Pertuan Agong elected every five years from the Malay rulers and two elected houses of parliament: a Senate or Upper house (Dewan Negara) the majority of whose members were elected by the state legislatures every 6 years and a Lower House (Dewan Raayat) elected every five years on the basis of single member electorates. Whereas the Dewan Raayat has had primary legislative responsibility throughout the period the main function of the Dewan Negara was to review legislation emanating from the people's house. That is to say, although both houses could initiate legislation, in practice it has been the Dewan Raayat that has initiated Bills whiled the Dewan Negara has acted `mainly as a forum for seldom-heeded debate and as a rubber stamp for the Parliament'.([15]) The federal government and the nation as a whole were led by the Prime Minister who headed a cabinet of federal parliamentarians responsible to parliament for all executive actions implemented by them and their departments. The cabinet was made up of parliamentarians from the majority party in Federal Parliament. Although the provisions for the two federal houses of parliament was formalized in 1957 it was not, however, until 1959 that the merdeka constitution was fully implemented with the actual replacement of the Negara.

---

[15] Stanley S Bedlington, Malaysia and Singapore The Building of New States(London, 1978), p.142.

The merdeka constitution also provided for subsidiary state constitutions. At the apex of each state stood the Sultan as constitutional head of state. The Sultan was head of state only in a more formal, technical and ceremonial sense however and real legislative and executive power was wielded by elected state assemblies. Each assembly had a Chief Minister who headed an Executive Council appointed from the majority party in the assembly and appointed by the Sultan on the advice of the Chief Minister.

Countering the centrifugal pull of state-based forces in 1946-1957 period the federal constitution allotted jurisdiction between centre and periphery of the new Malayan state in a way which placed the greater concentration of authority in the hands of federal government but with significant allocation of residual control localized in the states. The states exercised authority in the two important areas of land and agriculture for example.([16]) The federal government exercised control of all financial matters and this in particular has served to strengthen the centripetal pull in the working out in practice of federal-state relations since it provided a lever which national government could use to rein in any recalcitrance in the states where the latter were disinclined to fall into line with national policies.

The independent state has experienced some expansion and contraction in size since 1957 while retaining basically the same constitutional structure. In 1963 the federation was enlarged to include Sarawak, Sabah and Singapore and was renamed the Federation of Malaysia. In 1965 Singapore broke away from the Federation to become the Republic of Singapore.

The Merdeka Constitution shared the inherent national weakness of all federal systems. The price for the greater flexibility of a federal system in accommodating a measure of state autonomy is that this same autonomy tends to limit the extent to which national policies can be implemented across the periphery of the federal state. There is, then, a continuing tension between centre and periphery in federal systems of government - tension which needs to be confined within limits for national government to function properly. This

---

[16] Though control of agriculture was qualified by a compulsion to accept federal advisers in this field.

Bedlington, Malaysia and Singapore, p.142.

kind of tension has been very much in evidence throughout the history of the Malaysian federation and was greatly intensified, as we shall see, when PAS exerted a strong presence in north Malaya in the first decade or so of Independence.

The Merdeka constitution, perhaps inevitably, has generally operated to reinforce the position of the Malayan elites dominant from the time the document came into operation.([17]) Alliance constitutional proposals had been given considerable weighting in the Reid Report (though not all of its proposals were accepted) and given this, the influential nature of that report in the final constitutional negotiations, and the fact that Alliance representatives were involved in these negotiations, it is not surprising that the functioning of the constitution has assisted in the entrenchment of the Alliance communal elites in a position of dominant power throughout the period of Merdeka.

It is arguable that there are two main aspects to this pro-Alliance bias in the constitution. The first more obvious aspect and the one taken up in the sources, is the operation of the more coercive provision of the constitution - provisions which ensure that the constitution operates in a more direct sense to hold in tow opposition parties and groups while allowing the Alliance relatively free reign to implement the policies of its choosing. The sources clearly indicate, and casual observation strongly suggests, that the security provisions in that document have in effect served to strengthen the position of coalition parties while weakening the position of organized opposition. The second related aspect and one which is less visible in the sources may be seen as a substantive ideological bias contained in the constitution as a whole which in a much more subtle way means that all law tends to support the position of coalition parties and their backers and weaken that of those in opposition.([18]) On this view, an overt communalism and an implicit capitalism are enshrined in the

---

[17] Means makes the general point that the new constitutional arrangements operating since Independence tended to reinforce the position of the dominant party in each state.

Means, Malaysian Politics, p.411.

[18] This constitutional issue relates to the wider topic of class and race in Malaysia - a wider topic which has yet to be dealt with more fully in the scholarly sources as I indicate in this chapter below. Any such examination of class bias in the constitution would need to commence with a close examination of the wording of the constitution itself and of the documentation arising from the constitutional negotiations. Beyond such an examination legal case studies would reveal how constitutional bias has operated in practice.

constitution itself in a way which means that ultimately all law making and policy implementation tends towards the support of an Alliance status quo.([19]) On this perception the strong cooperation between conservative Malayan and British colonial authorities in the making of the constitution meant that a belief in communal international capitalism was a major premise upon which 1956 constitution making was based.([20]) Thus, in this entrenched

---

[19] Some measure of a communal free enterprise bias in the Malaysian constitution can be seen in the assessment of a Malayan federal court judge of the provisions in the constitution for the balancing of the economic rights between the communities in one particular area of the economy. Making the point that the constitution has allowed a fair distribution of ownership of courier vehicles between Malays and non-Malays the judge concluded:`This illustrates the practical and liberal working of the constitutional provision protecting the legitimate interest of other communities[i.e. other than the Malay community].'

Tan Sri Mohamed Suffian Bin Hashim, Judge of the Federal Court, Malaysia, An Introduction to the Constitution of Malaysia(Kuala Lumpur, 1972), p.263.

Clearly the judge reflects basic constitutional thinking directed at balancing the welfare of the Malaysian communities (in this case economic welfare), within a context of economic liberalism.

Funston cites the example of the removal of the Minister of Agriculture partly as a result of his efforts to transfer the ownership of rice-mills in Perak and Province Wellesley from private to cooperative hands. Pressure was applied by the Malayan Chinese Association (the Chinese party in the coalition government: the place of the party in the wider Malaysian political context is outlined below in this chapter) and as a result the minister was removed on the grounds of unconstitutional practices. While certainly this entailed a very literal interpretation of the constitution, and one made by politicians and not judges, it does at least indicate the amenability of the constitution to interpretation in a way which favoured one class interest over another. According to Funston:

`The constitutional issue referred to is the guarantee under Article 152 that the government would protect the "legitimate interests" of non-Malays; it is significant that MCA was able to invoke this clause to protect a group which had played a major role in oppressing Malay farmers'.

Funston, Malay Politics, p.13.

These two examples, then, take us a short initial distance in the direction of a definitive understanding of the way in which the Malaysian constitution enshrines a belief in the functioning of Malaysia as liberal, capitalist society - as a society operating on the western, British, model of a free enterprise economy.

[20] Consider for example the following passage from the 1956 conference report stating a proposed continuing link between an independent Malaya and western capital and, given the history of that link, implying in its tone a broad capitalist premise to conference constitutional thinking as a whole:

`We recognize the important part which overseas capital must continue to play in the economic and social development of Malaya. In this connection we think it desirable to draw attention to the statement in the Alliance Manifesto that it is

ideological sense we can see in very broad terms that behind the broad communal compromise at the heart of that document lies an elitism which has ensured that the odds were stacked very much in favour of inter-communal and foreign capital and against ethnically divided labour.([21]) Whereas it seems obvious that the twin pillars of British colonial Malayan and

---

their policy to attract overseas capital to Malaya. This was give a more detailed expression in the High Commissioner's statement in the Legislative Council on Nov. 30, 1955 in which he stated that the Federation Government looked with confidence to the establishment of happy relationships and a full sense of partnership between a fully self-governing Malay and overseas industry and enterprise genuinely interested in the development of sound lines of the country's productive resources. To this end it was, and would remain, their policy to encourage overseas
investment, industry and enterprise to look to Malaya with every assurance of fair and considerate treatment and, without fear of
discrimination'.

Self-Government for the Federation of Malaya Report of the Constitution Conference, London, January-February, 1956, Pamphlet, place and year of publication not given(London,1956?) p.14.

We can see than the capitalist assumptions upon which conference thinking proceeded and the role of the Alliance, a tripartite coalition of political parties representing the three main ethnic groups on the peninsular (outlined more fully below in this chapter) in pressing this assumption. We can see the continuation of the same kind of thinking in 1962 amendments to the royalty provisions of the constitution aimed at lessening the tax burden on mining companies in Malaya. This amendment is clearly consistent with the 1956 conference aim of providing a favourable free enterprise environment in Malaya providing `fair and considerate' treatment for overseas capital.

Ibid.

Hashim, Introduction, pp.163-166.

[21] I refer here to the compromise which seeks to balance the interests of the three main communities. See below in this chapter for further discussion of this aspect.

Funston comments on the similar class background of Alliance leaders and their sympathy for a free enterprise economy. While he doesn't comment directly on the relevance of this in the formulation of the constitution he does refer in a general way to an allegiance of interest between British and Malayan leaders from the earliest stage of independence. He indicates that `Britain harshly suppressed non-communist left-wing elements in the independence struggle, ensuring the succession of a group sympathetic to their interests.' He quotes sources indicating that UMNO leaders were `the designated heirs of the colonial rulers' and that Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Prime Minister of the independent federation, had admitted reaching an `unwritten accord' with British officials ensuring the protection of British commercial interests after independence. He acknowledges that `direct evidence of foreign influence is, in the nature of things, hard to come by.' He clearly feels, though, that there is enough evidence to support the general view that Alliance leaders were willing collaborators in the activities of British enterprise on the peninsular. In Funston's words: `Most Alliance leaders, Malay and non-Malay, shared the Tunku's pro-British feelings and were sympathetic towards those urging the virtues of a free enterprise economy.'

Funston, Malay Politics, pp.12, 13.

Alliance social thinking - communalism and capitalism - have been entrenched in the Malaysian constitution in this way, and we can see the operation of this bias in Malaysian society in broad terms, it is not easy to pin down in precise terms the nexus between this broad constitutional bias and the frustrations of opposition political groups in attempting to bring about the kind of social change they want and the major published sources on Malaysia do not attempt it. But further examination along these lines in Malaysian scholarship showing in detail how an entrenched constitutional bias has tended to support the position of the predominant elites in the country would greatly assist our understanding of politics, and especially alternative politics, in Malaysia.

While the specific connection between the broad underlying social assumptions in the constitution and the working of the constitution in practice is not yet clear from the sources and awaits further research the coercive operation of particular sections of the constitution is very clear. Operating on the basis of article 149 giving Parliament special powers to deal with subversion and article 150 giving the Executive and Parliament special powers to cope with an emergency the Alliance has acted, or threatened to act, to suppress alternative approaches to the government of the country.([22]) With these security provisions very much in mind Means makes the point that the inherent pro-Alliance bias in the constitution has forced opposition parties into `desperate and irresponsible responses'. According to Means, `it is little wonder that most opposition parties have exhibited considerable contempt for the democratic process, particularly that represented by Malaysia's Parliament. Boycotts, mass demonstrations, politically inspired rioting, conspiracy with foreign powers and ultimately armed insurgency provide alternative tactics which become increasingly attractive for dispossessed and disillusioned "permanent political minorities".'([23])

---

22 Hashim cites the security provisions of the constitution.

Hashim, Introduction, pp.149, 150.

For a full account of the Malaysian government's use of these powers see Means, Malaysian Politics, pp.412, 413.

[23] Means, Malaysian Politics, p.411.

In 1971 the Alliance Government succeeded in amending the constitution with the resultant effect that its ability to implement policies pertaining to Malay special privileges and other sensitive matters without question became entrenched in law. In particular this amendment meant that the Alliance became a law unto itself in continuing its implementation of a policy of limited rural reform in Malaysia. The bill to this effect was introduced following the traumatic race riots in 1969 and was part of a wider government strategy to avert a repetition of this kind of disturbance. The 1969 riots and the wider strategy to avert a repetition of them are dealt with below. The debate centring on the bill clearly illustrates the coercive nature of the constitution from the opposition point of view and the legally entrenched nature of Alliance power in Malaysia. Speaking of the effect of the bill in placing the economic development of Malays solely in the hands of the Alliance to the exclusion of any socialist participation in this process, a prominent Democratic Action party (DAP) member of parliament, Lim Kit Siang, complained in the course of the constitutional debate:

> There is gross injustice and grave unequal distribution of wealth and income in Malaysia. Over the years the feudal - compradore and tycoon class have become richer and richer, while the mass of peasantry and workers become more and more downtrodden ...
>
> The basic problem in Malaysia is an economic and class one, and not a racial problem.
>
> The only effective way to uplift the living standards of the have-nots of all races is to execute meaningful socialist policies untinged by racialism, as in carrying out radical land reforms, beginning with the abolition of absentee landlordism in the padi sector and distribution of land to the tenant farmers, the creation of a comprehensive and efficient rural credit, co-operative and marketing infrastructure to free the peasants from the triple curses of fragmentation, landlordism and credit indebtedness; greater diversification of agriculture and the economy; a modern and science oriented education system to bring the peasants abreast with the techniques and know-how of twentieth-century era, and a greater rate of industrialization ...
>
> The great objection to the entrenchment of this provision in the constitution and its removal from public discussion and debate is that the whole provision will cease to be answerable to the electorate. The Government will be supreme in deciding what it wants to do in this field.([24])

Clearly, then, what was locked into the constitution was not any particular rural policy per se but the unchallengeable right of the government to devise and implement such a policy in the countryside without democratic accountability inside or outside the parliament. Thereafter the enunciation of the democratic socialist alternative was a subversive act.

---

[24] Lim Kit Siang, Time Bombs in Malaysia Problems in Nation-Building in Malaysia(Kuala Lumpur, 1978), p.217.

To a great extent the constitutional support for the Alliance position of dominance in Malayan and Malaysian society stems from the fact that repressive mechanisms were entrenched in Malaysian law at a time when the Alliance was enjoying a position of political supremacy under the colonial constitutional arrangements. As the first parties to exercise this constitutional power they naturally had a strong advantage over their rivals and it was in this political as well as constitutional sense that the Alliance elites were installed in power on a more permanent basis than the democratic pronouncements that heralded in Independence implied.

The most traumatic aspect of the 1948-1957 period, and one which left a clear mark on the shape of the Merdeka constitution, was the Emergency. The Emergency saw British and Malayan governments in the immediate post World War II years engaged in a military conflict with mainly Chinese communist insurgents - an insurgency which arose from organized Chinese resistance to the Japanese during the war time occupation period.([25]) Officially the Emergency lasted from 1948 to 1960.

Although it was entirely consistent with the Westminster style of government to include self-preservationist clauses into the constitution the security clauses protecting the Merdeka state did, as we have seen, severely compromise the ideal of a liberal parliamentary democracy. In very large measure the repressive nature of that constitution stemmed from a perceived threat to the constitution from forces within the state - a sense of threat heightened by the Emergency atmosphere which was a strong feature of the domestic backdrop to the constitution deliberations. Taken at their word the constitution planners in 1956 sought a continued state authority for dealing with Communism beyond the period of the Emergency.([26]) However it was the Emergency which proved the main justification for

---

[25] The Emergency is well covered in the literature. See, for example, A. Short, The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60(London, 1975) and R. Clutterbuck, Riot and Revolution in Singapore and Malaya 1945-1963(London, 1973).

For an alternative perspective on the subject see M. Caldwell, `From "Emergency" to "Independence", 1948-57' in M. Amin and M. Caldwell, Malaya The Making of a Neo-Colony (Nottingham, 1977), pp.216-265.

[26] Self Government, pp.7, 8.

entrenched law which had a much broader operation as a means of installing a ruling inter communal clique in a position of near unassailable power; while aimed mainly at communist subversion the operation of the security provisions built into the constitution in 1956 have had a much wider sweep in containing the thoughts and action of non-Alliance groups in the federation. Apart from its influence on the constitutional provisions themselves, the Emergency was also a strong demonstration of the ultimate authority upon which the constitution depended. The new state was born in violence and the years 1948-1957 were a dramatic indication that Alliance elite ideology and dominance enshrined in, and protected by, the constitution, had the strong backing of force. By 1957 the essentials of a Malayan democratic state had been worked out but not without a strong continuing police action to secure the stage for contending factions operating within the framework of the narrow consensus embodied in the Merdeka constitution.

The operation of communalism as a factor serving to entrench Alliance elite rule in Malaya and Malaysia also had a political as well as a constitutional aspect. The communal divisions given overt expression in the constitution provided a strong basis for Alliance policy which has been strongly racial in its approach to national development.

From the outset, then, of the new state national unity has been defined mainly in terms of racial harmony - a racial harmony dependent upon the achievement and maintenance of a suitable balance between the interest and welfare of the main ethnic groups. Economic development has, therefore, as we will see in more detail below, been perceived as something which has to operate in the first instance within, rather than across, communal divisions. It is this notion of a balance of communal interests which is central to the constitution. The idea of a broad consensus resting primarily on a balance of ethnic interests is basically a continuation of colonial constitutional thinking which by 1956 was firmly committed to a view of national unity as resting on a central formula whereby there was a trade off between the major ethnic groups: the Malays were to continue in positions of administrative and political power for which they were being groomed by the British in the colonial period and in return the Chinese, and to a lesser extent the Indians, were to continue to enjoy the economic advantage they had acquired during the colonial period. However, while the constitution has embodies a national balance of ethnic interest (the rights of each community are spelled out separately) the reality in terms of the practical working of the constitution is very different as we shall see when we

come to examine the wider social and political context below. The conception in the constitution is a crude one - that of a balance between the interests and rights of monolithic ethnic blocs in a way which does not make social distinctions within them. Historically it was an arrangement entered into by and for the upper strata of the communal groups and, notwithstanding generalization to the contrary from this elite, took little account of the likely fortunes of the lower ethnic stratas under the new constitution. In recent times, as we shall see below, the Malaysian government has, while retaining the idea of a communal balance over all, shifted the balance by seeking to drastically increase the share of the Malays in the wealth of the country.

It might be argued that constitutional and political approaches aimed at prompting racial harmony within the federation have, ironically, served to reinforce rather than diminish, ethnic cleavage. Certainly the constitutional and political measures adopted by the dominant groups on the peninsular - measures necessarily aimed at the containment of tension arising from the existence of separate and strong communal identities - have served to institutionalize communalism in a form deemed manageable by these dominant groups.

There may well have been mixed motivation involved in this process. The question to ask here, since there is a decided advantage for communal elites in the continued division of Malaysian society along racial lines in this way, is this: Has institutionalized communalism in the independent state arisen solely as a method of coping with ethnic divisions inherited from the colonial period or has there been an aspect of deliberate stratagem on the part of coalition of manipulating communalism for their own ends? Have they, as perhaps the British before them, aimed at a containable tension between the races as a method of staving off what is seen as the greater evil of an inter-communal mass opposition to coalition elite privilege? Certainly the notion is highly speculative and needs to be approached with caution.

It may well be that the answer to these questions lies not so much in the realm of crude conspiracy but more in the understanding of how a tacit awareness on the part of these elite groups of a certain advantage on maintaining a grass roots separation of the races influenced their thinking and behaviour in devising institutional methods for the containment of communal tension. Certainly we need to be wary of any theory running along these lines;

there is little direct evidence in the sources and it is in the nature of the subject that such evidence would be difficult to find.([27]) Still, whether a divide-and-rule strategy has been involved or not we can say that the effect of British and coalition constitutional, political and administrative approaches has been in the direction of minimizing the development of potential inter-community class identity and solidarity at the lower levels of Malaysian society while enabling a collaboration of mutual interest across the upper levels of the three communities.

This state of affairs is implicit, at least, in many academic accounts of the functioning of communalism on the peninsular. Consider, for example, Gullick's veiled observation to this effect in looking back over his account of the way in which communalism was a dominant factor in the Malaysian political system:

> The foregoing description may illustrate how much the inherent conflicts of economic and social interests within the communities are shut into a communal and monolithic opposition of one group against another. Reform when it comes is the fruit of inter-communal bargaining rather than direct response to social pressures. It is doubtful whether it can do enough to respond to the real needs of a changing society.([28])

While there is, then, within the scholarship, a strong broad awareness of the exploitative potential in communalism we are still a long way from a direct, thorough going, definitive, understanding of how any such manipulation of ethnic divisions by political and other elites may have been working in practice. Still, the field is not by any means a neglected one and there are here and there scholarly studies which do address this exploitative aspect directly and which take us some of the way towards a complete understanding of the phenomenon. For example in a paper delivered to the third colloquium of the Malaysia Society Wendy Smith argued that Japanese investors benefited in their exploitation of Malaysian labour from the way in which ethnicity obscures an awareness on the part of workers of their class position. The last paragraph of her paper reads:

In Malaysia, as elsewhere, the Japanese investors benefit in that their class position is

---

[27] Both Wang and Milne and Mauzy refute the view that the British deliberately pursued a divide-and-rule policy aimed at keeping the races apart for their own ends.

Wang, Malaysia, p.328.

Milne and Mauzy, Politics and Government in Malaysia, p.23, 24.

[28] Gullick, Malaysia, p.129.

mystified by the notoriety value of their ethnic identity. Similarly, ethnic cleavages within the Malaysian labour force preoccupy workers and mitigate against a realization of their common class position. Hence I argue for the consistent ideological role of ethnicity in obscuring the class positions of those engaged in the relations of production.([29])

The achievement of constitutional and political consensus as a basis for a parliamentary political process or the Westminister model did not, then, come easily. It is clear from the course of Independence politics so far that the 1957 constitution has embodied much less than a unanimity of agreement between the major political groups on the basic rules for organizing government in the country. Partly because of this the Malayan and Malaysian political process has been, since 1957, inherently unstable. In the main parliamentary democracy has been held together by the existence of an inter elite communal consensus coherent enough for the Alliance and National Front to field and sustain a government - a capability reinforced by a heavy measure of actual and threatened coercion by dominant interests holding in reign dissident communal and class interests threatening the consensus from within and without the system. As we shall see in sharper focus below the Achilles heel of the young democracy has been that, from the earliest days of Independence government, although party policies have been framed in the name of a wider cross section of the Malayan and Malaysian public those policies have in reality been primarily framed by and for a middle and upper elite and have only secondarily served to benefit people at the lower level of that society. It was mainly in this sense that the independent state got off to a tenuous start in 1957 and has had to contend with a strong measure of insecurity ever since. While it has been able to sustain relative stability - relative to other countries in the region over a comparable period of time - it has nonetheless experienced a sustained fragility - a fragility that has been the evident cause of considerable nervousness and insecurity in the national leadership to the present day.

---

[29] Wendy Smith, "Japanese investment in Malaysia: Ethnicity as a Management Ideology." Paper given by Wendy Smith, Monash University, at the Asian Studies Association of Australia Malaysia Society Third Colloquium, held at the University of Adelaide, 22-24 August, 1981.

Federal Party Politics 1948-1980.

(1) The nature of this politics: a broad overview.

It was within the framework of the 1948 constitution and under the tutelage of colonial authorities that the fledgling political parties emerging in the later colonial period began to operate. These parties, reflecting the sectional class and ethnic interests of groups within peninsular society in the first instance, were compelled by the new democratic constitution to seek a broader electoral power base within society. From 1948, and with renewed impetus with the elections in 1954 and 1955, Independence in 1957 and full elections in 1959, the young political parties worked at developing broader national and state policies to that end. Political parties worked towards the attainment of dependable electoral and parliamentary majorities as the basic method of gaining and holding power in the new state.

The necessity of obtaining a popular mandate at election time has meant that Malaysian politics has been basically an exercise in elite manipulation of the popular will to its own end. Milne and Mauzy describe the process in these terms:

> [T]he political style of the Alliance depended largely on the autonomy of the elites and their ability to convince the rank and file to abide by the decisions made at the top. Within the Alliance, behind closed doors, there could be intense bargaining, but conducted in an atmosphere of trust and in a spirit of accommodation. Once a decision was taken, it had to be defended by all component parties. There could be pressure, but not public pressure and decisions could not be publicly explained. Secrecy was a key rule of the Alliance style. The other key was compromise and a technique of trying to discuss a problem until a consensus could be reached. This style of elite accommodation was accompanied by a constant effort to depoliticize communal issues and to use "power of government and party to suppress unmanageable claims".[30]

It might be thought that the widening of the ruling Alliance party into the National Front might, by including politicians with a stronger grass roots appeal, have effectively broadened the basis of government in popular democratic terms. Despite appearances however the style of elitist consensus politics remained as strong as ever through the period to 1980 and continues to be the case to the present day. The creation of the wider coalition has served as a stratagem for constraining the need for government sensitivity to popular needs and desires since former opposition parties, most notably PAS, have been confined to more arguing their cause within the much narrower arena of the combined party room. It is in this way that a significant portion of opposition was curbed by the restraints of party discipline and debates on important public issues were distanced even further from the Malaysian populace. With the

---

[30] Milne and Mauzy, Politics and Government, p. 131.

departure of PAS from the National Front(see below in this chapter) it may be that a large section of the peasantry will regain an effective say in government with the resumption of oppositionist policies and tactics by the party.

Clearly the holding of preliminary elections in the late colonial period, Independence in 1957, and then the holding of subsequent elections, all signified major changes to the political process on the peninsular. While the main economic bases of power continued to be Malay peasant surplus in the north, and Malay peasant surplus together with the surplus created by non-Malay labour in the extractive and rubber industries to the south of the peninsular, the rules for acquiring and maintaining power on those bases had changed. With Independence power now rested primarily with political parties operating within a Westminster system of government. In the NMS this meant that political power rested on the control of peasant surplus achieved through the winning of electoral support largely from the peasants themselves. To the south political power through control of surplus rested on the winning of electoral support from a less racially homogeneous electorate. The power that had been exercised by colonial elites according to the coercive top-down means provided for and backed by the British colonial state was now, in theory at least, being exercised by a wider range of groups and individuals (though still primarily by the local ethnic elite groups fostered by the British) on a more popular basis through political parties operating within a democratic constitutional framework. Within the new Independence political and constitutional structure the old ascendancy - the Sultan and the aristocratic holders of power under the British - and new emergent groups seeking power - rich peasants, western educated Malay administrators and others - now competed with each other for electoral support. The essential source of, and in the broad sense stated above, the rules for, attaining power were the same at both the federal and state levels. At the state level elite political power in the NMS rested on the control of surplus through the winning of peasant electoral support for influence in, and preferably control of, state legislatures; at the same time old and new elites in the four states sought a more extensive power on the basis of wider surplus control in the context of the national economy and policy through NMS electoral support for influence within the national parliament. Thus the situation was that supreme power was now sought through the party

political process and, once achieved, was exercised through the instrumentality of the state and national legislatures in Malaya and later Malaysia. Clearly, then, one way in which class interests and tensions in the northern Malay state countryside, and the country as a whole, could manifest themselves was in the state and federal electoral process.

(ii) The beginnings of party politics and the emergence of PAS.

From the outset in all this the British ensured that the party political contest was a one sided one. Parties and organizations that threatened, from a British point of view, to bring about a radical restructuring of the colonial social order - an order they wanted to see continue in their own economic and strategic interests and one which benefited their class allies within the local Malayan population - were repressed in order to leave a clear field for pro-British moderate forces.

Funston describes the way in which the organized radical Malay alternative was developing and how it was squashed by the British very early in the post war pre-Independence period.([31]) The first national organization of Malays established after the Second World War was the Malay Nationalist Party. (MNP). This party drew on the more radical strand of Malay nationalism absorbing elements from various pre-war radical Malay organizations referred to in the chapter above.

It will be remembered that it was the Malayan Union question which focussed the attention and development of Malay nationalist organizations in the immediate post war years. Moderate Malay nationalist opposition to the union, as we have seen, was spearheaded by the Malay Associations - the Persatuan Malayu; and on a broader front UMNO - quickly came, as a result of manoeuvring between contending groups making common cause on the Union issue, to operate as the united front of moderates opposed to Malayan Union. The radical Malay opposition to Union came to be represented principally by the Kesatuan Malayu Muda (KMM), an organization operating within what Roff identifies for the pre-war decades as a third stream of Malay nationalism - an Islamic reformist stream (Kuam Muda) drawing inspiration from the Middle East from around the turn of the nineteenth century. Until very late in the pre-war period it was primarily religious in its orientation with, as we have seen in the case of the Kelantan and Trengganu risings, some rebellious political overtones as well. It

31 Funston, Malay Politics, pp.40,41.

was not, however, until this Islamic reformism merged with secular nationalism in the very late pre-war period that it became overtly political.

Thus the MNP was the successor to KMM and gave party political expression to a more radical and strongly religiously inspired Malay nationalism. It was the first national organization of Malays to be established and was a foundation member of UMNO for the duration of the cause of defeating Union before splitting from the umbrella organization to pursue separate goals of its own. Funston observes that while the ostensible reason for the split was a dispute over the issue of the party flag the separation had its roots much more in ideological differences between, and in the differing socio-economic backgrounds of the leadership of, the two parties.([32]) Funston further observes that the differences between the MNP and UMNO were in broad terms the same as those which existed between the conservative Malay state associations and KMM:

> ... though both sides were strongly committed to the creed of Malay nationalism, UMNO's conservatism contrasted with MNP's advocacy of socialism and its vehement anti-colonialism; and UMNO leaders were drawn from the aristocratic/bureaucratic elite while their MNP counterparts were from a much lower class. ([33])

Funston suggests that the MNP and its offshoots had, contrary to conventional wisdom, a popular following with a membership which may have been similar to that of UMNO in the late 1940s.([34]) It does appear, though more information is needed than Funston is able to give, that it was at this time the MNP which was the party which was addressing popular class concerns with UMNO more orientated towards the elite. When the party and related like-minded organizations were suppressed by the British there was no Malay party - no strong and consolidated political organization of Malays - addressing popular class grievances arising from the colonial experience and that it was into this vacuum that PAS eventually stepped.

Importantly, the MNP had an Islamic wing and it was this group which was able to

---

32 Ibid., p.39.

33 Ibid., pp.39,40.

34 Ibid., p.40.

engineer the institutionalization of Islamic Malay nationalism for the first time in a way which was to lead to the formation of PAS. In March 1947 an MNP sponsored conference in which the Islamic wing of the party was particularly active gave birth to an organization called Majlis Agama Tertinggi Sa-Malaya (Pan Malayan Supreme Religious Council) or MATA. This organization was intended as an umbrella under which all Muslim associations and individuals could unite. Funston indicates that it was the nature of the demands put forward by MATA (its main initial aim was to wrest control of Islamic affairs from the secular state and to place it firmly in the hand of Muslim religious bodies) which make it clear that `this was indeed the first institutionalization of the Islamic reformist stream in Malay nationalism'.([35]) Still, while MATA was not in itself a political party it soon gave rise to one; at its fourth meeting in March 1948, a new political party called Hizbul Muslimin was formed from the ranks of MATA.([36]) Funston points out that this new party had close links with the MNP, was the first political organization pursuing Malay-Islamic nationalism, and was a direct forerunner to PAS.([37])

These groups were not, however, given the chance to consolidate their positions as the British began to suppress them in the late nineteen forties with the onset of the Emergency. In 1948 the arrest of Hizbul Muslimin leaders under Emergency Regulations bought the party's activities to a standstill and in 1950 the MNP was officially banned. Prior to this - in 1947 - the MNP's youth wing, Angkatan Pemuda Insof (literal meaning: Aware Youth Corps) or API, had been banned. Other affiliated individuals and organizations were suppressed at around the same time. Funston remarks on the concern that the expansion of MATA (by 1947 branches had been established in every state) had caused UMNO and Dato Onn(Dato Onn, as we have seen, had cautioned the British in 1946 that `a strong youth movement with Indonesian sympathies was gaining ground among Kampong Malays')([38]) Clearly the British

---

35 Ibid., p.88.

36 Ibid., p.90.

37 Ibid., p.91.

38 H.Q.B.M.A. (M) to S of S., Colonies 29 March, 1946 CO 537/1548 Correspondence in the form of a telegram.

were taking the phenomenon of organized radical Islamic reformism very seriously. Whether these organizations were at that stage a real threat to the British establishment and their moderate Malay allies or not it does seem clear that the British thought there was a potential for these organizations to rally substantial popular support for the anti-Union cause and, more to the point, for the creation of an independent Malaya organized along radically alternative lines inimical with continuing British interests on the peninsular.

According to Funston when the MNP and affiliated organizations were suppressed members of these organizations initially went in different directions: some joined the Communist Party in direct challenge to the system, some continued their struggle through the medium of literature, while still others in larger numbers joined forces with UMNO.([39]) In the early nineteen fifties some of these remnants were able to combine under the banner of PAS when the party was formed and consolidated from early in the decade and to begin mounting a challenge to the UMNO ascendancy. The trigger for this process, implies Funston, was the coincidence in time of the suppression of the MNP and related organizations with a decision on the part of UMNO to present itself as a party suitable to lead Malaya into independence in part by accommodating non-Malays with a more liberal set of citizenship and party membership provisions.([40])

It will be remembered that the rights of non-Malays had been a sensitive issue during the Malayan Union conflict; it remained an emotive issue in the years following that contest and became the focus for anti-UMNO activity both within and outside the organization. Those outside the organization opposed to the decisions came together to form the Peninsular

---

The identity of the youth movement is not specified in the correspondence but it seems likely that it had some connection with the KMM and related organizations. It may be that Onn was referring to one or both of the API and the Estate Youth Corps of Kedah. See my reference to this correspondence in the chapter above.

39 Ibid., pp. 40,41.

40 Ibid., p.41.

Malays Union (Persatuan Malayu Semenanjong). After a promising start the Union lost support when it initially rejected independence as an immediate goal, and, while it did later adopt a more radical stance, it was not able to regain the momentum lost over its early stance on independence. Still, it was able to maintain an active if relatively low key role in defence of Malay rights up to 1965, the year in which it was accused of supporting Indonesian `confrontation' with Malaysia and banned.

It was, however, a break away of affiliated religious sections from UMNO in 1951 which served as the nucleus for the much stronger challenge to the organization in defence of Malay rights. It was this group which established itself as PAS. In February, 1950, UMNO sponsored a national meeting and this formed itself into a body - the Persatuan Ulama - ulama Sa Malaya (literally, the Pan Malayan Union of the Religiously Learned) - to exist within UMNO. At the final meeting of this body in Kuala Lumpur in August 1951, the decision to form an independent political party was taken; The Persatuan Islam Sa Malay (literally, Pan Malayan Islamic Union, commonly translated as the Pan Malayan Islamic Party and known by the acronyms PMIP or PAS) was formally proclaimed at Butterworth, Penang, on November 24, 1951.([41])

The precise reasons for this break away formation of PAS remain unclear. Funston observes that it is probably that the move was inspired by a perceived need for a centralized unity of Islamic affairs and administration in order to achieve desired reforms - a process which, it was felt, could not be achieved within UMNO since it was a party insufficiently guided by the holy texts, the Koran and Hadith and which could only be achieved through the formation of a separate and strictly Islamic party.([42]) Funston further suggests that this break away was initially inspired in important part, but not solely, by an adverse reaction to the non-Malay rights decisions of UMNO.([43])

---

41 Ibid., p.93. The party referred to by me as PAS throughout. See my explanation of the reasons for this in this chapter above.

42 Ibid., p.93.

43 Funston bases his interpretation of the reasons for the break away somewhat tenuously on an article in the form of an open letter which appeared in a local publication on the opening day of the conference which organized the break away party. He advances the view that the article `probably reveals some of the reasoning behind the move'. He draws the inference that the new party was

Still, while on Funston's account, PAS was formed initially out of a general concern for a more effective political and administrative Islamic organization - for a more tightly organized stricter Islamic approach to the running of the country, and the more specific issue of non-Malay rights - it is clear that by the later nineteen fifties the focus of the new party had widened out into a sustained challenge to UMNO on a much broader policy front. While the party initially had little effect in the wider political arena it was able to consolidate its position and unite many of the anti-UMNO groups into an effective Malay opposition force in the later years of the decade of its formation. It went, within the decade, from a party which was, at its inception, not much more than an Islamic welfare organization with no political goals to a party with well defined wide social objectives carrying considerable popular appeal.([44]) It was a party led by Islamic reformists with backgrounds in the MNP and Hizbul Muslimin and which drew inspiration not only from these two preceding parties but the KMM before them and from an amorphous spirit and approach of Malay reformist Islamic radicalism which had been developing from early in the century and which surfaced briefly in 1915 and 1929 during the Kelantan and Trengganu risings.

What we can see from all this, then, in very broad terms, is the way in which PAS emerged as a manifestation of the more advanced later development of an Islamic reformist stream of Malay nationalism - a stream which is a clearly discernible presence on the peninsular from early in the century but which remained in the background as a lesser force until, ironically, it was able to merge with a stronger secular nationalist drive in the early post war period and in so doing emerge as a strong independent force in its own right. From the days when its exponents were a disaffected section of the Malay elite unable to reach an

---

formed partly in reaction to `UMNO's changing policy towards non-Malays and its plans to sponsor a lottery' from statements in the article - statements paraphrased by Funston in these terms: `An Islamic party based on the Koran and Hadith would, moreover, not dismay its supporters by adopting expedient changes of policy from time to time.'

Ibid., p.93.

44 Funston comments on the limited function of the party at its inception.

Ibid., p.94.

accommodation with the British establishment, at odds with not only British colonial authority but the accommodated Malay elite as well, it appears that it was unable to sustain a mass following in its own right in any institutionalized sense until the formation of PAS. Still, it does seem that it was able to achieve a localized popular following in Kelantan in 1915 and Trengganu in 1929 and it seems plausible to hypothesize that the later popularity of the MNP and PAS owed something to these experiences though it is a linkage which at present remains largely unexplored.

What is clear in general terms is that the development of Islamic reformism throughout the decades of this century had its roots in the changing nature of social relations resulting from the colonial experience on the peninsular. That is to say, on the longer historical perspective we can see in very general terms the way in which the radical Islamic stream was in large part an alternative response on the part of section of the Malay elite which felt itself more threatened and alienated from the new colonial social structures. We can see how, whereas most of the Malay elite was able, reluctantly, to accommodate itself with new positions of lesser material well being and diminished prestige within a steadily encroaching British apparatus of state another section of that elite was unable to do so, or unable to do so to the same extent, and felt itself from the early decades of this century to be marginalized. It was this latter group which was inspired by Islamic reformism and which looked for solutions on that perspective - a perspective which, in its secular thinking and approach, and unlike that of the moderate Malay elite, sought a much more radical social restructuring. While there has clearly been a strong and dominant religious motivation attached to this radical elite resistance it is important to stress, without being too reductionist, that whereas the purity of the Islamic faith does seem to have been a separate concern in itself, that stricter Islam, in ways yet to be fully and clearly defined, was also the vehicle for the conceptualization of the secular, material grievances of this disaffected elite.

There is some evidence, too, as we have seen, that Islamic reformists, or at least individuals broadly aligned with this stream, were starting to address peasant grievances in the early decades of the century. Further forward in time to the appeal of the KMM during the Malayan Union conflict and the picture is less clear in the sources. Still, it remains a plausible hypothesis that Islamic reformism was starting to address the concerns of a peasantry reacting to new forms of surplus extraction continuously if unevenly throughout the decades leading up

to the formation of PAS. We can speculate that, whereas such appeals struck a responsive chord among the peasantry from time to time eliciting an overt response of one kind or another, such overt responses were short lived and localized, surfacing from time to time as with the two risings and less obvious (perhaps because it has been obscured by larger events as with the Malayan Union conflict where the grievances and activities of Malay civil servants seem to have been paramount) at other times. It may well be that Islamic reformism was starting to elicit some measure of sustained sympathy among the peasantry from early in this century - a sympathy which was activated into overt action periodically as in 1915 and 1929 in the two states but which was largely latent in this popular sense perhaps until the time of the KMM and the Union conflict but otherwise until the emergence of PAS as a strong force with popular appeal in the later nineteen fifties. We can surmise, then, that in this way a psychological predisposition at the grass roots level to incline in the direction of a politicized Islamic reformism in the nineteen fifties was developing over a longer period of time: that Islamic reformists were able to tap into this pre-existing pool of sympathy held by significant numbers within the peasantry in the late fifties to build an active sustained peasant support for their cause now that the mechanisms - the constitutional and political mechanisms - enabling this were in place.

Thus, whatever the precise degree of more limited response earlier radical Islamic organizations may have elicited from the peasantry it is clear from current scholarship that it was not until PAS was well underway that there was an unequivocal, strong and sustained radical appeal to the Malay peasantry on the peninsular. While such a radical political awakening seems a comparatively recent phenomenon seen against the earlier peasant political awakening elsewhere in the wider South East Asian context we can be sure, as Kessler and others have indicated, that it was based on long standing social tensions at the level of the productive base on the peninsular. Indeed, it is fair to ask whether this politicization of the Malay peasantry was as late as we currently think it was: if indeed there was, as the conventional wisdom assumes with limited substantiation, a genuine mass reaction (i.e. a reaction substantially involving the Malay peasantry and not confined mainly to an emergent Malay administrative elite) against Malayan Union, perhaps the KMM was able to a

degree, behind the scenes, to appeal to the class grievances of the peasantry in relation to the Union issue in ways not currently understood by the scholarship. Certainly there is a need to examine more closely the organizational antecedents of the belated popular radical political awakening that came with the formation and operation of PAS in the Malayan and Malaysian political scene. We need to understand, for example, the practical, inspirational, ideological link that must have been there between the social objectives of say the KMM and the MNP and the social policies of PAS once these had been formed in the years following the setting up of the party. In order to understand this longer term continuity we need to know in some detail what this earlier reformist leadership was saying to the peasantry and what their response was; and for that matter, as we shall see below, we need a more precise understanding of how PAS was making its appeal to its peasant supporters.

In sum, then, what is clear in broad outline if not in detail from the record over the longer period of time - from the time of the Kelantan Rising through to the functioning of PAS to 1980 and beyond - is the way in which the Islamic reformist stream of Malay nationalism identified by Roff has been both a response to, and a factor helping to shape, changing social relations on the peninsular as the old society gave way to the new. What can also be seen across this longer period of time is that this seems to have been a stronger phenomenon in the northern states on the peninsular. It is this stronger impact of this kind of politicized Islam that has, more than any other single social influence, lent a distinctive character to the nature of Independence politics in the four states and which has consequently had such a strong impact on Malayan and Malaysian politics and society, as a whole.

(iii) The early UMNO ascendancy.

Means argues that of key importance to UMNO in the manipulation of mass electoral support has been the role of a traditional top and middle strata of state and local functionaries in mobilizing the electoral support of the peasantry at the village level.([45]) Means points out that UMNO was able to make use of the existing structure of power and authority in Malay society down to the village level by placing itself at the head of that structure.([46]) According

---

45 Means, Malaysian Politics, p.21.

46 Ibid.

to Means, `the power structure of Malay society, from the Malay Rulers down to the kampong headman, was relied upon for the political mobilization of the Malay masses'. `In most instances', he says, `UMNO merely incorporated the existing Malay political and administrative office-holders into the party, thus capitalizing on a political communication and authority system already in existence'.([47]) Means believes that mass Malay support for UMNO was possible in this way because of the `common Malays loyalty to their Sultans and the aristocracy associated with the court circle'.([48]) While this gives us a good general idea of the UMNO modus operandi in mobilizing electoral support, and while it is true that the organization retained, on the whole, majority support from the peasantry in this way, we do need to look a little more closely at the way in which this traditional loyalty operated on the peninsular generally. Clearly, as we have seen, UMNO did not have the field to itself on the basis of traditional loyalty in appealing for the Malay vote. The fact that, from 1959 onwards, a considerable number of peasants switched their allegiance from UMNO to PAS, and the fact that there was as we shall see, oscillating Malay peasant support between the two parties, raises questions about the way in which such loyalty was operating on the peninsular in the post war period. Means' perception does seem to be that of a very structured Malay society and policy and this assumption of loyalty on the part of the Malay peasantry does need some qualification along the lines discussed in my chapters above. While such loyalty of a kind did exist it had a coercive aspect and was not universally unquestioning in its nature. Clearly the potential for a division within the peasantry in which some remained `loyal' to the conservative traditional leadership and social structures while others did not existed on the peninsular from the early decades in this century as we have seen. Thus, as we shall see below, the successes of PAS from 1959 show that the loyalty of the Malay populace to their traditional leaders was not all that it previously seemed to be. UMNO may have relied on its ability to elicit grass roots support by traditional means but clearly, from 1959 onwards, modern colonial influences were having strong effect, the division between loyalist and non-

---

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

loyalist peasantry was no longer marginal, and the unquestioning loyalty of the Malay masses even in appearance could no longer be relied upon.

UMNO's overtures to the masses were not made only through the traditional power structure. New elites figured as well in the calculations of top UMNO officials to win popular support. Of particular importance at the kampong level in this process was a group of rich peasants - land owning peasants - who would, it was hoped, in return for party patronage, support UMNO in their own right and assist in inveigling or coercing raayat over whom they had power and influence into supporting the party as well.([49])

UMNO versus PAS

As we have seen the conservative UMNO elite was, through the popular mandate it achieved in the 1955 elections, placed in a very strong position of predominance in the embryonic Malayan state. In that election the Alliance, with UMNO as the major component party, won 51 of the 52 seats to be filled by that election.([50]) The remaining seat went to a PAS candidate. In addition the Alliance was able to count on 19 additional votes from non-elected members to bring them to a position of unassailable power in what was very nearly a one party legislature.([51]) Operating as it was on a multi-racial consensus platform UMNO was not able to address itself to Malay aspirations in the political process exclusively and did not, where it was addressing purely Malay concerns, apply itself to the material needs of the vast majority of rural Malays to any great extent. The Alliance in its appeal for votes, focussed then on cross communal issues relating directly to Independence and the kind of Malay state

---

49 Kessler comments on UMNO's hopes that the Kelantanese raayat landlords would attract the votes of their clients and poorer peasants in support of the party.

Kessler, Islam and Politics, pp.164, 165.

50 The strength of UMNO within the Alliance can be gauged from the fact that in the 1955 elections UMNO had just over twice the representation on the Alliance ticket as the MCA, the next most influential party in the coalition.

Means, Malaysian Politics, p.212.

51 Means comments on the votes of the additional 19 members.

Means, Malaysian Politics, p.167.

As indicated above the federal and state legislatures were not fully elected until 1959.

that would emerge in the imminent Independence period under Alliance leadership. While Malay constitutional rights were guaranteed and economic security was promised for the Chinese business community the major thrust of Alliance electioneering aimed at establishing in the mind of voters an impression of the coalition as an effective opponent of colonialism capable of ruling a harmonious multiracial society. In the 1955 contest for power the social base of PAS was too ambiguous and too divided for it to succeed.([52]) In general it can be said that in that election the embryonic political parties had not at that stage established a clear relation with identifiable sections of the electorate and, in that sense, the election was something less than a fully-fledged reflection of economic-based tensions within Malayan society.

The 1959 elections saw the strong emergence of PAS as a threat to Alliance rule. In the state elections of that year control of the Kelantan and Trengganu went to the radical Islamic party. In Kelantan the party retained control of the state for more than a decade. In the federal elections held later in the year PAS won 13 out of the 14 parliamentary seats in Trengganu and Kelantan and came close to winning the federal electoral contest in one district in Kedah and two districts in Perak. In the 1969 elections strong support for PAS spread to Kedah and Perlis as well. Throughout the decade, then, this PAS electoral success, while not enough to oust the UMNO from its position of ascendancy at the national level through domination of the Alliance, did strongly threaten that ascendancy.

PAS and the NF.

That threat was lessened for a period when PAS merged with the Alliance and other parties to form the Barisan Nasional or National Front (NF). This development arose out of the traumatic race riots of 1969 and the period of the National Operations Council (NOC), an emergency body composed of leading political figures, members of the civil service and security forces and which was aimed at co-ordinating `the work of the civil administration, military and police in an all-out effort to restore peace.'([53])

---

52 Kessler, Islam and Politics, pp.109, 110.

53 Funston quoting a newspaper source.

These riots (dealt with in more detail below) were seen as a severe threat to social and political stability in Malaysia. In part the riots seem to have been inspired by the heated and strongly communal atmosphere of the 1969 general election. The election results seemed to suggest that the compromise represented by the Alliance was dramatically losing its appeal. UMNO, with its moderate and compromising communal approach, lost votes to PAS with its radical and strongly communal appeal. Likewise the MCA lost votes to the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Gerakan Rakyat Malayasia (Malaysia People's Movement). Butcher observes that the latter two parties, while claiming to be non-racial, were made up of members who were almost entirely non-Malay and had policies during the election campaign (particularly the DAP) which appealed mainly to non-Malay voters.[54] In general the Alliance lost ground significantly winning only 66 out of 114 seats or 48.5 per cent of the overall vote and felt itself denuded of support and insecure as the leading party political force in Malaysian politics. These gains by parties with a strong communal orientation clearly contributed to a feeling of communal instability - an instability which erupted into the race riots later in that year. Funston observes that there was a real fear among Malays that non-Malays were about to take over in the country.[55]

It was an atmosphere which had a strong echo of the intense communal feeling that had characterized the Malayan Union conflict. There was a feeling on the part of Malay political leaders that a widespread Malay anger over infringements of their rights had spilled over beyond bounds containable by UMNO and PAS in their respective constituencies on their existing approaches and that what was needed was a united front and a new approach.([56])

It was against this background that UMNO and PAS began to co-operate with one another. It was a move prompted mainly by the mutual need to present a common front as a

---

Funston, Malaysian Politics, p.212.

[54] John Butcher, "May 13: A Review of Some Controversies in Accounts of the Riots", Paper given at the Asian Studies Association of Australia Malaysia Society Third Colloquium, University of Adelaide, 22-24 August, 1981, p.3.

[55] Funston, Malay Politics, p. 294.

56 Funston comments that the riots made it clear that Malays `were not prepared to passively allow UMNO to gaurd their rights, or to exercise their protest merely in the form of a vote for PAS.'

Funston, Malay Politics, p.225.

strategic measure in the unstable aftermath of the riots and one facilitated by a mutual ideological shift in the direction of each others positions and which, on the PAS side, was made easier by a change in the class interests of the party leaderships (at the same time these shifts tended to undermine the cohesiveness of PAS's position in the NF as we shall see below.)([57])

This new co-operation led in the direction of a formal alliance of UMNO and PAS under the banner of a widened coalition - the Barisan Nasional or National Front (NF). Apart from the common need for an effective strategy to ensure the social stability that was a prerequisite for the political system to work UMNO, PAS and other parties involved no doubt had an eye on advantages that would accrue to themselves from such a united front.([58]) In so moving in this direction UMNO perhaps saw the chance to recover Malay votes formerly lost to PAS. With the ideological gaps between the two parties narrowing and with the inevitable constraints that were placed on PAS in conforming with a common frontal approach to government UMNO may have reasoned that, provided it did not alienate existing support in other directions - moderate Malay support and support in the other communities - that it

---

57 The shift in class interest is described by Funston and dealt with more fully in this chapter below where I summarize the fortunes of PAS in the 1969-1980 period.

Ibid., p.246.

58 At this point in time we lack a precise - a definitive - understanding of these motives. Something for the histories of the future. Funston comments on them in general and somewhat speculative terms. He comments that for UMNO `there was a great deal of political capital in uniting the Malay body politic'. For PAS he conjectures that `there may be an element of truth in the party's claim that it entered the coalition disinterestedly, in the cause of Islam and national unity' and casts further doubt that we can accept this aim on face value by pointing out that `it was never clearly explained why coalition was the only way, or the most appropriate way to achieve these ends'. Funston comments suggest that, whatever the two parties hoped to achieve for themselves from the merger, that it was UMNO that stood to gain most from it. For PAS, he observes, there were only the 'immediate benefits from direct participation in governments at the various levels and probably an increased flow of funds to Kelantan'; as a strong counterbalance to this, the merger appeared, in 1977 when Funston was writing, to be spelling `an end' to the party's popular support.

Ibid., pp.251, 252.

would on balance stop the drift of votes tending to undermine its dominance.([59]) The moves towards the wider coalition coincided with the initiation of the New Economic Policy (discussed more fully in this chapter below) and UMNO may well have felt that there was every chance that, in being identified as prime mover in a now populist government, or at least one which more determinedly sought to redress grass roots imbalances between the communities and which more particularly sought to more strongly address the issue of Malay rights and the need to eradicate Malay poverty, that it would draw new, and especially Malay, votes to itself; and that in the negative it would pick up votes lost to a now constrained and seemingly moderate or less radical PAS.([60]) For its part PAS must have had a reciprocal hope of expanding its constituency by drawing in marginal moderate votes as well as those from existing radically inclined supporters. PAS, too, had to balance its appeal between radical and moderate demands from the electorate and from within its membership. It was an extremely difficult balance to maintain as we shall see.

But it was above all else the shock of May 13 which drove the parties together in an urgent accord to ensure social and political stability. Accordingly, the new cooperation between UMNO and PAS which began in 1969 became a formal coalition in January, 1973, and then a formal cooperation between the two parties as part of a nine party member National Front(NF).([61]) The National Front was formally registered on June 1, 1974.

---

59 The need to balance interests in this way has been, of course, inherent in coalition politics throughout the period of its existence. Looking at the position further forward in time (the late 1970s) Gullick makes reference to the need of the UMNO leadership to balance the appeal of the party between its supporters on the one hand and supporters from other communities within the coalition on the other hand:

'The Malay politicians of moderate views, including the Prime Minister, have a similar problem in finding a middle course between driving the Chinese electorate into the arms of the opposition and satisfying their own supporters'.

Gullick, Malaysia, p.134.

60 The new approach to Malay poverty is discussed below in this chapter in the section on the New Economic Policy.

61 Those parties were: former Alliance members, PAS, Gerakan, the People's Progressive Party(PPP), the Sarawak United People's Party(SUPP), Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu and the Sabah Alliance.

Funston, Malay Politics, p.234.

Clearly, though, this narrowing of the ideological differences and differences in approach carried dangers for both UMNO and PAS and these became disconcertingly apparent during the years of the PAS involvement in the coalition. For PAS, as we shall see a little more fully below, the compromise sat extremely uncomfortably with some within the party and the tension between these dissidents and the top party leaders whose will initially prevailed in the new accommodation greatly weakened the internal coherence of the party; it was a tension fuelled by a perception within PAS that some within their leadership were inclining in the direction of decadence and corruption - that there was a tendency within this leadership in the direction of the development of a new and alien class interest and that as a result of all this, PAS was abandoning the interests of its grass roots supporters. This lack of coherence, and the perceived lack of appeal among potential supporters among other factors saw PAS separating from the NF late in 1977 and doing extremely badly in independently contesting the general election in the following year.

After the election it continued its oppositionist stance in relation to UMNO and the other parties in the coalition and it continues in this stance to the present day. Clearly, then, radical Islam has exerted in varying degree across the period, a strong political influence in Malaya on an electoral base located mainly in the north of the peninsular. It has done so on an electoral platform which is more strongly Malay nationalist, more religious and much more strongly and overtly communal than that of the UMNO. Within the period the partial and uneven success of the PAS challenge to the UMNO's monopoly of the Malay vote led to a strong anxiety within the conservative Malay elite that the radical Islamic party was undermining the position of UMNO as the leading party of the Malay community. It seems likely that this has in part had a secondary consequence in exacerbating tension between government coalition partners. Although definitive evidence is not easily accessible for the period it seems inevitable that the UMNO response to the PAS challenge created a risk of UMNO aggravating intra-Alliance and later National Front tensions in a way tending to threaten the internal cohesion of the coalition and therefore the effectiveness of national government overall. UMNO was confronted with a dilemma posed by the need to design and promote policies that would enable it to maintain its appeal to the Malay electorate against a

radical Islamic challenge while at the same time avoiding any alienation of the non-Malay ethnic vote essential to the continued survival of the coalition. To some extent, then, the radical Islamic electoral challenge tended to deflect UMNO policies away from the interests of the inter-communal government elite. Since the early 1970s it seems likely that it has been in part the need to encourage PAS voters to switch their allegiance back to UMNO that has motivated UMNO to be primarily instrumental in the framing and implementation of policies aimed at increasing the welfare of ordinary Malays while at the same time avoiding any sacrificing of existing coalition support. Thus, as I suggest in more detail below, the UMNO led Malaysian government has throughout the 1970s been prompted to a considerable degree by the alternative Islamic political challenge to accept a delicate and difficult balance whereby it seeks to increase the Malay share in the economy without causing a disintegrative displacement of local National Front elites and their western capitalist participant collaborators from their long standing position of dominance in the running of the national economy. It has been perhaps at the point where the Chinese entrepreneurial elite feels itself losing its share of the economy to the Malays that this balance is a present at it most sensitive.([62])

Having the radical Islamic party in power at the state level has also created problems for the national government of a more practical administrative nature; PAS with its markedly different approach to government in those states it controlled has been an irritant to national government by thwarting the implementation of federal government policies on a national scale. UMNO dominated Alliance government at the centre and adopted the practice of restricting finance to PAS held states with a view of pressuring these states into bending in the direction of national government policy and with a view to persuading voters in these states that it was in their best interest to vote for the UMNO in upcoming elections.

Funston casts the tension in dramatic terms pointing out that `the Malayan federal system underwent a substantive change in 1959 when PAS was elected to power in the states of Kelantan and Trengganu in 1959'. He further indicates that the tension between the centre and periphery following this election victory was primarily focussed on tension between

62 Certainly private discussions I had with entrepreneurial Chinese Malaysians on separate occasions in the 1970s (and 1980s) strongly suggest that this was the case.

UMNO and PAS. According to Funston there was a forewarning of such tension between the two parties and the withholding strategy to be adopted by UMNO when Tun Razak, then Deputy Prime Minister, warned during the 1959 election campaign that a future Alliance national government would reduce the priority for assistance for state governments not cooperating with it. Despite the warnings PAS pursued an independent policy at the state level pressing on with the implementation of land schemes and the building of a bridge in Kelantan against the wishes of the national government.([63])

Gullick, too, indicates the strong dislocation felt by the UMNO dominated Alliance government with the election of PAS governments in Kelantan and Trengganu in 1959. Notwithstanding the way the federal system was supposed to work in theory - the constitution made allowance for differing parties at the state and federal level - in practice the Alliance relied heavily on keeping control of state governments in their hands `to avoid party conflict between the federal and state regimes'[64] The 1959 election results meant that there was `a state of deadlock in which the federal government demonstrated its strength by cutting off the flow of public money to finance development in any states over which it had no control.'([65]) Gullick also makes the point that notwithstanding this purse string pressure being applied to Kelantan by the Alliance national government PAS managed to maintain its hold on the state until 1978 when internal party divisions and the increased strength of UMNO as a party caused PAS to lose power in the state.([66])

---

63 Funston, Malay Politics, p.56.

Kessler makes a similar point in observing that within the same period the PAS administration in Kelantan was able, in a situation where the state had been prevented from opening a federally funded land scheme, to use the control of land given the states by the national constitution to implement its own land development scheme.

Kessler, Islam and Politics, p.168.

64 Gullick, Malaysia, p.120.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., p.121.

The success of PAS in 1959 and in the decades following has appeared as a surprising phenomenon not easily explainable in terms of the conventional interpretations of Malay political behaviour. In 1959 UMNO had sought to hold power on the basis of the votes of the numerically preponderant Malay population and had expected to be wholly successful. As UMNO guaranteed Malay constitutional rights, had spearheaded the moves of the local Malayan population towards Independence, and had been overwhelmingly successful in the 1955 elections, it had seemed likely to enjoy a renewed mandate in the 1959 elections. The success of PAS in that year, then, appeared as a marked alteration in the political behaviour of the Malays. The questions posed by these developments in this: How do we account for PAS successes and failures in this period? Conventional explanations have sought to interpret PAS success in terms of northeastern Malay religiosity, parochialism and backwardness. PAS was seen as representing an aberrant strand of Malay nationalism drawing upon the ignorance and superstition of the Malay electorate in areas of the peninsular less in touch with modern influences.([67]) The question of PAS success and failure does, however, need to be seen on a wider and deeper perspective if we are to fully understand the phenomenon. What we need to understand is how the economic, social and political circumstances of the peasantry in the NMS, and the Islamic ideology shaping their perception of those circumstances, gave rise to the shifts in electoral support towards and away from a radical Islamic party throughout the period.

Kessler has gone a long way towards providing us with an answer to this question.([68])

For further accounts of the tension between centre and periphery in Malaysia see Bedlington (tension between UMNO controlled centre and PMIP and later PI(PAS) controlled periphery in Kelantan and Trengganu) and Means (the way in which the Alliance government manipulated the purse strings to ensure cooperation at the periphery).

Bedlington, Malaysia and Singapore, pp.142, 143.

Means, Malaysian Politics, pp.413, 414.

67 Kessler summarizes this kind of approach.

Kessler, Islam and Politics, pp.32-35.

68 Kessler, Islam and Politics, passim.

Kessler has sought to explain to success of PAS in Kelantan in the period 1959-1969 both in terms of the objective condition of the peasantry and elite in Kelantan as it had come to be as a result of colonial influences and in terms of the subjective ideological appeal of Islam as a force shaping peasant and elite perception of those objective circumstances. Kessler sees Islam as a vehicle for the articulation of class tensions in the Kelantanese countryside. Rejecting the notions that the success of PAS can be explained in terms of the backwardness, ignorance and parochialism of a large section of the Malay electorate Kessler argues that, in Kelantan, the success of PAS in the 1959-1969 decade was an expression of class tensions in the state - tensions which had colonial origins. Summing up the way in which a situation had developed in which PAS (the PMIP) was able to appeal to class interests in Kelantan, Kessler says:

> In township and countryside alike support for the PMIP grew from and expressed antagonistic class-based interests, and as support for the PMIP receded after 1959 because of the defection of wealthier peasants to the UMNO, its class nature became more clearly evident. Class thus exerts a clearly powerful influence upon Malay politics, and in Kelantan the conflict of class interest that the PMIP expressed pits Malay against Malay. British colonial policies and the distinctive patterns of social and political development they occasioned in Kelantan set the stage for the more recent rivalry of parties primarily concerned to articulate the opposed class interest of Malays. Kelantanese support for the PMIP has evidenced not so much racialism and xenophobia as the uninhibited rivalry of Malays for whom Sino-Malay political antagonism was only of secondary importance.([69])

Kessler argues, then, for a two dimensional class conflict with different sections of the Malay elite pitted against one another and the Malay elite as a whole, but particularly the UMNO elite, as contending with the peasantry. As we have seen from Kessler in chapter 3 above the peasantry were coming under increasing pressure as colonial elites found new ways of siphoning off peasant productive wealth in support of the expanding colonial state economy and colonial state superstructure; and it is clear from Kessler's account that at the same time old and new elites were competing for control of peasant surplus in the altering colonial circumstances in the state in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries.

Against this background Kessler sees the leadership of PAS as an expression of an intra-

---

69 Kessler, Islam and Politics, pp.240-241.

NB Kessler uses the acronym PMIP to denote the radical Islamic party thought his discussion.

Malay elite conflict between a conservative and less religious PAS leadership and a radical reformist Islamic PAS leadership.([70]) Whereas the UMNO leadership was comprised of English educated Malay administrators and Malay land owners that of PAS was made up of aspiring administrators educated in the Malay vernacular and in Islamic educational institutions, some land owners and Malays belonging to the urban party bourgeoisie. Generally speaking, then, PAS was dominated by a disaffected middle elite seeking the power and influence not available to them through the UMNO. Kessler points out that PAS was made up of Malays who were denied positions of party and government influence by an UMNO which admitted only English educated membership to such positions.([71]) PAS was thus strongly influenced by an Islamic intelligentsia educated in the vernacular who sought party political positions of influence and positions of state government executive power in a PAS controlled Kelantan administration: and, in the event of the PAS winning sufficient influence at the national level, influential positions within the national bureaucracy as well. Thus the peasantry had no membership at the top level of PAS. Although PAS did assist the peasantry with their problems party leadership was not primarily concerned with agrarian questions and the peasants were perceived mainly as an electoral means to the attainment of political power. Certainly many PAS leaders originated in the rural sphere but their basic interests lay elsewhere as they sought to put their Islamic education to use in the practice of party political and administrative influence and power. Although the number of large landowners in PAS was small in comparison with the number in the UMNO PAS did enjoy, in its hey day in office in Kelantan, the support of a significant number of rich peasants. Clearly, then, from Kessler's account we can see that while both the UMNO and PAS elites sought control of peasant labour for their ends through the electoral process it was the PAS

---

70 The discussion which follows on the composition and motivation of PAS functionaries is based primarily on Chapter 9 of Kessler's book.

Kessler, Islam and Politics, Chapter 9 `Land, Peasants, and Parties', pp.161-182.

See also Gullick's excellent brief description of the UMNO and PAS leadership running along similar lines to Kessler.

Gullick, Malaysia, pp.126-127.

71 Kessler, Islam and Politics, p.171.

elite that was less removed in sympathy from the bulk of the peasantry.

Funston develops on Kessler's point that PAS functionaries were able to mobilize support by addressing the worldly concerns of Islamic followers and encouraging them to take a firm stand on these.([72]) According to Funston they were assisted in this approach by being seen as sincere, self sacrificing and unpretentious in their dealings with their followers - that their appeal rested on a perceived genuine affinity with the peasantry.([73]) The degree of such an affinity may have been more apparent than real during the period of the PAS ascendance in Kelantan and both Kessler and Funston view it with a realistic eye. Whatever the real level of sincerity involved it was convincing enough in the shorter term to help secure the support needed. It was, however, as Funston points out and as we shall see below, a perceived affinity, which did not last.

The relationship between peasant and party political leadership in Kelantan was much more based on a convergence rather than an identity of interest between the two groups: there was a much stronger convergence of interest between the PAS leadership and the bulk of the peasantry than was the case between the UMNO leadership and the same peasantry. Both UMNO and PAS have always been vulnerable in that there has been some overlapping of the elites guiding the two parties with the division between them a fluid one.([74]) Both parties have had some appeal to land owning Malays as we have seen with UMNO exercising the stronger appeal to this group. It was, according to Kessler, internal divisions within PAS and most notably the defection to UMNO of the rich peasant landlord group in the latter part of the 1959-1969 decade that weakened the influence of PAS in Kelantan. UNMO hoped that these defecting rich peasants would bring back their clients and poorer peasants to support of

---

72 Funston, Malay Politics, p.198.

73 Ibid.

74 `Elite' generally in the sense defined above: a traditional upper, and a new middle, mainly English, educated elite in the case of UMNO; a traditional, and a new, mainly vernacular, educated elite in the case of PAS. The landlord group referred to in the text seems to have been a shifting component within this broad categorisation.

their party.[75] These hopes, however, proved to be ill-founded and the Kelantanese peasantry remained generally unimpressed with the overtures of UMNO in seeking their allegiance.[76]

Much more than UMNO, PAS has been able to give expression to the basic economic and social grievances existing at the base level in the Kelantanese rural economy in a way which communicated with, and evoked the sympathy of, the peasantry. It was this ability to address class tensions - tensions that had been building in the state from the earliest penetration of colonial influence in the state - through a distinctly Islamic mode of expression that set PAS apart from the UMNO and which was the main reason for the PAS's electoral success in that state. It was PAS that, in this sense, had the common touch. There was a nearer coincidence in the interests of the PAS leadership as they sought to overcome their exclusion from the old and new traditional conservative ascendancy and those of the peasantry in their concerns as they sought to retain as much as possible of their economic surplus for themselves than was the case between UNMO and the peasantry.[77] Indeed, the traditional elitist nature of UMNO placed them in a strongly invidious position vis-a-vis the peasantry to an extent which, by 1959, easily overcame any appearance of `the common Malay's loyalty to their Sultans and the aristocracy associated with the court circle.'[78] As Kessler points out, `[m]ost UMNO officials saw relations among the various peasant classes in village society simply in terms of dependence, without acknowledging the element of antagonism in them. They [ie the peasantry in Kelantan] were ... unmoved when the ... village notables, soon after haggling with their tenants over the division of the harvest, sought to convince them that the UNMO was an adequate protector of their interest.'[79]

Although Kessler doesn't address himself to the total picture of PAS fortunes in the Independence period to 1980 his main focus being on the party's success in Kelantan during

---

75 Kessler, Islam and Politics, p.164.

76 Ibid., p.165.

77 Ibid., pp.173, 174.

78 The words used by Means and quoted above in this chapter.

79 Kessler, Islam and Politics, p.165.

the decade 1959-1969 his argument nonetheless does allow us to extrapolate from his account towards a wider understanding of the political success of radical Islam in its NMS strong hold. Given the broadly similar fundamental effect that the penetration of western influence has had in all the NMS and given the very strong appeal, though in varying degrees, that PAS has had and continues to have in all the states to the north on the peninsular, it seems very likely that Kessler's account of the reasons for the varying appeal of PAS in Kelantan applies in broad terms to the other NMS as well. Certainly the precise story of the impact of the radical Islamic party will differ from state to state and definitive state-by-state study is needed for us to develop a clear picture of the regional impact of the party.([80]) But unquestionably the fact of the general success of the party in the north together with Kessler's account of this success for Kelantan are strongly suggestive of the way in which tension between direct producers and those appropriating their surplus, tension which owes its distinctive character to the way in which outside western influences were penetrating the four states from the beginning of the colonial period, has been given strong intra-communal expression within the moderate democratic party political context in Malaya and Malaysia. In Stenson's words:

> ... [Kessler's] analysis implies that the extension in 1969 of PAS support from Kelantan and Trengganu on the east to the north-western states of Perlis and Kedah and even to Perak and Selangor, arose not from a sudden upsurge of specifically regional or religious dissent as from the continuance of class polarization accompanied by a marked tarnishing of the UMNO's image.([81])

Stenson echoes Kessler's views on the importance of the relative absence of communal factors in Kelantanese society in understanding the success of PAS in that state. Restating Kessler's view Stenson points out that it was `the relative absence of the Chinese threat which accounts

---

80 Certainly the scholarship does not universally accept the wider applicability of Kessler's Kelantan argument. Commenting on that argument Gullick, for example, observes: `I do not know Kelantan well, but am inclined to think that Kessler's analysis relates better to socio-economic conditions in Kelantan than elsewhere.'

Gullick, Malaysia, pp.246, 253n.

81 Stenson, "Class and Race", p.48.

for the earlier emergence in Kelantan of oppositionist Malay politics.'([82])

Muzaffar, in his published work on the subject, offers us a valuable contribution to our understanding of PAS as party political expression of resurgent Islam in Malaysia.[83] In so doing he allows us a valuable insight on the interaction of class, religion and ethnicity as important primary causal factors in that resurgence.[84]

Muzaffar sees the `capitalist concept of, and approach to, development' in Malaysia as a primary factor fuelling a resurgence of Islam in the federation.[85] He describes the consequences of this capitalist development first in general terms:

> Since capitalist development is inherently uneven, it leaves whole segments of society without adequate access to those tangible and intangible goods and services which make life meaningful. At the same time, it reinforces the wealth and power of those in the upper echelons of society. As this type of development expands, intensifies and pervades the entire social fabric, the economic, cultural and psychological disparities between the `haves' and `have-nots' become wider and wider. The poor and deprived begin to react to this uneven development, to the growing chasm that separates them from those who command prestige and privilege in society.[86]

`In the Malaysian case', he writes, `a portion of the Malay `have-nots' have chosen `to react to capitalist inequities through Islam'.[87] There was, he says, a social polarization in Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu which served as strong factor driving the appeal of resurgent Islam in general and PAS in particular in these states.[88]

In a different way (from Kessler and Stenson) Muzaffar is able to cast the differing appeal of PAS and UMNO to the Malay populace on an interesting and instructive perspective.[89] One dimension of this appeal was, he says, on the basis of the distinction

---

82 Ibid., p.48.

83 Chandra Muzaffar, Islamic Resurgence, passim. The book cited and referred to briefly in chapter 6 above. Cited in connection with the Trengganu Rising as an Islamic phenomenon arising from the colonial experience. Muzaffar on the world wide experience of Islam under colonial influence.

84 Ibid., especially Chapter 2, pp. 13-29.

85 Ibid., pp. 16, 16-22.

86 Ibid., p. 16.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid., pp. 17,18.

89 It should be noted that Muzaffar differs from Kessler and Stenson in that he is strongly critical of resurgent Islam (and of PAS within it) in his analysis. While he sees positive

between true Muslim believer and kafir(unbeliever).[90] `Without actually saying so', Muzaffar writes, `PAS has made it quite explicit that the UMNO leadership and UMNO members fall within this[ie the kafir] category'.[91] PAS, he writes, `perceives UMNO in particular to be "impure", "tarnished" and "contaminated" from the Islamic stand point'.[92] PAS, by contrast, perceives itself as `the only pure, righteous advocate of Islam in the political arena'.[93] PAS, he says, drew its conservative approach to Islam from its association with, and allegiance to, the Ulama: `It relies heavily on the theological injunctions of the past handed down from generation to generation through the medium of the ulama. The very fact that it glorifies the illustrious ulama of antiquity, regarding their wisdom as almost infallible and their authority as unchallengeable, attests to this'.[94] `Thus the Muslim-kafir demarcation', Muzaffar says, `which in the formal sense separates Muslims from non-Muslims, becomes a dichotomy within the Muslim community distinguishing the pure from the impure, or those who have remained faithful from those who have deviated'.[95]

PAS appealed on the basis of another dichotomy, Muzaffar says - that which existed between the mustazaffin(the oppressed) and the mustakbirin(the oppressors).[96] PAS identifies

---

aspects in the resurgence he sees much that is negative as well. On balance he sees it as a negative force in its current form holding back the social progress of the federation. It is, he says, `superficial' and `divisive' in its approach to social issues. PAS, he says, `lacks concrete suggestions' and is `naive' in its approach to the nation's economic problems. Furthermore, the party has failed to ponder `crucial dimensions of an alternative economic system'. What is needed from Malaysian Muslims in general, he writes, is `a more rational, progressive and dynamic approach to Islam'.

Ibid., pp. 60-62, 107.

[90] Ibid., p. 85.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., p. 59.

[95] Ibid., p. 85.

[96] Ibid.

itself with the former and, while not saying so directly, UMNO with the latter.[97]

The two dichotomies, as conceptualized by PAS, are not independent of one another Muzaffar says. They are tied in that, in the thinking of the party, `the mustazaffin are the Muslims while the mustakbirin are the kafir'.[98] Both dichotomies, he says, were popularized by the Iranian Revolution.[99] The strategy, he implies, is to convey a popular impression that PAS is on the right side of this twin dichotomy and UMNO on the wrong side of it. It is, he says, a matter of identity within the Malay community: `What the PAS leadership would like ...is for the mustakbirin to be seen as kafir and the kafir to be recognized at once as the UMNO leadership'.[100]

Muzaffar points to a limited class dimension to the oppressor-oppressed dichotomy:`Since PAS represents to a great extent the disadvantaged and deprived among the urban Malay working class and Malay rural dwellers, the term mustazaffin assumes a class connotation of sorts'.[101] This is class consciousness of a more limited kind than Kessler and Stenson seem to have had in mind. Muzaffar points out that`mustazaffin as a concept, even if it embodies class elements, does not cut across religious boundaries'.[102]

Clearly, then, Muzaffar presents us with a different emphasis in examining the mix of class, religion and ethnicity which was the basis of the PAS mass appeal. He emphasizes the religious component of mass identity as having the stronger pull for their followers whereas

---

[97] Muzaffar implies that this was the case.

Ibid.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid., p. 86.

Although he implies that what PAS would like that perception to be and what it actually is may not coincide exactly. He raises the possibility that the dichotomies may be seen in terms of ethnic division - in terms of non-Muslim oppressors(ie kafir in this sense) in other communities versus Malay true believers - against the wishes of PAS.

Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

Kessler(and Stenson) have the more secular emphasis on class in explaining the appeal of the party. Of the two dichotomies, it was, Muzaffar says, the Muslim-kafir one that was the stronger in its emotional appeal to followers.[103] Indeed, it was the failure of PAS to more strongly link up the secular, class component of Malay identity with the religious and ethnic components that limited the party in its popular appeal.[104]

Muzaffar, looking beyond the party's appeal in Kelantan, has a different slant from Kessler and Stenson on ethnicity as a factor in that appeal. To him its not the absence of ethnicity but the effect of the government's policy of fostering what he refers to as ethnic dichotomization that has reinforced Islamic resurgence and therefore the appeal of PAS.[105] It does this by emphasizing an ethnic identity and `the qualities or characteristics which it believes are unique to its existence in order to articulate its identity'.[106] This identity, he says, is usually expressed through `[l]anguage, cultural forms and practices and religion'.[107] Of these it is especially religion which is most important: `More than language or any other facet of culture, Islam expresses Bumiputra, or more accurately Malay identity in a manner that has no parallel.'[108] Given the cultural and especially religious emphasis that has come with ethnic dichotomization `it is not surprising at all', he says, `that Islamic resurgence is happening'.[109]

Muzaffar, then, offers us a sophisticated understanding of the interrelationship of religion, ethnicity and class as causal factors in Malaysia's resurgent Islam. The ethnic dichotomization which is so strong a feature of Malaysian society is driven, he says, by class considerations:

> Yet the Bumiputra/non-Bumiputra dichotomy is as powerful and as potent as ever. Indeed, it has become much stronger with the implementation of the New Economic Policy(NEP) of the Government. For the NEP is in reality a strategy designed

---

[103] Ibid., pp. 85,86.

[104] Ibid., p. 86.

[105] Ibid., pp. 23-26.

[106] Ibid., p. 23.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., pp. 24,25.

[109] Ibid., p. 24.

> to accommodate, entrench and extend the interests of the Bumiputra middle and upper classes. It is a policy whose actual aim is to enhance and expand the wealth and power of these classes within the Bumiputra community. For this purpose, the Bumiputra/non-Bumiputra dichotomy has to be maintained, indeed reinforced, at all costs. Since the state, given its capitalist orientation, reflects the interests of the middle and upper classes, and since the interests of these classes dominate society, society as a whole lives and breathes through this Bumiputra/non-Bumiputra dichotomy. Is it any wonder, then, that in the 1970s and 1980s, in the era of the NEP, the Bumiputra/non-Bumiputra dichotomy had become overwhelmingly powerful ? [110]

Muzaffar, then, on an approach very broadly in line with Kessler(though with the differing emphasis and perspective) offers us a refined interpretation of the way in which the secular and the religious have interacted in bringing about a Malay identity being given expression through a resurgent Islam on the peninsular in general and party political expression through an allegiance to PAS in particular.

Stenson follows Kessler in a more secular interpretation of the PAS phenomenon. Within the context of a broad discussion of the relative importance of class and race as sources of social cleavage on the peninsular he hypothesizes widely from Kessler arguing that the widespread support for PAS indicates a class polarization within the Malay community, a polarization that is peninsular wide and which, to 1976, had been given modern party political expression not only in the NMS, but in Perak and Selangor as well. In the southern and central Malayan states, Kessler states and Stenson agrees, class tensions have tended to be obscured by communal tensions and ethnic rivalries.([111]) It might be tempting, then, on the basis of what Stenson says, to generalize beyond the northern states to see the support for PAS to the south as an even wider indication of class-based rather than communal politics. But such generalization would need much more substantiation than Stenson is able to give in his broad overview of class and race on the peninsular. The most that can be said on current research for the 1957-1980 period is that the more recent extension of PAS support in Perak and Selangor within that period has provided more extensive party political evidence of intra-Malay class conflict this time in more strongly multi racial state societies.[112]

---

[110] Ibid. See also pp.104-107 where Muzaffar reinforces the point that because the Malaysian ruling class has a vested interest in ethnic dichotomization, a major force behind the nation's Islamic resurgence, it is unlikely to move against it.

111 Stenson cites Kessler's contention along these lines with approval. Stenson, "Class and Race", p.48.

[112] The major thrust of PAS's influence in the post 1980 period has continued to be focussed in the NMS. If Kessler's argument for Kelantan does extend to Perak and Selangor

Still, any extrapolation along these lines stretches Kessler's argument to the limit and we do need to be wary of too wide an application of the Kelantan analysis in considering the issue of class and race for the peninsular as a whole.

To sum up then, what we can say, in interpreting and applying Kessler within reasonable parameters, is this: the fact that the electoral basis of support for PAS has to 1980 (and beyond to the present) been located mainly in the NMS, coupled with what we know about the way in which this has been occurring in Kelantan, is strongly suggestive of the distinctiveness of not just the one state but of all the NMS in the Malayan and Malaysian context. Extending Kessler's broad argument for the NMS as a whole on the basis of our social analysis here of the effect of modern outside influences on the four states we can advance the plausible notion that: intra Malay class tensions within the numerically dominant Malay community in the four states have been more visible and have had a stronger impact there than elsewhere on the peninsular; that, more specifically, such intra Malay class tension, while latent through the colonial period surfacing only for periods of short duration and in a very localized fashion, became overt and sustained in its manifestation first of all in Kelantan from 1959 and then as a more extensively regionalized phenomenon in 1969 with the electoral successes of PAS across the four states in that year; that it is in large measure because the four states have been relatively homogenous in the communal sense that class tension between Malays has been strongest and more visible there than elsewhere on the peninsular where the class factor has been interacting with a greater tension between the ethnic communities and has been somewhat diluted in its effect and therefore less visible; that this stronger surfacing Malay class tension interacting with Malay religious and wider cultural factors indicates the essential nature of the distinctiveness of the four states in their social development from the time of the earliest colonial intrusion to 1980 and beyond.

As the moment the whole issue of class and race in Malaysian history is under

---

down to the present day we continue to have a situation where intra-Malay class conflict in its party political manifestation is, while evident in the more multi racial states to the south, is less obvious there because it is, in ways yet to be clearly defined by the scholarship, enmeshed in - an important dimension of - communal tension in those states.

researched.[113] While we can see in broad outline the way in which underlying class tensions in the NMS in their party political and other manifestation have been relating to wider purely communal(including religous) factors in the wider peninsular context further examination is needed for a full and definitive understanding of the process. It may well be that, as further evidence on past trends emerges, and that as the forward direction of Malaysian social change exposes the process in sharper definition, we will be better placed to understand how class and race(especially in its cultural, religious dimension) factors have been interacting with one another to shape peninsular society in general, and the unique role of the NMS in this in particular. It may well be that further exploration of Stenson's hypothesis(in combination with the added wisdom that Muzaffar brings to the issue) will produce a new, definitive, understanding of Malaysian society - one in which we can see very clearly how an earlier manifestation of class tensions in interaction with broader Malay cultural factors in the NMS, in addition to being the essential dynamic for the distinctiveness of the four states, was at the same time in its wider impact a strong ingredient in the wider interaction of communal and class factors shaping Malayan and Malaysian society.

The Departure of PAS from the NF and the 1978 elections.

In 1978 PAS split from the NF and whereas this did signal some significant diminution in the power of PAS to exercise power through elected offices the party did, to the end of the decade and beyond, remain a force to be reckoned with. It was the circumstances surrounding the departure of PAS from the NF in December 1977 and the results of the state and federal elections in 1978 which seemed to signal a major decline in the party's influence on the peninsular. In 1978 PAS not only suffered a major defeat in Kelantan, hitherto to its strong hold since 1959, but was also badly defeated in the general national and state elections which followed.

This electoral failure was not a sudden downturn in its fortunes but rather a marked dramatic drop in popular support in the wake of a succession of electoral defeats. For

---

113 Funston comments on this lack of research to 1980, the year his book was published.

Funston, Malay Politics, p.14.

Apart from Muzaffar there has been little scholarly progress in this area since that year.

example, in Kelantan its strength had been dropping from 28 seats won out of a possible 30 in the 1959 election to 21 and 19 seats in the 1964 and 1969 elections respectively.([114]) Certainly its fortunes appeared to pick up in the 1974 Kelantan state election when it won all 22 seats allocated to it in a packaged distribution of 36 seats as a member party of the National Front though it is hard to determine the trend here since it is not clear from this result the extent to which the party drew support on its intrinsic merits and the extent of its support on the basis of its place in the wider front organization.([115]) While on the more general 1974 result PAS did seem to be holding its own while a member of the front, the 1978 election result was a body blow to the party's influence on the peninsular and seemed to signal an end to the party as a viable alternative political leader of the Malay community. Whereas in 1974 the party had won 43 state seats (the 22 in Kelantan; 11 in Kedah; 8 in Trengganu and 2 in Perak) with 14 seats in the national parliament this was reduced to 11 state seats in 1978 (2 in Kelantan; 7 in Kedah; 1 in Perak and 1 in Penang) with 5 in the national parliament.([116])

While from this result the NF remained the dominant force in Malaysia it was not simply a matter of former PAS voters remaining with the Front and returning to the NF, and specifically UMNO, out of disillusionment with PAS; independent Malay candidates (mostly PAS dissidents) in Kelantan, and candidates for the radical socialist Party Rakyat in Trengganu, made large inroads (20% and 30% of the vote respectively) on the electoral support of the ruling coalition indicating a realignment of Malay voter allegiance in those states away from the UMNO - PAS dichotomy in a new direction.([117]) This new trend was reinforced when Party Rakyat further strengthened its position in a by-election for the Kedah

114 Muhammad Kamlin, "The Storm before the Deluge: The Kelantan Prelude to the 1978 General Election", in Harold Crouch, Lee Kam Hing and Michael Ong(eds.), Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election(Kuala Lumpur, 1980), p.53.

115 Ibid.

116 Firdaus Haji Abdullah, "PAS and the 1978 Election" in Crouch and others (eds.) Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election, pp.67, 70.

117 Funston, Malay Politics, pp.234, 235.

State Assembly losing the seat by a margin of only 136 votes.([118])

The 1978 Kelantan Election

It was primarily a clash of will between the UMNO led federal government and the PAS dominated Kelantan State Assembly late in 1977 which bought to a head tensions between UMNO and PAS - long standing tensions which had threatened the coherence of the Front since its inception and which, when they erupted so dramatically in Kelantan in late 1977, threatened `the whole fabric of Malay politics, throughout the rest of Peninsular Malayasia.'([119])

The dispute between the federal and state government focussed on the suitability of the Menteri Besar (chief minister) to lead the state. The issue of suitability initially involved a division within PAS in Kelantan: Datuk Mohamed Nasir was a PAS party member and an established leader within the party; from the time of his positioning as Menteri Besar there was a split within the party between those who thought him suitable and those who did not. In late 1977 a majority of PAS parliamentarians in the legislature clearly thought that he was not. When the State Assembly, accordingly, passed a motion of no confidence in him on 15 October, 1977, he responded by moving to retrieve his position by exercising his option of seeking the dissolution of the Assembly and the ordering of a fresh election only to find that this was not possible. The passing of the no confidence motion had been accompanied by considerable civil disorder (there had been several disturbances, mostly sympathetic to the ousted Mentri Besar) and it was because of this confusion - because, presumably, it was felt that the social circumstances were too unstable for an orderly election at that stage - that the state's regent refused the request for a fresh election. At this point, then, the state's leader had lost the confidence of the parliament, had refused the option of resigning, and found himself unable to exercise the second option of taking the case directly to the electorate. Government was therefore paralysed without constitutional remedy at the state level.

The deadlock, then, took the form of a constitutional crisis which was resolved by the

---

118 Ibid.

119 Muhammad Kamlin, "Kelantan Prelude", p.38, passim.

The brief account which follows is based on Kamlin.

federal government stepping in and placing the state under its direct administrative control through emergency rule legislation on 9 November 1977. It was when federal control was lifted that the way was clear for a state election to restore confidence in the state legislature and to resolve the question of state leadership. This did not occur though before the differences between PAS and the rest of the NF, bought into sharp relief by the crisis, resulted in PAS leaving the coalition. Federal control was lifted on 12 February, 1978 and the election for the new state assembly was held on 11 March of the same year.

By all accounts, then, the 1977 Kelantan crisis bought to a head tensions within PAS, between PAS and the wider coalition, and between the PAS party organization and their followers in the wider electorate. While Datuk Muhamed Nasir was supported by UMNO and clearly had significant public support he was seen as little more than an UMNO stooge by a strong and powerful group within the Kelantan PAS organization. Thus it was on Datuk Mohamed Nasir and his appointment as Menteri Besar that the line of compromise between how PAS wanted to govern and the UMNO perception of good government was sharply drawn; it was on this functional personal leadership issue that compromise between the two differing political philosophies and approaches broke down with widespread and dramatic consequences for government in Malaysia. Datuk Mohamed Nasir was, in effect, appointed as Menteri Besar against the wishes of the wider party, and he had held the office, apparently, on sufferance, until the change to remove him came along. When the question of the leadership of a PAS dominated coalition administration in Kelantan arose within the front following the 1974 election victory there was tension when UMNO pressed to have a say in the decision against the feeling of PAS that as the leading partner in the state coalition the final say should rest with it. In the end UMNO, and specifically Tun Razak, as the leader of the National Front, prevailed against the wishes of Kelantan PAS and Datuk Mohamed was appointed as Menteri Besar. The decision rankled with his party, however, and from its point of view he was holding the office until an opportunity to oust him came along. The outcome of this was that Kelantan PAS overplayed its hand in asserting its will; when what was seen as the opportunity to remove him was seized using the no confidence strategy the move backfired and far from being in a position to assert their will within the front more strongly

they found themselves outside the coalition and facing an election while divided and demoralized and in a situation in which popular support had seemed to be lacking, certainly on the leadership issue and with ominous signs that it was swinging against them on wider issues as well.

It was the initiation of the bill to bring Kelantan under federal control introduced in the national parliament that was the specific focus of the dispute which forced PAS from the coalition. PAS members were against the move and instructed its members in the national parliament to oppose it. To reinforce this stand PAS functionaries within the coalition tended their resignations - a move which amounted to a withdrawal of PAS from the Front. UMNO felt threatened by this and moved to have the Front expel PAS as a disciplinary move and with the passing of the federal control bill into law PAS found itself irrevocably outside the coalition with all the consequences for the party outlined above.

Clearly, then, the Kelantan state election defeat was a major set back for PAS; the party had held power there since 1959 and Kelantan was regarded as its base state. But worse was to follow. With the 1978 Kelantan defeat a re-think was necessary; an opportunity was seen to recover the lost ground in the general election which followed shortly after in the same year. The strategy of the party was to shift its focus to Kedah where it was believed that significant support remained and where it was thought there was a good chance of forming a state government as the main basis for an electoral recovery.([120]) But as we have seen the strategy failed; the party not only lost the chance for a second foothold in Kedah but was soundly defeated in the other states to the north where it had enjoyed support and was a long way short of extending its support into states where it was believed that the potential for strong support existed.

While the defeats for PAS were devastating for the party - enough to seriously question its position of alternative leadership of the Malay community - it is important not to overstate the degree of that defeat. The party lost many of its seats by a fine margin and was still able to draw an impressive proportion of the total votes cast. For example, although it won only two seats in the Kelantan March election it did win something like a third of the total votes

---

120 Harold Crouch, "The Results" in Crouch and others (eds.) Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election, pp. 293-312.

cast.([121]) In the elections for national parliament in 1978 PAS was third with 5 seats and 5.5 per cent of the total votes cast behind the NF with 131 seats and 57.5 per cent of the total votes cast and the DAP with 16 seats and 19.2 per cent of total votes.[122] On a state-by-state breakdown for the same election the party won two seats with 39.6 per cent of votes cast in Kedah, 2 seats in Kelantan with the 43.6 per cent of votes referred to in the footnote immediately above, nil seats in Perlis with 33.5 per cent of votes cast and nil seats in Trengganu with 38.1 per cent of votes cast.([123]) In the state elections held in July PAS won 7 seats in Kedah with 39.4 per cent of total votes cast, nil seats in Perlis with 29.2 per cent of votes, and in Trengganu nil seats with 36.7 per cent of votes.([124]) The fact, too, that the PAS vote held up in the padi growing areas within the Muda region of Kedah where the federal government had been running a special scheme aimed at reducing rural poverty there suggests

---

121 The collection of essays dealing with the March and July elections edited by Crouch and others contains variations in precise figure terms as to the size of this vote: according to Kamlin PAS `picked up almost 33 per cent of the total' vote in the March election. The same author further indicates that this was against the 37 percent of the National Front vote. Crouch on the other hand, drawing attention to the fact that while PAS was unsuccessful in picking up seats in Kelantan in the March and July elections it was able to draw a significant proportion of total votes cast, makes a comparison of the PAS result for the two elections to indicate an increasing proportion of the total votes cast: `Nevertheless, in terms of popular support, PAS was not a spent force, as was shown in Kelantan, where its share of the valid vote increased from 33.5 per cent in the March state election to 43.6 per cent in July, ...'

Kamlin, "Kelantan Prelude" and Crouch, "The Results", in Crouch and others (eds.), Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election, pp.54 and 295 respectively.

It seems that Crouch is here making the somewhat loose comparison between the percentage of popular vote cast to PAS candidates in a state election and those cast for PAS candidates within the state for election to national parliament. There was no state election in Kelantan in July. Still, whatever the precise figures it is clear from both Crouch and Kamlin that, in terms of total number of votes cast, support for the party within the State was significant (between a third and one half of total votes cast for the two elections, state and national) and that support for the party may even have been increasing - that there may have been a partial recovery in train in Kelantan - between the March and July elections.

[122] Crouch, "The Results", p. 297.

123 Ibid., pp. 299-302.

124 Ibid., pp.304, 307, 308.

that it was still holding, albeit unevenly, significant support within the group that constituted the main bases of its electoral strength, the poor peasantry.([125])

We can see from this that PAS was not by any means rendered redundant by the 1978 result. While PAS was not rendered a spent force the election failure was a serious set back and its position in providing alternative political leadership for the Malay community was strongly threatened.

The Reasons for Failure.

There were various reasons for the 1978 failure and the scholarship is varied in its interpretation of causes and in the emphasis it places on the causal factors. There is general agreement in the published commentaries that internal weaknesses, particularly a lack of unity and coherence in the party and a loss of confidence in party leadership, were majors factor causing the defeat. In the words of one commentator: `The defeat in Kelantan could be attributed to the internal struggle and petty squabbling among its members which resulted in the formation of the splinter party - Berjasa. At the same time it could be attributed to a loss of faith in Datuk Haji Mod. Asri Muda, its national leader.'([126]) Kamlin, too, and Abdullah, in their essays on the subject, focus more on the internal, organizational, weaknesses of the party while Funston in effect steers us in the direction of a more fundamental understanding of PAS's failure to maintain its appeal to its constituents.([127]) Whereas Kamlin, in his essay focussing on the failure of PAS in the two 1978 elections, emphasizes the difficulties and failures of the PAS leadership Funston, writing in the year before the elections were held and considering the reasons for the declining fortunes of the party in the year immediately

---

125 Mahadzir Mohd. Khir, "The UMNO - PAS contest in Kedah" in Crouch and others (eds.), Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election, pp. 110. See also the reference on page 102 in this piece to the potential effect of a drought affecting a large area of padi land in Kedah on the voting behaviour of padi growers there and especially the poor ones.

The Muda scheme is discussed in this chapter below.

126 Khir, "UMNO-PAS Contest", p.99.

127 Kamlin, "The Kelantan Prelude", and Abdullah, "PAS and the 1978 Election" in Crouch and others (eds.), Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election, pp 37-68, and 71-95 respectively. Kamlin deals with the Kelantan March election part of the 1978 defeat.

Funston, Malay Politics, pp.244-247.

preceding the election, looks also to interpreting the preceding failure more in terms of the Kessler explanation of the party's 1959-1969 success. Funston implies that, whereas PAS was able to draw votes and hold power on the basis of the way in which it successfully addressed the class grievances of the peasantry in Islamic terms up until 1969, the party leadership became compromised beyond that point and was much less effective in addressing such class grievances in the later years.

According to Kamlin it was more the internal weaknesses of PAS than external factors which caused the electoral defeat of PAS in the March election. He isolates several main aspects of this: a substantial number of traditional PAS supporters were put off by attacks on the party's leadership on the basis of corruption and ineptness during the election campaign; the NF strategy of raising the spectre of non co-operation between a PAS state and a NF federal government; the party's miscalculations and in particular in entering into a coalition first with UMNO and then the Front - a move which, while having advantages, limited the party's freedom to `act absolutely as it pleased' and which was a fact `not fully assimilated' in its implications by PAS.([128])

Kamlin, then, places strong emphasis on what he sees as internal weaknesses within the party and the popular perception of these in brining about the March defeat. He indicates that voters may have been influenced by accusations that their economic policies had failed to alleviate rural poverty and claims that such lack of economic development would be worsened by a lack of co-operation between state and federal administrations in the event that PAS were returned to power.

In all this Kamlin does not acknowledge Kessler, Stenson, Funston and others on the reasons for the party's prior electoral successes and does not squarely address these reasons in relation to the 1978 failure.([129]) He does not pick up directly on Funston's point that a betrayal

---

128 Kamlin, "The Kelantan Prelude" in Crouch and others (eds.) Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election, pp.56-61. Kamlin is quoted here at pp. 58 and 59.

129 He does peripherally only to the extent that he suggests that voters may have been put off by the economic fears referred to in the text of this thesis above and in that he reports on the criticisms of a PAS break away group - Berjasa - that PAS leaders were self interested wealth seekers. This latter aspect is dealt with briefly in this chapter below.

by the PAS leadership of its pre 1969 aims and appeal was a major factor in declining support for the party from the early 1970s.

Funston seems to be suggesting that a PAS abandonment of the class interest of its supporters beyond 1969 was a major reason for declining support in the lead up to the disastrous 1978 election (as Funston was writing before that election took place he could not make the connection). He focuses upon accusations of corruption against PAS by party dissidents, draws attention to the fact that this was essentially a post 1969 phenomenon, and suggests a probable relationship between this and `a marked retreat from the image of self-sacrifice' that has been projected by the party leadership in the pre 1969 period.([130]) Funston continues: `Party leaders built large houses, exchanged Malay dress for the western suit, and in some cases even joined the ranks of the golfing fraternity. They had thus acquired a class interest quite different from that of the rank and file.'([131]) Funston further points out that on `economic matters PAS turned an almost complete volte-face': whereas before its approach had involved `attacks on capitalism' and `support for the underdog' now there was criticism of those championing the cause of the underdog and encouragement of foreign investors.([132]) Summarizing the position of PAS as this had developed between 1971 and 1977 and giving his projection on the likely fortunes of PAS beyond 1977 Funston stated:

> PAS now appears more divided than ever in the past. Moreover, its participation in the National Front, while beneficial in a number of respects, is unlikely to win it popular support. This support in the past was due very substantially to the fact that it represented an alternative to UMNO, one that was more concerned with representing the interests of the dispossessed Malay peasantry and was in many respects, more strongly committed to Malay rights. It will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to uphold this image within the National Front; so far no attempt has been made. If UMNO and PAS are seen to be indistinguishable, the latter is likely to decline sooner.([133])

Now if this compromise position continued to be a strong and dominant feature of PAS into 1978 - and it seems almost certain that it did - then measured against Kessler's argument for the reasons for PAS popularity in 1969 the change in the leadership and the general

---

130 Funston, Malay Politics, p.246.

131 Ibid.

132 Ibid. p.245.

133 Ibid., p.247.

approach of the party must have been extremely damaging. While further examination is needed, and while the purely organizational difficulties and other factors were important, it does seem likely that a major reason, perhaps the most important reason, for the party's failure in 1978 lay in the fact that it was no longer seen as responding to the needs of its grass roots supporters in the way that it used to. Certainly this tends to be borne out by the trend indicated by the prior electoral gains of alternative radical candidates in elections in the 1970s preceding those held in 1978 - the gains of Party Rakyat in Trengganu and of Malay Independents (mainly PAS dissidents) in 1974 and of Party Rakyat in the Kedah by-election for the state assembly in 1975. True, PAS had left the Front by the time of the two elections and so the accommodation with UMNO was at an end. The question is really how quickly PAS was able to make the adjustment back to an independent policy stance. While it may well have quickly regained some of the ground lost through the compromise by the rapid policy change - enough to retain around a third of the total votes (clearly many traditional supporters had not given up on the party as we have seen) - it seems likely that it was perceived, at least, by many other potential supporters as still compromised and that it is this which in large measure explains the loss of seats. Certainly the PAS campaign for the 1978 general election carried a strong echo in very broad terms of the party's appeal for the 1959-1969 period in Kelantan as described by Kessler. As part of its campaign the party was operating a strategy of political education of the peasantry. While this strategy was not spelled out specifically, in general terms it referred to `the need to explain to the rakyat [i.e. peasantry] that religion and politics were inseparable, that Islam was not only a theological concept but a complete system of life encompassing all aspects including politics.'([134]) It may well be, then, that while the party was broadly in line with its pre coalition approach in 1978 there had simply not been time between the split and the two elections for PAS to make a full adjustment away from the situation described by Funston. Given the nature of the appeal of Party Rakyat and on the assumption that PAS dissidents were standing on a no-compromise platform in line with party behaviour and objectives prior to 1969 it may well be (though we

---

134 Abdullah, "PAS and the 1978 Election", in Crouch and others(eds), Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election, pp.88, 89.

can't be sure on what the secondary sources say so far; more vigorous research of the issue is needed) that significant numbers of Malays took the view that neither UMNO nor PAS were addressing class grievances adequately and that the party and the independents were, or at least that they offered, the best chance for this.([135])

Certainly we should not underestimate the importance of internal dissension in weakening the PAS 1978 campaign. The divisions within the PAS camp led to a formal separation of the opposing groups when, following the lifting of federal emergency rule, Mohamed Nasir led his followers in leaving PAS and formed another party, Barisan Jema'ah Islam Se Malaysia (Berjasa).([136]) The fact that there was a three cornered contest in the Kelantan March election between UMNO, PAS and the break away Berjasa, dramatically split the Malay vote and in particular divided potential support for PAS thus reducing the party's chance of a successful result to a very marked degree. Thus, while Berjasa won 11 seats with 27 per cent of votes cast, it was ahead of PAS with the two seats won and something like one third of total votes cast, and second behind the NF with its 23 seats won and 37 per cent of the vote.([137]) The weakening effect of the division of the vote between PAS and Berjasa (and assuming some defections to UMNO) is clearly evident from this result.

It is not easy to see from the published material what the respective appeal of PAS and Berjasa was to what became their constituents. Berjasa pitted itself strongly against PAS but projected a similar basic appeal as its opponent on a revivalist, return-to-true-principles, line -

---

135 Kamlin gives an account of the Party Rakyat in Trengganu in 1974. However, despite his reference to the impressive performance of the party in capturing the number of votes that it did he focuses more on the negative aspects of its campaign by way of explaining the failure to win seats than on the trend indicated by the significant proportion of votes won. While this does provide quite a thorough account of the party's participation in the election and some valuable insights into the reason for the failure to win seats it does not explore the issue of the way in which the voting trend throws light on the popular response to the PAS-UMNO accommodation within the front in the way suggested by Funston.

M. Kamlin, "History, Politics and Electioneering: The Case of Trengganu", Department of History, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1977, pp.34-44. This study is in the form of an academic paper.

136 Kamlin, "The Kelantan Prelude", pp.45, 46.

137 Ibid., pp.53, 54.

as `the real PAS, albeit in a new guise'.([138]) It attacked the corruption and general deviationism of PAS in a crude and hastily organized campaign.([139]) Paradoxically, though, Berjasa had been spearheaded by Datuk Mohamed Nasir, a figure who, as we have seen, clearly had an easy accommodation with UMNO and whose position vis-a-viz the latter was seen by many within PAS party as a compromised one - something which was a major source of discontent within the party and which contributed to the making of the constitutional crisis and the forcing of the March election held to solve it. Indeed Berjasa campaigned on a common platform with the NF in March though it did allow itself some flexibility in not formalizing this.([140])

Somewhat at odds, then, with this apparent alignment with UMNO elitism was the Berjasa claim to more truly represent the interests of those who had been making up the PAS constituency. In line with this Berjasa electioneering propaganda accused PAS leaders of being self interested wealth seekers - an accusation running along class lines, reminiscent of past PAS accusations against UMNO and echoing Funston's observation that the PAS leadership had, between 1971 and 1977, been abandoning its true class interests one sign of which had been their adoption of lavish life styles. One such Berjasa electioneering hand bill crudely characterized all PAS leaders as`hungry crocodiles who cannot be trusted, (who) are always on the lookout for victims to prey on, and who are in quest of wealth and self

---

138 Ibid., p.50.

139 Ibid.

140 Kamlin implies an element of duplicity in this in that the new party `to all intents and purposes agreed on a common election platform with UMNO (BN)' but `did not wish to formalize the arrangement into an electoral pact or to join the Barisan Barisan Nasional' in large measure because this would better enable it to harness the vote of `disaffected or disillusioned PAS members who, despite the depth of their feelings, would not turn out for UMNO under any circumstances.' Kamlin also makes the point that this was the reason for not joining the Front and forming a separate party instead.

Ibid., p.46.

From this it would appear that Berjasa was to some extent flying under false colours in order to deceive potential PAS voters into supporting them.

interest'.[141] The same hand bill continued:`In the eighteen years of PAS rule we do not see any change of which we can be proud - only `Rumah Tok Wakil Besar', `Kereta Tok Wakil Besar (houses and cars belonging to PAS leaders), and many other things (of this kind) which all of us do not know and do not know and do not see with the naked eye' [sic]([142])

It would appear then that there was some inconsistency in the Berjasa stance: on the one hand its campaign was in accommodation with that of UMNO; on the other hand it purported to be espousing what it claimed were true past PAS principles - principles it claimed had been betrayed by current PAS. Yet these principles were, as we have seen, in many ways fundamentally at odds with those of UMNO and a source of great tension between the two parties both within and certainly outside the coalition and it is hard to see how Berjasa's stance in accommodating the past PAS and present UMNO approaches to government could have been a tenable one.

It is hard to gauge from the published commentaries what voters made of all this - why they voted as they did in supporting either of the two parties. Putting aside the issue of alignment towards or against UMNO it would seem that, in terms of the broad policy approach, there was a fine line between the two. Certainly in terms of the policy stance adopted by the two parties in their electioneering there would seem to have been little difference between them. Perhaps voters inclined in the direction of the non-UMNO alternative were genuinely confused and there was a certain randomness in their choice of party. Perhaps voters for the break away alternative did a kind of double think being drawn by Berjasa's PAS-like appeal without heeding the accommodation with UMNO. Perhaps voters inclined to the radical alternative were drawn by both PAS and Berjasa on basis of class interest choosing between the two on relatively superficial criteria - on the basis of personalities, leadership styles and the like. If this was indeed the case then it would be clear that the sort of class based appeal of PAS in the 1959 - 1969 period was, on the combined result of `almost 33 per cent' of the vote for PAS (to take the figure given by Kamlin) and 27 per cent for Berjasa, still having a strong appeal for the majority - 60 per cent - of voters in the state. But this remains in the realms of speculation and more information is needed to be sure.

---

[141] Ibid., pp. 50,51.

142 Ibid.

What is clear from all this is that the non-UMNO alternative was, while less successful in terms of seats won (a total of 13 seats for both parties against 23 for the Front), still able to draw something like a two thirds majority support in terms of votes cast in favour and that in this sense oppositionist Malay politics was very much alive and well in Kelantan at that time. At the same time it is, in broad terms, also clear that the decline from the 1969 position of dominance in its own right of PAS in Kelantan was attributable to the compromise necessitated by its inclusion in the NF, the internal tensions within the party which arose primarily from this, and the eventual splitting of PAS and the division of support for the alternative which was a direct consequence of this.

Against this we do need to ask why significant voter support for PAS remained in 1978 notwithstanding the loss of seats and despite the monumental difficulties faced by the party as it contested the election so shortly after its departure from the NF - before there had been a chance to regroup and consolidate its renewed position as an independent party political force in Malaysian politics. Why did they, despite the Kelantan electoral and other set backs, capture something like a third of the votes cast in the north? Why did their Muda supporters remain loyal to the party?

Certainly, given their strong previous support, a certain inertia in voting behaviour may have seen many voters disinclined to change their vote for PAS. But it seems likely that many saw PAS as continuing to serve, or having the potential to return to, the needs of its traditional constituency. No doubt strongly local factors played an important part in the uneven retention of a significant vote. It may well have been, for example, that in Muda social tensions associated with the operation of the rural scheme there meant that the poor peasantry saw PAS as the best, or perhaps the only, alternative for the redress of their grievances notwithstanding any perception on their part of the party's organizational and strategic short comings.

Even within government circles there was recognition of a continued social polarizing tendency associated with the Muda scheme as we shall see in this chapter below; and 1974 and 1980 saw outbreaks of rural tension, again as we shall see in more detail below, with the disturbances in the latter year directly involving the Muda area. The strong suggestion in this is that Kedah would have been fertile ground at that time for the sort of appeal that PAS was,

if we accept Kessler, making during its 1959-1969 hey day.([143]) Perhaps, in some residual sense, given that in the post 1969 period the party was badly compromised in its espousal of its pre 1969 principles and by 1978 its image significantly tarnished within its wider group of supporters, PAS supporters in Muda clung to the party in an atmosphere of class tension in the belief, or the hope, that it still carried the potential to address class grievances as it had done in the past - that there was some carry over of past appeal in this way. Certainly in 1980 in Kedah the party was seen as exercising, at the time of the heightened social tension referred to above, an appeal along class lines. The immediate cause of the 1980 disturbance was the dispensation of a rice subsidy to growers in the form of a coupon to be deposited as savings in a bank - a move which limited the accessibility of the recipient to ready cash. At the time a federal minister, alluding to his belief that the riotous reaction of the rice growers to the coupon subsidy was instigated by organized forces within the state, commented:

> The coupon subsidy was only a convenient issue to be exploited by Party Islam (PI) which is still very strong in Kedah [even if the extreme theocentric party was badly beaten in the 1978 state election]. Apart from PI, there is the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), which is still very active in the area.([144])

The coupon scheme was exacerbating class tension in the state and if the minister was correct, PAS was drawing support through an appeal based on this. Coming so soon after the election - only two years later - the strong indication is that, in Kedah at least, PAS did, once it was released from the coalition and able to resume its oppositionist stance in relation to the conservative inter communal elite compromise represented by the Front, quickly return to its stronger appeal to the class grievances of poor peasants. It may well be that local Muda candidates and party organizations had been able to achieve this in Kedah as early as the 1978 election.([145])

In 1978 a severe drought wiped out almost one third of the rice crop. The drought clearly had strong political significance and was an important factor in the 1978 campaign. Its

---

143 And for that matter fertile ground for the Malayan Communist Party. See government source quoted in the text immediately below.

144 K. Das, "Bitter harvest in the rice bowl", FEER, 8 February, 1980, p 20.

145 See discussion of the Alor Star disturbances in this chapter below for an account of the way in which the imposition of the rice coupon scheme exacerbated class tensions in the rice growing areas of Kedah.

impact was felt as, or shortly after, PAS seemingly opened its campaign by moving a motion of non-confidence in the Chief Minister (Menteri Besar) of Kedah on 21 December, 1977.([146]) In early January the following year the Menteri Besar, Datuk Syed Ahmad, made a public statement on the seriousness of the drought to this effect:

> 15,000 acres of padi land had dried up and could not produce anything. The drought threatened the livelihood of the farmers. Indirectly it would also threaten the position of UMNO in the coming election if the National Front was not able to overcome the problem. The effects of the drought would of course be exaggerated and exploited as a political issue by PAS in its effort to prove that UMNO failed to improve the plight of the poor farmers, particularly the rice planters.([147])

Clearly, then, the election coincided with a period of severe hardship for rice growers - something that would have rendered them even more susceptible to any PAS electoral appeal along class lines despite any perceived organizational short comings in the wider party.

In sum, then, Kessler's argument, and the position for a time of PAS within the NF, raises an important question in relation to the PAS electoral failure in 1978. Kessler's argument for Kelantan, and the wider speculation along similar lines of Stenson and others who have followed Kessler in arguing that the PAS success for the decade to 1969 was based on an appeal to class grievances, suggest that the party needed to maintain this appeal for continued electoral success. The fact that PAS had, in the early seventies, been drawn into what was effectively a communal elite compromise within the NF inevitably constrained that class appeal - a process which Funston indicates was accompanied by a personal failure within the PAS leadership to live up to its class ideals. It seems reasonable to ask whether these two things help us to understand the marked decline in PAS electoral appeal in the late nineteen seventies. Both raise the possibility that, within the wider organizational failings of PAS, lay a central failure to live up to its ideology and that, while this failure was not total by any means and was not the sole reason for electoral defeat in 1978, it was the main reason for the dramatic loss of votes in that year.

---

146 Khir, "UMNO-PAS Contest", p.102.

147 Khir paraphrasing the Minister's statement.

Khir, "UMNO - PAS Contest", p.102.

UMNO Versus PAS: Conclusion.

What we can see from all this then is the way in which Malay politics as the dominant force since Independence was in turn, from 1959, dominated within the period by the contest between UMNO as the moderate representative of Malay interests and PAS as the radical exponent of Malay nationalist religious and economic aspirations. It was a contest which had reached a high point in the late 60s and into the early 70s, which was greatly diminished in intensity when UMNO and PAS were joined in coalition in the early seventies in troubled rapprochement, and which flared into discord once again in 1977 with the Kelantan crisis, the departure of PAS from the coalition, and the renewal of the conflict between PAS and the National Front as they competed against one another for votes and seats in the Kelantan state and the general elections in 1978. While PAS was soundly beaten in that election in terms of seats won and lost it retained a significant proportion of the vote and was, to the end of the decade (and continues today), a significant force in Malaysian politics.

Throughout the period the tension between the two Malay political alternatives has, on the PAS side, been firmly anchored in the unique economic and social development of the NMS and the class tensions which have arisen from this. The dichotomy has been, and remains, a dramatic illustration of the way in which the transformation of the old society in the four states triggered by the intrusion of colonial influences has given rise to a distinctive political approach in the north on the peninsular - one which is both shaping and reflects, production and wider social forces at work in the four states and on the peninsular as a whole. We can see, albeit only in broad outline on current research, how colonial intrusion upset the old social order in the four states giving rise, as one of its major effect, to a radical strand of Malay nationalism in the 1920s and 30s - a nationalism led by a disaffected section of the traditional Malay elite unwilling and unable to reach an accommodation with British colonialism and at odds with that section of the traditional Malay elite which did, and which eventually led, in combination with other factors, to the formation of PAS. We can also see how the same colonial influences unleashed new productive forces altering the relations between direct producers and those extracting their surplus in a way which rendered direct producers susceptible to radical nationalist appeal and which, in its longer term development, explains the populist aspects of this radical nationalism.

Certainly this kind of nationalism was much slower in developing than elsewhere in

Southeast Asia - something largely explainable by the fact that the Malayan export economy was not dependent on Malay peasant surplus as was the case elsewhere in Southeast Asia. As we have seen, the Malayan colonial export economy was centred to the south - and depended upon immigrant ethnic labour for its support. The demands on Malay peasant labour were therefore less exploitative, placing less pressure on the Malay peasantry and creating less hardship and resentment than would otherwise have been the case, and was the case, elsewhere in Southeast Asia.([148]) But while it was slower in developing and for a longer time less visible than elsewhere in South East Asia it was developing as a manifestation of contentious social relations nonetheless and the popular notion that Malays were largely quiescent until the Malayan Union controversy when, so the perception has it, there was a sudden outburst of Malay Nationalism, needs considerable qualification as we have seen.

It is this basic dynamic of class contention, then, which links the earlier outbreaks of Malay protest against British colonialism with the PAS radicalism in the Independence period. PAS was the inheritor of a developing Malay militancy based on class tension which had been developing along different and specific lines in the four states from the time of the earliest

---

148 This was generally true for the peninsular as a whole. Peasant surplus was more important in the NMS than elsewhere on the peninsular where there was a wider economic base - the surplus generated by the more substantially present other communities as well - supporting the colonial state.

For my general understanding of the relative importance of Malay peasant surplus to the colonial state and export economy, and the way in which this resulted in a slower development of Malay political participation in the wider Southeast Asian context, I am indebted to Peter Burns' essay entitled, "Peasantry and National Integration in West Malaysia: A Case of a Late-Developing Peasant Problem". I first read this source in the very late nineteen seventies. It was then in the form of a draft paper to be given at a conference of scholars to be held I think in Mexico at around that time. While the paper was a draft and, as such presumably not for attribution, it was of great help and interest to me in the writing of this thesis and I am grateful for the help it provided in understanding the economic importance of the Malay peasantry to the colonial state on the peninsular. Burns touches upon the economic aspects of this issue in a published essay on the early development of capitalism on the peninsular.

P. Burns, "Capitalism and the Malay States" in Alavi and others, Capitalism and Colonial Production, p.174.

See also my reference to the relative importance of Malay surplus to the colonial state and export economy in the NWS and the wider implications of this in my thesis introduction and conclusion.

penetration of colonial influence there. This social dynamic of which PAS was eventually a part was earlier marked, in its outward manifestations, by the Kelantan and Trengganu risings - outbreaks which very likely signified the presence of the radical (Kuam Muda) strand of pre war nationalism referred to by Roff, and which, when it merged with more secular radical Malay nationalism, took on activist organizational form in the shape of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) and successor organizations (the Persatuan Kebangsaam Melayu Muda or PKMM and its front organization, the Persekutuan Persetiaan Melayu Kelantan (PPMK) in Kelantan for example) which were the immediate precursors of PAS. The latter organizational process was very much fixed, as we have seen, by the Malayan Union conflict in that it gave an urgent and specific focus for this kind of Malay radicalism in the unstable and volatile social circumstances of the immediate post war period when the British were seeking to establish a tighter control on the peninsular under the new constitutional arrangement. The fact that the link between the KMM and PPKM was a close one can be seen in the fact that in the later stages of the war the head of PKMM was Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, later to become president of PAS.([149])

Thus, while in the pre and immediate post war period there had been only short term overt manifestations of popular radical Malay nationalism with a less active - more latent - popular radical Malay nationalism of as yet undetermined strength and extent (it must have been there; the Kelantan and Trengganu risings and the subsequent sustained appeal of PAS could not have arisen from a vacuum; there is fragmentary evidence that, while not in the ascendence radical popular Malay nationalist sentiment was growing in the north) developing slowly and less visibly than the stronger conservative Malay nationalism, the late fifties saw a strong and sustained development of a popular pan Malay activism led by PAS within the new party political system. We can see from the above, then, the linkage in broad outline. What is needed now as more research in the direction of a closer definition of how PAS radicalism developed over the longer period of time.

The Threat from Outside

The post 1971 period was characterized by a wider political instability involving not just the challenges to established authority within the legally constituted political system referred

---

149 Kessler, Islam and Politics, p.104.

to above but more direct challenges to such authority as well.([150]) Both kinds of political instability had their origins in the effect of colonial forces and the way in which these had been reshaping the way in which groups interacted in society. It was the way in which the new social forces had resulted in contentious party political relations operating on the basis of the Independence Westminster constitution which lay at the heart, as we have seen, of political instability within the system. But there were sources of instability operating outside the system - sources of instability which owed their character to the same new class relations with origins in the colonial period and, in their populist aspects, hinging on the way in which surplus was being extracted at the base level in Malaysian society.

The Malayan Communist Party, while remaining well short of the sort of mass following it was seeking and which communist parties had acquired elsewhere in South East Asia, was able to exert a significant presence, particularly to the north on the peninsular. Certainly if government and media accounts are any guide, it was perceived as a threat, or a potential threat, to the status quo in Malaysia throughout the period.

The MCP and Malay nationalism 1948-1980.

This perception and the nervousness that went with it in government circles is understandable given that the more gradual politicization of the Malay peasantry in the earlier post war decades might have seen a stronger mass support for the MCP developing in a way echoing the experience of other countries in the region, especially to the north on the peninsular where the greater concentration of rural property was located. However, as we have seen, this class contention on the peninsular was slower in surfacing and any potential support for the MCP on the basis of it was being side tracked in another direction: Malay resistance was in the first half of this century strongly communal in its parameters and had a strongly Islamic flavour; by the immediate post war period it was strongly nationalist in its orientation with moderate nationalism in the ascendancy. There was an Islamic radical nationalism with a clearly populist aspect anchored in class grievances at the lower levels of Malayan society emerging throughout this period - a nationalism which adopted an ideological

---

150 Funston, Malay Politics, p.276, 235.

position in many ways similar to that of the secular revolutionary left but this remained on the periphery of the mainstream until the late nineteen fifties. Throughout the period to 1980 then, Malays were not being drawn so strongly to purely secular organized protest on the left.

The Emergency: 1948-1960.

The strong resistance to British and Independence governments by communist forces in the forties and fifties appears to have been a limited action involving mainly Chinese activists and lacking mass appeal within the Malay population. Certainly the published record to date portrays it in this way though it must be said the very considerable energy and resources devoted to defeating the insurgency, and the strength of the anti insurgency strategies aimed at civilian supporters, or potential supporters, of the guerillas, strongly suggest that British, and after them Malayan, authorities saw the potential for support for the insurgency to widen out into fully fledged people's war.([151])

---

151 Malcolm Caldwell, writing in 1977, makes the point in this way:`... the British in practice acted on the assumption that large-scale Malay participation in the liberation struggle **was** a possibility, and that the consequences of not scotching that possibility by every means available would be disastrous - indeed fatal - to the whole counter-insurgency programme'.

Caldwell, "From `Emergency' to `Independence' 1948-57" in Amin and Caldwell (eds.), Malaya The Making of a neo-Colony, p.225. Original emphasis.

Caldwell presents a plausible if somewhat thinly based case that there were Malay insurgents to an extent not then generally recognized.

Ibid., pp.224-229.

His case for this is not by any means a definitive one and more evidence is needed to confirm this assertion. While there may have been more Malay insurgents than is currently thought the stronger possibility is that, while few Malays were active in the field as terrorists(referred to at the time as communist terrorist or CTs), there was a significant degree of Malay civilian support for the insurgents though again more evidence needs to surface in verification of this.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, there is little (or little accessible) in the Public Records Office in London by way of British intelligence reports throwing light on the subject.

For description and analysis of the Emergency in general and the counter insurgency effort in particular, see for example:

Anthony Short, The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960(London, 1975) and;

Richard Clutterbuck, Riot and Revolution in Singapore and Malaya, 1945-1963(London, 1973).

PAS and the MCP: 1948-1960.

Throughout the period, then, Communism remained limited in its popular appeal and it was much more organized radical Islam which was, from the early Independence years, able to exercise a strong populist presence within the Malay population on the peninsular. In a sense, then, the MCP was displaced by PAS as the protector of peasant interests; by 1959 it was clear that it was the radical Islamic party, much more than the MCP, which provided the vehicle for the expression of class based peasant interests. By that year the heavy police action mounted against the MCP by the British and Malayan governments was having a strong effect in subjugating the party. Malayan communism was therefore in no position to widen its appeal among the Malay masses and the field was left to PAS operating above ground and constitutionally to tap into class grievances at the lower levels of the Malay community and to adopt the mantle of protector of the Malay people through the ballot box in the newly independent Malayan political system.

The United Front Strategy.

Still, the MCP was not by any means completely broken in the fifties. In the sixties it was able to rally to some extent operating a united front policy by infiltrating and working through other organizations - unions and the like - towards its goal of the fundamental reorganization of Malayan and then Malaysian society.

The Resumption of armed struggle.

In 1968 the party abandoned the united front strategy it had been pursuing and opted for a resumption of armed struggle instead; from the sanctuaries where it had been driven on the Thai-Malaysian border towards the end of the Emergency the party was able to exert a strongly felt residual presence on the peninsular and especially in the north. Funston points out that a `government White Paper published in October, 1971 admitted that the party had "managed to achieve some degree of progress", particularly in re-establishing communication lines and penetrating deep into states such as Kedah, Perak and Kelantan.' There was, Funston continues, considerable strength in the communist insurgency in the 1970s with a greater number of insurgents than at the end of the Emergency (2,054 insurgents in 1975 on one

estimate compared with 500-100 left at the end of the Emergency): there was much greater support from Malays (mostly of Thai origin) than had been the case in the past and a considerable degree of public support for the guerillas apparently indicated by the failure to apprehend virtually any of those involved in the assassination of police officials.([152]) Kessler speculated in 1978 that the MCP was in a position of understudy to PAS standing in the wings ready to draw widespread peasant support if PAS was unable to retain it.([153]) We have already seen that in 1980 the national government, or at least one of its ministers, took the view that the MCP was `still very active' in Kedah.([154])

However, it is important not to exaggerate the party's influence in the seventies. Gullick cautions for example that communism on the peninsular in the period to 1980 was a limited force operating on a narrow basis of popular support: `The MCP has never been able to secure support from the Malay peasantry by exploiting their economic grievances'.([155]) Funston, too, writing in 1980, had reservations on the strengths of the movement: `The communist movement is now a more serious force than it has been since the Emergency but short of a major political, social or economic upheaval, or rapid advances by communists in

---

152 Funston, Malay Politics, pp.276-278.

Gauging the degree of popular support with any precision for insurgents is always problematic. The truth of Mao Tse Tung's fish and water analogy indicating that a guerilla force must necessarily rely heavily on the support of the civilian population which is the element within which it operates is self evident and commonly used counter insurgency tactics aimed at the removal or limitation of this support are, in effect, premised on its veracity. While the situation was clearly well short of anything looking like popular uprising there must have been some civilian support for these guerillas (arising from sympathy for the cause, or intimidation, or a mixture of the two) especially to the north on the peninsular in the 1970s though what form it took and how extensive it was is yet to be established in the sources.

153 Kessler, Islam and Politics, p.243.

Kessler is quoted on the point in a footnote below.

154 K. Das, "Bitter harvest in the rice bowl", FEER, 8 February, 1980.

The minister cited above who implied a view that communists were behind the 1980 Kedah rice riots.

155 Gullick, Malaysia, p.135.

neighbouring countries, does not seem likely to make major gains in the near future.'([156])

While the MCP remained a limited force in terms of its failure to draw a strong popular following it does seems that it was able to cause considerable anxiety to the Malaysian government - an anxiety disproportionate to its actual impact on the political scene in the country. Ironically, then, since it was common practice at the time for official announcements to stress the undesirability and unimportance of Malaysian communism these same announcements nonetheless carried an acute anxiety conveying an effect of exaggeration of the importance of communism as a threat to the status quo in the country. It was an exaggeration which threw more light on the acute nature of the anxiety which any sort of leftist presence instilled in official circles than on the actual strength of the revolutionary left on the peninsular.([157])

Other forms of direct protest.

Funston further points out that the UMNO dominated government had other forms of direct protest to contend with in the seventies. Student unrest focussing on a range of issues and including demonstration in support of peasants during the Baling and Sik disturbances, the `ubiquitous communal problem' as a `constant background', and less well organized forms of protest - the rural poor expressing their discontent through unauthorized squatting on land

---

156 Funston, Malay Politics, p.278.

157 An anxiety strong enough in 1976, for example, for UMNO to perceive the existence of `communists' within its own ranks and to take steps to remove them. In that year the party was subject to a McCarthyist witch-hunt for communists - something which threatened the internal stability of the party.

Crouch, "The UMNO Crisis: 1975-1977", in Crouch and others (eds.), Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election, pp.20-27.

At the party General Assembly in June of that year the Prime Minister warned that `a problem of witch-hunting, making innuendos and character assassinations as a result of uncontrolled emotions had arisen'. But notwithstanding this the latter half of that year saw a whispering campaign against ministers and party officials seen as being suspect on the guilt-by-association principle and the party Old Guard and UMNO Youth continued to call for action against remaining `communists' and `pro-communists' in the government - something which many observers saw as forcing a major split in the party.

Ibid., p.27.

and increasing crime in urban areas (not necessarily a form of protest but something which did `test a government's capacity to rule') operated together with the resumed communist insurgency and other activities of the MCP as a source of instability for the Malaysian Government. All this was the wider context of direct dissension from outside the system within which took place what was, perhaps, the most dramatic and unusual protest giving expression to peasant class grievances at the end of the seventies - the disturbances which took place in the Baling and Sik provinces of Kedah in 1980.

Concentration of wealth.

Before proceeding to briefly examine these disturbances it is important to stress that in the rural sphere the direct protest referred to above, and very dramatically the Baling and Sik disturbances, arose from a situation of continued polarization of wealth in the countryside - a polarization which had its roots in the colonial past and which was particularly acute to the north on the peninsular. The nature of this economic differentiation and its effect in helping to politicize the peasantry is well documented in the secondary sources. We have already seen something of the way in which this was taking place in the colonial period and extending on this on a selection of the sources (some of them dealt with where the subject of economic concentration is dealt with in this thesis above) dealing with the subject we can arrive at a clear general picture of how the process was operating over the longer period of time - from the colonial period into the 1970s.

Wilson, Firth, Swift, Mokhzani, Kessler, Stenson and Gullick have all commented on the tendency into the independence period. Wilson, an agricultural economist, prepared a comprehensive government survey of the state of the padi economy in north Malaya in the very early independence period - a survey which focussed on land tenure and use and which, as we have seen, provided a very good idea of the tendency towards a concentration of land ownership in spatial terms in the area.([158])

---

158 T.B. Wilson, The Economics of Padi Production in North Malaya Part I Land Tenure, Rents, Land Use and Fragmentation, Federation of Malaya. Ministry of Agriculture Bulletin No. 103 (Kuala Lumpur, 1958) passim and especially pp.11, 97.

It will be remembered that Wilson's contribution to our understanding of this aspect of padi production to the north on the peninsular is discussed in my chapter dealing with the consolidation of the colonial state above.

Clearly, then, this polarizing tendency has received recognition in official reports

Firth, in his anthropological study of Malay fishermen, has indicated the trend in the coastal area of Kelantan to 1963.([159]) While the main focus of this study is on the period 1939-40 it does include a chapter recording follow-up observations based on return visits to the locality where the initial field work took place in 1947 and 1963.([160]) Recording trends in the peasant economy and society in Kelantan to 1940 Firth observed:

> There is little doubt that during the last thirty years the position of the peasant in Kelantan has tended to change, particularly in the direction of greater differentiation in levels of wealth.([161])

He further observed for the period to 1940 that the differentiation within the fishermen in part arose from the same factors encouraging polarization in the rural peasant land based economy - from modern changes in the wider peasant and state economy - and predicted the emergence of a `petty capitalist class' of fishermen.([162]) When he came to re-examine the situation in the

---

within government circles on the peninsular. See also my discussion of the Muda report prepared by Afifuddin Haji Omar in the Muda sub section of this chapter below. While these sectional reports assisting government policy making did pick up on the trend towards wealth differences between the rural Malay community the strong tendency at the national level was to portray the situation on the peninsular in terms of undifferentiated communal blocks of wealth and poverty as the official reports on the successive Malaysian Plans show and as we shall see below in this chapter. Still, it may well be that notwithstanding such official pronouncements federal government officials were influenced by reports such as Wilson's into seeing a socially destabilizing tendency in the differentiation and were, without saying so directly, addressing the issue in their policy formulations. See my NEP discussion on this point in this chapter below.

159 Raymond Firth, Malay Fishermen their Peasant Economy (second edition, London, 1966).

160 Ibid., pp.298-350.

161 Ibid., p.296.

162 Ibid.

Firth discussed the factors providing the existence of 'petit rentiers living largely on the shares of the produce of their lands worked by others'. He added: `Definite information is lacking, but I am inclined to think that the practices of share-cropping rice lands and of leasing the produce of orchards have increased considerably in recent years, perhaps to an extent hardly realized by the Government.'

Ibid.

locality in 1963 he was able to confirm an earlier prediction of his. That prediction that the introduction of the use of powered boats by these fishermen would `demand a re-arrangement in the established system of distributing earnings and [that] there would be more likelihood of the gap between wealthy, and poor fishermen being widened'.([163]) More generally he found in 1963 that the effect of technological modernization of fishing in the locality had been `to widen the wealth range in the society and accentuate areas of social non-cooperation.'([164])

Swift, in his seminal 1967 essay on the subject, drew together a number of earlier more localized studies in the area to assert, on a sociological approach, and with a contemporary focus, a prima facie case for the concentration of wealth in Malay peasant society.([165]) His main assertion ran:

> I maintain that every important field of peasant economic activity shows a change from a fairly equal distribution of wealth to one where a small number of peasants are set off from their fellow villagers by substantially greater income and possessions.([166])

According to Swift, `T.B. Wilson, in the most extensive study of Malay padi economics yet published (1958) clearly shows the existence of a "high degree of concentration of ownership" in the sense of a "great variation in the area of land per landowner."'([167])

Mokhzani, in a dissertation completed in the early seventies and dealing with the then

---

163 Ibid., p.346.

164 Ibid., p.347.

165 Seminal partly by dint of the fact that it had a single focus on the concentration issue; previous (and later) studies have included it among wider concerns.

M.G. Swift, "Economic Concentration and Malay Peasant Society" in Maurice Freedman (ed.) Social Organization Essays Presented to Raymond Firth (London, 1967).

See also his related studies: "Malay Peasants" in R.D. Lambert and B.F. Hozelitz (eds.), The Role of Savings and Wealth in Southern Asia and the West (UNESCO, Paris, 1963); and Malay Peasantry in Jelebu (LSE Monograph on Social Anthropology No. 29 The Athlone Press, London, 1965).

166 Ibid., p.241.

167 Ibid., p.242.

contemporary situation in Perlis, focussed on the role of credit transactions in bringing about the concentration of wealth.([168])

Kessler, within the context of his 1978 published argument that PAS succeeded in Kelantan to 1969 on the basis of a class based appeal does focus on concentration of land ownership and use and the way in which this intensified class tensions in the state. He describes the way in which this increasingly uneven distribution of and access to land - the most basic means of production to the peasantry - engendered social anxiety and tension and the political consequences of this within the context of an emergent parliamentary political system as this was developing in the post World War II years:

> The postwar growth of landlordism and the declining profitability of rice production have produced among the Kelantanese peasantry a fundamental disquietude concerning land and the future it may provide them. Among those reduced from small holders to share croppers a marked disaffection has developed; among smallholder-tenants, attempting to retain their small plots and an already diminished dignity and independence, a profound apprehension prevails; among the surviving smallholders, unsure of their ability to preserve their land and independence as a patrimony for their children, an equal anxiety obtains. Smallholders, tenants, and smallholder-tenants alike see the source of their anxiety in the acquisition of land by local rentiers and government officials; in the Alliance, with which the landlords and bureaucrats are overwhelmingly identified; and in Alliance policies, which they perceive as serving, at their expense, the interests only of the wealthy.([169])

It was partly on the basis of this polarization in the countryside and relying on the work of Wilson, Fisk, Swift and Kessler and others, that Stenson argued in 1977, as we have seen, that `the overwhelming dominance of race and the relative insignificance of class as categories for political analysis' in the scholarship was a misplaced emphasis particularly in the light of

---

168 Mokhzani bin Abdul Rahmin, "Credit in a Malay Peasant Economy" Ph.D. thesis in Anthropology (LSE, 1973) passim, pp.441, 442.

In making his point on pages 441 and 442 Mokhzani refers us to previous studies of his own (1963 and 1965), Swift (1965 and 1967) and S Husin Ali (1964).

169 Clive S. Kessler, Islam and Politics in a Malay State Kelantan 1838-1969 (London, 1978) pp.124, 125.

The book is a revised version of Kessler's thesis: "Islam and Politics in Malay Society: Kelantan 1886-1969" (Ph.D. thesis in Anthropology held in the University of London library, 1974). He published part of his thesis argument in a chapter in a book on Kelantan edited by Roff: "Muslim Identity and Political Behaviour in Kelantan" in William R. Roff (ed.) Kelantan Religion, Society and Politics in a Malay State (Kuala Lumpur, 1974) pp.272-313.

`expressions of discontent by Malay villagers' and students at the end of 1974 and that a `more critical analysis of the sources and significance of class as well as racial conflict' was warranted.([170]) He cited Kessler approvingly indicating that he had `argued persuasively that class polarization arising from the disruptive impact of colonial administration and the cash economy was already noticeable in the 1930s and continued thereafter' in the Malay countryside.([171]) While less marked than in Burma and the Philippines, Stenson continued on the basis of Kessler, `increasing concentration of land ownership in the hands of a relatively small number of rural landlords and members of the Malay salariat gave rise to clear conflicts of interests between them and the mass of the peasantry who owned little or no land.'([172]) Studies by Wilson, Fisk and Swift had confirmed `a picture of a rapidly rising rural population, widespread landlessness (over 50 per cent of rice cultivators in northern Malaya), fragmented and Liliputian land-holdings, indebtedness, landlordism and widespread underemployment and unemployment.'([173]) Not only did this not improve with the implementation of Alliance land schemes and the provision of community amenities it actually became worse with `significant sections of Malay peasants and fishermen [suffering]

---

170 Michael Stenson, "Class and Race in West Malaysia", Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, Vol. 8, No. 2 1976, pp.45-54.

171 Ibid., pp.47, 48.

Stenson's reference here is to Kessler's essay in the Roff edition.

While Stenson found Kessler persuasive and his interpretation of rural polarization confirmed by other scholars he cautioned his readers that `[s]tudies of trends within the Malay countryside [were] regrettably scanty and interpretation of the sources of Malay dissent [needed] necessarily [to] remain somewhat speculative.'

Ibid., p.47.

172 Ibid., p.48.

173 Ibid.

Here he relied on Wilson's 1958 study and Swift, "Economic Concentration" and "Malay Peasant Society in Jelebu" as cited in my footnote above. His other reference is to E.K. Fisk, "Rural Development Problems in Malaya", Australian Outlook, 16, 1962.

actual impoverishment during Alliance rule.'([174])

Gullick well summarizes the polarizing tendency within the Malay countryside to 1980. Under British colonial influence `land became a valuable and heritable fixed asset of the Malay economy (in contrast to its previous temporary use as a natural resource)' and `inequality of wealth began to divide peasant society into classes' as a result.([175]) There was a continuing trend in this direction to 1980 increasingly towards a situation where rural production was dominated by a minority landlord group with a majority of producers in varying forms of tenancy arrangement or subsisting without land at all as landless wage labourers.([176]) As a result of this there had been `tacit, and sometimes explicit, resentment

---

174 Ibid., p.48.

175 John Gullick, <u>Malaysia: Economic Expansion and National Unity</u> (London, 1981) p.243.

See discussion of this process in chapter above.

176 Ibid., p.243.

Gullick makes reference here to a `number of excellent modern surveys' which `present a remarkably uniform picture of economic class structure in different Malay village communities.' He cites Swift's 1965 study of Jelebu and Kessler's published analysis of PAS in Kelantan (based around a close anthropological study of the district of Jelawat). He also cites Husin Ali (1964) and (1975) and Rogers (1976). See: Syed Husin Ali, "Social Stratification in Kampong Bagan", <u>JMBRAS</u> monograph (1964), pp.1-70 and <u>Malay Peasant Society and Leadership</u>, (Kuala Lumpur, 1975).

I have been unable to find a 1976 reference for Rogers. In an essay published in 1975 Rogers focussed on the village of Sungai Raya as a typical example of the way in which the politicization of Malay villagers in three decades to 1975 had had an integrative effect within the Malay community but at the same time a disintegrative effect `within the larger multiethnic Malaysian society'.

Marvin L. Rogers, "The Politicization of Malay Villagers National Integration or Disintegration", <u>Comparative Politics</u>, 7, ii (1975), pp.205-225, 223.

In this essay Rogers does, on the basis of a close examination of the particular locality of special interest to him, address the issue of the economic frustration of Malays in Malaysia but apparently perceives this frustration on an undiscriminating perspective as existing within a monolithic ethnic bloc of Malays and in terms of rising Malay economic aspirations. It does not address - or does not address squarely - the issue of economic differentiation within the Malay community.

Ibid., pp.212-214.

among the poor at the exploitation by the well-to-do of their economic strength.'([177])
Differences in wealth had been reflected in such things as the size, construction, and furnishing of houses, leadership in social activities such as prayer meetings and in the choice of marriage partners for children.([178]) Corresponding changes in village leadership meant that it was no longer localized and hereditary in its nature but instead saw influence passing `by a process of "politicization" ... to a new type of leader, the local party organizer, and above him the elected State assembly-man or, member of federal parliament.([179]) The village headman (ketua kampong) and the sub district headman (penghulu), while generally elected, tended to be someone who had `traditional claims by descent (reinforced by wealth and personal merit)' and who had become `a minor cog in the general administrative machinery' of state and national government.([180]) All this entailed a blending of the old and new kind of village leadership, something which had, by 1980, occurred `without much friction' and which saw a village leadership comprised of `the well-to-do members of the peasant class' and which rarely allowed the rural poor to take a leading part.([181]) Gullick further points out that `[s]ince 1955 the government of Malaya and then of Malaysia has been founded on the hold of UMNO on

---

The article arises from field work conducted in Sungai Raya during 1965-67 for a Ph.D. thesis by Rogers. This thesis pre-dates the article by some seven years and carries the same social perspective in failing to give due emphasis to the importance of intra-Malay economic differentiation to our understanding of the political behaviour of that community on the peninsular.

Marvin Llewellyn Rogers, "Political Involvement in Rural Malay Community", Phd thesis submitted in Political Science in the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley, 1968.

As such both the thesis and article by Rogers seem out of line with the other references cited by Gullick as presenting a `remarkably uniform picture of economic class structure in different Malay village communities'.

177 Gullick, Malaysia, p.244.

178 Ibid.

179 Ibid.

180 Ibid.

181 Ibid., p.245.

the political allegiance of the recognized leaders of these village communities'.([182]) Referring to Kessler's account of the PAS challenge to UMNO's hegemony in Kelantan he concludes that if Kessler was right `UMNO remains politically vulnerable in those areas, especially the rice-bowl of the north-west as well as the north-east, where economic conflicts within the Malay community are especially sharp and unlikely to be relieved in full by the policies of the NEP.[183]

It was this economic concentration as this was developing in the independence period which lay at the heart of support for PAS in the NMS as we have seen and which, as we shall see, was the driving force behind the two Kedah disturbances in 1975 and 1980. And, as Gullick implies, the failure of the Government's New Economic Policy was also a factor exacerbating poverty in the north and as such was a strong contributing factor to unrest there. Before looking at these disturbances, then, it is useful to look at the NEP as the broad policy setting giving rise to unrest in the area.

The NMS and the New Economic Policy

In May 1969, following the recent federal and state elections of that year in which the Alliance lost several seats to The Opposition, the victorious Opposition parties and their supporters celebrated their victory in a manner which gave offence to the Malay community.[184] These victory celebrations marked the beginning of violent street clashes

---

182 Ibid.

[183] Ibid., p. 246.

[184] According to Gullick the Opposition celebrations were calculated to give offence to the Malay community.

Gullick, Malaysia, p. 22.

The extent to which the riots may have been deliberately provoked or otherwise incurred by design remains unclear. Interpretations of the nature, sequence and especially the causes, both immediate and long term, vary widely. There are several major published sources giving the riots extended treatment and much has been written on the subject in both academic and journalistic periodic sources. An official government report gives the official version of the riots.

National Operations Council, The May 13 Tragedy: A Report(Kuala Lumpur, 1969), passim.

The riots are too recent to allow for a detached, definitive account. Stenson's article offering an explanation of the longer term causes of the riots in terms of the relative importance to be placed on class and race as sources of social cleavage in Malaysia - an

between the communal groups and especially between Malays and Chinese in and around Kuala Lumpur. The clashes resulted in several hundred fatalities, most of them Chinese.

These race riots were a great shock to the Malaysian government. In the early nineteen seventies, in response to them, the Malaysian government sought to formulate and implement a marked change in national policy in order to better preserve national unity - a unity that had appeared very much threatened in 1969 by the explosive communal violence of that year.[185] A wide range of strategies was adopted: a state ideology was declared setting out the government's overall policy objectives clearly and with affirmation; the Alliance was, as we have seen, widened into the National Front with the aim of getting as close as possible to a communal consensus in government; and a policy of major economic reform was declared aimed at defusing communal tension through the elimination of poverty, especially rural Malay poverty.[186] This policy of economic reform was seen as pivotal to the continuing survival of a harmonious and integrated federation. Since it is the NMS that has had the greater concentration of rural poverty that region must have been of crucial concern to the government since the early part of the last decade as the main focus for its rural reform policies.[187]

Following the riots the government moved quickly to quell any further outbreaks of communal violence. The constitution was suspended and the government of the country

---

account, as we have seen, relying heavily on Kessler's interpretation of politics and social change in Kelantan - is well worth reading in this context.

Stenson, "Class and Race", passim and especially p. 48. John Butcher gave a good review of English language sources on the main issues raised by the disturbances at the Third Malaysia Society Colloquium held in Adelaide in 1981.

John Butcher, "May 13: A review of Some Controversies in Accounts of the Riots". Paper delivered to the Asian Studies Association of Australia Malaysia Society Third Colloquium. University of Adelaide, 22-24 August, 1981.

[185] Gullick, Malaysia, pp. 122-124.

[186] Ibid., pp. 123,124.

Scott points out that the policy was also prompted by the 1974 rubber disturbances.

Scott, Weapons, p. 54.

[187] Though this regional differentiation doesn't get spelled out in the official Malaysian documentation on the subject. See below in this chapter. The 1974 disturbance must have indeed focussed, or helped to focus, government attention urgently on rural poverty in the north.

placed in the hands of the National Operations Council (NOC).[188] Shaken by the conflict the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, lost his confidence and will to govern and his authority to lead his party and the nation. He gave way to his deputy Tun Abdul Razak, who led the NOC and played the leading part in the reconstruction which followed the riots.[189]

It was against this background of social and political trauma threatening a sustained anarchy that Malaysian leaders sought, with the restoration of constitutional democracy in 1974, a more affirmative, positive new direction for the federation. To limit the potential for contentious communication to inflame communal tension the constitution was amended to ban `any future public opposition to, or criticism of, Malay special rights and other sensitive issues'.[190] The proclamation of a state ideology indicated the intention of the nation's leaders to commit the country to five futuristic statements of belief in the kind of reconstructed society and policy to be achieved in the years following 1971.[191] This included a commitment to national unity, democracy and justice.[192] The ideology also enunciated five moral principles for the guidance of individuals in their striving for good Malaysian citizenship: belief in God; loyalty to the Malaysian sovereign and to the country; support of the constitution; good behaviour; and morality.[193]

At the political level, as we have seen, Tun Razak and the NOC sought a stronger moral authority in governing a racially divided society through a wider communal representation in the governing party. Through the expansion of the Alliance into the National Front the country moved away from adversarial party politics towards consensus decision making within a broad and more representative ruling party in the hope that governance of the country would be, or at least would be seen to be, more widely representative of the main communal interests in Malaysia.[194] In large measure, then, the

---

[188] Gullick, Malaysia, p. 122.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid., p. 123.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Ibid.

[193] Ibid.

[194] Ibid.

party room took over from parliament as the main forum for the discussion and implementation of national policy. By closeting national policy debate within the party room in this way and with the constitutional amendment referred to above prohibiting discussion on racially contentious topics, it was thought that such communally sensitive issues could be held at arms length from the Malaysian populace. It was hoped that these political and constitutional strategies would help to defuse the kind of explosive racial tension so painfully and destructively evident on May 13 1969.

The third main plank in the post 1969 reconstruction strategy - that of implementing a more purposeful economic strategy - was seen as a more long term solution to the problem of racial tension in the federation. The New Economic Policy (NEP), the name given to this long term policy of economic reform, had two main stated objectives.[195] The first of these was the elimination of the main concentration of poverty, especially that located in the rural Malay sector of the economy.[196] The second thrust of the policy aimed at removing the identification of race and economic function, well being and status.[197]

The NEP is thus very much premised on a belief in the need to protect and increase the special privileges of the Malay Community through a policy(called the Bumiputra policy) of positive discrimination to allow economic, educational and other advantages to the Malay community. Its purpose is to redress what is seen as an imbalance - a socially destabilizing imbalance - in the relative prosperity and general well being across the three main ethnic communities in the federation. Although the NEP planning statements are careful not to say so too directly one main intention behind the policy has been the elimination of Malay poverty as a cause of resentment against a much wealthier Chinese community. The NEP thus aims at improving the economic position of the Malays while at the same time maintaining an overall growth in the economy. The NEP aims amongst other things at a thirty percent Malay ownership of the modern sector of the economy by that policy's target date. This involves a delicate balancing operation on the part of the Malaysian government in which an increasing share in wealth and economic participation for Malays is sought while at the same time

---

[195] Ibid., p. 124.

[196] Ibid.

[197] Ibid.

resentment from the other communities, particularly the Chinese community, which tend to see themselves disadvantaged by the concessions to the Malays, is avoided.[198]

The policy was instigated on a twenty year time span (1971-1990) for the achievement of its main objectives with the period being broken down into specific 5 year stages.[199] To 1980 the programme of economic development was guided by three major planning documents with the last two of these directed at the post 1969 situation. It was, then, the Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975 (SMP) which set down systematically the main aims and method of implementation of the NEP generally and the first stage of that plan in particular.([200]) This was followed by the Third Malaysia Plan 1976-1980 (TMP) which continued basically the same economic strategy though with some refinements in the light of the assessed performance of the previous five year strategy.([201]) Both the second and third Malaysia Plans have been fine tuned with mid-term reviews of their operation.([202]) The full twenty year perspective of the NEP was addressed more directly in the Outline Perspective Plan (OPP) which appeared in the Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan. A revised Outline Perspective Plan (OPP2) appeared in the Third Malaysia Plan.

The implementation of the NEP has been assisted by the operation of various government agencies such as the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) set up to buy and mill rice and a network of `farmers' organizations (FO) organized under a central authority to provide technical and other assistance to agriculturalists in the federation.[203]

---

[198] Conversations I have had with members of the Chinese community on the peninsular during several visits in the late nineteen seventies and throughout the eighties was strongly suggestive of such resentment within that community.

[199] Gullick, Malaysia, p. 124.

[200] Malaysian Government, Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975, Kuala Lumpur, 1971.

[201] Malaysian Government, Third Malaysia Plan 1976-1980 Kuala Lumpur, 1976.

[202] Malaysian Government, Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975, Kuala Lumpur, 1973. Malaysian, Mid-Term Review of the Third Malaysia Plan 1976-1980, Kuala Lumpur, 1976.

[203] Funston points out that the FAMA had the task of `eliminating the ubiquitous exploiting middle men' by overseeing the marketing of agricultural produce.

Funston, Malay Politics, p. 63.

Within the period of this chapter the NEP in operation was epitomized by particular rural and industrial projects aimed at improving production of certain commodities and increasing living standards using modern production methods and especially modern production technology. One such project was the show piece river Muda irrigation scheme located geographically in the north of the peninsular which, in 1980, had 250,000 acres of paddy fields irrigated by innovative irrigation methods.

Clearly, then, the new twenty year policy of economic reform was not being implemented in isolation as the sole answer to communal tension in the 1970-1980 period. Conceived in the immediate wake of the explosive 1969 race riots it was, as we have seen, part of a wider ideological and political strategy aimed at nothing less than the continued survival of the federation itself.[204] From the point of view of the Malaysian authorities the success of the NEP within the context of the wider strategy was vital to the maintenance of continued social and political stability in Malaysia.

The economic strategies being practiced were, arguably, somewhat narrowly conceived. The official economic planning statements, while cognizant and sensitive to differences between rich and poor, appear to perceive these differences in narrowly communal terms. The wealth differences are seen as corresponding in the main with the differences in ethnicity and little is said about intra communal socio economic differences.[205] Relatedly, the Malaysian government was in this decade pursuing an economic strategy which was, arguably, reformist in the western liberal democratic sense in a way which did not go to the heart of the intra-ethnic economic and social differences in the federation.[206] Although the planning documents made reference to social restructuring it was clear that the Malaysian authorities interpreted social restructuring in narrow terms and did not adopt a wider perspective on the nature and causes of social cleavage and tension in Malaysia. The strategy was one of creating a Malay entrepreneurial class operating within a post colonial capitalist

---

[204] I am referring here principally to the proclamation of a state ideology, the widening of the Alliance into the National Front, and the constitutional moves to limit free speech on communal matters outlined immediately above in this chapter.

[205] I am referring here to the three planning and review documents cited immediately above in this chapter.

[206] The approach continued throughout the 1980s and remains basically the same now in the 1990s.

economy and hence, in fundamental social terms, was doing nothing to alter the status quo of entrenched intra-communal wealth and poverty.[207]

It is especially the rural poverty in north Malaya that was presenting the stronger challenge for the NEP in the decades of its operation to 1980. Because there was a greater concentration of poverty in the NMS it was there that the policy was most vulnerable. Gullick makes the point, that within the Malay dominated rice producing sector of the Malaysian economy at that time, while land owning peasants engaging in double cropping were prosperous relative to single cropping tenant farmers 70 per cent of the former and 90 per cent of the latter were under the poverty line.([208]) This was, Gullick says, `a very large problem' in terms of the numbers of families affected.[209] It was also, he says, a localized problem.[210] Nine tenths of the 140,000 families depending on rice growing as the main source of their livelihood, he says, were located in the north-west and north-east of the peninsular.([211])

Writing in 1974 Wheelwright commented that, `the whole North-east area...is extremely backward and poor' and in 1981 Lorraine Corner indicated that the gap in material well being between the padi planters and rubber smallholders of Kedah, Perlis and Kelantan and the rest of the population on the peninsular was the main focus of most criticisms of rural government policy.([212]) Funston points out that FAMA - the marketing authority referred to several pages above in this thesis - was `also engaged in research on rural problems and

---

[207] Post colonial in the obvious sense that it was an economy operating on the basic principles installed by the British during the time of their colonial presence on the peninsular to 1957.

[208] Gullick, Malaysia, p.175.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Bearing in mind that Wheelwright's perception of social conditions and relations in Malaya is somewhat Eurocentric, his use of the word `backward' in this context needs some qualification along the lines of my discussion of Eurocentric perceptions of Malaysian society and history above.

Wheelwright, Radical Political Economy, p.348.

Lorraine Corner, "The Persistence of Poverty: Rural Development Policy in Malaysia". Paper delivered to the Asian Studies Association of Australia Malaysia Society Third Colloquium, University of Adelaide, 22-24 August, 1981, p. 2.

gained considerable publicity for a report on Kedah and Perlis released in March 1968 which revealed that most farmers in these states were heavily in debt'.[213]

Certainly the Second Malaysia Plan and its Mid-Term Review reflect some awareness of spatial economic differentiation across the peninsular(they espouse a goal of achieving an economic balance between the states) but they do so without clearly identifying the regions and states of greater and lesser need. Thus, although that plan does adopt a regional approach to economic reform it does not directly state the distinctive poverty problem in north Malaya. Still, within the wider implementation of the plan there is official recognition of poverty in the north, as the FAMA report on debt in Kedah and Perlis referred to immediately above indicates. Despite the fact that planning documents do not spell it out for us it is clear that a knowledge of this northern hardship has entered strongly into the calculations for economic reform of Malaysian authorities since 1971.

To 1980 the NEP had been a mixed success. While it had achieved a measure of economic growth in the economy as a whole it had had much less success in its objective of eliminating poverty, especially rural Malay poverty.([214]) Thus, while the federation under the NEP had gone a long way towards meeting its production goals the policy had fallen down in failing to achieve the desired spread of the benefits of this productivity equitably throughout the Malaysian population. While Muniappan casts doubt on the claims of the Malaysian government that there has been a decline in absolute poverty in the period 1970-1978 Corner

---

[213] Funston, Malay Politics, p. 63.

[214] For an assessment of the efficacy of the NEP in the first decade of its operation see Gullick, Malaysia, pp.146-156. Both Lorraine corner (cited above) and David Lim give an appraisal of the working of the NEP from different perspectives in papers prepared for the Third Malaysia Society Colloquium referred to above.

Corner, "Persistence of Poverty", passim.

David Lim, "The Political Economy in the NEP in Malaysia" Paper given at the Asian Studies Association of Australia Malaysia Society Third Colloquium held at the University of Adelaide 22-24 August, 1981, passim.

In a paper prepared for the same gathering Muniappan evaluates the utility of poverty studies in NEP Policy formation and in so doing offers comment on the overall working of that policy.

D. Munniappan, "Poverty Studies and the Determination of Social Policy in Malaysia", paper given at the Asian Studies Association of Australia Malaysia Society Third Colloquium held at the University of Adelaide 22-24 August, 1981, pp.7-17.

accepted that there has been such a decline and that there had been an overall improvement in real standards of living in the 1970s but pointed out that at the same time that rural Malay poverty, and at a more general level significant differences between rich and poor, continued to be a strong feature of Malaysian society in the period.([215]) Lim reported in a similar vein that while the Malaysian economy was reasonably successful in achieving its target growth rate in the 1971-1975 period and the indication was that the NEP would be successful in achieving its more long term projected target growth rates in the future to 1990, it had nonetheless, in the term that it had been operating, had little success in reducing income inequalities.([216])

Clearly, then, it was north Malaya and the rural poverty that existed there which in particular constituted the Achilles heel of the NEP in the potentially unstable circumstances that prevailed in the federation in the decades following 1969. We must assume that the Malaysian government perceived this failure to eradicate northern Malay poverty as threatening the fragile communal consensus seen as being at the core of social and political stability in the country. Certainly such a threat is implied in the secondary sources.([217])

The official view of the danger posed by economic inequalities appears to be a simplistic communal one. The scenario that the Malaysian government fears appears to be, if we extrapolate from the Second Malaysia Plan and its Mid Term Review, one of the Malays,

---

[215] Muniappan, "Poverty Studies", p.16.

Corner, "Persistence of Poverty", passim. See especially pp.2,19.

[216] Lim, "Political Economy", passim and especially pp. 35-40.

[217] For example, Lim, although he doesn't refer to the NMS specifically, makes the point in his paper delivered to the Third Malaysia Society Colloquium:

> 'There is the further point that the existing restructuring strategy has increased income inequality in the country and among the Malays. What we have then is highly undesirable situations where the expectations of the Malay poor, which have been raised very high by the politicians can not be fulfilled against a background of rising income inequality. The scope for social and political unrest and for such unrest spreading into the racial arena is therefore large.'

Lim, "Political Economy", p.38.

The extent to which the discontent of rural Malays can be attributed to rising expectations is debatable but certainly Lim echoes the official view that discontent through poverty may spill over in some way not clearly defined into the racial arena.

as a group, and especially the Chinese, again as a monolithic group, coming once again into open conflict, a conflict in some ill-defined way given added intensity on the Malay side by their poverty and their resentment of Chinese wealth in a situation where a particular set of circumstances acts as a catalyst sparking off hostilities.([218]) But there was another dimension to the threat posed by northern Malay poverty to the Malaysian governmental status quo which, while being an integral part of the communal susceptibility of the federation, at the same time constituted a challenge of another kind which was not in itself communal in character. The expressed official fears of an economically and socially undifferentiated Malay community pitted against a likewise undifferentiated Chinese community obscured the powerful bearing that intra communal class conflict was having on social and political stability in the federation. The Baling, Sik and Alor Star riots, the emergence of radical Islam as a political force from 1969 based in the NMS, and even the residual presence of Communist guerilla forces on the Thai-Malaysian border, were clear evidence of, from the stand point of the Malaysian government, potentially destabilizing forces within Malaysia having a basis much more in class tensions than tensions stemming from purely ethnic differences.[219] Certainly the presence of beleaguered Communist guerilla units posed only a limited direct military threat to Malaysian government forces, and the MCP operated very much

---

[218] While the Second Malaysia Plan and its Mid Term Review do not offer a thorough - going explanation of how Malay poverty fuels racial tension and the official view on the issue remains generally unclear in the sources, Stenson, approaching the question on a very different perspective does attempt to show how class tension between rich and poor Malays was projected into the ethnic sphere in a way resulting in open communal conflict in 1969. Stenson is critical of the government's emphasis on communalism as the main source of social conflict in Malaya and of the rationale of the NEP based on this rigidly communal interpretation of social conflict. Stenson seeks to explain the 1969 race riots mainly in terms of class conflict - a conflict which has been displaced into the communal arena. He does, as we have seen, present a strong and convincing argument for the existence of class tensions on the peninsular but he is less convincing in showing how class and race interact with one another and in drawing a nexus between class tension and the 1969 communal conflict. Stenson is probably right but his argument, that class tension was somehow transferred into the racial arena in 1969 is located in a very problematic area of scholarship and much more evidence on the state of mind of those involved directly and indirectly in the riots than Stenson is able to give in his article is needed to be wholly convincing on this point.

Stenson, "Class and Race", passim, pp.48,49.

[219] The Malayan Communist Party(MCP) abandoned a `united front' strategy in favour of armed struggle in 1968.

Funston, Malay Politics, p. 277.

underground with no apparent widespread support at the time. There remained, however, given the scale and intensity of class tension in north Malaya outlined above in this thesis, and the class tensions which arguably existed in wider Malaysian society, the possibility that a greater number of the Malaysian populace and especially the NMS raayat would have, in the right circumstances, been receptive to a Marxist political appeal, and would have eventually cast their allegiance behind it.([220])

Clearly, then, the failure of the NEP in the 1970-1980 period to effectively implement a redistributive strategy, and in particular its failure to sufficiently distribute wealth more equitably within the NMS Malay community, resulted in a multidimensional threat to stability in Malaysia - a threat which went well beyond the threat of communal conflict of the kind that erupted in 1969. The extent to which NEP policy makers were cognizant of intra Malay class tensions as a destabilizing force within Malaysian society is unclear from official economic policy statements. The Malaysian government did in a very narrow sense acknowledge a threat from the left, particularly that posed to them by communist insurgent forces operating from the northern border area, but it did not directly connect this up with manifest class tensions within the federation nor with the NEP strategy.[221] But it does seem

---

[220] Gullick discussed the `threat of a communist take over' in the then(the book was published in 1981) contemporary Malaysia. Amongst the factors limiting Communist power and influences was, he wrote, the divisive nature of the MCP.

Gullick, Malaysia, p.135.

Three years earlier Kessler had speculated on what might happen if the PI failed to retain the support of the raayat at that time:`others will court them: the Malayan Communist Party remains ever hopefully in the wings'.

Kessler, Islam and Politics, p.243.

[221] Certainly the threat from the Malaysian government's point of view was real enough. In June 1975, the Minister of Home Affairs in Malaysia, Tan Sri Ghazali, stated that there were 2,054 insurgents indicating a considerable increase on the 500-1000 left at the end of the Emergency.

Funston, Malay Politics, p. 278.

Funston offers some reasons for this growth in insurgency in the 1970s:

> Communist insurgency and social unrest persisted and grew in spite of - to some extent because of - the new policies. The greater Malay orientation alarmed some non-Malays, heightening communalism and perhaps directly contributing to communist support. Restrictions on the media placed a question mark over the government's credibility, and other restrictions on political participation seemed to go beyond the requirements of safeguarding the system's capacity for containing

likely that the geographic location of communist guerilla hideouts in the northern extremity of the peninsular did, in official eyes, render the north of Malaya an area to some extent at least susceptible to widespread Marxist appeal and that the strong continuing police action against the guerillas throughout the decade was conducted very much with an eye to eliminating such a possibility.[222] It may be that there was an element of strategmn in official reticence in avoiding any statement of an actual or potential connection between economic problems in the northern rural sphere and Malaysian Marxism. The government may have been seeking in

---

dissent. Economic policies, despite a pro-Malay bias, did not aim at removing basic structural obstacles to Malay improvement in rural areas, contributing to the government's inability to prevent agrarian unrest when the country as a whole experienced an economic down turn.

Ibid., p. 282.

By the end of the first post 1969 decade - ten years into the running of the new policy - the MCP was, in Funston's view, a significant resurgent force exerting limited influence on the peninsular as we have seen in this thesis chapter above.

Ibid., p. 278.

[222] Certainly there was evidence indicating that communism did, in the 1970s, have significant appeal to the north on the peninsular. Funston reports that a government white paper published in October 1971 admitted that by abandoning `united front' tactics in favour of armed revolution the Malayan Communist Party(MCP) had `"managed to achieve some degree of progress", particularly in reestablishing communication lines and penetrating deep into states such as Kedah, Perak and Kelantan.

Ibid., p. 277.

Of the 2,054 insurgents in Malaysia in 1975(see footnote above in this chapter)`over 30 per cent were Malays(though most seem to have been of Thai origin) indicating much greater support from Malays than had been the case in the past'.

Ibid., p. 278.

We can see from the fact that most of the 30 per cent Malays were of Thai origin that Malay support for the MCP at that time came from neighbouring states immediately across the border in Thailand to the north of the Malaysian NMS. It will be remembered that all these states north and south of the current border were once known as the Siamese Malay States by dint of the fact that they were under the aegis of Siam, as it was then, and their predominantly ethnic Malay composition. While any examination of the states to the north across the border is beyond the scope of this thesis the strong support there for the MCP is strongly suggestive of the commonality of social change across all these states north and south of that border under colonial(and post colonial) influences. The kind and character of that commonality would make an interesting and useful academic study.

Funston further adds that there was evidence suggesting that the support in this border area for the MCP went well beyond the 30 per cent:`... it is difficult to explain away the failure to apprehend virtually any of those involved in ... assassinations of police officials, since to evade detection a considerable degree of public support would seem to be necessary.'

Ibid.

this way to further cast Malaysian Marxists in the role of social renegades out of touch with the true needs of the people. Likewise, it seems likely that the Kedah riots and the continuing strong appeal of radical Islamic policies were perceived as a strong threat to social stability and the status quo in Malaysia. But again official economic policy statements do not draw a direct connection between this and economic problems and economic strategy as they applied in the NMS.

Given the closed nature of government policy making we can only speculate but it does seem likely that behind closed doors the Malaysian government did acknowledge that a non-purely communal threat to their status quo did exist, certainly in north Malaya, and that the sort of caution advanced by Wilson in 1958 on the connection between rural inequalities and social stability in the countryside was very much a consideration in government economic policy making.([223]) Certainly, as we shall see in this chapter below, the connection was recognized within government circles in the nineteen seventies for the extensive Muda region of Kedah. We can surmise from this that, while the government planners didn't want the open acknowledgement in the main NEP planning documents, they were nonetheless aware of the issue of class in the northern Malay peasant community.

Still, if we take the government at its official word throughout the decade the main rationale of the NEP seems to have been based firmly on a perception of a communally divided society and the need to reduce tensions between the communities by neutralizing the economic causes of that communal tension. Ironically it is in large measure the government's perception of a communally divided society and the framing of policies, especially economic policies, to remove or at least minimize tension between the races which, as we have seen in very broad terms above, in itself tended to reinforce the communal divisions in Malaysian society since by crudely identifying monolithic blocks of ethnic wealth and poverty and by approaching its economic social organization as an excuse in adjusting the relative economic positions of undifferentiated ethnic communities, it tended to further a situation of the separate development of the three main communities. This raises the more specific question

---

[223] Wilson, <u>The Economics of Padi Production</u>, pp. 27,28.

See my reference to Wilson's comments on the socially destabilizing effects of rent increases for the peasantry in chapter 5 above.

looked at in broader political and constitutional terms above: whether, in the economic sphere, the government's perception and policy implementation on the basis of an ethnically divided society was self-serving. If, as I have suggested in the paragraph above, government policy makers did indeed privately harbour a more sophisticated notion of social conflict and its causes in Malaysia the question of whether communalism was being manipulated as a deliberate divide and rule strategy comes again to mind.[224] Certainly if we are thinking in terms of a stratagem the pre-existing communal differences did serve to keep the poor of the respective communities apart and certainly the framing of economic and other policies on the basis of ethnicity tended to maintain and strengthen this separation. It may well be, then, that the government perceived this communal separation as an advantage to itself and that to have admitted openly to the existence of social cleavage based on class as an added dimension overlapping ethnic division would have lead, in the eyes of the NF inter communal elite, to an undermining its own position by in some way inviting the possibility of cross communal cooperation of the Malaysian poor in opposition to privileged power in Malaysia. It may well be that this was the reason why the distinctive position of the NMS was not explicitly recognized in official economic and other policy statements and, in part, why secondary sources relying as they do to a significant extent on official sources, also fail to fully explore the unique position of these states in he working of the NEP in the wider context of Malaysian society and politics in the 1970-1980 period.

Certainly this is highly speculative and relates to events much too contemporary for a definitive explanation of government motives in implementing the NEP. But there is certainly some suggestion in the sources that the ethnicity which was(and still is) so prominent a feature

---

[224] Certainly the possibility has been the subject of some scholarly speculation. See for example Leng Hin Seak and Manjit S Bhatia, "The Makings of the Crisis of the Mahathir State in Contemporary Malaysia: Some Considerations", paper intended for the 1991 Malaysia Society Seventh Colloquium held in Melbourne. The abstract(only the abstract appeared at the colloquium; I have been unable to obtain the paper proper and have not read it) of this study indicates that the two authors are presenting an analysis of the Malaysian state under Mahathir Mohamad in the nineteen eighties and involves them in an examination of the argument `that racial grievances advanced by the Malay state have been a critical ideological tool manipulated by the Malay ruling class for the maintenance of Malay political hegemony'.

As we have seen, Muzaffar, in his published work on resurgent Islam in Malaysia, gives strong expression to what he sees as the use of ethnic dichotomization as a stratagem by NEF policy framers to maintain a Malay ruling class hegemony.

Muzaffar, Islamic Resurgence, p. 24.

of Malaysian society has allowed the opportunity for Alliance and then NF elites to practice a divide and rule economic strategy, or at least to capitalize on a situation in which major social cleavage runs along ethnic lines. If that was the case then the NF failure to address itself directly in its policy making to intra communal social tension that is so evident in north Malaya may eventually prove self-defeating. As Kessler observed of the Alliance:

> The Alliance, with its ethnically separate constituent communal parties, was hardly nonracial in its nature and appeals. As an official of one of its constituent parties acknowledged, `the strength of communalism is the very basis of our existence'. Writing at the time when the PMIP was first swept into power in Kelantan, one observer perceptively remarked that the Alliance and the political order it defined could ultimately `be destroyed by the logic of the communalism which it imperfectly enshrines.'([225])

Certainly the Kedah disturbances and the successful political challenge mounted by radical Islam - a challenge which continues in one state at least in the north - cast strong doubt on whether 'the logic of communalism' in the NEP and wider NF policy thinking will continue to produce policies sustaining the NF in a position of power within the Federation as the century comes to a close.

The Muda Irrigation Project

One particular scheme - the Muda Irrigation Project operating under the auspices of the NEP - warrants special mention in this chapter since it operated in the area rocked by the major peasant disturbances in 1980 discussed in this chapter immediately below. These demonstrations by peasant rice producers invite consideration of how well the scheme, and the wider policy of which it was a part, were working some ten years into their operation. The fact that the vote for the radical Islamic party, PAS, held up in the Muda area in the 1978 elections when that party was generally in electoral difficulty invites us to consider that it did so on the basis of its appeal to the economic grievances of the peasantry there in line with the accounts of Kessler, Stenson and others of the nature of the popular PAS appeal across the wider geographic area across the wider time span. What is of special interest in pursuing such an enquiry is that there was some substantial official recognition of the need to differentiate within the rural Malay community in ensuring social stability through economic reform. What is significant about the scheme is that, unlike the NEP planning documents which appear to be

---

[225] Kessler, Islam and Politics, p.241.

tied to a single focus on ethnicity and to be unaware of intra communal social differences and tensions, the Muda scheme did operate on some awareness of socio economic disparities within the rural Malay community and seek to address these.

I focus here on three main valuable sources - all referred to in the first chapter of this thesis - on the Muda scheme to advance to advance our understanding of the way the NEP was operating in the NMS in the 1970-1980 period. The three sources offer a thorough account of the operation of the scheme to the late nineteen seventies on different perspectives. Two of these sources are contemporary with our period of interest in the scheme - the years leading up to the Alor Star disturbance in 1980. The third one was written some five years later and looks back on a field study by the author in the Muda region between 1978 and 1980. The first of the two is a departmental report entitled "Aspects of Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Linkages In the Development of the Muda Region" prepared in 1977 by Arifuddin Haji Omar, the then Head of the Agricultural Division of the Muda Agricultural Development Authority.[226] The second is the academic article, "The Modernization of Agriculture in a Kedah Village 1967-1978" by Rosemary Banard.[227] The later source is the published anthropological study by James C Scott entitled, Weapons of the Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance.[228]

The Muda Irrigation Project operated throughout the 1970s as a scheme designed to increase agricultural productivity in the area in which it operated through technical(including the provision of irrigation infrastructure) and institutional innovation and advancement.[229] A main objective of the scheme in enhancing agricultural productivity was to increase the rice yield through double cropping.[230] It was Malaysia's largest irrigation scheme covering 98,000

---

[226] Arifuddin Haji Omar, Head of the Agricultural Division, Some Organizational Aspects of Agriculture and Non-Agricultural Growth Linkages In the Development of the Muda Region, Office of the General Manager, Muda Agricultural Development Authority, Teluk Chengai, Alor Setar, Kedah, October, 1977.

[227] Rosemary Barnard, "The Modernization of Agriculture in a Kedah Village 1967 -1978", Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs, vol. 13, No. 2, 1979.

[228] James C Scott, Weapons of the Weak Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance(New Haven, 1985).

[229] Omar, "Organizational Aspects", p.1.

[230] Ibid.

hectares of north Kedah and Perlis(see map) and servicing over 60,000 `farms'.[231] At the time the Malaysian government - the Far Eastern Economic Review quotes an unnamed politician from the ruling National Coalition on the subject - sought to dismiss the 1980 Alor Star peasant demonstration as something attributable to the activities of extreme Islamic or communist agitators exploiting `conditions on the ground'.[232] Such explanations, however, seem defensive and singularly inadequate in that they fail to analyse the material grievances of the peasants who took to the streets in protest. While there is, in the reference to `conditions on the ground', an implicit acknowledgement of felt hardship by peasant rice producers, this hardship is dismissed in favour of a focus on manipulative agitators using hardship for their own ends. It fails to acknowledge that even if agitators were at work that agitation could only have produced such dramatic protest if the grievances were real and strongly felt by the protesters.

The real question that arises from the Alor Star demonstrations is this: what effect was the Muda Scheme was having on the lives of the peasantry affected by it ? As the Far Eastern Economic Review reportage at the time indicated, the disturbances were surprising, given the economic reforms that were being implemented in the area at the time.[233] Such protest was not expected `in an area covered by a M$300 million(US$137.6 million) development show piece, the Muda scheme, which [could] irrigate 250,000 acres of paddy-fields'.[234] The scheme had been operating throughout the 1970-1980 decade(the first phase implementation of double cropping was in 1970) and was, by the turn of that decade, well established.[235] The question for us is why, a decade into the implementation of the NEP on the peninsular in general, and the scheme as its main flag carrier in the locality in particular, there was such a dramatic demonstration of peasant economic hardship and unrest on such a

---

[231] Barnard, "Modernization of Agriculture", p. 47.
`Farms': the term used by Barnard.

[232] Das, "Bitter Harvest", p.20.

[233] Das, "Bitter Harvest", p.20.

[234] Ibid.

[235] Omar makes reference to the commencement of double cropping in 1970.
Omar, "Some Organizational Aspects", p.1.

significant scale in 1980.

On the face of it the protest would seem to imply some significant failure in the scheme since its objective was to enhance the material security of the Malay community there and, in so doing, to minimize the potential for social contention.[236] We must ask, too, whether, as I have suggested in the chapter above, PAS was indeed able to appeal to the class interests of a disgruntled peasantry of the kind described by Kessler for the immediate post independence period and if so, whether this too indicates a major failure of the scheme.[237]

The fact is that there were assessments - the two I have referred to above and one of these more than the other - indicating social tensions existing in the area. Given the fact that these assessments pre-dated the disturbances the outbreak of rioting ought not to have been the surprise it seems to have been to observers at the time.

Omar and Barnard examined the scheme on very different perspectives and approaches. Omar's study was as we have seen an official one conducted in 1977 as Head of the Agricultural Division of the Muda Development Authority. Barnard's article is a revised version of paper presented in 1978 to a conference of academics in Sydney.[238] While Omar's study has a wider regional focus Barnard's perspective, as the title suggests, is focussed on one particular village locality within the area of operation of the scheme.[239]

As his title suggests Omar argued the need to anchor any assessment of what was primarily an exercise in increasing rural productivity in an understanding of the wider organizational context in which that exercise was placed. He implied that we can only meaningfully explore the working of the scheme by seeing it against the wider social context

---

[236] Objectives drawn from the NEP in general. See discussion of the 1969 riots and the NEP above.

[237] Described by Kessler in his book, Islam and Politics in a Malay State referred to in this thesis chapter above.

[238] Presented to a Malaysia panel at the Second National Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, University of New South Wales, Sydney, May 1978.

Barnard, "The Modernization of Agriculture", p.46.

[239] Her article assessed `the response of a padi farming village, Kampung Asam Riang, to opportunities afforded by the Muda Irrigation Project'.

Ibid., p. 47.

in which it was placed.[240] Omar applied Frank's theory of development and underdevelopment to the Muda circumstances.[241]

Omar pointed out that Muda regional growth had been hampered by a lack of investment in its enterprise due to a `siphoning effect' whereby `surplus obtained through monopsonic rice marketing was... appropriated to other developed regions more highly developed than the Muda region, especially to the industrial-port region of Penang where the rates of return to investment [were] considerably higher than those in the agricultural Muda Region'.[242] As a result of this there was `a net outflow of economic surplus from the Muda Region thus draining the already poor region bone dry'.[243] Omar quoted Frank on the causes of underdevelopment as indicating the fundamental reason for the `underdevelopment of the peasant majority' in the Muda region. The `capitalistic dependency form of growth and development' in evidence in the Muda and `leading to the underdevelopment of the peasant majority' there, was, he wrote quoting Frank, `"the necessary product of the internal contradiction of capitalism itself"'. The same quotation continued:

> These contradictions are the expropriation of the economic surplus from the many and its appropriation by the few, the polarization of the capitalist system into metropolitan centre and peripheral satellites, and the continuity of the fundamental structure of the capitalist system through the history of its expansion and transformation due to the persistence or recreation of these contradictions.[244]

---

[240] His title draws our attention to `organizational aspects' and to `agricultural and non-agricultural growth linkages in the development of the Muda region'.

See reference citation above in this chapter.

[241] Omar, "Organizational Aspects", pp. 9,10.

Omar cites Frank's seminal text on the subject.

A.G.Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil(New York and London, 1967).

See my discussion of Frank in the introductory chapter to this thesis above.

[242] Ibid., p.10.

[243] Ibid.

[244] Ibid.

In citing Frank Omar rejected the `"dual-economy"' concept used by many to describe the Malaysian economy in which the rural smallholdings [were] categorized as subsistence economy while the urban-town economy [was] categorized as commercial-industrial economy with little or no linkages between the two.'

Ibid.

Certainly it is unexpected to see this approach to economic development in an official Malaysian government document at this time. And, indeed, it is no doubt because it is an official document that it has some unevenness in perspective and tone. Thus while parts of the report are anchored, as we have seen, on a dialectical understanding of the essential dynamic of rural society in the Muda region other parts of it seem to be premised on a qualified acceptance of the `capitalistic theory of development' and the capacity of `the capitalistic model of development' to `spread [its] growth effects' among the peasantry through the mechanism of the `trickle down effect'.[245] The tone of the report in places, then, suggests a certain defensiveness on the part of its author - a defensiveness no doubt arising from a knowledge that the prevailing sympathy of the Malaysian government as a whole lay with the `capitalistic model of development'.

We can also read in the report, however, a genuine belief that a reconciliation between two opposing models of development - socialist and capitalist - is possible - that the capitalist way of organizing a local rural economy could be made to work in the interests of the Muda peasantry. Thus it recommended the retention of a `capitalist model' for `growth and development in the Muda region' but one in which `capital [was] expropriated from the peasantry and appropriated to the peasantry' in a way which would see peasants as `owners as well as producers'.[246]

Omar's conclusion, premised on the assumption that it is possible to lift the condition of the peasantry by adopting the right measures within a capitalist nationalist framework, is that the scheme has been a success - but a very much qualified success - in achieving its

---

He rejected the concept because it `[blurred] the fact that the capitalistic structures [had] penetrated even the most isolated villages since colonial times, in one form or another, even though colonial sanctions limited their extensive development.'

Ibid.

He cited the introduction of cash crops, a monetary economy, and the collection of taxes in cash form as examples of this penetration.

Ibid.

[245] Ibid., p.13.

[246] Ibid., p.12.

objectives.[247] The scheme did, he said, increase the region's agricultural output and succeeded in that sense.[248] But it failed to achieve a redistributive function in spreading the benefits of this increased productivity equitably within the region's peasantry.[249] Omar takes the view in his report that a social, organizational, reform was needed as a complement to the technical agricultural reforms producing the increased yield for the scheme to be fully effective.[250] He argued that a social restructuring at the village level was needed to achieve an equitable elimination of poverty and in so doing to help ensure the nation's political stability in accordance with NEP objectives.[251] While he conceded by implication that this re-distributive objective needed to be balanced against the wider national economic objective he nonetheless argued that it should have had a strong emphasis even at the risk of slowing down the overall development of the national economy:`The order of the day is to allocate more resources within a completely integrated market to the low income peasants even at the cost of a slow transformation towards a national industrial society'.[252]

It was, the report indicated, the failure of the scheme to achieve a re-distributive effect within the Muda rural Malay community that was the fundamental cause of social instability within the region. Clearly, given the timing of the report - it is dated October 1977, some two years or so before the Alor Star disturbances in 1980 - the protest could not have been a complete surprise within government circles given the Muda report warning of the potential for social instability.

On page 13 of the report Omar cautioned that too long a `distribution of acquired

---

[247] He implies the assumption in its national context. See immediately above in this chapter and pp. 36-38 of his report.

[248] Ibid., p.1, passim.

[249] Ibid.

[250] Ibid., pp. 1,20-32,36-38.

[251] Ibid.

He does not refer to the NEP objectives directly but they are strongly implied throughout in the report. See especially pp. 1,14,28-30(his discussion of the importance of peasant political involvement as a necessary and integral corollary to the economic development which was the primary focus of the Muda Scheme and the NEP), 36,38.

[252] Ibid.

This statement is underlined in the report.

income to the lower strata' - income arising from the `growth in the high capital-intensive non-farm capitalistic strata' - would mean `lopsided growth' which would `threaten the political order'.[253]

Omar cautioned against the judgements of economists who `seldom set their feet in the rural areas' and for whom questionnaire survey reports were `their major, if not only, sources of information'. Omar continued the point strongly:

> These are defended and buttressed by statistical justifications in the form of `coefficients of reliability',`degrees of fit',`standard errors', and so forth. What is neglected is the qualitative dimension of the economic reality which can only be appreciated not through sitting in air-conditioned rooms, but through direct interaction with the peasants. Certainly developing countries can not afford arm-chair economists. These qualitative dimensions include the conditions of life: the labouring environment in which a ton of padi is produced is never and can not be reflected in the prices of padi set up by economists. The tenancy relation and the exploitation of middlemen in weighing scale etc, etc[sic]. Peasants often perceive higher true costs of innovations or new inputs than outsiders[sic]. Economists' calculations based merely on market costs of inputs are not tapping the total realities of cost.[254]

In support of this perspective on Muda Omar examined the social dynamic of the Muda region in a way which seems uncharacteristic of Malaysian government officialdom at that time but well prepares us for an understanding of the outbreak of major peasant protest there in 1980. He pointed out that the peasantry were not a homogenous group but were rather made up of various groups with opposing interests.[255] He was aware that `the high demand for land' there `not only reduce[d] the operational size [of rural holdings] through fragmentation but also create[d] a high degree of tenancy and increase[d] the number of displaced tenants ... [creating] ... a large class of rural proletarians'.[256] He pointed out that, in the marketing of peasant produce, it was the existence of exploitative combinations of rice millers that was the reason for the lack of peasant capital.[257] These millers were, through their concerted action,

---

[253] Ibid., p.13.

Omar also made the point that such lop sided growth might result in the `retardation of growth itself'.

Ibid.

[254] Ibid., p.29n.

[255] Ibid., p.23.

[256] Ibid., p. 7.

[257] Ibid., p. 11.

able to keep the purchasing price of rice to themselves at a low level thus denying peasant sellers the profit margin needed for them to further develop their holdings. It was for all these reasons that Omar argued the need for a political involvement on the part of the peasantry as a concomitant to the yield-increasing innovations of the scheme in order to bring about the social restructuring at the village level that would control exploitation and distribute the material benefits of the scheme more evenly.[258]

While she is inclined to down play the social tensions arising from economic inequalities under the Muda scheme we can nonetheless see from Barnard's article that those inequalities existed and gauge something of their effect on the local community in a way helping us to understand why strong social protest broke out in the region in 1980.[259] Certainly we can see the continuing exploitation and the potential for social contention in what Barnard says in her article even if her conclusions based on her observations were guarded and curiously inconsistent.

Barnard took a sanguine view of the effect of the scheme on land tenure in the village. She concluded in her discussion of land tenure un the project that `access to land [did]

---

[258] Ibid., pp. 29,30.

[259] The article, while containing much useful information and valid observations on particular aspects of the scheme, does seem curiously uneven in its wider social observations. Early in the article she indicated that she was aware of the potential social instability in the implementation of the scheme. She pointed out in her opening pages that there had been less social dislocation arising from the adaption or transformation of the `mechanisms regulating the complex relationship between land, labour and capital' in the `process of agricultural modernization' in Muda through the introduction of higher yield varieties than elsewhere.

Barnard, "Modernization of Agriculture", p.46.

`Malaysia', she wrote in her second paragraph, `appears to be fairly unusual among those countries where HYV[ie High Yield Variety] packages have been encouraged on a large scale in so far as adverse reports of their effects are remarkably absent'.

Ibid., p. 47.

In her conclusion however she does concede in luke warm terms the emergence of social tension in the area:

> Until now the Muda Project, double cropping and HYVs have been accompanied by an unusual lack of societal dislocation. With a gathering of momentum of the modernization process, the Muda population is showing signs of some of the familiar tensions arising out of the introduction of the HYV technology.

Ibid., p. 89.

not appear to have been adversely affected by the new agricultural technology'.[260] Indeed, it `may even have ', she added, `improved access by allowing more people to make a living from smaller areas of padi land'.[261] This conclusion, however, as with her broader conclusions on the local social effect of the scheme, seems at odds with the body of her argument. She clearly indicates an uneven concentration of wealth and benefits on the basis of land tenure in the particular village - Kampung Asam Riang - in the ten year period of her study.[262]

Barnard draws the tentative conclusion the arrangements for land occupancy and access were relatively stable for the ten year period. What is also clear from this account is that she is describing a tenurial situation which was stable in the sense that uneven land distribution underwent very little alteration for the ten year period of her study. While her emphasis - and her perspective - tend to belie it, her description clearly indicates the exploitative circumstances prevailing in the locality in the 1967 to 1978 period. Thus, when she wrote that `Kg. Asam Riang's pattern of land tenure exhibit[ed] a remarkable degree of stability in terms of the three tenurial categories and the proportions of padi lands operated under ownership and rental conditions' it was the continuing disproportionate distribution of padi land that she had in mind.[263] In making the statements on stability she referred to two tables which together indicated that less than half(44% in 1967 and 45% in 1978) of `padi farm operators' owned the land they worked and that over half(56% in 1967 and 55% in 1978) were tenant `farm operators'.[264] More importantly her tables indicate that only around a third of the total area of padi land operated(33% in both 1967 and 1978) was owned by the operator while something like two thirds(67% in both years - 1967 and 1978) was rented.[265] She further pointed out that `the scale of cultivation for the great majority of farmers [was] very

---

[260] Ibid., p. 74.

[261] Ibid.

[262] Although she is unsure of the trend in the village for the specific period of time and draws this tentative conclusion:`... land ownership may eventually become further concentrated, but at present there is little evidence of definite trends in this direction.'

Ibid., p. 51, 67-70.

[263] Ibid., p.70.

[264] Ibid., p.69.

[265] Ibid., p.70.

small indeed - two relong(0.57 hectares or less).[266] There were, she reported, `four types of rental systems' in use in the village.[267] Of these it was the sewa padi agreements that were most common. The potential for peasant hardship from this arrangement is implicit in Barnard's description of it:`an amount of padi paid to the landlord after the harvest, fixed and not negotiable according to the size of the harvest.'[268]

Even if there was no such dynamic towards landlessness in this particular village within the decade the fact of a disproportionate presence of landless peasants clearly indicates a strong potential for economic hardship and social tension. While Barnard indicated that separation from the land did not occur to any significant extent as a result of the operation of the scheme it is also clear from her article that, in a community in which rice growing was the main way of earning a living, there was a significant number who did not have access to land for this purpose and who suffered as a result.[269] For example, from Barnard's Table 1 we can calculate that 20% of those in agricultural occupations listed farm labouring as their main occupation in 1967 and 36% did so in 1978. That amounts to a relative increase in 16% in those selling their labour to make a living - an increase which is not adequately explained by Barnard. In those years respectively 77% and 62% of those in agricultural occupations listed

---

[266] Actually the table Barnard refers to in support of the point indicates that 41% of producers in 1967 and 42% in 1978 had holdings of two relongs or less - not a majority of producers but still a very substantial portion - nearly half - of them.

Ibid., pp. 67, 68.

[267] In use `in a sample of 28 tenants, who had 44 separate agreements'.

Ibid., p. 71.

[268] Ibid.

Again, while her description of the rental arrangement strongly implies hardship she seems at pains to minimize this in her general conclusion on the subject. She concludes for example, without explanation, that longevity of tenancy in the village signifies the role of kinship as a stabilizing factor in these landlord tenancy relationships.

Ibid., pp. 74,89.

`Fears', she wrote without arguing the case, `that tenants would be vulnerable to dispossession and exorbitant rents ... were based on a lack of understanding of the important role of kinship in landlord tenant relations'.

Ibid., p. 89.

[269] `Dispossession', she wrote, `did occur' but `was rare'.

Ibid., p. 74.

themselves as rice farmers - a decrease of 15%[270]

While this data does appear to suggest there may have been, proportionately, a shift away from land ownership and tenancy in the direction of greater landlessness for the ten year period we can not draw any hard and fast conclusions along these lines. Certainly, though, the apparent trend warrants further investigation with all the variables - a sudden influx of people moving into the village for example - being examined. Barnard does not do this. If we accept Barnard's chronology on the problem the separation from the land clearly evident in her data must have occurred prior to the period of her study. It was, she implies, a problem that could not be alleviated in the decade of her study because access was greatly limited by pressure on the land due to `the fast growing population' in the village and the fact that the increased productivity the scheme bought raised the monetary value of padi land and therefore made it accessible to all but `urban developers or the State'.[271] `[E]ven', she continued, `with HYVs, irrigation and double-cropping, the cake is not big enough to satisfy the land hunger of so many'.[272] While it is clear that she is describing a static - or relatively static - situation with regard to the distribution of land ownership - the unevenness of that distribution is nonetheless clear.

Barnard refers to her Table 1 to make the point that in `Kg. Asam Riang the number of people who regularly engage in agricultural labouring work is large'.[273] This group, she reported, was experiencing contentious hardship in a number of different ways. They resented the occasional use by rice growers of family labour - a resentment which threatened to `destroy community harmony'.[274] Mechanization, too, threatened the demand for manual labour and therefore the livelihood of the landless poor. The introduction of combine harvesters was a case in point illustrating the individual hardship and social divisiveness of

---

[270] Ibid., p. 57.

[271] Ibid., p.66.

`A few wealthy farmers', she added, `[had] purchased instead <u>kampung</u> and orchard land in fairly distant locations for Alor Setar'.

Ibid.

[272] Ibid.

[273] Ibid., p. 83.

[274] Ibid.

such mechanization:

> Combine harvesters were not introduced gradually in Kg. Asam Riang, so their effects have been traumatic for the landless. Harvest earnings have been reduced by as much as eighty per cent compared with previous years.
> On social grounds the landless and minute-scale farmers resent the uncaring attitude of those who use combine harvesters while they sit idle at home.[275]

Barnard concludes somewhat vaguely that the employment situation in the village highlighted `the problem of conflicting sets of priorities among the various people concerned'.[276] `It appear[ed]', she suggested, `that the crucial factor in Kg. Asam Riang [was] the large groups of agricultural labourers'.[277] `Other villages', she suggested, `may have been less divided over the mechanization issue because they [had] had more ... migration and therefore a greater shortage of manpower'.[278]

Even where the villagers did have access to land this was for `the great majority of farmers' access to holdings which were `very small indeed' and which were problematic for these producers.[279] These smallholders were, for example, largely shut out from the newer credit institutions which were part of the scheme - the Farmers Association(FA) for example.[280] Their holdings were deemed to be too small to secure - to ensure - their productive capacity and they were therefore considered a bad risk.[281] The newer credit institutions - the FA and the Cooperative Society(the latter came to replace the former as a `source of cheap production credit') were mainly the preserve of larger land holders leaving the small holders restricted to `a narrower set of options - the shop keeper, the pawn broker, friends and relations - or do[ing] without altogether'.[282] The poorer producers with less land were paying

---

[275] Ibid., p. 86.

[276] Ibid., p. 88.

[277] Ibid.

[278] Ibid.

[279] Ibid., p. 67.

The holdings were two relong(0.57 hectares) or less.

Ibid.

[280] Ibid., pp. 75-82, especially 79-82.

[281] Ibid., p. 75.

[282] Ibid., pp. 80,81.

more interest while those with more land were paying less.[283] Barnard's conclusion is clear if somewhat guarded:` ... one can not escape the conclusion that those who need most help are finding that they must pay more for credit than better off fellow villagers'.[284] In the light of all this Barnard's claim in her article conclusion that `[l]and tenure does not appear to be a particularly pressing problem despite earlier fears that tenants would be vulnerable to dispossession and exorbitant rents' does appear to be something of a non sequitur.[285] The best reading that can be given to the working of the scheme in this particular village is that, while the scheme did significantly enhance the agricultural yield without significantly adding to the economic and social hardship of the poorer peasantry it did not substantially alleviate that suffering either.

A reading of Scott's study adds further weight to the accounts by Omar and Barnard of the shortcomings of the scheme. Scott's book is a detailed anthropological examination of local class relations in the particular village of his study. While the study has this localized focus it nonetheless places class relations within the village very firmly within the wider social context at the state and national level. In his study Scott examines the objective economic and wider social condition of the peasants in the locality and then closely examines their reaction to these conditions and specifically their reaction to their superordinates extracting their surplus. It is the latter aspect - the peasant reaction - that is the main object of Scott's attention. He is primarily concerned in his book to give due emphasis to the everyday forms of peasant resistance in his title. It is in his setting out of the social conditions against which his peasants were reacting that the value of his book especially lies for this thesis.

It is the fact that the village of the study is located in the Muda region that afforded Scott the opportunity to examine the working of the scheme at the micro level and to draw some more general conclusions about its operation in the region as a whole. The scheme as it had developed to the time of writing his book(the middle eighties: book published in 1985) had, he says, been of mixed benefit to the Muda peasantry. While on the one hand it was true that `without the project the Muda peasantry would [have been] far worse off both relatively

---

[283] Ibid., pp. 80-82.

[284] Ibid., p. 82.

[285] Ibid., p. 89.

and absolutely' it was, he also indicates, not the unqualified success it had seemed to be earlier in its operation - in 1974 - especially `in terms of employment and income'.[286]

The project, he says, had for a decade leading up to 1985, bought the peasants positive benefits in the form of increased amenities, greater availability of consumer goods, stronger capacity through increased yields to meet rice subsistence needs, better nutrition, less need for supplementary wage employment as a result of the greater productivity of peasant agriculture, and less peasant indebtedness as a result of an increased capacity to repay loans through greater agricultural productivity.[287]

But marked inequalities in Muda peasant society were evident as well. Land was distributed `quite unequally'.[288] `Large holdings above 7 acres(10 relong)', Scott writes, `account for only 11 per cent of the holdings but occupy 42 per cent of the total paddy land'.[289] And, at the other end of the scale: `the great majority(61.8 per cent) of owners [are] with holdings below what is required for a poverty-line income'.[290] Similarly, Scott remarks on `inequalities in actual farm size' - inequalities which `were not as marked as in the case of ownership' but which were `nonetheless apparent'.[291] Scott also highlights major changes in land tenure in the region. The most striking feature here has been the marked decline in the number of pure tenants since the commencement of the scheme. This decline has been accompanied by an increase in the number of owner-operators, both small and large. The decline of pure tenants is in part, Scott says, a matter of displacement by landlords returning to cultivation: `Double-cropping, higher yields, and mechanization have made it increasingly profitable and feasible for landlords to resume cultivation'.[292] The decline in the number of pure tenants was also a consequence of the emergence of a `rich, fully commercial tenant class

---

[286] Scott, Weapons, p. 65.

[287] Ibid., pp. 65-68.

[288] Ibid., p. 68.

[289] Ibid., p. 69.

[290] Ibid.

[291] Ibid., p. 70.

[292] Ibid., p. 71.

whose entry into the rental serves to displace small, capital-poor tenants'.[293]

Scott summarizes the `overall picture from farm size and tenure data' as one of `gradual polarization - an increase in the proportion of small farms(mostly owner-operated)that produce a bare subsistence income, an across-the-board decline in tenancy, and a growing class of larger-scale commercial farms'.[294]

Scott's general assessment of `agricultural progress' under the project is a depressing one of inequality - an inequality `all too familiar from analyses of the green revolution elsewhere in Asia'.[295] This is broadly in line with Omar and Barnard, especially Omar, and it is worth quoting Scott in full since it strongly reinforces our understanding of rural conditions in the area for the period leading up to 1980 - rural conditions which gave rise to strong protest there in that year.

> As the economic distance between rich and poor has grown, so has this privileged class's access to influence and credit. If the interests of paddy farmers are heard at all, they are increasingly the interests of larger farmers. On some questions, such as paddy support prices or fertilizer subsidies, this may make little difference, for the interests of rich and poor will largely coincide. But on many other issues - mechanization, agricultural wage policy, credit eligibility, land rents, land reform - their interests are sharply conflicting. The vise-like grip with which large operators now control the Farmers' Associations means both that the vital interests of Muda's poor are systematically excluded even from the policy agenda and that those who have already profited most from the green revolution will continue to have things their own way.[296]

Scott concludes his section on Muda on a pessimistic note. Having quoted Griffin on the effect of the green revolution in strengthening the domination of larger farmers elsewhere in Asia he says:`In Muda as well, the economic, political, and institutional facts combine to make it extremely unlikely that the great inequities now prevailing will even be addressed, let alone mitigated'.[297]

To sum up then, while the 1980 peasant disturbance in Kedah appeared to surprise Malaysian government officialdom we can see from the three authors how the outbreak was the culmination of social tensions that had been building up within the decade(and into the

---

[293] Ibid., p. 74.

[294] Ibid., p. 71.

[295] Ibid., p. 84.

[296] Ibid., p. 84.

[297] Ibid.
Scott's Griffin reference is as follows: Keith Griffin, The Political Economy of Agrarian Change: An Essay on the Green Revolution(Harvard Univ. Press, 1974).

next) and which had their origins in the colonial experience of the area. What is clear from their accounts is that, while the project increased agricultural yields in absolute terms, it failed to implement the wealth distribution necessary to ensure social stability. A reading of Omar and Barnard together suggests some awareness in official and academic circles in Malaysia of significant emerging social tension in Muda in the lead-up to the 1980 demonstrations. While in their own way they were both guarded in drawing their conclusions, it was by far Omar who gave this social tension its due emphasis. Scott's later writing serves to reinforce the general conclusions of Omar and Barnard on social inequality in Muda as a broad cause of the 1980 outbreak.

It may well be, too, that we can see in the economic hardship and the social tension indicated in the Muda area for the decade the basic reason for the 1978 electoral support for PAS there though given the changing nature of the party we can not jump to any definite conclusions on the basis of the hardship alone.

Raayat Direct Protest in North Malaya: The Baling and Alor Star Demonstrations

Aside from the successes of PAS in the NMS there have been other strong indications of class tensions in the countryside there which, while not directly related to the party political process have nonetheless been strongly influential in that process and which have posed serious difficulties for the Malayan and Malaysian governments. On two notable occasions within the last decade Kedah peasants took to the streets to protest against economic hardship stemming ultimately from the long term effects of the intrusion of western colonial influences into the sphere of their local economy. One protest involved rubber smallholders and the other rice growers.

These disturbances have, understandably given their recency, received only scant mention in the standard academic works on Malaysia and, where attention has focussed on them, interpretations on their nature and significance have varied. Stenson saw them as important and interpreted their meaning and significance on a on a wider social perspective believing that they invite us to reconsider the relative importance of class and race in the Malaysian context.[298] Bailey though, as we have seen briefly above, misses the real nature of the wider significance of the disturbances which occurred shortly after his departure from

---

[298] Stenson, "Class and Race", p. 45.

Kedah and miscasts his analysis of changing leadership roles in the district of Sik in Kedah accordingly.

Bailey perceives the wider significance of the 1975 disturbances in this way:

> Although the direct genesis of these protests was related to the price of rubber, broader forces of social change appear to have been at work here, involving the gradual political awakening of the Malay since Independence, the expansion of educational opportunity and the promise of economic development.[299]

Certainly he does seem to be aware that the disturbances had wider, longer term, causes than those which sparked them. And his own study is a longer term one: his analysis of changing leadership roles in the Sik district in the monograph begins with the nineteenth century. He does not, however, adequately indicate how the longer historical perspective of his monograph can inform our understanding of the 1974 disturbances. He does not place the disturbances against the full time span of his study: he chooses, instead, to interpret them on a much shorter time span. His view on them is a myopic one.

In his study Bailey clearly reveals himself to be tied in his thinking to a stereotypical view of the Malay village. Expressing surprise at the force and directness of the protest he wrote:`... as will be recognized by anyone familiar with the stereotyped image of the quaint and quiescent Malay villager, this willingness to take their grievances to the government in such a forceful manner is, to say the least, a novel occurrence.'[300]

Bailey's interpretation of the incident does not recognize and, on a more general level, is at odds with, the causes of the Kelantan rising of 1915 and the Trengganu Rising of 1928. He in no way acknowledges the importance and relevance of Allen's account of the former rising and the light this throws on the reaction of the peasantry to their colonial circumstances discussed by me in chapter 7 above. On a wider social perspective over the longer period of time it does seem likely that the disturbance was the outcome of a long term build up of tension between the rubber smallholding peasantry and those appropriating their surplus in those districts - a tension which had been building since colonial times. Bailey does not, as arguably he should have done, hypothesize that this tension had built up to such an intensity by 1974 that a major trigger would unleash major peasant protest action of the kind that occurred. While Bailey does suggest wider causes for the disturbances than those located

---

[299] Conner Bailey, "Broker, Mediator, Patron and Kinsman: An Historical Analysis of Key Leadership Roles in a Rural Malaysian District"(Ohio University, Centre for International Studies, Papers in International Studies, Southeast Asia Series No. 38, 1976), p.8.

[300] Ibid.

in the temporary grievances of the smallholders in 1974 he does not seem, in his perception of those wider causes, prepared to extend his historical perspective beyond the beginning of the Independence period.

The Baling Disturbances.

In the Baling and Sik Districts of Kedah, in November 1974, rubber smallholders, in a series of demonstrations, took to the streets to protest the harsh conditions of their existence stemming from falling rubber prices, rising consumer prices, and exploitative trading arrangements.([301]) The scale of these demonstrations was significant. On November 21 of that year 12,000 peasants marched in Baling. On December 1 of the same year nearly 30,000 marched in that district.[302] Both were part of a succession of hunger marches held to highlight the plight of peasants in northern Kedah.[303] Students rallied in support of the peasantry.[304] These student protests were widespread. Students protested at the University of Malaya.[305] There was `an eruption in the universities, first on the padang(open space) in Kuala Lumpur, then on the campuses in the capital and among students in some of the technical, agricultural and other universities elsewhere.'[306] This sympathetic protest was due in large part to the fact there was a direct link between the students and the rural misery they were protesting. A high

---

[301] The disturbances itemized in the introduction to this thesis.

The Baling disturbances are described in Peiris , in the FEER article referred to in this thesis above.

Peiris, "Rural Revolution", pp.29-31.

Bailey refers briefly to the peasant disturbances in both Baling and the neighbouring district of Sik in Kedah at around the same period of time in that year.

Bailey, "Broker Mediator, Patron, and Kinsman", pp.2 and 8.

Both Stenson and Funston make reference to the 1974 peasant disturbances in Baling.

Stenson, "Class and Race", p. 45.

Funston, Malay Politics in Malaysia, p. 279.

[302] Funston, Malay Politics, p. 279.

[303] Ibid.

[304] Ibid.

Peiris, "Rural Revolution", p. 30.

[305] Ibid.

[306] Ibid.

proportion of the student activists came from rural backgrounds and were responding to `a gut reaction ...[to their] own experience of rural misery'.[307]

The government response to the riots clearly indicated their concern. Tear gas was fired into the crowds and a government white paper on the protest at the University of Malaya held in sympathy with the Baling marchers was prepared.[308] In Funston's words:`[T]he government reaction - mass arrests, restrictions on scholarship-holders and amendment to the Universities Act - was unprecedented, and came as a great shock'.[309]

What is clear from accounts of the peasant grievances that motivated the protest is that at base they stemmed from exploitive productive relations - productive relations that have their origin in the effect of colonial influences in transforming the NMS economic base in the manner described in my thesis chapters above. Peiris cites the example of one raayat rubber smallholder, Awung, who found that, on the sale of his rubber at around the time of the disturbances, he was getting very poor prices. The reason for this was that `the dealers - the middlemen between the tappers and the export markets - were creaming off what should have been his [i.e. Awung's] share.'([310]) The same report points out that 25% of the total smallholders did not own their land so that, in addition to the burden of poor rubber prices and inflated food prices they had to 'either pay a fixed rent or share their crops with landowner.'([311])

The Alor Star Disturbances

On January 23, 1980 10,000 Kedah peasant rice producers converged on the Wisma Negri (State House) in strong demonstration against their harsh living conditions.[312] The authorities moved promptly to disperse the crowd using tear gas and batons and adopted stern follow up measures designed to suppress any further demonstration. About sixty people were charged in court the day after the demonstration with `rioting and destroying property and a

---

[307] Ibid.

[308] Peiris, "Rural Revolution", pp. 29,30.

[309] Funston, Malay Politics, p. 279.

[310] Peiris, "Rural Revolution", p. 29

[311] Ibid.

[312] My account of this demonstration is based on K. Das, "Bitter Harvest in the rice bowl", Far Eastern Economic Review, February 8, 1980, pp.20,21.

curfew was imposed in the municipal area where the demonstration took place.'([313]) The demonstration was, then, one of some significance and one that the authorities took seriously. The Mentri Besar (Chief Minister) of the state claimed that the demonstrators were bent on a coup d'etat.([314])

The demonstration presented something of a paradox in terms of government policy and functioning since it took place in the area covered by the Muda scheme - a scheme which was a showpiece example of Government economic strategy aimed at the elimination of rural poverty on the peninsular.([315]) Ironically, the immediate cause of the demonstration was a government rice subsidy operated by the government as a form of peasant financial assistance. The 1978 harvest had been a good one and, on the face of it, it is understandable why, in response to the demonstrations, `[o]fficial anger, frustration, justifications and explanations were loud, and sounded very much like panic.'([316]) At the same time the government response to the demonstration illustrates the failure of government economic policy to come to grips with the fundamental causes of rural hardship and, if the official statements reported in the Review are to be taken at face value, a misunderstanding on the part of high ranking government officials of the long term effects of the penetration of modern economic influences into the north Malayan and wider Malayan rural sphere. Datuk Musa Hitam, Primary Industries Minister at the time of the Baling and Sik riots, told the Review:

> In Alor Star there was no immediate reason for the demonstration mainly because

---

[313] Ibid., p.20.

Scott indicates that `[O]ver ninety people were arrested on the spot and held'.

Scott, Weapons, p. 276.

[314] Ibid.

Scott quotes the chief minister as claiming that the demonstration was `provoked by certain groups of a militant persuasion'. Scott paraphrases him as noting ominously `that the Bolshevik, French, and Iranian revolutions had all "used" the peasantry'.

Scott, Weapons, p. 276.

[315] See below in this chapter for a brief account of the Muda scheme in the context of my discussion of recent government rural development policies in the north Malayan and wider Malaysian context.

[316] Das, "Bitter harvest", p.20.

> the rice situation in Kedah generally [in view of the reforms] has achieved a great deal of success. Also, the price support system is the most reasonable you can think of.([317])

Clearly this was a reference to the then recent government policy of rural economic reform in the NMS and wider Malaysian context discussed immediately above in this chapter and dealt with more fully below. We can see from this that, in January 1980, the Government and the Kedah peasantry perceived this rural reform very differently, at least in one of its aspects.

On the face of it the government rice subsidy was a measure that would serve to limit the economic hardship experienced by the Kedah peasantry. The problem was, though, that the rice subsidy, which had been increased to M$2.00 per pikul shortly before the riot, was paid in the form of a coupon to be paid into one of the government savings institutions. It was because the subsidy was not paid in the form of ready cash that the savings plan looked to the Kedah peasant `more like a tax than a subsidy.'([318]) As one Kedah MP put it:

> The village economy is a cash economy. Coupons, bonds and cheques can become a burden rather than a help. The illiterate farmer stuck with a piece of paper is also a ready target for unscrupulous shopkeepers, middlemen, moneylenders and, of course, the political opposition.([319])

Scott describes the peasant grievances in these terms:

> The ostensible issue sparking the demonstration was a demand for an increase in the farm-gate price of paddy and opposition to a recently introduced *cupon* scheme whereby M$2 of the price per *pikul* of paddy would be retained and saved for the seller. Although the forced savings would yield a profit(not `interest', which is forbidden) and could be redeemed after six months, the scheme was universally unpopular. It appeared to many that the producer price had thereby been lowered by M$2, and it was unclear whether the majority of growers who sold their paddy to Chinese middlemen would recover the `savings' at all.[320]

Clearly, then, the partial cure of the coupon subsidy in effect contributed to, rather than alleviated, the ill of rural poverty it was designed to help overcome. The paper benefit of the coupon subsidy failed to provide the Kedah peasant with much needed ready cash and the thinking behind the measure is reminiscent of Bryson's perception of the difficulties of the Trengganu peasantry in coping with an imposed cash economy in Trengganu in 1928. The failure of the Kedah subsidy policy is reminiscent of the failure of the British government to

---

[317] Ibid. Original parenthesis.

[318] Ibid.

[319] Ibid.

[320] Scott, Weapons, p. 275.

come to grips with the economic realities of peasant life in Trengganu in 1928.([321]) From the point of view of the Kedah peasantry the rice subsidy left them effectively in the position where they were rendered less than their full due on their labour in the paddy fields by a government implementing a scheme which indirectly assisted the process of surplus extraction by middle ranking entrepreneurial groups in the Kedah countryside. We can see then how the intrusion of the western cash economy over the preceding century or more, and the emergence of new methods of surplus extraction, led up to a situation where enforced saving, itself part and parcel of a new refined and sophisticated process of surplus extraction(since the ultimate economic aim of such enforced frugality was the effective maintenance of a rice producing labour force capable of rendering the service) had, as a side effect, increased the vulnerability of the Kedah peasant to local small entrepreneurial exploitation.

What is important, then, about the Baling, Sik and Alor Star disturbances is that they are suggestive of the continuity of class tensions in the NMS countryside as a whole. These riots indicate a later manifestation of essentially the same kind of class tension evident in raayat resistance to colonial rule in Kelantan and Trengganu in the early decades of this century and in raayat electoral behaviour in the NMS in the Independence period. These disturbances thus represent the most recent, traumatic manifestation of the way in which modern methods of surplus extraction are continuing to lend a distinctive shape to society in the NMS, and a distinctive aspect to their role in the wider Malaysian Federation.

Conclusion

Clearly, then, the Northern Malay States have played a distinctive role in the independence period of Malaya and Malaysia. The political challenge of radical Islam to conservative national government, the Kedah disturbances, and the intractability of rural Malay poverty within the context of the NEP, all point to the problematic nature of the four states in contemporary Malayan and Malaysian society from the point of view of the dominant forces within national government. It is in this sense that the NMS have not fitted easily into the Alliance status quo formally conceived in 1957 and maintained somewhat tenuously ever since. It is also clear that the central factor determining NMS society and the problematic

---

[321] My account of Bryson's interpretation of the Trengganu rising in 1928 occurs in my chapter 6 above.

nature of the society for dominant groups based in Kuala Lumpur has been the relations - strained relations - between direct producers and those extracting their surplus. While a largely latent class tension does arguably exist peninsular wide it is clear from Kessler, Stenson, Muzaffar and others that class tensions are strongly manifest in the four states and can be clearly seen as a major factor shaping their societies and the relationship of these societies to the wider Malaysian social formation. While the emphasis to be placed on class, race and religion varies across the three scholars - the latter with more emphasis on the religious with Kessler and Stenson focussing more on the secular - the three together compliment each other in offering the best chance of a full understanding of the way in which the interaction between class and race/cultural factors has been a major determinant shaping NMS and wider Malaysian society. Thus, the continuity in the effect of the penetration of colonial influences into the NMS can be clearly seen in the modern character of class relations in the region and the way in which they are a contemporary manifestation of ongoing class tensions that have been played out in the area since the intrusion of those colonial influences. We can see these tensions for what they are: a fundamental cause of the distinctiveness of the NMS in modern Malaysian society and history. It is a continuously developing distinctiveness borne of the interaction between class and wider cultural, religious, factors in ways yet to be fully defined in the sources.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have sought to demonstrate how outside influences on the Northern Malay States resulted in changes to the way in which those societies were organized around production in a way which fundamentally explains the distinctiveness of these states in Malaysian history. My central argument, developed in stages in the chapters above, is that it has been the intrusion of colonial and post colonial influences into the NMS which brought into play modern contradictions within those societies - contradictions which have had a distinctive manifestation there. It has been, I argue, the fact that this modernizing process differed markedly from that occurring to the south, through the operation of differing historical factors in the two hemispheres, that indicates the essential contrasting dynamic of social change between north and south and which in essence defines the distinctiveness of the NMS on the peninsular. At the same time I have stressed the need to be aware of intra regional state differences in the nature and course of fundamental social change within the broad similarities across the states as a whole if we are to perceive society and social change in them on a sharper focus.

The crucial point that I have stressed in my study is that we must seek out all the major groups involved in the NMS productive process, both those proximate to and those remote from, the point of production and examine the interrelationships between them if we are to arrive at an accurate and complete picture of society and social change in those states. It is on this approach that my thesis argues that it was forces intruding into production from outside the four states which had the effect of producing a distinctive society there. From the earliest period of my study the NMS have been subject to outside colonial influence and I have in my thesis sought to show both the way in which these influences operated and their effect on the economy and society in them.

In ethnic and national terms the major outside influences impinging on the four states

came from Siam and Britain. I make the point in my second and third chapters that, in the pre-colonial period, as I have defined if for the NMS(ie before European influences had had any impact at all), and throughout the first century or so of major European colonial incursion into the area(ie the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries), the four states were subject to the suzerainty of Siam. While that suzerainty entailed a sustained nominal control of the region by Siam, in reality the Siamese power holders, in fulfilment of their economic, political and strategic objectives in the region, remained at some distance from NMS production. While siphoning off some of their wealth, the Siamese did not intrude on them to such a degree as to alter to any appreciable degree in their own right, the basic character of their societies. However, for the last century or so of Siamese suzerainty the Siamese Malay States, as they were then known, were feeling the effects of European colonial influence as well - something which saw competition between Siamese and NMS elites, and between both of these and British imperial and colonial authority, for economic and strategic advantage in the region. As a consequence that period spanning a century or more did see the initiation of major changes to the mode of production in the NMS.

It was, then, the combined effect of Siamese and British influence that was having a strong impact on the NMS at this time. While the Siamese had some limited direct influence on the economy and society of the four states what was more important was the strong indirect effect their presence had in influencing the behaviour of the British towards them. The eventual result of the contest between Siamese and British authorities for influence in the region was the relinquishment by the Siamese of their rights to the four states and the formalizing of a British presence in the area in 1909.

As my chapter 3 makes clear this change over signalled the emergence in the NMS productive process of a colonial administrative elite which sought to siphon off productive wealth in support of an expanded British colonial state. It was in particular the new methods of surplus extraction implemented by this elite which served, in large measure, to further alter the mode of production in the areas. Well before the emergence of an independent Malayan state in 1957 then, outside influences of which the British colonial intrusion was the most important had induced major and fundamental changes to the economic and social organization of the NMS and therefore the basic character of their societies. As I make clear in Chapter 6, with the ending of the British colonial Malayan state in 1957, the essential

productive relations in the four states remained the same with neo-colonial interests maintaining a share in the NMS productive wealth albeit now by new methods - through the democratic electoral process for example - in a way serving to maintain the new mode of production as it had come to be by around 1942.

It was the fact that outside influences were entering the productive process in the NMS throughout the period that also accounts for the external aspects to the distinctiveness of these states in Malaysian history. As chapters 2 and 3 indicate it was the action of Siamese overlords in laying both periodic and intermittent claim to economic and strategic advantage, and the raayat and elite reaction to this, which in large measure explains the behaviour of the Siamese Malay States within the wider imperial Siamese polity. Likewise we can see from chapter 3 that it was the competition between Siamese elites and British colonial interests for mainly economic advantage in the region throughout the nineteenth century which was the basis not only of relations between the four states and both Siam and Britain but Anglo-Siamese relations as these focussed on the area throughout the period as well. We can see from chapter 4 of this thesis how the primary British interest in acquiring the NMS was to secure the vital tin and later rubber wealth to the south by creating a northern buffer zone against competition for these resources as well as the material and human resources that the four states had to offer in their own right. It was these objectives which provided the incentive for the British to extend their influence into the northern peninsular and which lay at the heart of the relationship between the four states and the wider British colonial state into which the four were increasingly drawn.

My chapter 7 and 8 make it clear that claims made by the colonial British and the wider independent Malayan, and then Malaysian, state on NMS resources, and the reaction in those states to this, in large measure explains the distinctive role and place of those states within the colonial and then independent Malayan and Malaysian contexts. Beyond the peninsular itself, and at its most remote, we can trace demands on NMS productivity throughout the colonial and independence periods to the colonial and neo-colonial metropolis in England. While I do not need to go further in this thesis than acknowledging its existence it is important to be aware that there was a wider exploitative British imperial context within which the colonial

intrusion into the NMS took place, and which was, ultimately, the driving force behind it.

In sum, then, my thesis makes the case that it was the changing way in which society was being organized around production in the NMS throughout the period of my study which in very large measure constitutes their essential history in the wider imperial, colonial and neo-colonial contexts in which they were placed. It was a reorganization that was in the end prompted mainly(though not solely; a multiciplicity of factors were present, not all of them economic) by the contest that came about when new and powerful forces came onto the scene seeking a share in the productive wealth of the area. With the establishment of the British colonial state in all four states by 1909 the apparatus of state was used to systematically tap into that productive wealth with contentious results as we have seen. In the last analysis it has been the way in which the various groups were combining in a wider process of social production - the raayat whose labour and productivity remained the basis of the four state economies throughout the period, the pre-colonial traditional state elites, Siamese overlords, the various groups making up the Malayan colonial commercial and administrative elite, and in the independence period entrepreneurial, administrative and political elites operating within the neo-colonial productive mode in the region, that constitutes the essential distinctiveness of the NMS in Malaysian history.

In interpreting and presenting NMS history in this way I maintain that the conventional sources within Malaysian historiography have been limited in that, where scant attention has been paid by them to the place of the four states in Malaysian history, they have not sufficiently understood that it is not the fact that those states were, until 1909, under Siamese suzerainty, that they came formally under the British colonial umbrella later than the states to the south, that they have been relatively racially homogenous, and that they have remained relatively free from large scale commercial enterprise per se, that indicates the distinctiveness of those states but the way in which these historical factors have been operating in the process of fundamental economic and wider social change which is important in understanding how those states developed societies markedly and basically different from those in the south.

The foregoing chapters of this thesis make it clear that, while NMS society may have appeared to undergo only limited change on a surface view of them in the period leading up to World War 11, important and fundamental changes to that economy and society were well underway by the later decades of the nineteenth century - changes which continued to operate

to produce an identifiably and basically different mode of production and wider society certainly by 1942, though precise periodization for this change is difficult. In perceiving NMS society as remaining essentially unchanged - traditional and backward - with only superficial alteration throughout the colonial and into the Independence period the more conventional scholarship has in part been misled by the official rhetoric of colonial officials who sought to implement a policy of preservation of the Malay rural community in the NMS and on the peninsular as a whole from 1909 onwards. Paradoxically it was this very policy, containing within it humanitarian objectives no doubt, but harbouring also the ulterior motive of organizing NMS economic life in the service of an expanded British colonial Malayan state, which re-enforced and added to change already occurring to the productive process as a result of the activities of colonial commercial interests in the region. It was, then, the operation of colonial capital and colonial administration acting in concert with one another which, beneath a surface level of social structural continuity, changed the basic nature of the NMS economy and society.

Before the earliest penetration of colonial influences into the NMS peasants engaged in subsistence agriculture laboured to produce enough to support themselves and their families and beyond that in support local power holders - elite figures who extracted their surplus by means of physical coercion. Power in the region rested on the control of material and human resources in this way. There was no proprietary ownership of land and peasant labour was unfree in the sense that it was tied to the land for its own subsistence and reproduction. Most importantly, labour was extracted from the raayat, directly through the practice of kerah, and secondarily though still importantly indirectly, in the form of produce. In both cases surplus extraction took place on an irregular basis and was unsystematic and localized in its operation. Of central importance in the acquisition and maintenance of power was the practice of slavery: slaves, who were not tied to the land(or the sea) for their living, constituted a core of labour power for pre-colonial power holders and were highly valued since they were `free' to work at any time at the whim of their masters. They represented a sustained source of labour.

The fact that wealth and power relied so heavily on the direct appropriation of surplus from peasants who were for the most part tied to subsistence on the land or sea meant that the

exercise of power in the region was very localized. The northern Malay polity was thus made up of an agglomeration of spheres of influence within which local power holders exercised domain over labour and resources and which were linked only very loosely by the largely symbolic authority of the Sultan or Raja. Malay settlement in pre-colonial times in the north(as elsewhere on the peninsular) was grouped in the kampongs strung out along river and coast: sea and river were the main means of communication and the trade moving up and down the rivers and along the coast facilitated the taxation of goods in transit by power holders placed strategically on the internal trade routes. Thus, where Sultans and Rajas enjoyed a greater share in wealth and power this was in large measure due to their strategic position at the river mouth - a position which gave them an advantage in the imposition of trade tax. Still, before the strong emergence of the colonial market in the nineteenth, and especially the later nineteenth, century, trade tax provided no more than a marginal advantage in the struggle for power and the domain of each power holder was defined principally by the reach of his capacity to physically control in a very direct sense labour located in and around the kampongs in his locality.

It was in this way then, as my chapter 2 explains in full, that the social configuration of the pre-colonial northern Malay polity was an expression of the social relations of production in the region and the method and form of surplus extraction upon which those relations, at base, hinged. Those relations were localized, personalized, immediate and direct, specific and physically coercive.

We can not know in any definitive way what northern Malay society was like before European contact was substantial and had started to have an impact. To a very considerable degree any such understanding - certainly for historians such as myself tied to English language sources - is lost in obscurity. We can only know in a very general and, when it comes to certain specifics, a very uneven, way what those societies were like on the basis of indigenous sources and archeological investigation as reported in the secondary sources. What this source material does allow us to conclude within the limitations here indicated is that, contrary to the impression given in the conventional sources, the pre-colonial polity in the north could not have been characterized by structured harmony but rather by a basic tension between the major social groups in the region - a tension arising from the wider social productive process upon which they all depended in fundamentally opposed ways. It is in the

contentious relations between producer and surplus appropriator, between individuals and groups within the raayat, between one section of the traditional northern Malay elite and another, between Siamese and NMS Malay elite, between slave and master, raayat and chief, Sultan and chief and so on, as they combined in the one broad process of social production, that we can see the dialectical unity of the four loosely structured polities in pre-colonial times. Coming forward in time, as my chapters 3, 4 and 5 make clear, the NMS economies came to no longer aim mainly at production for local domestic consumption and by the later decades of the nineteenth century the organization of the four state societies around production was becoming increasingly tied to the needs and operation of the colonial market. As a result the period saw a fundamental change in the way social groups there related to each other in the productive process, and a corresponding change in the social configuration of NMS society in the shape of a modern centralized state. The pace of this social change varied within the four states being more rapid in the northwestern states of Kedah and Perlis than it was in the northeastern ones of Kelantan and Trengganu.

Of key importance in initiating these changes were the merchants based to the south on Penang and Singapore. The activities of these traders is of vital significance in that they set in train fundamental change to NMS society - changes which had reached an advanced stage by the time of the commencement of a British presence in the four states. Thus, it was the drawing of the NMS, through trade, into a British Malayan, and beyond that British imperial, exchange of commodities - the opportunities for wealth that this afforded for some, and the productive pressure it bought for others in the majority - that was the mainspring of change moving the four states in the direction of modernity.

It was, then, particularly from the later part of the nineteenth century that enterprising individuals and groups from already wealthy and powerful sections of the local population were able as never before to capitalize on the increasing opportunities for wealth and power arising from the operation of the colonial market. The traditional NMS elites sought on the basis of new and old methods of surplus extraction to do this. The period also saw enterprising groups outside the Malay community vying for a share in this trade wealth. As power came more and more to depend on the collection of trade tax and greater sophistication

and organization was needed to utilize this source of wealth, a mainly Chinese group of revenue collecting agents - the revenue farmers - was interposed, in economic terms, between Sultan and raayat. These revenue farmers sought to siphon off as much raayat surplus as possible in the form of trade tax and in the name of the Sultan while maximizing their benefit from this operation. It was largely through the agency of the revenue farmers that the vastly increased trade along the waterways gave strategically placed power holders significantly increased opportunities for wealth and power through the imposition of trade tax and the period saw the concentration of power in the hands of Sultan and Raja at the river mouth and, through increased capacity for patronage and the use of force, the extension of that power and control further along river and coast. At the same time the colonization of new areas along and away from river and water saw the linear and lateral expansion of settlement and therefore power. It was in this way then that changes to the mode of production in the area were being expressed in the transformation of a highly decentralized polity into a state in the modern sense.

As these colonial elites sought to accumulate greater quantities of peasant produce to service the burgeoning colonial market this peasantry was induced and coerced into the production of an agricultural surplus. By the late nineteenth century the sources indicate that a significant number of peasants were producing beyond subsistence as a source of supply for bulk handlers of their product. That is to say, at this time the purpose of production, and the nature of the product, was increasingly undergoing change as the peasants changed over from production for use - production for their own consumption with only limited exchange - to production of a substantial surplus for exchange. At the same time the raayat themselves were becoming increasingly a market for commodities produced within and outside their region. We can see then, as chapter 3 makes clear, how the exchange of commodities - an exchange with values determined both by local and wider external colonial and imperial economic factors - was a way of extracting surplus from the raayat. It was an exploitative mechanism which worked in two directions since on the exchange of their produce and on the purchase of commodities the peasant got less than their due share of the value of the commodity. The profit of rice bulk handler and shop keeper contained a portion of peasant surplus and while much wealth was created through trade on the basis of peasant labour the peasantry by-and-large did not share in this and remained at the level of simple reproduction. Where the

peasants produced a surplus beyond subsistence this surplus was siphoned off leaving little or no possibility for capital accumulation and the expansion of their productive enterprise. It is in the increased commoditization of peasant agriculture that we can see the strengthening of this kind of basic social antipathy between producer and non-producer in the NMS.

In this way, then, the partial commoditization of the product introduced a fundamental change to the productive relations in the region. The emergence of the colonial market and the unequal exchange that came with it bought the peasants into contact with powerful and more distant economic forces. Their livelihood now depended much more on values determined well beyond their locality - in Penang and Singapore - and beyond that such places as London and Canton.

The change in the nature of the product was accompanied by a related change to the productive significance of land. Throughout the period land, as the main means of production for an expanding colonial market, began to acquire a value in itself that it had not had before and was, by the late nineteenth century, taking on the character of a commodity. Land was thus becoming something that could be bought and sold - something that could be gained or lost in a proprietary sense - and it was in this way that the pre-1909 operation of colonial influences created an essential pre-condition for the separating of some peasants from the land - for the emergence of landlordism and tenancy and the social contention that this implies.

One aspect of the commoditization of production was the increasing monetization of the NMS economy throughout the period. There is clear evidence in the sources that, down to the base level in the economy, in the decades spanning the turn of the nineteenth century, there was some exchange of goods for cash and that cash values were increasingly being given to commodities in the region. Although cash remained in short supply amongst the raayat until well into the formal colonial period, by the late nineteenth century the raayat were being increasingly drawn into a cash economy as new and more effective ways were sought of tapping into their productive wealth.

Clearly, the emergence of a cash economy was an important factor in the changing productive relations in the area. The levying of revenue exactions was both a consequence and a mainstay of the concentration of power in the hands of Sultan and Raja. The NMS now

had rulers exercising real power across a more extensive geographic area. To maintain this power they aimed at the systematic and regular collection of revenue, including not only trade tax (though this continued to be the mainstay) but other kinds of tax revenue as well. And it was because they had this power that they were more able to do so. By this time Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu were starting to look less like developed polities and more like states in the modern sense familiar to us today. To augment the revenue farm system the states instigated, late in the nineteenth century, the setting up of a rudimentary state bureaucratic apparatus along British colonial lines - a move aimed principally at effecting a reliable and extensive collection of revenue. Through the instrumentality of this bureaucratic apparatus the Sultans and Rajas sought, though with limited success, to impose cash taxes of various kinds - produce and land tax for example - as a means of buttressing their power as head of state. It is clear, then, that while the collection of taxes by state instrumentalities was not fully and effectively operational until well into the formal colonial period, moves in that direction were well underway before 1909 - a process which was becoming possible as raayat cash became available and which at the same time had the effect of further monetizing the raayat economy.

We can see, then, how the arrival of a cash economy and the efforts to impose cash taxes were becoming an important source of social tension in the area. The raayat were, in the decades preceding 1909, being drawn into contentious productive relations with a rudimentary state bureaucracy seeking to extract cash surplus from them - relations which, as the revenue collecting function of this bureaucracy became more effective - were to rupture into open conflict in two states in the formal colonial period.

By the late nineteenth century, then, there is clear evidence of a much more diverse set of social relationships emerging in the NMS - relationships which were at base anchored in very large measure in and around production and adopting a character in large measure determined by the way that production was taking on a new purpose - a new direction - and entailing a differing internal logic. The economic endeavour of productive groups was coming to focus more upon the production and sale of commodities and it is principally in this fact that we can see the emergence of new kinds of contradictions into the mode of production in the area. The peasants now lived less in `fear of the chief and the men at his back' coming to seize their labour and produce, and were becoming more concerned with the return they got

in commodity transactions with Malay or Chinese entrepreneurial figures in their locality and the efforts of a more powerful Sultanate to impose cash taxes on their labour.[1] The traditional Malay elite was competing less for the control of labour and material resources in a direct physical sense at the point of production. Instead they were competing more on the basis of the new ways of tapping into this productive wealth made possible by the encroaching colonial circumstances. They sought, for example, to maximize their control of trade tax revenue as this became an even more important source of wealth and power with the expansion of colonial trade in the late nineteenth century. They were coming more and more to compete for advantage within the new colonial market economy and it was the culmination of these conflicts which saw the eventual concentration and exercise of power on a fundamentally different economic basis in the four states. The acquisition by certain social groups of positions of prominence and power on the basis of economic advantage made possible by the new colonial market economy further served to fundamentally alter the dynamic of social tension and conflict in the region. Thus a new social configuration came out of all this which rested at base, as was the case before with the traditional configuration, on the productivity fo the NMS peasantry and which saw the latter competing with a more diverse range of groups - some of them emergent - for a share in the productive wealth of the four states. The rice produced by the peasantry was now much more a commodity and there was strong inducement and pressure from rice merchants - the bulk handlers of this commodity - to produce more. This group of bulk handlers included Malay elite figures and immigrant, mainly Chinese, entrepreneur all seeking to capitalize on the potential wealth from an expanded peninsular trade. As we have seen the revenue farmers, too, exerted a direct influence on rice production in order to ensure the quantity and regularity of the padi trade on which their trade tax revenue depended.[2] And on top of all this the Malay rulers and their elite associations in the four states were starting to impose rudimentary taxes through the agency of

---

[1] The phrase used by Gullick and referred to above in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Gullick, Indigenous Political Systems, p. 143.

[2] Bearing in mind that revenue farmers were not necessarily distinct from the merchant group. Many merchants turned their hand to revenue farming at the time.

a nascent state bureaucratic apparatus.

It is, then, in the changing nature and the diversification of these relationships around production throughout the nineteenth century that we can see the forces that were to shape NMS history throughout the twentieth century.

It was the Anglo-Siamese treaty of l909 which opened the way for further economic and social changes in the area - changes which culminated in the existence of a dominant colonial - clearly no longer traditional(I do not attempt to categorize it; merely to describe what it was like and how it worked) - mode of production and a distinctively modern colonial society as its wider expression. There was now a close and more formal link between European, Chinese and other colonial enterprise from outside operating within the NMS and an expanded British colonial state on the peninsular and both now exerted an even stronger presence there. Most important was the fact that production in these states now took another change in overall purpose - a change which intensified the changes to the mode of production already well advanced in the four states. Production was now directed primarily at the maintenance of the four newly acquired states on the peninsular and to this end all social groups in them were now combining under the aegis of the wider British colonial Malayan state represented in the NMS principally in the figure of Agent or Adviser in a process of social production now tied much more closely to wider British colonial political and administrative objectives and less to the needs of local raayat, entrepreneurial and political interests.

It is, then, in the debit and credit balance sheets of colonial Advisers and Agents as they sought to measure the success or failure of their administrations in largely financial terms that we can see the raison d'être of the four colonial states and the broad overriding economic objectives to which production in those societies was now tied. NMS production did become even more closely linked to the operation of the colonial market with an intensification of the economic and social consequences already well in train by 1909. But added to this was a new impetus that came with the overriding objective of the British colonial state to establish and maintain itself in the north. It was this in particular which added a new dimension to outside intrusion into the MMS productive process and the dialectical process of social change in the region. It is only on this perspective that we can understand the marked and distinctive changes taking place in the four states throughout the formal colonial period.

With the transference of suzerainty over the four states from Siam to Britain and the establishment of a formal British colonial presence in all the NMS many of the economic and social changes already occurring under commercial influences in the region were formalized in a colonial administrative sense. At the same time that administration introduced its own changes to the economy. Thus the commoditization of land was assisted by the fact that land ownership and tenancy was clothed in modern western juristic form by the British colonial government in the north. The existing bureaucracies were expanded and the imposition of cash taxes on the raayat became more vigorous and systematic in its implementation - a process which re-enforced the existing monetization of the raayat economy and further intensified pressure on the raayat to engage in cash crop production. The combination of these influences - the further commoditization of the raayat economy and the general implementation of a modern system of land tenure - served to increase the incidence of landlordism and tenancy within the NMS Malay community, particularly through the mechanism of usury since raayat were putting up their land as surety in seeking loans needed to meet the pressing demands of their new economic circumstances.

Although in 1909 the NMS were incorporated into a wider colonial state on the peninsular they managed to maintain a degree of independence throughout almost all of the formal colonial period. Partly out of recognition of the reluctance of the NMS elites to entertain a diminution of their power and partly because there was no serious British aim of developing natural resources in the north through any very large scale commercial enterprise of the kind that existed to the south, the NMS remained for many decades outside the federation to the south. The NMS elites were not subdued by the British and successfully resisted the colonial encroachment - to a degree. Unlike the Malay elite to the south, the NMS Malay elite was able to reach an accommodation with the new colonial circumstances and was able to maintain a degree of institutionalized power within the British colonial state framework. But not easily. The period saw a continuing tension between British colonial officialdom which sought to maintain power and control of resources in the wider British colonial interest, and the NMS elites who sought to maintain, on the same economic basis, a say in the running of the states in their own interests.

By 1942, then, the NMS economy and society was very different from that which had existed prior to the time of strong colonial incursion into the region. Production was no longer localized and now took place within the context of a modern colonial state economy. The nature of the product was now fundamentally different. Whereas the pre-colonial peasant economy aimed mainly at the production of goods for use the practice of producing a commodity surplus was now widespread at the base level in the economy. Still other peasants - a significant number - were even more closely tied to the colonial market as petty commodity producers. Although the majority of peasants were producing to meet their own needs directly and remained subsistence agriculturalists in that sense, they were to a significant and increasing extent now dependent upon the commodity market - or commodity transactions - for the satisfaction of a part of their needs. Peasant surplus remained the basis of the economy but now that surplus was being extracted by a variety of sophisticated methods - the unequal exchange of commodities, the imposition of various taxes and the like - by a variety of entrepreneurial interests both small and large and by state instrumentalities. Kerah and slavery were no longer practiced. Productive relations were no longer localized direct and personal but generalized and largely impersonal. There was now a significant differentiation within the raayat - something which made for a greater diversity of productive relations at the base level in the economy. The changing concept and use of land and in particular the formalization of this change in British colonial land legislation had allowed for a concentration of land and wealth within the peasantry and by World War II large and small landholders - rich and poor peasants - were clearly discernible. Various forms of tenancy and ownership marked differing kinds and degrees of control of land - the main means of production in the NMS rural community. landlordism was now a strong feature of NMS society. At the local level peasant producers, Malay and especially Chinese small scale commercial enterprise, the local operatives of larger commercial enterprise, and colonial officials of whom the District Officer was most prominent were all involved in, or closely associated with, the production and marketing of commodities. While in all this the peasants sought a livelihood, and small middle and higher ranking entrepreneurs sought profit, all were joined ultimately in an economy with the overriding objective of maintaining their position within an expanded British presence on the peninsular.

On a more general state and region level, then, we can see how rich and poor raayat,

landlord and tenant, moneylender and borrower, producer and bulk handler, European and local immigrant commercial mining and plantation enterprise, British colonial and more distant imperial officialdom, and a Malay administrative elite - to give a partial and overlapping categorization of the groups involved in NMS production - were combining in the creation and distribution of wealth in the region. As I have indicated in chapters 6 and 7, it is the dialectical relationship between these groups as this was developing between 1909 and 1957 which in essence constitutes the history of the four states within the context of the wider colonial state. It is in the unique working out of these relationships that we can see, ultimately, the very different character the NMS was developing throughout this formal colonial period, and had developed by 1942.

The point that I stress in chapter 5 is that it is in the fact that production had taken on a very different character in its organisation that, without trying to give exact periodization for this change, we can identify a new and distinctive rural mode of production in the region by 1942. Furthermore I stress that this dominant mode of production has remained essentially unchanged to the present day and its continuing dialectic contains the basic clue to the late colonial and independence history down to the present day. The main classes involved in production in 1942 can be seen in conflicting relationship in the post war history of the NMS.

Certainly there were important structural changes to the states with Independence and these changed the context of basic social change without altering the basic nature of social change within those states. While the British state had withdrawn from a position of direct involvement in NMS affairs British capital, in alliance with ethnic capital on the peninsular, continued as a productive force within the NMS economies. Independence did see the entry of political elites into the productive process since with the setting up of a parliamentary democracy on the Westminster model the context and structure within which power was sought and maintained on the basis of raayat surplus was now very different. But it is important to realize that these political elites were really the new and old elites that were manoeuvring for productive wealth and power within the colonial regime in a new guise. Thus, while this elite's class identity and role in production remained essentially the same they now operated within a neo-colonial economic and political context and were now identified

with the political parties through which they sought wealth and power ultimately on the basis of raayat surplus. The traditional Malay elite that had occupied positions of administrative significance within the colonial state in a position of subordination to British colonial authority now sought the top positions of power in the four states and at the federal level in the wider independent state through the democratic political process.

Thus, while these elites operated in production in essentially the same way they now did so within a neo-colonial context which contained new rules for the acquisition of top power on the basis of productive wealth but which maintained productive relations between Malay elites and other groups involved in production which were essentially of the character they had acquired in the colonial period - the late nineteenth century to 1942 period - and quite unlike those which had existed before. While Independence saw the elevation of a section of the NMS elite to top political power that power was now contingent upon - could only be held on the basis of - the new ways of acquiring wealth and power that came with the fundamental economic and social changes that had been occurring in the lead up to Independence. This power was very much dependent, for example, upon widespread commodity production to supply revenue for state coffers and personal salaries, and was still linked in with a wider set of productive relations - between landlord and tenant, moneylender and borrower, Chinese middleman and raayat and so on - that were of the kind developed over the previous six or seven decades.

At a lower level, then, the new dialectical process of social change as that had developed by World War II continued to operate within the new political and administrative structures and practices that came with Independence. The raayat was divided on the basis of economic interest and were now seeking the patronage of political parties that best served that interest: the rich raayat generally though not always voted for and otherwise supported UMNO whilst significant numbers of poor raayat leant support to the PMIP and later PI. Both rice growers and rubber smallholders could be seen protecting their interest against the exactions of international capital and peninsular government.

In short, then, the new state continued to operate on the basis of the mode of production that was emerging in the colonial period and which had taken a recognizably different dynamic form by 1942. The state populations, it is true, now had a collective say in their own destiny through the ballot box but this did nothing to change the essential nature of productive

relations in the region. From 1942 onwards the nature of class exploitation within the four states has remained essentially the same. Indeed, as I make clear in chapter 8 above, a conservative Malay elite in formal alliance with elites of other communities and in collaboration with neo-colonial capital, has continued to manipulate the democratic process in their own favour and coercive methods have been adopted to ensure their on going influence and power. This elite alliance has remained a dominant factor in NMS politics at the federal level. This dominance has been much weaker at the state level in the north where a radical Islamic Malay party - PAS - has been able to exert a strong influence in defiance of the conservative inter ethnic elite alliance - an influence which continues to the present day.

This intra-Malay elite rivalry has resulted in a challenge to the conservative Alliance and later National Front elites as we have seen. It was very early into the Independence period that a Malay educated intelligentsia of lower ranking civil servants launched the electoral challenge to UMNO's hegemony at the state and federal level under the banner of the PMIP discussed in the chapter above. The fortunes of the radical Islamic party have varied throughout the post war period but they have remained a strong alternative force in the NMS, and wider Malayan and Malaysian productive and political process to 1980, and continues to be so to the present day. It is principally Kessler's convincing argument that this party has sought and gained power on the basis of an appeal to raayat class interest that strongly suggests the way in which this challenge arises out of the longer term economic and social changes prompted by colonial influences in the NMS. It is not just that we can see in Kessler's account of the appeal of radical party political Islam to the raayat the reaction of the latter to the exploitative circumstances that grew up around them with these influences. It is there in the intra-elite conflict in the NMS as well.

Thus the PMIP and PI leaders, while grounding their appeal to the raayat more strongly on the material needs and frustrations of the latter, at the same time were concerned first and foremost to meet their own class objectives - objectives defined ultimately by the role and place of those leaders in the NMS society as that had come to be by the beginning of the independence period.

Looking at the post war period as a whole, then, we can say that the history of the four

states both in its internal and external aspects can only be understood in terms of the dynamic contradictions within the dominant mode of production as that had come to be by 1942. In chapter 8 then, as its title suggests, I have sought to stress the continuity of dialectical social change throughout the entire period of my study. It is chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 that contain the main thrust of my argument. It is in those chapters I have sought to indicate how fundamental change to - an alteration in the internal logic of - the main mode of production in the NMS was the driving force behind their colonial and Independence history within the context of the wider colonial and Independent state.

I have not by any means given the total story of NMS history but rather, by selecting important historical events in that history, sought to examine the way in which those events were a direct and sometimes indirect manifestation of the dialectical process within that productive mode throughout the colonial and Independence periods. To be sure the examples chosen do not illustrate dramatically the full range of contentious class relations and further study of other important historical events and perhaps a more thorough look at my examples as more source materials become available is needed for a more complete picture of the working of the dialectic in NMS history throughout the period. It is in the nature of the examples chosen that I have focussed upon particular relations of production in the north - on the central and very broad distinction between direct producers and those appropriating their surplus - and on the intra-elite conflicts as figures in the Malay ruling class there sought to maintain wealth and power in the changing colonial circumstances in which they found themselves.

Thus, the Kelantan and Trengganu risings give a very clear indication of the kind of tension existing in the two states, and the latent tension in the NMS as a whole, between raayat producers and a colonial administrative elite extracting surplus in support of the new British colonial state there and the tension existing within the colonial elite as sections of it competed with each other for the control of labour and material resources in the region. On a wider geographic scale we can see too how the role of the NMS Malays in the Malayan Union question was a consequence of these social relations. It was the reaction of the Malay elites, comfortable with the accommodation they had reached in maintaining a measure of control over wealth and a measure of subordinate power, in resisting absorption into a unitary state which they (rightly) saw as a threat to that accommodation, that was in very large measure

responsible for the defeat of the Malayan Union proposal.

Contentious social relations arising from the colonial experience in the NMS can be seen, too, in the political successes and failures of party political radical Islam in the NMS. In similar vein the Kedah disturbances are a clear later and more direct manifestation of the overt tension existing between peasant commodity producers and those in the community with which they have economic and wider social relations in producing goods for exchange - bulk handlers of rice and rubber, landlords, government officials and the like. We can see too, in the Malayan and Malaysian governments New Economic Policy, an attempt to address the destabilizing effect of strained productive relations in the NMS countryside - relations which, together with other factors(for example the ethnic conflict which assumed such dramatic and tragic proportions in 1969: a conflict which was in itself arguably an indirect expression of contentious productive relations), threatens the stability and well being of the federation as a whole.

To drive home the point then: clearly these historical events have a common, underlying theme - a theme arising from the emergence of a colonial mode of production in general, and modern relations of production in particular, in the NMS. It is a theme which runs throughout the colonial and post colonial period of NMS history to 1980 and beyond. It has been the working out of the conflict between the social groups functioning within, and whose behaviour made up, that changing mode that constituted the essential dynamic for social change in the four states. It is only through a close examination of this dialectical process of social change in the manner indicated in my thesis chapters above that we can come to an understanding of the distinctiveness of the Northern Malay States in Malaysian history.

Certainly we can see why, in the eyes of conventional writers on Malaysia and its history, the Malays have appeared placid, traditional and backward. The consequences of fundamental social change within the rural Malay community on the peninsular have not had the dramatic manifestation that it has within rural populations elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Thus, while the dialectical process of social change within the rural Malay community has not, in relative terms, been highly visible on the peninsular, nonetheless the history of the four northern states in West Malaysia clearly shows up the myth of a totally quiescent Malay

peasantry. The situation is clearly one of a `late developing peasant problem' as viewed from the point of view of the Malaysian authorities.[3] Because the changing mode of production in the NMS(and for that matter the peninsular generally) was located on the periphery of the colonial export economy the pace of change to that productive mode has been slower than elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Unlike other countries in Southeast Asia peasant surplus was not critical to that export economy in Malaya. As a result the peasantry on the peninsular has been under less pressure to produce than elsewhere in Southeast Asia. To say that surplus was not critical to the colonial economy is not to say that it was unimportant to it. Clearly it was, and especially so in the NMS where the Malay elite had always been dependent upon peasant surplus for its support. From 1909 that peasant surplus was the economic support for the British presence in the four states. Peasant surplus supported not only NMS Malay elite figures operating with a degree of independence within the British aegis as well as British functionaries and the apparatus of state of which they were a part. Thus, while the NMS peasantry did not contribute to the rubber and tin export mainstay of a wider Malayan colonial economy directly they did so indirectly through their support of the NMS colonial state apparatus on which that export economy in large part depended. We can see in this the reason for the contentious relationship between the NMS peasants and those seeking to extract their surplus - a contentiousness which seems to have been(though I do not argue the comparative case here in this thesis) more contentious in those states than in those to the south on the peninsular where the peasants were not involved directly in the export economy and were outside the main rice bowl areas to the north needed to feed the populations in the large scale enterprises to the south.

It has been tempting to look to the experience of other Southeast Asian countries and to say that the dialectical process of rural social change in the Northern Malay States had yet to run its course along fundamentally similar lines with its own, distinctive, outward manifestation in line with its particular location in place and time.[4] As we have seen, events

---

[3] The phrase used by Peter Burns. See my chapter 1 above.

[4] Indeed, the question is still a valid one for us today as I imply in the text of this thesis immediately below, though it would need to be framed somewhat differently to accommodate the very dramatic and fundamental changes in the region(and to the world order) since 1980. It may well be that, while Malaysia has missed out the armed revolutionary peasant resistance of other countries in those earlier post World War 11 decades, that their future oppositionist behaviour will start to look like that of their counterparts in neighbouring countries as they,

in Malaysia to 1980 and in particular the Kedah disturbances, suggested, as Stenson and others have pointed out, the need for a re-examination of the history of the federation. But they also encouraged a new forward looking perspective as well and the question of whether Malaysia was simply a delayed version of the revolutionary peasant social development in other South East Asian countries is one that has occupied scholars and other observers of the country. The earlier outbreaks of peasant resistance - in Trengganu in 1929, in Kelantan in 1915, in Baling and Sik in 1975 and in Alor Star in 1980 - invoked the question of whether these disturbances were not merely isolated outbreaks tied only to particular circumstances at particular times but linked in a way suggesting that Malaysia, too, would see the emergence of widespread, strong and sustained peasant resistance. The question for some within, and some observers outside, Malaysia, was whether the country would see peasant armed struggle of the kind that had been having an impact in other Southeast Asian countries - Vietnam and the Philippines for example. While some within Malaysia certainly held out the hope that peasant resistance would take the classic form of an organized, militaristic, liberationist struggle in an inter-ethnic alliance of substrata across the main communities with peasants joining forces with industrial workers and the intelligentsia for example - such a development was never a strong possibility as we have seen in chapter 8 above. Among the best assessments of the time on this matter was that of Funston cited in this thesis chapter above. The concluding part of that assessment again:`The communist movement is now a more serious force than it has been since the Emergency, but short of a major political, social or economic upheaval, or rapid advances by communists in neighbouring countries, does not seem likely to make any gains in the near future.'[5]

Of course such weighing up of the chances of a communist victory in Malaysia to 1980 was speculation at its most dramatic and topical and while surmise along these lines had long been a feature of alternative thinking on Malaysia and its history there was, as Funston

---

too, continue to suffer the new forces of `globalization'.

[5] Funston, Malay Politics, p. 28.

indicated, little empirical basis for predicting that such a victory would occur at that time.[6]

And where is the Federation headed now, nearly twenty years beyond 1980 ? While it takes us outside the time frame of this thesis proper it is a question which arises from, and highlights, its contemporary relevance. We can only understand Malaysian society today if we address squarely both the historical and contemporary factors making it what it has come to be. Thus, my detailed examination of the NMS indicates that while the essential dynamic of social change in them is broadly similar to that in other rural localities in rural Southeast Asia there are particular factors which mean that the changing shape of the Malaysian social formation as a whole, and the NMS one within it, is likely to continue to develop in a very different way to societies elsewhere in the Southeast Asian region. For the time being the operation of ethnic factors seems likely to continue to prevent the major lines of organized conflict being drawn across communal and along class lines on anything like a national scale. It seems likely that the class factors in Malaysian society will continue to assert themselves in a less direct fashion in a communally divided society.[7] On present indications it would seem that the contradictions within the dominant NMS mode of production will continue to gain expression through allegiance to radical party political Islam, especially in Kelantan where the radical Islamic Party, PAS, continues to be strong force into the 1990s.[8] Much hinges, in the

---

[6] And of course, with the dramatic changes on a world scale in recent years such a victory for the left in Malaya seems even less likely at the present time. In a country, region and a world currently experiencing what appears to be a hegemony of the right such success seems very unlikely indeed in the short run.

[7] Though the degree to which this is true will depend on how Malaysia fares in the Asian economic crisis gripping the Southeast Asian region now in the late 1990s. The impression currently in the mainstream mass media in Australia is that, whereas there is very considerable grass roots hardship in Indonesia with its very serious economic problems, Malaysia, with its lesser economic woes, is not experiencing this very extreme hardship at the base level in society. If that is an accurate reflection of the situation in Malaysia then the likelihood is indeed that the assertion of class factors will be less strong and less direct than in other Southeast Asian countries experiencing worse economic conditions at the popular level such as Indonesia.

[8] Though it will be interesting to see whether the recent contest between the Dr. Mahathir and Wan Ibrahim forces within UMNO - a contest focussing initially on and around the trial of the former on morals and corruption charges - in any way significantly alters the fortunes of UMNO, PAS, and the wider political configuration of forces through which the masses seek to realize their political will. At the time of writing this footnote(December, 1999) there is some suggestion that it has. While it has seen the Barisan Nasional and Dr. Mahathir very comfortably returned to power the general election in Malaysia a few weeks ago does indicate that the contest may have diminished UMNO's support and helped increase that of PAS.

Certainly PAS, still operating outside the NF, continues to maintain a significant presence as an alternative focus for the Malay vote and wider electoral support. Throughout

working out of class tensions in the northern states of west Malaysia whether through the party political process, through direct protest on the streets, or in some other way, on the impact of the government economic policy in the region. It seems likely that any continued failure to implement an effective redistributive strategy will, as a depressed world economy to which, as we have seen, the NMS peasantry are now tied, continue to create economic hardship in the region, and that as a result tensions between direct commodity producers and those involved directly or indirectly in siphoning off a share in that productivity will increase.[9]

---

the 1980s PAS continued to feature prominently in the Malaysian press as significant rival party to UMNO. See for example:

Maria Samao, Kalimullah Hassan and Zainal Epi, `UMNO VS PAS - So far from the spirit of '82', The Sunday Star, 2 February, 1986, p. 7.

An Australian press report late in 1990 reported on the recent electoral success of PAS in Kelantan at that time under the sub heading,`Islam Loosens Mahathir's grip':

> The election of Islamic leader Haji Nik Aziz Nik Mat as the `Mentri Besar'(Chief Minister) of the north-eastern Malaysian State of Kelantan has shaken the National Front administration in Kuala Lumpur. It is the second time since elections were held in 1955, two years before independence, that the fundamentalist Pan Malayan Islamic Party(PAS) has formed the administration in Kelantan. The first, in 1959, lasted 18 years and was brought down by an orchestrated National Front campaign. This time, the PAS was in an opposition coalition which won all 13 parliamentary and 39 State assembly seats in the election last month. The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir, shocked at the `kala teru'(complete rout), warned the State National Front that it might have to remain in opposition for 20 years or more `if they(the PAS) did their work properly'.

"Islam loosens Mahathir's grip", The Weekend Australian, 24-25 November, 1990, p. 12. Article from M.G.G. Pillai in Khota Bharu.

In the recent general election PAS consolidated its grip on Kelantan, gained control of the state assembly in Trengganu, and pushed its number of seats in the federal parliament from 7 up to 27.

Anthony Spaeth, "Bittersweet Victory", Time, December, 13, 1999., p. 54.

[9] Certainly the Malaysian government, perhaps spurred on by the protests referred to above and the on-going strength of PAS in the north continued in the 1980s to stress the importance of tackling the problem of rural poverty as a priority for government. In 1986 the Fifth Malaysia Plan was announced in the press as a plan with rural poverty and its minimization as one of its foci. In 1986 the New Straits Times reported that the cabinet in Malaysia had approved a draft of the Fifth Malaysia Plan - a draft which `contained evaluations and strategies' on a number of `problems' including `[a]gricultural and socio-economic programmes to be implemented with greater intensity and socio-political as well as security problems'.

`Cabinet approves draft of Fifth Malaysia Plan', New Straits Times, 30 January, 1986, p. 1.

It is speculative considerations such as these which capture the imagination and stimulate an interest in the nature of past present and future social change on the peninsular and which help to shape the specific concerns and approaches of the scholarship on the subject. While scholarly interest in such issues of social equality is not what it once was, that interest nonetheless remains.[10]

Clearly such comparative foresight in seeking out the longer term direction of social change within the NMS suggests the need for future studies to scrutinize the continuing dialectical process of social change within the NMS as existing historical factors continue to operate and new factors come into play. And not just the NMS. Such studies of the NMS need to be part of a wider understanding of a wider geographic sweep of Malaysian history. There is also a need for an ongoing comprehensive exploration and understanding on an alternative perspective of the changing nature of the economy and society in the southern peninsular states in their specific historical circumstances as well. In so doing stock would have to be taken of the changes taking place within all sectors of the economy including the mining industry and large scale(plantation) as well as small scale(peasant) agricultural enterprise.

A strong lead already exists in the published scholarship for the furtherance of our understanding of the fundamentals of social change in Malaysia as a whole. Lim Teck Gee's excellent account of the modernizing of the Malay peasant economy in the south on the peninsular leaves the way open for a further look at this process - one which focusses attention on the productive relations implicit but not overtly examined in his typology of the Malayan

---

The day after the same paper reported the Agriculture Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, as saying that `the Government [would] continue to pay attention to poverty eradication, especially in the rural areas'.

`Priority still for poverty eradication', New Straits Times, 31 January, 1986, p. 3.

[10] For example the 1991 Seak and Bhatia enquiry as to whether `intra-Malay conflict along class lines [in contemporary Malaysia] is firmly entrenched or only just emerging' is a case in point.

Seak and Bhatia, "The Makings of the Crisis of the Mahathir State", Abstract.

I make reference to the paper in a footnote in chapter 8 above in support of my point that the Malaysian government may use communalism as a divide and rule strategy to keep itself in power.

peasant agricultural economy as it was emerging between 1874 and 1941.([11]) We would benefit, too, from a another look at the plantation economy, both in the northern and southern states, with a view to seeking out and explaining in full the essential nature of productive organization within that sector of the economy.([12]) As I have indicated in the introduction to this thesis we know from Burns' 1982 study that a capitalist mode of production existed in the tin industry in Perak, Selangor and Sunjei Ujong by as early as 1874.([13]) We also know from this source that capitalist tin production created the wider context for changes in other areas of the region's economy and it remains for future studies to show exactly how this occurred for the peninsular as a whole.[14] On a more general level we need, through particular in-depth studies, to build more of the picture of how the old and new modes of production on the peninsular interacted to create the dynamic society emerging on the peninsular and its neighbouring territory in the colonial and independence periods. In so doing account needs to be taken of the relative strengths and weaknesses of modes of production throughout the period to show how one mode was giving way to another: to show how new, `modern' forces contained within one mode of production challenged the social relations of production in another and how the modern production relations containing modern contradictions came to dominate. It will be important to explore the role ethnic factors played in this process in producing a particular and unique manifestation of social tension based ultimately in the productive process.

To sum up, then, in this thesis I have attempted to show how the NMS mode of

---

[11] Lim Teck Gee, Peasants, passim.

[12] A good start in this direction, as I have implied in this thesis above, would be a reading of Jackson's Planters and Speculators.

James C. Jackson, Planters and Speculators Chinese and European Agricultural Enterprise in Malaya, 1786-1921(Kuala Lumpur, 1968), passim.

[13] Burns, "Capitalism and the Malay States" in Capitalism and Colonial Production, passim.

[14] Ibid., p. 174.

production has been changing since the earliest substantial outside colonial contacts. I have sought to demonstrate - to describe - in a general kind of way, how an expansion of trade in the later nineteenth century bought into play new productive forces. My central argument has been that these modern productive forces ran up against existing - traditional - social relations of production to produce new ones and that the dynamic contradictions contained within this process constitute the essential history of the region in the wider peninsular and neo-colonial contexts. In so doing I have sought to acknowledge the way in which large scale tin and plantation enterprise, located mainly to the south and to a much lesser degree in the north, prompted actions on the part of British colonial officialdom and in this indirect sense had an important impact on the changing mode of production in the NMS. Thus this large scale productive enterprise operated broadly in concert with the traders on the peninsular and both served to re-enforce the effect of the other in producing social change in the NMS.

The history of West Malaysia is essentially the history of this penetration of colonial trading, production, and colonial and post colonial administrative influence into the traditional mode of production there over a long period of time - nearly two centuries - and the effect this has had. My thesis, then, presents part of the story of this process for the peninsular as a whole by showing how NMS production was radically altered in its purpose and organization by the intrusion of colonial influences in the particular historical circumstances of those states - circumstances very different from those operating to the south and producing a differing outward manifestation of social change.

It is only by combining a knowledge of the working of the dialectic in both the north and south of the peninsular that we can arrive at a basic understanding of west Malaysian society in change - an understanding enabling us to better comprehend the major historical events taking place on the peninsular in the colonial and independence periods. It is in this vein that my thesis is intended as a contribution to our understanding of Malaysian society and history.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

EARLY BRITISH POLICY ON THE NMS.

Eastern
No. 135.

Confidential.

433

MALAY STATES.

NOTES

ON A

POLICY

IN RESPECT OF THE

UNFEDERATED MALAY STATES.

1921.

CO717/10 2215

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Maxwell, "Notes on Policy" (1920).

2

NOTES

ON A

POLICY IN RESPECT OF THE UNFEDERATED MALAY STATES.

1. When, in July, 1895, the four States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang, entered into a Treaty of Federation, they were the only Malay States under British protection. The British Treaty with Johore was one of alliance and friendship, and the States of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu were under Siamese suzerainty. The position has now changed, for by a Treaty dated May, 1914, Johore has accepted a British official as "General Adviser," and has promised to follow his advice; and by the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 the suzerainty of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu has been transferred from Siam to Great Britain.

All the Malay States in the Malay Peninsula, south of the Anglo-Siamese frontier, are now under British protection. The compact block of the "Federated Malay States" occupies the central position: Johore is at the extreme south of the peninsula, and the other four States lie to the north, Kedah and Perlis being on the western, and Kelantan and Trengganu on the eastern, coast.

2. Before we can consider the problem of the four federated and the five unfederated States, it is necessary to know something of why and how the four States formed themselves into a federation. In the early "nineties" the four protected States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sambilan and Pahang were showing rapid development. In each State the British Resident, though nominally only an adviser to his Sultan, was really the sole Administrator. He was subject to the instructions of the Governor of the Straits Settlements, and applied to him for directions in matters of importance. In certain matters, such as land alienation, for instance, general instructions were laid down. But, inevitably, each Resident worked on his own lines. Apart from that, each State had not only its separate "Civil Service" proper, but also its separate Professional Services [e.g., Medical, Survey, Public Works, Railways, Police, Ports and Telegraphs, &c., &c.]. Promotion from one Service to the other was rare. In Pahang and Negri Sembilan, the entire European staff of officials was very small, and a Department might only have one or two Europeans in it. Each State kept aloof from its neighbours. Transport between Singapore and the Malay States was slow and difficult, and not only did the Governor find it almost impossible to make the tours of inspection that were desirable, but even found his official correspondence with the four Residents took much time in going and coming.

3. The suggestion that the four States should be federated was made in 1893 by the Marquis of Ripon, then Secretary of State for the Colonies. It was welcomed by the Governor (Sir Cecil C. Smith) on the grounds that it would lighten the work of the Governor, and that the administration of the States required co-ordination. It is noteworthy that there was no consideration of the question whether the Sultans or the people of the four States would desire to federate. In 1895, Sir C. Mitchell sent a further despatch to the Secretary of State, putting forward the arguments in favour of federation. He also forwarded for approval the draft of a Treaty to be signed by the various Rulers, and an outline of a scheme for the general administration of the federation.

4. The Secretary of State (Mr. J. Chamberlain) approved generally of the scheme of federation, and desired that:—

> "no pains should be spared to safeguard the position and dignity of the "Native Rulers, to invite them to co-operate as fully as heretofore with their "British Advisers in promoting the advancement of their respective terri-"tories and subjects, and to give them the assurance that such changes as "shall be made are solely intended to promote strength by combination, "uniformity of policy and harmony of purpose."

CO 717/10 2215
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Maxwell's Notes on a Policy (1920)

439

Mr. Chamberlain accepted, as sound and judicious, the views expressed by Sir Charles Mitchell, that at first the Federal Council should be only a consultative body; that the legislative powers of the separate State Councils should not be interfered with; and that separate State Treasuries should be maintained. He considered that the growth of the federation should be gradual, because attempts to hurry on prematurely a closer union would probably excite suspicion and distrust.

5. In the same despatch, Mr. Chamberlain approved the terms of the draft Treaty of Federation, and Mr. (now Sir) F. A. Swettenham was at once sent by the Governor on a special mission to each State in order to obtain the concurrence and signature of its Ruler. Mr. Swettenham was instructed to point out to the Rulers that " in binding themselves and their States by this agreement, the Rulers will not, " in the slightest degree, be diminishing the powers and privileges which they now " possess, nor be curtailing the right of self-government which they now enjoy." He was also to explain that the object of the federation was to " advance the " common good of the States as a whole by the aid and countenance which the richer " States will be able to afford the poorer in the development of their resources, so " contributing to the common welfare "; that matters of common interest would receive the benefit of the knowledge and experience of all the Rulers; that the powers of the States in the administration of justice, for the suppression of crime, for defence against aggression, and for the establishment of the means of communication would be strengthened; that advantages would accrue from the annual meetings of the Rulers; and that the expenses of carrying the scheme into effect would be met by the States in shares proportionate to their several revenues.

6. Mr. Swettenham's mission did not take long. In his official report upon its success, he noted that the " cheerful rapidity with which the Malay Chiefs have in " this instance accepted Your Excellency's advice, is as remarkable as the ease and " rapidity with which it is now possible to travel in the Malay States." The rapidity was indeed remarkable.

In the same report, he records that:—

The Sultan of Perak signed and sealed the Treaty at once;

The Datoh Bandar [on behalf of himself and the Datoh Klana] signed after half-an-hour's interview;

The Datoh Jelebu also took half-an-hour to decide;

The Sultan of Selangor took an hour;

The Yam Tuan of Sri Menanti, and the Datohs of Johol, Rambau and Tanpin (whom Mr. Swettenham saw together) took three hours;

And lastly, the Sultan of Pahang, who took longer than anyone else, returned the executed document within four hours.

So far as I am aware, the fact that not one of these Rulers even made an attempt to consult his State Council has not yet received official comment. It has not escaped native comment. Mr. Swettenham knew, fully as well as the Rulers, that in this respect the Rulers had signally failed in their duty to their people.

7. There is another point which requires attention in connection with any consideration of a scheme for extending the scope of the present federation. The scheme was a profound secret until it had become an accomplished fact. There had been no sign of any desire or feeling amongst the Rulers or the people of the Malay States that combination in certain respects would enure to their common welfare; there had been no public discussion of the subject: it had not even been mentioned in any of the local newspapers. But this is not all. The Treaty was signed in July, 1895. The secret was not given out until the 23rd August, 1895, when the Treaty was published in the " Straits Settlements Gazette." The appointment of Mr. F. A. Swettenham as Resident-General was not gazetted until the 3rd July, 1896. A notification in the " Straits Settlements Gazette " of the 5th June, 1896, proclaimed that the Treaty would come into effect on the 1st July, 1896, which was about a year after its execution. The only reason for this delay must be that the Treaty was premature, and that the Government was unable to carry it into effect.

8. The first of the " annual meetings of the Rulers " took place in Kuala Kangsar (Perak) in 1897. The second did not take place until six years later (1903), when it was held in Kuala Lumpur (Selangor). It was noteworthy for a statement made thereat by the Sultan of Perak. In a set speech (speaking in Malay) he referred

353

CO 717/10 2215
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Maxwell, Notes on a Policy (1920)

to the benefits which his State had derived from British protection, and then expressed himself as follows:—

" These States are now known as the united countries: but the matter of " union I do not quite clearly understand. But you are all aware that the " States have become friendly, amicably assisting one another. If, however, " the four States were amalgamated into one, would it be right to say that one " State assisted the other? Assistance implies something more than one: for, " if there is only one, which is the helper and which is the helped? A Malay " proverb says that there cannot be two masters to one vessel. Neither can " there be four Rulers over one country.

" It is my hope that the affairs of each State may be managed by its own " officers, so that the Governments may be separate entities."

" The appointment of a wise and prudent Resident-General is of great " advantage to all these States united in friendship; and I therefore sincerely " hope that he will bear in mind the duties and powers of the Residents, " because it is provided in the Pangkor Treaty that the Residents are the " advisers of their Sultans."

9. So far as I am aware, there were no further meetings of the Rulers. On the 20th October, 1909, the Federal Council was created by an Agreement of that date; and its first meeting was held on the 11th December, 1909.

It is not necessary, I think, for the purposes of this memorandum that I should attempt to describe the federal system of the Federated Malay States. It will suffice, perhaps, if I state that it is admitted by everyone to suffer from an excess of centralization. This was certainly the view held by the late Sir John Anderson, who once said to me that " The Federated Malay States had been tied up into far too tight a " knot, and the difficulty was to know how to undo it." This over-centralization is so acute that the Public Service Salaries Commissions devoted some space in their report to it under the heading of " Remarks on the Discontent in the Public Service " [*see* paragraph 498 of the report], and their recommendations [*see* paragraph 500] were that there should be such decentralization as is possible of the functions of the Secretariats, and that the Residents, Heads of Departments, District Officers, and other suitable officers should be given greater personal authority wherever it is feasible.

10. I now venture, with all due deference, to invite attention to the root of the evil of the " Residential " system. It was not apparent (to the superficial observer) in the pre-federation times: it became conspicuous when, after federation, the Residents were given, in unmistakable terms, to understand that it was their duty to do what they were told to do by the Federal Secretariat. Beyond doubt, the root of the evil is that, from the very first, the Residents, though nominally only Advisers to their Sultans [*see* the Treaties, *see* also Mr. Chamberlain's speech (paragraph 4 above) and the Sultan of Perak's speech (paragraph 8)] had really, by force of circumstances, been compelled to act as though the Sultans had delegated their powers to them. The Residents really administer the States, and the Sultans stand by and watch them do it. In the Unfederated States, it is very different. There the Adviser states an opinion or makes a recommendation, and the Sultan (or his delegate) concurs or approves. The Adviser is most circumspect in avoiding all semblance of giving any executive order. Paradoxical as it may seem, an Adviser is, nevertheless a far more powerful official than a Resident. The Adviser works in close terms of friendship and intimacy with his Ruler, and the order that goes forth with the Adviser's recommendation and the Ruler's approval has double weight. In the Federated Malay States, the Resident's powers have, to a very great extent, been taken away from him and given to the heads of Federal Departments; and, even in matters solely connected with his State, he may find his orders reversed by the Federal Secretariat. Putting it bluntly, therefore, one may correctly state that the difference between the Ruler of an Unfederated State and a Ruler of one of the Federated States is that one rules his country and that the other does not. It is in this light that one should view Sir Arthur Young's statement (in his private letter of the 11th August to Mr. Collins) that " it requires very strong reasons before taking the " step to force the Unfederated States to join the Federation, and certainly Johore " and Kedah will never join without compulsion."

11. When, in 1909, the British Government took over from Siam the suzerainty of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu, Sir John Anderson confidently expected that these States would at an early date be willing, if not eager, to enter the federa-

678

CO717/10 2215

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Maxwell Notes on Policy (1920)

tion. All four States were in desperate financial embarrassment, they sadly needed some European officials, and the rank and file of their staff of Malay officials were disgracefully underpaid. It appeared to Sir John that entry into the federation would be the quick and easy remedy for these ailments. He very soon discovered that the new States, though prepared to be thoroughly loyal to their new suzerain, Great Britain, were nevertheless determined to have nothing whatever to do with the Federated States. When staying with me once in Kedah, he expressed his astonishment to me, and asked me what it all meant. I told him that the Kedah Government was afraid of being compelled to surrender its freedom and to enter the Federation. Sir John recognised that only harm could result to all concerned so long as the Kedah State Council was obsessed by this fear, and took the opportunity, not long afterwards, at a public banquet in Kedah, to announce that Kedah would never be compelled to enter the Federation against its will.

12. The relations with the Federated Malay States of Kedah and Johore, the two most wealthy and progressive of the Unfederated States, are most friendly. Neither State has now any fear of the Federation, and has no reason for any but friendly feelings. Owing to lack of communications, Kelantan and Trengganu are practically isolated from the Federated Malay States. The little State of Perlis (ten miles long by twenty broad, mostly jungle) was once a part of Kedah, and undoubtedly its destiny is to become again absorbed in it. There is a confidential memorandum on this subject in the High Commissioner's Office.

13. It is submitted that the British policy should be directed to fostering these friendly feelings, with the hope that as common interests and powers of mutual assistance come more and more into being and into light, there may naturally and spontaneously be evolved the true federal feeling, which in process of time will link all the Malay States into a loose-knit federation, wherein each State can preserve its separate entity, its dignity and self-respect, whilst combining with all the other States in matters of common interest. It will be of interest to note the matters in which the Malay States—as a whole—have already shown a common interest, or perhaps even the rudiments of a federal feeling.

14. *First.*—The European staffs of the Unfederated States are borrowed from the ~~States~~ Settlements and Federated Malay States Civil Services. The credit for this must be given to Sir John Anderson. He clearly realised what its influence would be, and stood out against much opposition from persons who urged that the incompetence of locally recruited officers would compel the Unfederated States to join the Federation. Sir Arthur Young consistently followed Sir John's policy. The result is that not only the Civil Service proper, but the staffs of the professional departments (Medical, Education, Survey, Public Works, Police, &c., &c.), are filled with men who have been trained in the Colony or the Federated Malay States and who naturally bring with them the ideas and methods of the places in which they have been trained. It is difficult to over-estimate the value of this as a factor towards the development of a federal feeling. Certainly there is an extraordinary difference between this great, homogeneous Public Service extending throughout British Malaya, and the four separate little Government Services that existed ("in water-tight compartments") in Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang before federation.

15. *Secondly.*—The Federated Malay States Railway (with its lease over the Johore State Railway) is, fortunately, the only railway in British Malaya. It extends throughout Kedah, Perlis and Kelantan, and will be carried into Trengganu. It connects with the Siamese railway system, both on the East and West Coasts of the Peninsula. This railway is a federal factor of considerable importance.

16. *Thirdly.*—A tendency for the establishment of a Federal Court of Appeal has been carefully fostered. In 1914, Johore expressed a desire for the establishment of an Appellate Court, which would hear appeals from the Supreme Court of Johore. It was arranged that the Court of Appeal should consist of three judges of the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States sitting in Johore. The Government of Kedah is now yielding to local public opinion, and is assenting to the establishment of a similar Court of Appeal in Kedah. It is practically certain that as soon as railway communication is established between Kelantan and the Federated Malay States, a similar Court of Appeal will be asked for in Kelantan. Trengganu is still so very backward and so isolated that only one cannot foretell when it will be ready for a similar Court of Appeal. But, sooner or later, and perhaps at no distant date, the same body of judges will be sitting as a Court of Appeal in the Colony and all the Malay States.

CO717/10 2215

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Maxwell Notes on Policy (1920)

17. *Fourthly.*—Military defence is a matter in which all the Malay States should combine. The need for it and the benefits of it are obvious. The "Malay States Guides" was a regiment of which the entire cost was defrayed by the Federated Malay States. When it was decided to disband the Guides, I suggested, in confidential correspondence, that the cost of whatever regiment, or regiments, might be sent to the Malay States, in place of the Guides, should be borne by all the Malay States, Unfederated as well as Federated. It was submitted that it was hardly fair to the Federated States that the whole cost should fall on them, and it was further submitted that, politically, it was desirable that the Rulers of the Malay States, Federated and Unfederated, should realise that in this respect their interests were in common. Nothing was done in the matter. Since then a proposal has been laid before the Federal Government by H.H. the Sultan of Perak for the formation of a Malay regiment or regiments as being preferable to the maintenance in the Federated Malay States of Indian regiments. If anything comes of this proposal, it is very desirable that there should be some broad scheme which should cover the whole of the Malay Peninsula, and not only the Federated States. Similarly, any scheme for the reorganization of the various European Volunteer Corps and for the extension of Malay, Chinese and Indian Volunteer Corps (which are well supported) should cover the whole of the Malay Peninsula.

18. *Fifthly.*—Three Government Departments—namely, the Department of Agriculture, the Forest Department and the Fisheries Department—stand out as being by their nature departments in which (with necessary allowances for local circumstances) there should be a common policy throughout the Malay Peninsula. They are, in the main, scientific and technical departments. The Government is guided by, even dependent upon, the advice of the Head of the Department. Contentious or controversial questions are uncommon. The Advisers to the Governments of the Unfederated States should be given to understand that the general policy of the Director of Agriculture, Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States, the Conservation of Forests, Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States, and Director of Fisheries, Federated Malay States, should, unless the Unfederated State was prepared to show good reason to the contrary, be followed in every Unfederated State. The difficulty will be to prevent the local Agriculture, Forest or Fisheries officer from serving two masters. It should be understood, therefore, that, whilst the local officer might correspond direct with the Federal Head of Department, yet he would receive no executive instructions otherwise than through the local government.

19. *Sixthly.*—The Medical Department and the Education Departments should also have a common policy throughout British Malaya. They differ from the three Departments mentioned in the preceding paragraph in that they deal with highly contentious matters. It is suggested that a means of getting over the difficulty would be the establishment of a "Medical Committee" and an "Education Committee" for Malaya. The two committees might comprise experts representative of the Colony and all the Malay States: it would formulate the general policy, and leave local details to local authorities. In this connection I may mention, as an indication of a move in this direction, that, whilst I was General Adviser in Johore, the Johore Government established an Education Board for Johore, and asked that the Director of Education, Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States, might be permitted to serve on the Board.

20. *Seventhly.*—In any research conducted by the Federated Malay States Government [*e.g.*, Rubber, Rice, Timber, Medical] the Unfederated States might be asked to co-operate, or at least to make a contribution towards the cost.

21. There is, I think, nothing to be gained by carrying this list any further. All that is aimed at is the barest indication of the outline of a policy. I am keenly aware that what has been written is open to the criticism, *first*, that it does not show how the new federation is to be made, and, *secondly*, that apparently it contemplates a federation within a federation. In reply to the second point, I can only say that, so long as the Federated Malay States are constituted as they are at present, this appears to be inevitable. Sir Arthur Young has stated (and I entirely agree) that Johore and Kedah will never join the Federation without compulsion; and Kedah has Sir John Anderson's promise that compulsion will never be used. All that seems to be possible, therefore, is some policy of combination, co-operation and co-ordination, with the creation of a friendly spirit which may ripen into a federal spirit. In reply to the first point, I would say that it is undesirable, even if it were possible, to lay down, *a priori*, a complete scheme for the federation of the Malay States. Any scheme must unfold itself as it develops. Influences at present unforeseen will

(Held with the Colonial Office(CO) records in the Public Records Office in London.)

CO 717/10 2215
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Maxwell Notes on a Policy (1920)

operate upon it. In some respects, progress may be surprisingly rapid, and in others it may be extraordinarily slow. It is vain to prophesy, and it would be vainer still to attempt to work out a "cut-and-dried" scheme.

22. I have had a long and very intimate acquaintance with all the Malay States. I know every one of the Rulers intimately, and have personal friendships with many of the principal Chiefs in each State. I am thus emboldened to emphasize the importance of avoiding anything in the nature of a "Meeting of Rulers," or a "Conference of Residents and Advisers." The "Meetings of Rulers" referred to in paragraph 8 above, were wholly foreign to Malay ideas and etiquette. The fact that only two were held is in itself a sign of unsuccess. "Conferences of Residents and Advisers" might possibly be useful for the interchange of ideas, but they would do active harm by creating suspicion amongst the Malays.

23. I venture to recommend that the policy be as follows:—

(i) A public declaration should be made on some suitable occasion, such as the High Commissioner's Annual Address to the Federal Council, that the policy of the Government is not to extend the Federation so as to include any State not at present included in it, and that the policy is to aim at a friendly combination and co-operation between the Federated States, the Unfederated States and the Colony in all matters in which they have a common interest, on the understanding that each party is free to act as it thinks best in matters of local interest. All matters, whether of common, or of local, interest would, as hitherto, be subject to the approval of the Governor or the High Commissioner.

(ii) In any scheme for friendly combination and co-operation, particular care should be taken to give full representation to the Unfederated States, and to avoid carefully anything that might be interpreted as undue pressure.

(iii) In any matters in which there was no such scheme, the Advisers of the Unfederated States should be given to understand that, unless they could show cause to the contrary, they should advise their Governments to adopt the general policy of the Federated Malay States.

(iv) In the Federated Malay States, power should be restored not only to the Residents, but also to the Rulers and the State Councils, in order to give the Rulers more share and interest in the administration of their countries, and at the same time to reduce the difference, which is now very marked, between the Rulers of the Federated and the Unfederated States.

24. Before concluding, I would refer to two points in Sir Arthur Young's letter to Mr. Collins. He says, "I found, nevertheless, no difficulty in getting the "Rulers of the Unfederated States to agree to adopt any measure which had been "adopted in the Federated States, and which I considered should apply to the "Unfederated." Later on he says, "It would have saved me and other officers a "good deal of work, and, as I have said, simplified administration, if the whole were "federated." I venture to submit that the work falls almost entirely on the Secretary to the High Commissioner, who conducts the High Commissioner's correspondence with the Federated and Unfederated States. Sir Arthur Young says that there is no difficulty in getting the measure adopted: it is only a matter of correspondence.

25. The second point is in the following passage in Sir Arthur Young's letter. He writes:—"There is another factor which militates against the Unfederated "States joining the Federation, and that is the unwritten law that in the Federation "the Rulers take precedence according to the dates they joined the Federation; for "instance, the Ruler of Negri Sembilan, who is not a Sultan, takes precedence of "the Sultan of Pahang. Even the Sultan of Kelantan would not, I consider, join "the Federation if this rule holds good." With all deference to Sir Arthur Young, I think that he is mistaken. Precedence can hardly date from the time when the Rulers joined the Federation. They all joined (with the extraordinary rapidity mentioned above) within a few days of another; and the Federation was not complete until the last had joined. It is more likely that consideration was had to the dates on which the various States came under British protection. But, however that may be, I venture with all respect to submit that the "unwritten law" is a thoroughly bad one. Under it the present Sultan of Perak, who recently came to the throne, and who has no decoration from His Majesty, takes precedence over the Sultan of Selangor and the Ruler of Negri Sembilan, both of whom have the

(02146-2) Wt 34496-623 4 2/21 H&S G1

CO 717/10 2215
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Maxwell Notes on a Policy (1920)

Honorary K.C.M.G. It is submitted that the rule should be that precedence takes effect from the date when the Ruler was formally proclaimed as such.

So far as the Rulers of the Unfederated States are concerned, there is no difficulty, for they very seldom meet one another except in one another's States. So far as the Rulers of the Federated States are concerned, I think that the Sultan of Perak (who would be the loser) could be persuaded to agree. If he agreed, the other three Rulers would doubtless agree. If any change is made, it will be necessary to consider the scale of salute of guns accorded to the various Rulers.

26. Finally, I venture, with deference but with emphasis, to urge that it is not a matter in which the Government can look for early results. In fostering feelings of friendliness, confidence and co-operation between a number of native States, of which the people are as slow to think and to act as they are quick to suspect, one must avoid any premature advances and refrain from asking for any promise, undertaking or concession that the other party is not yet prepared to make. Perhaps it may be said that the golden rule in federation-making is to observe the rules of love-making. In any event, it can be safely said that it is no longer possible, or desirable, to obtain signatures to a Treaty of Federation in the manner that was successful in 1895.

W. GEORGE MAXWELL.

Oxford,
15th October, 1920.

APPENDIX 2

THE DISTRIBUTION OF LAND ACCESS AND ENTITLEMENT IN NORTH MALAYA IN 1958.

TABLE 4.

LAND TENURE

Padi Land Area Under Various Types of Tenure

	Owner-Farmed	Fixed Rental		Lease	Crop-Sharing	Loan	Mort-gage	Total Padi Land.
		Padi	Cash					
PERLIS								
Small relong	34,134	24,592	420	1,268	3,720	—	—	64,134
S.E.	±3,284	±5,688	±303	±669	±1,974	—	—	±5,705
Per cent.	53	38	1	2	6	—	—	100
S.E.	±5.5	±6.6	±1.5	±1.0	±3.1	—	—	
KEDAH								
Small relong	170,012	160,995	29,503	24,102	1,560	365	—	386,537
S.E.	±11,706	±10,693	±4,465	±3,365	±630	±282	—	±14,098
Per cent.	44	42	8	6	—	—	—	100
S.E.	±2.5	±2.3	±1.1	±0.9	—	—	—	
PROVINCE WELLESLEY **								
Large relong	9,464	14,284	158	958	73	—	—	24,937
S.E.	±1,141	±1,029	±106	±412	±69	—	—	±1,348
Per cent.	38	57	1	4	—	—	—	100
S.E.	±3.5	±3.5	±0.4	±1.7	—	—	—	
KELANTAN								
Acres	72,478	2,551	211	—	66,928	259	—	142,427
S.E.	±3,493	±865	±148	—	±4,248	±104	—	±5,840
Per cent.	51	2	—	—	47	—	—	100
S.E.	±2.3	±2.0	—	—	±2.2	—	—	
KRIAN								
Acres	41,198	25,380	3,925	1,066	728	272	44	72,613
S.E.	±1,349	±1,413	±535	±258	±237	±257	±44	
Per cent.	57	35	5	2	1	—	—	100
S.E.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

* S.E. — Sampling Error.

** Main Crop figures, in areas of double-cropping of padi.

(Taken from Wilson, The Economics of Padi Production in North Malaya, p. 35.)

APPENDIX 3

THE DISTRIBUTION OF LAND ACCESS AND ENTITLEMENT IN A PARTICULAR VILLAGE - KG. ASAM RIANG - IN THE MUDA REGION 1967-1978.

TABLE III

SCALE OF CULTIVATION, KG. ASAM RIANG

Area of padi land under cultivation (*relong*)[a]	1967		1978	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
0.1 - 1	8	12	13	15
1.1 - 2	19	29	23	27
2.1 - 3	6	9	11	13
3.1 - 4	8	12	4	5
4.1 - 5	5	8	7	8
5.1 - 6	2	3	9	11
6.1 - 7	3	5	2	2
7.1 - 8	4	6	3	4
8.1 - 9	-	-	3	4
9.1 - 10	7	11	5	6
10.1 - 11	1	1	-	-
11.2 - 12	1	1	-	-
More than 12	2	3	4	5
Total	66	100	84	100

a. 1 *relong* = 0.285 hectares.

TABLE IV

AVERAGE SIZE OF PADI FARMS BY TENURIAL CATEGORY, WHOLE VILLAGE, KG. ASAM RIANG

Tenure Category	Average Size in *Relong*		Percentage decrease
	1967 (N=66)	1978 (N=84)	1967-1978
Owner	3.46	3.18	8
Tenant	4.39	4.20	4
Owner-tenant	9.50	7.14	25

TABLE V

TENURIAL CATEGORIES OF PADI FARM OPERATORS, WHOLE VILLAGE, KG. ASAM RIANG

Tenure Category	1967		1978	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
Owner	22	33	26	31
Tenant	37	56	46	55
Owner-tenant	7	11	12	14
Total	66	100	84	100

TABLE VI

AREA OF PADI LAND OPERATED ACCORDING TO TENURIAL CATEGORY
ALL FARMS, KG. ASAM RIANG

Tenure Category	1967		1978	
	Total Area *Relong*	Percentage	Total Area *Relong*	Percentage
Owned	99.75	33	115.75	33
Rented	205.5	67	238.75	67
Total	305.25	100	354.50	100

In 1967 four types of rental systems were in use in a sample of 28 tenants, who had 44 separate agreements. These were (1) *sewa padi*, an amount of padi paid to the landlord after the harvest, fixed and not negotiable according to the size of the harvest; (2) *sewa tunai*, a fixed cash rent paid yearly to landlords before land preparation; (3) *pajak*, a lump sum of cash paid in advance for the right to use padi land over two or more successive years; and (4) *pawah*, a form of crop sharing in which the tenant's share was a payment for working the landlord's land. As shown in Table VII, the great majority of the 44 agreements were *sewa padi*.

TABLE VII

TYPES OF RENTAL AGREEMENTS AMONG SAMPLED FARM OPERATORS[a], KG. ASAM RIANG

Form of Tenancy	1967 (N=28)		1978 (N=24)	
	No. of Agreements	Percentage	No. of Agreements	Percentage
Sewa tunai	2	5	28	78
Sewa padi	34	77	8	22
Pajak	7	16	-	-
Pawah	1	2	-	-
Total	44	100	36	100

a. The data were based on a detailed survey of a random sample of 40 farm operators (of whom 28 rented padi land) in 1967 and a re-study of 31 of these original farm operators (of whom 24 rented padi land) in 1978.

(From Barnard, "Modernization", p. 71.)

APPENDIX 4

THE FORTUNES OF PAS IN THE 1978 ELECTION: COMPARATIVE RESULTS - PAS VOTES IN THE NMS AND THE OTHER STATES ON THE PENINSULAR.

Appendix Tables

I. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION RESULTS, 1978: NATIONAL, PENINSULAR MALAYSIA AND STATE

I.1 NATIONAL PARLIAMENT

Parties	*Seats Contested*	*Seats Won*	*Votes Obtained*	*% of Valid Votes*
Barisan Nasional	153	131	1,996,307	57.5
UMNO	(74)	(69)		
MCA	(27)	(17)		
MIC	(4)	(3)		
Gerakan	(6)	(4)		
PPP	(1)	(0)		
Non-party	(1)	(1)		
Berjaya	(10) *	(9)*		
USNO	(7)*	(5)		
PBB	(8)	(8)		
SUPP	(7)	(6)		
SNAP	(9)	(9)		
DAP	53	16	664,463	19.2
PAS	89	5	537,253	15.5
Sapo	1	1	10,150	0.3
Others	93	1**	265,617	7.6
Total		154	3,473,790	100.0

*Includes officially endorsed 'independents' contesting the same seat.
**An independent.

The Barisan Nasional won 9 seats uncontested. The seats were won by UMNO (4), MCA (1), Berjaya (1), PBB (1), SUPP (1) and SNAP (1).

I.2 PENINSULAR MALAYSIA (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	113	94	1,732,839	57.1
UMNO	(74)	(69)*		
MCA	(27)	(17)		
MIC	(4)	(3)		
Gerakan	(6)	(4)		
PPP	(1)	(0)		
Non-party	(1)	(1)		
DAP	51	15	652,730	21.5
PAS	89	5	537,253	17.7
PSRM	4	0	22,031	0.7
SDP	3	0	13,788	0.5
Kita	1	0	350	0.0
Pekemas	6	0	22,871	0.8
Workers' Party	1	0	1,731	0.1
Independents	18	0	52,024	1.7
Total		114	3,035,617	100.0

*4 uncontested.

I.3 FEDERAL TERRITORY (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	4	2	46,147	25.1
UMNO	(1)	(1)*		
MCA	(1)	(0)		
MIC	(1)	(0)		
Gerakan	(1)	(1)		
DAP	4	3	101,306	55.0
PAS	2	0	12,006	6.5
Pekemas	2	0	17,988	9.7
Workers' Party	1	0	1,731	0.9
Independents	3	0	5,072	2.7
Total		5	184,250	100.0

*Uncontested.

I.4 JOHOR (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	16	15	330,633	77.3
UMNO	(11)	(11)*		
MCA	(5)	(4)		
DAP	6	1	64,385	7.6
PAS	12	0	32,512	15.1
Total		16	427,530	100.0

*1 uncontested.

I.5 KEDAH (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	13	11	197,865	57.1
UMNO	(11)	(9)		
MCA	(2)	(2)		
DAP	1	0	2,828	0.8
PAS	13	2	137,400	39.6
Independents	5	0	8,410	2.4
Total		13	346,503	100.0

I.6 KELANTAN (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	12	10	143,161	56.4
UMNO	(12)	(10)		
PAS	12	2	110,620	43.6
Total		12	253,781	100.0

I.7 MALACCA (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	4	3	58,984	55.8
UMNO	(2)	(2)		
MCA	(2)	(1)*		
DAP	2	1	34,576	32.7
PAS	2	0	12,067	11.4
Total		4	105,627	100.0

*Uncontested

I.8 NEGERI SEMBILAN (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	6	5	81,671	57.6
UMNO	(3)	(3)*		
MCA	(2)	(1)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
DAP	4	1	41,736	29.4
PAS	4	0	11,217	7.9
Independents	1	0	.7,151	5.1
Total		6	141,775	100.0

*1 uncontested.

I.9 PAHANG (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	8	8	123,593	66.8
UMNO	(6)	(6)		
MCA	(2)	(2)		
DAP	3	0	16,354	8.8
PAS	7	0	34,156	18.5
PSRM	1	0	6,441	3.5
Independents	2	0	4,384	2.4
Total		8	184,928	100.0

I.10 PERAK (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	21	17	294,063	53.5
UMNO	(10)	(10)		
MCA	(6)	(3)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
Gerakan	(2)	(2)		
PPP	(1)	(0)		
Non-Party	(1)	(1)		
DAP	19	4	200,577	36.5
PAS	14	0	52,655	9.6
Pekemas	1	0	342	0.1
Independents	1	0	1,564	0.3
Total		21	549,201	100.0

I.11 PERLIS (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	2	2	30,762	60.8
UMNO	(2)	(2)		
PAS	2	0	16,973	33.5
Independent	1	0	2,906	5.7
Total		2	50,641	100.0

I.12 PENANG (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	9	4	138,173	47.1
UMNO	(3)	(2)		
MCA	(3)	(1)		
Gerakan	(3)	(1)		
DAP	5	4	79,918	27.3
PAS	6	1	31,667	10.8
SDP	3	0	13,788	4.7
Kita	1	0	350	0.1
PSRM	1	0	10,044	3.4
Independent	4	0	19,280	6.6
Total		9	293,220	100.0

I.13 SELANGOR (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	11	10	212,065	57.6
UMNO	(6)	(6)		
MCA	(4)	(3)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
DAP	7	1	111,050	30.2
PAS	8	0	36,615	9.9
Pekemas	3	0	4,541	1.2
PSRM	1	0	902	0.2
Independents	1	0	3,257	0.9
Total		11	368,430	100.0

I.14 TRENGGANU (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	7	7	75,722	58.4
UMNO	(7)	(7)*		
PAS	7	0	49,366	38.1
PSRM	1	0	4,644	3.5
Total		7	129,732	100.0

*1 uncontested.

I.15 SABAH (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	16	14	101,929	56.1
Berjasa	(9)	(8)*		
USNO	(6)	(5)		
'Independents'	(2)**	(1)		
DAP	2	1	11,733	6.5
Pekemas	1	0	921	0.5
Sedar	4	0	4,491	2.5
SCA	2	0	1,305	0.7
Pusaka	3	0	5,594	3.1
Independents	13	1***	55,814	30.7
Total		16	181,784	100.0

*1 uncontested.
**In one seat both Berjaya and USNO nominated formally 'Independent' candidates against each other. The Berjaya supported candidate won.
***The successful independent was in fact supported unofficially by Berjaya against the Barisan Nasional's USNO candidate.

I.16 SARAWAK (Parliament)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	24	23	161,539	63.0
PBB	(8)	(8)*		
SUPP	(7)	(6)*		
SNAP	(9)	(9)*		
PAJAR	12	0	35,009	13.7
Peace	3	0	962	0.4
Umat	3	0	3,898	1.5
Sapo	1	1	10,150	4.0
Independents	17	0	44.831	17.5
Total		24	256,389	100.0

*1 uncontested.

II. STATE ELECTIONS RESULTS, 1978

II.1 JOHOR (State)

Parties	*Seats Contested*	*Seats Won*	*Votes Obtained*	*% of Valid Votes*
Barisan Nasional	32	31	274,723	73.7
UMNO	(20)	(20)*		
MCA	(11)	(10)**		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
DAP	11	1	64,604	17.3
PAS	23	0	25,915	6.9
Independents	4	0	7,435	2.0
Total		32	372,677	100.0

*3 uncontested.
**2 uncontested.

II.2 KEDAH (State)

Parties	*Seats Contested*	*Seats Won*	*Votes Obtained*	*% of Valid Votes*
Barisan Nasional	26	19	180,199	55.1
UMNO	(21)	(14)		
MCA	(3)	(3)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
Gerakan	(1)	(1)		
DAP	2	0	5,597	1.7
PAS	25	7	128,729	39.4
Kita	2	0	735	0.2
PSRM	1	0	567	0.2
SDP	1	0	54	0.0
Independents	6	0	10,940	3.3
Total		26	326,821	100.0

II.3 MALACCA (State)

Parties	*Seats Contested*	*Seats Won*	*Votes Obtained*	*% of Valid Votes*
Barisan Nasional	20	16	67,875	54.4
UMNO	(13)	(13)*		
MCA	(6)	(3)		
MIC	(1)	(0)		
DAP	14	4	39,057	31.3
PAS	16	0	16,128	12.9
Independents	1	0	1,679	1.3
Total		20	124,739	100.0

*2 uncontested.

II.4 NEGERI SEMBILAN (State)

Parties	*Seats Contested*	*Seats Won*	*Votes Obtained*	*% of Valid Votes*
Barisan Nasional	24	21	94,416	59.3
UMNO	(15)	(15)*		
MCA	(8)	(5)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
DAP	16	3	45,983	28.8
PAS	13	0	13,114	8.2
Kita	1	0	118	0.1
Independents	6	0	5,639	3.5
Total		24	159,270	100.0

*1 uncontested.

II.5 PAHANG (State)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	32	32	109,921	61.9
UMNO	(24)	(24)*		
MCA	(7)	(7)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
DAP	15	0	22,943	12.9
PAS	26	0	27,490	15.5
PSRM	7	0	9,009	5.1
Berjasa	3	0	844	0.5
Independents	13	0	7,200	4.1
Total		32	177,413	100.0

*1 uncontested.

II.6 PENANG (State)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	26	20	135,475	46.4
UMNO	(10)	(9)		
MCA	(5)	(2)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
Gerakan	(10)*	(8)		
DAP	16	5	77,484	26.6
PAS	15	1	28,768	9.8
PSRM	3	0	9,508	3.2
SDP	9	0	10,259	3.5
Kita	4	0	1,138	0.4
MCA Independents	5	0	8,622	2.9
Independents	10	1	20,433	7.0
Total		27	291,687	100.0

*The nomination of one Gerakan candidate was rejected on technical grounds but later accepted following an appeal. A new election was held which was won again by the DAP candidate.

II.7 PERAK (State)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	42	32	269,328	50.5
UMNO	(24)	(23)*		
MCA	(8)	(5)		
MIC	(2)	(1)		
Gerakan	(4)	(2)		
PPP	(4)	(1)		
DAP	41	9	195,060	36.6
PAS	32	1	62,833	11.8
United People's Party	4	0	1,023	0.2
Kita	2	0	381	0.1
Independents	6	0	4,750	0.9
Total		42	533,375	100.0

*1 uncontested.

II.8 PERLIS (State)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	12	12	25,151	57.7
UMNO	(10)	(10)*		
MCA	(2)	(2)*		
PAS	8	0	12,735	29.2
Independents	4	0	5,676	13.1
Total		12	43,562	100.0

*1 uncontested.

II.9 SELANGOR (State)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	31	28	195,583	61.1
UMNO	(20)	(19)*		
MCA	(7)	(5)*		
MIC	(3)	(3)		
Gerakan	(1)	(1)		
DAP	11	3	51,024	16.0
PAS	22	0	46,554	14.5
Pekemas	10	0	11,355	3.5
PSRM	1	0	550	0.2
Workers' Party	1	0	132	0.1
Independents	12	1	14,743	4.6
Uncontested		1**		
Total		33	319,941	100.0

*1 uncontested.

**The nomination papers of all candidates for the Kampong Jawa seat were rejected. In a new election held later the seat was won by the Barisan Nasional (UMNO).

II.10 TRENGGANU (State)

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	28	28	77,045	55.8
UMNO	(27)	(27)*		
MCA	(1)	(1)		
PAS	28	0	50,723	36.7
PSRM	12	0	9,894	7.2
Independent	1	0	344	0.2
Total		28	138,006	100.0

*2 uncontested.

State elections in July 1978 were not held in Kelantan, Sabah, or Sarawak.

III. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION RESULTS, 1974

III.1 NATIONAL PARLIAMENT

Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Obtained	% of Valid Votes
Barisan Nasional	154	135*	1,287,463	60.7
UMNO	(61)	(61)		
MCA	(23)	(19)		
MIC	(4)	(4)		
Gerakan	(8)	(5)		
PPP	(4)	(1)		
PAS	(14)	(14)		
USNO	(13)	(13)		
SCA	(3)	(3)		
PBB	(16)	(9)		
SUPP	(8)	(6)		
DAP	46	9	387,863	18.3
Pekemas	36	1	108,709	5.1
SNAP	24	9	117,503	5.5
Others	66	0	221,389	10.4
Total		154	2,119,927	100.0

*47 uncontested.

(The above election result tables taken from Crouch, "The Results", in Crouch and others(eds), Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election, pp. 297-309.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS ARTICLES AND PAPERS

Allen, J. de V., "The Ancien Regime in Trengganu, 1909-1919", JMBRAS, 41, i, (1986), pp.54-94.

Allen, J. de V., "The Kelantan Rising of 1915", Journal of Southeast Asian History, Vol. 1X, No. 2., (1968).

Allen, J. de V., The Malayan Union, Monograph Series No. 10, Southeast Asian Studies, Yale University, 1967.

Allen, Richard., Malaysia Prospect and Retrospect The Impact and Aftermath of Colonial Rule, Oxford University Press, London, 1968.

Annandale, N., "The Siamese Malay States", The Scottish Geographical Magazine, 16, (1900), pp. 505-523.

Bailey, Conner., "Broker, Mediator, Patron, and Kinsman: An Historical Analysis os Key Leadership Roles in a Rural Malaysian District", Ohio University, Center for International Studies, Papers in International Studies, Southeast Asia Series No. 38.

Barnard Rosemary, "The Modernization of Agriculture in a Kedah Village 1967-1978", Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs, Vol. 13, No. 2, (1979).

Bedlington Stanley S., Malaysia and Singapore The Building of New States, Cornell University Press, London, 1978.

Bonney, R., Kedah 1771-1821 The Search for Security and Independence, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1971.

Brelich, Henry., "Mining in Trengganu", in Dykes, F.J.B., Mining in Malaya, 1920. Copy held in the Royal Commonwealth Society in London.

Burns, P.L.,"Capitalism and the Malay States", in Alavi, Burns and others, Capitalism and Colonial Production, Groom Helm, London, 1982.

Burns, P.L., "Peasantry and National Integration in Peninsular Malaysia: A Case of a Late-Developing Peasant Problem", Centre for Asian Studies, Working Paper No. 13., 1982. Paper originally given at the 30th International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa held in Mexico, August 1976.

Butcher, John., "May 13: A Review of Some Controversies in Accounts of the Riots", Paper given at the Asian Studies of Australia Malaysia Society Third Colloquium, University of Adelaide, 22-24 August, 1981. At the time of giving the paper John Butcher was with the School of Modern Asian Studies at Griffith University in Queensland, Australia.

Cooke, Elena M., Rice Cultivation in Malaya(Malayan Studies Series No. 2.), Eastern University Press, Singapore, 1961.

Coope, A.E., The Voyage of Abdullah A translation from the Malay by A.E.Coope, Malaya Publishing House, Malaya, 1967.

Corner, Lorraine., "The Persistence of Poverty: Rural Development Policy in Malaysia". Paper delivered to the Asian Studies Association of Australia Malaysia Society Third Colloquium, University of Adelaide, 22-24 August 1981.

Crouch Harold, Lee Kam Hing and Ong Michael(eds.), Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election, O.U.P., Kuala Lumpur, 1980.

Craig, J.A., "Agriculture in Kelantan", Malayan Agricultural Journal, 23, (1935), pp. 369-374.

Ding Eing Tan Soo Hai, The Rice Industry in Malaya 1920-1940(Singapore Studies on Borneo and Malaya NO.2), University of Singapore, Department of History, 1963.

The Duff Development Company's Territory, London, 1910. This source is in the form of `a collection of views of the Duff Development Company's property in Kelantan' from the company's directors for circulation amongst its shareholders.

Emerson, Rupert., Malaysia A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1937.

Fairbank John K, Reischauer Edwin o, Craig Albert M, East Asia The Modern Transformation(A History of East Asian Civilization Volume Two), George Allen and Unwin, London, 1965.

Firth, Raymond., Malay Fishermen Their Peasant Economy, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, Second edition(revised and enlarged), 1966.

Fisher, C.A., "The Railway Geography of British Malaya", The Scottish Geographical Magazine, Vol. 64, No. 3, December 1948, pp. 123-136.

Frank, A.G., Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil, Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1967.

Funston, N.J., Malay Politics in Malaysia A study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam, Heinemann Educational Books(Asia) Ltd., Kuala Lumpur, 1980.

Friedmann, Harriet, "Peasants and Simple Commodity Producers: Analytical Distinctions", University of London, Centre of International and Area Studies, Peasants Seminar. Paper for discussion on 4 May, 1979.

Graham, W.A., Kelantan A State of the Malay Peninsular A Hand Book of Information, James Mac Chose and Sons, Publishers to the University, Glasgow, 1908.

Gullick, J.M., Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya, The University of London The Athlone Press, London, 1958.

Gullick, J.M., Malay Society in the Late Nineteenth Century, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1987.

Gullick, John., Malaysia: Economic Expansion and National Unity, Ernest Benn Limited, London, 1981.

Hall, D. G. E., A History of South - East Asia, MacMillan, London, 1964.

Tan Sri Mohamed Suffian Bin Hashim, Judge of the Federal Court, Malaysia, An Introduction to the Constitution of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1972.

Hill, R.D., Rice in Malaya A Study in Historical Geography, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1977.

Jack, H.W., "Brief Notes on Agricultural Conditions on the East Coast of Malaya", Malayan Agricultural Journal, 16, (1928), pp. 88-91.

Jackson, James C., Planters and Speculators Chinese and European Agricultural Enterprise in Malaya, 1786 University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1968.

Kamlin, M., "History, Politics, and Electioneering: The Case of Trengganu", Department of History, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1977. This paper prepared as part of a larger and, in 1977 still continuing, project entitled "Politics in Malaysia since 1969" undertaken by

the History Department of the University of Malaya early in 1974.

Kahn, Joel. S., "Petty Commodity Production on the Periphery of the World Economy: The Case of Indonesia", University of London, Centre of International and Area Studies, Peasants seminar. Paper for discussion on 23 November, 1979.

Kay, Geoffrey., Development and Underdevelopment A Marxist Analysis, The MacMillan Press, London, 1975.

Kessler, Clive S Islam and Politics in a Malay State Kelantan 1838-1969, Cornell University Press, London, 1978.

Khoo Kay Kim, The Western Malay States 1850-1873: The Effects of Commercial Development on Malay Politics, Oxford University Press, 1972.

Kynnersly, C.W.S., "Notes on a Tour through the Siamese States on the West Coast of the Malay Peninsular, 1900", JSBRAS, No. 36, (1901), pp. 49-66.

Leng Hin Seak and Manjit S. Bhatia, "The Makings of the crisis of the Mahathir State in Contemporary Malaysia: Some Considerations", Abstract. A single sheet of paper provided at the Seventh Malaysia Colloquium, The University of Melbourne, 4-6 October, 1991. The paper itself was not given. I have been unable to obtain a copy of the paper itself.

Lim Kit Siang, Time Bombs in Malaysia Problems of Nation-Building in Malaysia, Published by Democratic Action Party, 77 Jalan 20/9 Petaling Jaya, August, 1978.

Lim Teck Ghee, Peasants and their Agricultural Economy in Colonial Malaya 1874-1941. East Asian Historical Monographs, Kuala Lumpur, 1977.

Lim, David., "The Political Economy in the New Economic Policy in Malaysia", Paper given at the Asian Studies Association of Australia Malaysia Society Third Colloquium, held at the University of Adelaide 22-24 August, 1981.

Lewis Dianne, "Kedah - The Development of a Malay State in the 18th and 19th centuries". Held in the University of Malaya Library(Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya) and read by me on a visit there in 1990. It is, I think, a paper. Unfortunately I did not record any other bibliographic details.

Maxwell G, "Notes on a Policy in respect of the Unfederated Malay States", CO 717/10, October 1920.

Means, G.P., Malaysian Politics, University of London Press, London, 1970.

Meek, C.K., Land Law and Customs in the Colonies(London, 1949).

Milne, R.S. and Mauzy, Diane K., Politics and Government in Malaysia, Federal Publications, Singapore, 1978. Issued under the auspices of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.

Mohamed B. Nik Mohd. Salleh, "Kelantan in Transition:1891-1910", in Roff, William R(ed), Kelantan Religion, Society and Politics in a Malay State, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1974.

Mokhzani bin Abdul Rahmin, "Credit in a Malay Peasant Economy", Unpublished Phd thesis, Department of Anthropology in the School of Arts, London School of Economics, 1973.

Ibrahim Nik Mahmood, "The To' Janggut Rebellion of 1915", in Roff, William R(ed)., Kelantan Religion, Society and Politics in a Malay State, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1974.

Mahmud Zahara, "The Population of Kedah in the Nineteenth Century", Journal of South East

Asian Studies, V3, No. 2, (1972).

Munniappan, P., "Poverty Studies and the Determination of Social Policy in Malaysia", paper given at the Asian Studies Association of Australia Third Colloquium, held at the University of Adelaide 22-24 August, 1981.

Muzaffar Chandra, Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia, Penerbit Fajar Sdn. Bhd., Petaling Jaya, 1987.

Noor Be binte Kassim, "The Trengganu Rebellion, 1928", Academic exercise, University of Singapore, 1972.

Peiris Denzil, "The Emerging Rural Revolution", Far Eastern Economic Review, January 10, 1975, pp.29-31.

Rahmat Bin Saripan, "Salient Features of the 19th Century Kelantan Sultenate", MH, vol. 26, (1983).

Robert, Leslie R., "Malay Ruling Class and British Empire: The Case of Trengganu 1881-1941", Unpublished Phd thesis, Monash University, 1977.

Roff, William. R., The Origins of Malay Nationalism, The University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1967.

Roff, William R., Kelantan Religion, Society and Politics in a Malay State, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1974.

Tunku Nong, "Something about Kedah", The Asiatic Review, Vol. XXX 111, No. 116, October 1937, pp 883 - 842.

Ryan, N.J., The Making of Modern Malaysia and Singapore A History from Earliest Times to 1966, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1969.

Scott, James C, Weapons of the Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1985.

Smith, Wendy., "Japanese Investment in Malaysia: Ethnicity as a Management Ideology", Paper given by Wendy Smith, Monash University, at the Asian Studies Association of Australia Malaysia Society Third Colloquium, University of Adelaide, 22-24 August, 1981.

Sutherland, Heather, "The Taming of the Trengganu Elite", in McVey, R. T., Southeast Asian Transitions, U.P.I., Yale, 1978.

Shaw A.G.L., Emergence and Expansion A Modern World History, F.W.Cheshire, Melbourne, 1964.

Sheppard, M.C.FF., "A Short History of Trengganu", Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol.22, Pt.3, (June, 1949), pp 1-75.

Sopiee, M.N., From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation, Penerbit Universiti of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1974.

Stenson, Michael., "Class and Race in West Malaysia", Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, Vol. 8., No. 2., (Part 11 April-June, 1976), pp. 45-54.

Swift M. G., "Economic Concentration and Malay Peasant Society", in Freedman, Maurice(ed), Social Organization Essays Presented to Raymond Firth, Frank Cass and Company Limited, London, 1967, pp. 241-269.

Shaharil Talib, After Its Own Image The Trengganu Experience 1881-1941, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1984.

Tarling, Nicholas., British Policy in the Malay Peninsular and Archipelago 1824-1871, Oxford University Press(Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints), London, 1969.

Thio, Eunice., "British Policy in the Malay Peninsular 1880-1909", Phd., University of London, 1956.

Thio, Eunice., British Policy in the Malay Peninsular 1880-1910 Volume 1 The Southern and Central States, University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1969.

Turnbull, C.M., "The Origins of British Control in the Malay States before Colonial Rule", in Bastin, John and Roolvink, R., Essays Presented to Sir Richard Winstedt on his Eighty Fifth Birthday, O.U.P., London, 1964, pp. 166-183.

Turnbull, C.M., The Straits Settlements 1826-67 Indian Presidency to Crown Colony, The Athlone Press, University of London, 1972.

Wansbrough-Jones, Lieutenant Le., R.E., "The Kelantan Section of the East Coast Railway, F.M.S.R.", The Royal Engineers Journal(R.E.Journal), Vol. XLIV, No. 4, December 1930, pp. 647-656.

Wheelwright, E.L., Radical Political Economy Collected Essays, Australian and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1974.

Wheatley, Paul., "Desultory Remarks on the Ancient History of the Malay Peninsular" in Bastin, John and Roolvink, R.(eds.), Malayan and Indonesian Studies. Essays presented to Sir Richard Winstedt on his eighty fifth birthday O.U.P., London, 1964.

Wilson, T.B., The Economics of Padi Production in North Malaya Part 1 Land Tenure, Rents, Land Use and Fragmentation, Federation of Malaya, Ministry of Agriculture Bulletin No. 103., Kuala Lumpur, 1958.

Williamson, James A, The British Empire and Commonwealth A History for Senior Forms, Macmillan and Co., London, 1962.

Winstedt Richard, The Malays A Cultural History, Routledge and Kegan Ltd., first edition 1947; sixth edition(with some corrections) 1961.

Winstedt, Sir Richard., Malaya and its History, Hutchinson and Co., London, 1958.

Winstedt, Sir Richard., "Notes on the History of Kedah", Journal Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1936, pp. 155-189.

Wong David S, Tenure and Land Dealings in the Malay States, Singapore University Press, Singapore, 1975.

Wright, Arnold and Reid, Thomas H., The Malay Peninsular A Record of British Progress in the Middle East, T. Fisher
Unwin, London, 1912.

Yoji Akashi, "The Japanization Program in Malaya with Particular Reference to the Malays", paper presented to the Annual Meetings of The American Political Science Association, September 1971, Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago.

OFFICIAL SOURCES

Afifuddin Haji Omar, Some Organizational Aspects of Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Growth Linkages in the Development of the Muda Region., office of the General Manager, Muda Agricultural Development Authority, Teluk Chengai, Alor Setar, Kedah, (October, 1977). Afifuddin Haji Omar was then Head of Agricultural Division of the Authority.

ANNUAL REPORTS
Annual reports for each of the NMS. These are the yearly reports on the economic and social progress of each of the four states prepared by the principal British officer in the state and forwarded to superiors in the Colonial Office. Held in the Public Records Office in London and, selectively, in other repositories of research material in London - the School of Oriental and African Studies(SOAS) library for example. Unless there is a special reason for doing so I have not cited each report in full. Also included here is the record of annual reporting on the Malayan Union. The reports consulted are these:

(a) **Kedah.**

Kedah Annual Report 1904/1905.

Kedah Annual Report 1905/1906.

Maxwell, W. George, The Annual Report of the Adviser to the Kedah Government for the year 1327 A.H.(23 January, 1909-13 January, 1910), FMS Government Printing Office, Kuala Lumpur, 1910.

Kedah Annual Report 1914.

Kedah Annual Report 1921/22.

(b) **Kelantan**

Mason, J.S., Kelantan Administration Report for the Year 1327 A.H.(23 January, 1909 - 12 January, 1910), Kuala Lumpur, 1910.
Kelantan Annual Report 1912.

Kelantan Annual Report 1913. CO. 827/1.

Kelantan Annual Report 1914. CO. 827/1.

Kelantan Annual Report 1915. CO. 827/1.

Kelantan Annual Report 1916.

Kelantan Annual Report 1919. CO. 827/1

Kelantan Annual Report 1931.

Kelantan Annual Report 1932.

Kelantan Annual Report 1936.

Kelantan Annual Report 1937.

Kelantan Annual Report 1938.

(c) **Perlis.**

Perlis Annual Report 1909.

Perlis Annual Report 1938.

(d) **Trengganu.**

Trengganu Annual Report 1909.

Trengganu Annual Report 1910.

Trengganu Annual Report 1916.

Trengganu Annual Report 1917.

Trengganu Annual Report 1918

Trengganu Annual Report 1921.

Trengganu Annual Report 1924.

Trengganu Annual Report 1927.

Trengganu Annual Report 1928.

Trengganu Annual Report 1929.

(e) **Malayan Union.**

Annual Report on the Malayan Union 1946. CO 576/74.

Annual Report on the Malayan Union for 1947. CO 576/74.

Government of the Malayan Union Annual Report on the Supplies and Food Control Departments for the Year 1947. CO 576/78.

CABINET DOCUMENTS

CAB 98/41.

COLONIAL OFFICE(CO) RECORDS

CO. 717/10
CO. 273/5
CO. 273/6
CO. 273/15
CO. 273/17
CO. 273/34
CO. 273/350
CO. 537/1548.
CO. 537/1541.
CO. 537/1551.
CO. 537/1552.
CO. 537/1555.
CO. 537/1558
CO. 576/74.
CO. 576/78.
CO. 576/79.
CO. 827/1.

FOREIGN OFFICE(FO) RECORDS

Foreign Office(FO) records held in the Public Record Office in London:

FO. 371/333/54186
FO 371/332
FO. 371/332/xc/A/54713

Grist, Donald Honey, An Outline of Malayan Agriculture(Malayan Planting Manual No. 2.), published on behalf of Department of Agriculture, Federation of Malaya, by the Crown Agents for the colonies, London, 1950.

Malayan Agriculture 1922 Handbook compiled by the Department of Agriculture FMS and SS.

Self-Government for the Federation of Malaya Report of the Constitution Conference, London, 1956, Pamphlet, place and year of publication not given(London, 1956 ?).

SUMATRAN FACTORY RECORDS

Sumatran Factory Records(SFR), The British Library, India Office Library and Records:

G/35/15

Wilson, T.B., The Economics of Padi Production in North Malaya., Malaya. Ministry of Agriculture Bulletin No. 103., Kuala Lumpur, 1958.

UNPUBLISHED THESES AND MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Sharom bin Ahmat, "Transition and Change in a Malay State: the Economic and Political Development of Kedah, 1879-1923", Phd., Department of History, University of London, 1969.

Mokhzani bin Abdul Rahmin, "Credit in a Malay Peasant Economy", Phd(Arts), Department of Anthropology, London School of Economics, 1973.

Bryson, H.P., "Trengganu `Rising' in 1928", British Association of Malaya(BAM), 11, 4. The document is in the form of a hand written reminiscence of the event. Held in the Royal Commonwealth Society(RCS) library in London.

Burney, Colonel H to Maingay, A.D., 28 May, 1841. Printed letter labelled `relations with Kedah' held in the Royal Commonwealth Society library in London. The library holds six copies of this letter with one of these corrected.

Burney, Captain H., 23 March, 1827, narrative of Captain H Burney's mission to Siam, Calcutta 9 March, 1827, Bengal Secret and Political Consultations, Vol. 345, No. 19, Burney Papers, Vol. 11., Part V(February 1825 to October, 1827), 1912. These papers printed for private circulation by order of the Vajiranana National Library, Bangkok, 1912. Held in the library of the Royal Commonwealth Society in London.

Day, Colonel E.V.G. Diary of Colonel E.V.G. Day, British Military Administration(BMA), Region No. 1., S.C.A.O. Kedah/Perlis(22/10-28/11/45). Held in the Royal Commonwealth Society library in London under this listing: British Association of Malaya(BAM) Historical Collection 1/23, E.V.G. Day Papers(S.C.A.O. Kedah and Perlis, Oct-Nov, 1945).

Maxwell, W.G(later Sir George)., British Adviser, Kedah., "HOW KRAH (FORCED LABOUR) WAS ABOLISHED IN KEDAH", British Association of Malaya(BAM) Historical Collection, 11, 2. This source is in the form of an extract from a private letter sent to H. Bryson as Secretary of the British Association of Malaya by Sir George Maxwell on 2 October, 1958.