

MALAYSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY: A FURTHER LOOK*

Khoo Kay Kim

*The writer of this article takes issue with a group of younger Malaysian historians and other scholars who choose to forsake "conventional history" (descriptive/narrative) and who prefer to view Malaysian history from a different perspective. Such scholarly concern, he argues, can hardly justify itself by using theories and by following trends in Europe and America especially when gaps still exist in Malaysian historiography such as the lack of detailed accounts of the lives of Indian immigrant labourers during the colonial period, biographical studies and the history of towns in peninsular Malaysia. The main target of his critique is a recently-published work of the above-mentioned group entitled *The Underside of Malaysian History*.*

*Penulis rencana ini mempertikaikan sudut pandangan satu golongan ahli-ahli sejarah muda di Malaysia dan sarjana-sarjana lain yang menolak kepentingan penulisan "sejarah konvensional" (deskriptif/naratif) dan keghairahan mereka untuk menulis sejarah Malaysia dari perspektif yang berlainan. Penulis menganggap tumpuan perhatian mereka ini sebagai tidak wajar kerana ia menggunakan teori dan mengikuti kecenderungan sarjana-sarjana di Eropah dan Amerika Syarikat. Lagi pun, masih ada banyak kekurangan di dalam pensejarahan Malaysia yang perlu diisikan, misalnya, kekurangan butir-butir tentang kehidupan kaum buruh imigran India di zaman kolonial, kekurangan kajian-kajian riwayat hidup dan kekurangan sejarah bandar-bandar di Semenanjung Tanah Melayu. Satu kajian golongan ini yang menjadi sasaran kritikan penulis ialah sebuah buku yang baru diterbitkan dan berjudul *The Underside of Malaysian History*.*

Foundation

The writing of Malaysian history by academic scholars began soon after World War I.¹ It gained momentum after World War II when the Department of History, University of Malaya, was founded in 1949.² But the work of the early generation of scholars was basically a repetition of the work that had been more casually done by British officials from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1930s.³

* Discussion here is confined to peninsular Malaysia because a large portion of the data used has been conveniently extracted from an on-going project on Malaysian history 1900-1941, which is being carried out with the assistance of Toyota Foundation. This article was originally a paper read at the International Association of Historians of Asia (IAHA) Conference held at Hong Kong University, 24-28 June 1991.

The British officials had one main aim in mind - to explain the local society to those at "Home". After British administration had been established, it became more important to show the favourable influence that Britain had brought to bear on the native society.⁴

The professional scholars, writing in the 'fifties' were more meticulous and more cautious. They were, like Wilkinson and Winstedt, still interested in British administration. But they wrote more objectively. The fundamental aim was similar. They were attempting also to explain the whole process of British administration. However, they were more analytical and were less concerned with the "civilizing influence" of the British administration than the dynamics of change.

Both the officials and the scholars wrote what would be termed today "conventional history". The professional historians, of course, wrote more systematically and with a greater sense of authority because their works were technically superior and often they were able to use secret and confidential documents not available to the officials. There was one other important similarity: the academic scholars too tended to focus on the 19th century.⁵ No serious attempt was made to expand on the writings of Wilkinson, Winstedt, and others on the history of the Malay states. Wilkinson and Winstedt, on the other hand, did not fail to write on the pre-1800 period.

Despite the preoccupation with the 19th century, up to the 1960s, the history of the Malays, before that period, had not been well researched and studied. No major work on state history appeared until more recently,⁶ although, earlier, a couple of historians had worked on the Dutch sources⁷ and the late Ian McGregor had demonstrated that Portuguese sources could contribute greatly to knowledge of 16th century Malay history though he himself was more interested in the Portuguese than the Malays.⁸

Writings, by professionals, on the history of 19th century Malay states had been, as mentioned earlier, meticulous, but they dealt mainly with politics and administration. There were exceptions. Tin was ably studied by a historian;⁹ plantation agriculture by a geographer¹⁰; and what could be regarded as the economic history of peninsular Malaysia was completed by an economist¹¹. There were other works, less elaborate perhaps, but still usefully supplemented the major works. Also, writings on the economic history of Peninsular Malaysia were not confined to the 19th century; many of the studies spilled over into the first two decades of the 20th century.

In general, therefore, it may be said that the 19th century has been reasonably well covered so that what may be called the "foundation history" of that period, now available, can be deemed to be adequate for anyone seeking to acquire a basic knowledge of the society concerned. In such a situation, it

would be appropriate for adventurous scholars to attempt to look at more micro and more sharply focused aspects of the country's history by using the methodologies from other disciplines. One could, for example, examine the impact of the Penang Baba on Kuala Lumpur society between the late 19th and the earlier 20th centuries. One could also study the effects on the *jehu* (coachmen) and owners of bullock carts, mainly Punjabis and Malays (in the case of Melaka), as a result of the introduction of rail and motor transport between 1880s-1910s.

If, therefore, younger historians choose to forsake "conventional history" when dealing with 19th century Malaysia, it does not create a serious problem although that is not to say that more need not be written on that period with the primary intention of explaining the basic peculiarities to the society. This need may not be clear to those outside the country. But, within Malaysia, there have been, over the years, requests from various quarters for information on the past and it has been difficult even for professional historians to oblige simply because the existing literature does not provide the basic answers sought. For example, little is known about the early history of insurance in Malaysia, not to mention the emergence and growth of public companies. Nor has there been any detailed study of the initial role of the Chettiar in Malayan commerce. Regrettably, there has been no serious study too of that very interesting institution – the Chinese pawnshops – which continue to exist in many urban areas and are more popular today among the non-Chinese than the Chinese. All these were part of the developments of the 19th century.

Again, it is not, for example, immediately known Chinese of what territorial-dialect groups first migrated to the Kinta District to work in the mines, and what other groups subsequently settled down there in large numbers. This could, indeed, have an important bearing on studies dealing with the communist movement in the 1930s for the tin mines in the Kinta District appear not to have revealed the same degree of response to communist agitation as the rubber estates in Selangor and Negeri Sembilan.

It is equally unclear how the Malays practised Islam in, for instance, the late 19th century, in every one of the peninsular states although general information is available based on the writings of British officials. Nor could the professional historian, at this juncture, answer more specific questions on how the early Jaffna Tamil or Sikh migrants organize themselves or relate to one another (intra-ethnic relations) in the number of places in the peninsula where they had chosen to settle down in rather substantial numbers. How many students of Malaysian history, for example, know to which ethnic group these terms refer: *Mahja*, *Malwa* dan *Doaba*? (The Sikhs).

It is even more important for students of Malaysian history to realise that the 20th century, especially the period between 1900 and 1941, has been somewhat

neglected by historians. There have been a few studies (indeed doctoral dissertations which were subsequently published)¹² and, of course, Rupert Emerson's classic: *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule* (New York, 1937). But these few studies hardly justify the significance of the period. For most students of peninsular Malaysian history, the impression obtained from the existing historiography is that important developments of that period revolved around subjects such as the over-centralization of the administration of the Federated Malay States, the policy of devolution, Malay nationalism, Chinese political activities, and, of course, tin, various aspects of the rubber industry, immigration, and very little else.

Although it may appear that a great deal has been written, the topics which have been covered are insufficient to provide a solid foundation for students seeking to acquire a rounded knowledge of the history of the period. A couple of studies have looked at developments of particular Malay states.¹³ But, if, in the case of 19th century Malaysia, the western peninsular states have tended to monopolize the attention of historians, these same states have been more neglected in historiographical in the first four decades of 20th century Malaysia. For instance, the two most advanced states in the peninsula were Perak and Selangor but there has been no serious study of the two states which even attempts to look at the effects of the growth of tin mining and rubber planting. And, contrary to general impression, more attention has been given to plantation and tin mine workers than to the urban population.

The existence of a number of studies dealing with questions of politics and administration notwithstanding, it is not clear to students of history how (and, indeed, that) political consciousness grew mainly during the interwar years. Despite the claim that Malay nationalism had emerged by about 1906, and the well-known fact that Malaysian Chinese, by the turn of the 20th century, had become clearly embroiled in the politics of China, serious discussions of constitutional issues (directly related to peninsular Malaysia) occurred only after World War I. Demands for communal representation, for example, led to the re-constitution of the Federal Council as well as the Straits Legislative Council in the 1920s.¹⁴ It was not simply the decentralization issue *per se* which requires the attention of historians but also the political views of locals who were concerned with their position and future in peninsular Malaysia. Many of them, especially the English-educated, were imbued with progressive ideas and, indeed, the first non-communal political association was formed in August 1918.

The groups which came together to found what was known as the United Malaya Council comprised Planters' Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Miners' Associations, the Society of Estate Medical Officers (represented by Dr. Malcom Watson of 'Malaria' fame), Indian as well as Ceylon Tamil associations, the Bar (Penang, Singapore and the F.M.S. separately), and the

Straits Chinese British Association of Singapore. No Malay organization, however, participated.¹⁵ The Council failed to take off.

What is more evident during the inter-war years was the rapid growth of ethnic rivalry and antagonism. The problem was exacerbated by the demand for communal representation in the various Councils established by Government. It was a particularly pervasive problem which affected even people who practically shared cultural traditions, namely, the Indians and the Jaffna Tamils. For example, while the Selangor Ceylon Tamils' Association, in early October, 1929 (*Malay Mail*, 8 October 1929), passed a resolution at their 29th A.G.M. that "His Highness the Sultan of Selangor be approached with a view to obtain Ceylonese representation in the State Council", the Selangor Indian Association, at their A.G.M. in the middle of 1935, resolved "that the Indian community respectfully enters its protest against the classification of Ceylon Tamils under the category of Indians." (*Malay Mail*, 27 May 1935).

Problems of politics and ethnicity apart, the period also saw important social and economic developments taking place. Some attempts at urban planning began when a town planner was employed to serve the Federated Malay States in 1921.¹⁶ The electrification of many of the leading towns in the country also occurred progressively beginning from the 1920s. Aviation was introduced in the course of World War I. Economic depression between 1921-1922 and 1930-1931 caused the British administration and the private sector to attempt to diversify the peninsular Malaysian economy. Palm oil and tea became important exports but the 1930s and industrialization began in the 1920s (the initiative was taken by Tan Kah Kee of Singapore fame).

It would not be unfair, therefore, to say that, on the basis of existing historiography, it would be difficult for the student of Malaysian history to obtain a sufficiently clear picture of general developments to enable him to work on narrower topics such as problems of female emancipation (Chinese, Malays and Indians separately) or why the British failed to induce Malays to participate in major padi schemes (before 1941). Not that material for such studies are unavailable but the student of history, without a proper foundation of Malaysian history, may not always look at the right places for information. Studies of female emancipation, for example, would have to take into consideration sports development, a subject that historians, interested in Malaysia, have not taken seriously. But, the day a Malaysian girl wore shorts and played games in a public place is surely an important day in the history of women in Malaysia. And attempts to study the attitude of the Malays *vis-a-vis* agriculture would have to examine the development of traditional Malay economy prior to the 20th century, preferably, beginning from at least the time of the Melaka Sultanate. Historians eventually will need to explain why the Malays were

unwilling to participate in padi schemes but could not be restrained from planting rubber.

Comparatively, the post - 1945 period has received greater attention than the period from 1900 to 1941. But it is primarily Malaysia's politics which scholars have found interesting. Almost simultaneously attention was drawn to (i) communal politics, and (ii) the communist agitation. In the past, students were often asked which posed a greater problem to the country - communalism or communism. As a result, writings on Malaysian politics have not been the preserve of historians; political scientists have, in fact, contributed as much to the subject.¹⁷

Studies on Malaysian society and economy, however, have been quite insignificant. That, in a sense, is to be expected because when the first 40 to 45 years of the 20th century have yet to be studied, it can hardly be expected that historians would proceed to deal with the developments subsequent to that. It is not forgotten, of course, that scholars from other disciplines have been interested in Malaysia's cosmopolitan society but they have studied it without a proper historical background.

The foundation history of Malaysia, properly speaking, should deal with more than just the process of political, economic and social developments, from era to era. It must contain sufficient information for scholars to understand something of the complexity of the society so that they will not commit fundamental errors when attempting to analyse Malaysian history.

A few examples may be given. Not long ago, a scholar studying the estate strike in Klang, on the eve of World War II, having sieved through his evidence, came to the conclusion that the underlying cause of the problem was the conflict between the Malayali (overseers and clerks) and the Tamils (labourers). But, he said that the principal agitator was a certain *Menon*. He did not know that the name *Menon* indicated only too clearly that the man was a Malayali which made nonsense of his conclusion. Another scholar, intent on showing that tin mining had an important impact on Malay society in the mid-nineteenth century, pointed to certain Malays (*Mendeling*) in Perak earning wages as tin mine labourers. This, to him, was an important breakthrough for, hitherto, in traditional Malay society, the *corvee* (*kerah*) system was in vogue and Malays were never paid for the work they were required to do. But the scholar did not realize that the *Mendeling* (like the *Rawa*) were not considered part of the native Malay society of Perak and, indeed, they were denied privileges enjoyed by the native Perak Malays until the outbreak of World War II.

Other mistakes which have occurred, from time to time, include the misleading notion that the *Orang Kaya-kaya* constituted a class as opposed to *Orang Kaya* (a single individual). But *Orang Kaya-kaya* is not the plural for *Orang Kaya*. It

can be shown irrefutably, in the case of Perak, that the *Orang Kaya* referred to the four principal chieftains (*Orang Besar Empat*) and the *Orang Kaya-Kaya* to the eight (*Orang Besar Lapan*), lower in hierarchy. Again those who may like to see in Malay history a *hulu-hilir* conflict (the influence of B. Bronson)¹⁸ have merely latched on to the denotation of *hulu* meaning *kepala* of head without realizing that, in peninsular Malay society, *hulu* indeed also connotes "the peripheral"; and one who is naive is said to come from the *hulu* much like the Malaysian Chinese concept of *sinkheh*. The *hulu* was never the centre of the Malay world in the Peninsula; it could have been though, occasionally, the place of refuge for a ruler retreating from an advancing enemy.

Conventional historians, therefore, need never worry that their work would be irrelevant. Collecting and collating material with meticulous care, sifting through the myriad details patiently, and seeking to understand the basics, constitute an invaluable contribution to knowledge. Labels are not a substitute for the little bits of information about a society that one needs to know to avoid making fundamental errors. For example, to say that the Malaysian society is 'plural' and that the Indonesian society too is 'plural' is to say very little. Both are not identical. Each has to be carefully described in order that they may be better understood.

Another example may be given of the need to be meticulous about details. There was the case of a doctoral student (a Malaysian) who was studying Malay attitude towards the monarchy. He wisely chose to concentrate research on one particular locality; in this case an area situated to the north of Taiping. But he failed to ask a very basic question: "What kind of Malays are found in the area?" In this instance, the majority of the Malays are, in fact, descendants of Banjarese and Patani migrants. Their attitude towards the monarchy would, unavoidably, be quite different from that of the native Perak Malays who are found largely from Kuala Kangsar downwards along the Perak river. Indeed, what is known as the Perak dialect is spoken here whereas from Kuala Kangsar towards the *hulu*, the Patani dialect is commonly spoken, and from Kuala Kangsar towards the north, the Kedah dialect.

The student of history who does not have a firm grasp of not just the basic structure but also, the peculiarities, idiosyncracies and predilections of a particular group or even sub-group in Malaysia's cosmopolitan society will have difficulty understanding their actions and behaviour patterns.

The situations which the student of history chooses to study should not be contrived; they must emerge from within the society; in other words, those that the society itself perceive to be important. External perceptions of the society are not necessarily irrelevant; but there is no reason why they should be allowed to supersede internal perceptions.

Perceptions

Much of the criticism of past Malaysian historiography (conventional history), in effect, stems from efforts by younger scholars to view history from a different perspective. This is not the first time, of course, that attempts have been made to perceive Malaysian (indeed Asian) history differently. In the 'fifties' there was the call for Malaysian-centric history or a more autonomous Malaysian history. K.G. Tregonning, one of those involved in the debates then, put it this way when introducing his book:

I have confined my attention to the peninsula itself, taking it as my frame of reference, and considering the activities of the many peoples in it as my interest. My aim is to give due weight, within this Malayan framework, to every element that has gone to create the modern State of today, always endeavouring to look at these many elements of society from within Malaya. Many of my predecessors have stood away, and in a manner of speaking, have viewed Malaya from the office of the colonial powers, or from the deck of a foreign ship. I would have you stand with me on the beach, watching him arrive. For the historian of Malaya, that is the only true position.¹⁹

But the younger scholars of today have not taken up Tregonning's position. They have been more ideologically-inclined. They may not even call themselves historians (e.g. some do not teach in the Department of History) though they write history. By challenging conventional historiography, they have, in fact, contributed new ideas to the field. It matters little whether one agrees or disagrees with these new ideas. They ensure that existing historiography does not gather moss.

The younger scholars themselves, however, tend to become impatient. And there are attempts to impose their perceptions on a newer generation of emerging scholars. Also, often they fall short of their claim when producing a book on Malaysian history. One such work is *The Underside of Malaysian History*.

The intention of those involved is perfectly commendable. The editors said:

The Underside of Malaysian History deals with Malaysian (and Singaporean) social history, particularly from the late nineteenth century to the present. Specifically, the study concentrates on the everyday world of ordinary people, such as rubber small-holders, estate workers, agricultural squatters, railway workers, hackney carriage syces (drivers), rikisha pullers and prostitutes; it also examines the related physical and mental health problems of both them and their families. As such, it is a step towards a people's history designed to make

present-day Malaysians conscious of the enormous contribution of their unheralded forbears.²⁰

This effort certainly deserves support. But one chapter in the book stands out like a sore thumb: "Politics of Survival: European Reactions in Malaya to Rubber Smallholders in the Inter-war Years". Why was the chapter included? A more appropriate chapter surely would be "Malayan Rubber Smallholders' Reactions to European Enterprise or the Restriction Schemes." Data are available. Contemporary English newspapers are an invaluable source.

Apart from that, while it is so easy to agree with the choice of topics, the approach is perhaps a little too clinical. It is, for instance, a little difficult, perusing this book, for the average reader to obtain an idea of what the Indian estate worker's life was like. The conventional historian would present his work very differently. He would find, for example, the following information sufficiently valuable to include in his work:

The [Indian] immigrant will probably sail for Malaya as a deck passenger on board the S.S. Rohna or the S.S. Rajula, two large ships which were specially built by the British India Company for this service and were launched as recently as 1927. The voyage may not be too pleasant, although the welfare of the immigrant will be supervised on board by travelling inspector paid from Malayan revenues, but on arrival at Penang or Port Swettenham, Ramasamy will spend a delightful week with nothing to do but eat and sleep in the quarantine depot.

To an inhabitant of an Indian village, who has always lived on the famine line, this is an experience not to be underrated, and even after he leaves the depot his path continues to lie in pleasant places, for he goes to the immigration depot and there receives a free rail ticket to any part of Malaya to which he wishes to go, and \$2 to spend on the journey.²¹

And also this description of the daily life of an estate labourer:

His work begins at 5:30 a.m., at which hour the coolies are mustered for roll call. After instructions have been given to mandors in charge of the different batches of coolies, the various operations commence.

Some are engaged in weeding, others in tapping, but we will not go into detail, as nearly everyone is acquainted with the art and craft of the rubber industry.

After a day's work, which is only for a certain number of hours, the coolie is able to indulge in any of his favourite amusements, but before he does this he first goes through his toilet.

The toilet consists of an oil bath, from which he emerges looking like a well polished ebony statue, his dusky ringlets glistening with oil; a veritable advertisement of "Cherry Blossom boot polish."

While he stands dusting out his tresses with his hands, the favourite way Tamils have of drying their hair, he either shouts to his brother coolies the latest piece of scandal, or invites them to a musical entertainment with "Tom Toms."²²

There is a great deal more similar material which the conventional historian would include in his work to provide a graphic picture of life in the estate and such data are easily available. Certainly, no discussion of the social life of Indian labourers would be complete without at least a general reference to religion, caste and marriage. In this respect, a document such as the report of the Acting Controller of Labour (J.M. Barron) for the year 1935 appears particularly valuable.²³ On religion, he said:

Labourers are religious and there are very few estates which do not possess a temple while few caves, or banyan trees escape the erection of a shrine. In the temple precincts labourers play "Tigers and Dogs", tell stories and have disputes settled by their "Panchayat" - a committee of five elders. Most of the temple are dedicated to either of the gods "Subramaniam" or "Mariamman" and the priest in charge, known as a "Pandaram" or "Pusari" is almost always a non-Brahmin. A "Panchayat" is a most useful body and should be more carefully fostered and encouraged than is at present the case.

Barron, however, erred when he said that the priest was known as *Pandaram* or *Pusari*; the former was actually assistant to the latter. In practically all the estate temples, there were no *Pusari* (who was always a Brahmin). The *Pandaram*, however, was not a Brahmin. On the game called "Tigers and Dogs" Barron explained:

Chess and draughts as such are not generally played by labourers but they have a game "The Tigers and the Dogs" corresponding in a way to the English "Fox and Geese" in which one player endeavours to move his three pawns through the opposing lines of 15 pawns. It is usually the centre of a keen crowd of spectators from which came uninvited advice and criticism as readily as from the onlooker at a Ladies' Bridge Four. It is played with stones on a diagram consisting

of three adjoining vertical triangles which are intersected by two adjoining rectangles giving 23 points to which the stones may move.

On caste distinctions, Barron reported that, in 1935, the *Adi Dravida* or "Untouchables" were finally admitted to the new Mariamman Temple in Queen Street, Penang. "Nevertheless," he said, "on estate it is necessary to provide caste men with separate accommodation from the *Adi Dravida*, though quarrels between the two bodies are not common, the origin of these troubles being usually due to the arrival of the newcomers." But caste distinctions used to pose a greater problem. As far back as 1901, it elicited a comment from the *Straits Times* (November 5). The paper said:

The difficulty in handling high caste Tamil coolies when once planters got them, was illustrated at a recent meeting of the Negri Sembilan Planters' Association. Mr. Rowland, one of the members, drew attention to the fact that the coolies on his estate *would sooner die* in the lines than go to the Government hospital;... the fact of the cook at the Seremban Hospital being a pariah prevented high caste coolies from going there. (Emphasis added)

The *Straits Times* suggested that to overcome the problem, fewer high caste labourers would be recruited. On marriages, Barron remarked that it

...is the biggest event in the social life of the labourer, and there is no mere registration formality about it. In contrast to the practice among better caste Hindus, there is no horoscopic determination of the suitability of the match or the date of the wedding. The ceremonies and ritual vary from caste to caste and cannot be described in this note in detail or even generally.

The Tamil in India generally marries his sister's daughter or his cousin but this is not so common in Malaya. There is little evidence of child marriage in this country, the girl being usually given in marriage when she is about 16. All is arranged by the respective parents and at the engagement the bridegroom's father visits the bride's home and hands to her parents, in the presence of elders, jewels and clothes for the girl. The bridegroom is not permitted to attend this ceremony.

On the appointed day the "thali" – a string with a gold or silver ornament attached – is tied round the neck of the bride. In the Federated Malay States and Kedah the marriage is sometimes registered by the parties. The practice of giving "Stridhanam" (Siddhanam), i.e., the giving of a dowry, including money, jewels, and property by the parents of the bride, is not prevalent among labourers.

If the parties are poor, the "parism ceremony" is dispensed with and the marriage takes place in the temple in the presence of a priest and elders. Usually the marriage is performed in the bride's house.

There are other sources from which similar information can be obtained. For the year 1935, there is, for example, also the report of the Agent of the Government of India.²⁴ The following comment on the women and children is interesting:

The labour laws provide for the payment of maternity allowances to working married women in cases of child birth, for one month before and one month after confinement. These allowances are generally paid, but unless the managers of estates take a personal interest in the matter, the chances are that the money is not spent for the benefit of the mother and child, but is appropriated by the husband of the woman or by someone else. The women are generally reluctant to go to the hospital for confinement. It is essential, therefore, that maternity wards should be provided in the estates themselves to which the women could be removed a little before confinement and detained a few days at least after confinement.

As for the children, it was said that:

Creches are provided in most estates where young children are kept in charge of *ayahs* when the mothers go out to work. Some estates provide milk and *kanji* for these children at the creches.... The *ayahs* employed are mostly old women who are not fit for any work in the estates.

The Agent's report also provides a general picture of how the labourers spent their leisure:

The majority of the labourers spend their leisure times between the toddy shop and the estate provision shop indulging in chit chat and in playing cards. Some well-conducted estates have provided games such as volleyball, football, etc.... Cheap Japanese bicycles are becoming very popular among the younger generation and it is not uncommon to see labourers bicycling to the nearest town in the afternoons with their wives on the pillion. The more thrifty among them spend their leisure in rearing cattle and poultry and in raising vegetables in their garden allotments. A few go out for shikar.

Official reports are not the only sources available for those interested in the working class Indians in peninsular Malaysia before World War II. Indian newspapers also provide useful information especially in cases where maltreatment of Indian labourers occurred. The following is an example:

Not infrequently the modesty of our Indian womenfolk in the estate is infringed. I leave it to your conjecture to calculate what should happen when an uneducated European is put in charge of an estate when most of the work is done by the Assistants such as Kanganies and Conductors and is given a fat salary and who eats plenty of meat, and also drinks much of alcoholic liquors. Most of such managers are bachelors; even when these are married they leave their wives in England. It is an undeniable fact that ingestion of plenty of meat and alcohol with little or no work to do increases and stimulates the animal passion and the Indian women labourers are often made the victims of such passions. I know of many instances of Estate Managers coming to the estate doctors and asking for abortifacients... for they said they do not like to see their children born to a "cool woman". Sometimes when the men object to the Managers taking undue liberties with their womenfolk they are thrashed or are given harder work or even dismissed.²⁵

Although there is always the possibility that such reports were either exaggerated or written emotionally, maltreatment of labourers in the estates was a common phenomenon. The point made here is that a purely clinical study tends to provide a perspective of how the labourers were managed rather than how they lived; there is, in most instances, a discussion of administrative procedures and organisation but very little reference to the culture of the people concerned.

The interests of readers, naturally, tend to differ. There are bound to be those who prefer to obtain an intimate view of the social life of the estate Indians or railway workers rather than employment statistics and laws which govern the recruitment and employment of labourers. There must, therefore, be historians who will cater to the needs of such an audience.

The *Underside of Malaysian History* acknowledges that it cannot possibly deal with too many groups but does not say what other groups are perhaps worthy of study by other historians. A great deal, of course, depends on what particular area the historian would like to study. Even if he is averse to studying the elite groups (such studies, in fact, are not common), most of the major towns still offer interesting possibilities. Take the town of Ipoh as an example. What groups would tend to be noticeably present in it before World War II? School teachers would come immediately to mind. In Ipoh, English and Chinese schools predominated. There were comparatively few Malay and Tamil schools.

Another prominent group would be the subordinate government servants – clerks, store-keepers, dressers and technicians, etc. Together with teachers, these tended to play important leadership roles at the lower level of society. They were active in various associations and recreation clubs. The Chinese school teachers were more inclined to be involved in clandestine political activities compared to the others.

There were other numerically smaller groups, apart from rickshaw pullers, prostitutes and syces, whose presence the local society was fully aware of. These were, to mention them at random, Chinese physicians and temple mediums who were the alternative to Western-trained doctors, Indian barbers, gardeners (better known then as *kebun*, both Indians and Malays), Indian dhobies, shop assistants (both Chinese and Indians), cobblers (mostly Chinese), *amah* (domestic servants, mostly Cantonese), the Sikh policemen, stable boys (Bawean) who were present in other towns as well where there were turf clubs, Hainanese cooks and domestic servants (largely employed by Europeans), Indian manual workers attached to the P.W.D. and Sanitary Board, lower ranking government servants (i.e. those with less than Standard VII English education or with no English education) such as office boys (peons), postmen, and cabinet pushers, etc.

The data available on each of the groups varies. It is easier to obtain information from official reports and newspapers on the government servants. In the other cases, although the material available is fragmentary, it could be reinforced by oral sources. Many of the groups have not yet disappeared. The Indian barbers, for example, greatly reduced in number today, are still there, so too the cobblers and stable boys as well as Chinese physicians and temple mediums. The various categories of government servants, in particular, have continued to exist although they are now somewhat scattered and not concentrated in particular localities. Green Town, the "haven" of government servants in Ipoh, since the late 1920s has partially disappeared.

Differences in perceptions indeed help to enrich historiography. Every society is complex in its own way. The Malays perceive Malaysian history very differently from the Chinese and Indians. And world-views differ too. It is to be expected, therefore, that non-Malaysians too would view Malaysian history from their own individual perspectives. No form of historiography can be said to be irrelevant. What the historian writes is in answer to particular questions. But differences in perceptions can lead to one aspect of history being more emphasized than the others.

Omissions

At the risk of repetition, it may be said that the existing Malaysian historiography clearly reveals the predilections of historians who have worked on the subject. In the past, more foreigners wrote Malaysian history than Malaysians themselves. The result was that many aspects of Malaysian history were left unstudied. Malaysian historians who subsequently attempted to correct the imbalance were sometimes accused of being 'nationalistic'. The implication was that they attempted to distort history. Admittedly, there were locals who wrote with the sole intention of obliterating the historiographical efforts of foreigners and were not too careful about the academic quality of their own work; but there were others who were anxious to explore areas hitherto neglected. If their perceptions differed from those of foreign scholars, it was because their own cultural experiences and world-views were different.

A great deal has been written within the past 15 years, in order to augment the content of Malaysian historiography, especially by students who are usually in a favourable position to study local history.²⁶ But looking at Malaysian history across the board, there are still a number of serious omissions which have remained because of past perceptions of Malaysian history.

One of the most glaring omissions is the absence of serious biographical studies. There have been numerous eulogies but these contribute very little towards knowledge of the Malaysian society. In this respect, the recent study of the Khaw family in Penang²⁷ is a major contribution to Malaysian historiography. But even within Penang Chinese society, the Khaw family is merely one of many whose exploits and activities deserve to be carefully studied. The idea is not, of course, to place them on a pedestal but, through their life histories, it would be easier to understand the social, cultural, and economic environment in which they lived.

It is not possible to list exhaustively the names of those who, at one time or another, played leadership roles in Penang Chinese society. But among those whose influence extended beyond one generation were: Khoo Thean Teik, Chung Keng Kwee, Phuah Hin Leong, Heah Swee Lee, Cheah Kim Teah, Cheah Cheng Eok, Ong Hun Siew and Yeap Chor Ee. Perhaps the family whose influence lasted longest was the Koh family. At least the history of this family has been briefly touched on.²⁸ The patriarch, Koh Lay Huan, was the first Penang Chinese *Kapitan*, appointed by Francis Light. Well-known members of subsequent generations included Koh Seang Tat, Koh Cheng Sian, Dr. Koh Leap Cheng (a Queen's scholar) and Koh Sin Hock, Koh Aun Peng, a son of Kapitan Koh, served in the Chinese Government Service. Koh Hong Tek, a great grandson of the Kapitan became famous in Foochow, Hong Kong and Hainan, and his brother Koh Hong Beng (better known in China as Ku Hung Ming) was a philosopher, poet and linguist.

Hung Ming mastered French, German and modern Greek languages within the short space of three years. He was the first Malaysian to graduate from Edinburgh University in English Literature, securing the degree of M.A. at the early age of 17. He was a reformist but not a revolutionary and had difficulty adjusting to the new regime after the Revolution of 1911. Although he did become the Professor of English Literature at the Beijing National University, he was eventually dismissed. He was a prolific author. Several of his poems and books were translated into English, French and German. His own translations into foreign languages of the Analects of Confucius and the *Chung Yung*, one of the four Confucian canonical books known as the "Doctrine of the Mean", were described as literary marvels of his time. Herbert A. Giles, Professor of Chinese at Cambridge, and James Legge, Professor of Chinese at Oxford, often consulted him in the publications of their famous works on China. One of the best known of his classical works was *Vox Clamantis*, published early after World War I, which was widely and enthusiastically received throughout Germany, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. He died in 1927, penniless, but was conferred by the Manchu Boy Emperor the posthumous title of *T'ang Kung* (Duke T'ang), a title usually conferred on members of Royalty.²⁹

Though members of Chung Keng Kwee's family did not gain similar fame, the leadership roles they played in Perak were nonetheless noteworthy. Chung Keng Kwee (popularly known as Ah Quee) himself was China-born and arrived in Perak when he was not yet 20 years old. As the leader of a secret society, he was directly involved in the Larut wars and survived. But the 1870s, when Taiping was founded, he was the most influential Chinese in the place. He was, therefore, made a *Kapitan*. Apart from being a miner, he also held the Perak Farms for 12 years (commencing 1889). At the time of his death in 1901, he owned ten mines employing no less than 15,000 workers. Making Penang his base, he was the patron of almost every local institution. He also owned property in Hong Kong, said to be worth \$10 million; and in Beach Street, Penang, alone, his property was valued at \$1.5 million. His eldest son (adopted), Chung Ah Yong, was educated at Doveton College, Calcutta. He was a philanthropist like his father and well-known in sports circle in Taiping. Ah Yong's brother, Chung Thye Phin, educated at St. Xavier's Institution, Penang, later settled down at Ipoh, and was appointed to the State Council. He also succeeded his father as the *Kapitan China* of Perak.

The saga of the Chung family, if ever written, would certainly make fascinating reading. The transition from the secret society head – practically a gangster – to his children – English-educated gentlemen – was radical. Chung Ah Yong not only studied at Doveton College but gained colours playing rugby. He was the first Malaysian Chinese to have played the game. He also loved billiards and golf. He was a supporter of the turf, having a stable and was, in addition, a member of the Society of Arts, London. His brother,

Chung Thye Phin, too, was an active sportsman. On more than one occasion "he won the blue ribbon of the Straits turf". He took to motoring at the beginning of the 20th century and soon had the opportunity to drive the Duke and Duchess of Connaught as well as Princess Patricia in his car when they visited Penang. He built himself an expensive bungalow on Drummond Hill, Taiping. Chung Ah Yong's eldest son, Chung Ah Ming, equally, had a colourful career. Educated at the King Edward VII School, Taiping, he represented the state in several games – hockey, soccer, cricket and tennis. He was the Perak tennis champion in 1923 and 1924. Later, he also played golf and was very interested in racing, owning a string of horses. His close friends included Lam Say Kee (a descendant of Chung Keng Kwee, on his mother's side), another tennis champion, who learnt his game in America, and Dr. K.T. Khong, a Cambridge Blue, in rowing. Like his uncle, Chung Thye Phin, and grandfather, Ah Ming too became a Perak State Councillor. Unlike them, he was also made a Federal Councillor. He died prematurely in the middle of 1940 at the age of 54.³⁰

The Chung family was not the only one to have experienced social metamorphosis. Heah Swee Lee's children too became anglicized; they were outstanding polo players; and Cheah Chen Eok's children had an obsession for tennis. The cultural transformation of the Straits Chinese (those of Melaka and Singapore included) is another subject never yet pursued.

It should not be forgotten that Penang was not purely a Chinese society. There were non-Chinese too who, in one way or another, helped to characterize Penang's unique cosmopolitanism. Penang was indeed also the home of the *Jawi Pekan* (local-born Indian Muslims and usually of mixed parentage). The two important founders of these families were Kader Mydin Merican who was appointed the *Kapitan Kling* also by Francis Light, and Mohamed Merican Noordin. Another highly respected Muslim, not from the *Jawi Pekan* families but of India origin, was Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar who is practically unknown in Malaysian history although he was the first non-European to be appointed to the Malayan (Straits) Civil Service. A graduate of Cambridge University, he translated, in 1930, the *Quran* direct from Arabic to English. He swerved in Penang as well as Singapore; in the early 1920s, he was a District Judge in Singapore, and was a very influential member of the Muslim community in both the Settlements.³¹

Another graduate of the Cambridge University also settled down in Penang and became the first Indian to practise law in Malaysia – P.K. Nambyar. He was also the first Indian to be appointed to the Straits Legislative Council, in 1923. His appointment to the Council was controversial as he was a Malayali; the Tamils protested. Nambyar passed away in 1928; and his son, Dr. N.K. Menon, M.D., L.R.C.P. & S., L.R.F.P. & S., educated in England and Europe, succeeded his father as an important leader of Malayan Indian politics,

a role which was played with even greater efficacy by N. Raghavan, son-in-law of P.K. Nambyar. Raghavan was admitted to practise as advocate and solicitor in the local courts in early 1929.³² During the War (1941-1945), Raghavan was an ardent supporter of Subhas Chandra Bose and at the end of the War, left Malaya to serve the Indian Government. He was appointed Indian Ambassador to Russia in 1947.³³

Another Indian whose appointment to the Straits Legislative Council (in succession to P.K. Nambyar) also initially led to considerable controversy (because he was a Muslim), was H.H. Abdool Cader. He too was born in India and came as a youth to Malaya with his father, Hasanally Abdool Cader, who became a leading member of the Penang Muslim community. The young Abdool Cader studied at Raffles Institution, Singapore, Penang Free School, and Country High School in Ilford, United Kingdom. He then joined Lincoln's Inn, and Christ's College, Cambridge University, where he took up the Law Tripos, and in 1912, was called to the Bar.³⁴ He was knighted soon after World War II.

That so far is roughly the Penang scenario with a brief reference to Perak. Where the Chinese are concerned, Perak and Selangor, at least, deserve the same attention. In certain instances, the "Penang connection" was very strong. Foo Choo Choon (the 'Tin King'), Cheah Cheang Lim (Federal Councillor), Loke Chow Kit (a Chinese leader in Selangor), and Goh Hock Huat (the 'Pineapple King') were among those who traced their origins to Penang. Other Chinese who participated extensively in the development of Perak and/or Selangor include: Yau Tet Shin, Leong Fee, Leong Sin Nam, Eu Tong Sen, Lam Looking, Chan Sow Lin, Goh Ah Ngee, San Peng, Ho Man, Choo Cheng Khay, Lai Tet Loke, and Choo Kia Peng.

Leaders of the Indian and Ceylonese communities too have received practically no attention. Names such as Chettiappa Chettiar, M. Rethnasamy Pillay, V.K. Murugasa Pillay, Dr. Ismail Mohd Ghows, Louis Thivy, M. Cumarasmi, S.N. Veerasamy, S.B. Sinha, B.K. Chengappa, L.R. Chandran, Dr. S.R. Krishnan, S.G. Goho and J.R. Vethevanam are unknown to students of Malaysian history. They were men who initiated or attempted to initiate change. Murugasa Pillay, for example, although a Ceylon Tamil, supported the *Adi Dravida* movement.³⁵ S.B. Sinha (already a member of the English Bar when he came to the country) and Louis Thivy (a planter and father of John Thivy, founder of the Malaysian Indian Congress or M.I.C.) were the two persons who first issued invitations for a meeting to be convened in Kuala Lumpur with the intention of forming a 'Malaya Indian Association'. The meeting which was duly held on January 25, 1936, led eventually to the formation of the Central Indian Association of Malaya (C.I.A.M.) at the end of the year.³⁶ J.R. Vethevanam, on the other hand, as a member of both the Kuala Lumpur Sanitary Board and the Selangor State Council, unceasingly called for greater

communal cooperation. It is patently untrue, therefore, to say that, in Malaysian historiography, too much attention has been focused on the elite groups.

In the case of the modern Malay society, clearly the reverse is true. Preoccupation with the subject of nationalism has led to practically an exclusive emphasis on personalities who did not belong to the establishment. Ibrahim Yaacob, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmi, Ahmad Boestamam, Ishak Haji Muhammad, and Harun Aminurrashid have found secure places in Malaysian history textbooks while the society, in general, has no memory of persons such as Mohd Zain Ariffin (the first Malay to study at Oxford University), Dr. Abdul Latif bin Dato Abdul Razak (first Malay to graduate from the King Edward VII Medical College, Singapore), Abdul Wahab bin Tok Muda Abdul Aziz (the first Malay to practise law in the Federated Malay States),³⁷ Raja Musa bin Raja Bot (the first Malay to be called to the Bar of England; also the first Malay to be admitted as an advocate and solicitor of the Supreme Court of the F.M.S.; and the first Malay in the country to be appointed a Judge), and Raja Said Tauphy bin Sultan Abdullah (the first Malay to be appointed to the Malayan Civil Service). The last-mentioned was also the first non-European to be made Chairman of a Sanitary Board (in the case, the Larut and Matang Sanitary Board, in 1924).³⁸ Even Malay leaders of the Malayan Communist Party – Musa Ahmad, Rashid Mydin, Shamsiah Fakeh, and Abdullah C.D. – are better known.

Personalities apart, there is also a tendency to focus attention on the Melaka Baba to the exclusion of the Penang Baba. Sometimes it is simply assumed that they were identical. Penang Baba were, in general, Chinese speaking (mainly Hokkien) while the Melaka Baba spoke their own form of Malay. They spoke no Chinese. There were no close social ties between the two but there was close affinity between Melaka Baba and Singapore Baba for the latter indeed originated from Melaka. The largest Chinese *peranakan* (their Hokkien dialect is singularly different) community today is, in fact, found in Kelantan. They have been completely neglected.

The Indian *peranakan* of Melaka – better known as Melaka Chitty – are also different from the *Jawi Pekan* (Muslims) of Penang. The former are Hindus although they too once did not speak their mother tongue. But the *Jawi Pekan* spoke their mother tongue (Tamil or Malayalam) fluently. Similarly, there is a difference between the Eurasians of Melaka (descendants of Portuguese and Dutch) and the Eurasians of Penang who once formed a substantial section of the Penang community. They founded the well-known Penang Recreation Club in the 1880s. Some of the better known surnames among them include: Reutens, Klassen, Scully, Rozells, Foley, Oliveiro, Jeremiah, Aeria, Carrier, Robless, and Jalleh.

Ipoh too had a prominent Eurasian community; it comprised mainly Ceylon Burghers Jansz, Grenier, Van Hagt, LaBrooy, Moreira, Speldwinde, and Ashby. Both the Eurasians of Seremban (van Huizen, Sta Maria, Pinto, Nunis, etc.) largely of Melaka origin, and those of Kuala Lumpur (Martin, Dorall, Jumeaux, O'Hara, Koelmeyer, Leembrugen, Yzelman, Danker, Keum, etc.), of more diverse origins, have yet to be studied too. For a society which is so colourful, it is surprising that historians (or for the matter sociologists) should have neglected the study of its ethnic groups or, indeed, the society as a whole.

In more recent years, scholars have been more inclined to look for evidence of class formation/struggle instead of examining the peculiarities of the society which distinguish it from other societies for no two societies are identical. It is, at the same time, misleading to generalize based on one or two examples. Depth is undoubtedly important in social studies; so is breadth. It would be ludicrous to claim that having studied Lower Perak thoroughly, one is in the happy position of being able to understand Perak society fully. Again, for outsiders, similarities, perhaps, ought to be emphasized more than differences for they cannot possibly cope with all the peculiarities of a society with which they have but minimal contact. But, for locals, understanding differences is important for a number of reasons. Politically, for example, Kelantan has shown itself to be quite unique. Why? Linguistically, Selangor can lay little claim to having a dialect of its own, unlike most of the other states. Dialect, therefore, cannot be an agent for fostering affinity and cohesiveness among Selangor Malays. And, without sufficient information about the social background of a particular person, it is difficult to understand even today why he is appointed to or moved from a position in politics or the bureaucracy or the corporate sector.

Not only has the human aspect of Malaysian history been neglected, there has been practically no serious study of the history of towns and, related to that, the study of local government. Such local bodies (known as Sanitary Boards before World War II) had been in existence since 1890. The Kuala Lumpur Sanitary Board was the first to be established. By 1893, many more Sanitary Boards came into existence, mainly in Perak. Although members of the Boards were nominated, such local bodies gave considerable opportunities to Malaysians to learn, through practice, the duties of government. In the earlier years, many of the members, being not English-educated, were inclined to be passive. By the 1920s and 1930s, the situation had changed radically. Members of the Kuala Lumpur Sanitary Board (such as H.B. Talalla, Khoo Keng Hooi, Khan Ah Choong, W.J.P. Grenier and J.R. Vethevanam) in particular, were vocal, continually urging the government to place firmer trust on the local people by giving greater autonomy to the local authorities. For those interested in the study of the growth of political consciousness in Malaysia, a fairly comprehensive knowledge of local participation in local government, since the 1890s, would enable them to obtain a better perspective

of the various stages of development of local understanding of political ideas and constitutional issues.

As for the history of towns its place in Malaysian historiography, in general, is undeniably of fundamental importance. Every major town, at least, being very much an individual unit in itself, has to be generally understood by any student of Malaysian history before it is possible for him to form an overall impression of the society. Few studies of the Malaysian Indian population, for example, have bothered to look at urban Indians. Their number may not be large but, in most of the major towns, they have been, nonetheless, an important minority group. Even in the past, in the urban areas, not all Indians were manual labourers. There were businessmen, shopkeepers, restaurant owners, school teachers, English-educated government servants, dhobies, barbers, and, last but not least, the *Chettiar*, without whom numerous Chinese businessmen would have had considerable difficulty obtaining ready cash to carry on trading.

Ignorance of the history of Malaysian towns could also distort one's perspective of Malaysian history. For example, it is not realized that the popular impression of Selangor is too Kuala Lumpur-centric. Although Kuala Lumpur was once the gateway to most of the Selangor mines and also the major storehouse for tin (its importance reinforced by the fact that it became the federal capital in 1896), economically, it was, since the turn of the present century, less important than Klang. In fact, by the end of the 19th century, Klang had become the centre of an expanding agricultural area which included Kuala Langat, Jurga and Kuala Selangor. Despite the transfer of the state capital to Kuala Lumpur in 1880, Klang remained important because it had replaced Kuala Selangor, since the mid-nineteenth century, as the chief port of Selangor. In 1901, the new port (Port Swettenham) was located downstream but the growth of Port Swettenham into an international port greatly benefitted Klang so that when the manufacturing industry developed, beginning from the 1920s (Tan Kah Kee of Singapore, was the pioneer opening a pineapple canning factory there), Klang, owing to its proximity to Port Swettenham, was chosen as the primary industrial site in the country. The canning of pineapple was subsequently reinforced by the manufacture of rubber goods. The first rubber factory, started in 1928, was the Shum Yip Leong Rubber Works. This was followed, in 1935, by the Malayan Rubber Works (owned by Ng Teong Kiat) and Bata Shoe Company, in 1937. On the eve of World War II, the Fung Keong Rubber Manufacturing of Hong Kong established a branch in Klang.³⁹

Most of the major Malaysian towns emerged after the establishment of British administration. Older towns and villages were either relocated or rebuilt. The towns which expanded more rapidly, such as Taiping and Teluk Anson (now Teluk Intan), eventually incorporated neighbouring villages which were far

older. For example, Kota, Klian Pauh, Assam Kumbang and Tupai became part of Taiping, and Durian Sebatang, Pasir Berdamar, Changkat Jong and Batak Rabbit became part of Teluk Anson.

Because of past neglect, the task of writing the history of Malaysian towns is now an enormous one. A further disadvantage is that valuable records were lost during World War II. But the difficulty is not insurmountable because fragmentary information at least is available from various sources: annual reports, government gazettes, district office files, school magazines, and also newspapers. For example, the *Malay Mail* (Kuala Lumpur) contains a great deal of information on Seremban, and useful data on the major towns of Kedah can be gleaned from the *Pinang Gazette* and *Straits Echo* (Penang). However, unless the subject is seen to be important by students of history, the gaps will never be filled.

Concluding Remarks

The kind of history espoused here is, in many respects, opposed to current trends. It has been explained that in Europe and America,

... the rise of social and economic history, at first hesitatingly during the interwar period and more vigorously after 1945, has tended to undermine the long-standing dominance of political history with its proclivity to extol national achievements. It was more interested in the underlying economic structures inside a particular society and the collective action and interaction of divergent social groups; it was moved by a different scholarly concern, also by a different ideological commitment...⁴⁰

The new emphasis was on "forces of change and on the under-privileged, rather than on the forces of national glory and status quo preservation. There was a potential for creating an identification different to the one the 'nationalist historiography' of the previous decades had been working towards."⁴¹ The influence of sociology and social anthropology did much to turn historical attention away from national figures as kings, feudal lords and capitalists.

The key term here is *scholarly concern*. Historiographical development in Europe and America, in the post - 1945 years, took off from a position where there was almost a surfeit of writings on "power-politics, diplomacy, decision-making and great men."⁴² The old could serve as a foundation for the new. It has been shown that the same cannot be said of Malaysian historiography. Scholarly concern can hardly justify itself by following trends in Europe and America when so much of the basic substance of Malaysian history is yet unknown and, therefore, even the serious students of Malaysian history have not been introduced to it. How can they seek to try to understand "economic structures", "interaction of divergent social groups" and "forces of change"

within their own society when they do not have a clear idea of what happened in the past? Foreign scholars may be content to have a general view of Malaysian history and society, so long as it is sufficient to enable them to arrive at certain broad conclusions; but, Malaysian students, as part of the general populace, are, therefore, also often caught up in the throes of ethnic friction, political rivalry, polemics on moral values and the formulation of controversial government policies, and can hardly afford to have merely a bird's eye-view of their own history.

It is not even implied here that the volume of 'nationalistic historiography' should be augmented and that more should be written to extol 'great Malaysians' or to glorify the country's achievements. History is about *both* leaders and the common people; it is past politics as well as past economics and society. There need be no rejection of the use of theories and models to explain past phenomena. What is advocated here is simply that the cart must come before the horse and the flesh and the form should complement each other. The younger scholar, working on Malaysian history, runs the risk of making erroneous assumptions if he chooses to ignore descriptive/conventional history. The writing of history must involve more than the use of labels and models. The ultimate test of a historian's work is not just the methodology used; his work must survive the baptism of verification and validation.

NOTES

- ¹ See L.A. Mills, "British Malaya, 1824-1867" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malayan Branch (JMBRAS)*, III: 2, 1925.
- ² Undergraduates were required to write academic exercises on Malaysian history. (See K.G. Tregonning, *Malaysian Historical Sources*, Singapore, 1965). Among the lecturers, the earliest to do research on Malaysian history were C.D. Cowan and Graham Irwin. Both subsequently worked in Malaysian history for their Ph.D. degrees. Both theses were published. See Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control*, (London, 1961) and Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry* (Singapore, 1955).
- ³ Among the works of British officials were: P.G. Begbie, *The Malayan Peninsula Embracing its History, Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants, Politics, Natural History, etc. from the Earliest Records* (Madras, 1834); T.J. Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (London, 1839); R.J. Wilkinson, *A History of the Peninsular Malays with Chapters on Perak and Selangor* (Singapore, 1923); and R.O. Winstedt, "A History of Malaya", *JMBRAS*, XIII: i, 1935.

- ⁴ See in particular Frank A. Swettenham, *British Malaya: An Account of the Origins and Progress of British Influence in Malaya* (London, 1906).
- ⁵ Vide Emily Sadka, *The Protected Malay States, 1874-1895* (Kuala Lumpur, 1968); and C.M. Turnbull, *The Straits Settlements 1826-67: Indian Presidency to Crown Colony* (London, 1972).
- ⁶ See Leonard Y. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor 1641-1728: Economic and Political Developments* (Kuala Lumpur, 1975); and Barbara Watson Andaya, *Perak: The Abode of Grace – A Study of an Eighteenth Century Malay State* (Kuala Lumpur, 1979).
- ⁷ The late David Bassett and B. Harrison.
- ⁸ See, for example, "Johore Lama in the Sixteenth Century" *JMBRAS*, XXVIII: 2, 1915.
- ⁹ Wong Lin Ken, *The Malayan Tin Industry to 1914* (Tucson, 1965).
- ¹⁰ James C. Jackson, *Planters and Speculators. Chinese and European Agricultural Enterprise in Malaya, 1786-1921* (Kuala Lumpur, 1968).
- ¹¹ Lim Chong Yah, *The Economic Development of Modern Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur, 1967).
- ¹² See J. Norman Parmer, *Colonial Labour Policy and Administration: A History of Labour in the Rubber Plantation Industry in Malaya, c.1910-1914* (New York, 1960); W.R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven, 1967); K.K. Ghosh, *Twentieth Century Malaysia: Politics of Decentralization of Power 1920-1929* (Calcutta, 1977); Jagjit Singh Sidhu, *Administration in the Federated Malay States, 1896-1920* (Kuala Lumpur, 1980); and Yeo Kim Wah, *The Politics of Decentralization, Colonial Controversy in Malaya 1920-1929* (Kuala Lumpur, 1982). See also John Drabble, *Rubber in Malaya 1876-1922* (Kuala Lumpur, 1973) and Lim Teck Ghee, *Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy in Colonial Malaya 1874-1941* (Kuala Lumpur, 1977).
- ¹³ See Leslie R. Robert (Shaharil Talib), 'Kelantan 1890-1939: Government in Transition' (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Malaya, 1973); Shaharil Talib, *After Its Own Image: The Trengganu Experience 1881-1941* (Singapore, 1984).
- ¹⁴ See Khoo Kay Kim, "The First Indian Members of the Straits Legislative and Federal Councils", *Malaysia in History*, XVI: 1, 1973.

- ¹⁵ "United Malayā Council", *Malay Mail*, April 1, 1918.
- ¹⁶ The Town Planner, Charles C. Reade, was originally temporarily loaned to the Federated Malay States by South Australia. He was appointed permanent Federal Head of the Town Planning Department in 1926.
- ¹⁷ See, for example, K.J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur, 1965); Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics* (London, 1970) and R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Politics and Government in Malaysia* (1977). Numerous articles were published in journals (such as *Foreign Affairs*, *Pacific Affairs*, *Far Eastern Survey*, *United Asia*, *International Affairs*, etc.) in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s.
- ¹⁸ "Exchange at the Upstream Ends: Notes towards a Functional Model at the Coastal State in Southeast Asia" in Karl L. Hutterer (ed.), *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia: Perspectives from Prehistory, History and Ethnography* (University of Michigan, 1977). It is also a moot point whether this model applies to Minangkabau (Sumatra) where the *wellanschauung* of the people was radically different.
- ¹⁹ *A History of Modern Malaya* (London, 1964), Preface.
- ²⁰ Peter J. Rimmer and Lisa M. Allen (ed.), *The Underside of Malaysian, History, Pullers, Prostitutes, Plantation Workers...* (Singapore, 1990).
- ²¹ "Indian Mission to Malaya", *Straits Times*, March 30, 1930.
- ²² "The Tamil Coolie", *Malay Mail*, July 19, 1913.
- ²³ "Life of Indian Labourer in Malaya", *Times of Malaya*, May 26, 1936.
- ²⁴ "Malayan Immigrants' Status in Malaya", *Malay Mail*, September 24, 1936.
- ²⁵ Published in the *Hindu* (Madras) on January 11, 1923 and reprinted in *Pinang Gazette*, January 29, 1923.
- ²⁶ For some information on this subject, see Khoo Kay Kim, "Recent Malaysian Historiography", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, X: 2 (1979).
- ²⁷ Jennifer Cushman, *Family and State: The Formation of a Sino-Thai Tin-Mining Dynasty, 1797-1932* (Singapore, 1991), edited by Craig J. Reynolds.

- ²⁸ C.S. Wong, *A Gallery of Chinese Kapitans* (Singapore, 1963), p. 12-23.
- ²⁹ "Ku Hung Ming, Eminent Philosopher, Poet and Linguist", *Sunday Gazette*, October 4, 1936.
- ³⁰ A. Wright & H.A. Cartwright (ed.), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources* (London, 1908), pp. 130, 577. *Sunday Tribune*, October 11, 1936.
- ³¹ *Malaya Tribune*, January 6, 1920.
- ³² *Pinang Gazette*, April 24, 1928; *Malay Mail*, July 14, 1928; *Straits Echo*, 26 February 1929.
- ³³ *Malaya Tribune*, August 8, 1947.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, July 24, 1928.
- ³⁵ *Times of Malaya*, July 23, 1930.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, January 30, 1936.
- ³⁷ He later succeeded to the title of *Panglima Bukit Gantang* and in 1948 became the first Chief Minister (*Menteri Besar*) of Perak.
- ³⁸ *Malay Mail*, June 29, 1928.
- ³⁹ See Khoo Kay Kim, "Klang District and Town: History and Historical Sources", *Kekal Abadi* (University of Malaya Library), Vol. 8, no. 2, 1989.
- ⁴⁰ Volker R. Berghahn & Hanna Schissler (ed.), *Perceptions of History. International Textbook Research on Britain, Germany and the United States* (Oxford, New York, Hamburg, 1987), p. 2.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Ibid.*