

An Analysis of Reports by *The Illustrated London News (ILN)* and *The Graphic* against Social Activities in Malaya in the 19th Century

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ABSTRACT

*Unlike in the West, the emergence of visual printing and printing press in Malaya was comparatively lagged behind. Publication and printing reached the Malayan shore through the Straits Settlements after the first publication was brought in and introduced by A. B. Bone in 1806. Since then, various visual reports regarding Malaya made their way into the well-known newspapers in Britain, *The Illustrated London News (ILN)* and *The Graphic*. Social activities in Malaya became part of the main visual report in these newspapers. Nonetheless, it was found that these newspapers were not objective in reporting the news on social activities in Malaya. In lieu of this, the current research attempted to find out the extent of the action of *ILN* and *The Graphic* in manipulating visual news report about the social activities in Malaya in the 19th century. In addition, this research also aimed to find out how far the ideas and thoughts of both newspapers in describing the news reports related to social activities in Malaya in the 19th century. This research focuses on the 19th century, within the specified period, of which the two respective presses released many visual news reports regarding social activities in Malaya. The qualitative method and visual approach were chosen as the research itself was conducted in London, especially at the National Art Library, situated in the Victoria and Albert Museum. In Malaysia, materials and resources were obtained from the Malaysian National Archive, National Museum, National Library, and libraries at higher learning institutions.*

Keywords: *The Illustrated London News, The Graphic, visual, press, Malaya*

INTRODUCTION

Historical information is often derived from official documents, written materials, and artefacts from an era or civilisation. However, visuals play a significant role as tools to convey and record something that carries historical values. Recording an incident is a culture, which had begun in the ancient times when humans learned to leave a mark on a surface. A well-known example of a recorded historical event is the discovery of pre-historic cave paintings from the Palaeolithic era, all around the world. Most of these visual outcomes present invaluable images regarding the community and human lives at that time. Cave paintings and engravings continued for centuries until several major civilisations used visuals as a medium to convey information about power and human daily activities in that era. Even though most cave paintings and engravings are discovered

in Spain and France, the Malay ancient civilisation left its own paintings on cave walls too (Whitley 2001). Undeniably, cave paintings have their own symbolism and meaning, which indirectly make them visual historical artefacts that represent the development and civilisation of an era. Several cave paintings, which exemplify the Malays' own unique prehistoric remnants are the paintings found in Gua Kelew, Kelantan, which could have been a form of communication media at that time. As time changes and technological advancement leads to art development, the medium to record visuals of nature undergoes its own evolution. Visuals, which were once used to record the natural surroundings, are now replaced by efforts to record religious visuals. Visual art, which was domesticated, was found and practised in the Malay world, such as Gua Kain Hitam (The Painted Cave) in Niah, Sarawak and Gua Tambun (Tambun Cave) in Perak (Zuliskandar Ramli et al. 2020).

When the Europeans who were responsible for introducing and practising art activities, which involved the recording of the Malay world, the second print revolution came to Malaya. Hence, printed visuals about the Malay world were mostly produced by western artisans. Artisans of this era comprised of travellers, army officers, government staff, and their family members. As these artisans were keen on recording visuals together with their written documents of personal experiences in a foreign country, these private collections or the ones collected for their sponsors were made public in a large scale. Such collection was made possible due to the artisans' passion in visuals and written documents on their experiences abroad. With the advent of printing technology, the collections of recorded visuals were exhibited or printed in the form of published books.

Printed visuals gained more popularity as printing technology progressed over the years. From a small-scale traditional printing technique, visuals were produced through a large-scale printing method due to the state-of-the-art printing technology. As a result, visuals that were obtained from abroad were circulated across Europe. Visuals were published in the form of news and events were recorded in the newspapers. The European communities in the 19th century kept abreast with news from the colonies, in the form of visuals. In fact, Queen Victoria had the same interest in producing news in the form of visuals to observe the current development and progress in the British colonies. Newspapers in the form of visuals were pioneered by *The Illustrated London News (ILN)* and *The Graphic*. Both played a significant role in reporting visual news in Europe. In the 19th century, visual reports for news and events or also known as "Printing News" gained momentum and more visual newspapers were introduced to the public in London. Even in Malaya, both newspapers had featured numerous captivating visuals about social activities in the 19th century.

During the British imperialism and colonialism in Malaya, there were social interactions between the colonials and social activities that had taken place in the country. For example, events, such as official visits and occasions were held by the British administration. Other than colonial officers' visits, Malaya received official visits from the British monarchy, such as the visit by Duke of Edinburgh to Penang. Each social activity in Malaya was recorded visually for the people back in England and it was featured with a written report. Among all, the British had its own interest in the visual prints produced by the *ILN* and *The Graphic*. Both newspapers reported on every social activity, in which the British government had participated. As a result, the visual reports and news only came from one party and issues, such as prejudices and bias occurred in the published materials found in the *ILN* and *The Graphic*. In fact, some of the reports were inaccurate and could be rejected through research and other sources. Therefore, the current research attempted to find out the extent of the action of *ILN* and *The Graphic* in manipulating visual news report about the social activities in Malaya in the 19th century. In addition, this research also aimed to find out how far the visual news reported by *ILN* and *The Graphic* was commonly related to social activities in Malaya in the 19th century.

This research has its own importance since it provides early news reports related to Malaya that focused on social activities during the new era of imperialism. In fact, the visuals in the newspapers provide initial visuals related to social activities in Malaya since the use of cameras was limited and had not yet reached the people at that time. In addition, researchers in the field have given less attention on research analysing visuals and news in colonial newspapers in the 19th century, despite the fact that various important information could be obtained through the visuals drawn by artisans for these two newspapers. This research could also assist the authorities, such as The National Art Gallery of Malaysia in enriching the visual collection of our country's history, which insofar has not been revealed and displayed to the public. This contribution should be recognised so that these visuals can also be part of the options in showcasing important events that took place in Malaya in the 19th century, which focused on social activities.

BACKGROUND OF *ILN* AND *THE GRAPHIC*

ILN was first published on 14 May 1842 and was well-received among the readers in Britain. At that time, being the earliest newspaper, which produced international news in the Victorian era, *ILN* was also the first in using woodblock engraving as its printing technique. In 1863, its circulation reached 300,000 copies as compared to renowned daily press in England at that time, which could only sell 70,000 copies. Some of the workforce and talent behind its success were Sir John Filbert, Henry Anely, Birket Foster, H. G. Hine, and Kenny Meadows. The process of recording a visual began with a basic sketch, which was obtained from correspondence, such as artists, engineers, army officers, scientists, and individuals. Once the sketch reached the press office, it would be reproduced to ensure that each visual was meticulously done with an attention to details (Archer 1972; Douglas 2009; Hill and Rchwartz 2015; Chapman and Nuttall 2011). As for *The Graphic*, it was first published and circulated on 4 December 1869 by William Luson Thomas' company. Its founder, William Luson Thomas, was also an active artist and woodblock engraver. It was the newspaper, which was responsible in generating skilled workers who were talented at woodblock engraving, such as Luke Fildes, Hubert von Herkomer, Frank Holl, and John Milaise. First circulated as *The Graphic*, on 23 April 1832 to 14 July 1931, the newspaper was known as *The National Graphic*. Previously, none of the visual newspaper was circulated daily, but *The Graphic* succeeded in distributing it in 1889 and it was a phenomenal achievement in the printing industry at that time. Moreover, this newspaper was well-received throughout its distribution in British colonies and Northern America (Edwards 1991).



Figure 1 The front page of *ILN* on 9 October 1897.

Source: *ILN* (1897).

If *ILN* and *The Graphic* are compared, the visual production of prints show significant differences in the aspects of visual quality and delivery. The visual production of *The Graphic* seems to be more meticulous and stylish than that of the *ILN* because the purpose of the production of the two newspapers is different. *ILN* was produced on the basis of reporting news with visuals, where the newspaper representative (correspondent) who sent the visuals to the editorial team was usually a member of the military who served at that time. They were assigned with the task to sketch any incident or event that took place and send it to the headquarters in London. The appointed military sketchers had indirectly recorded visuals that convey political and economic critique (Crayton 2011). Nonetheless, their skills should not be taken lightly as they were actually given a training in drawing while at the Royal Military Academy (Azian Tahir 2018: 99). However, there were times when the *ILN* also hired professional artists for expedition purposes or important tasks that required better visual recordings than those usually printed according to news needs. This is in contrast to *The Graphic* newspaper, published from a group of artisans, which was a successful visual artisan newspaper in Britain. In fact, if viewed in terms of visual production, this newspaper did not produce visuals in the form of events and news like the *ILN*. Instead, *The Graphic* is more about stylisation (North 1884: 126). The decorative generalisation of figures and objects by means of various conventional techniques were done by *The Graphic*'s artisans. Although there were visuals produced by *The Graphic* that seem to report important events in Britain and the colonies, if scrutinised, the events were merely being stated as an object in the visual production without the news text to explain the visual produced as done by the *ILN*, and the visuals were usually a mere citation.



Figure 2 The front page of *The Graphic* on 5 February 1870.
Source: *The Graphic* (1870).

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES IN MALAYA BY *ILN* AND *THE GRAPHIC*

Social activities obtained more attention in the news reports published by *ILN* and *The Graphic*. Most of these social events were recorded by travellers or army officers' family members who accompanied them to Malaya. Later, the visuals were published in both newspapers. Nevertheless, some professional artists did contribute their sketch and prints based on social themes. It was by pure coincidence that these artists were present at the location, and they captured the moments in their sketches or paintings as part of their portfolio or journal. The timeline of events is presented in this research and each occasion was arranged in order, and other relevant incidents are also provided.

Visuals of Events and Celebrations

On 22 April 1854, page 372, *ILN* reported an official dinner for the anniversary of the Straits Settlements. Based on the visual in Figure 3, the elaborate and magnificent event is clearly depicted. It was the 35th anniversary celebration of the establishment of Singapore or another colony in Malaya. Governor Colonel W. J. Butterworth attended and joined the ball on 6 February 1852. In its splendour, the venue was a hall with Sir. T. S. Raffles chantry on the wall as he was commended as the founder of Singapore. Other items that can be seen are the British and the East Indian Company flags as symbolic representations of the cooperation made in establishing a colony in Singapore. Guest of honours for the anniversary were British officers, soldiers, and merchants who were distinguished by their costumes. Other guests were foreigners of different races, such as Europeans, Arabs, Persians, Turks, Jews, Siamese, Chinese, and the Malay royalties. One of the esteemed guests was Hoo Ah Key or Whampoa who was a community leader from Asia in Singapore at that time, and he was featured in the sketch on the left, holding a Chinese folding fan (*ILN* 1854: 372).



Figure 3 Ball in Singapore, in celebration of the Anniversary of the Settlement, 1854.

Source: *ILN* (1854: 372).

Undeniably, *ILN*'s decision to publish this visual was hardly shocking since it played an important role in disseminating news about the grandness and prominence of the British empire around the world. The 35th official dinner to commemorate the Straits Settlements establishment was newsworthy to *ILN* at that time. In fact, the visual depicted could be made as a reference of the ongoing progress in Singapore's administration to the British government and the citizens. There are images of investors, merchants, and sponsors who dealt with the Singaporean government celebrating the establishment of Singapore as the new regional business hub. Pictures of the capitalists are apt to represent the state of Singapore then, as they were powerful and influential in decisions made by the Singaporean government. For instance, the investors had urged the first Singaporean Resident, Major William Farquhar to provide an adequate source of water for Singapore ports at that time (Buckley 1984). These investors also took their own approach by providing water supply close to the ports through wells and reserved tanks. Hence, their presence at the anniversary dinner was also a move to honour their efforts to bring progress to Singapore as a renowned commercial hub. Another esteemed guest was the Malay royalty, Temenggung Tun Daeng Ibrahim, the ruler of Johor whose presence spoke volume of his significance to the British (Mardiana Nordin 2001). An East Indian Company's representative, Raffles, signed an agreement with the Sultan and Temenggung Johor on 16 February 1819 with a payment of \$5,000 a year. This had given a huge opportunity to the Company's officers to develop the Island according to their interest. In a short period of time, Raffles had imagined that Singapore could materialise his dreams.

In short, Singapore is everything we could desire and I may consider myself most fortunate in the selection; it will soon rise into importance and with this single station alone would I undertake to counteract all plans of Mynheer; it breaks the spell; and they are no longer the exclusive sovereign of the Eastern Seas. (Buckley 1984)

It was rightful that the Johor royals would be invited to the official dinner, and with the assistance of the British, Johor had introduced a modern bureaucracy system (Turnbull 2009). This indicates that Johor and British had a win-win relationship, which benefitted each other.

Visual of Royal Visits

Penang received a visit from the British royal family in 1867. The Duke of Edinburgh who was better known as Prince Alfred Ernest Albert had arrived for an official visit, which also included going to several attractive places at the Island. His Highness' visits to the British colonies at this time was the first made by a prince. Prince Alfred's around the globe tour began in October 1867, and it took him a year and ten months (McCreery 2018). He arrived in Penang and was appointed the captain of a ship called HMS Galatea (McCreery 2009). Penang administration had made various preparations to receive the royal visit. It was clearly stated that the citizens together with the local celebrated the royal visit together. *ILN*, as expected, provided a special report for this event. There are three visuals, which reported the activities and preparations made. One of them is the welcoming party in front of the lover court organised by Penang administration and was officially reported by *ILN* on 5 February 1870. The printing is based on a photographic record by K. Feilberg who used the wood carving technique at 24 cm × 16.8 cm (*ILN* 1870b: 136).

Based on Figure 4, one can see a clear sky and bright clouds, a hilly area as well as a congregation of people. In front of the hill, there are rows of buildings and trees, while a river runs through in the middle to give a perspective view. On the right, there are occupied buildings and the front yard has an empty rectangular patch of grass, devoid of any figure. Across the river, many people are waiting, and another group of figures is in the middle. On the left side in the middle, there are rows of houses and vegetation, but less figures occupy that space. A press representative had clearly explained that George Town was decorated with numerous ornaments and decorative patterns. The impressive gateway was made from silk, as it was inspired by the Chinese design that gave every corner an enticing look. Betel palm, coconut leaves, and sugarcane are also part of the decorations, which contribute to an image of plants that grow overnight.

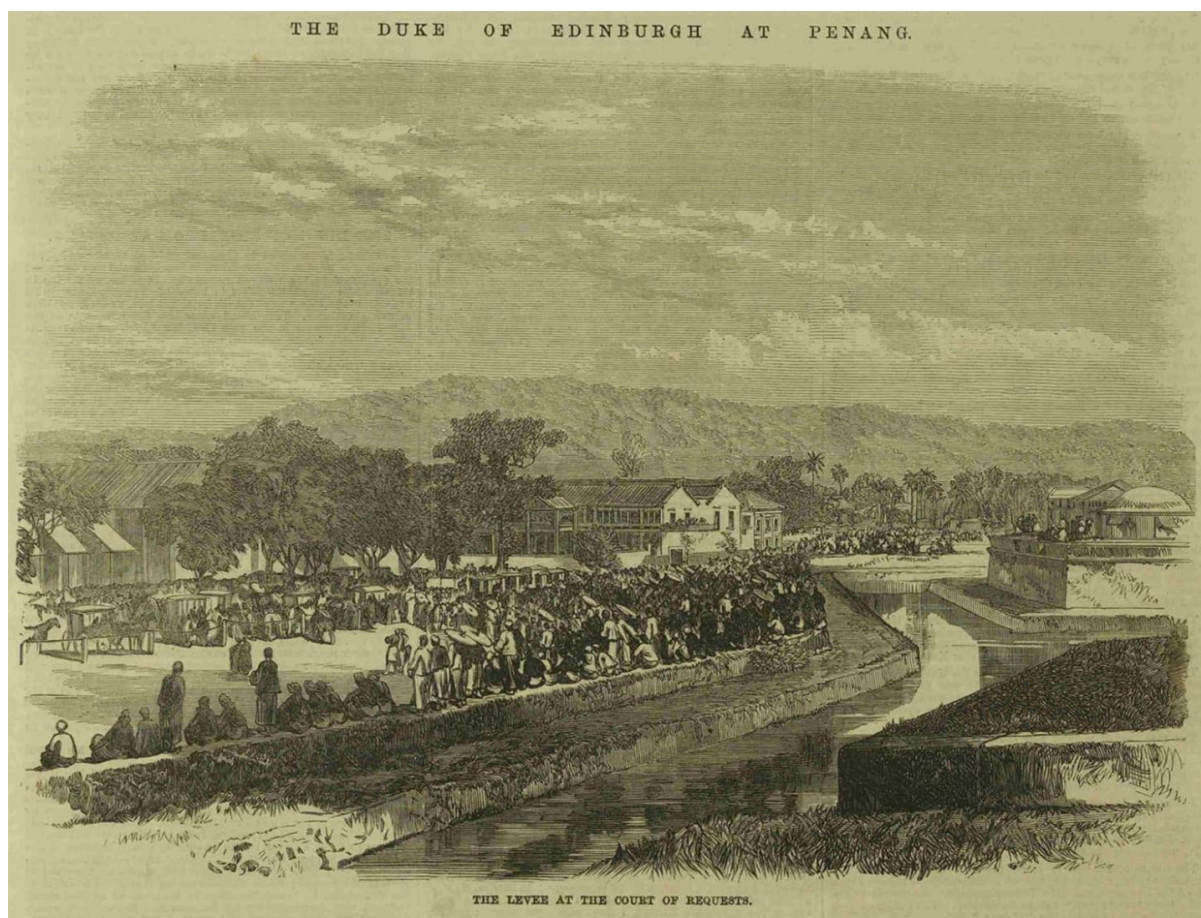


Figure 4 The levee at the Court of Requests, The Duke of Edinburgh at Penang (1867).

Source: *ILN* (1870b: 136).

ILN has reported that, a large number of banners were hanging around the consulate buildings, docked ships, and signal stations, which read, “God save the son of our Queen!,” “God bless the Queen!” and “Welcome our Sailor Prince!” At the same time, to honour his father who was from Germany, a German consulate hung a banner, on which the phrase “True und Fest!” was stated. The grand event came to life on the morning of 11 December 1867, when cannon shots were fired at 7 a.m. to announce the arrival of Duke of Edinburgh in Penang. People basked in the “en fete” city as they celebrated the meaningful Saturday with feasts like roasted beef and fireworks were allowed to grace the sky (*ILN* 1870b: 135). A report came at 11 a.m., informing that HMS Galatea, a light cruiser or the Royal Navy was approaching the jetty. One canon shot was fired as salutation and the cruiser reciprocated with another shot. Duke of Edinburgh was accompanied by Elioy Yorke and Lieutenant Haig, while Penang was represented by Sir Harry Ord (the Governor) Colonel Anson, R. A., and Forbes Broun. When the crowd gathered at the jetty, the Seventh Regiment of Madras Native Infantry performed their procession. Both locals and Chinese traders donned their traditional costumes, and they rushed to the town to where the Prince was staying, hoping to catch a glimpse of the royal figure. Penang administrative office had prepared a mansion for the Duke and it was captured on print and published by *ILN* too, on 5 February 1870, on page 136. The printing technique was used on a wooden plank measuring 14.7 cm × 16.2 cm (*ILN* 1870b: 136).



Figure 5 House occupied by the Duke (1867).
Source: *ILN* (1870b: 136).

It is clear that the visual shows several guards and other staff who are working to ensure the safety of the mansion. In the middle, a horse cart with two horses are ready, the coachman is wearing a hat and is sitting on the cart, and a Malay guard is standing nearby in a traditional costume with a bonnet on his left side. The magnificent mansion was newly constructed by a Chinese trader, Koh Sin Tat in Renong. The Duke's visit had caused the owner to loan the mansion to the local government as the esteemed visitor's temporary residence, which was also known as "Edinburgh House." In conjunction with his visit, the road in front of the city was named Jalan Duke (at the back of the Local Council building). Sir Archibald Anson played his own part in this significant event by sponsoring a bed for the Duke (Wong 1963).

Prince Alfred stayed in Penang for five days and he was occupied with activities, such as visiting Penang and Seberang Perai as well as enjoying nature at waterfalls in Penang: The visual was captured and published by *ILN*. It was on Saturday evening that the Duke and his entourage went to a waterfall after he completed his visit to Penang Club and tried his hand at several lawn bowling games. Once these official visits were done, he went to the waterfall and was amazed by the tropical beauty he witnessed in Penang. The alluring nature at the waterfall was undeniable and this was attested by a well-known artist, James Wathen who declared that waterfalls in Penang were very different from those in England and Wales. A scenic image at the waterfall was amplified by the presence of lush green vegetation and large trees, which were different from other locations. On Sunday, the Duke visited a sugarcane plantation called "The Sugar Estate of Caledonia," which belonged to Edward Horsman, M. P. He also found some time for hunting and had breakfast at Batu Kawan to watch the capturing of two Malayan tigers. On the last day of his visit to Penang, the cannon was fired again to mark The Duke of Edinburgh departure to Calcutta, India (*ILN* 1870b: 135).



Figure 6 Waterfall near Penang.

Source: *ILN* (1870b: 137).

The Duke of Edinburgh's visit won a special place in *ILN* reports because he was Queen Victoria's prince. It was stated earlier that Queen Victoria referred to visual newspapers in Britain to keep abreast with the latest development and expansion of the British empire itself. The Duke of Edinburgh's tour around the globe was considered as a great achievement and something to be proud of for the British empire. Through these visits, the diplomatic ties between Britain and the other countries were forged, while the Duke had the chance to visit his colonies. Not only for Malaya, The Duke of Edinburgh was also named the first royal representative who visited New Zealand and the first European to visit Japan (*ILN* 1869: 213). Such accomplishments deserved a place in the visual newspaper, and the *ILN* published them to ensure that the news would reach all across Britain and the world at large.

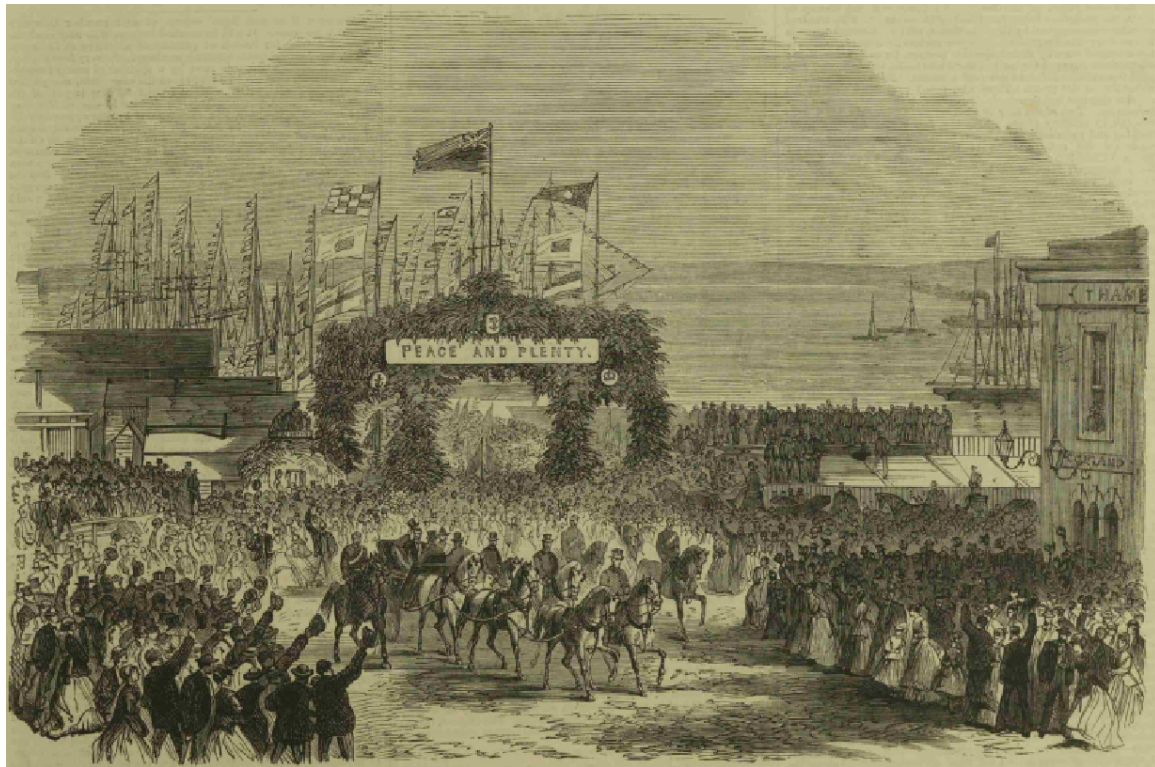


Figure 7 The Duke of Edinburgh visit to New Zealand.
Source: *ILN* (1869: 213).



Figure 8 The Duke of Edinburgh visit to China.
Source: *ILN* (1870a: 112).

From the visual of the celebration for the Duke's visit to Malaya, it could be inferred that his presence was welcomed by people from all walks of life in Penang as the British royal family was the patron for their subjects in the Straits Settlements. The information conveyed by *ILN* was part of a significant record of activities that the Duke participated in when he visited several places. The *ILN* publication of his official visit was not limited to only Malaya, but it also covered the Duke's visit to China and India. From all these visuals, *ILN* was able to give the impression that The Duke of Edinburgh's official visits were celebrated and welcomed by every country involved. The celebrations might differ in each country, but the visuals produced are sufficient to provide various important information for each historical event mentioned in this article. Furthermore, the elements of the local culture were featured in the visual through the portrayal of costumes, locations, and series of visits. As the world's greatest empire at that time, the British proved their political and economic significance through The Duke of Edinburgh's around-the-world-tour and visits to the colonies. From another aspect, *ILN* had deliberately attempted to glorify the sovereignty and authority of the British royal family through all the visuals published. This was achieved through the visuals, which show that the people were eagerly waiting for the Duke's arrival. In fact, there is an image of security officers in a traditional *baju Melayu*, securing the area in front of the mansion prepared for him in Penang.

Having accepted The Duke of Edinburgh's visit to Penang, Malaya received another official visit from the British monarchy, namely, Prince Albert Victor and Prince George who were Prince of Wales's princes (later known as King Edward VII), made a visit to Singapore in 1881 and the event was widely covered by *The Graphic*. In detail, *The Graphic* states that both Princes George and Albert sailed in a ship named HMS Bacchante, as midshipmen all throughout their voyage to the colonies of British empire at that time. To celebrate the special visit, the Singaporean ruler had hosted a dinner with several aristocrats and esteemed guests (*The Graphic* 1882: 217). After that, the royal entourage was brought to the lantern festival at the Chinese community area (Tate 1989: 44).



Figure 9 Lantern festival celebration in Singapore in 1881.

Source: *The Graphic* (1882: 217).

The lantern festival is a celebration among the Chinese community on the 15th day of the Chinese calendar, and it also marks the end of Chinese New Year. However, in 1881, for the first time, lantern festival was celebrated in pomp and grandeur, different from the norm in conjunction with the visits by Princes Albert and George. It is apparent from the visual that the celebration was indeed grand, with a banner saying “welcome” in different languages. Moreover, various types of traditional lanterns are seen hanging around the tent areas with exquisite decorations. It simply shows that the Singaporean, who were from multiracial backgrounds came together to celebrate despite their differences. From the aspect of quality, prints from wood carving were meticulously produced as it was shown in the Chinese and European costumes, worn by those who attended the event (*The Graphic* 1882: 217). From the report published by *The Graphic*, it is suggested that the extraordinary lantern festival in Singapore was attributed to the two princes’ visit. Nevertheless, the attempt to give credit to the royal visit could be opposed since the lantern festival in Singapore was widely celebrated in the past, and it remains as such until today. For every lantern festival, family members will gather and take part in activities, such as solving riddles, lighting up the lantern, watching exhibition, playing games, singing, participating in lucky draw, eating moon cakes, and the list goes on (Selina 2003). Hence, as featured in Figure 9, the lantern festival had always been celebrated with such grandeur. As for Princes Albert’s and George’s visit to Singapore, it coincided with the event, and it was arranged for them to take part in it. *The Graphic* attempted to relate the organiser’s effort in putting up a multilingual banner for “welcome” as an indication to honour the esteemed royal guests. However, this claim could be questioned since Singapore was already receiving investors, merchants, and traders from different parts of the world. It goes without saying that these foreign guests could be related to the multilingual “welcome” featured on the banner (Mardiana 2013).

The Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria

Queen Victoria was the longest reigning monarch in Britain as her succession was in 1837 and she ruled until her death in 1901. The Queen was celebrated for her 50th anniversary of her reign known as the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, which was observed on 20 and 21 June 1887. For this celebration, each country within the colonies had their own festivities. *ILN* was impressed with the empire celebration in Singapore and published the visuals to be circulated worldwide (*ILN* 1887: 215).



Figure 10 Celebration of Singapore: Jubilee performance at *wayang* or Chinese theatre (1887).

Source: *ILN* (1887: 215).

The above visual was reproduced from a photographic copy by Lambert, and it was published and printed by *ILN* on 20 August 1887, page 215. It was printed using the wood carving technique at 23.3 cm × 15.1 cm. *ILN* has reported that, to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, a traditional Chinese opera was presented by the Chinese community in Singapore on 27 June 1887, and it managed to attract people from different races. The show was held for three days from 27 to 29 June 1887, and it was a free entry for the public (*ILN* 1887: 215). Based on the visual, the audience clearly had a great time when the traditional opera was presented. Stage decorations were elaborate, and the actors and actresses carried different characters in the show. In addition, the Golden Jubilee celebration was also presented during an opening ceremony for Sir Stamford Raffles statue, as organised by Singapore Governor, Sir Frederick Weld, G. C. M. G. *ILN* did not publish a visual for this official activity, but a written report was given (*ILN* 1887: 216).

Nevertheless, the news published by *ILN* was inaccurate since the traditional Chinese opera in Singapore began in 1842 when Charles Wilkes, Commander of the United States South Seas Exploring Expedition was in Singapore. He witnessed many festivities among the Chinese community to celebrate the Lunar New Year. In his own words, he recorded that the show consisted of “a group of people bearing an altar, flags, and banners, among others, and they were accompanied by a musical procession with cymbals and gong” (Wilkes 1984). The popularity of the traditional Chinese opera show is an evidence of its acceptance among the Singaporeans. Singaporean government has introduced an act called the Police Act and Conservancy Act in 1856 to curb the performances and ban congregation, parade, and street opera shows (Liu and Phillips 1988). However, there was a protest from the Singaporeans and the government relented; the traditional Chinese opera shows were permitted to be performed in Singapore. Hence, it would be inaccurate to claim that the traditional Chinese opera was held just for the Golden Jubilee for Queen Victoria alone in 1887. Based on the analysis conducted, the traditional Chinese opera was part of the local Chinese culture in Singapore and performances were frequently held for the public. It coincided with the Queen Victoria celebration and *ILN* was drawn to the attention it received. Therefore, the newspaper decided to connect the success of the show to the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

In fact, the traditional Chinese opera was mentioned by Andrew Kippis during his visit to Singapore. According to him, when the show was held, the crowd gathered across the road of a house (theatre). Musical instruments and drums were played during the show known as *Chinese Sons of Thespis*. He stated that the theatre was made of a stage built at about one level and covered by a green cloth. Curtains were hung on the sides and these could be opened and closed to ease the flow of the show. Actors and actresses who wore elaborate, exquisite costumes came from the back of the curtain with captivating movements. As usual, the hero in the show would perform several actions using swords and other weapons. Having punished and killed the villains, the show ended with a dance. Like the show itself, the dance performances were captivating to the audience even when Kippis himself could not fully comprehend the plot and story presented (Kippis 2018). His elaboration went against the claim made by *ILN* that the traditional Chinese opera show was meant only for the empire celebration. In other words, news reported by *ILN* must be analysed in depth to ensure their validity. *ILN*'s attempt to relate the traditional Chinese opera as meant only for the Golden Jubilee is baseless and irrational. A cultural presentation was not symbolic of the British empire celebration as an affirmation of their power, especially in the colonies. On the other hand, the traditional Chinese opera was part of the local culture. However, the opening ceremony for Sir Stamford Raffles statue by the Governor of Singapore, Sir Frederick Weld, G. C. M. G. could have been the most suitable event to be celebrated as part of the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria. *ILN* written report on the ceremony was transparent, even though the visual was not published.

Visual of Railway Track Opening Ceremony

The Graphic was not left behind in recording important opening ceremonies such as the launching of railway track in Selangor by the British Governor in Malaya. The visual report was published on 3 November 1884, measuring at 10 cm × 14.8 cm, and it was produced by wood carving technique. One of the beneficial projects from the British for Malaya was the introduction of modern transportation such as train, which became an important transport to mobilise materials such as rubber and tin. Sir Frank Swettenham had instructed the construction of railway tracks to connect Klang to Kuala Lumpur, which was the centre of tin mining activities in Selangor in 1880. At the beginning of the rail construction, it was a collaborative effort between the government and a private company. First, the project took off in Perak in 1885 and this was followed by another railway track for Selangor in 1886. The state of Selangor decided to construct the railway from

the centre of tin in Kuala Lumpur to the port and Klang which was 20 miles by crossing the Klang river. Another railway project started which connected Kuala Lumpur and Klang which was at Pengkalan Batu (*The Graphic* 1883: 433).

Figure 11 illustrates the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of railway track from Kuala Lumpur to Klang. This ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of railway track was reported and published for the readers on 3 November 1883. Nevertheless, the ceremony for a railway track of 19 miles was only carried out in February 1884. The railway track was constructed from Kuala Lumpur to Klang since the raw materials were mostly found in the former as compared to the latter. Spence Moss, the engineer appointed to oversee the project worked with other workers who were brought all the way from Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The above visual showed Governor Weld cutting the ribbon to officiate the placement of foundation stone in Kuala Lumpur. Only on 15 September 1886, the first railway in Selangor was officiated at The Selangor Government Railway in Bukit Kuda. The plan for this railway to reach Klang town was halted for four years since Connaught Bridge over the Klang river was not opened to the public. (*The Graphic* 1883: 433).

Nevertheless, *The Graphic* report about this issue could be argued since it was inaccurate. The railway track from Kuala Lumpur to Klang was not the first railway in Malaya. Referring to *Salinan Surat Datuk Menteri* (1888), Datuk Menteri to Datuk Seri Setia Raja on 13 November 1888 (copy of the letter of Minister Datuk Seri Setia Raja), it was clearly stated that the first train introduced in Malaya was in Johor as on 21 July 1869, King Abu Bakar had launched a train project which connected Johor Bahru and Pulau Hill which was 20 miles in distance. The launching event was picked up by *The Straits Times* which published a report on 24 July 1969. Unfortunately, the train service stopped after the track was ravaged by termites (*The Straits Times* 1969). According to *Surat-surat Perempuan Johor* (letters of Johor woman) by Faisal Tehrani, in 1873, Johor had its own government departments including a train department (Faisal Tehrani 2005). *The Graphic* was misleading because it wanted to attract the attention of the British government and its people by claiming that it was the British that introduced train service for the first time in Malaya. The report clearly defied brilliance and achievement of Sultan Abu Bakar in modernising Johor from the aspect of transportation.

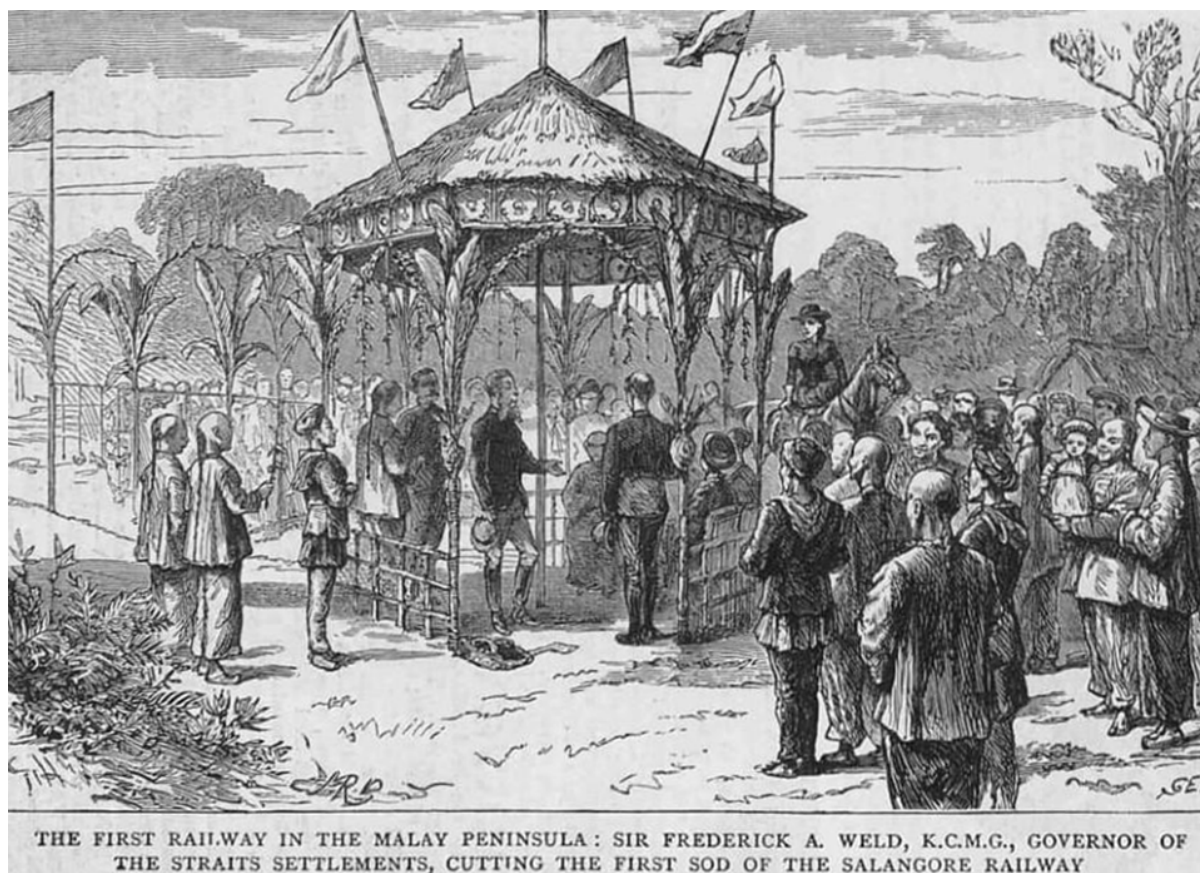


Figure 11 The first railway in the Malay Peninsular: Sir Frederick A. Wrederick A. Weld, K. C. M. G., Governor of the Straits Settlements, cutting the first sod of the Selangor railway.

Source: *The Graphic* (1883: 433).

It would be quite unacceptable for the British to acknowledge that the Malay could have been more advanced as compared to them in the era of imperialism. In fact, *The Graphic* in stating that the British was responsible in introducing the first train in Malaya indicated that there was a sinister attempt to override the history made by Sultan Abu Bakar who was the first figure who introduced the train in Malaya. Through this analysis, actual facts about the first railway in Malaya could be used as future references.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the news reports by *ILN* and *The Graphic* in the 19th century represented their interest in Malaya and also consolidated the imperial image of its colonies. The frequency of reports on the local social activities was one of the ways to affirm their power in this country. News reports were also ways of inculcating the culture of imperialism through governance, sports, economy, culture, and others. These newspapers were more interested in highlighting the British achievements in creating a civilised Malaya from social aspects as being focused on in this study. In fact, these newspapers had provided various interesting visuals on the social activities in Malaya. All the published visuals could be used as part of Malaya historical documentations according to the timeline involved. This research has contributed to new findings regarding the visual presentation of Malaya. Past research in this area did not give much attention to the roles of *ILN* and *The Graphic* in reporting visual news in Malaya. This study found that these two newspapers are indeed responsible for what is stated as it is closely related to the image of the British who were supposedly great, dominant in power, and as the ambassador of civilisation compared to the colonies. Certainly, the news and visual reports released were in their favour as these two newspapers were from a very powerful empire at the time. In fact, the action was also driven by the British royal family, especially Queen Victoria, who made these visual newspapers as the main communication tool to follow current developments in Britain and developments in the colony. If the news reports that were released did not elevate their image, it would certainly tarnish their image as the greatest colonial power at the time, of which this situation would cause Queen Victoria to be infuriated. Therefore, it can be seen how the newspapers were manipulative and not being objective in the related reports on social activities in Malaya in the 19th century. This is because the emergence of *ILN* and *The Graphic* during the early days of imperialism played an important role in colonial news reporting that it had caused these two newspapers to be seen as planning to construct news reports as earlier stated as part of the reporting style. This style of reporting has been continued by western newspapers, especially from Britain in the 20th century to date.

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