

**COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS IN EVERYDAY SPACES:
BRITISH OFFICERS AND MALAY COMMUNITIES IN
PERAK AND KEDAH 1875-1940S**

BY

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Human Sciences in History and
Civilization

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed
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International Islamic University Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the socio-cultural dimensions of interactions between British officers and Malay communities in Perak and Kedah from 1875 to the 1940s, with a particular focus on everyday settings within the colonial administration of British Malaya. Through comprehensive analysis, it explores how British officers implemented policies by adapting Malay customs and governance into their colonial administrative frameworks, as exemplified by the Residential system in Perak and the Advisory system in Kedah. These two states serve as case studies to highlight differences in the British colonial approaches and Malay responses, which ranged from cooperation to subtle resistance. This dissertation argues that the British strategically facilitated their colonial administration in British Malaya through the development of the Malay Civil Service (MCS) and the Malay Administrative Service (MAS), thereby accommodating Malay customs in their engagement with local communities and reshaping Malay society in the process. By emphasising everyday interactions and the role of Malay traditions, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of colonial governance and expands the socio-cultural historiography of British Malaya.

خلاصة البحث

تعالج هذه الدراسة البُعد الاجتماعي والثقافي للتفاعل بين الضباط البريطانيين والمجتمعات الملايوية في ولايتي فيراق قدح، خلال الفترة الممتدة من عام 1875 حتى أربعينيات القرن العشرين، مع تركيز خاص على السياقات اليومية ضمن الإدارة الاستعمارية في الملايو البريطانية. ومن خلال تحليل شامل، تستكشف الدراسة كيفية تنفيذ الضباط البريطانيين لسياساتهم عبر تكييفهم للعادات والنظم الملايوية ضمن نموذجهم الخاص بالإدارة الاستعمارية، كما يتجلى في نظام الإقامة في فيراق والنظام الاستشاري في قدح. وتوظف ولايتا فيراق وقدح كدراستين حالتين لتسليط الضوء على الاختلافات في النهج الاستعماري البريطاني وردود الفعل الملايوية التي تراوحت بين التعاون والمقاومة الضمنية. وتجادل هذه الدراسة بأن البريطانيين عمدوا إلى تسهيل إدارتهم الاستعمارية في الملايو البريطانية من خلال إنشاء "الخدمة المدنية الملايوية (MCS)" و"الخدمة الإدارية الملايوية (MAS)"، وهو ما أتاح لهم احتواء العادات والتقاليد الملايوية ضمن تفاعلهم مع المجتمعات المحلية، وفي الوقت ذاته إعادة تشكيل البنية الاجتماعية الملايوية.. ومن خلال إبراز التفاعلات اليومية ودور التقاليد الملايوية، تسهم هذه الدراسة في تعميق الفهم لحوكمة الاستعمار، وتوسيع نطاق الكتابات التاريخية الاجتماعية والثقافية في سياق الملايو البريطانية.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in History and Civilization.

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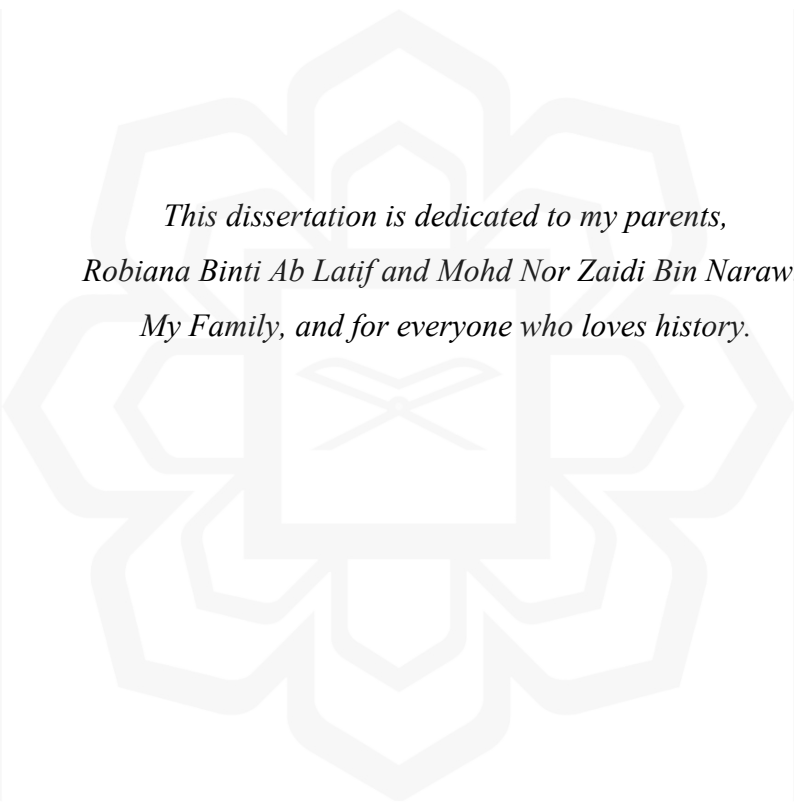
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*This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,
Robiana Binti Ab Latif and Mohd Nor Zaidi Bin Narawi,
My Family, and for everyone who loves history.*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

British Malaya was a period in Malaysian history during which the British Empire colonised the Malay Peninsula in the late 18th century. While historians often examine this period through the lens of colonialism, it is essential to acknowledge the significance of local narratives existing during that period. These narratives offer a socio-cultural interpretation that accurately depicts the period's events. To fully understand this interaction, conducting a thorough socio-cultural analysis of the interaction between the British officers and the Malay community is crucial.¹ This study aims to provide an insightful and comprehensive account of this historical period.

The socio-cultural analysis is part of this study's initiative to investigate the issue. Earlier studies, such as Andaya's *A History of Malaysia* and Gullick's *Rulers and residents: Influence and power in the Malay States, 1870-1920*, focused more on the formal nature of interactions through political and economic aspects. The socio-cultural analysis is essential for evaluating interactions in depth and focusing on the everyday context of these two parties' interactions.² Additionally, the study will examine the experiences of the Malay community particularly the Malay community leaders that range from the upper echelon of Malay society such as the Sultan, the Malay aristocrats like *Menteri* (Minister), *Bangsawan* (Nobles) and *Penghulu* (Village Headman), and the emergent middle-class Malay elites such as the Malay administrative officers within

¹ The socio-cultural analysis is a framework that utilises the social and cultural historical approach to understanding history. Certain social norms and cultural significance of ethics can provide a different perspective on any particular historical account.

² Butcher, John G. "Towards the History of Malayan Society: Kuala Lumpur District, 1885–1912." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 10, no. 1 (1979): 117

Malay Civil Service (MCS) and Malay Administrative Service (MAS), exemplified by the position like the Assistant District Officer. The study will also analyse their customary practices that shaped their interactions with British officers, primarily within the state administration, following the shift in British colonial policy from informal to formal rule in British Malaya. The shift from informal to formal settings here indicated a change in the British administration's approach. Since 1874, the approach has been taken in an informal setting, without clear guidelines from the British regional authority, the Straits Settlements, and with officials who were a small and disparate group of British men. However, by 1919, the formation of the Malayan Civil Service (MCS) led to the formal management of British Malaya, which included an organised system of trained officials and proper bureaucracy.

The research period selected for this study spans from 1875 to 1940. This timeframe was chosen because, by 1875, the British Resident system had been implemented in Perak, making it the first Malay state to receive a British Resident after the Pangkor Treaty in 1874. The appointment of the Resident as the British advisor for the Sultan carries a connotation of colonial intervention in Malayan affairs. This study concludes in 1940, as the period after 1920 marked the beginning of the controversial Decentralisation Policy proposed by Sir Laurence Guillemard (1862CE – 1951CE), the High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States (FMS) and the Governor of the Straits Settlements.³ This policy indicated the self-ruling process that expanded the Sultans' power exponentially, especially in the Federated Malay States (FMS). It solidified the colonial bureaucracy, standardised the Malayan Civil Service (MCS), and marked the beginning of the process towards Malayan independence.⁴ It led to a decline

³ Goh, Daniel PS. "States of ethnography: Colonialism, resistance, and cultural transcription in Malaya and the Philippines, 1890s–1930s." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 1 (2007): 135

⁴ de Vere Allen, James. "Malayan Civil Service, 1874–1941 Colonial Bureaucracy/Malayan Elite." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 12, no. 2 (1970): 149-178.

in direct interaction between British officers and the Malay community, with most communication conducted through intermediaries within the bureaucracy. Additionally, this period witnessed a progressive shift in British policy that affected interactions between British officers and the Malay community at the district level.⁵ This study aims to understand the gradual changes in treatment and communication between both parties through a socio-cultural lens.

British Malaya comprised three distinct political entities with varying administrative settings and differing extents of colonial intervention during this period. This research highlights these differences, which significantly affected interactions between British officers and the Malay community. The Straits Settlements (SS) consisted of Melaka, Pulau Pinang, and Singapura, the first colonies founded by the British East India Company and later directly administered by the Colonial Office as the Crown Colonies.⁶ Next, the first set of states, Perak, Selangor, Pahang, and Negeri Sembilan, became the British Protectorates, and in 1895, they were consolidated under a federation known as the Federated Malay States (FMS). Despite being protectorates, the FMS's administration and authority were still under the control of the British residents.⁷ By 1919, Kedah, Terengganu, Kelantan, and later, Johor had been incorporated into the Unfederated Malay States (UMS). This second set of states maintained relatively autonomous rule within their local administrative structures.⁸ Based on these settings, the Malay community experienced separate treatment under these colonial entities.

⁵ Ponniah, Sivarajan. "Pengaruh British di Kedah 1770-1940: Kesan Ke atas Pentadbiran dan Ekonomi." PhD diss., Tesis PhD, Pulau Pinang: Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2010, 13-17

⁶ Sua, Tan Yao. "The British educational policy for the indigenous community in Malaya 1870–1957: Dualistic structure, colonial interests and Malay radical nationalism." *International Journal of Educational Development* 33, no. 4 (2013): 339.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

Due to this difference, this study will focus on two states: Perak from the Federated Malay States (FMS) and Kedah from the Unfederated Malay States (UMS). Perak represents a particularly significant case in the study of British colonial history in Malaya, as it was the first Malay state to adopt the model of colonial rule established by the Pangkor Treaty of 1874. The British had a strong influence in Perak, where they started interfering in Malayan affairs on a formal basis. As for Kedah, after the Treaty of Bangkok in 1909, the British demonstrated their interest in controlling state affairs under the pretext of indirect rule, which was later formalised in the Anglo-Kedah Treaty of 1923.⁹ The research does not include any of the Straits Settlements states (Pulau Pinang, Melaka, and Singapore) because these territories were crown colonies of the British Empire. As such, their administrative systems were heavily controlled by British civil servants and answered directly to London after 1867, when authority was transferred from the India Office to the Colonial Office.¹⁰ Despite the Malay population comprising the majority of inhabitants in all three states, interaction between them and British officers at the administrative level was limited to education, religious activities, and participation in local corps.¹¹ The nature of governance in the Straits Settlements did not provide the same level of interaction between the groups involved as was found in Perak and Kedah. Therefore, the Straits Settlements were excluded from this research because the core dynamic under investigation, which was the interaction between the British officers and the Malay community in these states, was less pronounced. Their administrative systems diverged significantly from the other systems, such as the

⁹ Mat Noor, N. O. O. R., and Ahmad Kamal Ariffin Mohd Rus. "Identiti Kemelayuan Dalam Pentadbiran Kedah, 1923-1941." *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategy* 41, no. 1 (2014). 4

¹⁰ A. Guthrie et al. *The British Possessions in the Straits of Malacca: An Address to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Signed by A. Guthrie and Others, and Dated April 20th, 1861, in Reference to the Transfer of the Administration of the British Possessions in the Straits of Malacca to the Colonial Office.* London: 1861.

¹¹ Gin, Ooi Keat. "Disparate identities: Penang from a historical perspective, 1780-1941." *Kajian Malaysia-Journal of Malaysian studies* 33, no. Supp. 2 (2015): 27-52.

residential and advisory systems, which involved the Malay population in their daily operations.

This research aims to present a narrative from the socio-cultural perspective of the Malay community and its interactions with British officers. The complexity of Malay tradition¹² played a significant role in understanding the Malays' decisions, perspectives, and participation within British colonial settings. The British administration's policy change was seen as an accommodation of Malay traditions. However, the Malay community reacted differently as processes of westernisation and modernisation transformed Malay society into a “modern” colonial society under British rule.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The historiography of British colonialism in Malaya has heavily emphasised political, administrative, and economic dimensions, with relatively limited attention given to socio-cultural history.¹³ Scholarly works such as Emily Sadka's *The residential system in the protected Malay States, 1874-1895*, and Gullick's numerous works, including *Sistem Politik Bumiputera Tanah Melayu Barat*, focus on statecraft, administrative elements such as the Residential System, and politics. Similarly, Webster's *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in Southeast Asia 1770-1890* and Hirschman's *The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology* highlighted the economic aspects of British colonial ventures in Malaya. Even Barbara and Leonard Andaya's *A History of Malaysia* only emphasised the political change and economic development in its broader syntheses. While these works make

¹² Malay tradition or Adat is a customary law of the Malay ethnicity. It was the unwritten, traditional code governing personal conduct from birth to death. Two kinds of Malay adat law developed before the 15th century: Adat Perpatih and Adat Temenggung.

¹³ Milner, Anthony C. "Colonial Records History: British Malaya." *Modern Asian Studies* 21, no. 4 (1987): 789

significant contributions to British Malayan historiography, the socio-cultural perspective remains less explored.

The interaction between British officers and the Malay community is typically studied and discussed within the colonial narrative, which focuses on the political and economic perspectives of British colonialism in Malaya. The narrative highlights the role of the British officers in their bureaucratic and administrative capacities. At the same time, the Malays are portrayed through the representatives of their sultans and Malay elites, who followed the instructions of the British authorities. Besides, the economic structure of the Malay states is also being explored due to their importance as sources of wealth for the British Empire. For example, the establishment of the Straits Settlements (SS), Federated Malay States (FMS), and the Unfederated Malay States (UMS) were the result of ensuring administrative unity, increasing economic efficiency, and reducing the administrative costs, plus the production and management of the tin mining and rubber plantation and other related structures.¹⁴

Nevertheless, one aspect that needs to be added to this narrative is the socio-cultural aspects. Some studies examined the concept of race and the occupation of British Malays.¹⁵ However, the discussion focuses primarily on the education and roles of Indian and Chinese immigrants in the plantation, mining, and trading industries. As for the Malay community, the topic usually revolves around the power structure of Malay royalty, migration, and personal accounts described by British officers. One area of the socio-cultural history of British Malaya that needed to be discussed was the everyday interactions between British officers and Malays, including their

¹⁴ Burns, P. L. *The Constitutional History of Malaya With Special Reference to the Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negri and Pahang 1874-1914*. University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (United Kingdom), (1966): 272

¹⁵ Stockwell, Anthony J. "The white man's burden and brown humanity: colonialism and ethnicity in British Malaya." *Asian journal of social science* 10, no. 1 (1982): 44-68.

administrative nature. Choosing Perak and Kedah for this research is significant because the British administered both states differently. Perak was a part of the Federated Malay States (FMS). The officers directly engaged with the Malay livelihood and person in power through residency and retained considerable control over the state administration.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Kedah was under the Unfederated Malay States (UMS), which maintained a significant amount of autonomy or native-style administration that can be reflected upon the Malay community who expressed themselves more differently from their counterpart in F.M.S as they resist the changes implemented by the British, who intent to make Kedah adopt the similar system practiced in FMS, thus resulted in they were given the autonomy as compromise in ensuring the colonial administration proceed smoothly.¹⁷ Since the research will focus on the Malay community in British Malaya, it would be wise to observe their interaction at the district level. The interactions can be observed through the bureaucratisation of the state's local administration, particularly in the Malay Civil Service (MCS). It would be more sensible and relatable if the discussion were viewed from a social and cultural perspective, which inevitably influenced the British initiative to accommodate local customs by learning and embracing the native culture, so that it could later be used to implement relevant laws accepted by the local community.

This study will also address the insufficient attempts of specific authors, such as Amoroso's *Traditionalism and the ascendancy of the Malay ruling class in Malaya*, and Gullick's *Rulers and residents: Influence and power in the Malay States, 1870-1920*, when analysing the Malay tradition in the daily life of the Malays. Malay tradition is a

¹⁶ Hack, Karl A. "Biar Mati Anak: Jangan Mati Adat [Better Your Children Die Than Your Traditions] Locally Raised Forces as a Barometer for Imperialism and Decolonization in British South East Asia, 1874-2001." *South East Asia Research* 10, no. 3 (2002): 252

¹⁷ Mat Noor, N. O. O. R., and Ahmad Kamal Ariffin Mohd Rus. "Identiti Kemelayuan Dalam Pentadbiran Kedah, 1923-1941." *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategy* 41, no. 1 (2014): 5-6

central component of the Malay community, governing every aspect of their lives. It is also closely tied to Islamic practices. Malay tradition continued to oversee the everyday activities of the Malays at that time. For example, in the case of Perak, the reason behind the fierce native resistance to the British first Resident, J.W.W. Birch (1826CE – 1875CE), which eventually led to his death, was due to his lack of understanding of Malay traditions, specifically the cultural significance of the role of the Malay Aristocracy. In Malay tradition, the cultural role of the Malay aristocrat was to collect taxes from their owned territories. When Birch introduced the centralised taxation system that replaced the role of Malay aristocrats as the tax collectors with the state-appointed ones, it caused massive dissatisfaction and ended with the assassination.¹⁸ Therefore, the assassination of Birch was not just a simple anti-colonial resistance but was influenced by the Malays' perception of Malay tradition. Any attempts to study everyday contact and interactions between British officers and Malays should also consider the aspect of custom, as it will not portray the Malays' actions holistically without it.

When the discussion about Malay Aristocracy occurred, the colonial narrative consistently portrayed them as a strategic tool in the colonial enterprise, utilising their authority in controlling the masses (the Malay community), taking advantage of the concept of “*Daulat*” and “*Derhaka*”¹⁹, which was valid to a certain extent in all British protectorates. However, in British Malaya, not all Malay aristocrats unquestioningly accepted colonisation or were blinded by the compensation of regular salaries and

¹⁸ Winstedt, R. O., and R. J. Wilkinson. “A History of Perak.” *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 12, no. 1 (118) (1934): v–180, 107-109

¹⁹ Daulat and Derhaka are customary beliefs of the Malays regarding loyalty to the rulers (Sultan). They were created through the agreement between Sri Tri Buana and Demang Lebar Daun, in which the latter acknowledged the other's authority and swore loyalty to him in perpetuity. Anyone who broke the agreement by being a traitor or disobeying the rulers would incur the mystical punishment known as “Tulah.” See Harun, Jelani. “Pengaruh Sejarah Melayu dalam Kesultanan Negeri Perak: Suatu Penelitian Sumber dan Fasa Baru Magna Carta Melayu.” Seminar, 2013.

honorary offices without much work. The complexity of Malay tradition compelled these aristocrats to obey their superiors as if it were a habit. They embrace the changes without question, as reflected in the previously mentioned concepts of “Daulat” and “Derhaka”.²⁰

On the other hand, political history often privileges formal or official activities, overlooking the ordinary and everyday lives of Malayan society. To remedy this issue, socio-cultural history, also known as history from below, was needed to construct this interaction. The interaction between the British officer and the local community also provided insight into how the British implemented the changes.

In this case, for example, the Upper Perak District Officer, Hubert Berkeley, was known as the White Rajah of Upper Perak due to his close relationship with the locals. The way he acted during his residence, such as wearing a “*sarung*” and herding chickens and ducks at the back of his house, was very intriguing.²¹ Others, like Frank Swettenham and Hugh Low, were famously known for their “Malayophilia” or “Malayocentricity”²², also appeased the locals by including them in administrative roles, which may have contributed to the British's long rule in Malaya.²³

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This research contributed to an in-depth local narrative emphasising the relationship between Malay tradition and British colonial policy in British Malaya. The usual colonial narrative focused only on the policy's political and economic significance for British Malaya's development. In contrast, another narrative is supposed to focus on

²⁰ Kratoska, Paul H. "Penghulus in Perak and Selangor: The rationalisation and decline of a traditional Malay office." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 57, no. 2 (247 (1984): 32

²¹ Butcher, John G. "The British in Malaya, 1880-1941: The social history of a European community in colonial South-East Asia." (*No Title*) (1979).

²² Stockwell, Anthony J. "The white man's burden and brown humanity: colonialism and ethnicity in British Malaya." *Asian journal of social science* 10, no. 1 (1982): 51

²³ Chew, Ernest. "Swettenham and British Residential Rule in West Malaya." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 5, no. 2 (1974): 174

the social perspective, emphasizing the Malay aristocracy as a colonial tool and its dealings with the British authorities. Due to Malay tradition, the British colonial policy firmly established its colonial venture in British Malaya. This research assumed that the Malay aristocracy was not voluntarily becoming colonial tools, but instead was habitual due to the complexity of Malay tradition. The British benefited from the loyalty of Malay commoners to their Sultans and nobles, and empowered the Malay elites to their advantage.²⁴ Despite being within the Malay tradition, any signs of betrayal or disobedience (*Derhaka*) towards the Sultans will incur “*Tulah*”. The lack of social representation and understanding of Malay tradition led to misunderstandings of the Malay aristocrats' roles and of local community reactions to British colonial policy.

Furthermore, the research will provide an alternative perspective on the interaction between British officers and the local community, a topic colonial historians have yet to explore thoroughly. Thus, it helped fill gaps in Malaysian colonial history, which is typically addressed within a political and economic historical framework. By conducting an in-depth study of the histories of Perak and Kedah, the extent and nature of this interaction can be gauged and analysed, thereby further enhancing understanding of the British colonial bureaucracy and the role of the Malay community.²⁵

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

1. To what degree did the British officers consider local circumstances and customs before implementing policies from the central authorities (State and Federal)?
2. How did the unique development of civil service tradition in each state shape the nature of everyday relations between the British officers and the Malays?

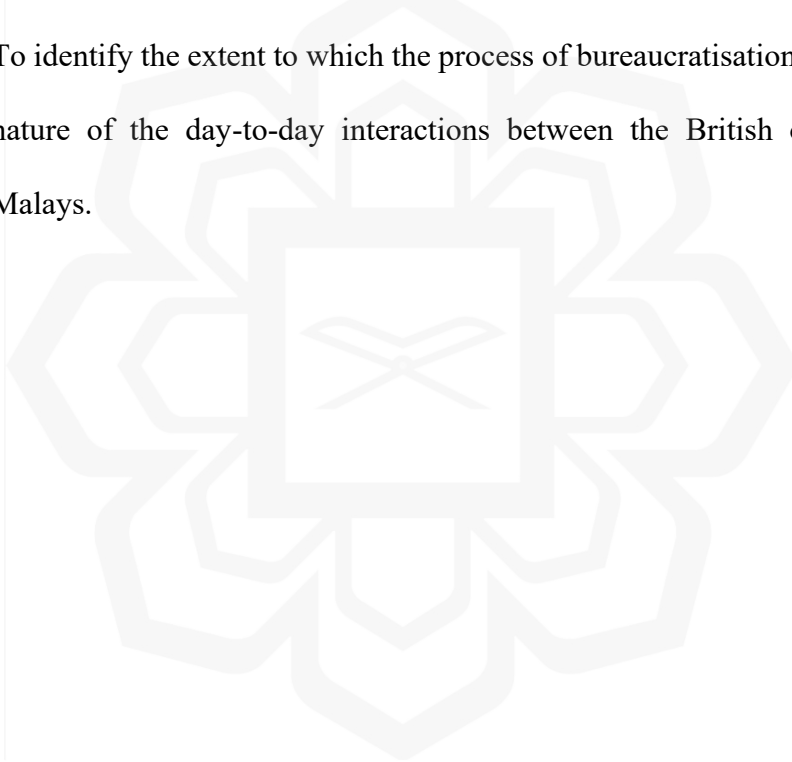
²⁴ Stockwell, Anthony J. "The white man's burden and brown humanity: colonialism and ethnicity in British Malaya." *Asian Journal of social science* 10, no. 1 (1982): 62

²⁵ Wah, Yeo Kim. "The grooming of an elite: Malay administrators in the Federated Malay States, 1903–1941." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1980): 292

3. To what extent did the process of bureaucratisation transform the nature of the day-to-day interactions between the British officers and the Malays?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To analyse whether the local circumstances and customs of the Malay were observed and acted upon by the British officers before implementing any policies from the central authorities (State and Federal).
2. To study each state's unique civil service traditions and how they influenced the everyday interactions between the British officers and the Malays.
3. To identify the extent to which the process of bureaucratisation transformed the nature of the day-to-day interactions between the British officers and the Malays.



1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature on the interaction between the British officers and the Malays is abundant in the context of colonial studies. The British–Malays relations were heavily studied to understand their political and economic development. European scholars wrote most of the published material on British Malaya. Furthermore, not many historians have focused on the discourse of social and cultural history in British Malaya. For local historians, the discussion typically highlighted the socio-political or socio-economic framework provided by the abundance of primary sources.

Some experts, such as A.C. Milner and J.M. Gullick, have written numerous works that discuss Malay political identity through the lens of Malay traditionalism, including the Malay traditional system and hierarchy. These works examine the relationship between the Malay aristocracy and British administrators, but less on the Malay community in their local and everyday settings. For example, Milner presented that the head of the Colonial Office in 1932 emphasised the crucial role of preserving the Malay rulers' position, authority, and prestige as a cardinal point in British policy. This statement underscores the significance of the Malay rulers in the British colonial administration, highlighting their importance in maintaining order and stability in the region.²⁶ Gullick argued that the relationship between British administrators and the Malay rulers was not one of hostility but a collaborative effort to establish a balance of power and influence. Although somewhat uneven, this balance enabled continuous communication and served as a foundation for future Malay participation in the newly formed government.²⁷ Nevertheless, their contributions are exceptional in understanding the Malay community as a whole.

²⁶ Milner, Anthony C. "Colonial Records History: British Malaya." *Modern Asian Studies* 21, no. 4 (1987): 773-792.

²⁷ Gullick, J.M. *Rulers and Residents: Influence and Power in the Malay States, 1870-1920*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992.

When examining the historical interactions between the British and Malays, it is essential to acknowledge the scholarly works that have discussed the British social perceptions of the Malays. One of the significant factors that influenced the British view of the Malays was their concept of 'race.' The sociologist Charles Hirschman explored the topic of race in British Malaya from a sociological perspective in his article titled *The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology*,²⁸ Hirschman argued that the British viewed the Malays through a paternalistic lens, seeing them as docile, loyal, and easy to govern. He acknowledged some resistance from the Malays, but British paternalism prevailed.²⁹ However, this approach needs improvement, as it is necessary to examine micro-level interactions to obtain a more accurate and comprehensive picture of the situation. Analysing these interactions is crucial to determine whether the general picture accurately represents the situation. Moreover, it fails to consider that the Malay population's willingness to be subdued was not universal. After all, some Malays adhere to the concepts of “*Daulat*” and “*Derhaka*”, which make them docile and loyal.

When it comes to the social history of British Malaya, among the first to explore this topic was J.G. Butcher in his work, *A Social History of the British in Malaya, 1880-1941*.³⁰ This literature provided the basis for this research, as Butcher extensively discussed the social perspective of British Malayan society. However, his work primarily centres on the European society that lived in Malaya, and he discusses other ethnicities only superficially. Since Butcher drew on sources from that period's

²⁸ Hirschman, Charles. "The making of race in colonial Malaya: Political economy and racial ideology." In *Sociological forum*, vol. 1, no. 2, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1986, 246-342

²⁹ Paternalism is a sociological term that focuses on the idea that the governance of individuals and the nation ought to be approached in a paternalistic manner, akin to how a caring father would guide his children.

³⁰ Butcher, John Glover. "A social history of the British in Malaya, 1880-1941, with special reference to the Federated Malay States." PhD diss., University of Hull, 1975, 105-107

newspapers, the interaction between Europeans and Asians is notably present, often between the Chinese and Indians. For Malays, it was rarely discussed. Despite this gap, this research can utilise his information and synthesise a reflective study of the Malay community in British Malaya. Another Butcher's work, *Towards the History of Malayan Society: Kuala Lumpur District, 1885–1912*³¹, discussed the socio-economic life of British Malayan society in Kuala Lumpur. He mentioned that the interaction between Europeans and Asians had gradually improved by the 1930s, with less segregation and greater inclusiveness in most social activities. His explanation often involved upper-class society, and he touched on the sentiments of racial segregation and racial tension. As for the Malays, social changes were brought about through education and employment in the civil service. In his view, British-Malay relations were relatively harmonious. However, the term he usually uses is "Asian," which groups the Malays, Chinese, and Indians into one category—the example he mainly chose involved interactions between Chinese elites and some Indians and Europeans.

Other than Butcher, historians like Andayas and Thio have also discussed the social interactions between the Malays and the British in their writings, *British Policy in the Malay Peninsula, 1880-1910*,³² and *A History of Malaysia*³³, though their works mainly focused on the colonial policy. Andayas presented that the British and the Malays had a good relationship, especially the Malay sultans, as they perceived the dealings and agreements between both parties as beneficial for political and economic standings. Besides, the British traders received specific instructions to win over the native people's affection and respect. They were also tasked with teaching the locals to

³¹ Butcher, John G. "Towards the History of Malayan Society: Kuala Lumpur District, 1885–1912." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 10, no. 1 (1979): 104-118.

³² Thio, Eunice. "British policy in the Malay Peninsula, 1880-1910." (*No Title*) (1969).

³³ Andaya, Barbara Watson, and Leonard Y. Andaya. *A history of Malaysia*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

view the British as their "friends" or "protectors" whenever they interacted. This study noted that Andaya's accounts provide insights into British-Malay relations. However, they require further research to be fully understood, as the scarcity of available sources has hindered a comprehensive understanding of their history. Additional analysis and exploration can gain a more nuanced understanding of British–Malay relations.

It is a fascinating topic in the case of British Malaya because, in general, research on British colonial policy in Malaya consistently indicates that the same policy was imposed in the British Raj. Thio and Andayas argued that the development of the policy can be divided into two phases: the extension of British political control (1880-1889) and the policy of consolidation (1890-1910). Both phases were due to the region's political and economic development. This statement was confirmed in the context of Malaya's geopolitics at the time, which involved many local civil wars and strife that the British exploited to expand their influence and control strategic resources. The British–Malay interaction during both phases also changed considerably. The interaction during the first phase (1880-1889) is evident between the British officers and the Malay Aristocracy. This is due to the British's intention to expand their influence, without a clear policy on moving forward. However, during the second phase (1890-1910), the British intended to intervene more thoroughly in Malay affairs; thus, the interaction between British officers and the Malay community also expanded, especially between District officers and the *Penghulus*. Nonetheless, Thio and Andayas did not deeply explain the interaction between the British officers and the Malay community in their works.

The bureaucratisation of the Malay community also contributed to understanding the interaction between the British officers and the Malay community. Through this process, the British began to standardise the Residential and Advisory

systems to consolidate Malaya's two prominent polities: the Federated Malay States (FMS) and the Unfederated Malay States (UMS). Ghosh and Wah presented a pretty detailed argument of Malay elites' importance in the British administration of Malaya in their writings, *Twentieth-century Malaysia: Politics of Decentralisation of Power, 1920-1929*³⁴ and *The Grooming of an Elite: Malay Administrators in the Federated Malay States, 1903-1941*,³⁵ which included a practical knowledge of Malay tradition (Malay Custom). The role of Malay elites in the British bureaucracy led to the combination of the roles of administrator and aristocrat (administocrat).³⁶ Wah argued that the bureaucratisation of Malay elites, due to their English education and their being styled like their European counterparts, helped administer British Malaya efficiently, leading to the establishment of the Malayan Civil Service (MCS). This process diminished the presence of Malay elites within the Malay community, as their relationship became more formal and less interactive than in the past. Ghosh supported Wah's argument by underlining that the expansion of the Malayan Civil Services contributed to the bureaucratisation of the Malayan society. Thus, the British officers stayed in their offices and interacted with only a handful of Malays from MCS, making fewer contacts with the Malay community than they had through field trips or inspections.

Another approach historians used was to view the relationship between the Malay Elites and the British colonial administration as a medium heavily involved in the British smooth expansion in Malaya, and to examine whether the implementation

³⁴ Ghosh, Kalyan Kumar. "Twentieth-century Malaysia: Politics of decentralisation of power, 1920-1929." 1977.

³⁵ Wah, Yeo Kim. "The grooming of an elite: Malay administrators in the Federated Malay States, 1903-1941." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1980): 287-319.

³⁶ A term labelled by Chandra Muzaffar, a Malaysian political scientist in his book, "*Protector?: An Analysis of the Concept and Practice of Loyalty in Leader-led Relationships Within Malay Society*" published in 1979.

of their policy incorporated Malay tradition. It is the same idea this research sought to explore, but told through a different narrative. Moreover, the previous studies in this approach utilised the theory of meaning to further describe the use of specific terms, such as tradition and traditionalism, in the Malay culture. Donna J. Amoroso's *Traditionalism and the ascendancy of the Malay ruling class in Malaya*.³⁷ and J.M. Gullick's *Rulers and Residents: Influence and Power in the Malay States, 1870-1920*³⁸ discussed this approach in a commendable way, yet not holistically. Amoroso and Gullick shared the same argument that British colonialism in Malaya was instrumental in restoring Malay tradition by empowering the local sultans. They argued that the Malay Elites were the tools for the British to expand their influence in Malaya. The reasons were that the Malay custom of loyalty towards the Sultan led to little resistance from the local community if the British policy was implemented under the pretext of the Sultan's orders. Plus, the prevalent traditionalism in Malay cultures further eased the process of British expansion as long as the local sultans did not dispose of it. However, the gap identified within their arguments was that neither fully understood the concept of "Malay Traditionalism". This concept entangles many aspects that cannot be separated. Amoroso focused on the political aspects of Malay tradition, such as the structure of Malay aristocracy, while neglecting its cultural, social, and religious dimensions. For example, the appointment of the Malay Elites to office positions also carries cultural significance, which usually translates into the roles and responsibilities they assume. A similar Malay tradition governed each Malay state, though with slightly different practices in different localities. For example, the role of Malay elites in Perak included the privilege to collect taxes, which were exclusively for them; they were not

³⁷ Amoroso, Donna J. *Traditionalism and the ascendancy of the Malay ruling class in Malaya*. N.U.S. Press, 2014.

³⁸ Gullick, J.M. *Rulers and Residents: Influence and Power in the Malay States, 1870-1920*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992.

obligated to send the money to the Sultan's government.³⁹ Abandoning this cultural aspect will fail to explain Malay tradition. This study highlighted the need to discuss Malay tradition in all its aspects to holistically understand the roles of Malay elites and the local community.

Next, the interaction between the British officers and the Malay community also addressed immediate customary practices. Through the Perak and Kedah cases, these practices have become an essential mechanism for the British to establish their presence in Malaya by appealing to the Malay population. In Perak, Kratoska, in his work, *Penghulus in Perak and Selangor: The Rationalisation and Decline of a Traditional Malay Office*⁴⁰, presented that the Residential system left the Malay administration intact. However, many officeholders were given political pensions and stripped of their authority. A fresh administrative framework comprising residents, district officers, and specialised departments like surveys, land and mines, posts and telegraphs, customs, and the treasury. European leaders directed these departments to bypass the Malay administration. However, these departments have less knowledge and true power to exercise in rural areas. Thus, incorporating the *Penghulus* and Datos into the colonial administration might solve this problem. Even so, it became troublesome because many factors were involved, such as the fact that these hereditary offices did not ensure that the position would be held by someone efficient or literate; due to Malay tradition, they usually sided with the local community against the Resident's authority and others, but this gradually improved. The interaction between the district officers and the *Penghulus* was a central feature of Kratoska's writing. Besides, in Kedah, the Advisory system, which intervenes less in the state administration composed of a majority of Malays,

³⁹ Husin, Norbi. "Sistem politik dan masyarakat negeri Perak sebelum 1874: Suatu gambaran Umum." *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics and Strategic Studies* (1973): 27-39.

⁴⁰ Kratoska, Paul H. "Penghulus in Perak and Selangor: The rationalisation and decline of a traditional Malay office." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 57, no. 2 (247) (1984): 32

featured different kinds of interactions. Noor Ain and Ahmad Kamal Ariffin argued in their writing, *Identiti Kemelayuan Dalam Pentadbiran Kedah, 1923-1941*⁴¹, that Kedah managed to maintain a Malay-dominated presence in its state administration despite the technical departments, such as surveys and healthcare, being monopolised by the British. The use of Malay and Jawi as the administrative language ensured Kedah's autonomy in managing its government. Preserving their Malay identity in the transition towards modern bureaucracy can be assumed as preserving Malay tradition. The relationship between the British and Malays in Kedah was always tense, as both pursued their own selfish agendas.

Milner beautifully addressed all these shortcomings in his *Colonial Records History: British Malaya*.⁴² He highlighted the lack of effort or initiative to construct British Malayan history through local narratives by including the local community rather than focusing solely on the Malay aristocracy.

The available literature on British Malayan history lacks discussion from a socio-cultural perspective, particularly regarding the interaction between British officers and the Malay community. Most books and articles discussed the importance of British colonial policy in British Malaya; however, they only emphasised its political and economic significance. An effort was also made, using the socio-cultural approach, to assess the role of the Malay aristocracy as a British instrument in the colonisation of Malaya. Nonetheless, its effect and consequences on the local community should have been discussed more comprehensively. The British Malayan studies have been thoroughly researched, yet some historians cannot escape colonial narratives. Therefore, addressing these gaps and rectifying them in future research is essential.

⁴¹ Mat Noor, N. O. O. R., and Ahmad Kamal Ariffin Mohd Rus. "Identiti Kemelayuan Dalam Pentadbiran Kedah, 1923-1941." *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategy* 41, no. 1 (2014).

⁴² Milner, Anthony C. "Colonial Records History: British Malaya." *Modern Asian Studies* 21, no. 4 (1987): 773-792.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is based on a historical approach and library research through document analysis. The sources and interpretation play an essential role in producing a good socio-cultural analysis. It will start with data collection from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources, such as documents and memos from the British Malaya era, preserved in the National Archives of Malaysia, will be used. Some records and accounts must be sorted and studied independently as they are not relatively interrelated. However, at the end of the study, their outcomes will be compiled through diligent assessment to understand the interactions between the British officers and the Malay community. For example, records from the Larut District Office from around 1890 describe the interaction between the Larut District Officer (British Officer) and a Malay aristocrat (*Orang Kaya-Kaya*) regarding the celebration in Taiping, demonstrating regular contact between the two. In Kedah, the letters between the Kedah government and the British High Commissioner in Singapore were written in Malay using the Jawi script.⁴³ This research will also incorporate district-level government documents and materials, such as those from the Kuala Muda District Office.

Another primary source will be the personal accounts of colonial writers, such as British officers, subjects, and travellers (who may be of other ethnicities besides Englishmen), either from their diaries or travelogues. At the same time, for the locals, it was the other way around. For example, a contemporary travelogue by the British explorer Isabella L. Bird, titled *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*⁴⁴, was published in 1883. This account can be considered from an outsider's perspective despite her being British. *The Chersonese With The Gliding Off*⁴⁵, written by Emily

⁴³ Mat Noor, N. O. O. R., and Ahmad Kamal Ariffin Mohd Rus. "Identiti Kemelayuan Dalam Pentadbiran Kedah, 1923-1941." *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategy* 41, no. 1 (2014).

⁴⁴ Bird, I. L. "The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither." (1884).

⁴⁵ Innes, Emily. *The Chersonese with the gliding off*. Vol. 1. London: R. Bentley, 1885.

Innes, was an account of a reaction towards the writing of Isabella L. Bird. It was composed of Innes's experiences as the wife of a British officer stationed in British Malaya. It is a good account of describing a detailed life from the perspective of an average British citizen and her interaction with the Malays. Another one titled *Out in the Midday Sun: The British in Malaya 1880-1960*⁴⁶, was written by Margaret Shennan, a child of a British officer who served in several British protectorates. It was her account of growing up in British Malaya. The accounts of British officers like Frank Swettenham and Hugh Low were also included, such as *British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya*⁴⁷ and *The Journal of Sir Hugh Low, Perak, 1877*⁴⁸.

As for other local sources, by the 1930s, many Malay printed works, such as newspapers like *Saudara* and *Majlis*, could be used as references. These newspapers can provide a general understanding of the issues discussed by the local community during that period, offering insight into British–Malay interactions. The English printed newspapers, like *The Straits Times* and the *Pinang Gazette*, can also be used to assess the role played by the British officers. Another one was a book titled *Puteri Gunung Tahan*⁴⁹, written by Ishak Haji Muhammad, or famously known as Pak Sako, which was a satirical novel condemning the British. It was a proto-nationalist novel published in 1937, and its content was relatively relevant to the topic. Based on these sources, their interpretations will be situated in local contexts and researched through a socio-cultural framework.

⁴⁶ Shennan, Margaret. *Out in the Midday Sun: The British in Malaya 1880-1960*. Monsoon Books, 2015.

⁴⁷ Swettenham, Frank Athelstane. *British Malaya: an account of the origin and progress of British influence in Malaya*. J. Lane, 1907.

⁴⁸ Sadka, Emily. "The Journal of Sir Hugh Low, Perak, 1877." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 27, no. 4 (1954): 1-108.

⁴⁹ Muhammad, Ishak Haji. "Putera Gunung Tahan." (*No Title*) (1973).

Secondary sources will be extracted from books and articles on the History of Malaysia, British Policy, the Malay Aristocracy, colonial writers, and the social and cultural aspects of British Malaya. This study will also compare the case studies of Perak and Kedah to understand the extent of interaction between British officers and the Malay community.

The research will use two prominent theories of Sociology popularised by a renowned German sociologist, Max Weber (1864–1920), which are the Theory of Bureaucracy and the Tripartite classification of authority, to properly elaborate the concept of Bureaucracy, Bureaucratisation, and authority in the colonial bureaucracy of British Malaya in Chapter 4. According to Weber, bureaucracy is an organisation with a rigid hierarchy, in which work is done according to fixed rules, and workers become more impersonal and formal, leading to highly specialised jobs.⁵⁰ The tripartite classification of authority consisted of three types: traditional authority, rational-legal authority, and charismatic authority. Weber argued that the legitimacy of a ruler or government must rest on these three authorities to ensure that their rule is legitimate and stable. Traditional authority is a form of authority that derives its legitimacy from a community's customs, heritage, and long-established beliefs. The best example of the traditional authority was a hereditary monarchy. Secondly, the rational-legal authority is a type of authority that permeates modern societies, deriving its legitimacy from a system of impersonal, codified rules and laws, and elevating people who are themselves bound by those laws to issue commands within their rights. A modern government where people obey the appointed leader not because of their personal qualities, but because they were elected through constitutional procedures. Lastly, the charismatic authority is a type of authority centred on the individual leaders with extraordinary

⁵⁰ Roth, Guenther, and Claus Wittich. "Max Weber Economy and Society." (1978).

personal qualities that inspire loyalty and obedience from their followers. These individuals or figures can be revolutionary leaders, religious prophets, or cult leaders, embodying confident leadership that inspires devotion.⁵¹

By integrating multiple sources and employing a comparative case study of Perak and Kedah, these methodologies are designed to produce a substantial socio-cultural analysis of the British-Malay relationship during this colonial period.

1.8 CHAPTERISATION

The research will address and assess the problems using various perspectives, accounts, and sources. Finally, it will be categorised into chapters to explain the findings systemically and pragmatically.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter explains the research's problem statement and significance, emphasising the reasons. It will also provide the background and scope of this research. The research was guided by its questions and objectives for a holistic study. This chapter also discussed the methodology that this study would utilise. At the end of the chapter, the literature review will be focused on previous research on this topic.

Chapter 2: The British Policy During Their Early Intervention In Perak And Kedah

In the second chapter, this study will delve into the historical background of British Malayan history. The main research question is whether the British officers observed and acted on the local circumstances and customs of the Malays before implementing policies from the central authorities (state and federal). This chapter will discuss the British administration's policy-making process and the Malay community's

⁵¹ Roth, Guenther, and Claus Wittich. "Max Weber Economy and Society." (1978).

reaction to these policies. In addition, this chapter will explore in detail the accounts of interactions between both parties.

Chapter 3: The Civil Service And Its Impact On The Daily Interaction With The Malay Community

This chapter will address the second research question: How far did the unique development of each state's civil service tradition shape the nature of everyday relations between British officers and the Malays? An analysis of both Perak and Kedah regarding their state administration will also be conducted, including the Malayan Civil Service and British-Malay relations within this context.

Chapter 4: The Bureaucratisation Of The British Administration And Its Influence On The Everyday British-Malay Interaction.

This chapter will discuss the extent to which the bureaucratisation process transformed the nature of day-to-day interactions between British officers and Malays, continuing Chapter 3's discussion. It will also focus on the decentralisation process of FMS and the gradual changes in the interactions between British officers and the Malay community under British colonial policies.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendation

The last chapter will summarise the research content and its outcomes. Then, the research questions will be reviewed again to determine whether they are answered objectively throughout this research. In the end, the research will suggest future topics for this field of study.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BRITISH POLICY DURING THEIR EARLY INTERVENTION IN PERAK AND KEDAH

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The discourse surrounding the history of British Malaya often focuses on colonial ventures, agreements, wars, politics, and the economic aspects of this period. However, the people's perspectives during that time are less frequently examined, particularly regarding their interactions with the colonial officers. The interactions between the Malays and the British began in the 17th century, but gradually became more formal and frequent by the late 18th century as their regional power consolidated. The interaction might not materialise fully through obvious evidence, but it can be observed through the engagement between the British and the Malays in the administration domain.

This chapter aims to discuss the historical background of the research topic and provide a general overview of the historical setting. The chapter will be addressed in two separate sections. The first area will focus on early British interactions with the Malay rulers of Kedah and Perak, culminating in the appointment of their first British Resident and Advisor. The latter part will explore the situation of the Malay community before the British presence. The early interactions between the British and Malay communities, their policy-making processes, and whether they considered local circumstances before implementing policies from central authorities will also be reviewed. Discussing these two areas extensively is crucial, providing a background and foundation for the following chapters.

2.2 THE ARRIVAL OF THE BRITISH IN THE MALAY PENINSULA AND ITS EARLY ENCOUNTER WITH THE MALAYS

The interaction between the local populations of Southeast Asia and Europeans has been thoroughly studied, such as in Hakluyt's *Collection of the Early Voyages, Travels, and Discoveries, of the English Nation*⁵², due to its importance in investigating the earliest European colonial ventures in the region. The British were not the only European power to encounter local societies in Southeast Asia, especially in the Malay Peninsula. These European travellers' visits to Indonesian islands and the Malay Peninsula often involved brief interactions with local communities as they travelled towards southern China.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach Asia, with Vasco da Gama (1460 CE – 1524 CE)'s 1498 voyage arriving in Calicut, India. This voyage marked the successful bypassing of the Ottoman-controlled land routes for Eastern trades and established a direct sea route. Initially, the Portuguese established several trading ports along the Malabar coast, driven primarily by commercial interests. However, the Portuguese conquest of Goa in 1510 shifted this dynamic from mercantilism to imperialism. The arrival of Lopes de Sequiera (1465 CE – 1530 CE), a Portuguese trader, in Melaka in 1509 marked a pivotal point in European–local interaction in Southeast Asia. Under the order of King Manuel I (1469 CE – 1521 CE) of Portugal, Sequiera was tasked with establishing a trading port in Melaka.⁵³ Although, this mission also served as a pretext for future broader Eastern expansion. However, a tragic event⁵⁴

⁵² Hakluyt, Richard. *Hakluyt's Collection of the Early Voyages, Travels, and Discoveries, of the English Nation*. Vol. 1. G. Reimer, 1809.

⁵³ Pintado, M. J. *Portuguese Documents on Malacca*. Kuala Lumpur: Arkib Negara Malaysia, 1993.

⁵⁴ The tragic event was the capture of Sequiera and his entourage by Sultan Mahmud of Melaka after he heard the news from the Gujarati traders about the conquest of Goa by the Portuguese, which could have a similar implication on Melaka if not prevented. Sequiera managed to escape, but several Portuguese remained captives, including a notable figure named Rui de Araujo. He managed to slip a message to Goa, requesting their help. Upon receiving this message, Alfonso de Albuquerque led the assault on Melaka, killing two birds with one stone by rescuing the captives and conquering a strategic location in Southeast Asia to strengthen his project to expand Portuguese presence in Asia.

occurred, which led to the conquest of Melaka by Alfonso de Albuquerque (1453 CE – 1515 CE) in 1511. This event marked the starting point of European colonisation in Southeast Asia. Their focus was not only on monopolising regional trade but also on land acquisition and global influence in the region. The Portuguese incursion into Southeast Asia opened the way for other Europeans to exploit the region's resources.

In the Malay Peninsula, the Dutch began interacting with local sultanates, especially the Perak and Johor Sultanates. In 1641, the Dutch successfully took over Melaka from the Portuguese with the help of the Johor Sultanate.⁵⁵ For the Perak Sultanate, the Dutch exploited Perak's tin resources and, in 1765, initiated an agreement with the Perak Sultan to monopolise tin production.⁵⁶ Even though there was a degree of mutual understanding, both parties occasionally engaged in skirmishes due to dissatisfaction among the Perak aristocracy with the one-sided trade deal.

The British presence in Southeast Asia was closely associated with the East India Company (EIC). This chartered company conducted trade-related activities for the Kingdom of England and, later, the British Empire. The acquisition of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras established their presence in the Indian Ocean and neighbouring Southeast Asia. The primary focus of the EIC in the early 18th century was to capitalise on the volatile political situation in the Indian subcontinent. It expanded its influence and territory by establishing factories and trading posts along the Coromandel and Malabar coasts, as well as by engaging in conflicts with other European chartered companies, such as the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the French East India Company (CIO). However, some of EIC's small shipping and trading companies also conducted trade with the Burmese and the Siamese by establishing small trading posts

⁵⁵ Andaya, Barbara Watson, and Leonard Y. Andaya. *A history of Malaysia*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

⁵⁶ Andaya, Barbara Watson. *Perak, the abode of grace: A study of an eighteenth-century Malay state*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1979.

and factories along the Bay of Bengal and Straits of Melaka. One of these traders or agents was Francis Light (1740 CE - 1794 CE). He worked with Jourdain, Sullivan, and the De Souza Firm, located in Madras, and later established a trade post in Salang (present-day Phuket), Siam, where he operated for approximately 10 years.⁵⁷ Francis Light was among the earliest British agents to have formal encounters with the Malay population.⁵⁸

In 1771, the first recorded interaction between the British and Malays was a letter sent by Sultan Muhammad Jiwa II (1710CE—1778CE) of Kedah to the Governor of Madras requesting military assistance in quelling a local rebellion, which was aided by Bugis mercenaries from Selangor.⁵⁹ He promised to allow the British to establish a trading post in Kuala Kedah. Francis Light was sent to lead a company of sepoy to honour the request; however, upon arriving in Kedah, the situation calmed down, and the Bugis mercenaries retreated to Selangor. Despite that, Francis Light signed an agreement with the Sultan to station 100 sepoy in defence of Kedah. Later that same year, Sultan Muhammad Jiwa II requested offensive military assistance against Selangor by promising to lease a fort in Kuala Kedah and the surrounding lands, including the trade monopolies. The proposal was generous; however, by complying with this offer, the British would need to participate in military actions against the Bugis, consisting of Selangor, Riau, and Johor, who had been on good terms with them. Thus, they rejected the deal but sent a military force led by Edward Monckton to

⁵⁷ During his 10 years of trading in Salang, he learned the Malay and Siamese languages and befriended the Governor of Salang. Francis Light was interested in acquiring Pulau Pinang since 1771, as the island could become a British trading post at the gate of the Straits of Melaka. He wrote about this suggestion to the Governor of Bengal but to no avail due to the war with the French and the Dutch. Steuart, Archibald Francis. *A Short Sketch of the Lives of Francis and William Light, the Founders of Penang and Adelaide: With Extracts from Their Journals*. S. Low, Marston, Limited, 1901.

⁵⁸ Interactions during this period usually involved notable persons of that particular culture, such as rulers, generals, and traders.

⁵⁹ Kedah experienced political turmoil due to the succession crisis caused by the rival claimants. These claimants secured the aid of Bugis mercenaries to launch a rebellion against the sultan. Bonney, Rollin. *Kedah 1771-1821: The search for security and independence*. Oxford University Press, 1974.

propose a new deal, involving a defensive alliance, on the terms offered by the Kedah sultan. This reply was not received happily by the Sultan, who rescinded the offer despite intimidation and a passive-aggressive response from Monckton.⁶⁰ This first interaction can be viewed as a political issue between the EIC and the Kedah Sultanate. It set a precedent for the later Sultan, who faced similar predicaments to Sultan Muhammad Jiwa II.

18th-century Southeast Asia also faced a similar fate to their counterpart in the Indian subcontinent, which was chaotic. The newly ascended King Rama I (1737CE – 1809CE) of the Chakri dynasty united his kingdom in Siam (modern-day Thailand) after defeating the last pretender, the Thonburi Kingdom, in 1782. Due to years of continuous war, the Chakri dynasty lacked the manpower to withstand the invasion. To consolidate his power and overcome the manpower crisis, he reaffirmed his control over the Malay Sultanates in the northern Malay Peninsula: the Sultanates of Patani, Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah. He ordered these northern sultanates to contribute manpower, supplies, and weapons to the war under threat of punishment. The Sultanate of Patani tried to resist the order, which ended with the capitulation of its cities, and the Siamese army slaughtered the population. This harsh punishment was meant to serve as an example to other sultanates if they attempted to resist or ignore the previous tradition of submission. In addition to the contribution, the Siamese king also demanded that all the sultans travel to his capital and prostrate before him to reaffirm their loyalty. This outrageous demand, in the eyes of the sultans, was humiliating. Before this, as tributaries of the previous dynasty, the sultanates did not have to do this and willingly paid “*Bunga Emas dan Perak*” and met the demands requested.

⁶⁰ Bonney, Rollin. *Kedah 1771-1821: The search for security and independence*. Oxford University Press, 1974.

All of these demands drove the northern sultanates to opt for alternatives. The presence of European powers in the region, such as the Dutch, Danes, and British, enabled them to consider forming a defensive alliance against their overlord. The Sultanate of Terengganu is already engaged in talks with the Dutch for cooperation.⁶¹ The decisive reason behind Kedah's intention was to secure its security and independence against the hostile regional powers in its neighbourhood. Although Kedah recognised its military weakness, the presence of advanced European powers in the region opened a new opportunity to withstand Siamese and Burmese aggression.⁶² In 1785, the Kedah Sultanate under Sultan Abdullah Mukarram Shah (1778CE – 1797CE), sensing the pressure of imminent invasion either by the Burmese or Siamese, contacted Francis Light to request military protection from the EIC as they possessed advanced military assets and were quite popular at that time due to their successful ventures in India in return for the lease of the Pulau Pinang.⁶³ Francis Light, who had been in contact with the Kedah rulers since 1771, considered Pulau Pinang a valuable trading post that the EIC should acquire to facilitate further commercial expansion in the Straits of Melaka.⁶⁴ Francis Light promised that the EIC would help the Sultanate of Kedah in the event of a Burmese or Siamese invasion.⁶⁵ Thus, Francis Light established a colony in Pulau Pinang in 1786, the first British colony in the Straits of Melaka.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Andaya, Barbara Watson, and Leonard Y. Andaya. *A history of Malaysia*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

⁶² Bonney, Rollin. *Kedah 1771-1821: The search for security and independence*. Oxford University Press, 1974.

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ "Captain Light. The Founder Of Penang". *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 20 October 1894, Page 3.

⁶⁵ Webster, Anthony. *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in Southeast Asia 1770-1890*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022.

⁶⁶ Recently, the date for Francis Light's acquisition of Pulau Pinang in 1786 has been contested by recent scholarship. On that date, Light illegally occupied Pulau Pinang under the pretext of stationing his troops for a while, awaiting the finalisation of the treaty between Sultan Abdullah Mukarram of Kedah and the Governor-General of Bengal. However, the treaty was delayed because the British needed confirmation from Europe, leaving the Sultan of Kedah very frustrated with the wait. At the same time, Light had proceeded to hoist the British flag by renaming Pulau Pinang as "Prince of Wales Island" on 11th August 1786, without the signing of any treaty, thus making it an illegal occupation. The only treaty that implied

Establishing a British colony in the Straits of Melaka provided promising control over the trade in the region. In addition, by 1803, Europe experienced a devastating war known as the Napoleonic War (1803CE – 1815CE). All the European colonial powers were involved directly in this war. The Dutch Republic was defeated by the French Grande Armée in 1795 and converted into the Batavian Republic, later the Kingdom of Holland, in 1806. The last stadtholder of the Dutch, Prince William V of Orange, was exiled to London and issued an order known as the Kew Letters, which transferred the Dutch colonial possessions worldwide to the British.⁶⁷ Some Dutch governors followed, while others were confused and continued their usual activities. In 1810, the French Empire annexed the Kingdom of Holland, fully controlling all the Dutch colonies. The British took this opportunity to launch an invasion of the island of Java in 1811 and successfully conquered all the Dutch East Indies territories. Another prominent British colonial officer, Stamford Raffles (1781 CE—1826 CE), was appointed as the Lieutenant Governor of Java. The British became an undisputed European power in Southeast Asia and took the opportunity to expand their influence by establishing some presence in the Dutch East Indies before returning it to the newly liberated United Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815 under the terms of the Anglo-Dutch Convention of 1814.⁶⁸

The brief experience of ruling Java inspired Stamford Raffles, then the Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen (modern-day Bengkulu), to strategise on how to combat Dutch hegemony in the East Indies. During his new appointment, he surveyed

the leasing of Pulau Pinang to the EIC was signed in 1791, with reluctance and without a proper understanding between the parties. Ahmad Murad Merican and Abd Ur-Rahman Mohamed Amin. 2021. The 1786 acquisition of Pulau Pinang: Unveiling the Light Letters, revisiting legal history case materials and R. Bonney's Kedah 1771–1821. *KEMANUSIAAN the Asian Journal of Humanities* 28(2): 189–212.

⁶⁷ Webster, Anthony. *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in Southeast Asia 1770-1890*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022.

⁶⁸ Ibid

some islands south of the Malay Peninsula, including Bintan and Singapore. In 1818, William Farquhar (1774CE – 1839CE), the British Resident of Melaka, informed Stamford Raffles of an excellent location for the British settlement in Singapore, and he was currently negotiating commercial treaties with the representative of the Johor-Riau sultanate. Raffles took the opportunity to accompany Farquhar to Singapore, where he met Temenggung Abdul Rahman (1755CE – 1825CE), the Temenggung of Johor. The Johor-Riau sultanate experienced a succession dispute after Sultan Mahmud III's death. The Sultan had no legitimate heir from his official wife, Tengku Puteri Hamidah, and only sired sons with the commoners. The Dutch and the British took advantage of this dispute by offering protection and support for their chosen claimants to the throne to better their chances of expanding their influence in the region. The Dutch supported Tengku Abdul Rahman, who was appointed by most local chiefs, including the support of Yang di-Pertuan Muda Raja Jaafar.⁶⁹ As Sultan of the Johor-Riau Sultanate, Sultan Abdul Rahman (1811CE – 1819CE) chose Daik, Lingga, as his capital. On the other hand, the British, represented by Raffles and Farquhar, engaged in discussion with Temenggung Abdul Rahman, a staunch supporter of the other claimant, Tengku Hussein, to install him as the Sultan in Singapore, assuming the name Sultan Hussein Shah (1819CE – 1835CE). This offer of support by the British was due to the Sultan and the Temenggung's willingness to lease Singapore so they could establish a

⁶⁹ Yamtuan Muda or Yang di-Pertuan Muda was a hereditary title held by the Bugis prince in the Johor-Riau Sultanate. After the death of Sultan Mahmud II, "Mangkat di Julang", who did not have an heir, a succession crisis occurred. The Johor aristocrats appointed the Bendahara Sultan Abdul Jalil IV as the sultan of the new Bendahara dynasty. However, he was challenged by Raja Kechil, who claimed to be the estranged son of Sultan Mahmud II. With the help of the Minangkabau army, Sultan Abdul Jalil IV was ousted from Johor. His son, Raja Sulaiman, with the help of the Bugis Princes, launched a war to retake the throne and succeed. Raja Kechil was chased to Siak in 1723. As a gesture of gratitude, Raja Sulaiman conferred the title Yang Dipertuan Muda Johor on Daeng Merewah. Its role gradually replaced that of Laksamana, who supervised the Sultan's navy and served as the Sultan's ambassador in the Classical Malay hierarchy.

settlement and conduct extensive trade in the region.⁷⁰ The struggle culminated in the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty in 1824, following lengthy discussions between the Dutch and the British to partition the area into their respective spheres of influence. The British influence was limited to the northern part of the Straits of Melaka, while the Dutch controlled the southern part, including the islands of Riau and Lingga. This treaty also oversaw the exchange of colonies, such as the Dutch giving up Melaka to the British, who in turn gave up Bencoolen and other minor territories on each side. Another tragic consequence of the treaty was the division of the Johor-Riau Sultanate into two sultanates: the Johor Sultanate under Sultan Hussein Shah and the Riau-Lingga Sultanate under Sultan Abdul Rahman. The division not only divided the Johor dynasty into two but also left the legitimacy and fealty of the local chiefs in question, especially the Malay chiefs who governed the extremities of the Johor Sultanate, such as Pahang.⁷¹

After acquiring three significant settlements along the Straits of Melaka (Pulau Pinang, Melaka, and Singapore), the British East India Company sought to solidify its control over these colonies by establishing a central authority named "The Straits Settlements" (Negeri-negeri Selat) in 1826. These territories answered to the authority of the British colonial government of India in Calcutta.⁷² Their main functions were serving as trading ports and as military prisons for convicts from India. The dissatisfaction among the European mercantile community over the use of these colonies as penal colonies, including the negative opinion over its governance, financial and social management by the related authorities, led to the transfer of Straits Settlements from the British India Office (Government of India) to the British Colonial

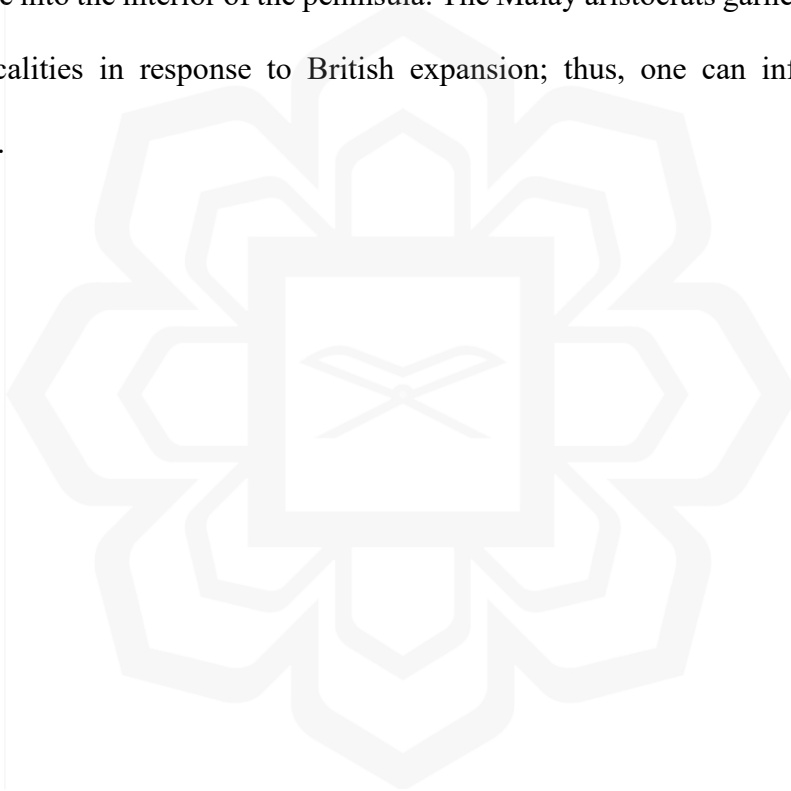
⁷⁰ Andaya, Barbara Watson, and Leonard Y. Andaya. *A history of Malaysia*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Hawksley, Charles M. "Administrative colonialism: district administration and colonial middle management" in *Kelantan 1909-1919 and the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea 1947-1957*. (2001).

Office, acquiring the crown colony status under the Straits Settlements Act on 1 April 1867.⁷³

Early interactions between the British and the Malays mainly occurred among the Malay upper class. This was due to the recorded events only happening in treaties and agreements. Some of them might have been written in newspapers and the diaries of the colonial officers. However, despite this kind of interaction, it also reflects the reaction of the Malay community in the later period as the British expanded their influence into the interior of the peninsula. The Malay aristocrats garnered support from their localities in response to British expansion; thus, one can infer their general reaction.



⁷³ Hawksley, Charles M. "Administrative colonialism: district administration and colonial middle management' in Kelantan 1909-1919 and the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea 1947-1957." (2001).

2.3 THE MALAY SOCIETIES IN PERAK AND KEDAH PRIOR TO THE BRITISH INTERVENTION

Orang Melayu, or the Malay in English, was the native of the Malay Archipelago, specifically the Malay Peninsula, eastern Sumatra, and the coastal area of Borneo. The Malays were part of the more prominent Austronesian family within the Malayo-Polynesian branch. The term “*Melayu*” can broadly describe the people who lived in the Malay Archipelago. The *Javanese*, *Bugis*, *Sundanese*, *Batak*, *Minangkabau*, *Makassar*, *Banjar*, *Dayak*, *Achehnese*, and others were closely related to the Malay. The Malays shared the peninsula with another native group, the *Orang Asli* (Indigenous people), who belong to the Austroasiatic family, which is closely related to the Vietnamese and *Khmer* peoples. The Malays called them either *Sakai* or *Negro* casually.⁷⁴ The native populations of Kedah and Perak were Malays. By the 18th century, a non-Malay population, particularly Chinese miners and merchants, began arriving regularly in Kedah and Perak.⁷⁵ They were hired by the local sultans and the Malay aristocrats to operate mines within their territories. Other minorities, such as the Indians (Tamil and Gujarati) and the Arab community, were merchants who conducted naval trade with these sultanates; some stayed behind as advisors, while others formed an enclave community within the local port. Most non-Malays were not considered part of the permanent population in the 18th century, as they mainly arrived in the peninsula to engage in mercantilism. It was not until the 19th century, when these people began migrating, that this impacted the demography of the states.⁷⁶

Most Malays lived in *Kampung* (villages) near the river. The river was the life of the village; it provided fresh water for drinking and agriculture, as it was crucial for

⁷⁴ Manaf, Azmah Abdul. "Sejarah sosial masyarakat Malaysia." Utusan Publications and Distributions Sdn Bhd (2001).

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

irrigating crops such as paddy, which was extensively planted on the outskirts of the village. Besides, these essential rivers, such as the Kedah River, Merbok River, and Muda River in Kedah, and the Perak River, Kinta River, and Dinding River in Perak, also served as transportation routes for daily activities, such as trading, travelling, and transporting goods across the sultanates. The capital of Kedah in the 18th century was located in Kota Setar (Alor Setar), near the Kedah River, with access to Kuala Kedah, where the trading port handled Kedah's commerce.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the capital of Perak changed multiple times along the Perak River, but starting in the 18th century, it was located at Kuala Kangsar, further upstream. Despite being far from the sea, the location was chosen because it is near the Perak hinterlands, where many tin mines are located.⁷⁸ The Kinta Valley and the Tanjung Tualang, Batu Gajah, were famous tin-mining complexes running through the Kinta River in this hinterland. Besides, Kuala Kangsar's strategic placement at the centre of Perak, between the two prosperous cities, Taiping to the west and Ipoh to the east, makes it more convenient for trade and travel.

The fall of the Melaka Sultanate to the Portuguese in 1511 gave rise to many Malay successor states in the peninsula. The Perak Sultanate, the Johor Sultanate, and the Pahang Sultanate were the primary successor states, as their sultans were part of the royal Melakan bloodline. The Kedah Sultanate, previously a vassal of Melaka, also became independent before being a tributary state to the Siamese kingdoms, first the Ayuthaya kingdom and later the Chakri dynasty.

The history of the Kedah Sultanate and other northern sultanates was closely intertwined with the Siamese intervention, whether in war, trade, or diplomacy. The Kedah Sultanate was ancient and predated the famous Sultanate of Melaka. According

⁷⁷ Ahmat, Sharom. "Kedah-Tradition and Change in a Malay State: A Study of the Economic and Political Development, 1878–1923", MBRAS, Monograph, no. 12, 1984." *Kedah-Siam Relations* 1905 (1821).

⁷⁸ Andaya, Barbara Watson. *Perak, the abode of grace: A study of an eighteenth-century Malay state*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1979.

to *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (Kedah Annals), the first king who established Kedah was King Phra Ong Mahawangsa (1136CE – 1179CE), a descendant of Merong Mahawangsa (circa 1st century), who founded the Kingdom of Langkasuka.⁷⁹ In 1136, he converted to Islam and assumed the name Sultan Mudzaffar Shah of Kedah.⁸⁰ Kedah has been ruled independently since its creation. It was never a vassal state of the Siamese kingdoms, because the Siamese never incorporated Kedah or other northern sultanates as vassal states; they were only tributaries under the Siamese-Malay tributary system.⁸¹ It is pretty controversial to address Kedah as a vassal of Siam; not until the Burney Treaty of 1826 did the British acknowledge the Siamese (Chakri dynasty) control over the northern sultanates in exchange for Siam's recognition of British occupation of Pulau Pinang and form a defensive alliance against the Burmese (Konbaung dynasty). Despite the acknowledgement, the treaty was concluded without the representatives of the said sultanates, indicating that it was controversial without the parties' consent. The Kedah Sultanate avoided Siamese and Burmese aggression by sending *Bunga Emas dan Perak* as a sign of subordination.

The Perak Sultanate was among the oldest hereditary sultanates in the Malay Peninsula. It was established in 1528 after the fall of the Melakan Sultanate. Sultan Mahmud Shah (1488CE – 1528CE), the last Sultan of Melaka, fled to Kampar after retreating from Bintan, which was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1526. During his stay in Kampar, two representatives of the Perak people, Tun Saban and Nahkhoda Kasim, approached the audience and requested that one of the Sultan's sons be appointed Sultan

⁷⁹ Maziar Mozaffari Falarti, *Malay Kingship in Kedah: Religion, Trade, and Society* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013): 35.

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Several northern sultanates of the Malay Peninsula, such as Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu and Patani, have been tributary states of Siam throughout their history. Despite the tributary status, most of the time, they ruled independently from the central authority. One unique feature of this relationship was the sending of *Bunga Emas dan Perak* to the Siamese kings as a tribute and show of fealty. On some occasions, especially in war, Siam can request assistance in manpower, supplies, and equipment whenever they want. Another name for this system was Mandala system.

of Perak.⁸² Sultan Mahmud Shah agreed to their request and ordered his son, Raja Muzaffar, to accompany them. Thus, the entourage arrived at Kuala Perak, where the people of Perak received their Sultan at Beting Beras Basah.⁸³ Raja Muzaffar was installed as the first Sultan of Perak, assuming the name Sultan Muzaffar Shah. The ascension of Sultan Muzaffar Shah not only solidified the Perak Sultanate's existence but also established it as one of the successor states of the prestigious Melakan Sultanate, claiming descent from the Melakan royal bloodline.

The history of Perak is coloured with the struggle and survival against its neighbour. Despite being hailed as the successor of Melaka, the Perak Sultanate was not a strong sultanate. Throughout history, Perak struggled to muster enough manpower for its own protection, let alone expand its territories, and was rivalled by other successors such as Johor and the Pahang Sultanate. Despite that, regarding resources, the discovery of tin along the Perak and Dinding Rivers made the sultanate a promising trading partner. The traders from the Coromandel coast, as well as the Dutch and Portuguese, regularly traded at the Perak port for tin products. The tin richness in Perak attracted jealousy and was coveted by its neighbours.⁸⁴ Due to this situation, the Perak Sultanate was constantly threatened and sometimes invaded by surrounding polities, including the Ayutthaya kingdom, the Aceh Sultanate, the Portuguese Melaka, the Dutch Melaka, the Minangkabau, and the Bugis. The later intervention of the Dutch and the British also affected the prized resources of Perak in the 19th century.

The social structure of both societies was similar to the Melakan Sultanates. The general overview of the Malay community consisted of two categories, including *Golongan pemerintah*, the upper class (the Sultan and the Malay nobility), and

⁸² Andaya, Barbara Watson. *Perak, the abode of grace: A study of an eighteenth-century Malay state*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1979.

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Ibid

Golongan diperintah, or *rakyat*, the lower class (the commoners and the slaves).⁸⁵ There was a distinction in social status within the Malay community. Everyone was expected to act and behave according to their status. Social boundaries were rarely crossed, unless fortune favoured commoners who entered the service of the Sultan or the Malay nobility, or through marriage between social classes. These were rare forms of social mobility within the community, especially marriage, as the Sultan and the nobility were highly conscious of their status and dignity. The life aspects of both social groups can be very different, especially in political and economic matters. Malay tradition emphasised loyalty to the ruler, whether a Sultan or a Raja. This tradition is known as *Daulat* and *Derhaka*. The palace became the centre of the ruling, and "*Balairung Seri*", a reception hall within the palace, served as the venue where the Sultan received petitions and conducted hearings from the aristocrats and commoners alike.⁸⁶

The Sultan was the highest authority within his sultanate and was assisted by a group of officials from the Malay nobility. These officials were usually members of the Sultan's family, distant relatives, or individuals who contributed significantly and later achieved noble status, which is quite rare. The standard nobility system of the Malay sultanates followed the Four-Fold nobility (*Pembesar Empat Lipatan*), but its application and the titles used varied between sultanates. Positions such as *Bendahara*, *Temenggung*, *Laksamana*, and *Penghulu Bendahari* were prominent among the nobility and occupied the upper hierarchy of the nobility. In the case of Perak, the hierarchy extended in successive multiples of four, comprising the Eight Nobles (*Orang Besar Lapan*), the Sixteen Nobles (*Orang Besar Enam Belas*), and the Thirty-Two Nobles

⁸⁵ Winstedt, Richard Olof. *The Malays: A cultural history*. Taylor & Francis, 2024.

⁸⁶ Andaya, Barbara Watson. *Perak, the abode of grace: A study of an eighteenth-century Malay state*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1979.

(*Orang Besar Tiga Puluh Dua*).⁸⁷ Most positions were accompanied by territorial grants by the Sultan to govern. However, some positions, especially from the *Orang Besar Lapan* onwards, were personal titles given by the Sultan, either on a hereditary or on an appointment basis in recognition of service to the sultanates, and were not accompanied by territories.⁸⁸ Some examples of non-territorial noble positions in Perak are *Orang Kaya-Kaya Laksamana Raja Mahkota* and *Orang Kaya-Kaya Seri Adika Syahbandar Muda*.

For Malay aristocrats who governed territories, they could recruit soldiers for land protection and to collect taxes, which served as their source of income. Depending on the sultanate, these taxes can be sent to the central authority, the Sultan, or retained by the local rulers themselves. For example, the Kedah Sultanate maintained a strong central administration over its territories; local chiefs collected taxes and sent a portion to the capital.⁸⁹ While the Perak sultanates exercised rather loose authority over their territorial chiefs, who were permitted to retain the taxes collected within their territories as part of their governing service. The Perak Sultanate also had his own private territories and collected taxes through appointed tax collectors to support his income. In some cases, a local chief in Perak could become more powerful and prosperous than the Sultan himself.⁹⁰

The concept of sultanate, or *Kerajaan* (Kingdom), in Malay political consciousness differed from the standard definition. Typically, a kingdom is understood as possessing clearly defined boundaries or territories that define its influence and

⁸⁷ Harun, Jelani. *Umpama sebuah bahtera: kajian naskhah Melayu sejarah Kesultanan Negeri Perak*. Arkib Negara Malaysia, 2011, 214-215.

⁸⁸ M.A. Fawzi Mohd Basri, *Cempaka Sari: Sejarah Kesultanan Negeri Perak*, Perak: Yayasan Perak, 1986, 92-94.

⁸⁹ Ahmat, Sharom. "Kedah-Tradition and Change in a Malay State: A Study of the Economic and Political Development, 1878–1923", MBRAS, Monograph, no. 12, 1984." *Kedah-Siam Relations 1905 (1821)*.

⁹⁰ Andaya, Barbara Watson. *Perak, the abode of grace: A study of an eighteenth-century Malay state*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1979.

authority. However, within Malay tradition, the *Kerajaan* was centred on the position of the Sultan or Raja. Wherever the Sultan resided, the *Kerajaan* was considered to exist, provided that he could exert control over the surrounding areas of his territories. Consequently, the territorial extent of the *Kerajaan* was not fixed and could change over time, depending on the authority of the Sultan and his nobility.⁹¹

The lower class of the Malay community, which consisted of freemen and slaves, made up the majority of the population. They were the backbone of the sultanates, providing taxes, supplying food, cultivating the land, conducting trade, and securing the territories. The commoners held occupations such as the blacksmith "*Pandai Besi*" or the goldsmith "*Pandai Emas*", the farmer "*Petani*", the trader "*Saudagar*", and others. The Malay community's economy was subsistence-based.⁹² The commoners' lifestyle was enough to sustain them and pay taxes. Many factors led to this economic policy. One of them is the limitation of the land owned. The commoners owned a small patch of land, resulting in lower crop yields and less surplus; thus, they could not increase their income and could only produce enough to sustain themselves. Another factor was the *Sistem Kerah dan Serah* (Corvée and Produce Extraction system).⁹³ The *Kerah* system obliged the commoners to work for the Sultan and the Malay aristocrats to construct essential buildings such as a palace, a fort, and a bridge. These works were done without being paid, out of loyalty to the Sultan and a willingness to sacrifice for them. Despite not being paid, the Sultan will provide sustenance in the form of food and shelter during the *Kerah* undergoing.⁹⁴ The *Serah* system compelled the commoners to contribute some of the produce from their

⁹¹ Gullick, John Michael. *Sistem Politik Bumiputera Tanah Melayu Barat*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1978.

⁹² Manaf, Azmah Abdul. "Sejarah sosial masyarakat Malaysia." Utusan Publications and Distributions Sdn Bhd (2001).

⁹³ Winstedt, Richard Olof. *The Malays: A cultural history*. Taylor & Francis, 2024.

⁹⁴ Wilkinson, R. J., ed. *Papers on Malay Subjects*. Kuala Lumpur: FMS Government Press, 1923

plantations to the Sultan as a token of gratitude for granting them the land. Thus, these systems further limit the commoners from generating surplus from their hard work.⁹⁵

The leader of the commoners in *Kampung* was called the *Penghulu* (village head). He played a significant role as the intermediary between the Malay upper and lower classes.⁹⁶ His role was accompanied by many responsibilities, such as collecting taxes, maintaining peace in the village, and overseeing the villagers to ensure they completed instructions from the upper class. A *Penghulu* can be a commoner, and his hereditary position can be passed down from father to son. The relationship between the *Penghulu* and the commoners was usually close because he needed to maintain it to prevent them from leaving, as it could affect the village's prosperity.⁹⁷ Due to this relationship, some European historians assumed it was similar to the concept of Feudalism practised in medieval Europe.⁹⁸ This statement was wrong and controversial because, although the existence of social hierarchy and the land ownership concept prevailed, the details of the Malay relationship between classes, such as freedom of travel, the freedom of marriage, and the freedom of commoners to whom to serve, were the unique difference that separates this Malay tradition from Feudalism.⁹⁹ The commoner could freely travel within the territories and serve any local chief they wanted. The migration of people usually occurred in specific situations, such as war, to avoid capture or death, and to access income sources available in the villages and towns ruled by the upper class.

⁹⁵ Bonney, Rollin. *Kedah 1771-1821: The search for security and independence*. Oxford University Press, 1974.

⁹⁶ Kratoska, Paul H. "Penghulus in Perak and Selangor: The rationalization and decline of a traditional Malay office." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 57, no. 2 (247 (1984): 31-59.

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Gullick, John Michael. *Sistem Politik Bumiputera Tanah Melayu Barat*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1978.

⁹⁹ Arifin, Azmi. *Feudalismo: sejarah dan persejarahan*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2023.

The slaves in the Malay tradition are related to the concept of Servitude.¹⁰⁰ Slavery was common in the Malay culture. However, the idea of slavery differed from the European definition. In the Malay world, the slaves were not necessarily of lower status. The higher the owner's position, the better the status of their slaves. There were two types of slaves in the Malay community:

1) The hereditary slaves (*Hamba Abdi*)

The slaves, such as *Biduanda* (Palace Attendant), *Abdi* (Servant), and *Hamba* (Slave), served the Sultan and the Malay nobility hereditarily from one generation to the next. One becomes a hereditary slave through many options and circumstances, such as a prisoner of war, a pirate, a criminal, a heavy criminal, and, in exceptional cases, a volunteer who voluntarily offered themselves as a slave to the wealthy Malay aristocrats to depend on them.¹⁰¹

2) The Debt-bondsman (*Hamba Berhutang*)

The slaves who were previously freemen became slaves because they were unable to settle their debts. They would remain slaves until they paid the debt by fulfilling specific terms within an agreed-upon period. Another case involved a thief who stole goods and could not return them to the owner; in this category, the slave status applied to the whole family, not only to the one who incurred the debt.

There was a significant difference between *Hamba Abdi* and *Hamba Berhutang*. When it comes to status, *Hamba Berhutang* has a higher status than *Hamba Abdi* because their origins were as freemen. In this case, *Hamba Berhutang* cannot be sold, unlike *Hamba Abdi*, who can be sold to others.¹⁰² The freemen must treat *Hamba*

¹⁰⁰ Gullick, John Michael. *Sistem Politik Bumiputera Tanah Melayu Barat*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka,

¹⁰¹ Manaf, Azmah Abdul. "Sejarah sosial masyarakat Malaysia." Utusan Publications and Distributions Sdn Bhd (2001).

¹⁰² Ibid

Berhutang with respect, as they are only fulfilling their role of repaying the debt to their owners.

The Malay tradition transcended their culture and influenced their politics, economy, and society. This intricacy led to the most significant misunderstanding among outsiders, such as the colonial officers, towards this tradition, and to the imposition of their European ideas negligently, which caused a severe backlash in later discussions.



2.4 THE POLICY OF THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN THE EARLY STAGE OF THEIR PRESENCE IN PERAK AND KEDAH

Before further discussion, the hierarchy of the British administration should be understood when discussing its colonial ventures around the world in the 19th century. The East India Company (EIC), a British trade company, has primarily traded goods and resources in the Indian Ocean region since its founding in the 1600s. As the company's land expanded and its influence spread across the Indian subcontinent and Burma in the 18th and 19th centuries, the British Government in London needed to intervene in its affairs. After the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857¹⁰³, the British Government established the India Office under the Government of India Act 1858, which transferred all the EIC possessions in India to the administration of the Secretary of State for India. This event led to streamlining the British political and economic structure in India, a process that was later reflected in British Malaya. The policy adopted in India will be utilised by the Governor of the Straits Settlements to be implemented in his administration. This action also becomes the basis for their interaction with the Malay community in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Straits Settlements, founded in 1826, incorporated Pulau Pinang, Melaka, and Singapore under a single administrative system. It is to reduce administration spending, regulate the policy, and expand its influence carefully in dealing with the surrounding local sultanates. This polity was headed by a governor and assisted by three Resident councillors, one from each territory.¹⁰⁴ Firstly, since its establishment, it has

¹⁰³ Thio, Eunice. "British policy in the Malay Peninsula, 1880-1910." University of Malaya Press (1969). The cause-and-effect of 1857 Sepoy Rebellion in British Raj (modern-day India) shaped the British colonial policy going forward. As the need to address the gap in relationship and mutual understanding between the British officers and their subjects. The local traditions and customs knowledge became more in demand as a qualification for the officers to prevent further insurrection and accommodate the subjects for the long-term planning. Later, the same policy will be adapted by Hugh Low in Perak after the similar but small-scale event occurred (The Assassination of J.W.W. Birch, the First Resident of Perak).

¹⁰⁴ Gullick, J.M. *Rulers and Residents: Influence and Power in the Malay States, 1870-1920*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992.

been under the jurisdiction of the EIC; later, in 1858, it was transferred to the British Raj under the supervision of the India Office. By 1867, the Colonial Office took over and administered it as the Crown colony of the British Empire.¹⁰⁵

Establishing the Straits Settlements in 1826 showed the British intention to expand their influence in Southeast Asia. However, during the early period of their presence in the region, the first Governor of the Straits Settlements, Robert Fullerton (1826CE – 1830CE), adopted a non-interventionist policy toward the local Sultanates. The idea behind this policy was that the primary goal of the British presence in Southeast Asia was for trade and political influence. Besides, the early period of establishment compelled the Governor to focus on consolidating the bureaucracy and maintaining good relations with the sultanates to increase trade profits. However, amid the regional political situation and the global superpower machinations, the British began to shift their approach, moving from non-intervention to intervention.¹⁰⁶ This action was taken due to concerns over the expansion of other European powers in the region.

The VOC has been the dominant colonial power in the region since the 17th century and has acquired immense territories in modern-day Indonesia, with its administrative capital in Batavia. The French East India Company (CIO) increased its activities in the Indo-China region (modern-day Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos). The EIC must consolidate its power in the Malay Peninsula to avoid losses in this colonial competition. Thus, several treaties were agreed upon between the EIC and the VOC in the Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824 to divide spheres of influence, and between Siam (Chakri dynasty) and the EIC in the Burney treaty of 1826, which secured the northern border of British influence in the peninsula. The EIC maintained its non-interventionist

¹⁰⁵ Thio, Eunice. "British policy in the Malay Peninsula, 1880-1910." University of Malaya Press (1969).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

policy until 1874; under the pretext of preventing a German attempt to impose its influence on the peninsula's east coast, the British adopted an interventionist policy.¹⁰⁷

2.4.1 PERAK

The first state in which the British intervened was Perak. According to colonial records, Perak's situation before the intervention was characterised by chaos and anarchy.¹⁰⁸ However, the interpretation of these records has changed in recent years as local historians have continued to decolonise their analysis. In the colonial narrative, the British intervention was viewed as the saviour in solving the crisis at hand, such as the civil war between the successors of the Sultan of Perak, Raja Abdullah (*Raja Muda*) and Raja Ismail (*Raja Bendahara*), and the rivalry between the Chinese secret societies, Ghee Hin and Hai San.¹⁰⁹ The solution proposed by the British was solemnised in the form of the Pangkor Treaty in 1874, which resolved the conflict by acknowledging Raja Abdullah as the sole Sultan of Perak and dismissing Raja Ismail, whom the Perak aristocrats recognised. The proposed solution favoured British interests in Perak's economy, especially in its tin trade. The ongoing Larut War since 1861 disrupted trade in Perak, causing considerable losses for European and Chinese merchants in the Straits Settlements. The war even spread to the British-controlled Province of Wellesley (modern-day Seberang Perai), and casualties increased. The participation of the local Malay chiefs and the struggle over the Perak throne further escalated the war into a multi-pronged conflict.

¹⁰⁷ Thio, Eunice. "British policy in the Malay Peninsula, 1880-1910." University of Malaya Press (1969).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ Arifin, Azmi. "Perak disturbances 1871–75: British colonialism, the Chinese secret societies and the Malay rulers." *Jebat* 39, no. 1 (2012): 51.

The war forced the British to intervene to prevent further losses before it spread to other Malay states.¹¹⁰ In addition, the British also needed to secure long-lasting profits in their interest in the proposed solution. Although the majority of Perak aristocracy supported the appointment of Sultan Ismail, the British insisted to assist Raja Abdullah, who was previously the heir apparent of Perak, in claiming the throne. This decision was motivated by their strategic interest, as supporting the supplanted Raja Abdullah, enabled them to install a ruler who are indebted to them, which later they can manipulate the indebted Sultan to further the British influence in Perak.¹¹¹ Thus, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Andrew Clarke (1873CE – 1875CE), mediated peace negotiations, and the Pangkor Treaty of 1874 was concluded. Each belligerent representative agreed to the terms presented. They acknowledge the ascension of Sultan Abdullah II to the Perak throne. Sultan Ismail will be the Raja Muda, and all Malay chiefs will receive pensions. A resident will be installed as the Sultan's Advisor and will advise on all matters related to administration, except Malay culture and religion. An Assistant Resident will be stationed in Taiping. The territories of Dinding and Pulau Pangkor will be given to the Straits Settlements.

In anti-colonial narratives, some historians suggested that the state of Perak was not in a state of chaos or anarchy.¹¹² The external factors, like the Chinese secret societies' war between Ghee Hin and Hai San, the dissatisfaction of the European-Chinese merchant community towards the war, which incurred losses, and the European observer, namely the British, took advantage of a claimant and supported him for the throne, despite the matters of succession having been settled for their gain in the long run. These factors encouraged the British to intervene, driven by their ambition to gain

¹¹⁰ Winstedt, R.O, Wilkinson, R.J, and Maxwell, W.E. "A History of Perak." Silverfish Books. 2012.

¹¹¹ Arifin, Azmi. "Perak disturbances 1871–75: British colonialism, the Chinese secret societies and the Malay rulers." *Jebat* 39, no. 1 (2012): 51.

¹¹² Ibid

a greater foothold in the Malay Peninsula and incorporate it into their larger colonial enterprise. The successful expansion in India inspired many British officers to strive for personal glory and further expansion in another region, especially Southeast Asia.¹¹³ The "chaos" in Perak presented a lucrative opportunity to initiate the Forward Policy in the Malay Peninsula. Thus, the situation in Perak was not chaotic; external factors driven by political and economic interests exaggerated it.

The Pangkor Treaty of 1874 was a starting point for the British interventionist policy in the affairs of the Malay sultanates. In the case of Perak, the appointment of J.W.W. Birch (1874CE – 1875CE) as the first Resident of Perak and Captain T. Speedy as his assistant led to the implementation of British rule in Perak. The discussion of British rule in Perak can be narrowed down to whether they considered local circumstances and customs when implementing policy from the central authority. The situation in Perak after the treaty was still tense. The installation of the Resident seemed promising at first as the Sultan listened to his advice concerning administration. J.W.W. Birch was renowned as a skilled colonial administrator with an outstanding service record in Ceylon, and he saw the need to modernise Perak to increase the efficiency of his administration.¹¹⁴ Later, through his many actions and policies imposed on the Perak Malays, his *modus operandi* can be observed, including whether he considered local circumstances when implementing policies from the central authority.

Despite the main reasons for establishing the Straits Settlements to centralise and organise administration in British colonies in the region, the early Resident System was experimental and was not meticulously thought out. Mostly, the Residents were free to handle the sultanate administration with British interests in mind. Clarke

¹¹³ Arifin, Azmi. "Perak disturbances 1871–75: British colonialism, the Chinese secret societies and the Malay rulers." *Jebat* 39, no. 1 (2012): 51.

¹¹⁴ Winstedt, R.O, Wilkinson, R.J, and Maxwell, W.E. "A History of Perak." Silverfish Books. 2012.

commanded Birch to focus on Perak's political and economic affairs and not to interfere with Malay customs and religion. This issue was controversial at the time because the British officers' understanding of Malay culture and customs was shallow; although Frank Swettenham and Francis Light were fluent in Malay, it took several years before they fully understood its essence. Malay customs encompassed the Malays' way of life, including every affair, whether political, economic, religious, or cultural, which was part of the larger tradition.

Among the policies that Birch implemented was the centralised taxation system. Earlier in the chapter, it was explained that the local chiefs collected taxes in their assigned territories because they were their source of income. This is their right, as expressed in tradition. Birch issued an order that the Sultan's agent appointed by him would collect the tax. Thus, he stripped the local chiefs of their traditional role. It caused dissatisfaction among the Malay aristocrats. From Birch's perspective, the current taxation system was inefficient because it enriched only the aristocrats, not the Sultan, who was the head of state and needed a fully functioning treasury for the daily operations of government agencies.¹¹⁵ He could finance development throughout Perak. If this issue was not resolved, it would weaken the Sultan's position as the central authority. Besides, the prior Fourth Larut War (1873CE—1874CE) can be attributed to this system, as the Menteri of Larut, Ngah Ibrahim, became so rich and powerful that he could tip the balance of power in Perak by supporting any candidate, whether in the Perak succession or in the rivalry between Chinese secret societies.¹¹⁶

Another of his policies was to abolish slavery in Perak. Slavery or Servitude has been embedded in the Malay culture since time immemorial. The sudden abolishment was seen as an intrusion into Malay customs, breaching the agreement of the 1874

¹¹⁵ Winstedt, R.O, Wilkinson, R.J, and Maxwell, W.E. "A History of Perak." Silverfish Books. 2012.

¹¹⁶ Ibid

treaty. Besides, most slaves who were free or ran away were women and concubines of the Malay aristocrats and the Sultan.¹¹⁷ Besides, Birch turned Bandar Bahru into a sanctuary for escaped slaves, causing further suspicion about Birch's intentions. Birch, on the other hand, abhorred slavery in line with his homeland policy. In his journal, Birch commented on the slavery practice, sympathizing with the ill-treatment that they had incurred. The British Empire generally abolished slavery in 1833 through the Slavery Abolition Act 1833. Embracing the empire's policy can be a part of his consideration in extending the abolition in Perak. These policies were implemented without considering the Malay customs and circumstances. He did not attempt to solve the issues sensitively.

The dissent increased in Perak and even forced the Sultan to cooperate with his rivals, the Upper Perak chiefs, to oust the British from Perak. However, in the British account, he stated that Sultan Abdullah II was sly. When dealing with the British, he always refused Birch's advice. Nevertheless, in the back, he was planning to stab the British in the back.¹¹⁸ This perspective came from the colonial lenses regarding the unrest in Perak. As tension increased, Andrew Clarke rebuked Birch's action and cautioned him not to antagonise the Malays. Birch was a proud man, expecting everything to calm down in time.

In the end, J.W.W Birch was assassinated during his bath at Pasir Salak by the disgruntled Perak aristocrats led by Dato' Maharaja Lela and his conspirators, Dato' Sagor, Pandak Indut, and Sepuntum.¹¹⁹ British rule in Perak faced a difficult start due to Birch's hasty changes, which imposed policies without regard for local circumstances and customs, thereby breaching the treaty. It caused dissent among the affected Malay

¹¹⁷ Swettenham, Frank Athelstane. *Malay sketches*. John Lane, 1895.

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Ibid

aristocrats and led to his tragic end. Nevertheless, his future successor, Hugh Low (1824CE – 1905CE), managed to resolve the issue left by his predecessor. Low was known for his effort to stabilise Perak after the British launched a military expedition to capture Birch's murderers and pacify the rebellions. During his early tenure, some areas in Perak, such as Kota Lama, became bases of resistance and could not be entered by any Europeans. If they came from the river, the Malay resistance would shoot them from both sides of the banks.¹²⁰

Despite opposition from the rest of the resistance, Low continued his work to build an acceptable administrative model in Perak. Low's works in Perak can be assessed through two contemporary accounts by Isabella L. Bird (1831CE – 1904CE) and Emily Innes (1843CE – 1927CE). Bird, an English traveller who visited Perak and stayed at the Low residence in 1879, commented on Low's *modus operandi* in administering Perak. His residence was always accessible to the Malays who inquired or needed his help.¹²¹ The frequent visits usually come from the Perak royalty, such as Raja Yusuf, the Regent of Perak, and Raja Idris, the Raja Muda, who were the surviving royal members after most of the Perak aristocracy had been exiled or executed for their roles in Birch's assassination. By establishing a State Council composed of the Sultan, important Malay aristocrats, representatives from the Chinese community, himself, the Resident, and the Assistant Resident, all matters concerning Perak administration will be discussed in Malay.¹²² Through this council, Low guided and taught all involved in

¹²⁰ Isabella L. Bird recounted her experience of being the first European to set foot in Kota Lama, after the British expedition in Perak. Bird, I. L. "The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither." (1884).

¹²¹ Bird describes Low will stop anything he was doing to entertain the visitors usually the Malay aristocrats and their conversation revolved around administration and governance. Low was viewed as a teacher or parent in advising them about the art of governing. Ibid.

¹²² The inclusion of a representative from the Chinese community, usually called Kapitan, was needed to cater to and control the huge population of Chinese in Perak. Besides, the crime rates involving Chinese were high according to Emily Innes as she had first-hand experience due to the murder of Captain Lloyd, the Dinding district officer, where she stayed a night at his residence in Pulau Pangkor. He was murdered and robbed by the Chinese in the middle of the night. Innes, Emily. *The Chersonese with the gilding off*. Vol. 1. London: R. Bentley, 1885.

governing, including maintaining courtesy when dealing with various people of many backgrounds. He also received many letters and petitions from Malays and Chinese alike on multiple matters. Low conducted regular meetings and visits with the *Penghulus* of Perak to supervise their work across the districts. He incorporated the *Penghulus* into the general administration of Perak following Frank Swettenham's recommendation in 1876.¹²³ The *Penghulus* would be regularised and paid salaries so they could work diligently with the colonial government. By the end of his tenure, Low managed to maintain the peace in Perak by reconciling with its aristocracy, improving its infrastructure through public works, abolishing slavery, and saving Perak from bankruptcy by increasing revenue through systematic management of tin mining and introducing cash crops like rubber.¹²⁴ These contributions were achieved through his experience serving in the colonial administration in Borneo, and through his sensitivity to the locals, which prompted them to cooperate smoothly by including them in decision-making and consulting them on issues involving Malay traditions and customs.

Low also encountered opposition from his colleagues to some of his policies, especially concerning the Malay debt-bondage slavery. James Innes, a colonial administrator stationed in Lower Perak for a while and the husband of the renowned author Emily Innes, propounded accusations against Low's policy of gradual disintegration of this slavery institution. Innes accused Low of enabling the Malay aristocrats by failing to abolish the practice abruptly, which was abhorrent in the eyes of a Victorian.¹²⁵ The debt-bondage slavery was eventually abolished in 1883. Low's policy of gradualism was to appeal to the Malay aristocracy and to the idea of abolition,

¹²³ Sadka, Emily. "The Journal of Sir Hugh Low, Perak, 1877." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 27, no. 4 (1954): 1-108.

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Gullick, John. "EMILY INNES 1843-1927." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1982): 87-114.

without incurring losses for both parties. An immediate abolition will result in a violent reaction similar to the Birch case. By understanding that this slavery was a part of Malay traditions since immemorial and proposing a new solution of buying the slaves and offering compensation for the loss, the aristocrats will, little by little, move towards the idea of not needing the slaves. Interestingly, through this policy, most of the slaves that were freed would request to stay with their masters as family members. Thus, most of his policies later became the foundation of a steady rule in British Malaya, as they were copied and practised in other states, particularly after Perak became a member of the Federated Malay States (FMS).¹²⁶

2.4.2 KEDAH

British rule in Kedah began in the early 20th century after the Bangkok Treaty 1909. Kedah and the other northern sultanates became British interests due to the encroachment of other European powers in the region, especially the French in Indochina and the Germans in Siam. The first interaction between the British and the Malays was the first engagement between the former and the Kedah Sultanate. It did not end with the British rule over Kedah; instead, it culminated in the acquisition of Pulau Pinang. The Burney Treaty of 1826 between the British and the Chakri dynasty of Siam recognised Siam's influence and control over the northern sultanates, as well as the British right to trade with Terengganu and Kelantan.¹²⁷ The treaty also concluded that the British had become an ally of Siam in their war against the Konbaung dynasty of Burma and had settled the northern borders of their influence in the Malay Peninsula. Kedah remained under Siamese control until 1909. Under the Bangkok Treaty of 1909, the north sultanates, Kedah, Perlis, Terengganu, and Kelantan, transferred their

¹²⁶ The Residentship Of Perak. Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle, 7 September 1888, Page 5

¹²⁷ Bonney, Rollin. *Kedah 1771-1821: The search for security and independence*. Oxford University Press, 1974.

suzerainty to the British while the British acknowledged the Siamese rule over Patani. Then, Kedah was ruled by the British.

Nevertheless, the Kedah-British relationship from 1909 to 1923 can be described as a period of turmoil marked by push and pull due to the vagueness of British policy. On the one hand, Kedah sought to maintain its independent status by preserving the status quo. On the other hand, the British wanted to intervene in their affairs by incorporating them into the FMS.

In general, the early stage of British rule in Kedah faced considerable opposition, especially from the Kedah government. Since 1857, Kedah has enjoyed relative autonomy in governing despite its dependence on Siam. Not to be confused, Kedah was never considered a province of Siam.¹²⁸ The Siamese have loose control over the northern sultanates. They virtually governed these territories through their proxy. Kedah and Perlis were under the jurisdiction of the Governor of Ligor, while Kelantan and Terengganu were under the supervision of the Governor of Singgora. Due to this type of control, most northern sultanates ruled independently and annually sent Bunga Emas dan Perak to Bangkok as tribute.

Furthermore, the Sultan of Kedah has developed a positive relationship with his neighbour, Pulau Pinang, one of the Straits Settlements colonies. He regularly corresponds with the Resident Councillor of Pulau Pinang regarding trade and politics.¹²⁹ By 1895, Kedah underwent a modernisation process under the initiative of a visionary sultan, Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah (1864CE—1943CE). Encouraged by his enlightened brother, Tengku Abdul Aziz, who was also Raja Muda of Kedah, they

¹²⁸ Siamese Suzerainty In The Malay Peninsula. Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle, 8 October 1889, Page 4

¹²⁹ Ahmat, Sharom. "Kedah-Tradition and Change in a Malay State: A Study of the Economic and Political Development, 1878–1923", MBRAS, Monograph, no. 12, 1984." *Kedah-Siam Relations 1905 (1821)*.

modelled the Kedah modern administration after those of the FMS and the Straits Settlements.¹³⁰

1905 was a starting year for Kedah as it transitioned from Siamese control to British rule. Kedah was on the verge of bankruptcy, and its government adopted the solution of obtaining a loan from Siam. A delegation headed by Raja Muda of Kedah, Tengku Abdul Aziz, was sent to Siam to request an audience concerning the loan. The meeting between the Siamese representative, Prince Damrong, and Tengku Abdul Aziz concluded with the Kedah Loan Agreement of 1905, under which Siam loaned 2.6 million at 6% interest to Kedah. However, several terms must be met to receive this loan.¹³¹ Firstly, Kedah must accept a Finance Advisor appointed by the Siamese to manage Kedah's finances. Secondly, as the Sultan's health deteriorated, Kedah established a state council to govern in the Sultan's name. Tengku Abdul Aziz agreed with all the terms as they seemed reasonable for Kedah's situation. The appointment of a Financial Advisor was collateral to ensure that Kedah would repay the loan, including its interest, and not for political reasons. In a sultanate with an absolute Sultan, if the Sultan was ill, administrative issues could not be resolved immediately, which could halt governance of the land. So, creating a state council was a welcome suggestion; though the council members' decisions still needed to be approved by the Sultan, with delicate persuasion, a strong state council prevailed.

Upon hearing of the meeting and negotiations between Siam and Kedah, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, John Anderson (1858CE – 1918CE), intervened to inquire about the content of the meeting and whether it was in the British interest. This was the beginning of British interference in Kedah affairs. He proposed several terms

¹³⁰ Ahmat, Sharom. "Kedah-Tradition and Change in a Malay State: A Study of the Economic and Political Development, 1878–1923", MBRAS, Monograph, no. 12, 1984." *Kedah-Siam Relations 1905* (1821).

¹³¹ Ibid

to Prince Damrong for the British assurance of the agreement.¹³² Firstly, an advisor and his assistant must be of British nationality. The British must approve their appointment or removal. Secondly, all Kedah administrative affairs will be managed by the local authority. Although annoyed by the terms, Prince Damrong agreed to Anderson's arrangement. W.F.J. Williamson, the Financial Advisor, was appointed and later succeeded by G.C. Hart.

By 1908, the president of Kedah State Council was succeeded by Tengku Mahmud, another sultan's brother, after the death of Tengku Abdul Aziz.¹³³ The rumours circulated in the Malay Peninsula about the British and Siam reaching an agreement to transfer the suzerainty of the northern sultanates to the British. Hearing this rumour, Tengku Mahmud pressed Hart on the issue, but Hart stated he was in the dark, as the Colonial Office had not informed him. Tengku Mahmud and the State Council pursued every possible avenue to ensure Kedah was represented before the treaty was signed. He issued a protest letter to the Colonial and Foreign Office, but it was ignored. He used Kedah's lobby in London to bring the matter to the Parliament; at first, they debated it, but later dismissed it.¹³⁴ Until the end of 1909, the Kedah State Council was informed of the Bangkok Treaty, signed in March 1909. This late notice, along with its omission from the treaty, caused fury among the state council members. Due to Kedah's long period of self-governance, the idea of being ruled by the British colonial government was very negative. Specifically, the idea of being incorporated into the FMS made the protest even more vocal. In this case, the British tried to impose a policy to increase their involvement in the Kedah administration. They appointed

¹³² Ahmat, Sharom. "Kedah-Tradition and Change in a Malay State: A Study of the Economic and Political Development, 1878–1923", MBRAS, Monograph, no. 12, 1984." *Kedah-Siam Relations* 1905 (1821).

¹³³ Samah, Mohd Shariff Abu. "Modenisasi pentadbiran Negeri Kedah, 1895-1957." UUM Press (2012).

¹³⁴ Ibid

George Maxwell (1871CE – 1959CE) as the first British Advisor of Kedah. Maxwell, at first, was very active in handling Kedah's administration; in his view, the role of Advisor was similar to that of a Resident in the FMS. However, he did not expect that Kedah would already have a modern administration with relative efficiency, except that most of them are Malays. So, he faced strong opposition, especially from the Kedah State Council led by Tengku Mahmud, who tried to maintain the Kedah status quo.¹³⁵ This conflict persisted until 1911, when, after several attempts at arbitrariness and strikes, the British presence was powerful, forcing the Kedah State Council to comply. Interestingly, the relationship between Maxwell and the council members improved after the confrontation, and they worked well together to manage Kedah's administration.

The early stage of British rule in Kedah, starting in 1909, showed that they initially tried to consider the customs and circumstances in Kedah. In his 1904 visit to Kedah, John Anderson, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, highlighted the mood of Kedah, which he described as uniquely native—the obvious Malayness of Kedah's centralised administration, with most of its officers drawn from Kedah Malays.¹³⁶ Even fewer foreign Malays were present, and there was a presence of non-Malays, such as a pocket of Chinese in the mine and opium farms. At the same time, Europeans worked only in the service sector, such as the public works department and hospitals in the capital. He mentioned that it would be pretty challenging if the British wanted to incorporate Kedah into FMS. Unlike FMS, their administration has weak sultans who cannot exert their power fully over the local Malay chiefs. However, in Kedah, the

¹³⁵ Ahmat, Sharom. "Kedah-Tradition and Change in a Malay State: A Study of the Economic and Political Development, 1878–1923", MBRAS, Monograph, no. 12, 1984." *Kedah-Siam Relations 1905 (1821)*.

¹³⁶ Ibid

situation was reversed to a moderate extent. The British needed to proceed with caution and delicacy in matters regarding Kedah.

Nevertheless, Anderson's comment was not embraced by British officers who interacted with Kedah, leading to a conflict of opinion and interest for years. In 1909, both the British and Siam made a decision, solemnised in the Bangkok Treaty of 1909, that did not consider local circumstances. They did not include the parties affected by the treaty and dismissed all the attempts of reconsideration from the northern sultanates, especially Kedah. Ultimately, the conflict between the British and Kedah persisted until the Anglo-Kedah Treaty of 1923, a compromise both parties accepted.

2.5 CONCLUSION

During their early presence, the British policies and actions in Perak and Kedah laid the foundation for their colonial domination in Malaya, with economic interests intertwined with political interventions. While initial contacts, such as treaties and trade agreements, highlighted the British focus on strategic and financial interests, the subsequent imposition of rule, primarily through the Resident system, demonstrated insensitivity to local customs and traditions, as witnessed in Perak under J.W.W. Birch. This was in contrast to subsequent administrators, such as Hugh Low, who showed greater sensitivity, stabilizing rules by introducing local participation and addressing resistance. In Kedah, the transition from Siamese to British rule through the Bangkok Treaty of 1909 was fraught with tension, symbolising Kedah's inability to maintain its independence amid British efforts to incorporate it into the Federated Malay States. These earlier policies underscore the complexity of British-Malay interaction, even though, in their early attempts to impose their policies on the Malays, they neglected the significance of Malay traditions. Later, the British considered local customs and circumstances when implementing their policies in Perak and Kedah.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CIVIL SERVICE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DAILY INTERACTION WITH THE MALAY COMMUNITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The interaction between the colonial officer and the local community can be observed through the lens of administration. The colonial administration engaged with the local community daily to ensure its policies were enforced correctly. These policies required the local community's cooperation to extract and exploit local resources efficiently. Besides, a pragmatic administration was essential to manage a vast overseas empire. This chapter will discuss the development of civil service in British Malaya from its inception in 1786. Each state's unique development shaped the interactions between British officers and the local community. The scope of the discussion focused on the Malayan Civil Service (MCS) and the Malay Administration Service (MAS) for the State of Perak, while in Kedah, the Kedah Civil Service (KCS), which the Kedah ruling family initiated to imitate the efficiency of the Federated Malay States (FMS) 's model. Furthermore, the chapter will explore the Malay community's reaction to changes among British civil servants and how often they engaged with them daily.

3.2 THE MALAYAN CIVIL SERVICE (MCS)

The history of the civil service in British Malaya can be traced to the establishment of the British colony in Pulau Pinang. It was modelled after the Home Service, especially the Indian Civil Service, which has served the British Raj and its Presidencies wholeheartedly.¹³⁷ The early semblance of civil service was Francis Light

¹³⁷ Mills, Lennox Algernon, Constance M. Turnbull, and D. K. Bassett. "British Malaya 1824-67." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 33, no. 3 (191 (1960): 1-424.

(1740 CE—1794 CE) and his servants. He recruited them among the traders who did their business in the area.¹³⁸ This kind of recruitment was necessary because the colonies were still in their infancy, and the Government of India could not provide enough funds, which led the servants, including Light, to continue their professions as traders while also managing the colony. Nevertheless, the civil service became stable after the creation of the Straits Settlements in 1826. Their name also changed to the Straits Settlements Civil Service (SSCS). Now, they receive cadets from the Indian Civil Service and other Eastern civil services, such as those of Ceylon and Hong Kong. It continued to operate with small groups of servants.¹³⁹

After the Pangkor Treaty of 1874, the newly established Resident System became a part of the British Civil Service in Perak, later known as the Perak State Services. The recruitment of the Perak State Service during its early phase was not standardised. It emphasised recruiting any travelling and private Englishmen present before the British intervention in the state.¹⁴⁰ A good example of this case was Captain Speedy (1836CE – 1910CE), appointed Assistant Resident alongside J.W.W. Birch (1826CE – 1875CE). Besides, most of the officers recruited lacked training in leadership and administrative skills, as evidenced by the short service of Captain Speedy, who served for three years and had a bad reputation. In the case of Birch, the first Resident of Perak, he had experience in administration as a colonial secretary in Ceylon. However, he lacked knowledge of Malay customs and traditions, which

¹³⁸ Mills, Lennox Algernon, Constance M. Turnbull, and D. K. Bassett. "British Malaya 1824-67." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 33, no. 3 (191 (1960): 1-424.

¹³⁹ Another reason the civil service in the Straits Settlements was small in numbers was the unpopularity of the colonies themselves. The Straits Settlements were used as penal settlement for the convicts of India; most of them were later absorbed into the colony's population. *The Straits Times*, 15 December 1857, Page 3.

¹⁴⁰ de Vere Allen, James. "Malayan Civil Service, 1874–1941 Colonial Bureaucracy/Malayan Elite." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 12, no. 2 (1970): 149-178.

resulted in his untimely demise.¹⁴¹ His reforms were a reasonable effort to modernise the traditional element of the Perak administration at that time. During his brief tenure, Birch's efforts were shown as he visited various kampungs along the Perak River to meet with the Malay chiefs to announce the policy and posted pamphlets for the masses.¹⁴² This situation can be interpreted as the practice exercised by the early State Services to survey the local situation and disseminate information about their policies. The British officers took this action, which can be considered a hands-on approach to daily interaction with locals.

During the tenure of Hugh Low (1877CE – 1889CE), the fourth Resident of Perak, a similar practice continued but with a more sensitive approach, as discussed in Chapter 2. He incorporated the traditional administration into colonial bureaucracy by utilising the *Penghulus* as government agents, linking the colonial authority with the local community.¹⁴³ Furthermore, he appointed the district officers, who were fully responsible for managing their large districts in all matters, including maintaining peace and stability, enforcing the law, collecting taxes, etc. Thus, Low standardised the early British policies in Perak, laying the foundation for the effective colonial administration in British Malaya. The colonial bureaucracy in Perak, headed by the Sultan, was only in name; however, the actual political power resided in the Resident, assisted by his District officers, and, lastly, at the bottom of the leadership, the *Penghulus*, or village headmen.¹⁴⁴ The Resident was answerable to the Governor of the Straits Settlements

¹⁴¹ J.W.W. Birch was a proud Victorian who believed anything opposing his values must be eradicated. Negative values, according to him, existed in Malay traditions, like slavery, which he abhorred. Sadka, Emily. "The Journal of Sir Hugh Low, Perak, 1877." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 27, no. 4 (1954): 1-108.

¹⁴² Pencilled Journal Entries of Frank A. Swettenham (F.A.S.) Regarding Perak Affairs with Reference To The Murder Of J.W.W. Birch - 17 January-21 February 1876, 17.01.1876.

¹⁴³ Perak in 1889. The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (Weekly), 30 July 1890, Page 10

¹⁴⁴ The British earlier proposal was to impose an indirect rule over Malaya as the prospect of this new territory was not clear. However, due to the political and cultural circumstances, although by nature, the colonial administration in British Malaya was an indirect rule as the British acknowledged the Malay states as their protectorates, in reality, the Residents managed their duties like a direct rule like any other

until 1896, when the Federated Malay States (FMS) was formed; the Resident was under the supervision of a Resident-General who served under the High Commissioner of the FMS.¹⁴⁵

The Federated Malay States (FMS) were the formalisation of British Malaya's colonial bureaucracy. The States Service of Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Pahang were combined into the Malayan Civil Service (MCS). As the Federated Malay States (FMS) were no longer under the East India Company's (EIC) jurisdiction but under the Colonial Office, the recruitment of civil servants followed official Home Service practices. The competitive open examination was introduced, and anyone who scored flying colours could choose their placement.¹⁴⁶ Most of them joined the prestigious Indian Civil Service. Ceylon and Hong Kong Civil Services were other frequent choices. The Malayan Civil Service (MCS) was unpopular for various reasons. One was that the salaries offered were relatively low compared to other placements, and another was the location in Malaya, which is unattractive due to its tropical climate and poor accommodation.¹⁴⁷ Thus, the civil servants sent to Malaya were those who scored poorly in their exams and had no option but to choose other places. Despite these challenges, the authority of the Federated Malay States (FMS) continues to request suitable cadets who have mastered Malay and rejects those who have not. The older generation of the Malayan Civil Service (MCS), who served in British Malaya from the beginning, have assumed much higher positions in FMS, such as Frank Swettenham (1850CE – 1946CE), who was appointed as the first Resident-General of FMS. They

crown colonies. Emerson, Rupert. "Malaysia: A study in direct and indirect rule." University of Malaya Press (1964).

¹⁴⁵ The position of High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States (FMS) was a dual position assumed by the Governor of the Straits Settlements, who was responsible for the highest British authority in Malaya.

¹⁴⁶ Wah, Yeo Kim. "The grooming of an elite: Malay administrators in the Federated Malay States, 1903–1941." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1980): 287–319.

¹⁴⁷ Malaya In 1900. The Straits Budget, 22 August 1901, Page 2

acted as gatekeepers, emphasising that civil servants must master Malay and be sympathetic to Malay customs and traditions to serve the MCS.¹⁴⁸ This action coincided with the British standard policy in Malaya, which promoted understanding of the locals and empowered the traditional administration to ensure smooth operation within the protectorates.¹⁴⁹

Regarding the interaction between the Malayan Civil Service (MCS) and the Malay community, understanding the daily routine of colonial officers is vital to understanding how their administrative duties reflected their practical interactions with the Malay community on the ground. During the early stage of British rule, before 1880, the position of the district officer had not yet been established, and British-Malay interaction relied heavily on small numbers of civil servants, including the Resident, assistant residents, and several cadets.¹⁵⁰ These British officers were responsible for overseeing an extensive territory, requiring them to travel frequently to reach every Malay village within the state. Their day typically started at dawn. Depending on the weather and the distance to the destination, they would travel by boat along the river systems in Perak and by elephant or horse when traversing the state's interior, with its lush jungle, before the widespread use of motorcars in the early 20th century. After the introduction of the district officer's position, they took on the responsibilities previously held by the Resident, including presiding over the magistrate's court and handling cases ranging from land disputes to criminal offences.¹⁵¹ They supervise tax collections and the application of land titles, and assess the reports submitted by the *Penghulus* on

¹⁴⁸ Malaya In 1900. The Straits Budget, 22 August 1901, Page 2

¹⁴⁹ Amoroso, Donna J. *Traditionalism and the ascendancy of the Malay ruling class in Malaya*. NUS Press, 2014.

¹⁵⁰ Johan, Khasnor. "The emergence of the modern Malay administrative elite." Oxford University Press (1984).

¹⁵¹ Hawksley, Charles M. "Administrative colonialism: district administration and colonial middle management in Kelantan 1909-1919 and the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea 1947-1957." (2001).

village welfare and agricultural products. The British District officers and the *Penghulus* played a significant role in bridging both parties. They cooperated for the betterment of the administration, as the district office served as the administrative, judicial, and social centre for the district's well-being, especially for the Malay community.

The best example of this early interaction was Frank Swettenham. He was travelling along the Perak River during the Birch assassination on a mission to meet with Sultan Ismail in Belanja. The interaction from Swettenham's perspective showed that Sultan Ismail's servant said he had been asleep for a long time. Swettenham understood this statement as Malay diplomacy, saying the Sultan did not want to meet him.¹⁵² Another example was Hugh Low's visit to Kota Tampan, during which he met with all the *Penghulus* of the neighbouring villages.¹⁵³ He asked them about their well-being and whether they were satisfied with Perak's current state. He also mentioned that he had good intentions in addressing any issues or problems *Penghulus* faced. Lastly, he communicated his intention to advise Raja Muda to impose taxes in the form of Land Rent "*Hasil Kelamim*", and the *Penghulus* further questioned him about the implementation and related matters in a civil conversation.

The early generation of District officers, from 1880 to 1920, had distinct characteristics compared to their successors after 1920. These civil servants were characterised as eccentrics due to their fascination with the Malays.¹⁵⁴ Some historians called this phenomenon "Malayophilia", the opposite character of the Malays who are fascinated with the Englishmen, who will be called "Anglophilia". Interestingly, this

¹⁵² Swettenham, Frank Athelstane. *Malay sketches*. John Lane, 1895.

¹⁵³ Sadka, Emily. "The Journal of Sir Hugh Low, Perak, 1877." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 27, no. 4 (1954): 1-108.

¹⁵⁴ de Vere Allen, James. "Malayan Civil Service, 1874-1941 Colonial Bureaucracy/Malayan Elite." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 12, no. 2 (1970): 149-178.

phenomenon also extended to the civil servants who came after 1920, though in a milder form. The best examples of individuals who experienced Malayophilia and often mentioned their cases were C.F. Bozzolo and Hubert Berkeley (1864CE – 1942CE). Both were District officers in Upper Perak. The factors behind their behaviours were due to their background; Hubert Berkeley came from an aristocratic family. Feeling served and treated like a lord by the locals through his regular interactions made Berkeley more attuned to the Malays. He even embraced Malay customs, such as eating Malay dishes, wearing a *sarong*, farming, and having chickens in his backyards. All of these activities symbolised the daily routine of the Malays in *Kampung*.¹⁵⁵

Another factor was the nature of the Malay culture. The British officers observed the similarities between their cultures. Malays are constantly called the "Gentleman of the East" because of their modest behaviour. The loyalty, courage, and proud features they portrayed resonated with the British on many levels. They saw the Malays as themselves in the Middle Ages.¹⁵⁶ These senses of familiarity encouraged them to explore Malay customs, leading to the emergence of colonial officers who became Malay experts and produced several written records during this period. These experts served in the upper echelons of the Malayan Civil Service, including Frank Swettenham, Hugh Low, R.O. Winstedt, R.J. Wilkinson, and W.E. Maxwell. R.O. Winstedt, who dedicated himself to the study of Malay history, literature, and Islam, made him one of the leading scholars in colonial knowledge of the Malays. Through his scholarship, especially on Malay manuscripts such as *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, he expressed his unique fascination and admiration for Malay intellectual heritage.¹⁵⁷ R. J. Wilkinson, who championed the establishment of Malay vernacular

¹⁵⁵ Gullick, J. M. "The British in Malaya 1880-1941: The Social History of a European Community in Colonial Southeast Asia." (1980): 120-121.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

¹⁵⁷ Winstedt, Richard Olof. *The Malays: A cultural history*. Taylor & Francis, 2024.

education, believed that his advocacy of preserving the Malay language and customs was fundamental to sustaining social stability. His collaboration with Malay scholars, proficiency in Malay, and close relationship with Malay officers earned him the trust of the Malay elites.¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, the Malay acceptance became more relaxed and open, knowing the British had shown some interest in their culture, as portrayed by Swettenham:

So far the means of studying Malays in their own country (where alone they are seen in their true character) have fallen to few Europeans, and a tiny proportion of them have shown an inclination to get to the hearts of the people. There are a hundred of thousands of Malays in Perak and some more in other parts of the Peninsula, and the white men, whose interest in the race is strong enough, may not only win confidence but the devotion that is ready to give life itself in the cause of friendship.¹⁵⁹

3.3 THE MALAY ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE (MAS)

The trend in the Malayan Civil Service (MCS) changed gradually between 1910 and 1920. The influx of a new batch of civil servants with similar backgrounds because most graduated from Public school – Oxbridge.¹⁶⁰ Besides, their number increased exponentially among the new cadets for the other Eastern Civil Services.¹⁶¹ This development brought several changes regarding their interaction with the Malay community. As the colonial bureaucracy in the FMS was well established, daily

¹⁵⁸ Wilkinson, R. J. "Papers on Malay Customs & Beliefs." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 30, no. 4 (180) (1957): 1–87.

¹⁵⁹ Swettenham, Frank Athelstane, and William R. Roff. "A nocturne and other Malayan stories and sketches." (*No Title*) (1993).

¹⁶⁰ Wah, Yeo Kim. "The grooming of an elite: Malay administrators in the Federated Malay States, 1903–1941." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1980): 287–319.

¹⁶¹ The cadets who graduated from Public school-Oxbridge were considered among the British officers' elites. Their education was top-notch, and they even excelled in sports and social conduct. However, some MCS senior officers, like J.G. Davidson, viewed these cadets as too overqualified to serve the civil service, contrary to the standard needed to serve in Malaya. Davidson highlighted that the MCS officers should be gentlemen but not too much and must be flexible when dealing with sensitive Malays. If these cadets of Public school-Oxbridge who have been exposed to a higher standard of living and the social conduct of the upper class, they will face difficulties in maintaining the successful balance that their predecessors achieved in the British-Malay relations.

interaction between British officers and Malays became less common. Despite that, they still maintained favourable attitudes towards the Malays. However, they created a bubble that catered to their way of life back in their home country by establishing the European clubs.¹⁶² These clubs, such as Perak Club, Perak Golf Club, and Taiping Recreation Club, organised many communal events, including parties, balls, plays, and tournaments. Their purpose was to provide a safe place for British civil servants and their families to socialise and maintain a semblance of home, thereby avoiding homesickness and boredom. The European Clubs was the hub of the British Malayan society.¹⁶³ Besides, the European clubs became a prominent social hub due to the role of British wives, who accompanied their husbands upon arrival and remained in Malaya.¹⁶⁴ Thus, they created a small community detached from the main population, further reducing interaction with Malays in general and conversing only with the selected few, such as the Malay aristocracy and the Malay servants (Amah) who served them on their estates.¹⁶⁵

Regarding their relationship with the Malays, the introduction of the Malay Administrative Service (MAS) in 1919 increased the number of Malay administrators occupying junior-level positions, such as clerks and assistants to officers. The daily interaction with the Malay community, previously handled directly by British civil servants, has now been transferred to the MAS, the colonial government's representative, to handle all official work related to this situation. In Perak, the district officers delegated the task to their Malay assistants. By the 1930s, the position of

¹⁶² Butcher, John G. "A social history of the British in Malaya, 1880-1941: with special reference to the federated Malay states." University of Hull. (1975).

¹⁶³ Shennan, Margaret. *Out in the Middy Sun*. Monsoon Books, 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid

¹⁶⁵ Several cold highlands in Malaya, such as the Cameron Highlands in Pahang and the Fraser Hills in Perak, became the retreat for these Europeans to experience the semblance of their cold home country. These places were built with European-style cottages with functional furnaces and equipped with a large backyard for their children to play. The Amahs will cater to all their needs, and other servants will serve the food and essentials needed during their stays.

assistant District officer was filled with Malay officers.¹⁶⁶ They continued to the previous position's responsibilities like handling occasions, events, local disputes, and assuming the magistrate's position. The Malay Administrative Service became the new intermediary between the British officers and the Malay community. In 1931, the Malays were allowed to participate in the Malayan Civil Service following a decision by the Federal Council.¹⁶⁷ The Malay officers had been promoted to the MCS and treated as equals and colleagues by their counterparts. However, this treatment is limited only to the workplace, not the public or social life.¹⁶⁸ The evidence is evident in the case of the European Club. The Malay officers were rarely invited to attend any events organised by the European Clubs. Some clubs did provide invitations, but because of cultural differences, they always felt left out when socialising at these events.¹⁶⁹ In addition, influential and high-ranking Malay officers began forming their own clubs, imitating their counterparts.¹⁷⁰ Thus, it created another bubble within the Malay community, reducing grassroots contact between colonial officers and locals. Although the decision to open the Malayan Civil Service to Malay participation, some Malays were sceptical. In *Majlis*, the author expressed fear of the consequences of implementing this decision, as it would open the possibility for non-Malays to request similar opportunities, thereby depriving the Malays of this already lucrative opportunity.¹⁷¹ His statement also showed the spirit of Malay nationalism in ensuring that more non-Malays were not administering his country.

¹⁶⁶ Malay Officers. The Straits Times, 9 September 1933, Page 10

¹⁶⁷ Kedudukan Kaum Melayu dari Sehari ke Sehari Dan bergerak dari selangkah ke selangkah ke hadapan dan ke belakang. Saudara, 7 Feb 1931, Page 1

¹⁶⁸ de Vere Allen, James. "Malayan Civil Service, 1874–1941 Colonial Bureaucracy/Malayan Elite." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 12, no. 2 (1970): 149-178.

¹⁶⁹ Johan, Khasnor. "The emergence of the modern Malay administrative elite." Oxford University Press (1984).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

¹⁷¹ Jawatan Malayan Civil Service, *Majlis*, 12 Sep 1932, Page 5

3.4 KEDAH CIVIL SERVICE (KCS)

The civil service in Kedah was a unique case in Malaysian history. It can be observed as a successful attempt by a local sultanate to modernise its traditional administration into a systematic colonial-modelled bureaucracy. Another sultanate that successfully modernised itself earlier than Kedah was the Johor Sultanate under the renowned Sultan Abu Bakar (1886CE – 1895CE). This modernisation also led to the establishment of the Kedah Civil Service (KCS). The development of KCS provided insight into the interaction between the British and the Kedah Malays. The situation in Kedah was the opposite of that in Perak. As KCS was a part of the traditional administration, most of the bureaucracy was composed of the Kedah aristocracy with frequent titles such as Wan, Nik, and Syed. Thus, the conventional Malay elements prevailed throughout the Kedah administration.¹⁷²

The Kedah Sultanate began modernisation with the ascension of Sultan Abdul Hamid (1881 CE—1943 CE) in 1885. Together with his brother, Tengku Abdul Aziz, they took the initiative to learn English. They travelled to the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States to learn about their efficient bureaucracy and the arts of modern administration.¹⁷³ After returning from this educational trip, Sultan Abdul Hamid and his brother implemented several reforms within their government. One of the reforms was the division of Kedah territories into districts and the appointment of district officers. They also established government departments, including the Public Works Department, the Finance Department, and the Sanitary Board. In the early phase, these departments were overseen directly by the Sultan. The modern administration was only fully realised in 1905 with the coming of the British Financial Advisor, W.J.F. Williamson, who reorganised the Kedah administration for the betterment as during this

¹⁷² Samah, Mohd Shariff Abu. "Modenisasi pentadbiran Negeri Kedah, 1895-1957." UUM Press (2012).

¹⁷³ Ibid

period, Kedah's finance was in a state of disarray due to the enormous spending, debt and others which forced them to secure a loan from the Siam in exchange for Kedah to receive a financial advisor that will ensure Kedah to repay its loan.¹⁷⁴ In the process, the British intervened and reformed both the Kedah political and monetary administrations.

From 1905 to 1909, the Kedah Civil Service was still in a trial-and-error phase, blending traditional and modern administrative elements.¹⁷⁵ This situation emerged due to opposition from the Kedah nobility to the changes that accompanied modernisation. In a similar situation that happened in Perak, previously discussed in Chapter 2, the appointment of district officers led to the loss of the traditional and cultural role of the Kedah aristocracy, who were the masters of the land bestowed upon them, acted as generational tax collectors, and amassed a power base in their territories full of manpower and resources.¹⁷⁶ At first, the Kedah government implemented its policies and hoped the aristocracy would accept them. However, the modern mentality was embraced only by the Sultan's close circle, such as Raja Muda Tengku Abdul Aziz and Bendahara (Chief Minister) Wan Muhammad Saman. It did not spread among the more prominent aristocracy, thus leading to this resistance.¹⁷⁷ In retaliation, the Kedah government forcibly annexed the territories and sought to compensate the local chiefs with substantial pensions, straining the Kedah budget in the long run.

After the Bangkok Treaty of 1909, a British Advisor to Kedah further complicated the Sultan's administration. The first British Advisor of Kedah was George Maxwell (1871CE – 1959CE), the son of the famous colonial officer, W.E. Maxwell. The High Commissioner of FMS, John Anderson (1858CE – 1918CE), reminded

¹⁷⁴ Administration Report Of The State Of Kedah - September 1906-February 1908, 28 February 1908, State Secretary Office of Kedah.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁶ Samah, Mohd Shariff Abu. "Modenisasi pentadbiran Negeri Kedah, 1895-1957." UUM Press (2012)

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

Maxwell that the position of British advisor was to "advise" the Sultan in the matter of administration. However, Maxwell operated his position similarly to the British Resident, who directly administered the government on behalf of the Sultan.¹⁷⁸ His action gained the ire of the Kedah State Council, led by the newly appointed Tengku Mahmud. After the death of the former Tengku Abdul Aziz, Tengku Mahmud acted first as the president of the State Council. Later, this position was given to Tunku Ibrahim (1884CE—1934CE), the crown prince, who also acted as the Regent of Kedah.¹⁷⁹ From this point onwards, frequent clashes between the State Council and the British Advisor became the norm, indicating the sour relationship between the Malay administrator and the British officers. An example of this clash was the appointment of the Inspector General of Police of Kedah; the State Council proposed the appointment of Tunku Muhammad as the replacement. It was a tradition in Kedah to appoint a member of the ruling house to this position. However, Maxwell opposed this and suggested that Mr. Speers, Assistant Commissioner of Police, assume the position in the meantime, as any Malays appointed would lack the technical knowledge suitable for the position.¹⁸⁰

The main reason for these clashes was the nature of the intervention imposed by the British on the Kedah government, as they sought to incorporate Kedah into the Federated Malay States.¹⁸¹ However, Anderson himself presented this idea before the 1909 treaty, when he visited Kedah, and under his purview, the British should be

¹⁷⁸ Ahmat, Sharom. "Kedah-Tradition and Change in a Malay State: A Study of the Economic and Political Development, 1878–1923", MBRAS, Monograph, no. 12, 1984." *Kedah-Siam Relations* 1905 (1821).

¹⁷⁹ Vacancy In The Kedah State Council. Forwards Translations Of A Letter From His Highness The Sultan Of Kedah Covering A Letter Revised From The President, Adviser And Members Of The Council Requesting His Highness To Permit His Son Tunku Ibrahim To Fill The And States That He Approves It On Behalf Of His Majesty's Government. 1 February 1911, High Commissioner Office, Malaya.

¹⁸⁰ Vacant Post Of Inspector General Of Police, Kedah - Proposed Selection Of Tunku Muhammad To Fill It, 5 October 1913, High Commissioner Office, Malaya

¹⁸¹ Gullick, John Michael. "Rulers and residents: Influence and power in the Malay States, 1870-1920." Oxford University Press (1992).

cautious about Kedah matters. They will face difficulties in including Kedah in the FMS as their government is already well-established and modern.¹⁸² In addition, one unique feature that Anderson highlighted about Kedah is its “Malayness”; on the surface, the Kedah government might be similar to the FMS in structure. However, most of its high-ranking officers were Malay, which would be hard for the British to penetrate. The administration used Malay, and all administrative papers were written in Jawi script. Maxwell’s view of his position undermined Anderson’s caution, which sought to further British interests by establishing a strong British presence in Kedah, preventing the intervention of foreign powers like Siam and other European powers, and attempting to incorporate Kedah into the FMS. The back-and-forth dilemma faced by the British Advisor will include being isolated from the State Council meetings and being reminded to use, speak, and write in Malay when dealing with the Kedah administration and the workers’ strike, which halted the Kedah government for a while.¹⁸³ This situation forced Anderson to intervene, warning that if the Kedah State Council did not cooperate with Maxwell, it would be abolished and the British would take over the government directly. Facing this massive threat, the State Council caved in and reconciled with Maxwell, reflected in the smooth sailing of cooperation between the two parties after this conflict.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Gullick, John Michael. "Rulers and residents: Influence and power in the Malay States, 1870-1920." Oxford University Press (1992).

¹⁸³ Samah, Mohd Shariff Abu. "Modenisasi pentadbiran Negeri Kedah, 1895-1957." UUM Press (2012).

¹⁸⁴ The sudden cease of hostilities by the Kedah State Council members might have been attributed to the fear of the consequences done by the British, similar to the consequences faced by Perak during the early British expansion in Malaya. The assassination of a British Resident, J.W.W. Birch, provided the opportunity for the British to depose all problematic Malay chiefs who were also involved in the murder and began a fresh start. Quoting Swettenham on his remark about the aftermath of the assassination, “The loss of his (Birch) life was an infinite gain to Perak, for the considerable military expedition which followed, and the subsequent short occupation of the State by British troops did more to secure permanent tranquillity than ten or fifteen years of “advice” by a British resident could have done it”. Swettenham, Frank Athelstane. *About Perak*. Straits Times Press, 1893.

The harsh reaction to the British intervention stemmed from fear that Kedah would lose its independence to another power. Dissatisfaction had already occurred when the British and Siam signed the Bangkok Treaty in 1909 without representing Kedah. In addition, the arrival of the British Advisor to advise the Sultan would be agreeable; however, when the advisor tried to supervise and intervene in all matters of administration, it led to a clash between the Kedah government officials and the British advisor. This issue was resolved with the Anglo-Kedah Treaty of 1923, under the efforts of the new High Commissioner of FMS, Laurence Guillemard (1862CE – 1951CE), who proposed decentralising British control over its possessions in Malaya by empowering the local sultans in their states.¹⁸⁵ This idea also extended to the Unfederated Malay States (UMS), which, in the case of Kedah, agreed with the terms proposed by the State Council concerning the Kedah administration. Among the treaty's critical clauses was that the Kedah Civil Service would hire Kedah Malays and use Malay as its administrative language.¹⁸⁶ Besides, Kedah will be informed in advance of the candidate for their British Advisor and can refuse him if they do not like him.¹⁸⁷ Thus, the Kedah Civil Service developed into a native-centred civil service with its high-ranking Kedah Malay officers.

The interaction between the Kedah ruling class and the British can be seen as up-and-down, with conflicts at the beginning and resolutions at the end. Although much of the Kedah administration was controlled by the Malays except for the high-ranking positions such as the British Advisor, Assistant Advisor, and several heads of essential departments such as the Public Works Department, the British presence can also be felt

¹⁸⁵ Emerson, Rupert. "Malaysia: A study in direct and indirect rule." University of Malaya Press (1964).

¹⁸⁶ Mat Noor, N. O. O. R., and Ahmad Kamal Ariffin Mohd Rus. "Identiti Kemelayuan Dalam Pentadbiran Kedah, 1923-1941." *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategy* 41, no. 1 (2014).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

in other areas, as the European population in Kedah increased in the coming years after 1909. Most of these Europeans were either the planters who managed the rubber plantation in Kedah or the British citizens who assumed non-administrative government positions such as the Police superintendent, the state surgeon, the state engineer, and others.¹⁸⁸ A balanced composition between the British and the Malays can be seen within the Kedah government. The European clubs in Kedah became common among the Europeans. Notable clubs such as Sungai Petani Club and Kuala Muda Club became exclusive places for them. Like the other European clubs in FMS, they held social gatherings for Europeans, but it is customary to invite the district officer as the honoured guest.¹⁸⁹ This practice also gave the district officers a luxurious lifestyle, as they were frequently involved in white men's sports, such as golf and tennis, which the Europeans commonly played.¹⁹⁰ One example is the regular ride taken by the British Advisor of Kedah, William Peel (1875CE—1945CE), together with the Regent of Kedah, Tunku Ibrahim, during which they discussed state-related matters on horseback.¹⁹¹

3.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter explores the intricate dynamics of interaction between the British colonial civil service and Malay society in Malaya, focusing on the evolution of administrative institutions and their political and cultural repercussions. The establishment of the Malayan Civil Service (MCS), Malay Administrative Service (MAS), and Kedah Civil Service (KCS) illustrates the engagement between colonial governance and traditional Malay institutions, which reflected the interaction between

¹⁸⁸ Mat Noor, N. O. O. R., and Ahmad Kamal Ariffin Mohd Rus. "Identiti Kemelayuan Dalam Pentadbiran Kedah, 1923-1941." *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategy* 41, no. 1 (2014).

¹⁸⁹ Nadaraja, K. *The Kuala Muda District: History of the Administrative Centres of Kota Kuala Muda & Sungai Petani, 1905-1957* (UUM Press). UUM Press, 2016.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid

¹⁹¹ Shennan, Margaret. *Out in the Middy Sun*. Monsoon Books, 2015.

the British and the Malays. British authorities and local rulers navigated the challenges of modernisation, cultural integration, and resistance through informal and contested interactions. The inherently complicated relationship, marked by efforts to reconcile colonial efficiency and Malay tradition, was marked by cooperation and conflict. The interactions left an indelible mark on Malaya's socio-cultural landscape and provided some insight into the development of the civil service, thereby affecting daily British-Malay interactions.



CHAPTER FOUR

THE BUREAUCRATISATION OF THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE EVERYDAY BRITISH-MALAY INTERACTION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters focused on the development of the civil service and its influence on everyday interactions between the British and Malays. The civil service in British Malaya was part of the broader colonial bureaucracy across the British Empire. Although this bureaucracy might seem standardised in general, each colony has unique circumstances that differ from those of other colonies. In this chapter, the focus will be on the process of bureaucratisation and its extent in transforming the nature of everyday interaction between British officers and the Malay community. Regarding public administration, the discussion of bureaucracy cannot be avoided, as it goes hand in hand in the modern era. Similar situations can be applied during the colonial period; however, this concept was only developed in its early stages. The bureaucracy played a crucial role in shaping the British-Malay interaction, as it gradually came to realise this concept, which affected both parties. The research will utilise Weber's Theory of Bureaucracy and his Tripartite classification of authority to explain the colonial bureaucracy of British Malaya.

4.2 WEBERIAN BUREAUCRACY

Firstly, it is essential to understand the definition of bureaucracy. According to the prominent German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920), bureaucracy is an organisational structure characterised by numerous rules, standardised processes, procedures, and requirements, as well as a precise and meticulous division of labour,

clear hierarchies, and professional, almost impersonal interactions between employees.¹⁹² Weber believed that bureaucracy was the most efficient way to manage a large organisation, through the rationalisation and impersonalisation of society. In the case of British Malaya, its colonial bureaucracy was derived from two crucial ideologies: Capitalism and Colonialism.¹⁹³ The Industrial Revolution in 18th-century Britain prompted the British to seek raw materials and resources to supply their factories. The British expanded their empire worldwide through Colonialism with those goals in mind. In addition, their colonies and protectorates provided a ready market for their products, thereby furthering their interest in maintaining mercantilism and monopolies over specific resources and territories. Besides, as colonialism became the primary focus of British foreign policy, it increased their prestige and sense of domination over other European competitors. It can also be referred to as colonial capitalism, which summarises the action taken by the British in Malaya.¹⁹⁴

Weber's tripartite classification of authority can be applied to the British administration in Malaya. Two classifications can be reflected in the British Malayan bureaucracy: the traditional and rational-legal authorities. The third point is that charismatic authority appears irrelevant in the British Malayan context, as this classification of authority typically relates to familial and religious institutions that require charismatic figures to lead them. As for the traditional authority, there was a

¹⁹² Roth, Guenther, and Claus Wittich. "Max Weber Economy and Society." (1978).

¹⁹³ According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, Capitalism by definition means an economic system characterised by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market, while Colonialism means domination of a people or area by a foreign state or nation: the practice of extending and maintaining a nation's political and economic control over another people or area.

¹⁹⁴ Colonial capitalism refers to the heterogeneous and globally networked property structures, exchange systems, and labor regimes constituting Britain's imperial economy. It involves organising commodity production and trade by colonial states, settlers, and companies, often disrupting existing production patterns and social existence. Ince, Onur Ulas. *Colonial capitalism and the dilemmas of liberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

traditional administration led by the Sultan, who derived his power from Malay traditions and customs. This concept of authority can be expressed through the Malay tradition named “*Daulat*”, an unquestionable loyalty towards the Sultan by their subjects.¹⁹⁵ With the British arrival and intervention, a mixture of authority occurred. Traditional authority was maintained, but rational-legal authority was introduced. In this case, the Resident system and the State civil service were the forms of rational-legal authority.

Before the discussion of the details, these are the general applications of Weber’s Theory of Bureaucracy and Tripartite Classification of Authority. When applying Weber’s Bureaucracy to the British colonial bureaucracy in Malaya, a similar insight emerges, making it both parallel and practical. The British colonial bureaucracy began with the Resident System, with the Resident at its head, composed of a small number of cadets and volunteers. The approach they adopted was informal; everyone made their own interpretation and effort when they received instructions from the central authority in the Straits Settlements. Thus, it was a loose foundation of a bureaucracy. As time went on, with the consolidation of British power in the Malay Peninsula and the formation of the Federated Malay States (FMS) in 1896, the Malayan Civil Service (MCS) was born. The bureaucracy started to become centralised and organised. The rules and regulations imported from London and India, and some created locally, smooth the bureaucrat’s machinations. By now, the paperwork, like annual reports, tax ledgers, memos, and minutes of meetings, has become routine. The recruitment of civil servants also became more pragmatic and orderly, with central examinations conducted, training implemented, and the rationalisation of civil works undertaken. Beginning in 1920, civil servants and colonial officers worked diligently in

¹⁹⁵ Winstedt, Richard Olof. *The Malays: A cultural history*. Taylor & Francis, 2024.

their offices, and contact between British officers and the Malay community became less frequent as the process of impersonalisation emerged. The work becomes specialised, focusing solely on paperwork and instructions from higher-level officers until it is disseminated through the corporate ladder. Thus, the colonial bureaucracy was finalised in British Malaya.

In the tripartite classification of authority, only two of the three types can be applied in the British colonial bureaucracy. First, the traditional authority in Perak and Kedah resides with their sultans, as their legitimacy is hereditary and reinforced by the Malay tradition of loyalty, “Daulat”. The Sultan of Perak and Kedah can exercise their authority over their subordinates and the people of the sultanates in any form they want. The second type was the rational-legal authority. The British introduced this type of authority to Perak and Kedah. It derived its legitimacy from English law, as abided by the British, and was translated into local variations in both states. It was represented as a Resident and Advisor system. Later, the FMS, UMS, and the Straits Settlements also adopted this rational-legal authority, as by the time they formed, they had incorporated colonial and state laws as the sources of legitimacy that everyone under the British government in Malaya needed to abide by. Thus, these are the general applications of the theories, which will be explained in detail in the next subchapters.

4.3 PERAK AND FMS BUREAUCRACY

In the discussion of Chapter 2, the resident system was experimental, and no solid structure was formed. 1874 – 1880 was a confusing period for the British administration in Malaya, particularly in Perak. Although they learned a lesson from the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and the Birch assassination of 1875, about the local reaction to their abrupt policy, the process of trial and error is still ongoing.¹⁹⁶ The

¹⁹⁶ Thio, Eunice. "British policy in the Malay Peninsula, 1880-1910." University of Malaya Press (1969).

appointment of Hugh Low as the fourth Resident of Perak brought significant changes. Low laid the foundation of the British colonial bureaucracy in Malaya, and his model was copied and implemented in other Malay states.¹⁹⁷ His method of empowering the traditional administration was viewed favourably by locals but met with scepticism from his colleagues.¹⁹⁸ He analysed Malay customs and traditions, selected some for rationalisation, consulted the Sultan and Malay aristocrats to understand the reasons for their embracement, and suggested alternatives to these traditions, considering whether they would be accepted among the Malays.¹⁹⁹ The rationalisation of Malay culture during Low's tenure eased the establishment of the bureaucracy in Perak. Frank Swettenham commented on Low's effort:

The resident's experience of the Native States since the inception of the Residential system, backed by the successful results of Sir Hugh Low's administration of the country, leads him to deprecate excessive organisation in details, which tends to degenerate into 'red-tapeism', and to favour the policy of *festina lente*.²⁰⁰

Low took it upon himself to interpret the Pangkor Treaty of 1874 and enact policies as he saw fit. His action also received considerable support from Frederick Weld (1823CE – 1891CE), the Governor of the Straits Settlements. Low's model has been implemented as a state service for all British protectorates. State Council's introduction and the *Penghulus*'s incorporation into the general administration further

¹⁹⁷ Gullick, John Michael. "Rulers and residents: Influence and power in the Malay States, 1870-1920." Oxford University Press (1992).

¹⁹⁸ Gullick, John. "Emily Innes 1843-1927." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1982): 87-114.

¹⁹⁹ Sadka, Emily. "The Journal of Sir Hugh Low, Perak, 1877." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 27, no. 4 (1954): 1-108.

²⁰⁰ Red-Tapeism refers to excessive regulation or rigid conformity to formal rules that are considered redundant and bureaucratic and hinder action or decision-making, while *Festina Lente* means to make haste slowly in Latin. These words confirmed Low's approach of imposing policies gradually rather than in instant enactment due to the need to address the Malay traditions and their understanding of the modern practices. Perak in 1890, Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle, 2 July 1891, Page 4

supported the colonial bureaucracy.²⁰¹ Low addressed the employment of the *Penghulus* as a supplement to the colonial administration, which was a viable alternative despite their limited education and unreliability. The Malay community can voice their complaints to the *Penghulus*, who will relay them to the responsible British officers, easing the need for significant personnel in the meantime.²⁰² Besides, the British officers appointed to office had to assume many positions; for example, James Innes, who was elected as the Superintendent of Lower Perak, also served as their Magistrate, handling the district's judicial matters.²⁰³ Thus, as the British Forward Policy (1880 – 1890)²⁰⁴ continued, expanding its territories into other Malay States, many personnel were needed to manage various departments, such as the Public Works and Land departments. Furthermore, the development of communication and transportation across states also eases the bureaucratic process. During Frederick Weld's tenure, he ordered the construction of railway lines connecting Port Weld (modern-day Kuala Sepetang) to Taiping, the economic centre of Perak, marking the beginning of an expansive transportation network across the Malay Peninsula.²⁰⁵ Along with this railway line project, he also initiated construction of the telegraph line, which was necessary for communication within the civil service at the time.²⁰⁶

Each state's services grew in size and developed independently, increasing the complexity of their management. The Governor of the Straits Settlements had to

²⁰¹ H.E. Sir Frederick Weld Annual Address, Straits Times Weekly Issue, 12 July 1883, Page 4

²⁰² The Resident of Perak to the Colonial Secretary, The Straits Times, 13 June 1883, Page 4

²⁰³ Innes, Emily. *The Chersonese with the gilding off*. Vol. 1. London: R. Bentley, 1885.

²⁰⁴ The British Forward Policy (1880-1890) was a decisive shift in the British strategy based in the Straits Settlements as they adopted a more interventionist policy to expand their control over the Malay Peninsula. Several factors, such as the presence of rival European powers and the security needs due to inter-state wars raging in the Malay sultanates, push them to assert their control in Pahang (1880) and Negeri Sembilan (1880s). Thus, culminated in the formation of Federal Malay States (F.M.S.) in 1896. The chief architect of this policy was Sir Frederick Weld, the Governor of Strait Settlements and later his successor, Sir Cecil Clementi.

²⁰⁵ Annual Report, State of Perak 1884, Page 7

²⁰⁶ Ibid

personally oversee these four states (Perak, Selangor, Pahang, Negeri Sembilan), which required more time, effort, and resources on his part. In addition, several issues emerged that required assistance from other states, such as Pahang's debt.²⁰⁷ These culminated in the formation of the Federated Malay States (FMS) in 1896. The establishment of FMS was due to the need to reduce government spending, consolidate the colonial bureaucracy, which consisted of the four State Services (Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Pahang), standardise policy, and reorganise the administration in general.²⁰⁸ The Colonial Office had jurisdiction over the Federated Malay States. This process also finalised the rational-legal authority in Malaya, which was incorporated alongside each state's traditional administration.

For clarification, there was a need to understand the concept of protectorates used by the British in Malaya. The agreement between the British and the Malay states stipulated that the British would acknowledge the sovereignty of the states, and that the states would receive a resident whose advice must be acted upon, except in matters regarding Malay traditions and Islam.²⁰⁹ However, the issues in these states will not be discussed in the British parliament, as they were technically independent states. Thus, the colonial bureaucracy, headed by the Residents, coexisted alongside the Sultan's administration, which also had its own power hierarchy. Despite this complex situation, most authorities remained under British control and managed all aspects of administration, including paying the Sultans' salaries and those of their aristocracy.

The High Commissioner headed the FMS bureaucracy, and under him was the Resident General, who led the four residents of each Malay State, assisted by their

²⁰⁷ Gullick, John Michael. "Rulers and residents: Influence and power in the Malay States, 1870-1920." Oxford University Press (1992).

²⁰⁸ Emerson, Rupert. "Malaysia: A study in direct and indirect rule." University of Malaya Press (1964).

²⁰⁹ Article 6, Pangkor Treaty of 1874.

respective Assistant Residents.²¹⁰ Under the Residents were the district officers who governed each district in the state. The role of district officers was unique: they acted like Residents but at the district level, and all district-level issues were handled personally, with little intervention from the residents.²¹¹ However, districts closer to the capital usually face stricter oversight by residents, unlike those located at the state's periphery. A notable example of this was the District of Upper Perak, which is located far from Taiping, Ipoh, and Kuala Kangsar. The district officers of Upper Perak exercised considerable authority, akin to that of autonomous states, as they rarely reported in person to the State government.²¹² Hubert Berkeley was once known as the White Rajah of Upper Perak for his arbitrary governance of the district and for routinely appointing Assistant District officers among the British. Nevertheless, before the FMS, during the tenure of Frank Swettenham as the fifth Resident of Perak, he appointed some Malay aristocrats as the assistant district officers for the far away district due to his initiative to encourage the native participation in the administration, to recruit the available personnel who were have an extensive knowledge of the districts and also because the secluded location of the districts which was unattractive for the British to serve, so he can avoid the lack of manpower to manage these districts.²¹³

The role of the Sultan was to discuss various issues and policies in the State Council, a newly created concept similar to *Balairung Seri* but with fewer members. The members consisted of Sultan, the council's leader, assisted by several ministers, including the *Menteri Besar*, *Penghulu Bendahari*, and *Temenggung*, as well as the Resident and the Assistant Resident, and a few representatives from the Chinese

²¹⁰ Emerson, Rupert. "Malaysia: A study in direct and indirect rule." University of Malaya Press (1964).

²¹¹ Gullick, John Michael. "Rulers and residents: Influence and power in the Malay States, 1870-1920." Oxford University Press (1992).

²¹² Ibid

²¹³ Swettenham, Frank Athelstane. *About Perak*. Straits Times Press, 1893.

community.²¹⁴ The resident will submit proposals for council approval, especially by the Sultan; thus, the proposal appears to be an order from the Sultan to his subjects rather than a proposal from a resident. This method was a suggestion made by Hugh Low to address the Malays' loyalty to the Sultan by empowering their ruler.²¹⁵

4.4 KEDAH BUREAUCRACY

In 19th-century Kedah, a bureaucracy existed before British intervention. Sultan Abdul Hamid and his brother, Tengku Abdul Aziz, initiated the adoption of modern-style administration from their neighbours, such as Pulau Pinang, and their travels to the Federated Malay States established the Kedah bureaucracy in 1885. Like the old Malay sultanate, the traditional position was maintained, with the Sultan assisted by his usual ministers, including the *Menteri Besar*, *Bendahara*, *Temenggung*, and *Penghulu Bendahari*. However, during Sultan Abdul Hamid's reign, he had fewer ministers than the previous sultans. He relied heavily on his relatives, such as his brother, Tengku Abdul Aziz, and his uncle, Tengku Abdul Rahman.²¹⁶ Another famous figure who supported the Kedah sultan, especially after he became ill in 1895, was the innovative *Menteri Besar*, Wan Mohd Saman, who was well-known for his contributions to the construction of the Wat Mat Saman canal, which supplied water for paddy cultivation in Kedah.²¹⁷

This early bureaucracy was simple: it consisted of some district chiefs from newly divided districts or *daerah*.²¹⁸ The appointed district chiefs were usually of royal descent and were given the Letter of Authority, or *Surat Kuasa*, to govern the districts.

²¹⁴ Sadka, Emily. "The Journal of Sir Hugh Low, Perak, 1877." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 27, no. 4 (1954): 1-108.

²¹⁵ Ibid

²¹⁶ Ahmat, Sharom. "Kedah-Tradition and Change in a Malay State: A Study of the Economic and Political Development, 1878–1923", MBRAS, Monograph, no. 12, 1984." *Kedah-Siam Relations* 1905 (1821).

²¹⁷ Ibid

²¹⁸ Emerson, Rupert. "Malaysia: A study in direct and indirect rule." University of Malaya Press (1964).

They were powerful chiefs responsible for maintaining law and order in their districts and collecting taxes. There were three essential reasons behind the Sultan's appointment of members of the royal family to certain political posts. The first was that the population of Kedah was small and did not require more significant officials to maintain it. Secondly, the collected revenue was lower, and fewer officials could be hired. Lastly, by appointing officials related to the sultan, the Sultan can ensure their loyalty to himself rather than appointing outsiders whose loyalty was questionable. Another administration level was the Mukim, a smaller territory under the district that the *Penghulus* managed. Like the *Penghulu* in Perak, they acted as the bridge between the *rakyat* and the ruler's agent, the district chiefs. A *Penghulu* will be elected from among respected families with fame, knowledge, and status, due to their role in ensuring that ordinary people follow them and do not leave the *Mukim*. They were also responsible for imposing the order from above regarding *Sistem Keraf and Serah*.²¹⁹

By 1905, Kedah was facing a financial crisis due to numerous debts and the sultan's arbitrary spending on state revenue. Thus, the Sultan's brother, Tengku Abdul Aziz, procured a loan from Siam to finance the daily administration. Upon finalising the loan agreement with Prince Damrong, Kedah agreed to accept a financial advisor to manage its treasury and ensure the loan was paid on time. The presence of this financial advisor brought changes to Kedah's bureaucracy, making it more solid and efficient. At Siam's advice, Kedah established its own State Council to govern the state as a Regency due to Sultan Abdul Hamid's declining health and inability to oversee the state administration. It comprised Raja Muda Tengku Abdul Aziz, later succeeded by Tengku Mahmud, as president, several ministers, and a financial advisor, who were replaced by

²¹⁹ Emerson, Rupert. "Malaysia: A study in direct and indirect rule." University of Malaya Press (1964).

the British Advisor after 1909.²²⁰ Following the signing of the Bangkok Treaty in 1909, the bureaucracy underwent further changes. The establishment of technical departments, such as the Public Works Department, the Survey Department, and the Sanitary Board, as well as non-technical departments like the Police Department, the Agriculture Department, and the Land Department, expanded the bureaucracy into a complex administration that required a large number of officials. Thus, the Kedah Civil Service, which was initially traditional, was modernised to meet these demands by hiring additional personnel. The arrival of the British Advisor, George Maxwell (1871CE – 1959CE), brought an influx of Europeans into the Kedah bureaucracy. As discussed in Chapter 3, the tension between the Advisor and the State Council, led by Tengku Mahmud, subsided after several deliberations, contributing to the smooth operation of Kedah's governance. Although Malays predominantly control the Kedah bureaucracy, a clear divide is evident within the Kedah Civil Service. The Europeans headed most technical departments, while the non-technical departments were under Malay control. In the State Council, the members were few in number, but the majority were Malays, while only the Advisor or his assistant was a European. Unlike the State Council in Perak, none of the members represented the Chinese, as they were not appointed to the State Council.²²¹

4.5 MALAYAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE AND THE RISE OF MALAY MIDDLE-CLASS

Several factors contributed to the establishment of the Malay Administrative Service (MAS), a subordinate service that supported the Malayan Civil Service (MCS). Among the factors was the absence of European civil officers at one point, as they

²²⁰ Minutes Of Meetings Of The State Council Of Kedah Held During September, 1912; Also Of Minutes Of The Meeting Held On The 28th August. Forwards Translations Of, With Explanatory Memoranda. p 1.

²²¹ Ibid

returned to their home countries.²²² Another factor was the movement among British colonial officers to empower the Malays by educating them in Western ways, thus giving them a share in, or an opportunity to govern, their lands. This movement was championed first by J.P. Rodger (1851CE – 1910CE), a British officer who served as resident in three Malay states, and later by R.J. Wilkinson (1867CE – 1961CE), an Inspector of Schools for FMS and a former Resident of Negeri Sembilan.²²³ He viewed the need to educate the Malays and prepare them to govern their states. Additionally, it is considered an alternative to addressing the shortage of officers to administer junior positions across the government branch. His effort resulted in the creation of the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK), a Malay Residential School in 1905, focused on teaching the sons of Malay aristocracy following the English Public School style. Later, his proposal for the MAS scheme, approved in 1910, recruited the school's graduates into clerical positions in the government. Perak's bureaucracy benefited greatly from this scheme, as the positions of district officer and assistant district officer were among the highest held by these graduates. A Malaysian scholar, Chandra Muzaffar, coined a unique term to refer to these Malay officers as “administocrat,” a combination of administrator and aristocrat.²²⁴ They were of aristocratic descent and served as administrators within the colonial bureaucracy. Given these positions, the Malay aristocracy was further empowered by the British, which created a gap within the Malay community.

By 1924, admission to MAS had been opened to lower-class Malays. This opportunity contributed to the emergence of the Malay middle class within the Malay

²²² Johan, Khasnor. "The emergence of the modern Malay administrative elite." Oxford University Press (1984).

²²³ Ibid

²²⁴ A term labelled by Chandra Muzaffar, a Malaysian political scientist in his book, "*Protector?: An Analysis of the Concept and Practice of Loyalty in Leader-led Relationships Within Malay Society*" published in 1979.

community. These English-educated Malays received recognition among the Malay community. They also acted as the bridge between the Malay community and the British administration. Despite their position being similar to that of the Malay leader within the traditional Malay administration, they did not have the privilege of their counterparts, who were born into aristocratic lineages. They gave their prestigious status through their connection to the colonial bureaucracy.²²⁵ By 1923, the Anglo-Kedah treaty had granted Kedah significant autonomy in its administration and civil service. The treaty formalised Kedah's position under British protection without Kedah joining the FMS, as the previous British policy towards Kedah had envisaged. Kedah had the authority to appoint its civil servants from among the Malays, especially the Kedah Malays, to maintain the existing bureaucracy structure before the British intervention.²²⁶ The language of administration would be Malay, and the Jawi script would be used in their daily correspondence.²²⁷ Kedah civil servants were allowed to continue their studies abroad, whether in Britain or the Arab countries, and the British would bear the costs. These privileges made the Kedah civil service a unique model compared to other Malay states, as they successfully maintained their "Malayness" over the long term.

With the Decentralisation Policy (1920–1940) adopted by Lawrence Guillemard, the High Commissioner of FMS since his assumption of the position in 1920, the political and social responsibilities of the sultans, their traditional chiefs, and Malay officers increased.²²⁸ The final phase of bureaucratisation saw the higher positions in the administration assumed by the British, while the lower positions, and a

²²⁵ Johan, Khasnor. "The emergence of the modern Malay administrative elite." Oxford University Press (1984).

²²⁶ Mat Noor, N. O. O. R., and Ahmad Kamal Ariffin Mohd Rus. "Identiti Kemelayuan Dalam Pentadbiran Kedah, 1923-1941." *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategy* 41, no. 1 (2014).

²²⁷ Ibid

²²⁸ Thio, Eunice. "British policy in the Malay Peninsula, 1880-1910." University of Malaya Press (1969).

larger number of them, were given to the Malays. The British officers mostly acted as supervisors over their subordinates' work. In addition, after the First World War, the new batch of officers, mainly graduates of the Public School-Oxbridge, lacked the same enthusiasm towards the Malays as their predecessors.²²⁹ The interaction between the British officers and the Malay community decreased as regular fieldwork in the *kampung* became less frequent, and they mostly stayed in their offices to settle paperwork, which grew exponentially as the state's bureaucracy expanded. It also aligns with Weber's theory, which views bureaucracy as the most efficient means of managing public administration. However, it also had its opponents, including red tape and the deprivation of individual freedom. Once the bureaucracy achieved its highest efficiency, as reflected in this example.²³⁰ The fieldwork duties were assigned to the Malay officers, as the Malay community received them favourably. The assistance provided by the *Penghulus* further increased the bureaucracy's efficiency. The Malay officers might have had difficulty gaining the community's trust. Still, with the help of the *Penghulus* in explaining their policies, the Malays will follow without much question, given the prestige of the *Penghulus* themselves.²³¹ This kind of cooperation made the position of *Penghulus* more convenient in the eyes of the British officers, despite their prejudice that they were less educated and hereditary than the Malay officers.

²²⁹ de Vere Allen, James. "Malayan Civil Service, 1874–1941 Colonial Bureaucracy/Malayan Elite." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 12, no. 2 (1970): 149-178.

²³⁰ Roth, Guenther, and Claus Wittich. "Max Weber Economy and Society." (1978).

²³¹ Kratoska, Paul H. "Penghulus in Perak and Selangor: The rationalization and decline of a traditional Malay office." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 57, no. 2 (247 (1984): 31-59.

4.6 THE MALAY REACTION TOWARDS THE COLONIAL BUREAUCRACY

The colonial bureaucracy in British Malaya fostered positive interactions between British officers and the Malay community, particularly among those who joined the administration as colleagues. A popular example of this condition was Raja Chulan Ibn Sultan Abdullah II, the son of the exiled Sultan who was implicated in the Birch assassination. A Malay aristocrat who graduated from Malay College Kuala Kangsar, he achieved one of the highest positions within the British colonial bureaucracy when he was appointed District Officer of Upper Perak in 1902.²³² He served on the Perak State Council for 26 years. In 1924, he became the first Malay member of the Federal Council²³³, utilising his position to elevate the status and economic standing of the Malay community. Raja Chulan suggested allowing more Malays to be educated in government schools to increase their intellect, which would be beneficial for the British administration. He subsequently proposed recruiting more Malay officers into the Malayan Civil Service (MCS), reducing reliance on British officers from Europe, which could reduce the costs of hiring these expensive officers.²³⁴ His vocal efforts led to an increase in the employment of Malay officers in the Malayan Civil Service. Another senior position attainable by Malays, typically those of noble background, was Assistant District Officer. For example, in 1933, Raja Haji Ahmad Bin Raja Indut was appointed as the Assistant District Officer of Gopeng and Kampar.²³⁵ Therefore, Raja Chulan became one of the early Malay nationalists in Malaysian history.

²³² Perak Gazette Notification, The Straits Budget, 3 December 1902, Page 5

²³³ Perak's Malay Member, The Straits Times, 4 May 1936, Page 12

²³⁴ Proceedings Of The Federal Council, Federated Malay States (F.M.S.) - 1932

²³⁵ Malay Officers, The Straits Times, 9 September 1933, Page 10

The period between 1930 and 1940 witnessed a rise in local newspaper publications, which coincided with the rise of Malay nationalism, led by educated Malays who were either English-educated or religiously educated. The emergence of Malay nationalism was in response to global trends after the end of the First World War (1914-1918), where various countries around the world fought for or declared their independence as an expression of self-determination. These trends had already begun to circulate before the Great War through the rise of Pan-Islamism, which called upon Muslims to resist colonial empires and was championed by Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876 CE – 1909 CE) of the Ottoman Empire, Muhammad Abduh, and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani.²³⁶ Many religiously educated Malays who studied in Arab countries were influenced by their teachings and brought such ideas back to Malaya. Similar cases occurred among English-educated Malays, who were exposed to Western concepts such as constitutionalism, nationalism, and self-determination at their institutions, such as the Sultan Idris Training College (SITC) and Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK). This knowledge sparked their political awareness, and they started to criticise the British government for its colonial oppression of the indigenous population.²³⁷

To spread this awareness, both groups began publishing articles and columns in newspapers, exposing the public to Malay nationalism. For example, the newspaper *Saudara* and the magazine *al-Ikhwan* were founded by Syed Sheikh al-Hadi, a prominent religiously educated publicist. Furthermore, the newspapers *Majlis* and *Warta Malaya* were edited by Abdul Rahim Kajai and Dato' Onn Jaafar, respectively.²³⁸ These publications expressed the public voice of the Malay community through their articles and became an effective medium for spreading nationalist ideas among the

²³⁶ Roff, William R. *The origins of Malay nationalism, 1900-1941*. The Australian National University (Australia), 1965.

²³⁷ Ibid

²³⁸ Ibid

masses. Thus, the articles written are usually inclined towards Malay nationalism or Islamic revivalism, depending on the newspaper. At the same time, not only did Malays start to demand their rights, but non-Malays (the Chinese and Indians) also began to demand their citizenship as Malaysians. The idea of non-Malays becoming citizens in the Malay states sparked reactions among Malay nationalists, who opposed such demands. As a result, extensive debate about “Malay” vs “Malaysians” began to fill the newspapers. For example, in one article in *The Straits Times*, the author expressed his opinion on the unrealistic demand by non-Malays for citizenship in the Malay states, questioning whether they were prepared to pledge their loyalty to the Malay sultan of their respective states, a requirement associated with such citizenship. The author also highlighted the ambiguity of identifying as a “Malaysian”, arguing that the term was politically incorrect, as there was no country known as Malaya. Instead, the Malay states were British protectorates rather than colonies and thus remained sovereign entities.²³⁹ Another article in *Saudara* wrote the opposite response of the previous authors, in which he wrote a favourable opinion of British administration in Malaya, by allowing the Malays to participate in the government through the Malaysian Civil Service and the British initiative to safeguard the Malay interest in the form of “Malay Reservations” from the incursion of non-Malays who day by day requested more privileges to be considered as Malaysian.²⁴⁰

Not all British policies received a positive reaction from the Malay community. This dissatisfaction with colonial bureaucracy is evident in these newspapers. For example, in *Saudara*, the author was shocked at the Legislative Council of FMS's decision to allow non-European British citizens to participate in the Malay Civil

²³⁹ “Through Nationalist Malay Spectacles.” *The Straits Times*, January 17, 1939, 17.

²⁴⁰ Ingatlah Orang Melayu Inilah Masanya Jika Tidak Bangsa kita akan Tenggelam, *Saudara*, 25 Apr 1931, Page 1-2

Service.²⁴¹ In one of *The Straits Times* articles, the author explained that although the population lived in comfort under a “benevolent bureaucracy”, the lack of public rights, despite the payment of taxes, needed to be addressed. The author argued that the colonial government of Malaya must give concessions for its inhabitants to vote for popular representation, as they are practically living under an official dictatorship, where the ones elected to the Legislative Council are the ones who are “good fellows at the club”.²⁴² Another complaint published in *Majlis* is that the author expressed his opinion on British policies that enabled the influx of non-Malays into Malaya on how they prospered more than the natives, questioning whether the Malays were still the dominant race on the peninsula.²⁴³ From these complaints, the underlying message reveals a negative opinion of British bureaucracy, adding to the growing voice of Malay nationalism as the idea of saving their homeland from British occupation gained further traction. This sentiment can also be observed in the contemporary novel titled *Puteri Gunung Tahan* by Ishak Haji Muhammad, also known as Pak Sako, published in 1937. This satirical novel was intended to express opposition to British officers' administration of Malaya by ridiculing them.²⁴⁴ He employed symbolism and effectively utilised the Malay language to convey his nationalist ideas.

Reaction against British bureaucracy can also be seen in the formation of Malay nationalist movements. Initially, political awareness among the Malays was relatively low, as Malay nationalism was confined to educated urban Malays rather than the public, especially the rural Malay masses.²⁴⁵ In addition, political discourse among Malays was commonly royal-centric, and any confrontational politics were avoided to

²⁴¹ Jawatan Malayan Civil Service Akan Terbuka Kepada Ramai, Saudara, 17 Aug 1932, Page 6

²⁴² “Popular Representation.” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, September 3, 1929, Page 8

²⁴³ Semenanjung Tanah Melayu bagi Orang-orang Melayu, *Majlis*, 31 Mar 1932, Page 5

²⁴⁴ Muhammad, Ishak Haji. “Puteri Gunung Tahan.” (*No Title*) (1973).

²⁴⁵ Ariffin Omar. *Rethinking Malay Nationalism: A Historiographical Study*. Kuala Lumpur: UKM Press, 1993.

prevent excessive opposition to the royal institution, which was part of the colonial administration. As for the newspapers, they reached only urban Malays who can read. But the momentum of the movements built over time, with more Malays beginning to read newspapers, and nationalists continued to voice their ideas to ensure political awareness remained vocal. For example, in *Saudara*, the author suggested that instead of creating a single large organisation to represent all Malays, it would be more effective to establish Malay organisations based on state origin in order to ensure consistency and momentum in the movement. The argument was that it was better to start small and succeed rather than start big and fail.²⁴⁶ Even within the British colonial bureaucracy, Malay officers began to participate in this movement, including Dato' Onn Jaafar and Zainal Abidin Ahmad (Za'aba).²⁴⁷ Thus, the Malay nationalist movement opposed British bureaucracy both from within and from outside the colonial system.

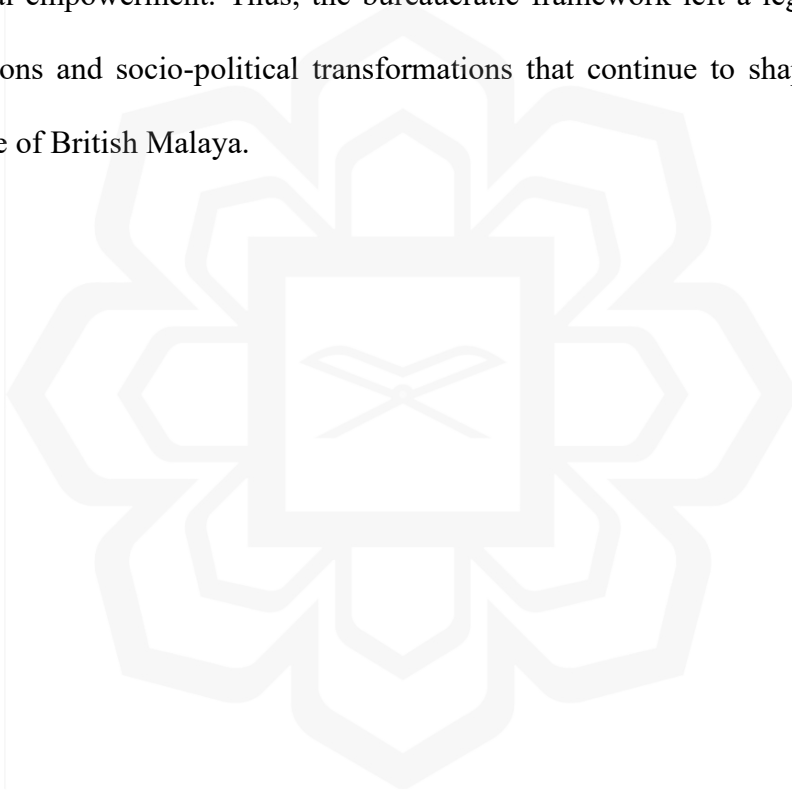
4.7 CONCLUSION

The bureaucratisation of British administration in Malaya fundamentally reconfigured the relationship between the British and the Malays. It helped to cultivate a colonial system that attempted to reconcile traditional authority with rational-legal authority. This process was characterised by the establishment of state services and the enactment of Weberian bureaucratic ideals, such as hierarchical structures, standardised policies, and the division of responsibilities. The British brought with them a degree of administrative efficiency and infrastructure development, facilitated by the introduction of railway and telegraph systems. However, British rule also had a profound impact on social policy, which in some respects was progressive, particularly within the social sectors. These changes compelled confident Malays to close the gap between

²⁴⁶ "Kesatuan Melayu Semenanjung: Apa Patut Kita Buat." *Saudara*, May 23, 1931, Page 1.

²⁴⁷ Ariffin Omar. *Rethinking Malay Nationalism: A Historiographical Study*. Kuala Lumpur: UKM Press, 1993.

themselves and the reintegration process through educational achievements and employment, which had socially stratified the Malay community. This arbitrary dualism, combined with the British bureaucracy operating above the Sultans, created continuity in governance but eroded the Sultans' autonomy and relegated them to secondary roles in primary administrative capacities. Over time, bureaucratisation facilitated the emergence of a Malay administrative elite and middle class, contributing to the rise of nationalism as Malays navigated the tensions between colonial subjugation and local empowerment. Thus, the bureaucratic framework left a legacy of complex interactions and socio-political transformations that continue to shape the historical narrative of British Malaya.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 CONCLUSION

This research was a modest attempt to investigate and analyse the everyday interactions between British officers and the local Malay communities in Perak and Kedah from 1875 to the 1940s by emphasising the socio-cultural dimensions of their experience. Besides, this research aimed to provide an understanding of the relationship between British colonial policies and Malay tradition by analysing the historical context, the development of civil services, and the bureaucratisation of the British administration. Furthermore, this research has also provided an understanding of the complexity of the Malay tradition, the nature of cooperation, conflict, and gradual transformation within Malay society under British rule.

In Chapter 2, the research examined the historical context of the early encounters between the British and Malays, which ultimately led to their intervention in Perak and Kedah. It also highlighted the socio-political and economic motivations behind their intervention to fulfil their aspirations as colonial powers, and that their economic ventures were driven by capitalism. The early interactions between British officers and Malay communities can be seen as overly interventionist due to a lack of understanding of Malay traditions, as illustrated by J.W.W. Birch's case in Perak. Although his policies to modernise the Malay community were well-intentioned, they were too abrupt. It fundamentally touched on the subjects emphasised by the Pangkor Treaty of 1874, which fell under the jurisdiction of the sultan and the Malay aristocracy: Malay traditions and Islam. Tragically, the implication led to his assassination in 1875.

Nevertheless, his successor, the fourth Resident of Perak, Hugh Low, adopted a more sensitive approach by incorporating Malay traditions into the British colonial

administration, listening to and acquiring advice from the sultan and the Malay aristocrats, thereby stabilising British rule in Perak. In Kedah, the traditional government, led by Sultan Abdul Hamid, had already undergone modernisation. However, the excessive debt led them to take out a loan from the Siamese government, which set in motion a series of events culminating in the transition from Siamese influence to British protection under the 1909 Bangkok Treaty. The early interaction between the Kedah ruling class and the British Advisor was complete with back-and-forth power struggle and disagreement over the British incursion into the Kedah administration and his ambition to incorporate Kedah into the Federated Malay States (FMS), but thanks to the Decentralisation policy which began in 1920, the Anglo-Kedah Treaty of 1923 was signed and eventually paved the way for a more harmonious relationship, preserving Kedah's unique “Malayness” like the Malay language as the administrative language and the use of Jawi script instead of the Rumi script, while integrating it into the broader British colonial framework.

Chapter 3 saw the development of the Malayan Civil Service (MCS) and the Malay Administrative Service (MAS), which shaped the everyday interactions between British officers and the Malay community. The MCS, modelled after the Indian Civil Service, initially struggled with recruitment and retention due to the unattractive conditions in Malaya. The old batch of British officers acted as gatekeepers, screening potential civil servants who sympathised with the Malays and would maintain the established status quo that they had hard fought to achieve. However, the service became more efficient over time due to the formation of FMS, which centralised, reorganised, and structured the Malayan Civil Service (MCS), with British officers increasingly relying on Malay administrators to bridge the gap between colonial authorities and local communities. The MAS, established in 1919, further empowered

the Malay elite, creating a new class of Malay bureaucrats who played a significant role in the administration of British Malaya. In Kedah, the Kedah Civil Service maintained a delicate balance between Malay and British officers, assuming responsibility for some government departments. The Anglo-Kedah Treaty of 1923 granted considerable autonomy to the Kedah government to recruit its officers, who must be Kedah Malays, and to inform them first of the candidate chosen as their advisor. If they are dissatisfied with the choice, they can request a replacement that suits their need.

The bureaucratisation of the British administration in Malaya was analysed through Weberian theories of bureaucracy and the tripartite classification of power in Chapter 4, leading to the standardisation of policies and the rationalisation of Malay traditions to accommodate the initial colonial bureaucracy. This process transformed the nature of everyday interactions between the British officers and the Malay community as they became more detached from the local population due to the increase in paperwork and highly efficient bureaucracy, by relying on Malay officers and *Penghulus* to implement policies at the grassroots level, such as doing the fieldwork and explaining the policies to the Malay community. While this system increased administrative efficiency, it also created a divide between the British officers and Malay communities, as by the 1920s, the new batch of civil servants was from similar backgrounds, graduated from the Public school-Oxbridge, practised a more rigid gentlemanship, and often associated among themselves, which resulted in the creation of the European clubs. These clubs were the centre of British society in Malaya, and they created a bubble that further isolated them from the rest of the Malay population. A similar situation also occurred within the Malay community, with the emergence of the Malay middle class, which consisted of the Malay officers of both MCS and MAS; they imitated their colonial counterparts by creating their own Malay Clubs. In Kedah,

the Malay officers enjoyed more privileges, as they were regularly invited to the European Clubs and participated in "white-man" Sports like Polo, horse riding, and golf.

The Malay reaction to colonial bureaucracy was mixed. While some, like Raja Chulan, embraced the opportunities provided by British rule as he was appointed as the first Malay member of the Federal Council in 1929 and advocated for Malay causes such as greater participation in the civil service which realised in 1931, others in the Malay community especially the one who were educated, expressed dissatisfaction with the increasing influence of non-Malays as they saw the opportunity to request similar offer done by the colonial administration to open the Malayan Civil Service for their kind which would challenge the traditional Malay dominance in the Malay Peninsula. The rise of Malay nationalism in the 1930s, reflected in newspapers and literature, signalled a growing desire for self-determination and a rejection of colonial subjugation, as more and more Malays educated abroad became increasingly motivated to see their country become independent. They also began forming Malay nationalist movements in response to the colonial bureaucracy.

In conclusion, this research has demonstrated the intricacy of colonial policies and Malay traditions through the socio-cultural dynamics that influenced and shaped everyday interactions between British officers and Malay communities, particularly in Perak and Kedah. While initially insensitive to Malay traditions, the British colonial administration gradually adapted to the realities of the Malay community by empowering traditional authorities, thereby fostering a more stable system of governance. Still, it gradually experienced instability as the rise of Malay nationalism propagated the idea of self-determination during the later period of British rule.

5.2 RECOMMENDATION

The lack of native sources was among the limitations experienced during the research. Constructing the local narrative without proper native sources was challenging, especially regarding socio-cultural analysis. Thus, some solutions exercised were utilising colonial sources and making academic assumptions. Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be made for future academia.

This research attempted to create a narrative of the socio-cultural aspects of British-Malay interactions, but the field still needs further exploration. Future research could study the everyday life of a Malay. Still, it should focus on the later period of British Malaya, such as the 1930s and beyond, as there is an abundance of native sources available. Besides, another perspective that can be explored is the role of women, both Malay and British, in shaping colonial British Malayan society; as this research shows, the wives of British officers played a significant role in creating a European enclave within it. Their role can be observed through the impact of colonial policies on Malay family structures and community life.

Another recommendation was to conduct an in-depth comparative study of the colonial administration of the Federated Malay States (FMS) and the Unfederated Malay States (UMS). This research focuses on Perak and Kedah, two states with distinct administrative structures under British rule, as both have experienced different ways of British intervention in their affairs. Future research could expand on this scope by comparing other Malay states, such as Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Kelantan, and Johor, to provide a more holistic understanding of British-Malay interactions across the Malay Peninsula. Comparative studies can also be conducted by comparing British Malaya with other British protectorates in the region, such as Burma and Hong Kong, to identify

recurrent patterns and unique differences in their colonial governance and local responses.

Lastly, this research aimed to illuminate everyday interactions between British officers and Malay communities in Perak and Kedah during British colonial rule in Malaya. The observation revealed the intricacy of the relationship between colonial policy and Malay traditions, which evolved from conflict to cooperation in response to the Malays' reactions, by analysing the socio-cultural dimensions of the British administration. The findings of this research provide valuable insight into the complexity of colonial policies and their impact on history later on by highlighting the understanding of local history through the regional perspective, which

As Malaysia continues to retrace its identity and sense of belonging in the 21st century, the lessons from the past can offer crucial insights into how British colonialism in Malaya brought modernisation and rationalisation to its culture and traditions, further shaping the nation's development. By critically assessing the British Malayan history, Malaysians can understand the roots of their present-day challenges and work towards a more inclusive and equitable future.

In conclusion, this research has contributed a fresh perspective on British Malayan history, especially concerning the everyday interaction between British officers and the Malay community, to the growing literature on British colonialism in Malaya. This research will inspire future exploration of this particular period of Malaysian history and provide a comprehensive understanding of this nation's convoluted or colourful pasts.

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