

BRITAIN AND MALAYA :  
IMPERIALISM AS THE MYSTIFICATION OF SELF-IMAGE

by

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## Abstract

Heraclitus said, "Man is estranged from that with which he is most familiar." Which is to say, himself. Man, as imperialist, is particularly estranged from his true self. This, then, is the "problem" confronted in the following pages - the processes, bred of his alienation from himself, by which man distorts his perception of his human and physical environments so as to bring them into accordance with his own mystified self-image.

Mid-nineteenth century England, like Heraclitus' Greece, turned out an impressive array of imperialists, among them the "Residents", to whom the administration of Her Majesty's Further Indian Empire was entrusted. Victorian England was also for the most part lacking in that quality, as Keats understood it, of Negative Capability - "that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." It was a quality which, by their own confession, the Residents found amply present in the Malays.

Given a remarkable opportunity to "learn" this quality in the Malayan setting however, the British, as purveyors of law and order and the scientific method, by setting about making over the Malays in the image of the Victorian gentleman, almost without exception conspired to destroy precisely what might have been their salvation from the dilemmas of imperialism.

I have attempted to understand how and why the British adapted their image of Malaya and the Malays to their own reality - a reality determined (for all that they might have been condemned in some circles for "going native") by their own experience as Victorian imperialists, and conceived in essential ignorance of the country and its people. Moreover, I have hypothesized that since people are to a certain extent what others make them, the Malays came to accept and to act out, in varying degrees, the British image of them.

Finally, I would conclude with Charles Olsen that history itself can be shown to be of two kinds. One is negatively capable - a function of any one of us, and as such can be taken quietly and usefully. The other is power.

Men can and do wilfully set in motion egotistical, sublime events. They have effect which looks like use. These are power, and history as primordial and prospective is seen to demand the recognition that the other history - which I would call 'anti-history' - is not good enough.



BRITAIN AND MALAYA :

IMPERIALISM AS THE MYSTIFICATION OF SELF-IMAGE

An Investigation into Some Aspects of the True  
Nature of Imperialism in All Times and Places,  
with Special Reference to the Imperialism  
practised by the British Residents in the  
Malay Peninsula in the Last Quarter of the  
Nineteenth Century.

My thanks are extended to  
Professor Brian Harrison, for  
his "advice without control",  
and to my typist, Marie, who  
showed me, beautifully, that  
the medium is indeed the message.

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Part One :

Know the historian

(or, the Duke of Gloucester to  
Edward Gibbon on publication  
of Decline and Fall: Another  
damned fat book, eh, Mr. Gibbon?  
Scribble, scribble, scribble eh,  
Mr. Gibbon?)

To be freed from the belief that there is no freedom is indeed to be free.

Martin Buber:

Ich and Du

Art stands against history, withstands history which has been the history of oppression, for art subjects reality to laws other than the established ones; to the law of the Forum which creates a different reality - negation of the established one even where art depicts the established reality. But in its struggle with history, art subjects itself to history: history enters the definition of art and enters into the destruction between art and pseudo-art. Previous forms, styles and qualities, previous modes of protest and refusal cannot be recaptured in or against a repressive society.

Herbert Marcuse:

Repressive Tolerance

You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows.

Bob Dylan.

I had written an elaborate justification for undertaking a study of nineteenth-century British Imperialists in Malaya from a library in British Columbia in the late twentieth century - from a position, that is, which made it extremely likely that the result would just be another "Europe-centric" study of the imperial experience.

An analysis of British Imperialism may contribute to the comparative study of the intellectual and psychological aspects of group and racial confrontations, the evolution of prejudices and stereotypes, and the mentality of dominant classes. British imperialism of the late nineteenth century in the Malayan setting, while unique in many respects, developed a pattern of relationships and attitudes for which analogues can be found in other societies then and now - in Africa, South America and Asia, social situations have emerged which bear comparison with nineteenth century Malaya.

Further, the study of British imperial ideology continues to be relevant to contemporary issues because of the role it plays in the nationalist struggles of emerging countries. It is important to understand what these peoples are reacting against, the peculiar nature of their contact with the west, in order to appreciate the nature of the reaction. Some of them accepted the British view of themselves and of the native peoples they governed; others did not. But the ideology of colonial rulers cannot be ignored by the indigenous race because the former largely set the terms of the debate ...

Frankly, I borrowed most of that from other historians trying to justify doing precisely the same thing. Such is my understanding at present that the only phrase which seems to have any meaning at all is "the study of British imperial ideology continues to be relevant to contemporary issues ..." - that is, in the end, if I can justify it at all, I can justify writing

in thesis form only as it relates to the present and to myself as part of that actuality - as student, woman, citizen of the Earth, particle in the Universe ...

"...there is no other reality than the present ... you must realize in what tense you live. Are you in contact with the present? Are you awake to the reality of your surroundings, or do you wander off into the past or future? .... how much of your time is spent in attending to actual reality and how much is remembering and anticipating. Train your sense of actuality by watching your inclination to slide off into the past or future. At the same time, find out if you upset your balance by avoiding to look into either past or future ...."<sup>1</sup>

E.H. Carr wrote that in order to appreciate history at its full value we have to understand what the historian is doing, because whether we like it or not, the facts of history never come to us "pure" - they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder.<sup>2</sup> Many historians pay lip service to the assumption that historians should not and cannot be detached, and then proceed to write and live precisely with detachment. The reason for this has been clearly stated by Noam Chomsky; it is because

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<sup>1</sup>

F.S. Perls: Ego, Hunger and Aggression, The Beginning of Gestalt Therapy (New York, Vintage Books, 1969), p.208. cf.: Leonard Cohen: Selected Poems 1956-1968, (Toronto, Canadian Publishers, 1969). History is a needle/for putting men asleep/anointed with the poison/of all they want to keep.

<sup>2</sup>

E.H. Carr: What is History? (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1964) Chap.I.  
Also, Clementi-Smith's awareness of the "actuality", when addressing the Royal Colonial Institute on a paper delivered by the "young" Mr. Clifford: "I cannot help thinking a paper of this kind has a very special value, not perhaps today or tomorrow ... but the time will come ... when civilization will have so extended itself that these will be matters of chiefly historic interest ..."  
Proc. R. Colonial Institute, Vol. XXX, 1898-99, p.398.

"scholarly detachment" in fact permits intellectuals, as historians and as people, not to make certain comments, not to ask certain questions, not to draw certain conclusions, not only about their subject but about themselves.

In fact I have to admit to agreeing with Chomsky when, discussing the responsibility of "the intellectuals" in modern society and the methods they have customarily applied in "fulfilling" that responsibility, he wrote:

By entering into the arena of argument and counterargument, of technical feasibility and tactics, of footnotes and citations, by accepting the presumption of legitimacy of debate on certain issues, one has already lost one's humanity.<sup>1</sup>

This is a very singular damnation of the historian, or more correctly, the "thesis-writer". For of all intellectuals and of all "historians", the thesis-writer is especially susceptible and frequently falls prey to what Marshall McLuhan has called the power of the medium to impose its own assumptions on

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N. Chomsky: American Power and The New Mandarins, (New York, 1969) (my underlining). "Given the unique privileges that the intellectuals in our society enjoy, the leisure, the facilities and the training presumably to seek the truth behind that veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology and class interests through which events are presented, their responsibility is much wider and deeper than that of ordinary people." "The notion that intellectuals must speak the truth and expose the lies of history has become just another truism and as such is being largely ignored."

But cf. Abbie Hoffman: Revolution for the Hell of It (p.89) who compares all intellectuals to "sheep talking rhetoric". Even "the 'Left' masturbates continuously because it is essentially rooted in the academic tradition". The intellectuals' insistence on ideological exactness rather than action conceals the truth as much as the actions of the people in political power.



the unwary.<sup>1</sup> Even Chomsky admits to being temporarily and frighteningly drawn into "this morass of insane rationality" - inventing arguments and counter-arguments to counter and demolish the constructions of "the Bormans and the Rosenbergs", and, one might add, all the thousands of "intellectuals" and people who have thus far escaped public notice, but who have accepted without question the right of one organism to impose upon others, by force if necessary, its vision of the world - the assumption which lies at the base of all imperialist ventures in all places, ages and times.\* This applies as well to those whose only "imperialist" gesture is to assume, unaware of the typographic bias of our culture, that uniform and continuous habits are a sign of intelligence and who would thus eliminate the ear man and the tactile man.<sup>2</sup>

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cf. F. S. Perls: Ego, Hunger and Aggression, op.cit., p.208. "The flight into the past is mostly characteristic of people who need scapegoats. These people fail to realize that, despite what has happened in the past their present life is their own, and that it is now their own responsibility to remedy their shortcomings, whatever they may be. Whenever these people who hang on to the past encounter difficulty, they spend all their energy in complaining, or in finding 'causes' outside themselves."

Also, David Reisman: "Psychological Types and National Character" (in American Quarterly 1953, p.333-4) for results of a Thematic Apperception Test on graduate history students. I do not agree with Reisman's inference that there is really nothing wrong with pursuing an occupation which tends to pathology rather than health.

cf. Clifford: Bushwacking ... (London, 1901) p.318: "I live in the past, as all men must who have no future - save the end."

\* See interleaf.

2 After Marshall McLuhan: Understanding Media (New York, 1964) esp. Chap. I. "Rational", of course, has for the West long meant "uniform and continuous and sequential" (the thesis). We have, as McLuhan points out, confused reason with literacy, and rationalism with a single technology. "Our conventional response to all media, namely that it is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot." It is not the content but the medium which is the message.

The thing is ugly but inevitable. Our experience in Asia has taught us that it is impossible to avoid making a little war of our own before we can hope to teach an unimaginative people the full blessings of peace. It is a pity, and stated crudely, it has an ugly look to those who do not understand. Therefore, at each forward step which England makes, her sons thrust the past behind them, hope that the future will belie its experience, and decline to face the facts which history teaches all too plainly. Given, however, an oligarchy of native chiefs who have ruled a cowed brown people, melancholy and unresisting, for their own profit, and for the satisfaction of their own lusts, with flinty hearts unfettered by conscience or principles, given a strong feudal spirit among the lower classes, the habits of centuries which bid them to obey unquestioningly; given a fear of the Unknown which tells them white men may be harder task masters than their hereditary oppressors - given these things and an explosion of some sort must certainly occur. Add to them the presence of a slender band of Europeans, men callous of that personal dignity which readily impresses Oriental folk - striving to set up a new standard of ethics in a land where right and wrong have hitherto been things of little meaning, curbing the lawlessness of chiefs, punishing the crimes of the community with an even-handed justice which disregards alike the convenience of friend and foe, and all the while unwittingly offending the susceptibilities of a most sensitive race, and the chances of peace become small indeed. To an Eastern people, with the tradition of centuries of war and rapine in their wake, bloodshed naturally appeals as the only conceivable exit from an impasse such as this, so we inaugurate our rule of peace with a heart-breaking little war ....

Sir Hugh Clifford, G.C.M.G., C.B.E., of the Malayan Civil Service: "Recollections of the Pahang Disturbances of December 1890 - September 1891" in Bushwacking and Other Asiatic Tales and Memories.

....the quarrel was between white authority and Malay resentment of interference ... There followed what is known as "a state of reprisals". Uncivilized people, who do not understand fine distinctions in such matters, called it war ....

Swettenham: Malay Sketches,  
"The Eternal Feminine" p.84

Graduate theses are required of candidates for advanced degrees as evidence of competence in research. As these are often contributions to knowledge (sic.) it is important that the findings be made available for use and it is essential, therefore, that sound academic standards be adhered to in their preparation and presentation ... If the material is not presented in the proper form, the thesis will not be accepted nor will the degree be conferred ... the entire thesis must be typed on the same typewriter, and care should be taken to ensure evenness of impression and colour ... ("it is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission").<sup>1</sup>

It is Marshall McLuhan's opinion that the partial and specialized character of the viewpoint, however noble, will not serve at all in the electric age, in the nineteen-seventies. Every culture and every age has its favorite model of perception and knowledge that it is inclined to prescribe for everybody and everything. But

....the mark of our time is its revulsion against imposed patterns. We are suddenly eager to have people and things declare their beings totally. There is a deep faith to be found in this new attitude - a faith that

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"Instructions for the Preparation of Graduate Theses" - University of British Columbia, Faculty of Graduate Studies, 4 pages. The final parenthetical quotation is part of a "statement signed by the student" and "normally" bound with each copy submitted. Liberation has, in fact, become elimination of the solitary viewpoint. (I am not certain in what sense the word "competence" is being used.) cf. Swettenham: Journals, April 9th, 1874 (J.M.B.R.A.S., Vol.XXIV, Pt. IV, p.38) "What a curious thing it is to write down one's thoughts especially when there is a possibility that they may be read by someone who has never experienced circumstances such as gave being to those written thoughts. How curiously foolish and egotistical they must appear to that other person, constantly harping on the same subject ..."

concerns the ultimate harmony of all being.<sup>1</sup>

Can history be written, especially in thesis form, without involving the writer in a gigantic contradiction, without alienating him from his age? Elsewhere McLuhan offers a ray of hope by suggesting that Harold Innes has shown historians that they can as well be "recognizers of patterns" as "classifiers of knowledge" (the traditional "point-of-view" thesis orientation tends towards the latter.) Classification is a process, something which takes up one's time, which one might do reluctantly, unwillingly or enthusiastically, which can be done with more or less success, done very well or very poorly. Recognition, in sharp contrast, is not time-consuming. A person may spend a long time while looking before recognition occurs but when it occurs, it is "instantaneous".

When recognition occurs, it is not an act which would be said to be performed either reluctantly or enthusiastically, compliantly or under protest. Moreover, the notion of recognition being unsuccessful, or having been done very poorly seems to make little or no sense at all.<sup>2</sup>

Straughton Lynd also offers temporary solace to the hist-

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McLuhan: Understanding Media: Chapter I. The age of the "fixed point of view" has given way to the age of the "inclusive image". It was the natural mode of expression of the age of mechanical industry for mechanization is achieved by fragmentation of a process and by putting the fragmented parts into a series (- the "thesis"). McLuhan suggests in his study of the psychic and social consequences of the coming of electric technology, that the aspiration of our time for wholeness, empathy and depth of awareness, is a natural adjunct of this technology.

2

Marshall McLuhan's introduction to H.A. Innes: The Bias of Communication (p. viii) Quoting from Kenneth Sayre: The Modelling of the Mind (U. of Notre Dame Press, 1963, p.17)

orian of the 'seventies in dealing with the problem of reconciling historical past with existential present.<sup>1</sup> He begins with two basic assumptions: one, that what distinguishes the historian from the social scientist is not that he writes about the past but that he considers things in process of development.

"History" and "sociology" are not concerned with different objects, they are different ways of looking at the same object.<sup>2</sup>

The historian need not be embarrassed if he concerns himself more with the present and future than with the past. (In fact, it is no longer even possible to adopt the aloof and dissociated role of the literate westerner, according to McLuhan.) For, and this is Lynd's second assumption, the historian's business with the

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McLuhan: Understanding Media, op.cit. p.20. "Western man acquired from the technology of literacy the power to act without reacting. The advantages of fragmenting himself in this way are seen in the case of the surgeon who would be quite helpless if he were to become involved in his operation. We acquired the art of carrying out the most dangerous social operations with complete detachment." Writing history is also a "dangerous social operation" which came to require complete detachment.

2

Lynd, S.: "Historical Past and Existential Present" (in The Dissenting Academy, ed. T. Roszak, New York, 1967). cf. Levi-Strauss: Structural Anthropology (New York, 1967) Chap. 1, "History and Anthropology". Alan Watts in The Book (on the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are) (New York, 1966), makes a similar point in a wider sense. His contention is that we create problems for ourselves by allowing nominalism (the myriad pigeon holes and boxes into which for convenience we obsessively attempt to cram ourselves and our universal environment in order to "make sense of it all") to obscure the fact that we are at one with our universe and ourselves. We are separate only in name... "when this is not recognized, you have been fooled by your name." Thus history and sociology properly used are convenient names only for different ways of looking at "man-in-his-universe". Man is no longer, as Sir Thomas Browne supposed in Religio Medici "that great and true amphibian whose nature is disposed to live not only like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds ..."

future is not to predict but to envision - to say not what will be, but what can be. "The past is ransacked not for its own sake but as a source of alternative models of what the future might become."<sup>1</sup> Further, the historian could and should cease to consider himself one of a full-time professional few whose time must be committed wholly to chronicling and envisioning; writing history does not necessarily (and must not, I would argue) involve "being a historian" to the exclusion of all else. He who acts as well as watches will acquire kinds of knowledge unavailable to him who watches only, as is conversely commonly accepted.

But it is in his two concluding qualifications that Lynd's strength lies. All human beings, at least those born into the Judaeo-Christian culture, appear to need to formulate a collective past.<sup>2</sup> Presumably it will always therefore be mainly the job of the historian to respond to this need responsibly (recalling Chomsky) and this responsibility entails a refusal to do violence to either the facts of the past or to the human beings of the present.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, whatever else it is doing, mankind is making

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Lynd: op.cit., p.107-109. I find his use of the word "ransacked" disturbing.

2

On this point see also Pannenberg, W.: "Redemptive Event and History" in Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics (ed. Claus Westermann. Richmond, John Knox Press, 1960). esp. p.339 ff. "In Christianity, there is in fact an interest in the past which cannot be surrendered, because it contains the promise which will be fulfilled in the future."

3

cf. Laing, R.D.: Politics and Experience, p.143. "we require a history of phenomena, not simply a phenomena of history. As it is, the secular psychotherapist is often in the role of the blind leading the half-blind ..."

an agonized transition from societies based on private property to societies which are not. The historian who does not or can not grasp this fact is out of touch with what is happening in the second half of the twentieth century and must resign himself to becoming not merely old-fashioned but anachronistic. "Those not busy being born, are busy dying."<sup>1</sup>

There is no necessity, historical or otherwise, that these new societies be more humane than those they replace - in the interests of our survival, however, we can as easily take an optimistic view and assume that there are sufficient elements within the human psyche to give some sort of humane socialism a chance.<sup>2</sup>

It is the responsibility of the historian as intellectual and as human being to recognize this and to act accordingly. It is a responsibility largely abdicated. Chomsky illustrates this abdication by looking closely at a collection of "scholarly and objective studies" which appeared in the journal Asian Survey in August 1967; a symposium on Vietnam in which a number of "experts" were asked to contribute their thoughts on alternative solutions to the conflict there.<sup>3</sup> Here, as in so much of what passes for scholarly debate on this particular issue, there was no questioning of the American right to transfer innovations and institutions to the Vietnamese; or of America's "superior insight" into the

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Or as Eldridge Cleaver put it "If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem".

2

Richard Brautigan in In Watermelon Sugar (San Francisco, Four Seasons Foundation, 1968) envisions one such alternative for example.

3

Chomsky: op.cit. p.41 ff. See interleaf.



Which of us, Chomsky asks, would find Vietnam an obscenity had order and stability been secured in the first instance. One can imagine the rhetoric thirty years hence.

" ....At all events, the policy was crowned with success; and though success does not in all cases justify the means employed, it does not seem possible that by any milder course could the destruction of the murderous and treacherous piratical communities which had so long been the scourge of the Archipelago have been accomplished ... the natives gained in peace, prosperity and personal security. Before the advent of ("Rajah") Brooke, the country was in a completely anarchical condition - Malays were fighting against Malays, and Dyaks against Dyaks. The latter drank deeply of the cup of wretchedness; they were exposed to continuous exactions - their children were carried off, their villages attacked and plundered by piratical hordes, and their troubles were frequently increased by want, approaching famine ... The impetus given by the Rajah's colossal energy was so great that in this desert place, a thriving commercial community sprang up ... Hence came wealth, and the comforts that flow from wealth, as were evidenced in the improved dwellings, the larger prahus, the gayer and costlier dresses, the amount of gold ornaments worn by the women ... "

W.H.D. Adams: The Eastern Archipelago,  
(p.171 ff. writing in 1880 of James Brooke's  
murder of 800 Malay "pirates" off the  
Sarawak coast in 1847.)

needed innovations and appropriate institutions. That is, in presuming to provide solutions for Vietnam, however much respectability can be mustered for them by clothing them in a veil of behavioural science rhetoric, these detached scholars, by refusing to ask themselves the question "By what right?", are reflecting precisely the colonial mentality they claim to be condemning.

When we strip away the terminology of the behavioural sciences, we see revealed in such works as this, the mentality of the colonial civil servant persuaded of the benevolence of the mother country and the correctness of its 'vision of world order', and convinced that he understands the true interests of the backward peoples whose welfare he is to administer.

The assumption that colonial power is benevolent and has the interests of the natives at heart is as old as imperialism itself. It is a familiar refrain. But the idea that the issue of benevolence is irrelevant, an improper sentimental consideration, is something of an innovation in imperialist rhetoric.

It is precisely with the conviction that imperialism, benevolent or no, is unnatural that I undertake the writing of this study of the relationship between the "imperialist" and "imperialized" in nineteenth century Malaya. It is unnatural because it seeks to distort another's self-image, to make over what it perceives as different in its own image, in the firm conviction that this is "better."

Our survival depends on our ability to learn to let others be but with affection and concern - in short, if I might borrow a rather tired word from my peer group, to love.

For

In the landscape of spring there is neither better nor worse. The flowering branches grow naturally, some long, some short.

Love and violence, properly speaking are polar opposites. Love lets the other be, but with affection and concern. Violence attempts to constrain the other's freedom, to force him to act in the way we desire, but with ultimate lack of concern, with indifference to the other's own existence or destiny.

R. D. Laing:  
The Politics of Experience

By the green shade of the palm trees  
Where the river flows along  
To be wedded to the calm seas,  
Dwell the people of my song.  
With a languid step they wander  
Thro' the forest or the grove,  
And with listless eyes they ponder  
on the glories poets love.  
They have little joy in beauty,  
Little joy in virtue high,  
Honour, mercy, truth and duty,  
Or the creeds for which men die.  
But their lives are calm and peaceful,  
And they ask for nothing more  
Save some happy, listless, easeful  
Years, and peace from strife and war.  
Tales I tell of women wailing,  
Cruel wrong and bitter strife,  
Shrieking souls that pass, and quailing  
Hearts that shrink beneath the knife.  
Tales I tell of evil passions,  
Men that suffer, men that slay,  
All the tragedy that fashions  
Life and death for such as they.  
Yet these things are but as fleeting  
Shadows, that more lightly pass  
Than the sunlight, which retreating  
Leaves no stain upon the grass.  
O my friends! I judge ye lightly,  
Listen to the tales I tell  
Answer, have I spoken rightly?  
Judge me, have I loved thee well?

Hugh Clifford:  
In Court and Kampong.

Part Two :

Imperialism

The Mystification of Experience  
and the Distortion of Self-Image.



"Captain T. C. S. Speedy, Basha Felika", reproduced from Sir Frank Swettenham's *Footprints in Malaya* (Hutchinson & Co., London, 1942), from a block kindly loaned by the publishers. The date of this portrait is not certain, but it seems likely that it was taken after Speedy's return from Napier's expedition to Abyssinia, and shortly before he came to Malaya.

A good many of those who began the work are dead, and a good many have gone - invalided, or to seek better prospects; but, to speak collectively of those who remain, there is amongst them the same spirit, the same earnest desire to "make" the Malay States, that ever there was.

Sir Frank Swettenham:  
The Real Malay,  
"A New Method ..."

We English have an immense deal to answer for, and it will be interesting to see exactly how our account stands - we come to a country which is racked with war and rapine, and, after making a little war of our own, we reduce the land to a dead monotony of order and peace. We find vile misrule, and a government which is so incompetent and impotent that it is incapable of even oppressing its subjects completely, and we replace it by a high-class, triple-action automatic revenue-producing administration that presses equally on all alike. We give the poor and undefended rights, of the very existence of which they had never formerly dreamed; we free the slaves, who have for generations been made to labour sorely against their will and who celebrate their emancipation by declining to engage in any toil more arduous than betel-chewing, with an occasional theft thrown in when the children cry for rice; we lop his power from the Chief who, it must be confessed, has always consistently abused it, but finds little to comfort him in the recollection; we open up the most inaccessible places; we bring Trade and Money and Prosperity and Material Comfort and Sanitation and Drains and a thousand blessings of civilization in our wake. We educate, we vaccinate; we physic; we punish the Wicked and reward the Good. We administer the Native till we make him almost giddy, and he begins to forget that he is an absurd anachronism in the Nineteenth Century and must surely lose his way most utterly if he tries to stay here. We sweep away the horrible gaol-cages of independent Malaya and replace them by model prisons where, should the Fates so decree, he may lodge with considerable convenience to himself ....

Hugh Clifford:  
Proc. Royal Col. Institute  
1902-03

Behaviour depends on the image - the sum of what we think we know and what makes us act the way we do. The image lies behind the actions of every individual. It accounts for the growth of every cause. To recognize the image is to begin to understand the scientist, the believer, the crusader, the soldier.

J. P. Corbett.

You see, really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you because you always treat me as a lady, and always will.

G. B. Shaw: Pygmalion.



The selfish desire to have others act in a way calculated to feed one's ego is not confined to the group of men to whom the governing of the Malay States was entrusted after 1874, nor indeed to that whole cavalcade of Empire Builders which issued forth from the Sceptred Isles throughout the nineteenth century. Sadly, it still motivates the behaviour of most of us in our relations with fellow human beings. R.D. Laing speaks of the process by which we, as human beings, in the name of "love", subject our children to a system which is as imperialistic as any perpetrated against the peoples of Africa, Asia and America in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

It is not enough to destroy one's own and other people's experience. One must overlay this devastation by a false consciousness innured, as Marcuse puts it, to its own falsity.

Exploitation must not be seen as such. It must be seen as benevolence. Persecution preferably should not need to be invalidated as the figment of a paranoid imagination; it should be experienced as kindness. Marx described mystification of experience and showed its function in his day. Orwell's time is already with us. The colonists not only mystify the natives, in the ways that Fanon so clearly shows, they have to mystify themselves. We in Europe and North America are the colonists, and in order to sustain our amazing images of ourselves as God's gift to the vast majority of the starving human species, we have to interiorize our violence upon ourselves and our children and to employ the rhetoric of morality to des-

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R.D. Laing: The Politics of Experience (New York, Ballantine Books, 1967) Chap. 111  
 See also E. Cleaver: Soul on Ice (New York, Delta Books, 1968)  
 J. Farber: The Student as Nigger (San Francisco, Contact Books, 1969) and Betty Friedan: The Feminine Mystique (New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1963)

cribe this process.<sup>1</sup>

The process, in which our society tries to involve us all, has elsewhere been seen as a "double-bind" game with self-contradictory rules, a game "doomed to perpetual self-frustration". The child is tricked into the ego-feeling by the attitudes, words and actions of the society which surround him - his parents, his teachers, his similarly hoodwinked peers. We allow other people to teach us who we are. "Their attitudes to us are the mirror in which we learn to see ourselves, but the mirror is distorted." Our social environment thus has an enormous power precisely because we are a part of it - "society is our extended mind and body."

Yet the very society from which the individual is inseparable is using its whole irresistible force to persuade the individual that he is indeed separate from it. Society as we now know it is therefore playing a game with self-contradictory rules. 2

My suspicions were aroused by a comment made by V.G. Kiernan in his study on European attitudes to the rest of the world in the "Golden Age" of European imperialism. It is his contention that until the 1870's, current notions about Malays were drawn chiefly from their piratical depredations in the Archipelago. Thus they had won the reputation of being "the

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Laing: *ibid.* p.57. ff. Jean-Paul Satre observed in his forward to *The Traitor* by Andre Gorz (London, Calder, 1960, pp.14-15): "They are called parents. Long before our birth even before we are conceived, our parents have decided who we will be."

2

A. Watts: *The Book...*, *op.cit.* pp.64-67. For these purposes our society is essentially that of Victorian England - with its contradictory emphasis on "team-spirit" and "individualism" - the pillars of the Public School tradition.

most fierce, treacherous, ignorant and inflexible of barbarians." However decades later, according to Kiernan, "it was necessary to contradict reports that all Malays were pirates or savages, forever running amuck and knifing one another." Their country was still depicted as being in a frightful condition of misrule and chaos and the mass of its cultivators in a state of slavery, but now all that they manifestly stood in need of was the civilizing influence of British rule.<sup>1</sup>

Why did it become necessary for the British to see Malaya and the Malays differently? Did they, in fact? What is the process by which our images are formed and transformed? Does "the image in the mind disappear as soon as the need of the organism is gratified..?"<sup>2</sup>

I would begin with the proposition that behaviour depends on the image; that is, how we act depends on what we see. To understand what determines the image is fundamental to the understanding of how life and society really operate, not only in nineteenth century Malaya but in all times and places. Platitudinous as it may seem "it's all a matter of how you perceive reality" ... advertising agents owe their success to this realization.

We look at life by conscious attention, and when we

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E. J. Trelawney: The Adventures of a Younger Son 1831 pp. 353-4, 357. quoted in V. G. Kiernan: The Lords of Human Kind (London, Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, 0.83).

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F. S. Perls: Ego, Hunger and Aggression, op.cit., p.40. "Exactly the same happens to our subjective realities: they disappear once they are required no further."

attend to one thing, we ignore others. In a society which places low value on "indecision", perception is necessarily narrowed to give the advantages of being sharp and bright - for only under such conditions can one act decisively. British colonial administrators came to place a very high value on acting with precision - above all else, it was imperative that they avoid giving the natives the impression that they were uncertain of what they were doing. Successful imperialism demanded narrowed perception, the single viewpoint.<sup>1</sup> Cadets were not chosen for their "intellectual capacities"; Hugh Clifford frequently voiced the familiar imperial conviction that "thinking makes cowards of us all,"<sup>2</sup> and what he meant was simply that his society placed low value on indecisiveness, and that thinking, by revealing ambiguities, inconsistencies and alternative modes, makes the single viewpoint difficult to sustain.

Attention is noticing and to notice is to select, to regard

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1 See Boulding: The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society (Ann Arbor, U. of Michigan Press, 1956) p.125. "In tracing the effects of images on the course of history, peculiar attention must be paid to the future ... it may not be so much the actual content of the image of the future which is important in its effect, but its general quality of optimism, or pessimism, certainty or uncertainty, breadth or narrowness. The person or the nation that has a date with destiny goes somewhere, (though not necessarily to the address on the label). The individual or the nation which has no sense of direction in time, no sense of a clear future ahead is likely to be vacillating, uncertain in behaviour, and to have a poor chance of surviving." I would argue rather that one needs only a firm sense of the present, but Boulding expresses a firmly-entrenched Western idea.

2 See also R. Furse: Aucuparius: Recollections of a Recruiting Agent (London, Oxford U. Press, 1962); R. Heussler: Yesterday's Rulers: The Making of the British Colonial Service. (Syracuse, Syracuse U. Press, 1963)

some pieces of perception or some features of the world as more noteworthy, more significant, "better" for the purposes at hand, than others. It is a way of looking at life using that special part of the memory, the value system, to string the bits together.

There are numberless features and dimensions of the world to which our senses respond without our conscious attention.

What governs what we choose to notice? According to Alan Watts:

The first is whatever seems advantageous for our survival, our social status, and the security of our egos. The second, working simultaneously with the first, is the pattern and the logic of all the notation symbols which we have learned from others, from our society and our culture.<sup>1</sup>

There is another process at work in the formation of images: what Harold Isaacs has called "the unwitting or witless process by which we generalize from the small fact or single experience." According to Isaacs, "the mind's bent to make much out of little is .... part of the secret of human genius." The necessity for common understanding requires that we employ the normal devices of generalization every day in our lives. Normally, these are checked for relevance and validity against the realities with which they must cope. However,

In a great many matters in a great many minds, what goes on is a kind of mental trickery, a process of enlargement whereby we people

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<sup>1</sup>

cf. A. Watts: The Book, op.cit. p.29 "we need a notation for almost everything that can be noticed. Notation is a system of symbols - words, numbers, signs... Such symbols enable us to classify our bits of perception. They are the labels on the pigeon holes into which memory sorts them.." It is hard, but not impossible, to notice anything for which the languages available to us have no description.

our worlds with caricatures which appease some private or social needs.<sup>1</sup>

Kenneth Boulding sees the image as "subjective knowledge", which is built up as a result of all the past experience of its possessor. From the moment of birth a constant stream of messages enters the organism from the senses. As a child grows these indifferentiated lights and noises gradually become distinguished into objects and people. He begins to perceive of himself as an object in the midst of a world of objects. "The conscious image has begun." The child finds himself in an increasingly complex web of personal relationships; every time a message reaches him, his image is changed in some degree by it, and as his image is changed his patterns of behaviour will be changed likewise.<sup>2</sup>

There are images of "fact" and images of "value". Clearly there is normally a difference between one's image of a given physical object and the value one puts upon it. Any image of value is concerned with the rating of the various parts of our image according to some scale of betterness or worseness. We all tend to erect such scales, at least over that part of the universe closest to us. But adherence to any doctrine of imperi-

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H. Isaacs: Images of Asia: American Views of China and India (New York, Capricorn Books, 1962). cf. P. Mason: Prospero's Magic: Some Thoughts on Race and Class (London, Oxford U. Press, 1962) p.97. "Have we, the British, lived the past two centuries in an unreal world, projecting our own image on to the peoples we have ruled, seeing them as Calibans who practice the vices we dislike in ourselves, obedient Ariels who must be reminded to be grateful, Mirandas who gaze with parted lips at the wonders we reveal and who must never express an opinion of their own."

<sup>2</sup> K. Boulding: The Image, op.cit., p.7 ff.; p.54 ff.

alism makes this distinction increasingly difficult to make. Things no longer just exist; they must be judged according to the value scale of the imperialist. The writings of even the most disinterested "observers" of the Malays show that the need for the distinction was rarely felt. John Cameron "described" the Malay's appearance in these terms:

The physique of the Malay is of high order. The men are short, being on an average about five feet three inches in height; but they are well-proportioned, round, full-limbed and generally possess a good, honest, open countenance. Their feet and hands are small and their fingers long and tapering, with well-shaped nails. In fact, they show most of those points which we ourselves set down as the indices of good breeding. Their eyes are dark brown, or black, with a bold yet not impudent expression; and their hair - which only grows upon the head - is jet black and usually cut short.<sup>1</sup>

Cameron was a Singapore journalist writing about the Malays on the eve of the transfer of the Straits Settlements to the Colonial Office in 1867; that is, "under the belief that the possessions of which the following pages treat are about to come under the direct control of the Imperial Government, and with a view to afford the people of England some glimpse of the great beauty, some conception of the valuable commerce, and some grounds upon which to estimate the importance, in a political point of view, of the tropical country to which they are about to be drawn in ties of a nearer relationship." His "description" might be compared with A.S. Bickmore's comments on the "characteristics of the Malays" he saw during a brief tour of the East Indian

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<sup>1</sup>

J. Cameron: Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India (London, Smith Elder & Co., 1865) p.131-2; Preface.

Archipelago undertaken in the 1860's "to recollect the shells figures in Rumphius's 'Rariteit Kamer'." <sup>1</sup>

The men have but few straggling hairs for beards, and these they generally pull out with a pair of iron tweezers. The hair of the head in both sexes is lank, coarse and worn long. Each sex therefore resembles the other so closely that nearly every foreigner will, at first, find himself puzzled in many cases to know whether he is looking at a man or a woman. This want of differentiation in the sexes possibly indicates their low rank in the human family if the law may be applied there that obtains among most other animals.

One of the most important propositions of Boulding's analysis of the reorganization of images is that

....the value scales of any individual or organization are perhaps the most single element determining the effect of the messages it receives on its image of the world. <sup>2</sup>

If a message <sup>is</sup> received that is perceived as neither good nor bad, it may have little or no effect on the image; if it is perceived as bad or hostile to the image already held or desired to be held, there will be resistance to accepting it. This resistance may manifest itself as a simple refusal to acknowledge the message, or in an emotive response - anger, hostility, indignation. (The British reaction to the Indian

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A.S. Bickmore, (M.A.): Travels in the East Indian Archipelago (New York, 1867) Bickmore's self-image was such that he described himself as "Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society of London, corresponding member of the American and London Ethnological Societies, New York Lyceum of Natural History, Member of the Boston Society of Natural History and the American Oriental Society, and Professor of Natural History in Madison University, New York." !

2 Boulding, The Image, p.12-13.



Mutiny, for example took the latter extreme form since the message could not be ignored. The murder of Resident Birch in Perak in 1874 evoked a similar response). Messages favorable to existing images of the world, on the other hand, are easily received. Victorian England placed high value on certain outward physical signs of masculinity - Bengali Hindus, lacking these manifestations, were rejected by the British as "effeminate", while Sikhs, Mohammedans, Rajputs and Pathans who exhibited the more familiar aggressive masculine traits could more easily be related to. Kipling could only picture East and West meeting on that almost universal male preserve - the battlefield.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of British-Malayan contact in the latter part of the nineteenth century, a far more harmonious relationship by the admission of most observers then and now, owes much to the fact that, in Boulding's terms, far more messages received by Anglo-Malayan minds confirmed world images already held - as Cameron's description testifies. Swettenham's "embodiment of an Eastern dream", the Famous Seyyid, was first and foremost "A man of war". The awareness of the masculine-feminine conflict was there still, (witness Major Fred McNair's Perak and the Malays: "Sarong" and "Kris") but generally speaking Anglo-Malayan imperial-

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cf. S. and L. Rudolph: The Modernity of Tradition (Chicago, U. of Chicago Press, 1967) p.162-4 "Practitioners of the swash-buckling style shaped the dominant image of Englishmen in India and by contrast 'the mirror image' of Indians." See also S.H. Alatas: "Feudalism in Malaysian Society: A Study in Historical Continuity". (Paper presented to International Conference on Asian History, Kuala Lumpur, Aug. 5-10, 1968) p.8: "the dominant standard of aristocratic Malay Society from the 16th century to the turn of the 19th century ... was that of warrior kingship. The values of bravery, absolute loyalty to the prince, skillfulness in combat, aggressiveness and pillage were stressed."

ists "recognized" that the Muslim Malays shared much more of the code of conduct, and of the ideals, of the British "gentleman" class, than did the Hindus.

The value image, then, is very significant, for to a large extent we see the world the way we see it because it has "paid" us to see it that way. Incoming messages are not admitted to the image free; they are mediated through a highly learned process of interpretation and acceptance. To this extent, the image of the world possessed by an individual is a purely private matter - all knowledge is subjective. "Knowledge is what somebody or something knows ... without a knower, knowledge is an absurdity."

Yet part of our image of the world is the belief that it is shared by the other people who are also part of our image. We behave daily as if we all possess roughly the same image of the world. The basic bond of any society, culture, subculture or organization is a "public image" - an image whose essential characteristics are shared by the individuals participating in the group. A large part of the activity of each society is concerned with the transmission and protection of its public image - "that set of images regarding space, time, relation, evaluation etc. which is shared by the mass of its people." <sup>1</sup>

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Boulding: The Image, op.cit., Chaps. IV and V, "The Image of Man and Society" and "The Public Image and the Sociology of Knowledge."

cf. Watts: The Book, op.cit., p.64-65: "We are perhaps rather dimly aware of the immense power of our social environment. We seldom realize, for example, that our most private thoughts and emotions are not actually our own. For we think in terms of languages and images which we did not invent, but which were given to us by our society. We copy emotional reactions from our parents ... Our social environment has this power just because we do not exist apart from a society." Watts seems at times unduly determinist - society has as much and as little power as one allows it.

The impact of society on the image is nowhere more marked than in the value image. For apart from the basic "biological" value image which is built into an organism by its genetic constitution (an organism which puts high value on pain, hunger or self-immolation would be unlikely to survive), the value image of most of us is socially-acquired. A society's system of education is perhaps its most effective institution for harnessing the biological drives in the interests of establishing and maintaining a value system. By constant reiteration these acquired values become internalized and acquire the same status as biological values, if not superior. The ceremonial life of a society also largely centres around the reinforcement of the acquired value system, and in this context, it is worth noting that ceremonial occasions loom large in the dynamics of imperialist society. Beyond the formal and ceremonial instruction however, value-images are created and find reinforcement informally within the small "face to face" group, especially the individual's peer group. The genius of mid-nineteenth century imperialism lay in the efficacy with which its institutions drew together these formal and informal value images. Through institutions like the public school, the universities, the army and the civil service, the informal sanctions of peer group and parents came very closely to approximate the formal sanctions of the individual's superiors and society. Possibly without realizing it at first, Victorian England grasped that

....if a group of people are to share the same image of the world, or, to put it more exactly, if the various images they have of the world are

to be roughly identical and if this group of people are exposed to much the same set of messages in building up images of the world, the value systems of all individuals must be approximately the same.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Schumpeter claimed that imperialists were feudal atavisms, men whose hunger for the chivalric life could not be accommodated by the middle-class civilization of nineteenth century Europe, and who therefore turned to the new frontiers of the colonies for a challenge they could not find at home; O. Mannoni saw the colonial life simply as a substitute to those who are, as a result of having failed to make the effort necessary to adapt infantile images to adult reality (an adaptation increasingly difficult in competitive, industrialized nineteenth-century Europe), still obscurely drawn to the "desert island" and "the world without men".<sup>2</sup> But what distinguishes the imperialist is that, for whatever reason, he has become convinced that his world view is "best"; moreover he is concerned for a variety of reasons, that others share this view - he therefore necessarily sets about imposing it upon those others who have come to be part of his world view.

As to the question of which comes first, imperialism or the

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Boulding: ibid., p.73. Confucian China also realized this fact.

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Joseph Schumpeter: The Sociology of Imperialism (New York, World Publishing Co., 1959, first published 1919);  
 O. Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Imperialism (New York, Praeger, 1956) p.101, 105.  
 "...there is in the child some trait which is partly misanthropic or at any rate anti-social, a trait which, for the lack of a better term, I would call 'the lure of the world without men'. It may be repressed to a greater or lesser extent, but it will remain, nonetheless, in the unconscious."

imperialists, there seems little point in entering such a hen and egg controversy. The image not only makes the society, society continually remakes the image."<sup>1</sup> The egg theory of hens is as valid as the hen theory of eggs. Causal relationships of historical development are too complex, too elusive to be caught in a catchword.

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One of the basic concepts of the theory of the image is that it is the image which determines the current behaviour of any organism or organization. The image acts as a field; behaviour consists of gravitating toward the most highly valued part of the field. Imperialism, as behaviour, however, ultimately deals with relations between imperialist and imperialized - the colonial "experience", although the imperialist is generally unaware of it, is, properly speaking, the colonial "inter-experience" - as Albert Memmi and Franz Fanon have emphatically pointed out. As such it is peculiarly subject to that "strange dynamic instability arising out of the fact that persons themselves are to a certain extent what their images make them."<sup>2</sup> And because

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<sup>1</sup>

Boulding: The Image, op.cit., p.64, 79.

<sup>2</sup>

Albert Memmi: The Colonizer and the Colonized (New York, Orion Press, 1965); Franz Fanon: The Wretched of the Earth (trans. C. Farrington, New York, Grove Press 1968). Both are introduced powerfully by Jean-Paul Satre; in the latter, Satre gives two reasons why "all Europeans" should read Fanon: "the first is that Fanon explains you to his brothers and shows them the mechanism by which we are estranged from ourselves; take advantage of this, and get to know yourselves in the light of truth, objectively ... it is enough that they show us what we have made of them for us to realize what we have made of ourselves ... And here is the second reason: if you set aside Sorel's fascist utterances, you will find that Fanon is the first since Engels to bring the processes of history into the clear light of day." (p.13-14)

the image is the creation of the messages it receives, people tend to remake themselves in the image which other people have of them.

Personal relations involve an extremely complex action and reaction of image upon image. In The Politics of Experience, Laing describes this process in such terms:

I see you and you see me. I experience you and you experience me. I see your behaviour. But I do not see and never have and never will see your experience of me.

And, further:

I do not experience your experience. But I experience you as experiencing. I experience myself as experienced by you. And I experience you as experiencing yourself as experienced by me. And so on ..."<sup>1</sup>

This is basic to the understanding of the self-justifying image - a phenomenon basic, in its turn, in the mechanism of imperialism. If I think that you are mean and surly I will treat you in such a way that you will tend to react in a surly and mean way, making me feel justified in my original presumption. A study of "teacher expectation and pupils' intellectual development" in an American elementary school recently investigated what was called "the interpersonal self-fulfilling prophecy - how one person's expectations for another's behaviour can quite unwittingly become a more accurate prediction simply for its having been made."<sup>2</sup> Normally, much of our behaviour is governed by widely shared norms and expectations that make it possible to prophesy how a person will

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<sup>1</sup>

R. D. Laing: The Politics of Experience, Chap. I, "Persons and Experience, esp. p.17-18.

<sup>2</sup>

R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobson: Pygmalion in the Classroom (New York, Rinehardt and Winston, 1968) Introduction.

behave in a given situation even if we have never met that person and know little of how he differs from others. At the same time, however, behaviour varies so that we can more accurately prophesy the behaviour of a person we know well than we can that of a stranger. To a great extent, our expectations of another's behaviour are accurate because we know his past behaviour. The accuracy of interpersonal predictions increased with another factor however, namely: "our prediction or prophecy may in itself be a factor in determining the behaviour of other people." In other words, people more often than not do what is expected of them.<sup>1</sup> Or as Laing put it:

I am concentrating upon what we do to ourselves and to each other -

Let us take the simplest possible interpersonal scheme. Consider Jack and Jill in relation. Then Jack's behaviour towards Jill is experienced by Jill in particular ways. How she experiences him affects considerably how she behaves towards him. How she behaves towards him influences (without by any means totally determining) how he experiences her. And his experience of her contributes to his way of behaving towards her, which in turn ... 2

In these terms then, Frank Swettenham's "Real Malays" notwithstanding, what the Englishmen in Malaya saw was not the

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Rosenthal and Jacobson: ibid. Briefly, 20 percent of the children in a certain elementary school were selected at random as showing unusual potential for intellectual growth. Eight months later these unusual or "magic" children showed significantly greater gains in I.Q. than did the remaining students who had not been singled out for the teacher's attention.. The change in the teacher's expectations regarding the intellectual performance of these allegedly "special" children, had led to an actual change in the intellectual performance of randomly selected children.

2 Laing: Politics of Experience, op.cit., p.33.

"Malays" but the "Malays-experiencing-the-British-experiencing-the-Malays." Almost all writers included a chapter on what they were wont to call the "Malay Character" as though this were some unchanging entity existing in a vacuum, an exercise rendered the more legitimate by the widely-held conviction that "the Malays as a race detest change."

Lastly, these Malays were then, and are still (but in some particulars to a less extent) a courageous, haughty, and exclusive people, infinitely conservative, hating change, full of strange prejudices, clinging to their ancient customs, to the teachings of the men of old time, and ready to die to uphold them, or simply in obedience to the orders of their hereditary chiefs." <sup>1</sup>

It should not be surprising, keeping in mind the fact that thoughts and actions do not occur in vacuums (they, and the phenomenon which we call character, are the total continuum of every person and event with whom we have come into contact in our lifetime, including ourselves), and what has been said about the self-justifying image, to observe that Swettenham's "characteristics of the Malay" are surprisingly similar to any list of the characteristics of the Victorian "gentleman".

This is Jean-Paul Satre's "relentless reciprocity binding colonized to colonizer" and vice versa.<sup>2</sup>

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Clifford: Proc. Royal Col. Instit. Vol. xxx, 1898-9, p.371  
Swettenham: The Real Malay, p.18; also p.264-66.

2

Satre, introducing A. Memmi: Colonizer and the Colonized, op. cit.; Memmi's book purports to "show the pattern and genesis of each role, (of the colonizer and colonized), the genesis of one through the other and the pattern of the colonial relationship out of the colonial situation" in Tunisia. (As a Tunisian Jew, he fits into neither role himself.) He speaks of "the necessity of this relationship, the necessity of its development, the necessary images which it impressed on the colonized and the colonizer."



The genius of British imperialism in Malaya rested upon the fact that, with a few notable exceptions,<sup>1</sup> the Malay rulers needed for their own reasons to accept the image which the British found it necessary to impose upon them. (The British in Malaya were able for the most part to "ignore" the Malay peasant classes or, at least, consign them to an idyllic Kampong existence, because they were fortunate enough to have the Chinese and Tamil Indians to perform the more menial imperial tasks.)<sup>2</sup>

Or, more orthodoxly,

British policy in the peninsula throughout the period (before the turn of the century) was based on a mutually profitable alliance with the Malay ruling class, particularly with the individual rulers of the states and their aristocratic establishments. This symbiotic relationship, in which the British undertook to maintain intact the position and prestige of the traditional ruling class in the states in return for the right to develop a modern extractive economy with the states, certainly deprived the Malay Sultan of much of his policy-making power, but it was furthered with a tact which carefully preserved the fiction that the Sultans were autonomous rulers acting under advice from Residents who were in some sense their servants. 3

It is my impression that it was as much in return for a certain psychological security, arising out of being permitted,

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Obviously the murderers of Birch were none too enamoured of the idea. See also interleaf from Mrs. Innes overpage.

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This point is discussed in greater detail, p.166 below.

3

Roff. Origins of Malay Nationalism p.250 (my underlining) cf. Swettenham: Real Malay, p.32 "It was not the Malay people who asked for the British official; it was a disappointed Malay Raja who, desiring British recognition of a coveted position, offered the invitation as a means to that end. He obtained the end he sought, and he was properly held responsible for what happened to the guest entrusted to his care."

At first I was inclined to laugh at the impertinence of the unclothed old savage, (the Sultan at Langat) as I considered him, thus giving us - us, free-born Britons! - his gracious permission to walk, but on reflexion I considered that the country was his, and we were only there by his invitation, and the fact of his dress being rather airy did not really affect the question ...

....He complained that sometimes he received as little as \$90 a month and this was not really enough for him to live upon, as everyone in the country who was in want looked to him for assistance, and he could not possibly send them away; no Sultan had ever been known to do such a thing...

....I do not know how to play the piano, nor does anyone in my house; and moreover, I am too old to learn. I prefer fingers to forks; European crockery and glass is not suited to my servants, who smash it continually; and as for the horses, I suppose we do not understand the care of them, for they do nothing but die, one after the other, as fast as they can. The buggy is all broken, and we do not know how to mend it; and the gun which was sent me is useless, as I am now too old to begin. I should be glad if no more European articles were sold to me for the present, as I wish to receive my \$1000 intact.

We felt glad to know that this poor old man had received any benefit at all from the 'protection' of the British Government, for we fancied we saw in his talk and demeanour, occasional signs that he felt the loss of dignity entailed on him by his revenue being collected, and his laws altered and administered for him, by aliens. He bore it very well on the whole; but on occasions ... he was evidently much distressed, and only agreed to it, we believed, from feeling himself powerless to cope with the English Government.

Emily Innes and the Sultan of Langat  
from The Chersonese with the  
Gilding Off

within the "Residential System", to play a role which provided and maintained a well-defined and accepted self-image, as for "the right to develop a modern extractive economy" that the British adopted the policy they did in Malaya.<sup>1</sup>

Imperialism relies for its success on the phenomenon of the self-justifying image. The imperialist needs, (because of the high values he has come to place on certain images of himself and the other people in his world), and therefore expects, the imperialized to behave in a certain way - with the result that more often than not he does, a process which can always be facilitated by the judicious application of a system of rewards or punishments to the imperialized. Insofar as imperialism can be said to be a medium of communication, an extension of the human senses, between imperialist and imperialized, it largely configures the awareness and experience of both. It has that power of imposing its own assumptions upon even the wary.<sup>2</sup>

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This is discussed more fully in a later chapter. But cf. O. Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban, op.cit. p.32: "The colonizers of the heroic age - the era of colonial expansion - were fully convinced of the superiority of the civilization they represented. Their strength came from their knowledge that, though they represented this civilization, they did not embody it. They did not set themselves up as models; they offered to others their own ideals, something greater than they. But the fact that they possessed superior power persuaded the natives of the over-riding need to imitate and, like schoolchildren, to obey. Psychologically the result was at first beneficial. At that stage it was impossible even dimly to perceive the reciprocal misunderstanding on which the situation was based, nor could it have foreseen what successes and failures the effort at imitation was to meet. It would be pointless to pass judgment now on what happened then, especially as there was undoubtedly much good will on both sides at the outset...."

2

M. McLuhan: Understanding Media, op.cit. Chap.I.

Imperialism, it should be realized, is a process involving for all concerned distortion and mystification of one's self-image. As such, there is an inevitable contradiction in imperialism. For the imperialist, because, if he is not successful, if he fails to make the "native" over sufficiently in his own image, the latter may stab him in the back - at any rate, he will constantly be reminded of his failure. If, on the other hand, he succeeds, then the "native" becomes equally a threat, or rather a rival: the imperialist, as imperialist, is no longer needed; he is redundant, his task is done and will no more offer him satisfaction for the image is complete. He may move on to a new "colony", but he is doomed to perpetual frustration. Hugh Clifford saw this clearly:

Since the day when I played in the squalid street,  
 And dreamed that I'd go to sea,  
 No place in the world was dear or sweet,  
 Or good in itself to me!  
 The Land I loved was the Land I saw  
 Just dipping below the sky,  
 And when I was there - it was good no more,  
 So forward again trudged I! <sup>1</sup>

And for the imperialized because

....we only become what we are by a radical  
 and deep-seated refusal of that which others  
 have made (or would try to make) of us. <sup>2</sup>

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Clifford: Bushwacking, op.cit. p.86

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<sup>r</sup>Satre: Introduction to Fanon: The Wretched of the Earth,  
 op.cit., The parenthetical addition is mine.



THE SULTAN OF JOHORE.

### Part Three :

"The development of images is part of the culture or subculture in which they are developed and it depends on all elements of that culture or subculture."

Kenneth Boulding: The Image

Every Roman was surrounded by slaves. The slave and his psychology flooded ancient Italy, and every Roman became inwardly, and of course unwittingly a slave. Because living constantly in the atmosphere of slaves, he became infected through the unconscious with their psychology. No one can shield himself from such an influence.

C. G. Jung:

Contributions to Analytical  
Psychology.

I was astonished at what seemed to me the weakness of Mr. Low's argument. He repeated again and again that the slaves were from time immemorial the property of their owners, just as much as if they were elephants or cows; that it would be unjust to deprive the owners of their elephants or cows; that it would cause a revolution in the country if the slaves were freed without full pecuniary compensation; that to grant such compensation would ruin the government ....

Later Mr. Low spoke to me "half in earnest".

"It is too good, your making a fuss about these slaves. You are a slave yourself - all married women are slaves!"

I replied, "Just so. That is precisely why I can sympathize with other slaves."

Emily Innes:

The Chersonese with the  
Gilding Off.

Both Phillip Curtin and George Bearce in their studies of British attitudes to Africa and India respectively have noted a striking variance between British beliefs and African or Indian "reality". Curtin concludes firmly that observers went to Africa with preconceived notions derived from the reports of their predecessors and the theoretical conclusions already drawn from them, and that they were therefore sensitive to data that seemed to confirm their preconceptions but comparatively insensitive to contradictory data.<sup>1</sup> As a result, British thought about Africa responded weakly to new data of any kind. Indeed it responded far more positively to changes in British thought. Observers, taking the European weltanschauung as their point of departure, did not ask "what is Africa like and what manner of men live there?" but "How do Africans, and how does Africa, fit into what we already know about the world?" In this sense, claims Curtin, the image of Africa was far more European than African. (Scientists, supposedly studying the nature of racial differences, in fact studied Africa in order to find answers for questions posed for them by the existing state of biological theory and knowledge. The interdependence of race and culture was assumed because it helped explain a phenomenon in which contemporary Europeans were very interested - namely their own leadership in the world of the nineteenth century - ("How is it that it can be so truly said

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P.D. Curtin: The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action 1780-1850 (Madison, U. of Wisconsin Press, 1964)  
 G.D. Bearce: British Attitudes towards India, 1784-1858 (London, Oxford U. Press, 1961)



that the sun never sets upon the English flag?")<sup>1</sup>

The image of Africa, in short, was largely created in Europe to suit European needs - sometimes material needs, more often intellectual needs. When these needs allowed, it might touch on reality .... otherwise the European Afrikanschauung was part of a Weltanschauung, and it was warped as necessary to make it fit into a larger whole ....<sup>2</sup>

There is little reason to believe that those who went to Malaya were qualitatively different to any great extent. In the following pages I shall consider the more important facets of western and especially British thought which were likely to have been brought to bear upon the Malayan colonial experience, to attempt to reach some understanding of the disposition of the era in which the British came into contact, as imperialists, with

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<sup>1</sup> "At a more personal level, many affirmations about Africa were made for political, religious or personal reasons. Prichard's belief in monogenesis came, first of all, from his desire to prove that science was congruent with Scripture. Nott and Gliddon's polygenesis came from their desire to prove that negro slavery was licit. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that some of the wilder ravings of Knox's "transcendental anatomy" came from a blighted career, not merely from the currents of evolutionary thought." (Curtin: ibid., p.480).

The quotation is from F.S. Marryat : Borneo and the Indian Archipelago (London, Longmans, 1848) p.231-232. "May it not be, I say, that the Almighty has, for his own good reasons, fought on our side, and has given us victory upon victory, until we have swept the seas, and made the name of England known to the uttermost corners of the globe?.." In fact, however, this sentiment is in such contrast with the rest of Marryat's work that I am tempted to suppose he added it simply as an after-thought for the benefit of his London readers.

<sup>2</sup> Curtin: ibid. "To say this, however, is not to imply a moral or intellectual judgment of the nineteenth century Europeans. They sought knowledge for their guidance and the very magnitude of the effort remains as a kind of monument. Their errors nevertheless did as much to mold the course of history as their discoveries ...."

Malaya. What ideas, events and circumstances were likely to have influenced, and how, the nature of contact between the British Residents and the Malay people, in the "Golden Age" of Malayan imperialism? <sup>1</sup>

British territorial interest in Malaya dates from 1786 when the East India Company secured the island of Penang off the west coast of the Peninsula. Malacca, taken from the Dutch during the Napoleonic Wars but returned in 1818, became British territory in 1825, and Singapore, the last of the three outposts known collectively as the Straits Settlements, was occupied in 1819. From the moment it occupied Penang, the East India Company regarded its settlements in Malaya purely as ports of call and trading stations and tried to keep clear of commitments in the Peninsula itself. In 1833, government of the Straits Settlements, with the character of the British position in Malaya still largely undefined, was transferred from the East India Company to the India Office to be administered as part of the Bengal Presidency. The Indian Government, immersed in Indian affairs, had neither the time nor the knowledge to cope with the totally dissimilar problems of the Straits, and its unfortunate attempts to foist Indian currency and port dues on them evoked a good deal of resentment, and, after 1855, a demand from the merchants of Penang and Singapore for the ending of the Indian connexion. By 1859, both

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<sup>1</sup>

The phrase is J. de V. Allen's, in "Two Imperialists: A study of Sir Frank Swettenham and Sir Hugh Clifford." (J.M.B.R.A.S., Vol. xxxvii, Pt. I, 1964) p.42.

the Indian Government and the India Office were prepared to admit that the Straits Settlements would be better administered by the Colonial Office (as in the case of Hong Kong); in 1867, after a long period of haggling over the financial arrangements of the transferral, the Straits Settlements became a separate Crown Colony.<sup>1</sup>

Britain officially "intervened" on the Malay Peninsula, and British government of the native Malay States, however indirect, was established through the Residential system. But Malaya's early British history occurred in the shadow of events in India, and when separation finally occurred in 1867, it was as much in response to events within India as to the conviction of the necessity for establishing direct control over the Straits Settlements. In particular, the violence done to that most sacred of institutions where British imperial rule was concerned, the Indian Army, by the revolt of Indian soldiers in 1857 forced the British to reconsider the whole question of the nature and efficiency of their government in the East. It was as much due to the conviction that henceforth all the energies of the Bengal Government should be focussed upon Bengal, as from any concern for the advantages that might accrue to the region itself, that "our tropical possessions in Malayan India" were transferred to the Colonial Office in 1867.

It is unlikely that any event had a greater effect upon the British image of Asia and the Asians, or upon the imperial

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See C.D. Cowan: Nineteenth Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control (London, Oxford U. Press, 1961) Chap. I, for greater detail.

ideology on whose foundations the British Empire of the latter half of the nineteenth century would be built, than the Indian Mutiny of 1857,

"the Terrible Year in '57, which found us English folk, little handfuls of us, isolated, almost defenceless, facing the brown millions who for once were banded together against us by hate and wrath." <sup>1</sup>

The Sepoy Mutiny has traditionally been regarded as an isolated incident quickly and effectively dispersed, in a country whose calm was not ruffled again until the nationalist stirrings of the turn of the century. Despite the fact that nothing could, and did, arouse such a frenzy of hatred in the Victorian Englishman as the sight of his womenfolk (so long safe from foreign invaders and hedged around by sentiment and chivalry) hacked to pieces by barbarous savages,<sup>2</sup> the memory of the stirring events at Lucknow and Delhi did fade relatively quickly from the British consciousness and "the annual Indian Debates" soon ceased to attract attention outside a small circle of merchants and retired

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<sup>1</sup> H. Clifford: Bushwacking, etc., "The Breath upon the Spark" p.319. (The works of Clifford and Swettenham will be cited in abbreviated title only - for detail, see bibliography).

<sup>2</sup> ibid. p.324: "Through the chaos came the voice of Haji Muhammed Achbar ... 'nor will it be the turn of our womenfolk to be made chattels for the pleasure of new husbands'. At that word fear left me and a great wrath alone remained. I rose from my chair, and in an instant I had him by the throat. 'Have a care, dog,' I cried ..."  
This fear and anger might be compared with the emotion aroused by the suspected detention of a European female at Amboon, Borneo in 1844 - an emotion more akin to curiosity. See Captain Belcher: Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Samarang, (London, 1848) Vol.II, p.163 ff. for official correspondence.

civil servants.<sup>1</sup>

But in the British subconscious the Indian Mutiny lived on and left a deep and abiding mark both on the fabric of Indian Society and in the nature of British Imperial rule. Its most pervasive legacy was to be found in the sphere of human relations, in the attitudes of the British and Indian peoples toward each other. To the feeling of patronizing superiority which followed naturally from the position of the numerically smaller ruling British class, evangelical religion with its stern disapproval of Indian ways, and the advent of European wives in India, was added a new racial tinge - a belief in the inherent racial inferiority of the natives of Hindoostan.

Before the Mutiny it had been assumed that for all his idolatry and debauchery, the Indian could still be civilized, Indian society regenerated and reformed on a British model; Utilitarians and Evangelicals alike agreed that in a generation or two India's "respectable" classes would be Christian, English speaking and actually engaged in the governing of their country. Any faults they had arose not from inherent racial inferiority but

"from the hateful superstitions to which they are subject, and the unfavorable state of society in which they are placed. But if it please God to make any considerable portion of them Christians, they would I can well

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T. Metcalf: The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1850-70 (New Jersey, Princeton U. Press, 1964) p.vii.

I am largely indebted to Metcalf's study for my understanding of the effects of the Mutiny on the British psyche.

believe, put the best of European Christians to shame." <sup>1</sup>

From the time of Bentinck in 1828 therefore, the British had openly set their hand to the task of raising the moral and intellectual character of their subjects; spurred on by the liberal and reforming spirit of early Victorian England, they had hoped to transform Indian society on a European model. On the other hand, almost all recent historians of British imperialism in the second half of the century have noticed that the optimism of the earlier period was lacking - the atmosphere of "glad confident morning" was a good deal less pervasive than might be supposed of the era which saw the hectic colonization of the African, Asian and Pacific land masses.<sup>2</sup>

The enthusiasm may well have begun to waive in the decade or so before the Revolt; almost certainly it did not change the attitude of thousands of Englishmen overnight. But it crystallized a situation, provided a justification for what

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<sup>1</sup>

Bishop Heber, letter to Charles Wynn, March 1st, 1825, in Regionald Heber: Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India (London, 1829, III, p.333), in F.G. Hutchins: The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India (New Jersey, Princeton U. Press, 1967)

<sup>2</sup> See R. Faber: The Vision And The Need, op.cit., p.12-13; C.A. Bodelson: Studies in mid-Victorian Imperialism (Copenhagen, U. of Scandinavia Press, 1960) p.174, maintains that one of the most important effects of Seeley's writings (whom he considers one of the most influential prophets and popularizers of Imperialism) was the studied sobriety with which he tried to dampen what he called "bombastic Imperialism", by which he meant the flamboyant and romantic orientalism that came to be associated with Disraeli. Also G.M. Young: Victorian England: Portrait of an Age (London, Oxford U. Press, 1960 edit.)

some may have already begun to suspect. At any rate, the policy of reform and the ultimate goals of British rule had both to be reconsidered. Racial animosities had been aroused by the event, which were to poison relations between British and all Indian peoples; doubtless in fact "every subject of Your Majesty who is not a Christian and who has a dark skin."

Almost without realizing it, the British threw over the whole notion of Indian regeneration and consigned the Indian people to permanent racial inferiority. From the Mutiny they drew the lesson that the Indians were not backward and inept, in need of guidance, but irredeemably mired in oriental stagnation. A people who rejected the benefits of European civilization, they were clearly incapable of appreciating them and could never be lifted to the heights of Victorian liberalism. <sup>1</sup>

Their only hope now lay, it was presumed, in the long continued rule of a beneficent British government; and, if it was rarely openly expressed, the idea of permanent racial inferiority underlay most post-Mutiny British thought about India, Asia and "the East" and it was ultimately written into imperial ideology. <sup>2</sup>

Importantly, however, the idea of permanent racial inferiority soon found a theoretical backing outside the Indian experience - in contemporary scientific thought, in the pseudo-scientific

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Horace St. John wrote as early as 1853 of the "Indians" of the "Indian Archipelago"; "Their imbecility is as incurable as their despotism is ferocious. They deserve only ruin." The Indian Archipelago: Its History and Present State (2 vols. London 1853)

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T. Metcalf: op.cit. p.303-04, p.309. With the passage of the Ilbert Bill in 1883 "the principles of racism and imperialism emerged triumphant from their greatest challenge."

racism of new racial theories of men like Cuvier and Arthur de Gobineau, which helped convert the notion from an emotional sentiment to a scientific fact. The earlier European self-confidence had naturally clothed with moral overtones "the instinctive revulsion against the new and <sup>un-</sup>familiar which has lain at the base of racial prejudice since men of different cultures and colours first came into contact." It was obvious to the British that their expanding industrial civilization was somehow superior to that of the darker-skinned negroes and oriental races. In the mid-nineteenth century however, with the development of the study of anthropology, racial prejudice was given scientific foundations and differences became permanent and irradicable.<sup>1</sup> Some, like Gobineau, adhered to the Christian tradition of a single ancestor; others, amongst them the American ethnologist, J.C. Nott, took the theory to its logical extreme and saw the various races of mankind as separate and distinct acts of creation. Still later, others, influenced by the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species, found a path somewhere between the two. A.C. Haddon noted that

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Curtin, Image of Africa, op.cit., especially discusses this point. "Eighteen fifty-four was the great year for racist publications. Nott and Gliddon accepted Knox and proclaimed that human progress came from "a war of races". Bulwer Lytton, later to become Secretary of State for the Colonies, presented his own racial interpretation of history. In France, Count de Gobineau began publication of his Essai sur l'Inegalite des races humaines, the most famous and perhaps the most influential of all racist works in the nineteenth century." See also Nott J.C. and Gliddon G.R.: Types of Mankind (Philadelphia, 1855) and Indigenous Races of the Earth (Philadelphia, 1857).



"....the three groups of mankind - the white, the yellow and black races, are probably all divergencies from the same unknown ancestral stock. They have severally specialized along lines of evolution, and what is important to note is that different traits of their organization have become arrested, or specialized in different degrees and in different directions." 1

All however were able to reassure their European audiences that "there can be no doubt that, on the whole, the white race has progressed beyond the other races." When racial characteristics became anatomical features susceptible of precise measurement (size of the brain, facial angle, shape of the head) and cranial structure could be shown to provide an enduring natural and reliable basis upon which to establish a true classification of the races of men, intellectual capacity became related to physical structure and it was possible to rank the races of mankind on a scale of civilization.<sup>2</sup>

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A.C. Haddon: The Study of Man (New York, 1898) p.xxii. Haddon went on to make the rather dubious observation that "while the white man may, for example, be nearer the ape in the character of his hair than the Mongol or the Negro, the usual short body and long legs of the latter also remove him farther from the ape, to whom, in this respect, the other groups are more allied." See also Quatrefages A.: The Human Species (London, 1886) pp.89-178 for a detailed analysis of different theories of the origins of Human Species. Of the Malays, Quatrefages wrote (p.433) "All polygamists have regarded the Malays as one of their human species; many monogamists have considered them as one of the principal races. I showed them long ago that, in reality, they are only a mixed race in which white, black and yellow elements are associated."

2

Ranging understandably from the Saxons of North Europe (with the largest cranial capacity, the most advanced anatomical structure, and the greatest appreciation of freedom) to the negro at the other extreme, midway between man and ape, his intellectual inferiority clearly established by the fact that from earliest times, "the dark races had been the slaves of their fairer brethren," and unalterable, since the size and  
(continued page 40)

Further, the races of mankind were demarcated according to climate:

That certain races are constitutionally fit and other unfit for certain climates is a fact which the English have but too good reason to know when on the scorching plains of India they themselves become languid and sickly, while their children have soon to be removed to some cooler clime that they may not pine and die."<sup>1</sup>

Whenever the white races ventured into the tropics or negroes into the temperate climes, they deteriorated rapidly. The racists concluded that although the white races were destined by virtue of their superior energy and intelligence to dominate the earth, they could neither settle in the tropics nor marry the native races. The mission of the white man in tropical Africa and Asia was not to displace the indigenous races but to rule over them as conqueror and guardian.

(Naturally this posed some problems for the British in "our tropical possessions in Malayan India" and not a small part

(Footnote 2. contd. from page 39)

shape of his brain set rigid limits to his advance in civilization. - See A.R. Wallace, (who significantly dedicated his book to "Charles Darwin, ... not only as a token of personal esteem and friendship but also to express my deep admiration for his genius and his works"): The Malay Archipelago (London, 1869), especially Vol.II, Chapter XL, on "The Races of Man in the Malay Archipelago - "a short statement of my views as to the races of man which inhabit the various parts of the Archipelago, their chief physical and mental characteristics" - and Appendix, (p.287-290), on "The crania of the races of man in the Malay Archipelago." Wallace was perhaps the most influential ethnographer of the region.

<sup>1</sup> Tyler, Edward B.: Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization (New York, 1898, first edn. 1881) p.73; cf. Henri Fauconnier's conviction that every land in which man cannot live naked all year round is condemned to work and war and morality (The Soul of Malaya; London, 1931, p.143)

of their writing was devoted to proving that they might reside there for reasonably long periods without succumbing to the insidious physical and moral torpidity of the tropics:

Within seventy-sev<sup>e</sup>n miles of the equator, it might be expected that the climate (of Singapore) would be ill-suited to Europeans. Such however is not the case. Neither is the high temperature nor the extreme humidity of the atmosphere found to interfere seriously with their health or even with their comfort. So green and beautiful is all around that heat which would be intolerable in an arid plain or sandy desert is there scarcely appreciated, and is borne without difficulty. In Singapore - all is constant midsummer.

And yet "this extreme equableness ... is after all, perhaps, the greatest objection to the climate":

....for it has the effect of slowly enervating the system, and unfitting it to withstand any acute disease that should overtake it. No bad effects, however, should be felt from a residence of six or seven years, and it has been ascertained by all the best medical authorities in the Straits that after such a residence, one year in a cold bracing climate is sufficient to completely restore whatever vigour may have been lost and fit the European for another term of similar duration.<sup>1</sup>

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Cameron: Our Tropical Possessions, op.cit., p.150-1; Curtin op.cit. draws attention to the influence of the imperfect state of contemporary medical knowledge on racial and imperial ideology. Doctors attributed the recovery of Mrs. Innes and Mrs. Lloyd (from injuries received in the "Pangor Tragedy") to "our being below par ... Had we been living in Singapore, where a more generous diet is available, the danger would have been much greater. Semi-starvation has its advantages. Many a Malay, owing to the national diet of fish and vegetables, combined with teetotalism, has recovered from wounds that would have been fatal to a European accustomed to live on beef, mutton and brandy." (Mrs. Innes, needless to say, lost little love for what she was wont to call "the red-tapeists of Singapore".) The Chersonese with the Gilding Off, Vol.II, p.144).

Nevertheless, as in all countries east of Calais, the Britisher had continually to be on his guard - particularly for any loss of moral "vigour":

Passions run high among a people  
living within shout of the equator ....  
If morality is a question of latitude ....  
by western standards (it) is remarkably  
lax throughout a good many degrees north  
and south of the equator ....<sup>1</sup>

Incredible though these race theories may appear today with their easy assumption of European superiority,<sup>2</sup> at the time they marked the first significant attempt to place anthropology on a scientific basis, and met with widespread approval.

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Swettenham: Real Malay, p.150-151. Note also the theme of Dawe's short romantic stories of "The love of the White for the Yellow, the Yellow for White" (A.C.L. Dawe: Yellow and White (London, John Lane, 1895)).

2

As the home of the "orang-utan", the ape, and an aboriginal race of "black woolly-haired", "ape-like" men, the Semangs or "orang-utan" (literally "wild men of the woods"), the Malay Peninsula was naturally the focus of a good deal of speculation along pseudo-Darwinian lines. Most serious studies carried a chapter on the possible origins and relationship to the Malay race proper, customs, physical and moral characteristics and so on. It is difficult to tell precisely how their presence affected images of Malaya - the emphasis on their "negrito" traits, for example, must have deflected to Malaya, in part at least, that whole spectrum of emotion generated in mid-Victorian England by the negro problem. On the whole, however, they were regarded as a curiosity arousing the interest only of traveller, and ethnographer; with rare exception little attention was paid them in the nineteenth century once it was decided that the Malay race would become the agents of British imperialism, beyond satisfaction or regret at their inevitable passing before the wheels of progress and civilization. See, e.g. Burbidge. Gardens of the Sun (London, John Murray, 1880), "Let any naturalist who is prejudiced against Darwinian views go to the forests of Borneo. Let him there watch from day to day this strangely human form...."

Even the rise of Darwinism with its emphasis on evolution did not shake the hold of this pseudo-scientific racism.<sup>1</sup> If evolution destroyed ideas of multiple creation and the fixity of racial types, it provided, in the struggle for survival, a mechanism by which racial differentiation and conflict could take place. The white race, more adaptable and advanced, emerged dominant from Darwin's theories, victorious in the struggle for existence. The new racial theories, whether Cuvier's or Darwin's, provided Englishmen all over the Empire with a British audience already conditioned to think in racial terms when it became necessary to proclaim the inherent superiority of the British people, and such was the prestige of the new sciences that there could be little unjust or immoral in merely following their dictates.

After the events of 1857, no one could easily deny that the races of men were cut off from one another by enormous differences in behaviour and attitude, and that the darker races were permanently consigned to an inferior position in the scale of civilization. Together the new racial thought and the lessons of 1857 reinforced and gave credibility to one another. Cranial measurement and the Kanpur Massacre taught much the same lesson. 2

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But see Harvard Educational Review (Feb. 1969) and New York Times (August 31st, Sept. 21st, 1969) for Arthur Jensen's conclusion that I.Q. is genetically determined and "negroes as a group test out poorly when compared with whites or orientals". "No amount of compensatory education or forced exposure to culture is going to improve this factor". Note also the recent popularity of books like Robert Ardrey's African Genesis (Atheneum 1961) and Territorial Imperative (Atheneum 1966); Desmond Norris' The Naked Ape; and K. Lorenz's: On Aggression (Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966). Ashley Montagu, and others, in Man and Aggression (London. O.U.P. 1968) however, vigorously attack any such doctrine based on the "innate depravity of mankind."

- 2 T. Metcalf: The Aftermath of Revolt, op.cit., p.313.

At the same time, there were important differences between the Malayan and Indian imperial experience; (many of which appear to have arisen simply out of the determination of the Anglo-Malays to create them, but also precisely because the Indian Army and the Sepoy Revolt did not "occur" in Malaya.)<sup>1</sup>

It was, beyond the vague but important field of British attitudes to the Asiatic races, mainly in a negative sense that the Indian mutiny impinged upon the colonial experience in Malaya. In the immediate sense, "Malaya" was anxious to share in the drama of those stirring days as far as it could - it was with pride that one resident recorded that Lord Elgin was actually staying with Mr. Blundell in Singapore when "the great rebellion in India" broke out, and that from "the government bungalow that stood where Fort Canning now stands" he issued the famous order "which, by deflecting the troops of the China expedition at Anjer and sending them back to India, it is believed by many, saved the British Empire in India." <sup>2</sup>

Moreover there are occasional intimations that the mutiny experience remained in the Anglo-Malayan sub-conscious, long after the event itself had become mere history.

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<sup>1</sup> Allen: Two Imperialists ..., op.cit., also looks at the ideas Swettenham and Clifford held in common with their age, (Part I), and how they differed, (Part II). The latter, according to Allen, was due to one of two reasons - either it was because they "liked and respected" their subjects in a way which was by then quite unfashionable in India and never possible in Africa, or because they entered the Malay States just before "the rush-hour" of imperialism, under abnormal circumstances.

- <sup>2</sup> J. Cameron: Our Tropical Possessions, op.cit., p.24.

Mr. Innes always said he believed the 'simple dressing' which was sent to us with other medicines from Klang, was neither more nor less than hog's lard, the thought of using which would have been horrible to the Mahometan Malays; but I cannot think that the Government, knowing their prejudices, would risk offending them by treachery of this kind, after the lesson taught by the Indian Mutiny. 1

There is a sense in which the early Anglo-Malay imperialists keenly felt the lack of incidents in their history to compare with the Mutiny for creating heroes and martyrs (even Africa made one of General Gordon and this was, after all, the "real stuff" of imperialism), a vague but unmistakable sense of "being left out of it all" in some way.<sup>2</sup> Swettenham tried desperately to invest the murder of Resident Birch in Perak with something of this atmosphere, but the whole affair was nonetheless robbed of much of its dramatic potential by the suspicion that Birch had, in dashing "into Perak's Augean Stables like an angry Victorian schoolmaster, confident that it could all be cleared up with a little firmness and decision"<sup>3</sup>, somehow broken with the Malay "tradition" of tactfulness and understanding in dealing with the natives, and in fact might even have deserved

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Mrs. Innes: The Chersonese with the Gilding Off, op.cit. Vol.I. p.102.

2 Malaya's "isolation" is discussed more fully in Part 4.

3 R.O. Windstedt: Malaya and Its History (n.d) p.66, 68, quoted in Kiernan: op.cit., p.84; cf. Anson About Others and Myself (p.323), quoted in Parkinson, C.N.: British Intervention in Malaya, 1867-1877 (Singapore, U. of Malaya Press, 1960), p.202-03. "I am very much annoyed with Birch, and the head-over-heels way in which he does things; ... He has made a regular mull of the farms, and does not seem to have impressed either the Sultan or the ex-Sultan very favorably."

his rather hasty, if regrettable, demise. Clifford at once defined Anglo-Malay sentiments about the Mutiny, and in a wider sense, the whole Malayan imperial experience, in his short story "The Breath upon the Spark".<sup>1</sup> Ostensibly a minor Anglo-Indian official's reminiscences on his reaction to the outbreak of the Mutiny, in fact it reveals a good deal about how the British perceived of themselves in Malaya: Insofar as he identifies at all with the mutiny, it is through his hero ("an Assistant Deputy Commissioner of sorts," stowed away in a God-forsaken district at the Back of Beyond, so long alone among the natives "that he knew as much about the dusky insides of Orientals as is good for any man.") This "Assistant Deputy Commissioner of sorts" has successfully cowed the Muslims in his district; at the end of his story, Clifford asks him

"But you must have got plenty of kudos for keeping that district quiet at such a difficult time."

"Kudos?" he queried. "O dear, no! You see mine was one of the districts that had no mutiny history, and there were heaps of them - heaps of them!" 2

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Clifford: Bushwacking: p.309 ff.  
See Swettenham's account of Birch's murder and the role the former played in the events, especially in Malay Sketches, Chap. xix, "James Wheeler Woodford Birch" and Chap. xx, "A Personal Incident".

2 Clifford: ibid. This story is also a very interesting comment upon the Deputy Commissioner's attitudes to the opposite sex. The European woman who is the "breath upon the spark" of his flagging imperial spirits is married to a man whose "lack of pluck .... was somehow degrading to us all", but she earns Clifford's hero's undying love by "helping him to play the man".



The thought that his imperial gestures might go unnoticed apparently preyed heavily upon Swettenham's mind too (and perhaps partly explains his feverish determination to leave his mark upon the Peninsula in railway lines, public buildings, roads and Botanical Gardens). Nothing was so unjust to his mind as the treatment meted out to Stamford Raffles. He spoke of British expansion in the East as

"a record of the doings of courageous, capable and masterful men. Opportunity may tear the cloaks from a thousand excellent, hesitating, conscience-burdened theorists and talkers, who never get beyond their good intentions; while one man of courage, determination and action inspired by the fire of patriotism will make opportunities for himself, to the profits of his country. Such a man was Sir Stamford Raffles, and today his countrymen can gauge to a nicety England's gain and his personal reward."

But, while hastening to point out that no true patriot counts either his present risk, or his prospective advantage, when intent upon his country's interests, ("the greater so immeasurably overshadows the less"), Swettenham confided

"....probably no true man can help a feeling of mortification when the sacrifice of the best he has to offer passes without acknowledgment. Raffles was a great man and stronger in individuality than most, but neglect touched him, and embittered the closing years of his life." <sup>1</sup>

To Swettenham, nothing could be more tragic.

But to return to the effects of the Indian Mutiny; I have spoken elsewhere of a "Malayan tradition" of governing

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<sup>1</sup> Swettenham: Real Malay, "A New Method", p.8-9.

native peoples. It is my impression that denied by circumstance and economy, the glamour and romance that was lent to the life of British officials in India by the presence of the Indian Army (what more impressive a place for display of imperial splendour than the battle field ... or the parade ground?),<sup>1</sup> the Anglo-Malays determined to make a virtue of the somewhat less spectacular imperial qualities of understanding and kindness to the natives - which had the effect of modifying the rift created in India between ruler and ruled by the Mutiny, and gave the racial element in late nineteenth century imperial ideology a slightly different emphasis in Malaya.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time Malayan civil servants never avowedly modelled themselves on the precedent of the government of India.

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<sup>1</sup> The pomp and ceremony of the Malay courts became an important part of the Residents' business and the Durbars following Federation were unquestionably very important for all that little of substance was discussed. This pomp was obviously much enjoyed by both British and Malays and is a tradition that continues today. (See the lavish production "The King Installed - The Pageantry of a Great Ceremony" Straits Times Annual (Singapore, 1967) p.22 ff.)

<sup>2</sup> Although military force played its part in the Malayan imperial experience it was in a special and temporary sense only. "The history of British influence in Malaya ... of the last quarter of the nineteenth century began with a military expedition which attracted small attention, for it cost the country little in blood and nothing in treasure. The expedition was punitive and what was required was done quickly and effectually ... In Selangor, beyond a naval demonstration, the shelling of some forts and the excavation of certain reputed pirates, there had been no conflict with British forces and no British troops were ever employed to support the Resident's authority" (Swettenham Real Malay p.47, p.17-18) cf. Miss Bird's evident disapproval of the Residency of Bloomfield Douglas, which had "the appearance of an armed post amidst a hostile population" (The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither (London, John Murray, 1883; Oxford edition, 1967, p.218)

In Clifford's story, "Concerning Maurice Curzon," Maurice's father curses the examination system and is given to lament that, in another age, his recalcitrant son might have been a "Clive"; the author points out however, that "a new kind of man is now called for in the East".<sup>1</sup> The early Malayan Residents were very much aware that theirs was "a new method" for governing the native races, and in the attempt to define their role, they looked back to men like "Rajah" James Brooke ("who upset his bishop by conniving at liaisons between his staff and Borneo women", and many of whose administrators "sport Dyak tattoos and shunned European company"), and, perhaps even more, to Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore and the first and greatest Malay scholar-administrator.

Moreover, it was significant that Stamford Raffles had written as early as the eighteen-twenties of the Malays:

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Hugh Egerton: Sir Stamford Raffles, (London, 1900) in the "Builders of Empire Series"; "It is to the honour of Raffles that he was distinguished both in the fields of thought and action, that he bridged the chasm which divides the Wakefields from the Clives in this series."  
 cf. H. Keppel: The Voyage to Borneo of the H.M.S. Dido (2 Vols., London, 1846) "Whether in preparing for the establishment of a British settlement on the coast of Borneo, or in actually making one, Her Majesty's Minister, I am satisfied, will advert to the merits and peculiar qualifications of Mr. Brooke..... I consider him as possessing all the qualities which distinguish the successful founders of new colonies; intrepidity, firmness, and enthusiasm, with the art of governing and leading the masses. He possesses some, moreover, which have not always belonged to such men, however otherwise distinguished; a knowledge of the languages, manners, customs and institutions of the natives by whom the colony is to be surrounded ...." Keppel also noted that "benevolence" and an "independent fortune" were convenient but unusual attributes for "projectors of colonies" in this part of the world.

" Notwithstanding their piracies and vices usually attributed to them there is something in the Malayan character which is congenial to British minds and which leaves an impression the very opposite to that which a much longer intercourse has given of the subdued and cultivated natives of Hindoostan ...." <sup>1</sup>

In the same spirit, H. Wise wrote in 1846 that

" The Malays, with proper management, may in my opinion be rendered a very superior race in many respects to some of the natives of Hindoostan ...."

and opined that Rajah Brooke was noteworthy in his belief that the natives should be treated "as equals"

" On this point, most Europeans are grossly wanting .... When we desire to improve and elevate a people we must not begin by treating them as an inferior race; and yet this is too generally the style of our Indian rulers, with a few brilliant exceptions." <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From A. Wright and T. Reid: The Malay Peninsula (London, 1912) p.134. Also J. de V. Allen: "Malayan Civil Service 1874-1941 - Colonial Bureaucracy/Malayan Elite." (Paper presented to International Conference, Asian History, Aug. 5-10, 1968, University of Kuala Lumpur). Allen feels that in speaking only of the Malays, Raffles anticipated more correctly the views of succeeding generations of Malay Civil Servicemen than of "the founding fathers". I would argue that the Chinese were tolerated rather than liked and that their women-folk apart, the Indians were generally disliked. It was as much for himself as for "the Malay" that Swettenham spoke when he wrote "The land is Malaya, and he is the Malay. Let the infidel Chinese and the evil-smelling Hindu from Southern India toil, ... they are strangers and unbelievers, and while he is quite willing to tolerate them, and to be amused, rather than angered, by their strange forms of idolatry, their vulgar speech in harsh tongues, and their repulsive customs, he thinks it only fitting that they should contribute to his comfort ...."

Real Malay p.37: see also p.39 on Chinese and p.37-40 on the Indians.

<sup>2</sup> H. Wise: A Selection of Papers relating to Borneo, (1846) p.49, 24. in Kiernan: Lords of Human Kind, op.cit. p.86

Even Henry Keppel, for all that the nature of his contact with the Malays sharpened his awareness of their less endearing traits, offered the opinion that

No difference can be more marked than between the Hindoostan and the Malay. The former though more self-possessed and polished, shews a constraint in manners and conversation, and you feel that his training has made him an artificial character. The Malay, on the contrary, concealing as well the feelings uppermost in his mind, is lively and intelligent, and his conversation is not confined to a dull torture of unmeaning compliment. 1

And when they turned away from the Indian model in an attempt to establish a distinctly Malayan imperial identity after 1867, it was to this tradition that the founding fathers of the Malay States Civil Service turned, albeit a trifle reluctantly in some cases ... 2

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H. Keppel: H.M.S. Dido, op.cit., p.26-27.

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See J. de V. Allen "Malayan Civil Service ...", op.cit. on the distinction between Straits Settlement Civil Service and Malay States Civil Service; the latter being all those who served in Malaya except those who served only in the Crown Colony. Strictly speaking there were two distinct civil services in Malaya before Federation, even before 1919, when the two were amalgamated at Sir Lawrence Guillemard's suggestion. Generally, the S.S.C.S. clung more to the Indian model (many were ex-India officials; See e.g. O. Cavenagh: Reminiscences of an Indian Official, (London, 1884), esp. p.369.) and to the other strand of the Raffles' image of "Empire-Builder". Sir Frederick Weld obviously saw himself in the Raffles' tradition when, unveiling a statue of Raffles in 1887, he stressed "the crowd of splendid shipping, the churches, the public buildings and offices", and "the influence of the British name in the Native States" as testimony to the greatness of that man. Raffles was not solely an orientalist and humanitarian; in fact, (see J. Bastin: The Native Policies of Sir Stamford Raffles in Java and Sumatra An Economic Interpretation, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957), he was one of the first to suggest the importance of bringing influence to bear on the Malay Sultans as a means of safeguarding British commercial interests in the East. See also Egerton: Sir Stamford Raffles, (London, 1900).

There are two roads to possession and power . . . . the one is by force of arms and 'the mailed hand', - the other is by force of character and the exercise of certain qualities which compel respect and even sometimes win affection. Of the two, any one who has tried force knows which appeals most to him. Conquest and physical mastery is to most health-minded Englishmen, the finest game in the world, and to those who have had the luck to take part in it, a really good fight is the acme of man's enjoyment. The grim excitement of war, the thrill of battle, the quickening pride of race, the inspiring traditions of heroism and sacrifice, the shock of arms, and the ecstasy of victory, which shouts in delirious joy lest it should choke with unexpected tears - appeal to instincts higher than those of the mere savage. It is an experience to live for, worth dying for: with reward, and fame, and praise coming hard upon the heels of success. <sup>1</sup>

The other, which Swettenham was obviously struggling to accept, and "the more excellent way" (though it "lacks in brilliance, in scenic effect, in excitement, and often in recognition, much of what the first possesses,") required

.....courage and resource, combined with tireless energy, sympathy with the people of the land, their customs and prejudices, and their enthusiasm for the work entrusted to them, that determination to compel success, which is characteristic of the class which sends its sons to the uttermost parts of the earth to preach the gospel of freedom, justice and British methods of admin-

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<sup>1</sup> See also Swettenham: Perak Journals 1874-1876 (ed. by C.D. Cowan, J.M.B.R.A.S., Vol.24, Pt.4, 1951) and British Malaya (London, 1948 edn.) p.191-2 for his eulogy of Raja Mahmud of Selangor whom Swettenham found a most attractive personality perhaps because "he fought for no political reason, but for friendship's sake, and because he liked it"

istration.<sup>1</sup>

The result was that, if only by projecting most of their animosities on to the "natives of Hindoostan", the Anglo-Malayans were able to forgive in the "more civilized" of their subjects even those traits which at first sight they might have found just as repulsive. At one extreme, this expressed itself in the sentiment: however uncivilized the Malays, they are still better than the Hindoo barbarians.

Less admirable however, are their practices of rouging - a custom confined to married ladies alone - and using antimony after the fashion of Kobe to darken the eyelids and give a lustrous look to the eyes. But after all, these customs are infinitely preferable to those of the Hindoos who give a ghastly yellow tinge to their faces, by the use of a powder composed

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<sup>1</sup> Swettenham: Real Malay p.46-48, p.212-213; "A British military expedition had been dispatched to the State, at a moment's notice, and the troops were divided into two forces; one sent from China ... and the other composed of troops from India. I myself was with the first force, and, for a time, all the fighting to be got was theirs. That, of course, was very annoying to the later arrivals, stationed here with nothing to do but to gaze upon this Malay paradise, which I have no doubt they regarded as very indifferent compensation for their hurried dispatch from India - the soldier's paradise ..."

I am prepared to admit that, as woman, I am perhaps unable to understand the appeal of war to man. But, even if, as Joseph Kinsey Howard (Strange Empire: The Story of Louis Riel, Toronto, Swan Publishing Co. 1965 p.18) claims:

"They were moments of war, and boys play moments at war because they recognize in it, by unerring instinct, the most dramatic of human experiences. A philosopher has commented that, as much as we hate to admit it, war gives a 'sudden-edged preciousness to values we take for granted, like light when night is falling, or conversation with a friend one knows is doomed to die?' I could understand that." It seems unnecessary to make war merely to achieve a feeling of the preciousness of values normally taken for granted - easier, in fact, simply to stop taking them for granted.

of tumeric.<sup>1</sup>

At the other extreme, it expressed itself in the conviction that the Malay might be backward and inept, in need of guidance, but he was probably not as "irredeemably mired in oriental stagnation" as the natives of India. In any case, a "genuine" concern to preserve the 'real Malay' existed amongst most of the Residents.

From what I have said, it might be thought that a little emancipation is what the Malay audience chiefly need. I doubt it. That form of experiment, though full of interest to the operator, is sometimes fatal to the patient. A little learning is not so dangerous as to plant the seeds of aspirations which can never grow to maturity. It is easy for a teacher to make a child entirely dissatisfied with all its old surroundings, to fill it with a determination to have something better than the old life, or to have nothing at all. But, when the time comes to satisfy the cultivated taste of the educated mind, the teacher is powerless to help, is probably far out of reach, and the lonely soul ... will find little comfort in her old home and society of her own unregenerate people.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Major Fred McNair: Perak and the Malays: "Sarong" and "Kris" (London, 1878) p.154.

See also F.S. Perls: Ego, Hunger and Aggression, op.cit., p.157 "The projecting person ... visualizes in the outside world those parts of his own personality with which he refuses to identify himself. The organism experiences them as being outside the Ego-boundaries and reacts accordingly with aggression."

Also Chap. X, Part III, "The Assimilation of Projections."

<sup>2</sup> Swettenham: Real Malay p.273-4.

(Speaking of the isolation imposed by Muhammedanism on Malay women, but expressing a common sentiment about all Malay subjects.)

See J. de V. Allen: "Two Imperialists...", op.cit. p.55 ff., his analysis of the difference in the way Clifford and Swettenham used the words "regenerate" and "unregenerate", and how this difference affected their ideas on the value of education for Malays.



In any event, although it remained in the British subconscious, it is obvious that the lesson taught by cranial measurement and the Kanpur Massacre was for a variety of reasons softened as it found expression through imperialists in Malaya. The veil of misunderstanding and fear that lay between the races in India, was never so impenetrable in Malaya.<sup>1</sup> Swettenham proclaimed confidently, that contrary to general belief, it was not impossible for a European and a Christian to "understand the character of an Eastern, or follow the curious working of his brain", provided, that is,

"....you make yourself perfectly familiar with the language, literature, customs, prejudices and superstitions of the people; if you lie on the same floor with them, eat out of the same dish with them, fight with them, and against them, join them in their sorrows and their joys, and, at last, win their confidence and regard ... " 2

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Allen: ibid. p.62, speaks of Clifford's ability, already rare in British imperial literary tradition, to write of non-Europeans as real people, and maintains that it sprang from Clifford's connection with "early imperialism" when race barriers were low. Most historians of this period draw attention to the lack of "racialism" in early Anglo-Malayan relations - even the Chinese were not racially discriminated against, it is claimed.

- 2 Swettenham: Real Malay p.265: In any case the task was made easier by the fact that "between one Eastern and another there is a much greater similarity than there is between two Westerns, even though they be of the same nationality. There are good and bad, lazy and energetic, but you will hardly ever meet those complex ~~western~~ products of Western civilization whose characters are subordinated to the state of their nerves, and those to the season of the year, the surroundings of the moment, politics, the money market, and a thousand things of which the Eastern is blissfully unconscious." One can almost hear Swettenham's sigh of relief since it was precisely to avoid these "complex products of western civilization" that he had left England. (See Part 6, below).

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Or, as Clifford put it, observing the Sultan of Perak upon his knees in a London Hotel, "prostrating himself upon his prayer carpet, making earnest supplication to the King of Kings for the life of the Ruler whose servants, in His name, have brought a Malayan people out of the Land of Darkness and out of the House of Bondage",

Surely, there is hope for a race, let the pessimists say what they will, whose influence wins the love, admiration, confidence, and ready support of such men as this - men with the clean mind, the keen intelligence, and the kind heart of Sultan Idris of Perak - and makes of them loyal and enthusiastic Imperialists. 1

Or perhaps the Imperialist simply makes virtue out of necessity.

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1 Clifford: Bushwacking ..., "Pilotting Princes", p.222, upon the death of King Edward. Clifford's remark is a plea for British imperialism as a whole, and, for the particular case, Malaya.

Further support was found for the new imperial doctrines at home, in the authoritarian liberalism which grew up in the intellectual community of the Gladstone era. At the same time that the Indian Mutiny forced the British to re-examine their Indian policy, liberalism at home was undergoing a slow but profound transformation. "By 1860, it was no longer the heady intoxicating brew it had been during the 1830's when a group of earnest young men, brash, self-confident and aggressive had set out to remodel England according to the principles of Bentham and Ricardo."<sup>1</sup> The prosperous, complacent laissez-faire England of the mid-nineteenth century decades aroused little reforming enthusiasm.

With the gradual incursion of "democracy" upon the English political scene and in particular upon the Liberal party, intellectuals, increasingly estranged from the party leaders, began to proclaim that nothing could be further removed from the true liberal spirit than the rule of a tyrannical majority, manipulated by wire-pullers and party caucuses and with no object in view other than the satisfaction of its own baser instincts.

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T. Metcalf: Aftermath of Revolt, op.cit., p.viii. See also G.M. Young's brilliant analysis of these years in Portrait of an Age: Victorian England, op.cit., esp. p.100 ff. "We are nearing the years of division. In 1859, the last of the Augustans was laid by Johnson and Addison, and the Red House was begun at Bexley: in 1860 Ruskin issued as much of Unto This Last as Thackeray dared to print, and how great a part of late Victorian thought is implicit in five books of those same years, in the Origin of Species, Mill on Liberty and Essays and Reviews: in Fitzgerald's Omar and Meredith's Richard Feverel we can appreciate now better than their own age could have foreseen. We are approaching a frontier ... The late Victorian age is opening ..."

Robert Lowe spoke for these men as early as 1865 when, contesting the 1867 Reform Bill, he asserted:

Because I am a liberal and know that by pure and clear intelligence alone can the cause of the progress be promoted, I regard as one of the greatest dangers with which this country can be threatened a proposal to subvert the existing order of things, and to transfer power from the hands of property and intelligence ... to the hands of men whose life is necessarily occupied in struggles for existence. <sup>1</sup>

Much of this opposition to the spread of democracy was a natural response on the part of the educated middle classes to the loss of those privileges which they had held since 1832. However it rested on a well-developed intellectual foundation, derived in part from the philosophy of Hobbes and Bentham, in part from an idealization of British rule in India, of the type Lord Elcho alluded to, in the same debate, through the words of "Mr. Kaye's History of the Indian Mutiny":

In that country, public men are happily not exposed to the pernicious influences which in England shrivel them so fast into party leaders and parliamentary chiefs. With perfect singleness of aim and pure sincerity

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<sup>1</sup> Lowe added: "Are we prepared to do away with a system of tried and tested efficiency as no other country was ever happy enough to possess since the world was a world and substitute for it a form of Government of extreme simplicity, whose tendencies and peculiarities have been as carefully noted and recorded as those of any animal or vegetable, with whose real nature we have no excuse for not being well-acquainted - pure democracy?" Such a form of government might answer its purpose well enough in Greece or America (a nation of "log-rollers and wire-pullers"), but for England "in its present state of development and civilization, to make a step in the direction of democracy appears to me the strangest and wildest proposition ever broached by man."

Hansard, Vol. CLXXVIII, May 3rd 1865, pp. 1437, 1440.

of purpose they go with level eyes  
 straight at the public good never  
 looking up in fear at the suspended  
 sword of a Parliamentary majority,  
 and never turned aside by that fear  
 into devious paths of trickery and  
 finesse ... 1

The most forthright exponent of this authoritarian liberalism was James Fitzjames Stephens, who followed Bentham and Hobbes in proclaiming that the greatest happiness of the greatest number, rather than liberty, was the aim of government, in denying a natural propensity in man to treat his fellows with justice, and in maintaining, as a consequence, that only the judicious application of force wielded by a powerful legislator could resolve the conflicting interests and suppress the selfish desires of mankind. Force in this sense was not an evil but a necessary element in the creation of a civilized society. Stephens departed from the Utilitarian creed however, on the matter of popular education; Bentham and J.S. Mill, with all the enthusiasm that characterized Utilitarian, early Victorian thinking, assumed that everyone, English working man or Asian native, was capable of understanding the principles of Victorian

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1. ibid. p.1407. cf. Swettenham's translation of this in the Malayan setting: "It may be assumed that the leading motive of government in an English dependency is to spend for its advantage, all the revenues raised in it, never seeking to make money out of a distant possession, or exact any contribution towards Imperial funds ... This policy is one which appeals specially to intelligent natives of the East, and as long as these principles are maintained, the spread of English rule can only be for the good, and no native race, Eastern or otherwise, will regret the advent of English advice, as in Malaya, or English control as in India." (This distinction between "advice" and "control" was one the Residents were pleased to make, but which was scarcely supported in practice.) Real Malay p.33.

morality and living in peace with his neighbour, given only the training of good government and education. Stephens on the other hand, was convinced that the bulk of the people would always remain beyond the reach of rational discussion or improvement.

There are and always will be in the world an enormous mass of bad and indifferent people - people who deliberately do all sorts of things which they ought not to do, and leave undone all sorts of things which they ought to do. Estimate the proportion of men who are selfish, sensual, frivolous, idle, absolutely commonplace, and wrapped up in the smallest of petty routines, and consider how far the freest of free discussion is likely to improve them. The only way by which it is practically possible to act upon them at all is by compulsion or restraint. <sup>1</sup>

Universal suffrage and education would achieve nothing.<sup>2</sup> Rather the masses of people needed the rule of a gifted minority able to command their obedience and impose upon them its own ideal of happiness. Where Mill and Bentham had obscured the fact that

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<sup>1</sup> Stephens, J.F.: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (London, Smith Elder & Co., 1874, 2nd edition, p.31-35) See also R.J. White's introduction to the 1967 Cambridge edition of Stephens' book, which Stephens himself described as "little more than the turning of an Indian lantern on European problems." See again too, Marshall McLuhan's contention that "rational" has long meant "uniform, continuous and sequential" and that progress and improvement were felt to follow similar patterns. E.M. Forster's A Passage to India dramatically underlines the inability of oral and intuitive ("passionate") oriental culture to meet with the rational visual European patterns of experience. To McLuhan, Forster's book is a parable of western man in the electric age, and only incidentally related to Europe or the orient (Understanding Media, op.cit., p.30)

<sup>2</sup> See Swettenham: Real Malay, "A Mezzotint" p.273.

men were "fundamentally unequal", Stephen now asserted that society could only progress if this fact were unequivocally accepted and the idea of democracy abandoned. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising to find that Stephens' "ideal book" was Robinson Crusoe.<sup>1</sup> Nor should it now be surprising to find Sir Andrew Clarke, Governor of the Straits Settlements, writing:

" The Malays, like every other rude eastern nation, require to be treated like children, and to be taught, and this especially in all matters of improvement, whether in the question of good government and organization or of material improvement, ... such teaching can only be effected by an Officer living on the spot, whose time should be devoted to carefully studying the wants and capabilities of each State, the character of the Sultan and his Chiefs, and to making himself personally acquainted with every portion of the country ..." 2

Bodelsen, in his study of mid-Victorian imperialism looks closely at the writings of Seeley and Froude - the "classical expressions" of imperialism. He emphasizes the influence of the conservative thinker, Carlyle, particularly on the latter. Froude shared Carlyle's ideas about the role of "Great Men" in history, his distrust of political democracy, his preference for an older and more patriarchal state of society, his dislike of the industrial ("competitive") system, his disbelief

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<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere Stephens had had occasion to praise Mill for his castigation of "the complacent optimism" of the age, and the growing influence of a petty mediocre type of character. (*ibid.* 1967 edn. p.2.)

See Mannoni and Mason on the subject of Robinson Crusoe and the imperial mentality, discussed in Part 6 below.

<sup>2</sup> Clarke to Sec. of State. No.43, 24th Feb., 1874)

in nineteenth century progress. Froude distrusted the granting of self-government even to the "white" colonies, although it was due more to his fear of parliamentary democracy than to any objection to colonial autonomy. "He would have granted the colonies any amount of independence within the Empire if they had chosen to be ruled by a "Hero" instead of a responsible ministry." Moreover, as another commentator has written:

Kipling's attitude towards leadership was supported by an almost girlish capacity for hero-worship. Throughout his life he showed a tendency not only to admire but idealize Great Men." 1

Authoritarian paternalism and "Hero-worship" became closely related strands in imperial ideology, in fact this authoritarian paternalistic liberalism, combined with the new racial theories, provided the pillars upon which rested the ideology that was to govern Britain's imperialist ventures in the latter part of the nineteenth century, - the Malayan experience among them. In India, the British outwardly remained convinced of their own moral superiority and looked upon their presence there as tangible manifestation of this supremacy. But the self-confident optimism, and the plans for rapid westernization of Asia were shattered. The introduction of western ideas into traditional Asian society now seemed a dangerous and explosive thing; the consequences of meddling, however well intentioned,

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R. Faber: The Vision and the Need, op.cit., (p.99 et.seq.) One wonders whether the judgment implicit in the phrase "girlish capacity for hero-worship" does not make Faber a party to the same male Chauvinism explicit in Kipling's writings.



were at best uncertain and at worst catastrophic. Doubts, however small, crept into even the most ardent supporters of Pax Britannica. Thus Hugh Clifford, writing from his cherished Malay fastnesses in 1896, could wonder, in the midst of his certainty that

"....no one who has seen the horrors of native rule and the misery to which the people living under it are oftentimes reduced, can find doubt that its many drawbacks notwithstanding, the only salvation for the Malays lies in the increase of British influence ... and the consequent spread of modern ideas, progress and civilization",

whether

"....the Malay in his natural unregenerate state is more attractive than he is apt to become under the influence of European civilization." <sup>1</sup>

In future, it would be safer and more sensible to leave Asian society as it was and to concentrate upon the provision of a sound efficient administration. Caution and conservatism underlay every sphere of activity in India "after the Mutiny"; in Malaya too, the British sought to "enlist on our side and to employ in our service those natives who have from their birth or

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Clifford: In Court and Kampong, (London, 1897) esp. Chapters I and II.

cf. also Swettenham's introduction to the Malay Sketches, (London, 1893).

Note again Allen's ("Two Imperialists, op.cit.) discussion of Clifford's and Swettenham's use of "regenerate" and "unregenerate". Swettenham, though to a lesser degree, shared with Clifford, this peculiar schizophrenia in his conception of their role in Asia - were they rapists or saviours?

Swettenham notes that the "irresistible Juggernaut of Progress," that "enemy at the gates" who will destroy Malaya's natural beauty, is at the same time the bearer of "a higher morality."

position a natural influence in the country." It was wiser to buttress the traditional institutions, to strengthen the position of "natural" leaders who alone, it was presumed, could command the allegiance of the masses and speak to them on their own terms, to minimize social change, and to soften the impact of western rule.

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In fact the British built, on their knowledge of the behaviour of the Indian People during a period of revolt, an exaggerated and stereotyped image of Indian conservatism. The people were never so devoted to their old ways as the British imagined and showed, particularly as the nationalist movement gathered momentum, a marked adeptness at combining western and traditional Indian institutions and modes for use towards their own ends.<sup>1</sup> This image, generalized into a kind of "imperial folklore", was used as evidence to support the theory of "oriental stagnation", and was, it has been argued, in large measure a conveniently created myth by which the white man eased his conscience as he enjoyed the perquisites of power. Faced with a state of society, that of the imperial experience, which he found pleasurable and profitable but which, based as it was on the rule of one person by another, he felt subconsciously

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<sup>1</sup> See L. and S. Rudolph: Modernity of Tradition, op.cit., esp. and S. Wolpert: Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India (Berkeley, U. of California Press, 1962). One might compare these with Roffs' very competent analysis of the origins of Malay Nationalism: Origins of Malay Nationalism (New Haven and London, Yale U. Press, 1967)

to be basically unjust, the imperialist experienced a deep psychological need to justify his position and hence emphasized his subjects' inferiority to legitimize his refusal to mix with them on equal terms: <sup>1</sup>

If imperialism is as I have argued elsewhere, a self-justifying image, and if Shakespeare was correct in assuming that the colonial mentality is not created by the colonial situation but is a facet of human nature, always present, perhaps suppressed to a greater or lesser extent, it might not be irrelevant to consider here the concept of the personality of the imperialist.

The psychological phenomena which occur when two peoples at different stages of civilization meet and mingle can probably best be explained and understood if we see them as reactions to each other of two differently-constructed types of personality. <sup>2</sup>

Firstly, given the less ébouillient imperial mood of the second half of the century, it seems reasonable to expect a change in the personality - type of the person "who went out to

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<sup>1</sup> This is essentially Thomas Metcalf's analysis of the Indian imperial experience in latter nineteenth century. (Aftermath of Revolt, op.cit.) The real nature of these 'pleasurable', psychological perquisites of power is discussed in Part 6 below.

<sup>2</sup> O. Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban, op.cit., p.24. Note Mannoni's comments (p.24 ff.) on the "individual" and "personality". "An individual consists of what is inherited in the chromosomes, the genetic stock with which a man enters upon life. As an individual he represents the species to which he belongs, and within that species, the time from which he has sprung. The personality is inherited up to a point, but the inheritance is a social one ... (it) is simply the sum total of beliefs, habits and propensities, organized and linked on to another, which go to make up the individual as a member of his group. "Personality" and the "value image" are closely related. See Part 2 above.

This dark forest, where trees shoot up straight and tall, and are succeeded by generation after generation varying in stature but struggling upwards, strikes the imagination with pictures trite but true. Here the hoary sage of a hundred years lies mouldering beneath your foot, and there the young sapling shoots beneath the parent shade and grows in form and fashion like the parent stem. The towering few, with heads raised above the general mass, can scarce be seen through the foliage of those beneath; but here and there the touch of time has cast his withering hand upon their leafy brow, and decay has begun his work upon the gigantic and unbending trunk. How trite and yet how true! It was thus I meditated in my walk. The foot of European, I said, has never touched where my foot presses - seldom the native wanders here. Here I indeed behold nature fresh from the bosom of creation, unchanged by man, and stamped with the same impress she originally bore! Here I behold God's design when he formed this tropical land, and left its culture and improvement to the agency of man. The Creator's gift as yet neglected by the creature; and yet time may be confidently looked for when the axe shall level the forest, and the plough turn the ground.

Rajah Brooke's sentiments on  
first beholding the forests of  
the Malayan Archipelago.

the colonies." It has been noted that in India, at least, before the Mutiny, he tended to be an optimist, man of reforming spirit, who looked to India for the realization of radical hopes frustrated at home. In later decades however it was more the autocrat, pessimistic in his consideration of fellow humans, who sought in India a field to fulfil ambitions blocked in England. A man disturbed by the growing democratization of English life, and likely to be less excited by the desire to reform than to rule, concerned with British might rather than colonial hopes.<sup>1</sup> In Malaya this type was represented, too, by men like Sir Frederick Weld who could qualify what seems, at first glance, an unusually perspicacious remark to the effect that

Nothing we have done so far has taught (the Malays) to govern themselves. We are merely teaching them to cooperate with us and govern under our guidance. To teach men to govern themselves, you must throw them on their own resources. We are necessarily doing the very reverse ...

with the remark that in any case

I doubt if Asiatics can ever really be taught to govern themselves. Good native government seems not to be a plant congenial to the soil." 2

and this set his imperialist soul at ease.

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F. Hutchins, Illusion of Permanence, op.cit. p.xi.

2 Weld to his Secretary of State, 21 Oct., 1880, CO/273/104. cf. His address to the Royal Colonial Institute: "I think the capacity for governing is a characteristic of our race...." (Proc. Roy. Col. Inst., Vol.15, 1883-4, p.266)

Moreover, O. Mannoni, in a study of the phenomenon of "dependence" as manifested by Malagasi natives under the French colonial system, has suggested that this dependence met exactly the psychological and personality needs of the colonial European. Mannoni argues convincingly that everyone in a competitive society (as that of Victorian England increasingly was) is the victim to some extent of an inferiority complex which may be expressed in any number of ways (- in determination to make good, a desire for perfection, aggressiveness, preoccupation with order); and to the spirit convinced, or at least suspicious, of its own inferiority

"....the homage of a dependant is balm and honey and to surround oneself with dependants is perhaps the easiest way for appeasing an ego eager for assurance."

He suggests that the colonial administrator (and the missionary and pioneer/settler) shows himself, by choosing the colonial career, particularly prone to this weakness "of which the germ is present in every member of a competitive society and which", he claims, "flourishes with peculiar luxuriance in the warm broth of the colonial situation."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Mason, introducing O. Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban, p.11; cf. Albert Memmi: The Colonizer and the Colonized, p.xxvi. Memmi strikingly described the sequence of steps that lead the colonizer to "self-absolution." Conservatism brings about the selection of mediocre men. How can an elite of usurpers, aware of their mediocrity establish their privileges? By one means only: "debasement of the colonized to exalt themselves denying the title of humanity to the natives and defining themselves as simple absences of qualities - animals not humans." cf., Eric Berne: Games People Play, The Psychology of Human Relationships (New York, 1964), p.111-112, calls the game "Blemish" - it is played from the depressive child position "I am no good", which is protectively transformed into the Parental position "They are no good." Hence,

(Continued on Page 68)

Mannoni's thesis, that the European image of the native peoples they came to govern is simply a reflection of their own inner difficulties is supported by the tentative conclusions of a recent study of conservatism and personality.

Conservative doctrines appear in some measure to arise from personality needs ... the exacting and inflexible features of conservative social doctrine are related to the prototypic personality attributes of conservative believers.

Measuring the social-psychological attributes of conservatism,<sup>1</sup> Herbert McCloskey found that it appears to be far more characteristic of social isolates,<sup>2</sup> of people who think poorly of themselves, who suffer personal disgruntlement and frustration, who in fact may be very timid and submissive and wanting in

Footnote 1 continued from Page 67 -

"Blemish" players do not feel comfortable with a new person until they have found his blemish. "In its hardest form it may become a totalitarian political game played by "authoritarian" personalities, and then it may have "serious historical repercussions."

<sup>1</sup> Herbert McCloskey: "Conservatism and Personality" (American Pol. Sc. Review, March '58 Vol. III pp. 42,44) McCloskey admits to the tentativeness of his hypothesis; his conclusions are drawn entirely from contemporary Minnesota examples and the degree to which they may be generalized to conservatives in all places and all times could be questioned. In fact however, he inclines to the view that "the connections between conservatism and the personality configurations presented in the foregoing would very likely prevail wherever and whenever the members of a society are free to choose between conservatism and alternative liberal systems of belief."

<sup>2</sup> cf. Clifford, speaking of a group of colonials returning home to England in "The Home-Coming of Vincent Brooke" (Bushwacking etc.) p.250-1: "Most of us were friendless, adrift in a barren world, whose only inhabitants were English folk who, after the manner of their kind, eyed one another with deep disfavour and suspicion."

confidence.<sup>1</sup> Such people may lack a clear sense of direction and purpose, may be uncertain of their values and tend to be bewildered by the alarming task of having to thread their way through a society which seems too complex to fathom. (The District Commissioner in Clifford's "The Breath upon the Spark", by way of illustration of this point, is immensely relieved when the suggestion of violence upon English women, whom he has significantly epitomized in the person of a single woman, "Mrs. Harold", breaks him dramatically out of his paralysing loss of faith in himself. "Qui bono?" he wonders. "When a white man in the East once falls to setting himself that riddle, he is in woefully bad case. So long as we can feel that we are doing something that justifies our presence east of Suez, we can hold on, we can fight, we can endure." But

with that thought (of violence against the white woman) came also the necessity for action, and when a man is called upon to act ... he is relieved of the curse of thinking. It is the habit of taking thought, of letting the imagination have full play - it is that habit, more than conscience, that makes cowards of us all. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It may merely have been a literary ploy but a great many Anglo-Malay writers prefaced their works with an elaborate apology for forcing themselves upon their readers' attention. (See interleaf.) Nevertheless, this literary prostration before one's cultural peer group reveals a great deal about Victorian society and the imperialists' relationship to it.

<sup>2</sup> Clifford: Bushwacking p.326: The process of "taking thought", of "letting the imagination have full play", is that of recognizing the ambiguities of any situation, or realizing that there may be many alternative solutions, or, no solution, rather than the single, indisputably 'right' solution which the conservative personality, with its obsession for definition, must seek out.



## P R E F A C E

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As the history of even the most uneventful life, when faithfully recorded, must always contain some matter deserving notice, I venture, with all humility, to express a hope that in the following plain unvarnished sketch of the career of an Indian Officer from Cadet to Governor, there may be found some scenes described, some incidents related, which may be deemed of sufficient interest to induce its readers to pardon my presumption in presenting it to the Public.

General Sir Orpheus Cavenagh;  
Governor, Straits Settlements:  
Reminiscences of an Indian Official.

Provided with a clear purpose, whose worth he has no need to question, that of saving Mrs. Harold, the Commissioner can begin to function as imperialist once more.

On the other hand, McCloskey's research revealed that hostility and aggressiveness are principal components of the conservative personality and of the conservative doctrine. Conservatives prefer to believe in man's essential wickedness, they choose to see man as fallen, untrustworthy, lawless, selfish and weak. Expressed as a political doctrine, these projections of aggressive personality tendencies take on the respectability of an old and time-honoured philosophical tradition. They also lie at the root of the conservative inclination to regulate and control man; to ensure, that he will not violate the conditions necessary for order, to train him to value duty, obedience and conformity, and to surround him with stabilizing influences like property, church and the family.

The high values placed on authority, leadership and natural heirarchy and on an elite to guide and check the rest of mankind apparently derive from the same set of psychological impulses. The extreme emphasis on law and order,<sup>1</sup> the elaborate affection for the tried and true, and familiar, the fear of change and desire to forestall it, and the hope for a society which is ordered and hierarchical, and in which each is aware

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"Nothing has tended more decidedly to the deterioration of the Malay character than the want of a well-defined, generally acknowledged system of law."  
(Isabella Bird, Golden Chersonese, op.cit., p.22-23)

of his station and its duties, are, according to McCloskey, doctrinal expressions of a personality pattern that has a strong need for order and tidiness, that adjusts only with difficulty to change and cannot bear the uncertainty of questions left unanswered.<sup>1</sup> Such a personality is uneasy in the give and take atmosphere of free enquiry and the open society, it yearns for consensus of values and unequivocal definitions and conclusive specifications of the source of authority.<sup>2</sup>

The threads which hold together these various personality configurations of the conservative - the submissiveness, indecisive, retiring and somewhat spiritless demeanour on the one hand, and the hostility and aggressiveness and perfectionism on the other, defy precise tracing. They seem at first glance to have little to do with the administrators of the British Empire - neither seems to conform with the image we have inherited of the tireless, self-sacrificing imperial proconsul. But if the trend to conservatism in British intellectual and imperial ideology was a fact; and if, as McCloskey and Mannoni suggest, "conservative doctrines tell us less about the nature

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Swettenham: Real Malay, p.265, quoted above, footnote 1 p.55.

<sup>2</sup> cf. Swettenham: Real Malay, p.258-9. He attributes the anarchy that reigned supreme on the Malay Peninsular prior to British intervention to "a variety of reasons, amongst the principal of which may be instanced the absence of roads and the immense difficulties of communication; the jealousies and rivalries of different aspirants to the supreme authority, and the consequent "failure of any individual to make his power recognized throughout the State ..." It was this burden of many masters, and no fountain of justice and appeal, "that resulted in a well-nigh perpetual state of strife."

of man and society than about the persons who believe in these doctrines"; and if, finally, my purpose here is to understand what kind of men went to the colonies in the late-nineteenth century, then some understanding of the conservative personality is not irrelevant.

It acquires added significance if the marked parallel between the values and mechanisms of the Victorian public school system and those of British government, at home and abroad, which has been underlined by various scholars of the two institutions, is accepted. The most systematic of these is Rupert Wilkinson's study of British leadership and the public school tradition.<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson does not maintain that the one begot the other; however, he feels that both were equal reflections of British social character,<sup>2</sup> and further that;

Taken together, the attitudes and values inculcated by the Victorian public school very nearly comprise a definition of conservatism. They match practically item for item, the list of common beliefs held by Burke and acknowledged conservative thinkers.

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<sup>1</sup> Rupert Wilkinson: The Prefects: British Leadership and the Public School Tradition (London O.U.P. 1964). The main theme of this work is: "how did the Victorian school produce rulers, and what sort of rulers did they turn out to be?" See especially his chapters on "The Guardian Imperialist" and "Conservatism".

<sup>2</sup> cf. Bernard Darwin: The English Public School (London, Longmans Green 1929) p.26-29: "It seems ... that when we stick up for the public schools in a good stolid conservative way, we are not so much sticking up for a particular English institution but rather for the genius and for the stupidity of the whole English people. ... they ... emphasize the qualities of the Englishman of whatever class, refining and improving them in the process..."

<sup>3</sup> Wilkinson; op.cit., p.30-31.

Wilkinson argues that the main goal of the Victorian public school system was political and that behind the aim of "character-building" lay a political bent that was inseparable from the traditions of the English gentry. Thomas Arnold's formula for creating "the Christian gentleman" became an educational device for maintaining a public service élite. In other words, because conservatism was the argument which the group in power could put forward to justify its retention of power and because the problems facing this group, the landed gentry, were twofold (namely, it must absorb its competition and extend its social and political privileges to potential leaders of the liberal business class, and it must show that it deserved to govern by merit as well as by birth), its education system, the public school, became not merely the propagator of conservatism, but its logical expression. The public schools attempted to perpetuate the political supremacy of the landed classes by capturing talent from the rising bourgeoisie and moulding that talent into synthetic gentlemen; the bias that preferred government service to private profit-making was all part and parcel of the gentleman ideal.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The ideal was not peculiar to England. The same pattern emerged in Imperial China. "Like the public schools, Confucian education made public servants by making gentlemen ... The remarkable likeness between Confucian education and the Victorian public schools suggest that there is an intrinsic link between landed traditions, the gentleman ideal and a certain political bias in education." Wilkinson, *ibid.* p.4.  
 cf. J.D. Pringle "The British Commune: Thoughts on the Public School", (*Encounter*, Vol.16, Feb. 1961., pp. 24-28.) Pringle compares Plato's *Republic*, the 20th century Chinese commune, and the public school as political institutions designed to provide guardians for their respective societies.

Again, the inter-relationships between the public school system, British government and character cannot be simply defined but there appears to be a connection between "the public school spirit" and "the imperial urge". As one writer put it:

This public school spirit, though sufficiently elusive and hard to define is a real thing. It is probably wisest not to attempt any direct definition of it but to try to discover what sort of man it is who is imbued with it, what he is best fitted to do, what he has done and is doing for his country ... I fancy ... that if several old boys were asked for their opinions, they would say that what struck them most was the great number of the their fellows who were in one capacity or another "doing something abroad." They are in short, to use a convenient if tiresome expression, 'builders of empire'...<sup>1</sup>

There was in fact something in the character nurtured by the public school experience, predominantly a boarding school system with its monitorial tradition, its highly selective curriculum, its emphasis on competitive athletics, and being "out of doors" that predisposed many of its bearers toward building and guarding the Empire. A Public School Commission, set up in 1861 to investigate the failure of existing schools to meet the recruiting needs of the Army and Civil Services, significantly found no fault with their training of character:

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<sup>1</sup> B. Darwin: op.cit., p.20. cf. C.E. Carrington: prefacing his study of The British Overseas (Cambridge U. Press, 1950, p.xx), "I should not have undertaken this task if I had not the good fortune to be born into one of those middle class families whose members for hundreds of years moved freely about the Empire. An uncle or cousin in every Dominion is a great help to thinking imperially"; and see Roff's introduction to Stories by Sir Hugh Clifford, (Kuala Lumpur Oxford U. Press, 1966) for biographical details of the Clifford family, for example.

It is not easy to estimate the degree in which English people are indebted to these schools for the qualities on which they pride themselves most - for their capacity to govern others and control themselves, their aptitude for combining freedom with order, their public spirit, their vigour and manliness of character, their strong but not slavish respect for public opinion, their love of healthy sports and exercise... they have had perhaps the largest share in moulding the character of an English gentleman .... 1

It was in these schools that the young middle class boy could learn the "gentlemanly" virtues of strength, courage, chastity and "sacrifice of private interest on the altar of patriotic devotion to England's civilizing mission." 2 A public school background did much too, to prepare the colonial officer for the harassing that was, in spite of the servants and exotic travel, so much of colonial life. Boarding school isolation inoculated him against homesickness, and the spartan conditions of dormitory and study hall offered harsh contrast to the comforts of the middle or upper-class household. Indeed, one proud commentator at the turn of the century observed.

Long before the British public at large had been fired with a faith in the British Empire, one and indivisible, that was the faith in which every English schoolboy was

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Quoted in Pringle:op.cit. p.27.

2

The process is described in detail and with some insight by Simon Raven: The English Gentleman: An Essay in Attitudes (London, Blond, 1961) pp. 23-59, esp. His picture of the final product largely supports Wilkinson's claim that the values of the public school were largely those of the conservative thinker. See interleaf.

And so at last we may see and sum our paragon, the English Gentleman in the last days of his ascendance. We see that he was an agent of justice and effective action, having the fairness and the thoroughness to examine facts and the integrity to act on his findings. We see that he had much regard for the old loyalties - to country, to kinsmen, to Church - and that as a guardian of such institutions, and no less to assist him in his other duties, he saw fit to adopt a grave and somewhat aloof attitude of mind which was matched by dignified demeanour and a superior, though not an ostentatious, style of maintenance. Deeply conservative, if only as a result of fostering the loyalties with which he was charged, he never forgot his status as a warrior, was always ready, in time of need, to return to the ancient proving ground of his kind; but when there was no call for service, then he preferred to remain on the lands which his ancestors had won by service, for on these lands were at once his proper establishment and his proper occupation. Lacking the passion for intellectual exchange which had made city life tolerable for the Greeks, he held firmly to the Greek rule which pronounced most urban employments to be degrading. He went to the city, therefore, only to carry out his duties as a ruler - for to rule and to administer were among the many obligations on which his honour was based. According to this notion of honour, he was bound, not only by such commonplace rules of decency as chivalry to women and charity to the poor, but by a direct and imperative necessity to pay for his privileges by rendering service - service to his Sovereign and his superiors in office, service to his dependants, service to his Church. But even so, he set store by his freedom; if he met his obligations it was because honour bade him do so, not because any absolute authority compelled him. Authority he certainly recognized, but only such as his conscience suffered him to obey; he would welcome laws made by man in proper form and would acknowledge a King who ruled with his consent and with regard for his interests; but he would brook nothing from a tyrant who claimed divine right or a priest who dictated through dogma, and in no case whatever would he accept interference from beyond the sea. As his position required, he had pleasing manners intended to reassure his inferiors and to show the proper respect, free of any hint of servility, to those above him; and he was liable to combine such manners with a light scepticism which eschewed enthusiasms and quarrels. But if ever he was tempted to let his scepticism affect his deeper attitudes, then he was apt to receive timely reminder that many of his countrymen took their souls - and his, very seriously, and that if he was to continue in his place then he must look to his morals. For the English Gentleman, over and above all, was the product of English morality - a morality compatible with all forms of social and practical endeavour, but none the less grounded, as deep and firm as the roots of the oak tree were grounded in English soil, in the stubborn prohibitions of St. Paul.

Simon Raven:

The English Gentleman.



The dominant standard of Malay society from the 16th century to the turn of the 19th century ... was that of warrior kingship. The values of bravery, absolute loyalty to the prince, skilfulness in combat, aggressiveness, and pillage were stressed. From the 15th century ... the history of the Malays was dotted by petty as well as more serious warfare between contending chiefs and princes, right up to the end of the 19th century. Within Malay society, there developed two contradictory systems, the one stressing cooperation, togong-royong, usaha, (labour) and conformity, the other stressing courage, power, initiative, individualism adventure, absolute loyalty to the ruler ... The former value system was to be found among the agrarian subjugated section of the Malay society. The latter was upheld by the rulers and their courts, their dependants and hirelings. The larger section of Malay society was dominated by the latter.

Syed Hussein Alatas: "Feudalism in Malaysian Society: A study in Historical Continuity"

reared.<sup>1</sup>

Or, as G.M. Young put it,

Nor, in any history of the Victorian Age, should the school builders be forgotten. Those solid large-windowed blocks, which still rise everywhere above the slate roofs of mean suburbs, meant for hundreds of thousands their first glimpse of a life of cleanliness and order, light and air. <sup>2</sup>

And yet, there is a vague indication in the midst of all the glory of God, Queen and country, that the public school boy was not entirely convinced of his ability to play the role of guardian of England and Empire. The indoctrination was thorough (as one may judge from Simon Raven) but the fear remained in the subconscious that a synthetic gentleman was just that, and that in any case the day of the gentleman-guardian was fast passing. On the conscious level, most colonial officials successfully overcame these fears - after all, action was all that mattered, and, once in the colonies, that tiresome habit of thought, which Clifford confessed, "makes cowards of us all" could be left behind.<sup>3</sup> But the doubt remained, colouring in greater or lesser

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<sup>1</sup> Minchin: Our Public Schools (London, 1901) quoted in Pringle: op.cit., p.27-28. Pringle notes that it is surprising that mothers "in a class society where parents have an extraordinary affection for their children" should allow their sons to be taken from them at the tender age of eight or nine years, in much the same way that Chinese mothers are persuaded by rhetoric which declaims maternal love - as a product of a class society inseparable from ideas bred of private ownership and "nothing but the social ideology of man." He also points out that Plato was aware that the separation of the young guardians from their homes during education was the key to his whole system. ibid. p.26.

<sup>2</sup> G.M. Young: Victorian England, op.cit., p.117.

<sup>3</sup> See Clifford: Bushwacking, p.49-50: "A man to go bushwacking should have no insight, no sympathy, no imagination". It was Clifford's dilemma that, as imperialist in Malaya where high values were placed on precisely these three attributes, he possessed all three.

extent, the actions of all colonial officials, manifesting itself in that tireless "self-sacrifice" which never quite concealed the suspicion that imperialism was wrong.

Many a lad who leaves an English public school disgracefully ignorant of the rudiments of useful knowledge, who can speak no language but his own, and write that imperfectly, to whom the whole literature of his country and the stirring history of his fore-fathers are almost a sealed book and who has devoted a great deal of his time and nearly all his thoughts to athletic sports, yet brings away with him something beyond all price, a manly, straightforward character, a scorn of lying and meanness, habits of obedience and command, and fearless courage. Thus equipped he goes out into the world, and bears a man's part in subduing the earth and ruling its wild folk, and building up the Empire; doing many things so well that it seems a thousand pities that he was not trained to do them better, and to face the problems of race, creed and government in distant corners of the Empire with a more instructed mind. This type of citizen, however, with all his defects, has done yeoman's service to the Empire; and for most that is best in him, our public schools may fairly take credit ... <sup>1</sup>

If Victorian public schools cannot be held responsible for the creation of an empire, they did, once empire-building had been begun, partly contribute a faith and a rationale, "a fusion between the nationalist spirit and the motive for imperial philanthropy". The British Empire satisfied both the patriotic impulse to seek national glory, and the philanthropic impulse to "do good to others" and to inspire them by setting examples of superior morality, which was the essence of so much of the public school training. The connection between the two impulses was

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<sup>1</sup>

Rev. T.L. Papillon: "The Public Schools and Citizenship,"  
quoted in Pringle: op.cit.

to be found in the assumption of national and racial superiority. In the eyes of the imperial guardian, the white man's burden came to signify moral status as well as moral duty. The psychological fusion between prestige and philanthropy was a familiar process to the public school gentleman, who showed much the same attitude to his place in British class society. From the standpoint of gentlemanly values, the principle of the "white man's burden" was really only an imperial extension of noblesse oblige. Both principles sought to make status a reminder of duty, and to make duty a symbol of status.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, and again without arguing a strong causal relationship between imperial policy, the public school tradition, and conservatism, the policy of "indirect rule" adopted in Malaya and some parts of the African and Indian Empire is based on values which bear a marked resemblance to those of the public school.<sup>2</sup> It was very much in the latter's tradition of compromise between custom and efficiency. A complex pattern of control which, essentially, respected traditional communities and traditional authorities, it allowed for British administration through native leaders and, at the time, was a very convenient, economical and flexible way of running an empire. But it is also highly suited to the public school concept of leadership and respect for the guardian rather than the innovator. There were further shades

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See R. Heussler: Yesterday's Rulers (Syracuse, 1963);  
R. Furse: Aucuparius (Oxford, 1962)

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See R. Emerson's study, Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule (New York, MacMillan, 1937) for detail.

of the ethic of guarded tolerance in the sympathy that many of these administrators showed toward native traditions and the personal loyalty they often felt for their subordinates and colleagues, the chiefs and princes, qualities which were particularly in evidence in the Malayan imperial experience.

The Malayan Residents and Assistant Residents came from widely diversified social backgrounds and careers and were drawn to the Malay Civil Service for varying motives. Most of the Residents however came from the professional middle class and the small gentry and were educated in public schools. Four of them had attended a university or had read law, and had taken their degrees. The others had gone from school into their chosen services, or into experiences or adventures that eventually led them to government service in the East. Five of the twelve residents appointed between 1874 and 1896 came from other fields. Davidson served very briefly in Selangor before returning to a successful legal career in the Straits Settlements. Douglas had previously served as lieutenant in the Navy, as a marine surveyor, and as Resident in the Northern Territory of Australia. Like Low, he was one of "Rajah" Brooke's men. Murray also came to the Malay Civil Service from the Navy, and had travelled extensively in Africa. Rodger, "a gentleman of means", was "born in a castle", attended Eton and Christchurch College, Oxford, and was travelling in Malaya when he received his first appointment under Swettenham in Selangor. Lister was the younger son of an earl; originally a coffee planter in Ceylon and Malaya, he accepted government service in Selangor and later Negri Sembilan.

Birch, Low, Paul, Swettenham, Maxwell and Treacher were career members of the Colonial Service. All had worked in other colonies before coming to the Native Malay States. Paul, an Etonian, had accompanied Brooke to Sarawak in 1860. Maxwell's father had been Chief Justice in the Straits; his sons followed in his footsteps, Maxwell has been described as a "lightly humourless man who symbollically spent his career flitting between the States and the Colonies, perhaps from a distended sense of duty." Swettenham's father was a lawyer, "a strange person" according to his son, who appeared only infrequently at home - in intervals of hunting, shooting and fishing in the country and searching old curiosity shops in London for miscellaneous antiques that cluttered his study in Belper, Derbyshire. Swettenham therefore spent most of his early childhood in the company of his mother, who took Frank and his elder brother, Alexander, to Scotland in 1860; until her death the following year, when Swettenham was eleven years old, she provided all his education. For the next five years he attended the local boarding school as a day boy. He returned to England to an academically undistinguished career at St. Peters School, York; considered joining the Emperor of Austria's Foreign Guard, and the Indian Woods and Forests Service; but eventually sat for the competitive examinations for cadetship to the Straits Colony. At the age of twenty, in January 1871, he arrived in Singapore to begin his professional life.

Clifford, the grandson of the Seventh Baron of Chudleigh in Devon, one of the leading Roman Catholic landed families of

England, was the only Resident who spent the whole of his early career in the Malay States, from his appointment in Perak as cadet at the age of seventeen to his first appointment as Resident of Pahang in 1896. Clifford's childhood in the "inward-looking enclaves" of the great Roman Catholic houses of the Clifford family in Devonshire and Somerset, which "seemed to partake of an earlier and simpler vision of society than that of the late nineteenth century", was undoubtedly a formative influence on his personality and set him apart from the other Residents. It is not hard to see in the castle-cottage relationship a shaping influence on Clifford's later "romanticization" of Malay life with its court and Kampong dichotomy and its supposedly medieval system of values, and upon his own strong bent toward benevolent paternalism and mistrust of material progress.<sup>1</sup>

His schooling was acquired through a private tutor at home; in 1883, he passed the entrance examination for Sandhurst, and seemed about to follow in his father's footsteps in the Army, when the latter died and Clifford decided to go East, where his

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<sup>1</sup> These biographical details on the Residents are taken mainly from E. Sadke: The Protected Malay States, 1874-1895 (Kuala Lumpur, U. of Malaya Press, 1968) p.203 ff.; J. de V. Allen: "Malayan Civil Service 1874-1941: Colonial Bureaucracy/Malayan Elite", op.cit.; W. Roff: Introductions to Stories and Sketches by Sir Frank Swettenham (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford U. Press, 1967) and Stories by Sir Hugh Clifford (Kuala Lumpur Oxford U. Press, 1966); and C.D. Cowan (ed.): "Frank Swettenham's Perak Journals, 1874-76", (Journal of Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. XXIV, 4, 1951.)

father's cousin, Sir Frederick Weld, was Governor of the Straits Settlement.<sup>1</sup>

How does all this relate?

There were certain important elements in the culture or subculture from which sprang the Malayan imperial experience and thus British images of Malaya, and I have attempted to outline these. An Englishman growing to maturity in the "sixties and 'seventies", the opening of the late Victorian age, was no longer isolated and secure but involved in a world of accumulating and accelerating change.

The first thing which strikes one in the schoolboy of today is that his views of life are much wider than those of the schoolboy of earlier times. He seems to be more in contact with its cares and responsibilities. There is no diminution of freshness or of capacity for healthy enjoyment but he is manifestly not without a sense that existence has its business, and that that business he will sooner or later be called upon to transact. The lad begins of his own accord to discuss the possibilities of a career, the chances of schoolfellows who are reading for examinations, or the merits of those who have actually gained appointments. In all this one may witness some of the results of the competitive system. If competitive examinations had done nothing more than bring home to the minds of English boys a sense of the necessity for prolonged individual effort they would have done much. They may be unfair sometimes in their operation ...

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Weld has also been described as an "incurable romantic" who loved to tour the Native States, shared Swettenham's love of picnics and shooting parties with his Malay hosts, and enjoyed the implicit flattery in the lavish traditional entertainments arranged by both Chinese and Malays on these tours. See E. Sadke: Protected Malay States, op.cit., p.144 ff; and Lady Alice Lovat: The Life of Sir Frederick Weld, A Pioneer of Empire (London, Murray, 1914).



but they have at least not so much modified by revolutionized the school-boy's whole conception of life. The happy-go-lucky temper that all will come right in the end is more or less superseded by an intelligent recognition of the circumstances that how this may be very much depends on himself. <sup>1</sup>

Outside Britain, under the impulsion of Bismarck, the European pieces were setting to a new pattern. Britain still held her own but it was not without the sense that her security rested as much on Bismarck's prudence as on the restraining influence of her own diplomacy and the Royal Navy. Economically, too, there were doubts and fears.

The roaring slapdash prosperity of a decade had worked itself out to its appointed end. Overtrading, speculation, fraud and collapse ... In spite of a buoyant revenue and a record expansion of the export trade there was already a chill in the air ... it seemed as if the resiliency of old days had gone, as if we were moving from our apogee, yielding, as Cobden had foreseen, to the larger resources of America, yielding, too, to the higher efficiency of the Germans." <sup>2</sup>

At home, the forces so long restrained by the genial ascendancy of Palmerston were seeking their traditional outlets - the abatement of privilege and the extension of the franchise. In 1867, the Tenpound Householder imparted his privilege to the Householder at large and the lodger; the Forty Shilling Freeholder to the Twelve Pound Householder. The social composition

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<sup>1</sup>

T.H.S. Escott: England: Its People, Polity and Pursuits (London, Chapman and Hall, 1887, 1st. edn. 1882) p.297. See also Cornhill Magazine (Vol. IV, 1861 p.692-712) "Competitive Examinations" which looks at the "Nature, and the moral and intellectual effects of the system of competitive examinations".

<sup>2</sup>

G.M. Young: Victorian England, op.cit., p.114 ff.

of Parliament began to alter rapidly to the advantage of the business class, and if the Civil War in America and the public school in England helped to stave off the real menace to the rural gentry, the return of the Liberals in 1868 dealt a three-fold blow to the gentlemanly interest. Purchase of commission was abolished, the Universities were thrown open to dissenters, and the Civil Service to competition.

The quiet time was over. In its six years of office, the Liberal administration contrived to offend, disquiet or to disappoint almost every interest in the country.

But above all, it was manifest that a revolution of far wider and deeper import than any shift of the balance of power in Europe, or the centre of electoral or social gravity in England was impending - a revolution that must leave its mark upon the individual's as well as the nation's psyche. It was the same kind of change which had come over the human mind in the sixteenth century, when the earth expanded from Europe to a globe - Hieronymous Bosch, by means of paintings that interfused medieval forms in Renaissance space, tried to tell what it was like to live straddled between two worlds of the old and new during that change. In the mid-nineteenth century it appeared to be happening again. "The earth had given up her most mysterious secret when in 1856, Speke stood on the shores of Victoria Nyanza and saw the Nile pouring northward." The Atlantic cable was laid, the Suez Canal was opened. In domestic life the contraction was making itself felt - the full flowering of the Industrial Revolution manifested itself in an

increasingly compact metropolis and Suburbia was born.<sup>1</sup>

There were then, as always, two possible ways of reacting to this atmosphere of change - with optimism or with pessimism. At the one extreme, one might read Lewis Carroll and ascend into the fantasy world of discontinuous space and time that he created in anticipation of Kafka, Joyce and Eliot. In Alice in Wonderland, Carroll invited those Victorians confident enough in themselves and their society to participate in his fantasy and gave them a playful foretaste of Einsteinian time and space. He took them into a dream world that was as startling as that of Bosch but built on reverse principles. Where Bosch had taken the old medieval idea of unique, discontinuous space, and superimposed upon it, with nightmare intensity, the new Renaissance idea of uniform connected space, Carroll was avant garde enough to know that non-Euclidean geometry was coming into vogue in his time.

But Alice In Wonderland has, ironically, been regarded for a century as a child's book and, like Marshall McLuhan's today, Carroll's faith and optimism was suspect in Victorian England. Clifford, describing the fierce retribution sought by the relatives of two small, quarrelsome, Malay children, wrote: "I own I was astonished at what seemed to me to be as charming a piece of perverse inconsequence as ever the fertile brain of a Gilbert or a Lewis Carroll could devise". Swettenham wrote of the Malays he travelled with in 1874:

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<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to ignore the parallels between the 1860's and the 1960's - to recall McLuhan and "the global village."

They had told me stories of there being fish and scarlet prawns ... in the springs, but I did not see any, and am so incredulous that I don't believe it. I told them so but they only said "they are there, but of course you can't see them." This is the faith which will move mountains." <sup>1</sup>

It was a faith manifestly lacking in imperial England.

An increasing number of Englishmen lacking the confidence in themselves to overcome their fear of the unknown, met the challenge of their changing world with horror, as Bosch had done in the sixteenth century, and Shakespeare in King Lear, and Pope in The Dunciad. More and more, refusing to admit the inexorability of change because of their own deep fear that they were ill-equipped to perform the appointed task, found solace in conservative doctrines, in past modes as solutions to present problems, and attempted, in fact, to make time stand still or go back upon itself. Others read Robinson Crusoe and literally or figuratively sailed for the colonies: Prosperos in search of islands inhabited by Calibans and Ariels.

England watching Paris burn, was in no mood to go too far or too fast, and a greater destiny was beginning to absorb her thoughts. Mistress of India and the seas, mother of nations, she might well see in her world-wide sovereignty the crown and demonstration of evolution in history. The very contraction of the

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<sup>1</sup> Clifford: Proc. Roy. Col. Inst. Vol. XXX, 1898-9, p.378; Swettenham: Journals, (21 June 1874, p.85) cf. p.88 "Some of my people say that three elephants passed the boat last night. I can't say as I did not see them." But, possessing no "faith" himself, except in what he "saw", Swettenham could therefore not expect his English readers to believe what he wrote of Malaya. See Also and Perhaps: "Disbelief in the Unseen", p.227, "No-one who has been in out-of-the-way places can have failed to notice the aggravating incredulity with which a plain statement of fact is received by listeners who have not met with the same experience."

world was making the thought of Greater Britain more intimate and familiar, and giving to imperial hopes and aspirations an ascendancy over domestic fears and doubts ... 1

Her sons, particularly the rural gentleman and the "pseudo-gentleman" product of the public school, neither entirely convinced of the legitimacy of the role in which their changing society had at once cast them and seemed about to deny them, converted their own inner fears and doubts into imperial ardour and proceeded to project the former on to their imperial subjects.

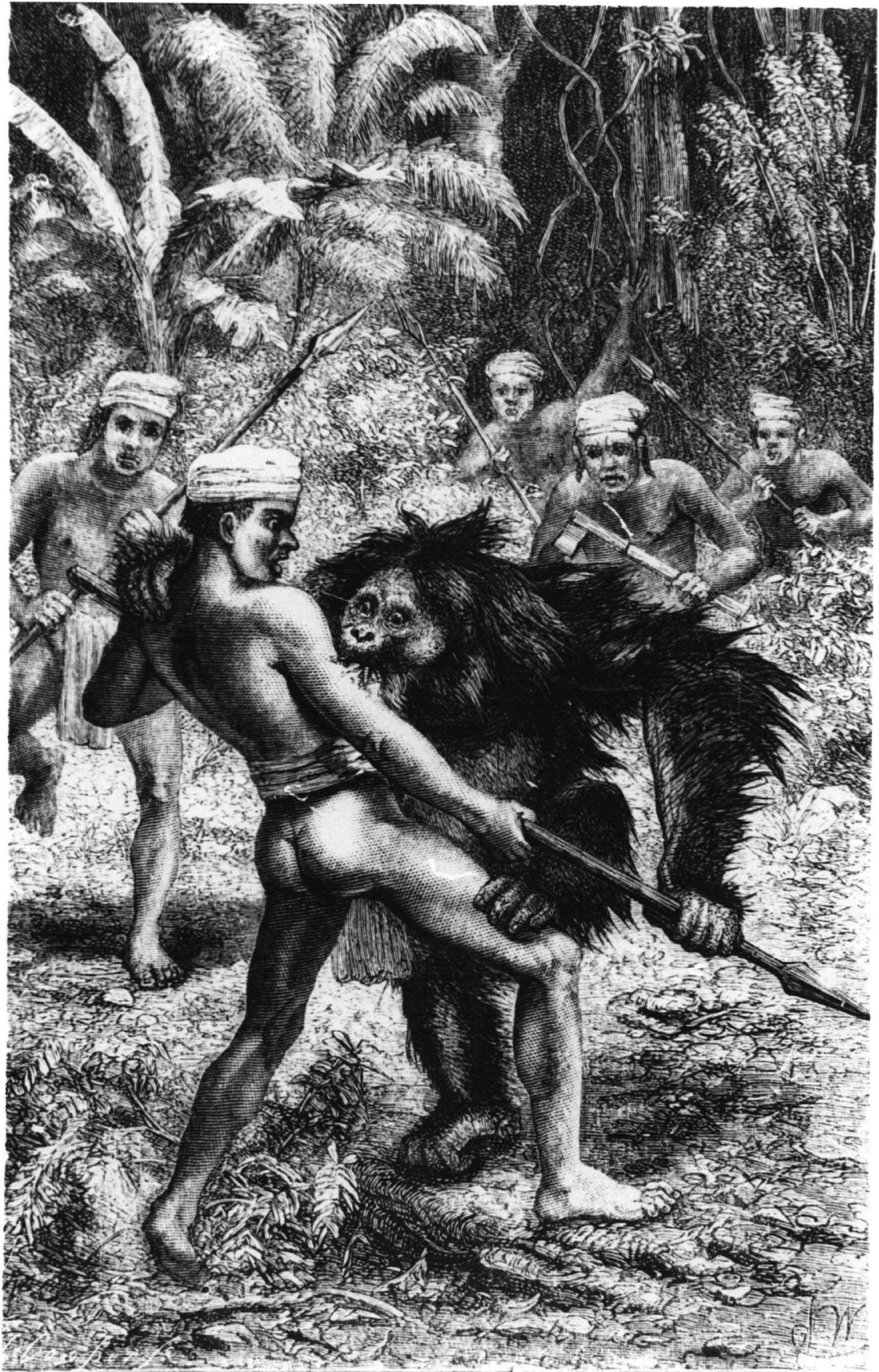
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Young: Victorian England, op.cit., p.113-4.

Part Four :

Land of the Orang-Utan  
And the Bird of Paradise



ORANG UTAN ATTACKED BY DYAKS.

If we look at a globe or a map of the Eastern Archipelago, we shall perceive between Asia and Australia a number of large and small islands, forming a connected group distinct from those great masses of land, and having little connexion with either of them. Situated upon the Equator and bathed by the tepid water of the great tropical oceans, this region enjoys a climate more uniformly hot and moist than almost any other part of the globe, and teems with natural productions which are elsewhere unknown. It produces the giant flowers of the *Rafflesia*, the great green-winged *Ornithoptera* (Princes among the butterfly tribes), the man-like orang-utan, and the gorgeous Bird of Paradise. It is inhabited by a peculiar and interesting race of mankind - the Malay, found nowhere beyond the limits of this insular tract, which has hence been named the Malay Archipelago. 1

In such fecund terms, the naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace attempted to conjure up an image of the Malay Archipelago for his readers in 1869. (The full title of his book was The Malay Archipelago. The Land of the Orang-Utan, and the Bird of Paradise: A Narrative of Travel, with Studies of Man and Nature and it was, incidentally, dedicated to "Charles Darwin, author of *The Origin of Species* ... not only as a token of esteem and friendship, but also to express my deep admiration for his genius and his works". One might speculate on the image conjured up in Victorian England by this title - "orang-utan" with its pseudo-Darwinian, evolutionary overtones, and "Bird of Paradise" with Old Testament, genesis connotations.)

Wallace continued his introduction to the physical

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1 Wallace, Alfred Russell: The Malay Archipelago ... (2 volumes, London, MacMillan & Co. 1869). Wallace was author also of Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro and Palm Trees of the Amazon.



geography of the Archipelago in these terms:

To the ordinary Englishman, this is perhaps the least known part of the globe. Our possessions in it are few and scanty; scarcely any of our travellers go to explore it; and in many collections of maps it is almost ignored, being divided between Asia and the Pacific Islands. It thus happens that few persons realize that, as a whole, it is comparable with the primary divisions of the globe, and that some of its separate islands are larger than France or the Austrian empire. The traveller, however, soon acquires different ideas. He sails for days, or even for weeks, along the shores of one of these great islands, often so great that its inhabitants believe it to be a vast continent. He finds that voyages among these islands are commonly reckoned by weeks and months, and that their several inhabitants are often as little known to each other as are the native races of the northern to those of the southern continent of America. He soon comes to look upon this region as one apart from the rest of the world, with its own races of men and its own aspects of nature; with its own ideas, feelings, customs, and modes of speech; and with a climate, vegetation, and animated life altogether peculiar to itself. <sup>1</sup>

Wallace was, in fact, one of the first to use the term "Malay" to describe the region; on the whole, insofar as it had any location in space for most Europeans in the first half of the nineteenth century, the geographical entity later known as Malaya was simply part of what was variously referred to as "India beyond the Ganges", "Ultra-Gangetic India", the "Indian Archipelago" or the "Indian Isles". In 1864, John Cameron had titled his work "Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India", <sup>2</sup> but on

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<sup>1</sup>

Wallace: ibid. p.1-2.

<sup>2</sup>

cf. John Crawford: History of the Indian Archipelago (3 vols. Edinburgh, 1820); also, A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian  
(continued page 90)

the whole there can be little doubt that Malaya (the Straits Settlements and the Malay Peninsula) remained geographically isolated and indistinct in the minds of most Englishmen even after the "India-centric" approach to South East Asia had given way, and "Malaya" was relatively free from Indian associations. As late as 1928, Ashley Gibson protested that

English people still cherish a number of extraordinarily wrong ideas about Malaya ... the leader writers in London ... will call it "Malay" just as they declare, in the face of all protest, that Singapore is the capital of the Federated Malay States. But then, of course, most post office young ladies in the suburbs who deal with your parcels to and from these parts, will insist that both are in India.<sup>1</sup>

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(Footnote 1 continued from Page 89)

Isles and Adjacent Countries (London, 1856); George Windsor Earl: The Eastern Seas, or Voyages and Adventures in the Indian Archipelago (London, 1837); J. H. Moore: Notices of the Indian Archipelago and Adjacent Countries (Singapore, 1837); Horace St. John: The Indian Archipelago, its History and Present State (2 vols., London, 1853); J. Cameron: Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India (London, 1865); See B. Harrison: "English Historians of 'the Indian Archipelago': Crawford and St. John", in D.G.E. Hall (ed.): Historians of South East Asia (London, Oxford U. Press, 1961, p.245 ff.) It is worth noting that both P.J. Begbie, (The Malayan Peninsula, Vepery Mission Press, 1884; Kuala Lumpur, O.U.P., 1967, Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints series), and J. Anderson, (Political and Commercial Considerations relative to the Malay Peninsula and the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca, Prince of Wales Is., 1824, Reprinted in J.M.B.R.A.S., Vol. XXXV, Dec. 1962), placed their studies firmly in the Malayan Peninsula.

- <sup>1</sup> Gibson: The Malay Peninsula and Archipelago (London, Dent & Sons, 1928)  
cf. Emily Innes: The Chersonese with the Gilding Off, (2 vols. London, R. Bentley, 1885, Vol.I, p.34-35) Mrs. Innes complained that, of the newspapers and books she requested from London while resident on the Peninsula, most were lost, and of those that weren't "the greater part had the post-marks on them 'missent to Bombay', 'missent to Hong Kong', 'missent to Delhi', and so forth. Postal officials seemed to be under the impression that 'Singapore' which was part of our address, must be an Indian name ..."

Kenneth Boulding has underlined the importance of maps in building up public and private images of a particular region. Not only can the spatial image be transcribed very briefly and commodiously in the form of a map, but the map itself has a profound effect on our spatial image. Although the Romans had only vague ideas about the shape of their empire, the distance from Rome to wherever they happened to be was an important factor, and their maps stress this spatial conception. The maps of the Middle Ages show the world centering on Jerusalem because the theological symbolism rather than the spatial configuration was important. The Chinese, too, centered their maps upon China - ethnocentricity, it would appear, is a universal habit in map-formation. But, with the advent of surveying, trigonometry and accurate measurement, the map became an exact representation of "a bird's eye view".

The invention of latitude and longitude reduced the multi-directional space of earlier days to two simple directions, north-south, east-west. The gradual exploration of the globe leads to a closure of geography. This has profound effects upon all parts of the image. 1

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1 Boulding: The Image, op.cit., p.65-66. "Primitive man lives in a world which has a spatial unknown, a dread frontier populated by the heated imagination. For modern man the world is a closed and completely explored surface. This is a radical change in spatial viewpoint. It also produces effects in all other spheres of life." In slightly less dramatic terms, this anecdote from Emily Innes illustrates Boulding's point: "One of the rajahs remarked to me the other day that he would like to learn English, 'only', he said, 'there is this objection to English, that it is only spoken by about a dozen people in the world, even counting the Governor of Singapore and his followers; while wherever you go - to the north, south, east and west or beyond the wind, you find Malay spoken'. " (Chersonese with the Gilding Off, op.cit. Vol.1, p.98). See also Isaacs: Images of Asia, op.cit. p.40 ff. for the important role played by map-makers in determining images of "Asia" in modern American minds.

Hugh Clifford, British Resident in the Malay States in the last decades of the century, wrote a short story about an expedition by a group of English officers into "the benighted lands" on the east coast of the Peninsula to apprehend a party of rebel natives.

A Sakai, a hill tribesman, acts as guide. He is a citizen of the jungle, and owns no country as his home. To him the States on the fringe of the Empire and the Benighted Lands are all one; he recognizes no boundaries ... To him all the interior districts of the Peninsula form one State - the jungle kingdom - a land without definite limits, where all men are free to come and go at will .... An hour passes, during which bearings are taken by compass of all the mountains of which the Sakai can furnish or invent names, for the Europeans, after the manner of their own kind, are making a rough map of the unknown land. ¶

Alan Watts sees map-making and the division of the world into latitudes and longitudes as an example of that obsession of ego-centred western society with imposing order upon chaos.

(I am reminded of Richard Faber's impression in his study of Victorian imperialism, The Vision and the Need, that "the English seem sometimes to have been possessed by a fit of tidiness on a

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1 Clifford H.: Bushwacking... "The 'Benighted Lands' ", p.98,105. cf. Swettenham: Real Malay, p.20 "We spent our time getting about the country as best we could, roughly mapping it ...." Note Clifford's reflection that "without the aid of his knowledge - the knowledge of a creature who wears his scanty loin-cloth of rough bark ungladly, and can count no higher than the numeral three - the white men, the "heirs of all ages", and the semi-civilized brown folk, their companions, would be unable to prosecute their journey; without his help the great engine of the empire, which, working from Downing Street, is propelling the life force into the Benighted Lands, would find its monstrous wheels clogged: The idea has something awful about it: it exemplifies the impotence of the mighty in a manner which is humiliating". This kind of circumspection is characteristic of Clifford, in fact of many of the type of Englishman in Malaya, who tended to exhibit more "humility" than their counterparts in India.

global scale and to have found a positively aesthetic satisfaction in spreading order ...."). Watts notes that "the net" has become one of the presiding images in Western thought.

As an illustration of the tendency to which I feel Boulding, Watts and Faber are alluding, I would direct the reader's attention to four maps - they are images of Malaya. The first accompanied P.J. Begbie's Malayan Peninsula in 1834.<sup>1</sup> There are two points worth mentioning about the image this map transferred to his readers; the first is that the map-drawer places the Malay Peninsula in the wider context of Siam, Cambodia, the China Sea, Borneo and Sumatra - that is, in 1834, the Malay Peninsula was only a part of a larger geographical entity taking in all these other countries. Secondly, although he indicates latitude and longitude east of Greenwich, in the margin, he does not draw in the intersecting lines of "the net". There is no indication of the scale of the map.

The second map is one of the two maps included in an 1878 publication, Major Fred. McNair's Perak and the Malays.<sup>2</sup> Here the focus is narrowed so that the Peninsula appears only in the context of the Gulf of Siam and part of the Island of Sumatra; lines of latitude and longitude now intersect across the Peninsula and a rather complex scale in "English Miles"

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1

P.J. Begbie: Malayan Peninsula..., op.cit.

2

Major Fred. McNair: Perak and the Malays "Sarong" and "Kris" op.cit. The other is a more detailed map of Perak State, whose eastern boundary had not yet been determined but was nonetheless indicated by a dotted line; "Approximate boundary of the State of Perak."

(1-13/16" to 100 miles) is indicated. Although no boundary lines are described, the Peninsula had been subdivided into Native "States", for administrative convenience as much as from any conviction that the native sultans recognized boundaries to their "Kingdoms". The Straits Settlement colonies are outlined in pink to indicate that they, at least, are definitely part of the Empire. This map also reflects two other interesting points - the striking lack of information about the east coast region, and the increasing awareness of the proximity of Siam to the northern boundaries of the Peninsular states. (This map, unlike Begbie's, which was drawn by the Chief Engineer's Office at Fort St. George, was drawn in England by Tinsley Brothers. It seems probable, therefore, that it was compiled from information supplied by the Colonial or Foreign Office - as such it can be seen as an indication of the metropolitan officials' increasing pre-occupation with the problem of securing Britain's northern boundaries in Malaya from Siamese (French) encroachment, without yielding to local pressure for extension of the Resident system to this region. This was undoubtedly the predominant image of — the Malay peninsula evoked for Foreign Office officials in the last two decades of the century; it culminated in a secret convention between Britain and Siam in 1897.<sup>1</sup>

The other two maps were "specially compiled" for two editions of Sir Frank Swettenham's British Malaya: An Account

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<sup>1</sup> See E. Thio: "Britain's Search for Security in North Malaya: 1886-1897" (J.S.E.A.H., Vol.10, No.2, Sept. 1969), and K.G. Kiernan: "Britain, Siam and Malaya" (Journal of Modern History, Vol.28, No. 1, March 1956.)

In the following days a great deal of very useful work was done, all the sultans and many of the chiefs frequently speaking on the various questions under discussion, and taking a keen interest in all the proceedings.

The following is taken from the Resident-General's official report of the proceedings:

From every point of view the meeting has been an unqualified success, and it is difficult to estimate now the present and prospective value of this unprecedented gathering of Malay Sultans, Rajas and chiefs. Never in the history of Malaya has any such assemblage been even imagined. I doubt whether anyone has ever heard of one Ruler of a State making a ceremonial visit to another; but to have been able to collect together, in one place, the Sultans of Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negri Sembilan is a feat that might well have been regarded as impossible. People who do not understand the Malay cannot appreciate the difficulties of such a task; and I confess that I myself never believed that we should be able to accomplish it. It is hardly to be expected that a man of the great age of the Sultan of Selangor could be induced to make, for him, so long and difficult a journey, and to those who know the pride, the prejudices and the sensitiveness of the Malay Rajas, it was very unlikely that the Sultan of Pahang would join an assemblage where he could not himself dictate the exact part which he would play in it. It is not so many years since the Governor of the Straits Settlements found the utmost difficulty in getting speech with the Malay Rajas in the States which are now federated; Sir Frederick Weld, even though accompanied by the present Sultan of Perak, by Sir Hugh Low, and the present Residents of Selangor and Pahang, all officers accustomed to deal with Malays, had to wait several hours on the bank of the Pahang River, before anyone could persuade the Sultan of Pahang to leave a game of chance

in which he was engaged with a Chinese, in order to grant an interview to His Excellency. It is difficult to imagine a greater difference than between then and now, and, though the Sultan of Perak has been far more nearly associated with British officers than any other of the Sultans, he has always been extremely jealous of his rights as a Ruler. I was, therefore, surprised to hear the frank way in which, at the council, he spoke of British protection, which he did not hesitate to describe as control.

This 1897 Conference was such a profound success that by the desire of the Malays, it was decided to repeat it from time to time as found desirable and convenient, and on each occasion to assemble in a different State, so that, each Sultan in turn might have the pleasure of welcoming the neighbouring rulers, of showing them his country, and the hope was expressed that the friendships then so happily made might be renewed.

A second and equally successful conference was held at Kuala Lumpur, in Selangor, in July, 1903. Again the deliberations of the assembly, after much interesting discussion, resulted in a number of important decisions chiefly connected with matters in which the Malay population was specially concerned. This conference was rendered notable by the fact that the rulers of all the western states were conveyed to Kuala Lumpur by train, only the Sultan of Pahang and his chiefs having to travel by sea, and also by reason of a remarkable speech delivered by the Sultan of Perak at the close of the proceedings, when His Highness gave a graphic account of British intervention in the Malay States, and the benefits which had been conferred on the country and people by the adoption of British methods of administration. The Sultan spoke freely of his own and his people's early suspicion and distrust of the white man and how they had gradually changed their minds. His Highness laid special stress on the fact that he and his people had given their confidence and lasting friendship to those Residents who came with the evident wish to secure them.

Frank Swettenham:  
British Malaya 1908

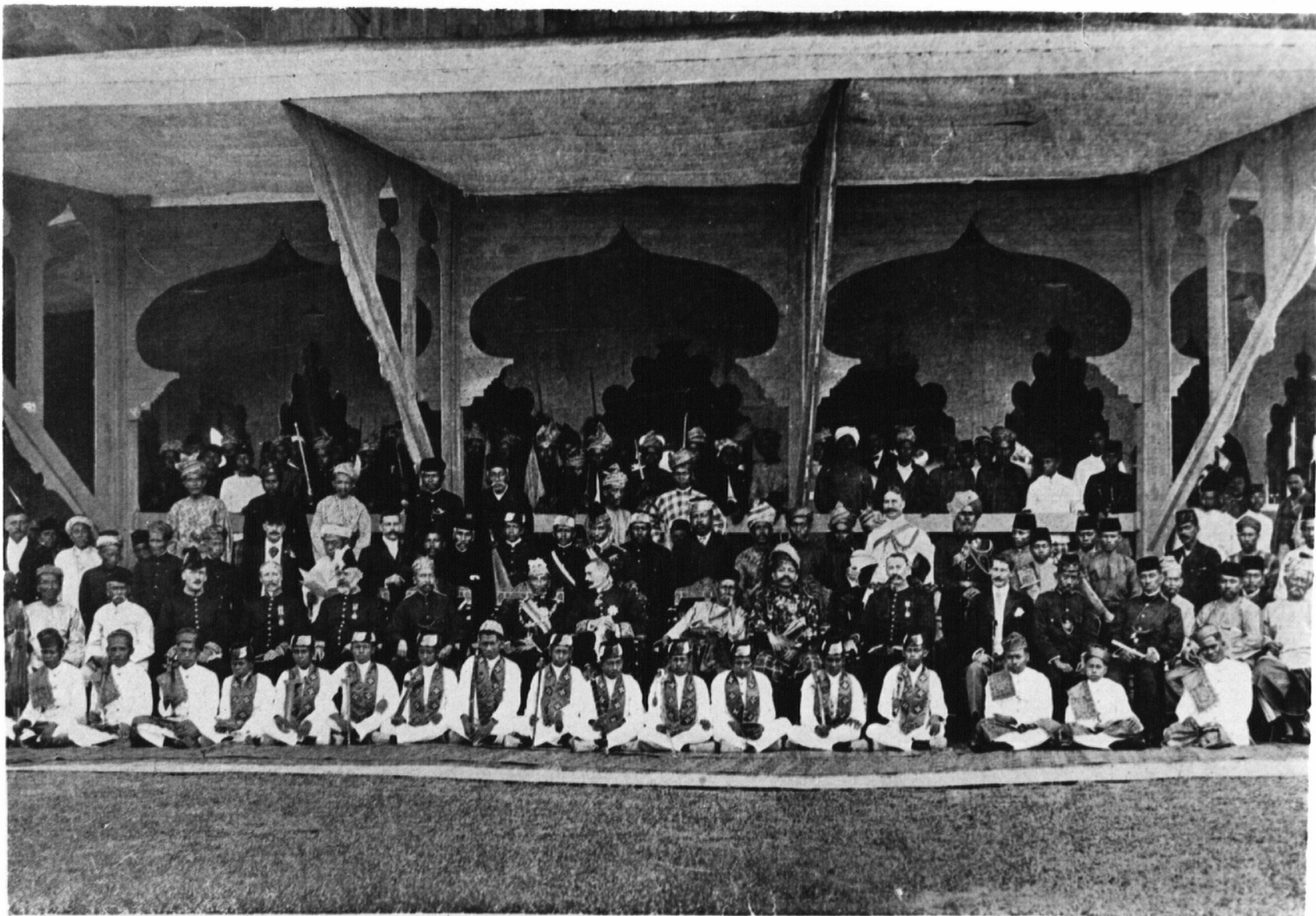


of the Origins and Progress of British Influence in Malaya, published in 1908 and 1948. As such they represent the coming to fruition of Swettenham's vision for Malaya, a graphic representation of the dream of one of the most imperial-minded of Britain's "servants" in Malaya. Both maps focus very definitely on the Peninsula - the outline only of the Sumatran coast exists; the boundaries of the various states are not only distinctly drawn in, but emphasized by the super-imposition of different colours (in 1908); by 1948, Swettenham had adopted that technique, familiar to all school children, of the English system at least, of depicting different states by solid blocks of contrasting colour. In 1908, although the boundary of Siam includes the northern states (Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu), they are subtitled "British Sphere of Influence" so as to leave his readers with no doubt as to Swettenham's intention for them. Lines of latitude and longitude further subdivide the 1948 map, while in 1908, he deemed it necessary to indicate not only degrees of latitude/longitude, but intervals of 5°.

Having thus subdivided and classified the geographical entity in this way, however, Swettenham draws it all together again by describing across its face:

Railways open  
               "      under construction  
               "      surveyed  
 Roads surveyed  
 Bridle paths  
 Railway routes explored

and indicating distances in miles from Kuala Prai, in Province



CONFERENCE OF CHIEFS, KUALA LUMPUR, 1903

Wellesley.<sup>1</sup> As a symbolic representation of Swettenham's projected image of Malaya, these maps might be compared with the plate, entitled "Conference of Chiefs, Kuala Lumpur, 1903." His vision, in fact, appears to have been, by uniting all its chiefs under one roof, (and preferably in British ceremonial garb) to impress upon Malaya the image of being a political-administrative unit - a single nation with the British Empire. Swettenham's gratified descriptions of two of these conferences, in 1897 and 1903, are very significant for they illustrate not only one Anglo-Malayan's image of successful imperialism, but they provide an excellent picture of how the British came to see their role in Malaya and to measure their success in this role, and of the processes by which Malay Sultans came to "change their minds" about the white man. They are a perfect illustration of that process of distortion of self-image which I equate with imperialism. That any human being could come to consider it significant and important, a measure of the success of his life's work, that all save one Malay Sultan should travel to Kuala Lumpur by train in 1903; or that a native ruler in Malaya could be persuaded to participate in a game, in the sense in which Eric Berne uses the word,<sup>2</sup> which necessitated his

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Real Malay p.48. "Those who know anything of the modern history of the States will no more forget what was done for them by Governors Sir Frederick Weld and Sir Cecil Smith than they will that Sir Andrew Clarke initiated the whole policy of British protection, and that, both federation and the railway loan were sanctioned during the Government of Sir Charles Mitchell, the first High Commissioner for the Malay States."

<sup>2</sup> Eric Berne: Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy (New York, Grove Press, 1961) and Games People Play, op.cit.

sending florid and meaningless messages to a "Queen Empress" totally remote from the reality of his life, has an absurdity bordering on the pathetic.<sup>1</sup> But such is the nature of imperialism.

We, the Sultans of the Malay States, by the invitation of Your Majesty's High Commissioner, are met together, for the first time in history, to discuss the affairs of our States confederated under Your Majesty's gracious protection. We desire to offer our respectful and cordial congratulations on a reign of unexampled length and unequalled progress. And we pray for Your Majesty's long life and the continuance of that protection which has already brought such prosperity to Malaya. 2

Further though, all this illustrates the point made previously in the present chapter - that, in Swettenham's mind particularly, and doubtless also in many others, a decent British order had indeed been created out of Malay chaos.

If in earlier pages I have been able to give the reader an intelligible idea of this waste of jungles and swamps, of mountains and rivers sparsely populated by a far from industrious or happy people, preying on each other and on the heaven-sent Chinese toiler in an atmosphere of eternal heat, tempered by frequent deluges of tropical rain; if I have been able to show him something of the extraordinary changes which may have passed over the country and the people, lighting the dark

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<sup>1</sup> See B. Friedan's chapter, "The Forfeited Self" (in The Feminine Mystique, op.cit., p.299 ff.) "...all postulate some positive growth tendency within the organism which, from within, drives it to fuller development, to self-realization. This 'will to power', 'self-assertion', 'dominance', or 'autonomy', as it is variously called, does not imply aggression or competitive striving in the usual sense; it is the individual affirming his existence and his potentialities as a being in his own right; it is 'the courage to be an individual'."

<sup>2</sup> Swettenham: British Malaya (London, 1908, p.228 ff.)

places, bringing freedom and comfort and happiness to the greatly oppressed, and wealth to the greatly industrious; if now the reader sees a country covered with prosperous towns and villages, with roads and railways, with an enormously increased population, with every sign of advancement and prosperity, and if he also understands, in a measure at least, how this change has been brought about, I will cease to trouble him with further details of this unique experiment in administration ...." <sup>1</sup>

This is the process which these four maps represent.

It gains added significance if read with McLoskey's conclusion about the "conservative" personality and its inability to cope with ambiguity, its need for well-defined boundaries and its obsession with placing everything in the correct order.<sup>2</sup>

There are several further facts to be brought out as far as the role of maps in building images of Malay is concerned. Geographic images are generally outlined on some mental screen in the individual's mind first exposed in the early grades of school.<sup>3</sup> I have not seen a Victorian school atlas, but since, even in American schools as late as the 1940's, geography texts carried world maps which placed England along the Greenwich meridian, at the centre, it seems unlikely that, if Victorian

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- <sup>1</sup> Swettenham: ibid., p.291-2.
- <sup>2</sup> McLoskey: op.cit., discussed in Part 3.
- <sup>3</sup> cf. Boulding: Image, op.cit. p.66-67. "We learn our geography mostly in school not through our own personal experience." This assertion probably applies less to nineteenth century administrators of the British empire than to Boulding. Nevertheless, Boulding rightly draws attention to what he calls "the extraordinary authority" of the map, "an authority greater than that of the sacred books of all religions." That an increasingly high value was placed on "the map" in nineteenth century England can be judged by the increasing number of publications on Malaya proudly boasting on the title page: "Illustrated ... with maps".

school children acquired any image at all of the Malay Archipelago from their geography classes, it could not have been other than as part of "the Far East" with all the additional connotations this image carried.<sup>1</sup> As such it was as removed geographically from English minds as any place on the world map could be.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, although the exploration of the globe has undoubtedly resulted in a closure of geography, and while the Straits Settlements and the Peninsula certainly did not escape the "net" of British imperialism; (its human and natural geography were eventually subjected to as many classifications, divisions and systematizations as those of any other part of the Empire); it was late in the century before the Malay Peninsula received an identity clearly distinct from the "Eastern Archipelago" or the "Malayan Archipelago" in the minds of all but a few Europeans. This was partly due to the fact that a stereotype approach developed to writing about the various parts of the region, which took the form of a description of the present state of the region and a brief outline of its past particularly in European times. As Begbie noted when, writing of the Malayan Peninsula:

In those rapid and numerous revolutions incident in some measure to all States, but more particularly to infant ones, these divisions have been subject to various alterations of geographical units and political influence; and, as European powers have acted a conspicuous part in the drama of the Peninsula, it is impossible to omit the neighbouring settlements of Java, Rhio, Singapore and Prince of Wales Island, so far as they are mixed up with its affairs. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

Isaacs, H.: Images of Asia, op.cit., p.42-43.

<sup>2</sup>

cf. Wallace: Malay Archipelago, op.cit., p.102 previously quoted.

<sup>3</sup>

Begbie: Malayan Peninsula, op.cit., p.2.

It was 1874 before any map or handbook of the Peninsula was issued. In 1878, one author wrote:

It is hardly too much to assume that prior to 1875, when the sad news reached England of the rising of a people under British protection, and the murder of Mr. Birch, the State of Perak was to the majority of people a terra incognita. They knew, of course that the Malay Peninsula was a long tongue of land stretching nearly to the equator and that it was in close proximity to Sumatra and Java with innumerable islands generally known as the Malay Archipelago, but saving those interested in the British Straits Settlements - Singapore, Malacca and Penang - it may be taken for granted that few people were aware that a large and rich territory, ruled over by a Sultan and his petty chiefs, had been, so to speak, placed under the wing of the British government whose representatives ... were at the court of the ruler, to counsel and advise for the better management of a country whose people were suffering from anarchy and misrule. <sup>1</sup>

Such comments apply equally to the other native states on the Peninsula - the east coast states, in fact, being less commercially attractive, remained unexplored and unknown far longer.<sup>2</sup> When the surveyor Daly published his report in the Royal Geographical Society's Journal in 1882, he marvelled that

...even in this nineteenth century, a country rich in its resources and important in its contiguity to our British possessions is still a closed volume ... there is a vast extent, more than half the Malay Peninsula, unexplored. ...Of the internal government, geography, mineral products and geology of these regions we do not know anything ...

In 1883, Isabella Bird explained the fact that her letters

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1

McNair: Perak and the Malays, op.cit., p.1-2.

2

See Clifford: In Court and Kampong, Chaps. I and 2.

dealt only with the western portion of "the Golden Chersonese", by "the very sufficient reason that the interior is unexplored by the Europeans, half of it being so little known that the latest map gives only the position of its coastline."

I hope, however, that my little book will be accepted as an honest attempt to make a popular contribution to the sum of knowledge of a beautiful and little travelled region, with which the majority of educated people are so little acquainted that it is constantly confounded with the Malay Archipelago ...<sup>1</sup>

She ventured the information that there was, at the time of her writing, no point on its mainland at which European steamers call, "and the usual conception of it is as a vast and malarious equatorial jungle sparsely peopled by a race of semi-civilized and treacherous Mohammedans."<sup>2</sup>

It is also worth noting that not one of the maps accompanying the many descriptions and "histories" of the Straits Settlements and the Peninsula attempted to show the region in any larger context than that of the surrounding Archipelago.

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Isabella Bird: The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither, op.cit., Preface; p.5.

2

ibid., p.1. "It was, in fact, as little known to most people as it was to myself before I visited it, and as reliable information concerning it exists mainly in valuable volumes now out-of-print or scattered through blue books and the transactions of the Asiatic Society of Singapore, I make no apology for prefacing my letters from the Malay Peninsula with as many brief preliminary statements as shall serve to make them intelligible". cf. Buckley, C.G.: An Anecdotal History of Singapore in the Old Times, 1819-1867, (preface to Vol.I, p.ii): "It has long been a matter of regret to me that the writings of Crawford, Logan, Braddell and others who gave so much time to writing about Singapore and neighbouring countries, should be so soon forgotten, and the books scarcely to be obtained. When a copy is to be found on the bookshelves of some old library here, it is generally tumbling to pieces..."



That is, it was never related to Europe and England in this important transcript of spatial images. Some writers attempted to clarify images of the region in terms such as these (which reveal less about its geographical position than of the importance as a commercial outpost placed upon it by Europe): in 1820, Crawford had proffered the information of the Archipelago that:

... Its general position is between the great continental land of New Holland and the most southern extremity of the continent of Asia. It is centrally situated with respect to all the great and civilized nations of Asia, and lies in the direct and inevitable route of the maritime intercourse between them. Its eastern extremity is within three days' sail of China; its western not above three weeks' sail from Arabia. Ten days' sail carries a ship from China to the richest and most central portion of the Archipelago, and not more than fifteen are required for a similar voyage from Hindustan. Taking a wider view of its geographical relations, it may be added, that the voyage from Europe to the western extremity .. may be readily performed in ninety days ... and that the voyage from the west coast of America may be effected in little more than half that time, such are the extraordinary advantages of the geographical and local positions of these five countries. 1

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1 J. Crawford: History of the Indian Archipelago, op.cit., Vol.I., p.2-3. As far as images-in-time are concerned, Crawford's introduction to his three-volume History is equally significant: "That great region of the globe, which European geographers have distinguished by the name of the Indian Archipelago, became well-known to the more civilized portion of mankind, and was first frequented by them much about the same time that they discovered and knew America ... in regard to all knowledge not merely speculative or curious, our discovery of the Indian Archipelago is a transaction of history as recent as that of America. The Indian Archipelago, at the moment of the discovery of both, may be advantageously compared even with the New World itself, to which, in fact, its moral and physical state bore a closer resemblance than any other part of the globe. It was greatly inferior to it in extent, but in the singularity, variety, and extent of its animal and vegetable productions, and in the civilization and number of its inhabitants, it was greatly superior.

It is doubtful whether Begbie's assertion that

"the best authorities have laid down the geographical limits of the Malayan Peninsula as being comprised within the latitudes of 8d. 27m., or, according to Horsburg, 8d. 09m. north, corresponding to the northernmost point of the neighbouring island of Junk Ceylon, and 1d. 22m. north, which is the latitude in which point Romania, its south-eastern extremity lies,"<sup>1</sup>

gave his readers any clearer picture of where the Peninsula actually was. Even Swettenham attempted little more than "From England to Penang by way of the Suez Canal is a voyage of about eight thousand miles, and the last stage of it, from Colombo to Achin Head, the turning point of Sumatra, is practically due East."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, one of the most interesting attempts to create a relational image of these two regions is a map printed in Wallace's account of his journeys in the "Land of the Orang-Utan and the Bird of Paradise". In an effort to give his readers some notion of the size of the Archipelago, Wallace super-imposed the outline of the British Isles on a map of Borneo and wrote:

The Malay Archipelago extends for more than 4,000 miles in length from east to west, and is about 1,300 in breadth from north to south. It would stretch over an expanse equal to that of all Europe from the extreme west far into Central Asia, or would cover the widest parts of South America, and extend far beyond the land into the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. It includes three islands larger than Great Britain; and in one of them, Borneo, the whole of the British Isles might be set down, and would be surrounded by a sea of forests..<sup>3</sup>

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Begbie: Malayan Peninsula, op.cit., p.1-2.

2

Swettenham: British Malaya, op.cit., p.1.

3

Wallace: Malay Archipelago, op.cit., Vol.1, p.3.

(Whether it was intended to emphasize the smallness of the British Isles, or the largeness of Borneo, is uncertain - at any rate, the image created in the last lines must certainly have given Wallace's readers food for thought on the subject of the might of Imperial England.) Malaya, then, appears to have remained spatially and geographically indistinct in European minds in the nineteenth century. It is ironic therefore that, in an attempt partly to overcome this isolation, to "put Malaya on the map", (an urge all imperialists must indulge as they necessarily seek recognition for their activities) and partly to overcome the stigma, arising from this isolation, of its being one of the least attractive imperial outposts, they turned to glorifying its exotic natural beauties and, by consequently creating an almost Edenic image of the region, succeeded in isolating it even more.

The comparison with other colonies, particularly India, was obviously in Major McNair's mind when he wrote of Perak, ("a land metaphorically flowing with milk and honey"):

Picture this tropical land; Not a sun-baked region of parched desert and unsufferable drought; but a rich moist country almost touching the equator, but rarely suffering from excessive heat; a land of eternal summer, where refreshing rains fall, where the monsoons blow regularly, where the frightful tempests of the East are unknown, and which is for the most part covered with a luxurious vegetation, the produce of a fertile soil. <sup>1</sup>

McNair's opinion might be compared with that of Emily Innes. Returning to England after her first years as the wife

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<sup>1</sup>

McNair: Perak and the Malays, op.cit., p.2.

of District Magistrate James Innes, in "the butcherless, bakerless, tailorless, cobblerless, doctorless, bookless, and altogether comfortless jungle", of Selangor, she compared situations with other colonial wives and remarked that

"...they hinted pretty plainly that the officials of the Native Malay States must be fools to stay on in it. That was my own opinion ..." <sup>1</sup>

Voices as consistently disenchanted as Mrs. Innes', however, were rarely heard. Particularly after the separation from India in the 1860's, Anglo-Malay writers were anxious to point out that it was only ignorance which resulted in the impression that "an existence in Malay was an exile of the worst description" and that

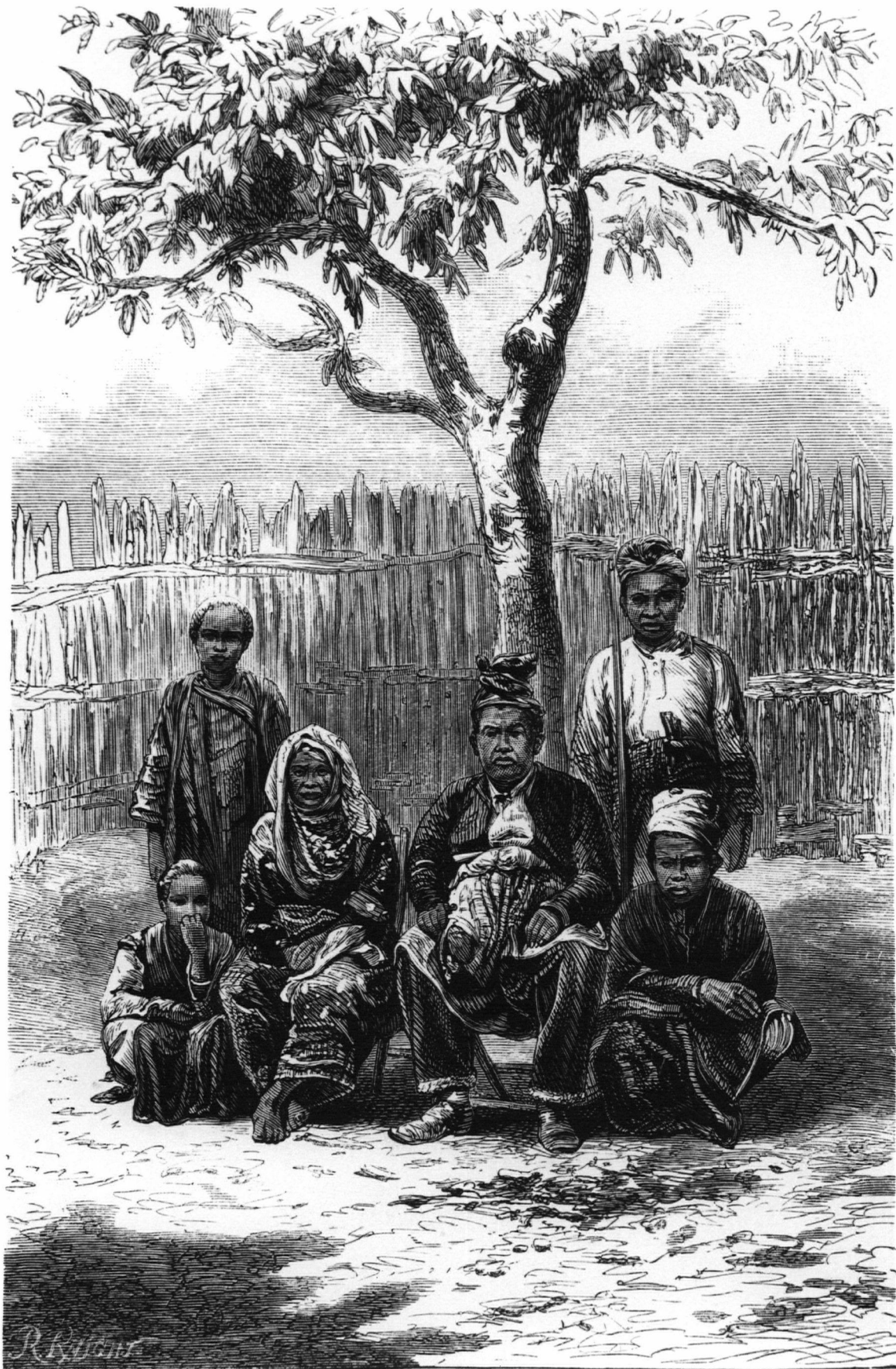
"...those who have endorsed that exile can tell of a far different condition of life in the tropical garden." <sup>2</sup>

The connotations of the Aurea Chersonese notwithstanding however, it became evident that there was little in Malay to compare with visions of oriental splendour to which tales of Indian rajahs, the Taj Mahal, fabulous treasure and the adventures of Marco Polo had accustomed British minds in contemplation of the Asia of India and China. At least, many expressed the

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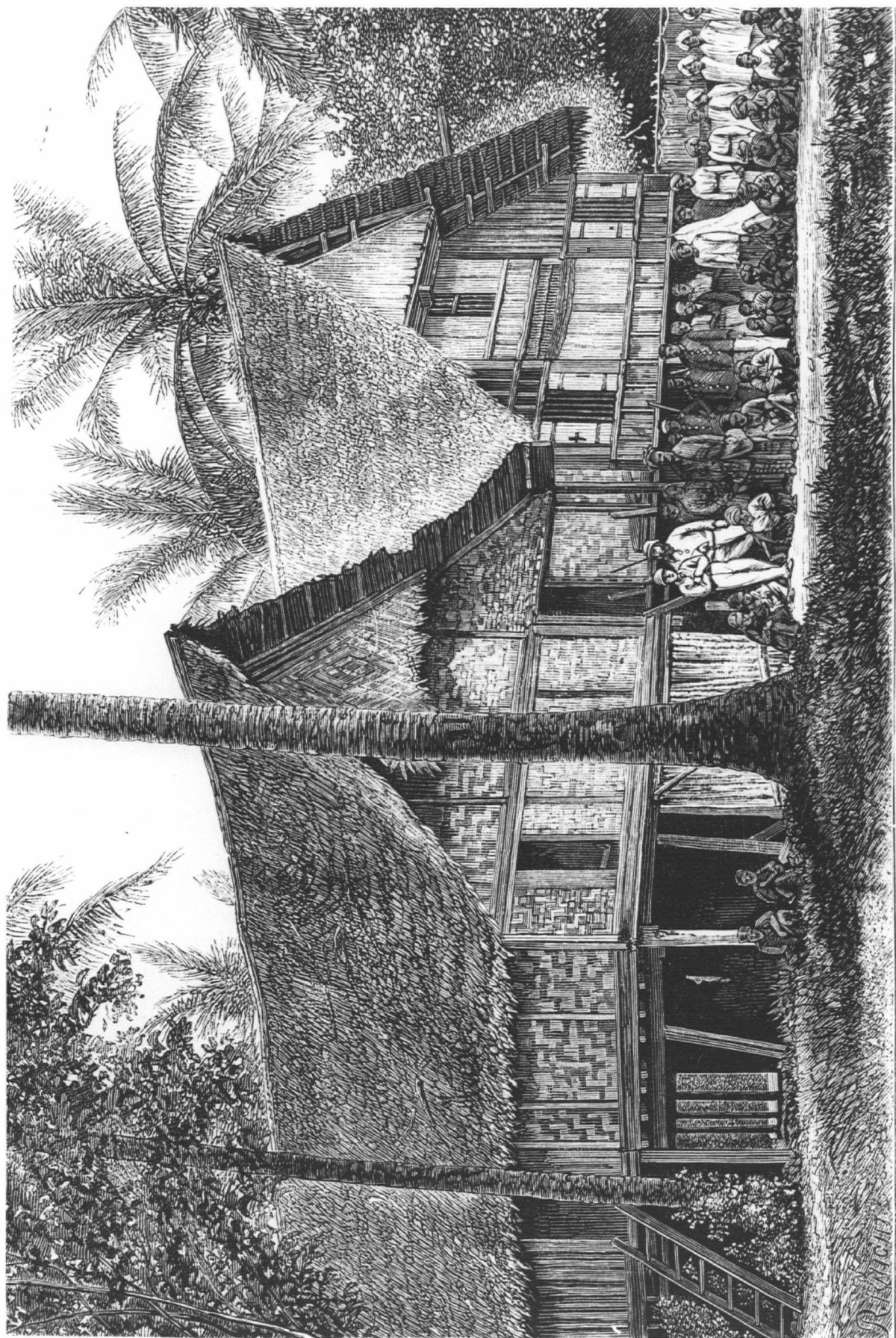
<sup>1</sup> E. Innes: Chersonese with the Gilding Off, op.cit., Vol.II, p.242-3; Vol.I, p.244-5. In fact, she did not recommend the Malay States service to anyone who did not begin "at the top, by being Resident". Elsewhere, she compared the Malay Peninsula to "Timbuctoo" and the "Deserts of Sahara", and wrote of Durian Sabatang: "the unhealthiness of its climate ... was far worse than that of the Gold Coast of Africa". (Vol.II, p.55, p.70.)

<sup>2</sup> Cameron: Our Tropical Possessions, op.cit., p.2. He was significantly equally willing to promote the image of its commercial potential "...those at all acquainted with the high roads of eastern trade have but to view the position of the island of Singapore on the chart, to become sensible of its importance to such a nation as great as Britan."



INCHE MAIDA, PRINCESS OF PERAK, HER HUSBAND, NAKODA TRONG, AND ATTENDANTS.





RESIDENCE OF PRINCESS OF PERAK AT QUALLA KUNGSA.

REYNOLDS

sentiment that:

" ... Nature is so imposing, so magnificent and so prolific on the Malay peninsula that one naturally gives man a secondary place which I have assigned to him ... Neither great wars, nor an ancient history, nor a valuable literature, nor stately ruins, nor barbaric splendours attract scholars or sightseers to the Peninsula." <sup>1</sup>

In the absence of such man-made splendours, the British in Malaya turned to the beauties of nature, and scarcely an author omitted a long opening chapter on first glimpses of this jewel bathed in warm tropic seas. In its more moderate form it was simply an attempt to balance the impression of Malaya as a tropical no-man's land inhabited by tigers, equatorial swamps, orang-utans, amok-running savages, head-hunting pirates, and every conceivable insect and reptile ever to torment mankind,<sup>2</sup> ("my first impression was of mud, mosquitoes and immorality") - which had been built up in the first half of the century, partly out of ignorance, and partly through association with other "regions of the Unknown" while attempting to fill these gaps in the imagination.

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<sup>1</sup> I. Bird: Golden Chersonese, op.cit., p.12, p.338. When scholars and sightseers did turn their attention to the Peninsula, as they increasingly did towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the opening decades of the twentieth century, they were more often attracted to the study of the languages and customs of "a primitive people", or to the problems of governing native races in the tropics, or to the prerequisites of travelling in equatorial jungles, "in the rayless paths of deep forests". See the works of Winstedt, Kidd, Ireland, Rathborne and Kirkland. As late as 1926, the latter reflected in Finding the Worthwhile in the Orient (London, 1926 p.282) "...there are no ancient cities or monuments of any sort inherited from antiquity. Nature has been supreme - not man. On the other hand, if the mystery, the beauty and the silence of the jungle draw you, then Malaya awaits you..."

<sup>2</sup> See Bird: ibid., p.7-10 for a typical terrifying list of wild beasts inhabiting the Peninsula.

At its extreme, this concentration on the natural beauties reached what I call "the Paradise" or "garden of Eden" vision of Malaya.

A great deal has been written about the natural beauties of Ceylon and Java, and some theologians determined to give the first scene in the Mosaic narrative a local habitation, have fixed the Paradise of unfallen man on one or other of those noble islands ... I have seen both Ceylon and Java, ... but for calm placid loveliness I should place Singapore high above them both ... perfumed isles are in many people's minds merely fabled dreams but they are easy of realization here ... 1

Generally speaking, those who passed any time in the country modified these glowing first impressions in part, but it remained a familiar image of travellers and sojourners whose picture of Malaya extended only to the view from the steamer's decks as it came into the roadstead at Penang or Singapore, and whose tales were doubtless avidly read by a British public living vicariously on the adventures of its less sedentary brothers and sisters. One such writer hoped that:

.... this record of a time spent among the less well-known portions of Malaysia may be interesting to those whom the goddess of travel has wooed in vain, as perchance to those "birds of passage" to whom the islands and continents of the world are as well-known as the church spires and mill-stones of their own land ....

and spoke of the region as "the gardens of the sun" where "nature is very beautiful" and "man, although often strikingly primitive, is hospitable and not often vile ..."

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Cameron: Our Tropical Possessions, op.cit., p.27-28.



A voyage of a few weeks brings us to these beauty-spots of the Eastern Seas - to an "always-afternoon" kind of climate - since they are blessed with the heat and glory of eternal summer - to a place where winter is unknown - monsoon-swept islands oasis-like basking in a warm and shallow desert of sea. Warmed by perpetual sunshine, deluged by copious rains, and thrilled by electricity, they are really enormous conservatories of beautiful vegetation - great Zoological Gardens inhabited by rare birds and curious animals. In these sunny garden scenes, man is the Adam of a modern Eden, primitive in habits and numerically insignificant; he has scarcely begun his battle with things inanimate, or his struggle for existence as it is known to us. At home we have man as in some sort the master of Nature, but in the Bornean forests Nature still reigns supreme. Here with us man wrests his sustenance from her - there she is lavish in the bestowal of gifts unsought. 1

There was, in fact, a prevalent feeling that "Malaya had dreamed away the centuries". Even when such landscapes were peopled, nature continued to play a dominant part, and the sensation of existing in an unreal, dream-world pervaded the image.

It was late afternoon, and the sun was casting shafts of hot light between the palms, across the fern-carpeted ground, through the feathery fronds of bamboos, swaying gently on the river bank, out among the dancing ripples of the steam. Under the trees was gathered a little group of men and women, dark, olive-skinned natives of the country clad in soft-toned silks; the women wearing ... gossamer veils edged with gold embroidery - not veils to hide the face, only to frame it in a tenderly artful setting, whence the dark-lashed, dewy eyes might stir the beholder's blood more easily ...

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1  
F.W. Burbidge: The Gardens of the Sun (London, John Murray, 1880) Preface. That late Victorian England could conceive of Eden only in terms of "a great zoological garden" is significant in itself.

With the exception of the more civilized tribes in the vicinity of Sarawak, the Malays who inhabit the coast of Borneo are a cruel, treacherous and disgusting race of men with scarcely one good quality to recommend them ... every man is armed and is a robber by profession ... these Malay tribes live almost wholly by piracy, to carry on which each town possesses several large prahus, which they man, and send out to intercept any unfortunate junk or other vessel incapable of much resistance, which fate or the currents may have driven too near their coasts ... Unless they are irritated by a desperate resistance or they attack an inimical tribe, they do not shed blood, as has been generally supposed; restrained, however, by no other feeling than that of avarice, for the salves are too valuable to be destroyed. In their physiognomy, these Malays are inferior to the Dyaks; they have a strong resemblance to the monkey in the face, with an air of low cunning and rascality most unprepossessing. In stature they are very low, and generally bandy-legged. Their hair and eyes are invariably black, but the face is in most instances devoid of hair; when it does grow, it is only at the extreme point of the chin. The Borneo Malay women are as plain as the men, although at Sincapore (sic.) Mauritius and the Sooloos, they are well-favoured ...

F.S. Marryat : Borneo and the  
Indian Archipelago, 1848.

Some naked children laughed and played  
 within the shadows of a crooning stream;  
 fought in the shallows and fell into the silent  
 pools of deeper water, shadowed by branches  
 hidden from the sun.

The picture caught my eye and held me  
 dreamily delighted ... 1

As the interleaf illustrates, contemplation of the Malay people had not always aroused such idyllic pictures. In the absence of precise information about the Peninsula, which persisted by and large until the last quarter of the century, images of its peoples were formed mainly by association - with "the East" and "Asia", with "India" in the special sense already mentioned, with the Eastern or Indian Archipelago. This process of association was furthered no doubt by the tendency to use the term "Malay" rather loosely to describe the inhabitants not only of the Peninsula and the Straits Settlement, but of Sumatra (whence it was assumed the Peninsular Malays had originally emigrated), and of the other islands of the Archipelago to which, as a maritime race, they had spread.

British images of Malaya, particularly until the decision was made to intervene on the Peninsula, reflected British interests there; since these were overwhelmingly commercial, it is not surprising that images of the Malays were formed insofar as they impinged advantageously or disadvantageously on these interests, or that, the Malays, with their Arab heritage, being a

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Swettenham: Real Malay, "Local Colour" p.267-8.  
 There was a very real sensation, natural enough for the sons of Victorian England, that if they were not ever on their guard, they would be seduced by Malaya, so compelling and beguiling was its beauty and charm.

sea-going people themselves, the contact was frequently not to the advantage of the British.

The natives of the Archipelago had carried a formidable and justifiably-earned reputation for piracy for centuries - at least since Europeans had entered its waters. The many inlets and river mouths on both east and west sides of the Straits of Malacca, and the flow of currents with the monsoons, offered excellent territory for attacks on unwary merchant ships plying between Europe and the Far East. Piratical plundering was natural enough for a people who traditionally made a living from the sea - "fishermen who also engaged in piracy whenever they considered that piracy could be committed with safety." In fact, as one gentleman's experience and practical observation had led him to believe, "the whole of these seas are more or less infested with pirates of the most sanguinary and cruel description" and "nothing but the fear of European power, or the want of opportunity would deter them from attacking vessels and if successful, of practising the most barbaric atrocities upon their victims."<sup>1</sup>

It was an image supported in larger or smaller degree by almost every "historian" and observer of the Malays from the time of British contact in the late eighteenth century. Even the conscientious Marsden, with his determination not to write "an entertaining book, to which the marvellous might be thought not a little to contribute",

... but to furnish those philosophers whose labours have been directed to the investigation

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Parliamentary Debates, Great Britain, Series III, Vol. 110, July 12, 1850, p.1307.

of the history of Man, with facts to serve as data in their reasonings, which are too often rendered nugatory, and not seldom ridiculous, by assuming as truths the misconceptions, or wilful impositions of travellers.

perpetuated the image by writing of Portuguese-Achinese contact in these terms:

That enterprising people, who caused so many kingdoms to shrink from the terror of their arms, met with nothing but disgrace in their attempts against Achin, whose monarchs made them tremble in their turn.<sup>1</sup>

The "head-hunting pirate" image was predominant in the innumerable personal adventure stories and narratives which constituted almost the whole of the literature on Malaya in the second quarter of the nineteenth century - books of trade and travel, with their emphasis on the commercial potential and the sensational in the Archipelago, the graphic accounts of naval officers engaged in expeditions to put down piracy - ("The noble Government of our honoured and beloved Queen Victoria at home, has come forward with her admirals and brave captains to assist in reducing the piracies which infested the coasts, by deeds of almost unexampled heroism"), and by the various missionaries and naturalists who travelled in the region: all of them repetitive

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William Marsden: The History of Sumatra (London, 1783). As a native state which successfully resisted repeated European encroachments upon its sovereignty, Achin doubtless contributed greatly to the "fiercely independent, if misguided, petty potentate of the East" image of native Malay Princes, whose passing British writers were wont to dwell upon with mingled awe and relief - See eg., Swettenham: Real Malay, "A Silhouette", p.224.231.

in their descriptions of scenery pirates, head-hunters and cannibalism, tigers, barbarians and ghoulis local customs.<sup>1</sup>

It is doubtful whether any event focussed attention upon this image of the Malay more than the dramatic adventures of James Brooke in Sarawak and Borneo, the charges of inhumanity levelled against his dealings with the Malays, the controversy in British Parliament and public circles, the commission of enquiry, and the complete exoneration which eventually followed. As one observer saw the whole affair:

One of the darkest recesses of heathen ignorance, cruelty, and desolation, where piracy, and murder and conflagration, and head-hunting stalked abroad in open day, and the aborigines were in sure way of being exterminated utterly, is now, so to speak,

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. E.J. Trelawney: Adventures of a Younger Son (London, 1831); G.W. Earl: The Eastern Seas .... (London, 1837) which incidentally inspired Brooke to embark upon his expedition to Borneo; Rev. H. Malcolm: Travels in South Eastern Asia (London, 1839); G.F. Davidson: Trade and Travel in the Far East (London, 1846); Sir E. Belcher: Narrative of the Voyage of the H.M. Samarang (2 vols, London, 1848); F.S. Marryat: Borneo and the Indian Archipelago (London, 1848); Captain H. Keppel: Expedition to Borneo of the H.M.S. Dido (2 vols, Borneo, 1845) and A visit to the Indian Archipelago in H.M. Ship, Meander (2 vols, London, 1853). Marryat's works is perhaps the most interesting, revealing as it does, Marryat's attitudes as naval official, spectator, man, Briton. A midshipman on the Samarang, he allowed his eye to wander a little further than did Belcher. His attitudes to the "natives-at-play", especially his evident delight at the ease of intercourse with the ladies of the Archipelago compared with those of Singapore and Europe, are worth comparing with Swettenham's (Malay Sketches: "A Fishing Picnic", 1903), A.C.L. Dawes' tragic male Chauvinism in Yellow and White, (1895) and finally, those of Henri Fauconnier in the Soul of Malaya, (1931)

like the Paradise of God.<sup>1</sup>

It was one of the few occasions in the century on which the affairs of the British in the Malay Archipelago were debated at any length in the Houses of Parliament, and, apart from the publicity given Brooke's adventures in the House and the press, a considerable body of literature in the form of pamphlets, biographies and collections of Brooke's papers and letters appeared in the years following the Commission - the best part of it the product of the pens of Brooke's many friends and admirers, and unabashedly eulogistic about the achievements of the Raja's regime in Sarawak. Moreover, practically every book written from that time carried a chapter extolling Brooke's virtues and exemplifying his methods of dealing with the native peoples of that region, and marvelling at the transformation of Borneo under his "truly imperial ascendancy."<sup>2</sup> It was a vision

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<sup>1</sup> Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates: (Vol. 118, Series III, July/Aug. 1851 p.467) from a letter signed "D. Calcutta" quoted by Mr. Headlam in the House of Commons. For a less flattering view of Brooke's achievements, see Captain Vigor's account of the attack and massacre of the alleged pirates - (ibid. Vol. 110, July 12, 1850) noting, nonetheless, his conclusion: "That discharge of grape was a fearful sight, as at point blank range it crashed over the sea, and through the devoted prahus, marking its track with floating bodies of the dying, shattered prahus, planks, shields, and fragments of all sorts. I should have pitied them; but they were pirates and the thought steeled my heart ..." (My underlining.)

<sup>2</sup> Brooke himself wrote: "My intention, my wish, is to develop the island of Borneo. My intention, my wish, is to extirpate piracy by attacking and breaking up the pirate towns; not only pirates direct, but pirates indirect. I wish to correct the native character, .. to introduce gradually a better system of government; to open the interior, to remove the clogs on trade ... I wish to make Borneo a second Java. I intend to amend and influence the entire Archipelago." (from Adams: The Eastern Archipelago. (London, 1880) p.171-4 quoting J.C. (continued on page 114)

which mid-Victorian England found particularly gratifying obviously. As George Borrow commented in The Romany Rye in 1857:

What a crown of glory ... to carry the blessings of civilization and religion to barbarous, yet at the same time, beautiful and romantic lands.

Only Raja Brooke, according to Borrow, had done so in these times.

It is interesting to note in passing that in justifying his slaughter of eight hundred "piratical Serebas tribesmen",<sup>1</sup> Brooke called upon the twin themes of Malayan imperialism: of kindness to the natives, and preservation of the peace necessary for free trade (-"laying broad foundations for native prosperity whilst extending general security and commerce" as Keppel called it.) In order to do this, he idealized on the one hand the "poorer and peaceful aboriginal" Dyak tribesmen, whom he claimed were in danger of extinction, and on the other, the piratical Serebas and Sakarrans - "Savages, steeped in the blood of the

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(Footnote 2 continued from Page 113)

Templar: Private Letters of Sir James Brooke ... (London, 1853, 3 Vols.) There was some doubt at the time whether these were "pirates", either "direct" or "indirect", or simply neighbouring tribes engaging in a small civil war. See the Parliamentary Debates relative to the "Alleged Piracy off Borneo" and the Times newspaper in these months.

<sup>1</sup> Note Brooke's "official" image of the affair:

Killed during action, by the steamer and English boats	250
Killed by the natives during action	50
Killed after the action when on their way home	50
Died in the jungle, or after reaching their home	450

(from Brooke's Journal, quoted in Adams: ibid., p.174) The reduction of a bloody battle to columns of statistics, a characteristic of all imperial practice, is clearly a special device for "tidying up" an affair, while concomitantly easing one's conscience. Cobden, in the House of Commons, was outraged:

(continued Page 115)



most innocent and weak and guilty of the most atrocious crimes." That is, he made the familiar simplistic division into "the good" and "the bad" which lies at the base of the western concept of justice, based as it is ideally on conflict rather than consensus, on polarization into a totally right and a totally wrong.<sup>1</sup>

It becomes obvious, on reading the official and unofficial literature of the Borneo piracy and Brooke's policy there, that images of the antagonists were incredibly blurred and disordered as distance from the events, both in a geographical and a relational sense, increased. A confusion of terms rained upon British ears - Malays, Dyaks, Sakarran, Sarebas, aboriginal peoples, head hunters, inhabitants of Borneo, piratical marauders. The consequent confusion of images undoubtedly persisted in the minds of many when an attempt had later to be made to envisage "the Real Malay", and to define his "characteristics both moral and physical", in order that the British might set about that regeneration of the brown races of the Peninsula which was the inevitable adjunct of the extension of British control.

There were, however, concerted efforts to clarify and balance the image of the Malay peoples as the "most fierce treacherous ignorant and inflexible of barbarians." Trelawney,

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(Continued from Page 114 - Footnote 2)

"The loss of life was greater than in the case of the English at Trafalgar, Copenhagen or Algiers, and yet it was sought to pass over such a loss of life as if they were so many dogs ... (P.D., Series III, Vol. 118, p. 498) There are undeniable parallels between the British action in Borneo in 1849 and the Americans in Vietnam in the 1960's.

<sup>1</sup> cf. Perls: Ego, Hunger and Aggression, op.cit., Chap. vii; and S. and L. Rudolph: The Modernity of Tradition, op.cit. esp. Part 3, on the transition of India's legal institutions with British rule.

whose messmates such men had been, noted that they were "true to their word , generous to prodigality, and of inimitable courage" - a chivalrous race, "devoted to war, and to its inseparable accompaniment, women."<sup>1</sup>

Although it was never as strong as its counterpart in continental India during the same period, there was a tradition of relatively sophisticated scholarship, centering on enquiry into the native people of Malaya, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century - a tradition which looked back to Marsden, Raffles and Crawford, and was continued later by administrator-scholars like Low, Major McNair, Swettenham, Clifford and Winstedt. I have already spoken of a general feeling that there was something congenial in the Malay character which tended to predispose the British towards overlooking some of their more monstrous sins against civilization. Many came to believe that the less attractive side of the Malay nature was due to contact with other European nations, (the Portuguese and Dutch, who were manifestly ignorant of the art of dealing with native peoples), and that the Malay in his natural state was a far more amiable and enlightened creature. (This latter realization was scarcely surprising since the only satisfactory indication of enlightenment seemed to be a disposition to welcome the English.)

This involved a contradiction which is worth noting. Peter Begbie, who was one of the British army officers who utilized his professional stay in the East for fruitful historical purposes, wrote an account of the Naning War of 1831,

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<sup>1</sup> Trelawney: Adventures of a Younger Son, op.cit. p.353-4, p.357.

which actually comprises a fairly comprehensive analysis of Dutch administration of Malacca, a general review of British rights in Naning, the story of the founding of Singapore, and a broad survey of the history and customs of the Malays. In The Malayan Peninsula, he compared a Naningite plot to set the Dutch town of Malacca on fire in 1644 with a similar plan conceived by the Roman, Mutius, which had always been regarded as an act of heroism. But "Had Mutius lived later and been termed an Italian", commented Begbie, "or had the action been recorded of a Malay, the same force of prejudice would have linked the epithet of treachery with the deed." Later, however, he was to condemn the "turbulence and disaffection" of the Naningites in opposing British rule, and sang the glories of British administration which had brought only plenty and prosperity to a land of traditional poverty.<sup>1</sup>

The lack of scholarship was partly the result of political circumstances.<sup>2</sup> The Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824, in splitting the old Johore-Lingga empire into separate British and Dutch spheres of interest, divorced the British from direct contact with Java, Sumatra, and the islands of the Archipelago with ancient traditions, and this isolation was intensified by the trading restrictions imposed by the Culture System in Java after 1830. The British were also cut off from the Malay

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P.J. Begbie: The Malayan Peninsula (p.56, p.154)

2

It was noted (above page 101) also that many of the early works of Crawford, Raffles, Logan and other scholars, were unobtainable by the last quarter of the century.

hinterland states by the East India Company's rigid policy of non-intervention, and were confined to the modern sea-ports of Singapore and Penang, and the declining settlement of Malacca. After 1833, even this interest in the Straits Settlements declined when the Company lost its monopoly of the China trade.

Apart from the monographs of men like Begbie and John Anderson, (of whose Political and Commercial Considerations Relative to the Malayan Peninsula all but a few copies were reputedly destroyed by Government order, because it was highly critical of the Company's duplicitous treatment of the Raja of Quedah,<sup>1</sup>) most of the Malay scholar-administrators of this period found an outlet for their talents in the Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia,<sup>2</sup> which was edited in Singapore by James Logan, ex-planter, newspaper editor, law agent and ethnologist. Most of the articles in Logan's Journal were fairly stolid enquiries into the geography, languages, customs and exploration of the Peninsula and its inhabitants.

But, as far as images of Malaya are concerned, the main function of these articles, and those which appeared in collections like J.H. Moor's Notices on the Indian Archipelago and Adjacent Countries, was to establish, by looking closely at the writings of Europeans in contact with the Archipelago in earlier

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<sup>1</sup> J. Anderson: Political and Commercial Considerations Relative to the Malayan Peninsula and the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca. (Prince of Wales Is. 1824; facsimile reprint in J.M.B.R.A.S., Vol. XXXV, Part IV, Dec. 1962. See John Bastin's "Introduction" for the circumstances surrounding publishing of Anderson's book.

<sup>2</sup> The Journal was published 1847 to 1859.

centuries, that although Malays had long been a maritime people and had thus spread over the whole Archipelago, not all of them earned a living from the sea (whether legally or illegally).<sup>1</sup>

Crawfurd, for example, expanded upon the fifteenth century Portuguese writer, de Barros, to conclude that

The Malay nation may be divided naturally into three classes - the civilized Malays, or those who possess a written language, and have made a decent progress in the useful arts; the gypsy-like fishermen called 'the sea people'; and the rude half savages (quasi meois salvages) who for the most part live precariously on the produce of the forest.

The "civilized" Malays were to be found inhabiting the eastern side and the interior of Sumatra, and the seaboards of Borneo and the Malay Peninsula. The sea gypsies, on the other hand,

... are to be found sojourning from Sumatra to the Moluccas ... the only habitations of these people are their boats and they live exclusively by the produce of the sea, or by robberies they commit upon it.

They were generally referred to as the "orang laut" or "rayat-laut", the latter the Arabic word for subject, signifying "their dependence on the princes of the civilized Malays". The "rude wandering savages" inhabited the interior of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra; they were called "orang utan", (literally "men of the woods", "wild men" or "savages") or "sakai" which means follower or dependant.<sup>1</sup>

(In passing, the Sakai's attracted a good deal of attention from the amateur ethnologists and anthropologists of

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<sup>1</sup> Crawfurd: Descriptive Dictionary..(London, Bradbury and Evans, 1856, p.250 ff.) The dictionary was a compilation and modification of the information contained in his previous volumes on the Archipelago. See his entries for 'Malays' and 'Malay Peninsula.'

pseudo-Darwinian England. Generally speaking there was a curious ambivalence in attitudes to these nomadic,aboriginal peoples of inland Malaya. On the one hand, they were seen as the most primitive barbarians, woolly-haired animals scarcely more developed than the apes who shared their name; their demise,as such,would be a loss to scientist and missionary zealot,but the inevitable was scarcely to be regretted. On the other, they were depicted as a Malayan version of "noble savage", pure, untainted children playing Edenic games in the tropical Malayan jungles "content and happy in the solitary grandeur of the primeval forests." As such,their disappearance, in the path of Malay encroachment upon their rights, would be regretted by a nation already firmly grasped between the jaws of the industrial monster, the Juggernaut of Progress, although it was hoped that the benignity of the British Government would secure them some measure of protection from Malay oppression and imposition.) 1

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1 See Cameron: Our Tropical Possessions, op.cit., p.124-125. And compare Wallace: The Malay Archipelago, op.cit., esp. his concluding chapter, Vol. II, p.282-286. "We should now clearly recognize the fact, that the wealth and knowledge and culture of the few do not constitute civilization, and do not of themselves advance us towards "the perfect social state." Our vast manufacturing system, our gigantic commerce, our crowded towns and cities, support and continually renew a mass of human misery and crime absolutely greater than has ever existed before. They create and maintain in life-long labour an ever-increasing army ... who ... are worse off than the savage in the midst of his tribe ... I believe that the civilized man can learn something from the savage man ... as regards true social science, we are still in a State of Barbarism."

In 1850, Logan reprinted in his Journal the work of Francois Valentyn, (Description of Malaka), a Dutch missionary in the East, who wrote at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and was recognised as "the greatest European authority on the whole area." Valentyn wrote:

The Malays of these countries are commonly called orang de bawa angin, i.e. 'the people below the wind' (to leeward), or else 'Easterlings'; whilst those of the Occident, more especially the Arabs, are called Orang atas angin, that is, 'people above the wind', or 'Occidentals'; this is not that there are no other tribes of that name, but that these two nations are the most renowned, the most ingenious and the most civilized of that race.

The Malays are the most clever, the most ingenious, and the politest people in the whole East.

They are of a rather pale hue and much fairer than other natives of India, also much kinder, more polite, and neater in their manner of living, and in general so charming that no other people can be compared to them ... Their women, too, are generally of a more exalted mind than other women of India and they excel also in loveliness and wit far above others. <sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note how British observers related to the fact of the Arab influence on the Malays. The enquiry into the past history of Malay people, (a necessary adjunct of any national philosophy based on the premise that "you are what you have done"), attracted a good deal of attention and effort, and although most conclusions were tentative and contradictory, it was generally agreed that the Malays "had a history which shows that, in place of being a poor spiritless body of tribes,

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<sup>1</sup> Logan: Journal of Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia, Vol. IV, 1850, p.698-70.

they have been from the earliest times a race whose enterprise has been widespreading to a degree" and that, while noting the Hindu association with the Peninsula, the Arab connection had been most formative on Malay character. It was not always seen as a favorable influence - to their Arabic heritage was attributed the Malay pirates' bloodthirsty lack of respect for life:

Besides their love of piratical plunder these Malays more than any others were much more under the influence of their Arabian teachers and had imbibed to the full the belief that to die for the religion of the Prophet Muhammed was to there and then enter the Paradise of Islam." <sup>1</sup>

Crawfurd, writing of the "Manner of Foreign Settlers" in the Archipelago, remarked that Arabian adventurers had settled almost every country and, inter-marrying with the native peoples, had "begot a mixed and numerous race." Of all the nations which met on this "common theatre", he wrote,

... the Arabs are the most ambitious, intriguing and bigotted. They have a strength of character which places them above the simple natives ... to whom, in matters of religion, they dictate with that arrogance with which the meanest of the countrymen of the prophet consider themselves entitled to conduct themselves. <sup>2</sup>

Much later, Ambrose Rathborne was to write of the Malays that:

Their treachery, cunning and absolute disregard for human life is due to their

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<sup>1</sup> See N.J. Ryan: Malaya Through Four Centuries: An Anthology 1500-1900 (London, Oxford U. Press, 1959, p.19 ff.) referring to the Achinese actually. G. Finlayson: The Mission to Siam and Hué (London, 1826) likened the "roving unsettled life" and "distaste for agricultural pursuits" of the Malays to that of the "more savage banditti of the Arabian desert."

<sup>2</sup> J. Crawfurd: History of Indian Archipelago, op.cit., (Vol.I. p.139)



Arabian ancestors, who introduced the Moham-  
 medan religion, which is answerable for the  
 fatalism and the looseness of their marriage  
 ties. 1

It is significant, however, that Rathborne offered this inform-  
 ation more in the way of pardoning the Malay for sins not really  
 his own; by the 'sixties in fact, one writer could dispel both  
 images - of barbarian and infidel (- in part at least.) The  
 ancient practice of piracy was, after all, according to John  
 Cameron, a sin for which the Malays might be excused, since it  
 "has to be laid at the doors of a sea-faring population, for  
 whose shortcomings even in our own country we are accustomed  
 to make considerable allowances." 2 Moreover, mid-century  
 Englishmen were more inclined to look favorably upon the Muslim  
 religion, particularly when they recalled the idolatrous  
 caste-bound Hindu beliefs which had proven to be such a barrier  
 to the progress and enlightenment of the natives of India. 3

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1 A. Rathborne: Camping and Tramping in Malaya, op.cit.  
 (p.58-59)

2 Cameron: Our Tropical Possessions, op.cit., p.128.  
 cf. Wallace: The Malay Archipelago, passim, observing that  
 "Man has means of traversing the sea which animals do not  
 possess; and a superior race has power to press out or  
 assimilate an inferior one", was impressed with the mariti-  
 me enterprise and higher civilization of the Malays, which  
 had enabled them to colonize neighbouring regions, and which  
 apparently created a further affinity between the Malays and  
 mid-Victorian Englishmen. Note again Boulding's contention  
 that messages coinciding with our own value system will be  
 more readily received.

3 Finlayson: The Mission to Siam and Hue, op.cit., p.69. And  
 yet note the Residents' frequent assertion later that "the  
 Malays as a race detest change. 'Let our children die rather  
 than our customs' is a familiar saying ... which has but  
 little of exaggeration." (Clifford: Proc. Royal.Col. Inst.,  
 1898-9, p.371)

(They also compared favorably in this respect with the "citizens of the Celestial Empire" whose "immutable laws forbid alteration in the customs of their upholders. The Malay race on the contrary eagerly adopt improvements.") In fact, it was with a feeling akin to relief that Anglo-Malayan writers began to note that their subjects were followers of the Prophet. Moreover, Mohammedanism in the Malay setting was seen to be somehow less pernicious. Lieutenant Newbold attributed this to the fact that their religion resembled more the simple mode of the Arab than "the Musselman of Hindoostan tainted and contaminated by the admixture of many Hindu observances" and that being descendants of the Arabs, "their attention to the rules of Islam is more constant and regular than the Muhammedans of India."<sup>1</sup>

Others felt that it was precisely because their Mohammedanism was not pure that it was tolerable.

The Malays of the Straits ... were converted to the faith of Mahommed in the thirteenth century; but whether it be that their conversion was not at first complete, and that many of the early superstitions were left behind, or that it is simply the result of degeneracy, certainly the duties of their religion seem to sit very lightly upon the great bulk of them. <sup>1</sup>

Another wrote that the Malays "are nominally Mohammedans but have none of the fanaticism of that sect in Arabia." <sup>2</sup> It was

<sup>1</sup> Cameron: Our Tropical Possessions, op.cit., p.128. "It is true that when they accumulate a fortune, which very few of those in the Straits ever do, they expend a portion of it in a trip to Mecca, but this is scarcely an indication of great piety; it is rather a desire, by considerable temporal sacrifice to make up for a good many spiritual shortcomings, both past and present."

<sup>2</sup> Bickmore: Travels in the East Indian Archipelago, op.cit., p.33-34; cf. Swettenham: Real Malay: "A Study in Shadows" p.161; and Rathborne: Camping and Tramping, op.cit., p.58.

generally felt that their sins, at least the sins of those who were uncorrupted "by the vices of the other populations who have crowded in upon them," were not heinous, and were "chiefly those of omission".

Whatever the reason the British in Malaya increasingly drew comfort from the fact that many of the concomitants of the Mohammedan religion and the Arabic tradition which they had had difficulty accepting in other regions, were modified or absent in Malaya. Victorian gentlemen could scarcely be other than gratified to note that, though their religion permitted it, few Malays had more than one wife, and though divorce laws were incredibly lax by English standards, there "subsists a sincere and generally lasting attachment" between man and wife. The men moreover "are far more gallant than the natives of the other parts of the East, and those they love, they also respect."<sup>1</sup> Observations of this kind were generally followed by reflections upon the peaceful domesticity of Kampong life ("and it is indeed rather to these than to the crowded streets of our towns that we must go for a glimpse into the life of these people") - marital bliss, upon which Victorian moralizers placed such high value, apparently accompanied the greater freedom accorded the women of Malaya by their spouses, a freedom which, nonetheless, they did not abuse:

They are strongly attached to their homes and families, and there is probably no more

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<sup>1</sup> Cameron: Our Tropical Possessions, op.cit., p.130.  
cf. Crawford: History of Indian Archipelago, op.cit., Vol.I, p.95 "The funerals of the Indian Islanders who are Mahommedans are conducted with a decent solemnity, without clamour and ostentation."

pleasing picture of social happiness than is presented by many of the Malay hamlets ... the women are constant and faithful and after marriage esteem their virtue their chief ornament. Both parents are kind to their children, and govern rather through affection than force, the result being that old age is with them an honoured estate. <sup>1</sup>

This idealization of Kampong life was to reach its zenith under the pen of Hugh Clifford, but it became a familiar image with most Britons writing about the Malays. Clifford's 'good' and 'bad' were Kampong and court - to the latter it was that the cross of St. George was sent out from Britain to "yet another battle with the great dragon - the four-headed dragon of Cruelty, Ignorance, Selfishness, and Stupidity," to relieve the lower classes of the population of "the heavy hand of misrule which fell most crushingly" upon them.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Isabella Bird was a more "objective" observer than those who actually lived with and governed the Malay people - for whatever reason, at least, she was less inclined, throughout the account of her journey in the Native States, to idealise the doings of either British or Malays, and the image she leaves is worth noting, especially since it draws together the strands I have noted in these pages:

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<sup>1</sup> Cameron: ibid. p.129, 131. There is something pathetically ironic in Cameron's application of the word "estate" to the position of the aged in Malay society, but it is an excellent illustration of the power of the medium (language) to impose its own limitations upon its user. cf. Swettenham: Real Malay, p.262. "It is difficult to imagine any state of human existence more typical of perfect peace, of idyllic simplicity, of warmth and colour, and the plenty bestowed by a super-abundantly fruitful Nature, than that presented by a Malay riverine hamlet."

<sup>2</sup> Clifford: Proc. Roy. Col. Inst., 1898-99, p.372, p.385.

The Malays undoubtedly must be numbered among civilized people. They live in houses which are more or less tasteful and secluded. They are well clothed in garments of both native and foreign manufacture; they are a settled and agricultural people; they are skilful in some of the arts, especially in the working of gold and the damascening of krises; the upper classes are to some extent educated; they have a literature, even though it be an imported one, and they have possessed for centuries systems of government and codes of land and maritime laws which, in theory at least, show a considerable degree of enlightenment.

Miss Bird:

The Golden Chersonese And  
The Way Thither, 1883

"Have the Malays any special habits?"  
I have often been asked. The questioner has continued: "I suppose they are all dreadfully fierce men, with wild eyes, and armed with long knives?"

"Whatever makes you say that?"

"Well, it's what I've read. Why only recently I heard of - what do you call it? - a Malay running amuck and killing six people. Dreadful, dreadful!"

Could the average Englishman only realise the exceeding gentleness of the Malay, could he see him in his house with his wife, or playing with his children; could he talk with him and note his pleasingly soft accents; could he watch him stride the roads - head erect, neck well poised, one of Nature's gentlemen; could he meet with the courtesy which the Malay will bestow on all - he would revise his opinion.

Richard J. H. Sidney, M.A., F.R.G.S.:  
In British Malaya Today (1927)

The theory of government (absolute despotisms, modified by certain rights of which no rulers in a Mohammedan country can absolutely deprive the ruled, and by the assertion of individual rights by the chiefs) does not contain anything inherently vicious, and is well-adapted to Malay circumstances. Whatever is evil in practice,\* is rather contrary to the theory than in accordance with it. The States undoubtedly have fallen in many ways into evil case; the privileged few, consisting of the rajahs and their numerous children, oppressing the under privileged many, living in idleness on what is wrung from their toil. The Malay sovereigns in most cases have come to be little more than feudal heads of bodies of insubordinate chiefs; while even the headmen of the villages take upon themselves to levy taxes and administer a sort of justice. Nomadic cultivation, dislike of systematic labour and general <sup>in</sup>security have further impoverished the people ... 1

In any event, although the transition contained many contradictions, and images were rarely as clearcut as an attempt to outline them in "thesis-form" might imply, it appears that the transformation, the necessity of which Kiernan draws attention to in The Lords of Human Kind,<sup>2</sup> did occur, although I shall argue

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\* She instances debt slavery, forced labour and the oppressive taxes.

1 I. Bird: Golden Chersonese, op.cit., p.26: (Note that on p.19 she had instanced their "settled and agricultural" habits as evidence of their meriting inclusion amongst "civilized people.") A devout Christian, she could not resist adding: "While Islamism exercises its usual freezing and retarding influence, producing fatal isolation which to weak peoples is slow decay." Generally speaking, the British were scandalized by the indulgence afforded the royal sons of Malaya; not surprisingly, Clifford wrote: "Can there be room for wonder that with such an up-bringing the young raja developed into something not unlike a Nero?" ... wanting even a love of art to weave a certain halo of romance about his vices and cruelty." (Proc. Roy. Col. Inst., 1898-99, p.375-6); See also J.M. Gullick's character analysis of Rajah Abdul Samad of Selangor: "A Careless, Heathen, Philosopher?" (J.M.B.R.A.S., Vol.26, Pt.I, 1953, p.86 ff.)

2 Quoted above p. 12-13.

below (Part 6) that it was not wholly a transition with time and circumstance as Kiernan suggests, but one which the imperialist must make at all times as he necessarily defines and divides his world, in order that he may control it by ruling it.

\* \* \*

There is one point to make in passing about the illustrations accompanying Anglo-Malayan literature for these, as much as the worded descriptions that accompanied them, conveyed the images which would be held by their readers.

"In describing people and countries hitherto unknown," as one writer remarked, "no description given by pen will equal one correct drawing." The tendency of many colonial authors to anglicize the colonial setting, that occurred in other outposts of empire in the nineteenth century as Englishmen struggled to familiarize their new surroundings, may be noticed in Malaya. It was the same process to which Crawford unconsciously referred when describing the "hospitable and elegant mansion" of the Governor of Penang, (named Suffolk, after Francis Light's birth country):

... the taste of Mr. Phillips has rendered it the most beautiful spot of the kind in India, after Barrackpore, ... it is, in short, an English gentleman's park, where clove and nutmeg trees ... are substituted for oak, elms and ash. 1

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1  
Crawford: Journal of an Embassy to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China, (London, 1830) p.15. The Botanical Garden and the Museum, both familiar imperial institutions, represent an attempt to preserve native flora, fauna and artifact yet by reducing and confining them to order and manageability within the garden border and display case.



Proctor, lith.

Published by Smith, Elder & Co. 65, Cornhill, London.

Day & Son, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.

THE LIMBANG—HAULING PAST THE RAPIDS



The anglicization of the environment may not have been entirely intentional on the part of the author. Marryat, regretting the failure of the Admiralty, in fitting out survey vessels, to supply a professional draughtsman, noted that "the engravings which have appeared in too many of the Narratives of Journeys and Expeditions give not only an imperfect, but even erroneous, idea of what they describe." This was due to the fact that the hasty pencil sketch from an impractised hand

was commonly made over to an artist to reduce to proportion, from him it passes over to the hand of an engraver, and an interesting plate is produced by their joint labours. But in this making up, the character and features of the individual are lost, or the scenery is composed of foliage not indigenous to the country, but introduced by the artist to make a good picture ... 1

Swettenham also grappled with the problem of presenting reality, recognising the limits of both pen and brush in reproducing nature, but feeling very strongly the "...wish, in the heart of the beholder, that his joy should be shared by those he loves, by those to whom such a scene would appeal as it does to him." Although he was afraid that the result could be "little more than a caricature of the beauty which so stirred his feelings," he concluded that "in even indifferent hands" it was possible to "catch a faint semblance of the reality, and give, sometimes pleasure, sometimes a grain of instruction..." 2

1

Marryat: op.cit. p.v-vi. Marryat's book is interesting for "by my not doing any duty on board at one time, and at another by my having been discharged into hospital ship at Hong Kong," he found time to complete his own drawings, having intended originally to publish them without commentary on the voyages of the H.M.S. Samarang.

2

Swettenham: Real Malay, p.263-4.

Indeed apart from the occasional token palm tree, many of the "Malayan" settings looked remarkably like the forests of the Lake District or the South of France. It is doubtful whether anyone in England had any idea what the Malayan jungle was really like until photography, with all its capacity for destroying illusion,<sup>1</sup> was introduced into Anglo-Malayan literature, at the very end of the century. It is my impression that it was also partly an attempt to convey graphically the image of a land being brought slowly but surely from anarchy to civilization. It did not accord with British hopes for the success of their civilizing mission in Malaya, to depict their subjects in anarchic settings. The tendency to romanticize and idealize the environment was reflected in illustrations too; but even the English imagination was sorely tested when required to depict the "Garden of Eden". Perhaps one of the best examples of this is W.H.D. Adams' "60 illustrations" accompanying his study of The Eastern Archipelago.<sup>2</sup> While certainly strange and unmistakably oriental, they have an order and even tranquility about them which contrasts markedly with earlier foreboding mystery

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<sup>1</sup> Compare e.g. H. Norman's photographs in Peoples and Politics of the Far East (1901) with Cameron's drawings in Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India (1865). See Marshall McLuhan: Understanding Media, op.cit., Chap.20, "The Photograph", for the "transforming power of the photo."...) Swettenham: ibid. displays a suspicion of the photo "whose comparative exactness ... often conveys a poorer idea of a scene than an indifferently painted sketch," a fact which, to Swettenham, "gives encouragement, and some justification, to an accurate and truth-loving observer, who honestly tries, with however little success, to share his pleasant experiences with those who may never have the opportunity of seeing with their own eyes...."

<sup>2</sup> W.H.D. Adams: The Eastern Archipelago: A description of the scenery, animal and vegetable life, people, and physical wonders of the Islands in the Eastern Seas. (London, Nelson, 1880).

and darkness, and which has little in common with the later photographs of Malayan scenery. "Interior of a Dyak Hut" (facing p.136) for example, for all that the women are bare-breasted and otherwise obviously "native", portrays a studied domesticity - the men talk amiably and two are actually reading. "Bamboo Thicket" (facing p.110) might also be "The Hay Wain" in oriental setting, and "Natives of New Guinea" (facing p.476) looks remarkably like Arthur Rackham's frontispiece to The Vicar of Wakefield.

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The role of Singapore in images of Malaya is important for it represents the British attempt to supply the Malayan image with those outward and visible signs of "civilization" which the Malayan peoples had manifestly failed to provide - a lack to which they alluded when they spoke of "her unheroic past .."

Malaya has played an exceedingly insignificant part in the drama of eastern history. Its jungles hid no ruins of great cities of past empires. There never has been an era of proud distinction. Java ... Cambodia ... Burma ... Ceylon ... each of these lands has nourished great civilizations. Malaya has dreamed away the centuries ... 1

Singapore was indeed a white man's city. From its beginning Raffles had envisioned that this small settlement should and could become "the Venice of the East", and he was determined, regardless of the lack of enthusiasm initially shown by the Home Government,

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Kirkland: Finding the Worthwhile in the Orient, op.cit.

to rescue this "classical spot" from isolation and oblivion, and establish it permanently as such in the minds of Europe and England.

I shall say nothing of the importance which I attach to the permanence of the position I have taken up at Singapore; it is a child of my own ... it is my intention to ... devote the remaining years of my stay in the East to the advancement of a colony which in every way it can be viewed, bids fair to be one of the most important and at the same time, one of the least expensive and troublesome which we possess. Our object is ... a great commercial emporium. 1

As later writers testified, the rapidity and success of the transformation of this swampy land, inhabited by a few piratical Malay fishermen, into a flourishing, bustling free port and cosmopolitan city was one of the most remarkable achievements of the British in the East; it was frequently felt that it would have surprised even Raffles to have returned in the 1880's to gaze upon the "crowd of splendid shipping, the churches, the public buildings and offices" and all the other evident signs of "civilization".<sup>2</sup> This was the more so when they compared it, as they almost invariably did, with the genteelly-decadent ex-Portuguese and Dutch Colony of Malacca and the picturesque, but commercially less-challenging, port of Penang. Whether they represented the image in terms of

Singapore Harbour - P. and O. Company -  
Shipping in the Roadstead - Projected new docks -  
Chinese junks - Malay Prahus - Public Buildings -

- 
- 1 Raffles to Duchess of Somerset, June 1819; from Buckley: Anecdotal History, op.cit., p.5-6.
- 2 From a speech by Weld, unveiling a statue of Raffles in Singapore in 1887, from Egerton: Raffles, op.cit., Chap.XV. "The Man and His Work."

Crowded Streets - Commercial Square - Crowd of  
Boats - Busy Wharves - Native Shops - Chinese  
Trades - Opium Shops - Itinerant Vendors - St.  
Andrews Cathedral - Court House - Town Hall ...",<sup>1</sup>

or in exhaustive tables of statistics showing increasing amounts of trade passing through the port,<sup>2</sup> almost every account of the British experience in Malaya included a chapter or two on Singapore as port and city, all of which supported the stereotyped image of the almost fantastical realization of Raffles' dream. This was no "small trading station, scattered about an arid coast, trafficking with aborigines for gold dust and ivory and planting, at best, a few coconuts and oil-palms" - it was "the centre of commercial, telegraphic and naval communications between Europe, India, China, Western, Northern and North-Eastern Australia." <sup>3</sup>

And yet, while it undoubtedly grew into a flourishing commercial centre, and attracted the attention of those Europeans (and Chinese) whose image of the town extended no further than its commercial potential, it is doubtful whether Singapore ever became a great centre of society in the nineteenth century. As one writer put it as early as the 1840's:

Singapore, like all new settlements is composed of so mixed a community, that there is but little hospitality, and less gaiety. Everybody is waiting to ascertain what is to be his position in society, and till then is afraid of committing himself by friendly intercourse;

<sup>1</sup>

Taken from chapter headings of Cameron's Chapters II and III on Singapore in Our Tropical Possessions, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup>

See e.g. Begbie: The Malayan Peninsula, op.cit., opp. p.386; and Cameron, ibid., Chap. VII.

<sup>3</sup>

F. Weld: Proc. Roy. Col. Institute: Vol. XV, 1883-4, p.266.

moreover everybody is too busy making money ...  
 The consequence is, but few parties are given  
 and a ball is so rare that it becomes the  
 subject of conversation for months ..."<sup>1</sup>

While French civil servants and colonial officials may have found cosmopolitan Singapore a vast improvement over the society of Saigon, as one proud Englishman observed, few writers expressed any real enthusiasm beyond noting that the society of Singapore, "in its restrictive signification" comprised officials, bankers, lawyers, physicians and army officers, and centred on an aristocracy of European merchants. The notable exception was one, Whampoa, a Chinese merchant, who gave "excellent dinners and very agreeable parties" and whose "champagne is particularly approved of".<sup>2</sup>

Even John Cameron, who found much to his satisfaction in the decidedly languid life style of Singapore's European population, (estimated at only 800 persons in 1864), noted that "The people of Singapore must appreciate what long experience taught the Dutch in Java, that heavy dinner parties are scarcely suited

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Marryat: op.cit., p.213.

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Marryat: ibid., p.213. cf. Cameron, Our Tropical Possessions, op.cit.: "The community is a very small one. There are not I think over forty families who aim to form a part of society, and if I might offer an opinion on so delicate a subject, it would be that, among so few, a more general, even less intimate intercourse should spring up." Cameron's is the best and most detailed account of Singapore society on the eve of British intervention on the Peninsula. See esp. Chap.10. The images evoked by his chapter divisions are significant. "No field for European labour - Case in Illustrations - None for Adventurers - Social Distinctions - Society in its restrictive signification - its conservativeness - its expensive hospitality - its composition - prejudice against colour - style of living - general luxury - A Day's scenery - Breakfast - Drive to Town - Business - Tiffin - Fives Court - The Band - Drive Home - Dinner - Its Substantial Nature - After Dinner Amusements." cf. Parkinson, British Intervention, op.cit., Chap.I.

either to the climate or to the purse of settlers anxious to push their way to fortune", and he was particularly critical of the racial prejudice evidenced in the European society of the town; especially he noted ...

One of the chief of these impediments appears to be an insuperable, though somewhat over-sensitive, objection taken to all who are descended from the people of India, no matter how remote the descent; and it has happened more than once at a ball, that one lady has refused to dance opposite another because her vis-a-vis was slightly darker than herself in complexion. There can be no real necessity for such extreme sensibility as this ...

Nor did Singapore "present any field for the industry and enterprise of the working class at home, ... to adventurers of all sorts Singapore is a most unlikely field ..." <sup>1</sup>

The much-travelled, if eccentric, Miss Bird was frankly disenchanted with the society of "the par-boiled community", in 1879.

As Singapore is a military station and ships of war hang about constantly, there is a great deal of fluctuating society and the officials of the Straits Settlements are numerous enough to form a large society of their own. Then there is the merchant class, English, German, French and American; and there is the usual round of gaiety, and of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cameron: ibid., p.288. The town was distinctly divided into European, Malay, Chinese and Indian sections, the former living two or three miles out of the town generally. There was little assimilation except perhaps among the wealthy merchant class of the various races, and of these Miss Bird was to note "Not a Malay or a Kling has raised himself either as a merchant or in any other capacity to wealth or distinction in the colony ..." (Golden Chersonese, op.cit., p.116.) (The Sultan of Johore, it should be noted, was almost as famous for his lavish parties as Whampoa.) See also Parkinson: ibid. p.14.

amusements which make life intolerable ..."<sup>1</sup>

The European ladies of Singapore were particularly maligned. Marryat, perhaps missing the easy association of the "Prétty Dyak girls, very scantily clothed", remarked that though there were "some good looking girls in Singapore", it was "only at church or on parade that a stranger obtains a glimpse of them." Prudery, he regretted, was the order of the day and was carried to such an extent from non-intercourse that "at a farewell ball given to the Cambrians, the women would only polka and waltz with each other ..."<sup>2</sup>

Miss Bird had only a little sympathy for them.

I think that in most of these tropical colonies the ladies exist only on the hope of going "home". It is a dreary aimless life for them - scarcely life only existence. The greatest sign of vitality in Singapore Europeans that I can see is the furious hurry in writing for the mail ... the hurry is desperate and even the feeble Englishwomen exert themselves for "friends at home" ...<sup>3</sup>

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Miss Bird: ibid. p.110-111. See O. Cavenagh: passim, and Lady Alice Lovat: passim, for an impression of the rather tedious official society surrounding the comings and goings of a naval-military centre in the second half of the century. Also, H. Clifford, (In Court and Kampong, p.170), was aghast at the Malay practice of cage-gaols and concludes: "And yet, all these things happened and are happening today, within shouting distance of Singapore, with its churches, and its ballrooms, its societies for the prevention of cruelty, its missionaries, its discontented exiled Europeans, its high standards, its poor practice, its loud talk, and its boasted civilization."

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Marryat: op.cit., p.213.

3

I. Bird: op.cit., "To judge from the flurry and excitement and driving down to the post-office at the last moment, and the commotion - one would suppose the mail to be an uncertain event occurring once in a year or two, rather than the most regular of weekly fixtures! The incoming mail is also a great event, though its public and commercial news is anticipated by four weeks by the telegraph..."

(continued page 118)



It is only in the European part of Singapore, which is dull and sleepy looking. No life and movement congregate around their shops. The merchants, hidden away behind jalousies in their offices, or dashing down the street in covered buggies, make but a poor show. Their houses are mostly pale, roomy, detached bungalows, almost hidden by the bountiful vegetation of the climate. In these their wives, growing paler every week, lead half-expiring lives, kept alive by the efforts of ubiquitous "punkah-wallahs", writing for the mail the one active occupation. At a given hour they emerge, and drive in given directions, specially round the esplanade, where for two hours at a time a double row of handsome and showy equipages move continuously in opposite directions. The number of carriages and the style of dress of their occupants are surprising, and yet people say that large fortunes are not made these days in Singapore! Besides the daily drive the ladies, the officers, and any men who may be described as of "no occupation", divert themselves with kettle drums, dances, lawn tennis, and various other devices for killing time, and this with the mercury at 80°! Just now the Maharajah of Johore, Sovereign of a small state on the nearest point of the mainland, a man much petted and admired by the British Government for unswerving fidelity to British interests, has a house here, and his receptions and dinner parties vary the monotonous round of gaieties ....

Miss Bird:

The Golden Chersonese  
and the Way Thither

For her it was the natives who monopolized "the picturesqueness of Singapore with their bizarre crowds."

It is all fascinating! Here is none of the indolence and apathy which one associates with Oriental life, and which I have seen in Polynesia: These yellow, brown, tawny, swarthy, olive-tinted men are all intent on gain; busy, industrious, frugal, striving ...." <sup>1</sup>

And, strangely in view of the prevailing dislike of the Indian population of the Straits Settlements, both Miss Bird and Mrs. Innes commented upon the classical grace of the Kling women and the absurdity of the steadfast adherence to European styles in tropical Singapore. Perhaps such idealization,

.... a beautiful object, classical in form, exquisite in movement, and artistic in colouring, a creation of the tropic sun,

made admiration possible from afar. At any rate both were, from the position of their firm exclusion from Singapore society, able to wonder what the Kling woman thought

.... of the pale European, paler for want of exercise and engrossing occupation, who steps out of her carriage in front of her, an ungraceful heap of poufs and frills, tottering painfully on high heels, in tight

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(Footnote 1 continued from page 117)

cf. Interleaf above; Note also the dislike the Residents generally evidenced for the telegraph (below, part 6);—a fact which, given Mannoni's definition of the imperialist as one reluctant to have to communicate with his own kind, throws some light on the commonly held view that the presence of white women per se tends to increased imperial/racial conflict in the colonial situation.

<sup>1</sup> Bird: ibid. And yet she noted that despite all the activity and earnestness "the swarthy faces have no expression that I can read and the dark, liquid eyes are no more intelligible to me than the eyes of oxen." It was Oriental inscrutability, "the Asian Mystery" all over.

boots, her figure distorted into the shape of a Japanese Sake bottle every movement a struggle, the clothing utterly unsuited to this or any climate, impeding motion, and affecting health, comfort and beauty alike."<sup>1</sup>

But, for all the nascent "civilization" of Singapore, its image was still largely derived from nature, from the fabulous opulence of the scenery, on the one hand:

(...such a wealth of gold and green giving off fragrance! Here too are treasures of the heated crystal seas - things that one has dreamed of after reading Jules Verne's romances. Big canoes, manned by dark-skinned men in white turbans, and loin cloths floated round our ship or lay poised on the clear depths of the aquamarine water with fairy freights - forests of coral white as snow ... to eyes which have seen only the yellow skins and non-vividness of the Far East, a world of wonders opens at every step...)<sup>2</sup>

or, on the other hand, for those who looked beyond the immediate limits of the town, from tales of man-eating tigers, crocodiles, monkeys and the ever-encroaching tropical jungle.<sup>3</sup>

The sense of this mixture of civilization and fable is perhaps best expressed in Cameron's description of Singapore at

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- <sup>1</sup> Miss Bird: ibid., p.116.
- <sup>2</sup> Miss Bird's first impression, typical of first views of Singapore ...
- <sup>3</sup> See H. Norman: op.cit., p.547-8. "The jungle is a world of itself ... No human foot has ever pressed it: ... All the strange green things that the rich warm earth produces and the tropical sun and rain nurse into exuberance are engaged in a desperate struggle for existence ... But the chief impression ... must be that of its marvellous nearness to the days of creation.  
It is man in his garden, scarce awakened as yet  
From that sleep that fell on him when woman was made,  
The new-finished garden is plastic and wet  
From the hand that has fashioned its unpeopled shades.

night:

It is a very fine sight from the beach to see these houses lit up at night, the brilliant argand lamps in use shedding a flood of light around the lofty white pillars and colonnades of the upper stories, while the lower parts of the buildings are hid by the shrubbery of the gardens in front. Every door and window is thrown open to admit the cool night breeze and gathered round their tables, or lolling about in their easy chairs, may be seen the wearied travellers or residents, with the strange, often grotesque figures of their native servants flitting about with refreshments. Indeed on a fine starry night, standing there, on the sea-wall of the bay, with the stillness broken by the gentle ripple of the wavelets at one's feet, it is not difficult to imagine oneself amid the garden palaces of the Arabian Nights .... 1

I have tried to avoid suggesting rigid chronological order, or cause and effect, or transformation of image A to image B at point C in space and time. There were as many images of "Malaya" as there were people who thought at all of the region - frequently elements of these images contradicted each other. To enquire after precise images, and their "causes", of "our Malayan possessions" in the broad generalization required by this study is an injustice to the reader and to those who held them. But if I must generalize, then I would state that Malaya, perhaps more than any colony, resisted that closure of geography and focus of relational image attendant on the wider exploration of the globe in the nineteenth century, remaining isolated and remote even for those Europeans who had come into "direct contact" with it whether as travellers, merchants, scientists or administrative

and naval officials. Even the work of Malayan scholars, arch-enemies of ambiguity and ignorance, did little to overcome this feeling - partly because they were so few and narrowly read, and partly because, in some Toynbean sense, perhaps, the challenge of the Malayan environment was beyond them.

And this was as much because "observers", in greater or lesser degree, wanted it that way. For, Penang, Malacca and especially Singapore notwithstanding, Malaya (particularly Peninsular Malaya), with its orang-utans, and tigers, its sarongs and krises, its vast equatorial jungle recesses and glittering tropic seas, remained Robinson Crusoe's island for an imperial nation and its sons at home and abroad. Very few Europeans went to Malaya in the nineteenth century; even fewer sought it out as a centre of civilization and the society of other Europeans.

Part Five :

Intervention Revisited

At home in Britain there was little reason for attention to be focussed upon Malaya. In an era noted for its "surpassing love of economy", a colony which paid for itself was unlikely to receive a great deal of attention. As one observer noted later in the 'eighties:

...this colony is getting on so well that there is no occasion even for a Parliamentary question about it...if you had to go to the market to try to scrape a loan for a few millions, or were testing the ingenuity and resources of Cabinets and Parliaments to say how your colony would be governed, then we should hear plenty about you.

And although colonial officials occasionally expressed vexation that "a colony not only relatively but absolutely the richest of all the Crown Colonies under the British flag" should receive so little attention in the metropolis, and that many newspapers professedly devoted to colonial interests never find room for even a "passing glance" <sup>1</sup> at its affairs, it remains true that, for the most part, they were jealous of the freedom that this lack of the fierce light that beats upon the Throne gave them. "Red-tapeism" was anathema to men more inclined to act first and account later. As Isabella Bird remarked: "A Crown Colony where the Government has it all its own way must be the Paradise of officials ..."

...in this town (London) I do not speak with the same freedom as I do in the jungle of the Malay Peninsula, where there is nobody to

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<sup>1</sup> Proc. Roy. Col. Inst.: 1883-4. Chairman responding to Sir Frederick Weld's address. See also An Index to Events Relating to India and the East referred to in "The Times" between 1850 and 1889 inclusive (Printed by order of Sec. of State for India in Council, June 1893.)

contradict me, but the real reason is that in the Malay States we have had as little red tape as possible, and we have done a good many things that, if we had been working in an old-established and recognized Colony, I have no doubt we should not have been allowed to do. 1.

It must be remembered that Malaya was a very small part of the colonial Empire of a country, which for all the emphasis placed upon European imperial expansion in the last quarter of the century, was still more than preoccupied with domestic politics, and with Ireland, and only secondarily concerned to maintain, in "colonial Europe", that balance of power her diplomatists hoped to achieve in Europe while essentially remaining aloof from affairs in that continent.

The confusion surrounding the decision to intervene in the native Malay States, particularly Kimberley's apparent volte face in the summer of 1873, which has involved historians of Malaya in a massive amount of very detailed and exhaustive research, may be seen simply as the consequence of imperfectly formed and conflicting images held by metropolitan officials, resulting largely from insufficient knowledge about the region at a time when a decision could no longer be postponed.

Generally speaking neither Parliament nor the Foreign Office displayed any interest in the whole question of Britain's relations with the Native Princes of the Peninsula. When Frederick Rogers, the Permanent Under-Secretary for Colonial Affairs first broached the subject in 1867, as part of a general

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Isabella Bird: Golden Chersonese, op.cit., p.112.  
Swettenham: Proc. Roy. Col. Inst., Vol. XXVII, p.312, 1895-6.



enquiry into the division of responsibility on the entire imperial frontier, Lord Stanley, the Foreign Secretary, had replied that he found it all "rather an irritating and troublesome matter," and his Permanent Under-Secretary had commented: "Let the Colonial Office adopt their own rules." The Foreign Office was anxious only to avoid giving colonial officials, noted for their over-zealousness, a chance to meddle with native policy, thus involving the Home Government "in quarters of which we cannot see the end." <sup>1</sup>

Even the Colonial Office had small reason to give any serious thought to the Native Malay States in 1867. Its chief preoccupation was with the revenue of the Straits colony; fear of a new drain on the exchequer had been the main obstacle to the transfer from the India Office which was broached a decade previously. As the first Colonial Secretary to deal with the Malay States, Buckingham simply accepted the policy of "non-intervention ... unless," which was inherited from the India Office, along with a bundle of papers among which Charles Cox, head of the Eastern Department of the Colonial Office, discovered a few that were "interesting & instructive as regards our relations and difficulties with Native Princes."<sup>2</sup> When Rogers

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<sup>1</sup> See Minute by Rogers, 19th February, 1868 on Ord to Buckingham, 3rd Nov. 1867, CO/273/13. Notes by Stanley and Hammond with C.O. to F.O. 17 March, 1868. Foreign Office files - Siam correspondence. F.O./69/47 and F.O. to C.O. 25 March 1869. CO/273/23, quoted in McIntyre: "British Intervention in Malaya" (J.S.E.A.H., Vol.2, No.3, Oct. 1961) p.51. cf. Clifford: Bushwacking p.36-37.

<sup>2</sup> Minute by Cox, 1 July, 1867 on India Office to C.O., 6 June 1867, CO/273/15.

drafted his instructions for Governor Ord in 1867, he deleted the heading "Political Relations" and wrote nothing in its place. <sup>1</sup>

Important in the consideration of the formation of metropolitan images, moreover, is the fact that sources of information were erratic and biassed, and the Colonial Office frequently had a most imperfect knowledge of the events upon which it was presumably deciding policy. Often first intimation of trouble came from letters to The Times, or petitions from Singapore merchants and their London agents, whose special pleading generally led them to exaggerate their picture of events in Malaya, or from questions asked in the House by Opposition back-benchers eager to embarrass the Government on subjects about which it knew the latter to have only a vague knowledge. A good deal of the Governor's correspondence about the Malay States was obviously not sent home by Ord; Clarke preferred to act first and send in his dispatches much later; and like almost all colonial officials of the time, Anglo-Malayans resented the intrusion of the telegraph upon their privacy, and reacted to it in a way that would have delighted Marshall McLuhan.

Daily, deep in his heart, he thanks God that he is not linked to the telegraph. In the eyes of the men who do their country's work on the outskirts, telegraphy, seen in the light of a bitter experience, is the most abominable of human inventions. Fettered to the little ticking instruments by miles of thin wire, a man loses all power of initiative: the passion for personal responsibility, which had so much to do

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Draft instructions dated 6 Feb. 1867, after Treasury to CO. 26 Jan. 1867, CO/273/16.

with the formation of the characters that have made England's rule in Asia a possibility, is scotched or slain. By the agency of the telegraph the man at a distance is able to over-ride the recommendations of the man on the spot - the man, be it noted, who is best able to form an opinion; by its aid all centralization is created which, had it existed from the beginning, would infallibly have choked the life out of our Eastern empire while it was still a puking thing in swaddling clothes. 1

In any event, as one historian remarked: "The Secretary of State as he planned his future moves was rather like a general going into battle with poor maps and a weak intelligence service."<sup>2</sup>

When Kimberley became Colonial Secretary in July 1870, he obviously had little knowledge of, or interest in, the Peninsula. When shown a collection of photographs of Malaya sent him by Professor Huxley, he declared them to be "a hideous series";

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1 This quotation, from Clifford, is very significant for the light it throws upon the nineteenth century imperialists' inability to cope with the incipient electric technology with its compulsion towards "interaction" rather than mere "action"; particularly if read with Marshall McLuhan's explanations of the telegraph as electric media, and Mannoni's contention that the imperialist prefers to inhabit "a world without men" - that is, to act rather than interact. For this reason it deserves quotation in full. Clifford continues, illustrating also the dilemma of the imperialist, as conservative personality, caught between fear of failure and fear of disobeying the voice of authority.

" Were he now in telegraphic communication with headquarters, the Resident feels sure that he would be bidden to return, to abandon an enterprise so hopeless, to confess to the people of the Benighted Land, once for all, the impotence of the Government ... But it is not the least of the many fascinations of these remote places that no word of instructions or advice can reach the expedition; and since the Resident is therefore able to act precisely as he chooses, he determines to make one last attempt ..."  
Bushwacking, op.cit., p.120-121.

<sup>2</sup> McIntyre: "Intervention ..." op.cit.

and he responded to a rumour, circulated by the Dutch, that the Maharaja of Johore was about to lease Tioman Island to the North German Confederation as a naval station, with the comment that "the first step is to ascertain distinctly where the Maharaja and his island are."<sup>1</sup> Kimberley has been described as having a "rather narrow interest" and "somewhat cynical aloofness from Malay affairs" but, in all fairness, he probably devoted more time to the Malayan problem than did his successor Carnarvon, and he did attempt to acquire a more balanced picture of the whole situation when the time came to make a decision, despite his simultaneous preoccupation with the equally time-consuming matter of Garnet Wolseley's Ashanti expedition in West Africa. Before considering the question of proposed closer relations with the Malay States, Kimberley did give his department a fortnight to prepare a comprehensive memorandum on the nature of Britain's relationship with the States from the time of the Indian regime, stressing, however, that it be "so complete as to be intelligible without books or papers."<sup>2</sup> He did call for some of the original documents and his pencilled adornments on the memorandum indicate that he studied it quite thoroughly.

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It is worth noting that although the Dutch rumour did not bother him in 1870, because he had no idea where Tioman Island was, the message obviously predisposed him, in Boulding's terms, towards accepting an image of Malaya as strategically threatened when, in 1873, another rumour of possible German interest in Selangor was circulated by Singapore merchants, although there is little evidence that such an interest ever existed. See Seymour Clarke's letter to Herbert, 18 July 1873, CO/273/14; and Rear Admiral Osborn's letter to Times, 12 July 1872, p.12.

2

See McIntyre: "Intervention" op.cit., p.66.

Historians of the period 1867-73, preoccupied with the "hen and egg" question of cause and effect, and seeking to explain the presumed reversal of the avowed policy of non-intervention, have laboured mightily to discover the exact moment of Kimberley's decision and the precise attitude of the Colonial Secretary to the problem he was faced with.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Parkinson stresses the decisive impact of the arrival of a petition from Chinese merchants on August 21st 1873, set against the background of a rising tide of imperial fervour and the imminent fall of the Liberal Government, which presumably gave Kimberley wider freedom of choice, and concludes that the reversal occurred between August 21st and September 20th, 1873.<sup>2</sup> Cowan feels that "it was probably only coincidental that the formal record of his (Kimberley's) decision was attached to the Chinese petition", he is ambivalent about the role of Seymour Clarke and the Selangor Tin Company, and concludes that "the decision to take some action in Malaya, and if necessary to intervene in the affairs of the States, was provoked not by conditions in the Peninsula, nor by any consideration of British economic interests there, but by fear of foreign intervention."<sup>3</sup> McIntyre concludes that the change took place between early July and 22nd July (the

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McIntyre: "Intervention.." ibid., p.66.

2 See E. Chew: "The Reasons for British Intervention in Malaya: Review and Reconsideration (Vol.6, No.I, 1965, J.S.E.A.H.) esp. p.81-82, for the earlier interpretations of Swettenham, Margaret Knowles, A. Wright and T.H. Reid, and Richard Winstedt, which according to Chew, the work of Cowan, Parkinson, and McIntyre have relegated to "the limbo of historical curiosity".

3 Parkinson: British Intervention, op.cit., p.107-111 esp.

date of Kimberley's minute on Seymour Clarke's letter), as a result of the "coincidence" of several factors: Lieut.-Governor Campbell's meeting with Kimberley at the same time that the situation in the west coast states, (the Larut War), was causing him to change his mind; and Seymour Clarke's production of the unlikely threat of a German protectorate, which was "a sort of political blackmail to a sensitive diplomatist like Kimberley, who immediately felt a challenge to Britain's position as the paramount power in Malaya."<sup>1</sup> In 1965, Ernest Chew reconsidered the literature of intervention and, after confessing that it was impossible to discover the precise moment of Kimberley's decision, concluded that the reversal in policy occurred between early July and the last week of August 1873.

Frankly, after reading all this, (and without going into the question of its relevance.) I am left with the impression that Kimberley can scarcely have been other than generally confused about what was actually happening in Malaya. Ultimately, however, as a former diplomatist under Palmerston, his interest was imperial strategy;<sup>2</sup> that he continued to conceive of the Malayan question overwhelmingly in such terms, despite the various requests, incidents, qualifications, attempted and actual interventions impinging on his image between 1867 and 1873, may be

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McIntyre, "Intervention...", op.cit., p.68-69.

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Kimberley served as Under-Secretary to the F.O. from 1852 to 1856; as Envoy to St. Petersburg 1856-8; as Under-Secretary to the F.O. again 1859-61; and as Special Envoy to Denmark 1863. In 1860, he favoured supporting the Dutch in the Malay Archipelago to prevent France stepping in and threatening India and Australia.

judged from the summary of the situation which he forwarded to Gladstone with Governor Clarke's instructions on September 10th, 1873,-when he concluded that the time had finally come to make a statement on what was, for him, simply a special instance of that problem of achieving order on the frontier of an Empire, by some method that fell short of the extension of British sovereignty.

He wrote:

The condition of the Malay Peninsula is becoming very serious. It is the old story of misgovernment of Asiatic States. This might go on without any serious consequences except the stoppage of trade were it not that European and Chinese capitalists stimulated by the great riches in tin mines in some of the Malay States are suggesting to the Native Princes that they should seek the aid of Europeans ... We are the paramount power on the Peninsula up to the limit of the States tributary to Siam and looking to the vicinity of India & our whole position in the East I apprehend that it would be a serious matter if any other European Power were to obtain a footing on the Peninsula ... 1

Moreover, it is my impression that Kimberley did not genuinely feel that his instructions to Clarke embodied a dramatic reversal of any policy. People like W.H.M. Read had long hinted hopefully that the Malay States might be ready for a new relationship with

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1 Kimberley to Gladstone: 10th Sept. 1873. Gladstone Papers 44225/103. It is worth noting Parkinson's contention (British Intervention, op.cit., p.113), that, even after the heated exchange between Disraeli and Gladstone in January 1874, over whether Disraeli's actions in 1868 or Gladstone's actions in 1871, had endangered British trade in the Far East by relinquishing "a treaty which secured us the freedom of the Straits of Malacca"; "...it is unfortunately open to doubt whether the problem of the Straits of Malacca was understood by England, Gladstone or even by Disraeli. There was, in fact, no more mention of the Straits after the General Election was over."

Britain, and the Anson Committee and George Campbell had suggested explicitly the appointment of Residents. After all "in India, in many a native-ruled State, it is marvellous what work a single well-selected British officer has effected ... most native-ruled states in and around India have such officers and the value of their influence is unquestionable." <sup>1</sup>

Moreover, Kimberley assured Gladstone that the new instructions "do not actually pledge us to anything, but they imply that some attempt is to be made to produce a better state of things." Moreover, they are tentative in the extreme, and his tone suggests that, realizing his own inability to be more definite because of lack of time, first-hand knowledge or inclination, Kimberley was prepared to trust Clarke to take the initiative in working out a practical solution to a problem which, theoretically, he conceded could no longer be postponed. He asked Clarke to find out carefully "the actual condition of affairs in each State," implying that, for all the mass of reports, petitions and despatches he had attempted to assimilate in the previous months, he would gladly exchange the sound opinion of one competent observer; and then he suggested the Resident system as a means of promoting "the restoration of peace and order",

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<sup>1</sup> Lieut. Governor Campbell reported on the Larut War after an expedition to the Larut River in October 1872. Drawing on his Indian experience, he suggested, as a solution to the chaos there, "the appointment of a Resident or political officer" to certain of the States, in a letter to Ord, 6 Sept. 1872: See Wilkinson: "Notes on Perak", Papers on Malay Subjects, Vo.14, (1908), pp. 99-100. And Campbell's Report, dated London, 28 June 1873 (received 3 July '73) CO/273/74. Also Anson Committee Report, 19 May 1871 enc. in Anson to Kimberley, 3 June 1871, CO/273/47.



without any sense of its being an innovation, but simply because it had apparently adequately met the current twin imperial demands, of economy and avoidance of trouble with the native princes, elsewhere.

I should wish you especially to consider whether it would be advisable to appoint a British Officer to reside in any of the States. Such an appointment could, of course, only be made with the full consent of the Native Government, and the expenses connected with it would have to be defrayed by the Government of the Straits Settlements."

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It is my impression that, unaware of the isolation of Malaya from the minds of metropolitan officials and British attention in general, historians have over-estimated the degree of Kimberley's involvement in the problems of that one small part of a widening empire. Against my understanding of Kimberley's image of Malaya, his famous instructions to Clarke, embodying the "dramatic reversal" of policy from one of non-intervention to one sanctioning establishment of the Residential system, seem slightly less than that. What he implied, beneath a good deal of Foreign Office rhetoric, was that he hoped Clarke could come up with a solution that was cheap, would intimate to any other European power that the Peninsula was "taken", would satisfy the clamourings of the Singapore merchants, and above all, would avoid the kind of fuss with native Malay peoples which had terrified British Governments since Rajah Brooke and the Dyak pirates, and Maxwell Benson's outraged letter to The Times

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P.P., Kimberley to Clarke, 20 Sept. 1873.

condemning the Selangor intervention as an "act of war", had shown what public outcry could be roused by even the suspicion that native peoples in the Archipelago were being tampered with.<sup>1</sup>

Above all, the dispatch was a plea that Clarke try, as quietly and efficiently as possible, to remove the rather tedious Malay question from the focus of Foreign Office and metropolitan attention. Unfortunately, however, Kimberley overlooked the fact that Clarke, having just seen his solution to the Ashanti problem in West Africa rejected in favour of Wolseley's more ambitious expedition, and knowing that the Liberal Government was about to fall, was likely to feel justified in impressing doubly with his solutions for Malaya; and that, as imperialists in the late nineteenth century, he, and his successors and their subordinates in the Sultan's palaces, must strive for recognition of their actions, and therefore shared precisely that determination to put Malaya on the map, which Kimberley desired to avoid, but which nonetheless loomed large in the Malayan imperial experience.

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Times, Wed. 13th September, 1871, p.9.

See Parkinson: op.cit., p.48-60, for an account of this particular piece of gun boat diplomacy "which began in the pursuit of pirates, and ended with the coercing of the Sultan of Selangor, Straits government intervention in a civil war, and publicity for the whole affair in England."

Asked by Gladstone to explain his subordinate's untimely actions, Kimberley fell back, with a good deal of melodrama but little accuracy, on the familiar image: "The Malay pirates are desperate men, and the murders committed on this occasion were most atrocious."

Kimberley to Gladstone: 19th Sept. 1871, (quoted in McIntyre: "Intervention ...", op.cit. p.59).

Part Six :

Playing at Eden

As I was writing these last words, a beautiful green cicada with great eyes and long transparent wings, flew into the room and dashed straight at a lamp. In spite of several severe burns, and all my efforts to save her, she has accomplished her — own destruction and now lies stark dead; the victim of a new light which excited her curiosity and admiration, but the consuming power of which she did not understand.

She would have been wiser to remain in the cool moonlit jungle where, at least she was at home with those of her kind, but the creatures of the forest have not yet learned the danger of giving way to natural instincts ....

Swettenham: The Real Malay

The undeniable fact that the psychological attitude of the native has long been in our favour has blinded us to its character as a reaction. Today that character is only too apparent and cannot be overlooked ....

Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban

Europeans, after a few steps in the darkness you will see strangers gathered around a fire; come close, and listen for they are talking of the destiny they will mete out to your trading centres and to the hired soldiers who defend them. They will see you, perhaps, but they will go on talking among themselves, without even lowering their voices. This indifference strikes home; their fathers, shadowy creatures, your creatures, were but dead souls; you it was who allowed them a glimpse of light, to you only did they dare to speak, and you did not bother to reply to such zombies. Their sons ignore you, a fire warms them and sheds its light around them, and you have not lit it. Now, at a respectful distance, it is you who will feel furtive, nightbound, and perished with cold. Turn and turn about; in these shadows from whence a new dawn will break, it is you who are the zombies....

Jean Paul Satre introducing  
Franz Fanon:  
The Wretched of the Earth

It is possible to explain the nature of British rule and contact with the Malays in Malaya in terms of pure economic and political expediency. Mid-Victorian statesmen, being gentlemen, had a profound sense of responsibility and duty. It was their duty to give the colonies good government and this included justice for the natives as well as protection for the white men's commercial interests. But the desire for good government was perpetually restrained by the desire to keep down expenses. Nothing could be more apt than Carnarvon's warning to Shepstone in 1877: "Parliament does not like to be made to pay even for what it approves ... Your object therefore must be to bear in mind these two opposite conditions - effective government and economy - and as far as possible to reconcile them."<sup>1</sup> In fact, this does go a long way towards an explanation of the policy of "indirect" rule, of advice without control, which was the ideal behind the Residential system introduced in the Native Malay States. But it should not be permitted to disguise the fact that, because of that very policy, and because of the isolation of Malaya, the men to whom its government was entrusted, played a very significant part in the actual working out of the Residential system and thus in the nature of contact between the two races. As J.S. Mill had recognised

... In the position of the administrators of a dependency where the people are not fit to have control in their own hands, the character of the government entirely depends on the qualifications, moral and intellectual of

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Carnarvon to Shepstone: 30 May, 1877, (Private), P.R.O.30 - 6/23 quoted in Cambridge History of British Empire, Vol.III, p.17-18.

the individual functionaries ... <sup>1</sup>

The early Residents of Malaya, from 1874, when the decision to "intervene" was taken, until Federation in 1895, were a unique phenomenon in the history of imperialism. In reality they were neither nineteenth century Empire builders nor Twentieth century colonial administrators (though Clifford and Swettenham contrived to include both roles in their long colonial careers.) Rather, they belonged in the tradition of James Brooke in Sarawak and Cromer in Egypt, of British gentlemen sent to put the houses of "native princes" in order for them. And since the justice of such missions was largely regarded at the time as self-evident, little trouble was taken to clarify the legal technicalities of their position. (It is obvious that some Malay Residents were a little uncomfortable in the ambiguous role in which the early Colonial Office instructions left them - others, particularly with the passage of time, came to realize that herein lay its precise wisdom.<sup>2</sup>)

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J.S. Mills: On Liberty, Representative Government, The Subject of Women (London, Oxford U. Press, 1963) from Chapter XVIII, p.418-419. (Originally published 1861).

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Allen: "Two Imperialists" op.cit., p.41.  
Swettenham wrote in The Real Malay, "A New Method" p.27-28 "The main reason why success has been secured is twofold; first, because a succession of Governors trusted their Residents and supported them; and, secondly, because of that very possession of large authority which was at once the strength and the weakness of the residential idea." The flaw, in Swettenham's mind, of "the power for mistakes, for extravagance, for favoritism," which was "greater than should be placed in a single hand," was removed by Federation.

See Cowan: Nineteenth Century Malaya, op.cit., (p.251-2.) for Low's correspondence with Robinson following the reprimand of Douglas for exceeding his powers in Selangor.

British residents, whose "advice must be asked for and acted upon on all important questions" were sent to the Courts of Perak, Selangor, and Sungei Ujong in 1874-5, and to Negri-Sembilan (incorporating Sungei-Ujong) and Pahang in 1887-8, - a process which is generally referred to as British intervention. During these years, the Golden Age of Malayan imperial experience, the "Residential System" operated fully.

From the first to the last the theoretical independence of the States was the governing factor in the system evolved in Malaya. The so-called "Resident" was in fact, a Regent, practically uncontrolled by the Governor or Whitehall, governing his "independent" state by direct personal rule, with or without the cooperation of the native ruler.<sup>1</sup>

It is O. Mannoni's contention that a colonial situation is created

... the very instant a white man, even if he is alone, appears in the midst of a tribe, even if it is independent, so long as he is thought to be rich or powerful or merely immune to the local forces of magic, and so long as he derives from his position, even though only in his most secret self, a feeling of his own superiority. <sup>2</sup>

I have alluded briefly to Mannoni's study of what he terms "the

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<sup>1</sup> Sir F. D. Lugard: The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa (London, 1926) pp.130-1. See also Emerson: Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban, op.cit., p.18. Clifford's "heart-breaking little wars" thus become nothing more than a British demonstration of immunity to local magic. It was commonly accepted in imperial thought that a brisk show of force was an essential preliminary to effective government of the native peoples, just as physical violence is still widely considered to be the only conclusive way of proving oneself to be immune to the forces of local magic. cf. Swettenham: Real Malay p.17. "A military expedition had vindicated the prestige of a power hitherto unfelt, and the existence of which was but vaguely realized." See page 159 below.

psychology of colonization" elsewhere, and although there are certain qualifications which must be made, his work is one of the most significant contributions to the understanding of the imperial experience, and appears to have more than marginal application to the nineteenth century Malayan situation. In any event, I intend to elaborate upon it in this chapter.

If there is any merit in such an approach to imperialism it is because, as Mannoni points out, although it has been customary to see a colonial situation as a case of the rich dominating the poor, of the weak being under the guardianship of the strong, or of the systematic exploitation of a difference in standards of living, it is not generally seen as a case of the meeting of two different personality types and their relation to one another. Because of the special circumstances of the Resident system in Malaya, and the type of people the Malays were, none of these customary approaches throws a great deal of light on the nature of the imperial relationship - while precisely these two factors suggest that Mannoni's psychological/personality framework might be a constructive one from which to seek some understanding. Although severe Marxists might like to see the Residents as a set of financial adventurers and well-connected freebooters whose machinations in the Sultans' Courts sealed the fate of Malaya for eighty years, in the main it was not economic gain which motivated them - rather, as Mannoni suggests, they seem to belong to a type willing to forego profit for the sake of certain psychological satisfactions afforded by the position.



Undoubtedly there were exceptions. Captain Speedy, the first Assistant-Resident in Larut was certainly cast in the mould of the old-style adventurer, but even he appears to have relied on his wife's inheritance for any financial independence he enjoyed, and, having earned, in the eyes of Governor Jervois at least, a reputation for extravagance, he eventually resigned when offered a lower post at half the salary.<sup>1</sup> The wealthy Singapore barrister, J.G. Davidson, Selangor's first Resident, had considerable financial interest in the State,<sup>2</sup> and Carnarvon, in the Colonial Office, had originally opposed his appointment, on the grounds that he was not satisfied that the transfer of Davidson's financial claims to other hands was sufficient guarantee of his future disinterestedness as a public servant. Davidson eventually resigned, partly because he found he was running his post at a loss.<sup>2</sup> Douglas (who replaced Davidson), aided by his son-in-law, Daly, bought up some public land in Selangor, alienated his Sultan, Zia'u'din, was reprimanded by the Governor, and was finally removed from his post for tampering with the Sultan's salary.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Gullick: "Captain Speedy of Larut" (J.M.B.R.A.S., Vol.26. Pt.2, 1953)

<sup>2</sup> Cowan: Nineteenth Century Malaya, op.cit., p.76, 139, 207; Carnarvon to Jervois, 8 April 1875, CO/273/76.

<sup>3</sup> See Cowan: ibid., p.247-9, p.250-51; and Colonial Secretary, Singapore, to H.B.M. Residents, (17 May, 1878, in C.O./809/18: "...the Residents have been placed in the Native States as advisers, not as rulers, and if they take upon themselves to disregard this principle they will most assuredly be held responsible **if** trouble springs out of their neglect of it." This divergence between theory and practice was never really resolved.

But it appears that the "best" Residents fell within the category, described by Mannoni as "greedy" for something other than economic profit. Those unprepared to sacrifice financial gain, (to act like "gentlemen"), resigned or were dismissed from the service.

Dr. Mannoni is a French psychologist who spent several years in Madagascar, and was there during the rebellion of 1947, which was put down by the French with very heavy losses to the Malagasies.<sup>1</sup> He is not a colonial historian, and he attempts no generalizations of wider application than Madagascar; he makes no reference to events in British colonial history, although many seem to support his hypothesis in general. In Madagascar he was strictly a bird of passage; he was not there long enough to become identified with either "side", with the French who had spent their lives on the island, or with the Malagasies. He looked at both with as much detachment as anyone could, who is fully aware that "the observer's description of the native's behaviour is necessarily an interpretation .... this interpretation is also a reaction, that of the observer to the native before him."

It is true that Mannoni is dealing with a particular modern colonial situation - where people from an individualistic, scientific, competitive society are suddenly in contact with

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O. Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonialization (New York, Praeger, 1964, first published as Psychologie de la Colonisation (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1950). He had previously spent several years studying the ethnology of Madagascar and came to realize "there was a background of more disturbing psychological problems behind the ethnological ones."

people of a culture which may be older, but is temporarily static. It is part of the situation that the scientific people have left their own country and are separated from it by a sea voyage. He is talking about French colonialism rather than British.<sup>1</sup> This is Phillip Mason's main criticism of Mannoni's thesis - or rather, his reason for maintaining that there are strict qualifications which must be made before even attempting to apply Mannoni to British imperialism. But given Mannoni's definition of the "colonial situation" (page 155 above), it seems that he is talking as much about east and west of Main Street, Buffalo, or about the peculiar position of women in universities where "historians are gentlemen ...." The key to the colonial situation is the acceptance by both parties of the notion that one has the "stronger magic", decides the rules of the game. (Conversely, neither can play if one party refuses.) Finally, the class structure and the assumptions of the Victorian upper-middle class may have produced a different kind of imperialist to the French system, but, it is doubtful, as Mason claims, whether one Prospero can be "better" than another.<sup>2</sup>

Mannoni suggests that traditional Malagasy culture places great emphasis on security. A man is essentially part of his tribe and his family; he worships dead ancestors who control

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<sup>1</sup> Phillip Mason : Prospero's Magic: Some Thoughts on Class and Race (London, Oxford U. Press, 1962) p.78-79; see also Mason's introduction to the 1964 edition of Prospero and Caliban, op.cit. Mason admits to seeing the colonial situation in a different light precisely because he is a "Prospero", but he feels that "colonization was a valuable stage of development" for native peoples.

<sup>2</sup> Mason: ibid., p.87.

and guide his life, he is a rung in the ladder between the dead, who are immortal, and the unborn whom he is to beget. The typical Malagasy before the coming of the French was a man who knew his place in this hierarchy and therefore felt secure. The coming of the French broke up the ancient security of many Malagasies, who eventually left the known ways of the old tribal and family system; they came to feel acutely the need for an authority which would take the place of the "father", of the dead ancestors, of the customs of their own society.

At first glance, this situation seems only marginally inapplicable to the Malayan situation. If the accounts of British writers in Malaya in the nineteenth century are to be believed, there was very little security for anyone in traditional Malay society; ("in 1874, no Malay man was ever seen unarmed. The men usually carried from three to eight weapons, and boys of a few years old two or three"); and, in any case, since the Residents were expressly instructed not to interfere with any matter touching on Malay culture, it was unlikely they could break up traditional patterns of life.<sup>1</sup>

A more recent historian wrote:

Early British administrators, for obvious reasons, liked to describe the life of the Malay peasant before their arrival as one of unmitigated oppression at the hands of an arbitrary and self-indulgent aristocracy. Though this picture was often overdrawn, especially where it

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<sup>1</sup> W. Roff: Origins of Malay Nationalism, op.cit., p.9. I am largely indebted to Roff for my understanding of Malay society before the British. cf. Swettenham: Real Malay, p.16, p.260, and British Malaya, p.141 (revised edn. 1948); Clifford: In Court and Kampong p.186-7, and Proc. Roy. Col. Inst., 1898-9, p.372 ff.

suggested either systematic or motiveless tyranny, it finds support in the few extant Malay accounts of the time, and there can be no question that the determining characteristic of the relationship between ra'ayat (peasant) and ruling class was submission.

Clifford frequently voiced the sentiment that to live in independent Malaya was to live in the Europe of the thirteenth century, meaning that the Malays,

... in common with more civilized folk had worked out for themselves unaided a theory of government on feudal lines which bears a startling resemblance to European models of a long-passed epoch.

Malay society before the advent of British rule was characteristically that of a river people occupying the valleys of the riverways; the majority of the settled population were peasant farmers engaged in subsistence economy of agriculture and fishing. There was, in addition, a considerable amount of petty trade up the lower reaches of the rivers, in the hands of the local nobility (or "foreign Malays": Buginese or Sumatrans, Arabs, and later Chinese). The discovery of tin, however, and the consequent influx of Chinese miners in the mid-century, upset this pattern, and led to the introduction of radical elements of imbalance in Malay economic life, as factional struggles took place, between and within communities, for control of tin areas.

Politically, peninsular Malaya was divided into independent states ruled over by a hereditary monarch (the Yang di-pertuan - "he who is made lord"). This ruler was supported by a number of territorial chiefs, who held areas of the state and who, in turn, had minor chiefs and village headmen at their command for generally

administering their territory, collecting taxes, and raising manpower for war and public works. The Yang di-pertuan expressed the symbolic unity of the State and protection of its order and integrity;

Embodying in his person both ... the mystical reinforcement of personality by kingship, ... and supreme temporal authority, he was vested with an aura of sanctity and the supernatural that found outward form in an elaborate apparatus of ceremonial practice and belief .... 1

The exercise of authority by the ruler was, in fact, limited by the extent to which he could control his territorial chiefs. Again, the discovery of tin, which gave chiefs a disproportionate source of economic power, introduced an element of political unrest in mid-century. There was always a strong ambivalence within the ruling class, marked by rivalries and tendencies towards strife and fission; yet these were counter-balanced by a recognition of the values and virtues of the sultanate as the validating mechanism of the whole society. The Sultanate was preserved because it made meaningful all else within Malay society; thus, despite the ceaseless internicene warfare, and the little, real power the Sultan frequently wielded, the Sultanate was preserved because it provided definition for the rest of the system.

Socially, Malaya was divided into two groups, a ruling class and a subject class, a distinction based on birth and clearly demarcated by custom and belief. Appointment to

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Roff: Origins of Malay Nationalism, op.cit., p.2-3; also J.M. Gullick: Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya (London, 1958); Emily Sadke's opening chapters of The Protected Malay States, op.cit., are also informative.

"aristocratic" offices was validated by the ruler; they were ranked in complex order, and served primarily in defining and determining relative position and influence within the traditional elite. There appears to have been a substantial preoccupation with the appurtenances and symbols of rank; titles were jealously guarded by the holder and his kin. The concept of differential status and concern for its expression were of abiding interest to the traditional elite, who manifested a correspondingly exclusive attitude toward those not privileged to manifest it.

Below the level of high politics, control of the villages was vested in the penghulus (headmen), who assumed a very important role in Malay village society. The penghulu constituted the link between peasant and local chief; his duties ranged from keeping the peace, arbitrating disputes, tax collection, organization of kerah labour, and allocating new land to arrivals from outside. The fact that he normally operated by influence and persuasion, rather than coercion, indicates that in Malay village life, social roles were well-defined and accepted. Social sanctions against atypical behaviour can only be applied by a people who have agreed to share values - who know who they are in terms of their society.

At the base of the social system were the ordinary cultivators, owing loyalty and obedience to their local chief, and with little knowledge of the world beyond their own villages. The subordinate status of the ra'ayat was questioned by neither side; both accepted the right of the ruling class to receive

on demand a wide range of goods and services. Clearly the system was open to abuse and there were, as Residents were fond of pointing out, instances of cruelty, oppression and injustice. But, as Isabella Bird perceived, there were a number of checks on the arbitrary exercise of power within these "Muhammedan Monarchies" and these served to ameliorate the peasant's situation.<sup>1</sup> Both aristocracy and peasants lived a common rural life in which differences of status were reflected only to a limited extent by differences in standard of living and material welfare. Moreover, if village society permitted of the individual acts of injustice, such as Clifford and Swettenham delighted to dwell upon in their sketches of Malay life, widespread, systematic oppression was disadvantageous to all, because the chief relied on his peasants' general cooperation in production of goods and services.<sup>2</sup> In a society in which status was measured largely in terms of the manpower one could attract or muster, it was unwise to acquire a reputation for undue harshness. This was the more so before British rule because of the extreme mobility of the peasants - the ultimate protest of removal to another area was always available in a society where land was not invested with property connotations, where

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Bird: Golden Chersonese, op.cit., quoted above page 127; Compare this with Emily Innes' (Chersonese with the Gilding Off: passim.) descriptions of village life under the Sultan of Langkat, with its stress on mutual obligations between ruler and ruled.

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Debt bondage and kerah labour undoubtedly weighed heavily upon the peasants, but it is doubtful whether they saw it in quite the same way as mid-Victorian imperialists - as "slavery" and "forced labour", that is - at least until the Residents "told" them.



there was little shortage of good land, where houses were easily and simply built and possessions few, and where welcome into another village community was readily afforded newcomers.

In nineteenth century Malaya then, it appears that if, by western standards, life was rendered somewhat less than secure by the frequent petty quarrels between rival chiefs and the exactions of the aristocracy upon the peasant classes, it should be noted that westerners have traditionally interpreted security only in material terms, and that, as far as the security to be derived from "possession" of a well-defined self-image is concerned, the Malays may well have been better off than the British in the same period. Within the traditional Malay social system and within the Islamic religion as manifested in Malaya, roles were well-defined and generally accepted, a fact to which frequent British references to Malay "fatalism" and "lack of ambition" bear witness.

However, on the other hand, it is equally true that much of the change in the traditional Malay way of life and world view, which undeniably accompanied British rule, despite its revolutionary and lasting character for the peninsula as a whole, does not appear immediately or directly to have affected Malay life.

It was less that there was no change within this area - for manifestly much happened to shift the Malay view of the world - than that the changes which did take place did not coincide with or take their direction solely from incidents of British rule, and that change occurred within (or coexisted with) a remarkable persistence of traditional patterns of social organization.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roff: Origins of Malay Nationalism, op.cit., p.249-250. See also Syed Hussein Alatas: "Feudalism in Malaysian Society: A Study in Historical Continuity", op.cit.; Alatas speaks of a "psychological feudalism" which remains in present day Malaysia.

The effects of British rule were not seriously disruptive of the role of the aristocracy in Malay society - once, that is, they had become accustomed to the deprivation of their independence in certain taxation and territorial privileges. If they effectively ceased to be politicians in the sense that they had been, they were rewarded, politically with roles on the State Councils which, before Federation at least, were relatively meaningful; and, economically, with state pensions and access to certain mining and land rights and so on. To a considerable extent, the traditional aristocratic establishment was permitted in nineteenth century Malaya to exist alongside the new centralized bureaucracy, and in customary life, the territorial chiefs continued to play effective part.

British policy and practice also attempted to shield the Malay peasants and village life from the disruptive effects of the new economic and political order, and they were largely successful precisely because, traditionally, the Malay peasant class was rarely involved outside its own subsistence economy. Foreign traders - Arabs, Chinese, Buginese, South Indians - had traditionally attended to that side of the economy, and foreign labour, Chinese especially, had generally been encouraged by independent Malay sultans to undertake, in return for tax on the proceeds, whatever mining and planting existed in the first half of the century. The British were largely able to ignore what would otherwise have constituted a serious labour problem (since the Malays were manifestly too few in number and too disinclined to work) by wholesale introduction of Chinese and later, Tamil

coolies. Moreover, there was plenty of unoccupied land, so that large tracts could be allotted to European and Chinese entrepreneurs without pushing the Malay peasant from his land. Education policy reinforced this desire to create and preserve "a vigorous and self-respecting agricultural peasantry" by confining such western education as was offered, to the sons of the aristocracy and encouraging the peasants to partake in a vernacular education.

At first sight then, Mannoni's hypothesis, insofar as it postulates a break-down of the values of traditional native society under the impact of European government, does not seem to be applicable in the Malayan colonial setting, particularly in the period under discussion. Within Malay society, the role of all elements was actually strengthened by the British presence in these early years. And yet, it may well be that it was in precisely this atmosphere that Mannoni's "dependence" syndrome was born - that "dependence" may be the result of a "strengthening" as well as a "break-down" of the native system.

In fact, the original settlement with the Malays, based on conciliation of the ruling class "had the somewhat ironic effect of rendering de facto a system of authority which had previously existed only de jure", precisely because the British "misunderstood" what they saw when they went to Malaya (whether they did this because they had to, in order to create order and stability out of nineteenth-century Perak and Selangor, or because they could not, as sons of mid-Victorian England, conceive of rulers who did not rule); they elevated the sultans

to positions of real as well as ritual power.

Within Malay society the rulers not only remained supreme but had their position considerably strengthened by the improvement, under the aegis of the British, of the centralized apparatus of government, by the reduction of previously competitive territorial chiefs to the status of titled pensioners or government paid bureaucrats, and by the strengthening of customary but previously frequently unexercised control over religion.

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A recent study of feudalism in Malaysian society has suggested, moreover, that, despite the gradual disappearance of institutional and judicial vestiges of feudalism since "the beginning of modernization during the latter part of the nineteenth century", its psychological traits remain. In the context of this psychological feudalism,

... the relationship between those in power and those dependent on them is characterized by personal attachment to the leader or man in authority rather than the principle he stands for. The leader or man in authority ... expects the subordinate to be loyal and faithful in a manner that sometimes comes into conflict with the norms and ethics of the work ... He is supposed to be loyal under almost all circumstances ...

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Perhaps more significant than all this, however, as far as Mannoni is concerned, is the fact that the Perak rajas, whose treatment of Birch is witness to their extreme reluctance to accept any British interference, and who, of all Malays, felt

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Roff, *ibid.*, p.250, p.14. He also noted that "The saving clause in the protectorate treaties concluded between the Malays and the British, while not to be taken too seriously by the historian, especially where 'custom' was concerned, operated to preserve and enlarge in the hands of the rulers a substantial authority over Islamic practices."

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Alatas: "Feudalism in Malaysian Society," *op.cit.*, p.2.

themselves least in need of the psychological security offered by British authority, "were glad that the Queen had sent them an old gentleman!" to replace Birch - namely, the white-bearded, fifty-three year old Hugh Low<sup>1</sup>; and, "fortunately", according to one historian,

Low did not have to persuade the rajas to settle under his supervision, they were only too anxious to do it for themselves. Raja Yusuf was no fool; he realized his dependence on Low, and a few weeks after Low's arrival, Yusuf and Idris were already planning to move to Kuala Kangsar - ostensibly so that they might benefit by Low's advice, but actually so that they might derive "an appearance of permanence" from the association.

The essence of Low's achievement is that while keeping rajas and chiefs out of executive positions, he gave them a vicarious sense of responsibility and participation by involving them in daily consultations on state business. <sup>2</sup>

In 1946, when he was writing the introduction to the third edition of his British Malaya, (and largely attempting to answer the accusation of critics of British Policy in Malaya, following on the fall of Singapore and the Peninsular States to Japan, with little apparent resistance, in 1942, that this capitulation was "due to want of proper direction by the British controlling authorities who were disliked by the Malays, or at any rate had failed to create enough sympathy to induce ~~the~~ inhabitants to defend their country against an alien enemy",) Swettenham recalled

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<sup>1</sup>

I. Bird: Golden Chersonese, op.cit., p.347.

<sup>2</sup>

E. Sadke: The Protected Malay States, op.cit., p.112.

a conversation with "the ablest Malay I ever knew", which illustrates the relationship that came to exist in Malaya between Native Rulers and Residents. The Raja, Idris of Perak, had just returned from a visit to England and was shown an Indian Newspaper by Swettenham, (then Resident of Perak), containing a leading article on the government of his own State. The article accused Swettenham of running the government and exercising all authority, while the Raja was kept in the background. Swettenham wrote:

When I translated the article into Malay for him, Sultan Idris said, "What is the matter with the man? What does he want? Of course you do the work - that is what you are paid for. You always consult me about everything of importance before it is done and when that is settled you do it. You are trained for the job. I could not do it, and don't want the trouble if I could." 1

Swettenham's story appears to illustrate that, in the first stage of colonialism, the people of the colonial country often invest the European (or European institution, such as the government or the regiment) with something of the authority denied him by the disruption of his own culture. The tradition, well-established in imperial literature, of the "faithful native bearer" stems from this phenomenon - a tradition translated in the Malayan scene into the sentiment underlying tales like Clifford's "Piloting Princes", which permitted the Resident to reminisce fondly about the eccentric loyalty of "my sultan" or

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Swettenham: British Malaya, (London, 1948), p.viii-xi. "If the critics are still unsatisfied," he continued, "I repeat what are the faults of which they complain? The Malay is a Muhammedan and looks to his Raja for authority. The ballot box makes no appeal, and self-government has no attractions. If we could order him differently, give him a new idea of life, we should only make him unhappy."

"my king" ...

It is curious how understanding and sympathy can bind a man to even the least attractive personality, for I grew to have more than a sneaking affection for my wicked old king ... I was often forced to admire the hard-bit, strong-willed, shameless, but fearless old curmudgeon; and when at length he died in the odour of iniquity, I joined heartily, and more than a little sadly in his people's prayer, "God be merciful to him."

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or, as he put it elsewhere,

The toad beneath the harrow knows  
Exactly where each tooth-point goes:  
The butterfly upon the road  
Preaches contentment to the toad.

That typifies the usual relations between the white man and the brown. 2

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Mannoni continues by claiming that the relationship between native and European is one which the latter frequently fails to understand - he sees the dependence as "loyalty",

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1 Clifford: "Piloting Princes" in Bushwacking ..., p.193 ff. esp. p.201. It is interesting to note, too, the British fascination, both in fiction and as a matter for "scientific" enquiry, with the two characteristic Malay "nervous disorders", the "amuk" and "latah", which may well have been an extreme manifestation of the "dependence" symptom, in that they both represent ultimate refusal to take responsibility for one's actions. This is merely a tentative suggestion, but it bears further investigation.

2 It is worth noting, in connection with my analysis of mid-Victorian society, that Lewis Carroll also saw the authority/dependence relationship. The Duchess's lullaby:

"I speak severely to my child  
And beat him when he sneezes  
He only does it to annoy  
Because he knows it pleases."

is the relationship in esse; significantly, when she gives the "child" to Alice, it is only a short time before Alice "realizes" that it is a pig.

"respect", even "love" (words which the Residents frequently used to describe their relationship with the Malays) and therefore fails to live up to what is expected of him. To the Malagasy, the European has accepted responsibility for all that happens, and if he eventually rejects this responsibility and "disowns" the Malagasy, (as happens in the process of decolonization"), the latter will feel betrayed and rejected and will either fall back on what seems to the European unreasonable superstition, or take vengeance against those who have betrayed him. Colonial rebellion is, thus, not a protest against repression but against progress, not against the firm hand but its withdrawal. This is how Mannoni interprets the 1947 Rebellion in Madagascar, and it seems to explain, for example, the Mau Mau movement in Kenya. The picture of a people left in a vacuum and seeking a new authority is central to this thought; it suggests that an end to colonial government is likely to be followed by a marked readiness to invest one personality with all the "old magic" - in short, to explain the dictatorships that frequently emerge in countries newly released from colonialism.

But for the purposes of the paper, I am more interested in the "European side" of Mannoni's hypothesis. Whereas dependence, (need for authority and security), is the dominating characteristic of the Malagasi, its counterpart is present in everyone brought up in the unspoken and spoken assumptions of European (Western) culture. It manifests itself in the inferiority complex. The colonial situation brings out, in most Europeans, a tendency widespread amongst them to what Mannoni



calls "the Prospero complex."

The personality of the colonial is made up, not of characteristics acquired during and through experience of the colonies, but of traits very often already in existence in a latent and repressed form in the European's psyche, traits which the colonial experience has simply brought to the surface and made manifest.

Social life in Europe exerts a certain pressure on the individual, and that pressure keeps the personality in a given shape; once it is removed, however, as in travelling to the colonies, the outlines of the personality change and swell. According to Mannoni, a person free from complexes, if such a person can be imagined, would not undergo change as a result of the experience of the colonies. He would, in fact, not feel the urge to go there in the first place; but, even should he find himself there by chance, he would not taste these emotional satisfactions which, whether consciously or unconsciously, powerfully attract the predestined colonialist.<sup>1</sup>

Acknowledging a debt to the psychological theories of Karl Abraham and Melanie Klein, Mannoni believes that these complexes are formed necessarily in infancy and their later history varies according to whether they are repressed, resolved or satisfied in the course of a closer contact with reality as the age of adulthood is reached.<sup>2</sup> The best description of them

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Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban, op.cit., p.98.

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See esp. M. Klein: Contributions to Psychoanalysis, p.238, referred to by Mannoni, ibid., p.33-34. "The cult of the dead, such as is found among the Malagasies, would come near to being an institutionalized form of Melanie Klein's Internalized 'good object' theory, according to which the individual preserves a 'good object' to which tribute must be paid. This cult, in contrast to the sort of mourning for stated periods we know in Europe, is continuous and acts as a protection against melancholia and as a cure for it ...."

is found in the works of writers who have projected them on to imaginary characters placed in situations which, though imaginary, are typically colonial. He lists amongst these, The Odyssey, Shakespeare's Tempest, Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, Sinbad the Sailor, Gulliver's Travels and so on; the characteristic of this type of fiction is that the hero has to face either the perils or miseries of exile, (which are usually punishment for some wrongdoing, deliberate or otherwise,) which constitutes disobedience of the gods, the customs, the "father" or his image, the "king".

Even the real travellers, R.L. Stevenson, Trelawney, and Baudelaire, conform to the unconscious schema. The former is particularly interesting. In Stevenson's novel, "good" and "bad" were Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. In the remote Pacific, Stevenson finally found the courage<sup>r</sup> to grapple with the image that had driven him so far, and began writing the Wier of Hermiston. (Significantly, too, he had written, in The Amateur Immigrant, after travelling to the United States on an immigrant ship in 1879:

We were a company of the rejected, the drunken, the incompetent, the weak, the prodigal. All who had been unable to prevail against circumstances in one land, were now fleeing pitifully to another; and though one or two might still succeed, all had already failed. We were a shipful of failures - the broken men of England.)

The fictional travellers encounter parental prohibitions in the form of monsters: Cyclops, the Roc Bird, the Cannibals. They are typically full of regrets - "Ah, how much better it would have been if ... !" And when they get back, they have

nothing but misfortunes to relate. Nevertheless, their adventures arouse envy in their stay-at-home readers, especially if they are young.

This later characteristic of the colonial experience in Mannoni's hypothesis is so reminiscent of the circumstances surrounding Hugh Clifford's first address to the Royal Colonial Institute that it bears dwelling upon in some detail.<sup>1</sup>

It was common practice to invite colonial officials at home on leave in England to address the Institute on some matter related to "their" colony - there had been several Malayan officials previous to Clifford:- Wray in 1873-4, Weld in 1883-4, W.E. Maxwell in 1891-2, and Swettenham in 1895-6. These four addresses have two characteristics in common: a feeling of indignation on the part of the speaker that so little was known about Malaya, and an overwhelmingly optimistic and complacent picture of the beneficial changes brought about by British rule. Their tone is éboullyantly aggressive, with variation in degree; they are liberally sprinkled with statistics. Clifford's first address, on the other hand, is totally different in tone and implication; (historians commonly cite these addresses, of Swettenham and Clifford to the Institute, to show the difference between Swettenham's aggressive "public works-oriented" imperialism and Clifford's romantic idealism.<sup>2</sup>) - so much so that in the discussion following his paper, several speakers, chiefly

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<sup>1</sup> Proc. Roy. Col. Inst., Vol. XXX, 1898-9, pp. 369-401: "Life in the Malay Peninsula: as it was and is."

<sup>2</sup> e.g. J. de V. Allen: "Two Imperialists", op.cit., p.43.

Low and Treacher, both Residents themselves, felt constrained to point out to the audience that the Malays were not "a totally unamiable set of people", and that life in the Malay States is not "entirely unendurable - indeed Mr. Clifford has briefly alluded to the lighter and less gloomy aspects of the case."

Treacher commented:

I do not wish at all to traverse any of the statements made by Mr. Clifford, but he has, unavoidably of course, had to focus before you some of the worst points in Malay life and I am trying to relieve somewhat the tension you must be feeling ... I should like to allude to the adaptability of the Malays. My own Sultan is one of the most courteous men I have ever met ... 1

But, more significantly however, Treacher drew attention to the fact that, although Clifford had "referred to four men, including our chairman, (Mr. Cecil Clementi Smith), who will be remembered for their admirable work in building up the Federated Malay States", he had "omitted to mention the services of Sir Hugh Low ... not only an able administrator but a statesman." It was obviously part of the traditional function of addresses to the Royal Colonial Institute that one took advantage of the opportunity to publically eulogize one's colonial colleagues,

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Proc. Roy. Col. Inst., op.cit., p.396. He also reminded the members that "not very long ago in the history of our own civilized and Christian country, women were burned for witchcraft, people were hanged for stealing sheep, Catholics burned Protestants and Protestants burned Catholics, and slavery existed under our own flag, with all its horrors, to an extent unknown to the Malays." It should be noted that Treacher served on the west coast, in Perak, which had been under British rule for thirty years, considerably longer than Pahang, so that it is not surprising that "his" sultan should "understand both sides of a question more rapidly than many Englishmen." Also, ibid., p.394, Low speaking.

particularly those present in the audience. Clifford's response to Treacher's reminder of his "oversight" is an admirable example of the working of those forces within nineteenth century British society to which Mannoni refers when he speaks of the societal pressures which keep the personality in shape. Clifford's concluding remarks amount to an agonized public confession of his guilt in transgressing the rules of this "game".

There is one oversight in my Paper - one of much gravity, and which I regard with profound regret. I have inadvertently and carelessly and ... most stupidly omitted to mention among the chief officers in this country, the name of Sir Hugh Low. Anybody who knows anything of the State of Perak, and of the Federated Malay States which have sprung out of our protection of that the first of those States, knows the record of Sir Hugh Low's services as one of great self-sacrifice and of marvellous tact and ability in dealing under very difficult circumstances with people who do not understand anything at all about what British administration meant. He went among those people fearlessly, almost alone, and simply through his own force of character so impressed them with his own strength of mind, firmness of will, and great goodness and kindness of heart that in a short time he could do with the natives of Perak what he wished. It is almost incredible that I should have been guilty of the absurd inadvertence of omitting Sir Hugh Low's name .... 1

This was obviously much more like what the Institute was accustomed to hear from its speakers. But, the most peculiar thing about all this is that, in the transcript of Clifford's address in the Proceedings, he did mention Low's name, citing not four men as Treacher claimed, but five, and specifically mentioning Swettenham and Low as "more than any other living men, having

had the greatest share in the executive government of the Malayan States ..."<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to explain Treacher's remark, or Clifford's elaborate apology for an oversight which presumably he knew he had not made, except by assuming that Clifford gathered during the discussion of his address that he had transgressed in some way by giving, not the typical "facts-and-figures" account of Malaya's progress under the British, but a vividly gloomy impression of the continuing evils of Malay court society under British rule, postscripted with a very short account of material changes with British administration<sup>2</sup>, and that the apology to Low for an imagined slight was a singular way of making good his lapse.

In any event, honour appears to have been satisfied; closing the discussion, the Chairman was able to conclude:

Everyone will agree that Mr. Clifford has told us his story in a very attractive manner, in spite of the fact that he had to give us some rather gruesome details. He has the pen of a ready writer ... Young as he happily is, we shall expect more from his pen.

For after all, and to illustrate Mannoni's contention about the young, returning fictional traveller:

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ibid., p.393.

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In a later address to the Institute, (Proc. Royal Col. Inst. Vol. XXXIV, 1902-3, p.45), Clifford admitted that "the last Paper dealing with the then existing State of affairs in the Malay Peninsula which was read in this place (for in this connection I need not take into account a contribution of my own made in 1899, which was of a frankly popular and un instructive character) was that of Sir Frank Swettenham ..."<sup>2</sup> (my underlining).

The success of the work Great Britain has taken in hand in such places as the Malay Peninsula depends on the services of young men like Mr. Clifford, who go out with the desire to do all they can to maintain the character of their country. It is that character which impresses itself on the native races, with the ultimate result that the country we administer becomes a success in itself and a credit to the Mother Country. <sup>1</sup>

Mannoni undertakes a detailed analysis of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, a story which, recounting the relationship which grew up between Crusoe and Friday, may well have been responsible for many colonial callings. (This fact cannot be verified of course; suffice it to note that, even before reading Mannoni, I was struck with the number of references to Crusoe which occur in the literature of imperial Malaya.<sup>2</sup>) He sees the story of Crusoe as the account of a long and difficult cure of a misanthropic neurosis. The hero, who is at first at odds with his environment, gradually recovers psychological health in solitude. In fact, Mannoni maintains that Defoe had no other model for Crusoe than himself, (Defoe apparently confessed as much in a letter to Bishop Hoadley in 1725):

The case of Defoe ... is one of misanthropy, melancholy, a psychological need for solitude, the projection of his faults on to others, a sense of guilt towards his father,

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Proc. Roy. Col. Institute, 1898-9, p.398-99. Somewhat ironically, in view of America's manifest failure presently to successfully "imperialize" South East Asia, Clementi Smith added: "I feel quite certain that the operations of British officials in the Malay States is at this time an object-lesson to our cousins across the Atlantic, who have themselves embarked on colonial expansion and who in the Philippines have before them much the same class of work we took in hand in the Peninsula ..."

2

Most of the fictional works cited by Mannoni are still considered suitable literature for Commonwealth students, and recur on syllabuses from the primary to tertiary levels of education.

repressed affection for a daughter whose sex he preferred to ignore ... Thence emerged the story of Robinson in the way a dream might occur.

The most significant point about Robinson Crusoe, for the purposes of the study of imperial relations, is that, when this "dream" was published all Europe realized that it had been dreaming. For more than a century afterwards, the European concept of the savage came no closer to reality than Defoe's representation of him, and it was on that figure that the European, (if he was more or less "infantile" in character or, like Rousseau, unable to adapt himself to reality as Mannoni asserts,) projected the image of which there was no counterpart in the solid and too familiar world of reality.<sup>1</sup>

The appeal of Defoe's book, and thus of the colonial situation, is the "lure of the world without men". (Crusoe is happier when he is absolutely alone than when he is afraid he may not be.<sup>2</sup> He finally overcomes his original fear of every sign of another living thing and comes to accept the presence of creatures upon whom he has attempted to project the image of "others" - his parrot, Friday, the cannibals - whom he subdues by his authority. He assumes the title of Governor the island - and is reconciled with the father image and God, and, like

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Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban, op.cit., p.103. What I have written about the "piratical, head-hunting, cannibalistic" people with which the Archipelago was populated in British imaginations should be recalled with this in mind.

2

This paradox, "Man is afraid because he is alone and his fear is the fear of other men" (fear of solitude is fear of intrusion upon that solitude), is also manifest in The Tempest. Prospero's solitude is finally broken in upon.



Ulysses, can return home "plein d'usage et raison".)<sup>1</sup> This lure of a world without others who have to be treated as human beings is a manifestation of a trait, present in all children, tending towards antisocial misanthropy; it remains in the adult unconscious although it may be repressed in greater or lesser degree. The appeal of the idea of a desert island, the real attraction of solitude is, then, that a world emptied of human beings can be filled with the creatures of one's own imagination - Lilliputians, cannibals, Ariels, Fridays.

I have dwelt on Mannoni's theory in some detail because there are remarkable "coincidences" between his analysis of the development of the colonial mentality and its manifestations, and the circumstances of the extension of British imperial rule to the Malay Peninsula through the Residential System. Historians of this period frequently draw attention to what they refer to as the "eccentricities" of the colonial officials entrusted with the maintenance of the System.

Conditions in the Malay States approximated to those in any frontier society; prospects, salaries, and pensions, were unsure or non-existent; and it is hardly surprising that the sort of men who were attracted were, on the whole, very different from the more calculating apparatchiki who were already beginning to fill the Civil Service in the Crown Colony ... there were few direct pressures upon the States administrators and plenty of opportunities for eccentricities among them.

Normally, however, these "eccentricities" are included as light relief in the midst of the more serious details of their achievements as "good Residents" - they were good imperialists

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Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban, ibid., p.103-04.

in spite of their bizarre habits rather than because of them.<sup>1</sup>  
It is this latter which I intend to investigate.

Hugh Low was undoubtedly foremost amongst the Residents, in that it was considered, then and now, that, apart from Raja Brooke, no one had so successfully evolved a system of government which served "the needs and prejudices" of the Malays as he.<sup>2</sup>

Low, "the young botanist from Clapton", was, in fact, one of Raja Brooke's finds - he sailed to Labuan in the H.M.S. Meander with Brooke and the Lieutenant-Governor William Napier in February 1848, just after his publication of "the first book written on Sarawak". He married Kitty Napier, (daughter of William Napier and a "Malacca lady of Malayan blood"), in August 1848 but she died in Labuan in 1851.<sup>3</sup> Low remained there as Colonial Treasurer, Oriental linguist and expert on

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<sup>1</sup> J. de V. Allen: "Malayan Civil Service, 1874-1941," op.cit. p.11-12; also see Sadke's eulogistic paragraphs, (Protected Malay States, op.cit., p.203 ff.)

<sup>2</sup> cf. S. St. John: Life in the Forests of the Far East (London, 1862, Vol.I, Preface): "No man possesses more varied experience or a more intimate knowledge of the people" than Low; and J. de V. Allen: "Malayan Civil Service", p.11. "Whitehall's first, (and most successful), appointment was that of Low in 1877".

<sup>3</sup> See J. Pope-Hennessy: Verandah: Some Episodes in the Crown Colonies, 1867-1889 (London, Allen and Unwin, 1964) p.107. After her death, Low kept up a "long but quiet liaison with a Malay nonya." "He said that he had never permitted any familiarity between his legal daughter and his natural one. In Low's own opinion his conduct had been normal and discreet." Doubtless it was, but one wonders how much inter-racial contact such relationships actually involved, even before the Governor, Pope-Hennessy (the writer's grandfather), decided to exploit his father-in-law's liaison and publically condemned it. (H. Low: Sarawak, its Inhabitants and Productions, being notes during a Residence in the Country with His Excellency, Mr. Brooke, London, Bentley, 1848).

the fauna and flora on the island.<sup>1</sup> But his administrative career of twenty years in Labuan, was one of constant disappointment; without any influential friends at home to press his claims upon the Secretary of State, he was passed over repeatedly in favour of younger, less-experienced men who obtained their appointment "through an exercise of political patronage of the most blatant kind."

An honourable and high-minded public servant, Low was human enough to feel angry disappointment, and no doubt its ally jealousy.

Low's situation was complicated by the absurd but continuing disagreement between himself and the young Governor, Pope-Hennessy, who married Low's daughter. In any event, as "old timers", part of the "bunch of incapables" whose policies the young Governor vigorously set about to reform, both he and Dr. Treacher (the colonial surgeon) resented the appointment of this much younger man as their superior.<sup>2</sup> J. Pope-Hennessy (who admittedly may have been a little biased in favour of his grand-sire)

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Low was erudite naturalist and botanist, endowed with "a constant sense of beauty" and "a love of watching things grow." His garden was the finest on Labuan and he was responsible for many beautiful plantations and vistas in the island;" including the "miniature English park" around Government House. He had a private aquarium, and a tropical aviary, "as well as important collections of sea-shells, butterflies and moths, snake-skins and stuffed animals." Pope-Hennessy: ibid. p.78. Pope-Hennessy's use of "things" is probably unconscious, but it draws attention to Low's preference, as imperialist, for "objects" rather than "people".

2

See Pope-Hennessy: ibid. p.77, 104.  
cf. Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban p.106, for his comments on the relationship between the practice, common in patriarchal communities, of working for the father-in-law and colonial racialism: both attitudes seek to justify hatred on grounds of sexual guilt.

wrote that:

Both perhaps had long since ceased to wonder just what they were really doing on Labuan at all. Over twenty years, a waning faith in Labuan's future had dwindled to a cheerless recognition that this island Colony was at once their destiny and their home. <sup>1</sup>

Low, however, finally did escape from the "living death of existence on the swampy island"; he was chosen for a job after his own heart - British Resident (after the murder of Birch) at the court of the Resident of Perak, "a vast forest kingdom in Western Malaya." Here, already an old man, he sought escape from the professional blind alley in which he had found himself; the Colonial Office left him to define most of his own duties and to assume any responsibilities he felt necessary for his task of influencing and restraining the Sultan. Significantly, he was "the only white man in that part of the huge jungle State"; living at Kuala Kangsar in a spacious, verandahed bungalow perched high above an elbow of the Perak River, guarded only by a small native bodyguard, he "had really to rely on his personality alone" to keep the Sultan and his subjects in check.

Isabella Bird, who spent some time at the Kuala Kangsar residency, provides the closest account available of Low's life style in Perak. Her overwhelming impression appears to have

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Pope-Hennessy: ibid. p.83-4. cf. E. Sadke: The Protected Malay States, op.cit., p.106. "By all ordinary standards his official career (in Labuan) was a failure. It had been crippled by personal animosities which frustrated his work and his advancement in the Service, and in 1872, after twenty four years' service, in which he had acted as Governor for long periods, he was still only a Police Magistrate.

centred on his relationship with his animals. Although he received Malays "on equal terms" into his house at all hours and apparently earned "their respect and even their love",

... for companionship in his bungalow he kept an ape and a small gibbon named Eblis. These were intelligent creatures, who learned to open letters and pretend to read them, were mutually jealous of one another, and ate sitting up in chairs at Low's own well-kept dining table being solemnly served by the Malay 'boy' at every meal. <sup>1</sup>

Miss Bird, watching Low's apes and retriever greeting him in the evening, commented that:

All the creatures greet him more warmly than most people would welcome their relations after a long absence. Can it be wondered at that people like the society of these simple, loving, unsophisticated beings? ... I am inclined to think that Mr. Low is happier among Malays and his apes and other pets than he would be amongst civilized Europeans! <sup>2</sup>

Or, as Mrs. Innes, admittedly not completely impartial where Low was concerned, put it on observing his life style at Kuala Kangsar:

We no longer wondered at Mr. Low's staying contentedly at Perak, and never wishing to go to England, a contentment on which he much prides himself and which he was apt to hold up to his subordinates for their imit-

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<sup>1</sup> Pope-Hennessy: ibid., p.223; Bird: Golden Chersonese, op.cit. p.306-7.

<sup>2</sup> Bird: ibid.: She herself confessed to being very enchanted with "three days of solitude, meals in the company of apes, ... wandering about alone, and the free, open-air tropical life ... I had some of the 'I'm monarch of all I survey' feeling; and when drum beat and bugle blast and the turning out of the Sikh guard, indicated that the Resident was in sight, I felt a little reluctant to relinquish the society of animals, and my 'solitary reign' ..."

I should want to go now ... I should be so tired of the shambles here, the obscurantism, the colour-prejudice, the laziness and ignorance, as to desire nothing better than a headship in a cold stone country school in England. But I love this country. I feel protective towards it. Sometimes, just before dawnbreaks, I feel that I somehow enclose it, contain it. I feel that it needs me. This is absurd, because snakes and scorpions are ready to bite me, a drunken Tamil is prepared to knife me, the Chinese in the town would like to spit at me, some day a Malay boy will run amok and try to tear me apart. But it doesn't matter. I want to live here; I want to be wanted. Despite the sweat, the fever, the prickly heat, the mosquitoes ...

Anthony Burgess:  
The Long Day Wanes;  
A Malayan Trilogy.

ation. Living thus comfortably and monarch of all he surveyed, he was better off and in a higher position than he could hope to enjoy in England, where as everyone knows, even colonial governors are nobodies, unless they happen to have titles to fame other than their official rank. <sup>1</sup>

Low might be compared with Tristram Speedy whose eccentricities did not apparently predispose him to the ideal Resident mould. It has been suggested that Speedy's motive for joining the Malay Civil Service was probably his "love of dressing up and of the outdoor frontier life." <sup>2</sup> At any rate, he was much more in the tradition of the imperial freelance; son of a soldier in India, involved in campaigns in Ethiopia, Australia and New Zealand,—before joining the Malay Civil Service, he had begun his Malayan connection as a "sergeant-major" of the Sikh police in Penang. He resigned from this post to take service under a Malay chief.

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E. Innes: Chersonese with the Gilding Off, op.cit., Vol.II, p.133-4. See Vol.II, p.244 ff. Mrs. Innes did not recommend the Malay Native States Service to anyone who cannot begin at the top, by being Resident." She attributed all the miseries she suffered in the East to the system of "Protection" - "the only persons protected by it are H.B.M.'s Residents." If annexation (vigorously opposed by most Residents and Governors from the 1880's on) had been effected, she went on, the slavery question could have been dealt with properly, the influx of European traders and planters would have resulted in the establishment of an independent society "whose opinion, freely and publicly expressed, would have acted as a wholesome check on the Residents;" and, finally, "the solitude and isolation which formed one of our greatest trials would have been modified, if not done away with altogether." See also I. Bird: Golden Chersonese, ibid., p.322, 348; commenting on her stay with Low: "I sit at a table at the other end (of the verandah) and during the long working hours we never exchange a word." When she departed, Low remarked, "You never speak at the wrong time. When men are visiting me they never know when to be quiet, but bother one in the middle of business."

2

cf. Allen: "Malayan Civil Service ...", op.cit.

Governor Jervois, who found Speedy totally unsuitable Resident material, wrote of him in a private letter to Meade:

Captain Speedy is altogether an inferior order of being. He has apparently a delight in dressing himself in a gorgeous leopard skin with a grand turban on his head and still further exciting the curiosity of the natives by playing on the bagpipes, an instrument on which he performs with much facility. If you have seen his elephantine frame, you will be able to judge of the figure he would present under such circumstances. <sup>1</sup>

Jervois' picture of Speedy has been balanced a little by G.M. Gullick's study of him; Gullick stressed that "he was undoubtedly a man of exceptional courage and physical strength, who was at his best when playing a lone hand in a situation of danger."<sup>2</sup> He had a "flair for gaining the liking of Asians", but he was apparently attracted more to the Chinese than the Malays, a fact which could only place him outside the Resident tradition.<sup>3</sup> Swettenham, critical of Speedy's temporizing with the Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> Jervois to Meade: Aug. 1876, quoted in Gullick: "Captain Speedy of Larut", op.cit., Introduction. Gullick's paper seeks to answer the question, "What sort of a man was Speedy?", and he invites the reader "to decide for himself what verdict he will pass on Speedy." (sic.)

<sup>2</sup> Note my comments elsewhere in this paper on the imperialist's preference for situations which do not require prolonged thought, his dislike of the ambiguity of ordinary everyday life.

<sup>3</sup> cf. Victor Purcell: The Memoirs of a Malayan Official (London, Cassell, 1965) p.95-96: Purcell chose to study Chinese, ("instead of being restricted to the comparatively unevolved culture of the Malay Peninsula, the door would thus be opened to one of the great civilizations of the world."); on communicating his decision to the Under-Secretary, the latter replied: "You-have-ruined-your-career! You will never become a governor, or even a Resident. You will merely be a specialist!" According to Purcell, the contempt for the specialist, which lies deep in British society, derives from the belief that it is the privilege of the aristocracy to supervise, and of the artisan to know how.



during the mining disturbances in Larut, recorded rather arrogantly in his Journal, after noting that Speedy treated the Chinese "like Gentlemen", that:

I should recommend him to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest and practise Forster on Decision of Character, a book which I cannot claim personally to have studied but its name recommends it. 1

On the other hand, Gullick concludes that it became clear that Speedy "lacked many of the qualities of a good civil servant", in fact, he was "too much of a restless individualist to concentrate on the details of routine or to submit willingly to supervision, an expansive personality who did not count the cost." The Colonial Office apparently shared this opinion - someone wrote against his name, "large, lazy, undisciplined and extravagant." Speedy was clearly not "a gentleman". He built himself a fine house at public expense and, according to Jervois, his "integrity" was suspect - this latter charge an afterthought (when Speedy declined to resign his post while in England on leave in 1876) related to his suspicion that Speedy had accepted money from the Mentri of Larut to engage in "anti-British activities" in 1875.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps most significant of all, however, is Gullick's own verdict on Speedy - a verdict arrived at after having read

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Swettenham's Journals, April 19, 1874, p.50, According to Cowan, who edited the Journals, "Forster" was probably the Baptist minister of that name whose "Essays", including one on "Decision of Character", were published in 1805 and went through several editions.

2

See Gullick, "Captain Speedy of Larut" op.cit., p.42, 59, 75 ff.; and McNair: Perak and the Malays, p.29.

Low's deprecatory report of Speedy's administration of the mining state of Larut:

Speedy is hardly to blame except for being too much of an optimist.

It should be obvious why Speedy left the Malay Civil Service and Low remained to become one of its most respected figures.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

It is Mannoni's contention that:

Where there is a preference for Ariel or Friday to real persons, it is clear that there has been a failure in adaptation resulting usually from a grave lack of sociability combined with a pathological urge to dominate. 2

Whatever its real nature, this tendency towards misanthropy is often first expressed in a flight from other people.

I have already noted Hugh Low's flight from others. On the other hand, Frank Swettenham's personality appears to have tended more towards the extroverted, aggressive side of conservatism, and he remained relatively unaffected by his Malayan experience. At the same time, even he wrote, much later in 1942, of his youth in the Scottish lowlands:

That was the place and those the conditions for a boy to learn self-confidence and a liking for aloneness; where he could muse on the Odes of Horace, the language of the Greek tragedies ... The open air, light and shadow of the mills, the wind in the rushes of a mere, rain and shine, and great expanses of solitude without houses or humanity or

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1

Gullick: ibid., p.78, and Low's Journal, 19th April, 1877, esp. Section 3.

2

Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban, op.cit., p.102.

cultivation were already dear to me. <sup>1</sup>

And elsewhere, describing his first appointment to the court of the Sultan of Selangor, an appointment which apparently earned him the condolences of his fellow civil servants, Swettenham wrote:

But I may say here (as I am never likely to return to the subject again), that this sympathy was thrown away upon me. I was delighted to go to that snake-haunted, mosquito-breeding swamp, and, in the twelve months, that I spent in Selangor, without the companionship of any other white man, I never felt the dullness of my surroundings for a single day. <sup>2</sup>

From the beginning of his career, it was inactivity, the absence of "useful employment", rather than the company of others that constituted Swettenham's 'hell'. Waiting for Birch's arrival at Pulo Pangkar in 1874, he wrote with feeling:

Sunday to Wednesday, only four days, four days of complete, I have almost said gross, idleness, and I'm beginning to feel as if I had been here for months. And worse than that there does not appear to be even the slightest prospect of getting away. I am beginning to have a due appreciation of what must have been R. Crusoe's feelings when he kept looking out for a ship which would not come ... I suppose like him, I shall give it up in time. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Swettenham: Footprints in Malaya (London, 1942), p.9-10. See also W. Roff's introduction to Stories and Sketches by Sir Frank Swettenham, op.cit. But on his first mission into the Native States, he was annoyed at being sent up country early, thereby missing several good parties in Singapore. (Journals.)

<sup>2</sup> Swettenham: Real Malay p.20. See also "A Silver Point"; and Malay Sketches: "Latah".

<sup>3</sup> Swettenham: Journals April 8, 1874: cf. April 28th: "This helpless inactivity is most disgusting ..."

Significantly, Swettenham did not give it up; he maintained a "healthy" interest, if not in his own kind, then in the Malay people. (It is worth noting, however, that in writing about the "Real Malay", Swettenham struggled with the notion of presenting reality to his readers: his chapter headings suggest the shadow more than the substance of reality - "A Silhouette", "A Study in Shadows", "A 'Genre' Picture", "A Line Engraving." Swettenham was more at home detailing material progress under British guidance.) In that sense, he did not succumb permanently to the lure of the world without men. His work, in Malaya done, as he conceived of it, he returned, like Crusoe, soon after the turn of the century; content, except for a few slight misgivings after the Second World War, that what he had achieved in Malaya was the best for that country, and gratified to watch the twentieth-century progress of the Federation from afar and to comment frequently upon it in the correspondence columns of The Times.

In another sense however, Swettenham's flight from the reality of others was as complete as Hugh Low's. For he retained his faith in himself precisely by refusing to accept that his image of Malaya - perfected in 1903 when Federation and the railway line brought the Native Chiefs together in conference - could change. British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya was published first in 1906, and with very minor revisions, in 1929 and 1948. Forty years, and two World Wars, found Swettenham still protesting that he had recreated Eden in Malaya in the nineteenth century, that

the Malay people did not want change, and that any alteration in British policy in the States would be sheer madness.

That brings me to the main question, ... namely, what is the reason for all the clamour we have heard ... demanding the introduction of all sorts of drastic changes in the administration of Malay States affairs? ... What was wrong with Malay administration as practised up to the end of the year 1941? ... I have read and know to be true, countless statements of the phenomenal progress and development of Malaya from ... 1874 to ... 1941. Readers are invited to note that beginning with debts, directly the British took a hand in affairs, these States prospered and grew, until they astonished the world.

From a revenue of £200,000 in 1874, the four Federated States, in 1940, enjoyed a revenue of £12,000,000, with trade valued at £67,000,000.

Is such a result possible with bad administration? I don't believe it. Then why all this fuss about the reorganization, reconstruction, and all the other re's? Malaya is now free again, and it is therefore appropriate to ask these questions before harm is done by well-meaning people, or by others who have axes to grind, and ideals of human happiness with which the Malay has no sympathy.<sup>1</sup>

Hugh Clifford took a different path out of the contradiction implicit in imperialism. Clifford was unique amongst the Residents for several reasons and deserves special attention here. Biographers of Clifford commonly refer to his "imaginative response" to Malaya and the Malays, and his "sensitive romanticism". In writing of them it is worth attempting to understand precisely what these terms imply about Clifford as imperialist, and about those who attribute these characteristics to him.

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<sup>1</sup>

British Malaya, 1948 ed., p.IX-X.

He went out to Malaya at the age of seventeen, not long after the death of his father, from a rather sheltered boyhood in England; and remained there, except for brief intervals, for almost twenty years. It was Clifford who wrote of the new breed of men needed in the East, of which he obviously felt himself to be one, that:

... circumstance had combined to well-nigh denationalise him, turn him from his own kind, herd with natives and conceive for them such an affection and sympathy that he was accustomed to contrast his countrymen unfavorably with his Malayan friends.

And it was Clifford who was aware that this was "not a wholesome attitude of mind for any European", but that it was, nonetheless,

... curiously common among such white men as chance has thrown for long periods of time into close contact with Oriental races, and whom Nature has endowed with imaginations sufficiently keen to enable them to live into the life of the strange folk around him. <sup>1</sup>

Clifford, in fact, understood that it was "imagination" which made imperialism possible and tolerable; his use here of "Chance" and "Nature" as formative influences on Maurice Curzon is curious, in that it represents a change from an earlier realization that "to all dwellers in the desolate solitude, which every white man experiences, who is cast alone among natives, there are two 'up countries' - his Heaven and Hell, and both are of his own making."<sup>2</sup>

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Clifford: A Freelance of Today (London, 1903) "Concerning Maurice Curzon." (My underlining.)

2

Clifford: In Court and Kampong: (London, 1897) "Up Country" p.247. (My underlining.) He quotes "the Old Persian Poet":

I sent my soul through the invisible  
Some Letter of the After-Life to spell.  
And Presently my Soul returned to me  
And whispered 'Thou thyself are Heaven  
or Hell'.

In January 1887, at the age of twenty, he was sent to the east coast state of Pahang to persuade the ruler, Bendahara Ahmad, to accept British control. He was successful, and was subsequently appointed to the position of adviser in October 1887. The two years, from January 1887 until November 1888, spent as a solitary British official at the court of this Malay ruler, cut off by sea for several months of the year by the monsoon, thrown entirely upon the Malay for companionship, "in a corner of the globe where the world is very old, and where conditions of life have seen but little change during the last thousand years", were undoubtedly crucial ones in Clifford's life. He wrote elsewhere:

It is said that a white man, who has lived twelve months in complete isolation among the people of an alien Asiatic race is never totally sane again for the remainder of his days. This, in a measure, is true; for the life he then learns to live, and the discoveries he makes in that unmapped land, the gates of which are closed, locked, barred and chained against all but a very few of his countrymen, teach him to love many things which all right-minded people very properly detest. The free, queer, utterly unconventional life has a fascination all of its own. <sup>1</sup>

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1

Clifford: In Court and Kampong, "The East Coast." This story clearly outlines Clifford's feeling on going into Pahang. He was very aware that "the boot of the ubiquitous white man leaves its marks on all the fair places of the Earth, and scores thereon an even more gigantic track than that which affrighted Robinson Crusoe in his solitude. It crushes down the forests, beats out roads, strides across the rivers, kicks down native institutions and generally tramples on the growths of nature, and the works of primitive man reducing all things to that dead level of conventionality, which we call civilization." This is what had happened in the West Coast States in twenty years of British protection, and Clifford was keenly aware of the unique opportunity presented him of preventing it on the East Coast "where things are different and the Malay States are still what they profess to be." See also "The People of the East Coast", and "At the Court of Pelesu." ibid.

In 1895 Clifford became official Resident of Pahang - by the end of that year, the country was at peace, and he remained there for the rest of his service in Malaya, except for a brief period as Governor in North Borneo and Labuan, from which post he asked to be released. The days of "bushwacking", however, were gone, and were replaced, as they had been much earlier on the west coast, with the more prosaic tasks of day-to-day imperial administration. With less to do and more time to think, Clifford's doubts, about the ultimate effects of British rule on the Malay people and the very ideology of Imperialism upon which his presence in Malaya rested, grew.

We, who are white men, admire our work not a little - which is natural - and many are found willing to wear out their souls in efforts to clothe in the stiff garments of European conventionalities, the naked, brown limbs of Orientalism.

Recalling Mannoni, Clifford felt that too many white men were apt to disregard the effect of their actions upon the natives, "who, for the most part, are frank Vandals", and "also admire efforts of which they are aware that they are themselves incapable"; "even the laudator temporis acti has his mouth stopped by the cheap and often tawdry luxury, which the coming of the Europeans has placed within his reach."

What we are really attempting, however, is nothing less than to crush into twenty years the revolutions in facts and in ideas which, even in energetic Europe, six long centuries have been needed to accomplish.

And while even Clifford could not dispute that Europe had made a vast progress in the art of government and effected a prodigious improvement in the general condition of the people, nor



that there were many evils in Malay society which could not be permitted to persist, he could not help

... but sympathise with the Malays, who are suddenly and violently translated from a point to which they had attained in the natural development of their race, and required to live up to the standards of a people who are six long<sup>1</sup> centuries in advance of them in national progress.

The irony of Clifford's position was that, while clearly aware that what the British were doing to the Malays was not "right," he could still affirm that he knew what was the "proper place" of the Malays; furthermore, he could, at the same time, speak of the national "progress" of Britain.

He wrote a good deal in the last half of the 'nineties. In 1903, possibly because it was distressed by the tone of his recent literary efforts, the Colonial Office transferred him to Trinidad; later he served as Governor of Ceylon, Gold Coast, Nigeria and again Ceylon. But he continued to write predominantly of Malaya and, with an odd note of prophecy, in 1913 imagined, in "Our Trusty and Well-Beloved", the return of Sir Phillip Hanbury-Erskine as Governor, after half a lifetime spent in other outposts of Empire, to the land where he had spent "his unregenerate youth". "In its way absurdly romantic and inarticulate, the story nevertheless depicts, as Maurice Curzon

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, "The East Coast", p.2-3. "If a plant is made to blossom or bear fruit three months before its time, it is regarded as a great triumph of the gardener's art; but, what then are we to say of this huge moral-forcing system which we call 'Protection'? Forced plants, we know, suffer in the process; and the Malay, whose proper place is amidst the conditions of the Thirteenth Century, is apt to become morally weak (and) and seedy, and to lose something of his robust self-respect, when he is forced to bear Nineteenth-Century fruit."

had done earlier, one of Clifford's dreams". Yet, when he finally did return triumphantly to "his kingdom" fourteen years later as Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States, Clifford, like Sir Phillip, knew

... when the day was ended, in the dead unhappy night ... that old age had come upon him in the space of a single hour. <sup>1</sup>

There are a number of biographical studies of Clifford, and J. de V. Allen's analysis of his literary works and of Clifford's struggle, as it is expressed in his writing, to find some intellectually acceptable element in what had, for him, become mere colonialism, is excellent.<sup>2</sup> It would be repetitious to detail that struggle any further, except to note that, by investing Clifford's "eventual despair and falling back upon emotionalism", and his retirement in 1929 through "illness" or "cyclical insanity", with tragic overtones, these biographers show how closely they come to sharing precisely the imperial outlook from whose contradictions Clifford's "insanity" constituted his release.

Like Swettenham, Clifford saw that a return to England was one way of reacting to the realization that his work in Malaya could not, or should not, be carried any further. In "The Breath upon the Spark" (Bushwacking), he returns to Burnham in Somersetshire, "the most conservative place in the world - and the quietest".

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1

Clifford: Malayan Monochromes, London, 1913, p.32.

2 J. de V. Allen: "Two Imperialists" op.cit.; See also Introduction to Stories by Sir Hugh Clifford, op.cit., esp. p.ix-x for the influence of Clifford's childhood, with its strong aura of the medieval and "romantic unworldliness", on Clifford's later outlook on life.

It was precisely as it is now when I first remember it some fifty years ago.

But, writes Clifford,

As I looked upon the familiar sights, recognizing as life-long friends suddenly recalled to memory the ancient landmarks that had been my playmates in those days of early childhood, when existence was one unbroken, irresponsible game of play, a great sadness was upon me!

The fact that thirty years, which had held for Clifford "so much of disappointment and of disillusionment", had passed over the head of Burnham leaving it untouched, emphasized "the pathos of the changes they had wrought in me." He falls into conversation with an old fisherman who had also "given his youth to Asia." The most significant fact about his conversation, for the light it throws upon the nature of imperialism, is the concept of "the actuality" presented by the two speakers. The older man comments

Ah! ... So you have felt it too. That is the genius of Burnham. It is itself so unchanging that it furnishes ... a blank canvas upon which the pictures of the years, and of everything those years have held ... are cast with such a wealth of colour, of detail, of distinctness, that here, to a degree unknown in all the world besides, it is given to a man to live through each one of them again in imagination with something of the actuality that belonged to the past when it was present. <sup>1</sup>

He advises Clifford that youth is a time for doing, ("Don't waste it in dreams, man..."); and speaks of the time when man still wishes to be 'doing' but is physically incapable - a very

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Clifford: Bushwacking: "The Breath upon the Spark".

pervasive western notion. Significantly, he warns that since this time comes inevitably,

... let there be something done to furnish  
food for dreams - not dreams of the future,  
such as young men cherish, empty hopes that  
torture and elude, but dreams of the past,  
of big emotions tasted, of the raw red wine  
pressed from the grapes of life to the last  
drop, of great things done, of a man's record.  
Such as a man may take before his Maker,  
humble, but not ashamed. 1

This was obviously the solution which Swettenham followed; but Clifford, feeling that his time for doing was not yet over and able to find little in his past to provide him with any satisfaction, ("I've done so little of the much I once hoped to do; so much remains to be done that I know now I shall never accomplish. It is all rather a failure.") found the prospect of falling back upon his memories "a thing of infinite pathos". And, unlike Swettenham, Clifford chose to go back, both spiritually and physically, to Malaya, although he knew he could not regain his youth, or the Paradise he had once felt could be "built" there.<sup>2</sup>

For Clifford, the only solution was "madness", and yet less in the tragic sense customarily assigned to the "insane", than in the sense of a natural healing of that estranged

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cf. *ibid.* Mannoni: *Prospero and Caliban*, *op.cit.* p.128  
"Inferiority ... is the main driving force of western man and provides him with the energy which sets him apart from all other people in the world. It underlies almost all the life stories of our great men." It is my impression that the imperialist must, because of his need to repress the subconscious fear of his inferiority, make a distinction between 'humility' and 'shame', where, in truth, none exists.

2

Clifford: *Proc. Roy. Col. Inst.*, 1898-9, p.386; "there seemed to be the very makings of the Garden of Eden in these Malayan lands" ...

integration which nineteenth century English society, (and most of the twentieth century), called sanity. As R.D. Laing comments:

Let no man suppose that we meet "true" madness any more than that we are truly sane ... True sanity entails one way or another the dissolution of the normal ego, that false self competently adjusted to our alienated social reality. <sup>1</sup>

With Clifford's history in mind, it is curious to note that he regards madness as a voyage, embarked upon by an increasing number of people who find themselves forced out of the "normal" world by being placed in an untenable position in it. Such people, having no orientation<sup>2</sup> in the geography of inner space and time, are likely to get lost quickly without a guide. It is manifestly obvious that, while the "imperial faith" provided many nineteenth century Englishment with the guide they needed, it could not do so for Clifford.

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The tendency towards misanthropy, which Mannoni feels to lie at the base of the imperial urge, also frequently leads to a serious rupture of the image of other people from whom the imperial would rather fly, or, rather, to a failure in the

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If "madness" is indeed the dissolution of the ego, then "sanity", as western society defines it, and "love" are incompatible. See Part One and Two above.

<sup>2</sup> R.D. Laing: Politics of Experience, op.cit., p.144, 167-8. "Orientation means to know where the Orient is. For inner space, to know the east, the origin or sources of our experience." See interleaf. For an autobiographical account of psychotic experience whose healing function is clear see B. O'Brien: Operators and Things (London, Elke Books, 1958).

"The East! The East!" he repeated, turning the word upon his tongue as though it had (as in very truth it has) a flavour of its own. "The oldest of continents - and the youngest. Asia and Age are one, for every man who has eyes wherewith to see, an imagination to give him a glimpse into the Tremendous Past, a brain and a heart to aid him to an understanding of something of her marvels and her mysteries; but in the mind of every Anglo-Asiatic who is worth his salt, Asia and Youth are also one! We went to Asia boys, we came back old men, no matter what our years! Youth and Asia were both ours for a space, and in leaving Asia we left our Youth behind. It was the biggest gift that a man could give, and we gave it to her, our Mistress - gave it ungrudgingly, with both hands, and we asked for nothing in return! Yet She too gave us something - memories: memories of Asia and of Youth - eternal memories that will be with us to the end ...

Hugh Clifford:  
Bushwacking and Other  
Asiatic Tales ...

process of synthesis whereby that image is formed. The image falls into two parts which recede farther and farther from one another; on the one hand, into pictures of monstrous and terrifying creatures, and on the other, into gracious beings bereft of will and purpose: Caliban and Ariel.<sup>1</sup>

The same unconscious tendency (to refuse to recognize that man is both Ariel and Caliban) has impelled thousands of Europeans to seek out oceanic islands inhabited only by Fridays, or alternately to go and entrench themselves in isolated outposts in hostile countries where they could repulse by force of arms those same terrifying creatures whose image was formed in their own consciousness.

(Clifford, who felt that he had been "permitted to see native life as it exists when no white men are at hand to watch" and "to take note of its peculiarities - native life naked and unashamed," in addressing the Royal Colonial Institute, hoped that what he had to say

... might aid some to realize more fully the exact nature of the work which Great Britain is today carrying out in half-a-hundred obscure localities, with the aid of those who

Wait in heavy harness  
On fluttered folk and wild,  
Our new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child.)<sup>2</sup>

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1

cf. F.S. Perls: Ego, Hunger and Aggression, op.cit. chap.VII. "In the name of 'good' and 'bad' wars were fought, people punished or educated, friendships formed or broken. Dramatic plays usually contain one person - the hero - who is painted white, with invisible wings, and his counterpart, the villain, black, with horns. Heaven and Hell. High honours and prison. Sweets and whippings. Praise and condemnation. Virtue and vice, good and bad; good and bad ... like the unending rumble of a train this 'good' and 'bad' never ceases to permeate our thoughts and actions."

2 Clifford: Proc. Roy. Col. Inst. Vol.XXX, 1898-9, p.369-370.

Mannoni maintains that this failure to synthesize images arises from the fact that the savage is identified in the unconscious with a certain image of the instincts - of the id, in analytical terminology. And further, "civilized" man is painfully divided between the desire to "correct" the "errors" of the "savage", and the desire to identify with them in his search for some lost paradise (a desire which at once casts doubt upon the merit of the very civilization which he is trying to transmit to them.) Because of this unconscious and ambivalent attitude towards the memories of his early childhood, like Baudelaire, when he imagined his "green paradise of childhood loves" to be "further away than India and China", the imperialist finds that savage countries and savage peoples are the nearest imitations in the real world to that of his youth. The parallel between what Mannoni is saying and what has been written about Clifford's encounter with Malaya and the Malays is too striking to be mere coincidence.

There are, of course, all sorts of historical reasons to explain the success of colonization - but these causes were brought to bear on minds psychologically prepared. No one becomes an imperialist who is not impelled to do so by improperly-resolved complexes. The gap between the dependent personality of the native and the independent personality of the European affords these complexes an opportunity of becoming manifest; it invites the unconscious images and encourages behaviour which is not warranted by the objective situation, but is ultimately explainable in terms of the most infantile



subjectivity.<sup>1</sup> "Colonial" life is simply a substitute to those who are still obscurely drawn to a world where men do not have to be treated as men or women as women.

Shakespeare's theme in The Tempest, an even clearer portrayal of the colonial situation, is the drama of the renunciation of the power and domination afforded by the colonial experience, symbolized by Prospero's magic, a borrowed power which must be relinquished.

Prospero, when he arrived on the island, brings with him a female companion (his daughter) who is in no sense his equal and would never answer back. As historians, seeking to explain the lack of apparent racial prejudice in early contact between British and all the Asiatic races in Malaya, hasten to point out, there were few European women in the Native Malay States in the period under discussion. Most of the Residents were single, or had left their wives at home, or had taken a Malay "mistress". That Victorian gentlemen were incapable of relating even to their own wives as human beings, let alone as women, is so manifestly obvious that I do not intend to pursue it here. Clifford, for example, quite seriously introduced a tale called "The Battle of the Women" with this poem:

Woman is the lesser man,  
And all her passions matched with mine,  
Are as moonlight unto sunlight,  
And as water unto wine. 2

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1

I do not believe that Mannoni is implying a value judgment when he uses "infantile" here - although, since Freud, the West has largely done so.

2

See Page 204 for footnote 2.

The notion that the presence of white women in colonies creates and hardens racial barriers is no more than a veil to hide the fact that most white men would prefer to make all women "Mirandas", to place them on pedestals, in order to protect them from the "evil savage", (their own unconscious). It is a distortion, and the fact that most white women have traditionally acquiesced and still do, in the imposition of this role upon them by men, and in the consequent mystification of their self-image, should not be permitted to disguise it.<sup>1</sup>

Prospero found two natives on the island: Caliban and Ariel. He set Ariel free from an existing predicament; as the British rescued the Malay Sultans from the predicament presented them by the discovery of tin in their kingdoms, with its consequent unsettling influence upon the local chiefs and introduction of secret society warfare amongst the imported Chinese labourers).

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(Footnote 2 from Page 203)

Clifford: In Court and Kampong: op.cit. p.37. Those with any doubts should recall Low's parting remark to Miss Bird, or his exchange with Mrs. Innes on the subject of slavery. The sketches by Clifford and Swettenham, of the "Real Malay" in which they attempt to portray Malay women in relationships with both European and Malay men are also enlightening. See also Clifford: Bushwacking, "The Breath upon the Spark." and A.C.L. Dawe's short stories, Yellow and White, op.cit., and, or course, the whole "domestic" literary tradition of Victorian England. Finally, see E. Cleaver: Soul on Ice, op.cit., "The Allegory of the Black Eunuchs", in Chap.iv: "White Woman, Black Man."

<sup>1</sup> In this context, it is worth noting a comment upon Low made by Pope-Hennessy (Verandah, op.cit., p.78) apparently with no thought of malice. "In Labuan, as later in Malaya, he preferred the company of Malays to that of Europeans, and of his pet animals to either. He once wrote to his daughter Kitty that he loved only two creatures in the world - his wah-wah monkey Eblis, and herself". See also I. Bird: Golden Chersonese, op.cit., p.217-218 for her description of the residency of Bloomfield Douglas.

Prospero expects Ariel to be grateful forever for this service. On the whole he is. He is the 'good' native, the moderate nationalist, the gradualist content to wait till it pleases Prospero to give him his freedom. As Phillip Mason comments, "one almost expects Prospero to offer him a knighthood."

Prospero's insistence on gratitude has a good many colonial parallels<sup>1</sup> - and, as Ariel was delighted to be released from the cloven pine, few Malay rulers were not eventually persuaded that the new "freedom" was preferable to what had gone before.

Caliban, of course, is the 'bad' native, the nationalist, the extremist. In The Tempest, he has to be shut up, not for making seditious speeches, but for wanting to violate Miranda. At the same time, he is the useful slave, who is ruthlessly exploited. "You have tried to force Miranda, therefore you shall chop wood." (This non-rational mode of thinking may take several forms, according to Mannoni; as I have noted elsewhere, he maintains it is also at the base of the son-in-law/father-in-law relationship that commonly exists in patriarchal societies. It is primarily "a justification of hatred on grounds of sexual guilt", and lies at the root of colonial racialism). On the whole the Golden Age of Malayan Imperialism did not have to cope with these elements of the colonial situation - "Miranda" was largely absent, physically at least, and there were few, if any, nationalist stirrings before the turn of the century. And yet the Ariel/Caliban image was obviously present. There is a sense in which the Chinese, and possibly the Tamil Indians (though the

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See interleaf.

Gratitude, which is too frequently found a rare and transitory virtue, eminently adorns the character of these simple people, and the smallest benefit conferred upon them, calls forth its vigorous and continued exercise. It cannot, then, be wondered at, that this amiable quality should lead them, in their simplicity, to consider with a reverence bordering on adoration the great benefits they have received from European influence in their country. When we consider the oppression of which they were the objects, and the state of misery to which the tyranny of their former rulers had reduced them, and from which the kindness and power of an individual of a race, distinct from any of which they had previously heard - differing not only in features and complexion so remarkably, but also in the feelings with which he regarded their poor, distressed and destitute condition - we can scarcely blame them, that in the excess of their thankfulness, they should have considered as supernatural, the person who relieved them from their wretchedness, and by whose cherishing care and protecting kindness, they once more enjoyed the lives and liberties with which the great Creator had endowed them ... we accordingly find that several of their tribes have ascribed to Mr. Brooke the attributes of a superior being; and believe that he can, by his word, shed an influence over their persons and property which will be beneficial to them. In all their prayers he is named with the gods of their superstitions, and no feast is made at which his name is not invoked. This misdirected gratitude shows the force with which that virtue influences their minds, and promises ... to be a feature of their character ... of the greatest advantage and assistance to them if properly directed.

Hugh Low: Sarawak: Its  
Inhabitants and Productions

latter did not begin to arrive until rubber planting was introduced into the Malay economy in the last years of the nineteenth-century) took on the image of Caliban in Anglo-Malayan minds. Swettenham realized that Malay's economic prosperity was a product of Chinese immigration, but he did not believe that a British administrator would be wise to make friends with any Chinese. (Significantly, the fact that the Chinese coolies customarily came single to the Malayan minefields bothered British writers considerably; while Swettenham expressed a physical, though not economic, contempt for the Indians, he was relieved that they emigrated with their wives and children.<sup>1</sup>) But, once Governor Sir Cecil Smith had "exorcised the secret society demon ... those centres of crime and oppression", the Chinese, it was generally admitted, had become "the bone and sinew of the Malay States."

They are the labourers, the miners, the principal shopkeepers, the contractors, the capitalists, the holders of the revenue farms, the contributors of almost the whole of the revenue; we cannot do without them. 1

On the other hand however, the Chinese excited as little real enthusiasm among colonial officials in Malaya as the Jews have elsewhere: in a capitalist society they were tolerated as "a necessary evil". Many Anglo-Malayans made no attempt to disguise their distaste:

At Durian Sabatang, we saw many hideous, nine-tenths naked Chinese coolies; almost all

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Swettenham: Real Malay, ibid., cf. Eldridge Cleaver's concept of the "supermasculine menial" developed in Soul on Ice, op.cit.

with repulsive skin diseases, and all, without exception, owning the most villainous countenances; they scowled at us with hebetated (sic) looks being opium-smokers to a man ... A large proportion of the Chinese population was generally in prison for some crime or other ... These convicts were generally regarded as being the flower of the Chinese community, the argument being that all Chinese are scoundrels deserving of prison and that those who elude prison are merely more practised scoundrels than the rest. <sup>1</sup>

On other occasions, the Ariel/Caliban dichotomy obviously manifested itself within the Malay people themselves. There was a strong sense, even after the British had come to enjoy the "respect" and "loyalty" of the Malays, that not far below the surface lurked the piratical, amuk-running barbarian with which they had typically peopled the Archipelago of pre-British times. Swettenham captures this ultimate lack of "trust" in "A Silhouette" (Real Malay); the silhouette is that of the famous Seyyid, "the embodiment of an Eastern dream", whose desire to undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca does not conceal from Swettenham his intent to make war on some neighbouring petty principedom in order to secure the necessary loot. He wrote:

The elaborately quiet manner of the man, the studied slowness of his ordinary movements, and his voice - so soft and low, it is an effort to catch his words - accentuate the strong features of his face and fascinate their spectator, as certain snakes are said to fascinate

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E. Innes: Chersonese with their Gilding Off. Vol.II. p.65-66. Note that she added, with the rare insight she occasionally displays, that "probably they could not see, as indeed I never could myself - what business we English had there at all; however, they had no right to complain for they were as much intruders as ourselves, the Malays, or rather the Sakeis, being the aborigines". Mrs. Innes, whatever her reasons, was a less "imperialist" than most Anglo-Malayans.



EJECTING AN INTRUDER.

their victims...He is a man of war, this Seyyid, and was one of the most famous of the Malay fighting chiefs in the days that are no more. The stories of his prowess, his cunning, of his wickedness, are many, and strange, and ghastly. He has enemies ... he has been a soldier of fortune and he would be so again ... 1

Clifford doubtless found his Caliban and Ariel in "Court" and "Kampong", in the tyrannically-oppressive Malay ruling class and the peasant Malay people, waiting to be released from the cloven pine of their oppressed ignorance by men like himself. Indeed, he wrote,

the people as a whole were so generous and so charitable to their neighbours that there seemed to be the makings of a very Garden of Eden in these Malayan lands, had only the serpent in the form of the dominant classes, been excluded. 2

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The typical European imperialist is forced to live out Prospero's drama, for Prospero is dominant in his unconscious, as he was in Shakespeare's, only the former lacks the writer's capacity for sublimation. Swettenham and Clifford were unique amongst the Residents in that they wrote extensively, but it is

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Swettenham: Real Malay: "A Silhouette", (my underlining). "I remind him that once he had by his own statement to me, only waited for a signal to fall upon a considerable party of Europeans, amongst whom my death was, perhaps, the one most keenly desired." Swettenham frequently fantasized being singled out for death at Malay hands (see also Malay Sketches: "A Personal Incident") Note that, when asked by Seyyid to explain "A Silhouette", Swettenham replied: "It is a profile portrait in black, on a white background."

2

Clifford: Proc. Roy. Col. Inst. 1898-99, (my underlining).

See plate: "Ejecting an Intruder", and p.203-04 above, esp. Cleaver's concept of the "Supermasculine Menial".



doubtful whether either managed to sublimate entirely through the written medium. Swettenham managed to survive the disillusionment that overcame Clifford, by sublimating his doubts in public works and by retiring when he saw that "Eden" was over. Clifford did not take the next logical step to his realization that imperialism was "wrong for the Malays - "like a disillusioned communist, he cast around for any pretext not to make a break with his life's work."<sup>1</sup> Having seen that British rule did not necessarily entail greater happiness and progress for all, he nonetheless attempted to find consolation in its irrational corollary - that it was out of the question to return to the state of affairs that he had seen before British intervention. As an imperialist, having no real faith in himself, and thus in the Malay aristocracy he had helped to create in his own image, he could only assume that, without the British presence, they would revert to the exercise of their former tyrannies over the masses of the Malay people; as the product of a society disinclined to live firmly in the present, he could not even concede that a return to the past was impossible.

Man must learn to accept himself as he is and to accept others as they are. What the imperialist lacks, notwithstanding all the rhetoric of the Anglo-Malayan, is an awareness of the world of others who have to be respected. This is the world from which the imperialist has fled because he cannot accept

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<sup>1</sup>

Allen: Two Imperialists, op.cit. p.71. There are, of course, beyond Clifford and the "disillusioned communists" a great many others lacking the courage to break with "their life's work."

men as they are. Rejection of the world is combined with an urge to dominate, an urge which the individual has failed to "discipline". The reason the imperialist himself gives for his flight, whether he says it is the desire for travel, or the desire to escape from the cradle or the 'ancient parapets', is of no consequence - the real reason is still what Mannoni calls the colonial vocation. Thus, Mannoni's hypothesis applies equally to the man who chooses a colonial career by chance and without specific vocation - the "Prospero" complex is there, more fully repressed, but ready to emerge in favorable conditions.

Of all the elements which go to make up a society, its mentality is the most difficult to destroy. A man may be uprooted from his surroundings and taken to the antipodes or shut up in a cell, but the society to which he belongs will continue to live in him, in his beliefs and in the entire content of his mental life and the knowledge he takes with him. If such a man has the strength, or if he meets some of his fellows, he may build in some distant spot a society almost identical with the one he left behind. This was the case with many of the colonies.<sup>1</sup>

There are several points I would like to make about Mannoni's hypothesis. The first is that it reeks of Freudianism, and in the nineteen-seventies, when finally the powerful hold of Freudian psychology over the western mind is being broken, it is doubtful whether anyone should rush in and embrace a theory apparently so firmly grounded upon it. His "father images" and "unresolved infantile complexes" become slightly tedious. And yet, even the gestalt therapists are reluctant to throw out the

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<sup>1</sup>

Gaston Bouthoul: Traite de Sociologie, p.394, quoted by Mannoni: Prospero and Caliban, p.109.

baby with the bath water.

Psychoanalysis, after having made a general law out of the tautological platitude that every phenomenon has its origin in history, applied it on every possible occasion. Freud's conception of regression is a typical example. When the neurotic encounters difficulties in life he regresses, so Freud maintains, to certain stages in childhood...<sup>1</sup>

What really happens, according to Perls, is rarely a historical regression; it is the mere fact that the person's "true self", his weaknesses, become more clearly visible. His pretences, over-compensations and such achievements, which have not become an integral part of his personality, are being thrown overboard.

It is not as much the suspicion of determinism which makes such hypotheses suspect in the 'seventies, as the fact that they come perilously close to involving their adherents in a new litany of the "innate depravity of man."<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche rightly pointed out that the tragedy of Protestantism is that it concentrates on man's failures and limitations rather than his potential. In equating a person's "true self" with his weaknesses, both Freud, and Perls here, reveal how much within that tradition they lie.

Moreover, Mannoni's contention that the colonial's personality is wholly unaffected by that of the native of the colony to which he goes, that it does not adapt itself but develops solely in accordance with its own structure, and that it is therefore inevitable that misunderstandings should arise," for there can be no harmony between monads", bodes ill for any hope

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F.S. Perls: Ego, Hunger and Aggression, op.cit., p.209.

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cf. M.F. Ashley Montagu, (ed.): Man and Aggression, op.cit. especially his own article "The New Litany of 'Innate Depravity'," and Boulding: "Am I a Man or a Mouse - or Both?" pp.83-90.

of international understanding or humane socialism except on the smallest scale. At first sight, his assertion does not appear to accord with what I have written previously about the nature of experience - that is, that all experience is inter-experience, all action is interaction. There is a powerful historical school at present based solely on the premise that it is absurd to speak of the British effects on India, Africa, Asia, as though it were a one-way communication - the Indians left their mark upon the British as surely as the opposite was the case.<sup>1</sup> And yet Mannoni argues convincingly that the colonials themselves confirm his assertion. What they say, in effect, is that there is no misunderstanding to clear up, it would not be worth the trouble to clear it up: the native personality is whatever one likes to make it.

Swettenham for example, after confessing that the one great attraction of "character", as compared with the visible beauties of nature and art, is that it is hidden from sight, ("uncertainty always attracts, and experienced intelligence knows that certainty, in regard to the character of another, is a very difficult end to attain; while the fact that traits have been revealed to us ... to our insight or for love of us, that are hidden from the many is very soothing to our self-esteem.")

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<sup>1</sup>

Like Chomsky, (American Power and the New Mandarins, op.cit., Part One above), I find that at the base of much of this scholarship, lies precisely the colonial mentality it purports to be eschewing. There is a distressing hint of an academic noblesse oblige in the tone of much of it: "We will show you the origins of your problems. We will even admit that our fathers were partly to blame; on the whole, it would be ungrateful of you not to accept our solutions."

went on to write;

It is often said that a European cannot understand the character of an Eastern, or follow the curious workings of his brain. I doubt whether the Eastern is more difficult to understand than the western ... <sup>1</sup>

But in the end, it appears that Mannoni can only be as deterministic as his reader permits. He is merely warning us that, as the children of Western competitive society, we are all susceptible to falling prey to the urge to dominate; it simply behoves us all to be aware of it and to refrain from seeking out desert islands on which we are relieved of the need to relate to other human beings as human beings. It is as valid to find cause for hope, as despair, in his contention that although it is the same material a man takes with him, in a new "environment" it can assume a new shape, partly as a result of the difference in social pressure, but also as a result of the inner pressures of his own personality.

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<sup>1</sup>

Swettenham: Real Malay, p.264-5.

Part Seven :

Conclusion

The apathy of two centuries still reigns supreme with the enlightened people of England, as well as their Government, and whilst they willingly make expensive efforts favourable to science, commerce, or Christianity in other quarters, the locality which eminently combines these three objects is alone neglected and alone uncared for. It has unfortunately been the fate of our Indian possessions to have laboured under the prejudice and contempt of a large portion of the well-bred community, for whilst the folly of fashion requires an acquaintance with the deserts of Africa, and a most ardent thirst for a knowledge of the usages of Timbuctoo, it, at the same time, justifies the most profound ignorance of all matters connected with the Government and Geography of our vast possessions in Hindostan.

The Indian Archipelago has fully shared this neglect, for even the tender philanthropy of the present day, which originates such multifarious schemes for the amelioration of doubtful evils, and which shudders at the prolongation of apprenticeship in the west, for a single year, is blind to the existence of slavery in its worst and most exaggerated form, in the east. Not a single prospectus is spread abroad, not a single voice upraised in Exeter Hall to relieve the darkness of Paganism and the horrors of the slave trade! Whilst the trumpet tongue of many an orator excites thousands to the rational and charitable object of converting the Jews, and reclaiming gypsies, whilst the admirable exertions of missionary enterprise in the Austral climes of the Pacific, have invested them with worldly power, as well as religious influence, whilst the benevolent plans of the New Zealand Association contemplate the protection of the natives by the acquisition of their territory, while we admire this torrent of devotional and philosophical exertion, we cannot help deploring that the zeal and attention of the leaders of these charitable crusades have never been directed to the countries under consideration. These unhappy countries have failed to arouse attention or excite commiseration, and as they sink lower and lower they afford a striking proof how civilization may be crushed, and how the fairest and richest lands under the sun may become degraded and brutalized by a continuous course of oppression and misrule. It is under these circumstances I have considered that individual exertions may be usefully applied to rouse the zeal of slumbering philanthropy, and lead the way to an increased knowledge of the Indian Archipelago.

James Brooke, 1838.

The relative "benevolence" of the British imperialization of Malaya and its evident "success" have relieved most historians of the region of the need to ask themselves, as Chomsky supposes would have been largely the case with imperialism in Vietnam had an early victory been achieved there by America, the "sentimental" question: "By what right?"

That Britain and the British Residents in particular<sup>\*</sup> made "Malaya" in its own image, in the belief that it was somehow inevitable and better for the Malay people that they partake of the fruits of progressive nineteenth-century British civilization, is so manifestly obvious that I feel no need to offer "proof" of it. It is unlikely that "Malaya", like "India", and indeed most of the autonomous, "self-sufficient" nations into which the world outside the West is now divided as a result of imperialist ventures in past centuries, could have existed had not Britain, or Europe, needed to create these entities. The fact that most Malays acquiesced in this distortion of their self-image or that pre-British "Malayan" society was itself imperialist in essence, does not alter this fact.

If, in fact, we only become what we are by a radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others would make of us, then it behoves us to attempt to understand why some people apparently need to impose their own image upon others. Such has been my aim in the preceding pages - if we cannot remove the need, then at least, aware of the processes of imperialism, we can be on guard against their impositions on our self.

It is my belief that the need to distort another's self-



image arises from the conscious or subconscious suspicion, present in the mind of the imperialist, that he is inferior, and that, as Mannoni maintains, the inferiority complex, whatever else it is, is itself a necessary concomitant of a culture - the Judaeo-Christian - based upon the notion that man is "innately depraved", somehow inferior to "God", and therefore incapable of perfection or of "love" towards his fellow men. A culture, that is, which having no faith in its self, in the "now", permits itself to be moulded not simply by its past, but consistently by the bad in its past; a culture which prefers to concentrate upon man's limitations rather than his potential, and which exerts enormous societal pressures upon the individual, in order to perpetuate itself by insuring the continuance of feelings of inferiority and guilt. Imperialism is born of pessimism, not optimism.

The individual convinced of his own inferiority, yet wishing to survive, naturally seeks to assert himself - thus Mannoni's "urge to dominate" is natural in any society which has convinced its members that they can only know themselves according to some scale of betterness or worseness relative to the other members of that society - that is, of the competitive society.

Mid-nineteenth century European society turned out an increasing number of these individuals - competitive mid- and late-Victorian England turned them out more thoroughly than most, if one can admit of degrees of imperialism. Clifford wrote in In-Court and Kampong:

Englishmen, above all other men, revel

in their privilege of being allowed to grumble and "grouse" over the lives which the Fates have allotted to them. They speak briefly, roughly, and gruffly of the hardships they endure, making but little of them perhaps, and talking as though their lives were made up of these things only. The instinct of the race is to see life through the national pea-soup fog, which makes all things dingy, unlovely and ugly. Nothing is more difficult than to induce men of our race to confess that - hard though life may have been - good things have not held aloof, and that they have been quite happy under the most unlikely circumstances ...

In Malaya, two circumstances combined to heighten that inferiority complex inherited, and reinforced, by British Imperialists from their society. The first was common to most imperial experiences in the last half of the century - namely, that they were initiated by the men-on-the-spot without the approval of a Home Government, for the most part not inclined towards imperial expansion. That is, the approval of the authority figure, necessary to the conservative/imperialist personality not entirely convinced it is doing the "right" thing, was lacking. Imperialists responded to this dilemma by making a virtue of acting first and asking later - but the doubt remained.

Secondly, and this was more a characteristic of the Malayan imperial experience, Anglo-Malayans were haunted by the knowledge that "their" part of the Empire was less well-known and thus less important than, not so good, perhaps, as others. Again Clifford tried to justify away this fear in Further India:

The failure of the lands of southeastern Asia to make a strong appeal to the imagination of the peoples of Europe is to be ascribed

however, not to their intrinsic unimportance, nor yet to any lack of wealth, of beauty, of charm, or of the interest that springs from a mysterious and mighty past. The reason is to be sought solely in the mere accident of their geographical position. Lying as they do midway upon the great sea-route which leads from India to China, it has been the fate of these countries to be overshadowed from the beginning by the immensity and the surpassing fascination of their mighty neighbours. Thus, even when India and Cathay had emerged at last from the nebulous haze of myth, superstition and conjecture with which the imaginations of Europeans had enshrouded them, southeastern Asia continued to be wrapped in obscurity ...

Ironically, however, when Anglo-Malayan imperialists responded to this "ignorance" by attempting to put Malaya on the map, they were tempted to make Eden of it, and thus succeeded only in removing it further from their own, and Europe's, reality. At the same time they inevitably posed for themselves the eternal Western question, which, as imperialists they could not, and dared not, answer, of whether it was desirable to return to Paradise, and whether, since Eden might simply have been a figment of someone's (their own?) imagination, it was even possible.

If our aim is to be free, then we should be aware, with Martin Buber, that "To be freed from the belief that there is no freedom is indeed to be free"; that the only "answer" to the imperialist's question is to stop asking it. And this, amongst other things, requires a firm realization that past modes cannot be recaptured in order to serve present needs - or, as McLuhan wrote: "If it works, it's old-fashioned."

### About My Sources

One cannot study images without realizing, Mr. Ranke and the Positivists notwithstanding, that not even the historian can "simply show how it really was." What I have written is, therefore, no less than my own image of what imperialism is, and was in late nineteenth-century Malaya. As such, it is subject to all the qualifications that those, who, (like Mr. Gradgrind: "What I want is facts ... facts alone are wanted in life"), cannot be satisfied with the ambiguities of images, visions and dreams, must apply to the study of these things.

Having realized this, it is extremely difficult to speak of "primary" and "secondary" sources; even more difficult to suppose one more than the other to be the stuff of "good" history. Everything written, drawn or photographed (as much by what it does not show, as by what it does) is simply what its author saw or wished to see - the effect of his own experience, the "truth" of his perception. There is, really, no way of telling how much of it was shadow or substance. A great many of them spoke in their prefaces of wishing to add something to their readers' vague picture of Malaya; some, like Mrs. Innes, were honest enough to admit that their own was not the only picture - that others were equally "right".

Two further points might be noted - I have not read exhaustively in the "official" sources; firstly, because they have been read and reread by many other historians and, if only to demonstrate my faith in fellow man, I was prepared to accept "their" images of the official sources as "mine." The official

image is an important one nonetheless; those whose curiosity is not satisfied herein might read the excellent studies of Parkinson, Cowan, Sadke and Thio. Emily Sadke, in particular, has an excellent bibliography of the official documents relative to this period of Malayan history, and her Appendix 2, "Biographical Notes on Residents", is the most complete to date.

Although I have not noted them below, I consulted contemporary newspapers and journals (The Times, London Illustrated News, etc.) in passing, as important conveyors of images.

Secondly, although this may well be a simple justification of my preference for reading outside official documents and memoranda, I would argue that, in the study of images as images, the distinction between fact and fiction is less meaningful - away from the restraint of official reports men may even have expressed themselves more "truly" than otherwise. Also, in the study of imperialism, itself by nature so much a fantasy-experience, my preference has more validity than elsewhere.

Finally, I have "quoted" extensively because it was also my intention to show what other people saw in Malaya at the close of the last century - I thought it best to let them speak for themselves as much as possible rather than to superimpose another (my own) image between the author and the reader.

My footnoting and the interleaved illustrations (photographic and typographic) are an attempt to overcome what I felt constantly to be the limitations of the thesis as medium; through them, I hoped to provide other dimensions to my image, while avoiding the impression of cause and effect inherent in the

two-dimensional medium of "type-on-page". It is well if they have committantly demonstrated "my competence in research", but such was not my primary aim herein.

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## Appendix I

Imagine yourself transported to a land of eternal summer, to the Golden Peninsula, 'twixt Hindustan and Far Cathay, from whence the early navigators brought back such wondrous stories of adventure. A land where Nature is at her best and richest: where plant and animals, beasts of the forest, birds of the air and every living thing seems yet inspired with a feverish desire for growth and reproduction, as though they were still in the dawn of creation.

And man?

Yes, he is here. Forgotten by the world, passed by in the race for civilization, here he has remained amongst his own forests, by the banks of his well-loved streams, unseeing and unsought. Whence he came none know and few care, but this is the land that has given to, or taken from, him the name of a Race that has spread over a wider area than any other Eastern people.

Malaya, land of the pirate and the amok, your secrets have been well guarded, but the enemy has at last passed your gate, and soon the irresistible Juggernaut of Progress will have penetrated to your remote fastness, slain your beasts, cut down your forests, "civilized" your people, clothed them in strange garments, and stamped them with the seal of a higher morality.

That time of regeneration will come rapidly, but for the moment the Malay of the Peninsula is as he has been these hundreds of years. Education and contact with Western people must produce the inevitable result. Isolated native races whose numbers are few must disappear or conform to the views of a stronger will and a higher intelligence. The Malays of the Peninsula will not disappear, but they will change, and the process of "awakening" has in places already begun.

It might be rash to speculate on the gain which the future has in store for this people, but it is hardly likely to make them more personally interesting to the observer. This is the moment of transition and these are sketches of the Malay as he is.

Frank Swettenham (Resident):  
Introduction to Malay Sketches.

## Appendix II

"You're playing at Eden here and I don't want to disturb you," said La Roque. "Besides I also know what politeness is. Do you know that in Java the natives have to sit down to talk to you, because a seated man needs more time to pull out a kris and come and stick it in your belly? That is politeness. The Dutch lay great stress on it. Personally I am English ...."

"Not very English though," said I.

"That's a very innocent remark! Every Englishman is very English. Any defect of race is made up by education, and vice versa, When I am married I shall regard your conduct here as shocking. An Eden without an Eve or a serpent is truly shocking."

Rolain, who had affected to ignore the conversation, here put in;

"It is you who are the serpent when you come to talk to us about morals. But we shall not taste the fruit of the Tree again."

How was it I had never realized that the fabled fruit, which contained the knowledge of good and evil, was morality? One always believes that a myth is incomprehensible. But no definition could be clearer.

"But why," I asked, "find fault with men for distinguishing between good and evil."

"Because everything thus becomes suspect. Tell a European that we have lived naked in the sunshine, and see what he says; but transport the Malay Smail to the Folies Bergere and he will believe himself in paradise. Who is right?"

"Oh I know very well that one can be in Paradise among people who are in hell ...."

"Yes, and he by whom the scandal comes is he who is scandalized."

"And yet the Malays have a moral sense; they, too, talk of hell ..."

"They keep it for us ..."

"I often have occasion to sit in judgement on Malays," said La Roque, the District Officer. "It is very difficult to condemn them. They are never guilty. When they kill their father and their mother, it is due to their terrible ill-luck ... And yet they have many faults."

On this point I did not agree with him, and was glad to quote the remark of Father Lébourrier, the missionary at Kuala Paya: "We have all the mortal sins except idleness. The Malays have none but idleness."

"It is their virtue," said Rolain. "If they were not lazy, they would not be so merry, vivacious, lewd, fantastic, and arcadian. It is not for us who come of accursed races, to judge them."

"Accursed? For what sin?"

"Let us not dissociate sin and punishment. The sin-punishment was leaving Eden. Every land in which a man cannot live naked all the year round is condemned to work and war and morality."

"That's not bad. I'll make a note of it for use when I get back to Europe."

"When you get back to Europe, you will see none but harassed people, all mistrustful, always on their guard, thinking only of defending their right to get the best place first. How can they possibly be happy? ... And with it all, drilled like performing dogs."

"I observe," said La Roque, "that humanity is returning to its cradle. There are now a great many Europeans in the tropics."

"Yes, cursing their ill-luck all the time," said Rolain. "Departure from paradise is irremediable. We have become acclimatised elsewhere; that is to say we take a bad climate for a good one, and everything is upside down. And if you go back to paradise after centuries elsewhere, you will find an angel of fire waiting for you in the shape of prickly heat."

La Roque smiled. "Well, that's better than the elephantiasis reserved for your inhabitants of Eden ...."

"He takes everything literally," said Rolain contemptuously: "I mean by prickly heat that itching sensation that makes one feel so wretched when there is nothing the matter. Elephantiasis is not half so bad."

La Roque picked up his clothes.

"Your friend is very fierce. He is angry because he did not want to talk to me and could not help himself."

"We came here in search of solitude," I said  
....

from The Soul of Malaya

- Henri Fauconnier.