IDEAS OF NATION AND MALAYNESS IN MALAYA 1809-1942:

A HISTORY OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

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Summary

This thesis looks at the constitution of ideas of 'nation' and 'Malayness' by British, Malay and later, American authors. Nation and Malayness have typically been studied as inclusive and static. In combination, these terms are often equated to a 'Malay nation' or a 'nation in Malaya', both of which are imbued with late twentieth century understandings of Malayness. This thesis argues, however, that the meanings of these terms underwent change in the period in question, and exclusions were integral to the establishment of the their meanings.

From 1809 to 1942, nation and Malayness were used strategically to further aims such as perpetuating colonialism, building a community and gaining independence. Particular understandings of the terms supported by British and Malay writers shared a similar basis in placing a group defined as Malays as the only indigenous group in Malaya. This construction of a native Malay subject, however, was made in opposition to groups defined as not Malay such as Chinese and Indians. Thus, in the early twentieth century, ideas of nation and Malayness on the Malay Peninsula resulted in the exclusion of particular groups of people from being thought as belonging to Malaya.

When nation and Malayness were used in the 1930s and 40s to argue for independence, previous exclusions were incorporated into authors' visions of an independent state. Both concepts were tools to exclude those who were seen as threatening or not belonging to a Malay nation in Malaya. These exclusions gained legitimacy with the doctrine of national self-determination. The doctrine placed the rights of indigenous people as paramount in determining the basis on which governance should be established, and naturalised the exclusions affected by the construction of an indigenous people. Thus prior to the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, a 'nation in Malaya' was synonymous with a 'Malay nation'.

These insights draw attention to nation and Malayness not as natural and ever-present, but as historically contingent. The presentation of nation as the main source of individual identification throughout time, and of Malayness as essentialised and racialised, are thus called into question. In the context of Malaya, the use of both terms were varied and strategic in order to affect particular exclusions which continue until today.

Introduction:

Studies of nation and studies of Malayness - Points of convergence

In an opinion article published in 2004 in the *International Herald Tribune*

entitled "When the Malays cast their votes", the author, Philip Bowring, writes:

> "This year more Malays have participated in reasonably free and fair national
> elections than will vote in the U.S. presidential election in November. …Of the
> four predominantly Malay nations [Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia and
> Brunei], … only the tiny oil rich sultanate of Brunei cannot pass as a democracy.
> Is this a happy coincidence or a cultural statement with political and ethnic
> implications for the region?"[1]

Bowring's article represents a 'popular' understanding of the meaning of the terms

'Malay' and 'nation', and their relationship to political entities today. His use of 'Malay'

misleadingly evokes the idea of one ethnic base indigenous to the Malay Archipelago

which coalesced into separate present day states. No mention is made of other ethnic

groups who are citizens of these countries, or who have long been present in the

Archipelago. The Chinese are specifically excluded from being considered indigenous

since they are linked to another ethnic type and state. Bowring's understandings of the

Chinese is in opposition to his classification of Malays. Thus, he states that "China's

ambitions to control the South China Sea remains very much on the table to the

discomfort to the Malays who occupy most of its coastline." Finally, 'nation' seems to be

a mixture of current states overlapping with a singular ethnic group, thereby making

those states synonymous with a particular group.

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[1] Philip Bowring, "When the Malays cast their votes", in *International Herald Tribune*, Wednesday, July 14, 2004, p. 7.

Bowring's article illustrates the persistence of the links established between ideas of Malayness (or the condition of being Malay) and of nation which effects particular exclusions. Groups not considered as part of those terms are omitted from mention in the machinery of modern statehood and its history, or are presented as threatening elements. Nor is the article's approach foreign to politicians in Malaysia itself. Khoo Boo Teik writes that in 2000, "casting about for a solution to the persistence of 'Malay disunity', [then Prime Minister] Mahathir tried playing the card that UMNO [United Malays National Organisation] habitually dusted off its' shelves when the party was in trouble: the contrivance of a 'Chinese threat' to 'Malay rights'."[2] The spectre of Chinese hostile towards Malays was evoked in order to implore Malays to support the political party in power. This was done by implying that the resulting unity would keep the Chinese population in check and would protect the Malay-centred foundations of Malaysia by extension. The Chinese, though citizens of Malaysia, are again seen as at odds with the assumed ethnic base of the country.

The conceptions of nation and Malayness which naturalise exclusions of particular groups is explained partly by the way in which these terms are rendered static by many scholars. Nations are often studied as unchanging objects, instead of amorphous groupings. Definitions of the nation are offered so that the scholar is clear about the subject under consideration, often making the nation a category that stands outside of historical influences. The attempt to delimit the nation results in contradictory definitions, or a plurality of 'types' of nations which are also rigid and essentialised.[3] Furthermore, if

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[2] Khoo Boo Teik, *Beyond Mahathir: Malaysian Politics and its Discontents* (London: Zed Books, 2003), p. 126.
[3] See for instance the number of definitions offered in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) and the insistence of Walker Connor that most scholars use

the nation is historicized, it is still studied as an object, albeit one that came about through historically inevitable forces. This approach is seen most clearly in the philosophy of Anthony D. Smith where he categorises loyalty towards the nation, nationalism, as a "powerful current, a vital force based on vivid sentiments and attachments to a pre-existing nation."[4] Though respectful of claims of nationalists, his approach does not explain why that "pre-existing nation" is of such interest at a particular point in time, particularly in the context of calls for state autonomy.[5] Another aspect of nation studies is that the term is a signifier for those included in the group, instead of those not included. The emphasis on the former aspect of nation hides the other effect of delimiting groups, which is identifying who does not share membership.

These common features of many studies on nation are also present in studies of Malayness. The condition of being Malay, which goes beyond simple ethnic categorisation, or Malayness, is presented in many studies as a clearly-defined and static group. This rhetorical device enables the scholar to talk of 'Malays' in the eighteenth century, for instance, and 'Malays' in Malaysia today in the same breath, referring to a supposedly similar group of people with the same cultural features. Parallel to studies of nation, even when Malayness is not assumed to be the same in the past as it is in the present, the process by which the present group of Malays (or rather, present understandings of what Malayness is) came about is seen to be historically inevitable. Thus, even though the issues defining Malays in Malaysia today revolve around *adat*

'nation' incorrectly. Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a…," Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 91, 103.

[4] Anthony D. Smith, "Introduction: Ethnicity and Nationalism," in *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, ed. Anthony D. Smith (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), pp. 1-3.

[5] Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985), p. 104.

(culture)*, bahasa* (language) and *raja* (king) were not necessarily present in the past, the hegemony of this definition legitimises its usage in reference to the past as well.[6] Finally, Malayness is approached as an inclusive categorisation. This use of the term appears self-evident, especially when Malayness is understood to mean membership in an ethnic group, itself approached as a static object. The presentation of Malayness and ethnic groups in general as delimited and natural diminishes the aspect of identification with these groupings as a process which also entails perpetuating exclusions.

In addition to these ways of studying 'nation' and 'Malayness' separately, there are studies which marry the terms in two ways, though both render certain exclusions inherent. Firstly, they are combined as 'Malay nation'. Two extensive and important studies of nation in Malaya, William R. Roff's *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* and Anthony Milner's *Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, both talk specifically about Malays and a nation of Malays.[7] Secondly, the terms are combined as 'nation in Malaya' although the phrase is commonly understood to refer to a Malay nation, thus naturalising a particular ethnic base of nation in Malaya.[8] The elements of a nation in modern Malaysia which takes Malay identity as its base, bordering Chinese and Indians from that nation, is reflected in studies such as T. H. Silcock and Ungku Abdul Aziz's *Asian Nationalism and the West*, where the emphasis on loyalty towards a nation based on a

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[6] Shamsul A. B., "The Construction and Transformation of a Social Identity: Malayness and Bumiputeraness Re-examined" in Shamsul A. B., *Two Recent Essays in Identity Formation in Malaysia* (Bangi: University Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1997), pp. 15-33. Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid, *Sejarah Malaysia: Pentafsiran dan Penulisan* (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1992), p. 11

[7] William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967); Anthony C. Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the expansion of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[8] Adrian Vickers, "'Malay identity': Modernity, Invented Tradition, and Forms of Knowledge," in *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries*, ed. Timothy P. Barnard (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), p. 40.

Malay ethnicity is taken for granted.[9] These writings reflect an established scholarly perception of a nation in Malaya as equivalent to a Malay nation.

In a critique on such studies that look at nation and Malayness as static or historically inevitable objects, this thesis will argue that the terms are instead ideological frameworks employed for various exclusionary ends. This approach highlights that there could be influences on conceptions of nation and that those concepts are changeable, thereby explaining shifts in definition and use. For example, Eric Hobsbawm's well-known axiom that nationalism creates nations instead of the other way around is borne out of the view that conceptions of 'nation' vary according to different individuals.[10] Furthermore, Benedict Anderson's phrase "imagined community" in describing nations emphasizes, among other things, nation as an understanding of community that groups of people, particularly intellectuals, contribute to perpetuating.[11] How these conceptions of nation have been used are also open to scrutiny, with these works calling attention to the ways in which rhetoric surrounding the nation is used to legitimise a variety of aims. As

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[9] T. H. Silcock and Ungku Abdul Aziz, "Nationalism in Malaya" in *Asian Nationalism and the* West: *A Symposium Based on Documents and Reports of the Eleventh Conference Institute of Pacific Relations*, ed. William L. Holland (New York: Octagon Books, 1973), pp. 269-346.

[10] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 10.

[11] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origins and the spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 6, 40, 46; Dominique Schnapper, *Community of Citizens: On the Modern Idea of Nationality*, with a preface by Daniel Bell, translated from the French by Severine Rosee (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998), p. 147; *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*, ed. Michael D. Kennedy and Ronald Grigor Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 2. "Imagined" in Anderson's usage, and "ideological framework" as used here is not meant to connote "fabrication", "falsity" or "unreality". Such a comparison implies that there are "true communities exist[ing] which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations", a stand which is not taken here. The approach to nation as an ideology is underscored by Balibar who says that "*every social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary*, that is to say, it is based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative, on the recognition of a common name and on traditions lived as the trace of an immemorial past (even when they have been fabricated and inculcated in the recent past). But this comes down to accepting that under certain conditions, *only* imaginary communities are real (original emphasis)." Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation and Class: Ambiguous Identities*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1991), p. 93.

early as 1882, concepts of nation were used to support claims to territorial acquisition.

Ernest Renan's insistence on a nation based on common experience though not

necessarily of common ethnicity, was met with Theodor Mommsen's ethnicity-based

nation. While Renan's definition supported France's claim to territories annexed by

Germany by saying that the people in those territories shared the will to come together,

Mommsen's definition supported Germany's case for annexation based on assertions of

common ethnicity. [12] Therefore, to assert the presence of nation with particular

delimitations was, and continues to be, strategic.

Part of the strategy surrounding the claim of nationhood is the implicit placement

of borders surrounding this entity so as to exclude certain people. Nation is often

expressed in inclusive terms with people referred to as a part of the nation based on

particular characteristics. Those features are then falsely assumed to be common to all

people. These two aspects of the presentation of nation are referred to by Thongchai

Winichakul as the "positive identification" markers of those in the nation.[13] Part of the

effect of attributing characteristics to nations is to link and naturalize those

characteristics. The components are talked about in unison, leaving little doubt as to why

those components fit together. This typical manner of describing the nation obscures its

exclusivity. Studies by Anthony W. Marx and Uday S. Mehta argue that ideas of nation

are tailored specifically to exclude groups of people while assuming the facade of being

inclusive.[14] In fact, the discourse of inclusiveness assumes exclusions from the start, with

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[12] *Nationalism*, p. 17; Schnapper, *Community of Citizens*, pp. 136, 140; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780,* p. 6.

[13] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of the nation* (Chiangmai: Silkworm Books, 1994), pp. 3, 5.

[14] Uday S. Mehta, "Liberal Strategies of Exclusion" in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University California Press, 1997), pp. 60-1; Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford

the drive to bring together a section of the population though emphasizing antagonisms against an enemy made common.

There are studies on ethnicity, and Malayness in particular, that have also arrived at similar conclusions. Instead of seeing ethnicity as an object, these studies approach it as "a product of particular historical conditions, and not an ontological feature of human organisation."[15] Thus, ethnicity is seen as an on-going process of individual identification to a larger grouping.[16] These two insights bring forth an understanding of ethnicity that is individual and historically specific. Indeed, the contributing authors to *Contesting Malayness* show that a Malay ethnicity, or identification as Malay, cannot be essentialised since it could mean different things for people in different positions, making it difficult to talk about Malays in eighteenth century Malaya and Malays in modern Malaysia as a similar group.[17]

In the constitution of ethnicity, authors such as John Comaroff and Thongchai have noted that a group identity is asserted against the projection of a group seemed as dissimilar. Comaroff terms this strategy as "othering" whereby "'otherness,' then, becomes a contrivance in the counter image of social selfhood, not an empirical description of any particular population."[18] Fredrik Barth and Anthony Cohen's studies on ethnicity focus on the point of differentiation, or the issue over which a distinction is made between 'us' and 'them'. They note that an aspect of ethnic group formation, and of

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University Press, 2002), pp. vii, ix. Also see *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity, Volume I: History and Politics, Volume II: Minorities and Outsiders, Volume III: National Fictions*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1989).

[15] John L. Comaroff, "Of Totemism and Ethnicity: Consciousness, Practice and the Signs of Inequality," *Ethnos*, Vol. 52: III-IV (1987): 302.

[16] Richard Jenkins, *Social Identities, second edition* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 88.

[17] *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries*, ed. Timothy P. Barnard (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004).

[18] Comaroff, "Of Totemism and Ethnicity ", p. 309.

community formation in general, is through instances of boundary maintenance. The objective characteristics that serve as markers of a community may change, but boundaries are still maintained versus groups perceived as other.[19] Thus there is a range of expressions of community depending on which parties are threatening at certain time periods, though the reference is still towards one community, the Malays.[20] The implications of this malleability of community is that the meaning and implications of Malayness changes depending on the authors and the historical circumstances of their writings. Thus, Malayness is not a static object of enquiry, but rather it is a process of identification that is continually changing and being changed.[21] In this study then, boundary maintenance between Malayness and a group constructed as 'Chinese' will be the main focus.[22]

In the use of both terms, there was a convergence of strategies. Ideas of nation and Malayness were both used to further the aims of authors writing about them. The unities instilled through particular definitions and uses of nation and Malayness were indicative of the exclusions affected by them which were also strategic. In Malaya in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese were excluded from these terms at various points by prominent writers and intellectuals. The reasons for bordering this

[19] Fredrik Barth, "Introduction" in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970), pp. 14-5; Anthony P. Cohen, "Introduction: Discriminating relations: identity, boundary and authenticity" in *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*, ed. Anthony Cohen (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 1.
[20] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, pp. 116, 118.
[21] Jenkins, *Social Identities*, p. 88.
[22] There were other groups constructed as 'others' of Malayness, for instance Muslims of Arab and Indian origin. However, this study focuses instead on Chinese and to some extent non-Muslim Indians due to the prominent stereotype of these groups as being a major threat to the existence of Malays during the period of British influence and even in Malaysia today. Also because there were groups othered from Malays who were Muslim, religious difference is not approached as an objective characteristic dividing groups constituted as Malay and Chinese. Rather, the dichotomy between Muslims and non-Muslims is shown to have been highlighted strategically and linked to perceptions of threat and of other differences.

group depended on who was using the terms, and the circumstances of their writing. In the twentieth century, there was an overlap of meanings of nation and Malayness as used by various authors. This contributed to the notion that the marriage of the terms in reference to Malaya was either as a Malay nation, or a nation in Malaya universalised as based on Malayness, with Malays as an ethnic object delimited against other static groups, in particular, Chinese. The persuasiveness of these specific understandings of nation in Malaya was supported by prior British knowledge and new notions of self-determination which privileged an understanding of nation as a 'indigenous self'. The over-lapping positions of scholars using 'nation' and 'Malayness' as ideological frameworks show the interaction between spheres of knowledge production which perpetuate certain exclusions. These points of convergence between scholars within Malaya and without had long-lasting effects on perceptions of groups in relation to Malaya and the future Malaysia.

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Chapter One of this thesis addresses the manner in which nation was used strategically through definitions of nation, and the identification of the presence (or absence) of nation, in Malaya. A comparison of British authors' ideas of nation in Malaya from 1809 to 1891 will show that ideas of nation coming from Europe were varied and contradictory. Definitions offered by British writers were infused with their own perceptions of unities of peoples, governments, and cultures in Malaya, and what lay outside those unities. Rationales for including certain groups were followed by rationales

for excluding others. These exclusions were not uniform from author to author, or even within an author's work, calling into question just how 'rational' those exclusions were. In fact, both inclusions and exclusions in nation were contingent upon the circumstances of their knowledge production and how information could be put to use by the authors. The reliance of nation identification and delimitation by the scholar was brought into sharper relief when, in the late nineteenth century, circumstances of the British in Malaya changed and scholars agreed that there was never a nation in Malaya. Hence, definitions and identification of nation were far from natural, and were dependent on scholars' constructions, often with contradictory claims.

While establishing that ideas of nation depended on the perceptions of the authors, the question then shifts to how certain perceptions of nation in Malaya, with Malays as the defining characteristic of that nation, became established. Chapter Two ties this to British knowledge formation of Malaya and Malays. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Malaya was under either British protection or colonization, Malays were thought of primarily as an indigenous ethnic group. Chinese in particular were presented as the opposite of Malays, in contrast to all that was native to Malaya. The dichotomising of Chinese from Malays, and characteristics epitomised by the Chinese from those similarly represented by Malays, was a building block of racial categorisation. Notions of ethnicity and indigenousness promoted by the British during this time were extremely influential in determining ideas of who was Malay and thus native, and later, who was included in a nation in Malaya.

Although ascriptions of nationhood changed, a Malay nation was assumed to be present when British and Malay authors of the early twentieth century wrote about the

pre-colonial history of Malaya and the history of sultanates in the Peninsula. Recent authors also project the nation into the past. For instance, Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid writes that "Malay nationalism had already existed during the Melaka Malay Sultanate…". The nation is perceived as a Malay one, with Malay sultans and royalty in control of ruling and government in a defined political sphere, and a base society of Malay subjects.[23] These writings not only place the nation outside of history, they also impose Western and present day conceptions of nation and polities on historical communities that defy such interpretations. Chapter Three takes examples from three court-centred texts and illustrates the different ways community was organised in nineteenth century Malay Archipelago. The organisation of polities did not depend solely on the similar ethnic category of rulers and their subjects. Instead, there is evidence to suggest that groups other than what were called Malays in these texts participated in, and were regarded as loyal subjects by, the sultanates. These texts force us to question the connections between Malays, Malaya and governance which place groups not seen as Malay and indigenous outside of definitions of government, indigenous and nation.

The texts in Chapter Three are also dynamic in that they attempted to present alternate versions of their communities. The last text considered in that chapter, *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, reflects an endeavour to rework the meaning of Malay by a court scribe. Raja Ali Haji's formulation of what it means to be Malay, or Malayness, includes the Bugis in the links between Malays, royalty and the authority to govern in the Archipelago. He

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[23] Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1964), pp. 17, 19, 143; Zainal Abidin, *Sejarah Malaysia*, p. 11; Za'ba, *Sejarah Ringkas Tanah Melayu, dikutip dan diterjemah dari bahagian-bahagian yang menasabah dalam buku "Malaya" karangan Dr. R. O. Winstedt (yang terbit pada tahun 1922)* (Singapura: Pustaka Melayu, 1961), p. 117.

rewrote the boundaries of Malayness in ways that reflected his discontent with a term that excluded himself from the privileges afforded to Malay royalty during his time.[24]

The rewriting of the boundaries of Malayness when responding to perceived marginalisation and threats in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is traced in Chapter Four. In that chapter, Malayness, and later understandings of a nation based on Malayness, is shown to have different variants. In studies of nationalism in Malaya, the components that make up the Malay base are often taken for granted. Roff's study was a landmark work on nationalism in Malaya. The book's use of a new range of sources and the focus on different groups' contribution to Malay nationalism provides scholars with much to think about and continues to be influential thirty years after the appearance of his study. Roff traces the origins of Malay nationalism by taking the category of Malays, as well as nationalism and nation, as an object of study from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries of Malaya. The composition of that category, however, is not elucidated and in several instances appears static and self-explanatory. Muslims of Indian and Arab origin, as well as foreign Malays from outside of the Peninsula, are often subsumed under the category of Malays.[25]

The inclusion of particular groups as Malay is problematic as such definitions were fluid during the period in question. Groups may or may not have been considered Malay depending on the authors' understanding of the community. Indeed, some authors framed Malay in such a way as to prohibit entry of particular groups from the category

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[24] Virginia Hooker, "Riau-Lingga Writers" in *Early Modern History*, ed. Anthony Reid (Singapore: Archipelago Press, 1999), p. 98; Raja Ali Haji bin Ahmad, *The Precious Gift (Tuhfat al-Nafis)*, an annotated translation by Virginia Matheson and Barbara Watson Andaya (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1982); Jan van der Putten, "A Malay of Bugis Ancestry: Haji Ibrahim's Strategies of Survival" in *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries*, ed. Timothy P. Barnard (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), p. 123.
[25] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 54-5.

similar to the way nation was employed by British authors. Just as Raja Ali Haji's views of Malayness in Chapter Three were affected by his position as a member of the Bugis court in the Johor-Riau Sultanate, the range of ideas of Malayness as expressed by authors at the turn of the century were influenced by particular circumstances in Malaya. The perceived threat of "foreign races", often identified as a Chinese mass, was a factor in the conception of alliances and unities against those groups.

The ways in which meanings of Malayness and nation were both changed strategically point to parallels in knowledge formation by British and Malay authors. This can be linked to the context of Malaya in the early twentieth century, where Malayness had a currency not dissimilar to nation as used by Western anti-imperialists during the same time. For instance, when considering histories written in the 1920s with ideas of Malayness at their centre, their rhetorical effect paralleled the effect of histories of nation as used by Western anti-imperialists. Some terms connoting groupings of people such as *bangsa* or *orang Melayu*, and others referring to the Peninsula geographically or a homeland such as *tanahair*, *watan* and *semenanjung*, were spread through many Malay histories and creative literary works. The links forged by such a range of terms with Malays and Malaya, however, similarly connoted a privileged place in Malaya for the Malays. The last work considered in Chapter Four was written by Abdul Majid Zainuddin, a history that used the term nation to bear on matters of rights and privileges in government and economy.[26]

Divergences are equally apparent. Though ethnic categories were applied by both British and Malays to people in Malaya, the former use of race connoted a lessening of

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[26] *The Malays in Malaya, by One of Them* (Singapore: Printed at the Malaya Publishing House, Ltd., 1928), pp. 90-4; *The Wandering Thoughts of a Dying Man: The Life and Times of Haji Abdul Majid bin Zainuddin*, ed. William R. Roff (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 159-160.

power in terms of the way Malays and Malaya were perceived, while the latter application enabled the authors to call for Malaya-wide unities. The presentations of Malaya in the 1920s by Malay authors drawing from British knowledge were infused with a sense of autonomy not present in British writings. Abdul Majid's history of Malaya written in 1928 established major components of a nation seen in Malaysia today. He approached the nation in Malaya as deserving of the status of other nations in the world, with rights such as sovereignty and participation in government for the nation's people. At the same time, Abdul Majid's use of the terminology of nation and modern statehood diverged from that seen in Western anti-imperialists narratives that saw nationalism as a vehicle for the independence struggle.

Interactions can be seen between Abdul Majid's book and the American work on Malaya by L. Richmond Wheeler to which Abdul Majid was responding. Wheeler introduced another way of viewing Malaya which was influenced by British ideas concerning Malays and the early twentieth century anti-imperialism stance held by a handful of Western scholars. The latter viewpoint entertained the notion that nations might be formed, or were already present, in colonised countries, and that self-government or independence was the appropriate state of government for nations.[27] Abdul Majid, however, did not use the history of an autonomous nation to oppose the way the British were governing Malaya. Instead, he used it to argue that other groups in Malaya, namely Chinese and Indians, should not be allowed to participate in governing Malaya. These similarities and differences between Malay, British and American writings point to Malay authors not merely attempting to imitate ideas of nation from Europe.

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[27] L. Richmond Wheeler , *The Modern Malay* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1928), pp. 7, 111, 180, 235.

Rather, Malay authors brought their own concerns to their formulations at particular points in history.

Chapter Five deals with the convergence of different axes of thought in the 1930s and 1940s in establishing the idea of nation in Malaya as being a Malay nation and excluding the Chinese in particular. In comparing two pairs of works supposedly produced in separate spheres, similar inclusions and exclusions were evoked in presenting a nation in Malaya concerned with rights. Against the background of non-Malays arguing for access to positions in government in Malaya, as well as asserting that they should have the same rights in Malaya that Malays have, Ishak Haji Muhammad's novel *Putera Gunung Tahan* asserts the non-negotiable status of Malay rights to government and economic holdings, while also attacking colonialism. Rupert Emerson's *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule* acknowledges that the call for rights by representatives of Chinese in Malaya as natives of Malaya are not without their merits, but he finds it difficult to agree with Chinese rights.[28] The rights of Chinese and non-Malays in general were being called into doubt based on the strength of their claims as compared against established knowledge.

Over-arching claims were made about the nation in Malaya during this time, which had resonance with the way nations were asserted elsewhere in the fight for independence. The claim that nation was a unity of people who knew themselves to be connected was presented by writers as a way of galvanising support for anti-colonial movements. This individual attachment to the supposedly self-evident community and object of the nation, often called nationalism, is supported even today by scholars such as

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[28] Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Putera Gunung Tahan* (Petaling Jaya: Pustaka Budaya Agency, 1973), pp. 58-59, 69, 78; Emerson, *Malaysia*, p. 263.

Smith and Walker Connor. A comparison is made between the assertions of the unity of

"the people" in nation in Emerson's "Introduction" to *Government and Nationalism in*

Southeast Asia and in Ibrahim Yaakob's *Melihat Tanahair*.[29] The assumption by scholars

against colonialism and by nationalists that there is or should be a unity in nation is

juxtaposed against the testament of disunity which threatens the rhetoric of nation. These

texts show that the idea of a unity in nation in the 1940s was used strategically by writers

in and outside of Malaya. The rhetorical device of asserting a unity, however, was

subsequently entrenched as a feature of a nation. This study concludes at the eve of the

Japanese occupation of Malaya, when the rhetoric of the primacy of Malays in Malaya,

and the exclusion of non-essential elements such as Chinese and Indians, was persuasive

inside and outside of Malaya.

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[29] Rupert Emerson, "Introduction," in Institute of Pacific Relations Inquiry Series, *Government and Nationalism in Southeast Asia* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1942); Ibrahim Haji Yaakob, *Melihat Tanahair* (Kuantan: Percetakan Timur, 1975).

Chapter 1:

British knowledge formation on Malaya through the lens of nation -

Drawing boundaries

In an essay to the Asiatic Society in Calcutta at the beginning of the nineteenth

century, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, then Governor of Java, wrote:

> "I cannot but consider the Malayan nation as one people, speaking one language,
> though spread over so wide a space, and preserving their character and customs,
> in all the maritime states lying between the Sula Seas and the Southern Ocean,
> and bounded longitudinally by Sumatra and the western side of Papua or New
> Guinea".[1]

At the end of the same century, in 1891, William E. Maxwell at a talk at the Royal

Colonial Institute in London declared:

> "There has never been, at any time known to history, a Malay nation strictly so
> called; that is to say, one people acknowledging one supreme chief or ruler,
> obeying one central government, and governed by one body of customary law".[2]

While the authors promoted dissimilar theories of unities, they both articulated the nation

as the basic category under consideration. Nation was used to describe a group of people,

and to describe the things shared by those within that group that made them into a nation.

The differences between these two statements are obvious. If we merely focus on the

application of the word 'nation', the divergence between the two views lies in the former

asserting the presence of a nation in the Malay Archipelago, and the latter negating that

there ever was a nation in the Archipelago, and particularly the Malay Peninsula. The

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[1] Lady Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 15.
[2] W. E. Maxwell, "The Malay Peninsula: Its Resources and Prospects", in *Honourable Intentions: Talks on the British Empire in South-east Asia delivered at the Royal Colonial Institute 1874-1928*, ed. Paul H. Kratoska (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 125, 128.

gulf separating Raffles' and Maxwell's statements does not, however, end there. Both authors did not talk about the category 'nation' in similar terms. To Raffles, the nation embodied a unity of a group of people through a similar language and customs. To Maxwell, the unity of a people was dependent on a specific mode of ruling and government over a designated territory where the people are found.

Raffles and Maxwell presented two versions of nation that were supposed to be applicable to the Malay Peninsula during a similar time period. Understanding nation as an ideological framework allows for a better understanding of the differences between Raffles and Maxwell's statements. They are indicative of the separate contexts in which the authors were writing which were related to furthering British interests in Malaya. One of the effects of the knowledge produced concerning nation in Malaya was to establish assumptions about the people in Malaya by naturalizing the inclusion of some people as native and the exclusion of others as foreign at different times and in different contexts.

The role of knowledge produced by those aligned to colonising forces in furthering such interests has been a subject of great interest among scholars.[3] Knowledge production by British authors concerning the Malay Peninsula in particular was closely tied to British territorial acquisitions in the Peninsula during the nineteenth century. During this time, the British government and Malay polities began more extensive political relations than had hitherto been known. Prior to the nineteenth century, other European powers had made their influence felt in the Peninsula. In 1511, the Portuguese captured Melaka, which then passed to the Dutch in the seventeenth century. In the

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[3] See Chapters Three and Four in Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) and Olufemi Taiwo, "Reading the Colonizer's Mind: Lord Lugard and the Philosophical Foundations of British Colonialism," in *Racism and Philosophy*, ed. Susan E. Babbitt and Sue Campbell (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 157-86.

eighteenth century, however, Dutch power was in decline, and there were increasing

contacts between private traders from Britain and the Archipelago. In the late eighteenth

century, the Sultan of Kedah hoped an alliance with British traders would keep Siamese

power over Kedah in check. As a result, Penang came into British possession in 1789.

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw the founding of Singapore by Raffles in

1819. Following the Anglo-Dutch treaty in 1824, which divided the Archipelago into two

separate spheres of influence, Melaka came under British power as well.[4]

With the involvement of British traders and administrators in the Peninsula came

reports and scholarly works concerning the area. Prior to the nineteenth century, trading

records were the main sources of information about the Peninsula. Now, British

administrators and those sharing an interest in Malaya amassed knowledge for

administrative purposes and for interested British readers.[5] This was part of a scientific

endeavour to understand the region and Malays in a serious manner, which was related to

larger issues in the Scientific Revolution.[6] The category 'nation' was among the terms

used to make sense of Malaya. While few British authors wrote specifically about nation

in Malaya, the impact of those authors was felt through the dependence of the colonial

machinery on knowledge Britons produced about Malaya. The writings of those such as

Raffles, John Leyden and John Crawfurd influenced ideas about what lay inside and

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[4] Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), pp. 100-22.

[5] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 115.

[6] Hendrik M. J. Maier, *In the Centre of Authority: The Malay Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (New York: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1988), pp. 38, 43. It is a commonly held view that a Scientific Revolution took place in the seventeenth century in Europe. This constituted a change in the way the world was thought of by European scholars at the time, which impacted subsequent knowledge production in Europe. In particular, Richard Westfall argues that the scientific revolution ushered in the belief that things in nature were quantifiable, and its inner workings could be discovered via scientific methods (Richard S. Westfall, "The scientific revolution of the seventeenth century: the construction of a new world view" in *The Concept of Nature: The Herbert Spencer Lectures*, ed. John Torrance [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992], pp. 63-93).

outside a Malay nation, and had a impact on subsequent British impressions of the

Peninsula.[7] The importance of the larger body of knowledge to which these men

contributed has even led Henk Maier to refer to the scholarship as "Malayist Studies".[8]

New colonial officials referred to this knowledge upon arrival, thus setting the parameters

for their understanding. The knowledge was utilised in the training of cadets who would

be involved in the running of government affairs, and often had direct consequences on

the policies officials implemented.[9]

Raffles, Leyden and Crawfurd had a major influence on developing assumptions

concerning Malaya. As such, it is important to understand how and possibly why these

authors formulated nation the way they did. Raffles was as an administrator of the British

East India Company in Java and the founder of Singapore in 1819.[10] To search for

definitions of nation in Raffles' writing is difficult. Raffles, like other authors who

employed the term, rarely defined the nation outright.[11] What is evident from his writings

are the characteristics which distinguished a particular nation. In a 1809 introduction to

his 1818 article, "On the Malayu Nation, with a Translation of its Maritime Institutions",

there were certain criteria, such as language with written characters, a body of law, and

practiced customs, that Raffles applied in qualifying the presence of different nations in

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[7] Anthony Reid, "Understanding Melayu(Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities", in *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries*, ed. Timothy P. Barnard (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), pp. 295-314; Maier, *In the Centre of Authority,* p. 17.

[8] Maier's analysis of the knowledge formation by Malayists points to such an endeavour being academic and intertextual. Maier, *In the Centre of Authority*, pp. 8-9.

[9] R. J. Wilkinson, *Papers on Malay Subjects*, selected and introduced by P. L. Burns (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 2.

[10] Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles*, p. v; John Crawfurd, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands & Adjacent Countries,* with an introduction by M. C. Ricklefs (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. v.

[11] For example, see the work of Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics* (New York: The Colonial Press, 1899).

the Malay Archipelago.[12] In another piece written in 1806, Raffles distinguished nations by the different economic roles and foods the people consumed.[13]

In an article published in *Asiatic Researches* in 1808, John Leyden provided another view of the main component a nation. Leyden was known in Scotland as a scholar and writer of Scottish literature on par with Sir Walter Scott, a popular Scottish writer, in the late eighteenth century.[14] In line with many Scottish thinkers during that time, the study of the origins of social artifacts, such as language, was said to yield knowledge concerning the people who employed such artifacts.[15] In his article entitled, "On the Languages and Literatures of Indo-Chinese Nations", Leyden drew links between the Malay language as it was spoken and written in parts of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, and the presence of a Malay nation. In general, he believed that a study of language gave insights into the history of the nation.[16] Such statements indicate the extent to which Leyden viewed the nation and language as intertwined, incurring the problem for the scholar of ascertaining the extent to which a nation can be said to exist solely on the basis of the existence of a language.

Like Leyden, John Crawfurd was a Scotsman. He first came to Penang in 1808 where he began to study things Malay. He worked under Raffles in the British administration in Java, and after the Dutch regained control of the island, Crawfurd returned to England to write his *History of the Indian Archipelago*, which was published

[12] Reid, "Understanding Melayu(Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities", p. 303, f. 37; Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles*, p. 15.
[13] Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles*, p. 10.
[14] Maier, *In the Centre of Authority*, p. 16; *John Leyden's Malay Annals,* With an Introductory Essay by Virginia Matheson Hooker and M. B. Hooker, MBRAS Reprint 20 (Selangor: MBRAS, 2001), p. 4.
[15] Mary Catherine Quilty, *Textual Empires: A Reading of Early British Histories of Southeast Asia* (Monash University: Monash Asia Institute, 1998), pp. 42-4.
[16] *John Leyden's Malay Annals*, pp. 26, 28-9.

in 1820.[17] His last work, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands and Adjacent Countries*, was published in 1856. "Malay", in Crawfurd's dictionary, was a nation, a tribe as well as a race. In reading Crawfurd's definition of Malay, it is interesting to note the extent to which his explanation of the Malay or Malayan nation claimed to be separate from ideas of civilisation or government.[18] The latter aspects, he wrote, were not likely to be indigenous to the area, and Malacca was the only Malay state of any importance. The demographic spread of the Malay nation was vast according to Crawfurd; their members, who possessed a "distinct independent nationality", were to be found in Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula and surrounding islands. The category even subsumed those who did not speak Malay in Borneo, because they were still seen as part of the Malay race. Within this Malay nation, he identified further stratifications which he called different classes. There were three, which were the civilised Malays, "the gipsy-like fishermen" and "the rude half savages".[19]

It is evident in the writings of these authors that the term "race" and theories associated with that term were used to explain the peoples they were studying. A Malayan race was identified by Carl Gustav Carus, a nineteenth century German scholar, with the implication that that group of people descended from a different lineage of humans. Other racial theories by Georges Cuvier and Charles Hamilton Smith, a French

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[17] Crawfurd, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands & Adjacent Countries*, p. v; John Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago, containing an account of the manners, arts, languages, religions, institutions, and commerce of its inhabitants* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1967).

[18] Crawfurd, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands & Adjacent Countries*, pp. 249-51. In the writings of Crawfurd, the term Malayan was used sometimes in passages where he was referring wholly to Malay. This suggests that there is an overlapping of meaning between the terms Malay and Malayan which is also found in Raffles' article. At other points, however, Raffles does distinguish between a Malayan people which does not include Malays, though Malays are said to have been an offshoot of this group. Regardless of the exact reference of both terms, it is clear from the writings of Raffles, Leyden and Crawfurd 'Malay' was a preferred term to encompass various peoples within the Archipelago.

[19] Crawfurd, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands & Adjacent Countries*, pp. 249-51.

and a British scholar respectively, mentioned a Malay race as another biological division within the human species. Michael Banton distinguishes these lines of thought as racial theories: the first is race as lineage and the next is race as type.[20] The variety in thinking surrounding race coming from Europe and America is seen, for example, when Leyden talked of language as being the key to the development of the Malay nation and race. Raffles also used theories of race when discussing whether Malays were offshoots of a Malayan race, or the other way around.[21]

As much as these ideas are classified by some today as specifically race theories, in many instances there was an overlap between nation and other terms such as race, people or tribe.[22] As Anthony Cohen observes, terms such as race, ethnicity, and nation imply varying meanings but there are situations were there is little difference in usage or implication.[23] The idea that nations were linked to places of origin, a people or the dispersion of races is evident. Raffles, for instance, made the distinction between the Malay nation and/or race who were said to be found mainly on the coasts of the Archipelago, and another Malayan nation and/or people found inland. Both Raffles and Leyden sometimes referred to a group of people in the Archipelago just as Malays.[24] There were distinctions between the terms; Raffles consciously changed reference to the Semang from nation to race, with a hint that this indicated a lesser civilisational form

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[20] Michael Banton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. xi, 19-20, 29, 53.
[21] Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles*, p. 15.
[22] Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Europe and its Others" in *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*, ed. David Theo Goldberg and John Solomos (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 17-24.
[23] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, pp. 106-7; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780*, p. 15.
[24] Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles*, p. 10. This overlap reminds us of the history of term as employed in Europe (Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780*, pp. 14-5).

from Malays.[25] Yet, the flexibility in using any of the terms to refer to Malays suggests that these authors thought that all the terms were generally applicable to Malays.

Such formulations of nation were comparable to those found in the writings of late nineteenth century scholars in Britain concerning nation. In his essay, "Representative Government", published in 1861, John Stuart Mill noted many aspects of nation, none of which were "either indispensable, or necessarily sufficient by themselves". Some of them were the opinions, feelings and habits of a society. Such a commonality made the people in that society want to co-operate with one another, and want to be under the same government.[26] Mill, like Walter Bagehot, focussed on the extent to which laws and governments may constitute one of the nation's determining factors.[27] In earlier works as well, Mill acknowledged that race was a factor in formulating a nation. However, he noted that race was influenced by government and, by itself, was not the determinant of the nation.[28] In Bagehot's work *Physics and Politics*, published in 1872, Natural Selection was also used to explain certain aspects of nation. He argued that national character was a result of the patronage of favoured forms by some of those in the nation.[29] Differences in environment was another element which influenced the shape of the nation through natural selection, as a people developed their own manners and habits in order to best adapt to their environment.[30]

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[25] Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles*, p. 10.

[26] J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government*, ed. R. B. McCallum (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946), p. vii; Georgios Varouxakis, *Mill on Nationality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 20.

[27] Varouxakis, *Mill on Nationality*, p. 55; Bagehot, *Physics and Politics*, p. 25.

[28] Varouxakis, *Mill on Nationality*, pp. 39, 49. Mill used the term "national character" on which certain institutions act on. However, the group implied by this national character is the nation (Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780*, p. 19).

[29] Bagehot, *Physics and Politics*, pp. 36, 90.

[30] Bagehot, *Physics and Politics*, p. 84.

Nation, in the instances above, was expressed in inclusive terms. The functioning of the term that looks inward when being expressed makes it similar to other terms connoting communities such as ethnicity or race.[31] Indeed, we have seen that the terms were at some points used interchangeably by British authors. Part of the effect of attributing characteristics to nations was to link and naturalize those characteristics. The components were discussed in unison, leaving little doubt as to why those components fit together. However, as Thongchai writes about Thainess, "if the domain of what is Thainess is hard to define clearly, the domain of what is not Thai- that is, un-Thai- is identified from time to time. Simultaneously, this identification helps us to define the domain of Thainess from the outside."[32] The reasons for marking groups as separate have much to do with developing unities and differences for particular reasons.

This exclusionary thrust of nation is an integral part of defining the nation. This is done by showing how one group is different from other groups based on certain criteria. For example, when Raffles talked about characteristics of the Malay nation, he excluded the Semang. The distinction between the two groups was made on the basis of their appearance, which indicated to Raffles that they were of a different race from Malays. The Semang were also set apart by their way of life and language. Raffles' instituted an analytical distinction between one group and another, creating a border between the two. Raffles hinted at the rationale for such an assertion of difference. The Semang were portrayed as the lesser counterpart of Malays in civilisational terms, and hence could not have been descended from the same racial stock as Malays.

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[31] Barth, "Introduction", p. 11; Cohen, "Introduction: Discriminating relations: identity, boundary and authenticity", p. 1; Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, p. 106.
[32] Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*, pp. 3, 5.

The Siamese were also placed outside the bounds of what was Malay. In this case, not only did Raffles mark the two groups as different, but he also presented them as oppositional categories, antagonistic to one another. Raffles regarded the Malay states in the Peninsula as "the least adulterated in their character, usages, and manners". This 'pure' state was juxtaposed with a description of what would contaminate that purity. Raffles went on to say that "[the Malays] are bounded by the Siamese, to the north, whose encroachments and establishments in the Peninsula … may easily be defined".[33] Raffles' juxtaposition of Malaya and Siam may have been a result of his merely seeing differences between a group he identified as Malays, and another group he identified as Siamese. However, it was known by the British during his time that Siam had claims to power in what was later called the Northern Malay states, specifically with regards to Kedah. A representation of Malaya and Siam as different was used by Raffles, and other writers even earlier, to argue that such claims were unjustified to secure a British presence in the Peninsula. [34]

Differences were also highlighted between groups regarded as Malay. In particular, a strategic separation was made between Malays in the Peninsula and people in the rest of the Archipelago. Anthony Reid has written about the various interpretations that led to the Peninsula being understood as the original home of Malays. The authors in the debate, consisting of Raffles, Leyden and Crawfurd among others, theorised about the origins of the Malay people. Raffles had noted in 1809 that Malays were found in the Peninsula as well as in Sumatra, and other people different from Malays were found in the Malay Archipelago. In 1821, Raffles wrote about the Malays as historically the main

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[33] Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles*, pp. 16-7.
[34] Maier, *In the Center of Authority*, pp. 16-7.

inhabitants of the area, and a suitable people to form trading alliances with. The push to see the Peninsula as the home of that people may have also been helped by the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 which excluded the rest of the Archipelago from possible British involvement. Such writings bolstered the claims of those who wanted British involvement in the affairs of the Peninsula and the opening up of trade with people who would be obliging.[35]

The Chinese were another target of this exclusionary impulse of ideas of nation. In a document written in 1819 to support the establishment of a Malay college in Singapore, Raffles wrote about the future of the place of the British in the "peninsula and the larger islands". Raffles' interest in the region had much to do with its importance as a trading centre between India and China.[36] The region was described as being "at the very threshold of China" and thus offering a way of partaking of the trade that was engendered by the proximity to that country. On the other hand, the proximity of Southeast Asia to China made the latter a danger to British endeavours. Where previously Raffles described the Chinese population of the Archipelago as assimilating more with Europeans than Muslims, in later pages he highlighted the threat of these immigrants colonizing Southeast Asia and creating a copy of China outside of China.[37] This shift in opinion was also found in Crawfurd's writings. In his *History of the Indian Archipelago*, the Chinese were said to be the largest settlers in the Indian Archipelago, and were seen as indispensable to the trade in the region. In his later *Dictionary*, however, Crawfurd's

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[35] Reid, "Understanding Melayu (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities", p. 11; Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles*, p. 15; *John Leyden's Malay Annals*, p. 46; J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: a comparative study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 289.
[36] Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles*, pp. 28, 83; Labour Research Department, *British Imperialism in Malaya* (London: Labour Research Department, 1926), p. 3; Emerson, *Malaysia*, p. 86.
[37] Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles*, pp. 28-9.

description of the Chinese in the Archipelago differed. He seemed reluctant to ascribe old ties between China and the Archipelago, and indicated that settlement did not occur on a large enough scale.[38]

Bordering the nation with other nations by way of explanation sets up categories for understanding. The effect of posing borders, and instituting oppositions instead of mere difference, was to naturalize particular exclusions. Such rationalizations were seen in Britain as well. The long history of wars between Britain and France has been said to play a decisive role in congealing a national identity for those in Britain. Characteristics were attributed to the British that would not only describe the British, but describe them as distinct from the French.[39] Within Britain, groups such as the Scottish or the Irish also would be described as distinct from the English.[40] Such a process was occurring in the Malay Peninsula with colonial writings, not wars, playing a vital role.

From this study of the texts of early Malayists, a few general comments can be made. Nation was used by early scholars of Malaya and the term was an important one connoting a meaningful grouping. Nation was used by these various authors in their writings in order to make sense of Malaya to themselves and to other English speakers who might pick up their work. In using nation as a label for a group of people, the term made the reader draw upon understandings about groups of people. Those understandings drew from writings in Britain concerning nation to a certain extent. Indeed, if we

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[38] Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago,* pp. 94-5, 133, 138, 140; Crawfurd, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands & Adjacent Countries*, p. 380.

[39] Linda Colley, "Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain 1750-1830", *Past and Present* No. 113 (Nov. 1986): 100.

[40] Sheridan Gilley, "English Attitudes to the Irish in England, 1780-1900" in *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society,* ed. Colin Holmes (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), p. 81; Kathryn A. Manzo, *Creating Boundaries: The Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), pp. 118-24.

compare the various rationales concerning nation by Bagehot and Mill to the rationales of Raffles, Leyden and Crawfurd, there are striking commonalities. The ways in which a nation was defined similarly on a number of points is apparent across both groups of authors.

Though the theories were similar in terms of characteristics, one cannot necessarily draw the ideal-type of the nation based on these writings. The similarities in the points of definition were accompanied by the dissimilarities in what was emphasized in the nation. This is best illustrated by what each author felt were the important components in a nation. Elements such as race, language, culture, government and law were very broad terms in their formulations, and each author brought to his writing different emphases. The ways in which the authors chose to talk about nation were very different within the context of their books and the materials they were discussing. For example, in Raffles' and Crawfurd's writings, the emphasis on race, culture and language seemed more prominent, whereas representative government was more prominent in Mill's and Bagehot's writings. To merge all these terms and call them the same, or to say that ideas of nation by British thinkers writing about the Archipelago were copies of ideas of nation in Britain, is to ignore the ways in which understandings differ among authors.

The different ways in which nation was applied also point to separate meanings. These authors were not averse to calling Malays a nation, in addition to categories of race and tribe. It even appears that using nation to apply to Malays, where another group such as the Semang was not, indicates that Malays were regarded as a noteworthy group. This idea resonates with studies of nation by Bagehot and Mill whereby the presence of nation was an indication of the status of having civilization. The assertion of Malays being

somewhat civilized was employed by Raffles to improve the prospects of British

involvement in the region. By the late-nineteenth century, however, the interests of the

British had changed and so too the willingness to attribute that civilization category of

nation to Malays. With the spread of British power in the Peninsula, the topics of import

were government administration and economic progress.[41] As P. L. Burns wrote in his

introduction to R. J. Wilkinson's *Papers on Malay Subjects*,

> "Unlike the preceding generation who were concerned with problems of
> establishing and sustaining British authority, this group- the second generation
> British officers- could afford to… raise questions about the future development of
> the Malay States and especially about British policy towards the Malays."[42]

Two speeches read in 1874 by Leonard Wray and 1891 by Maxwell reflect this change of

interest among British thinkers. These writings still conceptualised Malaya in terms of

nation, though not in the same way that Raffles did. The desire to attribute civilisation

and perhaps autonomy to Malays had lessened. Thus, nation as an explanatory term

became less useful with regards to Malaya, while race was becoming the more popular

lens of interpretation.

Leonard Wray was a planter in Malaya, who went on to have a career as a curator

at the Perak Museum.[43] In March 1874, he lectured at the Royal Colonial Institute in a

forum meant to introduce topics concerning Malaya. Wray's talk was significant in its

timing. In January of that same year, what came to be known as the Pangkor Treaty was

signed between Andrew Clarke, the new Governor of the Straits Settlements, and Raja

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[41] Maier, *In the Center of Authority*, pp. 52, 54. See also the progression in topics concerning Malaya in *Honourable Intentions*.
[42] Wilkinson, *Papers on Malay Subjects*, p. 2.
[43] *Honourable Intentions*, p. 1;

Abdullah, a member of Perak royalty, trying to secure a place as sultan.[44] While the policy among different British commercial and political interests had not been in consensus, the Pangkor Treaty established a new formal relationship between the British and a Malay state.[45]

In the early part of Wray's talk, he mentioned nation sporadically as a mode of explaining 'the East' to an audience unfamiliar to it.[46] Thus, Siam was called a nation, as was Britain, though the latter was a "powerful and enterprising one".[47] When talking about Malays, he termed them a race covering a larger area than the Peninsula, including the Archipelago. The subsequent history he gave concerning the Malay or Malayan people is framed initially as that of a race, though in later paragraphs, the history is framed as that of a kingdom or a nation that had since declined. Wray, however, reminded the audience that "it is quite certain that, with restless activity and lawless pugnacity, [the Malays] have spread themselves throughout the Eastern seas and islands, conquering here and there, and making themselves generally feared and dreaded".[48] Could the designation of the Malays as race and not more firmly as nation be tied to such perceptions? The image of Malays offered by Wray was that of wanderers with no fixed home, and adhering to no form of governance. The impermanence painted here seems at odds with prior formulations of nation, as well as prior formulations of the Malay nation, by former scholars. At the same time, though the details of that group remained the same, the designation of race or nation by the observer varied.

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[44] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, pp. 154-5.
[45] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, pp. 144, 157.
[46] *Honourable Intentions*, p. 2.
[47] Leonard Wray, "Settlements on the Straits of Malacca", in *Honourable Intentions*, p. 23.
[48] Wray, "Settlements on the Straits of Malacca", pp. 22-3.

In 1891, William E. Maxwell gave a talk entitled, "The Malay Peninsula: Its Resources and Prospects".[49] In the period between Wray and Maxwell's lectures, treaties similar to the Pangkor Treaty had been signed with a few other *negeris* in the Peninsula, such as Selangor, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan.[50] In contrast to the indefinite labelling of Wray, Maxwell stated early in his talk that there was never a Malay nation. The issue of naming was brought out in the open. The statement at the beginning of the speech was almost a direct opposite of what Raffles proclaimed more than fifty years earlier. The target of his statement could be conjectured to be Raffles or those who were influenced by his research.

What were Maxwell's understandings of nation and how did Malaya fit in with them? Maxwell's criteria for nation status was expressed clearly in the basic idea that one people (Malays) should be ruled by one person, under one government and one body of law. This was juxtaposed with the then current description of the Malays, whom he says "have been scattered tribes and communities forming numberless little States along the coasts and on the banks of the rivers of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. … The tendency of the Malay States," Maxwell went on to say, "has generally been to split up, from inherent weakness in the governing power."[51] Maxwell laid emphasis on the unity of a group of people seen as Malays, as well as the unity of a government to encompass that people, both of which he felt should exist but did not. That unity should also have existed throughout time. He noted that, in the past, there had been states which did

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[49] Maxwell, "The Malay Peninsula: Its Resources and Prospects", p. 125.
[50] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, pp. 158, 166-67.
[51] Maxwell, "The Malay Peninsula: Its Resources and Prospects", p. 128.

encompass an area large enough to overlap sufficiently with the population of Malays. However, these periods were seen as few and far between.[52]

Where Maxwell did not see crucial unities that would translate into nationhood, there were other instances where he evoked other types of unities. His formulation of who was Malay included the rulers of the *negeris* in the Peninsula, as well as the Minangkabau and Achenese in Sumatra. The geographic spread of Malay peoples was split mainly between the Peninsula and Sumatra. It was that incongruity of what Maxwell regarded as *a* Malay people, with numerous governments and loyalties, that seemed to decide for Maxwell that there was no Malay nation. At the same time, he did not look closely at his categories of who was Malay and what governments there were to see that his formulations of nation were irreconcilable with the groupings and polities present in the Archipelago. The emphasis on government unity above all else could be seen as fitting with notions of nation as expressed by contemporary authors on nation, such as Mill and Bagehot.

The question emerges as to why Maxwell may have wanted to refute that Malaya was a nation. On the one hand, the 'inherent' weakness of Malays and their forms of government were testimony to the fact that there cannot have been a nation present, if Maxwell defined the nation as having certain characteristics. On the other hand, Maxwell was pushing aside even thinking of Malaya and Malays in such terms as nation and the ideas of sovereignty that accompanied it. If Malay states were exemplified by weak governments and a lack of unity, Maxwell had put forth the main reason the British chose to involve themselves in the Peninsula: to protect the Malays from being dominated, and

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[52] Maxwell, "The Malay Peninsula: Its Resources and Prospects", p. 128.

perhaps colonised, by large numbers of Chinese.[53] This 'objective' situation provided a powerful basis for a strong British presence in the Peninsula, which began in 1874 and seemed to be continuing in a predictable direction.[54] The project at hand, therefore, was not to ascertain the presence of a Malay nation with its associated sovereignty, but to provide the framework for continued British presence to be seen as desirable and necessary.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Designations of nationhood continually change. During the nineteenth century, various authors had their own understandings of nation and applied those understandings differently to what they perceived in Malaya and the surrounding islands. At the same time, the change in intellectual climate concerning nation from Raffles to Maxwell was not removed from other happenings in the Archipelago. The use of nation as an explanatory factor changed as well. The ways in which it shifted were not so obvious. For Raffles, framing the Malays as a nation worth reckoning was his way of making trading relations with this part of the world more appealing to his colleagues in England. For Maxwell, discarding nation as a relevant explanatory model was important because of the perceived nature of British involvement in Malaya.

Though Maxwell did not signal the end to thinking of or referring to Malaya as a nation, he can be said to characterise a frame of mind whereby Malaya was not thought of as a nation first and foremost. Despite this negation, there were still implicit unities in the rationalisation of Malaya, as seen briefly with the case of Maxwell and will be seen in

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[53] Maxwell, "The Malay Peninsula: Its Resources and Prospects", p. 129.
[54] *Honourable Intentions*, p. 1.

the following chapter. In addition to this, such unities had boundaries. The place of the

Chinese in the thinking of British officials also played a role. As seen with Raffles and

with Maxwell, the Chinese were considered a threat to both Malays and the British.

Though immigrant Chinese labour was needed to work the tin mines, their sheer numbers

were seen as a threat to 'backward' Malays and to British colonial interests.[55] When

looking at implicit unities, the perceptions of Chinese in relation to Malays in British

writings will be the focus of the next chapter.

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[55] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 176.

Chapter 2:

Malays and Chinese "Others" in British Thinking of Malaya

By 1909, all the states in the Peninsula were under British protection or advice in one manner or another. The first four states to come under British protection were federated into an administrative body in 1896. Essentially, this combined the governmental workings of separate *negeris* into one. In 1909, the Northern Malay states came under the protection of the British under an agreement between the British and Siamese governments. Lastly, during that same year, Johor accepted British advice.[1] The position of the British in Malaya seemed secure. These political changes facilitated the economic development of Malaya. From the 1840s until the early twentieth century, there was drastic economic and demographic change in the Malay Peninsula. Tin was the main export product of Malaya, but rubber grew in importance by the end of the period. The influx of people from both Southern China, Southern India, as well as from the neighbouring islands to participate in the economy was astounding.[2]

Amidst all these changes, the focus among many British writers was not on establishing what type of nation was in Malaya, or whether there was or ever had been one. The more common lens of interpretation for Malaya and Malays was race. Margaretta Morris, an American scientist, wrote in 1906 that the framework of race was "the typical thought of the second quarter of the nineteenth century" for many Western

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[1] James de V. Allen, "Two Imperialists: A Study of Sir Frank Swettenham and Sir Hugh Clifford", *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 36 (1964), p. 53; Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 200.
[2] Paul H. Kratoska, *Proconsuls, Yeoman and Rice Farmers: Cultural Categories in British Malaya* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Thesis Dissertation, 1975), p. 72; Charles Hirschman, "The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology," *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 1, Issue 2 (Spring, 1986): 336; Charles Hirschman, "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classifications," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Aug. 1987): 558-9.

scholars. Even in her article written in the early twentieth century, she primarily used race to study the Malay Archipelago. She referred to groups in the Archipelago as "nations" only when she relied on sources such as Raffles and Crawfurd who themselves described those groups as nations.[3] In another instance, Hugh Clifford, a colonial official, provided some friendly advice in a letter addressed to Americans who had recently colonised the Philippines in 1899. He saw both Britain and America as "nations" along with the Dutch. The British and the Americans were the "white races" governing the "brown race" in Malaya and the Philippines.[4] Swettanham in 1907 still referred to many nationalities in the ports of the West coast of Malaya, and that the Malay women wore the "national garment".[5] Yet the shift to race was even seen in the purposeful changing of census classifications from "nationality" to "race", as the author of the 1901 census explained that race, though overlapping with nationality, was more far-reaching and clear-cut.[6]

In the previous chapter, terms such as nation, race and people were seen as overlapping. This situation changed, as indicated in the writing of Maxwell, with the reluctance to attribute the civilisational attributes of nation to Malays and Malaya. This rationalisation of Malaya and Malays in terms other than nation resonated with the colonial concerns of British commentators. For John Westlake, a British lawyer of international law writing in 1894, the issue was whether the inhabitants of a certain area had civilization and sovereignty, the right to establish mechanisms of government. The test of civilization was whether the inhabitants had a government which allowed the

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[3] Margaretta Morris, "Race and Custom in the Malay Archipelago", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Volume 27 (1906): 196, 204.
[4] Hugh Clifford, "A Lesson from the Malay States", *The Atlantic Monthly*, Volume 84, Issue 505 (November 1899): 587-9.
[5] Frank Swettanham, *British Malaya: an account of the origin and progress of British influence in Malaya* (London : J. Lane, the Bodley Head , 1920), pp. 3, 9, 150.
[6] Hirschman, "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia", p. 561.

European way of life to flourish. The inhabitants would have sovereignty only if the government established was similar to European modes of government.[7] In other writings where nation was mentioned, the term was applied more towards those countries able to colonise such as the British, Dutch and French.[8] For the people and places colonised or protected, they were more likely to be referred to as "races", "lower races", or "lower nations". In J. A. Hobson's 1902 publication *Imperialism: A Study*, the title of one of his chapters is telling: "Imperialism and the Lower Races". The shift away from nation being applied to Malaya could thus also be said to stem from Malaya no longer qualifying for that status since the term was also connected to the power of states to make their mark on the world by attaining territorial possessions.[9]

Despite the slant towards racial connotations of Malays and Malaya, there were still implicit unities and borders drawn pertaining to people in Malaya and their relationship to the area. Knowledge formation by the British linked a Malay race to aspects commonly associated with nationhood. The place of Malays as compared to other groups in Malaya during this period can be seen in a quote taken from *The Economy of Malaya* by T. H. Silcock, written in 1954, which was present in the minds of many British writers in the early twentieth century:

> "The population of Malaya, at least up to the middle 30's of the present century consisted of two parts, a settled Malay population, which was in general very conservative about education, in keeping with the conservative attitude to economics and politics which it was the official British policy to encourage, and a large transient immigrant population, mainly of Chinese and Indian labourers,

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[7] "John Westlake on the Title to Sovereignty", in *Imperialism*, ed. Phillip Curtin (New York: Walker, 1972), pp. 51, 53.
[8] Clifford, "A Lesson from the Malay States", pp. 587-9; "Lugard on the 'Dual Mandate'", in *Imperialism*, p. 310.
[9] "J. A. Hobson, Trusteeship Under International Control", in *Imperialism*, pp. 319, 324.

who came to Malaya to work for relatively short periods and then return to their country of origin".[10]

Malays were clearly presented as the people of Malaya. They were tied to Malaya as they were said to be "settled", and their way of life was "conservative" in matters of education, economics and politics. Malays were perceived as subsistence farmers whom the British protected. However, the description of a Malay race as the people of Malaya was made more explicit by the description of the other peoples who were also in Malaya. On the other end of the spectrum were the highly mobile labourers who were Chinese and Indian. They were anything but settled, and were not linked to Malaya, except temporarily, as they intended to go back to their "country of origin". In addition to the detailed description of the races, which gave a certain character to Malaya, we can also note that there was an air of passivity and lack of sovereignty. The Malays were the meek population, the Chinese and Indians disinterested workers, whereas the British were the ones who were running things in Malaya even though they were not seen as part of Malaya.

This view of Malaya with its separate groups of people was reinforced by the theory of the "plural society" put forth most succinctly by J. S. Furnivall in 1948, though this framework can be found in the late nineteenth century long before he published his book. He described the plural society, which he said was to be found in all tropical dependencies, as follows:

"There is a plural society, with different sections of the community living side by side, but separately, within the same political unit. Even in the economic sphere

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[10] T. H. Silcock, *The Economy of Malaya: An Essay in Colonial Political Economy* (Singapore: Donald Moore, 1954), p. 34.

there is a division of labour along racial lines. Natives, Chinese, Indians and Europeans all have different functions…".[11]

Malaya, the Federated Malay States in particular, seemed a plural society *par excellence* to Furnivall. The markers of the different societal elements in a plural society were racial and economic. These two ideas were closely intertwined; indeed the economic function of a person strongly suggested their racial type and vice versa. Within concepts of race and economic function, there was only one group who had strong links to the territory: Malays, who were "native" or indigenous. Classification among one of the other groups, Chinese, Indian or European, seemed by definition to exclude them from having strong ties to the territory. Hence Furnivall's note of amazement and alarm that one group, 'the indigenous' was outnumbered by 'the immigrant'. He implied that the immigrant, one who had no entitlement to the land and hence to be in that territory, may actually threaten the indigenous group who were the rightful inhabitants. The establishment of who was native and who was immigrant followed closely an aspect of nation identification as mentioned by Renan.[12]

How did these ideas of Malays as natives of Malaya, with a plural society framework to explain all other groups of peoples, become established? Many scholars have provided studies which explain a different aspect of this question, mainly, the role of the British in creating divisions within the already dissimilar races of Malaya. Charles Hirschman voices a commonly held view when he writes that the introduction of race in colonial Malaya, through the British conducting the census and fitting people in its classification system, was behind the perpetuation of cleavages between groups. He

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[11] Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, pp. 304-5.
[12] Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, p. 305.

argues in two articles that such "structures of constraints and opportunities shaped by colonial rule widened the initial differences (between groups) even further, and then created an ideology to explain ethnic inequality as an inevitable reflection of inherent 'racial' differences".[13] While Hirschman correctly points out the institutional influence, there are problems with one of the main assumptions of his argument. The identifying of "initial differences" as a basis of further cleavages takes difference between supposedly already constituted groups as self-evident. As Paul Kratoska notes, while the differences between (constituted) ethnic groups were great, the differences within them were great as well.[14] This situation begs the question of which differences are noted as being irreconcilable, and which differences are seen as unimportant. This chapter argues that ethnic groupings by British officials were not merely labels to explain differences that colonial rule then made worse. Ethnic groupings were instead constructed oppositionally. The Malay race was classified with many groups under its heading, but particularly in juxtaposition to another group blanketed as Chinese.[15]

The oppositional construction of racial groups by British authors finds resonance with the concept of "othering" in colonial discourse theory. In general terms, othering posits the "other", usually the colonised, as different and internally undifferentiated from a "self", the coloniser. This difference of the other from the self, in terms of civilisation

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[13] Hirschman, "The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology", p. 348; Hirschman, "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classifications", p. 557.

[14] Kratoska, *Proconsuls, yeomen, and rice farmers*, p. 71.

[15] The second issue we have with that argument is that blame is often laid at British feet for being the main responsible party for the spread of racial ideologies which then are assumed to have detrimental effects on the populations to which it was applied. This is evident in articles such as Lim Teck Ghee's "British Colonial Administration and the 'Ethnic Division of Labour' in Malaya," *Kajian Malaysia* II, 2 (December 1984): 28-66 and Colin E. R. Abraham's "Racial and Ethnic Manipulation in Colonial Malaya" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Jan. 1983): 18-32. In the coming Chapter Four, we will see how racial ideologies were taken on by Malay intellectuals for their own reasons, and how they did not necessarily see such ways of thinking as detrimental.

levels, for instance, served the purpose of justifying the colonizing presence.[16] While conceiving of the colonial subject as the other of the colonial power has often been the subject of study, the emphasis in this chapter is on the way many British thinkers were differentiating their stewards from the Chinese other. Two lines of thinking were crucial in British knowledge formation for the Chinese to be othered from the Malays. There first had to be a construction of both a "Malay" and a "Chinese" ethnicity. Categories of Malay and Chinese were taken for granted in British writings on Malaya as descriptions of real characteristics of peoples in the midst of information that would contradict such coherent groupings. Simultaneous in the construction of both those ethnicities was the ascription of supposedly objective characteristics to both groups which were different from, and oppositional to, one another.

What seemed to be labelling applied to differences between groups were actually formulations that posed them as oppositional. Constituting ethnic groups through oppositional differentiation is by no means a new phenomenon. Comaroff writes that ethnic groups emerge through "the product of historical processes which structure relations of inequality between discrete social entities". He goes on to write that the construction and maintenance of an ethnic group "depends on its *differentiation* from the collective other."[17] Although his analysis stems from the point of view of those who identify with that group, his insights also may be applied to how "Malay" and "Chinese" became different ethnic groups in British understandings. Going further, however, these

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[16] *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. Carol A Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1993), p. 5; David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 7. Henceforth, "othering" and "other" will be referred to without quotation marks.

[17] Comaroff, "Of Totemism and Ethnicity: Consciousness, Practice and the Signs of Inequality", pp. 308-9.

groups came to be tinged with larger meaning as to who belonged in Malaya and were permanent settlers, and thus would be heirs to government.

One of the major oppositional positions put forth by many notable British authors was that Malays and Chinese in particular could not co-exist peacefully and shared a natural dislike for one another. Among the evidence for such a view was the inability of Malay leaders to cope with Chinese factions, and to govern or control the Chinese in the mid-nineteenth century. Clifford pointed specifically to the case which instigated British intervention in the Malay states. This was the situation in Perak in 1874 whereby fighting between Chinese secret societies disrupted the production of tin and where anarchy supposedly prevailed.[18] Swettanham wrote that "though the Malay is hardly ever a bigot in matters of religion, he has the strongest possible objection to a Malay woman marrying or living with a Chinese, and this is another of those matters which have caused a great deal of trouble in the Protected Malay States".[19] Ashley Gibson wrote that the manner of Chinese living is distasteful to the Malay and he contrasts both groups' way of life.[20]

The stereotype of inherent conflict between Malays and Chinese is interesting when taking into consideration that the categories of Malay and Chinese were not uniform. Under the heading of Malay were Malays who were born in the Peninsula as opposed to Malays from the Archipelago. Some of those characterised as Malays were actually Javanese, Minangkabau, Bugis and other peoples from the Archipelago. Among

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[18] Clifford, "A Lesson from the Malay States", p. 592.

[19] Swettanham, *British Malaya*, p. 147. Swettanam's statement does not necessarily imply that religious differences were the main source of discord between the two constituted groups. Indeed, his observation seems to suggest that religious differences were not a divisive factor between groups, except when the other group was Chinese. Thus, even if a Chinese man converted to Islam, "there was… a violent objection on the part of the Malay community to these domestic arrangements between the Celestial and the Malay woman" (Swettanham, *British Malaya*, p. 147).

[20] Ashley Gibson, *The Malay Peninsula and Archipelago* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1928), p. 30.

the Chinese as well, differences in place of origin and language fragmented the Chinese populace.[21] Despite these alternative realities, the supposedly systemic problems between Malays and Chinese were mainly highlighted, instead of more specific instances between specific people or communities within those categories. This oppositional stance was seen as all the more systemic since the root of opposition supposedly lay in the difference between the objective characteristics of each group. Descriptions of Malays and Chinese often followed one after the other in writings concerning British Malaya by British authors, if not directly juxtaposed. While the purposeful compartmentalisation of the descriptions into "The Malays" and the "The Chinese" did not point to a direct opposition between the two groups, the implicit, and sometimes explicit, contrast would have been hard not to grasp.

The next major opposition that constituted both these ethnic groups, and separated Chinese from Malay in British thinking, was that between the depiction of industrious and hard-working Chinese and lazy Malays. Frank Swettanham's characterization of Malays is famous. A whole chapter in his opus, *British Malaya* first published in 1906, was dedicated towards "The Malay: His Customs, Prejudices, Arts, Language, and Literature". Swettanham did not fail to mention that "the leading characteristic of the Malay of every class is a disinclination to work", by now a familiar stereotype in the vein of the myth of the lazy native.[22] L. A. Mills wrote in 1924 that "the Malays could not be induced to undertake hard and continuous work", thus following in the vein of John

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[21] C. A. Vlieland, *British Malaya (the Colony of the Straits Settlements and the Malay States under British protection, namely the federated states of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang and the states of Johore, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, Perlis and Brunei) : A report on the 1931 census and on certain problems of vital statistics* (London: Crown Agent for the Colonies, 1932), pp. 77-8.
[22] Swettanham, *British Malaya*, p. 133, 136; Hirschman, "The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya", p. 345; Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the sixteenth to the twentieth century and its function in the ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), p. 44.

Cameron's writings concerning Malayan India in 1865, and Charles Lucas'.[23] Clifford and Swettanham directly juxtaposed such a description of Malays to Chinese.[24] Mills' purposefully long quote concerning the various roles and guises of Chinese was used previously as well.[25] Even those who defended Malays did not doubt that the stereotype was true. "They call him indolent," said Gibson, "but who wouldn't be in such a climate?"[26] The sentiments concerning both groups were repeated elsewhere as well.[27]

An overarching line of thinking relevant to the construction of ethnic categories and stereotypes can be said to be the position of the British as stewards over Malays. This role of the British may not have been foremost in the minds of officials, but it was often a reality referred to in explaining the presence of the British in Malaya.[28] Part of being stewards was the necessity of knowing who their wards were and how they lived. For example, assertions of Malay rulers' abuse of power and inability to govern the Chinese in their state assumed that British officers were aware of the rulers' boundaries of power. That knowledge, however, was necessarily incomplete, and the interpretation of life in Malaya prior to the establishment of protectorates was sketchy. The group the British identified as Malays became the wards of the new government, and was imbued with the values of a settled, land-owning peasant class.[29]

At the same time, as stewards of the Malays, the British assumed the right to develop the economy of Malaya on behalf of the Malays. The excuse of development as a

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[23] L. A. Mills, *British Malaya 1824-67* (Singapore : Methodist Publishing House, 1925), p. 236.
[24] Swettanham, *British Malaya*, p. 305; Clifford, "A Lesson from the Malay States", p. 595.
[25] Mills, *British Malaya 1824-67*, pp. 236-7.
[26] Gibson, *The Malay Peninsula and Archipelago*, p. 25.
[27] Arnold Wright and Thomas H. Reid, *The Malay Peninsula: A record of the British Progress in the Middle East* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912), pp. 316, 321; Cuthbert Woodville Harrison, *An Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States (1923), with an introduction by Paul Kratoska* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 199; Vlieland, *British Malaya*, p. 8-9.
[28] Swettenham, *British Malaya*, p. 174.
[29] Kratoska, *Proconsuls, yeomen, and rice farmers*, p. 56.

reason for colonial interference was a common one.[30] The basis for such thinking was

that the world's resources were finite and that every country had a responsibility to

develop their resources. Any country that did not harness their resources should make

way for another country that could. At one point, Malays were considered an option for

rice production that would sustain the population that was growing in Malaya. However,

Malays did not fill this role as readily as the government hoped.[31] Malays were therefore

seen as unproductive in an era of capitalist exploitation. Yet, an influx of labour was

needed to fuel numerous positions in the economy of Malaya. In the scheme of

development, the impression of the hard-working Chinese fit well with British colonial

policies. The Chinese were in many different sectors of the economy and were facilitating

British commercial interests.[32] A Malay businessman, and a lazy Chinese were

unthinkable in such a rationale.

In cases where people did not fit into "Malay" or "Chinese" categories, and their

corresponding economic role, government coercion was used. Herein lay a contradiction

of stereotypes and certain policies; while the Malay was thought of as lazy for not

engaging in the development of Malaya, it was also attributed to their "way of life" which

the British sought to preserve. Therefore, it was the British responsibility to shield the

Malays from the incursions of development that threatened that way of life.[33] Many

Malays in the early twentieth century opted to plant cash crops such as rubber, or sell

their land to others who would use the land for the planting of cash crops.[34] But through

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[30] Darby, *Imperialism*, pp. 45, 307.
[31] Kratoska, *Proconsuls, yeomen, and rice farmers*, p. 51.
[32] Lim, "British Colonial Administration", p. 53.
[33] Kratoska, *Proconsuls, yeomen, and rice farmers*, p. 56; Lim, "British Colonial Administration", p. 35.
[34] Paul H. Kratoska, "'Ends that we cannot foresee': Malay Reservations in British Malaya", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (March, 1983): 153.

policies such as the Customary Land provision and Malay Reservations Acts, the colonial government attempted to curb such activities to ensure that the Malay did not forsake his 'traditional' livelihood. Even the education of Malays set up by the British was geared towards keeping them as rice farmers.[35] Through such measures, colonial policy disadvantaged that group in terms of economic gain by preventing them from engaging in other modes of livelihood, thus entrenching a way of life supposedly Malay.[36]

Alternatively, Chinese forays into land-holding were discouraged as this was seen as the arena of the Malays.[37] The implications of the thinking behind such policies as the Malay Reservations Acts was that Chinese should not hold land. This was based on the premise that Chinese were immigrants who were not going to settle in Malaya. The links between racial constitution and occupational role were clear. The feeling was that Malays should be protected from the changes occurring in Malaya and their main representatives, the Chinese. Maintaining a way of life that the British thought the Malay once lived also helped boost colonial profits. Keeping Malays away from rubber small-holdings protected the interests of the European landowners.[38] The image of the Malay population as content to be by-standers in the development of the country, while the Chinese were employed in industry, was not necessarily true in all instances.[39]

The last, and most important, opposition that is analysed in this chapter is Malays as indigenous and Chinese as impermanent. The issue of permanent settlement was a contentious one, and linked the state of indigenousness to the previous discussion of racial constitution and economic roles. Despite all the 'good' characteristics of Chinese in

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[35] Kratoska, "'Ends that we cannot foresee'", p. 155; Lim, "British Colonial Administration", pp. 53-4.
[36] Kratoska, "'Ends that we cannot foresee'", p. 151; Lim, "British Colonial Administration", p. 42.
[37] Lim, "British Colonial Administration", p. 33.
[38] Lim, "British Colonial Administration", p. 39.
[39] C. M. Phillips, *A Textbook of the Malay Peninsula* (Singapore: Kelly & Walsh, 1904), pp. 49, 54.

a developmental sense, the British still did not regard nor want them to be permanent settlers in the Malay Peninsula. Malays were seen as the only indigenous group in the Archipelago and especially the Peninsula. This indigenousness was measured in terms of being tied to the land and originating from the Archipelago. Such criteria were conveniently embodied by the grouping Malay and were thus seen as the only people desiring permanent settlement in Malaya. In a textbook for English schools in Malaya published in 1904, the Malays were placed among the original inhabitants of the Peninsula, even though the author had to qualify his statement that the homeland of the Malays was not a settled matter.[40] In numerous chapters concerning the peoples or races in Malaya, the Malays were often mentioned first, and were only second after the aborigines.[41] This pointed towards who were the indigenous people of Malaya and who would be there to stay.

The Chinese were seen as the other in this formulation and were ascribed the characteristics of being foreign and impermanent. The textbook placed Chinese under the heading of "Recent Foreign Element" despite the fact that Chinese had been present in the Archipelago for several centuries, albeit not in such large numbers, before the arrival of the British.[42] The British, however, accounted for the Chinese in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by their love of money, as it had been said that the Chinese followed the British flag into areas of peace to engage in commerce. As with Crawfurd before him, Clifford mentioned that there were Chinese in Malaya before British

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[40] Phillips, *A Textbook of the Malay Peninsula*, p. 12.
[41] Gibson, *The Malay Peninsula and Archipelago*, pp. 24-5. *Malaya, the Straits Settlements and the Federated and Unfederated Malay States,* ed. R.O. Winstedt (London: Constable, 1923), p. vii.
[42] Phillips, *A Textbook of the Malay Peninsula*, p. 12; Robert W. Hefner, "Introduction: Multiculturalism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia" in *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), p. 17.

protection in the Peninsula. Yet, this aspect of Chinese settlement, one that could not account for their presence in terms of clear economic gain which was said to occur during the period of British protection, was not paid much weight.[43] Similarly, in the 1931 Census report, C. A. Vlieland took great pains to explain that non-Malaysian immigrants (here Vlieland uses "Malaysian" to refer to immigrants not from the Peninsula or Archipelago) were "in the main, sojourners who come to Malaya to seek their fortunes with no intention of colonisation or permanent settlement". To support his claim, he had the difficult task of explaining away the increase in Malaya-born Chinese since 1901 which pointed to a tendency to settle.[44]

It is interesting to note that while Chinese birthplace and the patterns of Chinese settlement were studied in the census as indications of an intent to make Malaya their home, such indications among Malays were not as heavily scrutinized. Rather, based on a mixture of racial, cultural and religious background, the loyalties of that section of the population were already assumed to be linked inextricably to Malaya. Malay and Malaysian were used interchangeably by Vlieland, and he himself notes that what was regarded as Malay was actually a mixture of peoples from the Archipelago. He inserted his own view as to the affinities of certain groups of people:

> "…[O]nly a small proportion of immigrants from Sumatra regard themselves, or are regarded by the native Malay, as in any way alien (*which is only natural*), and that in the vast majority of cases the children of immigrant parents become merged at once in the Malay population and regard British Malaya as their own country".[45]

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[43] Clifford, "A Lesson from the Malay States", pp. 595-6.
[44] Vlieland, *British Malaya*, pp. 9, 69.
[45] My emphasis added. Vlieland, *British Malaya*, pp. 48, 71.

The idea that Chinese would want to settle in Malaya would not be considered natural. Indeed, such an assumption simplified the matter of who were the domiciled population that were supposed to be the wards of the British.

The constitution of "Malay" and "Chinese" as separate and oppositional ethnic groups, and the othering of the Chinese from the Malay, not only played a role in the development plans of the British colonial government. The maintenance of a Chinese ethnic grouping was a crucial point of reference in the relationship between the British and the Malays, and the reason for continued British presence in the Peninsula. One of the main justifications for British presence was, on one hand, the governance and development of Malaya, and on the other hand, the protection of the Malays from such development that would not allow them to lead their way of life. The Chinese were stereotyped as the harbinger of this development. Keeping Malay interests at heart, whatever they may be said to be, was not always the main priority of the British colonial government. In the 1920s, however, many administrators were part of the 'pro-Malay campaign' which meant that they felt that Malaya was for the Malays.[46] Government, in this view, should take care to promote the interests of this group. The Chinese were not included in this compact between British officials and their Malay stewards. The extent to which the British colonial administration oversaw and encouraged the very development said to endanger Malays is not lost on today's scholars. Phillip Holden, in talking about the writings of Clifford, notes that "Chinese men are the site in Clifford's work to which

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[46] Burns, *Papers on Malay Subjects*, p. 2.

commercial rapacity is attached, the means by which the desire for profit is separated from an imperial mission" that sought to improve the Malay.[47]

The established rationale for British presence in Malaya, the compact between the British and the Malays, and the positioning of the Chinese outside and antagonistic to this compact, meant that government should lie in Malay hands. Malays were seen as heir to the previously fully independent Malay states that were now under the protection of the British. Ashley Gibson wrote in 1928 of an exchange he had with a fellow passenger while travelling in Malaya. The following conversation ensued when both Gibson and the other passenger noticed the posture of a few Malays.

> "I rather like them," said my fellow-passenger, "but they do walk along
> the road as if they owned it, don't they?"
> "Well," I reminded her. "Don't they?"
> And she supposed that, after all, they did.[48]

It is noteworthy that Gibson's companion had to be *reminded* that Malaya was the land of the Malays. The other obvious owners of Malaya were the British. The Malays were the group specified by Clifford as the ones to be taught administration in the Peninsula, as they were the rightful heirs of government. He even boasted, incorrectly, that "the detailed work of administration is carried out largely by the natives".[49] In the preface to Swettanham's book, *British Malaya*, it was the Malays whom he saw as the ones he hoped would benefit from British protection. Guiding the Malays, who had given the British the responsibility of stewardship, was the main imperative of Swettanham.[50]

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[47] Phillip Holden, *Modern Subjects/Colonial Texts: Hugh Clifford and the Discipline of English Literature in the Straits Settlement and Malaya 1895-1907* (Greensboro, NC: ELT Press, University of North Carolina, 2000), p. 55.
[48] Gibson, *The Malay Peninsula and Archipelago*, pp. 24-5.
[49] Clifford, "A Lesson from the Malay States", p. 594; Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia,* p. 228.
[50] Swettanham, *British Malaya*, pp. vi, 304-5.

While Malaya was not thought of as a nation by many British authors, a Malay people was believed to belong to Malaya and were subjects and inheritors of the government the British had built. Whether or not there could be said to exist a unified Malay people, with the common characteristics that people were said to have, this was the basis on which the mechanism of British protection operated. It was maintained for various reasons, to the exclusion of other racially categorised groups, in particular the Chinese. The coinciding of different axes of thought concerning the grouping of Malays would later be a basis for the struggle for independence of a Malay nation in Malaya. Malays as the people from Malaya, Malays as landed settlers, and Malays as rightful heirs to government would be called for by authors with a critical view of colonialism. Nation formation, the establishing of elements of a nation, was taking place in the British colonial era through British-generated knowledge that established who lived and belonged to Malaya and their corresponding characteristics. The ways in which that nation was identified by anti-colonial authors in the 1930s and 40s, and the new sets of problems associated by such identification, will be dealt with in Chapter Five.

Other questions arise out of the discussion of the last two chapters which focused on British writings about Malays and other groups. Chapter One talked about the identification of a Malay nation, race or people, with corresponding forms of government for that particular group. However, writings from the polities and people in the Archipelago have not yet been considered. How do those British assertions compare to writings from the wider Archipelago? What similarities and divergences are apparent from such a comparison? What was the place of these writings from the Archipelago in British and Malay scholarship of the early twentieth century? The following chapter will

centre on the difference in rationales of ruling, and on the essentialising of a Malay nation by nineteenth century British and present day authors.

Chapter 3:

Court Writings in the Malay Archipelago - Different Worlds

In looking at ideas of nation and Malayness in Malaya, the role of nineteenth century manuscripts in Malay should not be overlooked. The choice of turning towards such writings in Malay during this time period may seem like an obvious counterpart to Chapter One. Against the backdrop of that chapter where knowledge production by British authors was scrutinized, studying Malay court writings during the same period may imply a shift to those objectified by the British knowledge as a coherent category. This shift facilitates the endeavour of finding ideas of nation, if any, in the polities of the Archipelago as distinct from the ideas of the British.

However, there are several problems with approaching Malay manuscripts in the nineteenth century as a counterpart to British writings with the assumptions that come along with that association. Studying Malay manuscripts potentially reasserts the British categories of ethnic Malays as the only indigenous group, with ethnic Malays as rulers and subjects being the norm. Winstedt wrote in 1923 that "the Malays of the Peninsula have certainly to their credit the romance of Hang Tuah, the 'Malay annals,' the 'Kedah Annals,' the *Misa Melayu*, the works of Abdullah."[1] From Winstedt's writing, we see that romances, the writings about the polities in the Archipelago and some other writings from the nineteenth century were seen as the heritage of Malays in the Peninsula.[2] Malay

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[1] *Malaya*, p. 100.

[2] *Malaya*, pp. 99-100. V. I. Braginsky classifies the classical period of Malay literature from approximately the sixteenth century to the first half of the nineteenth century. Winstedt, however, includes as "classical" writings that were produced up until the latter half of the nineteenth century (V. I. Braginsky, *The System of Classical Malay Literature* [Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993], p. 10; Sir Richard Winstedt, *A History of Classical Malay Literature* [Malaysia: Eagle Trading, 1996], p. 124).

authors in the early twentieth century also took such a stance in relation to these court texts. Abdul-Hadi, a Malay writer from the Sultan Idris Training College, used manuscript literature pertaining to the sultanates in his *Sejarah Alam Melayu*. Abdul-Hadi's history viewed court texts before the time of his writing as part of Malay history in a Malay world.[3]

There may have been several reasons for these misleading alignments surrounding court texts. The medium of literature in Malay, tied to a Malay ethnic origin of the author, was related to a Malay base of government centred in the Archipelago. In the nineteenth century, Leyden himself took the Malay language to be indicative of a Malay race and/or nation. An important court text about the Melaka sultanate was renamed by British scholars as *Sejarah Melayu* and taken by British and Malay writers alike as a founding text of Malay government and civilisation.[4] Amin Sweeney in *A Full Hearing* talks about the impression of court manuscripts as being written by Malays and for Malays. He asserts that the idea that Malay is primarily spoken and used by ethnic Malays became more entrenched with the spread of British power in the Peninsula.[5] A. H. Johns reminds us, however, that not everything written in Malay was by, or for, ethnic Malays.[6] Malay was not a language only spoken by Malays. Malay was seen as a learned

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[3] Abdul-Hadi bin Haji Hasan, *Sejarah Alam Melayu: Penggal I* (Singapore: MPH Publications Sdn. Bhd., 1967), pp. 14, 67. The similarities between Winstedt's and Abdul-Hadi's position are not accidental. Abdul-Hadi wrote his book for the Malay School Series, an initiative of the Malay Translation Bureau, with the approval of Winstedt, then Director of Education for the Federated Malay States and the Straits Settlements (Abdul-Hadi, *Sejarah Alam Melayu: Penggal I*, iii; Abdullah Sanusi bin Ahmad, *Peranan Pejabat Karang Mengarang Dalam Bidang2 Pelajaran Sekolah2 Melayu dan Kesusasteraan di-kalangan orang ramai* [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1966], p. 99).
[4] A. H. Johns, "The Turning Image: Myth and Reality in Malay Perceptions of the Past", in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), p. 46.
[5] Amin Sweeney, *A full hearing: orality and literacy in the Malay world* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 53.
[6] Johns, "The Turning Image", p. 46.

language by members of the polities in the Archipelago, and different variations of Malay were spoken by peoples in this area as well.[7]

Yet, both a British official and a Malay author claimed these texts as indigenous and written by Malays. The problems with such a view coming from the British have been touched on in Chapter Two. Posing an indigenous Malay category was used to facilitate certain ends of the colonial government. On the other hand, Abdul-Hadi's position brings up other issues. A Malay category was used by intellectuals identified as Malays as an empowering identity in the early twentieth century Malaya. While those claims were important ways of fostering an identity, the totalising effect of these assertions eclipses thought systems other than those based on a Malay linked identity and government. Other viewpoints show ways that government and identity could be envisioned which are dissimilar from the ideas of nation from British or Malay authors.

British authors during the colonial era drew several conclusions from these texts. Since these scholars were interested in information concerning the region in the format of European-type histories, the works offered little of the information they sought in a manner in which they were accustomed. Many of the works written during this time defied British categorisation, though in attempts to classify them, they were put down as fiction or fantasy, not history.[8] Even authors such as Abdul-Hadi, who wrote histories for Malays, scrutinised those works and occasionally concluded that they were false based on

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[7] Sweeney, pp. 46-47, 51-52.
[8] R. O. Winstedt, "Malay Chronicles from Sumatra and Malaya", in *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D. G. E. Hall (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 25; Vickers, "'Malay Identity': Modernity, Invented Tradition and Forms of Knowledge", p. 35.

the different writing styles and textual logic.[9] At the same time, other conclusions were drawn from these texts. A main assumption was that the production of texts in Malay was linked to governance in the hands of Malays. This underlying understanding of government is evident in the writings of Raffles, Leyden and Maxwell as discussed in the previous chapter, as well as in Malay writings such as those of Abdul-Hadi. The position of the court in these texts as a major source of ideological unity, however, was often overlooked.

The *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado* (Epic Poem of the War with the Chinese in Monterado) is a court writing linked to Malay governance by the editor of the text, Arena Wati. The *syair* tells of the war between the Dutch and various rulers with Chinese mining organisations in the 1850s West Kalimantan.[10] The Chinese, who dominated gold mining in West Kalimantan since the eighteenth century, organised themselves into *kongsis* whereby the mining endeavours were shared by various members who controlled the operation.[11] Kongsis controlled much of the area north of Mempawah, absorbing smaller ones and making it difficult for local rulers and the Dutch to control trade from their capitals and activities in the mines. The *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado* tells of the war with the Dagang Kongsi in Monterado when the Dutch initiated a major attack that brought the kongsis under control.[12]

At first glance, such a text may seem an inadequate source of information concerning systems of thought which, up until now, have been gleaned from sources

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[9] Abdul-Hadi, *Sejarah Alam Melayu: Penggal I*, p. 22.

[10] Arena Wati, *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado* (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1989), pp. 12, 66-7.

[11] James C. Jackson, *Chinese in the West Borneo Goldfields: A Study in Cultural Geography* (England: University of Hull Publications, 1970), p. 2.

[12] Mary Somers-Heidhues, "Chinese Mining Kongsis", in *Early Modern History*, ed. Anthony Reid (Singapore: Archipelago Press, 1999), p. 102-103; Jackson, *Chinese in the West Borneo Goldfields*, p. 4; Arena Wati, *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado*, p. 18.

more closely centred on the Malay Peninsula. However, the ties between court literary activity in the Peninsula and the neighbouring islands was extensive. Though Malay and Indonesian society are considered separately in many present day works, C. W. Watson comments that the inter-connectedness of these societies was much more apparent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[13] Certain texts produced in places throughout the Archipelago share features of style and theme, such as court-centredness, loyalty and religion.[14] The ruling family of Mempawah, for instance, had ties to the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java and Riau.[15] While the 1824 agreement between the British and the Dutch to partition the Archipelago into two simplified the political aspirations of both parties, the interactions between the two spheres continued.[16]

Arena speculates on the position of the writer of the *syair* primarily in ethnic terms. Based on the representation of various groups in the *syair* and the ability to write *jawi* in a particular manner, the writer is said to be either Malay or peranakan from West Kalimantan of Malay and Bugis ancestry.[17] Arena sees the main contribution of transliterating the *syair* as a testament to the history of the fortunes and tribulations of

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[13] This comment is taken from Amin Sweeney, *Reputations Live on: An Early Malay Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 28. See, for example, titles of works such as A. Wahab Ali's *The Emergence of the Novel in Modern Indonesia and Malaysian Literature: A comparative study* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1991).

[14] Johns, "The Turning Image", p. 47; Hadijah Rahmat, *In Search of Modernity (A Study of the Concepts af Literature, Authorship and Notions of Self in "Traditional" Malay Literature)* (Kuala Lumpur: The Academy of Malay Studies, University of Malaya, 2001), pp. 101, 108, 143.

[15] Mary Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers, Farmers, and Traders in the "Chinese Districts" of West Kalimantan, Indonesia* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2003), p. 29; *The Precious Gift (Tuhfat al-Nafis)*, p. 25.

[16] There were other changes, however, reflected in printed newspapers produced in the Malay Archipelago due to the separation of spheres. Ahmat Adam shows differences in reporting in nineteenth century newspapers published on both sides of the divide, due to the difference in policies of the Dutch and British respectively (Ahmat Adam, *Sejarah dan Bibliografi Akhbar dan Majalah Melayu Abad Kesembilan Belas* [Bangi, Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1994], p. 82).

[17] Arena Wati, *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado*, pp. 32-3, 39.

Malays.[18] Such a stance is not uncommon in the early twentieth century as evidenced from the quotes by Winstedt and Abdul-Hadi. However, the assumption of text being a testament to Malays only and a Malay base of government disregards the other ways that governance was organised which did not necessarily centre on race, or even a Malay race.

The sultanates in the Archipelago before and even during the period of British and Dutch control centred on rulers who were endowed with mystical powers. Anthony Milner calls this *kerajaan*, the condition of having a raja, which legitimised the polity.[19] Texts produced during this time were primarily done so under the supervision or prompting of members of the ruling court, and were supportive of the court and its legitimacy.[20] The lens of interpretation was thus the court and the position of individuals or groups in relation to the court instead of ethnicity. Texts represented a person's identity as bound up in his relationship as subject to a raja. The subject was linked to the polity represented by the raja, and was an understandable way of ascribing origin.[21] In the nineteenth century, the ruling court might in some cases have been the European powers that established themselves in the Archipelago, such as the British and the Dutch.[22]

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[18] Arena Wati, *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado*, p. 9.

[19] Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, pp. 16; Hadijah Rahmat, *In Search of Modernity*, p. 83.

[20] Barbara Watson Andaya and Virginia Matheson, "Islamic Thought and Malay Tradition: The Writings of Raja Ali Haji of Riau (ca. 1809- ca. 1870)" in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), p. 111; Johns, "The Turning Image", p. 64.

[21] Milner notes that affiliation to a Sultan was mentioned in response to questions concerning origin (Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, pp. 16-7); Sweeney, *Reputations Live On*, p. 80. Though Patrick Sullivan would say that to derive that the raja constituted the focal point of ones identity is what the text would have us believe, instead of an actual experience (Sullivan, "A critical appraisal of historians of Malaya: the theory of society implicit in their work" in *Southeast Asia: Essays in the Political Economy of Structural Change*, ed. R. Higott and R. Robison [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985] p. 67).

[22] A. Wahab Ali, *The Emergence of the Novel in Modern Indonesia and Malaysian Literature*, p. 42; Sweeney, *Reputations Live On*, p. 13.

These trends are apparent in the *syair* itself. The ruling courts are the centre of the *syair*. The *syair* opens with descriptions of the rulers and nobles of Mempawah. Praise and flattery are showered onto these figures repeatedly. Another eulogised party are the Dutch and their representatives who are presented consistently as brave and valiant. The alliances apparent from the *syair* between the Dutch and Mempawah rulers show the extent to which "court intrigues… disregarded ethnic divisions".[23] The rulers of Mempawah recognise Dutch suzerainty and orders coming from the Dutch are followed by those rulers. Both the Dutch and the royalty of West Kalimantan are showered with praise.[24] Not only is the syair concerned with the court, that court also includes the Dutch and is not necessarily bound up in ethnicity. The syair itself might have been commissioned by the Dutch or the ruler of Mempawah, or both in concert.

The writings of Munshi Abdullah are similarly claimed as centring on Malay forms of government.[25] The *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah* was published in 1838 and relayed the events surrounding Abdullah's journey to Kelantan. He accompanied some traders in an attempt to send a letter to the ruler of Kelantan concerning cargo from Singapore that was held up in Kelantan due to a war. During his travels, he was able to visit many east coast Malay states for the first time.[26] He compared polities between the Malay states that he visited and the Straits Settlements, and offered a critique of the Malay states. Kassim Ahmad focusses on Abdullah's critique of the Malay states as concern for the Malay race or nation and the Malay language by a Malay. Yet, the upshot

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[23] Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers, Farmers, and Traders*, p. 53.

[24] Arena Wati, *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado*, pp. 18, 29, 63, 66; Jackson, *Chinese in the West Borneo Goldfields*, p. 4.

[25] Winstedt, *A History of Classical Malay Literature*, p. 122; Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, p. 31.

[26] Munshi Abdullah, *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah ka-Kelantan dan ka-Judah, introduced and annotated by Kassim Abdullah* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 17, 23.

of Abdullah's writing was the celebration of British rule, the court with which he was affiliated.[27] Abdullah referred to two courts, Malay and British, and even called a British official "raja".[28] The element of juxtaposition between the 'good' British and 'bad' Malay rulers was a core component of his writings. The differences between the ways of life between the two systems were vast, as well as values of culture and learning. He seemed unable to understand the different ways of being a subject, and found being a subject of a ruler in the Malay states degrading when compared to conditions in the Straits Settlements. For example, the market economy operating in the Straits Settlements was important in the relationship between the ruler and those under him, and he saw it as an injustice that labour was unpaid in terms of currency.[29]

These court alliances hint at ways of thinking about groupings of people and polities which are dissimilar from those discussed in Chapter One and Two. Whereas race played an integral role in many of the ideas of nation by British authors, the court was used as a similarly all-encompassing trope in these texts. The *syair* and Abdullah's writing show that loyalty towards the court played a large part in the existence of individuals in these polities. Those loyalties disregarded, or skimmed over, ethnic lines. With both texts focussing on Dutch and British courts respectively, they could even be considered as Malay literature of the European courts.[30] This vertical alliance also implies that those who were seen as subject and participant in the polity were not necessarily marked by ethnic connotations, nor was that alliance confined to those of the

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[27] Munshi Abdullah, *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah*, pp. 1-2; Hadijah Rahmat, *In Search of Modernity*, p. 230-4.
[28] Hadijah Rahmat, *In Search of Modernity*, p. 227.
[29] Munshi Abdullah, *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah*, pp. 104-5, 123.
[30] Sweeney, *Reputations Live On*, p. 13.

Malay ethnicity. The identity of the text was thus not a horizontal ethnic one embedded in an understanding of Malayness, but rather an identity attached to the court.

Arena takes the ethnic alliances between Mempawah rulers and subjects as a given in the *syair*. In his analysis, he points specifically to racial antagonisms between Chinese and "locals" as the source of the war.[31] To be fair, there are plenty of indications that may point to such a source of the war. The text overtly mentions the grouping of the Chinese, as is evident from the title. The groupings indicated in the text itself alternate between just Chinese and specifically Thai Kwung Chinese, which was the name of the Dagang kongsi members.[32] This group is identified in a number of ways: in terms of their different religion (the Toapekong god was mentioned), their eating habits (chicken and pork with rice was served at a meeting), as well as physical characteristics (the eyes of kongsi members were described as being very small).[33] Such descriptions in the text are indicative of a racial grouping being constructed oppositionally to other groups in the text, such as the royalty, Malays and Dayak, in the 1850s.

However, there are a number of indications that suggest that the manner of conceiving the war with the Chinese mainly in terms of ethnic relations does not illuminate many of the other concerns presented by the *syair*. Early in the *syair*, the Chinese are described as practicing *durhaka* or treason.[34] The use of the term *durhaka* is strong, and tied directly to the framework of rulers and the ruled, since the politics of the archipelago relied on the loyalty of subjects and members of royalty to maintain the

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[31] Arena Wati, *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado*, p. 48.
[32] Arena Wati, *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado*, p. 65; Somers-Heidhues, "Chinese Mining Kongsis", p. 102.
[33] Arena Wati, *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado*, p. 70.
[34] Arena Wati, *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado*, pp. 65, 68.

power of the court and the stability of the polity.[35] Works were written to justify and maintain the court, and often touched on the theme of loyalty as a code of conduct for both ruler and subject.[36] Thus, for example, texts focus on the consequences of *durhaka* such as in *Hikayat Siak*.[37]

We learn early on in the *syair* that the reason for attacking the Chinese in Monterado is because the Chinese of the Thai Kwung kongsi did not follow the Dutch East India company's wishes. The Chinese in general were warned against making war which would bring harm onto Monterado, the kampungs and the markets.[38] The reasons for the attack offered in the *syair* go beyond just ethnic conflict. In the logic of the *syair*, the main issue put forth is not the characteristics of the Chinese community that set them apart as Chinese, but their relationship to the polity as traitors and trouble-makers. This serves as a justification for the attack, placing blame on the Chinese for causing instability to the state and the economy. While the differences between locals and the Chinese no doubt came into play in considerations of the *syair*, it is noteworthy that such differences were put in the context of *durhaka*.

The various meanings of racial categorization is also apparent in Abdullah's work. His comments about the Malay language and his scathing remarks on Malay rulers' treatment of their subjects and outdated customs are often taken as indicators that the Malay people were the group he was most concerned with, and who were seen as the

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[35] Andaya and Virginia Matheson, "Islamic Thought and Malay Tradition", p. 125.
[36] Johns, "The Turning Image", p. 64; Hadijah Rahmat, *In Search of Modernity*, p. 82.
[37] *The Precious Gift (Tuhfat al-Nafis)*, pp. 16, 61; Timothy P. Barnard, *Multiple Centres of authority: Society and environment in Siak and eastern Sumatra, 1674-1827* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2003), p. 96.
[38] There were two main Chinese kongsis in West Kalimantan. The Thai Kwung(Dagang) kongsi situated in Monterado, and the Samthaiokioe (Santiaogou) kongsi closer to Sambas. Rivalries between the two kongsis culminated in latter kongsi seeking protection from the Dutch, and the Thai Kwung kongsi attacked. The Dutch then attempted to control the Thai Kwung kongsi (Somers-Heidhues, "Chinese Mining Kongsis", p. 102-3).

main *rakyat*. Yet, when he described the relationship between ruler and ruled in the Settlements and the Malay states, it is not always obvious that Malays constituted the only group who were considered subjects, as there were other groups who participated in the ruler-subject relationship to different extents.[39] In the *Hikayat Abdullah*, his view of society, and that of the British, included a wider range of people than just Malays. He mentioned auction notices that were put up in Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English. Gossip and news concerning the Malay sultan spread among all races in Singapore. Abdullah also felt responsible for finding out more concerning Chinese secret society activities in Singapore which could jeopardise the safety of those in the settlement.[40]

This participation in society which cut across ethnic groups is also seen in his writing about the Malay states. In *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah*, his criticism of the *adat* of the land was related to its practice by other groups. For instance, Abdullah's concern with the Malay language did not necessarily translate into concern solely over Malays. His criticism about the lack of interest to learn to read and write Malay applied to Arabs and Chinese as well.[41] When writing about punishment by death in Pahang, Abdullah noted that the executor would go to Kampung China to ask for a fee from each house in order to bury the dead person.[42] This episode suggests that Chinese were expected to participate in the customs of the Malay states. A study concerning the legal status of Chinese in Malaya has shown that Chinese who migrated to the Malay states, whether from the Archipelago or beyond, were protected by the state by virtue of being subjects of individual rulers

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[39] Virginia Matheson Hooker, *Writing a new society: Social change through the novel in Malay* (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2000), p. 146.
[40] Munshi Abdullah, *Hikayat Abdullah*, pp. 49, 104, 109, 213-4, 265.
[41] Munshi Abdullah, *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah*, p. 36.
[42] Munshi Abdullah, *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah*, pp. 38-9.

through birth or naturalisation.[43] While this may seem to be a mere technicality, the details from Abdullah's book indicate that it was a lived experience for some.

The concerns of the nineteenth century writings in Malay were different in emphasis from British writers in the same place and time. In the ruler and the court were important factors in the polity and to the people it claimed as subjects. This can be seen in other writings as well, such as Mohamed Salleh bin Perang's autobiography where he described Johor and himself as being an entity.[44] Among the rulers and the subjects, there were also ethnic groups identified. Abdullah and the *Syair* mention groupings we might call racial, though to call it simply a racial identification would be a simplification of the different value systems held during that period of time. While noting that the ruler-subject relationship included a different section of people than ethnic based groupings, there were still ways in which the former criteria was used to create boundaries.

In the *syair*, the war against the Chinese kongsi is legitimised through pointing out their treasonous behaviour as distinct from others in West Kalimantan. In particular, another group of subjects, the Dayak, are presented as subjects instructed by the ruling court to attack the Chinese miners, and are more than willing to do so.[45] However, it is not mentioned in the *syair* that many Dayak married Chinese, and the Dayak would choose to align themselves with the Chinese in order to protect themselves from

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[43] Huang Tsen-Ming, *Legal Status of the Chinese Abroad* (Taiwan: China Cultural Service, 1954), pp. 199, 202. Jan van der Putten also mentions the Chinese in Penyengat, part of the Riau-Lingga Kingdom, as subjects, even though this section of the population did not interact much with the ruling elite (Jan van der Putten, *His Word is the Truth: Haji Ibrahim's Letters and Other Writings* [Leiden: Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies, 2001], p. 209); J. W. Cushman and A. C. Milner, "Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century Chinese accounts of the Malay Peninsula" in *JMBRAS* Vol. 52, Part 1 (June 1979): pp. 1-56.

[44] Sweeney, *Reputations Live On*, pp. 33, 80.

[45] Arena Wati, *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado*, p. 28.

incursions from the courts.[46] The *syair* seems to be attempting to separate the Chinese from the Dayak in order to portray a more convincing justification for the actions of the Dutch and the courts. Abdullah himself attempted to change certain boundaries. His writing opened a place for his court by expanding on what was a legitimate polity and ruler-ruled relationship in the Archipelago, which would include himself and his British state. He did this by elevating the status of his polity while criticizing the workings of the Malay states, thereby presenting the British polity as better than the polities already present in the Archipelago.

Another major text that brings together tropes of an identity linked to the court with the issue of Malayness is the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* . However, Malayness does not intersect with the court in predictable ways in this work, forcing the reader to rethink what they know about both these terms. The *Tuhfat al-Nafis* tells of the history of the Malay states and the involvement of the Bugis in the Archipelago. In the eighteenth century, the Riau-Lingga kingdom was part of Johor, and was linked to Malacca.[47] The authors of the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, Raja Ahmad and his son, Raja Ali Haji, were part of the ruling family of the kingdom of Riau-Lingga through the Bugis Yamtuan Muda.[48] The kingdom was ruled jointly by Malay and Bugis royalty; the king was Malay, but the position of Yamtuan Muda was held by Bugis royalty in perpetuity.[49] It was among this

[46] Somers-Heidhues, "Chinese Mining Kongsis", p. 103.
[47] Andaya and Matheson, "Islamic Thought and Malay Tradition", p. 108. *The Precious Gift (Tuhfat al-Nafis)*, pp. 1, 5.
[48] Virginia Hooker, "Riau-Lingga Writers", in *Early Modern History*, ed. Anthony Reid (Singapore: Archipelago Press, 1999), p. 98.
[49] Hooker, "Riau-Lingga Writers", 98; U. U. Hamidy, Raja Hamzah Yunus, Tengku Bun Abubakar, *Pengarang Melayu dalam Kerajaan Riau dan Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munshi dalam Sastra Melayu* (Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1981), p. 6.

Bugis Yamtuan Muda court that Pulau Penyengat of the Riau-Lingga kingdom became a centre for Malay language and culture and where many texts were produced.[50]

The *Tuhfat al-Nafis* is self-conscious of Riau-Lingga as the inheritor of Malay royalty and culture, the circumstances which made the Bugis involved with the court and the Malay world, and the role of texts. The *Sejarah Melayu*, as the Genealogy of Kings is commonly known, stresses the noble descent of the Malacca Malay rulers through association with Alexander the Great, to whom are linked the rulers of Johor and the Malay rulers of the Riau-Lingga Kingdom.[51] This condition of noble decent was commonly termed as being Malay, and was different from early twentieth century and present understandings.[52] The condition of Malayness as royalty, and the privileged position of descendents from Malacca as the prime bearers of that royalty, disadvantaged the Bugis of the nineteenth century Riau-Lingga kingdom.[53]

The *Tuhfat al-Nafis* reworks the boundaries of Malayness in the way that it is related to the ruler-subject relationship. The representation of the Bugis in the text make this group blameless in instances of court intrigue, with the blame often laid towards certain Malays from Terengganu or Siak. The matter of the links, and oaths, between the Bugis and Malays is highlighted again and again, pointing towards the goodwill of the Bugis to maintain the peace between these two groups.[54] The work then carves a rightful place for the Bugis in the history of the Malay world as rulers and subjects, and by doing

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[50] U. U. Hamidy, et. al., *Pengarang Melayu dalam Kerajaan Riau dan Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munshi dalam Sastra Melayu*, p. 6

[51] Virginia Matheson, "Concepts of Malay Ethos in Indigenous Malay Writings" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. X., No. 2 (Sept., 1979): 352; Andaya and Matheson, "Islamic Thought and Malay Tradition", p. 108; *The Precious Gift (Tuhfat al-Nafis)*, pp. 1, 5.

[52] Matheson, "Concepts of Malay Ethos in Indigenous Malay Writings", pp. 360, 365.

[53] Hooker, "Riau-Lingga Writers", 98.

[54] Hadijah Rahmat, *In Search of Modernity*, pp. 266, 268.

so, reforms what it means to be Malay by including the Bugis in that category to a certain extent.[55]

Raja Ali Haji's text illustrates how identities are multifarious and can be changed. In *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, his Bugis identity is negotiated with his Malay identity in the context of the court. These reworkings may also have been influenced by other perceived pressures. Jan van der Putten mentions that the increase of Dutch power in Riau, as well as growing power of the Chinese, were factors which influenced how writers saw themselves as Bugis, part of Malay royalty, and the place of religion and proper custom in the polity.[56] Those pressures also resulted in the desire to infuse Malayness with characteristics seen as desirable. These concerns were seen in the attempts at maintaining a particular standard of the Malay language.[57] As Virginia Matheson and Barbara Watson Andaya write, "Raja Ali Haji emphasized that as far as possible Malay should model itself on Arabic syntax and endeavour to eliminate accretions which had crept in through exposure to other languages," particularly English and Dutch. Such dilutions of Malay language were linked to declining standards of religious observance and custom, and thus to the *kerajaan*.[58] The meanings of Malayness were also linked to other royal attitudes which Raja Ali Haji inculcated. Other writings by Raja Ali Haji concerned topics of the correct conduct for rulers and Malays. The oath between the two factions is emphasised in the book as something to be followed, if not pain and disgrace would befall on them.

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[55] Van der Putten, "A Malay of Bugis Ancestry", p. 123. Raja Ali Haji's brand of Malayness also tries to gain legitimacy by presenting the Bugis as embodying Islamic ideals thought to be lacking in Malays from Terengganu and Siak. For example, the Bugis are shown holding true to their oaths, while Sultan Mansur Syah of Terengganu is depicted as giving in to his passions and manufacturing lies, un-Islamic attributes by Raja Ali Haji's standards (Andaya and Matheson, "Islamic Thought and Malay Tradition", pp. 121-22).
[56] Van der Putten, *His Word is the Truth*, p. 63.
[57] Raja Ali Haji, *Di Dalam Berkekalan Persahabatan: 'In Everlasting Friendship' Letters from Raja Ali Haji*, introduced and annotated by Jan Van der Putten and Al Azhar (Leiden: Department of Languages and Cultures of South-east Asia and Oceania, University of Leiden, 1995), p. 20.
[58] Andaya and Matheson, "Islamic Thought and Malay Tradition", p. 122.

The importance of keeping slander to a minimum, or else the relationship between factions would sour and the court would suffer, were rules still to be kept.[59]

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The court writings of the Archipelago show us a world with different systems of thought. Political and social organisation were tied closely to the court and the ruler was but one major aspect of this mentality. The preoccupations of these court texts were not specifically nation-related or racial in the British sense, nor with the connotations of a *bangsa* as used in the early twentieth century. These works were also dynamic and innovative. Besides supporting the court, the works interacted with other court writings and certain ideologies of its day. The *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado* exonerated the rulers from blame in the war against the Chinese based on saying that the Chinese were practicing *durhaka*. *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah* justified the superiority of the British Straits Settlements over other polities in the Peninsula. Meanwhile, *Tuhfat al-Nafis* called into question the conduct of Malay rulers and placed the Bugis as rightful heirs of Melaka and defenders of Malayness. In putting forth their cases, boundaries of what constituted a polity and of what it meant to be Malay were redrawn to reflect the author's perceptions and positions. In the case of the Bugis writers on Pulau Penyengat, ideas of Malayness expanded to include themselves and their polity, yet other perceived contaminations were kept outside for fear of being a threat to the kingdom. In the *Syair,* the Chinese were reinforced as a group in order to exclude them from the rest of the loyal subjects.

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[59] Van der Putten, "A Malay of Bugis Ancestry", pp. 122-3; Andaya and Matheson, "Islamic Thought and Malay Tradition", p. 120.

In the coming chapter, we will see authors use their writing to influence what is Malay, and what is a nation. Unlike Raja Ali Haji, the meaning of Malayness, and how it was applied to the nation, and the concerns surrounding the employment of the term were different. This took place in the arena of printed materials such as newspapers, magazines and books. With these new ways of understanding the world came other visions of community. What kinds of communities did these newspapers and their readers express and envision in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? What were the factors affecting the writers and readers? Also, what new threats were perceived and bordered in these writings? These issue will be addressed in the coming chapter.

Chapter 4:

Malay Intellectuals - Changing Meanings of Malayness

While in British writings "nation" had similar connotations to other terms of groups such as race and people, the term also came to be linked to the power of states and peoples to autonomy and sovereignty, in particular with regards to freedom from colonization in the nineteenth century. In the context of the sultanates, some terms shared a similar currency (though not a similar meaning) to nation. In *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, Malayness conferred power to the Bugis court, and qualifications of Malayness in the sense of certain attributes and codes of conduct were used to discriminate against and exclude those that were seen as threatening to the stability of the court and Bugis presence in the sultanate.

Malay writings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reflect how the meanings surrounding being Malay were again used in a legitimising sense but with different connotations than its use by the court writers. Ideas of Malayness were used by certain writers to build identities that were important in guarding against perceived infringements on their place in Malaya. The embodiment of those threats were not only Chinese, Indians and Europeans, but also other Malays. In certain circumstances, the grouping of Malay was called "nation". Those ideas of Malayness and nation were used to argue for greater participation in government and share in the economy, though not for autonomy vis-à-vis the British colonial government in Malaya. Thus, Malayness and nation used by these authors had a powerful currency that, at the same time, did not share the meaning of nation tied to independence. This partial overlap forces us to look at the

specificities surrounding the grouping of Malay in order to understand the ways in which it relates to nation in the Western sense.

Discussions pertaining to being Malay were taking place in another arena outside of the courts in the late nineteenth century. The court texts studied in the previous chapter painted an all-encompassing picture of the life in the Archipelago as being governed by the court. However, during that time there was another system of thought in another arena of text production that was coming to the fore. Evidence of different concerns among a section of society not related to the courts is found in printed newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and books of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The history of printing in the Archipelago is intertwined with the European presence in the region. A printing press was first introduced to the Archipelago in the seventeenth century by the Dutch, with a press arriving in the Peninsula in 1806.[1] Ian Proudfoot writes that "the psychological potency of the new medium should not be underestimated". Reading created "a new kind of social relationship which depended not upon personal networks or neighbourhood obligations but upon the shared interests of individual subscribers".[2] The discrepancy between the ideas of these printed materials and of the court texts has not been fully examined, particularly for British Malaya.[3] Yet, the presence of a discrepancy reminds scholars that despite the court-centeredness represented in many manuscripts, other identities and alliances were also present. This new medium of writing and communication, fostered by groups outside of the courts, brought about opportunities to express issues distinct from those in the last chapter.

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[1] A. Wahab Ali, *The Emergence of the Novel in Modern Indonesia and Malaysian Literature*, pp. 49, 60.
[2] Ian Proudfoot, "New Technologies and New Perspectives", in *Early Modern History*, ed. Anthony Reid (Singapore: Archipelago Press, 1999), p. 129.
[3] Ian Proudfoot, *The Print Threshold in Malaysia* (Clayton, Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994), p. 1.

Through this new medium, there were writings by a diverse group of intellectuals who counted themselves as part of a Malay community. The printing and consumption of printed material in the Malay Peninsula was mainly an elite activity. The spread of printing activity during this time lay in the hands of three particular groups: Europeans, Muslim communities such as Malays, Javanese and Jawi Peranakans, and Chinese Peranakans.[4] Some of the European materials tried to convert their readers to Christianity, or to educate those enrolled in schools. Newspapers in Jawi or Rumi Malay catered to literate Jawi Peranakans, Arabs, Malays and Malay-speaking Chinese with reports on trade and entertainment.[5] Only Muslim publications had a general appeal. Singapore emerged as a centre for Muslim printing in the Archipelago during the nineteenth century with publications concerning Quranic studies, theology and other religious topics.[6]

Most material, however, did not cater to a broad section of society. Printed texts were often expensive and scarce. Some texts were only accessible through colonial schools and literacy rates were very low outside of certain elite groups such as Europeans, Chinese Peranakans or a section of Malays located in the Straits Settlements and western Malay States, making competition for readership often very keen.[7] For Malays in particular, the spread of British education contributed to increasing the number of literate urban Malay-reading males, though this number was still lower than those who

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[4] Ahmat Adam, *Sejarah dan Bibliografi Akhbar dan Majalah Melayu Abad Kesembilan Belas*, p. 90; Proudfoot, *The Print Threshold in Malaysia* , p. 24.

[5] Proudfoot, *The Print Threshold in Malaysia*, pp. 10, 43; Ahmat Adam, *Sejarah dan Bibliografi Akhbar dan Majalah Melayu*, pp. 23, 81.

[6] Proudfoot, *The Print Threshold in Malaysia*, pp. 24-5.

[7] Proudfoot, *The Print Threshold in Malaysia*, pp. 7, 14, 44; A. Wahab Ali, *The Emergence of the Novel*, p. 63.

were illiterate.[8] Despite the scarcity and elitist reach of these materials, scholars of Malaya such as Roff and Milner have credited this arena with being a main contributor to the discourse of Malayness and politics in Malaya in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[9] This recognition is due to the fact that intellectuals, though often small in number and reach, are the ones who are in positions of privilege who are able to reach out to others of a similarly powerful status.

Expressions of Malayness in these newspapers were distinct from those in court texts which were frequently related to noble origins. The term "Malay" was being imbued with various other connotations by newspaper writers, such that it was difficult to determine who was and was not Malay. A telling example of this can be found in a few of the newspaper debates of the late nineteenth century between publishers vying for a similar readership in Singapore and the Malay states. In 1894, a debate ensued between the newspapers *Bintang Timor* and *Jawi Peranakan*. The documented argument started when *Bintang Timor* published a series of articles under the heading of "*Mengapa Melayu Layu?*"("Why are Malays Withering?") by an author known only by the pseudonym Senex. *Bintang Timor* was a Chinese Peranakan-run newspaper, with a leading member of the community, Song Ong Siang, as editor. The newspaper was published in Rumi Malay, which was not popular among many in the Malayo-Muslim community.[10] *Jawi Peranakan* did not appreciate the analysis of Malays, and responded

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[8] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 83-4.
[9] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, p. 158; Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, pp. 98, 168. This is not to say that court-centred writers did not continue to produce and publish works. See U. U. Hamidy, et. al. *Pengarang Melayu dalam Kerajaan Riau dan Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munshi dalam Sastra Melayu,* p. 11 and Chapter Eight in Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya.*
[10] Ahmat Adam, *Sejarah dan Bibliographi Akhbar dan Majalah Melayu*, pp. 71-2.

from the position of one part of a Malay community reluctant to let groups seen as outside of that community comment on its state of affairs.[11]

While this exchange may seem to be a clear cut differentiation between two groups separated by supposedly objective characteristics, the matter is complicated by an earlier exchange between *Jawi Peranakan* and *Sekola Melayu*, where the latter newspaper addressed the authors of *Jawi Peranakan* as non-Malays. In 1888, rivalries between these newspapers prompted a writer for *Sekola Melayu* to hurl insults at the writers of *Jawi Peranakan* as *"peranakan Bombai... yang tidak mengetahui alif bengkok Melayu kita ini."* To draw further attention to Jawi Peranakan as not Malay, and not 'us', the Malay language used by *Jawi Peranakan* was even criticized.[12] On the other hand, the credentials of *Sekola Melayu*'s writers as Malay were not unassailable. Those known as Jawi Peranakan had often intermarried with Malays, assimilated certain aspects of Malay culture and regarded themselves as Malays.[13] One of the writers of *Sekola Melayu*, Mohammed Alie, was himself of Indian origin and a former writer for the *Jawi Peranakan* before starting the *Sekola Melayu*.[14]

Despite the confusion about who was Malay, it is clear that to present a Malay identity played a strategic role in furthering the interests of those particular newspapers. There were already long-standing rivalries between *Jawi Peranakan* and *Bintang Timor* such that jokes and accusations of stealing news were made at the expense of the other. Though much of *Bintang Timor*'s articles on Malays were directed towards the conduct

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[11] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 48, 54-5. Bintang Timor
[12] "…peranakans from Bombay (India)… who do not know the ways of us Malays." Ahmat Adam, *Sejarah dan Bibliographi Akhbar dan Majalah Melayu*, pp. 61-3.
[13] Ahmat Adam, *Sejarah dan Bibliographi Akhbar dan Majalah Melayu*, p. 61; Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, p. 49.
[14] Nik Ahmad Hassan, *The Malay Vernacular Press* (University of Malaya: Department of History, 1958), p. 3

of Malay royalty, *Jawi Peranakan* took the opportunity to retaliate and to place themselves as the better newspaper.[15] Both *Jawi Peranakan* and *Sekola Melayu*, on the other hand, were competing directly for a similar market of buyers, with both wanting to promote themselves and be used as material for educational instruction in schools in Malaya.[16] *Jawi Peranakan* saw *Sekola Melayu* as an upstart newspaper, while *Sekola Melayu* saw the former newspaper as having lost its credibility after the death of its first editor.[17]

In the early 1900s, Malayness was again used strategically but not necessarily against other newspaper rivals. Malay identities were taken on by authors as a way to secure their position in Malaya. From writings in the early 1900s, there was already the impression that the group Malay was tied to a Muslim mass in the Peninsula, and to indigenousness. These connections may have been brought about partly due to the British policies. In an article written in 1907 concerning the proposed merger of the Straits Settlements with the Federated Malay States, Mohd. Eunos bin Abdullah in *Utusan Melayu* argued that the treaties between the British and individual rulers of the states should be honoured and should not be altered. The connection was then made between the rulers as Malays governing for Malays.[18] This knowledge of the agreement between the British and rulers indicates that the privileged position of Malays in that agreement, and in government policy, was also a point which was known. There were authors who

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[15] *Bintang Timor*, 5 October 1894, p. 3; *Bintang Timor*, 9 October 1894, p. 3; *Bintang Timor*, 15 October 1894, p. 3.

[16] Abdullah Sanusi bin Ahmad, *Peranan Pejabat Karang Mengarang Dalam Bidang2 Pelajaran Sekolah2 Melayu*, p. 10. Ahmat Adam, *Sejarah dan Bibliographi Akhbar dan Majalah Melayu*, pp. 61-2.

[17] *Jawi Peranakan*, 23/10/1893 as transliterated in *Bahasa Renchana Pengarang Akhbar2 Melayu hingga Ka-tahun 1941*, Mohd. Taib bin Osman (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pelajaran, 1964), pp. 46-8; *Sekola Melayu*, 1/8/1888 in *Bahasa Renchana Pengarang Akhbar2 Melayu*, pp. 49-51.

[18] *Utusan Melayu*, 16/11/1907 in *Bahasa Renchana Pengarang Akhbar2 Melayu*, pp. 58-9.

chose to align themselves to this conception of Malayness as being Muslim and indigenousness for different reasons, as can be seen in the writings published in *Al-Imam* and *Utusan Melayu*.

The writers of *Al-Imam* and *Utusan Melayu* positioned themselves as Malays despite indications that the authors were aware of cleavages within the term 'Malay' which excluded them from the term. The first issue of *Al-Imam* published in 1906 emphasized the authors' identity as Malay and the Peninsula as their home, claiming that they were the same as the Muslim Malay subject seen as indigenous.[19] These assertions were made in a climate where indigenousness was determined by the criteria of direct descent from Peninsula Malays which these writers could not necessarily fulfil. Three of *Al-Imam*'s editors were of Arab ancestry, and all of them had ties to the Middle East and a larger Islamic network.[20] Mohd. Eunos, the first editor of *Utusan Melayu*, also could not necessarily lay claim to a Malayness centred on the Peninsula, being the offspring of a businessman of Minangkabau descent from Sumatra.[21] Nevertheless, these authors attempted to forge links between themselves and a Peninsula-centred Malayness in their writings.

This alliance was useful in a number of ways. Firstly, including themselves as Malays counteracted other concepts of Malayness that attempted to exclude them from that identity. For instance, Major Fred McNair noted that in certain states a distinction was made between groups seen as Malays and several groups from the Malay

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[19] Abdullah bin Haji Jaafar, "*Al-Imam*" in *Lembaran Akhbar Melayu*, ed. Khoo Kay Kim and Jazamuddin Baharuddin (Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1980), pp. 7-32; Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 62-3; Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, pp. 98-121. *Utusan* was established in November 1907 and was in print until 1922, while *Al-Imam* was in print from July 1906 until December 1908.

[20] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 64-5; Abdullah bin Haji Jaafar, "*Al-Imam*", p. 8.

[21] Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, p. 94.

Archipelago outside of the Peninsula. Those of Arab descent were differentiated from

Muslim and Malay groups by their occupation as important traders.[22] The conceptions of

Malayness by these newspaper writers seem to react against such differentiation, and

reflect the authors' efforts to include themselves as Malay. Secondly, claiming a Malay

identity enabled these authors to call for changes in a community they were concerned

about, by speaking as Malays to others Malays. Malays were said to have fallen behind in

the race for progress on their own accord. This is evident when Eunos mentioned that

there were some who did not care for their *bangsa Melayu*, and indeed lost what he felt

was their Malayness. In 1908, the editors of *Al-Imam* chided those who were reluctant to

spend money to finance their children's education.[23] Both *Al-Imam* and *Utusan Melayu*

tried to effect change among Malays to rectify this situation with articles in the

newspapers calling for reform and improvement.[24]

Furthermore, asserting Malayness allied the authors to an official indigenous

Muslim group in order to tackle the problems perceived to be faced by all in this

community at the hands of other groups. While Malays were seen as accountable for their

"fall in progress", other groups were clearly singled out as the parties responsible for

bringing about the downfall of Malays. A Malay community was often presented

economically weaker than, as well as demographically over-run by, Chinese, Indians and

Europeans. Newspapers articles and poems written during the early 1900s frequently

referred to this situation. As Omar Mustaffa in 1913 expressed in a poem, "*Bangkitlah*

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[22] J. M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (University of London: The Athlone Press, 1958), pp. 25-6.
[23] Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, pp. 98-100; Abdullah bin Haji Jaafar, "*Al-Imam*", pp. 22-3.
[24] Mohd Taib bin Osman, *Bahasa Renchana Pengarang Akhbar2 Melayu*, p. 83; Abdullah bin Haji Jaafar, "*Al-Imam*", pp. 7, 11; Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 57, 160; Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, pp. 98-101, 138.

bangkit!… mengapa dibiarkan bangsa lain mengambil bijih kita…, lihatlah kekayaan Loke Yew Chow Kit!"[25] The call to rise up was made in reference to other groups taking "our" resources, in particular, wealthy Chinese businessmen.[26] Articles in newspapers in the 1920s made reference to Malays not being good at jobs such as clerk or book-keeper, implicitly comparing Malays to the well-known stereotype of Indians and Chinese being employed in such capacities.[27] In an article entitled "*Menuntut Ketinggian akan Anak-anak Negeri*" published in *Al-Imam* in 1907, Syed Shaykh al-Hadi accused Europeans and Chinese of gaining profits from the Peninsula which rightly belonged to Malays.[28] In the same year, Eunos also noted the dominance of particular groups in certain sections of industry such as Europeans in the plantations, Chinese in mining, and Indians in money-lending.[29] The image of foreign races swamping the original inhabitants of the country, Malays, was evoked in both papers.

The tendency among Malay authors to talk of Malays vis-à-vis other groups can be seen as part of the historic specificity of the early twentieth century production of newspapers in the Straits Settlements and Western Malay states. Many Malay language newspapers were published in these areas where those classified as Malays were often less in numbers than those who were not classified as Malays. Those locations were also

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[25] "Rise up! Rise up!…Why do we let other *bangsa* take our ore… look at the wealth of Loke Yew, Chow Kit!" Omar Mustaffa, "*Angan-angan dengan Gurindam*", *Utusan Melayu*, 18 January 1913, in *Puisi-Puisi Kebangsaan 1913-1957*, compiled by Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1987), p. 3.

[26] Mahmud Ahmadi , "*Sedarlah*", *Al-Ikhwan*, 16 June 1929, 16 July 1929, and Harun Aminurrashid "*Semenanjung*", *Jasa*, 11 September 1929, in *Puisi-Puisi Kebangsaan*, pp. 10-20, 21-3.

[27] P. K. L., "*Chita2 yang Tinggi*" in *Majallah Guru* (October, 1925), and M. Zai, "*Orang Melayu dengan Pelajaran*" in *Tetauan Muda* (June, 1927) in *Antologi Esei Melayu dalam tahun2 1924-1941*, dikaji dan disusun oleh Zabedah Awang Ngah (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pelajaran, 1964), pp. 53-7.

[28] The title is translated as "Demand for the Improvement of the Sons of the Soil" in *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hady, with selections of his writings by his son Syed Alwi Al-Hady*, ed. Alijah Gordon (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1999), pp.181-5.

[29] Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, p. 119.

the site of various economic activities in the form of industry surrounding tin and rubber. In the community building of authors who wrote from those areas, it is not surprising that the issue of economic development and demographic power were aspects of their Malay communities.[30]

In this use of Malayness, it is striking how authors interacted with certain elements of British racial ideology. The use of *bangsa* and even a more general *orang* by these authors indicate a consciousness of race akin to British conceptions of race.[31] Taking on racialised groupings instead of state-bounded loyalties made it possible to talk of a unified Malay subject within the breadth of territory under British protection and rule.[32] Such a subject projected into a community was then utilized to call for change regarding aspects of the conceived community, and to mould that community in ways which were important to them. In the writings of *Sekola Melayu* and *Jawi Peranakan*, the use of racial groupings was empowering in that the authors included themselves in that Malay grouping while excluding others. Similarly, the racializing of the population enabled the elite to talk of Malays in relation to other groups not so favoured such as royalty, state-affiliated Imams, the British, and especially other racialised groups. While taking on some British racial concepts, Malay thinkers imbued their formulations of community with other connotations which were important to themselves.[33]

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[30] Abdullah bin Haji Jaafar, "*Al-Imam*", p. 8; A. Wahab Ali, *The Emergence of the Novel in Modern Indonesia and Malaysian Literature*, p. 61.
[31] See f. 51 in this chapter for a discussion concerning the meanings of these words.
[32] Racial ideologies enabled *Utusan Melayu* to extend its rhetoric as far as Ceylon (Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, p. 100).
[33] Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, pp. 98-100. It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate out which is British racial thinking and which is Malay. Adrian Vickers points out that Malayness was influenced by the colonial presence in the Archipelago. It follows then that British thinking was influenced by British interaction with Malays and groups in the Archipelago. For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to point out that there were similarities between British and Malay writings in their

The similarities between British and Malay uses of racial ideologies point to a situation where it was in the interests of the Malay intelligentsia to use and perpetuate such ideology.[34] Much has been written about the spread of British racial ideology to people in Malaya through education and census taking, and the negative impact of that ideology in creating groups and cleavages between those groups.[35] However, the similarities between British and Malay usages of race, and the importance of racialised groupings to community formation, should also be kept in mind. Both the British and Malays applied racial categories to a large section of society based on certain objective markers, both made claims concerning those in that group about their habits, way of life or status versus other groups, and both tried to call for collective actions based on membership in such groups. While British administrators used the conceptual framework of racial groupings to assist in colonial governance, Malay intelligentsia used racial groupings in order to protect themselves against perceived threats, and to mobilize their readers.

In the 1920s, Malayness was further put to use in the writing of narrative histories of Malaya. These histories were compiled from periodicals and were used as school books or published independently by the author. The breadth of material available points to a proliferation of printing activities in the Peninsula during this time. Presses such as the Mission Press and Government Press published school textbooks, and original and

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formulations of race, though this does not imply that one framework is merely a copy of another (Adrian Vickers, " 'Malay identity': Modernity, Invented Tradition, and forms of knowledge", p. 27).

[34]Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, pp. 89-113.

[35] See, for instance, Abraham "Racial and Ethnic Manipulation in Colonial Malaya", Lim, "British Colonial Administration and the 'Ethnic Division of Labour' in Malaya," p. 34, and Hirschman, "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classifications," pp. 555-82. While the role of the British in creating such a situation was considerable, it should also be noted that people themselves took on racialised identities and negotiated them with other identities.

translated literature in Malay. The founding of the Malay Translation Bureau in 1924 brought about the publication of Malay schoolbooks as well as works intended for a general Malay readership.[36] Through various educational avenues, there were correspondingly Malay authors and intellectuals who fuelled these presses either by being contributors and/or staff. Teacher training colleges in Melaka, Singapore and the more notable Sultan Idris Training College in Perak have been credited with producing a Malay intelligentsia: politically-conscious Malays who later became writers.[37]

In two of these histories, versions of a Malay people were put at the centre, linking that group inextricably to the Peninsula. The first history was a series of translations by Zainal Abidin bin Haji Alhaj, or Za'ba, of writings by Richard Winstedt. These were published in *Majallah Guru* throughout the period of 1925-29.[38] In the 1965 compilation of these writings, Za'ba tells the reader that he translated his material from relevant portions of Winstedt's *Malaya* which was published in 1922.[39] From the book containing 27 chapters, of which 16 chapters were written by Winstedt himself, Za'ba concentrated on two chapters entitled "The Aboriginal and Malay Races" and "The

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[36] A. Wahab Ali, *The Emergence of the Novel in Modern Indonesia and Malaysian Literature,* pp. 65-8; Abdullah Sanusi bin Ahmad, *Peranan Pejabat Karang Mengarang Dalam Bidang2 Pelajaran Sekolah2*, pp. 20-1; Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, p. 51 fn. 66.

[37] A. Wahab Ali, *The Emergence of the Novel in Modern Indonesia and Malaysian Literature,* pp. 104-5; Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 142, 155-7.

[38] Za'ba began working as a translator and writer in the Malay Translation Bureau under the founder O. T. Dussek in 1924. Za'ba was also a main contributor to *Majallah Guru*, which was the magazine of the Malay Teachers Association of Singapore, Melaka and Negeri Sembilan (Abdullah Sanusi bin Ahmad, *Peranan Pejabat Karang Mengarang Dalam Bidang2 Pelajaran Sekolah2*, pp. 20-1; Hooker, *Writing a New Society*, p. 42; *Antologi Esei Melayu dalam tahun2 1924-1941*, dikaji dan disusun oleh Zabedah Awang Ngah, p. 209).

[39] The full title of the work which Za'ba referred to is *Malaya: The Straits Settlements and the Federated and Unfederated Malay States*, edited by Winstedt. The book covers various aspects of the colonies and protected states such as information about the various peoples of Malaya, the history of the Malay Peninsula, and administration of and communications within Malaya (*Sejarah Ringkas Tanah Melayu*, dikutip dan diterjemah dari bahagian2 yang menasabah dalam buku "Malaya" karangan Dr. R. O. Winstedt [yang telah terbit pada tahun 1922] oleh Za'ba dalam tahun 1925-26 [Singapore: Pustaka Melayu, 1961]; *Malaya: The Straits Settlements and the Federated and Unfederated Malay States*, ed., R. O. Winstedt [London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1923]).

History of the Malay Peninsula" from Winstedt's book. By doing so, Za'ba narrated a completely different story of Malaya from the profile of Malaya provided by Winstedt as colony and protected states.[40] He transformed the story of a disempowered people and territory to that of a community whose rightful place was as rulers of the Peninsula.

The narrative history performs this ideological twist in a number of ways. With Winstedt's chapters divided into smaller segments such as "*Bangsa2 Asli di-Tanah Melayu*" ("Original *bangsa* in the Malay Peninsula") and "*Orang Melayu di Semenanjong Zaman ini*" ("Malay people in the Peninsula Today"), Za'ba wrote a history of a Malay people from its racial inception to its present condition in the geographical space of the Peninsula. According to Za'ba's application of racial theories and *Sejarah Melayu*, Malays were borne of the mixtures of peoples from the Archipelago such as the Jakun, Sumatrans, Acehnese and Bugis. There was also the mixture of "*bangsa luar*" ("outside or foreign *bangsa*") such as Indian Muslims. Yet, the Malays were now more undifferentiated due to the mixing of people within the Peninsula, creating an essentialised Malay mass.[41]

Another way Za'ba linked Malays to the Peninsula was through a history of governance. Za'ba's history of the Malay Peninsula took much from the history of the Melaka court and other courts in the Peninsula. Sections such as "*Melaka Dengan Ugama Islam*" ("Melaka and Islam") and "*Perhubongan British Dengan Negeri2 Melayu*" ("British relations with the Malay States") gave a Muslim and Malay slant to all

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[40] *Malaya*, pp. vii-viii. Za'ba's choice of translation implies, to some extent, that Winstedt's ideas present in those sections had affinities to Za'ba's own thinking, or were taken on by Za'ba. This may be said of theories of racial origin and especially of the emphasis given to Malays on the whole. However, the very act of translating only sections of *Malaya* indicates as well that Za'ba broke with Winstedt's views, in particular concerning the importance allocated to Chinese and Indians, and British institutions in Malaya.
[41] *Sejarah Ringkas Tanah Melayu*, pp. 1, 9, 16-17, 28.

governments found in the Peninsula. The effect of marrying the articles about the Malay race with these courts in the Peninsula was to give the courts a racial slant as well. Thus, the distinction was made between "*hikayat2 Melayu*" and "*riwayat bangsa asing*".[42] By tying Malays to governance, Za'ba used a conceptual framework seen in *Al-Imam* and *Utusan Melayu*, and which paralleled British conceptions of governance as well. The framework linked Malays to territorially defined states and governments. *Al-Imam* identified races linked to countries, such as Chinese with China, and Japanese with Japan. *Utusan Melayu* used terms such as "Raja Melayu" or "Raja China" in reference to governments, and included territorially bound states. Both newspapers talked about feelings of pride and love linked with countries.[43] These associations went beyond an individual's relationship to their Raja: the link between subject and Raja was coloured by racial overtones. Thus, both the right to govern, and the position of being governed, within the Peninsula was presented as the sole right of Malays.

The subtle implication of such linking is that it placed other racialised groups, such as the Chinese and Indians, as equally closely linked to the places where their races were said to originate and to not have links to other places. The counterpart to writing a history of a people in the Malay Peninsula, and putting specifically Malays as the only people who can claim origin in the Peninsula and the Archipelago, is omitting the histories of other groups also in the Peninsula. Key chapters written by Winstedt concerning other groups ("Population" and "Chinese-Indians-Eurasians-Others") or chapters that portrayed the dense jungle of British administrative bodies ("Administration" and "The Federated Malay States") were among those that Za'ba did

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[42] *Sejarah Ringkas Tanah Melayu*, p. 117.
[43] Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, p. 103-5; Abdullah bin Haji Jaafar, "*Al-Imam*", p. 11.

not translate.[44] Where other groups were mentioned in Za'ba's work as presently being in Malaya, they were referred to as "*orang2 lain*" ("other peoples") who came to Malaya in order to make money or "*saudagar2 dagang*" ("foreign merchants") who opened businesses in Malaya with their capital. The Chinese were often mentioned throughout the articles in relation to China and Chinese sources. But where they were found in Malaya, such as at the eve of British intervention in Perak and Selangor, they were described as migrant workers creating problems.[45]

Such rhetoric also excluded other racialised groups from participation in the machinery of government. Taking Za'ba's articles together, their effect was to paint a picture of Malaya complete with an original people, a history of governments involving those people, as well as a history of oppression at the hands of groups wanting to take away the resources of those people's land and government, all of which did not involve those other groups. The negation of other groups being part of that original people, other than being racial in-mixtures along the way, as well as the documentation of governments along racial lines, provided a powerful basis of self-preservation (or alternatively, self-creation) towards the present position of rich businessmen found among the Chinese, Arabs and Indian-Muslims, as well as the throngs of immigrants working in Malaya.

There were others as well who were writing histories of Malays, but another version defined by and against other issues. Abdul-Hadi bin Haji Hasan, a teacher at the Sultan Idris Training College, wrote two volumes entitled *Sejarah Alam Melayu* (History of the Malay World) in 1925. The volumes were written based on *hikayats*, British censuses, as well as material from the Netherlands East Indies, and received approval

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[44] *Malaya*, pp. 73, 116, 168-174, 239.
[45] *Sejarah Ringkas Tanah Melayu*, pp. 24, 84, 91.

from Winstedt and Dussek to be used as a textbook in government schools.[46] Abdul-Hadi's formulation of Malaya and Malays gave emphasis to other aspects of a Malay *bangsa* not touched on by Za'ba. His version of the Malay world and Malays incorporated Hindus and Hinduism while specifically excluding Buddhists and Buddhism.

Sejarah Alam Melayu contains many similarities with Za'ba's articles. The history presents Malays as the main group in the Peninsula. There is an overlap of chapter headings and content. Abdul-Hadi's work also contains chapters on the original inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula, on how these inhabitants are the ancestors of Malays today, and on how Sumatrans came to the Peninsula.[47] Yet other issues were dealt with in detail in the *Sejarah* which were not touched on in Za'ba's work. Abdul-Hadi devoted two chapters to the presence of the Hindu people and religion in the Malay world. The inter-mingling of Hindus and Javanese was said to "*memajukan bangsa*" *orang Jawa*. Hinduism flourished in the Malay Peninsula with the coming of Javanese to the Peninsula, and left many influences on the language and culture of Malays.[48]

The celebration of Javanese, Hinduism and Hindus in the culture and history of Malays and the Malay world is juxtaposed with the exclusion of elements related to Buddhism. Abdul-Hadi noted how Buddhism came to the Malay Peninsula, though he wrote that it was not taken to by Malays. Eventually, the presence of the religion faded

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[46] Abdul-Hadi, *Sejarah Alam Melayu: Penggal I*, p. v; Abdul-Hadi bin Haji Hasan, *Sejarah Alam Melayu: Penggal II* (Singapore: MPH Publications Sdn. Bhd., 1968); Abdullah Sanusi bin Ahmad, *Peranan Pejabat Karang Mengarang Dalam Bidang2 Pelajaran Sekolah2*, pp. 20-1. There were four other volumes that accompanied these two which are unavailable (Cheah Boon Kheng, "Writing Indigenous History in Malaysia: A Survey on Approaches and Problems", *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 10 (2), pp. 45).
[47] Abdul-Hadi bin Haji Hasan, *Sejarah Alam Melayu: Penggal I*, pp. vii, viii, 1
[48] "…contribute to the progression of the Javanese." Abdul-Hadi, *Sejarah Alam Melayu: Penggal II*, pp. 35, 38.

entirely, leaving no legacy for Malays and their culture. The animosity towards

Buddhism is explained by its association to a group which he felt threatened Malays: the

Siam-Thai people. Abdul-Hadi wrote one chapter on "*Orang-orang Siam Mendudoki dan*

Berkuasa Di-Tanah Melayu" ("The Siamese Occupation and Rule of the Malay

Peninsula") where he wrote about Siamese incursions on the Northern Malay States of

Patani, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu. Those states, excluding Patani, were later

transferred to the protection of the British, though Abdul-Hadi lamented that Patani

remained under the Siamese as the people there were Muslims.[49] The Siamese were

considered a threat in their proximity to his Malay world, and were therefore singled out

as outside the bounds of the Malay world in terms of religion and race. Another

ommission and thus exclusion from the history of the Malay world and Malaya were the

Chinese. While groups such as Hindus and Siamese were mentioned, Chinese were

mostly mentioned in relation to the Chinese government. The linking of Chinese with

Buddhism and the earlier bordering of Buddhism from the Peninsula further marked this

group apart from the history and character of the Peninsula.[50] The factor of Islamization

which affected much of the Archipelago was emphasized as part of what distinguished

Malays from the Siamese in the further north and the bulk of European, Chinese and

Indian peoples who arrived in the Peninsula.

The various ways in which a Malay people were used in these histories was

analogous to the use of nation in the 1920s by Western authors.[51] There was a focus on a

people which was said to be of common racial origins, cultural habits or history. That

people was linked to a place, and to a history of political involvement in that area. Along

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[49] Abdul-Hadi, *Sejarah Alam Melayu: Penggal II*, pp. 35, 145-6.
[50] Abdul-Hadi, *Sejarah Alam Melayu: Penggal II*, pp. 151-2, 248.
[51] See discussion in Chapter Five concerning these works.

with the indigenousness status of that people, connotations of priority and privilege were associated with that group.[52] Indeed, in an article published in the Malay Mail in 1923, Za'ba used terms in English such as "nation" and "people" to describe the Malays.[53] The comparison between Za'ba's Malay and English terminology in reference to the community of Malays suggests that there were affinities between his usage of Malay terms such as *bangsa* and *orang* and the English "nation". However, there were key differences between the two. The Malay histories and the terms *bangsa* and *orang* were not used in such a way as to try to oust the British from the Peninsula, though the English term "nation" was becoming associated with decolonisation, self-government and independence.[54] Indeed, the British did not appear to be the main concern of these authors. Rather, the histories and the group terms targeted other communities. References to Malays were used in the writing of histories as a way to entrench authors in Malaya and argue for certain rights against other groups under the umbrella of British power in the Peninsula. Thus, the boundaries written into these narratives were aimed at excluding groups such as Chinese and Indians, producing various images of Malays.

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[52] There may not be a Malay word that captures the nuances of the English 'nation' during this time, though some scholars have translated some Malay words as 'nation'. The grouping terms often used in Malay texts were *bangsa* and *orang*. While the former has been translated as "race" by Milner and Hooker, Alijah Gordon has translated it into "nation" instead. Crawfurd and later Andaya translated *orang* into the generic English word "people". However, when combining *orang* with *Melayu* or other groups such as Bugis or Minangkabau, *orang* may connote a racialised grouping of different types of people. An important way of understanding the terms describing Malays in relation to nation is that both sets were grouping terms. As seen with "nation", "race" and "people", these may all refer to the same group but one term may be chosen to refer to that group instead of another due to its weight. When references to Malays were used in the writing of histories as a way to entrench authors in Malaya and later argue for certain rights, the implications of *bangsa* or *orang Melayu* are parallel to those of nation as referring to a group of people indigenous to an area and therefore deserving of state independence (Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, p. 6; Hooker, *Writing a New Society*, x; Crawfurd, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands & Adjacent Countries,* p. 314; Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 334).
[53] Hooker, *Writing a new* society, p. 70.
[54] See the discussion below concerning L. Richmond Wheeler's use of 'nation' in *The Modern Malay* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1928).

In the late 1920s, a history that came close to writing of Malays as a nation that deserved self-government was Abdul Majid Zainuddin's *The Malays in Malaya, by One of Them*, written and published anonymously in 1928. His history was written in response to L. Richmond Wheeler's *The Modern Malay* published in the same year. The medium of English, and the extensive use of political vocabulary in Abdul Majid's text, set it apart from former histories. The author wrote in English to reach a specifically English speaking audience. He used the term "nation" throughout his history in reference to Malays. In fact, he rewrote the history of Malaya and Malays using twentieth century political terms such as sovereignty, suzerainty, citizens, colonisation and rights. The "Malay nation" was presented in the work as a nation among nations, though a small one. The history of Siamese influence over the Northern Malay states was written in terms of conquest and infringement on Malayan sovereignty. A "Malayan nation" (and here the connotation of Malayan does not include Chinese and Indians), was also present in his depiction of Melaka. He lamented that if the League of Nations was present then, Melaka could have made a case against the Portuguese through that international body for the attack.[55]

Abdul Majid's application of political vocabulary shows how such vocabulary became increasingly associated with government, state independence and freedom from colonialism in the early twentieth century.[56] When talking about the arrangement of the British with Malay rulers, he wrote about "advice" being given, and "advisors" in

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[55] *The Malays in Malaya*, preface, pp. 29, 44.

[56] See the manner in which Japan and Afghanistan were brought up as a comparison to Malaya and Malays in "*Sedarlah*" by Mahmud Ahmadi written in 1929. Articles in the newspapers *Al-Imam* and *Al-Ikhwan* also voiced dissatisfaction with Malaya being ruled by those other than the rightful heirs. (*Puisi-Puisi Kebangsaan*, p. 10; "*Menuntut Ketinggian akan Anak-anak Negeri*" in *Al-Imam*, 12 July 1907 and "*Teriak Sa-benar*" in *Al-Ikhwan*, 16 October 1926 in *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hady*, ed. Alijah Gordon, pp. 181, 186).

quotation marks. This perhaps hinted at what he thought was a situation of unrightful power being in the hands of the British. His narrative points towards a subtle indictment of the British through questioning their place in Malaya.

The connotations of such political vocabulary are seen as well in Wheeler's book. The tone of the book is one which treats the Malays and Malaya with some autonomy compared to the texts we examined in Chapter Two. Though Malays were presented as a weak race and still not often as a nation, one gets the impression that the sense of colonial ownership and superiority over the Malays and Malaya was not complete.[57] When mentioning piracy in the Straits of Melaka, which was often cited as one of the reasons for British intervention, Wheeler placed that activity into perspective by saying that the most civilised nations during that time were buying and selling humans as a commodity. Furthermore, the possibility of Malaya turning into a nation was considered seriously. Here we find indications of what a Malay nation might be: a Malay race but with the key element of unified states instead of individual sultanates. This nation was then automatically linked to the possibility of it being independent, and posing a threat to British power.[58] Colonialism was being called into question, and nation linked to government was the tool which entered a former colony into the world of modern, independent states.

Abdul Majid, however, did not use nation and its accompanying connotations to argue for the British withdrawal from Malaya. Instead, it was used to bring up the issue of rights of Malays in Malaya, and the appropriateness of groups other than Malays

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[57] Wheeler, *The Modern Malay*, pp. 7, 71, 140-2.
[58] Wheeler, *The Modern Malay*, pp. 7, 111, 180, 235.

participating in government.[59] A more immediate threat was of the Chinese in Malaya. Before learning of the present grievance with the Chinese, the reader is prepared with earlier chapters on the Chinese in Melaka. While Chinese settlements were written about as far back as in the *Sejarah Melayu*, he doubted the truth of those reports. Chinese were strategically presented as leading separate lives from the majority of the population. He called them "good and loyal citizens" who "retain(ed) their nationality". He emphasized that they were allowed to live in peace. This emphasis on the specific living conditions and rights of Chinese in former days foreshadowed an indictment of Chinese. This earlier image was juxtaposed with the last chapter of the book where Chinese were presented as the main threat to Malays. The cause for such concern, besides the image of the "yellow peril" retarding Malays economically and politically, was that Chinese and Indians had begun asking for rights to join the Malayan Civil Service.[60] Abdul Majid explained that Malays let the British run their country in order to prevent an "Asiatic nation" from taking over.[61]

In addition to arguing for the exclusion of Chinese and Indians from the machinery of government, Abdul Majid's history also sought to foster particular inclusions and exclusions within a Malay people. He prefaced his work by saying that the intention of the short study was to look at the Malays in Malaya as separate and distinct from those in the Malay Archipelago. "This new nation", he said, was the outcome of the

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[59] *The Malays in Malaya, by One of Them* (Singapore: Printed at the Malaya Publishing House, Ltd., 1928); *The Wandering Thoughts of a Dying Man*, pp. 159-160; Wheeler, *The Modern Malay*.

[60] *The Malays in Malaya*, pp. 34-8, 103-4. See discussion of rights in Chapter Five.

[61] *The Malays in Malaya*, pp. 90-94. In an exchange between Za'ba and al-Hady in 1926 which was published in Al-Ikhwan, both men agreed that the British should not be made the target of criticism at a time when the more pressing danger are Chinese and Hindu Indians in particular. Za'ba, however, still indicated that he felt the British played a role in oppressing Malays, while al-Hady specifically said that the British were not the ones he referred to as responsible for keeping Malays in a low position ("*Teguran dan Jawaban-nya*" in *Al-Ikhwan,* 16 November 1926 in *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hady*, ed. Alijah Gordon, pp. 189-94).

mixing of different races that came to the Peninsula, as well as of the different governments found in the Peninsula. He wrote about Indians and "foreign" Malays who came from outside the Peninsula or who were from the Netherlands East Indies. By the time the book was written, he believed these foreign Malays were undifferentiated from original Malays in the Malay nation, or would be in the near future. Concurrently, he was careful to note which elements did not permeate the Malay nation and race. Arabs retained their race even though their manners are those of Malays, while the Siamese and Chinese have not influenced Malay language, literature or religion.[62]

The explicit inclusion of "foreign Malays" into the Malay nation centred in the Peninsula points to an insecurity in Abdul Majid's formulation. His Malay nation put himself comfortably within its borders, where in his life, he had often been excluded based on his foreign-ness. The issue of being a foreign Malay (known as well as *anak dagang*) was a sore spot which was given treatment in his memoirs. He wrote that he was considered *anak dagang*, being of Minangkabau ancestry, and was affected by prejudice against foreign Malays. He talked about the way foreign Malays were treated poorly by Peninsular Malays. Nor was this issue one which only Abdul Majid was sensitive about. In a speech he recorded by Sultan Idris of Perak, the Sultan made it a point to say that he regarded the anak dagang as his own subjects. Abdul Majid felt that the *anak dagang* should be thought of as Peninsular Malays, and thought that though they were treated as a separate community, they had no recognised leader in the government.[63] Abdul Majid's

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[62] *The Malays in Malaya*, pp. 7, 23, 37-8, 62-7.

[63] *The Wandering Thoughts of a Dying Man*, pp. 80, 82, 87-8. The *Anak Dagang* issue was also in terms of participation in the civil service (Khasnor Johan, *The Emergence of the Modern Malay Administrative Elite* [Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984], p. 57).

Malay nation was specifically tailored to go against the distinction of Peninsular and foreign Malays.

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Through tracing the margins of a Malay community, whether that community was termed *bangsa*, *orang* or nation, the boundaries used by various authors were changeable. Based on the perceived threats, the contents of that community could be drastically different from one author to the next. Though the communities were presented as coherent and static, other renderings show that there were several ideals in the community. Placing that community in the centre of histories produced narratives which addressed specific concerns. The community was presented with certain nuances: as a race, an ethnic group, tied to land, tied to governments and such. In the work of Za'ba and Abdul Majid, both authors used the term "nation" in reference to their community of Malays. The exact meaning and nuance of that word is as difficult to pin down as the exact meaning and nuance of nation when used by the British authors discussed in Chapter One. It was a meaningful grouping in their work, just as groupings such as *bangsa*, *Melayu* and *orang Melayu* were meaningful.

The link between nation and independence, and narratives of nation with anti-colonial movements, was called into question with these texts. The presentation of community in the last work was as a nation, and began to associate that nation with entitlement to rights, a different direction from previous histories. The assertion of nation and the writing of a history of that nation has often been linked with anti-colonial movements. In such cases, the histories are seen to present a case for why the coloniser

should not be present.[64] As we see here, that situation is not the only case whereby a nation is asserted and a history of a nation is written. For Abdul Majid, there was no contradiction between having a nation and the British being present, though there are indications that the writer does not think that the British should hold so much power. The main threat to the nation was considered to be the Chinese. The history of the nation, as did the histories of communities previously studied, was used instead to border the Chinese and other groups from the nation.

The final chapter will consider works which were anti-colonial and supportive of self-government from both Malay authors and British and American authors. In the years before the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, the issues of what is a nation, and what was a Malay, were still fought out in the realm of texts, with new concerns incorporated into those formulations.

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[64] C. L. Innes, " 'Forging the Conscience of Their Race': Nationalist Writers", in *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures: An Introduction*, ed. Bruce King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 124.

Chapter 5:

Malayness and Nation - Tools in the formation of an independent state

In the 1930s and 40s, Malay authors continued formulating views on what it meant to be Malay and how this was related to the nation. Their perceptions were wide and varied. There were authors who saw the inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies as part of the same cultural unit as Malays in Malaya while others distinguished between 'true' Malays and foreign Malays. There were also authors who continued to be supportive of the British presence in Malaya.[1] The focus of this chapter, however, is on those writers who envisioned Malayness and nation within the confines of British Malaya, and aspired to connect these ideas to self-government and independence. Concurrently, there were Western authors (in particular, Americans) who were against colonialism and who called for state independence for colonised territories.[2] Both groups of authors were influenced by established knowledge concerning Malays and nation in Malaya, as well as the issues that were important during the period in which these authors were writing. The forms of the proposed independent state and nation in Malaya were thus partly determined by the interplay between widely held views of Malaya and new debates of the 1930s and 40s. Furthermore, the nation which placed Malays as the indigenous base of nation while excluding groups labelled as 'immigrant' gained legitimacy due to its overlap with established British knowledge of Malaya and the doctrine of self-determination.

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[1] Dzimul Aqib Darul Aman, "*Semenanjung Tanah Melayu*" in *Warta Ahad*, 31 January 1937, Yalazagh, "*Indonesia-Malaya*" in *Warta Ahad*, 18 April 1937, in *Puisi-Puisi Kebangsaan*, pp. 77-9, 94-5.
[2] Upton Close, *The Revolt of Asia: The End of the White's Man World Dominance* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), p. iii; L. A. Mills, "American Historical Writing on South East Asia" in *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D. G. E. Hall (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 287.

The anti-British and anti-colonial tone of Malay texts was a departure from that of authors such as Abdul Majid discussed in Chapter Four. This may have been due to government authorities surveilling the writings and activities of Malay authors for signs of anti-British sentiments, making many Malays cautious in their writings.[3] Za'ba himself was careful not to take a stance which was too overtly anti-British, and in 1926, he asked *Al-Ikhwan* writer Syed Shaykh al-Hady to be wary about inciting the anger of the authorities.[4] In the 1930s, a few authors obliquely pointed out that British power in the Peninsula was responsible for the poor condition of Malays. Poems written in the 1930s mentioned that people from Europe as well as from Asia possessed wealth while Malaya and Malays lagged behind in terms of development. In 1939, the poet Mir Hamzah wrote explicitly of the British as a coloniser who facilitated the unjust conditions of Malaya:

> *Semenanjung British menakluk*　　(The British colonise the Peninsula
> *Anak negeri lalai berpeluk*　　　　While the people stood listless
> *Orang dagang beristana elok*　　　Foreigners live in grand castles
> *Awak kemiskinan kosong tembolok.*[5]　You remain poor with nothing to eat.)

The novel *Putera Gunung Tahan* (The Prince of Mount Tahan) by Ishak Haji Muhammad can be tied to this intellectual context of anti-British feeling during this period.[6] Ishak was an author who wrote articles and short stories for newspapers, and longer novels in which his version of a Malay nation was expressed. *Putera Gunung*

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[3] Khoo Kay Kim, *The Beginnings of Political Extremism in Malaya 1915-1935* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1973), pp. 326-7.

[4] "*Teguran dan Jawaban-nya*" in *Al*-Ikhwan, 16 November 1926, in *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hady*, ed. Alijah Gordon, pp. 189-94.

[5] Nurah al-Jantan, "*Faedah Kita Bersekutu*", *Al-Hikmah*, 3 September 1936, Ros Hamadi, "*Apalah Nasib Bangsaku!*", *Warta Ahad*, 29 January 1939, Mir Hamzah, "*Semenanjung...*", *Warta Ahad*, 25 June 1939, in *Puisi-Puisi Kebangsaan*, pp. 69, 105, 118.

[6] Translation of title is taken from Hooker's *Writing a New Society* (Hooker, *Writing a New Society*, p. 110).

Tahan was his first novel; it was written in 1937 and published the following year while Ishak was employed on and off as a writer for *Warta Malaya*.[7] The novel tells the story of two Englishmen, Robert and William, who are lost in the area surrounding Gunung Tahan in Pahang after British intervention in that state. The characters are separated and each is taken in by groups of people who reside in the jungle. Those groups are a mixture of Malay and *Orang Asli* (aborigine) peoples, as well as magical creatures from the jungle. The characters then have extensive conversations with the leaders of both groups, one of whom is called Raja Bongsu, and the other, his mother.[8]

Ishak's novel is blatantly against the British colonial system in Malaya, and for independence. The novel uses the vehicle of a nostalgic settlement untouched by British activity to tackle the very contemporary question of governance and rights in a bureaucracy built up by the British in Malaya. Malays and *Orang Asli* are shown as heads of their governments and people in the two settlements. The partnership between these two groups is but one of the fictional plots the novel employs in order to consolidate the position of Malays as natives and therefore holders of government power.[9] Power and position are underlined in the novel as a right which cannot be traded for money, given or taken away. One of the English characters, William, offers to buy the land where the settlement is located. He is met with the response from the Raja Bongsu that "*hendaklah tuan ingat bahawa gunung ini dan tanah-tanah dikelilingnya ini adalah di bawah*

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[7] Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar, *Ishak Haji Muhammad: Penulis dan Ahli Politik sehingga 1948* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 1977), pp. 18-9.

[8] Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Putera Gunung Tahan*, pp. 14-15, 22, 56.

[9] Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Putera Gunung Tahan*, pp. 32, 57, 74. While Orang Asli have been claimed by Ishak as one with Malays due to their indigenous status, the relationship between the two groups is not one of equality (Juli Edo, "Traditional Alliances: Contact between the Semais and the Malay State in Pre-modern Perak" in ed. Geoffrey Benjamin and Cynthia Chou, *Tribal Communities in the Malay World: Historical, Cultural and Social Perspectives* [The Netherlands: International Institute of Asian Studies, 2002], p. 143).

perentah saya, hak dan milik saya."[10] Through this and other passages, the novel

criticises those who gave up or sold their right to rule and to the state such as members of

royalty. In response to William's assertion that the British brought progress and

modernisation to Malaya, Raja Bongsu counters that idea by saying that the British are in

fact not protecting the Malay states. Rather, the British have the states under the soles of

their feet, and the Malay royalty at the tips of their fingers. Furthermore, the

inappropriateness of the British as protector is brought up by Raja Bongsu's mother, who

says that the British are of a different race, religion and other dissimilarities not

specified.[11]

Through this mythic narrative of a Malaya before the British became powerful,

glimpses are seen of the contentious issue of rights in 1930s Malaya. The form of the

"original" independent condition of Malaya was impacted by Ishak's knowledge of the

relationship between Malaya and its different groups of people, and the current debates

about rights. As early as 1924, Tan Cheng Lock brought up the question of admission of

non-Europeans into the Malayan Civil Service. In a speech to the Legislative Council of

the Straits Settlements, he said that

> "the withdrawal of the Colour Bar against the admission of locally-born British
> subjects to the Malayan Civil Service will… be an act of simple justice in that it
> will restore a birth-right formerly theirs and redress a long standing
> grievance[.]"[12]

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[10] "… you should remember that this mountain and its surrounding lands are under my governance, I have a right to it and it is my property." Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Putera Gunung Tahan*, pp. 58-59, 78.
[11] Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Putera Gunung Tahan*, p. 60, 34.
[12] Tan Cheng Lock, *Malayan Problems From a Chinese Point of View*, ed. C. Q. Lee (Singapore: TANNSCO, 1947), p. 93.

A similar statement concerning non-European entry into the service was made by Tan in a memo to Sir Samuel Wilson in 1932.[13] In the same memo, Tan touched on what he saw was discrimination against non-Malays who were unable to obtain land from the government for rice cultivation.[14] S. N. Veerasamy, then representative of the Indian community in the Federal Council of the Federated States of Malaya, remarked on this situation as well during a council meeting.[15]

The concerns Tan and Veerasamy highlighted may seem to have been merely matters of British policy. However, those arguments illustrate a different way of understanding Malaya and the place of the constituted ethnic groups within Malaya from British and Malay writings. Tan's justification for asking for non-European, specifically non-Malay, entry into a civil service stemmed from the belief that those born in the Straits Settlements were British subjects, and should have been accorded rights. Among the rights he mentioned were citizenship, suffrage and participation in the workings of government. Furthermore, he and another member of the Straits Settlement Legislative Council, Lim Ching Yan, put forth the assertion that the non-Malays' stake in the country was undeniable as much of this section of society had permanently settled in Malaya and contributed to its progress.[16] Similar claims were made in the Federated Malay States based on the position of non-Malays as subjects of the sultans. In a speech given by

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[13] Sir Samuel Wilson was sent to Malay in 1932 to investigate and put forth recommendations on the administration of the Federated Malay States. His appointment followed the controversy surrounding decentralisation proposals for government bodies in the Federated Malay States (Emerson, *Malaysia*, p. 324; Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of Brigadier-General Sir Samuel Wilson, permanent under secretary of State for the Colonies, on his visit to Malaya, 1932* [London: H.M.S.O., 1933], p. 3). See the following discussion concerning decentralisation.

[14] Tan, *Malayan Problems From a Chinese Point of View*, p. 74.

[15] *Selected Speeches by S. N. Veerasamy*, ed. G. W. de Silva (Kuala Lumpur: Kyle, Palmer & Co. Ltd., 1938), p. 55.

[16] Tan, *Malayan Problems From a Chinese Point of View*, pp. 77, 86, 92; Kamaruzzaman A. Kadir, "Nasionalisme dan Kesusasteraan Melayu Moden", *Nasionalisme dalam Persuratan*, ed. Anwar Ridhwan (Kuala Lumpur: Muzium Negara dan Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1985), pp. 9, 37, f. 27.

Veerasamy at the Federal Council in 1932 and again in 1936, he argued for the rights of those who are "Malayan-born subjects of their Highnesses irrespective of race or creed". He asserted that,

> "No distinction can properly be drawn between the Malay and the non-Malay subjects of their Highnesses. They are all subjects of the same Sovereign and ought to enjoy the same rights and the same privileges."[17]

These speeches did not go unnoticed. Their arguments, and the newspaper reports which supported them, were the subject of debates in Jawi and English language newspapers through articles and creative writings.[18] Ishak himself contributed to these debates. His short stories targeted the British and were concerned with the actions of foreign peoples in Malaya, which to him were Chinese, Indians and Arabs.[19] In articles such as "The Movements of Foreign peoples in Malaya" and "The Chinese Request for Land" published in *Warta Malaya*, Ishak expounded his views of foreigners, depicting them as dangerous and ungrateful. The Chinese in particular were depicted as greedy and driven to taking away Malay land.[20]

Related to the position of non-Malays vis-à-vis rights were the attempts to control the meaning of Malay and Malayan in the 1930s. There were some among the designated non-Malays who gave themselves the term "Malayan", indicating a relationship to

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[17] *Selected Speeches by S. N. Veerasamy*, pp. 52, 78.

[18] Tan, *Malayan Problems From a Chinese Point of View*, p. 94; Mohd. Kornain bin Hashim, "*Soal Kaum Imigren Dalam Akhbar Melayu (1930an)*", in *Lembaran Akhbar Melayu*, ed. Khoo Kay Kim dan Jazamuddin Baharuddin (Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1980), p. 82; *Penulis Khas Tanjung Malim*, "*Mempertahankan Hak Kita*", *Warta Ahad*, 19 April 1936, and IBHY, "*Ingatkan Semanjung Tanahairku*", *Warta Negeri*, 3 February 1930, in *Puisi-Puisi Kebangsaan*, pp. 26-7, 49-55.

[19] Chinese characters in his short stories are particularly devious and scheming. They are often depicted as the cause of a Malay character's downfall (Ishak Haji Muhammad, "*Macam Gergaji Dua Mata*" *Warta Malaya*, 3 December 1936, and "*Istana Berembun*" *Warta Ahad*, 3 April 1938-10 April 1938, in *Cerpen Malaysia Sebelum Perang Dunia ke-2*, ed. Hashim Awang [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1988], pp. 116-9, 120-33).

[20] Mohd. Kornain bin Hashim, "*Soal Kaum Imigren Dalam Akhbar Melayu (1930an)*", pp. 100-1.

Malaya deserving of rights.[21] Many Malay authors reacted negatively to this co-optation

of the term. Entitlement to rights, wrote the editors of *Suara Benar* in 1932, did not

depend on where a person was born, as argued by supporters of rights for non-Malays.

Malays did not have rights in Malaya because they were born in Malaya, but because

they were the original people of Malaya. At the same time, there was also contestation

about what lies within the boundaries of the term Malay. Intellectuals such as Abdul

Rahim Kajai felt that those of Arab and Indian ancestry should not call themselves

Malay. Kajai referred to these groups derogatorily as DKA (*Darah Keturunan Arab* or

"of Arab blood and ancestry") and DKK (*Darah Keturunan Keling*, or "of Indian blood

and ancestry").[22]

While debates waged over unresolved issues, Ishak's novel ironed away those

contestations by presenting in more lucid terms where the rights lay and who was Malay.

Groups not represented in the novel, and thus in this debate about rights, are those not

linked to Malayness such as Chinese or Indians. This omission was a powerful resolution

to assertions of entitlement by Tan and Veerasamy on behalf of their ethnic groups. The

exclusion of groups other than the indigenous and the coloniser in the narrative

strengthened the case that there was only one obvious group of people who should have

rights to property and governance. Indeed, the only nation in Malaya presented in the

novel is one which is tinged Malay; there are no other versions of nation to choose from.

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[21] Emerson, *Malaysia*, p. 513; Mohd. Kornain bin Hashim, "*Soal Kaum Imigren Dalam Akhbar Melayu (1930an)*", pp. 89-93.

[22] Tan Liok Ei, *The Rhetoric of Bangsa and Minzu: Community and Nation in Tension, the Malay Peninsular, 1950-1955* (Melbourne: Monash University, 1988), p. 7; Cheah Boon Kheng, "*Asal Usul dan Asas Nasionalisme Malaya*" in *Nasionalisme: Satu Tinjauan Sejarah*, ed. R. Suntharalingam and Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail (Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd., 1985), pp. 88-9; Abdul Rahim Kajai, "*Takrif Pergerakan Kebangsaan Melayu*" in *Utusan Zaman,* 23 November 1940, Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar, *Abdul Rahim Kajai: Wartawan dan Sasterawan* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1984), pp. 372-76.

The only reference to foreign peoples is where Raja Bongsu frowns upon the free contact between genders, and between foreign peoples and Malays.[23]

Ishak was not alone in assuming that seeing Chinese and Indians as indigenous was beyond the realm of reason. He was supported by years of acculumated understandings of Malays and Chinese and their respective places in Malaya. British writers at the time of these debates on rights were harsh to the requests of Tan and Veerasamy. In an article in the *Majallah Guru*, the author lauded the British writer of *Review of Malaya* for his "bashing" of Chinese, Indians and Eurasians who were seen as audacious in their request for entry into the Malayan Civil Service.[24] Roff also notes that the head of the Sultan Idris Training College, O. T. Dussek, was concerned about Malays not taking their rightful place as the rulers of Malaya.[25] While Ishak shared this basic assumption of the place of ethnic groups in Malaya with the colonial government, he then used that position to turn against the regime in a very convincing manner.

The convergence of British knowledge and writers arguing for independence is also seen in Rupert Emerson's writing, which adopted the exclusion of non-Malays from access to a Malay nation concerned with rights. Emerson's *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule* was published in 1937.[26] Emerson's book is the first by an American author considered at length in this study. The lack of American writings on Malaya was not unusual. L. A. Mills notes that American authors were largely unconcerned with

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[23] Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Putera Gunung Tahan*, p. 69.

[24] "Dalam keluaran majalah 'Review of Malaya' bagi bulan Januari 1930, yang diterbitkan di Singapura, pengarangnya, Tuan Cornivall Roberts [?] telah menghentam bangsa2 Cina, Indian dan Eurasian dengan menerangkan sepatut2nya menunjukkan yang mereka itu tiada layak diterima masuk ke dalam jawatan memerintah (Malayan Civil Service)." *Majallah Guru*, June 1930, p. 119.

[25] Roff, Origins of Malay Nationalism, p. 143; Hooker, *Writing a New Society*, p. 76.

[26] Emerson, *Malaysia*, p. v.

happenings in Southeast Asia before 1941.[27] The few works which did centre on Malaya

relied heavily on knowledge made available by the British, and it was a subject of interest

only due to the similarities in climate and people between Malaya and Philippines which

came under American power in 1899.[28] The Treasury Department of the United States of

America saw opportunities for learning from the British situation in Malaya when the

department published its findings on Colonial Administration in tropical areas in 1901.

The sources of information for the report were drawn from Sir Andrew Clark and

Swettenham among others, showing the reach of British colonial thought.[29] Likewise,

Emerson's book was dependent on writings by the British in Malaya and interviews of

various individuals, making the work a counterpart to writings considered in previous

chapters.

Emerson's *Malaysia* stands on an anti-imperialist framework typical of many

American authors in the 1920s and 30s.[30] This stance is seen in books such as Frazier

Hunt's *The Rising Temper of the East: Sounding the Human Note in the World-Wide Cry

for Land and Liberty* and Upton Close's *The Revolt of Asia* published in the 1920s.[31]

While calling for the liberation of 'the people', these books made assumptions

concerning who the people were, privileging the category of 'the native' or 'the

colonised'. As a result, works which mentioned Malaya specifically identified the people

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[27] Mills, "American Historical Writing on South East Asia", p. 286.
[28] Clifford, "A Lesson from the Malay States", pp. 587-9.
[29] Treasury Department – Bureau of Statistics, *Colonial Administration 1800-1900, Methods of Government and Development adopted by the principle colonizing nations in their control of tropical and other colonials and dependencies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), p. 1249.
[30] Mills, "American Historical Writing on South East Asia", p. 287.
[31] Frazier Hunt, *The Rising Temper of the East: Sounding the Human Note in the World-Wide Cry for Land and Liberty* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1922); Close, *The Revolt of Asia*, p. iii.

as Malays, thereby perpetuating certain ways of understanding nation in Malaya.[32] Even studies that were not necessarily against colonialism established ideas of the colonised within a territory giving that group an identity not dissimilar from a nation.[33] The joint effect of both the production of knowledge concerning anti-colonialism and British colonies was that the colonised within Malaya were clearly marked as Malays, as opposed to Chinese and Indians, and that independence should benefit the former group.[34]

The influence of British writings which had established the "indigenous" category of people in Malaya, and the anti-imperialist discourse privileging "the people", is seen in *Malaysia*. The study was an endeavour to understand society and the workings of colonial governments in Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. Although Emerson was relatively unfamiliar with these places, he travelled to the region in 1932 using a university grant to collect material for his book. One of the questions the resulting book raises is how does indirect rule differ from direct rule, and relatedly, how do both differ from independent rule? En route to answering those questions, the books seems to detour into the legalities behind decentralisation of the Malay states. The book's emphasis on this aspect of colonial politics, and its overall anti-imperial stance, prompted Frank Swettenham among other former colonial officers to give the book a negative review.[35]

The attention paid to decentralisation, and the reallocation of authority implied in that scheme, is understandable when considering the questions the book poses. Emerson

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[32] Herbert Adams Gibbons, *The New Map of Asia (1900-1919)* (New York: The Century Co., 1921), p. 70; Norman Dwight Harris, *Europe and the East* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926), pp. 318-20.
[33] Arthur Berriedale Keith, *The Governments of the British Empire* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1935), pp. 508-9; A report by a study group of members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Colonial Problem* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 119; Ralph Fox, *The Colonial Policy of British Imperialism* (London: Martin Lawrence, Ltd., 1933), p. 11.
[34] *The Colonial Problem*, pp. 232-3.
[35] Emerson, *Malaysia*, pp. vii, xiii, 17, 143, 495.

was attempting to understand how governance was run under the system of indirect colonial rule and its distance from how governance *should be* under independent home rule.[36] It is clear from his book that Emerson regarded independence as a former state of affairs that would have been continued had colonial powers not intervened, a belief in agreement with Ishak's. Similar to Ishak as well, Emerson held firm to the idea that the right to self-government should go towards the people of Malaya who were Malays.[37] In the absence of independence, however, the sultans should at least have a major position in government, hence his interest in decentralisation which intended to give them more. Furthermore, 'the people' should have a sizable share in economic resources. That share was compared against 'other' groups, such as the colonisers, Chinese and Indians.[38]

Emerson also considered the argument by non-Malays, particularly Chinese, for political rights. Three years earlier in 1934, Emerson published an article entitled "The Chinese in Malaysia" in *Pacific Affairs*.[39] Sections of that article were incorporated into *Malaysia* and reflect his interest in the Chinese and the issue surrounding their rights. In his writings, Emerson weighed the requests by representatives of the Chinese community for access to the civil service, their concerns about the effects of decentralisation, as well as their assertions that there were those among the Chinese who felt Malaya to be their home and should be given the rights of citizens. While those pleas seemed reasonable to Emerson, he held firm to the established view that only Malays were natives. His stance was partly based on the fears of scholars from the West about China and the place of overseas Chinese. The likelihood that Malaya would become another province of China,

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[36] Emerson, *Malaysia*, p. 143.
[37] Emerson, *Malaysia*, pp. 17, 19.
[38] Emerson, *Malaysia*, pp. 140, 149, 185, 193, 217, 472.
[39] Rupert Emerson, "The Chinese in Malaysia," *Pacific Affairs* Vol. 7, No. 3 (Sept. 1934): pp. 260-70.

and that that province might be communist, was seriously considered by some scholars though these arguments were not fully convincing to Emerson.[40] Scholars also attested to the inability of Chinese to "assimilate" to the places they were found outside China.[41] These various issues surrounding the Chinese operate in Emerson's book and portray the Chinese as distinct from an essentialised Malay Malaya.

Both Ishak and Emerson used bases of knowledge derived from Malay and British writings in which Chinese and Indians were excluded from indigenousness and Malayness respectively. The convergence in positions stems from this and other roots. Ishak was writing during a time when public debate concerning rights of Malays and non-Malays was taking place. He was also part of the small number of Malay writers who were overtly anti-British. Emerson was writing within the discourse of anti-imperialism that was being applied to Asian and African colonies. In the 1930s' use of 'nation' as a an entity deserving rights over land, economic resources and participation in government, resulting interaction between Malayness and nation were compatible in assuming that rights lie in the hands of Malays and should not be enjoyed by groups perceived as other.

This position gained strength and legitimacy because it shared some key tenets with the rhetoric of self-determination put forth by Woodrow Wilson in a speech he gave in 1918, which was reiterated by anti-imperialist authors. The declaration outlined the principle of self-determination as the right of 'a people' (used interchangeably with

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[40] Emerson, "The Chinese in Malaysia," p. 263; "*Bangsa Asiatik dengan* Civil Service *Lagi!*" in *Majallah Guru*, June 1930, p. 119. Many thanks to Timothy P. Barnard and Mark Emmanuel for allowing me access to newly transliterated portions of *Majallah Guru.*

[41] Emerson, *Malaysia*, p. 505; Mohd. Kornain bin Hashim, "*Soal Kaum Imigren Dalam Akhbar Melayu (1930an)*", pp. 82-104. This belief in the unassimilated Chinese is expressed most famously in the writing of Furnivall and his framework of the plural society as discussed in Chapter Two. Charles Coppel, however, argues that Furnivall accentuated the differences perceived between groups (Charles A. Coppel, "Revisiting Furnivall's 'plural society': colonial Java as mestizo society?" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 20 No. 3 (July 1997): 562, 566).

'nation' in the speech) to determine its own mode of government.[42] It is interesting to note the number of assumptions operating in the notion of self-determination. The principle directly links the concept of the individual (the self) to a group called 'the people' or 'nation'. The nation is assumed to be a collective individual with one self and one consciousness that is obvious and has certain characteristics. In the line of thinking, 'the people' and 'nation' are essentialised as static objects present throughout time and whose meanings are clear.[43] In the anti-imperialist works mentioned previously, the essentialised self of the nation was the indigenous self that should be given self-government. In reference to Malaya specifically, that self of the nation was obviously the Malay ethnic group which was seen as the epitome of indigenousness. In the early 1940s, however, that Malay self was transformed into a unified 'the people' which was seen as a hallmark of a nation deserving independence. These assumptions operate clearly in another text by Emerson and a book by Ibrahim Haji Yaakob.[44] However, instead of supporting the existence of that unity in nation, these writings instil doubts in this rhetorical strategy of the nation and reveal the collusion between scholars of nation and nationalists in bringing about such a principle of unity.

Emerson's "Introduction" to *Government and Nationalism in Southeast Asia* was published in 1942 just before Malaya fell to the Japanese. It was accompanied by two other parts, one on governments and another on nationalist movements, giving an overview of the current situation in Southeast Asia. Emerson's section delves into the

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[42] *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Writings, Essays, Speeches, and Documents From the Bible to the Present*, ed. Micheline R. Ishay (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 299-304.

[43] Charles Tilly, "National Self-Determination as a Problem for All of Us", *Daedalus* Vol. 122, No. 3 (Summer 1993): p. 30.

[44] Rupert Emerson, "Introduction," in Institute of Pacific Relations Inquiry Series, *Government and Nationalism in Southeast Asia* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1942); Ibrahim Haji Yaakob, *Melihat Tanahair* (Kuantan: Percetakan Timur, 1975).

nature of nations and nationalist movements fighting for their independence. He argued

that the nation was a community that has evolved through time and arrived at a particular

form naturally.

> "[Nationalism] is always the expression of a community which has been a long
> time in the shaping and which has been through varied phases of religious,
> cultural, economic and political development to which the attribute of nationalism
> may or may not be ascribed."[45]

The form of that nation was explained in terms of a unity within, and difference from

other such forms. He wrote that nationalism was a

> "conscious assertion of the unity, the distinct and separate identity, of the
> community in question[,] … the assertion of a claim as of right on behalf of an
> historically shaped community of men knowing itself to be radically differentiated
> from similar communities."[46]

These general observations on the character of the community of nation were then used to

describe the nation based in Malaya. Emerson's nation in Malaya is linked to the

essential 'self' of Malaya: the Malay. The Malay peoples, which he also termed

Malayans, were the natives found all over the Malay archipelago. He claimed that this

group was part of an originally undifferentiated ethnicity. Over this original base in the

Archipelago, the colonisers had introduced foreign elements which altered this sameness

and created other unities based on colonial territories. One major non-native element

identified by Emerson was Western government, and another was the Chinese.[47]

Emerson's observations of community were based on a few perceived similarities

of those in the Malay Archipelago, such as ethnic similarities assumed among an

"original" population, cultural similarities stemming from that ethnic base and a common

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[45] Emerson, "Introduction," p. 16.
[46] Emerson, "Introduction," p. 17.
[47] Emerson, "Introduction," pp. 6, 10.

history. Important to his theory of a community he called nation is the moment of self-awareness among its members. The nation comes into being when a group of people are aware that they are similar to one another, and different from other groups of people. These same principles are found in one of the earliest studies of nationalism, and nationalism in Asia in particular, Hans Kohn's *History of Nationalism in the East* written in 1929.[48] Already a precedent was being set for understanding nation as a community whose members share a particular consciousness.

That this Malay self was not only restricted in Emerson's rhetoric to British Malaya, but was assumed to cover the wider area of Southeast Asia, brought up problems in identifying the exact identity of the Malay and hence the nation in Malaya. Emerson's speculation as to which 'self'/'nation' in Malaya was most natural brought up several options which conflicted with one another. Emerson noted that nationalist movements came together closely based on political boundaries demarcated by the colonial governments which they were under, suggesting separate nations in each former colony.[49] Alternatively, Malays in the Peninsular might strive together with their "brethren in the archipelago" for independence since Emerson believed that people in both territories were part of the same ethnic group.[50] Those in the northern Malay states could also be said to have affinities to both the Thai state as well as British Malaya. Such splintering forced Emerson to call the nation as dependent on a unitary consciousness into doubt. He

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[48] Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East*.
[49] Emerson, "Introduction," p. 17.
[50] Emerson, "Introduction," p. 18. Prasenjit Duara as recently as 1995 wrote that this tendency of not addressing questions such as the conditions under which some entities would be included or not are still rarely taken up. (*Rescuing History from the Nation*, 3, f.1)

pondered the issue of whether or not the people whom the nationalists speak for are conscious of their nation status.[51]

This latest emphasis of nation, with its promise of independence, proved too powerful for Emerson to set aside. He astutely called attention to the uses of this unity in the fight for independence in the Netherlands East Indies, and which also applied to other people in nationalist movements similarly delimited by colonial rule:

> "… it is not only that the people of the Netherlands Indies must, if they are to achieve independence, overthrow the Dutch authority but also that they assert the existence of an Indonesian community which is entitled to its equal and separate place among the nations in the world."[52]

The implications of this observation are far-reaching. To achieve the goal of independence in a world of independent nations, a strong asset is to have a nation which assumes the main focus of loyalty of its members, regardless of whether or not such an entity can be said to exist. Emerson's awareness of this situation seemed to pull him towards maintaining his assertion of a nation as a unified community.

Unities are also what concerns Ibrahim's *Melihat Tanahair*.[53] Ibrahim's book is the result of his travels throughout the Malay Peninsula during the time period of 1940-41 which he embarked on in order to discover more about the conditions under which Malays in different states live. The author had another purpose to travelling the Peninsula. He states in a 1971 introduction to the reprint of his book that he wanted to

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[51] Emerson, "Introduction," p. 16.
[52] Emerson, "Introduction," p. 18.
[53] Title is translated by Milner into *Surveying the Homeland* (Milner, Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya, p. 257).

heighten the awareness of the *bangsa Melayu* in order to establish a national organisation for the whole of Malaya.[54]

Ibrahim's book eventually calls attention to the various experiences which supposedly unite Malays, the first of which is their common oppression at the hands of foreign capitalists. Ibrahim deployed a Marxist framework of capitalist exploitation on racial lines to explain the condition of Malays today. The roots of their oppression were stated succinctly as (1) foreign or outside capital, (2) foreign or outside labour with their capital and (3) foreign or outside goods, with capital and labour used to open up the country with no concern for the lives of "his" people.[55] The groups that were oppressing Malays were all *luar* (outside or foreign), Europeans, Chinese and Benggalis who squeezed Malays out of their capital, jobs, way of life and state power. Ibrahim's people were joined together by this experience of oppression at the hands of these groups and their capital.[56] Another focus of unity was a *bangsa Melayu* that transcended state boundaries within the Peninsula.[57] For example, he wrote that although Baweyan is a group that came from an island off the coast of Jawa, he believed that they were aware that their *bangsa* is Malay, and that the definition of Malay would unite them in an all

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[54] "…*menggerakkan kesedaran bangsa Melayu supaya membangun persatuan bangsa (nasional) seluruh Malaya…*" Ibrahim Haji Yaakob, *Melihat Tanahair*, pp. 5, 11.

[55] "…*di mana orang-orang Melayu?*" Ibrahim Haji Yaakob, *Melihat Tanahair*, p. 13; *"Maka yang mendesaknya itu ialah: (1) Modal luar, (2) Buruh daripada luar dengan bawaan modal luar, (3) Barang-barang dari luar dengan bawaan modal dan buruh(kaum pekerja) daripada luar, iaitu untuk membuka negeri ini seluas-luasnya dengan tidak menghiraukan hal kehidupan orang-orang saya (Orang Melayu)."* Ibrahim Haji Yaakob, *Melihat Tanahair*, pp. 13, 15, 16.

[56] Ibrahim Haji Yaakob, *Melihat Tanahair*, pp. 13, 18, 51-54; Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, pp. 267-66.

[57] During the Japanese occupation, Ibrahim would be one of the left-wing nationalists who wanted Malaya to achieve independence with Indonesia based on a *bangsa Melayu* that encompassed both these territories. In this work, however, the emphasis of the bangsa Melayu is its tool in uniting Malays within the Peninsula. John Gullick, *Malaysia: Economic Expansion and National Unity* (London: Ernest Benn, 1981), p. 44.

encompassing national organisation.[58] Through such an identification, he hoped that his readers would identify with *bangsa Melayu* and join his cause of establishing a Malay organisation in the Peninsula.

Though Ibrahim marked Malays in the Peninsula by their oppression and their origin in the Archipelago, their internal divisions were a constant impediment to his aims. It appeared that a Malay consciousness was distinctly lacking among Malays. Instead of being of one mind, Ibrahim realised that those he saw as Malays were of many minds, and had many focuses of loyalty. There were some who held on more dearly to other identities than an over-arching Malaya-wide Malay identity. There were those who did not know the 'true' meaning of Malayness, and thus had a 'false' sense of unity. Still others were just branded individualists who had no concern for anyone but themselves. These many minds were detrimental to Ibrahim's aim of establishing a national organisation whose aim would be to push for the independence of Malaya. Yet, he still held on to the idea of Malays would one day realise their Malayness and fight for independence based on that unity.[59]

Prominent scholars of the nation today have taken Emerson's writings, and the writings of nationalists such as Ibrahim, as testimonies of the awareness of unity in nation. Connor aligns himself to Emerson's observations about the over-riding loyalties of people towards the nation.[60] Smith agrees with the stance of scholars such as Emerson that the fight for independence is "a powerful current, a vital force based on vivid

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[58] "S*aya percaya mereka sedar Baweyan ini nama sebuah pulau kecil di pesisir utara Pulau Jawa dekat Surabaya, sedang bangsanya Melayu dan takrif Melayu ialah untuk mempersatukan mereka dalam satu kesatuan bangsa-bangsa seluruhnya.*" Ibrahim Haji Yaakob, *Melihat Tanahair*, pp. 18, 65.

[59] "*Istimewa pula fahaman-fahaman yang berlainan di antara satu pihak dengan yang lain, hingga hiduplah orang-orang Melayu dengan keadaan bercempera (berpecah-belah) tidak ada sesuatu tujuan atau pegangan kebangsaan (nasionalisma) yang boleh di pegang oleh mereka melainkan ikut kehendaknya masing-masing sahaja.*" Ibrahim Haji Yaakob, *Melihat Tanahair*, pp. 18, 21, 65, 67.

[60] Connor, "A nation is a nation, is a state, is an ethnic group, is a…", pp. 90-117.

sentiments and attachments to a pre-existing nation."[61] In a 1975 introduction to

Ibrahim's *Melihat Tanahair*, Ishak writes that Ibrahim's work is a point in furthering the

struggle for independence for all of the *bangsa Melayu*.[62] Further supporting those

testimonies is the distinction made by present day scholars of nation like Smith and

Connor between 'the nationalist' such as Ibrahim who enunciates the nation, and 'the

scholar' such as Emerson who observes and faithfully records that enunciation. This

categorisation suggests that a unity of consciousness in the nation is obvious, and that it is

'seen' and 'recorded' by impartial scholars.

Such a distinction and its implications, however, are difficult to maintain. What

can be seen in Emerson's and Ibrahim's writings is both 'the scholar' and 'the nationalist'

supporting the nation in principle and influencing the form of the nation. As Smith notes,

though he does not entertain this idea at length, "historians have in many ways furnished

the rationale and charter of their aspirant nations," and the same could be said for

scholars in general.[63] Emerson was not just a bystander whose views were heard by those

outside of Malaya. His book *Malaysia* was a prized possession of Ibrahim's, kept secretly

since the book was banned in Malaya. According to another Malay nationalist at the time,

the ideas in the book resonated strongly with Ibrahim's and perhaps provided both fuel

and inspiration to Ibrahim's developing thoughts on an independent Malaya.[64] The

interaction between authors and their works complicates the neat categories used to study

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[61] Smith, "Introduction: Ethnicity and Nationalism", p. 58.
[62] Ishak Haji Mohammad, "*Kata Pendahuluan*" in Ibrahim Haji Yaakob, *Melihat Tanahair* (Kuantan: Percetakan Timur, 1975), p. 8.
[63] Anthony D. Smith, "Nationalism and the Historians," in *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Anthony D. Smith, ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), pp. 58-80.
[64] These observations were taken from A. Samad Ahmad's autobiography where he recollected conversations he had had with Ibrahim concerning *Malaysia* (A. Samad Ahmad, *Sejambak Kenangan [sebuah autobiografi]* [Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1981], p. 111-2).

nations, and shows that many different intellectuals impacted understandings of nation in

Malaya.

Conclusion:

The Persistence of Ideas of Nation and Malayness

The nation is not a set concept or an 'object'. Its understanding and use is very much predicated on the possibilities of comprehension by the authors using the term. Chapter One of this thesis raised the question of what was 'natural' to certain authors and what unities they saw, which is also the same as asking what was 'unnatural' in their eyes and what they could not possibly link together. In Chapter Two, it was shown that British visions of an organisational concept that would encompass all those who were and came to be in Malaya during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were limited according to the conceptions of 'indigenousness' and 'foreign-ness' applied to particular sections of the population. Both terms were seen as mutually exclusive, and people in Malaya were grouped together to embody each trait. This line of thought was prevalent not only within the geographical borders of the Malay Peninsula, but also extended to those reading British writings outside as seen in Chapter Five.

Concurrently, those claiming an essentialised subject of Malayness, as seen in Chapter Four, were doing so by determining what makes someone Malay and also what does not make someone Malay. The construction of that identity relied on recognising similarity (the markers of 'Malayness') and difference (that which is bordered off from 'Malayness' which was most often 'Chineseness'). Malayness in the early twentieth century meant, among other things, the perception of lacking *kemajuan* (progress), being economically poor and demographically over-run. Progress, wealth and sheer numbers was seen to reside with the Chinese. These concepts of Malayness and un-Malayness/Chineseness were reiterated by various authors, and provided a platform to

envision a community of Malays banding together to face their supposedly common threats through ideals of nation.

This combination of Malayness and nation that borders Chinese rebuffs universalist claims of nationhood. Such claims posit that nations are found everywhere in the world, and are similarly defined communities. At the same time, it is assumed to be a clearly defined European idea that was spread by European colonizers to former colonized countries in Asia. In the Eurocentric rationale of Kohn and some Western authors of nation in the early twentieth century, Asia is portrayed as the recipient of a more advanced idea of community coming from Europe.[1] As shown in Chapter One, not even understandings of nation in Europe were uniform. Similarly, it is evident from the interaction between ideas of Malayness and nation that meanings of words change and do not signify similar concerns and aspirations as when the term is found elsewhere. In Malaya, the interaction meant that nation in Malaya took on the exclusions imbued into Malayness, which were directed towards Chinese, among other groups. This connotation of nation was not a universal nor natural meaning, but was the outcome of specific interactions in Malaya.

As Malay authors were marginalised by the colonial government and others in their conceived communities, they were also perpetuating marginalisations. While the particular constructions of a unified Malay identity and racial group encompassing all of Malaya could be seen as a way of empowering individuals and their communities, these

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[1] Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East*, pp. 3, 5; Alfred Zimmern, *The Third British Empire: Being a Course of Lectures delivered at Columbia University, New York* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 12; Clive J. Christie, *Southeast Asia in the Twentieth Century: A Reader* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), pp. 15-16.

strategies exerted rhetorical violence by attempting to deny other perceived groups access to the same symbols such as indigenousness and belonging to Malaya.

This denial was compounded by two aspects of knowledge formation which supported that position. Firstly, British colonial authorities' own assumptions on Malays and other groups in Malaya fit in with the strategy of those authors with the institutionalisation of two subject positions, 'indigenous Malays' and 'immigrant Chinese and Indians'. The power and persuasiveness of this established stereotype was seen in the referencing and adopting of the categories in other writings, and the reluctance to break away from the false 'truth' of those categories as shown by Emerson in Chapter Five. Secondly, the privileged Malay subject was also supported by the principle of national self-determination which turned the bases of colonial government in Malaya into the justification for independence. The British operated on the assumption that Malaya was the country of Malays, which was then translated by Malay authors and outside observers into the right to self government without the British by the beliefs enunciated in the doctrine of self-determination. The notable issue in this derivation is that the other assumptions remained the same, and were perpetuated in their own way through this doctrine. The conflation of the essentialised 'native' subjects with the nation in the doctrine gave legitimacy to the marginalisations incurred by the ideas of Malayness and nation in the 1930s and 40s. The indigenous 'self' had a right to a state, and also had the right to "exclude or subordinate members of other[ed] populations with respect to the territory and benefits under control of that state."[2] Therefore, the marriage of ideas between Malayness and nation at that point in time established the moral right of Malays to marginalise what had been seen as their formidable foes: 'coloniser' and 'immigrant'.

[2] Tilly, "National Self-Determination as a Problem for All of Us", p. 29.

These insights raise questions as to the liberalism in the process of decolonisation and in the manner that independence is achieved. Terms such as 'coloniser' and 'colonised' are catch-all phrases employed by authors to describe power relations between groups, facilitating the struggle towards decolonisation. However, that general relationship can and does change. Furthermore, within the 'colonised' there are still opportunities to marginalise others. As Balibar writes, "We have no right whatsoever to equate the nationalism [loyalty towards the nation] of the dominant with that of the dominated.... Yet this does not mean we can simply ignore the fact that there is a common element."[3] As ideologies are used to further certain causes seen as just, the same ideology also allows for, and partakes of, other dominating acts.

The writings discussed in the final chapters did not have the final say on the issues being considered. After the war, other situations emerged which were brought to bear on understandings of nation and Malayness. These concepts were revisited with new rationales and strategies employed to argue for particular nations and independent states in Malaya.[4] However, the persistence of these understandings of Malayness and nation in Malaya is still apparent. The 'Malay nation' or 'nation in Malaya' are still approached as though these ideas were objects etched in stone, and not historically contingent and contested meanings. Thus, these terms continue to be powerful tools in acts of marginalising othered groups in the modern state of Malaysia today.

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[3] Etienne Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism" in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation and Class: Ambiguous Identities*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1991), p. 45.
[4] T. N. Harper, *The end of empire and the making of Malaya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 167.

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