

# SOME ASPECTS OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY NORTHERN MALAY STATES : KEDAH, KELANTAN AND TRENGGANU A COMPARATIVE VIEW

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Up to the last decade there has been a surprising imbalance in Malay historiography with an over-emphasis on the colonial aspects of the formerly Federated Malay States dealing with British administration and policies in that portion of the country, the growth of immigration and economic development due to British rule and, to a considerable extent, the constitutional and bureaucratic development of the Federated Malay States. Indeed, the Northern Malay States comprising Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu have been almost neglected. The reason for this shortcoming may be explained by their late inclusion in the creation of present Malaysia as they were brought under the British High Commissioner for the Malay States only after the transfer from Siam in 1909. Thus, notwithstanding their great share in Malay culture and Malay history,<sup>1</sup> their place in Malay history is considered primarily in the context of their relation to Siam, and their position in British-Siam relations.<sup>2</sup> Whereas there is an impressive study of social and political systems of the Western "Federated Malay States" before they came under British rule in 1874,<sup>3</sup> there are only scattered references to the existing societies of the three Northern Malay States before the change in the 20th century.

Actually, there is some evidence left by visitors who on various occasions made explorations in these states in the late 19th century. For Kelantan and Trengganu, there is the expedition report of Sir Hugh Clifford, the personal narrative of F.L.

1. The three states were mentioned as well known international ports of the East by the Chinese and the Arab merchants as early as the 13th century; see: Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, (Kuala Lumpur : University of Malaya Press, 1961), "Introduction".
2. There have been only two major works done to fill this gap. One is Sharom Ahmat's "Tradition and Change in a Malay State : the Economic and Political Development of Kedah, 1870-1923" (an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation). Another is William R. Roff (ed.), *Kelantan : Religion, Society and Politics in a Malay State*, (Kuala Lumpur : Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. i & viii.
3. J.M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya*, Great Britain : University of London, 1958), p. 1.



Laidlow, and the Cambridge University expedition report of W.F. Skeat. For Kedah, there are records of even more abundance consisting of the correspondence of the British officials in Penang, the *Burney Papers*, the *Sultan's Letter Books* and various administrative orders of the Sultan (especially on economic activities). All these sources will be consulted in this paper in order to reconstruct the political and economic systems of the three states during the above period. In addition, relevant Thai records in the *Prachum Pongsawadan*, *Letters of Luang Udom Sombat* and the records of King Chulalongkorn's visits to these states will be used. The latter sources are essential for though it is generally accepted that Malay political and social institutions derive their origin from the Malaccan Sultanate, Gullick has put forward the view that "... the Malay States to the North were nominal dependencies of Siam, and their political system was affected by that fact".<sup>4</sup>

## PART I

### KEDAH: POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Little is known about the kind of political structure which existed in Kedah before the nineteenth century. As a matter of fact, ancient historical sources and some archeological evidence would seem to suggest that early Kedah developed her politics, economy and culture in association with the states in the Kra Isthmus and with Siam.<sup>5</sup> By the end of the thirteenth century, the evidence indicates that Kedah had recognized the sovereignty of Siam.<sup>6</sup> This dependency of Kedah on Siam can be attributed largely

\* Whereas it is almost impossible to study the history of Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu without references to their relationships with Siam for these bear a considerable impact on their internal political and economic systems, an intensive look into what kind of relationship these actually were, what roles both sides played in the context, and what factors contributed to such development will not be included in this paper. This omission comes as a result of the writer's preliminary survey of the primary sources concerned, the discrepancies which suggest a separate careful re-study of some of the facts and interpretations dealing with Siamese-Malay relations between the 19th-20th centuries. Thus, here only a broad over-view concerning Malay-Siamese relations will be included so as to provide continuity to the understanding of the study of the political and economic systems of the three Northern Malay States as a whole.

4. *Ibid.*

5. See, for example, *The Kedah Annals* and the *Nakhon Sri Thammarat Chronicle* which suggest that the rulers of Nakhon Sri Thammarat, the principle Southern Thai province, were related to, or had authority over, the founders of the Northern Malay States: Pattani, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu. J. Low, "A Translation of the Kedah Annals", *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, III, 1849, pp. 486-7, and *The Collection On Nakhon Sri Thammarat*, (Bangkok: Rung Ruang Rat, 1962), p. 51; Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, p. 300.

6. Wheatley, *Ibid.*, p. 301.



to the former's political-geographical setting which made her an important part linking the trade route between the Bay of Bengal and the Straits of Malacca to the land route of the Southern Siamese States: Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Singora, Pattani, and Trengganu.<sup>7</sup> However, by the end of the fifteenth century, two events brought about major changes in Kedah-Siam relations. First was the conversion of the ruler of Kedah to Islam.<sup>8</sup> Second was his visit to Malacca to obtain the royal insignia which marks the sovereignty of a Malay-Muslim ruler<sup>9</sup>. This approach of Kedah at the time that Malacca gained victories over the Siamese<sup>10</sup> may indicate her search for a new sovereign. Unfortunately, Kedah's hope was not long-lived, for at the time of the fall of Malacca in 1511, Tomé Pires recorded Kedah as under the suzerainty of the King of Siam.<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding the failure, many scholars believe that thereafter Malaccan political structure and legal codes became established in Kedah. The following description will show how Malaccan political organization has been adapted to fit Kedah society.

At the center was the 'Sultan' (Arabic ruler) or the Yang di-Pertuan (He who is indeed Lord). Essentially, as Gullick has pointed out, the Sultan's role was "... to symbolize and to some extent preserve the unity of the State."<sup>12</sup> His dignity was evident in elaborate court ceremonies and rituals and the belief of the public of his sacredness and supernatural power. Nevertheless, the Sultan did not, as in most Southern and Western Malay States in the nineteenth century, exercise absolute authority over his state. He may have had control over his royal district, but outside his immediate domain, there existed district chiefs who exercised their local power. The chiefs were hostile to the Sultan as well as antagonistic to each other. The acceptance of the Sultan depended on the need to provide for the defense of the country, for overall internal peace and order, and for taking care of matters related to external affairs.<sup>13</sup>

7. There exists an old Kedah-Pattani route in the Southernmost part of Thailand. See: A.W. Hamilton, "The Old Kedah-Pattani Trade Route", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society-Malayan Branch (Henceforth JMBRAS)*, LXXXVI, 1922, pp. 389-92; *Burney Papers*, Bangkok: Vajiranana National Library, Vol. II (1911), pp. 42-51, Vol. III (1912), pp. 8-47.

8. There is not yet a consensus concerning the date of the conversion of Kedah to Islam. The Kedah Annals dated A.D. 1474. See: Winstedt, "Notes On the History of Kedah", *JMBRAS*, XIV, pt. III, 1936, p. 156.

9. R. Bonney, *Kedah 1771-1821: The Search for Security and Independence*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 14.

10. G.E. Marrison, "The Siamese Wars with Malacca during the Reign of Muzaffar Shah", *JMBRAS*, XXII, pt. I, 1949, pp. 61-6.

11. A Cortesao, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires, 1512-1515*, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1944), p. 107.

12. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems* . . . , p. 44.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-9 & 54.



The Sultan and his princes were assisted by a hierarchy of state officers appointed by him. The traditional hierarchical Malaccan chieftainship was composed of four chiefs as Ministers of the first rank, eight of the second, sixteen of the third, and thirty-two of the fourth.<sup>14</sup>

In the case of Kedah, Sharom Ahmat has shown that only the first three ranks of chiefs existed, but apart from the titles, their specific roles and duties were obscure.<sup>15</sup> In fact, Sharom Ahmat's findings from the Sultan's *Letter Books* gave evidence that, between 1879–1905, there were only four Ministers of the first rank. The most prominent was the Chief Minister, or the "Bendahara".<sup>16</sup> The other three ministers were the Sultan's Private Secretary (the Mentri), State Treasurer (the Penghulu Bendahari), and Harbour Master (the Shahbandar).<sup>17</sup> Newbold noted a larger number of ministers in Kedah between 1710–1760 and stated that prior to 1821 Kedah was ruled by the Sultan and a council of four chief ministers of the State including the "Temenggong" (the Commander of Troops and Police). It seems that Siamese occupation of Kedah between 1821–1842 may have caused this change for, after 1842, the relations between Siam and Kedah turned to a peaceful and co-operative one.<sup>18</sup> By acknowledging Siamese indirect control over her external affairs, Kedah, particularly in the 1880's, did not need to prepare for war. Thus, the Sultan may have consolidated all power into his hands.

The existence of a hierarchical council of ministers at the peak of the administrative government could not be interpreted in the modern context, however, that there was a system of check and balance. The ministers of nineteenth century Kedah played the same passive, nominal role as their counterparts in other western Malay states. In fact, it was the Sultan and the royal members who possessed the absolute power over the state. This striking contrast in Kedah's highly centralized organization under the hands of the Sultan as compared with other nineteenth century Malay states was found in both the political and economic spheres. Politically, the validity of the Sultan's

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 89–91.

15. Sharom Ahmat, "Tradition and Change in a Malay State: The Economic and Political Development of Kedah, 1870–1923", (Unpublished Ph. D dissertation, University of London, Microfilm, 1969), p. 131.

16. Under the Malaccan Sultanate, this position was "the King maker" as it was his family which provided the Sultan with royal consorts. See: Ahmat, *Ibid.*, p. 130, footnote ¶ 1.

17. *Ibid.*, Gullick has noted the key role of the office of the "Shahbandar" under the Malaccan Sultanate as the state lived on the foreign trade of its port. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems* . . . , p. 8.

18. Sharom Ahmat, "Kedah-Siam Relations, 1821–1905", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, I, No. 2 (September 1970), pp. 10–12.



authority resulted from the relationship between the Sultan and the district chiefs at the provincial level, and from the relationship between the Sultan and the village headmen at the local level.

At the provincial level, though, theoretically the district chiefs in Kedah performed the same functions as their counterparts in other western Malay States : having complete control over their areas through exercising judicial administration, taking responsibility of collecting taxes, and commanding the police and armed groups. It was the Sultan, however, who possessed the absolute power over the district chiefs. The Sultan did not only appoint the district chiefs but also checked to be sure that his orders and demands were obeyed.<sup>19</sup>

This relatively peaceful relationship between the Sultan and the district chiefs was partly explained by the fact that most of the district chiefs were members of the royal family who also controlled most of the economically rich districts.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, these district chiefs tended more to cooperate with the Sultan for mutual political and economic interest rather than create trouble that would otherwise have led to political disruptions possibly including loss of their positions had Siam taken the opportunity to interfere. This awareness of Kedah's aristocrats of the possibility of Siamese intervention was substantially expressed and played a major role in helping keep Kedah's political stability and in pushing her forward for economic and political development as will be discussed later.

The fundamental position of the district chiefs in Kedah's economic system, which was in brief dependent on the Sultan, rendered the former politically subordinate of the latter. In the other western states, the inability of the Sultan to collect revenue from the district chiefs, especially taxes in tin, was so serious that it caused a "dispersal of power" from the central government as officials moved into the position of district chief in order to obtain a share of the revenue.<sup>21</sup> In Kedah, the situation was reversed. All important sources of revenue were farmed out to the Chinese directly from the Sultan. Thus, instead of getting a share from the revenues or from taxes they collected, the district chiefs' income was paid by the Sultan. This salary paid to the district chiefs came in various forms, i.e., the Sultan ordered certain revenue farmers to pay their revenues to the district chiefs, or generally the Sultan granted "ampun kernia" - the right to collect duties on certain goods - by which the district chiefs could raise an income by farming it out to the Chinese.<sup>22</sup>

19. Ahmat, "Tradition and Change", p. 134.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Gullick, *Indigenous*, p. 127.

22. Ahmat, "Tradition and Change", p. 137.



At the local level below the district was the "mukim" made up of a number of "kampong" or "villages", under the governing of the penghulu or the headmen. With the help of the village elder (Kertua Kampung), the "Iman" and other mosque officials, the penghulu governed his area according to the Kedah Law: "The Laws of Dato Sri Paderka Tuan" (dated 1667).<sup>23</sup> Aside from being the implementator of laws and orders sent from the capitol, the penghulu's main duty was the protection of religion: preventing any activities against religious taboos, i.e., gambling, cock-fighting, idol worshipping, etc., and supervising Islamic practice, i.e., daily prayers, fasting, etc. In fact, it was through the penghulu that the central administration got in touch with the "raayat" (masses).

Here again, Kedah was different from the western states in government control over the penghulus. It was the Sultan, not the district chiefs, who appointed and exercised direct administration over them.<sup>24</sup> In Kedah, besides the presence of petitions sent to the Sultan, another check on the penghulus was the annual visit to the capitol in which they would discuss the expenditure and budget of the mukims.<sup>25</sup> Thus, though frequently the penghulus were illiterate and were appointed because of wealth or the support of the district chiefs instead of ability, they did not present a major obstruction to efficient administration.

On the other hand, some British authorities at the Straits Settlements attacked the relationship between the ruling class and the raayat (masses). Swettenham noted that the raayat were so exploited by the class as... "...to do what the chiefs told them—no more, no less".<sup>26</sup> This situation did not encourage the people to produce surplus food for "...a Raja would rob them of it or oblige them to lend it without any prospect of repayment".<sup>27</sup> Both Gullick and Ahmat argued that though the masses were in general submissive to the ruling class as characterized by the existence of institutions like the "corvée system", there was, however, a limitation to the abuses the ruling class imposed on the masses. The fundamental explanation relies on the fact that in traditional Malay States, as in other traditional mainland Southeast Asian States, political power rested on the control of manpower which could produce goods to support the leaders (through tax collection). The main aims of the leaders were thus to promote the development of the district and to increase the productive population. Land in the Malay States was readily available and it was noted as customary for

23. Sir Richard Winstedt, "Kedah Laws", *JMBRAS*, II, (1928), p. 8.

24. Ahmat, "Tradition and Change", pp. 141-2.

25. *Ibid.*

26. F.A. Swettenham, *British Malaya*, (London: Jarrold & Sons, Ltd., 1948), p. 141.

27. F. A. Swettenham, *Annual Report of Perak, 1890*, cited in Gullick, *Indigenous*, p. 30.



anyone to settle where he pleased on unoccupied land. The oppression by the ruler evidently led to emigration of the people to other districts.<sup>28</sup> The record from the Sultan's letters revealed that the event was regarded as serious and orders were sent to prevent such happenings.<sup>29</sup> This picture of the generally well-governed people of Kedah in late nineteenth century was expressed by a British governor of the Straits Settlements:

that Kedah is not at present oppressively governed is proved by the fact that, though land is to be had on easy terms in the neighboring districts of provinces Wellesley and Perak, there is no immigration from Kedah and indeed many Malays hold padi lands in these territories which they came into to cultivate during the season; returning to their permanent homes in Kedah after the crop has been gathered and sold.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, from 1842, Kedah was a unique Malay State (with Johore being the only other exception), which possessed political stability while political turmoil led to British intervention in Perak, Pahang and Selangor. From the 1870's, it was admitted by British authorities in Malaya, as Swettenham put it, that :

In 1874, Kedah was more advanced in its institutions, in the observance of order, the well-being of its people, and the general development of the country, than any other State in the Peninsula.<sup>31</sup>

While the internal political system described earlier helps illustrate this viability of the Kedah governing system, much praise has been given to the Sultan, and other Kedah authorities, for their leadership and ability to adapt to the British model in the modernization of their state: the establishing of the departments of Treasury, Land and Survey, offices of the Auditor General, Post and Telegraph, and the Courts of Law.<sup>32</sup> However, looking into another aspect of Kedah's structure, the economic aspect, suggests not only a deep loophole in Kedah's traditional economic system but also in the "statesmanship" and "integrity" of Kedah's authorities of the late 19th century which finally brought to an end her traditional system, politically as well as economically. The bankruptcy of Kedah's finances by the end of the 19th century not only made it important to examine actually how Kedah's economic system worked

28. Gullick, *Indigenous*, p. 113 & p. 125.

29. Ahmat, "Tradition and Change", p. 144.

30. C.O. 272/303, Anderson to C.O., 30 November, 1904, as cited in Ahmat, *Ibid.*, p. 146.

31. Swettenham, *British Malaya*, p. 311.

32. For example, in 1885, Sir Cecil Smith gave the remark about the Sultan that "... This Young chief whom I have received here two or three times, is one of the promising Malay rulers in our Neighborhoods." (C.O. 273/136, Acting Governor, Singapore, to C.O., 19 October, 1885) cited in Ahmat, "Tradition and Change", p. 162.



but also makes one curious as to the true nature of the inter-relationships between Kedah's political and economic circumstances. Can a state be described as "advanced" in "institutions" and in "the well-being of her people" while at the same time its government falls into a debt of \$ 2.8 million? How did this financial problem relate to the fundamental structure of the control over manpower (the political and economic base in traditional Malay society)? The following look into Kedah's economic structure before the turn of the 19th century is attempted in the hope of giving an answer to these questions and what they imply.

### KEDAH'S ECONOMIC ASPECT

Basically, Kedah's economy was based on agricultural activities with about 99.59% of the total population engaged in growing rice.<sup>33</sup> A look at Kedah's population shows the Malays were the majority (in contrast to other Malay States which had a high percentage of Chinese)<sup>34</sup>; thus, it was, in fact, the Malay masses who supported the economy of the country. It has frequently been stated that these people, because of the 'hasil kerah' corvée system (which empowered the chief to call the peasant to work for him at any time), lacked time and motivation to cultivate any more than was necessary for self-sufficiency. This explanation is, however, contradictory to the fact that it was the peasants who supported the ruling class.<sup>35</sup> The record shows that, prior to 1906, all rice imported to British Penang came from Kedah (about 50,000 tons a year).<sup>36</sup> This amount of export was obviously a surplus over and above the needs of the ruling class. When the big farms leased to the Chinese<sup>37</sup> and the small farms

33. According to Kedah's and Perlis's official census in 1911, Ahmat, *Ibid.*, p. 28.

34. This rather homogeneous composition of the population helped contribute to the relative political stability of Kedah as compared to the other Malay States which possessed a high percentage of immigrants, for in the latter States, foreign-born Malay Chinese often caused conflicts between the chiefs. See Gullick, *Indigenous*, p. 26. The following table shows Chinese percentages:

	MALAY	OTHERS (mostly Chinese)	TOTAL
Perak	106,393	107,861	214,254
Selangor	26,578	55,014	81,592
Negri Sembilan	48,480	22,250	70,730
(The 1891 census: Gullick, <i>Indigenous</i> , p. 23.)			
Kedah	166,716	37,273	203,989
(The 1911 census: Ahmat, <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 154.)			

35. Even Ahmat overlooks this fact.

36. Ahmat, "Tradition and Change", p. 32.

37. For example, the farms leased to the Chinese merchants in Kota Star Districts brought an income of about \$97,000 per year, and a farm at Kuala Muda and Merbok brought \$5,500 a year. *Ibid.*



granted by the Sultan to the royal members or to the administrators as "royal gifts" (ampun kernia) are included, the income Kedah earned from rice production alone was higher than that from all other productivities (i.e. tapioca, sugar, and pepper) combined. The second important export was tin, but as its deposits were in the interior where there were poor roads and little communication, it did not become an important factor in the development of the state as it did in those programs launched by the British Malay States.<sup>38</sup>

However, though the raayat was the class that cultivated to support the lives of the ruling people, land was not known to be tilled under their ownership until after 1883. Traditionally, land was distributed by the Sultan to his chiefs and their followers as rewards or in lieu of salary. The people could have a share only when they were granted it to cultivate under two types of systems: the "pawah" by which the landlord received a share of the food produced, (this being decided in an arbitrary manner), and the "bagi dua" in which a more equal share system of determining was utilized.<sup>39</sup> Besides submitting parts of their production, the peasant had to perform "corvée" labor in lieu of land rent. Other people, ranging from the ruling people to the descendants of the Prophet Mohammed (i.e. religious men: Hajis, mosque officials), were exempted from the corvée system.<sup>40</sup> In 1883, Sultan Abdul Hamid issued a law by which documents certifying ownership over land were granted, provided that the holders paid rent.<sup>41</sup> In order to lessen the burden of the raayat, corvée labor was exempted for those who paid land rent. This introduction of a land tax system was expected to be an effective way to earn income for the state. But, in practice, the land tax system was far from satisfactory. The privileged class resisted paying the rent, whereas even the raayat who paid the rent were still recruited for corvée work for projects of personal interest to the chiefs.<sup>42</sup> Besides, the inefficiency of the survey system created trouble (that is, conflicts between the raayat and the Chinese merchants who got the leases to open the tin mines; these leases covered both rights over waterways and land as well).<sup>43</sup> Due to much pressure, in 1887, the Sultan abandoned the 1883 land tax system which consequently aggravated the weakening state of the economy of the country at that time.

Actually, apart from the land revenue, the main revenue of Kedah came from tax farms leased to Chinese merchants and in some cases from small tax farms which were granted to the ruling class (as royal gifts) which would be then leased to the

38. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 67.



Chinese farmers. On the whole, the system was of advantage to the state in that it guaranteed a certain amount of income to the treasury without the need for an elaborate administrative system. Before 1900, the farming that brought the highest income to the state was opium and chandu farming (which in 1890-1900 brought an average income of \$212,400 per year). Rice and padi farming brought \$102,500 annually and gambling accounted for \$129,750 in revenue. Lesser amounts were earned from spirits, tobacco, tin, tapioca, timber and wood, pawn broking, poultry, cattle, eggs and other products.<sup>44</sup> However great the amount of money it seemed to bring, in practice the rents paid by the revenue farmers were lower than that which should have been collected, for the Chinese merchants attempted, successfully to a degree, to ally together to obtain lower bids.<sup>45</sup>

In spite of the defects in the land and farm revenue systems, the record in the Sultan's Account Books between 1896-1899 showed that revenue exceeded expenditure - which contradicted the Sultan's correspondence signifying the beginning of financial problems - (ie. reducing the allowance paid to the royal members, and asking for more and more loans from Bangkok - from \$100,000 in 1903 up to \$2.8 million in 1905).<sup>46</sup> In actuality, comparison between revenue and expenditure (from 1883-1886) shows that whereas the revenues remained the same (for they were based upon fixed rent over a certain period of time), the expenditures increased markedly. This increase did not, however, come as a result of the investment in public works, as the corvée system was still in use at that time. In the cases that the projects became public service, they were out of private interest. An example is the construction of a road from Kedah to Songkla which was aimed to provide a connection for the royal visit to Bangkok.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the main source of the increase in expenditures was the personal extravagance of the Sultan and the royal family members<sup>48</sup> (i.e. spending money on gambling, buying jewelry, and making royal visits to other royal families). On the other hand, some of the royal members, such as the Raja Muda who, it was alleged, took bribes from the Chinese farmers who wanted to get low bids, were tainted by even greater scandal.<sup>49</sup> While the expenditures rose, the loan from Bangkok was put

44. *Ibid.*, p. 51. In 1905, it was estimated that the revenue of Kedah was about \$800,000 a year. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

45. Especially after 1887 when the Sultan agreed with the British authorities in Penang to grant Penang and Kedah opium farming to the same merchants, *Ibid.* pp. 45-6.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 83-8.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 93-99.

48. Swettenham, *British Malaya*, p. 311.

49. Sir John Anderson wrote to C.O. that he was informed that the Raja Muda took a bribe from the opium farmer, "... a sum of \$ 400 per month ... for the reduction of the farm revenue of \$10,000 per month" (C.O. 273/311, Anderson to C.O., April 1905, cited in Ahmat, "Tradition and Change", p. 110.)



under the heading of "revenue". This undoubtedly gave the misleading impression of rising revenues in the credit balance (for example, in 1896, loans accounted for 76% of the total revenue,<sup>50</sup> whereas the real revenue from farming was only 20% of the total reported).<sup>51</sup>

As already mentioned, within the limited nature of the source of income from the traditional system, the Sultan had attempted to innovate a better system of raising money, namely that of a land tax. This was done at the expense of eliminating the corvée system which was the traditional political and economic asset. Unfortunately, this failed because of the resistance of the privileged class. In 1887, the land tax system was eliminated and Kedah returned to the traditional way under which not only the ruling class was exempted from rent, but also the raayat who worked on the ruling class' property. The raayat also returned to the corvée labor system and only immigrants were under the land rent obligation.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, an increase of the land tax for the Chinese was difficult as, in the late 1880's, the Sultan became their debtor. Thus, not only the rent was ignored, but sometimes land was granted to them to settle the debts.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, eventually Kedah's economy collapsed in turn forcing her to obtain new loans from the Siamese government in 1905, and, as a condition of the loan, to agree to accept a financial advisor appointed by the Siamese government to assist in the reform of her finances. With this agreement, Kedah's traditional economic and political system came to a new phase where the Sultan no longer had absolute control over all affairs of the state.<sup>54</sup>

Kedah's failure in management of her financial affairs should not, nonetheless, obscure her diplomatic ability which kept her internal independence from the influence of both Siam and Great Britain from 1842 through the rest of the century. Kedah's relations with Siam since the 17th century up to 1842 were an untiring struggle for independence. Repeatedly Kedah turned in vain to other powers in order to balance the power of Siam.<sup>55</sup> Relations between the two reached a climax when, in 1820, Siam invaded Kedah; an invasion which brought great political and economic disaster

50. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 120-121.

54. Between 1905-1909, Kedah was under the reform stage of the loan agreement; a State Council was created and a financial advisor was appointed. From 1909, Kedah came under British control through the treaty between Siam and Great Britain of that year. This treaty transferred control of the four Siamese Malay States to the latter.

55. See: Bonney, *Kedah*, pp. 52-78.



to the latter. The Sultan (who escaped to Penang) was replaced by the son of the governor of Nakhon Sri Thammarat and Kedah remained under Siamese occupation until 1842.<sup>56</sup> Kedah's economic resources were exploited and sent to Nakhon Sri Thammarat. In addition, a large number of men were carried off to Bangkok.<sup>57</sup> Several attempts were made by the Sultan's relatives to regain power,<sup>58</sup> but most failed and the few that were successful were only temporarily so.<sup>59</sup> The cost of these wars became evident in the subsequent actions of both sides. In 1839, Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin sent his son and nephew to Siam asking for pardon and reinstatement.<sup>60</sup> Siam, considering the continuing problems in other Malay vassal states (i.e. Kelantan, Trengganu, and the Pattani states), succeeding Kedah's revolts, evidently thought it advisable to come to terms with her, for King Rama III appointed the ex-Sultan's relative as the new Sultan, (however, not until after making sure that Kedah's governmental power was diminished).<sup>61</sup>

From 1842, Kedah-Siam relationship continued peacefully. The succeeding Sultans of Kedah were granted Thai official titles and were also given symbols of royalty such as robes and eating utensils. They became constant visitors to the Bangkok court<sup>62</sup> and gave energetic cooperation to Thai orders and instructions as evidenced in the Sultan's correspondence book.<sup>63</sup> Kedah learned that the Siamese

56. Damrong Rajanubhab, H.R.H. Prince, Introduction to "Luang Udom Sombat, Letters of," *Chotmai Luang Udomsombat*, (Bangkok, Thaprachan, 1972), Seventh ed., p. 14 & p. 25.

57. *Burney Papers*, Vol. I, p. 176.

58. For example, in 1831, Tungku Den, the son of Tungku Raja, the brother of the ex-Sultan, attacked Kedah. See Rajanubhab, *Chotmai*, p. 28.

59. In 1838, others of the ex-Sultan's relatives, together with a force from another Malay state, attacked Kedah and took over the government. It was not until the following year that the Siamese were able to regain control. See: Walter F. Vella, *Siam Under Rama III, 1824-1851*. (Locust Valley, N.Y., J.J. Augustin Inc., 1957), pp. 71-2.

60. "Saiburi Chronicle." *Prachum Phongsawadan*. Vol. II, (Bangkok: Kurusapa, 1963), pp. 270-71.

61. L.A. Mills, "British Malaya, 1824-67", *JMBRAS*, II, ii, (1925). p. 163. See: Vella, *Siam Under Rama III*, p. 76. It is doubtful that, as some have claimed, Siam was merely reacting to the British refusal to any longer become involved in Kedah when Bangkok re-established good relations with the Sultan of Kedah. Several years prior to this time, Siam had already appointed three Malays to govern areas which were subdivisions of the former state of Kedah. Likewise, the fact that this division had already taken place in 1839 disproves the contention that this division was a direct result of the British refusal to become involved (which didn't take place until 1842). "Saiburi Chronicle", pp. 269-271.

62. "Saiburi Chronicle", pp. 272-74.

63. Ahmat, "Tradition and Change", p. 101.



government would not interfere in her affairs unless difficulty arose concerning succession. Consequently, Kedah's authorities tried to maintain cordial relations with Siam while keeping (and, in part, by keeping) internal order. This careful safeguard against Siamese intervention was well illustrated in the case over succession when Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin died in 1879, leaving two young sons, aged twelve and sixteen. There appeared then three factions over the question of who should succeed to power. The royal family members were in favour of Tengku Thiauddin (the eldest brother of the ex-Sultan). However, Siam had already appointed Tengku Yaacob (Sultan Tajuddin's second brother) as Raja Muda. Nonetheless, all sides consented to let the Siamese government have the final decision. The outcome was a compromise as Tengku Thiauddin and another royal family member were appointed as protectors and advisors under the leadership of Tengku Yaacob. Three years later, Tengku Abdul Hamid, Sultan Tajuddin's eldest son, finally was appointed as the next Sultan.<sup>64</sup> Essentially, Kedah's authorities viewed increasing Siamese influence in Kelantan and Trengganu in the last two decades of the 19th century as the result of an uncompromising policy adopted by these two states. As put by Kedah's chief minister, Kelantan and Trengganu had only themselves to blame for Siam's strengthening of her authority in those areas, for both had provoked Siamese interference by introducing Great Britain into their affairs, whereas Kedah did not give Siam any such reason to interfere.<sup>65</sup>

Indeed, Kedah's leaders were pragmatic in their accommodation towards Siamese policy as, since the 1880's, Siamese authority in the Malay vassal states was counter-balanced by British influence in the Malay Peninsula.<sup>66</sup> The problems over the

64. C.O. 273/100, Chao Phraya Suriwongse Phra Kalahom to Newman, 12 December, 1879, cited in Ahmat, "Tradition and Change". pp. 173-4. The Thai source, "Saiburi Chronicle," recorded a different account. It was indicated that Sultan Tajuddin had 2 sons: Tengku Sainarachid (aged 22) and Tengku Hamid (aged 16). The Siamese government considered that the eldest son should succeed the father thus appointed Tengku Sainarachid as the next Sultan. Tengku Hamid was appointed as Raja Muda while the former Raja Muda and Tengku Thiauddin were appointed assistant governors. Two years later, in 1882, when Tengku Sainarachid died, Tengku Hamid was then elevated to the position of the next Sultan. See "Saiburi Chronicle", pp. 285-8.

65. C.O. 273/162, Report of Swettenham's visit to Kedah, 23 November, 1889, cited, Ahmat, "Tradition and Change", p. 178.

66. Apart from France, who was rapidly increasing her influence in this part of the world, both Germany and Russia showed designs on establishing coal stations and obtaining concessions in South Siam. British officials in Malaya thus tried to convince the government at home to form a firm policy to safeguard against any other powers establishing a foothold on the peninsula. Sir Frederick Weld and Sir Frank Swettenham, in particular, saw Siam's claim



border between the Siamese Malay States and those under British protection (i.e. the Perak-Raman border questions 1883-1887 and 1891-1893, and for some periods between Perak and Kedah) and over the granting of concessions to foreigners had made the Siamese government realize the weakness of her control over the internal administration of these states. Subsequently, by 1900, the Siamese government began provincial reforms in order to safeguard her territories – especially those tributary states contiguous to territory held by the Western powers (i.e. France and Britain). However, Siam realized that her claim over the outer Malay States (i.e. Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu) was inadequate in the context of the modern Western state. Afraid that any reaction on her part in the Malay States would antagonize the British in Malaya, the Siamese government's objective over her Malay States, then, was moderated. As King Chulalongkorn told the Raja of Kelantan during his visit to that state in 1890:

Siam's objective towards the Malay vassals is nothing more than keeping them as the outside provinces between Siam and the Foreign Country (i.e. British Malay States-*sic*-). On the other hand, if these states which have been under the Siamese government fall under British administration, Siam will lose nothing but "Bunga Mas" which was valueless. It will only dishonour the country.<sup>67</sup>

Nonetheless, the three Malay States (Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu) responded differently to this policy. Kedah's realistic attitude brought her respect from both Britain and Siam. As late as 1901, when the question of the advisors (of British nationality) for Kelantan and Trengganu was being discussed by the Siamese and British government, the British Colonial Office still could not find any adequate reason to impose the same policy for Kedah. King Chulalongkorn himself expressed the confidence that the British would have been discouraged from doing so.<sup>68</sup> Contrarily, investigation into the Kelantan and Trengganu situations, as will be discussed, reveals a conspicuously different picture.

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over the Malay states as unfounded, and thought that Britain should expand her control to include the entire area between Malaya and Burma. See: Eunice Thio, "British Policy in the Malay Peninsula, 1880-1909" (unpub. Doctoral dissertation, University of London, 1956), pp. 122, 242-45, 272-73, 278; E. Thio, "The British Forward Movement in the Malay Peninsula: 1880-1909, *Papers on Malayan History*, K. G. Tregonning, ed., (First International Conference of South East Asian Historians, Singapore, 1962), p. 131.

67. King Chulalongkorn, *The Royal Visit, By Land and By Sea, to Malay Peninsula 1890*, Vol. II, (Bangkok, Kurusapa, 1964) pp. 198-99.

68. C.O. 272/303, C.O. Memoranda, 30 November, 1904. Cited: Ahmat, "Tradition and Change" p. 186. The situation later changed due to the changes in the financial stability.



## PART II

## KELANTAN'S AND TRENGGANU'S POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Both Trengganu and Kelantan are among the oldest Malay Kingdoms,<sup>1</sup> (though they are probably not as old as Kedah) and the evidence seems to show that the ruling houses of both states had ancient connections with Siam.<sup>2</sup> However, Siamese overlordship did not really begin in Trengganu until 1782 when Sultan Mansur began sending "bunga mas" to Siam.<sup>3</sup> As for Kelantan, it had been under Trengganu until during the reign of King Rama I when Kelantan sent "bunga mas" to Bangkok and asked for Siamese protection.<sup>4</sup> Like Kedah, both states were regarded as under Siamese control throughout the 19th century. In fact, their internal affairs were left intact so that it is possible to examine some aspects of their political and economic structure. The result of such examination should give some indication as to why and how the course of events in both states led to the resultant outcomes.

Similar to Kedah in the division of the posts of the ministerial offices, both Kelantan and Trengganu did not have any particular pattern for the titles and the functions of such positions. For Trengganu, such titles as Bendahara, Dato, Sri Maharaja, Long Pandak, and Menteri appeared during some reigns only to disappear during others.<sup>5</sup> It can be shown that most of the positions were created for expediency

1. M.C. Sheppard, "A Short History of Trengganu", *JMBRAS* XXII, pt. 3, (1949), p. 1. Sheppard refers to Ptolemy's map drawn in the second century, A.D., which showed two ports on the east coast of the Malay peninsula. Some scholars have identified one of these as Trengganu. Also: William R. Roff (ed.), *Kelantan*, p. vi.
2. The earliest Trengganu inscriptions referred to the hereditary title of "Telani", which was related to the legendary king of Jambi who received the support of the King of Siam to regain his throne. The Telani family ceased to rule Trengganu in 1478. When Trengganu historians referred to the re-establishment of the Trengganu Sultanate, they claimed it was possible only with Pattani support in the 18th century, however, Bugi historians said it was the Bugi who made the re-establishment possible. See: Sheppard, "A Short History", pp. 4-11. In fact, the Kelantan dynasty was closely related to the dynasty in Pattani. The latter was, in turn, related to King Baromaracha of Ayudhaya (1370-1388). See, A. Teeuw and David K. Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1970), pp. 5-6.
3. For the interpretation of "Bunga Mas", see L.A. Mills, "British Malay", *JMBRAS*, XXXIII, 1960, pp. 43-5. Also see Ahmat, "Kedah-Siam", p. 96.
4. "Kelantan Chronicle", *Prachum Phongsawadan*, Vol. II, p. 319. There is no mention in Kelantan chronicles of the date Kelantan began sending bunga mas to Siam. The Trengganu chronicle, however, mentioned that, in 1800, Long Mohamed won in the battle between him and Sultan Zainal Abidin II of Trengganu, and became independent ruler of Kelantan with the title of Sultan Muhamed I. Sheppard, "A Short History", p. 23.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.



(i.e. as rewards for those who supported the Sultan on the throne); thus, they existed only temporarily and did not imply any sort of consistent functions.<sup>6</sup>

However, concerning the lower administrative system below the ministerial posts, prior to the reign of Sultan Baginda Omar, (1839–1876) there was a hierarchical “feudal” system, according to Clifford, by which the state was divided into districts under the control of the district chiefs who held their districts as “fiefdoms” (as in Medieval Europe). Below the district was a series of “baronies” headed by the Dato Muda. The lowest unit was the sub-district under the control of the Kutua-an, or headman.<sup>7</sup> This description, in attempting to fit the traditional structure of Malay society into the context of a European “feudal system,” runs the risk of not taking into account the many distinctions between the two systems that may have existed. Clifford fails to compare and/or contrast such things as the Sultan’s succession to the hereditary nature of the European aristocracy and never touches on the moral code differences or the patterns of land tenancy. However, it can be discerned that, unlike the situation in Kedah, the Sultan in Trengganu exercised his power in the judicial, military and financial branches through the above mentioned officials.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it was not the Sultan but the able district chiefs who had the real control over manpower. The condition of the raayat during this time was reported as being severely oppressed for not only could their labor and products be recruited at any time by their superiors, but “...all the property of which he stands possessed and the very persons of his women folk only remain his so long as he is strong enough to resist the person by whom they are coveted”.<sup>9</sup>

During the reign of Sultan Baginda Omar (1839–1879),<sup>10</sup> the above political and social system was destroyed. It is not clear from the available written history to what extent the district chiefs in Trengganu played a role in counter-balancing the power of the Sultan. However, this competition for power seems to have been fairly intense in all of the Western Malay States except Kedah. However, the structure of the existing power base of the district chiefs should have empowered them with enough authority as to put them in a position where they might have proved detrimental to the throne; this motivated Sultan Omar to attempt to diminish the power of the district chiefs. With the passing of the old territorial chiefs, no more commoners could own territorial rights. All of the newly appointed district chiefs (with two exceptions) were

6. For example, Sultan Baginda Omar gave many of his supporters various positions, i.e. Menteri, Orang Kaya, etc. See Sheppard, *Ibid.*, p. 29.

7. Clifford, “Expedition”, pp. 68–9.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. Sheppard, “A Short History”, p. 67.



relatives of the Sultan.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the great territorial districts were sub-divided into villages, the penghulu (headman) of which was directly responsible to the Sultan. This centralization greatly affected the relationship between the ruling class and the raayat. A new type of ruling group, the "Budak Raja" ("famous in all Malay States for their arrogance and over-bearing conduct to the people"<sup>12</sup>) emerged. As most of the new territorial chiefs were now members of royalty and usually lived in the capital (Kuala Trengganu), young men in the royal entourage were sent to collect revenue from the people from time to time. Because of their age, their pride in their prestigious families and the lack of a rural background, these "Budak Rajas" became ruthless and unsympathetic masters over the people. Clifford, who led an expedition in 1894 to Trengganu, eighteen years after the reign of Sultan Omar, compared the previous hereditary territorial chief system to the new royal aristocratic rule as follows:

the Budak Raja, (who) do more than is ever done by their principals towards oppressing and grinding the faces of the people. Such, then are the men who in Trengganu have replaced the district Chiefs of former year, and the change is certainly for the worse. The hereditary Chief of a District in Malay countries is usually related more or less closely by ties of blood with the people over whom he rules. He has been born and bred among them, has their women-folk, lived their lives, shared in their troubles and their good fortune, more especially the latter, and even at his worst knows and is known most intimately by them, and cannot but be largely in sympathy with them. The Budak Raja, however, looks upon the capital as his home, and sojourn in an out district as banishment. He is not of the blood of the people over whom he rules, he does not know their affairs, despises their feeling or their thoughts, is utterly out of sympathy with them, and merely regards them as a potential source of revenue, missing no opportunity of enriching himself at their expense.<sup>13</sup>

In spite of the fact that the people were reported as heavily exploited as mentioned, no revolts were recorded against this oppressive rule during the reign of Sultan Omar. This may be attributed to the fact that Omar tended to be a paternal monarch. He is described as the patron of artisans and traders and religious studies.<sup>14</sup> It is said that Trengganu under his reign was "... an oasis of peace which ... brought

11. *Ibid*, p. 35; Clifford, "Expedition", p. 69.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 70

13. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

14. Sheppard, "A Short History", p. 35.



wealth to the ruler and chiefs and to the trading community.<sup>15</sup> Above all, he moved "...freely among his subjects" and was affectionately referred to by the raayat.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, it may be that the raayat had a fairly easy time in conveying their grievances to him and this could account for the lack of domestic disturbances.

However peaceful and prosperous Trengganu was during his long reign of thirty-seven years, then, as in the years following his death, the political and economic stability of the state depended more on the personal ability of the leaders than on the unstable political system. The problems that did arise, and those that came during the following reigns, were all part of his legacy. The centralizing of power into the hands of the royal family members paved the way for rising power competition among the aristocracy and this eventually led to jeopardizing the Sultan's position itself. Even during Omar's reign an attempt was made to oust him and to take the state of Kelantan out from under the authority of Trengganu.<sup>17</sup> Omar's reign survived because he was a firm and able ruler. The precedent set by such a long and stable rule no doubt helped his successor who was appointed to rule under Omar's name for two years and, upon the death of the old Sultan, continued to rule in his own right for five more years. This, along with the short length of time, no doubt contributed to the fact that no political or other events occurred during this follow-up reign. Developments must have been under way, however, for when Sultan Zainal Abidin III came to the throne in 1881 (until 1918), the Sultan's power was considerably reduced. The relative-chiefs took control of the state revenues, dividing them among themselves, and left the Sultan only the revenue from the Trengganu River from Kuala Telemong to the mouth, and the small adjacent river of Ibai.<sup>18</sup> As Abidin III spent most of his time in religious studies, the oppressed condition of the raayat under the absentee landlords and the rule of the Budak Raja seem to have increased as it was ironically reported that Tengku Besar, the Sultan's brother-in-law, was renowned for his kindness because he had farmed out his revenue duties to a Chinese.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, while personal ability counted for much of Trengganu's prosperity, the negative balance in the economic sphere seems to explain the contrast in Trengganu's relatively peaceful succession as compared to that of Kelantan for, after all, the positions of District Chiefs were more rewarding financially. On the part of the people, their tolerance of the ruling class was in large measure the result of a raayat being

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15. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 30

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

18. Clifford, "Expedition", p. 68.

19. Sheppard, "A Short History", p. 38.



"first and foremost a man of peace"<sup>20</sup>, self-contained, religious and, to a certain degree, politically indifferent. As Clifford described them :

All he asks is to be allowed to make money or earn a livelihood unmolested, and he has none of that "loyal passion" for his intemperate Kings which is such a curious feature among the people of Pahang. When the Baginda took Trengganu the people submitted without a struggle, and if a stronger than he had tried to wrest the country from him the natives would certainly have again acquiesced with equal readiness.... The people of Trengganu are the most zealous Muhammadans in the Peninsula, and since religious teaching among the Malays is the beginning of all learning, their standard of culture is comparatively high. (They) are both more religiously superstitious and more fanatical than are any other race of Peninsula Malays with who I am acquainted.<sup>21</sup>

Turning to early 19th century Kelantan's administrative system, a few points should be noted. First, a number of Malay Ministerial positions were traditionally appointed as the reward for those who supported the Sultan to the throne (i.e. the title of Menteri, as well as those of Temenggong, Sri Maharaja, Laksamana, and Tengku Sri Indera<sup>22</sup>). However, it is doubtful that the positions were granted with specific functions, although certain titles did indicate (as opposed to involve) certain functions as the chiefs were responsible to higher authorities (i.e. Bendahara Banggul was to be the chief of the Banggul district).<sup>23</sup> Below the district chiefs, the names and functions of the officials can be understood only under the Siamese-Pattani administrative context. Thus, "Toh Kweng" was the "district" headman, "Toh Nebeng" was a village headman, and "Toh Cha" was an official in charge of conscription (either of labor or goods)<sup>24</sup>.

Kelantan was the only state with Siamese influence in her internal administrative system. This process was altogether natural as Kelantan's history had long been one of closeness with Pattani. Their royal houses and their political experiences were so entwined that it is said, "It is almost impossible to write an account of Kelantan's history without touching on that of Pattani."<sup>25</sup>

20. Clifford "Expedition", p. 98.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

22. C. Skinner, "The Civil War in Kelantan in 1839", *Monographs of the Malaysian Branch Royal Asiatic Society*, II, (Singapore : Malaysia Printers Ltd., 1965), p. 11.

23. Khoo Kay Kim, "Trengganu and Kelantan in the 19th century", *The Southeast Asian Review*, I, No. 1, p. 43.

24. Kim mentioned "Toh Pail" as being a derived Siamese position. This may be a mis-transcribed word, for no similar Thai position can be traced. See Kim, *Ibid.*, p. 44.

25. Anker Rentse, "History of Kelantan", *JMBRAS*, XII, pt. iii, 1934, p. 44.



During the first half of the 19th century, both Kelantan and Trengganu actively participated in the Malay State's movement for independence from Siam in the revolt of 1832. That revolt marked a new phase in Kelantan's and Trengganu's relations with Siam.<sup>26</sup> After the war, Siam consolidated her power over these states. In Trengganu the Siamese deposed the old Sultan who had resisted her power and appointed Sultan Omar in his place.<sup>27</sup> Sultan Mohammad was allowed to continue his reign in Kelantan, but he had to return the Raja of Pattani to Siam and pay an indemnity of 30,000 silver pieces.<sup>28</sup>

Political events, however, were not to go according to Siam's plan. Sultan Omar of Trengganu became antagonistic to Siamese authority and stopped sending Bunga Mas to Siam. In 1861 Omar visited Singapore and requested Sir Ord Cavenaugh to authorize British intervention.<sup>29</sup> The next year, when the Siamese government supported the return of the ex-Sultan of Lingga to Trengganu, a British steamer entered Trengganu port and eventually shelled the fort there.<sup>30</sup> Though the event did not create crucial conflict between the Siamese and the British governments, Siam became well aware of Trengganu's policy of playing her off against the British. Four months after the new ruler ascended the throne, the King of Siam sought to rekindle the once warm relationship. He made royal visits to Trengganu in 1887 and in 1889. These were returned by the Sultan visiting Bangkok.<sup>31</sup> However close the relationship between both states might have been, the Sultans of Trengganu, from Mansur up to Abidin, always maintained that "Bunga Mas" was sent to Siam as a token of friendship rather than tribute.<sup>32</sup> Also, although he referred the state affairs to the King's officer before or after making a decision, Sultan Abidin told Sir Frank Swettenham that he made his own independent decisions.<sup>33</sup> This was true on at least one occasion for when, in 1892, the Siamese government asked permission to establish a post office in Trengganu which would sell stamps bearing the figure of the King of Siam, the Sultan refused his consent.<sup>34</sup> In fact, Trengganu showed much success in balancing Siamese

26. Vella, *Siam Under Rama III*, pp. 68-9; Damrong, "Introduction", pp. 30-1.

27. Damrong, *Ibid.*, p. 31.

28. Thiphakorawongse, Chaophraya, *The Royal Chronicle of the Third Reign of the Bangkok Dynasty*. (Bangkok: Sison, 1934), p. 119.

29. Sheppard, "A Short History", p. 32; Swettenham, *British Malaya*", p. 320.

30. *Ibid.*, 321.

31. Sheppard "A Short History", pp. 40-1.

32. This view of Sultan Mansur was expressed to Francis Light when the former refused to send any longer the Bunga Mas to Siam and began asking for British protection. See Sheppard, *Ibid.*, p. 19. Also, in 1887, when Sir Frederic Weld visited Trengganu, the Sultan expressed the same concern. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-2.



power off against that of Britain when compared to other states such as Kelantan. Thus, in 1902, the agreement to introduce the advisor system into Kelantan and Trengganu was rejected by the Sultan of Trengganu. He is recorded by Swettenham as saying, "...the Siamese have never in any shape or form interfered in the administration of Trengganu nor has there ever been any kind of treaty agreement or arrangement written or verbal between Trengganu and Siam."<sup>35</sup>

As for Kelantan, after the reign of Sultan Muhammad in 1837, the state fell into succession disputes which brought about political instability. From 1837–1845 Kelantan's leaders were factionalized and very antagonistic towards each other. In 1839, the competing candidates for the throne began fighting and only with Siamese force was the battle put to an end.<sup>36</sup> However, the hostile attitudes between the factions still dominated Kelantan's politics until 1840 when the Siamese government removed one of the rival candidates to another state.<sup>37</sup> After a period of relative calm, the short reign of Sultan Mohammad III (1888–1891)<sup>38</sup> (whose death was blamed on court intrigue),<sup>39</sup> was followed by similar succession disputes. This time one party sought Siamese support while the other asked for British help. Coupled with this internal turmoil, the Pahang Rebellion broke out. Thus, by 1900, a force of Siamese soldiers, with a resident commissioner, appeared in Kelantan declaring that they were only there to keep the peace. With the recognition of Siam, Tuan Long Senik was able to ascend the throne, but his relatives were in league against him, and they effectively deprived the new Sultan of power through the following measures: the right of royal family members to be consulted on all matters of state was granted; royal family

35. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

36. This rivalry over succession dispute in Kelantan was a complicated event composed of various intrigues which involved Siamese officials at Nakhon Sri Thammarat. See Skinner, "The Civil War", pp. 8–68. In fact, the event was the major theme of Udom Sombat's Letters. An intensive re-study of the latter would help clarify the discrepancies between the Malay and Thai sources. See also, "Kelantan Chronicle", pp. 319–22.

37. This Malay prince was Tuan Besar whom the Siamese government moved to another state: Nongchik, and who later, when the governor of Pattani died in 1843, was appointed the Raja of Patani. See "Kelantan Chronicle", p. 323.

38. There is not yet a consensus on the date of Senik's death. Clifford stated that he died in 1888, and the next ruler continued the reign up to 1891. See Clifford, "The Expedition", p. 108. Graham, on the contrary, dated his death to 1877. See, W.A. Graham, *Kelantan, a State of the Malay Peninsula*, (Glasgow, 1908), cited by Skinner, "The Civil War", p. 69. Also, Leslie Robert, "The Duff Syndicate in Kelantan, 1900–1902", *JMBRAS*, VI, pt. 1, 1972, p. 82.

39. Mohamed b. Nik Mohd. Salleh, "Kelantan in Transition: 1891–1910", in Roff, *Kelantan*, p. 23, footnote 4.



members could veto any orders given by the Sultan; royal family members were given power over certain revenue farms; and a limitation was placed on the Sultan's share of the state revenues. In addition to this, the Siamese refused to pull its force out of Kelantan.<sup>40</sup>

### TRENGGANU'S AND KELANTAN'S ECONOMIC ASPECTS

In the 19th century, Kelantan and Trengganu were the most populated of any of the Malay states, and at the same time were the most prosperous. Around the 1830's, Kelantan had a population of approximately 40,000–50,000<sup>41</sup> while Trengganu had not less than 100,000<sup>42</sup> by 1894.

Clifford described Trengganu as the most indigenous state, a state where the Malays made up nearly 99% of the population. Its people could be divided into three classes: the fishermen, who made up twenty percent of the population; the artisans who lived in the coastal towns, including the capital and who comprised twelve and a half percent of the people, and the farmers who lived in the villages and who accounted for sixty-five percent of the populace. The remaining two and a half percent were chiefs and other leisured classes.<sup>43</sup> For Kelantan, not a single statistic could be found to be recorded for the 19th century population, although it is probable that the percentages for most categories would be roughly equal. The only difference worth noting would be the percentage of the population represented by the Chinese, which would be a considerable number, for Kelantan had tin mines in those districts situated on the west bank of the Galas river.<sup>44</sup>

Both Kelantan and Trengganu were well known for their silk and cotton manufacturing. The people of Trengganu were especially admired for their skill and craftsmanship in boat-building and the production of metal-ware. Those in Kelantan were renowned for their quality fabrics at inexpensive prices. Also, although the majority of the people of both states were farmers who grew rice, because of the primitive mode of cultivation, both states had to import rice from Siam and the Straits Settlements.<sup>45</sup>

It seems that both Kelantan and Trengganu had the same basic taxing system. The first kind was the "Banchi" or poll tax which was levied on everyone except the Sultan once every three years in order to make the "Bunga Mas" to Siam. The second

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 30–36.

41. Skinner, "The Civil War", p. 8.

42. Clifford, "Expedition to Trengganu and Kelantan", p. 88.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 102–103.

45. Clifford, "Expedition", p. 95, 96 & 116.



kind was the "Serah" which was accomplished in two ways: by sending goods to a village or an individual charging a higher than market price, or by sending money to buy certain products at less than market value price.<sup>46</sup> This latter system of taxing can be seen as harsh and an imposition and, indeed, Clifford stated that the people "... throughout the state are taxed until the limit of the possible has been reached".<sup>47</sup>

As for the source of the state revenue, the important ones were export duties on fish (\$1.00 per pikul of fish), revenue farms for opium, revenues from tin and salt, and a small sum from gambling. Most of the revenue farms were granted to Chinese merchants.<sup>48</sup> In Kelantan, by 1894, the whole of the revenue went to the Sultan's treasury and to a few of the chiefs who would then distribute it to their followers.<sup>49</sup> In Trengganu, from the reign of Sultan Abidin III, the major part of the revenue was partitioned among the royal family chiefs as already mentioned. Besides, both Kelantan and Trengganu had their own currency. The Sultan usually farmed out the right to mint coins to the Kapitan (Chinese community headman) and, at times, to some of the royal members. In Trengganu, the coinage brought a profit of about 1,636% on each coin minted which led to extensive forging of the official currency. In Kelantan the profit was only .247%.<sup>50</sup>

The over-all view of Kelantan and Trengganu in economic terms at the end of the 19th century seems to be one of moderate prosperity. One visitor described Trengganu in this way:

in many kampongs of which the capital was composed we saw all manner of crafts being followed from boat making to embroidery. Kuala Trengganu appeared to be a hive of industry, and we were truly astonished at the range of the activities, and in parts at the high quality of the work.<sup>51</sup>

The same visitor gave an account of Kota Bharu, the capital of Kelantan, as follows:

I found the shopping center of the town fascinating. There one could see beautiful locally-made sarongs, along with the imported cotton and silk cloths, generally, unfortunately, markedly inferior in colour and texture; native sweet meats, tin and brassware from Brunei,

46. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 77 & 115.

51. W.W. Skeat, and F.F. Laidlaw, "The Cambridge University Expedition to parts of the Malay Peninsula, 1899-1900", *JMBRAS*, XXVI, pt. 4, 1953, p. 122.



Trengganu and Birmingham; cheap Japanese and Chinese tools and Knives; gold ornaments locally made; silver boxes; fruit and poultry. The traders were of wide origin, Malays, Chinese, Arabs, and Indians.<sup>52</sup>

No sources for the detailed statistical expenditures and revenues of Kelantan and Trengganu are available in order to make it possible to determine the real economic situation and the distribution of wealth of those states. However, from the existing sources it can be concluded that even though they were not developing economically, this does not seem to have been detrimental to their political stability.

The implication from this paper shows three different courses taken by Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu which were all to lead to the same end. In Kedah, the economic factor determined her loss of sovereignty, whereas in Kelantan, political instability led to the same fate. Trengganu, on the other hand, suffered neither of these afflictions, but events beyond her control were to lead to the inevitable loss of independence suffered by her neighbors at the hands of a larger and stronger outside power.

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52. F.F. Laidlaw, "Travels in Kelantan, Trengganu & Upper Perak, A Personal Narrative", *JMBRAS*, XXVI, pt. 4, 1953, pp. 157-8.



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