

GEOGRAPHY AS A DETERMINANT OF SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIAN HISTORY

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There are many who believe that fate governs human life. One could in fact say the same of places. Geographical location is often the single most important factor affecting the development of a particular place or country. This is certainly true of Kuala Lumpur. Although an important trading depot between c. 1850 and 1867, when civil war disrupted trade along the Klang river, it was not chosen as the capital when the British took over control of the administration of Selangor in 1875. Klang was.¹

Klang had been lucky too in ancient times. The Klang river was not merely within easy reach of the thriving port of Melaka; it was a tin-producing territory and was considered sufficiently important to be assigned to Tun Perak as his fief before he became the Bendahara of Melaka. Klang's subsequent history is not that clear but it rose to prominence again in the early 19th century also because of tin.²

From the time of the establishment of the kingdom of Selangor in 1766, Kuala Selangor was the state capital. In 1857, Sultan Abdul Samad succeeded his uncle and father-in-law (Sultan Muhammad). As it was a disputed succession, the new ruler chose to remain at

Kuala Langat where his immediate followers were. In the days of the *ancien regime*, the ruler's residence was also the kingdom's capital.³

But, by then, the Klang river basin was experiencing rapid development owing to tin mining activities in the vicinity of Kuala Lumpur. Although Sultan Abdul Samad did not move his base to the Klang valley, it subsequently came under the control of his son-in-law, Tunku Kudin of Kedah, who played a crucial role in the establishment of British administration in Selangor.⁴

However, within five years, the state capital was shifted to Kuala Lumpur. There were at least two reasons which affected British thinking at that time. Security consideration was one. J.W.W. Birch, the first British Resident of Perak was assassinated in November 1875. Hitherto, the British felt that the administrative capital should be close to the ruler's residence because it would enable the British Resident to be within easy reach of the sultan to whom he was supposed to be an Adviser. Birch had picked Bandar Baharu close to Batak Rabit (now a part of Teluk Intan), Sultan Abdullah's residence.⁵

Birch's assassination influenced the British to move the administrative centre away from the "Malay heartland" to a place where there was a more even mix between Malays and Chinese. In Perak, Taiping was selected in 1876. The following year, the British also fixed permanently the royal residence. It was located at Kuala Kangsar where it has remained to this day. The Kangsar river basin was not originally the pulse of the Perak kingdom which, until the advent of British administration, was focused on Lower Perak. Until even today, the Malay population along the Kangsar river is smaller in number compared to that in Lower Perak.

In 1888, when the British intervened in Pahang which within three years also witnessed strong Malay opposition, the administrative capital was as a consequence located at Kuala Lipis, at the confluence of the Lipis river and the Jelai river, tucked away in the interior of Pahang and a long distance from Pekan where the ruler was and where J.P. Rodger, the first Resident, had established his office. Kuala Lipis was the choice of Rodger's successor, Hugh Clifford (Resident from 1896-1899), who was very familiar with the interior of Pahang.

But it is doubtful that security was the sole reason for Clifford's choice. Even before 1888, serious consideration had been given to the subject of improving communication between Pahang and the western part of the Peninsula. Although there were suggestions that a road be built from Johor Bahru to Pekan or a railway from Melaka to Pekan, by 1888, a decision had been made to construct a cart track from Kuala Kubu to Raub and routes from Kuala Pilah (Negeri Sembilan) as well as across the Ginting [Genting] Bidai from Selangor were to be investigated with a view to building a road or railway which would meet the Pahang river at Temerloh.

In brief, local officials were more or less agreed that Pahang ought to be opened up from the west as communication by land between Pahang and Perak as well as Selangor had long existed: from Ulu Lipis to Ulu Slim (Perak), Tras to Kuala Kubu and Ulu Semantan to Ulu Klang.⁶ But the natural barriers to be surmounted were still formidable. The costs of building roads or railway were prohibitive. Pahang itself lacked revenue. Although gold and tin were found in the vicinity of Kuala Lipis, the area was not strategically located for establishing efficient links, *albeit* indirect, with the ports of Penang and Singapore. When construction of the east-west railway began, the point of departure from the west was located at Gemas (Negeri Sembilan) and not in Perak or Selangor. Kuala Lipis never grew even after the east-west railway had been completed by 1931. After the country achieved nationhood, the state capital was moved to Kuantan.

Similarly, when the British had completely taken control of Negeri Sembilan in 1895, Seremban, in Sungai Ujong (where British administration had been effected since 1875), was retained as the state capital. It is not in close proximity to Sri Menanti, the royal residence. It took some time for Yamtuan Antah, the ruler of Negeri Sembilan, to reconcile with the British whose presence in Negeri Sembilan was originally to assist the Dato Klana of Sungai Ujong who could not match the influence of his rival, the Dato Bandar, and was in danger of being ousted.⁷

Until the Birch episode of 1875, the British had found it convenient to conform to the traditional Malay settlement pattern which was governed by geographical considerations. The Malays had been

largely a maritime people and the emergence of Melaka in the 15th century as (according to the Portuguese) the busiest port in the world was the crowning glory of their achievement. Melaka was not just a busy port, it was also the progenitor of Peninsular Malay socio-political *Adat* or Tradition.⁸

The coming of the English country traders in the 18th century changed the whole scenario and the Malays began moving up the rivers so that, by the early 19th century, the estuaries of the rivers had been well populated and they continued to move upstream. They had become a riverine people. In the 18th century, only Terengganu and Johor (based then at Riau-Lingga) were maritime kingdoms. By the middle of the 19th century, the Malay states had become commercial dependencies of the Straits Settlements. This was the scenario when the British first took over the administration of some of the Malay states between 1874-1875.⁹

The decision to move inland after 1875 was also, to a significant extent, affected by economic considerations. It was tin mining which made Sungai Ujong, Lukut, Larut, Kuala Lumpur, and the Kinta so important. But, had economic considerations been taken solely into account, Kuantan, a mining centre and a port, would probably have been the choice over Kuala Lipis when the British were in charge in Pahang. Be that as it may, in the case of Taiping, Kuala Lumpur and Seremban, revenue collection featured dominantly in the thinking of British officials.

As such, although they were proved wrong in the case of Taiping whose decline began almost at the same time as the completion of the Taiping-Port Weld railway in 1885, the fear of incurring heavy expenditure delayed the transfer of the state capital from Taiping to Ipoh which, by the early 20th century, was already clearly the more progressive of the two towns although there was a conspicuous absence of public buildings in Ipoh as it was not - even Batu Gajah was and still is - the district capital.¹⁰

Until the British country traders, of whom Francis Light was the most famous, began to exploit the commercial potential of the Straits of Melaka, the east coast of the Peninsula had developed more rapidly than the west coast.¹¹ Although severely affected by the north-

east monsoon, at the end of one year and the beginning of the next, its proximity to China, Siam, the Indochinese Peninsula as well as Sulawesi (Indonesia) enabled Kuala Kelantan, Kuala Terengganu and Kuala Pahang to become important trading centres. Large Chinese enclaves were found in all these centres in the 18th century. The Chinese then were drawn to the Peninsula by trade. Some of the merchants were also appointed agents by the rulers. Kuala Terengganu was an international port which rivaled Riau, at that time the leading port of Johor (Lama). The whole subject, however, has still to be more closely studied.

Natural resources apart, the development of the west coast states owed much to the advent of the British country traders whose commercial ventures began when the East India Co. commenced its conquest of India in 1757. Using India as the base and encouraged by the growing importance of the China trade, they moved into the Straits of Melaka, which is separated from India by the Bay of Bengal, in search of produce which could be used in exchange for Chinese tea to which the British had become addicted but had to purchase with silver bullion.¹²

Although population migration to the west coast states of the Peninsula began as a result of the rapidly expanding tin production in territories within these states - owing to the end of Dutch monopoly after the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, and by the mid-19th century, the sharp rise in demand from the British tin-plate industry - the growth of the mining sector itself was made possible by the availability of capital from the Straits Settlements, in particular Penang and Singapore, both of which, initially, flourished as trading centres. Commercial agriculture, however, complemented tin in contributing to the development of the western Malay states.

In short, there was a flow of capital as well as manpower from the Straits to the hinterland. It was no accident that when tin was discovered in Larut, the earliest Chinese to invest there and to work the mines came from Penang. Almost the same pattern recurred when the Kinta district was opened up in the 1880s. Although Penang Chinese (merchants and clerks) also moved into Klang and Kuala Lumpur by the close of the 19th century, the earlier phase of Chinese migra-

tion into Selangor, not just the Klang valley but also Lukut, involved primarily those from Melaka.¹³

Indeed, commercially, a clear pattern was observable by even the mid-19th century. The port of Penang serviced the trade of Perak and, to a lesser extent, the trade of Selangor, but the Melaka port serviced Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. Penang Chinese were hardly involved in Negeri Sembilan and Melaka Chinese did not venture as far as Perak.

This geo-economic pattern eventually had a significant effect on cultural development. Melaka and Penang Chinese were practically strangers to each other not just because those in each settlement, in many instances, belonged to different territorial-dialect groups but even among the *peranakan* Chinese, no significant social tie was established between those of the two settlements. Moreover, while the Penang *peranakan* spoke Hokkien, the Melaka *peranakan* spoke only bazaar Malay. A large proportion of both, however, were English educated. Nevertheless, even in the conduct of business, the two groups did not often work in unison.

By and large, the story of the involvement of the merchants of Penang and Melaka in the tin production of Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan is well-known. Perhaps not so well-known is Singapore's contribution to the growth of mainland Johor in the early 19th century.¹⁴ The economic link between Singapore and the Peninsular as a whole was to continue to grow, buttressed by, first, the completion of the north-south railway in 1909 joining Prai and Johor Bahru and, in 1923, the construction of the Johor Causeway which was a major contributory factor to the growth of motor transport in this country for it facilitated the movement of traffic between Singapore and the Peninsular states. Indeed, road transport soon provided competition to rail transport.¹⁵

Geography, again, had even earlier played a role in augmenting the importance of the Straits of Melaka which directly affected Singapore and, later, Port Swettenham (Pelabuhan Klang). The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 directed East-West shipping to the Indian Ocean-Bay of Bengal region, and the Straits of Melaka, contiguous to the Bay of Bengal, is until today a major part of the same

shipping route. Put simply, its economic and strategic importance has not diminished since 1869.¹⁶

Port Swettenham, completed in 1901, was a particular beneficiary. Intended originally to serve Selangor, it became an international port by the 1920s owing to its location along the Straits of Melaka. Ships passing by often called to replenish whatever they were in need of. Its existence enabled Kuala Lumpur to continue to be a vibrant commercial centre although eclipsed by Ipoh when the Kinta emerged as the world's leading producer of tin by the 1920s. And, earlier, in the 1880s, important as Kuala Lumpur was, it was still less developed than Taiping which between 1876 and 1885 had become the premier town in the Malay Peninsula. The British Resident of Perak was the most senior of the existing Residents. When it was decided to create the Federated Malay States in the early 1890s, it was anticipated that Taiping would be chosen as the federal capital. But Taiping was less centrally located between the northern and southern parts of the western Malay states. The choice fell on Kuala Lumpur.

Ipoh might well have been given the honour had it been a developed town by the early 1890s. Although tin had already been found there since the 1880s, it was, even in the 1890s, little more than a village. It would require very heavy expenditure to turn it into the federal capital. The subsequent development of the Kinta valley was unprecedented and by the 1920s, Ipoh was popularly known as "the hub of Malaya". Tin also turned Kampar into the fourth largest town in the FMS by 1911, outstripping Teluk Anson (Teluk Intan), Klang and Seremban.¹⁷ But its subsequent growth was slow and it lost out to Seremban by 1921 by which time Kuala Lumpur's position as the federal capital had been firmly entrenched.¹⁸ It appointed, in that year, a town planner (Charles C. Reade from New Zealand) - the first in the country.

Ever since 1896, as the federal capital, Kuala Lumpur has always been the favourite child of the central government. Every effort has been made to develop the place befitting its status as the federal/national capital. But Klang never declined. Although neglected by the bureaucracy, it had derived immense advantage from its link with Kuala Lumpur by rail since 1886. The construction of Port

Swettenham was decisive in generating, initially, the expansion of plantation agriculture and then manufacturing in the Klang district.¹⁹

Plantation agriculture in Selangor began in the early 1880s, rather modestly at first. The completion of the Kuala Lumpur-Klang railway encouraged more planters to locate their estates in areas adjoining the railway line. Klang district became one of the country's major centres of commercial agriculture. Coffee was followed by rubber, then came pineapples and later oil palm.²⁰

Not many people know that Malaya was once an important exporter of canned pineapples. The principal market was in Britain. It antedated oil palm. The canning of pineapples, in Johor and Selangor, preceded slightly by the manufacture of matches, also marked the beginnings of industrialisation in this country. Manufacturing was to enter a more important phase in Selangor by the 1930s when several factories, including BATA's, were set up in the vicinity of Klang to produce rubber goods. In brief, Klang (district, town and port) contributed significantly to Selangor's as well as the country's economic development. But there was no elaborate urban development. For a long time Klang remained a simple town although the population of the town grew rapidly. By 1931, it was the fifth largest town in the FMS, only very slightly smaller than Seremban.²¹

Geography, to some extent can be overcome by technology. The decline of many of the country's traditional ports bears testimony to this. But the commercial importance of the states on the east coast, however, could not be saved by technology. Already disadvantaged by the yearly monsoon, their distance from the vibrant ports of Penang and Singapore discouraged Straits and foreign capitalists from investing there – for example, transport costs would be that much higher if plantations were located on the east coast. As a result, although there was ample land in Pahang, the largest of the Peninsular states, development was sluggish frustrating the high expectations of Straits officials who persuaded the Colonial Office to sanction intervention in Pahang in 1888 and then to continue to retain it as a British Protectorate after the disturbances of the early 1890s which placed severe financial stress on the administration. Britain decided to retain its establishment there by using the surplus revenue of Perak and Selangor

to assist Pahang which indeed was the main reason for the formation of the Federated Malay States.²²

However, technology (the completion of the north-south railway) eventually rendered the port of Teluk Anson redundant. The area situated at the confluence of the Perak and Bidor rivers had been long the most important trading centre in Perak. Until 1882, when Teluk Anson was founded, the port was better known as Kuala Bidor. In the earlier days it was, in addition, a weighing station for tin exported from Perak.²³

Lower Perak benefitted little from the growth of Larut and Matang but when the Kinta became the leading tin producer in the state, Teluk Anson's importance increased sharply for it was the major gateway to and from the Kinta district as the Kinta river flows into the Perak river only several kilometres above Teluk Anson which, incidentally, is about 50 kilometres from the Straits of Melaka. There was, until the advent of motor transport, no convenient route from Ipoh to Port Weld.

Initially, Teluk Anson continued to be important to the Kinta district even after the coming of the railway. The Ipoh-Teluk Anson line began operation in 1895 and the terminus originally was at the port which was in the town itself. Soil erosion eventually forced the station to be relocated about two kilometres further down the river but also on the left bank as the original port. The role of the Kinta river in the Kinta-Lower Perak commercial link almost ceased after 1895. But Malay peddling traders continued to service the villages along the river. The situation was to change significantly over the next decade when Prai was linked to Johor Bahru. The port in Teluk Anson became almost redundant. The opening up of estates during the turn of the 20th century practically saved the port and town. But after World War II, the port became dominant but the town since 1882 until now has been the district capital.²⁴

The 19th century was not just the age of railway; it was also the age of steamship in Britain. But the rail was a more efficient form of internal transport than the sail. British officials rather than pressure from the business community were primarily responsible for pushing the idea of linking Penang and Singapore by rail. The line, as they

visualized it, would traverse the major urban settlements many of which had expanded owing to the growth of the mining sector.

So aggressively was the plan pursued that the north-south link was completed in 1909 on the eve of the first rubber boom. However, it was not rubber but tin which paid for the construction of the railway. Rubber nonetheless benefited considerably as plantations were soon strung out along the railway line from north to south as well as along the railway route between the mining settlements and the coastal ports. In due course, roads were also built from the estates to the nearest railway stations.²⁵

With the completion of the north-south line, Port Swettenham alone among the ports on the western edge of the Peninsula survived. Port Weld, already severely affected because Larut had declined as a mining centre, became a ghost town. Teluk Anson, as mentioned earlier, was saved by the growth of rubber plantations. Indeed, the Jenderata Estate, Danish-owned, and located at Hutan Melintang about 15 kilometres from Teluk Anson, was the largest estate in the country. It probably still is.

Teluk Anson was also fortunate because of its proximity to the Bernam district, another centre of commercial agriculture in Selangor. Until the 1960s when road construction in the northern part of Selangor was more seriously pursued, the Bernam district in practice functioned as a part of the Lower Perak district. Even the estate soccer teams there participated in the Lower Perak football league. The Bernam-Lower Perak link was subsequently strengthened when a bridge was built across the Sungai Bernam near the Jenderata estate

Kuala Linggi, so important in the past as the port of Negeri Sembilan, faded away when the Seremban-Port Dickson railway was completed on the eve of the 20th century. The ports in Batu Pahat and Muar, to some extent, continued to be important as they also served the plantation sector in the two districts especially when the rubber sector expanded. Johor, since the 1840s, had become heavily dependent on commercial agriculture. Pepper and gambier which were sustained until the early 20th century eventually gave way to rubber and pineapples as well as oil palm.²⁶

But Batu Pahat and Muar were placed at a disadvantage when first the north-south railway was pushed through Kluang, closer to the east coast, and then with the growing importance of motor transport, after the completion of the Causeway in 1923, the road from Johor Bahru to Segamat made it unnecessary for north/south-bound motor vehicles to go through the two west coast towns. The ports continued to function but compared unfavourably with Johor Bahru.

To reiterate, the improvement in transport technology led to a major shift of the country's commercial centre from the coast to the interior although security considerations (after the assassination of Birch) and tin mining were also important contributory factors. But the choice of Gemas as the starting point of the east coast railway was, primarily, prompted by geographical consideration as access to Pahang from there would not encounter the steep gradient that would be unavoidable should the east coast line begin from Selangor although the distance would be shorter.

Construction of the east coast line began in early 1907 from Gemas and by April 1907 had been extended to Bahau, still within Negeri Sembilan. Six years later, it was brought up to Tembeling in Pahang which was about 160 kilometres from Gemas. In 1912, construction also began from the Kelantan end and, by 1914, Tumpat, the port at the northern end of Kelantan, had been linked to Tanah Merah further south - a distance of about 45 kilometres.

Meanwhile the further extension of the line from Tembeling also continued and, by the time of World war I (1917), had reached Kuala Lipis which hitherto had been very isolated despite being the state capital.

Although Malaya was not directly involved in what was more popularly called the European War, its economy and administration were not unaffected. This was because Britain had to concentrate resources on the war in Europe. British commercial vessels were commandeered and younger members of the British community serving in Malaya were conscripted. All capital expenditure was drastically reduced. Momentarily, the construction of the east coast line ceased. It was revived by 1918.

The east coast line was finally completed in 1931²⁷ but it failed to act as a catalyst for the development of the east coast states. The line was, on the whole, run at a loss. Until the 1950s, access by road was also extremely inconvenient as most of the rivers had not been bridged. Periodic floods, especially during the monsoon months of December and January, caused the business community to marginalize these states.

Lack of development also deprived the inhabitants of these states of modern amenities. Even the schools did not enjoy the facilities which were available to those in many of the towns on the western side of the Peninsula. Comparatively fewer students from the east coast earned opportunities to further their education at the tertiary level. Except for Kota Bahru, Kelantan, no newspaper or periodical (English or vernacular) was regularly published in Kuala Terengganu or Kuala Lipis or Kuantan whereas on the west coast, beginning from 1904, at least four English, and various vernacular (Malay, Chinese and Tamil) dailies were, at one time or another, published until the 1960s. The situation has remained little changed at this juncture although the number of English newspapers has declined.

The importance of geography can also be discerned from a cultural perspective. In this respect, Perak provides perhaps the best illustration of the influence of geography on culture. Upper Perak shares a common boundary with Thailand; north Perak is separated from Kedah by the Krian river. The western part of Perak is exposed to Sumatra. Until the advent of British administration, Upper Perak existed under the shadow of Siam. Many of the Malays there in fact originated from the Muslim province of Pattani or from Kelantan. Not surprisingly they spoke basically the same dialect as those from the southern Siamese territories. Elements of Siamese influence were found even in local government. For instance, in both Kelantan and Upper Perak, the institution of *Tok Nebeng* (a local headman) once existed.²⁸

Malays in north Perak, from Padang Rengas upwards, until today, use the Kedah dialect. A major contributory factor to this must have been the Siamese invasion of Kedah in 1821 when, it was said, 90% of the people left Kedah to seek refuge in the neighbouring territories of Penang and Krian owing to Siamese atrocities.

The story of West Perak, however, is a little different. Migration from Sumatra to Perak tended to focus on Lower Perak rather than the entire Perak coastline as the Perak river was the main artery of the kingdom. As in the case of Kelantan and Pahang, so too in Perak, the main core of the population was focused on the state's principal river. Over the centuries, people from Sumatra - Mandailing, Rawa, Acehnese, Batak, Kampar, and other smaller groups - continually arrived. Aceh's influence was particularly noticeable as it conquered Perak in the 16th century and, even in the 19th century, some of the Perak chieftains were of Acehnese descent.²⁹ One recognisable Acehnese name is "Pandak" - the Dato Maharaja Lela implicated in the assassination of Birch was Pandak Lam, and his follower, who was said to have been the first to stab Birch, was Pandak Indut.

Therefore, even before the massive inflow of Chinese and Indians, beginning from the mid-19th century, Perak society was very heterogeneous. Although Perak does have its own dialect which is the dialect used mainly in Lower Perak, no single dialect dominates. In the 20th century, the heterogeneity of Perak Malay society further increased owing to the immigration of Banjarese and Javanese, the former were brought to work the government padi schemes at Krian and later at Sungai Manik, Lower Perak, while the latter came with the growth of plantation agriculture around the turn of the 20th century.

When the entire Peninsular scenario is examined, it is evident that the pattern of development in modern times between the east coast and the west coast shows significant differences. On the eastern zone, the belt of territory behind the coastal plain never (and still has not) acquired the same importance as that on the west coast. Moreover, Terengganu is the only Peninsular state where the bulk of the population reside along the coast although the state has more than ten rivers running parallel to one another, each flowing into the South China Sea. To a lesser extent, Selangor's topography is similar in the sense that, before the British changed the boundary between Negeri Sembilan and Selangor, no less than eight rivers of the kingdom, parallel to one another, flowed into the Straits of Melaka. But

in only one area - Jeram - was the population found to live next to the sea.

The existence of Penang at the northern end and Singapore at the southern end of the Melaka Straits not only continually fed the western Malay states with capital and human resource but also exposed the population there to the outside world. In the latter case, it was particularly true before the advent of radio broadcasting, cinematography and aviation. It happened largely in two ways *via* the print media as well as the actual visits by influential personalities some of whom were very well-known. Dr. Sun Yat-sen was possibly the earliest political activist to spend time here.

M.N.Roy, the leading Indian communist passed through Penang during WW I. Tagore was here in 1927 and Nehru a decade later together with his daughter Indira Gandhi who met with a motor accident in Singapore but was uninjured. Indian history would have been very different had it been otherwise. The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) was here in 1921, so was Khawja Kamaluddin, Imam of the Woking Mosque in England, and he initiated an Islamic movement which captured the imagination of many young Muslims here including Za'ba, the renowned Malay linguist.

It was in the field of sport that Malaya was most fortunate. Australian Test cricketers played here as early as 1909. They came again in 1927 and, much to their surprise were defeated by a Malayan team in Kuala Lumpur. English, Indian and Sri Lankan cricketers also played here in the 1930s. Japanese Davis Cup players usually stopped to play exhibition matches on their way to and from Europe to participate in official competitions. Malayan fans also had the chance to watch Wimbledon tennis champions (Henri Cochet and "Big Bill" Tilden) here in the 1930s. The formidable Indian hockey team led by the legendary Dyan Chand played in Singapore against a Malayan side in 1932. The Islington Corinthians, although an amateur soccer club, toured the country in 1938. The list is not exhaustive.

In short, because of its geographical location, and in particular the strategic location of the ports of Penang and Singapore, those who resided on the western part of the Malay Peninsula were able to have closer contact with the rest of the world. The long term effects

on the people have been more significant than realized. The handicaps suffered by those on the eastern side of the Peninsula have yet to be remedied. Admittedly, Kelantan is in many ways an exception and this could perhaps be due to the inclination of Kelantanese, since a long time ago, to seek their livelihood in various parts of the Peninsula. It is a trend that has not been discontinued for it has been said that even today the majority of the Kelantanese are working outside their own state so that under-development in Kelantan has not impoverished the state for it has been able to thrive on other states.

Finally, it may be reiterated that no attempt is being made here to propound a thesis. Admittedly, the main thrust of the subject under discussion is the importance of geography in the study of history, but significant as it is, it does not in any way stand as an isolated factor in the making of a society. And although geography sometimes can be overcome by technology or even political decisions, certain handicaps cannot be erased. For example, a country with insufficient space cannot thrive on agriculture as the principal export, and the type of produce it can sustain depends on several factors: soil and climate among them, not to mention human resource.

These days it is common to insist that a theoretical framework should be used in the study of a society. But it has often been assumed rather than demonstrated that a theoretical framework is indispensable. What, precisely, is the advantage? What is the function of theory? In the physical sciences, it is to enable predictions to be made. But in the study of a society which involves investigating human affairs and behaviour, it should be self-evident that accurate predictions are not possible.

Economists have been particularly fond of making predictions; indeed, it is practically demanded of them that they should do so. But, in reality, economists do not predict, they cannot. They indulge in what may be called, at best, *disciplined speculation* for they are never certain that the conclusions they draw are right. If the element of doubt exists, then any statement about the future cannot be deemed a prediction.

In the case of historiography where scholars work with the advantage of hindsight, it is incongruous to think in terms of predic-

tion. But it is argued by those who advocate the use of a theoretical framework that even in the study of history, explanations can be better provided by the aid of theories. When the results are already known, what is the function of a theory? It is often argued that explanations make more sense if presented in the form of a theory. But that again is based on the assumption that a theory makes prediction possible. The contention seems to be that, with a theoretical framework, a known phenomenon can be used to predict the future, meaning that, given an identical scenario, the same results can be expected, hence the common saying: history repeats itself. But are two scenarios ever identical?

WW I (usually called "The European War") was supposed to be the war to end all wars. It was studied and analyzed by more scholars and interest groups than it is possible to enumerate. In addition, the League of Nations was formed to provide the vehicle for achieving peace. Despite everything, WW II broke out by 1939 and wars, small scale or big scale, have been going on since.

But whether students of history speculate or presume to predict, it is important for them to realize that, in history writing, the ideational is as important as the descriptive-narrative. Admittedly, it is that much more difficult for the inexperienced to be able to deduce from a corpus of data or to see patterns based on a number of examples. For one thing, their work, in the sunrise of their careers, is likely to be more depth- rather than breadth- oriented. But eventually, a scholar needs to invent ideas not merely echo them. And if one is an academician, one should rightly attempt to be a *guru* (its Sanskrit meaning was: 'one who liberates the minds of others') not a teacher or an instructor whose every word has to be remembered and, in due course, regurgitated.

There is ample room in historiography for the invention of ideas because history content-wise incorporates all the other disciplines, though it does not necessarily use the same methodology. It has been said that scientists are fortunate because they have engineers to implement their ideas. Scholars in the non-physical sciences are not placed in a similar favourable situation. Much of what they say is necessarily subjective. For that reason, it can be rejected in cavalier fashion, even

if the ideas propounded are sound. Some subjective disciplines have succeeded in assuming an objective form while remaining subjective. They are unlikely to be able to explain the huge grey areas in human life and the use of a quantitative approach merely appears to solve the problem. Actually it does not.

Note

- ¹ Emily Sadka, *The Protected Malay States 1874-1895*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press 1968, p.66.
- ² See Khoo Kay Kim, "Bandar Klang: Perkembangan 1870-1941" in Mohd. Sarim Mustajab & Khazin Mohd. Tamin (eds.), *Klang 1890-1990: Sejarah dan Pentadbiran*, Bangi: 1990.
- ³ Khoo Kay Kim, *The Western Malay States 1850-1873*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press 1972, pp.12-23.
- ⁴ Ibid., passim.
- ⁵ C.N.Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press 1964, pp. 196, 259.
- ⁶ See R.G.Cant, "Pahang in 1888: The Eve of British Administration", in *Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol.19, Dec. 1964.
- ⁷ See C.N.Parkinson, *British International in Malaysia*, p. 178.
- ⁸ See Khoo Kay Kim, "The Melaka Sultanate: Internal Administration and Control of Its Empire", in *Sejarah*, No.4, 1996.
- ⁹ Khoo Kay Kim, *The Western Malay States*, pp. 53-58.
- ¹⁰ The British originally selected Kota Baharu (now approachable by road from Gopeng) as the capital of the Kinta district but the place was found to be too swampy and unhealthy. Batu Gajah was chosen instead at a time when tin had just been discovered in the Kinta valley and Ipoh was as yet a small village. Ipoh's expansion was rapid. By the time of the rubber boom in 1910, Ipoh's new town across the Kinta river had already been constructed. In the late 1920s, concerted moves were made by the public to have Ipoh replace Taiping as the state capital. But the Slump of 1930 made it impossible for the government to consider the expensive exercise. Ipoh had to wait until after WW II to become the state capital.
- ¹¹ See Khoo Kay Kim, "Terengganu and Kelantan in the 19th Century", in *The South-East Asian Review (India)*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1975.
- ¹² See D.K.Bassett, "The British Country Trader and the Sea Captain in Southeast Asia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", in *Journal of the Historical Society*, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1961.
- ¹³ Khoo Kay Kim, *The Western Malay States*, pp. 67-79.
- ¹⁴ See C.M. Turnbull, "The Johore Gambier and Pepper Trade in the Mid-Nineteenth Century" in *Journal of the South Seas Society*, XV, No. 2, 1959.

- ¹⁵ See Lim Chong Yah, *Economic Development of Modern Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press 1967, pp. 274-275, 277, 280.
- ¹⁶ G.Bogaars, "The Effects of the Opening of the Suez Canal on the Trade and Development of Singapore", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Malayan Branch*, Vol. 28 (1), 1955; J.E.Nathan, *The Census of British Malaya*, London: Waterlow 1922, p.169
- ¹⁷ The following are the figures for the four towns in 1911 and 1921:

Towns	1911	1921
Kampar	11,604	12,325
Klang	7,657	11,655
Teluk Anson	6,927	10,859
Seremban	8,667	17,272

- ¹⁸ Khoo Kay Kim, *Album Kuala Lumpur 100 Years as a Local Authority*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Puteries, 1990, p. 88.
- ¹⁹ See Khoo Kay Kim, "Klang District and Town: History and Historiography", in *Kekal Abadi*, Berita Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya, Jilid 8, Bil.2, Jun 1989.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ The figures for the two towns in 1931 are: Seremban, 21,453 and Klang, 20, 913. C.A.Vlieland, *A Report of the 1931 Census of British Malaya*, London: Crown Agents for the Colonies 1932, pp. 138, 139.
- ²² Khoo Kay Kim, "The Federation of 1896: Its Origins", *Peninjau Sejarah* (Journal of the History Teachers' Association of Malaysia), Vol.1, No.2, 1966.
- ²³ Barbara W. Andaya, *Perak the Abode of Grace*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979, p.140.
- ²⁴ See Khoo Kay Kim, "Teluk Anson 1882-1941: Port, Agriculture and Erosion," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Malaysian Branch*, Vol. LXVIII, pt. 2, 1995.
- ²⁵ See Lim Chong Yah, *Economic Development of Modern Malaya*, pp. 280-181.
- ²⁶ See Khoo Kay Kim, "Johor in the 19th Century: A Brief Survey" in *Journal of the Historical Society, University of Malaya*, vol. 6, 1967/68, and "Sultan Ibrahim's Reign (up to 1941)" in R.O.Winstedt, *A History of Johor*, MBRAS Reprint No. 6, 1992.

- ²⁷ Lim Chong Yah, *Economic Development Modern Malaya*, pp. 275-276.
- ²⁸ See Raja Razman (ed.), *Hulu Perak dalam Sejarah*, Ipoh, 1963. Thought its activities might be 'largely consistent with a policy of gradual economic expansion only, but seem more consistent with a longer view on the part of Japan - with a vision perhaps of the possibility that in a near or distant future she may wish to take more active measures to increase her influence'.³
- ²⁹ For a discussion of relations between Perak and Aceh in the 16th and 17th centuries, see Barbara W. Andaya, *Perak the Abode of Grace*.