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**POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND PEDAGOGY:
The Central Role of Successive Malaysian
Prime Ministers**

by

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for the degree of Master of Arts (Asian Studies)

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This is to certify that this thesis is the result of my own work.

All sources have been duly acknowledged.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Deborah Johnson".

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Date: 20.2.96.

ABSTRACT

This is a study of the role played by Malaysian leaders in shaping both the political discourse and the pedagogy of their nation. The Malay rajas and sultans of the past were the political, intellectual, and spiritual centres of their realms. Today, that role has been largely assumed by nationalist political leaders. Thus, Malaysian political discourse and pedagogy converge in the person of the Prime Minister. He is the discursive agenda-setter, the source of vision and the nation's 'political religion'. He represents a state, which is the final arbiter of knowledge, pedagogy, and cultural norm.

Malaysia is a product of a multiplicity of cultural streams that has washed over its shores. Animist deference to (spiritually-) gifted individuals, Hindu hierarchy in relationships and government, Buddhist submergence of the individual in the collective, Islam's Quran-centredness, Western institutional and knowledge forms, and Japanese work ethics and management practices have all left their imprint on the Malaysia of today.

Now after some forty years of reinterpreting and sifting colonialism's legacies in the light of local perceptions, Malaysia's cultural distinctiveness is increasingly apparent. Malaysian Prime Ministers have shaped a discourse and institutional structure, which is centred around themselves. Political power is focussed at the centre. Educational practice prepares a "trained" and "disciplined" citizenry, able to participate in the *kerajaan* order that is the Malaysian state.

Under Dr Mahathir and his deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, the nationalist discourse has shifted in emphasis from Malay to Islamic issues. 'Modernity' has been relocated within an Islamic discourse. Similarly, in education there is now a greater emphasis on religious (and morals) teaching and on relocating Western knowledge forms onto an Islamic presuppositional foundation. Thus, Dr Mahathir's claims for Asian (or Malaysian) distinctiveness and Anwar Ibrahim's dreams of an Asian cultural and intellectual renaissance must be given attention. They explode the myth of the universality of Western norms and stake a claim to the individual right to see things differently.

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I would like to express my thanks to members of the Australian National University staff, whose openness to consultation and willingness to give of their expertise helped to give initial direction. They include Ms Brigid Ballard, Dr Gail Craswell, and Dr Larry Saha. In this regard, I would also like to thank Mr John Shelton of DEET and Ms Elaine Mackay. I would like to give special thanks for Dr Harold Crouch as Course Coordinator for his accessibility, assistance and willingness to lend material from his personal library; to friends Ms Vivien Chen for sending material from Malaysia and Ms Sonya Welykyj for her encouragement, research tips and capable proof-reading; to the Asian History Centre Secretary, Ms Linda Poskitt for her practical assistance; and last, but not least, to Professor Tony Milner who was prepared to take a novice in 'affairs Malaysian' and share his time, library, and expertise to guide her to greater understanding and appreciation of the world and peoples of Malaysia.

I must add that naturally the mistakes and failings of this thesis are solely my responsibility.

Deborah Johnson

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EAEC	East Asia Economic Caucus
ABIM	<i>Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia</i> (Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia)
Aliran	<i>Aliran Kesedaran Negara</i> (National Consciousness Movement)
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BMF	<i>Bumiputra</i> Malaysia Finance
BN	<i>Barisan Nasional</i> (National Front)
CCC	Chinese Consultative Committee
DAP	Democratic Action Party
FAMA	Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
FMS	Federated Malay States
Gerakan	<i>Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia</i> (Malaysian People's Movement)
HICOM	Heavy Industries Corporation of Malaysia
ICA	Industrial Coordination Act
ISA	Internal Security Act
MARA	<i>Majlis Amanah Rakyat</i> (Council of Trust for the Indigeneous People)
MCA	Malayan/Malaysian Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MCP	Malaysian Communist Party
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
NDP	New Development Policy
NEP	New Economic Policy
NOC	National Operations Council
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
PAS	<i>Parti Islam Se Malaysia</i> (formerly Pan-Malayan Islamic Party, PMIP)

PBMUM	<i>Persatuan Bahasa Melayu Universiti Malaya</i> (University of Malaya Malay Language Society)
PERKIM	<i>Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia</i> (Islamic Welfare and Missionary Association of Malaysia)
RISEAP	Regional Islamic <i>Dakwah</i> Council of Southeast Asia
SRM	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i> (Mal. Certificate of Educ'n)
SRP	<i>Sijil Rendah Pelajaran</i> (Lower Certificate of Educ'n)
SS	Straits Settlements
STPM	<i>Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia</i> (Higher School Certificate)
UCSCAM	United Chinese School Committees Association
UCSTAM	United Chinese School Teachers Association
UMS	Unfederated Malay States
UMNO	The United Malays National Organisation
UUCA	Universities and University Colleges Act

Malaysian Universities

IIU	International Islamic University
UKM	<i>Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</i> (National University of Malaysia)
UNIMAS	<i>Universiti Malaysia Sarawak</i>
UM	<i>Universiti Malaya</i> (University of Malaya)
UMS	<i>Universiti Malaysia Sabah</i>
UPM	<i>Universiti Pertanian Malaysia</i> (University of Agriculture Malaysia)
USM	<i>Universiti Sains Malaysia</i> (University of Science Malaysia)
UTM	<i>Universiti Teknologi Malaysia</i> (University of Technology Malaysia)
UUM	<i>Universiti Utara Malaysia</i> (Northern University of Malaysia)

GLOSSARY

<i>adat</i>	custom, tradition
<i>bomoh</i>	medicine-man, Malay doctor
<i>bumiputra</i>	Indigenous people, 'sons of the soil'
<i>dakwah</i>	Islamic revivalist movement
<i>dalang</i>	reciter of Shadow Plays
<i>Dewan Negara</i>	Senate
<i>Dewan Rakyat</i>	House of Representatives
<i>fiqh</i>	Islamic jurisprudence
<i>hadith</i>	sayings of Prophet Muhammad
<i>haj</i>	pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>Istana</i>	palace
<i>Jawi</i>	Malayanised Arabic script
<i>kafir</i>	infidel, non-believer
<i>kampung</i>	village
<i>Kaum Muda</i>	Muslim reformists
<i>Kaum Tua</i>	Muslim Traditionalists
<i>Kerajaan</i>	Government; condition of having a <i>raja</i>
<i>keramat</i>	having supernatural power; miracle working
<i>madrasah</i>	reformist religious school
<i>Majlis</i>	council
<i>Masjid</i>	mosque
<i>Menteri Besar</i>	Chief Minister of a state
<i>merdeka</i>	independence
<i>murid</i>	pupil, disciple of a Sufi mentor
<i>pawang</i>	shaman or magician
<i>penghulu</i>	head of a district
<i>pondok</i>	traditional religious boarding school
<i>Quran</i>	sacred Muslim scripture
<i>Raja</i>	Hindu-styled Ruler
<i>rakyat</i>	the people; subjects of a ruler
<i>Ramadhan</i>	Muslim fasting month
<i>Rukun Islam</i>	Five Pillars of Islam
<i>semangat</i>	vital force or soul substance; energy; spirit
<i>sultan</i>	Muslim ruler of a Malay state
<i>sunnah</i>	traditions of the Prophet Muhammad
<i>surau</i>	small Islamic prayer building

<i>syariah</i>	Islamic Law
<i>taklid</i>	acceptance of religious authority
<i>tassawuf</i>	Islamic metaphysics
<i>ulama</i>	Muslim scholars or theologians
<i>ummah</i>	Islamic community of believers
<i>umat Islam</i>	Muslims
<i>wayang</i>	shadow puppet play
<i>Yang di-Pertuan Agong</i>	Paramount Ruler or King

EXPLANATION OF NAME CHANGES, SPELLING, AND TYPOGRAPHY

British influence in colonial times extended over the Straits Settlements comprising Singapore, Penang, Province Wellesley, and Melaka; the Federated Malay States of Negri Sembilan, Selangor, Pahang, and Perak; the Unfederated Malay States of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, and Johore; and, North Borneo (Sabah), Sarawak on the Island of Borneo. The independent Federation of Malaya was created in 1957. It became the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 when Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah were added. Thus, the term Malaya is used in this thesis to refer to the original Federation of Malay States and Straits Settlements on the Malay Peninsula. Malaysia refers to the post-1963 Federation of West and East Malaysian states, excluding Singapore after 1965 when it became a separate republic.

Words and place names in Bahasa Malaysia are spelt as per most recent practice (thus, Melaka and not Malacca). Where they refer to or are quoted from other texts, they are spelt as they appear in the original text (for example, Malaka). Non-english words (mostly Malay, but may also be of Arabic or Sanskrit origin) are indicated in italics.

NOTE ON MALAYSIAN TITLES

Tunku; Tengku	Title for descendants of the Malay ruling family
Tun, Dato' (Datuk)	Ancient Malay titles dating back to the Melaka Sultanate founded at the beginning of the fifteenth century
Tan Sri, Dato' Seri	Titles created after independence in 1957

All are peers of the realm for life except that some Dato's are hereditary, for example Dato' Orang Kaya Shahbandar of Pahang - a title which Tun Abdul Razak (Second Prime Minister of Malaysia) inherited on his father's death.

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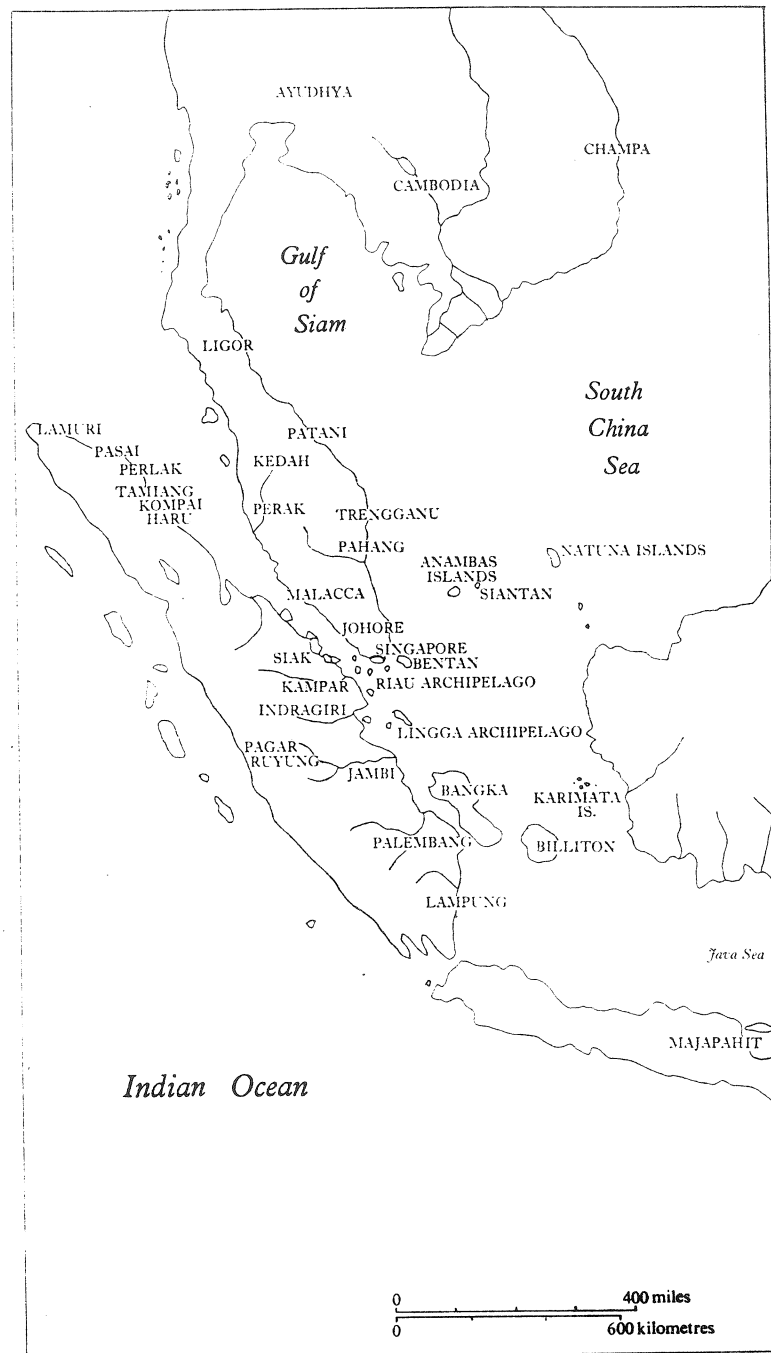
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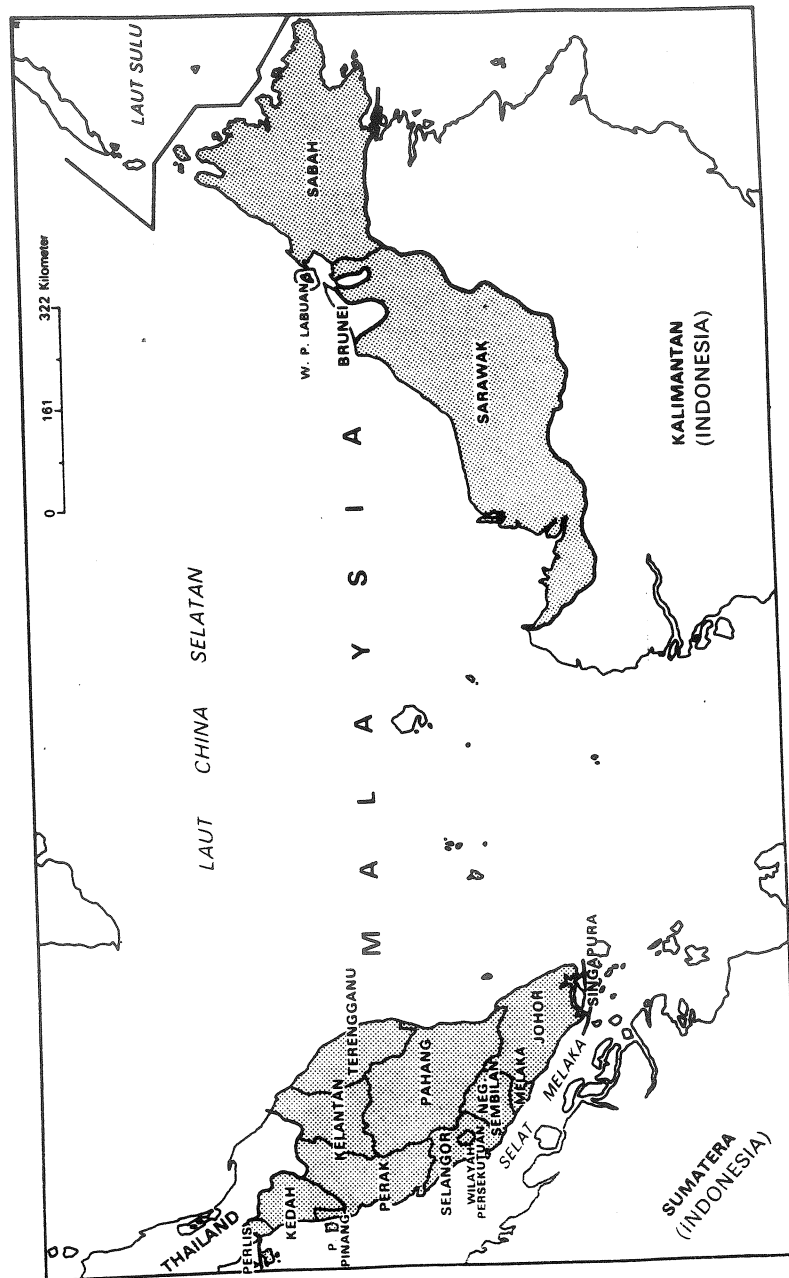
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Map 1: Malaya in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

(Source: O.W. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History*,
(London: Lund Humphries Publishers Limited, 1970))



Map 2: Malaysia Today

(Source: Sufean Hussin, *Pendidikan di Malaysia: Sejarah, Sistem dan Falsafah*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1993.)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir, has been a consistent critic of claims for the universal applicability of 'Western' values and models, arguing instead for the distinctiveness of "Asian values".¹ Do such claims for distinctiveness have any basis, or, as some would have it, are they merely a ploy to mask a predilection for authoritarianism in domestic politics?²

It is suggested that it is in the nature of the roles played by Asian leaders themselves, that some basis for claims of distinctiveness can be found. Larger-than-life, twentieth century Asian leaders such as Lee Kuan Yew, Ho Chi Minh, Tunku Abdul Rahman, U Nu, Sukarno, Prince Sihanouk have left their mark not only on their own countries but also the world at large. Not only have they been instrumental in shaping political outcomes, they have also to a large extent helped to shape the intellectual agendas in their nations.

In this study the focus is on Malaysia as just one of the modernising nations in the region that is Asia. It is a case study of the role played by successive post-independence political leaders in the shaping their nation's political discourse and in the 'education' its citizenry. It is hoped that it might provide a

¹This includes notions of human rights, democracy, the role of the media, and appropriate moral values. Refer, for example, to: Dr Mahathir, 'Let's have mutual cultural enrichment', Speech given at the Senate House, Cambridge University, *New Straits Times*, (16.3.95), pp.10-11; 'Still dancing to music of major powers', Speech given at the 50th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, *NST*, (30.9.95), p.10.

²For example: 'Do Asian values trump the West?', *The Australian*, (2.6.94), p.11.

window to the further understanding of aspects of what is claimed to be 'Asianness'. At the very least, it should reveal something of the motivations and thinking of Malaysian Prime Ministers of the past and present and perhaps something of the perceptions of those they claim to represent.

It is apparent that Malaysian leaders and their governments have played a central role in such diverse areas as business, religion, the media and education. It was a casual reading of the New Straits Times newspaper (the major English language newspaper owned by UMNO, the leading Malay political party), that led me to conclude that the leaders, the media, and, presumably, the people of Malaysia appear to have a surprising level of interest in educational issues.

Also from the texts of their speeches which were so faithfully reproduced in the New Straits Times newspaper, Malaysian leaders seemed to be wanting to 'teach' and inculcate certain ideas and cultural values. This led me to speculate that perhaps some distinctive 'Asian'/'Malaysian' cultural dynamics were at work. Further reflection highlighted the fact that all Malaysian Prime Ministers have served as either Education Officers (in the case of Tunku Abdul Rahman) or Education Ministers, whilst on their way up to the top post.

Was this apparent prominence given to educational priorities a consequence of different political realities existing in Malaysia, due to it being a relatively recently-independent and developing nation? Was it simply a consequence of the

personalities and interests of the political leaders in question? Alternatively, were there Malaysian cultural assumptions or socio-political imperatives, which required political leaders to participate in intellectual agenda setting and supervision of knowledge and values transmission? Or was it simply that 'knowledge engenders power'³ and, thus, astute political leaders have a vested interest in shaping the intellectual agenda?

It is evident that the convergence of pedagogic, priestly, and political roles in the person of the leader is not a recent phenomenon in Southeast Asian leaders. Indonesian journalist, Mochtar Lubis, in a 1977 lecture on Indonesian character referred to the Indonesian male as a ... "*campuran Arjuna dan Gatotkaca, seorang satria-pendeta atau malahan ratu-pendeta*". (a mixture of Arjuna and Gatotkaca, of knight and religious scholar, or even of king and religious scholar).⁴ According to the author of the Malay Annals, Sultan Muhammad Shah commanded "every citizen of Malaka, whether of high or low degree" to embrace Islam.⁵ A 1987 New Straits Times article spoke of the Sultan of Pahang's keen interest in education as reflecting the *Istana's* (palace's) role "in intellectual development in the State".⁶

³M. Foucault, C. Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980), p.52.

⁴Y. Johns, *Bahasa Indonesia: Langkah Baru, Book Two*, Second Edition, (Sydney: Australian National University Press, 1990), pp.85,96.

⁵C.C. Brown (tr.), *Sejarah Melayu or Malay Annals*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.44.

⁶Ahmad Kamal Dahalan, 'Pahang Sultan's keen interest in education', *NST Supplement*, (14.10.87), p.8. (Written on the occasion of the Sultan of Pahang's birthday)

Education in the region has long been associated with the inculcation of religious knowledge and practice. Similarly politics has generally not been divorced from the religious realm as it has been in secularised Western thought.⁷ In early Hinduised South-east Asia (roughly from the first to the fourteenth centuries A.D.), rulers were thought to participate in the authority of the god Siva, who "was also *guru* of the universe". Thus, according to Wolters, leaders were "expected to protect all cults and encourage spiritual zeal". They offered a means to relationship with divinity and were "educative influences, teaching their people the meaning of spiritual well-being ... [and attracting] congregations of devout followers".⁸ Consequently, according to Wolters, they were outward looking and alert to the latest in intellectual developments abroad.

Similarly, Malay rulers have been active in acquiring new ideas and acting as filters and repositories of knowledge. As youths, some may have gone off "in search of knowledge".⁹ As rulers, they actively invited scholars to their courts¹⁰ and sat under

⁷As an example, Milner has observed that Malay polity was "less a political than a religious system ... in which men were concerned ... with the maximization of spiritual rewards." (A.C. Milner, *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule*, Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1982), p.x); Note that it is a fallacy of secular thought to separate education and politics from religion. Secularised government and education merely propound the dominant 'religion' of secularism, whilst side-lining other religious competitors.

⁸O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982), pp.11,21.

⁹Milner, *Kerajaan*, p.80; M.C. Sheppard, *The Adventures of Hang Tuah*, Klang, 1949, pp.15,38-9.

¹⁰For example, the Malay Annals records the coming of Maulana Abu Bakar with the book *Durr Manzum*. Sultan Mansur Shah, who, after having the book "brought in possession to the hall of audience", studies it and then has it sent to Pasai "for an exposition of its doctrine by Tuan [Pematakan]." (Brown, *Malay Annals*, p.92); Also the Hikayat Deli

their teaching. They gathered the *hikayat* (a tale, romance, or historical narrative) and *wayang* (shadow play) texts and were patrons of the arts. They sought to disseminate "religious and customary law", instruct, and to direct the intellectual agenda.¹¹ Wolters has speculated that Southeast Asian leaders have continued throughout history to play such a role pointing out that nineteenth century Bangkok rulers were active in "mediating the acquisition of European scientific knowledge in Thailand."¹²

Malaysia has much in common with many of the Asian nations due to its extensive exposure to the various ideational streams that have contributed to Asia's development. To Malaysia's indigenous population have been added peoples from East and South Asia and the influence of Western colonisers. Since independence, Malaysia has sought to develop and modernise, thereby defining its separate identity and place in the world community. As has been the case for other newly-independent nations, the imperatives of national integration and rapid modernisation have demanded that its political leaders give a high priority to educational issues. Leaders' ideas and goals had to be clearly articulated and widely inculcated - the

records the court of Deli Akbar as having "one hundred learned men and theologians". (Milner, *Kerajaan*, p.96)

¹¹It has been suggested that *hikayat* were didactic in purpose - inculcating a world-view and culture, a code of political conduct; and, legitimating religio-political rule. Rulers, thus, jealously guarded such texts and supervised their oral transmission. (Milner, *Kerajaan*, pp.38-39,65,67,86-93)

¹²Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, p.21; Maier writes: Thai rulers "surrounded themselves with Western teachers and advisers" and, thus, they were approving of the attempts by Kedah royalty's "desire to embrace Western achievements". Refer H.M.J. Maier, *In the Centre of Authority: The Malay Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, (New York: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1988), p.104.

pedagogical methods and educational structures being geared to serve those ends.

It will be argued that, in keeping with many other communally-oriented nations, Malaysian society continues to be structured around its teacher-like leaders. Its Prime Ministers have become the new rajas encircled by their council of chiefs (The UMNO-led Federal Government), who display an interest in filtering knowledge and defining social norms and values - as is reflected in their contributions to their nation's political discourse and pedagogy.

Because of their central role in shaping their societies, their ideas are of tremendous importance to their nations. Thus, emphasis is given to distilling their personal views, philosophies and goals from their speeches, writings, and government documents.¹³ The comments of others (both Malay and non-Malay) in biographies, academic literature, periodicals and newspapers were consulted so as to give a more rounded picture.

These leaders have had a unique opportunity to re-define their nation's identity, political ideologies, constitutions, laws, structures and symbols - to remake them after their 'image'.

¹³Some degree of caution needs be exercised when interpreting speeches and documents, which may not have been written personally by the leader in question, but by members of his staff. Reported interviews and personal writings should be the most reliable primary sources. Where possible the context in which a speech was given will be noted in the footnotes.

Hindsight now allows assessment of their contributions and the sometimes unexpected consequences.

Aspects of leadership manifesting in the Malaysian political and educational experience will be given general consideration in Chapter Two. Recognition is given to the educative intent and significance of leaders' speeches. This is all within the context of pondering the challenges and implications of cross-cultural study; seeking an appropriate methodological approach; and, defining attendant terminologies. Chapter Three explores the various historical cultural streams, which have conspired to give the Malay political leader a central role in his society's intellectual development.

Malaysian leaders' contributions to the shaping of educational institutional features are overviewed in Chapter Four. Their use of educational levers to achieve political ends and conversely the influence of educational factors on activities in the political arena will be considered. In Chapter Five an attempt is made to gain an insight into their personal motivations and thinking; into how they have individually sought to model and 'teach' their views.

It becomes apparent that each of Malaysia's Prime Ministers has been engaged in a discourse and project of 'modernity'. Each has tried to remake the nation and its people after his particular vision of modernity, contributing to the uniqueness that is Malaysia. The views of the man poised to become Malaysia's next Prime Minister are also briefly surveyed.

The implications for Malaysia's future are pondered, whilst examining the broader issues of Asian claims of cultural 'otherness'; the potential for an 'Eastern' academic discourse to break free of entrenched 'Western' social science theories and categories in the light of challenges to Western political hegemony; and, the implications of an 'Asian' pattern of 'raja-centred' polity and pedagogy.

Before plunging into this study of the pedagogues and ideologues at Malaysia's helm, it is necessary to consider some of the ramifications of cross-cultural study. It is to these issues that attention is now turned in order to chart the way forward.

2.0 POLITICAL LEADERS TAKE CENTRE STAGE

2.1 Leadership from a Cross-Cultural Perspective - Theoretical Considerations

Notions of leadership are as varied as the civilisations and communities which inhabit this world. Expectations of the role a leader should play, the nature of institutional structures, the means of legitimating 'power', and so forth, are contingent upon historical socio-cultural development and upon the notional framework of the individual, society, and/or the ruling clique and the leader. Each individual's conceptual framework or interpretative grid (often called a *weltanschauung* or world-view)¹ guides his or her understanding of the surrounding world and interaction with it. Each society, according to Foucault, also has "its regime of truth ... that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true".²

The risk in any cross-cultural study (this one being no exception) is the tendency of the observer to impose her or her interpretative framework on what is an 'other' world.³ Terms

¹A 'world-view' (a term derived from the German word *weltanschauung*) is a central set of concepts and presuppositions that provide a person with his/her basic assumptions about reality. It may be a shared framework of ideas held by a society, or a group within it. It may be distinct from, but shaped by, the dominant discourse, or, it may underpin that central discourse.

²Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, pp.131-133.

³Note the colonising tendencies of the particular academic discourse presently engaged in. The requirement to write a reasoned and annotated dissertation in English immediately locates this endeavour in a specific cultural milieu. It posits a subject and an object and the need for an interpretative framework. In analysing the philosophical contributions of successive Malaysian Prime Ministers, there is the implication that there is an order or inherent logic which can be fathomed and described. It may be that a simple *wayang* performance would actually be a more powerful medium by which to communicate the thesis of leadership pedagogical involvement.

such as 'culture', 'discourse', 'ideology', and 'truth' may be contested constructs even within a single, culturally-homogenous society. These English terms are laden with historical and cultural content making it difficult to give them a clear definition. This study will assume (based on Foucault's work) a 'discourse' to be a "dispersion of statements" governed by "rules of formation", which provide a way of representing a particular kind of knowledge about a topic.⁴ This is not however to subscribe to Foucault's relativist notion of 'truth', which has to do with that which has gained intellectual hegemony.⁵ In keeping with Malay and Islamic notions of truth, this study will assume that, whatever the humanly-perceived or imposed 'truths', much of what 'is' is ultimately not a product of human creation, interpretation or manipulation.

This raises the issue of the difficulty associated with crossing linguistic and cultural divides. For example, Foucault associated 'power' with 'knowledge'.⁶ In Western thinking 'knowledge' has

⁴S. Hall & B. Gieben, *Formations of Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p.291; M. Cousins & A. Hussain, *Michel Foucault*, (London: Macmillan, 1984), p.85,94. The term 'discourse' will be used in subsequent discussion, for several reasons: i) it has gained a wide currency in present social science discussion; ii) it brings a dynamic component to the notion of world-view or ideology. It suggests a formation out of contesting antecedent ideas, and, iii) it suggests a larger arena of debate in which various ideological streams may participate.

⁵Foucault's definition of truth: "by truth I do not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted', but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true'..." (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p.132)

⁶For Foucault, power was knowledge. In his rebellion against absolutes and "the tyranny of globalising discourses", Foucault advocated "an insurrection of subjugated knowledges". (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, pp.81,3); Knowledge was that which arose out of discursive practice. There were "no knowledges independent of discursive formations".

to do with a familiarity with certain information or ideas, whilst 'power' (in the political context) has to do with relations between those in authority or ascendancy with those who are subject to their influence.

However, for the Javanese (with relevance also for the Malays) 'power' was perceived as a spiritual essence - a substance which could be transferred and concentrated.⁷ The Hinduised raja's political role was predicated upon his ability to concentrate 'power' (the divine energy animating the universe) in his person. This was achieved through rituals and ceremonies, by surrounding himself with objects and persons held to have or contain unusual 'power', and by asceticism and instruction in certain specific forms of 'knowledge'. A young Javanese *satria* (knight) would undergo a period of training under a seer who would initiate him into the esoteric sciences. He would seek the ultimate secrets of the cosmos attainable not "by ordinary study but by a suprarational moment of illumination".⁸

The words or 'signifiers' we use are, thus, culturally-laden.⁹ Even when a common language is used, words cannot be assumed to carry the same meaning for all participants in the

(Cousins & Hussain, *Michel Foucault*, p.96); Thus, discursive hegemony determined who wielded power.

⁷B. R. O'G. Anderson, 'The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture', in C. Holt (ed.), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp.1-69.

⁸Anderson, 'The Idea of Power', pp.43-47.

⁹The term 'signifier' is one much discussed by modern French philosophers. For an overview of the work of Saussure, Lacan, and Derrida, etc., refer: M. Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, Second Edition, (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

dialogue. The word 'government' is deemed similar in meaning to *kerajaan*, and *pemerintah* in dictionaries and, yet, may conjure quite different mental pictures in hearers of English-speaking, Malaysian, and Indonesian cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural observers must attempt to listen (with empathy) on the speaker's terms and to understand 'their' conceptual frameworks. But how can this be achieved?

It is suggested that one can begin by identifying the essentially unprovable (but logically interconnected) assumptions at the core of a person's world-view. They are assumptions (or presuppositions) made about the origins and meaning of life. These basic life questions, which each person must in some way answer, may be represented as follows (phrased anthropocentrically): Who am I? (a sub-set of questions concerning the essence of all that is); Where did I come from? (Ontology); Where am I going? (Teleology); Why am I here? (or, in other words, What is valuable? - Axiology); How do I know? (Epistemology). These assumptions provide each person with a 'belief system', or if you like, a 'religious framework', to guide his or her living.

For each of the philosophical elements illustrated above there are ultimately few possible answers. For the purposes of this study we will consider just the epistemological and axiological components. Understanding of a person's epistemological position can be reached by determining the person's confessed source of knowledge.

There are basically three epistemological (How do I know?) possibilities:

- i) Human **reason** is the only way of knowing;
- ii) A supernatural realm and supernatural actors impart knowledge (i.e. **revelation**); and,
- iii) I know, because somehow I just know (i.e. **intuition**).

For the axiological (what is valuable) component there are also basically three possibilities:

- i) that **the supernatural** matters;
- ii) that **human beings** matter;
- iii) that **matter** matters; the economic determinism of Marxist ideology being an example of the latter.

Axiological priorities are detected by asking "What does the 'speaker' regard as being of ultimate value?"; "What does he/she 'absolutise'?"; "What 'determines' all else?" For Hinduised rajas, for example, what 'mattered' was gaining spiritual power so as to ensure their political predominance. **Their** interests dominated and, thus, they subscribed to a humanistic axiology (number (ii) above).

Discourses, ideologies, human cultural expressions, and physical and institutional constructions arise out of often contesting presuppositional positions.¹⁰ This is exemplified in Figure 1,

¹⁰Note that the terms 'world-view', 'ideology', 'ideological streams' (in Malay, *aliran*), and 'discourse' overlap somewhat in meaning. It was Foucault, who discarded the use of the term 'ideology' and replaced it with 'discourse'. 'Ideology' has been defined (negatively) as "a set of statements of beliefs which produce knowledge that serves the interests of a particular group or class" and requires a distinction between 'true' (scientific) and 'false' (ideological) statements. Foucault argued that

which shows the interaction of three prominent Malay twentieth-century ideological streams: *kerajaan*, Islam, and *kebangsaan*.¹¹ Note, that each of these streams is a complex mix or spectrum, overlapping with other streams at the fringes. Table 1 is an attempt to contrast the presuppositional features of the midpoints of these spectra.

facts about the world can be construed in different ways and, thus, in and of themselves, cannot help us decide between true and false statements. For Foucault, power, rather than the facts about reality, makes things 'true'. (Hall & Gieben, *Formations of Modernity*, pp.292-293) The term 'world-view', as it is used here, makes no judgements as to the 'truth' or otherwise of the belief system, nor any assumptions as to the dynamics of its generation.

¹¹For further details refer to A. Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

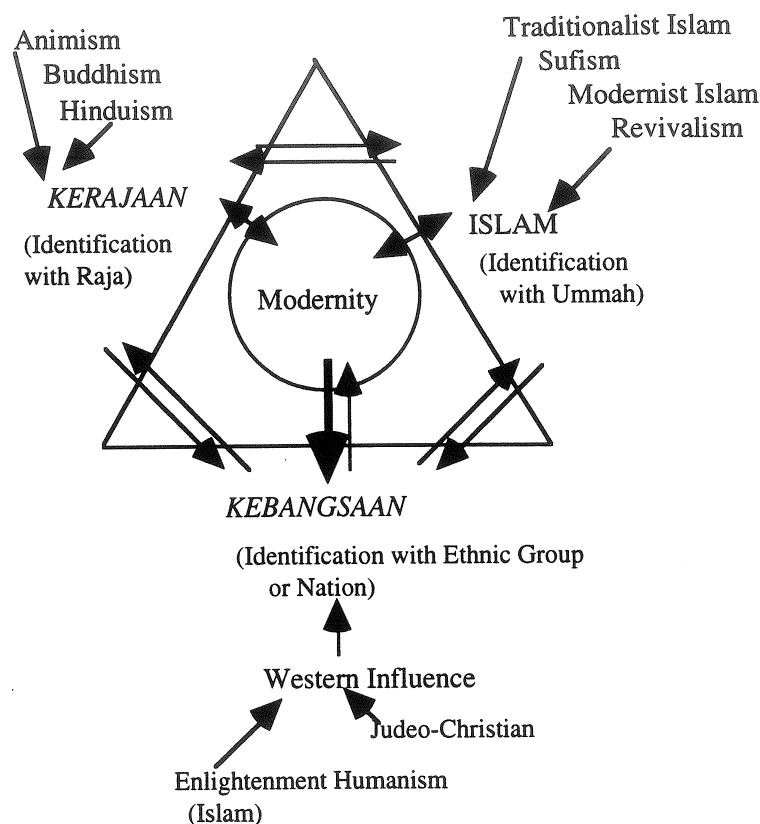


FIGURE 1:
Predominant Malay Ideological Streams
in dialogue with a 'Modernity' Discourse¹²

Note: The Nationalist (*kebangsaan*) stream was largely birthed out of the 'modernity' discourse which had its origins in Europe. However, the *kebangsaan* stream is in effect a synthesis of the Modernity, Islamic and *kerajaan* streams. This was reflected in the constitutional definition of a Malay as one identified with race, religion, and language and in the constitution's entrenchment of Malay rights and the position of the Malay rulers. This mixture is highlighted in the characterisation of the (Modernity and [*kebangsaan*]) streams in Column 3 (Table 1).

¹²The inspiration for the format of this diagram came from the work of Fägerlind and Saha in quite a different context. Refer I. Fägerlind and L.J. Saha, *Education & National Development: A Comparative Perspective*, 2nd Edition, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989), pp.227,235.

TABLE 1: Presuppositional Analysis of Malay Ideological Streams

	<i>KERAJAAN</i> (pre-Islam) <i>Adat</i>	ISLAM	MODERNITY [<i>KEBANGSAAN</i>]
Guiding Principles		Quran	The Law and the Constitution
mediated by ...	Raja (Priests, Monks)	Ulama (Sultan)	Democratically-elected gov't (Scientific/ Intellectual elite)
Epistemology	Intuitive (Raja as mediator with spiritual realm)	Revelation (interpreted by trained reason)	Reason (Science) [with Revelation]
Ontology	Reincarnation (Ebb and flow between Spiritual and Material)	Supernatural Creation	Natural Evolution [with Supernatural Creation]
Teleology Individually to:	spiritual realm	Paradise	dust [with notion of Paradise]
Collectively toward:	harmony of spiritual and physical	realisation of Islamic state	perfection on earth
Theology	Belief in gods, spirits, and extraordinary humans	Belief in Allah and his Prophet	Atheism - belief in no God or spiritual realm [belief in Allah]
Axiology	Humanistic	Theistic (with Humanistic component)	Humanistic (with Materialistic) [& Theistic component]
	Loyalty & followership	Submission to will of Allah	Individualism; Human Rights; Malay Rights
	<i>nama</i> ; manners; form & ceremony	<i>Shariah</i> ; the five Pillars	materialism; individual autonomy
Institutional Expressions	Istana	Mosque	Parliament House/Court
	Royal court	Pondok	State School
	keris	sword	gun
Origins	local & Indian	Middle East	Europe

In practice most of us live holding simultaneously to conflicting philosophical positions. We absorb new ideas and practices without consciously examining their implication or coherence with already-held positions. A person might consider him/herself a committed Muslim, whilst continuing to adhere to (Hindu-derived) *kerajaan* notions. The *kerajaan* stream was not only the product of local animistic and Indian Brahmano/Buddhist influences (as has been indicated in Table 1), but was also later subject to Islamic and Western influences. In other words, it was not static but a flux and an inter-mixing of often contradictory belief systems.

In any society there are those who have consciously interrogated their philosophic assumptions, and, who seek to live them out. There need only be a small number of people whose ability, convictions, vision, charisma, commitment and location in that society allow them to exert a leading and transforming role. Locating the competing loci of influence or active centres of the social order¹³ and probing their presuppositional foundations should give greater understanding of that society's condition and dominant discourse. Leading actors in the political and educational arenas will now be allowed to take centre stage in our thinking.

¹³Geertz describes these centres as "essentially concentrated loci of serious acts ... consisting of the point or points in a society where its leading ideas come together with its leading institutions to create an arena in which the events that most vitally affect its members' lives take place". (C. Geertz, 'Centres, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power', *Culture and Its Creators: Essays in honor of Edward Shils*, (Chicago: University of Chicago), 1977, p.151)

2.2 Leadership in the Political Sphere

Basically, a leader (in Malay, *pemimpin*) is someone who has followers, and, who leads them towards a specific goal or goals. A *pemimpin*, literally, is 'one who leads by the hand'. Thus, it would seem to convey a sense of benevolence, protection, and strength. This term is used in the modern context to refer to high level political leadership or to "leaders within other fields ... [such as] religion and music".¹⁴ Obviously, much in the Malaysia of today is at variance with the Malay world of the past. Yet, when the present-day notions of leadership are examined, much of the past seems to remain. That past will now be contrasted with the present to point to a continuing centrality of political leaders in the political, intellectual and cultural life of their nation.

In the Malaysia of today a person may become a leader by appointment or election. But usually such a process is the outcome of a recognition of the person's high attainment, superior status, charismatic qualities, or greater ability. So it was in times past. Heredity did play a part in determining royal succession. However, of greater importance was the candidate's demonstrated superior spiritual and cultural attainment. Consequently, once enthroned, rajas gave high priority to ritualised ceremonies, which served to enhance and

¹⁴S. Husein Ali, *Malay Peasant Society and Leadership*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.12. This text offers a more complete discussion of leadership from a sociological perspective (pp.5-13). Note, within the Malay context other terms used to refer to leaders include *ketua* (one who heads an institution or leads a group); *orang kuat* (strong men); *penghulu* (headman or local chief); *pelupur* (pioneer, prominent man, champion)

display their power and the grandeur and well-being of their realms. According to Geertz, it was through demonstrations of their presence and vigour and in the ceremonial forms, that rulers took "symbolic possession of their realm ... stamping a territory with ritual signs of dominance".¹⁵

Such dominance in the Malay world was not imposed from without or above, for the very essence or life-blood of the community coursed through the court and person of the *Raja*. He was the centre, the "organising principle", and "only institution" in life. *Kerajaan* (variously translated 'state' or 'government') literally means the "condition of having a *Raja*".¹⁶ Consequently, having a *Raja* was the pre-requisite for polity. Society flourished to the extent that it conformed to cosmic realities as harmonised and demonstrated in the person of the ruler. The whole universe gained its order and meaning in the ruler.

Malay life was, thus, politically and religiously oriented. Service to the *Raja* held out significant advantages. The *Raja* conferred gifts and *nama* (name, fame, reputation, title), which had implications for this life and the next.¹⁷ One could not very well jeopardise the life and well-being of oneself or the community, thus Malays held that it was "the custom of Malays ... never [to

¹⁵C. Geertz, 'Centres, Kings, and Charisma', pp.152-153,171.

¹⁶A.C. Milner, 'Islam and Malay Kingship', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, no.1, 1981, p.49; Milner, *Kerajaan*, pp.8-9,113-114.

¹⁷Milner, 'Islam and Malay Kingship', p.50; Milner relates that titles were important not only in this life, but also would be honoured in the next.

be] disloyal to their *Raja*".¹⁸ They might migrate to come into another Raja's sphere of influence, but they could never commit *derhaka* (treason) against their ruler, even though at times he might be somewhat arbitrary and unpredictable.

The rulers provided not only the meaning, but also the norms for life. Rajas were the cultural exemplars and *adat* (custom)-keepers. They were expected to be refined, gently spoken, just, humane, wise, intelligent, and knowledgeable about Malay laws and customs.¹⁹ They set the standards for others to copy.

In seeking now to draw the parallels with the present, some comments must first be made regarding the disjunctures and forces of change. Islamised Sultans were confronted by European economic and political power, from the 1500s onwards. The Industrial Revolution in Europe began to cause urbanising forces and a de-personalising of societal relations.

Such 'modernising' forces were eventually to impact Malaya, producing a 'state' and bureaucratic institutions which operated now largely apart from the person of the ruler. In a sense, the Sultan had always been a form-conscious 'institution' seeking to do that which was proper (*patut*); correct public image taking precedence over expression of individual personality. However, other institutional centres now existed, which no

¹⁸Brown, *Malay Annals*, p.157. Refer also pp.38,89,121,188,200.

¹⁹Brown, *Malay Annals*, pp.2,54,62; Refer also Milner, *Kerajaan*, pp.40-51,104-105.

longer found their meaning in the Sultan or even in any person. They were part of a 'public sphere'.²⁰

Curiously, though British colonisers were to take over much of the Sultans' economic, military, and political power, they were to have a role in entrenching and preserving the institution of Sultanship. (This is in stark contrast to the Indonesian experience which saw the compromising and eventual demise of Sultanship under Dutch colonial rule.) Treaty arrangements assured Malay Sultans a continued ceremonial role and headship of matters of Malay religion and custom. Sultans were put on the colonial payroll, given chairmanship of State Councils (*Majlis Negri*) and access to the best of English education.

Educational privilege ensured their superior position *vis-à-vis* the *rakyat* (masses). Some of the aristocracy went on to take up positions in the Malay Administrative Service (MAS) and later the Malayan Civil Service (MCS).²¹ However, the public education system, which was developed to affirm the new colonial order, also effectively subverted the ruler's role as

²⁰Habermas has studied the development of a 'public sphere' in the European context. Refer: J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1989).

²¹The MAS was begun in 1910 after dissatisfactions expressed at the 1903 Conference of Rulers over the lack of Malay participation in FMS administration. MAS recruits were drawn from the elite Malay College. In 1921 the MAS was opened to Malay commoners. In 1924 it was decided to admit MAS officers as full-fledged members of the MCS. However, up until 1941, Malay recruitment into the MSC was limited. "In 1941 there were only 21 Malay civil servants, about one-eightieth of the total MCS officers." Refer Yeo Kim Wah, 'The Grooming of an Elite: Malay Administrators in the Federated Malay States, 1903-1941', *JSEAH*, vol.XI, no.2, Sep. 1980, pp.287-319.

cultural transmitter. Ultimately, such public (as well as independent Islamic) educational institutions were to produce a new intellectual elite, which came to challenge both the *kerajaan* and colonial orders.²²

Nationalist leaders and their political machineries became the new managers and trend-setters. They now held sway over the instruments of power and had to begin providing a *raison d'être* for national life. The leaders of any society have a cohesion-building role. This involves imparting a sense of identity and continuity, as well as a reason and mechanisms for collective existence. This is especially so in a fragmented and plural society. In a sense, then, leaders act as the high priests of a 'political religion'²³, which gives a moral basis for personal and social being, and for finding identity either in the leader or the larger collective. The leadership task is to impart vision and clearly espouse objectives and the contributions each are to make.

To do this political elites deliberately involve themselves in reinforcing or contesting the "master fictions" by which a society lives.²⁴ Leaders justify their actions and bolster their

²²Three major elites were to emerge: *Kaum Muda* Islamic reformists; a radical autochthonous intelligentsia (Sultan Idris Training College teaching graduates), and the Westernised bureaucrats (predominantly MAS and MCS officers). Only the latter had the necessary functional and social links with the British colonial regime, the know-how and the acceptance of the *rakyat* to provide an alternative leadership to the Malay ruling class. (Yeo Kim Wah, 'Malay Administrators', p.319); Refer also: W.R. Roff, *The origins of Malay Nationalism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967)

²³D.E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p.267.

²⁴These are the myths and ideals, which a society holds; for example, the notion of Malay loyalty to its leaders as derived from the stories of

legitimacy in terms of inherited or invented cultural symbols - ceremonies, stories, regalia, insignia, customs. According to Geertz, they validate "current behaviour by reference to immemorial prescriptive norms" and by renewing interest in a semi-mythical past. ²⁵

The Sultans remained (though now as constitutional monarchs) to give that sense of continuity of tradition. They remained as ceremonial heads and as guardians of Malay custom, religion, and "special rights". They continued to confer *nama* (now in the form of titles) and came to represent the interests not only of Malays but of all races. However, nationalist leaders became the new "purveyors of ritual" and "keepers of the sacred texts", providing ideologies which gave a moral prescriptive and a basis for national definition and integration.²⁶ They now circumscribed the Sultans' role. They now held the reins. Certainly, Sultans continue to command great respect and loyalty from the populace, and, thus, they are a balancing centre of influence. However, they are no longer **the** centre of influence.

Many of the leadership notions of the old *kerajaan* political culture were transferred into the new nationalist context. Leaders are expected to be individuals of superior ability, to

the legendary Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat. Kessler shows how such 'fictions' are applied in the present. Refer also: C.S. Kessler, 'Archaism and Modernity: Contemporary Malay Political Culture', in J.S. Kahn & F. Loh Kok Wah (ed.), *Fragmented Vision: culture and politics in contemporary Malaysia*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), pp.133-157.

²⁵Geertz, 'Centres, Kings, and Charisma', pp.157-158.

²⁶Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, pp.296-297.

whom citizens must give their loyalty and obedience. They are to be refined in culture and manners, skilled in diplomacy, paternalistic protectors, cultural exemplars and intellectual and ideological pioneers. According to Dr Mahathir a leader must be "a beacon to his people"; upright, "sincere and willing to sacrifice for the benefit of the people"²⁷; "firm", successful in persuading others to accept his point of view; looking ahead all the time, "out in front with new ideas to improve conditions for everybody".²⁸

It has been said of Mahathir that "education had always been a subject close to his heart".²⁹ Like most of his predecessors (least of all Hussein Onn), he has sought not simply to efficiently carry out the duties associated with his role as leader, or to just innovate and bring changes within existing institutional structures. Rather, he has sought to radically transform much of the institutional set-up in Malaysia and even to shape his role as leader. To do this he and his predecessors needed to transform the psyche and outlook of Malaysians. The young in particular were to be educated, so that a new 'regime of truth' could be established - a regime in which belief in change and progress was central.

²⁷Vijayan Menon & Ashraf Abdullah, 'Return to mainstay party values, UMNO told', *NST*, (21.11.95), pp.1-2. (Message to UMNO members before November, 1995 UMNO Annual General Assembly)

²⁸R. Adshead, *Mahathir of Malaysia*, (Hibiscus Publishing Company: London, 1989), pp.5,101.

²⁹Adshead, *Mahathir of Malaysia*, p.57; Aziz Zariza Ahmad, *Mahathir: Triumph After Trials - Aftermath 1990 Elections The Second Phase*, (Kuala Lumpur: S. Abdul Majeed & Co., 1990), p.21.

'Modernity' began to dominate the rhetoric and agendas of politicians intent on catching up with and bettering their past colonial mentors. 'Modernity' is a particular attitude toward change which emerged from the European Enlightenment. It posits a "special kind of hope ... [for] a more abundant and kindlier world".³⁰

In order to bring Malays from the *kampung* into the modern present, to explain matters of cohesion-building dogma and ritual, and to inculcate new values and ethics, it was necessary for leaders to direct educational processes. Baker has commented: "a state which is meant for the moral perfection of its members will be an educational institution".³¹ It might be anticipated that, as a consequence, its leaders might seek to play a pedagogic role.

³⁰Refer: Apter, *Politics of Modernization*, pp.1,6,56; Apter defines 'modernisation' as "a process of continuously directing and controlling the social consequences of increased role differentiation and organisational complexity in a society".

³⁰Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, pp.131-133.

³¹E. Baker, *The Politics of Aristotle*, (Oxford, 1948), p.li, cited in Apter, *Politics of Modernization*, p.283.

2.3 Leadership in the Educational Sphere

Pedagogy (in Malay, *ilmu didik* or *ilmu perguruan*) is the "science of teaching".³² The Greek roots of the word convey the sense of having to do with the art of guiding a child's development. Related terms in Malay also include *pendidikan* (education, upbringing, nurture) or *pelajaran* (education, learning, thing taught or learnt). Education, teaching, learning, and nurturing are obviously not just activities which occur in schools. Intellectual, emotional and social growth occurs within the context of the whole community. Education is not only a means to maximising individual or collective potential, but is a social instrument for "conserving, transmitting, and renewing culture".³³

Defining 'education' and what schooling should involve seems a difficult task, attested to by the shelves of texts on educational theory and philosophy. In Malay, to 'attend school' is to *mengaji sekolah* suggesting that the purpose of school attendance is to learn to recite the Quran. Such expectations

³² J.B. Sykes, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, Seventh Edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.755. Note that *ilmu* is a knowledge or science (originally of the magic arts). (R. Winstedt, *A Practical Modern Malay-English Dictionary*, Fourth Edition, (Kuala Lumpur: Marican & Sons (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd., 1964), p.71) *Ilmu didik* or *ilmu perguruan* can be translated as 'the art of teaching'. A *guru* (root of *perguruan*) is a teacher, but was originally used in the sense of a spiritual teacher. *Guru* can also be used to mean a familiar spirit or 'guide'. (A.E. Coope, *A Malay-English Dictionary: Student Edition*, (Kuala Lumpur: Macmillan Education Limited, 1978), p.90)

³³ M.C.V. Jeffries, *Gaucon: An Inquiry into the Aims of Education*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd, 1950), pp.3-9.

were to confound British administrators attempting to institute 'secular' Malay-medium public education.³⁴

This all points to a diversity in cultural perceptions of education's essence and purpose. Educational leaders may not only be the pedagogically-skilled, or those with superior 'knowledge', but also may be those who have been able to encapsulate the intellectual trends of their times in 'new' educational theories, methodologies and curricula, thus either serving or leading broader societal movements.

It is the importance of education as a social instrument which has made it of great interest to political leaders. (Note in the following quotes the relationship between educational goals and the leader's particular political ideology.) According to Tun Razak:

Pendidikan merupakan tapak asas perkembangan sosial dan ekonomi negara ... Saya percaya melalui sistem pendidikan yang berjalan sekarang yang diperkukuhkan lagi dengan prinsip-prinsip Rukunegara sebagai panduan akan membolehkan kita membina jenerasi baru yang mempunyai quality seperti yang dicita-dicita itu.

Education is the cornerstone of socio-economic development ... I believe that through the current educational system, which adheres strongly to the principles of the *Rukunegara* as a guide, we will be able to build a new generation which possesses the qualities hoped for.³⁵

³⁴There were other issues for the Malays which added to their reluctance to participate in 'secular' schooling. These included the distance of the school from their *kampung*; the loss of the child's labour; the fact that the teacher may not have been a local; and, the fact that "many of the schools in the British colonial period were set up and managed by various Christian missionary bodies". Refer: Mahathir, *The Challenge*, (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1986), p.22.

³⁵Tun Abdul Razak, Speech given as UKM Chancellor 23.6.73, *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Abdul Razak bin Hussein, 1973*, (Kuala Lumpur: Arkib Negara Malaysia, 1977), pp.193-195.

According to Hussein Onn:

Education is the key to progress. No race or nation can advance without education. It is the foundation for the attainment of all economic and social objectives.³⁶

According to Anwar Ibrahim:

... sistem pendidikan kita harus melahirkan jiwa merdeka yang berani melihat masa depan berdasarkan perspektif dan nilai umat kita, bukan pangangan yang dipaksakan kepada kita.

Our system of education must give birth to a spirit of independence which bravely looks to the future and is based on our community's (*umat*) values and perspectives, not on the views which have been forced onto us.³⁷

As was the trend elsewhere, up until the twentieth century formal education in Malaya did not extend to cover the whole population. Only a small religious and intellectual elite were literate and served to assist the polity's ruler as cultural conservators and transmitters.³⁸ In a society in which knowledge was encoded in an oral intellectual tradition, the Sultan may not have been literate. Written correspondence was handled by a professional scribe in his employ.³⁹ Nonetheless, the Sultan's court served as the tertiary institution of the day. Milner writes that it was the Sultan's "duty to obtain

³⁶'Education the Key to Progress', Presidential address at the 30th UMNO General Assembly on 6.7.79, cited in Morais, *Hussein Onn: A Tryst with Destiny*, (Singapore: Time Books International, 1981), p.161.

³⁷Inferred in this quote (by the use of the word *umat*) is that it is to be Islamic values and perspectives which apply. Anwar Ibrahim, *Menangani Perubahan*, (Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing Sdn. Bhd., 1989), p.75 ('*Reformasi Pendidikan*', speech given in November 1988, when announcing an Education Reform programme based on a (new) National Educational Philosophy.)

³⁸Note that literacy in a society with an oral intellectual tradition was not necessarily the measure of educational achievement (as is inferred by this statement). However, those who were literate would have been much respected.

³⁹For an account of Malay traditions regarding the sending of letters refer: Sharanjit Singh, 'On His Majesty's postal service', *NST*, (27.3.95), p.31.

knowledge of the latest spiritual doctrines or techniques and to utilise them for the benefit of his subjects".⁴⁰

In the twentieth century it became accepted that it was a government responsibility to provide mass education. After independence, the Malaysian government was to take an intense interest in education. Education became the key instrument to be used in forging a national identity and unity from heterogeneous racial communities. Non-Malay communities keen to preserve their cultural heritage often felt threatened by the Malay-dominated government's educational initiatives. Thus, educational issues became highly politicised. Education, as the "*kunci kemajuan*" (key to development) and modernisation, was also an economic as well as a social lever.⁴¹

All this required massive expenditures on education. For example, in 1975 educational expenditure amounted to 19.4% of total public expenditure in Malaysia (6.3% of GNP).⁴² Economic pressures in the 1970s and 1980s led technocrats to demand value-for-money stressing educational efficiency in meeting national manpower requirements. Politicians had to take a firmer hand to ensure education met its 'social obligations'.⁴³ As Malaysia has progressed towards greater

⁴⁰Milner, 'Islam and Malay Kingship', p.54.

⁴¹Razak, *Ucapan-Ucapan*, 1973, p.192.

⁴²This dropped to a low in 1980 of 12.7% of total public expenditure (5.2% of GNP). It rose again after that. In 1988 educational expenditure represented 18.8% of total public expenditure (5.8% of GNP). Refer: Ministry of Education Malaysia, *Education in Malaysia 1989*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1990), Chart XIX.

⁴³This is a commonly expressed notion in Malaysian governmental and educational circles. Educational institutions are in debt to the government and society for the massive funds invested in them. Thus,

urbanisation and industrialisation, education has expanded at the secondary and tertiary levels. A heavy emphasis on credentialism⁴⁴ remains where increasingly graduate and post-graduate degrees are required to ensure a start on a professional career.

Thus, structural conditions (and resulting educational priorities) within the society have been changing in concert with the degree of development (socially and economically) experienced. As Malaysia moves towards becoming a post-industrial society, the educational emphasis will shift towards general and life-long education. Such trends are already in evidence in the delaying of streaming into Science and Arts streams until later years in Secondary education, the recent emphasis on compulsory co-curricular activities at universities, and the opening of continuing tertiary educational opportunities for those already in the workforce.

This dialectical interaction of the educational sphere with the socio-cultural, economic and political spheres can be depicted as per Figure 2 (Borrowing from and adapting the work of sociologists, Fägerlind and Saha).⁴⁵ This present study focuses more on the 'social-educational-political' interaction (as

they have an obligation to serve society. Refer: Robiah Sidin, *The Roles of the Universities in the National Development of Malaysia as perceived by selected government officials, university administrators and faculty members*, Ph.D. Thesis, Ohio University, 1980.

⁴⁴For a study of credentialism or, as sometimes called, "diploma disease" refer: R. Dore, *The Diploma Disease*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976). For a comment on the Malaysian situation refer: 'The Diploma Disease', *FEER*, (22.6.89), p.31.

⁴⁵Fägerlind & Saha, *Education & National Development*, pp.235.

depicted in the upper triangular section of Figure 2) and on the role of political leaders in that interaction.

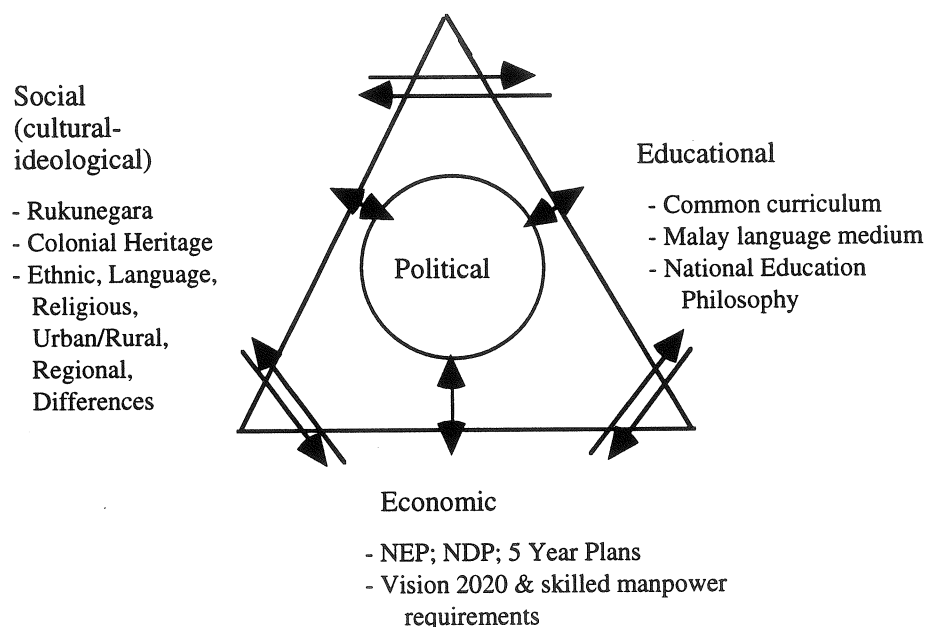


Figure 2: Dialectical model of Malaysian education

One trend which seems specific to the Malaysian situation is that Malaysian leaders have gradually strengthened central government control in education, as they have in other areas. They now control not only the financial inputs to education but also the medium of instruction, school building design, timetabling, curricula, examinations, right down to textbook content. Politicians are deciding what is 'useful knowledge' and, also, where to direct research funding. Like their royal predecessors they are seeking to act as knowledge filters and set the discursive agenda.

Leaders, themselves, have often also consciously played a pedagogic role as authority figures, ideological advocates, political mobilisers, and cultural ambassadors. Malay Rajas of the past were conscious that exemplifying cultural norms with correct speech, manners, and demeanour was as significant to legitimating their rule as was the actual holding of the economic and political instruments of power. Refined speech **demonstrated** the superior spiritual attainment, cultural excellence, and wisdom necessary in a ruler.⁴⁶

Similarly, we read of the Pahang royal family today that each have, "... in his or her own way, shown values and virtues worthy of respect and emulation." Sultan Ahmad "... does not merely advise his subjects 'to discharge your duties with responsibility and a sense of dedication and devotion' [but] he shows them how to do it".⁴⁷ Tun Razak exemplified self-sacrificing commitment to the cause of national development and Dr Mahathir has advocated "Leadership by Example".

Recognising that Malaysian leaders seem to be continuing on in the pedagogic mould of their forebears, it might be expected that their speeches, slogans, and even ceremonies would also have educative intent. In a recent speech, Dr Mahathir is recorded to have said:

We could not have done it [that is, achieved a higher standard of living than any major economy in the Americas, save only USA and Canada] without democracy. Let me reiterate this point because

⁴⁶In the *Hikayat Pahang* part of Ahmad's claim to the throne was that he possessed the refined speech and manners required in a ruler. Refer: Milner, *Kerajaan*, pp.39-41,50-51.

⁴⁷*NST* Supplement, (14.10.87).

there are so many young Malaysians in the audience. Never Forget. We could not have done it without democracy.⁴⁸

Now this may have been a subtle way of stressing to the non-Malaysians in the audience, that he is not an autocrat.

Alternatively, he may have been genuinely wanting to shape the views of young Malaysians. Keeping such subtleties in mind, the implications of leaders' speeches and slogans will now be further considered.

2.4 The Significance of Political Speeches and Slogans

The general impression gained is that leaders' speeches are accorded great significance by Malaysians. Leaders' comments and speeches are much quoted and regularly published.⁴⁹ They are often preserved in commemorative books and valued as part of the nation's heritage. In fact, the full texts of Dr Mahathir's speeches are now available on the Internet.⁵⁰

A leader may have various intentions (other than to teach) in delivering a speech. It may be to gain visibility, advance a cause, garner support, be accountable to the general public by responding to issues and reporting on progress, impart vision, or to guide discursive debate. Tun Razak, for one, was very aware of the potential of speeches to influence (and inflame). In the context of speaking about development and the need for

⁴⁸Mahathir, 'Let's have mutual cultural enrichment', *NST*, (16.3.95), pp.10-11.

⁴⁹Because of codes of journalistic conduct in Malaysia, reporters tend to quote *verbatim* rather than give extensive analysis or comment.

⁵⁰'@Asia aims to be region's one-stop centre on Internet', *NST*, (22.8.95), p.24.

"harmony, goodwill and unity among our people", he stressed (rephrasing what he had already said):

... the future of our nation ... will be determined by the trend and tenor of the many millions of, as yet unspoken and undelivered, speeches of leaders of our people, inside and outside this country.⁵¹

By his repetition and adherence throughout his career as Deputy, and then as, Prime Minister to just one theme (that of development), Tun Razak can be seen to be operating in pedagogic mode. A leader's speech can in some ways be regarded as a lesson to be studied in society's classroom. This theme will be further developed in Chapter Five, when the speeches of Malaysian Prime Ministers are analysed in order to define aspects of their world-views.

In order to dissect these speeches, a number of questions will need to be asked, including: Who are the audience? What are the historical or 'environmental' circumstances? What linguistic or rhetorical devices are employed and why? What was the manner of presentation and style used. What was the speaker's intent? Are there implied messages? How did it impact?

Clues as to the ideological content may be ascertained (as indicated in Section 2.1) by such questions as: What is determinative? What is the ultimate value? What is the problem raised and the solution proposed? What are the

⁵¹Razak, 'The Way to Build a Strong Economy - What the Berlin Wall Symbolises', Speech in Parliament on 24.12.64 in moving the Malaysia Development Estimates, 1965, cited in J.V. Morais, (ed.), *Strategy for Action: The Selected Speeches of Tun Haji Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussein Al-Haj*, (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Centre for Development Studies, Prime Minister's Department, 1969), p.86.

sources appealed to? How does he/she know? Does the speaker support a particular religious or intellectual tradition?

Not only are the leader's propositions and their underlying assumptions of significance, but so too are their omissions, emphases, illustrations, sources of authority appealed to, and their language, tone, and style. As is the case in many cultures, the silences, pauses, oblique references, and body language are often more meaningful to Malaysians than the actual words spoken. (Such subtleties have already been alluded to in comments on Dr Mahathir's 1995 speech at Cambridge University.)

Of further significance are the implications of the technology associated with the speech's delivery? To illustrate, a recent study has shown how Australia's long-serving Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, was able to take advantage of the then newly-arrived medium of radio. It allowed him to speak directly and personally to ordinary citizens in the intimate and informal settings of their own lounge rooms.⁵²

Likewise, whilst in traditional Malaya Sultans conducted ritualised ceremonies displaying their eminence and majesty, newly independent Malaya was to march to a different beat. Tun Razak, following in the mould of Dato' Onn Jaafar and the

⁵²Official radio broadcasting began in Australia in 1923. By the late 1930s, when Menzies came to prominence, there were wireless sets in two out of every three Australian homes. He was quick to see its advantage and to master the medium. (J. Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1992), pp.18-19)

no-nonsense Sir Gerald Templer⁵³, visited *kampung* after *kampung*, listening and talking to the people, demonstrating commitment, determination, and decisive action.⁵⁴ Malaya was on the move! A new *wayang* began entertaining and educating rural populations. Travelling movie shows would be interrupted part-way through for a 'sponsor's message', which could range from a public health message on the treatment of intestinal worms to political campaign speeches. This medium with its 'aura' of modernity, its portrayal of life beyond Malayan shores, its connecting Malays with that outside world, and its meeting people in their contexts would convey a sense of progress and leader interest.⁵⁵

Today, Malaysian political leaders continue to be very visible with busy rounds of official duties. They project accessibility, energy, sincerity, determination, firmness, and diligence. Conspicuous newspaper notices regularly appear expressing thanks to a leader for opening a particular building or event.⁵⁶

⁵³Sir Gerald Templer was the British High Commissioner of Malaya and Director of Operations from 1952 to 1954. He was apparently an active, no-nonsense, but fair man, who travelled extensively across the country to deal with communist insurgency and the day-to-day issues of government. He may have provided a model of leadership for those who took over when Malaya became independent. Refer to Tunku Abdul Rahman's comments about his impression of Sir Gerald Templer in: Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Something to Remember*, (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1983), pp.16-17.

⁵⁴J.V. Morais, *Strategy for Action*, p.xxiii reports him travelling "thousands of miles every month to see for himself the progress of every development project in every corner of Malaysia".

⁵⁵Malaysian cartoonist, Lat, has ably commented on this medium and its social impact. Refer: Lat, *Lots of Lat*, 6th Edition, (Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing Sdn Bhd, 1988), p.25;

⁵⁶Perhaps there is no better advertisement than to have one's company associated with a prominent political leader. Sophisticated graphics, portrayals of futuristic architectural styles, classical print fonts in association with photos of leaders in ceremonial or business attire combine to speak subtly to newspaper readers. The message conveyed is

Similarly congratulatory notices appear acknowledging an individual's achievement or award. Individual and group performance is regularly assessed by work superiors and 'report cards' are duly issued. Mirroring times past, titles and awards are conferred by Sultans and political leaders commending meritorious service and honouring achievement.⁵⁷

A further device of Malaysian leaders has been the significant use of campaigns and slogans targeting the next adjustment in social behaviour expected by the government. This has been particularly evident since 1969, with leaders making concerted efforts to mould the value system of the Malaysian public. Slogans abound from the *gotong-royong*, *jayadiri*, 'red' book or 'green' book campaigns in Tun Razak's time to the "Look East", "Malaysia Inc.", "Love our Language", "Vision 2020" slogans of Mahathir's era.⁵⁸

One Malaysian commentator has suggested insightfully that such "sing-songs" by-pass mental faculties to register at a subliminal level so as to produce the required dutiful response.⁵⁹ Speeches and newspaper reports repeat the succinct chant *ad nauseam* - the underlying message again

that benevolent parental/authority figures confer *nama* in reward for loyalty and achievement.

⁵⁷As an example refer to: 'Providing excellent service all the time', *NST*, (6.7.95), p.10. This reports on the awarding of Excellent Service Awards to *Universiti Pertanian Malaysia* staff.

⁵⁸Others from the Mahathir era include: "Buy British Last"; "*Bersih, Cekap dan Amanah*", "Clean and Beautiful"; "Privitisation", "Leadership by Example".

⁵⁹Syed Hussein Alatas, *Malaysian Business*, (16.11.88), cited in: Hasan Hamzah, *Mahathir: Great Malaysian Hero*, (Kuala Lumpur: Media Printext, 1990), pp.13-14.

being "we mean business ... we (the leadership) are on the move ... follow us/me".

Slogans are short, punchy, make appeal to a mass psyche, are easily promoted and readily imbedded in the memory.

Alliterative devices (for example, "Buy British Last"), appeals to emotive cultural symbols (for example, *gotong-royong*), the use of positive or commanding words (for example, 'Clean', 'Beautiful', 'Vision' and 'Look', 'Buy') are characteristic slogan features.

Because none of use live in a vacuum, it is evident that we are all to varying extents the products of our times, past education and our societies' cultural heritages and intellectual traditions. For Malaysia that past has been rich, multi-faceted and persistent. Some understanding of that past should aid in understanding the thinking of present-day leaders, for they, too, are products of that past.

3.0 THE RAJA AS PRIEST AND PEDAGOGUE

This chapter will overview the various external (ideological) influences, that helped shape the Malay world. Such ideas were to legitimate the rule of spiritually-gifted individuals (Rajas and Sultans), who were central to the life and cultural development of their realms. These rulers intercepted and filtered the latest 'know-how' brought by the traders, religious practitioners and colonial administrators who visited the region. The philosophical systems these visitors brought with them reflected the diversities and long periods of cultural development in the regions of their origins. It will be, thus, difficult to capture the essential essence of their philosophies in a brief overview. Nonetheless, this will be attempted in the following descriptive account of the various understandings of the spiritual, pedagogic and political aspects of a ruler's role in his community. Of interest will be the forms they took, when they were translated into the Malay setting.

3.1 'Extraordinary' Chiefs in Ancient Malay Civilisation

Public life and social relations in early Malaya¹ were centred around a spiritually-powerful chief. This is because the Malay world was one in which both malevolent and benevolent spirits needed careful 'management' to ensure life, health, fertility,

¹In the centuries before the Christian era, the Malay peoples lived in estuarine communities along the coastline of the jungled Malay peninsula and some of the surrounding islands now part of the Indonesian archipelago. They were cultivators of rice, fishermen and traders.

and general well-being.² All things possessed a 'vital force' or 'soul-substance' (*semangat*). However, there would be someone in the *kampung* (village), who had a special ability or "prowess", possessing an abnormal amount of 'soul-stuff'.³ This individual was best equipped to deal with the vagaries of the spirit world, justifying his recognition as chief. Other individuals would be able to enhance personal spiritual endowments, and communities would maximise material benefits, by maintaining proximity with such a gifted individual.

A chieftain, who in his lifetime had proved to be a successful intermediary between the people and the spirits, would in death be worshipped for the benefits he could continue to ensure. Amongst the *keramat* (sacred)⁴ places were the graves of village founders, significant leaders and shamans (*pawang*). Shrines were built in high places, where, it seems, men were especially able to commune with and receive power from the gods. Coedes points to the early presence throughout the South-east Asian region of "a cosmological dualism in which are

²The pantheon of spirits included "remote deities who controlled the elemental forces of nature and local spirits of more limited power and unpredictable temperament". (P. Wheatley, *Impressions of the Malay Peninsula in Ancient Times*, (Singapore: Donald Moore for Eastern Universities Press Ltd, 1964), p.178.); Refer also: R. Winstedt, *The Malays: A Cultural History*, (Singapore: Kelly & Walsh Limited, 1947), pp.12-19; K.M. Endicott, *An Analysis of Malay Magic*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

³Wolters has pointed to the hierarchical nature of societies in pre-Christian era and has suggested that "men of prowess", who "distinguished their performance from others in their generation", were a common cultural phenomenon in the Southeast Asian political landscape. (Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, pp.5-7)

⁴*Keramat* is a word of Arabic origins referring to the magical gifts of Muslim saints. (Milner, 'Islam and Malay Kingship', p.54) It probably superseded other local ascriptions, which also meant "having supernatural power".

opposed the mountain and the sea, the winged race and the aquatic race, the men of the heights and those of the coasts".⁵ Resonating with Indian thought, this theme continued in later traditions and stories, which speak of chiefs who descend from a mountain to rule their people.⁶

In such societies skills were passed from one generation to the next through on-the-job training or apprenticeship under parents, village elders or master tradesmen and women. Thus, the boat-builder, the fisherman, the agriculturalist or the housewife learnt the traditions and skills of the previous generation. Those with superior spiritual knowledge (in addition to the chief), including the *bomoh* (medicine man), the *dalang* (*wayang* presenter)⁷, and the *bidan* (midwife), would also command respect.

⁵G. Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1968), p.9; Wheatley, *Impressions*, p.26,179.

⁶The cosmological centre of the Indian world was Mount Meru - a heaven with its cities of gods and celestial spirits. In the *Mahabharata*, the five sons of King Pandu and their joint wife Draupadi climb Mount Meru and enter the realm of the gods. (M. Stutley, *Hinduism: The Eternal Law*, (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1985), p.34) In Malay tradition, the descendants of Raja Iskandar Dzu'l-Karnain in Palembang were said to have "come down from Bukit Si-Guntang Mahameru" and thus "every ruler from every part of the country came to pay his respects to them". (Brown, *Malay Annals*, p.15) The Rajas of Pasai were said to have come "originally from Mount Sanggong". (Brown, *Malay Annals*, pp.30-31)

⁷*Wayang* shadow puppets may have been developed in such early times and used to summon and seek the favour of the spirits of the ancestors. (Coedes, *Indianized States*, pp.12, 265 (Note 54)); Nonetheless by Indic times the practice was well-established, borrowing heavily from Hindu epics such as the *Ramayana*. The shadow was believed to be a semi-detached 'soul'. People feared losing their shadow and, thus, one should not step on another's shadow, especially if that person was a powerful individual such as a *guru* or a king. (J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), p.56; Winstedt, *The Malays*, p.13.)

Theirs was an oral tradition in which the past served and validated the all-important present.⁸ Human well-being in this life was the dominating priority. Practical outcomes determined the veracity or usefulness of a skill, 'power' or piece of 'knowledge'. Every-day survival concerns would stimulate a need in the present to identify and become associated with spiritually-gifted individuals. Wolters has suggested that an "alertness to reading contemporary signs" posited in the chiefs "an outward looking disposition" and an interest in new ideas from outside.⁹

As competent sea-farers Malays were likely to have had long-existing maritime relations with India.¹⁰ A 'community of culture',¹¹ with similarities in certain beliefs and rites, may have existed between 'monsoon' Asia and India proper. This would have allowed a ready acceptance of the new ideas which Indian traders and accompanying Brahman priests and Buddhist monks¹² had to offer - know-how which local chiefs needing to legitimate their rule were keen to monopolise.

⁸Rather than trying to emulate the past or prepare for some future, it was the present that mattered. Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, pp.9,33.

⁹Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, pp.41-45,62,66-67.

¹⁰There is some evidence of items of early Indian origin on the Malay peninsula. (Coedes, *Indianized States*, p.8); Also one of the Indian Jataka stories is said to refer to sailors from the Malay region off the coasts of Western India. (Wheatley, *Impressions*, p.25)

¹¹Coedes, *Indianized States*, p.8.

¹²Brahman priests may have come at the specific invitation of local rulers requiring their services. Buddhist monks, in accordance with their discipline, wandered for eight months of the year. The merchant class were also strongly supportive of Buddhism in early times and may have assisted their passage to more distant shores. There may also have been some direct proselytising activity emanating out of India and Sri Lanka. A great council of monks during the reign of their patron King Ashoka (269-232 BC) dispatched missionary monks to outlying areas of the subcontinent, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia. (R.C. Lester, *Buddhism*:

3.2 Brahmano-Buddhist Indian Influence

Brahmano-Buddhist ideas were to provide the norms and rationale for a Malay polity which centred around a Raja. Because of their all-encompassing nature, both Hinduism and Buddhism were able to include local "ancient and persisting indigenous beliefs" and bring them "into sharper focus", giving them a broader appeal within a universal framework of truth.¹³ Both offered local chiefs the possibility of enhancing spiritual power and regime legitimacy.

Hindu kings (with their Brahman priests) were in special communication with the gods, whilst Buddhist monks not only had a reputation for great learning, but also for extraordinary power over nature.¹⁴ Now as an incarnation of Siva or Visnu or as one who had attained Buddhahood, Malay rajas could manifest a divinity which transcended local deities.

It is thought that the advent of Buddhism may have opened the way for Indic ideas to enter the Malay region by breaking down any taboos the Hindu tradition's caste system may have had on racial interaction.¹⁵ At least from the beginning of the

The Path to Nirvana, (San Francisco: Harper, 1987), p.48; Tran, H.T., *Buddhism and Politics in Southeast Asia*, Ph.D. Thesis, Claremont Graduate School and University Centre, 1970), p.7.

¹³Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, p.9; Note that local beliefs were not discarded with the advent of the Hindu and, later the Islamic, religions.

¹⁴Ashoka's son, Mahinda, and his monastic companions were said to have flown through the air to Sri Lanka. Buddha-images were believed to be a source of power. (Lester, *Buddhism*, p.50)

¹⁵The Hindu tradition is a syncretic mix of early indigeneous Indian and Aryan beliefs. The Aryans were a fair-skinned people who migrated to India from the north over a period from 1700 BC to around 800 BC.

Christian era communities of itinerant Indian traders grew up in coastal ports on the Malay peninsula. There they traded and awaited favourable monsoon winds to take them on to China or back down to India. Later when piracy later made maritime routes around the peninsula dangerous and unprofitable, Indianised communities grew up beside trans-peninsular routes. Significant Indianised communities existed on the Kra peninsula (Southern Thailand), in Kedah and on the East Coast in Patani (Southern Thailand), Kelantan and Trengganu.¹⁶

These communities were to come under both Hindu and Buddhist influence to varying degrees at different times as successive suzerains extended their influence over the region.¹⁷

Perhaps as a consequence of their disdain for the darker-skinned locals, there arose a stratified social system with a brahman elite at the apex; the other castes being the warrior/ruler caste (*kshatriya*), the herdsman/farmer (*vaishya*) and at the bottom the labourer (*sudra*) caste. Note that the earliest statuary of Indian influence found in Southeast Asia is of Buddhist nature confirming that Buddhism may have undermined any Hindu aversion to foreign travel. Wheatley outlines the events which may have led to the stimulation Indian trade in this region around the beginning of the Christian era. (Wheatley, *Impressions*, pp.34-35,193)

¹⁶Traders followed rivers inland cutting across the central mountains to link up with a downflowing river system to take them to the sea on the other side. For a description of trans-peninsular routeways refer to: P. Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese: Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula before A.D. 1500*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1961), pp.xxvi-xxvii. For details of the communities and their histories refer to: P. Wheatley, *Impressions of the Malay Peninsula in Ancient Times*, (Singapore: Donald Moore for Eastern Universities Press Ltd, 1964).

¹⁷In the third century AD, Southern Thailand, Kedah and Patani were to come under the suzerainty of Funan (in Southern Indo-China). As Funan declined and was absorbed into the Khmer realm in the sixth century, peninsular polities had a period of independence until the maritime thassolocracy of Srivijaya reasserted control over maritime trading routes from the 7th Century. In the eleventh century, Javanese and Cola Tamil (from South India) pressures saw the Srivijayan capital move from Palembang to Jambi. Expanded Chinese shipping in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with Islamic trade centred at Pasai (in north-western Sumatra) saw the end of Srivijaya in the fourteenth century and the rise of Malacca in the 15th century. During this period Srivijaya was one of the world's premier centres Mahayana Buddhist

Centres on the East coast had a strong Mahayanist influence, whilst in Kedah there is evidence at different times of Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism and Saivite Hinduism.¹⁸ In fact, perhaps because of their common roots, the various religious strands tended to coexist peacefully even in the same communities.

From the first century AD onwards, local rulers began to structure their courts and polities along Indian lines - around the notions of Mt Meru as the cosmological centre and the astrological numbers 4, 8, 16, and 32. Brahmins, required to legitimate the king's status, were employed in the service of the king and the kingdom.¹⁹ They alone could consecrate him by means of appropriate ritual, ensuring the concentration of Siva's (or Visnu's) cosmic essence within the royal body and, thus, secure the realm's well-being.²⁰

scholarship. In 671AD when Chinese Buddhist I-Ching visited more than a thousand monks were practising Buddhist rule exactly as in India. (Wheatley, *Golden Khersonese*, p.45)

¹⁸Evidence suggests an early 5th century Mahayanist influence superceded by Saivism by the 7th century. In the 8th and 9th century under Srivijaya Mahayana Buddhism was again strong, followed by Hindu influence in the 10th century and Theravada Buddhism under the T'ai in the 13th century. (Wheatley, *Golden Khersonese*, pp.275-277)

¹⁹There are numerous references in Chinese accounts of Brahmins serving in Malay courts: In the kingdom of Ch'ih-t'u (which Wheatley locates in the Kelantan River basin), the king's Buddhist father had "abdicated so that he could preach the word. ... Several hundred brahmins sit (in the royal palace) in rows facing each other on the eastern and western sides. ... It is the custom to worship the Buddha but greater respect is paid to the brahmins." (Note the concurrent Buddhist presence.) (Wheatley, *Golden Khersonese*, pp.27-28) In the kingdom of Tan-tan (which Wheatley locates in Trengganu) the king "has eight high officers of state ... who are brahmins". (Wheatley, *Golden Khersonese*, p.51)

²⁰Brahmins consecrated the king, performed the rituals and sacrifices, and advised the king. A court-chaplain (*purohita*) or family priest had to ensure that the king and his family were protected spiritually, to consecrate war elephants and even accompany the monarch into battle. The *purohita* was to be a knowledgeable *brahmana*, who through his advice and service to the king would "guard the kingdom". (S.D. Singh,

Indian culture was not only able to offer the rules and standards of political administration, but also the canons of law and medicine, a writing system, norms for social behaviour and the inspiration for local art and literature. The Malays were to selectively borrow from and adapt the Indian tradition to their own setting.

In setting out to explore the intellectual world of Indiansied Malaya one is, however, faced with the problem that there is very little actual historical record prior to Islam's coming (that is prior to, say, the fourteenth century). Chinese records make reference to the region. Archaeological work has added to the picture, which nonetheless remains a very sketchy one. This present study will examine the religio-political and pedagogic elements in (the better-documented) Indian Hindu and general Buddhist thought.²¹ The cultural legacies in the Malay setting will be readily apparent and hopefully better understood.²² Those aspects of Indic thought, which were not embraced by the Malays, will be highlighted at the end of Section 3.2.2.

'The Early Development of Kingship in Pre-Muslim India', in I.W. Mabbett, (ed.), *Patterns of Kingship and Authority in Traditional Asia*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p.91; Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, pp.64-66)

²¹India has a striking diversity of changing beliefs, deities, cults and religious practices. Only two of the major religious streams (Hinduism and Buddhism) are examined here. Both have numerous variants and expressions. Also, as Singh makes clear, Indian thought and institutions were of a constantly evolving nature during the successive periods of Indian history. He attempts to trace historical changes in Indian kingship. (Singh, *Patterns of Kingship*, pp.85-107)

²²Present-day Malay wedding ceremonies and rituals and ceremonies associated with installation of Sultans and the king are infused with Indic tradition. Traditional Malay literature and performing arts bear its stamp also.

3.2.1 Rajas, Priests & Pedagogy - the Hindu view.

According to the Indian Hindu world-view, that which exists "behind and beyond the apparent multiplicity in the universe" is the *Brahman* or the "one immanent-transcendent Unity".²³ The Hindu tradition is regarded as 'the eternal law'.²⁴ Different deities and seemingly disparate beliefs are able to be melded together for, afterall, "Divine Reality is the transcendent-immanent ground of everything and therefore may be contacted at all levels, in all places, and in all things". Each deity is regarded as a symbol enabling finite minds to grasp some aspect of the infinite reality which is One.²⁵

The main contributors to Hinduism's formation and its (divinely inspired) canon were the *brahmanas* (priests), who were at the apex of the caste system.²⁶ With their superior esoteric knowledge and possession of the *brahman*, the Brahman priests had hereditary rights to perform ceremonies and conduct the complex sacrificial rituals necessary to ensure harmony between humans and the gods and the continuation of the world process. However, in the centuries immediately

²³M. Stutley, *Hinduism: The Eternal Law an Introduction to the Literature, Cosmology and Cults of the Hindu Religion*, (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1985), p.9.

²⁴The *dharma* is the divine law or truth (including customs, uses, duties, and moral orders). All including gods and kings were subject to it. (Sharma, *Kingship in India*, p.64) Note that Hinduism had "no founder, no one sacerdotal order to institute set dogmas, and no central organisation" and thus cannot be regarded as a single religion. (Stutley, *Hinduism*, pp.7-8)

²⁵Stutley, *Hinduism*, pp.9,83.

²⁶In times of peace the warrior (*kshtriya*) caste, which included the kings, devoted themselves to religio-philosophical studies and discussions and contributed to Hinduism formation and literature. They were second to the *brahmanas* in the caste hierarchy.

preceding the Christian era, the *Brahman's* monopoly on access to the gods gradually came to be challenged as classical Hinduism with its devotional cults emerged. The older Vedic deities, though never abandoned, became identified with the deities Visnu, Siva, and Sakta.²⁷ The aims of each of the cults were the same (union with *brahman*), however, they differed in their approach to this end.

In Vaisnava cults, *brahman* is regarded as a personal god or Lord approached by way of devotion through the practice of yoga. Through divine grace, enlightenment is attained when one intuitively apprehends god. Visnu has many manifestations.²⁸ He is regarded, for example, as the lord of life, a warrior, a benevolent ruler, and a teacher. This is exemplified in the various god-heroes, who have all been regarded as incarnations of Visnu - amongst them Krsna who was seen as the ideal teacher, heroic warrior and ruler.²⁹

In the awesome deity, Siva, there is also a nexus between power, knowledge and kingship. He is approached through

²⁷For example, Varuna, seen as the embodiment of kingship and as the supreme moral ruler implored to forgive sins, was now identified with Visnu. So too were Mitra, the benevolent solar deity guarding men's contracts; Bhaga, the giver of happiness and lord of bounty, and Indra, the storm god and warrior ideal.

²⁸Visnu is an aspect of the sun, mighty and pervasive, the lord of unceasing activity, the personalised sacrifice, "the Cosmic man whose sacrificial dismemberment gave rise to the universe". Visnu incarnates himself when the world becomes evil (thus does so a number of times) to save mankind. (Stutley, *Hinduism*, pp.41,85)

²⁹Others included Parasurama (an epic hero who re-established the social order when the nobility attempted to wrest spiritual leadership from the priests), Rama (the heroic chief of the *Ramayana*), and later Buddha. Visnu's symbols were the conch shell (symbolising the origin of existence) and the discus or six-spoked wheel (symbolising the limitless power of the Universal Mind which invents and destroys all forms). (Stutley, *Hinduism*, pp.89-91)

yogic practices and magic. Amongst his many manifestations³⁰ is the transcendent lord (*Mahesvara*) of divine knowledge and, thus, he is invoked to bestow intellectual achievement on his devotees.³¹ As an emanation of this "guru of the universe", rulers were expected to help their people realise their earthly and spiritual aims by promoting religion and preserving religious institutions.³²

Royal patronage was to play a significant role in the propagation of the Saivite cult both in India and later in Southeast Asia.³³ In keeping with earlier associations with high places, a Saivite king's essence was believed to reside in a *linga* (phallus)³⁴ mounted on top of a pyramid in the very centre of the royal residence (often located on raised areas or mountains. This was supposed to be where the *axis mundi* (axis of the kingdom) reached to earth. It was here that communion between god and king took place.

³⁰Siva is the Lord of the mountains, animals, lonely places, and of demons. He is the Supreme Yogin and model for ascetics. He is Kala, the personification of the disintegrating power of time; Nataraja, the cosmic Lord of the Dance; Mahayogi, the guru of yogic knowledge, music and the Veda; Sankara, the giver of bliss arising from absolute knowledge.

³¹Mahesvara is thought to coordinate the three energies from which knowledge arises, namely: the power of understanding (*jnana*), will (*iccha*), and action (*kriya*). (Stutley, *Hinduism*, p.108)

³²Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region*, p.21.

³³The Saivite cult became the most prominent Hindu cult in Southeast Asia. However, other cults tended to coexist peacefully with it. In India some attempts were made to syncretise the cults as in the triad (*trimurti*) consisting of Brahma (as creator, reorganising already existing eternal, unitary matter), Visnu (as preserver), and Siva (as destroyer). Each were regarded as essentially different aspects of the unitary Divine. Also there was the god Harihara (Hari, being Visnu - the cohesive or centripetal tendency in the universe and Hara being Siva - the centrifugal or decaying tendency).

³⁴The *linga* was a depiction of Siva as the source and manifestation of life inevitably also containing the seeds of disintegration and death. The *linga* acted as a sort of palladium or image protecting the kingdom.

In Siva there was also convergence and reconciliation of opposites.³⁵ The *linga* of Siva was often associated with the female generative organ (*yoni*), which represents Siva's *sakti*, the personification of his cosmic energy. When represented together or as Siva's hermaphroditic form (the right side male and the left female), the generative principles in the universe and the transcendent unity are signified.³⁶

Both Saktism and the later Tantrism centred on the Supreme Goddess Sakti - the creative power of the gods, the consort of the gods, and "the feminisation of Ultimate Reality (*brahman*)".³⁷ Tantrism later came to influence Saivism, Vaisnavism and Saktism and also Mahayana Buddhism. It was "a form of sacramental ritualism, having a number of esoteric and magical aspects and employing mantras ... and yogic techniques". A *guru* would pass on the necessary esoteric knowledge to a suitably prepared disciple in order to enable him or her to pursue liberation and merging "with the cosmic essence in the joy of pure consciousness."³⁸

Thus, gradually in India the emphasis shifted from sacrifice ritual to asceticism and knowledge (*jnana*) as a means of

³⁵The priorities of consensus, compromise, and harmony are not in contradiction with this notion of convergence of opposites. Add to this the strong emphasis on the collective within Buddhism, Tunku Abdul Rahman's *kerajaan*, Thai (he was close to his mother, who was Thai) and cosmopolitan heritage, and, this may provide some insight into the Tunku's 'compromising' impulses and personality.

³⁶Stutley, *Hinduism*, p.108.

³⁷Stutley, *Hinduism*, p.120-3; See also 47-48.

³⁸Stutley, *Hinduism*, pp.124-125.

spiritual advancement. In Upanisadic³⁹ times the *ashram* system was established. Students lived with and studied under a *guru*. (Note, that *Upanisad* means a "session" or "sitting near the feet of a master who gives secret teachings".)⁴⁰ The student was taught a broad curriculum, including Vedic studies, sacrificial arts, interpretation, grammar, astronomy, mathematics and perhaps literature. He/she was required to treat his/her master with utmost reverence and unquestioning obedience.

Thus, the *guru* came to take a more central role in cult leadership, scriptural interpretation, and in the passing on of esoteric knowledge on a more one-to-one basis. 'Knowledge', then, was to be found in the person of the teacher and in rigorous religious practice which would lead to enlightenment. Great religious teachers themselves came to be regarded as manifestations of deities.⁴¹

³⁹The *Upanisads* (approx. 800-400BC) form part of the Hindu canon. They represent a period of more speculative philosophic thinking by members of the warrior caste. Classical Hinduism soon after the Upanisadic period. Hinduism's sacred literature also includes the *Vedas* (*Rgveda*, *Samaveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Atharvaveda*), *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas*, the manuals (*sutras*), the epics (*Ramayana* & *Mahabharata*), and the Ancient Stories (*Puranas*).

⁴⁰V. Mangalwadi, *The World of Gurus*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1977), p.16. The word *guru* was first evident in the *Upanisads* and had various meanings, including a religious teacher, a founder of a sect or creed, a preacher of a particular doctrine, or a giver of a mantra. (Mangalwadi, *World of Gurus*, pp.8-9)

⁴¹Buddha, Sant Kabir (1440-1518 AD), Guru Nanak (1469-1538 AD; founder of Sikhism) and Bhagavan (God) Rajneesh (b.1931) are examples of a long line of venerated gurus. According to Sant: "Guru and God are both standing, whose feet shall I touch first? I shall touch your's O Guru, for You revealed God to me." Swami Sivananda adds: "The Guru is God Himself manifesting in a personal form to guide the aspirant." (Mangalwadi, *World of Gurus*, pp.9-13); Milner refers to evidence in the 7th-century Srivijaya inscriptions of Hindu notions of devotion (*bhakti*) to a *guru*. (Srivijaya was at this time a Mahayanist Buddhist centre.) Milner, 'Islam and Malay Kingship', pp.50-51.

Gurus were consulted by Rajas but were not necessarily part of their courts. They would sometimes seek isolated places where they and their followers could pursue spiritual knowledge.⁴²

The Indian *Raja* was very much the centre of his polity and came to be seen as the embodiment or personification of divine power. He displayed his grandeur, potency and wealth in elaborate court ceremony and etiquette, distributions of wealth and *nama*, and spiritually-potent royal regalia.⁴³

He was not so much a 'governor' for he left the management of his polity largely to a circle of appointed ministers 'versed in the sciences'. Rather, he was a 'protector' or 'guardian of the earth'. His first aim was to bring harmony and prosperity to his realm. As the *Ramayana* epic relates:

When Rama was king no widow mourned; ... all men were delighted and observed the *dharma*; the trees, always flowering, bore fruits without interruption; it rained when rain was desired; ... everybody was content.⁴⁴

As protector of the *dharma*, the king had to uphold the moral and social order,⁴⁵ meet any external aggression, judge and punish the guilty. He upheld the law rather than promulgated

⁴²This is illustrated in the Malay setting in experience of the legendary Hang Tuah, who was instructed by a hermit guru in the warrior arts. Refer: Sheppard, *The Adventures of Hang Tuah*, pp.12,38-39.

⁴³Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, pp.37-38; Skeat relates his encounter with a reputedly "particularly dangerous" Kedah royal regalia in the nineteenth century. Skeat, JMBRAS, vol.XXVI, pt.4, pp.126-127.

⁴⁴Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, pp.9-11; "A priest without knowledge and a king without protecting power are but wooden elephants. ... There is no need for such a man on the throne; he is like a eunuch or a barren field, or like a cloud that does not pour rain." cited in Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, pp.1-3; Refer also Singh, *Patterns of Kingship*, pp.86-87; R. Sharma, *Kingship in India (From Vedic Age to Gupta Age)*, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 1988), p.59.

⁴⁵Sharma, *Kingship in India*, pp.60-65;67-68;71-72.

it and, thus, had to have diligently studied the canon, legal codes and local customs.⁴⁶

Despite being (or at least being like) a god (*deva*)⁴⁷, the *Raja* was not always the exemplar of moral rectitude (*devas* themselves were not paragons of virtue). When, however, the king was not seeking to protect the *dharma* and exemplify moral rectitude, he and his realm would fall into confusion and disarray.⁴⁸ Thus, he was not an absolute ruler and could not act arbitrarily, for the spiritual and physical realms (and perhaps even his subjects)⁴⁹ would conspire to judge his error. The *dharma* was the king of kings.⁵⁰

The Raja's role, though political, was primarily priestly in purpose. He knew the paths between the gods and mankind

⁴⁶Singh, *Patterns of Kingship*, pp.93,98; The brahmins were the interpreters of the law, whilst Indian kings obeyed and implemented it. (Milner, 'Islam and Malay Kingship', p.51) Note Milner's comments that Malay royalty studied the *Undang-undang* (Melaka) (i.e. local legal codes). (pp.47-48)

⁴⁷A *deva* is a god among men, possessing supernormal faculties. (Stutley, *Hinduism*, p.39; Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, pp.6,24,30); Opinion seems divided as to whether or not kings were divine or simply had a function similar to the gods. Some argue that increasingly, especially from the beginning of the Christian era, kings became identified as a *deva* or even an abode (*sthana*) of the gods, serving as the intermediary between the spiritual and physical realms. (Singh, *Patterns of Kingship*, pp.87-88,97-98; Sharma, *Kingship in India*, pp.32-40;51-6) Sharma attributes such differences in interpretation to differences in western and Indian cultural perspectives. (See pp.37,52)

⁴⁸Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, pp.7,33-4.

⁴⁹There is the example of the wicked King Vena who "claimed exemption from punishment behind the garb of his divinity ... [and who] ... was immediately killed by the angry sages". Thus continued royal piety, and proper behaviour seem to have a bearing on ascriptions of divinity. (Sharma, *Kingship in India*, p.37-8); Citizens could also choose to migrate elsewhere as a protest against autocratic power. (Sharma, *Kingship in India*, p.39)

⁵⁰Sharma, *Kingship in India*, p.66; Singh, *Patterns of Kingship*, pp.91,95.

and, thus, could serve as a channel of communication to the gods, and of blessing from the gods, through participation in certain rituals, festivals and sacrifices.

Royal courts were centres of learning with kings acting as patrons of literature and the sciences.⁵¹

priests, wandering teachers, learned women and others took part in public debates before the king, who was often a man of great learning.⁵²

Both kings and priests were interested in knowledge but not for its own sake. Knowledge (apprehension of the *dharma* or *brahman*⁵³) was not an end as it so often was for the ancient Greeks and the ensuing western civilisation. Knowledge for those of a Hindu mindset was a means to practical outcomes - spiritual power to ensure general well-being.

In keeping with his role of sponsoring artistic and cultural development,⁵⁴ the king would arrange for the holding of artistic performances. However the aim was not purely entertainment or display, such functions were imbued with both spiritual and educative intent. They were a means of mass education and enculturation (in this a top-down or rather a

⁵¹Sharma, *Kingship in India*, p.63; Singh, *Patterns of Kingship*, pp.98,101; Amongst royal appellations were Prajapati (Lord of all creatures), Bhupati (Lord of the earth), and, significantly Satyayoni (one who abides in truth and reality) and Satyadharmapravartaka (one who knows the events of former times and who is the originator of the norms of truth. (Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, p.25)

⁵²Cited in Stutley, *Hinduism*, p.25.

⁵³With the *dharma* being the divine law or inner dynamic of all cosmic manifestations and the *brahman* being the limitless, attributeless Absolute or Ultimate Reality, the transcendent, immanent essence of all existence, the *dharma* is held to be an equivalent of *brahman*. (Stutley, *Hinduism*, p.165)

⁵⁴Sharma, *Kingship in India*, p.47.

centre-radiating-out-to-the-periphery society), and an appeal to the gods for some spiritual benefit.⁵⁵

As a cultural exemplar the king was to speak sweetly in a gentle and refined manner and be similarly addressed. A charge or accusation against any person was regarded as a magically potent act which would affect that person like a disease. Thus, no offence should especially be given to the king for the gods themselves did not disobey a virtuous king. One's loyalty to one's king was necessary, for the king, afterall, was essential to ensure individual and general well-being.⁵⁶

Hinduism, thus, had great potential to enhance the stature of Malay rulers. Probably for this reason, it was influential in helping to shape Malay perceptions of their world. Buddhism, though, also had much to offer.

⁵⁵Dances and music had a spiritual significance. In processions riding on his elephant, music was played to ward off evil. In royal courts bards sang the ruler's panegyrics and those of his ancestors thereby enhancing his power. Thus, it had the effect of being a magical performance. (Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, pp.46-47, 56-57.) Court story-tellers, professional bards, and wandering minstrels also played mass-communication roles. Stutley refers to the *Mahabharata* (and *Puranas*) as providing both popular entertainment and religious instruction - of special importance for the illiterate and the majority of Indian women who were denied access to formal education. (Stutley, *Hinduism*, p.33,37-38); For a reference to a Malay court story-teller refer to W.W. Skeat, *Journal Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society*, vol.XXVI, pt.4, p.126.

⁵⁶Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, pp.57,68.

3.2.2 Rajas, Monks and Pedagogy - The Buddhist View

Buddhism's founder, Siddhartha Gautama (a northern Indian prince), rejected the *Brahman's* monopoly on religious achievement, the sacrificial system and the rigidly stratified society of the time with its attendant inequalities. He renounced any claim to the throne for a life of asceticism, attempting to seek an answer to the suffering in the world. He was to become **the Buddha**, "the Enlightened One", having intuitively perceived the *Dharma* (or Eternal Truth).⁵⁷

Nirvana, he realised, was the cessation of desire; of ego-centric self-grasping, which was the cause of suffering, death and rebirth.⁵⁸ He preached a "Middle Way" to enlightenment and Nirvana via the Eightfold Path⁵⁹ - a path between worldliness and asceticism involving good deeds (*dana*), the discipline of

⁵⁷The *Dharma* was Eternal Truth manifested through Gautama. It was "the Doctrine and the Path" which he taught which in simple form constituted the Four Noble Truths: 1. That life is full of suffering; 2. That the cause of suffering is human desire; 3. That the cessation of suffering (Nirvana) is attainable; 4. That the eightfold discipline of morality, meditation, and wisdom is the path by which to attain nirvana. (Lester, *Buddhism*, p.16) Such truth is not understood "by discursive knowledge or conceptual thought" as it is "not within the sphere of logic"; rather it "can only be penetrated by the stainless, spotless eye of perfect intuitive wisdom". Reason itself could not discover truth but it could be used as an instrument of testing all doctrines and individual purity. (Tran, *Buddhism and Politics*, pp.16-17; 66-69)

⁵⁸Desire results in thoughts, words and deeds that have consequences (*karma*), either for happiness or suffering. A person's accumulated *karma* at the end of this life would determine whether he would return to another life or whether he would attain nirvana, the cessation of suffering.

⁵⁹This comprised Right Views, Right Resolve or Thoughts, Right Speech, Right Conduct or Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. (W.T. de Bary, *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China, and Japan*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p.16)

morality (*sila*)⁶⁰ and meditation (*samadhi*) by which one gains wisdom (*pajna*).

By his holiness and perfect enlightenment, Buddha was the Blessed One, the Lord and Teacher of all beings - he had power over all realms of life and the compassionate skill to deliver all beings from suffering.⁶¹ As one who had trod the path he revealed, he was a model and example for others to imitate. He was the Holy One (*arhat*) having conquered all lust, anger, delusion, and dispelled all sensuous desire, all yearning for personal existence, and all ignorance.

Within Buddhist thought, individual existence is submerged in that of the collective. This is because in the continuous stream of becoming, there is no permanent individual soul or ego. Rather it is in the context of the whole that the character of the individual is revealed.⁶² In the realisation of selflessness and of one's identity with others, the delusion of an independent ego and its attendant self-grasping evils of war, conflict, and hatred are overcome. Only by the attainment of enlightenment (the total destruction of self and the attainment of infinite wisdom, love and compassion) is the (inherently good) True Nature of man to be realised. The individual does not exist separately

⁶⁰This was a discipline of self-denial - refusing to lie or steal, to commit violence or engage in sexual misconduct.

⁶¹Lester, *Buddhism*, pp.59-61.

⁶²All things came about by a 'mutual dependent arising' and thus exists a 'selfless mutual identification' (within a cosmic totality) and an interdependent individual and collective karma. (Tran, *Buddhism and Politics*, p.48-9)

from society - "all difference is essential to the harmony of the whole".⁶³

Because individual and collective *karma* were interdependent, individual action could affect collective well-being. *Karma* could be enhanced by good deeds, good words, and good thoughts. The practicing of love and compassion (associated with enlightenment), thus, became the basis of social and political action. Charity and giving as a means of acquiring good *karma* formed the basis of social welfare.

By the beginning of the Christian era, two major Buddhist traditions had emerged: **Theravada**⁶⁴ ("The Way of the Elders" - the view that *arhat*-ship or attainment of Nirvana was only possible via monastic life; that full Buddhahood was unique to Gautama) and the **Mahayana** ("the Great Vehicle, the wide path" - the view that all could strive toward *Bodhi*⁶⁵ and become a *bodhisattva*, a being striving for enlightenment and for the welfare of others⁶⁶).

⁶³Tran, *Buddhism and Politics*, pp.17-29,49; Thus, it is likely that Buddhism has contributed to many Asian countries' emphasis on collective well-being rather than on individuality.

⁶⁴Also referred to, by those disparaging it, as **Hinayana** ("the Little Vehicle") Buddhism

⁶⁵*Bodhi* is "enlightenment" - the waking up to life as it really is; the full realisation of the four noble truths. (Lester, *Buddhism*, pp.12,150); The *Bodhisattva* rather than the *Arhat* was now the human ideal.

⁶⁶A *bodhisattva* or "Being of Wisdom" (one who was intent on Enlightenment (*Bodhi*) was one who had completely denied self-interest in the quest for Nirvana. Even though they need not be reborn, they chose to do so in order to use their power to help suffering humanity. Buddha was the ultimate example of such an attitude.

Within Mahayana Buddhism the king, as evidenced by his superior powers and status, came to be regarded as a *bodhisvata*.⁶⁷ He was seen to have advanced further than others in achieving enlightenment but had chosen to remain in the world of the particulars to relieve the suffering of others. He was ...

to put a stop to unrighteousness, to prevent evil deeds, to establish all beings in well-doing, and to show them the way to heaven. ... he who distinguishes good deeds from evil, who shows the results of karma - he is called a king.⁶⁸

Thus, he was to teach righteousness, administer justice, rule in harmony with the *dharma*, and as a protector and benefactor was to advance the general well-being and happiness of his people. The monarch's prestige was increased by the Buddhist theory of a 'wheel-turning' king or *cakravartin*. Buddha was the *cakravartin* par excellence with universal spiritual dominion.⁶⁹ He was not, however, an absolute ruler as he was to be chosen by the people, who would give him their support as long as he fulfilled his duty.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Evidence for such notions of kingship in the Malay world is found in the *Malay Annals* account of the pre-Islamic Palembang (Srivijaya) royal who founded Melaka. Paramesvara (a name of Siva - the Mahayana Avalokitesvara or sovereign *bodhisvata* and source of fertility had assumed attributes of Siva by this time) is described in *bodhisattva*-like terms in support of his claim to supernatural status. (Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History*, (London: Lund Humphries, 1970), pp.128-135)

⁶⁸Cited in de Bary, *The Buddhist Tradition*, p.106-8.

⁶⁹A *cakravartin* was a ruler whose chariot wheels roll everywhere without obstruction. Like the sun ruling and illuminating the earth, the ruler was central in the mandala or circle of his subjects - a sustaining sovereign, a power centre, a ruler with some claim to universal sovereignty. (Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, pp.52,62; Singh, *Patterns of Kingship*, p.100)

⁷⁰de Bary, *The Buddhist Tradition*, p.45.

As part of his role in advancing the *dharma*, the king was the patron of the *Sangha* (a community of saints and monks striving for *nirvana* - originally founded by Buddha). As enlightenment was individually possible through asceticism and certain religious practices, any person independent of rank in society could choose to enter the *Sangha*. It was the Sangha's "actual and intended purity and wisdom and its command of the *Dharma*" which provided a store of merit with the "power to heal, protect and bless those who are yet enmired in worldly affairs".⁷¹ Monks were to live in proximity to the Buddhist community as an inspiration - examples of liberating self-discipline, as teachers, spiritual leaders and advisers. (They were to teach the *dharma* and seek the general welfare of all.) Lay people were to cultivate self-denial by honouring the monks and giving of their wealth in material support of them.⁷²

Due to royal and merchant patronage, significant Buddhist centres of learning, influential in the spread of Buddhism, grew up in India and later in Southeast Asia - Amaravati and Nagarjunikonda in Southern India by the third century, Nalanda by the fifth century, and in Srivijaya (Southern Sumatra) in the seventh century. These were the tertiary institutions of the day. The great monastery complex and university at Nalanda attracted scholars from all over Asia (many who came via Malaya) and offered a wide curriculum. Of

⁷¹Lester, *Buddhism*, pp.16-17.

⁷²Lester, *Buddhism*, p.13.

his visit to Nalanda in the seventh century, Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuan-Zang wrote:

In India there were thousands of monasteries, but none surpassed this one in magnificence and sublimity. Always present were 10,000 monks, including hosts and guests, who studied both the Mahayana teachings and the doctrines of the 18 Hinayana schools as well as worldly books such as the Vedas and other classics. They also studied grammar, medicine, and mathematics ... (and) achieved ... much in their learning.⁷³

Thus, Indic thought offered Malays not only enhanced spiritual ability, but also great learning and high culture. Malays (especially their rulers) were to selectively borrow from both Hinduism and Buddhism. As a result, Saivism and Mahayana Buddhism were stronger in Malaya than the Visnu cult or Theravada Buddhism. Perhaps because of the strong concurrent Buddhist influence and a pre-existing predominance of local chiefs within their societies, the Hindu caste system was not adopted. However, strong social distinctions between ruler and ruled were reinforced by an Indic-influenced complex system of social norms and forms of address.

Whilst in India, Brahmans, gurus (and monks) had a more equal relationship with their rulers because of caste hierarchy,⁷⁴ Rajas in Southeast Asia held the superior role for they were the 'employers' of the religio-intellectual elite. They determined that neither the caste system (placing them below the Brahmans) nor the *ashram* or *Sangha* institutions (which were not necessarily associated with the ruler) found a home in

⁷³Lester, *Buddhism*, pp.46-47.

⁷⁴Indian kings had only a limited authority over the brahmans (or monks) (Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, pp.62-67); Refer also Singh, *Patterns of Kingship*, p.91.

Malaya. This is despite the presence of a large community of monks at one time in Srivijaya and the strong *Sangha* presence in Thailand even to the present.

In Malaya, Rajas and their courts provided the setting for spiritual and intellectual endeavour and not some separate intellectual or spiritual community. Life was spiritually oriented. 'Knowledge' was intuitively attained by the individual, who sought to emulate the all-important spiritual teacher - a role, which to a large extent, the Malayan *Raja* played. The end goal for both ruler and ruled was human happiness. Such an outlook had much in common with the medieval Islam (with its Sultans and Sufistic mysticism), that began to take root in Malaya in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

3.3 Sultans, Ulama and Pondok - the Islamic View

Once again Malay rulers were to be key recipients and advocates of the new wisdom from abroad. They were instrumental in Islam's acceptance and further expansion across the peninsula and to the islands beyond, becoming students of the great Islamic scholars and commanding their citizens to embrace Islam as they had done.⁷⁵ Because Malaya's outward-looking Sultans supervised Islam's selective localisation, Malayan Islam was to have a strong Sufistic flavour and be centred around its *ulama* (religious scholar)-like Sultans. Elements of general Islamic thought will be briefly reviewed before commenting on their influence.

Islam acknowledges a Creator God who gave revelation through his apostles and prophets, the final and greatest being the Prophet Muhammad (570-633 A.D.). Man,⁷⁶ as Allah's vicegerent on earth, was given a mind, speech, a will, the capacity to distinguish right from wrong, and a pure nature, which it was his duty to preserve. Man's success, prosperity, and salvation "depend on himself - on his keeping his soul pure as God made it".⁷⁷

⁷⁵Islam began to take root on the peninsula in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Its initial point of entry into the Malay world was its establishment in Northern Sumatran trading centres such as Pasai late in the thirteenth century. The conversion of the rajas of fifteenth century Melaka proved a significant turning point for Islam's partonage by Melaka Sultans was to aid its further expansion across the Malayan region. For a Malay account of the conversion of Melakan royalty refer: Brown, *Malay Annals*, pp.32-33,44,146.

⁷⁶The term "man" is used to mean "humankind". This is the term used by Islamic writers and, thus, it is used here.

⁷⁷A. Megid S. Mansour, 'Human Nature in Islam', *Jurnal Pendidikan*, no.6, Oct. 1977, p.49; 'The Responsibilities of man on Earth as willed by Allah', *NST*, (24.7.93), p.13.

The pattern or law (*Syariah*) by which mankind is to live was interpreted and applied by the Prophet Muhammad and recorded for all in the Holy Quran. The Quran gives Knowledge about Absolute Truth and, thus, all must be encouraged to live in accordance with its principles so as to vouchsafe human happiness and well-being in this life and the next.⁷⁸ The purpose of life is to serve Allah, and, thus, man is to exercise his abilities and utilise all things in the Universe to this end.

The prophet Muhammad in his lifetime was both a religious and political leader. Because Muhammad's authority covered both, there is no distinction in Islam, at least at a theoretical level, between a religious and a secular sphere of life.⁷⁹

Muhammad and the prophets modelled rulership, the proper exercise of political authority, as well as principles for every facet of life.

Following Muhammad's death the issue of succession resulted in two schools of thought within Islam: the Shi'a with its emphasis on descent from Muhammad and the Sunni with a consensual appointment of the Caliph by a religious elite.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Muhammad called for the establishment of a new social order or 'moral community' (*ummah*), encompassing all who subordinated themselves to Allah. This was to be the means of solving all humankind's spiritual and social problems.

⁷⁹A.H. Johns, 'Political Authority in Islam', in A. Reid (ed.), *The Making of an Islamic Political Discourse in Southeast Asia*, (Clayton: Monash Papers on Southeast Asia no.27, 1993), pp.17-18

⁸⁰Malays were to accept Sunni Islam and adhere to the Shafie school of law. "In Sufism they belong to the blend of Arab, Iranian, and Indian Sufi tradition tracing its teachings to the School of al-Junayd of Baghdad. (Zamakhshari Dhofier, 'Traditional Islamic Education in the Malay Archipelago: Its Contribution to the Integration of the Malay World, *IC*, no.53, Nov. 90, p.25)

Thus, a division of authority between the political and professional religious establishment (*ulama*) soon developed.⁸¹

Gradually the Baghdad Caliphate (representing religious authority by a 'valid' line of succession) began to disintegrate and the possibility arose for charismatic individuals to assume power directly. Thus, Sultans⁸² began to exercise authority and seek legitimation by using such titles as 'God's Vicegerent' or 'The Shadow of God on Earth' and by appealing to Persian notions of a "cosmic ruler" whose presence assured earthly peace. Nonetheless, a Sultan was not seen as an absolute ruler for he was subject to divine judgement. If his decrees were in accordance with the *Syariah*, then blessings would flow in his realm. Thus, a good king was expected to faithfully fulfil his religious obligations, respect and desire the company and counsel of men of learning, and not openly indulge in what is forbidden.

The purpose of Islamic education is Islam's propagation - to develop persons "who strive to live in surrender to God".⁸³ Islamic education at the time of the Prophet functioned mainly to disseminate the message. It developed into organised schools (*maktab*) with established curricula by the second century (A.H.). Knowledge (upon which Islam places a high value)⁸⁴

⁸¹Johns, 'Political Authority', pp.18-19.

⁸²Originally the word *sultan* was used in the Qur'an to mean authority. It later came to be used as the title of a man exercising authority. (Johns, 'Political Authority', p.23)

⁸³Khurram Murad, *Muslim Youth in the West: towards a new education strategy*, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1986), pp.4-5.

⁸⁴The Prophet himself is ordered to pray for an increased knowledge. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual*

became divided, though theoretically linked, between the religious (*ain*, or knowledge about God, worship, religious law and ethics) and worldly (*kifayah*) knowledge.⁸⁵ Islamic intellectual life developed and flourished in the first three centuries (A.H.) producing many original thinkers, scientists and scholars.⁸⁶ The increasing influence of mystical accretions resulted in a tightening of orthodoxy. Dogma arrived at by consensus (*ijma*) amongst the great jurists became fixed.⁸⁷ *Taklid* (the blind acceptance of authority in religion) replaced original thinking. Disputation (*jadal*) over detail replaced genuine intellectual endeavour, whilst passive learning by rote of already established knowledge defined the educational process.⁸⁸

It was Sultans and mystical Sufis who figured in the Persianised medieval Islamic world, which began to gradually influence Malaya.⁸⁹ The pace of assimilation was dominated by

Tradition, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p.134; He was active in spreading literacy. (M.A. Rauf, 'Islamic Education', *Intisari*, vol.II, no.1, p.14)

⁸⁵S. Ahmad, *Islam and politics in Malaya, 1969-1982: The dynamics of competing traditions*, Ph.D Thesis, Yale University, 1988, p.466

⁸⁶For Malay perspectives on the Islamic intellectual heritage: Tan Sri S.O.K. Ubaidulla, 'Rich Heritage of Islamic Civilisation', *NST*, (20.8.94), p.12; Syed Othman Alhabshi, 'Muslims Contributions to Knowledge suppressed by West', *NST*, (3.9.94), p.15.

⁸⁷Four legal schools developed differing over the method and rules of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence): Shafie, Maliki, Hanafi, Hanabali. According to Shafie the foundations of *fiqh* were: the Quran, the Prophet's Sunna (recorded in *hadith*), the consensus of the community (*ijma*), and any analogical reasoning (*qiyas*). Refer: M. Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp.151-158

⁸⁸Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & Modernity*, pp.37-38.

⁸⁹For an account of Islam's coming to Malaya (specifically Kedah) and the conceptual accommodations necessary for its assimilation refer: Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan, *From Saints to Bureaucrats: A Study of the Development of Islam in the State of Kedah, Malaysia*, Ph.D, Cornell University, 1985, pp.29-118.

the priorities of local rulers. In fact, the evidence suggests that early understanding and application of Islamic doctrine may have been superficial, or, rather, limited to *tassawuf* (mystical) aspects.⁹⁰ Sufis sought intimate relationship with the 'God within' by means of ascetic practices and arduous spiritual exercises - in a manner not unlike that of the Indic religious practitioners. Their doctrine of the "Perfect Man", a *bodhisattva*-like saintly figure, who has "fully realised his essential oneness with the Divine Being" and is able to guide others on the path he has taken, was of specific interest to Malay *Rajas*.⁹¹ Islam offered the possibility of gaining new magical powers, attracting taxable Muslim trade and an apparently complementary religious perspective.⁹² Islamic scholars were feted in the courts of their royal "patrons of learning", who acquired the appropriate Islamic titles and marriage alliances.⁹³

⁹⁰Milner relates that the Syariah was little applied, with the legal administration being in the hands of royal functionaries rather than *kadi* (Islamic judges) in the pre-colonial period. (Milner, 'Islam and Malay Kingship', pp.47-48)

⁹¹Milner, 'Islam and Malay Kingship', pp.54-56; The *Malay Annals* records Sultan Ahmad Shah atop his elephant studying "the unity of God" (*tauhid*) amidst a hail of Portuguese bullets; Sultan Mansur was interested in the mystical book *Durr Manzum*. (Brown, *Malay Annals*, pp.92,161-162)

⁹²Wolters suggests the political and economic reasons why the (third) ruler of Melaka accepted Islam. (Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya*, pp.158-176); Intrinsic tensions within Islamic doctrine regarding kingship, mystical practices, and management of the spirits, were later to become a focus of purification or movements from the eighteenth century onwards. (e.g. the Kaum Muda Reform movement early this century; and, the Revivalist movements of the late 1960s and 1970s) Such movements sought to purge Islam of its accretions and return to the Quran and Hadith as the basis of living.

⁹³Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya*, p.160,175; Both Sultans and their children were pupils of the great scholars. (Brown, *Malay Annals*, pp.146-147); Note Wolters' comment that only later when the Melaka kingdom was more thoroughly Islamised that schools were set up for their children and that rulers began to see themselves as part of a world-wide Islamic *ummah* (community). (p.175)

With Islam came the seeds of a more wide-spread literacy, though an oral learning culture remained strong.⁹⁴ Muslim teachers (either those from overseas or locals certified either by their *ijazah* (teacher-given certifications of achievement), having studied abroad, and/or completed the *haj*)⁹⁵ came to teach not only in royal halls but also in the local *Masjid* (mosque), *surau* (building in village used for congregational prayer)⁹⁶, *Madrasah* (Arabic-type school)⁹⁷ or *pondok* (communal school)⁹⁸ settings. Such teacher-centred, loosely-organised Islamic education was for centuries the only type of education available in Malaya.

Malay children would begin their formal education at the age of five or six. A local religious teacher would teach the Arabic alphabet, short prayers and Quran reading. Greater emphasis was given to correct pronunciation and tone than

⁹⁴Note that even today the reading of the Quran in Quran-reading competitions is a continuing form of entertainment.

⁹⁵Pilgrimages to Mecca or *haj* were one of the Five Pillars of the Faith (*Rukun Islam*). The others were: the confession of the faith, five daily prayers, fasting in the month of Ramadhan, and the giving of religious tithes (*zakat* and *fitrah*).

⁹⁶In pre-Islamic times a *surau* was a house of gods where offerings were made. They were transformed by Islam into a place for communal prayer. R.A.Kern, *MBRAS*, vol.XXIX, pt.1, cited in: M.A. Rauf, 'Islamic Education', *Intisari*, vol.II, no.1, p.19.

⁹⁷The first of this type was established in Baghdad in 1065 A.D. It was originally a communal school in which the teacher lived with his students. Such privately-sponsored schools were set up in Malaya initially by Islamic reformists or wealthy Arabs earlier this century. State Religious Affairs were also to set up such schools.

⁹⁸*Pondok* (literally 'hut') schools began in Malaya in the late nineteenth century. A group of *pondok* centred around the house of the *Tok* (or *Tuan*) *Guru* would provide simple accommodation for the students. Students were responsible for their own keep and might also help work the teacher's land. No fees were charged and students proceeded at their own pace. (R.L. Winzeler, 'Traditional Schools in Kelantan', *JMBRAS*, vol.48, pt.1, May 1975, pp.91-103)

comprehension.⁹⁹ Those with a 'thirst for knowledge' (and the financial means) would go on to the residential *pondok* schools, which offered a broader curriculum of religious studies, depending on the particular field of expertise of the *guru*.¹⁰⁰ Contact with the Middle East and Egypt increased in the late nineteenth century. Those studying at the famous al-Azhar university in Cairo and elsewhere came under the influence of reformist teaching. However, Sultans and their traditional religious establishments were to team up with British administrators to quench a nascent *Kaum Muda* movement, which was threatening royal religious authority.¹⁰¹

Europeans, when they first came to Malaya, were probably regarded by Sultans as no different from the other foreign traders. Sultans were to entertain both colonial officials and Christian missionaries in their courts in furtherance of their

⁹⁹For an insight into a child's experience of such Islamic education and upbringing refer Lat, *The Kampung Boy*, Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing Sdn. Bhd., 1994); Mat Noor bin Hashim, 'A Malay Child in a Religious School', *Intisari*, vol.II, no.1, pp.12-13.

¹⁰⁰The curriculum could include Quranic exegesis, hadith, jurisprudence, theology, ethics, Islamic history, and Arabic language and literature. Rote learning methods and teacher dictation were common pedagogical methods. Note, that religious teachers retained the Sanskrit title *guru* rather than adopting the Arabic title of *Mu'allim*. However, the Arabic word *murid*, or a 'novice' in Sufi terminology, came to mean a 'pupil' or 'student' in Malay.

¹⁰¹Reformers proposed that *ijtihad* (exercise of independent opinion) together with scholarly tradition could provide a basis of Islamic understanding based on the Quran and the Hadith. They called for Islam to be purged of its "accretions". The revivalists of the 1960s and 1970s called for a return to Islam as a way of life. This began to threaten some of the old Malay and *kerajaan* traditions. Note that it was the Sultans and traditional religionists of the Malay establishment, who teamed with colonial administrators to quench the *Kaum Muda* movement. Similarly, Sultans and a state-employed religious establishment today have teamed with the government to control religious "deviation".

intellectual inquiry.¹⁰² However, Sultan's were to come into a more unequal relationship with their colonial 'advisers'. Demographics began to dramatically change with a huge influx of immigrant workers. No doubt to shore up their interests, Malay rulers from the early days of colonial rule took a keen interest in educational matters "to equip their subjects to hold their own against the educated Indian and the vigorous intellect and energy of the Chinese".¹⁰³ As heads of Malay *adat* and religion, they assumed a formalised responsibility for management of religious affairs and education in their states.¹⁰⁴

The British were tolerant of "private" Islam and allowed religious schools to continue alongside "secular" vernacular schooling. Indeed afternoon Quran classes at the parents' expense were encouraged in government-run schools in order to improve morning class attendance. For Malays the Quran had always been central to education, and, as colonial-government-sponsored Malay vernacular education was in any case

¹⁰²Christian missionaries recognised that if they could influence the Sultans, then they could influence Malays in general. The Sultans, themselves, as the religious experts, for reasons of their own did invite individual missionaries to their court; for example, in 1821 Sultan Ahmad of Kedah held an audience with Thomas Beighton. In 1828, another London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary, W.H. Medhurst, was invited by the Sultan of Trengganu to discuss "the judgement day and the world to come". Refer: A.C. Milner, 'The Sultan and the Missionary', *Jebat*, 1979/80, pp.1-15.

¹⁰³*Annual Departmental Report, Straits Settlements, 1930*, pp.732-733. Cited in Awang Had Salleh, *Malay Secular Education and Teacher Training in British Malaya*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1979), p.8

¹⁰⁴As *kerajaan* rulers all such issues had already been under their purview. Islamic administration was to become more institutionalised under British rule. For further details refer: Moshe Yegar, *Islam and Islamic Institutions in British Malaya: Policies and Implementation*, (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1979).

designed not to lead to social or economic mobility, Malays were less than enthusiastic about colonial offers of 'free' primary education. In fact, *pondok* and *madrasah* schools sprang up apparently as a reaction to Western influence, but presumably also to meet unsatisfied Malay educational needs.

A number of Malay vernacular schools were begun due to the interest and support of Sultans.¹⁰⁵ Such schools fared much better in terms of attendance than those which were purely colonial government ventures.¹⁰⁶ Sultans maintained a vigorous involvement in education. The Sultan of Selangor was a founder and one of the original patrons of the Victoria Institution. He was said to be "the moving spirit for Malay education in the early years".¹⁰⁷ The Sultan of Johore put H.R. Cheeseman in charge of the discipline and organisation of Malay religious schools when he was Johore Superintendent of Education.¹⁰⁸ The five sultans of Pahang since 1882 have been described as "keenly interested in the intellectual development of their subjects".¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵Kelantan had its first Malay school in 1903 because "His Highness (was) anxious (to provide a) decent education for the people." (Annual Report, Kelantan, for the year Aug,1903-Aug,1904, p.31, Cited in Awang Had Salleh, *Malay Secular Education*, p.6)

¹⁰⁶The government-supported Malay school at Telok Belanga in Singapore was opened in 1856 as a result of the keen interest shown by His Highness the Sultan of Johore and was later reported to have better results than the other Malay school opened the same year at Kampung Gelam "owing to the interest taken in it by His Highness the ... Sultan of Johor" (Awang Had Salleh, *Malay Secular Education*, p.2-6)

¹⁰⁷Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, *Sejarah Perkembangan Sekolah-sekolah Negeri Selangor*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1975), p.35.

¹⁰⁸H.R. Cheeseman, 'Education in Malaya 1900-1941', *Malaysia in History: Journal of the Malaysian Historical Society*, vol.22, May 1979, p.126.

¹⁰⁹This article, already cited, seems preoccupied with projecting the Pahang sultan as "People-oriented", dedicated to "nurturing and

Sultans have, thus, during colonial times and since independence, seen themselves as central to the religious and cultural life of their states. They continue to sponsor education by donating land and facilities;¹¹⁰ to serve as university chancellors;¹¹¹ and they supervise matters related to Islamic religion (including Islamic education) through their State Religious Affairs Departments. A recent statement by an UMNO member would indicate that Malays may perceive their Sultans to play more than just a ceremonial role.

*Seorang raja adalah seorang imam. Seorang raja itu adalah seorang khalifah. Sebagai ketua agama, raja dan sultan akan ditanya di akhirat nanti tentang tanggungjawab mereka terhadap agama.*¹¹²

A raja is a head of the mosque. The raja is a successor of the Prophet. As the head of religion, the *raja* and sultan will be asked in the life to come about their responsibility for religion.

Sultans are, thus, expected to play an *ulama*-like role. There could be no *ulama* (religious scholar)-led *ummah* in Malaya, for the *ulama* were either a part of the Sultan's court or under his supervision. Sultans were the pre-eminent religious scholars.

spreading Islam in the state", and very desirous of better education for his people. A photograph shows Sultan Ahmad sitting at a desk (as a student) in the middle Sixth Form students attending to their lesson, which was in progress. (Refer *NST* Supplement, (14.10.87).

¹¹⁰For example, Sultan Hisamuddin Alam Shah Alhaj of Selangor (the father of the present Sultan) gave away his own palace to house the first Muslim College in Klang. Syed Othman Alhabshi, 'Institutions of learning as objects of Public Endowments', *NST*, (26.8.95), p.13; The Kolej Tuanku Jaafar - an up-market private school of English 'Eton' genre with a British headmaster - was established by the Negri Sembilan royal family, who continue to be involved in its running. Refer: S. Jayasankaran, 'Class Act: 'Eton of the East attracts well-heeled students', *FEER*, 13.7.95, p.30.

¹¹¹For example, the Sultan of Kedah is the Chancellor of *Universiti Utara Malaysia* (UUM). The Sultan of Pahang is the Constitutional Head of the International Islamic University (IIU). Sultan Azlan Shah is *Universiti Malaya* Chancellor. (*NST*, (23.7.95), p.6; The present king is the Chancellor of UKM.

¹¹²Mustafa Yaacob from Wilayah Persekutuan, cited in Chamil Wariya, *Politik dan Raja*, (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1992), pp.87-88.

Although Islam did not radically alter the Malay court structure, it did begin to stake its claim for a central position within Malayan pedagogy. It brought an emphasis on literacy and new knowledge classifications. More recently, inherited colonial educational practices have been undergoing a process of re-examination in the light of Islamic principles. An increased emphasis on morals and character formation reflect such a trend.¹¹³

Also, because it is presupposed that external, absolute truth exists and can be known through divine revelation recorded in sacred Scriptures, a text (the Quran) becomes the absolute referent. Debate will revolve over its interpretation, but quoting the text will support one's position. Reference to some authority rather than reasoned argument will win a debate. Reproduction of knowledge is the goal rather than questioning of that knowledge.¹¹⁴

Such pedagogic assumptions are consistent with the current text dependence in Malaysian schooling. State education authorities, through supervision of the textbook manufacture

¹¹³Refer for example: Mahathir (Chairman), *Report of the Cabinet Committee to Review the Implementation of Education Policy*, (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Education, 1985), pp.48-50; Note comments by Wasiullah Khan, Chancellor of the East-West University, Chicago, indicating that inculcation of character traits (he gives a list) is the "most significant imperative for educational reconstruction and development in the Muslim world". Wasiullah Khan, 'Massive Task of Reconstruction', *New Sunday Times Supplement* covering the International Islamic Conference, 11.10.87. p.17

¹¹⁴For further insights into differences in learning and pedagogical cultures refer to B. Ballard, & J. Clanchy, *Study Abroad: A Manual for Asian Students*, (Kuala Lumpur: Longman Malaysia Sdn. Berhad, 1984).

process, filter 'right' and 'useful' knowledge from that which is 'unhelpful'.¹¹⁵ This is in stark contrast to the notion individually-determined 'truth' that reflects the secular humanism, which has characterised a Western society now distant from its Bible-oriented, Christian roots.

3.4 The State, Colonial Administrators and Schools - the Western view

The proselytisers of Western thought, who came to Malaya, were to both institutionalise Sultanship and fundamentally undermine its political and intellectual authority. This was because Western thought placed the individual, rather than the Sultan, at the centre.

So-called Western thinking was derived from Classical Greek, Judeo-Christian and Renaissance (and some Muslims would add Islamic) roots.¹¹⁶ At the time of European imperialistic endeavour, the opposing Protestant Reformation and Enlightenment ideological streams were impacting British thought and culture.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵Note that within Islam there have been varying approaches to modern knowledge. Some would advocate its acceptance since early Islam cultivated developments in Science and technology which were to be later taken over by the West. Another approach is to limit knowledge acquisition to just "practical knowledge" and "useful skills" and thus not imbibe western intellectual frameworks. Thus, there is a tendency to screen and filter out 'secular' or 'useless' knowledge. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & Modernity*, pp.46-58,133-140; Refer also Dr Mahathir's comments: Mahathir, 'The Educational Dilemma', *The Challenge*, pp.17-43.

¹¹⁶For Dr Mahathir's views on the origins of Western learning refer: Mahathir, *The Challenge*, pp.22-25.

¹¹⁷Maier indicates that the Scottish Enlightenment (at it zenith in the last decades of the eighteenth century) had a big impact on the early Malayists (Low, Crawford), who he designated the "Merchant-Scientists". (Maier, *In the Center of Authority*, pp.33-50)

Deistic notions of God gradually gave way to a secular humanism in which the human individual was placed at the centre of his/her world. The universe was thought to be ordered according to a "Great Design" or universally-applicable Natural Law. This could be comprehended by human reason via scientific endeavour. If humankind could discover the workings of the universe in every discipline and sphere (including politics and education), and live in accordance therewith, then happiness and harmony would be assured. Located outside the scope of reason and the observable, the supernatural or supranormal was discarded in the dustbin of the superstitious and primitive.

Rather than being created *ex nihilo*, the universe was thought to have evolved naturally, with more complex life forms replacing the less complex. Humankind, a product of this process in a survival-of-the-fittest world, had climbed to its pre-eminent position on the evolutionary ladder. Races and societies were similarly in a process of evolutionary development. European colonialism's racial elitism, and also Hitler's Aryan race, and Marx's utopian communist state are examples of such thinking.¹¹⁸

The British, of course, in their experience of the antipodes found much to confirm their presumed high level of

¹¹⁸Elements of Social Darwinism are evident in Dr Mahathir's thinking. (Refer, Mahathir, *The Malay Dilemma*.) He seems to see races striving up a developmental ladder. He wants to toughen and 'condition' Malays by inculcation of selected values so that they can be strong in the battle for survival.

civilisational development. Their superior achievements in all fields of knowledge could benefit those less advanced. Commerce was to be the key to civilisation (and profits).¹¹⁹ By the time the British influence began to extend over the Malayan peninsula (following the Pangkor Treaty in 1874), Romanticist thought had imposed a racial hierarchy and order. In an idealised world everyone had their particular place. British "scientific" administration would preserve that order and protect it from destabilising elements. Colonial educational and administrative structures reflected such attitudes.

The British placed themselves at the top of a social 'pecking order'. They were the self-appointed arbiters of truth.¹²⁰ However, their knowledge forms were to radically differ from those, which were familiar in the Malay cultural world. Knowledge, for the Malays, was encoded in text-supported but predominantly oral/aural transmission forms. It was communicated face-to-face in real life settings and stored in human memories.¹²¹ Appropriate communicative settings were the courts of rulers and places of worship. 'British' knowledge, on the other hand, entailed literacy, printing, silent reading,

¹¹⁹According to Raffles: "Commerce is universally allowed to bring many benefits in its train, and in particular to be favourable for civilization and general improvement ... the intellectual powers are cultivated and expanded ... wealth and refinement become consistent with all that ennobles and exalts human nature." Cited in Maier, *In the Centre of Authority*, p.37.

¹²⁰Despite a worldwide lifting of colonial rule since World War Two, a Western monopoly on international management, scientific development and leadership of the academic world has continued. English remains a privileged language of scholarship, international dialogue, and cyberspace communication. Thus, both Malay and English feature as compulsory subjects of today's Malaysian educational curriculum.

¹²¹Maier, *In the Centre of Authority*, p.83.

reflection, and could be sought in one's own home. No longer was it necessary to have a knowledge-legitimizing/mediating royal 'presence'. It was, however, necessary to first learn how to read, and, thus, the 'state' stepped in to become the new intellectual and cultural transmission centre.

Educational developments in Colonial Malaya were to follow those in Britain. Nineteenth century British education was largely conservative, privately funded, and elitist - accessed by those who could afford it. England's industrial revolution (with its origins in the eighteenth century) had preceded mass education. It was assumed that working classes could learn all they needed to know on the job.¹²² It wasn't until the 1850s that it was decided that important posts in the British civil service would be filled by competitive examination rather than through "corrupt patronage".¹²³ Colonial administrators were the products of Britain's public schools and elite universities (Oxford and Cambridge) and, thus, had received a classics-based, literary education.¹²⁴ They were to perpetuate these educational models in Malaya. Secure government jobs were attainable through a humanities-based university education.

¹²²By the time the British were to give attention to Malay education (from the 1880s and onwards), the British had accepted that it was a government role to provide general education. However, it was seen as social welfare and a debit to public revenues.

¹²³That is, by virtue of 'connections' rather than by academic merit. D. Horne, *God is an Englishman*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1969), p.192.

¹²⁴Note, that medicine became a faculty at Oxford only in 1883 and it was not until 1919 that English universities sought State assistance in funding new science facilities. (K.G. Tregonning, 'Tertiary Education in Malaya: Policy and Practice 1905-1962', *JMBRAS*, vol.63, part 1, 1990, pp.1-2)

Colonialists also brought with them their faith in 'modernity', science, man's inherent goodness and rational ability to solve all the problems that stood in the way of progress and human happiness. However, the scientific method assumed that there was new truth that could be individually discovered. There were new knowledge frontiers to be explored not old knowledge forms to be mastered. Similarly, in education, childhood development, learning processes, pedagogic technique, etc., could be studied to discover pedagogic principles which would aid in maximising educational yields that investing states began to demand.

Not only did pedagogy become child-centred, but polity became people-oriented.¹²⁵ The people and not the Sultan were king. Areas of jurisdiction were defined and all citizens were required to live by 'the law' to ensure social harmony. Individual rights (rather than responsibilities, as Easterners would point out) and freedoms needed protection. A system of checks and balances was built in to governmental apparatus to limit overstepping of moral or jurisdictional boundaries by those in power. State authority and its apparatus was depersonalised and existed separate from the person of a ruler.

¹²⁵There were those who took a more interventionist approach to ensuring humankind's realisation of utopian ideals. They sought to impose egalitarian states via revolution and societal engineering. Though liberal democratic and Fabian socialist ideologies prevailed in Britain, those with more radical socialist views were nonetheless also represented, especially as students and lecturers on academic campuses. Educated Malaysians were thus exposed to a broad spectrum of Western thought. I suspect that the reason Malays were less than responsive to Communism was not only was it perceived as anti-Islam but Communism would have threatened the entire *kerajaan*-infused Malay cultural order.

This was the political form (i.e. democracy) imposed by Britain as a condition for independence. However, this had not been the political order of Malay experience. That had contained autocratic colonial governors and officers, and *kerajaan* rulers.¹²⁶

At the forefront of the quest to intercept and understand Western knowledge and to handle its political implications were the Malay Sultans.¹²⁷ However, the extent of Western influence varied from state to state. Sultans of the Unfederated Malay States, were able to take more initiative and be more selective in their borrowings.¹²⁸ With the memory of colonialism now fading, it should come as no surprise to see that much of Malaysia's Western veneer is little more than just that - a thin coating on an earlier substrate. Ironically, it was to be those who engaged most vigorously with its discourse (the Sultans), who were the ones whose position of intellectual and political authority Western influence most undermined.

¹²⁶Mahathir, *The Challenge*, pp.52-53.

¹²⁷For example: Sultan Ahmad Al-Muazzam Shah of Pahang (came to throne in 1882) is described as being "receptive to Western ideas of knowledge and education", and because of his "farsightedness ... sent his sons to the [elite, English-medium] Malay College for their education". (Ahmad Kamal Dahalan, 'Pahang Sultan's keen interest in education', *NST Supplement*, (14.10.87), p.8)

¹²⁸Maier, *In the Centre of Authority*, pp.103-105; The Sultans of Kedah and Johore took a vigorous interest in British ways. Both were to make a trip to England and make a first-hand study. Both tried to institute institutional reforms based on British practice in their states. The Sultan of Kedah surrounded himself with European advisers. According to one 1900 observer: "It is interesting to see how a purely Malay government without European interference has endeavoured to model the administration on colonial lines even to the appointment if an Auditor-General." (Kynnersley, cited in Maier, *In the Centre of Authority*, p.105)

4.0 THE STATE AS PRIEST AND PEDAGOGUE

Western influence was to see nationalist leaders take control of a state apparatus, which had been separated from the influence of the Sultans. Not only have nationalist leaders effectively usurped the Sultans' political role, but they now also represent a state with claims to intellectual and spiritual custodianship. The political realities of Malaysia's plural society have determined that educational and religious issues receive a high priority on leaders' agendas.

4.1 The Influence of Politics on Education

4.1.1 Colonialism's Legacies

Colonialism was to leave a largely under-funded and compartmentalised education system in a plural social landscape. It was an education system imprinted with the stamp of British educational forms and practices. Such a legacy was to present an enormous challenge to the leaders and social planners of independent Malaysia.

Colonial powers had come to the region largely as merchants seeking resources, and, in time, markets for their industrial machines. It was in order to secure this trade, that they became involved politically. Subsequent colonial bureaucracies were interested in maintaining order for minimum costs. Thus, little initial attention was given to educational issues. In fact, there was concern that too much education would have

disruptive social consequences.¹ Public expenditure seldom exceeded 1.5% of total revenues from 1902 to 1941.² This was to leave a legacy of general illiteracy and an under-funded and under-resourced educational system.

Difficulties were to be compounded by the changes the British brought to the social landscape and their entrenchment of racial, class, occupational, regional and rural/urban divisions through education. Large numbers of people from the Indian sub-continent and from China were permitted to flow into the Malayan peninsula, particularly in the nineteenth century, in order to serve as labourers on the rubber plantations and in tin mining operations. The Chinese 'immigrants' were left largely to their own devices, when it came to providing an education for their children.³ Thus, a privately-resourced Chinese vernacular educational stream developed.

The British felt a greater affinity and responsibility for Malays and their education. Meanwhile estate management needed to ensure a stable (Indian) workforce. Thus, "Malay aristocrats, Malay peasants, and Indian estate labourers ... received the kinds of education that would fit them to play the roles

¹For insight into British attitudes refer to Frank Swettenham's comments in his Report as Resident of Perak in 1890 and comments in 1895 by the Perak State Inspector of Schools cited in: Kua Kia Soong, *The Chinese Schools of Malaysia: A Protean Saga*, (Kuala Lumpur: United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia, 1985), pp.23-24.

²M. Rudner, *Malaysian Development: A Retrospective*, (Ottawa: Carleton Uni Press, 1994), pp.293-294.

³Initially numbers of children were small because of the predominance of males in the Chinese population. Most intended to make their 'fortunes' and return home to families in China. It was only in the twentieth century, after larger numbers of women were allowed to migrate from China, that the community took on a more settled nature.

assigned to them in the colonial scheme of things".⁴ The Malay elite received special consideration with their children being groomed to take up positions in the colonial bureaucracy. Meanwhile, Malay religious educational forms continued on seemingly little affected by the British presence.

It was only in the English educational stream (sponsored initially mostly by private Christian missionary organisations) that there was the possibility for racial mixing. (Malays were conspicuously few in this stream.)⁵ Gradually, the colonial government took an increasing interest in influencing the independent English and Chinese educational streams.⁶ It did so through a grants-in-aid arrangement giving financial assistance on the basis of compliance to certain prescribed conditions.

This conservative, piecemeal approach to education served to 'freeze' social divisions. Such diversity suited the British divide-and-rule approach to colonial management. However,

⁴D.R. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development in Malaysia*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.237. The FMS government held that the aim of Malay education was "... to improve the bulk of the people and to make the son of the fisherman or peasant a more intelligent fisherman or peasant than his father had been, and a man whose education will enable him to understand how his own lot in life fitted in with the scheme of life around him." (Sir George Maxwell, *Annual Report, F.M.S., 1920*.- Cited in P. Loh Fook Seng, *Seeds of Separatism: educational policy in Malaya 1974-1940*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.29)

⁵Malay enrolment in the English stream did begin to show an increase in the 1920 and 1930s. For FMS enrolment statistics of Malays in English schools refer: P. Loh Fook Seng, *Seeds of Separatism*, p.82. In 1919, 8.9% of total English school enrolment was Malay. It peaked at 17.2% in 1928 and dropped back to 14.9% in 1937.

⁶In the Chinese case, this was stimulated by a continuing mainland Chinese government interest in the education of 'overseas' Chinese. Chinese Nationalist and then Communist political ideologies were being propagated through Chinese schools in the region.

once the umpires departed the players were left with a vexed and volatile situation, which has preoccupied the attention of political leadership to this day.

In independent Malaya, education was to be the major instrument used by the government to build national unity.⁷ According to Tunku Abdul Rahman the nation with its racial pluralism was a "keg of gun-powder" which any "enemy of the Government" could set alight and blow to "smithereens". He elucidates:

...education means so much to a nation like Malaysia. ... Unless it can keep ... pace with progress, no nation will enjoy peace. ... Education, at whatever level, can make or unmake a man; in the same way it can make or unmake a nation. Our leaders are well aware of it.⁸

Leaders sought to use education to bridge the racial diversity so as to form in the next generation a citizenry with a new national identity and with new values and attachments.⁹ However, this was not to be a straightforward task. Even today there remain several educational streams at the primary level, each with its own language as the medium of instruction (Malay, Chinese, or Tamil). A standardised national curriculum,

⁷The Tunku described education policy as "one of the pillars which support our national unity". (Tunku Abdul Rahman, *As a Matter of Interest*, (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Asia, 1981), p.83 ('The Merdeka University Issue', 4.12.78))

⁸Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Viewpoints*, (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd, 1978), pp.193,196 ('The Case for English and Malay').

⁹The 'Razak' Report sought to "orientate all schools ... to a Malayan outlook". (*Report of the Education Committee 1956*, (Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1956), p.17.); Refer also comments in the: Malaysian Government, *Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975*, (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1971), pp.1,3: "greater emphasis must be placed on social integration ... [this involves] the formulation of educational policies designed to encourage common values and loyalties among all communities and in all regions".

however, has been put in place. All Malaysians must now study the Bahasa Malaysia and English language subjects throughout their education, though Malay is now the instructional medium for all post-primary government education.

An independent Chinese secondary stream (Mandarin medium) has been marginalised through government refusal to recognise its examination system and qualifications.¹⁰ Students have had to seek tertiary education abroad, even though such qualifications may not be recognised locally.

The Chinese, Indian and Malay communities have seen the continuation of educational opportunities in their own language as a means of protecting their culture and interests *vis-à-vis* the other communities. The politically-dominant Malays, though, have had the upper hand.

Besieged and threatened by the numerical, economic and educational dominance of 'immigrant' races, Malays have seen themselves as having right to political and cultural sway by virtue of their prior 'ownership'. They were the *bumiputra* (sons of the soil), whilst latecomers were 'immigrants'. Malay "special rights" were entrenched in the constitution and in other institutional arrangements. Islam became the state religion, though others were allowed to freely practice (but not proselytise) their own religions. *Bahasa Malaysia* became the *Bahasa Kebangsaan* (National Language).

¹⁰The United Examination Certificate of the Independent Chinese Secondary Schools has not been recognised by the government.