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British Travellers' Perspective on the People of the Malay Peninsula in the 19th Century

Perspektif Pengembara British terhadap Penduduk Semenanjung Tanah Melayu pada Abad Ke-19

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ABSTRACT

Travelogues are narratives that describe events, people, and knowledge in the places visited by the traveller, while also reflecting the traveller's imagination. Travellers often explore topics outside their comfort zone, such as lifestyle, human relationships, and management styles. Although travelogues were not initially regarded as historical sources, they were later recognised as such. Historians are increasingly interested in travelogues due to the absence of witnesses from the time period mentioned in the narrative, and the significant changes to the architectural and political structure of the region over time. Travelogues can provide a more colourful and subjective perspective on historical studies, augmenting official archive sources with personal accounts. In addition, in these texts, we may encounter different interpretations of events that are not mentioned or deemed unnecessary in official documents. This article will explore travellers' perspectives of the people of the Malay Peninsula/States in the 19th century with reference to a few renowned British travellers like Isabella Bird, Emily Innes, and Florence Caddy. The perspective that will be explored would be on historical episodes of the time, which is not known in the historical writing of Malaya. The episodes will be highlighted to see how the travellers define the people of Malaya as visitors, what prejudices are contained in their definitions, and how it could contribute to new information on the history of Malaya, is it just based on observation per se or on primary sources accessible at the time? By studying the episodes and the texts, this article would be able to prove that travellers' writing contributes to enriching Malaysian historical knowledge and is not merely propaganda writing.

Keywords: Travellers; Malay States; Malay, Chinese, and Indian

ABSTRAK

Travelog ialah naratif yang menerangkan peristiwa, masyarakat dan pengetahuan di tempat yang dilawati oleh pengembara, di samping mencerminkan imaginasi pengembara. Pengembara sering meneroka topik di luar zon selesa mereka, seperti gaya hidup, hubungan manusia dan gaya pengurusan. Walaupun travelog pada awalnya tidak dianggap sebagai sumber sejarah, tetapi kemudiannya telah diiktiraf sebagai sedemikian. Ahli sejarah semakin berminat dengan travelog kerana ketiadaan saksi dalam tempoh masa yang dinyatakan dalam naratif dan perubahan ketara kepada rupa bentuk serta struktur politik rantau daripada semasa ke semasa. Travelog boleh memberikan perspektif yang lebih berwarna dan subjektif tentang kajian sejarah, menambah sumber arkib rasmi dengan pandangan peribadi. Di samping itu, dalam makalah ini, kita mungkin menghadapi tafsiran berbeza tentang peristiwa yang tidak disebut atau dianggap tidak perlu dalam dokumen rasmi. Artikel ini akan meneroka perspektif pengembara tentang penduduk Semenanjung Tanah Melayu pada abad ke-19 dengan merujuk kepada beberapa pengembara British yang terkenal seperti Isabella Bird, Emily Innes dan Florence Caddy. Perspektif yang akan diterokai adalah mengenai episod sejarah pada masa itu, yang tidak diketahui dalam penulisan sejarah Tanah Melayu. Episod-episod tersebut akan diketengahkan untuk melihat bagaimana pengembara mendefinisikan penduduk Tanah Melayu sebagai pelawat, apakah prasangka yang terkandung dalam definisi mereka dan bagaimana ia boleh menyumbang kepada maklumat baharu tentang sejarah Tanah Melayu dan adakah ia hanya berdasarkan pemerhatian semata-mata atau sumber utama yang boleh diakses pada masa itu? Dengan mengkaji episod dan teks, artikel ini dapat membuktikan bahawa penulisan pengembara menyumbang kepada memperkaya pengetahuan sejarah Malaysia dan bukan sekadar penulisan propaganda.

Kata kunci: Pengembara; Negeri-negeri Melayu; Melayu, Cina dan India

INTRODUCTION: TRAVEL WRITING AND 19TH-CENTURY TRAVELS IN MALAYA

People learn about places in various ways, among which travel is an essential one. Because travelling also means exploring, embarking on an adventure, connecting with local people, learning, and communicating by living. Besides travelling, one of the significant interests of travellers is to write travel notes. At certain times, travel writing was considered more of a coffee table book style rather than a unique form of literature. Over the past decades, however, there has been a growing academic interest in travel writing, both as a literary form and a valuable historical source (Mohanty 2003).

In fact, the desire to travel around the world has been based on the human urge to explore and wonder since the time history began to be recorded. Research and investigation aim to either observe the realities of life consistently or discover solutions to questions in the traveller's personal world. However, man's profound idealism and endless questioning make him an insatiable traveller searching for new experiences. Paul Fussell's categorisation of explorer, traveller, and tourist in his book *Abroad: British Literary Traveling in Wars* is an intriguing distinction in this context. "… All three make journeys, but the explorer seeks the undiscovered, the traveller, that which has been discovered by the mind working in history, the tourist that which has been discovered by entrepreneurship and prepared for him by the arts of mass publicity" (Fussell 1980: 39).

Some well-known early travel account texts were written by Marco Polo, Friar Odoric, and Ibn Battuta. These narratives are written for the specific purpose of conveying useful detailed information to the readers. For instance, Ibn Battuta's travelogue is a rich source of historical and anthropological information about the Sumatra region. It covers various aspects such as customs, appearances, eating habits, and social rituals of the local people (Göksoy 2002). These texts were created with a specific purpose in mind. It's important to acknowledge that a traveller's perspective of the lands and people they visit is subjective and tailored to their individual experience. Thus, the traveller serves as a translator who reads signs during their journey and translates them for their readers by their objective.

By the 16th century, Europeans expedited the creation of maps and scientific instruments to aid in long-distance travel. Travelling became a common experience in the West in the second half of the 18th century when the middle classes started participating. It became popular to send young men (and later women) on tours to Europe or America. Naturally, these journeys were not confined to the West and soon extended to the East. During the early 19th century, the rise of mighty empires in various regions of the world resulted in significant growth in travel. The rise of England as a major global economic and political power, the British domination in India, and the increased use of steamships and railways led to a surge in the number of British travellers heading towards the East for travel (Bassnett 2003). Thus, recent academic studies have categorised travel writings as a colonial ideological tool used by empires. This analysis is mainly inspired by the work of Edward W. Said, particularly his influential and disputed book, *Orientalism*. According to Said, experts and travellers from Western countries deliberately and unfairly portrayed Eastern people and societies by labelling them as backward, exotic, effeminate, irrational, and stuck in tradition. He continued that Western experts represented Eastern peoples and societies as inferior and backward to distance themselves from them and present themselves as rational, dynamic, masculine, and modern. This characterisation, according to Said, was not based on factual observation but rather a rhetorical colonial strategy. While Said's *Orientalism* centred on the inaccurate depictions of Eastern cultures, the book also presented new insights into how Western travel accounts portrayed African, Asian, American, and Oceanic regions (Said 1995).

Mary Louise Pratt is another scholar who analyses travel texts as a source to understand imperialism. Pratt formulates the concept of 'contact zones' in her famous book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation.* Pratt defines the 'contact zone' as the place where individuals from different geographic and historical backgrounds come together to form ongoing relationships during colonial encounters (Pratt 2008). According to Bernard Cohen, Europeans in these contact zones developed a set of images and categorizations that shaped what they deemed important. Images and representations that are often considered aesthetically pleasing, romantic, exotic, and picturesque include architecture, costumes, cuisine, ritual performances, historical sites, and even depictions of bare-breasted women commonly found in travelogues written by European explorers (Cohn 1996).

Scholars like Said, Pratt, and Cohen have successfully shown how travel accounts are connected to imperial projects. Some critics argue that by doing this, they have simplified travel writing to propaganda as a tool of imperialism. Considering this critique, Mary W. Helms, an anthropologist, presents a distinct perspective in her book *Ulysses' Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance*. She acknowledges the relationship between travel, travel writing, and imperialism but contextualises European travel narratives within a broader global and thematic framework. According to Helms, when people travel to foreign countries and gain knowledge from those places, it can greatly impact their own society, both culturally and politically. Although travel experiences and reports were often used to serve imperialist agendas, they also had the potential to elevate the social status and influence of travellers within their own societies (Helms 1988). For instance, Isabella Bird became the first female member of the Royal Geographical Society in 1892. Therefore, travel is not just a tool for imperialism; travel accounts are not solely meant for imperialist propaganda.

In the 19th century, from the 1850s onwards, there was a notable increase in European exploration and travel across Southeast Asia. This surge opened up even the most remote regions for commercial and administrative purposes. The study of Southeast Asian travel and travel writing in history has been affected by a Eurocentric bias. This was undoubtedly the same case for Malaya, where travel writing was more or less dominated by European travellers. Despite the significance of travel accounts as historical sources, Malaysian historians have surprisingly paid little attention to the analysis of travel writing. Historians have conducted valuable research on both travellers' biographies and the growing scholarship on travellers' anthologies.[1] However, few studies examine travel accounts in a broader sense, including their impact on history, their reflection on the period, and the issues of bias they present as historical sources. This article will explore how travellers view historical events in Malaya and their impact on Malaysian history, particularly regarding socio-cultural aspects. To get a clear picture of those historical events through the perspective of Europeans who travelled to Malaya, we select three accounts of European travellers. They are three British women named Isabella Bird, Emily Innes, and Florence Caddy.

ISABELLA BIRD, THE GOLDEN CHERSONESE AND THE WAY THITHER

Isabella Bird was a well-known female travel writer during the Victorian era. She travelled extensively and wrote captivating travelogues about her adventures in various parts of the world. While on a trip to Japan, she had the chance to visit Malaya. As she mentioned, this voyage could be her escape from "civilisation". On her way to Malaya, she made stops in Hong Kong, Canton, and Saigon. Isabella's expedition to Malaya covered not only the British-administered Straits Settlements of the Peninsula but also the interior areas, broadly called *terra incognita* to Europeans. During her five weeks voyage (January 19 - February 25, 1879), she visited and explored several places, including Singapore, Malacca, Sungai Ujong, Klang (Selangor), Penang, Taiping, and Kuala Kangsar (Perak).

After returning to Edinburgh, she wrote her travel book that included an introduction, twenty-three letters, and three sections detailing Sungai Ujong, Selangor, and Perak. In 1883, she published her fifth book titled *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*. The first part of the title, the 'Golden Chersonese' part, as suggested by her sister Henrietta, refers to the geographical region that includes Malaya. On the other hand, 'The Way Thither' refers to stops in Hong Kong and Saigon on Isabella's journey from Japan to Singapore, covering the first six letters in the book. As Isabella explains in her introduction, the text remains unchanged except for a few factual corrections and some omissions. The main modifications were made to the letters containing her visit details to Sungei Ujong and Selangor. It seems that she may have engaged in self-censorship regarding Selangor Resident Bloomfield Douglas and specific passages that could potentially cause issues if published (Gullick 1995). The primary organising principle of the Golden Chersonese was based on the principle of "travelling with the traveller". As Isabella explains in her preface, "My first goal in writing to my sister was accuracy, and my next goal was to get her to see what I saw" (Bird 1883, viii). Her decision to write her letters to her sister instead of a wider audience enables her to express her thoughts and assumptions more openly and candidly. Isabella's ability to obtain information from British residents such as Clementi Smith made her narratives richer and more credible. Besides these oral sources, Isabella referred to standard works on the region by Crawfurd and

Newbold, McNair's *Perak and the Malays* (McNair 1878), and William Edward Maxwell's articles in the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asian Society* (Maxwell 1882). She also used official reports, such as the 1881 census report (Straits Settlements Government Gazette 1881) and the Straits Settlements Blue Books (Straits Settlements Blue Book 1882).

MALAYAN PEOPLE IN THE GOLDEN CHERSONESE

Victor Savage clarified the perspective of travellers in his *Western Impressions of Nature and Landscape in Southeast Asia*,

> One of the dominant themes in Western perceptions of Southeast Asia is the aesthetic appraisal of tropical nature, landscape, and scenery. From their travels and residence in the tropics, Westerners have left a massive record of their aesthetic appreciation. They described nature and landscapes not only in an objective and scientific manner but endowed nature with anthropomorphic feeling, cultural taste, and personal expression. Their aesthetic accounts were very comprehensive and exhaustive, including as they did the sounds, smells and tastes they encountered (Savage 1984: 188).

The writing style of *The Golden Chersonese* supports Savage's perspective. In the Introduction, Isabella first maps the landscape, climate, flora, and fauna of Malaya with her 'exotic' assumptions, then gives a detailed account of the local people. She states, "Nature is so imposing, so magnificent and so prolific on the Malay Peninsula, that one naturally gives man the secondary place which I have assigned to him in this chapter" (Bird 1883: 26-27).

As Isabella conveys her observations about the Malaya people, the contradictions in different parts of her text are noticeable. For instance, when she initially mentioned the physical appearance of Malays using the following statements:

> They [Malays] are dark brown, with rather low foreheads, dark and somewhat expressionless eyes, high cheekbones, flattish noses with broad nostrils, and wide mouths with thick lips. Their hair is black, straight, and shining, and the women dress it in a plain knot at the back of the head. To my thinking both sexes are decidedly ugly, and there is a coldness and aloofness of manner about them which chills one even where they are on friendly terms with Europeans, as the people whom we visited were with Mrs. Biggs (Bird 1883: 138).

The text on the following pages contains this statement: "The Datu Bandar's brother and uncle came in, the first a very handsome Hadji, with a bright, intelligent countenance. … These men looked superb in their red dresses and turbans, although the Malays are anything but a handsome race. Their hospitality was very graceful" (Bird 1883: 203). Any historian who uses *The Golden Chersonese* as a source for a study on the Malays should note the contradictions in the text.

Isabella's description of Malay believers reveals her prejudices, as evidenced by her choice of words. "… it is as a vast and malarious equatorial jungle sparsely peopled by a race of semi-civilised and treacherous Mohammedans." (Bird 1883: 1) or "The Malays are bigoted, and for the most part ignorant and fanatical Mohammedans…" (Bird 1883: 140) Isabella's father was an Anglican clergyman, and she had relatives who were missionaries in India and Persia. During her upbringing, she was deeply influenced by the evangelical, missionary, and philanthropic segments of the Anglican Church. Her prejudiced approach towards Muslims seems to have been affected by her background.

The Chinese are another ethnic group that Isabella observed on the Peninsula. Isabella stated that the Chinese experienced a significant boost in their wealth during the time of British rule. During the tour route from Malacca to Penang, she provides fascinating insights into the cultural activities of the Chinese community, their significant contributions to the region's economy, their involvement in various industries, as well as their unique lifestyles and living conditions. Isabella emphasises the density of the Chinese population in Malacca:

> And now I must diverge the singular fact that Malacca is to most intents and purposes a Chinese city. … Of the population of the town the majority are said to be Chinese, and still their crowded junks are rolling down on the north-east monsoon. As I remarked before, the coasting trade of the Straits of Malacca is in their hands, and to such an extent they have absorbed the trade of this colony, that I am told there is not a resident British merchant in Malacca. And it is not, as elsewhere, that they come, make money, and then return to settle in China, but they come here with their wives and families, buy or build these handsome houses, as well as large bungalows in the neighbouring coco-groves, own most of the plantations up the country, and have obtained the finest site on the hill behind the town for their stately tombs. Every afternoon their carriages roll out into the country, conveying them to their substantial bungalows to smoke and gamble. They have fabulous riches in diamonds, pearls, sapphires, rubies, and emeralds (Bird 1883: 132-133).

Isabella admires the hardworking nature of the Chinese people, "You will be almost tired of the Chinese, but the more I see of them the more I am impressed by them. These States, as well as Malacca, would be jungles with a few rice clearings among them were it not for their energy and industry" (Bird 1883: 220). It must be noted that Isabella did not

consistently demonstrate a positive attitude towards the Chinese community. For instance, "Along with their industrial habits and their character for fair trading, the Chinese have brought to Malacca gambling and opium-smoking. One-seventh of the whole quantity of opium exported from India to China is intercepted and consumed in the Straits Settlements, and the Malacca Government makes a large revenue from it" (Bird 1883: 133-134). Isabella's criticism of the Chinese using opium is intriguing, but she remained silent about the British government's involvement in trading opium and profiting from it through taxes.

Isabella provides information on Malay-Chinese relations but focuses primarily on highlighting their differences. The information she provides, without citing the source, is interesting, "In 1828, the number of Chinese working the mines here [Sungei Ujong] was one thousand, and in the same year, they were massacred by the Malays. They now number ten thousand and under British protection have nothing to fear" (Bird 1883: 188).

Based on Isabella's population data for various states, it is evident that the Indian population density in the region is low compared to other ethnic groups. Due to certain constraints, *The Golden Chersonese* contains limited information regarding Indians. Isabella cites the Indians as three distinct groups: Klings, Tamils and Sikhs. She openly admires Kling's appearance and provides a detailed description of both the man and the woman:

> The Klings make splendid boatmen, they drive gharries, run as syces, lend small sums of money at usurious interest, sell fruit, keep small shops, carry " chit books," and make themselves as generally useful as their mediocre abilities allow. They are said to be a harmless people so far as deeds go. They neither fight, organise, nor get into police rows, but they quarrel loudly and vociferously, and their vocabulary of abuse is said to be inexhaustible. The Kling men are very fine-looking, lithe and active, and, as they clothe but little, their forms are seen to great advantage. The women are, I think, beautiful— not so much in face as in form and carriage. I am never weary of watching and admiring their inimitable grace of movement. Their faces are oval, their foreheads low, their eyes dark and liquid, their noses shapely, but disfigured by the universal adoption of jewelled noserings; their lips full, but not thick or coarse…" (Bird 1883: 116).

Furthermore, when discussing Sikhs, she stresses that they are frequently involved in the armed force. "… There are four hundred and fifty of them, recruited in India from among the Sikhs and Pathans, and many of them have seen service under our flag. They are to all intents and purposes soldiers, drilled and disciplined as such, though called "Armed Police," and are commanded by Major Swinburne of the 80th Regiment (Bird 1883: 287).

EMILY INNES, THE CHERSONESE WITH THE GILDING OFF

Emily Innes spent seven years living in South-East Asia, with over a year spent in Sarawak and nearly six years in the Protected Malay States. In 1875, she joined her husband, James Innes, in Sarawak, where he was employed by Charles Brooke, the second Raja of Sarawak. However, Brooke had to dismiss James Innes due to Sarawak's financial issues. The Innes family moved to Singapore, and her husband was able to secure a job as a Collector and Magistrate under Sir William Jervois, the Governor of the Straits Settlements. At the end of his time as a colonial official, James worked as a revenue collector and magistrate in Bandar Langat, Selangor. However, he resigned in 1882 due to strained relationships with his superiors (Gullick 1982).

Doris Jedamski's research paper on *Images, Self-Images and the Perception of the Other: Women Travellers in the Malay Archipelago* provides a helpful classification of female travellers to the region, specifically identifying a group of "accompanying women." This group is defined by their mode of travel rather than their purpose of travel, with Emily Innes being cited as an early example of an accompanying woman due to her travels with her husband (Jedamski 1995). As an accompanying traveller's book, *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off*, aimed to portray colonial Malaya without embellishments. John Gullick noted that Innes' book primarily centres on her husband's employment struggles and their difficulties in Malaya (Gullick 1995). These issues were believed to have affected her perception of the region and coloured her experiences there. Yet the two-volume work goes beyond the Innes's dissatisfaction with the government and their complex relationship with higher-position colonial administrators. Thus, in the introduction to the 1974 Oxford reprint of her book, Khoo Kay Kim proposed the following idea:

> "…Needless to say, Mrs Innes was envious of those who occupied positions higher than that held by her husband. Nevertheless, it would be unjust merely to dismiss her as a high-strung, neurotic, frustrated woman whose real disappointment was with her husband rather than the Colonial Service. One is apt to obtain a very strong impression from reading her

book that she wrote frankly and recorded what she saw with considerable accuracy. It is her interpretation of what she saw that might have been unduly subjective and biased…" (Khoo Kay Kim 1993: vii).

Emily's book offers valuable insight and primary source information for historians, particularly in her detailed account of the social and political history of the Protected Malay States over the six years between 1876 and 1882. Emily divided her six years in Malaya into three distinct periods. The first two years were spent in Kuala Langat, which was initially uncomfortable. However, both husband and wife overcame their problems, including food, dangerous tigers, inconsiderate visitors (both European and Malay), heat, and discomfort. During the second half of this period, they moved into a new house they had built on the side of Jugra Hill. In mid-1878, the government decided to post James Innes as the Superintendent of Lower Perak at Durian Sabatang, Perak. This decision was made at the end of the first period. As a result, they found themselves living in a humble bungalow on the mud flats near a river. She displayed remarkable composure while living at Durian Sabatang, surrounded by dangerous individuals convicted of murder and other crimes. Over time, she became accustomed to the presence of prowling tigers around the open-plan house and even slept through their growls and moans. Meanwhile, Emily became ill and was offered a place to stay with the Lloyds in Pangkor. There she was involved in the so-called 'Pangkor tragedy' and witnessed the murder. Moreover, she was herself a victim of the attack (Innes 1885). The third and final period of James's posting to Kuala Langat began in 1880. They returned to their splendid house at the Jugra Hill, but Emily was ill and unhappy. James was disappointed to be passed over for promotion and had already considered leaving for Australia. To make matters worse, the Innes family had conflicts with the Resident, other officials, and their families in Selangor, both personally and professionally. Ultimately, this feud caused Innes to resign from the Selangor service (Innes 1885).

Emily's detailed description of the Innes family's relationships with the people around them and the living conditions in the region requires a more profound examination as it gives different perspectives both in terms of the social and political history of the Malay Peninsula.

MALAYAN PEOPLE IN THE CHERSONESE WITH GILDING OFF

Emily Innes and Isabella Bird were contemporaries but never met in Malaya. However, Bird met Emily's husband, James Innes, a Collector of Revenue and Magistrate in Kuala Langat, Selangor. Emily Innes wrote *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off* two years after Bird's *The Golden Chersonese*. Innes's book is a more pessimistic response to the Malay world than Bird's optimistic travel narrative. After considering Isabella Bird with her five-week trip, Innes's experiences prompted her to write in response to Bird's book. However, she did not intend to contradict Bird's descriptions of life and nature in Malaysia. Innes recognises the accuracy of Bird's explanations, even though Bird's illustrations are vibrant while Innes's are more subdued. Innes acknowledges this by stating: "… notwithstanding the brilliancy and attractiveness of her descriptions, and the dullness and gloom of mine, I can honestly say that her account is perfectly and literally true. So is mine. The explanation is that she and I saw the Malayan country under totally different circumstances" (Innes 1885: V2:242).

Innes points out that Isabella's circumstances were different from her own. Isabella was on an almost official visit to Malaya, accompanied by British administrators eager to accommodate her itinerary. As a respected female travel writer, the officials knew that her writings could impact their professional careers. Therefore, she was on a grand tour of British colonial territory with the support and protection of British government power. In contrast, Innes was the unnoticed wife of a minor colonial official who had to work hard to create a comfortable life in a culture she found inferior and alien.

The text by Innes, similar to Isabella's, portrays a sense of mixed feelings when describing the people of Malaya. Specific passages exhibit signs of biases and reflect a colonialist prejudice at its most extreme. "A Malay is by nature the laziest being on the face of the earth. He would like to lie under a banana tree all his life and let the fruit drop into his mouth" (Innes 1885: V1:187). Yet, she sometimes tries to emphasise the honourable traits of the Malay character. "… It seems to be the general impression in England that the Malay nature is 'treacherous, bloodthirsty, and cruel;' but I am so far from having

found it so ...” (Innes 1885: V1:41). The text presents conflicting portrayals of the local people, sometimes being racist with some of her assumptions of laziness and other times being empathetic and positive.

Isabella’s and Innes’s narratives differ in the extent to which they focus on portraying Malay women. Bird only wrote a little about her impression of Malay women, likely due to the short duration of her stay and the fact that she mainly interacted with men. Innes provides more detailed accounts of Malay women and their conditions, thanks to her experience as the wife of a British official, which allowed her to meet Malay women of all classes. Innes judged the dress and appearance of Malay women based on Western standards of taste and beauty and was highly critical of it.

> The women with their numerous draperies look, when fully dressed, like shapeless bundles of clothes. Very few of them have the smallest pretension to good looks ... As a rule their noses were flat and broad, with distended nostrils, their mouths wide and thick lipped, their teeth filed to a point and blackened; while a horrible crimson stream oozing slowly out of the mouth, and a huge lump bulging out one cheek, betrayed that the fair owner was chewing betel-nut (Innes 1885: V1:110).

As Innes is burdened with cultural bias, it is unsurprising that her stories about Malay women are abundant with instances of mistreatment and biased opinions. The single exception to Innes’ disdain for local women’s groups was Klings in the Malay Peninsula. Changes in tone characterise Innes’s writing about the Kling women:

> Klings, both men and women, are especially remarkable for the good taste with which they dress themselves. The art of draping fine muslin round their persons so as to set their figures off to the best advantage is studied by them till absolute perfection of grace is attained. I do not hesitate to confess that a well-dressed and handsome Kling woman, even though she might be only a coolie’s or washerman’s wife, was a far more beautiful sight in my eyes than the most fashionably dressed European lady of Singapore, whoever she might be, with her whalebone and steel, her kilted plaitings and angular frills, her pinched-in waist and distended skirts (Innes 1885: V2:21-22).

The travelogue exposes Emily Innes’ dismissive attitude and lack of knowledge about the people. There are numerous instances where she either showed ignorance or intentionally deceived others about the Malays. Below are some examples of specific passages mentioned in her text: “A Chinaman or a Malay always laughs when he tells you any bad news, or when any untoward accident happens. A servant smiles when he tells you that his mother or father is dead…” (Innes 1885: V1:62) or “… their prophet’s verdict that women have no souls” (Innes 1885: V1:82) or “The unpunctuality of Malays is, I believe, partly the fault of their religion, which forbids them to count their age. An ordinary Malay never knows how old he is, or what o’clock it is, or what day of the month it is, or even what is the current year. The Imam is expected to know all these things, but it is nobody else’s business. They tell the people once a year when the month of Ramazan arrives, and during that month the Malays count every hour and minute, because they find the fasting inconvenient; but if you ask them the names even of the other months in the year, they cannot tell you” (Innes 1885: V1:194). Likewise, a historian should be sceptical of Emily’s story about Datu Dagang: “Thus one day when the Datu Dagang and his three young wives called to see me, the girls smilingly informed me they were all sisters to each other, and nieces to their husband. … But they, finding I did not quite understand them, called to the Datu Dagang, who was sitting apart with Mr. Innes, and asked him to explain. He did so, informing me that his elder brother, the father of these three girls, had owed him money, and could not pay; so the Datu took first one daughter, then a second, and then a third to wife in settlement of the debt, letting the father go free” (Innes 1885: V1:79-80). It is important to note that according to Islamic beliefs, it is not permitted for an uncle to marry his niece. As most Malay cultural practices were shaped by Islam, Innes’s descriptions of Malay cultural practices in relation to Islam raise questions about the authenticity of her tale.

FLORENCE CADDY, *TO SIAM AND MALAYA IN THE DUKE OF SUTHERLAND’S YACHT ‘SANS PEUR’*

Florence Caddy was a woman in her fifties when she accompanied the Duke of Sutherland to Siam and Malaya in December 1888. In the preface *To Siam and Malaya*, she says that the duke went on a winter trip to recover from an illness and invited her on this trip because he was looking for someone who is a ‘geographer and naturalist’ (Caddy 1889). Caddy mentioned that another reason for the trip was that... “In travel the Duke is always on the look-out to see if comparison with other countries can offer any suggestions of improvements in our existing machinery, or if the application of English capital can benefit a colony or further British influence abroad” (Caddy 1889: 77). Based on Caddy’s statements, it appears that her trip was much more comfortable

than those of Isabella Bird and Emily Innes. Caddy provided detailed information about the yacht, The Sans Peur, which supports her assertion. She states, "The saloon looked delightfully comfortable, as we arrived by starlight, with a fire and the table laid for dinner, the lamps with their coloured shades, the book-case attractive with the newest books, and plates and pictures set in the olive plush walls above the dado of carved teak. An 'Æolian' pianoforte stands in one corner of the saloon" (Caddy 1889: 2). Furthermore, Florence Caddy had close connections with the British aristocracy and was warmly received by Thai and Malay aristocracy members during her journeys. Caddy highlights the friendly behaviour of Lady Clementi Smith, the spouse of Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, who served as the Governor of the Straits Settlements. Additionally, Caddy mentions that the Duke and his team were warmly welcomed by the governor at the Government House (Caddy 1889).

Florence Caddy wrote six books from 1877 to 1888, which included two novels, two biographies, and two books on housekeeping, design, and interior decoration. In 1889, she published *To Siam and Malaya in the Duke of Sutherland's Yacht 'Sans Peur*, her last book that compiled her travel notes from her journey to Southeast Asia. Caddy's *To Siam and Malaya* is divided into fourteen chapters. Out of the 14 chapters, only the tenth chapter, titled "The Sultan of Johore", and the eleventh chapter, titled "Muar", are significant sources for historians. In the third chapter, Caddy mentions their brief stop in Singapore (from the 6th to the 9th of February) before heading to Bangkok. Caddy visited the Botanic Garden and the Chinatowns surrounding it in Singapore, where she learned that the name Singapore originates from the Malay term for "Lion City." Caddy expresses sympathy for the Chinese community in Singapore and commends their diligent efforts. She offers information on both working-class Chinese as well as affluent individuals like Sia Liang Sia. According to her, Sia has never been to China but is fluent in English and knowledgeable about Europe (Caddy 1889).

In chapters four to nine of her book, Caddy shares details about her two-week trip to Bangkok. When they returned to Johor from Bangkok, she provided additional details about their brief stay in Singapore. She observed a military exercise to safeguard the Singapore port during her recent visit (Caddy 1889). Caddy also mentions her church visit: "I went to the cathedral service in Singapore. The church is very neat and nice inside, if you can call that inside which is open like a cloister on both sides. In the evening, it is lighted with gas, lit too early, or rather turned up high too early; otherwise, every precaution is taken to ensure coolness; the church besides being shaded by trees, is open all round and has open cane seats set in dark wood" (Caddy 1889: 229). Caddy refrains from making any negative remarks about Muslims or other religions in the region, unlike Isabella and Innes.

Throughout the text, Caddy frequently draws comparisons between different countries. As she stated, "… from him [Major Grey] we learnt how much better and more humane our prison arrangements are than those of the Chinese or Siamese. His great aim is to lead the prisoners to a better life, and carefully to distinguish between hardened criminals and those capable of returning to be of use to society. Our government does not recognise the debt slavery often incurred through gambling. Gambling altogether has been prohibited in Singapore. Perhaps this is one reason why the Chinese look so flourishing and happy here" (Caddy 1889: 230). According to Caddy, the British administration played a significant role in improving the welfare of society. The prohibition of debt slavery and gambling contributed to this positive outcome. In her narration, Caddy sometimes refers to specific places by name. As an example, she references Kranjie: "We reach Johore, with the Malay village of Kranjie on the opposite side of the straits, soon after five p.m." Travelogues are valuable historical sources because they enable researchers to track the evolution of place names over time, highlighting both similarities and changes. Caddy's mentioned region of Kranji (Singapore) has retained its name until today (Savage and Yeoh 2003).

Contrary to expectations, Caddy and Duke's trip to Johore and Muar lasted for approximately two weeks. Caddy's initial expectation is as follows, "Now we are off to Johore; we expect to stay two days with the Sultan" (Caddy 1889: 231). However, it appears that her opinion shifted after witnessing the palace's architectural beauty and experiencing the comfort of the place. She says, "We shall enjoy this place thoroughly, and we all secretly wished our stay might be longer than the two days we had at first almost unwillingly spared" (Caddy 1889). It is also known that Sultan's hospitality greatly influenced Caddy's decision to change her mind., "The Sultan insisted on our staying longer at Johore, and we were nothing loth to be pressed to stay with this

most hospitable host who did everything to entertain us; for every day there were excursions and parties, and, but for collapse from the extreme heat, we might have worked all day and night at amusement" (Caddy 1889: 241). Duke also emphasises Sultan's hospitality and warmth, "… and his Grace, in replying, said he was not likely soon to forget the royal hospitality of Johore; that when he arrived, he did not feel like a stranger, as he had not only the honour of His Highness's acquaintance before, but he had heard so much about him from the Prince of Wales that it was like visiting an old friend" (Caddy 1889: 259-260). Furthermore, Sultan Abu Bakar bestowed the title of Unkoo upon the Duke (Caddy 1889). Based on these conversations, it is apparent that Sultan Abu Bakar had established advanced diplomatic relations with British royalty.

MALAYAN PEOPLE IN TO SIAM AND MALAYA

The titles of the tenth and eleventh chapters, "The Sultan of Johore" and "Muar," show that Caddy's focus was mainly on the Johor Royal family and the economic and agricultural activities in the area. Caddy provides a thorough depiction of Sultan's physical appearance, "The Sultan appeared elegantly dressed for dinner, in a monkey-jacket, with the order of the Star of India, and a black velvet fez, with an aigrette of large diamonds in the front; half-a-dozen large gipsy-rings on each hand, almost covering his dark, fat little fingers; the rings all rubies and diamonds on one hand, all emeralds and diamonds on the other" (Caddy 1889). We understand that the Sultan did not speak English and that his translator was private secretary Dato Sri Amar d'Raja (Caddy 1889). Caddy further explains that the title "Dato" in Malay has the same meaning as "Pasha" in Turkish (Caddy 1889).

The text provides details about not just the Sultan, but also his family. It mentions that the Sultan has three wives and Caddy specifically highlights the role of Sultana. "The Sultana lives at Tyersall. She is no longer young; but the Sultan esteems her highly and consults her in everything. It is true he has other, younger, wives, but only the Sultana is a power in the state" (Caddy 1889). During her trip to Muar, Caddy shared that she met Sultan's son who had received an education in England. Caddy did not mention the name of the prince, but it is clear that he is Sultan Ibrahim (reign: 1895-1959), who succeeded Sultan Abu Bakar. We discover that Sultan has two siblings, Unkoo Abdul Majid and Unkoo Slayman. She also shares the story of meeting with Unkoo Abdul Majid's Turkish spouse, "… While the rain continued, we ladies visited the harem, furnished in semi-European style, where the Unkana, a Turkish lady, dressed in black satin, with a 'pouffe' dowdily arranged in European fashion, received us dumbly, as she could speak no Frankish language…" Recent research on the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Malay World identified Ruqayyah Hanim as the Turkish Lady (Alatas 2023).

Caddy also offers details regarding the local people. She tends to prioritize the opinions of some people rather than her own views. For instance, when writing about the Malays, she incorporated the perspectives of Dato Meldrum,

> Dato Meldrum, who came on most days to the Istana, to help us to ideas, says Malay wood-cutters are employed to go in the forests to bring the timber in rafts to the mills. A company of six to ten is made up; they are generally friends and relations: a headman is selected, and he is generally held responsible for the advances of money that are made to them. A sum is paid down when the agreement is made; with this money they purchase a boat and lay in a stock of provisions, tools, etc. In a month the head man makes his appearance and receives another advance, reporting progress; this is repeated three, four, or five times, according to the size of the raft they mean to bring. Sometimes six months or more elapse before the raft is brought to the mills, there being many contingencies that interfere with regular work: the habits and customs of the Malays, sickness, rainy weather, and sometimes want of rain sufficient to float the logs out of the small streamlets into which they have been rolled or dragged. Wives and children accompany their husbands, and frequently lend a hand in hauling or rolling the logs out of the forest. They live in the jungle in huts while the trees are being felled, and in huts on the rafts when they are made up and in transit to the mills. They are a quiet, orderly people now; very independent, yet kindly disposed. Their wants are few, as they do not suffer the privations attendant on the rigorous and changeable climate of more northern latitudes. Theirs is a constant summer, monotonous perhaps in its sameness, more or less relaxing, nevertheless very pleasant and enjoyable to them. They take nothing intoxicating and are very fond of liberty and a free and easy life (Caddy 1889: 253-254).

She obtained insights into the Chinese by considering the perspectives of Sultan Abu Bakar. She mentions, "Sultan Abubeker encourages the industrial Chinese; he says he finds them valuable as original settlers, as they are indefatigable labourers, clearing the jungle, cultivating the ground, and turning everything to account then, as he sees openings, —and he is always looking for them, — he can set up companies for working mills, mines, etc., with Chinese labour under European direction" (Caddy 1889: 265-266). Unlike previous travel texts, Caddy refrains from commenting on the lifestyles, settlements, or religious beliefs of the local people. Because she did not engage with the local people

much and that she only visited the region under the guidance of the Sultan.

CONCLUSION

Travel narratives reflecting the observations and experiences of individuals visiting foreign countries are considered a particular category of primary sources for historians. Historians find travel accounts valuable for various reasons. The text can provide details about the local community members who cannot offer information on themself for specific reasons. Furthermore, experienced travellers often provide unique perspectives on the societies they visit. The travelogues not only depict various regions and local societies but also reveal the perspectives of their writings when examined closely.

Travel accounts are considered valuable historical texts, but it's important to note that they may not always be wholly accurate or transparent. There are several reasons why it is not feasible to accept the narratives of travelogues uncritically. Sometimes travelogue writers did not notice or could not realise the various aspects of the local societies. Travellers sometimes acted inattentive or careless in carefully examining the communities they visited. They were sometimes under the influence of the values of their own culture that they misinterpreted or misrepresented the places under this influence. Furthermore, upon examining the professional backgrounds of travel writers, it becomes apparent that they came from diverse professional fields. The travellers include individuals with various professions, such as officials, trade route explorers, consuls, botanists, archaeologists, geographers, and missionaries. It can be inferred that travellers tend to reflect their personal interests more in their texts. Therefore, most travel accounts require careful and critical analysis because they may contain such problems to a greater or lesser extent.

The travel narratives of three British female travel writers, Isabella Bird, Emily Innes, and Florence Caddy, were examined in this article. These narratives are an essential source for Malayan historiography. The travelogues mirror a period of the early ten years of British rule (1879-1889) in the Strait Settlements and the Malay States. In general, the authors mentioned the daily life and traditions, occupations, clothing styles and settlements of the local people. In addition, travellers decorated their travel books with pictures, maps and portraits. Detailed analyses of the travelogues revealed some interesting pieces of information. During that time, the regional colony administrators were all male, leading to the dominance of male perspectives in written works regarding the region. For this reason, women travel writers' view is essential to ensure a diverse range of perspectives on historical events. Moreover, women travellers' access to places restricted to men allows them to gather unique information and insights. Travelling in different roles such as traveller, accompanying woman and tourist is also reflected in their travel books. For instance, Isabella Bird or Emily Innes provides details about the local community, while Florence Caddy provides more interesting information about the Malay royal class. Since each source has certain shortcomings, it is seen during the examinations that these travel books contain some prejudices and fixed ideas. Finally, travelogues not only provide historical information but also contribute to the toponomy by listing the names of regions, cities, and villages from that period.

NOTES

[1] For the extensive survey on travel literature in Malaya, see J. M. Gullick, 'Emily Innes 1843-1927', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 55, no. 2 (243) (1982): 87–114; Victor T. King, ed., *The Best of Borneo Travel*, Oxford in Asia Paperbacks (Singapore: New York : Oxford University Press, 1992); A. J. Stockwell, 'Early Tourism in Malaya', in *Tourism in South-East Asia*, ed. Michael Hitchcock, Victor T. King, and Mike Parnwell (London ; New York: Routledge, 1993), 258–70; J. M. Gullick, ed., *They Came to Malaya: A Travellers' Anthology*, Oxford in Asia Paperbacks (Singapore ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); John Sturgus Bastin, ed., *Travellers' Singapore: An Anthology*, Oxford in Asia Paperbacks (Kuala Lumpur ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); J. M. Gullick, ed., *Adventurous Women in South-East Asia: Six Lives*, Oxford in Asia Paperbacks (Kuala Lumpur; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); J. M. Gullick, ed., *Adventures and Encounters: Europeans in South-East Asia*, Oxford in Asia Paperbacks (Kuala Lumpur ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Victor T. King, ed., *Explorers of South-East Asia: Six Lives*, Oxford in Asia Paperbacks (Kuala Lumpur ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Sivachandralingam Sundara Raja, 'The Importance of the Malay Archipelago from the Perspective of Early European Travellers and Traders with Reference to the Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia (JIEA)', in *Memory and Knowledge of the Sea in Southeast Asia*, ed. Danny Wong Tze Ken (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 2008), 41–54; Sivachandralingam Sundara Raja, 'Accounts by Merchants, Travellers and Missionaries as Historical Sources for the Study of the Malay Archipelago in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century', *MANU* 16 (2010): 25–51; Farish A. Noor, *The Long Shadow of the 19th Century: Critical Essays on Colonial Orientalism in Southeast Asia* (Petaling Jaya: Matahari Books, 2021).

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