

Malay Elite Participation in the Johor Civil Service: Its Origins and Development until the 1930's

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One important area of Malay elite participation in the Johor Government Service was in the general administration. It was here that there was active elite participation in the government. Existing research on Johor, with the exception of a few, tends to focus on the question of Anglo-Malay relations prior to 1914 or at best the role of personalities in the early Johor Government. Very little is known as regard to the role of the Malay elite in the process of government especially during the early period of British rule. It is the intention of this paper to examine the origins and role of the Malay elite in the Johor administration immediately after British take over of the State's administration in 1914. This paper will also discuss subsequent developments of the position of the elite in the 1930's.

THE BEGINNING

Active elite participation in the affairs of Government in Johor could be traced as far back as the 1870s when Sultan Abu Bakar took over the reign of Government from his father Temenggong Ibrahim and subsequently shifted his capital from Telok Belanga to Johor Baharu. During the early years of its foundation the State's administration was run by a group of kins and friends of the Sultan. Although initially the role of the Malay ruling elite was confined to service the pepper and gambier industry, nonetheless as more and more people began to migrate into the state and to open the hinterland, it became necessary for the Government to establish some form of administrative organisation. Hence by 1885 when Johor finally concluded a treaty of friendship with Great Britain there was already in existence an effective administrative machinery in the state.¹

A close scrutiny of the composition of Sultan Abu Bakar's government at this time revealed that it was the following of the ruler, the small group of kins and associate from Telok Belanga, that had become the foundation of the Johor Government. Although in the initial stage they became executives of the Chinese agricultural and tax farming system, this group developed into the State Council and eventually grew into the Malay administration. It was the cohesiveness of this group that had kept the administration intact for quite a long time. Personalities such as Ungku Abdul Rahman and Ungku Abdul

Masjid; Dato Menteri Jaafar bin Haji Mohamad; Dato Mohamad Salleh bin Perang and Dato Mohamad Ibrahim bin Munshi Abdullah became architects of Modern Johor. It was the work of these few able followers and family from Telok Belanga that had made Abu Bakar's administration in Johor a success particularly between the 1870's and the 1880's. In his endeavour to sustain the independence of Johor, Abu Bakar had to play the role of diplomat cum ruler travelling to London everytime new problems were created by unsympathetic Governors in the Straits.² Hence during his absence, the day to day administration of the State had been left to his family and followers.

Despite the effectiveness of the early Johor administration there was little indication to show that an organised administrative cadre was in existence. What was evident was the fact that a score of important personalities were running the State administrative machinery.³ At times they too were assisted by Europeans who were recruited from neighbouring Singapore. These Europeans were employed by the State and later most of them became advisers and friends of the Sultan. William Hole for instance became one of Abu Bakar's secretaries, as well as Dato' Sri Amar Diraja, Abdul Rahman bin Andak. Others included Howard Bentley, who became the Postmaster General, Magistrate as well as Director of Immigration; Tom Kerr, Superintendent of Government Stores; W.F. Garland, Surveyor of Public Works and finally Captain Newland, Commandant of the Johor Military Forces. It appears that during the absence of the Sultan, Johor was administered by this small group of ruling elite whom the Sultan trusted. Most of the elites held on to their position at the goodwill of the Sultan. Apparently these early administrative elites were given a freehand to run their respective departments. Such arrangements appears to have worked well until the end of Abu Bakar's rule in Johor.

SULTAN IBRAHIM AND THE 'JAWATAN TADBIR' (JOHOR CIVIL SERVICE)

After the death of Sultan Abu Bakar in 1885, Johor saw the appointment of a new ruler who had neither the experience nor the training to become a sovereign. The states economy and finance according to Sir Robert Herbert, Chairman of the Johor Advisory Board in London, were in 'very bad way and notoriously going from bad to worse'. Ibrahim could not have been blamed for the sorry state of affairs in the State when he ascended the throne of Johor. This was due to the fact that he inherited an empty treasury as well as his father's huge debt. Surprisingly enough, despite the constant threat of British control throughout the first decade of his rule, Ibrahim was able to exert his influence as Sultan of Johor, as power the British had to reckon

with. It was the Sultan's audacity, along with his ability to collaborate and bow to the inevitable when the time came, that had made him an important personality.

The first few years of Ibrahim's rule in Johor also saw the formation of the Johor Civil Service. Although still at an early stage, the appointment of new officers into the administration, especially in 1895, to work along side old stalwarts like Muhammad Ibrahim bin Munshi Abdullah, the Dato Bentara Dalam; Mohamed Hassan bin Tahir the Dato Sri Setia Raja and many lesser officers, who had gained experience through the years under Sultan Abu Bakar's administration, reflected the unique nature of the system. Ibrahim seems to have retained the old system of government save with minor modifications to suit the need of the state.⁴ Dato Jaafar bin Haji Muhammad continued to function as the Menteri Besar while Engku Suleiman bin Engku Daud, a relative of the Sultan, functioned as State Commissioner in the *Jajahan* (District) of Muar. Invariably the Sultan appeared to be in full control of all government departments. Appointment of officers into the Government service was made with consent of the Sultan. The Sultan reserved the right to appoint officers although recommendations on the candidate's ability usually came from the various heads of departments. Royal kinsmen, as well as commoners who became officers of the government, were also subjected to the rules laid out by the Sultan in the *Surat Titah Perintah*.⁵ Eventually as administrative problems became more complex, due to the increase in the number of personnel as well as the influx of foreigners into the state, government servants in Johor were also subjected to the rules and regulations laid out in the *Titah Perintah*. The 'Sultan's Civil Service' which emerged at this time was known as 'Jawatan Tadbir' (Civil Service).

In contrast to the civil service administration, introduced by the British in the Federated Malay States, the 'Jawatan Tadbir' (Civil Service) in Johor prior to the extension of British control incorporated not only the administrators but also the Police, Army, Judges, Visiting teachers as well as Senior Clerks working for the establishment.⁶ Thus, it could be assumed that most if not all the senior officers working for the Johor Government at that time could be categorized as officers in the 'Jawatan Tadbir'. This practice appears to have been reinforced with the introduction of the circular known as *Pekeliling Setiausaha Kerajaan* issued by the office of the State Secretary in 1904 which clearly specified that officers included in the 'Jawatan Tadbir' were those who worked for the States administration, the army as well as the police force.⁷ Although a special salary scheme for clerks in the administrative service did come into existence only in 1912,⁸ the compartmentalization of officers into various categories of the service at this stage indicates that there was some sort of system prevalent as regards promotion as well as seniority. In Muar, for instance, the Police Commissioner of Muar (*Pesuruhjaya Polis Jajahan*) could act as the State Commissioner in the absence of the State

Commissioner himself. Similarly the post of Police Commissioner in Muar was considered to be a senior appointment in the 'Jawatan Tadbir', because only in the *Jajahan* (District) could the Police Commissioner be appointed as the State Commissioner in the event of a vacancy in the department. This was apparent in the case of Abdullah bin Jaafar who, in 1902, was appointed as Commissioner of Police in Muar. Abdullah later rose to become the State Commissioner of Muar when Dato Mohamed Mahbob left Muar to take over a new appointment as State Secretary in Johor Baharu.⁹ Similarly, Ismail bin Bachok, an English-educated, Anglo-phile Malay was only a clerk in the Public Works Department when he was appointed by Sultan Ibrahim to become Commissioner of Police in Muar. Like his contemporary, Abdullah bin Jaafar, he not only became the Chief Commissioner of Police (Dato Sri Setia Raja) in Johor Bahru but also rose to higher appointments in the administration. Ismail later became the Assistant State Secretary when Dato Mohamed bin Mahbob went on medical leave in India.¹⁰ Subsequently, after the advent of British control in Johor, he was made the State Secretary, acting as intermediary between the Sultan and the Malay officers on the one hand and the General Advisor on the other.¹¹

It was evident that by 1909 the Johor Civil Service (Jawatan Tadbir) was already well established to man the state administrative machinery. Although there were changes in the system after 1909, nevertheless these were insignificant as far as the entire structure of the State's administration was concerned. The bureaucratic system which emerged prior to the appointment of the first General Adviser revealed that the Menteri Besar was at the apex of the administrative system. Below him ranked the Deputy (Timbalan) Menteri Besar and the State Secretary (Setiausaha Kerajaan). Apart from these three major officers, there were other departments each headed by senior members of the administration. Usually the Head of the Treasury; the Chief Commissioner of Police; the State Auditor; Commandant of Prisons and finally the Head of Department of Public Works automatically became government ministers. Their inclusion into the Council of Ministers was deemed vital because of the nature of their work.¹² On the other hand below these ministers ranked the various Heads of Departments who would automatically become members of the Council of State of 29th April, 1906, in which was agreed that all departments in the states administration should be headed by Johor Malays. Similarly, in cases where Europeans had to be employed due to their expertise, the Council agreed that a Malay should be his subordinate officer. It was thought that in time, after the retirement of the European, his appointment could be replaced by the Malay assistant.

Prior to the signing of the treaty between Great Britain and Johor in 1914, Malay elite participation in government service was determined by the Sultan in close consultation with the Menteri Besar, the State Secretary and the respective Head of Department. The 'Jawatan Tadbir' as it was known at

that time, bears a close resemblance with the Malayan Civil Service and had been in existence as early as 1895. The only difference between the two was the fact that in Johor members of the service consisted mostly of Johor Malays while the Malayan Civil Service, which operated in the FMS in the early stage, was filled by British Officers of the Colonial Service. Similarly the Civil Service in the FMS was better organised because of the traditions that they had derived from the colonial service.¹⁴ Although the Jawatan Tadbir in Johor might appear miles apart from the Malayan Civil Service in terms of its efficiency and organisation, nonetheless, despite its short-coming, the Jawatan Tadbir had demonstrated its effectiveness in looking after the state's administration until the British.

THE MALAY OFFICER SALARY SCHEME (MOS)

Not surprisingly, a majority of Malay officials who had participated in the Johor government prior to British control, seem to have descended from the nineteenth century elite, especially the kin and those closest to the Sultan. Since a majority of these were either the Sultan's kin or his close associates from Telok Belanga, it was not easy for the British to suddenly break their monopoly of the civil administration when they took over the administration of the State in 1914. As a group which had been founded by a Malay administration, it would not be easy for the British to impose reforms in the service, as they had wished to do.

Instead, the British held to their broader strategy, focussing their approach on bureaucratic change, and on immediate goals. As an important section of the government machinery, the British had to rationalise this segment. They had to put those posts which were clearly administrative, along with the officers who held them, on one coherent graduated scheme. Hence in an attempt to control the entry of Malays into the administrative ranks, the British made it a prerequisite that a candidate for the service had to be in the clerical scheme before he could be promoted into the administrative service or the Malay Officers Salary Scheme (MOS).¹⁵ Thus by 1914, the British had begun to make their own rules as to the kind of candidate that the government would accept in the clerical service.

The Malay Officers Scheme was instituted for the administrative cadre to match a clerical scheme introduced as early as 1912. Initially introduction of the clerical scheme in 1912 was made with the intention that it would guarantee regular increments to deserving clerks as well as to determine what their prospects were. Prior to 1912 there was no fixed salary scale for clerks. From time to time a large number of these clerks made continual application to the Sultan in Council for a rise in pay. This procedure had in fact annoyed the Sultan, the scheme of 1912 was adopted in the early Johor Service partly

also with the intention of encouraging the clerks to be thrifty and at the same time to indicate to them what they could expect at the end of a particular month.¹⁶ Under this scheme separate scales of pay had been drawn for clerks who knew English and those who did not. A scrutiny of the 1912 clerical scheme (Table 1) revealed that there were four categories of clerks in the administration; viz., Malay Clerks; Malay Clerks with knowledge of English Clerks with VII standard certificate; and English Clerks with VII standard certificate along with a knowledge of Malay. Promotion of clerks from one scale to another was automatic, depending on the number of vacancies that existed. For example, promotion of clerks from Class II to Class I could be made by means of a recommendation from the Head of Department, who would certify whether a candidate was fit for promotion or not. After a clerk had drawn the highest pay of Class II, which would require him to be in the same scale for at least two years, he would then be promoted to the special class provided there was a vacancy. Hence the criteria of selection for clerks into this special class was determined not only by their length of service in a particular class, but also more by whether the candidate's performance merited to be in the particular class.

TABLE 1

Malay Clerical Scheme 1912	
Class III	\$20 - \$30 By biennial increments of \$5
Class II	\$40 - \$60 By biennial increments of \$10
Class I	\$70 - \$90 By biennial increments of \$10
Allowance for knowledge of English	
Class III	\$15
Class II	\$20
Class I	\$25
Class Special	\$30

Source: GA. 148/912 Scheme approved by His Highness the Sultan in Council on November 21, 1912. (Amended by Bil. 4/1914).

The system which was adopted at this stage indicated that there was disparity in the rates of pay between the English and the Malay clerk. For example, in class III a Malay clerk would get an initial salary of \$20 per month as compared with an English clerk who would start work with a salary of \$20 per month including \$15 as allowance for their knowledge of English. It was clear at this juncture that the difference in their initial salary scale made it more attractive for those with a knowledge of English to join the scheme as English clerks. Usually candidates who intended to be English clerks were required to pass the seventh standard in an English school either in Johor, the Straits Settlements or the Federated Malay States (FMS), while applicants for Malay clerkship ought to have passed the highest standard in a Malay school either in Johor, the Straits Settlements or in the FMS.

The resigning of the Treaty of 1885, along with the introduction of full British control of Johor administration in 1914, opened the way for further change to take effect in the service. Surprisingly the British did not carry out major changes in the organization of the clerical scheme but on the other hand they strove to maintain what had been practised prior to 1914. It was clear at this juncture that with the introduction of Circular No. 4 of 1914 (Table 2), the clerical scheme of 21st November, 1912 was automatically substituted with a new clerical service which consisted of two divisions i.e. 'Clerks with a knowledge of Malay' and 'Clerks with a knowledge of English as well as Malay'. In order to make the clerical service more attractive to Malay youth with an English-Malay background, the circular of 1914 stipulated that English clerks would get more pay, that is \$420 per annum, surpassing the ordinary Malay Clerk who got only \$300 in class III. It was further emphasised that the applicants for a clerkship in these early years of

TABLE 2. Malay Clerical Service 1914

(A) Malay only		:	(B) Malay and English	
Class III	\$300 to \$600	:	Class III	\$420 to \$720
By annual increments			By annual increments	
of \$60			of \$60	
Class II	\$720 to \$1080		Class II	\$840 to \$1140
By annual increments			By annual increments	
of \$60			of \$60	
Class I	\$1140 to \$1620		Class I	\$1200 to \$1800
By annual increments			By annual increments	
of \$120 and after			of \$120 and after	
three years service			three years service	
on \$1620 to \$1800			on \$1800 to \$1920	

Source: Circular No. 4 of 1914

British administration 'must be over sixteen years of age, must be of a good character and unless of Malay nationality must have passed the Straits Settlements or the Federated Malay States VII Standard Examination', or 'have obtained a pass in the Oxford or Cambridge Senior or Junior Examinations'. As for Malay clerks, the new circular also stipulated that applicants 'will be required to hold Standard IV Certificates and to have a good working knowledge of English'.¹⁷

Three years after its implementation, the Clerical scheme of 1914 saw further amendments of its provisions in 1917. In an endeavour to provide further incentive to Malay boys who had passed the Oxford and Cambridge Senior or Junior examination to join the clerical scheme, on 18th June, 1917, the State Secretary issued Circular No. 9 of 1917 to amend its earlier Circular No.4 of 1914. Under the new provision, Cause 3 (a) of the Circular provided that:¹⁸

Vacant appointments will be given to qualified candidates by selection and not necessarily according to priority of application. A candidate who has passed the Oxford and Cambridge Senior or Junior Examination will be given preference to others and will on appointment draw a salary of \$480 per annum and will rank as Senior to all those drawing lower salary at the date of his appointment.

It was apparent that while the amended circular aimed at providing a higher salary scale for a candidate with an Oxford or a Cambridge Examination qualifications, it was also intended to position of English as an important language in the new administration. The pay structure of the clerical scheme, while it overlapped certain senior clerical posts and the MOS, revealed the emphasis the British wished to place in obtaining capable clerks, whatever relative social prestige the job might carry. The significance of the clerical reform went well beyond the reshaping of the administrative cadre. As Johor's economy expanded and the role of Government involvement began to widen with it, so too did the need for clerks, especially for those who were proficient in English.¹⁹

It was clear at the outset that the new establishment had given preference to English rather than Malay, which was very much in contrast with the agreement reached in 1914 between Sultan Ibrahim and the British Government, where by both Malay and English was to given equal standing, especially in the government service. The fact that English assumed a superior position at this stage, came about as a result of British officers who were seconded into the state, who not comfortable in the use of Malay written in *Jawi* or the Arabic script of Johor. Worse still was the attitude of British officers themselves, who believed that English ought to be given free use in the government establishment. For some it would be a labourious task to gain verbal fluency, let alone written. Hence an examination of the files of the various government departments in Johor, especially in the early 1914's

revealed that both Malay and English were being widely used in their minutes and notes. This was evident because it was not only the British officers alone who were not fluent in Malay, but some Malay officers too were found to be inefficient in their use of the English language. Hence the need for clerks with a knowledge of both Malay and English became essential as the new government began to widen its influence on the entire administration, save for the Department of Religious Affairs and Malay Custom.

On the one hand, while demands for Malay youth with English education became necessary, English schools in the state on the other hand were incapable of supplying the requirements for clerks proficient in English. Subsequently in an attempt to overcome this deficiency, the General Adviser, D.G. Campbell, in 1913 suggested that a new Boarding School which resembled an English Public School should be set up in Johor Bahru. By this it was hoped that boys who would graduate from the school could be absorbed into the Government service to become English clerks, who were badly needed by the administration.²⁰ Apparently it was also contended that the Boarding School itself could become a base for the government, to train potential Malay youth who could be selected later on to join the Malay Officers Salary Scheme.

In an attempt to fill 'B' division clerks, a special scheme was devised in 1925 by the English Education Department, to provide for the appointment of boys from schools to become apprentices or probationers.²¹ Although the scheme was made with a view to give preference to suitable Johor Malays for the job, nevertheless it did open its door to applications from outside the state. Under this scheme, the English Education Officer would keep a list of applicants with details of their qualifications. In the event that a vacancy for 'B' Division clerks, or for apprentices or probationers existed in a particular department, the head of department would notify the State Secretary, who would in turn report such vacancies to the English Education Officer. The English Education Officer, on the other hand, would furnish the Secretariat with the names of those whom he considered suitable for the vacancy. If it was found that the vacancies could be filled, even by boys on the English Education Officer's list, then the names of the unsuccessful applicants would automatically be added to his by-monthly list.

Despite the attempt to establish an institution to train Malay boys proficient in English, the supply of qualified B clerks remained indifferent. It appears that the state's English schools were not able to meet the demand of expanding bureaucracy.²² It was not until 1928, when a new Superintendent of Education was appointed by the Johor government to create an improved unified curriculum, that the shortage began to decrease.²³ By the 1930's there were demands from students with English education who wished to join the government service as English speaking clerks. It appears that by the 1930's

there were more Malay boys in the state who had the necessary qualification than the vacancies available in government service. Due to a noticeable unemployment rate amongst English school graduates after 1935, the government began to tighten its requirement of entry into government service. Similarly, in an attempt to keep the boys longer in schools the British began to impose the requirements of Oxford and Cambridge local school leaving certificate as the prerequisite for a B clerkship.²⁴ Apparently special examinations were being conducted to test the clerk's ability before they could be promoted to a higher grade or later to be accepted as probationers or supernumerary MOS officers. Despite the entrance examination and subsequent proficiency test for A and B clerks, what became certain was the fact that the ablest clerks were often those best suited for promotion to the MOS. It could be safely said that by the 1920's IIB. Although the procedure with regard to the entrance examination was good for the initial intake of clerks into the service, nevertheless in practical terms this procedure had weakened both the MOS as well as the clerical service. Despite the stringent method of selection into the MOS, a large group of under qualified clerks still managed to climb the administrative ladder simply because they were related to some influential government officers.

It could be said that by the 1920's a lot of progress had been achieved in restructuring the Malay Administrative cadre. In conjunction with the amalgamation of the Education Departments, a new recruitment policy was introduced whereby candidates for the MOS were to be selected as probationers directly from those Malays successfully completing an English-language secondary school. With the appointment of a new Superintendent of Education in Johor in 1928, further improvements had been made in the selection as well as training of probationership.²⁵

Under the revised scheme, probationers for the Malay Officers Salary Scheme were usually offered by the Promotions Board to promising students in the Junior Cambridge class studying in a Johor Government School. On approval of his nomination by the Government the Probationers would be required to continue his studies at school for the Senior Cambridge Certificate. During this period he would receive an allowance of \$40 per month along with free tuition, and \$25 per month during vacation. Probationers were required to present themselves at an annual examination, and those whose progress were found to be unsatisfactory would be deprived of their British masters. Despite the introduction of a compulsory three years liberal arts study course at Raffles College for the probationers, some clerks still managed to climb the old ladder. This was so because not all of those probationers who were sent to Raffles College managed to complete their course.

It was interesting to observe that despite the elaborate and tough method of selection to join the MOS, even the process of selection into the training scheme had some tinge of nepotism. For example, in 1914, out of the eleven

closely connected with the Dato Menteri Besar, Dato Jaafar bin Haji Mohamad.²⁸ Although the British who were in Johor at that time had given their approval in this matter. As for the British, it was their aim to create a totally new Johor Civil Service out of the Johor Malay Officers Salary Scheme. Throughout the 1930's they had encouraged as well as sustained every effort to achieve this goal. In their endeavour to modernise the structure of the service the British did attempt to sift out non-administrative religious posts (The Mufti and the Chief Kathi) as well as those anomalies derived from Johor's nineteenth century experience.²⁹ In short they had tried as far as possible to open the service only to those whom they thought had talents. On the other hand by trying to exclude the religious elites from the actual machinery of governments; they had in fact gained disfavour in the eyes of the Sultan.

In so far as Sultan Ibrahim was concerned, he was totally opposed not only to the idea of shifting out religious post from the MOS but also was repugnant to the idea of increasing European participation in the Johor Civil Service. It was evident that by the 1930's there was a steady increase in the number of European officers serving in Johor. Equally important was the fact that Ibrahim was able to visualise that should the state continue to accept more Europeans, it would ultimately lead to the Europeanization of every single department in Johor. Inevitably Johor would never be able to sustain the problem of employment that was slowly threatening the administration. Similarly, should the flow of European Officers into the state remain unabated, it would surely jeopardise the Sultan's effort to enable more Malay Officers to hold important posts in the administration. In view of the problems that was slowly threatening the state, Sultan Ibrahim submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir Philip Cunliffe in London, wherein he had expressed his disagreement over the appointment of more Europeans in Johor.³⁰

I trust that shall not weary you if I refer now to another, but analogous matter-viz- the Johor Malay Officers Scheme, by which was proposed that the appointments of most of the Senior Officials and their assistants should be either reduced in standing or abolished altogether, and the work done by Chief Clerks. I opposed this policy most strenuously, as I consider it my duty to fight for a system under which Johore Malay Officers should at least be equal in number to the European Officers. It is no exaggeration to say that at the present time all the Heads of Departments, together with their Assistants, are European Officers, whereas I am confident that Malay Officers of long service and with adequate qualifications could be found for many of the posts, and it is obvious that, if only on grounds of economy, this is desirable. The same remark applies to the British Assistant Advisers, who are appointed to nearly all the districts in my State. I fully appreciate, and am grateful for the useful work done by British Officers in my Country, but I cannot understand why my own subjects cannot be appointed in many of such positions. In this connection I would refer to paragraph (7) of my letter of the 11th May, 1914 to the then Governor, Sir Arthur

Young, the terms of which were accepted in all respects by His Excellency's letter of the same date.

It was clear at this juncture that the preservation of the Malay Officer's role in the administration was necessary, in order to sustain a more balanced representation in the Government.

The views expounded by Sultan Ibrahim with regard to Malay participation in the Johor Civil Service appears to have been strongly supported by Onn bin Jaafar, the Malay Official Members of the Council of State.³¹ In contrast with other Malay Official Members of the Council of State, who were more moderate in their attitudes towards the British, Onn bin Jaafar was more forceful in his criticism of the Government. Onn attacked the British not only for their indifferent attitude towards religious personnel in the Johor Malay Officers Scheme but also criticised them for the disparity in the housing scheme enforced in the state, which was based on a certain salary scale for a certain class of house. Onn believed that if such a scheme were to be implemented it would be detrimental to the Malay Officers of the government service. He also regarded the scheme as inadequate because it gave more benefit to the European Officer serving in the State than to a Malay Officer. With regard to the scheme as inadequate because it gave more benefit to the European Officer serving in the State than to a Malay Officer. With regard to the matter Onn said.³²

The minimum salary of a Malay officer of Class V under the Malay Officers Scheme is not equivalent to that of a Class V officer of the Malayan Civil Service, from which the majority of the European Officers Serving in this State is seconded. In practice, therefore, a Malay officer of Class V is only entitled to class 7 quarters initially and later to class 6 as his salary reaches towards the maximum of that class.

On the other hand, officers of the Malayan Civil Service of Class V are invariably allotted at least class 3 quarters. Such treatment is entirely at variance with the express wish of H.H. the Sultan in his letter to His Excellency the Governor in 1914, prior to the ratification of the 1914 treaty.

Clearly Onn was quick enough to detect the disparity that existed in the scheme. Further he suggested to the Council that under the circumstances, the obvious course for the Government was to revise the housing scheme so as to be fairer to the Malays. Apart from the above issue, Onn also highlighted the question of European Officers who were appointed into the State. In fact Onn questioned the government as to why it did not limit the appointment of expatriate the government as to why it did not limit the Malays who would ultimately remain in the State. In his speech of 15th April, 1936, Onn said.³³

I am not so fanatical as to be against the employment of Europeans in the state services, but I do not see why the minimum number should not be aimed at instead of the tendency to increase at every possible opportunity. I trust that the Government will not forget that Johor is still Johor and a Malay country.

Onn's opposition over the appointment of more Europeans in the state clearly reflected his desire to preserve for the Johor elite the few remaining posts that were left in the administration, still unfilled by Europeans. In reply to the Sultan's Memorandum, the Secretary of State for the Colonies said that he supported the Johor Government's effort to encourage more Malay Officers to advance themselves in the Public Service and promised to look into the matter in greater detail.

The issue highlighted by Sultan Ibrahim as well as Onn bin Jaafar was just part of the story, especially with regard to the question of employment in the State. Even as early as 1933, the question of employment of Johor Malays in certain Government department had been stressed by the Dato Menteri Besar. In his letter to the Acting G.A., the Dato Menteri Besar had earlier criticised the government for not giving priority to Johoreans, in so far as job opportunities were concerned.³⁴ He was appalled to have received numerous letters of application for employment from Malay youth, for which he could do very little. What galled the Menteri Besar was the fact that the Government was still recruiting workers from outside the state, a policy which he said was inconsistent with the Sultan's wished.³⁵ The Menteri Besar suggested that the Government should try to look for more jobs for Malay youth, especially in areas such as the Public Works Department, the Town Board and Telegraph, Railway and Marine Department where the percentage of non-Malay workers were considered to be higher. In the Public Works Department the figures revealed that the average number of labourers employed by the department between 1931 to 1932 was very much in favour of the non-Malays, 2712 Indians in 1931, as compared with 816 others. Although the figure had some what dropped in 1932 where there were 2230 Indian labourers and 943 others, still the decrease was considered to be unsatisfactory.³⁶ In his Minute to the Acting General Adviser, the Head of the Public Works Department noted that the large concentration of Indians in the department was due to 'the unwillingness of the Malay to engage in the tough and tiring work of road maintenance and construction at the small wage of 40 to 50 cents per day'.³⁷ To what extent the statement is true was another matter, but the question remained that by the middle of the 1930's the issue on employment had certainly caused much debate in the Council of State. Onn, however, was more concerned about clerical appointments, when the Draft Estimate for the Public Works Department was passed by the Council of State. Speaking in November 1936 Onn said:³⁸

Now, Sir, before any of these new appointments are filled next year, I would like to have an assurance from Government that Malay youths who have passed through our local schools will be given first call on their services, and that the whole of filling appointments in the Clerical Service of the State will be considered by the Committee which I believe was appointed some like in 1934 or 1935 for that particular purpose ... it would be against the declared policy of that, any other new clerical appointments were given to men other-than Malays or Johore domiciled men of other races.

Yet despite his criticism of Government's policy towards Malay employment, Onn knew that the matter was not as simple as it appeared to be. He knew that basically the Johor Malay's inability to secure employment in some section of the Government service stemmed from his inadequate qualification. Although it could not be denied that there were some Malays who were choosy about their jobs, still the fact remained that Malays ought to possess the knowledge to do jobs which require technical skills.

By the end of the 1930's it appears that there was some sort of cooperation between Malay Officers and the British in so far as the state's administration was concerned. The Johor Malay Officers Scheme which was introduced by the British in 1914, to replace the 'Jawatan Tadbir' of the early Johor Government appears to fit in well with the new administration. Despite some disparity in the service, British officers in Johor were committed to the idea of an indigenous administrative cadre working as a partner in governing Johor. There appears to have been some sort of cooperation between Malay and British officials alike on the goals they were to achieve in the administration.

One important element which has emerged here is that the Malay administrative elite was the most sensitive sector of the Malay population to changes brought by British rule. The elite's reaction to this rule also inevitably influenced the Sultan's subsequent actions. This sensitivity of the Malay elite and the ability to influence the actions of higher authorities led them to increasing political prominence.

NOTES

¹See Carl A. Trocki., *Prince of Pirates; The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore 1784-1885*, (Singapore, 1979) and M.A. Fawzi Basri dan Hasrom Haron., *Sejarah Johor Moden 1855-1940*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1978).

²Eunice Thio., *British Policy in the Malay Peninsula 1880-1910*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1969) and Major Dato Haji Muhammad Said; *Ilikayat Johor dan Tawarikh Al-Marhum Sultan Abu Bakar Johor*, (Johor Bharu, 1950).

³See *Singapore and Straits Directory 1874*, "Johore", p.233. Cited forthwith as SSD.

⁴See *Daftar Ahli-Ahli Mesyuarat Kerajaan Johor 1895-1935*, Arkib Negara Johor, for a full list of members of the Johor Council of State 1895.

⁵See *Salinan Surat Titah Perintah 1888-1910* (SSTP), Arkib Negara Johor.

⁶*Peratoran Bintang-Bintang Jawatan Bagi Pegawai Kerajaan Johor*, 1hb Oktober, 1899 (13 Jamadil Akhir, 1317)

⁷*Pekeliling Setiausaha Kerajaan, 1hb Oktober, 1904.*

⁸GA (General Adviser) 148/1912. Draff. GA to SS, (State Secretary) 24th June, 1912, "Draft Clerical Scheme".

⁹SSTP, Surat Titah melanjutkan tempoh jawatan Pesuruhjaya Kerajaan Muar, 12 Nov., 1906; SSTP, Surat Titah, Dato Abdullah bin Jaafar, 22hb Dis., 1910. See also MB. 68/15. Surat Tauliah Datuk Abdullah bin Jaafar sebagai Pesuruhjaya Kerajaan

Muar and Haji Abdul Majid bin Zainuddin., *The Wandering Thoughts of a Dying Man*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1978), p.108.

¹⁰*Annual Report Johor, 921*, p.20. Datuk Mohamed bin Mahbob was suffering from an eyes disease and had to seek treatment in India. He retired from the Johor Government Service in September, 1922. See also MB. 25/22. Dato Mohamad Mahbob retires as Menteri Besar, 12th August, 1922.

¹¹Ismail Bachok was initially appointed as Assistant State Secretary on 17th June, 1913. Pemberitahu Kerajaan 17th June, 1913. As regards his promotion to State Secretary, see GA 327/27. Promotion of Dato Ismail Bachok.

¹²See *Daftar Ahli Mesyuarat Kerajaan Johor 1895-1935*.

¹³*SSTP, Titah Perintah*, Dato Mohamed bin Mahbob dijadikan Pesuruhjaya Kerajaan dan Pengadil Muar, 7hb. Nov., 1895.

¹⁴Further notes on the MCS see R.O. Tilman., *Bureaucratic Transition in Malaya*, (Durham, 1964) and James de V. Allen, "The Malayan Civil Service, 1874-1941: Colonial Bureaucracy/Malayan Elite", *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, XVI (April 1970), pp. 149-178. See also Khasnor Johan., *Emergence of the Modern Malay Administrative Elite*, (Singapore, 1984).

¹⁵GA 815/25, GA to High Comm. 2 Dec, 1925, Revision of Malay Officers Salaries Scheme.

¹⁶GA 148/192. General Adviser to State Secretary, 24 June, 1912. Draft, Clerical Scheme.

¹⁷See Circular No. 4, 1914, Clerical Service.

¹⁸GA 328/1917. General Adviser, 12 June 1917. Circular Amending Clerical Scheme No. 4 of 1914.

¹⁹See GA150/1913, D.G. Campbell's speech of Education, 25 July, 1913. In his speech Campbell stress on the importance of English as the future language of administration in Johor. See also GA 63/1932.

²⁰GA 150/1913. Campbell's Speech on Education.

²¹SS 651/25. Circular No. 22 of 1925. Filling of vacancies for "B" Division clerks or for apprentices or Probationers under Schemes providing for the appointment of Boys from school.

²²GA. 856/19. Shortage of trained subordinates. See also CLM. 679/25. Application for employment. Minute. CLM, 8 October, 1925.

²³See H.R. Cheeseman, *Education in Johor 1923-1933*, (Johor Bharu, 1933), (Johor Bharu, 1933).

²⁴SS. 610/30, Oxford and Cambridge Certificates for "B" clerks. p. 168.

²⁵SS. 651/25, Circular No. 22 of 1925.

²⁶GA 442/21, Circular No. 52 of 1921. Law Examination. See also Circular No. 26 of 1928. Scheme for Malay Officers in SS 1982/28.

²⁷*Annual Report, Johor, 1932*, p. 32. See also SS 222/26, Scholarships at Raffles College and MB 185/37. Improvements in the Scholarstic qualificatons of candidates for the MOS.

²⁸SS. 304/32. Promotions of Malay Officers Scheme. Minute. R.O. Winstedt, 27 April 1932.

²⁹Prior to 1917 in the Malay Officers Scheme, the post of Mufti was placed on the third Grade Salary Scale on the maximum salary of \$3,600 p.a. In 1934 it was proposed to exclude the post of Mufti and Kadi Besar from the MOS. The Sultan opposed this. G.A. 906/1934. Sultan Ibrahim to Sec. of State Rt. Hon. Sir Philip

Cunliffe - Lister. Colonial Office, London, 13 Nov., 1934. Malay Officers Scheme. See also MB 317/34 Datuk Awang bin Omar to Menteri Besar, 9 Jan., 1935.

³⁰MB 317/34. Memo Sultan Ibrahim to Sir Philip Cunliffe. 14th Nov., 1934. Also see Ibrahim to R.O. Winstedt, 17th Nov., 1934.

³¹For further notes on Onn bin Jaafar. See Ramlah Adam, *Dato Onn Jaafar, Pengasas Kemerdekaan*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1992).

³²MB 158/36, Council of State, Debate in housing. See also *Straits Times*, 15 April 1936.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴MB 52/33. Dato Menteri Besar to Acting GA, 23rd Feb., 1933. Employment of Malays in Government Departments; Minute. Acting GA to DMB, 27th Feb., 1933. Also see GA. 144/1933.

³⁵MB. 200/34, Pesuruhjaya Batu Pahat to Dato Menteri Besar, 21 July 1934, Banyak Orang-orang Luar bekerja dalam jawatan kerajaan. Also refer to, Letter Dato MB to SS. 21 July, 1934.

³⁶GA. 144/1933. Minute. Acting GA to Head Public Works Department, Johor, 8 March, 1933. Minute Head PWD to Ag. GA. 14th March 1933.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸MB 364/1936, Council Debate. Onn b. Jaafar on Clerical Service Appointments. 24th Nov. 1936.