

The Visual Report of The Perak War Based on Selected Newspaper Visuals from Britain and America, 1875-1876

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the representation of ideas through the visuals of The Perak War in Malaya, as produced by selected illustrated newspapers from Britain and America such as The Graphic, The Illustrated London News, and Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper from 1875 to 1876. Discussing the content and the objective behind the visual publication of The Perak War, which involved the hunt of J.W.W. Birch murderers and the Malay resistance against the British colonial authority in Pasir Salak, Perak, is the major objective of this research. In fact, the theme of this study is history, which is conducted by applying the qualitative method. Based on previous studies, research which was centred on the Perak War visuals did not get a lot of attention from researchers even though it was able to offer new interpretations of historical events involving Malaya. Most articles written on the Perak War were derived from written sources such as British records, individual records, letters, books, oral input, and others. Consequently, the dynamics of national history are lacking due to the limitations caused by these resources. Findings indicate that the objective in producing the Perak War visuals by the resources mentioned differs from the publication goal. Nevertheless, overall, there are similarities in the objective behind visual productions listed in this study which was to represent the British's interest in Malaya and also to consolidate the imperial image of its colonies.

Keywords: *The Perak War, visual report, the illustrated London news, graphic, Frank Leslie's illustrated newspaper.*

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who reads historical documents will, in his mind, conjure images and scenes which are related to the historical topic presented in the articles. Sometimes, readers with limitless imagination would picture themselves as the main characters in the historical events. In fact, we believe that such a method which enables readers to use their imagination to recreate events in the past is apt as it also adds to their understanding of them. This situation is in line with Fagherzadeh's (2008) argument which stated that "...recording facts, conducting a comparative study of these facts and recreating them are crucial... historical facts are records, sources, letters, personal journals, individual memories and others... historical facts are able to make a difference when a person is able to project them in our minds through pictures,

images or ideas of the actual situation..." Nevertheless, it is different when historical documentation of each incident, event, occurrence, and activity was visually recorded since it does not require the readers to imagine. In fact, we believe that through the visuals provided in any written historical record, the readers will be attracted to complete their adventure via the characters that they created in the historical events that they read.

In Malaysia, there is less acceptance of visuals as a historical reference as compared to Europe and The United States of America (Tahir et al., 2013). Comparatively, in this country, historians seem to be trapped in Leopold von Ranke's idea which stated that "no document, no history" (Boldt, 2019). From another perspective, based on a clearer understanding, Ranke's 'document' has its own underlying meaning. We believe the word 'document' used by Ranke is inclusive of visuals as part of significant document in historical research. Today, resources from new media such as Facebook, TikTok, Twitter and others can be used in historical studies (Kortti, 2022). Hence, it is imperative for our local historical research to change its stance on accepting sources and materials which transcend an understanding that is based only on the British record, manuscript, letters, oral history sources and others (Mohd Noor, 2006). If this call is accepted, the nation's historical research will be more dynamic and competitive: it will erase the society's perception that historical books and stories are suitable only as something to read when one cannot fall asleep at night. It could also answer Tun Dr Mahathir's appeal that "*The field of Geography and History have not changed. What is written and learned has not changed from time to time since it is not dynamic, disconnected from the latest research and knowledge. Instead, in the field of science, we find that new knowledge as a result of research is introduced daily. Knowledge is used for many man-made things created for our usage*" (Mahathir, 2020).

This study attempts to highlight "visual" as one of the primary sources for the nation's historical research. During the 15th century, after the arrival of colonial traders and travellers in the Malay Archipelago, the reproduction of information in visual form was still carried out to document events, cultures, and beauty in nature (Mirzoeff, 1999). This form of documentation was deemed easy to store and the information could easily be retrieved in the form of visual prints. Many visuals have been reproduced since and are still being reproduced in various forms, media, and applications, such as etching, lithography, and aquatint (Tahir, 2018). In the era of new imperialism in Malaya of the 19th and 20th centuries, there was social interaction between the colonials and interesting events which took place in the country (Tahir et al., 2021). Before the existence of cameras and even after they were introduced, their use was still very limited. Each significant event in Malaya was visually recorded by artists who had their own vested interest in the colonials (Miller, 1990). Visuals which were produced would be published in well-known illustrated newspapers from Britain and America, such as *The Graphic*, *The Illustrated London News (ILN)*, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (FLIN)* and others. The Perak War incident involved the hunt of the murderers of James Wheeler Woodford Birch or JWW Birch in Pasir Salak, Perak. Birch was killed on November 2, 1875 (Bostick, 2009) and the incident was taken as the most vital subject in the production of visuals by the illustrated newspapers mentioned earlier. This is because, through the incident mentioned, Bird (1883) reported that Perak had become known in England, and the London press began to ask how it was that colonial officers had suffered to make conquests and increase Imperial responsibilities without the sanction of the Parliament. Clearly, this situation was unexpected and the media of London reports has put pressure on the government in their effort to report the event through various forms such as visual reports, which is given the emphasis in this study. Therefore, this research aims to explore

the extent of the ideas regarding visuals of the Perak War from 1875 to 1876 produced by selected media from Britain and America in the 19th century.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study consists of historical research which is carried out using the qualitative method. Several actions and processes such as critics, analysis, heuristic and historiography were carried out to attain objectivity in historical research (Abd Wahab et al., 2022). Like other historical research, library search was used to collect primary and secondary sources. The researchers had visited the National Archives of Malaysia, the National Library of Malaysia, public university libraries in Malaysia, the National Art Gallery of Malaysia, Lithograph, Caricature, and Manuscript Gallery, Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities (FSSK), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, the National Archives of United Kingdom, the National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum London, and other venues to gather the sources mentioned. This research depends on official documents such as newspapers, the British records, journals, books, and others.

This research also focuses on the utilisation of iconography analysis in the study and interpretation of visual symbolism observed in The Perak War Visual depicted in The Graphic, ILN, and FLIN. The essay delves into the contextualization of the images, icons, and symbols used in these mediums to convey and represent specific concepts and ideas surrounding the events of the Perak War. The essay further explores the historical and cultural significance related to the visual elements present in these mediums, which contribute to the broader understanding of the war itself. Through the implementation of rigorous analysis using primary sources and historical scholarship, this essay aims to provide a deeper appreciation and understanding of the utilisation of iconography in understanding historical artistic mediums (Muller, 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research related to the visual report of the Perak War in Malaya has received little attention in historical writing. Furthermore, no other scholars have produced written works addressing the comparison of ideas regarding the visuals of the Perak War of 1875 to 1876, as presented by selected British and American media during the 19th century. This situation provides an opportunity for researchers to emphasise a different perspective in their investigations of the visual reports of the Perak War by selected media, thus offering an advantage and a new approach to the study of this historical event. However, there are several scholars who have tackled the discussion of the visual reports of the Perak War based on newspapers' accounts, highlighting the significance of these sources in understanding the war's portrayal in the media. Hardy (2016) argued that the Perak War visuals were instrumental in shaping British policies and attitudes towards colonial governance in the region. Barnard (2016) found that the Perak War visual had significant environmental as well as political consequences, and looked at how these were represented visually in the media. Besides that, Barker (2013) argued that The Perak War visual representations of brutality and violence were often used by colonial authorities to justify their use of force and maintain control, but that these same representations were also taken up by anti-colonial movements as symbols of resistance. Gelman-Taylor (2009) argued that the ways in which European and Eurasian communities in colonial Indonesia constructed and maintained their identities through visual representations, and includes discussions of images of the Perak War published

in ILN. Meanwhile, Hinterseer (2007) argued that the use of photographs of the Perak War in British colonial propaganda campaigns of the early 20th century and analysed the ways in which these images perpetuated Western narratives of colonial power and control. Andaya (2006) also argued that photography played a key role in shaping European ideas about Southeast Asian cultures, including during the Perak War. Her argument was concurred by Nelson (2006) who stated that the Perak War visuals were used by colonial authorities to create a narrative of Malay rebellion and savagery that supported British claims to colonial dominance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Perak War by The Graphics

The Graphic definitely played a significant role in producing visual reports which were related to The Perak War in 1875. The Graphic was the first illustrated newspaper which published a report on the Perak War visuals, and it was ahead of the other illustrated newspapers at that time. In fact, there were distinct differences in the production of visuals since The Graphic was published by a group of artists, and it was a successful visual artisan newspaper in Britain. In fact, from the perspective of visual production, this newspaper did not produce visuals in the form of events and news like the ILN. Instead, The Graphic was more about stylisation (North, 1884). The decorative generalisation of figures and objects by means of various conventional techniques were done by The Graphics artisans. Although there were visuals produced by The Graphic that appeared to report major events in Britain and the colonies, upon close inspection these events were merely being stated as an object in the visual production without the news text to explain the visuals produced as the ILN did, and the visuals were usually a mere citation. Consequently, The Graphic visual production appeared to have more freedom compared to the ILN: the former was not obliged to put the British empire on high pedestal (Thomas, 1888). The researchers believe that visual production from this illustrated newspaper is more transparent in portraying any incident which occurred even though the visuals provided valuable information to the masses in Britain. Additionally, the researchers believed that the newspaper failed to recognize the negative impact of their lack of honesty in visual production on the British empire. This stands in contrast to other illustrated newspapers such as ILN, which glorified the British empire's magnificence and generosity towards its colonies. Visuals depicting the British were typically deemed as decent and respectable, even within specific subtopics. In contrast, The Graphic appeared to take a more critical stance by publishing a negative image of the British that symbolized violence, going against the views of the Royals at the time.



Illustration 1: The front page of *The Graphic* on September 15, 1888

In all, there were seven pictures produced by this newspaper pertaining to The Perak War in two publications on November 18 and November 20, 1875 (*The Graphic*, 1875a; *The Graphic*, 1875b). As stated earlier, The Perak War visual produced by the newspaper was more transparent in portraying the actual event that took place. Those visuals were not prepared based on a certain party's interest. Instead, the researchers believe that the visual provided an emphasis on significant subject and object in relation to any event in an image produced (Hardy, 2016). This situation has proven that visuals produced by *The Graphic* were able to offer objectivity in historical research because the researchers believe it was the most reliable resource in providing information regarding the British's actions in its colonies, particularly on issues related to The Perak War.



Illustration 2: The British military on the village of Kota Lama, near the Perak River by *The Graphic* on November 18, 1875.

The Perak War illustrations published on November 18, 1875, were The Graphic's earliest publication. For this publication, the newspaper introduced three visuals which were captioned as "The War in The Malay Peninsula". Interestingly, one of the visuals published portrayed the British military at Kota Lama, a village near the Perak River (Illustration 2). The village was situated about one and a half miles from the British camp at Qualla Kangsa (Kuala Kangsar). A portion of the British forces under the command of Brigadier-General C.B. Ross had attacked the village. The initial purpose of the attack was to destroy the houses of some notorious outlaws. However, due to the determined resistance shown by the villagers, the whole village was burnt down. The Malays received heavy blows, which was believed to have subsequently moderated their expression of hostility toward the British. At that time, the battalions were just issued with the new Martini-Henry such as the 10th Regiment, 80th Regiment (Staffordshire Volunteers) and 3rd Regiment (The Buffs). By most accounts, the new weapon appeared to have performed admirably, contributing to the rapid destruction of the opposing Malay forces in Perak and Sungei Ujong. Lieutenant H.B. Eich of the Royal Engineers reported that troops advancing slowly up the Perak River were suddenly fired upon from a hastily-formed Malay stockade in the district of Belanja, near modern-day Parit. "The enemy fired two or three volleys, and in the meantime a gun and rocket tube were brought up and got into position. Two rounds of shell and one round of case shot were then fired into the stockade, as were two rockets. Several rounds of the Martini-Henry were also fired, as the guard advanced - the enemy retreated forthwith" (Manning, 2013). The researcher did not find it odd that The Graphics had chosen to publish this visual since it emphasised heavily on objectivity towards each visual produced. Moreover, it is believed that the British had yet to feel the need to monitor the publication of illustrated newspapers from there. The Graphics had portrayed a violent side of the British military that was covered by ILN publishing. The attack was considered shameful and disgraceful. This was because the British Empire had claimed itself to be benign, progressive, and reformist in its intentions, although the empire was "brutal nonetheless." In reality, violence was prevalent in the structures and systems of British rule. It was not "occasional" but was "a means to an end for as long as the British Empire remained alive" (Elkins, 2022). This can be seen based on how visuals regarding the British were seen as decent and refined, although The Graphics had published a negative image of the British which suggested violence. Through the above visual, it was apparent that the British could not run away from the violence they projected to the people from the colonies. Furthermore, such a situation exemplified the significance of visuals in historical documentation in the pursuit of providing a clear picture for any historic event.

The next visual which was produced on the same date was the picture of Birch temporary residence at Bandar Baharu, close to the Perak River (Illustration 3). To the researchers, the visual only provided information on Birch's presence when he was stationed there. It was apparent that Birch was given a comfortable accommodation which was close to an important water source from The Perak River. In fact, Birch's safety was also well-taken care of as there was surveillance in front of his house. The third visual featured the barracks at the residency, Banda Bahru, including Birch's grave (Illustration 4). However, for this analysis, the researcher would combine the analyses through The Perak War subtopics by FLIN since this newspaper also published visuals on the location of Birch's grave, Captain Innes, and others in Pasir Salak. The researchers found that the motive behind this visual production was similar, and it was better to combine both to indicate the relationship between The Graphic and FLIN.



Illustration 3: Temporary residency at Bandar Baharu,
by the Perak River by The Graphic, on November 18, 1875

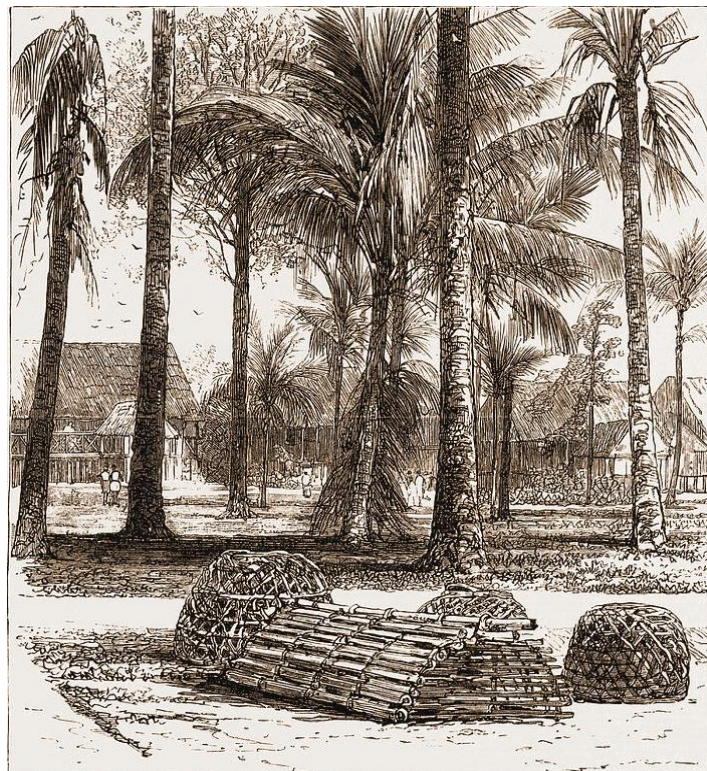


Illustration 4: The barracks at the residency, Banda Bahru,
with the grave of Birch by The Graphicon November 18, 1875

The Perak War visuals which were published on November 20, 1875, contained four visuals that introduced important characters who were part of this event. These visuals were produced by Mr. Edmund H. Watts who was the late Collector of Land Revenue, Malacca. He shared them with *The Graphic* to be featured in the newspaper. A distinctive feature which was found in this visual was the picture of JWW Birch which was produced based on original photographs of Birch that were believed to have originated from the illustrator's friend (Illustration 5) (*The Graphic*, 1875b). The researchers believe the visual was published as an introduction to the readers on the subject at hand that was the event discussed. In fact, it was also a form of honour given to the fallen British officer in the colony. This indicated that the visual publication must not mar the British image as depicted in events that took place in the colony. On the other hand, as stated earlier, it eased the visual continuation that would be published after that. From the researcher point of view, however, it was better for the other visual to be produced first as compared to the former that was published on November 18, 1875. Such a situation could be akin to a historical event: it has to have a beginning, and then moves to other stages known as the development, conflict, climax and resolution (Md Ali & Awang Deng, 2018). Nevertheless, from the visual arrangement in *The Graphic*, those in charge did not put them in order and these visuals were unsystematic. Such a situation had caused confusion and disrupted the readers' comprehension of the event depicted in the visuals published by the newspaper. However, there was a possibility that the visuals were not obtained at the same time, and this had caused the mixed up to happen in the publication of The Perak War visuals within the stated time frame (Tahir, 2018).



Illustration 5: James Wheeler Woodford Birch, or JWW Birch, the first British Resident to Malaya by *The Graphic* on November 20, 1875.

The second visual was the exterior and interior visual of a Malay stockade that was built at Sempang, close to the Linggi river (Illustration 6). As for the third visual, it portrayed the Malay fighters with some weapons such as muskets, spears, kris and swords (*The Graphic*, 1875b). The researcher believes that these published visuals depicted the actual condition from the Malays who were involved in the Perak War. The visual exterior and interior image of Malay stockade appeared to have shown the Malay defence in facing the British's attacks.

In fact, The Graphic had provided some explanation which stated that the stockade the Malays made from heavy timber enabled the Malays to “fight well behind defences and there could be no doubt but that they will give us much trouble in the *little war*”. From the explanation, the strength of the Malays must not be taken for granted by the British military and a just depiction given indicated that The Graphic was not biased in the visual publication. This situation advocated the researcher’s previous statement that the newspaper’s visuals offered objectivity in historical research: the researcher believes that those visuals were reliable sources that provided honest information on the British’s action in its colonies especially with issues pertaining to The Perak War. In fact, based on the third visual, it disregarded the image of weapons used by the Malays which was previously published by ILN since at that time, the Malays had used rifles. Instead, ILN did not list rifles as weapons used by the Malays in The Perak War. As stated earlier in this research, the visual report by The Graphics was published earlier than the ILN’s visuals. Through the honest depiction of images stated, it was clear that The Graphic had eluded Eurocentrism even though the researcher believes that this newspaper had its own loyalty to the issues and events that took place in the British empire involving all the colonies.

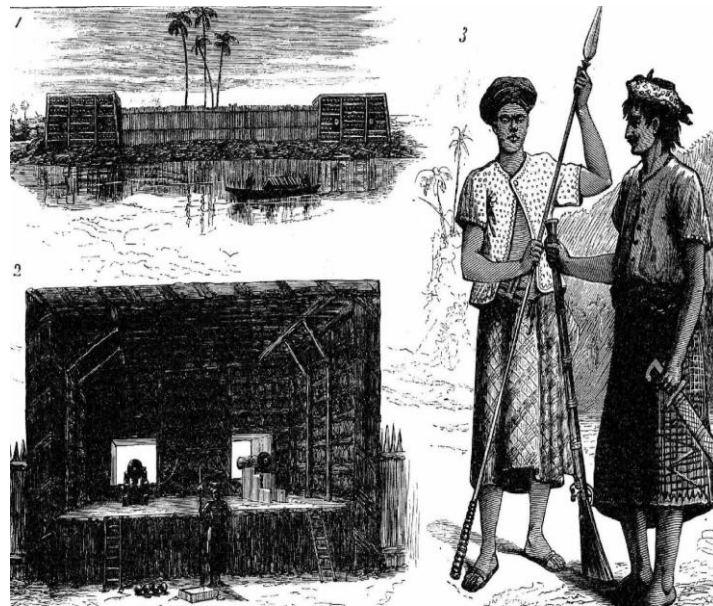


Illustration 6: The visual of exterior and interior of a Malay stockade which was built at Sempang, close to the Linggi river and indigenous Malays from the interior of the Peninsula by The Graphic on November 20, 1875.

The Perak War by ILN

ILN was the second newspaper which published visuals involving the Perak War in 1876. The overall visual report by ILN focused on the British’s military expedition in hunting the assassins involved (Hinterseer, 2007). The reports and visuals were all courtesy of Major O.H. Nicollas and Sub-lieutenant Holme, who happened to be at the scene of the crime. The visuals were recorded with the information obtained from the police and reports by the press office. They were then detailed and executed through the wood engraving technique. The visuals produced by ILN seemed to serve the interest of the British in the way the Malays and their weapons were represented in the assassination (Gelman-Taylor, 2009). At the same time, ILN also did not portray visuals that depicted the British’s attack in Perak. There were, in fact, photographs of Birch, Sultan Abdullah, and others at that time, which could be used as

comparisons, but ILN did not publish them. This indicated that the visuals were Eurocentric, as ILN only published them to serve the interest of the British. Eurocentrism is a form of thought that constantly measures and defines non-Western civilisations through historical, cultural, religious, geographic, scientific, and progressive perspectives of Western or European values, which are considered the highest form (Amin & Moore, 1989). The British produced various reports and records about the lands that were colonised. However, they painted an uncivilised picture of the colonised society. In that process, they produced a colonial historical record that later became the primary reference for historians to understand and explain local history until now (Stinson, 1972). This situation shows that the record produced by the British is biased and does not portray the actual report on the colonies. The same situation also occurred for the production of visual records and reports on The Perak War by ILN. The proper selection of visuals was essential to influence the British public and the British royal family. It was found that only five visuals were published, although there were still others not reported in the newspaper.



Illustration 7: The front page of ILN on January 18, 1873

The first analysis involved a visual report on scenery. The visual depicted the scene of the hills overlooking the harbour and George Town, Penang, with Province Wellesley in the background (Illustration 8). The artist, who was a soldier, became a representative of the newspaper agency and required more time to record the event and later, relayed it back to the agency's headquarters in London. Thus, in this news report, the editor decided to promote Penang as a surveillance centre and British military rescue headquarters in light of Birch's

assassination. This was considered apt because Birch's assassination was reported to Lieutenant Anson in Penang (ILN, 1876a).

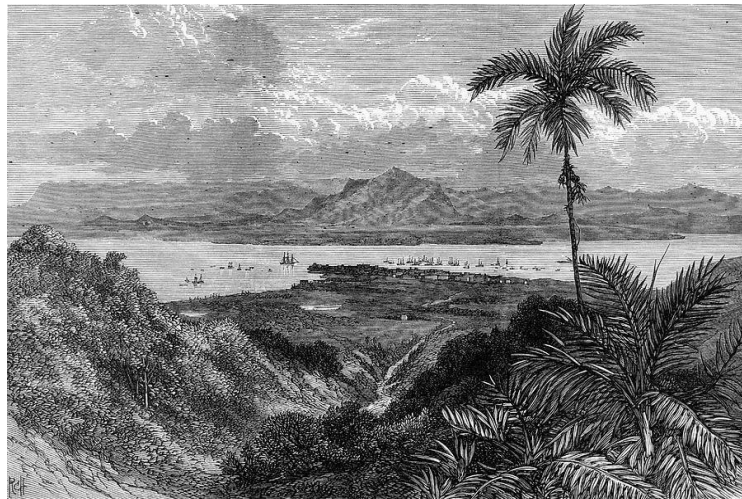


Illustration 8: Georgetown, Penang, near Perak, in the Malay Peninsula by ILN on January 1, 1876

The next visual shows a campsite at Bandar Baharu in Pasir Salak (ILN, 1876b), where Birch was assassinated (Illustration 9). Bandar Baharu was a British-owned area situated along the Perak River. Birch gave the place a sanctuary status for runaway indebted slaves (Parmer, 1987). The print visualised a flagpole to mark where Birch was assassinated (ILN, 1876b). The assassination was done in a boathouse that was tied to the riverbank (Abd Jalal et al., 2019). The boathouse was owned by a goldsmith, who went by the name of Koh An Yong (Ghazali, 1997). Birch was assassinated while bathing in the boathouse (Hijjas, 2005).

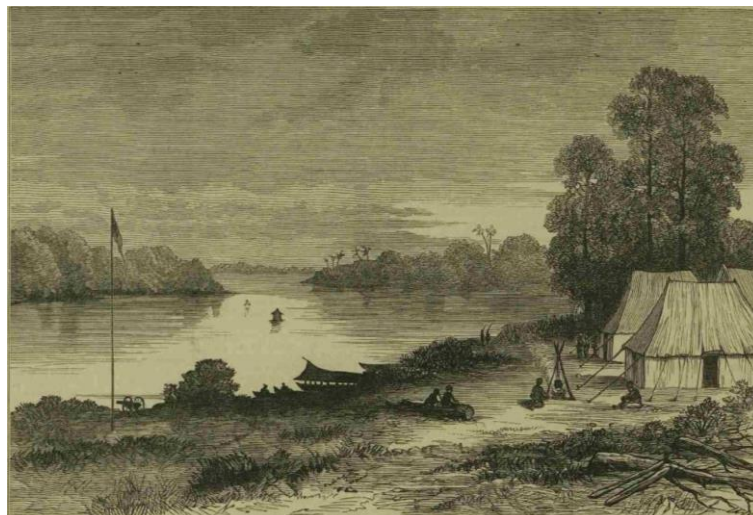


Illustration 9: Camp at Pasir Salak, Perak River by ILN on February 26, 1876

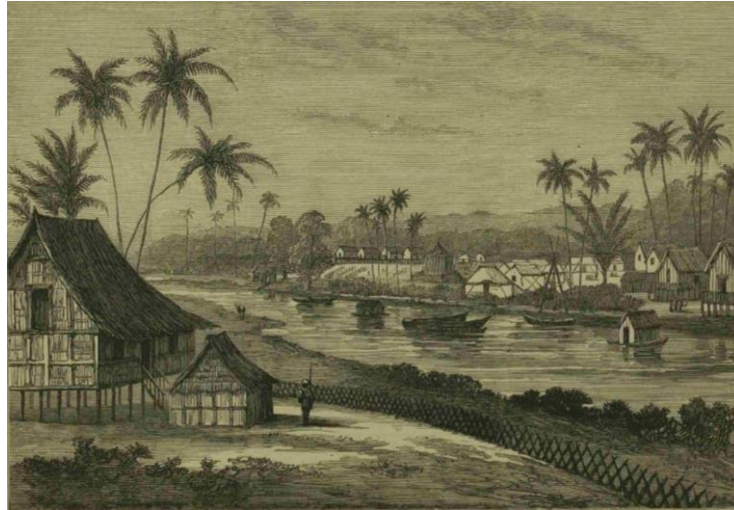


Illustration 10: View of the Encampment, Bandar Baharu, from the Back of the Residency by ILN on February 26, 1876

The next print was produced to provide a visual description of the boat that was boarded by security forces and a Malay escort (ILN, 1876b). The boat was traversing the river in search of Dato' Maharajalela and his followers (Illustration 10). It was stated that during the hunt for Dato' Maharajalela, 80 boats were heading north (Ghazali, 1997), but in this depiction, only 40 boats were recorded in ILN. Among the 40 boats, there was a steam-engine boat. Two boats with heavy artillery, the Thistle and the Fly, docked a few miles from the river as a precaution. The hunting expedition was conducted in December 1875, with many soldiers consisting of 200 infantries from the 10th and 80th Regiments, 40 canon teams, metal artilleries and rocket tubes, and central troops consisting of 70 high officers and more from the Medeste and Ringdove ships, armed with two metal cannons on the sides and three tube rockets (ILN, 1876b).

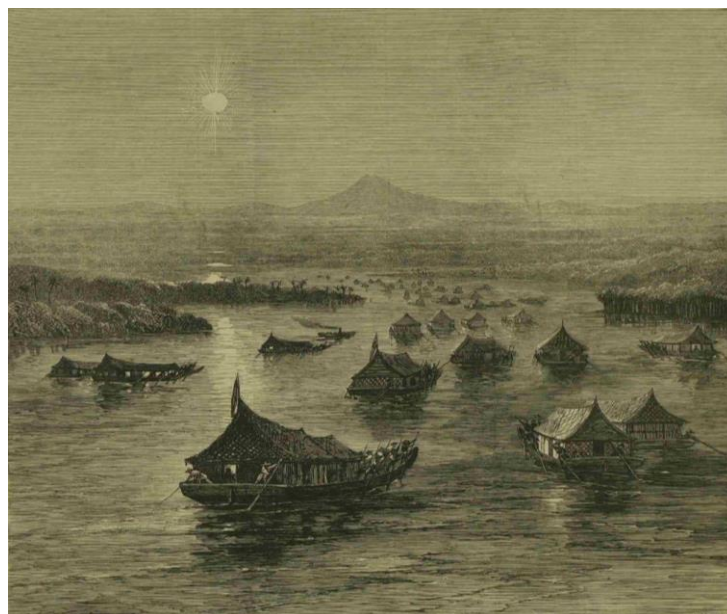


Illustration 11: The British Forces Ascending the Perak River by ILN on February 26, 1876

The print above was created to depict the environment in Pasir Telor, located around the vicinity of the Perak River. The largest square boat was fully equipped with artillery, machines, and coal to fire up a steam-powered rocket launcher (ILN, 1876b) (Illustration 11). A newspaper reported that the drawing was sketched near the left side of the Perak River, which was a place known as Blanja, a village under the command of Sultan Ismail (ILN, 1876b). Illustration 9, 10 and 11 were sketched to display the strength and reliability of the British security forces. The visuals were an attempt by ILN to cover their previous flaws during their first expedition, when Lieutenant Colonel A. E. H. Anson, the Lieutenant General of Penang (1867-1882), deployed a group of his army to settle the conflict. A team of 90 soldiers, led by Captain Innes R.E (C.O. 273/87), were defeated when their plot was foiled by the Malays. Captain Innes, who led the first team to Penang, was also killed along with three other soldiers (Rough, 2004). The visuals indicated that ILN was trying to convince the British public of their own military strength through grand representations. However, the information contradicted other records, such as the number of boats, as stated previously.

According to another in-depth analysis, the visuals by ILN were an attempt to portray the British as a superpower as they have control over the seas. It is acknowledged that the British Empire, which was centred on the British islands, depended on the seas to transport soldiers and supplies to and from France and Ireland. The wider, overseas empire that expanded during the ‘age of reconnaissance’, first in the Americas and then in Asia, relied on mastery of the seas and protection of trade routes. Naval power was essential, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to resist and thwart other competing imperial maritime powers, notably the Spanish, Dutch, and French. Having this advantage, they also took control of overseas territories in Asia, including Malaya (Killingray et al., 2004). The arrival of the British in the colonies, including Malaya, made it crucial for them to control water resources and the regional water system. The people of Malaya relied on water supply from the rivers, which was the source of the local economy’s strength. This was based on the theory that control over water resources expanded the economic system. The visuals depicted settlements along Sungai Perak, indicating that the British understood the function of Sungai Perak as the regional water system and their strategy toward imperialism to gain control over it. Abdullah (2021) stated, “If you can control the water system, you can control everything,” which indicated the way the British attempted to control the water system in Malaya and eventually amass their wealth through limitless control of economic outputs in the region.

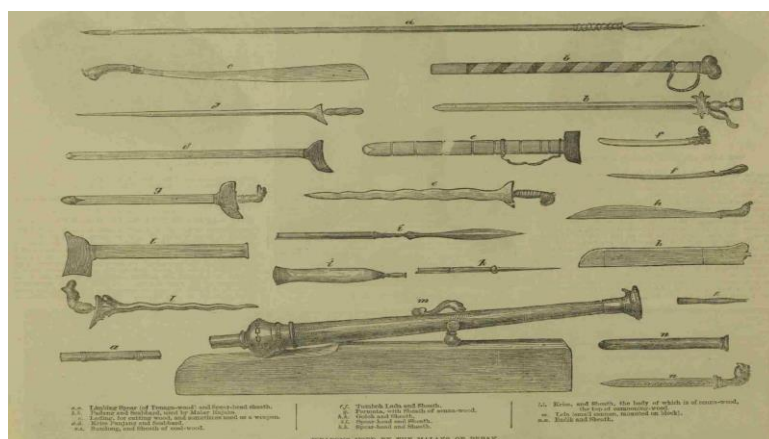


Illustration 12: Weapons used by the Malays of Perak by ILN on February 26, 1876

A list of weapons used was also drawn to justify the need to strengthen the British army. Swettenham (1895) also noted the types of weapons, as listed above, stating that in this report, the artist only sketched several traditional weapons, such as spears and *krises*, even though there was evidence indicating the presence of firearms (Illustration 12). ILN could not identify the actual weapons used in the assassination. Evidence produced by The Graphic which portrayed the Malays using modern weapons such as rifles (Illustration 6) was not listed by the ILN in the above visual. However, according to a report by Inspector Sagis, a policeman in Bandar Baharu, stab wounds were present on Birch's body. This indicated that Birch was killed by sharp objects. Among the main weapons listed were lances and *parang* or machetes (C.O. 273/90). Hence, the description of traditional weapons was appropriate in this report as these illustrate the possible weapons used in the assassination. The visual depicted by ILN aimed to portray violent images through the weapons used by Sultan, Malay Dignitaries and Malays in The Perak War. Whereas from the perspective of the Malays, they were everyday weapons used to cut and stab/impale (not necessarily for killing) and considered a basic necessity by the locals (Mohamad et al., 2012). The visual by ILN can be interpreted as - Malay Dignitaries and Sultans used lethal weapons to brutally assassinate Birch (Barker, 2013). From another perspective, the weapons used, which were mostly traditional weapons, could signify that the Malay society in Perak was still underdeveloped and backwards as they lacked the usage of advanced weapons, such as pistols, muskets, and rifles (Nelson, 2006). The Malays, through their weapons, were represented as outdated and not as advanced as the British. On the contrary, with reference to The Graphic's visual publication, the illustration stated was inaccurate since the Malays had used rifles in The Perak War (Illustration 6). Suffice to say, from that representation, ILN made a biased comparison for the Malays.

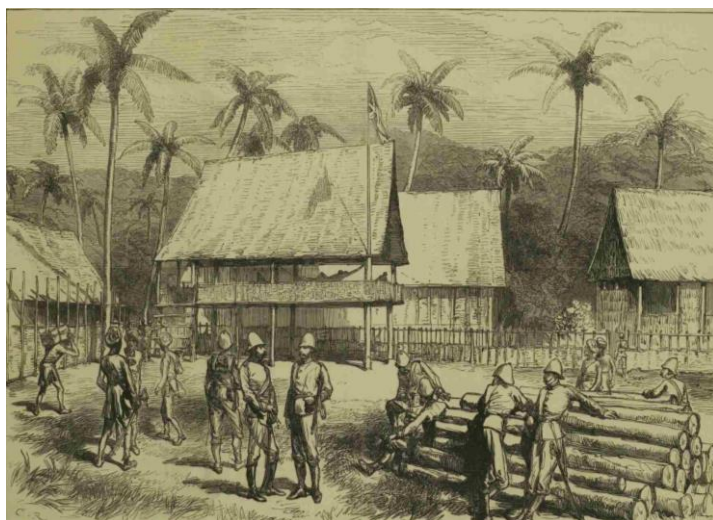


Illustration 13: Officers' Quarters, Campong Boyah by ILN on March 11, 1876

The final visual report was published in March 11, 1876, edition (ILN, 1876c). Illustration 13 showed the camp quarters of British officers in Campong Boyah, with images of wooden huts on stilts with no walls. These camps were places where officers came for a quick rest or naps and were erected in light of the assassination of many British Residents in Malaya. Sub-Lieutenant Holme drew the print. It was the last piece of the visual report published on Birch's assassination in Perak. The soldiers under the command of Major General Colborne C. B., and Navy Seals under Captain Alexander Buller R. N., were posted

there (ILN, 1876b). The visual portrayed the environment and condition of the camp, depicting the resting areas for officers prepared by the British government. The print shows how relaxed the officials were while talking to each other, having a breather, with the surrounding areas unrelated to the assassination. ILN did not portray visuals showing the British attack. This indicated that ILN was attempting to cover the oppressive actions of the British (Nelson, 2006). The British Empire represented a symbol of pride and force of progress, decency, and the rule of law around the world (Gunaish et al., 2022). If ILN portrays visuals showing the British attack, it can be seen as degrading to the symbol they represent. Thus, the visuals by ILN were illusions and they indicated the way that they were systematically created as self-serving hagiographies.

The Perak War By FLIN

In general, FLIN was a visual newspaper, an American illustrated literary and news magazine founded in 1855 and published until 1922 by publisher and illustrator Frank Leslie. Like ILN and The Graphics, it provided illustrations and reports first which represented their interest around the world and also consolidated the American image of its colonies. FLIN also reported The Perak War incident through three visuals which were published in The Pictorial Spirit of the Illustrated Press space on April 8, April 22, and August 19, 1876. Nevertheless, compared to the publication dates related to The Perak War visuals by ILN and The Graphic, FLIN's publication was delayed: it only started on April 8, 1876. The delay did not become an obstacle for them to produce visual report on The Perak War in their own way.



Illustration 14: The front page of FLIN on February 16, 1889

The shocking aspect of the visual report by FLIN was that they used the same visual which was previously published by ILN and The Graphics. For instance, the first visual was published on April 8, 1876 (Illustration 15), and it was similar to the visual that was published by ILN on March 11, 1876 (Illustration 13) (FLIN, 1876a). As for the second visual by FLIN which was published on April 22, 1876 (Illustration 16), it appeared to be the same with the visual printed in The Graphic on November 20, 1875 (Illustration 2). These similarities indicated that the visual obtained by FLIN came from the same source that both ILN and The Graphics referred to: the visual obtained from Malaya was from an artist, a soldier, who became a representative of the newspaper agency. At the same time, this situation proves that there was a possibility that these visuals were sold to other visual newspapers such as FLIN. This was because the process of recording a visual began with a basic sketch, which was obtained from correspondence, such as artists, engineers, British army officers, scientists, and individuals. Once the sketch reached the press office, it would be reproduced to ensure that each visual was meticulously done with an attention to details (Chapman & Nuttall, 2011). Undoubtedly, it made it difficult for the correspondence from other visual newspapers such as FLIN to join the same purpose stated as the root, method, and purpose of the production of these visual newspapers were different. In fact, they were correspondences which came from other empires. This article believes that these correspondences were not merely selling visuals that they produced. Instead, they also sold news reports which uplifted their images to other visual newspapers such as FLIN to secure their place as the most magnificent empire in the world. It appeared as a desperate act but it was a method to interact and share news about the British empire to the rest of the world (Jackson & Tomkins, 2011).

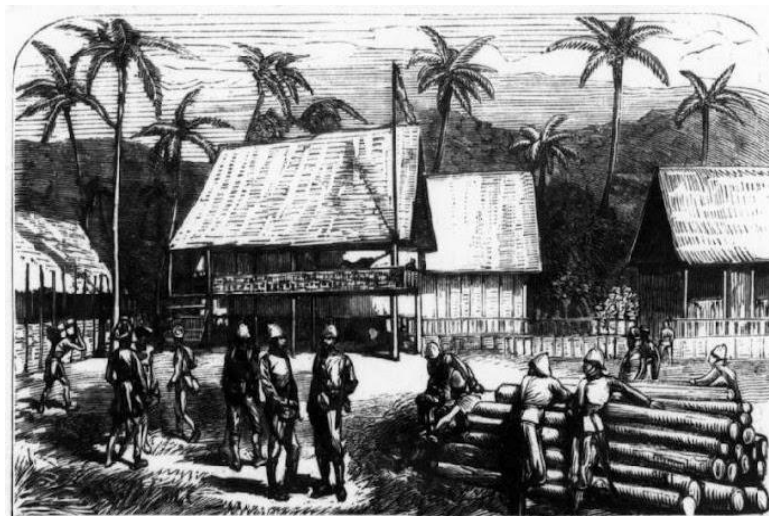


Illustration 15: Visual of the British Expedition Against the Malays of Perak which was published on April 8, 1876 by FLIN which was the same with the visual published by ILN on March 11, 1876 (Illustration 13)

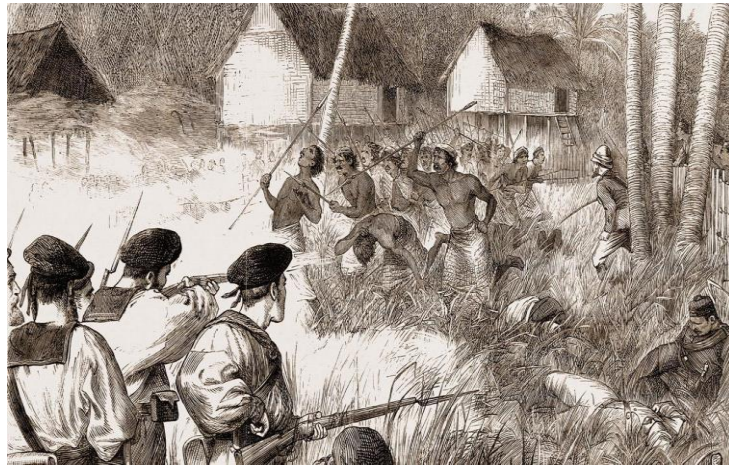


Illustration 16: Visual of The British Military Attack on the village of Kotah Lama, Perak River which was published on April 22, 1876 by FLIN which was the same with the one featured in *The Graphics* on November 20, 1875 (Illustration 2).

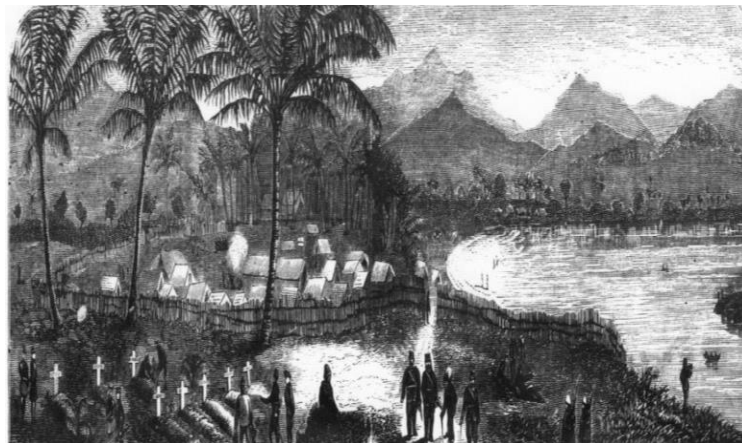


Illustration 17: The location of The Graves of Birch, Captain Innes, and others in Pasir Salak by FLIN on August 19, 1876

Figure 17 was the last illustration featured by FLIN and it depicted the location of The Graves of Birch, Captain Innes, and others in Pasir Salak, Perak (Illustration 17) (FLIN, August 19, 1876). The researcher finds that such a visual was also published by *The Graphic* (Illustration 4) on November 18, 1875, while *ILN* decided not to publish the visual mentioned. From the perspective of the researcher, reports from FLIN dan *The Graphic* appeared to have provided a complete explanation about The Perak War. Even though the researcher believes the visuals used were from the same source used by *ILN*, the report was complete like it was a narration which had the beginning and an ending. FLIN for instance, through only three visuals, found it sufficient to explain the beginning and ending of an event. As for *The Graphic*, even though the visuals were unsystematic and not arranged according to the plot, the visuals provided had given a clear portrayal of The Perak War. FLIN began its visual report on The Perak War through the British Expedition Against the Malays of Perak visual and ended it with a visual on the location of The Graves of Birch, Captain Innes, and others in Pasir Salak. Only through these published visuals, the researcher believes that it had given a 'perfect' image of The Perak War. Next, even though this discussion was limited to illustrated newspaper reports, through McNair's (1878) work in *Perak and The Malays*, there was a visual of the location of Birch's grave. However, it was a visual related to the British Military Attack at a

location which was not disclosed. The onus of the article was the notes from the writer and the visuals produced were very useful in the historical research of Perak state at the dawn of the new imperialism era. The researcher believes that ILN's decision to not feature such visuals to avoid tarnishing the British's image through the assassination of Birch (Cannadine, 2002). His murder was a slap to their face and served as a reminder to not underestimate the Malay's ability and cunning ways in strategizing Birch's assassination: the Malays were considered as "the jungle people" by many Western newspapers including ILN (Abdullah et al., 2021). Moreover, the frustration could be traced in Illustration 10 and 11 which depicted the British's arrival in Perak with forty boats that were meant for the hunt for Dato' Maharajalela and others who were involved in Birch's assassination. From this visual, it was apparent that the British were determined to capture the murderer to restore their tarnished image like wilted flowers on the graves of Birch, Captain Innes, and others in Pasir Salak. Transparency shown by FLIN as well as The Graphic in featuring the visuals of Birch's and the others' graves was acknowledged and at the same time, such publication of visuals indicated that the British empire had its own weaknesses and shortcomings which could be used to fuel the colony's rebellion.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, findings indicate that the production of The Perak war visuals by The Graphic, ILN and FLIN was different based on the purpose of their publication. In all, there was a similarity in visual production objective stated which was to represent the British's interest in Malaya and the publication of these visuals also consolidated the imperial image of its colonies. The Graphic appeared to have prioritized objectivity on each visual that it produced even though such transparency could tarnish the glory of the British empire. As for ILN, this illustrated newspaper was very selective in producing visuals which were related to the event so that the image of the most powerful empire at that time did not fall short and marred because of the Birch's assassination that was conspired by the Sultan of Perak and the Malays. Therefore, visual publications from the ILN advocated eurocentrism and biased towards the British. INL attempted to compensate the pain caused by the assassination was deemed unsuccessful since The Graphic and FLIN had published The British Military Attack on the village of Kotah Lama, Perak River visual as well as a visual of Birch's, Captain Innes', and others' graves. As emphasized in the previous discussion, those visuals sat in stark contrast to their claim that the British were benign, progressive, and reformist in their intentions, although they were "brutal nonetheless." In reality, from the visuals portrayed, violence was prevalent in the structures and systems of British rule. It was not "occasional" but was "a means and an end for as long as the British Empire remained alive". FLIN seemed to be successful in highlighting objectivity in its publication of visual reports and it was able to provide a narrative for The Perak War through visual reports that were 'complete'. However, the objectivity in the visual report might require an in-depth study since the visual portrayal did not involve the American images even though it was one of the powerful empires in the world at that time. Hence, it is hoped that studies which are related to FLIN visual reports can be carried out by any researcher especially on those which represented the American interest and also consolidated the imperial image of its colonies.

In fact, these newspapers had provided various interesting and attractive visuals of the Perak War. The Perak War incident had led to the British's serious intervention in Malaya after that (Mohammad Azmi, 2019). All published visuals could be used as part of Malayan historical documentations especially in breathing in new life to The Perak War historical

narrative. The researcher believes that visuals which were featured in this study could be used through historical documentation on new media platforms such as Tik Tok. Such methods undeniably will gain huge attention especially among teenagers to draw them to the field of history. The Perak War visual has the potential to be used for this purpose.

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