THE MALAYS IN SINGAPORE:

POLITICAL ASPECTS OF

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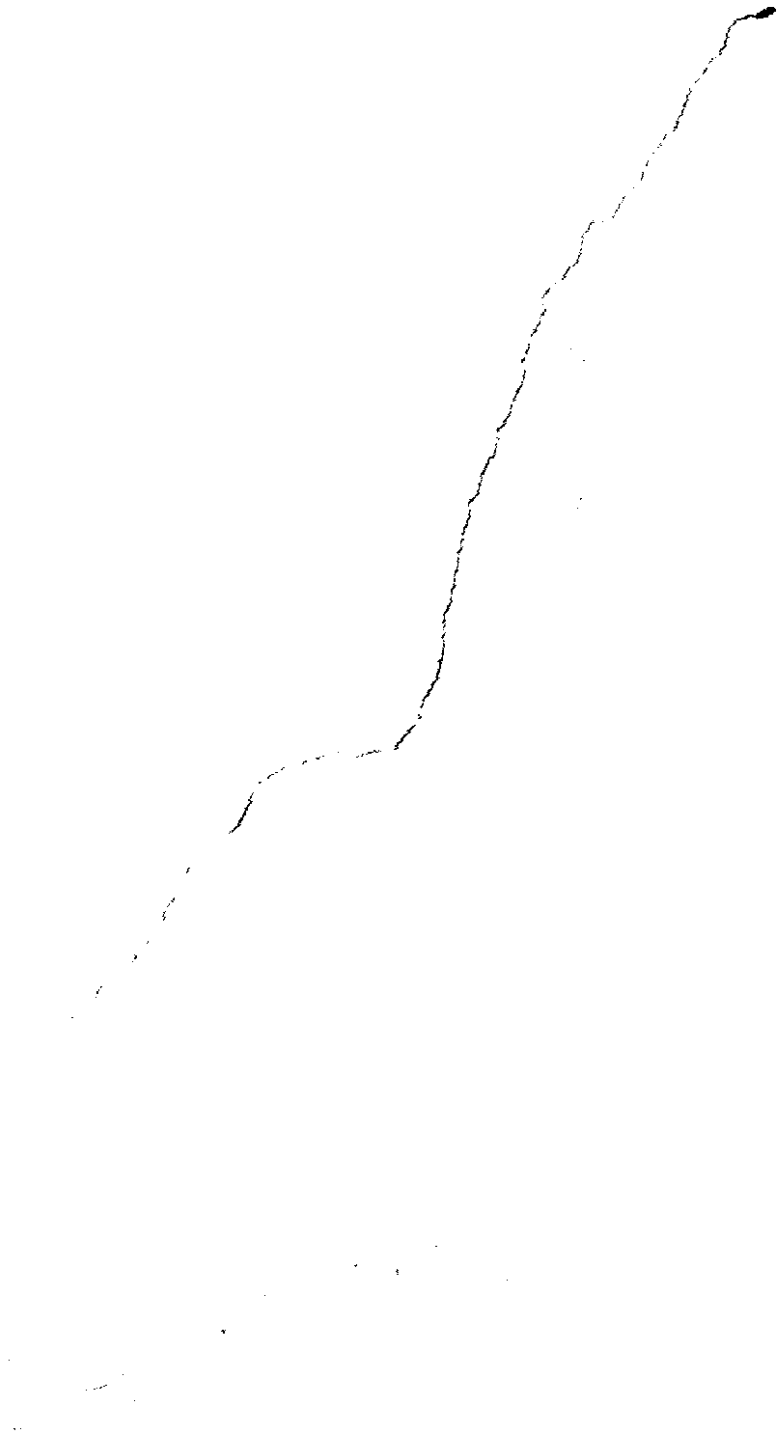
ABSTRACT

The social, economic, and cultural aspects of the "Malay problem" has received attention at the expense of political issues. There are glaring differences in perspectives on the sources of the Malay problem; however, the debate on the Malay problem has tended to attribute the source of "Malay weakness" to Malay culture or personality. As a consequence, there is a huge gap in the literature on the politics of the Singapore Malays; this thesis will focus on the political aspects of the Singapore Malay community.

Whereas the administration views Malay cultural values as an obstruction to the acculturation of the Singapore Malays with "modern" functional values which encourage the acquisitive spirit and subsequently, the aspiration for economic success, the Malays argue that the problems afflicting the community extends into the political sphere. For the Malays, political issues are as significant and pressing as are the non-political aspects of their relative social, economic, and political weakness.

This thesis examines the nature of the political difficulties afflicting the Singapore Malays in light of these conflicting views on the issue, by placing the study within the context of the political environment in order to explicate the impact and implications of that environment on the Malay problem. Both the political environment as well as the willingness and ability of the Malays to seize opportunities provided by that environment, are key variables in the issue of Malay political marginality.



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I would like to thank the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and the National University of Singapore for extensive use of their collections. A sincere *terima kasih* to those Singapore Malays who set aside valuable time from a tight agenda to accommodate the research curiosity of a Singapore Chinese, as well as other Malays who have contributed academically in one way or another. The insights gained from these conversations have found their way into this thesis in various forms; however, formal citations will not be made in the text of this thesis due to the politically sensitive nature of the topic. I am grateful to McMaster University and the Department of Political Science for the Ontario Differential Fee Waiver to offset the substantial foreign student fees, as well as to the McMaster Graduate Students Association for a travel allowance for this research project.

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The Problem Defined

Ambiguity surrounds the issue of Singapore "Malay weakness." The minority Malay community in Singapore has frequently been characterized as a socially and economically weak ethnic community associated with high rates of divorce, drug addiction, low educational attainment, and low employment status.[1] As the largest minority of approximately 15 percent of the total population of Singapore, the Singapore Malays have been depicted as an ethnic community plagued by socio-economic problems attributable to causes inherent in Malay culture. There is a widespread impression that the source of Malay weakness originates from Malay culture or personality, and that any change or improvement in the Malay social, political, and economic position in Singapore will have to begin with a reorientation of Malay cultural values from a "traditional peasant mentality" to one oriented to the acquisitive values of a "modern capitalist economy." Partly as a result of this widespread and ready acceptance of this conventional perspective on the weakness of the Malay community in Singapore, analyses of the problem have tended to focus on the social, economic, or cultural aspects of the "Malay problem." The assumption underlying this non-political view of Malay weakness is that Malay culture is either static and not dynamic, or that it is deeply entrenched and resistant to external changes in the social environment.

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[1] "Please . . . Kick the Drug Habit, Urges Malay MP Close to Tears," *Straits Times*, 14 July 1990, 22; "Malay Addicts 'Waste $17m on Drug Habit'," *Straits Times*, 6 August 1990.

The administration views Malay cultural values as an obstruction to the acculturation of the Singapore Malays with "modern" functional values which encourage the acquisitive spirit and subsequently, the aspiration for economic success. As Betts notes, special assistance policies seek to encourage "Malay adoption of the acquisitive mentality which is essential to Singapore's progress."[2] Associated with the cultural explanation is that relating to the educational performance of Malays. It is argued that the key to improving the Malay condition lies in educational attainment which will equip the Malays with the required qualifications for the economy. Educational failures are accordingly linked to the inhibiting values of Malay culture. Even if Malay culture may influence the attitudes of Malays, it will be shown that institutional arrangements which derive from public policy concerning the Singapore Malays have also had the effect, whether intended or otherwise, of perpetuating Malay weakness. Specifically, these institutions have constrained the scope of Malay political participation in Singapore.

Perhaps influenced by official government appraisals of the Malay problem, non-government studies of the Singapore Malay community also tend to be socio-economic rather than political in nature. Likewise, these studies focus on the Malays and education and link poor Malay educational performance with socio-economic malaise. At its most general level, these studies find that deficiencies in Malay educational attainment result in the inability of Malays to find employment, and to a subsequent discontent and disillusionment resulting in a withdrawal from society, and in most cases, a resort to drug dependence especially among Malay youths. Subsequently, these analyses prescribe the upgrading of Malay educational proficiency as the key to improving the social and economic weakness afflicting the

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[2] Russell Henry Betts, "Multiracialism, Meritocracy and the Malays of Singapore," (Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1975), 200.

underprivileged class of Singapore Malays. As these studies tend to focus on the Malay community, they yield conclusions in isolation from the broader socio-political context. The results from these studies are often cited in defining the Malay problem as being unique to the Malays. Owing to this emphasis on the cultural factor, political problems facing the Singapore Malays tend not to be given as much attention.

Although not discounting its significance, Tania Li has contested the overemphasis on cultural explanations. Li's social anthropological study of the Singapore Malays shows that Malay culture indeed adapts itself to changes in the broader social environment in Singapore. For example, she found that "Prior to 1959, the majority of Malays were not generally worse off economically than the majority of the Chinese," based on her analysis of quantitative findings of 1958 which showed that "the local born Malay is shown to have held his own against the other communities. It is only in the sense that comparatively few of them succeed to reach the best paid occupations that one can say that the Malay community has been economically unsuccessful."[3] She goes on to show that this absolute and relative Malay position of parity with the Chinese at the non-élite level declined in the post-1959 period, and provides a compelling explanation of this change in position in terms of non-cultural variables. A discussion of her analysis will not be conducted; suffice it to say that her assertion that certain aspects of culture change according to "different structural, economic or other conditions,"[4] lends support to the approach taken in this study that will examine the political problems of the Singapore Malay community by looking at the political environment within which the Singapore Malay community is placed. Li's success in stressing structural variables

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[3] Tania Li, *Malays in Singapore: Culture, Economy, and Ideology* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), 100.

[4] Ibid., xvi.

external to the Malay community stems from locating her analysis within a broader social, political, and economic context in Singapore.[5]

Conversely, while the Malays do not deny that social and economic malaise afflict various segments of the Malay community, they have also articulated political problems facing the community. These concern the role of Malays in the political process, a problem which has received relatively little exposure and treatment compared to the non-political concerns. The Singapore Malays have argued that the current system of Malay political representation and bargaining within the current framework does not provide effective channels of interest articulation. To the Malays, political problems are as significant and pressing as are the non-political issues. The political problems they face revolve around the issue of an appropriate Malay political leadership with the capacity and relative autonomy to articulate the concerns of the Singapore Malay community. This leadership question concerns the legitimacy of Malay political leaders from the ruling party. This problem being a product of the system of political representation and bargaining between the Malay community and the ruling party. There is clearly a divergence in perspectives on the Malay problem.

Notwithstanding the high production of studies of the socio-economic weakness of the Singapore Malays, there has been an extremely unusual and anomalous absence of published works on the Singapore Malays: "Despite its significance to Singapore and the region, no full-length treatment on the Singapore Malay community has been published in nearly three

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[5] Similarly, in a study of Malay socio-economic weakness in the Malay peninsula, Tham Seong Chee emphatically notes in *Malays and Modernization: A Sociological Interpretation* 2d ed. (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983), ix, that both academics and non-academics "have tended to treat the problem in isolation," without considering broader social and institutional practices and values.

decades."[6] More importantly, there is a dearth in the literature on the politics of the Singapore Malays.

Over an extended period, the continued association of educational, social, and economic weakness with the Malay community, will undoubtedly institutionalize the problem as one endemic to the Singapore Malays, and as one that is solely social and economic. Regardless of the strength of these "mainstream" socio-economic propositions concerning Malay weakness, it cannot be denied that as an ethnic minority, as with ethnic minorities elsewhere, the Singapore Malays undoubtedly face political problems in one form or another.

Rationale and Approach

This thesis does not set out to justify or support Malay claims to the existence of a political problem, but investigates the nature of that problem in light of the conflicting views on the issue. The study will not attempt to fill the gaps in the literature by aiming for a "full-length treatment" because of the nature, purpose, scope, and requirements of this academic exercise, but aims to explicate the political problems facing the Singapore Malay community. This thesis begins by assuming that there are political problems afflicting the Singapore Malays, and asks what political difficulties confront the Singapore Malays in independent Singapore, traces the problem in historical perspective so as to identify plausible causes of that problem, and seeks to determine the extent to which these causes can be attributed, as has been the case with socio-economic analyses, solely to a deficiency in educational attainment or even to Malay cultural practices and value systems.

Instead of accepting the position that fundamental parameters shaping Malay problems originate in Malay society, and implicitly, the assumption that the broader environment or

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[6] Li, *Culture, Economy, and Ideology.*

social system does not significantly define those problems afflicting the Singapore Malays, this study examines the impact and implications of the political environment in Singapore on the nature of political problems facing the Singapore Malays. The specific focus on political aspects of the problem does not dismiss the significance of social, economic, and cultural variables. Rather, the stress on politics is largely motivated by the need for research on politics and the Singapore Malays owing to severe gaps in the literature in this area. Sociological, economic, and cultural studies are certainly important in shedding light on phenomena in these respective disciplines; however, the political implications subsumed in these studies are rarely ever developed, leaving the Malay problem jigsaw gaping without its political contours.

Owing to the dearth in studies on the politics of the Singapore Malays, this thesis has had to draw heavily on historical, social, economic, and cultural studies for inferences about the political aspects of the Malay problem. The potential of error in inference has not been ignored, and an attempt has been made, as far as possible, to compensate or control for inferential bias, by relating the analysis to the broader socio-political context, about which more has been written.

The rationale behind treating institutional variables as exogenous is based on the assumption that the minority Singapore Malay community is not able to significantly shape these institutions through political action. Owing to this limited capacity of the Malays to significantly alter or influence the institutional structure, the scope and possibilities for active Malay political participation are limited.

CHAPTER 1

BRITISH RULE AND MALAY AUTHORITY IN SINGAPORE: 1819-1824

The Political Context and the British

When Stamford Raffles first arrived at Singapore in 1819, the Johore Sultanate was paralysed by a succession crisis. Encompassing Riau, Singapore, and Johore, and with a mixed Bugis and Malay population, the Sultanate was weakened by split loyalties. The sudden death of Sultan Mohamed Shah in 1812 was followed by a contest between two claimants: *Tunku* Hussein, the sultan's eldest son, whose supporters were primarily Malay; and *Tunku* Abdul Rahman, a younger son, whose primary supporters were Bugis.[1] With Dutch backing, the younger claimant was able to seize the throne, in part because his older brother was at the time, outside the realm in Pahang being married.[2]

Tunku Abdul Rahman's dubious claim to the throne enabled the British to support Hussein as the new Sultan of Johore who was then established in Singapore along with his principal supporter and regional chief, the Temenggong. Backed by a local Malay population, the Temenggong enjoyed more substantive power than Sultan Hussein who was removed from the trappings of power in the Johore court and "was always eclipsed by the more dominating

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[1] Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1982), 110; C. Mary Turnbull, *A History of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 97. The word 'Sultan' is Arabic/Turkish for 'monarchy'; Hussin Mutalib, *Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), 31.

[2] Turnbull, *Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei*, 97.

Temenggong"[3] in matters of policy. Unlike in the peninsular Malay states, a relatively autonomous Temenggong wielded power as the *de facto* ruler of Singapore, while the sultan, who "could exert little influence over his chiefs or principal ministers," was only a *de jure* sovereign with "no authority whatever,"[4] and performed only ceremonial functions. The succession crisis fractured the ruling lineage and provided the conditions for the British to establish a firm control of Singapore.

The systematic demise of traditional Malay authority can be traced through a series of three stages from 1819 to 1824. Each phase was clearly defined by a treaty and a corresponding decline in the significance of both rulers whose powers and influence were swiftly eroded. By 1824, the British had obtained full powers to rule Singapore as a British colonial possession, and the administrative structure which they imposed, determined the subsequent political fortunes of the Singapore Malays.

Profile of Early Singapore Malay Community

The Malay community in Singapore is not an indigenous component of the Singaporean population as Malays comprise immigrants who came mainly from the surrounding areas of the Malay Archipelago during the great influx of migrants in the eighteenth century.[5] Except for the Temenggong's entourage of twenty to thirty followers, and

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[3] Andaya and Andaya, *History of Malaysia*, 111.

[4] D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, 3d ed. (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1968), 511; L. A. Mills, *British Malaya 1824-67* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966), 55; Andaya and Andaya, *History of Malaysia*, 108-9; Charles Burton Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: n.p., 1902), 1:21; C. M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore 1819-1988*, 2d ed. (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), 9; Edwin Lee, *The British as Rulers Governing Multiracial Singapore 1867-1914* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), 4.

[5] Willard A. Hanna, "The Malays' Singapore Part I: The Feudal Past," *American Universities Field Staff Reports, Southeast Asia Series* 14, no. 2 (January 1966): 1; Stanley S.

a similar number of Chinese, the early Malay inhabitants of Singapore comprised *orang laut* or sea gypsies who lived a nomadic and impermanent existence.[6] In fact, the Biruanda Orang Kallang, "were the indigenous inhabitants of Singapore and had lived in the swamps at the mouth of the Kallang River as far back as their traditions went;"[7] there was no agriculture and they lived on fishing and produce gathered from the jungle. More importantly, these sea gypsies, especially those of the Gallang tribe, and the Malays monopolised and controlled the lucrative piracy cartel upon which the Temenggong depended as a source of livelihood.[8] In other words, the early economy of Singapore was largely controlled by the Malay chief, and was based on small-scale trading, piracy, and the collection of jungle produce.

The Malays in Singapore had an established mode of organization based on a social milieu that reflected a rigid pattern of authority, and apart from intermediate layers of village chiefs and headmen, traditional Malay society can essentially be characterised by a well defined gulf between the rulers and the people or *rakyat.*[9] The Sultan occupied the apex of

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Bedlington, "The Singapore Malay Community: The Politics of State Integration" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1974), 38; Ismail Kassim, *Problems of Elite Cohesion: A Perspective from a Minority Community* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1974), 29; William R. Roff, "The Malayo-Muslim World of Singapore at the Close of the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 24, no. 1 (1964): 75-76; Cheng Siok Hwa, "Demographic Trends," in *Singapore: Development Policies and Trends*, ed. Peter S. J. Chen (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1983), 68.

[6] Hanna, "Feudal Past," 1.

[7] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 5.

[8] Hanna, "Feudal Past," 5.

[9] J. M. Gullick, *Malay Society in the Late Nineteenth Century: The Beginnings of Change* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), 71; idem, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (London: The Athlone Press, 1958), 65, notes that "The division of the community into two classes--a ruling and a subject class--was one of the basic elements of Malay political and social structure." See also, Edwin Lee, "Community, Family, and Household," in *A History of Singapore*, ed. Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), 244.

this division in a rigid social hierarchy.[10] This socio-political alignment "was a political alignment which was rarely bridged by intermarriage or the advancement of a member of the subject class to the ruling class."[11] The significance of this gap lies in the command of services of men and women by the ruling class.[12] Despite what appears to be an autocratic authority structure, the ruling class could not abuse their position even though the subject class was required to remain subservient in a system in which "the determining character of the relationship between *ra'ayat* and ruling class was submission."[13]

At first glance, this traditional social and political authority structure resembled a system in which the ruler had arbitrary power; however, elements of a balance of power existed where consultation was necessary in any decision making. Chiefs required the sultan's authorization before embarking on controversial or important acts.[14] As prescribed in the constitutional theory of the Malay state, chiefs claimed to hold office and received power only after being appointed by the sultan.[15] The sultan, in turn had to be accepted by the majority of the chiefs, who were usually drawn from the non-royal aristocracy, right from the beginning of

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[10] Radin Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism, 1896-1941," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 1 (1960): 1. Unlike the sultans of the peninsular Malay states, the sultan in Singapore enjoyed only symbolic importance as the Temenggong held effective power.

[11] Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems*, 21.

[12] Idem, *Beginnings of Change*, 48.

[13] William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (Kuala Lumpur and Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1967), 9.

[14] Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems*, 49.

[15] Ibid., 48-49.

his reign.[16] There was, as such, both royal and non-royal political representation in the traditional Malay authority system.

Consequently, sultans could not exercise arbitrary power without risking the loss of support from their chiefs. The sultans were essentially in a relatively vulnerable position vis-a-vis the district chiefs because sultans generally played a symbolic role. In fact, sultans exercised little power which rested primarily with district chiefs.[17] Policy decisions of both the sultan and chiefs were governed by having to seek consensus: "decisions in important affairs required the presence of and a consensus of agreement from the senior chiefs."[18] This sultan-chief relationship in practice functions as a check and balance on each party against the abuse of power. A system of mutual accountability prevailed in traditional Malay society.

At the lower level of authority, chiefs whose power-base was anchored in the size of their retinue, had to ensure the well-being of their followers; this "ruler-subject relationship was sustained by both parties constantly paying attention to one another."[19]

> If he [the chief] oppressed them [the followers] unduly or failed to protect them against marauders, the people would flee away and settle elsewhere.[20]

The freedom to shift loyalty from one district to another subordinated territorial boundaries to loyalty because Malays "considered themselves to be living not in so many states but under

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[16] Pang Keng Fong, *The Malay Royals of Singapore* (academic exercise, National University of Singapore, 1984), 13.

[17] Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems*, 3.

[18] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 3; Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems*, 21.

[19] Pang, *Malay Royals of Singapore*, 10.

[20] Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems*, 113.

individual rajas."[21] This relatively free movement of subjects prevented chiefs from exercising arbitrary power. As Milner observes, "men easily shifted their allegiance from one Raja to another."[22] The arbitrary use of power exacted heavy costs on the chief in a socio-political context which had built-in mechanisms to check against ambitious chiefs. Since there was no such concept as citizenship formally defined, a set of obligations on the part of the chief and his subjects ensured relative stability. What really mattered in this dependence was that loyalty of subjects to rulers was not defined territorially.

In the case of Singapore, this relationship between ruler and ruled is clearly reflected in the Temenggong's provision of assistance to the pirates in exchange for a share in the bounty. As such, the social relationships between ruler and ruled was defined by traditional Malay political values and practices. The perpetuation of that political and social organization was in turn dependent on the ruler's access to wealth for maintaining the retinue that was the substance of a ruler's rule.

The Concept of *Adat* in Malay Society

The concept of *adat* formed the basis of social, and political organization, as well as administration in traditional Malay society.[23] There are two variants of *adat*: *Adat Perpateh*

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[21] A. C. Milner, *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1982), 9. Although this situation is more relevant to the peninsular states, its principles could also be applied to Singapore by viewing the latter as a microcosm of the peninsular; however, one would be hard-pressed to stretch this concept too far for the Singapore case, since there were only the Temenggong's and the Sultan's followers grouped into geographically restricted settlements. As such, there was only the sultan as an alternative to which the Temenggong's followers could shift their allegiance. The notion of obligation was perhaps a more important mechanism to retain stability in the case of Singapore.

[22] Ibid., 8.

[23] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 69.

and *Adat Temenggong*. *Adat Perpateh* operated according to a lineage system based on matrilineal descent, whereas *Adat Temenggong* functioned according to patrilineal descent but without any lineage organization.[24] In practice, the distinguishing feature between the two lies in "the way the law is administered rather than in the actual law itself; the '*adat temenggong*' was the '*adat perpateh* administered on autocratic lines'."[25] Autocracy in this instance involved the exercise of political authority along territorial lines, where villages and districts formed the territorial units of the social and political system; in contrast, the *Adat Perpateh* emphasised clan distinctions such that political organization was based on kinship ties.[26] *Adat* has played such a key role in Malay social organization that until recently, "no Malay has ever dared to challenge the standing" of the Malay proverb "*biar mati anak, jangan mati adat* (let the child but not the custom die)."[27]

Malay society in Singapore followed *Adat Temenggong* instead of *Adat Perpateh*.[28] The *Adat Perpateh* prevailed in Menangkabau, and since there is little evidence to indicate a strong Menangkabau migration to Singapore, it probably explains why *Adat Perpateh* did not establish itself in Singapore Malay society. The strength of a culturally heterogeneous composition of Malay migrants to Singapore who came mainly from Java, further emphasised

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[24] Judith Djamour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage in Singapore* (London: The Athlone Press, 1965), 13-14; Haron A. Rahman, "The Concepts Behind the Two Adat," *Straits Times*, 25 March 1987, 5.

[25] Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems*, 37.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Abu Makhluuf, "Between Adat and Economic Progress," *Straits Times*, 15 December 1983, 6.

[28] Djamour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage*, 14.

the weak Menangkabau influence.[29] Since no single social system dominated due to this heterogeneity, the method of social and political organization was strongly determined by demographic factors and its associated cultural elements.

> Migrant groups were usually domiciled in villages organized on the basis of place-of-origin where presumably the importance of ethnic languages and customs were reinforced. . . . Thus . . . one had, for at least the better part of the nineteenth century, not "a" Muslim community, but a number of Muslim communities.[30]

Ethnicity was as such, "reflected largely through place-of-origin," which served as "the most important core organizing principle of social organization."[31]

The relevance of *Adat Temenggong* for Singapore Malays is reflected in the concentration of authority in the persons of the Temenggong and the Sultan, as well as the importance of geography; in addition, Malays "who practised *Adat Temenggung* were mostly fishermen, sailors and traders,"[32] which was characteristic of Singapore Malay society. As such, kinship ties relevant to *Adat Perpateh* did not appear to make its presence felt. In general, a sultan is required to respect Malay *adat*, which the Singapore Malays adhered to before the turn of this century.[33]

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[29] In his *Indigenous Political Systems*, (37-38), Gullick has argued that because of cultural diversity in the states of Perak and Selangor, it was inevitable that a centralised autocracy should emerge as a means of social and political control.

[30] Sharon Siddique, "The Administration of Islam in Singapore," in *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, ed. Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), 319.

[31] Ibid., 316.

[32] Haron, "Concepts Behind Adat," 5.

[33] Chiew Seen-Kong, "The Socio-Cultural Framework of Politics," in *Government and Politics of Singapore*, ed. Jon S. T. Quah, Chan Heng Chee, and Seah Chee Meow (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985), 46; Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 19.

British Treaties and the Malay Rulers

The British quickly exploited the fissures in the Malay political hierarchy which had undermined the authority of the throne: "little remained of the once powerful Malay empire."[34] Despite the weakness of Hussein who was by now powerless and living in obscurity in Lingga, the British and the Temenggong concurred that Hussein should be installed in Singapore "in order to establish legality for the British station at Singapore."[35] As the Malay chiefs supported Hussein rather than the younger claimant as the successor, it was imperative for the British who were seeking to establish a presence in a Malay archipelago to do likewise. Subsequently, Hussein was secretly brought to Singapore where the British concluded a treaty with both the Temenggong and Hussein on 6 February 1819 which permitted the English East India Company to set up a trading post.[36]

The provisions of the treaty implied opportunities for both Malay rulers to consolidate their political position, and as such, made rejection too costly. The British offered an annual payment of $3,000 and $5,000 to the Temenggong and Sultan respectively.[37] The treaty also provided both Malay rulers with military assistance, but prohibited both rulers from engaging in external relations, while the British refrained from interfering in the internal politics of the Malays.[38] More importantly, both native rulers were entitled to a fraction of all port dues collected by the British.

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[34] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 8.

[35] Ibid., 9.

[36] The text of this treaty can be found in Buckley, *Anecdotal History*, 1:38-40.

[37] M. B. Hooker, *A Concise Legal History of South-East Asia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 126.

[38] Buckley, *Anecdotal History*, 1:39.

As the agreement did not involve the cession or transfer of sovereignty of Singapore, native rulers could exercise residual power, and were allowed to participate in the administration of Singapore, through a sharing of authority with the British: "government of the settlement was, . . . a 'condominium of Company officials and Malay rajas'."[39] In fact, Trocki contends that both native rulers intended to have a share in power as they were fully aware of the political and economic significance of the port to their position of authority.[40] This was because the political structure of Malay states have historically been based on a trading city, and by extension, a ruler's power derived from control of the port from which dues were collected.[41] Both the Sultan and Temenggong, together with the British Resident, met weekly to deal with grievances, and other administrative and logistical matters.[42] Indeed, the initial period of British occupation saw an ascendancy of traditional Malay authority where "nothing could be arranged"[43] without the consent of the British, as well as that of the native rulers.

> The treaties of 1819 transformed the Malay rulers into a great political force vis-a-vis the period before 1819. . . . the Malay chiefs were accorded great deference and economic power.[44]

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[39] Ernest C. T. Chew, "The Foundation of a British Settlement," in *A History of Singapore*, ed. Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), 39; Carl A. Trocki, *Prince of Pirates: The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore 1784-1885* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979, 47, calls this power sharing "tripartite rule."

[40] Trocki, *Prince of Pirates*, 51-52.

[41] Ibid., 51.

[42] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 12.

[43] Hooker, *Concise Legal History*, 126; Edmund Kwok, "The Impact of British Rule on the Position of Traditional Malay Rulers in Singapore," *Journal of the History Society* (1989/90): 5.

[44] Kwok, "Impact of British Rule," 5.

Changes were made in June 1823, to the 1819 treaty with the aim of diminishing the authority of the native rulers and to extend British control over the entire island, so as to remove the customary entitlement of Malay rulers to trade levies which contradicted British free trade policies. Both Malay rulers were relieved of their share in administration and relocated with their followers onto land reserves, which were immune to British control and away from the commercial district; the rulers "gave up all right to levy dues" in exchange for monthly allowances of $800 to the Temenggong, and $1,500 to the Sultan.[45]

The treaty of 1823 did not impose "any obligation on the Company's part to uphold the sultan's authority" and left the Malay chiefs without any power to control Singapore along the lines of earlier trade centres in which "a Malay hierarchy would preside over a cosmopolitan trading community, leasing land, judging lawsuits, and exacting dues."[46] These changes to the 1819 treaty were critical to the native rulers' position and authority for three reasons. Firstly, the Malay rulers were relieved of their judicial and quasi-legislative powers and their share in administration, and became isolated from the mainstream of politics. Secondly, the relocation of both rulers to land reserves and the restriction of their authority to these areas, formally circumscribed their political power, since the territory over which to rule was reduced. Thirdly, at a time of steadily increasing economic activity in Singapore, both rulers no longer enjoyed the percentage of port levies as income to maintain their following

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[45] Chew, "Foundation of a British Settlement," 39; Mills, *British Malaya*, 63; Lee, *British as Rulers*, 5; for the text of the Convention of 7 June 1823, see Buckley, *Anecdotal History*, 1:106-7.

[46] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 16; idem, *The Straits Settlements 1826-67: Indian Presidency to Crown Colony* (London: The Athlone Press, 1972), 273.

and status.[47] Specifically, the Malay rulers were jettisoned from the control of the economic and political spheres, and deprived of the attendant benefits which influence implied.

Unlike the 1819 treaty which was not entered into by the Temenggong and the Sultan under any form of coercion, the 1823 treaty was signed by the Malay rulers under pecuniary pressure from the British, who reacted to increasing demands from both Malay rulers for their stipends to be raised. The British intentionally defaulted on monthly payments to both Malay rulers who were desperately in need of funds to service debts accumulated from a lavish lifestyle, so that the eventual British offer of monetary compensation for a complete Malay cession of Singapore would be made more enticing and irresistible.

As the 1823 agreement fell short of a complete formal cession of Singapore, the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance of August 1824, completely and formally divested both Malay rulers of authority and sovereignty over Singapore, and prohibited them from engaging in external affairs, but allowed them to continue residing on land reserves.[48] As compensation, a lump sum of $33,200, and $1,300 per month was paid to the sultan, while the Temenggong received a lump sum of $26,800 and $700 per month.[49]

The British removal of the native rulers' control over land and laws eliminated avenues through which these rulers could strengthen their position and exercise authority. Land, which had earlier come under the authority of the native rulers, now became sold on

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[47] The value of imports and exports in 1823 totalled greater than $13 million. Hall, *History of South-East Asia*, 508. In the absence of comparative figures which would have given a clearer idea of the magnitude of economic activity, the value of $13 million in 1823 dollars, the eagerness of the Company to reinterpret the 1819 treaty, and the increase in Chinese immigrants to Singapore in response to economic opportunity, all combine to indicate a highly vibrant and growing economy.

[48] Turnbull, *Straits Settlements*, 275. For the text of the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, see Buckley, *Anecdotal History*, 1:168-70.

[49] Hall, *History of South-East Asia*, 509.

permanent lease by public auction which only the wealthier non-Malays could afford, and since land was integral to the concept of *adat Temenggong* according to which Singapore Malay society was organized, the political authority of the Malay rulers was directly undermined by the limited area of land on reserves: "Without territory there can be no sovereignty in law."[50] Judicial changes introduced English law, and confined Muslim law to religious practice, marriage and inheritance among the Malay population.[51] In other words, the relationship between Malay rulers and their subjects was significantly altered because these rulers were now bound by English law, and could not exercise political authority in the way they used to, even within the Malay community as Malays were also included under the ambit of English laws except in matters pertaining to Malay culture.

These changes affected traditional Malay authority as the relevance of land to authority was abolished through relocation, and the prohibition of taxation implied an eventual depletion of financial resources required to support a ruler's status, and finally, the legal jurisdiction of Malay rulers was diminished not only over Singapore, but also within Malay society. Singapore was converted into a free port to the benefit of the mercantile class but not the native rulers who were paid a lump sum by the British, instead of enjoying a percentage of dues which was substantial considering the rapid growth of the economy. Indeed, the institutional changes and measures "further whittled down the Malay chiefs' influence."[52]

Notwithstanding the coercive nature under which the treaty of 1823 was signed, both Malay rulers stood to gain from entering into the treaties which promised pecuniary benefits.[53]

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[50] Lee, *British as Rulers*, 7.

[51] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 22.

[52] Ibid., 26.

[53] Trocki, *Prince of Pirates*, 45.

With a feeble sultanate that could no longer provide the Temenggong with desperately needed income to maintain his following which "grew or diminished according to the general prosperity and the strength of his position in the entrepot,"[54] the British offer was an excellent opportunity to consolidate the Temenggong's economic and political position. Similarly, the Sultan was relatively too weak to demand exorbitant royalties from the British, and it could be surmised that his priority was to seize the chance implied by the treaty of 1819, to regain his status as the rightful Sultan of Johore.[55] The fact of his succumbing to the pecuniary coercion confirms the Sultan's position of weakness.

Reasons for Curtailing Malay Authority

As the Company's economic activities required political stability and certainty, the 1823 reinterpretation was necessary in order to obtain a "cession of the island [so that] the Company could legally set up courts of law,"[56] to impose English law in Singapore to ensure public order. As Turnbull has noted, "early Singapore was notoriously lawless."[57] The 1819 treaty gave the British

> only treaty rights to establish a British enclave within a Malay realm. . . . 'There was in reality *no territorial cession giving a legal right of legislation* [italics mine]. . . . The native chief was considered to be the proprietor of the land, even within the bounds of the British factory.'[58]

The British free port strategy also dictated that the Malay rulers had to be prevented from levying port dues, in order to protect "the increasingly valuable trade on the Singapore river

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[54] Andaya and Andaya, *History of Malaysia*, 108-9; Trocki, *Prince of Pirates*, 45.

[55] Hanna, "Feudal Past," 8.

[56] Mills, *British Malaya*, 63.

[57] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 16.

[58] Chew, "Foundation of a British Settlement," 38-39.

from [the rulers'] predatory interference."[59] In fact, the merchants were quick to recognise that a rise in the power of native rulers would be detrimental to mercantile interests, and pressured the British administration "to ensure the breakdown of larger and more exacting forms of native government, and . . . the maintenance of an entrepôt system."[60] Politically, the British administration wanted to prevent the development of disputes regarding Singapore's political status as part of a larger Malay empire which included territories to the south of the Singapore straits then under the control of the Dutch.[61]

English laws were accordingly introduced but enforced "with due consideration to the usages and habits of the people."[62] Malay laws and customs were respected in cases dealing with religion, marriage, and inheritance so long as these laws were not contrary to "reason, justice, or humanity."[63] In a study of English law in Southeast Asia, Hooker notes that

> the history of the English legal world in South-East Asia is a history of the accommodation between English principles and indigenous laws, resulting in the latter being absorbed within the English legal system by way of both statute and case law.[64]

Notwithstanding British considerations for religion and custom, the legal position of the Malay rulers were not safeguarded by the treaty. The native rulers had been divested of political authority, which was assumed by the British.

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[59] Lee, *British as Rulers*, 5.

[60] Nicholas Tarling, *British Policy in the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago, 1824-1871* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), 15.

[61] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 28.

[62] Buckley, *Anecdotal History*, 1:107; Hooker, *Concise Legal History*, 126.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Hooker, *Concise Legal History*, 123.

Status of Malay Authority after 1824

The subsequent establishment of British authority in Singapore effectively undermined the political and economic power, as well as prestige of traditional leadership groups. The British refusal to install a new ruler after the death of Hussein in 1835, confirmed for the Malays that power undoubtedly laid in the hands of British administrators.[65] Hussein's successor, Sultan Ali, was eventually proclaimed only in 1855 solely for symbolic reasons; Ali's successor was likewise not recognised when Sultan Ali died in 1877.[66] Although the sultan continued to reside in Singapore, he

> was never able to wield any effective authority over the Malays of Singapore, and . . . by the mid-nineteenth century no pattern of traditional, ascriptive Malay leadership existed in Singapore.[67]

Judith Djamour has also described Malay society in Singapore as being "devoid of its aristocratic leadership."[68] As Trocki has noted, only "seven years after the settlement of Singapore was founded, there was not even a Temenggong"[69] with the powers of a traditional ruler. Indeed, the survival of the powerless Temenggong and his followers depended "almost exclusively on the goodwill and tolerance of the Singapore government."[70]

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[65] Hashimah Johari, "The Emerging Malay Social Structure in Singapore," (M.A. thesis, National University of Singapore, 1984), 20.

[66] Lee, *British as Rulers*, 5-10.

[67] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 9-10.

[68] Djamour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage*, 17.

[69] Trocki, *Prince of Pirates*, 40.

[70] Ibid.

Even though formal English laws were introduced, they were not strictly enforced by a cumbersome and weak British administration lacking in financial resources.[71] In practice, all communities were self-administered due to the lack of administrative manpower, and the relative unwillingness of local ethnic communities to adapt to the newly imposed British legal system.[72] For example, the Chinese community was effectively organized by secret societies in such a way that "the Straits authorities were unwilling to enforce measures against the societies" or have them outlawed, since the Chinese were important to the commercial and economic life of Singapore.[73] Instead, the authorities "aimed to work in co-operation with their leaders rather than drive them underground."[74] Relative "lawlessness" prevailed over a feeble British political administration, crippling the administrative service but not economic development.[75] Until the 1920s, when a Malay leadership reemerged, the Malay community continued its existence in political, economic, and social isolation from the rest of Singapore. It is important to note that since the Malays already had an economic system in place, there was no compelling reason for them to engage in the commercial life of Singapore. Conversely, the Chinese seized the economic opportunities in Singapore, which had induced them to leave strife torn China.[76] Indeed, the brief period from 1819-1823 was "the heyday of

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[71] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 57.

[72] Turnbull, *Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei*, 104.

[73] Ibid., 105.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 36.

[76] Ibid., 40. Many have associated this vigorous economic opportunism of the Chinese with the current disadvantaged position of the Malays in Singapore. The coming of Western square-rigged sailing ships in the 1840s also proved decisive in sealing the economic fate of the Malays whose much more inferior vessels were displaced as trading crafts.

native power."[77] By contrast, the century after 1824 can be characterized as the heyday of British rule, commercial expansion and the benign neglect of the Malays in Singapore.

Summary

After the founding of Singapore in 1819, the Malays of Singapore rapidly became a minority community because of the rapid influx of alien immigrants.[78] Predisposed to live in scattered villages and to engage in agriculture and fishing, the Malays failed to play a significant political role in British Singapore.[79] Moreover, Malay customary law which operated according to patrilineal lines did not permit non-aristocrats to assume authority, precluding the emergence of an alternative leadership. The political influence of the Malay rulers in Singapore gradually disappeared, and with their decline, "no other Malay leaders emerged to take their place."[80]

The 1823 reinterpretation of the 1819 treaty was significant in altering the political status and authority of the native rulers as this new treaty extended British control of Singapore except over land reserved for the Malay rulers, and relegated the power of the native rulers by limiting their jurisdiction to their own community. The legal and administrative framework which the British subsequently imposed after the formal cession of Singapore in 1824, did not bear any resemblance to prior power sharing arrangements with the

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[77] Siddique, "Administration of Islam," 319.

[78] In the first census taken in 1824, the Malays still formed the largest community. Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 36, notes that by 1827, the Chinese had become the largest community comprising 65 per cent of the population. Chew, "Foundation of a British Settlement," 38-39, contests the appropriateness of locating the founding of Singapore in the year 1819.

[79] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 43.

[80] Ibid., 51.

Malay rulers and, in fact, completely ignored their presence and relevance as owners of the land. Instead, the British relationship with the subservient Malays was transformed from an "equal," to a patron-client relationship which the Malays did not appear to be in any hurry to alter. The Malay contentment with "official paternalism" is attributable to what Roff describes as "a deep rooted peasant-Malay deference to established authority,"[81] such that no elements within the Singapore Malay community emerged to challenge British authority which had "politically disposed" of Malay leaders. Indeed, the weakness of the sultanate is reflected in its inability to withstand the political manoeuvres of astute British administrators who managed to ensure the disintegration of native rule in the interest of unimpeded British commerce. The extended absence of a leadership, and as such, a leadership tradition, has plagued the Singapore Malay community which, up until today, is struggling to reach a consensus on an appropriate form of political leadership. The discontinuity in Malay leadership of approximately a century after 1824 enabled the British to entrench their rule which determined the course of future Malay political development in Singapore under a British-style legal and administrative framework. The political role of the Malay rulers began and ended with treaties devised to suit British interests. In such circumstances, British sovereignty could easily be asserted against a weakened institutional structure of Malay political authority, which could not reassert itself within a restructured political framework.

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[81] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 187. While deference may have contributed to the apparent Malay attitude, the norms of traditional authority also did not permit non-royal individuals to hold authority. Moreover, financial difficulties facing the native rulers compelled them to accept British treaties. As such, it was not simply a deference to authority.

CHAPTER 2

NEW ELITES AND MALAY NATIONALISM IN SINGAPORE: 1900-1945[1]

The Socio-Political Context

With the assertion of full sovereign power by the British over Singapore and the displacement of traditional Malay authority in the colony, Malay society suffered from a prolonged leadership vacuum. While there is little historical evidence on the nature of Malay authority in the half century after the founding of Singapore, it is reasonable to assume that Malay society operated with some system of low level village headmen or *penghulus* and elders, probably relying in part on Malay kinship linkages.[2] As Malays became an increasing part of an urbanised Singapore population, the system of traditional Malay village elders became more anachronistic especially in a fragmented Malay community which lacked social cohesion because of the continuous but irregular flow of other Muslim and Malay migrants to Singapore.[3]

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[1] The nationalism which the Malays experienced was not a political nationalism against a colonising power but "a growing social consciousness of the common problems that Malays felt in the wake of British rule." Yong Mun Cheong, "Indonesian Influence on the Development of Malay Nationalism--1922-38," *Journal of the Historical Society* (July 1970): 1.

[2] According to Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 53-57, the *penghulu* system of traditional authority and social organization existed only on the Southern Islands of Singapore, and "have not had much influence socially on the rest of the Singapore Malay population because of their isolated position [in the Southern Islands]."

[3] Ibid., 38.

A large proportion of these migrants were Malays from the surrounding islands and the Malay peninsula.[4] These migrants came mainly as indentured labourers, but also as pilgrims in transit to Mecca, some of whom remained to eventually settle in Singapore. The urban nature of Singapore also served as a gateway for Indonesian migration to the peninsula. Of these migrants, the small group of Arabs and Jawi Peranakan were integral, as catalysts, to the reemergence of Malay-specific leadership in the early 1900s.[5] These religiously conservative, but socially progressive Muslims were heavily involved in attempting to reform local Islam by purging it of the animism and syncretism of sufi mysticism. Both groups utilized the print media to its fullest as a vehicle to propagate the ideas of a purer form of Islam which had its roots in the Islamic resurgence in the Middle East. The reformist religious activism of these two groups was further stimulated by Islamic religious activities such as the *haj* or pilgrimage to Mecca that involved steadily increasing numbers of Muslims from the region coming to Singapore for boat passage to and from Arabia. Consequently, Singapore became a communication link for people, religious doctrine and political ideas.

Against the backdrop of this infusion of religious literature and ideas, both the Arabs and Jawi Peranakan functioned as "religious pedagogues," riding the wave of reformist ideas that challenged the "local" variant of Islam. The reformist role of these two non-Malay Muslim groups became significantly enhanced by the impact of similar reformist Islamic

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[4] Chiew Seen-Kong, "Ethnicity and National Integration: The Evolution of a Multi-ethnic Society," in *Singapore: Development Policies and Trends*, ed. Peter S. J. Chen (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1983), 33; the number of Malays reached approximately 26,148 in 1871 from only 120 in 1819, and accounted for 26.9 percent of the total population.

[5] See Narayanan Ganesan, "The Role of Islam in Malaysian and Indonesian Politics: A Comparative Survey," (M.A. thesis, McMaster University, 1986), 27-31, for a treatment of the Southeast Asian variant of Islam that adapted the *Sufi* mysticism introduced during the advent of Islam in Southeast Asia, to the animism or combination of animism with Hinduism and Buddhism practised prior to the arrival of Islam.

currents from the Middle East.[6] Aided by extraneous conditions in the Islamic world, both the Arabs and Jawi Peranakan in Singapore gradually acquired increasing leadership and authority within Malay-Muslim society.

The dynamism of this expanding religious activism provided a "breeding ground for new ideas and new ways,"[7] and turned Singapore into a hub of Islamic teaching and publication. At this point,

> Singapore to the Malays was an important and intrinsic component of the Malay world; separated only by political, artificially-created boundaries, culturally and economically it represented to the Malays (and to other Muslims) a bountiful and diverse cross-section of Malay life.[8]

Under these circumstances, the initiatives of the Jawi Peranakan and Arabs at religious reform coincided with ideal conditions within which their political leadership could be asserted. The Islamic resurgence in the first decades of the twentieth century stimulated a Malay awakening that changed Singapore Malay political attitudes from apparent apathy to mobilization for political action.[9]

These manifestations of Islamic resurgence also prompted the British to pursue a policy of coopting a new breed of less militant Malay leaders into the political process. As a result, established Singapore Malays were now given formal representation in the institutional

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[6] In fact, Indian and Arab traders had earlier imported and spread Islam in Southeast Asia through their trading activities that was carried out through the courts such that indigenous rulers became familiar with Islam.

[7] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 32.

[8] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 12.

[9] Religious introspection had an impact on the Malays who were adherents of Islam because Islam is conceptualized as a "total" religion which makes no distinctions between the social, political, and economic spheres of a followers life: "Islam's sway over the life of a Muslim and his unquestioning adherence to its precepts are mutually reinforcing." Ganesan, "Role of Islam," 8.

framework of the Singapore government thus providing both a stimulus for political activism and an access to political power. Backed by British patronage, this new embryonic Malay leadership posed a challenge to the Jawi Peranakan and Arab non-Malay Muslim leadership. The struggle for power within the Muslim community between local Malays, and Arab and Indian Muslims became intense in the 1920s. As a result of this struggle between these two new main groupings, residual traditional Malay authority surviving from the nineteenth century was eclipsed.

With formal Malay representation in the Legislative Council came a new found confidence in the political arena where Malays gradually came to express their political assertiveness in areas of Malay concern. Even though the British favoured local Malays as political representatives, Arabs and Jawi Peranakan continued to play a catalytic role in political and religious affairs at the informal level that stimulated the increasing political and religious mobilization of the Malay community. The distinctive roles of the Jawi Peranakan and of the Arabs in Singapore require separate consideration. This shift from a non-Malay Muslim leadership of the Malays, towards a Malay leadership, was significant because the Malays had previously suffered from a prolonged leadership vacuum that had left the community politically unorganized and marginalized. As such, it was no surprise that the appearance on the political scene of a Malay leader, was accompanied by an intense political mobilization of the Malays in Singapore.

Jawi Peranakan and Malay Consciousness

The Jawi Peranakan are Muslims born in Singapore from marriages between local Malay women and Indian Muslims, comprising Indian traders, merchants, and settlers who migrated to Malaya in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as well as convicts

brought to the Straits Settlements in the nineteenth century.[10] After the turn of the century, many Jawi Peranakan had become English-educated and were employed as teachers, clerks, translators, and interpreters by the British, while others had become successful merchants and traders of great wealth.[11] The eminent socio-cultural and economic standing of the Jawi Peranakan gave them parity with the Arabs "in leadership and authority within the Malayo-Muslim community."[12] Moreover, the Jawi Peranakan identified with Malay concerns and issues as a result of intermarriage, religious identification, linguistic ability, and some degree of cultural assimilation with Malay society.[13]

The establishment of a printing office and the first Malay language newspaper named *Jawi Peranakan* (1876-1896), was a precursor to the emergence of Malay language publications which subsequently came to play a vital role in awakening the consciousness of Singapore Malays.[14] Founded by Jawi Peranakan, this paper aimed to provide the latest foreign and local news, to foster vernacular education, and to promote the development of the Malay language. The paper catered to the small educated Malay élite and those engaged in commercial activities, devoting much of its space to business and commercial news.[15] It avoided being critical or hostile to British authority and was "frequently self-deprecatory" of

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[10] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 48. The majority of Jawi Peranakan lived in the Malayan, and now Malaysian, state of Penang. Those Indian migrants who did not intermarry continued living as a separate community.

[11] Ibid., 48-49, 189.

[12] Ibid., 49. For purposes of organization, the Arabs will be discussed in the subsequent section.

[13] Ibid., 48-49.

[14] Ibid., 159.

[15] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 118.

the Malays and conditions of Malay society.[16] In its early years, for much of its content, the paper reproduced translations of the English language press in the Straits Settlements, but with increasing contacts with the Middle East after the turn of the century, *Jawi Peranakan* became increasingly reliant on "the Egyptian and Arabic press as sources of news and articles of general interest and as determinants of journalistic style."[17] This shift in orientation of the *Jawi Peranakan* towards news from the Middle East, brought a constant influx of "revivified 'orthodox' Muslim thought" which stood in stark contrast to "the syncretism and eclecticism of indigenous religious life."[18] These news reports served as fodder for the non-Malay Muslim attack on local variants of Islam, and stimulated a Malay reappraisal of their religious beliefs and practices. William R. Roff has underscored the impact of the print media in the development of Islamic reformist ideas in Singapore, when he notes that "the role of literary and publication center for the Malayo-Muslim world came increasingly to be assumed by Singapore, with the added stimulus of more frequent and intensive communication with the Middle East."[19] Nevertheless, since approximately three-quarters of the Malay population was illiterate, only a "small elite group of literate Jawi Peranakan, Arabs, and Malays in the towns and some of the Malay-speaking Straits Chinese,"[20] were directly exposed to the potential of

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[16] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 49-50. Roff has attributed the non-confrontational nature of the Jawi Peranakan towards British authority, to the awe and respect which the British commanded from the Jawi Peranakan who were "impressed by the material and educational superiority of the West" Ibid., 50, footnote 62.

[17] Ibid., 50.

[18] Ibid., 43. For the Malays, Islam was a *total* way of social organization.

[19] Ibid., 44.

[20] Ibid., 50-51.

being agitated by news reports. Despite its commercial focus and narrow readership, *Jawi Peranakan* became "an important tool for social awakening among the Malays."[21]

To cope with the acute shortage of textbooks in Malay schools, Jawi Peranakan sponsored a second Malay language paper designed for use in Malay vernacular schools.[22] This paper, called *Sekolah Melayu*, was published for two years, from 1889-90. Besides providing general news and commentary on issues of concern to the Malay community, it also provided reading material infused with reformist orthodox Islamic thought as part of the Malay school curriculum.[23] Through this publication, Malay students were exposed at an early age to the political and religious doctrines of pan-Islamic revivalism which were then being generated from Egypt and other centres of religious and political activism in the Arab world.

In reporting on Islamic reformist activities of the Middle East and elsewhere, the *Jawi Peranakan* and *Sekolah Melayu* were instrumental in turning Singapore into "the focal point of reformist thought and literature in South-East Asia."[24] Although not radical and confrontational towards the British authorities, the *Jawi Peranakan* provided inspiration for subsequent Malay-based newspapers that emerged after the First World War. By serving as a medium through which reformist orthodox Islamic thought was disseminated, *Jawi Peranakan* laid the ideological foundation for both Jawi Peranakan and Arabs to assume more prominent

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[21] Chen Ai Yen, "The Mass Media, 1819-1980," in *A History of Singapore*, ed. Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), 290.

[22] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 50-51. The *Jawi Peranakan* had also been used as teaching material.

[23] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 51, 267; Chen, "Mass Media," 290-91.

[24] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 99.

leadership roles among the Singapore Muslim community which suffered from an endemic indigenous traditional Malay leadership vacuum.[25]

The Arabs and Reforms in Malay Society

As the complement to the Jawi Peranakan in the religious leadership of the Muslims in Singapore, the Arabs also played a key role in the political development of the Malays in Singapore. The Arabs were mainly wealthy traders who came to Singapore from the Hadramawt in small numbers in the 1830s.[26] They were "cultivated and scholarly men . . . with their roots in a literary and religio-legal society" resembling those of medieval Islam; their numbers grew substantially towards the latter part of the nineteenth century and totalled 919 in 1901.[27] By then, a large proportion of these Arab men, who possessed emotional and religious ties with their homeland too strong to be broken, had married local Malay women.[28] The resulting kinship relations from these intermarriages reinforced Malay acceptance of Arabs as co-religionists, and set the stage for the Arabs to assume religious leadership of the Malay community "as the direct inheritors of the wisdom of Islam, and . . . as possessed of unexampled piety and religious merit."[29]

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[25] Siddique, "Administration of Islam," 317.

[26] The Hadramaut (old spelling) is a south-eastern region in Yemen. *Historical Maps On File*, 1984 ed., s.v. "The Incense Road in Modern Times." The most recent spelling, Hadramawt, can be found in the *National Geographic Atlas of the World*, 6th ed., s.v. "Northeastern Africa;" *Philip's International World Atlas*, 1992 ed., s.v. "Arabia and the Horn of Africa."

[27] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 40-42; Djamour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage*, 13, reports that the Arabs numbered 2,591 in 1947.

[28] Djamour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage*, 13. Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 38.

[29] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 41. Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," (1), notes that sultans in the Malay peninsula were located at the apex of Malay religious life as Malay

After the closure of the *Jawi Peranakan* in 1896, the Arabs launched the first reformist journal, *Al-Imam* or *The Leader* (1906-1908), financed by urban Indonesian and Arab merchants with "extensive contacts with the Middle East modernist movement."[30] Expectedly, the orientation of *Al-Imam*'s content on religious and social reform mirrored elements of the Egyptian modernist movement. Other earlier publications had avoided political matters and serious discussion of religious, social, and economic issues.[31] By contrast, *Al-Imam*, which was inspired by reformist ideas of the Middle East, sought "to bring about social and religious reform among the Malays"[32] by purging Islam of its mixture with Malay cultural practices, as well as through modernizing Muslim education. Although the *Al-Imam* did not differ drastically from the *Jawi Peranakan* in its goals, its more militant and vocal approach to social criticism sought to change Malay values "along more progressive and, . . . religious lines."[33]

The Arab missionary zeal to "cleanse" Islam, stressed a strict adherence to "fundamental Islamic values untainted by innovation or the impurities of customary belief and superstition."[34] The Arabs argued that in its "true" form, Islam encouraged progressive

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peasants "believed that the Sultan was Allah's Caliph and, as such, he was God's shadow on earth. . . . A rebellion against him meant a rebellion against God." There were no sultans to perform this religious function nor was Malay society peasant-based in Singapore.

[30] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 118-19; Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 267.

[31] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 52.

[32] Chen, "Mass Media," 291; Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 118-19.

[33] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 17.

[34] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 43.

thinking, whereas "localised" Islam had been "mixed up with strange beliefs and practices"[35] which impeded social change. This assessment of local Islam led to the conclusion that

> Malay problems were due to ignorance of the true tenets of Islam, and that the neglect of religion was the root cause of Malay backwardness. To remedy this undesirable situation, religious reforms were needed.[36]

Subsequently, the Arabs proposed that "a proper understanding of, and submission to, the law and the spirit of Islam,"[37] was the only viable way to tackle the social, political, and economic ills of the Malay community. Consequently, *Al-Imam*'s agenda focused on religion as a "proven cure for all the ills"[38] of the Muslim community. Despite its distinct religious orientation, *Al-Imam* was careful to ensure that religious schools would also incorporate modern secular knowledge of the West.[39]

Since Islam encompassed *all* aspects of a Muslim's life and was "the only force to which the Malay could turn for spiritual consolation," religious criticism "stirred the Malay minds into being increasingly aware of what was happening around them,"[40] because religious introspection inevitably involved the criticism of social, political, and economic aspects of a Malay's life. Representing a substitute for the Sultan as representatives of Islam, it was "not surprising that leadership or active committee membership of Muslim societies and

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[35] Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 5.

[36] Chui Kwei-Chiang, "Political Attitudes and Organizations, *c.* 1900-1941," in *A History of Singapore*, ed. Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), 82.

[37] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 57.

[38] Ibid., 56.

[39] Ibid., 66.

[40] Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 5-7.

associations in the Colony was largely Arab and Indian."[41] In addition, the orientation and attitude of these western influenced "religious" élites who were also involved in the commercial activities of Singapore, made them more acceptable to the British administration. In both instances, the presses of the Jawi Peranakan and Arabs were careful to provide a relatively balanced reportage of religious and non-religious information so as not to project a radical religious public image.

Impact of Reformist Activities on Singapore Malay Society

These concerted efforts of the Arabs and Jawi Peranakan were significant in bringing "orthodox" Islam to the Singapore Malays, and in arousing Malay awareness.[42] Arabs and Jawi Peranakan provided the leadership, the initiative, and the organizational skills to disseminate the ideals and the ideology of the Islamic reformist movement which had already become a political force in the Arab world. In the Singapore setting, the movement focused on improving the social and economic position of the Malays. Many of the social and economic problems afflicting Malay society were attributed to a weak commitment of Malays to Islam and Islamic principles of social and political organization. By implication, indigenous Malays were ranked low on a scale of social and political development in comparison with other Muslim communities. As a consequence of this belief in the religious causes of the weak social and economic position of the Malays, the object of Arab and Jawi Peranakan efforts to reform Islam involved the infusion of Islamic principles into Malay society.

These new élites were not driven by a reformist zeal based on philanthropy or social assistance but rather on the unfavourable implications of Malay weakness on Muslim society

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[41] Djamour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage*, 16.

[42] Chui, "Political Attitudes and Organizations," 82.

"the principal concern of both [Arabs and Jawi Peranakan] was with the economic and educational backwardness of most Malays . . . which was seen to reflect discredit on the larger Islamic *umat* and on the Muslim religion itself."[43] From the perspective of the Arabs and Jawi Peranakan, religious factors contributed to the social and economic plight of the Malays. Subsequently, both Jawi Peranakan and Arabs became key agents for the social awakening of the Malays by encouraging, through their example and their religious commitment, the Malays to improve their social, economic and political standing through the application of Islamic principles and ideals to Malay society.

The leadership role of the Arabs became enhanced as Islamic reformism began to gain converts among Singapore Malays. Arabs could stress their unique understanding of, and affiliation with Islam, and some could even claim to be direct descendants of the Prophet Mohammed affirmed through their adoption of the title "Said" or "Syed"--male descendants of the prophet; many Arabs became acknowledged as scholars of Islam thereby legitimizing their claims to leadership of the Malayo-Muslim community. The high regard Malays had for Arabs as religious leaders was augmented by several Arab professionals who made substantial contributions to charity and social work among Muslims.[44]

Administratively, the British classification of Malays as Muslims rather than as a discrete ethnic group, further strengthened the legitimacy of the non-Malay Muslim assumption of leadership within the Malayo-Muslim community. Arab and Jawi Peranakan claims to leadership stressed the *umat*--the community of Islam--and deemphasized the unique cultural

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[43] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 184.

[44] Djamour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage*, 17-18; Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 42.

characteristics of Malay society.[45] For these non-Malay élites, the boundary markers for the new society stressed Islamic and pan-Islamic symbols while deemphasizing or rejecting symbols of parochial Malay cultural and political identity. In the process, the Arabs could claim, through the institutionalization of Muslims as a grouping, to speak on behalf of the Muslim community without referring to the Malays as a separate and distinct ethnic group.[46] Improved communications with the Middle East intensified Malay exposure to Islamic teachings and stimulated an awareness of Singapore Muslims to the more favourable situation of fellow Muslims overseas. It was against this backdrop of heightened religious agitation within a permissive political framework that Arabs and Jawi Peranakan in Singapore managed to fill the leadership vacuum left behind by the decline of traditional Malay authority.[47]

Non-religious Associations of Muslims

Formed around 1900 by Arab and Indian Muslims, the *Persekutuan Islam Singapura* (PIS) or Muslim Association of Singapore functioned as the main institution through which the Arabs and Jawi Peranakan exercised their authority and influence in the Muslim community.[48] In its early years, this association did not enunciate an openly political agenda nor exercised overt political influence, apart from making occasional representations to the British authorities on matters concerning the Malays and Muslims. William Roff has explained this general lack of apparent political motivation among the PIS and other Malay-Muslim associations of the first two decades of the 1900s, as deriving from a Malay fear of reprisals from the British who

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[45] Djamour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage*, 17.

[46] As will be shown later, this "institutionalized legitimacy" was eventually challenged by Malays in Singapore.

[47] Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 6.

[48] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 182.

were not receptive of "anything savoring of political activity," as well as "a deep-rooted peasant-Malay deference to established authority" that made Malays "well content with official paternalism."[49]

On the contrary, while the deferential nature of Malay society may have shaped Malay attitudes, it is apparent that the virtual collapse of traditional Malay leadership did not substantially alter traditional Malay values and attitudes toward the political system. So long as Malay activities posed no security threat, the British did little to interfere with Malay society. The hierarchical division of traditional Malay society into an ascriptive ruling and a non-ruling class had made "Malay deference to authority" ingrained into the Malay psyche. Furthermore, the economic and social marginalization of Malay society provided no resources for Malays to confront British authority, even if they had been motivated to do so. As such, by inclination and by circumstance, Singapore Malays in the early decades of the twentieth century were neither political activists nor political risk-takers.

Under Arab and Jawi Peranakan leadership, PIS largely failed to motivate Malays to political action. The strong cultural and emotional ties of the PIS leadership to their natal homelands in the Middle East and India which were cultivated and perpetuated by the organization, erected barriers obstructing the complete assimilation of Arabs and Jawi Peranakan into Singapore Malay society. Moreover, the mainly English-educated Arab and Jawi Peranakan élite comprising professionals, merchants, and landlords, together with the small middle-class, joined with a few educated Malays to form the core membership for the PIS. Together, these groups from the upper social strata of Muslim society represented the

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[49] Ibid., 187. Roff's use of "deference" seems to imply that there is an inherent deferential quality and tendency in Malay culture. If deference was an insurmountable hindrance to political action, then it would be difficult to account for the political challenge of Eunos and the KMS to the non-Malay Muslim religious leadership in the early 1900s. Eunos and the KMS will be discussed in a later section in this chapter.

emerging political and social élite of Malay society, even though Malay society as a whole was often unresponsive to their initiatives and admonitions.

For the lower class Malays, sports clubs, social organizations, and recreational associations were more popular, such that the associational organization of the Singapore Malay community reflected both a class and a religious dimension. The lower classes were attracted to associations stressing recreation, martial arts, and Malay culture, while the upper classes joined associations stressing Islam, economic advancement, and political activism. These class, cultural, and religious differences inhibited the capacity of Malay society to act with a unified voice. The new élites represented by the PIS, "tended to look down upon the sports clubs favoured by the uneducated mass of Malays and Indonesians as a symbol of Malay backwardness."[50] Such élite attitudes reflected the social and structural divisions that were emerging between the new élites and the mass base of Malay society in Singapore.[51]

During a period of increasing urbanization and domestic social change, the movement to reform Islam was significant as the Malays could now look to the Arabs for religious leadership previously provided by the Sultan. By around 1920, the Malays were no longer lax in religion and grew increasingly aware of 'orthodox' Islam. By default, Arabs could assume the religious functions of the Sultan during a time when "the disintegrative effects of urban individualism"[52] was threatening traditional forms of social organization. In asserting their claim to leadership of the Malay community, Arabs did not appeal to communal allegiances, but rather focused on the bonds of Islamic religious affiliation. By contrast, Malays exposed

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[50] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 99.

[51] The association has been described as "a sort of rich man's club," by the secretary of the KMS which was a political association spawned by Malay dissatisfaction with Arab and Jawi Peranakan leadership. See Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 189.

[52] Ibid., 181.

to this message of Islamic identity, became increasingly aware of their social, political, and economic position in Singapore. To a large extent, the period of Arab leadership of Malay society raised a sense of Malay awareness and identity. Both wealth and religious standing were important factors contributing to the enhanced leadership roles of Arabs and Jawi Peranakan within Malay-Muslim society. Together, "their wealth and high religious status made them the social élite of the Muslim community."[53] Paradoxically, this high social standing also undermined the leadership of the non-Malay Muslims.

Malay Reaction to non-Malay Muslim Initiatives

The challenge to Malay cultural traditions posed by the non-Malay Muslim attempts to reform local Islam led to tensions within the Malay community in the 1910s. In turn, these tensions brought about a non-formal coalescence of traditional Malay religious leaders into a block which came to be known as *Kaum Tua*--literally "Old Faction"--that came to logger-heads with the Arab-inspired orthodox faction or *Kaum Muda*--"Young Faction". While both groups appeared to be engaged in an ideological debate that had political ramifications, they were not organized in a manner to be counted as a political party; neither group had the institutional structures to participate in a political framework imposed by the British.[54] The conflict revolved around the latter's attempts to re-orient Islam towards a perspective at variance with the "indigenised" traditional Malay outlook.[55] While the conflict was centred in

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[53] Siddique, "Administration of Islam," 318.

[54] Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), 22. It will be shown in a later section on the new secular Malay leadership of Eunos, that "relevant" institutional arrangements aid in the relative performance of a political actor.

[55] For a brief statement of the conflict, see Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 8-9; Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 22; Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, chapter 3, provides a lengthier account; an extensive account can be found in Judith Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam: Modern Religious Radicals and Their Roots* (Vancouver: University of

the peninsular states, it can be reasonably assumed that the modernists religious reforms were significant in Singapore where there was no established traditional Malay élites. The *Kaum Tua*'s response was a defensive reaction to the threat posed by the *Kaum Muda* to customary Malay authority.

> On political issues the [*Kaum Tua*] were nationalists looking backward. They wanted a return to the old ways before the West was known, and urged a revival of their obsolescent aristocracy. The [*Kaum Muda*] looked ahead, advocated democratic rule and attempted to progress along western lines.[56]

Indeed, distinct ideological differences that could not be reconciled, surrounded the conflict and its participants.

The prolonged and heated debates which ensued between the old religionists and the young modernists were expressed in the press; the *Kaum Muda* were inspired and influenced by the publication, *Al-Manar*, which was produced by a group of activist Muslim scholars located at *Al-Azhar* University in Egypt.[57] In Singapore, the journal *Al-Imam* reflected a similar perspective by propagating "a renewed understanding of Islam which questioned the authority of the traditional religious establishment of the *ulamas* (or religious teachers)."[58] The *Kaum Muda* group defined its conflict with *Kaum Tua* in a religious idiom, while *Kaum Tua* defended traditional Malay culture and attempted to preserve "the old ways" in Malay society. The by-product of this confrontation between the old and the new was a heightened Malay consciousness not only regarding religion, but also regarding Malay culture and expressions of Malay ethnicity.

British Columbia Press, 1984).

[56] Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 8.

[57] Gordon P. Means, "Malaysia: Islam in a Pluralistic Society," in *Religion and Societies: Asia and the Middle East*, ed. Carlo Caldarola (Berlin: Mouton, 1982), 452.

[58] Yong, "Indonesian Influence," 2.

Both Arabs and Jawi Peranakan were initially seen by Malays "as the natural spokesmen for the Islamic community"[59] because of their religious and linguistic identity; however, interrelated ethnic and economic factors eventually provoked a Malay challenge to the leadership of both groups. Malay animosity towards the Arabs arose out of Arab purchases and control of large tracts of land for which the latter levied charges from Malays to occupy: "This situation was, indeed, at the root of many Malay grievances against the Arabs, into whose hands much previously Malay property had fallen."[60] As land was integral to the principles of *adat Temenggong*, one of two variants of Malay customary law to which the Singapore Malays adhered, land was intimately linked to the system of traditional Malay social and political organization. By implication, land scarcity resulting from Arab acquisition, threatened the institutional bases of Malay life that centred on the *kampung* (village), and subsequently attacked Malay cultural and ethnic identity.[61] Owing to these interlocking religious, ethnic and economic tensions, the Malays became socially and politically aware, and Malay ethnicity comprised an important component of their identity.[62]

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[59] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 188.

[60] Ibid., 192. This redistribution of land can be attributed to the changes of the 1823 treaty discussed earlier.

[61] The *kampung* was the basic territorial unit of organization of the Malay community which was structured according to a division of labour where village dwellers met each other's basic needs through *gotong royong* or intra village self-help. Just as in the old-Turk and new-Turk conflict, there is a presence of the cultural element in this emerging conflict between the new Malays and the Arabs. In the *Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda* confrontation, the cultural conservatism of the former seemed to be the relatively more significant point of friction with the progressive social outlook of the latter, while in the non-Malay Muslim versus modern and secular Malay conflict perhaps had its pressure point focused on both culture and ethnicity, since the non-Malay Muslims were "Western" in outlook.

[62] Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 8.

Despite non-Malay Muslim identification with the Malays because of factors such as inter-marriage, religion, and fluency in the Malay language as a prerequisite for membership to the Malay community, the Malays were more concerned with protecting and asserting their ethnic identity than with maintaining ties with the non-Malay Muslims.[63] Religious affinities became subverted by the more powerful pulls of ethnic preservation. For the Malays who had "had no official political representation as Malays, but only (together with Indians and Arabs) as Muslims,"[64] further Arab encroachment of Malay life had to be stopped. This deep rooted Malay attachment and commitment to their cultural values overshadowed the religious values shared religion by Malay and non-Malay Muslims.[65] The prominence of Malay ethnic markers is noted by Hussin who states that there is a "close attachment that Malays accord to the safeguarding of their Malay ethnic primordial ties or parochial interests in their dealings with others, especially non-Malays.[66] Malay ethnicity stands out distinctly as a key factor in the acrimonious relationship between the *Kaum Tua* and *Kaum Muda* of the early 1900s.

Even though the non-Malay Muslims were allowed relative freedom by the British authorities to pursue religious reforms and to assume leadership of the Singapore Malays, elements of class and Malay ethnicity operated at the community level to resist these "alien" intrusions into Malay life; however, in the final analysis, the emergence of *a* leadership was contingent on the permissive position of the authorities towards political organization. The *Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda* split within the local Muslim community is paralleled by a religious

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[63] John Clammer, "Malay Society in Singapore: A Preliminary Analysis," *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 9, nos. 1-2 (1981): 22.

[64] Djamour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage*, 1-2.

[65] Hussin provides a treatment of the dynamic relationship between Islam and ethnicity in *Islam and Ethnicity*, 31-34.

[66] Ibid., 1.

fragmentation between the non-Malay Muslim modernist faction and the secular Malay Eunos faction.[67] In other words, there was also a *Kaum Muda*-Eunos or Malay, class and cultural conflict at the political level in addition to the *Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda* stand-off during the religious wave.

The role of the Arabs in reforming Islam and the role of the Jawi Peranakan in providing the communication medium for the new social and religious currents were crucial elements in bringing about the evolution of Malay society from a religious to a more political phase. The emergence of a Malay political awareness was largely prompted by the religious criticisms that brought about a Malay awareness of their social, economic, and political position. With a new self-evaluation came an increasing desire for a larger political role, clearly reflecting a

> defensive reaction against the virtual extinction of Malay culture, . . . that . . . had been most suppressed by alien elements--in Singapore, where large numbers of Malays had degenerated to hired servants of other races.[68]

The *Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda* conflict was a critical impetus for a Malay political challenge to the non-Malay Muslim leadership that brought about a subsequent shift from the religious to the political phase.

The bid for the leadership of Malay society by non-Malay Muslims had challenged established Malay cultural values and inevitably led to a confrontation between "traditionalists" and "modernists." Although the British had deferred to claims of non-Malay Muslims to act and speak for the Malay community, elements of class and Malay ethnicity operated at the

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[67] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 190.

[68] T. H. Silcock and Ungku Abdul Aziz, "Nationalism in Malaya," in *Asian Nationalism and the West: A Symposium Based on Documents and Reports of the Eleventh Conference Institute of Pacific Relations*, ed. William L. Holland (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), 285.

community level to resist these "alien" intrusions into Malay life. As new currents circulated within Malay society and new élites emerged to articulate these new concerns, the British authorities would eventually be forced to reevaluate their assessments of Malay society and their identification of its "natural leaders." What began as a contest between élites later involved the Malay community as a whole and was finally recognized and confirmed by British authority.

The Re-emergence of Malay Political Leadership

The rising tide of Malay ethnic and community consciousness was indirectly and tacitly acknowledged by the British appointment in 1924 of Mohammed Eunos to the Straits Settlements Legislative Council.[69] This appointment was a boost to the continuing Malay political mobilization and awareness that resulted from the religious agitation of the early 1900s. Two years earlier, Eunos had been appointed the first Malay municipal commissioner, a Justice of the Peace. A journalist by profession, the English-educated Eunos was "acceptable to the British"[70] because of his non-antagonistic posture towards the authorities while working as the editor of two Malay secular newspapers, the *Utusan Melayu* (1907-1921), and the *Lembaga Melayu* (1914-1931). Other than mild criticism, both papers tended to cooperate with the government and was always sensitive to the official point of view.[71] His contributions to these papers earned him the title of "the father of Malay journalism."[72] As the

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[69] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 144-45; Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 190; Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 22.

[70] Wan Hussin Zoohri, *The Singapore Malays: The Dilemma of Development*, with a foreword by Haji Sidek bin Saniff (Singapore: Singapore Malay Teachers' Union, 1990), 14.

[71] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 158-61.

[72] Ibid., 158-59.

Malays had not had organized political representation over an extended period, this appointment of a Malay to the Council was profound in bringing the Malays into the institutions of government.

To provide a political base of support for Eunos' representation of Malay society within the Council, the *Kesatuan Melayu Singapura* (KMS) was founded two years later in 1926 by his principal supporters. With the founding of this new organization, Malay politics moved from its passive and self-examining phase to a more political and assertive phase. With Mohammed Eunos as the appointed member of the Legislative Council and the leader of the KMS, the ideological conflict between the traditionalist and modernist religious factions intensified. The *Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda* confrontation had spread from Singapore to the Malay peninsula, causing concern among British authorities. The political weakness of the Malays deriving from the prolonged absence of a political leadership tradition, was implicit in Eunos' dependence on the British patronage for appointment into the institutional structure of government. Despite Eunos' considerable influence among the Malays, he had still to consolidate community support as a result of this patronage.[73] Similarly, the formation of a Malay political association reflects the realization of Malay political weakness. Eunos was well aware that because of the disparate nature of Singapore Malay society, "his views would carry more weight in the Council if he had the *organized* [italics mine] support of the Malays of Singapore."[74] To address this Malay political handicap, the KMS was formed to serve as an instrument of political organization that would cultivate support to bolster Eunos' position in the Legislative Council. With the new Malay leadership drawn from an English-educated, mainly non-aristocratic, bureaucratic and commercial élite, the KMS sought to promote Malay

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[73] Ibid., 160.

[74] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 22.

political participation, technical and higher education, and to act as a mouthpiece to voice all issues of concern to the Malay community.[75]

In addition to serving as a political organization, the formation of the KMS was also a deliberate political "manoeuvre to counterbalance the influence of Arab and 'Jawi Peranakan' . . . leaders,"[76] whose support came from wealthy Muslims. Malay leaders in the new organization expressed particular concern with the peripheral political position of the Malays: "should we Malays form an association . . . so that our rights and our welfare shall not be surrendered to non-Malay Muslims?"[77] In its new role, the KMS became "the first Malay association with explicitly political aims."[78] The appointment of Eunos and the subsequent formation of the KMS signified the beginnings of formal Malay political organization.

Members of the fledgling organization also expressed their anxiety over the relative weakness of Malay élites, their relationship to British authorities and the unorganized condition of the Malay masses. Even so, the very formation of the KMS provided a focus for Malay political activity thereby enhancing the legitimacy and authority of Eunos in the Legislative Council and facilitating his mobilization of support from the Malays of Singapore. As a

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[75] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 21; Wan Hussin, *Dilemma of Development*, 14.

[76] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 20.

[77] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 191.

[78] Ironic as it seems, and despite the Malay majority in the peninsula, it is noteworthy that Malay political organizations began to sprout with great rapidity in mainland Malaya only between 1937 and 1939 when the KMS expanded into the peninsula. This anomaly could perhaps be explained by the strength of the socio-political structures and value systems of traditional Malay society in the peninsula, as well as the prominent role of Singapore as a centre for Islamic activities, such that there was not a catalyst as forceful as that in Singapore that stimulated "modern" formal political organization in the peninsula. Soenarno "Malay Nationalism," 15; Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 190-91.

consequence, the founding of the KMS marked "a turning point in the political attitudes of the Malays."[79]

British Policy and non-Malay Muslim Movements

The British was aware of the rewards of political stability and control from an overt support of Eunos and the KMS to the Legislative Council. Seen in relation to the ideological conflict between the traditionalist and modernist religious factions, the appointment of a moderate Malay leader was critical for maintaining a balance of power and stability in local politics. Appointing a Muslim to the Legislative Council would have provided the non-Malay Muslims an avenue through which to "officially politicise" the protracted *Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda.* Since the Arabs and Jawi Peranakan, as well as other Muslims involved in the *Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda* clash had strong religious ties with the power centre of Islam in the Middle East and to the larger Muslim *umat*, especially that of the states surrounding Singapore, the British were compelled to isolate the potentially disruptive row in the peninsula that showed signs of establishing itself in Singapore.

> The strongholds . . . of modernism center chiefly in Singapore . . . however, the old ideas are still powerful. In 1925 a wildly enthusiastic gathering of 2,000 Muslims at Singapore denounced the modernists as being worse than idolaters and Christians. As modernist ideas have been making headway, so the opposition has gathered strength.[80]

Whereas the Arab and Jawi Peranakan élites had founded PIS at the turn of the century, the faction of new Malay élites led by Eunos, formed a rival Muslim Institute in the 1920s and accused the PIS of being a "rich man's club" which ignored "the needs of ordinary Malays."[81]

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[79] Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 10.

[80] Rupert Emerson, *Government and Nationalism in Southeast Asia* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1942), 175.

[81] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 144. There were two main rival factions within the Singapore Malay community vying for leadership and support of the Singapore

The cross-cutting cleavages of Malay ethnicity, of class, of origin, and of religious convictions were all manifest in the political and social contest for Malay and Muslim support.

With the formation of KMS under the leadership of the Malay Eunos faction, a three-way contest developed for the support of the Malay Muslim constituency. The *Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda* split had pitted non-Malay Muslim élites and "Islamic modernism" against traditional Malay aristocratic élites and traditional Malay cultural norms and values. Now, the Malay Eunos faction avoided both camps and instead encouraged the rising aspirations of Malays educated in English and vernacular schools and espoused a secular approach to politics. By avoiding open confrontation with both *Kaum Muda* and *Kaum Tua*, the KMS attempted to bridge the ideological gap between religion and ethnicity and make earlier divisions less relevant. British support for the secular oriented Eunos faction appears to have been motivated by a desire "to avoid purely religious partisanship."[82] Even so, the Singapore Malay-Muslim community remained fragmented along cultural, class, religious and ethnic lines.

Implications of British Policy for Malay Politics

While the new system of Malay representation created sharp divisions within Malay-Muslim society along ethnic lines and weakened the non-Malay Muslim political position, it enhanced that of the new Malay leadership by bringing the Malays into the political framework in Singapore. Moreover, these divisions weakened the political power of the Singapore Muslim community. In the process, the political terms of reference shifted from

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Malays.

[82] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 190.

religion to ethnicity and subsequently marginalized the non-Malay Muslims while introducing the Malays as a political category into the structures of government.

To facilitate this process, British policy initiated a clear distinction between non-Malay Singapore Muslims and Singapore Malays who were also Muslim. By this tactic, the British emasculated the power of a potential confrontational religious faction while giving political resources and altered constituency boundaries to a western-oriented secular faction which was more supportive of the overall objectives of British policies. As would be expected, the switch in official classification of the Malays from a religious to an ethnic group was accompanied by a change in Malay support away from non-Malay Muslim religious leaders to the Eunos faction. Not only did British policy isolate and diminish the influence of non-Malay Muslims in the Malay community, it also encouraged the growth of Malay ethnic awareness.

Two resulting effects can be clearly discerned from this shift. Firstly, the emphasis on "Malay" instead of "Muslim" as a classification, reduced the size of the Muslim community. A percentage of the Singapore Muslim community which included Malays, was now classified in terms of ethnicity. Secondly, the religious ferment and movements were prevented from advancing, if not consolidating and establishing itself, as a political force in Singapore partly because of the political isolation from the public sphere, and partly because of a reduction in the Muslim population which placed religion ahead of ethnicity. Consequently, the political fortunes of actors within the Singapore political context was dependent on both structural constraints as well as organizational capability.

With the axis of politics shifting from religion to ethnicity, the new Malay leadership of the KMS could focus on specifically Malay concerns. Although the Malays constituted the bulk of the Muslim population, and as a community with new leaders and a new agenda, the

Malays now became "less and less attracted by the ideals of pan-Islamism,"[83] and began to throw their support behind the new Eunos-led English-educated Malay élite. This change in political orientation to secular and ethnic issues provided the basis for a new agenda and a stable base of political support anchored within Malay society.

Rather than confront British authority, the KMS took the opportunity to consolidate its position by stressing the safeguarding of "Malay interests in face of the rising political ambitions of the Straits Chinese."[84] At this stage, religion was still important, but no longer a key concern in the hierarchy of Malay demands.[85] The KMS strategies were heavily shaped "particularly by Chinese claims for a larger share in government and administration," and "aimed largely at reforming feudal elements in Malay society and institutions, not at overthrowing British rule or seeking self-government."[86] Soenarno notes that "this alien pressure [i.e., Chinese demands for equal rights and privileges] determined the course of the Malay political attitudes until the outbreak of the war."[87]

Specifically, the KMS aimed "to struggle against the economic and educational backwardness of the Malay race and enable it to hold its own against the immigrants [i.e., the Chinese]."[88] The Chinese community was now being used as the bone of contention to focus the political orientation of the Malays in Singapore. Means has also noted that

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[83] Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 9.

[84] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 144-45.

[85] Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 9.

[86] Yoji Akashi, "The Japanese Occupation of Malaya: Interruption or Transformation?," in *Southeast Asia Under Japanese Occupation*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1980), 66.

[87] Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 12.

[88] Silcock and Aziz, "Nationalism in Malaysia," 285.

> the Malays of Singapore, . . . were fearful of being engulfed by alien majorities and were demanding Malay reservations and other special privileges and guarantees in the Straits Settlements.[89]

Had equal political rights been given to the Chinese without some limitation, the existing economic strength of the Chinese would supplement their acquired political status, such that the Malays who were already in the minority, would become politically insignificant in a Chinese dominated Singapore. As a minority in Singapore, the Malays felt "beleaguered and politically isolated"[90] due to the absence of protective laws and special privileges. These anxieties of the Malays could become easily transformed into political ammunition by "the orientations of the KMS which was more concerned with this alien pressure, rather than that of being against the British Government."[91] As such, the Chinese factor was cleverly cast by the new Malay élite as a manifestation of Malay failures.

While there is an absence of evidence, it is highly likely that there was a traditional-Eunos tension, if not open conflict, within the Malay community, since the Eunos faction was secular oriented while remnants of the traditional religious leaders in the Singapore Malay community continued to embrace traditional Malay cultural values. In the final analysis, the British favoured a secular oriented Malay faction because the authorities "seemed to have been anxious to avoid purely religious partisanship."[92]

The concern of the KMS with the issue of Malay cultural atrophy overshadowed any attempt to challenge British rule. Understandably, the colonial government did not allow the moderate Malay political stance towards authority to go unacknowledged. As a result of the

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[89] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 22.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 17.

[92] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 190.

KMS' cooperative posture, the government was generally responsive towards the KMS by making land grants in response to the KMS' demands for reserves to build a Malay settlement.[93] After negotiations over a two year period, the request for Malay settlement land was formally approved in 1929.[94] By rewarding the political initiatives of the KMS leadership, the British created the conditions and incentives for expanding Malay organization and political activities.

While the KMS appeared to be making progress as a representative of Malay interests, it did not completely succeed in its objective of politicising the Singapore Malays. The failure of the KMS to politicise the bulk of Malay society can be partly attributed to the socio-economic gulf between the KMS leadership and the Malay masses. KMS leaders were mainly English-educated whereas the Malay masses generally had scant education and remained attracted to some of the emotive symbolic appeals of Islam that had been articulated during the earlier period. Except for a few, the Malay masses were mainly educated in Malay vernacular schools or in Islamic *madrasah* (religious) schools. Furthermore, the heterogeneous nature of the Malay community which included migrants from the surrounding areas, inhibited the creation of a common Malay identity as a reference point for successful mobilization, and further exacerbated existing elite-mass differences. These social and economic divisions made the task of political leadership formidable and generated an ethos of Malay apathy toward political movements.[95] Finally, because the KMS did not clearly define its objectives and "had no specific political programme"[96] to offer the Malay community, its support within the Malay

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[93] Chui, "Political Attitudes and Organizations," 84.

[94] Wan Hussin, *Dilemma of Development*, 15-16.

[95] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 154.

[96] Ibid.

community remained fairly small and essentially passive. Bedlington has summarized the causes of this failure:

> (a) most of the Malay population of the time had not yet attained that stage of consciousness of their plight (or, conversely, had been conditioned by their culture to 'accept' their lot) which might have led to a more militant participation, and (b) the Union's [KMS] leaders, . . . had neither a base of support in, or lines of communication to, the Malay populace.[97]

Some KMS demands were incorporated into public policy, but only if these did not challenge British authority or upset the social order. The primary concern of British policy was with political stability and ordered government to facilitate economic and commercial development; concern for the welfare and advancement of the Malay people was secondary and only confined to the framework of traditional Malay society.[98] Despite the KMS' inability to completely fulfil its aims, it was instrumental in sparking subsequent Malay political organization throughout the peninsula.[99]

The emergence of the "new generation" of Malay leaders was a watermark in the political development of the Singapore Malays: it was the first time since the era of the traditional Malay rulers that *Malays* were at the helm of leadership. The political organization of the Malays under the English-educated Malay leaders was symptomatic of a growing Malay political awareness which spawned "an increasing Malay desire to play a larger role in the political determination of their future."[100] The state of Malay politics on the eve of World War II showed an increasing political organization and participation particularly in the Malay peninsula, but also in Singapore. The political momentum initiated by the KMS was halted

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[97] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 21.

[98] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 12.

[99] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 145; Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 15.

[100] Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 188.

abruptly by the onset of World War II and the subsequent Japanese Occupation of Singapore and Malaya. The traumatic shock of these events shattered the relative apathy of the Malays and drastically altered the entire political landscape.

The emergence of the KMS and the appointment of Eunos to the Legislative Council was significant for the Malay community as it represented the reemergence of Malay leadership. Previously, the Malays did not play a direct political role as it was the Arabs who dealt with Malay issues; there were also no organized political associations which represented the Malays in the Legislative Council.[101] Although the KMS did not make as much progress as it had hoped for, it was effective as a stimulus for the emergence of other Malay associations, especially in the peninsula; moreover, the KMS was the manifestation of the increasing Malay consciousness brought about by the religious reform movements. Until Eunos' appointment and the formation of the KMS, there was an absence of co-operative effort among the Malays to formally organize themselves politically to voice their demands and concerns.[102] The activities of the KMS had led to the Malay perception that the British administration was ineffective in dealing with Malay interests.

> Government to them [the Malays] was no longer the sole business of the [British] officials . . . ; but that it was felt to be imperative that they should air their wishes if their wants were to be satisfied.[103]

This turning point in Malay politics in Singapore represented the start of formal Malay political organization to participate in an institutionalized political framework, and provided the conditions for the creation of a communication and authority system for the Singapore Malays.

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[101] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 22.

[102] Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 10.

[103] Ibid.

Japanese Policy and Malay Political Consciousness

From the beginning of their occupation, the Japanese never sought to give independence to Malaya or Singapore nor encouraged nationalism or aspirations for independence.[104] Even though Japanese policy avoided encouraging indigenous nationalism, the Japanese also hoped to mobilize Malay support to resist any moves to reassert British control. Malays were exhorted "to enlist for the defence of their country."[105] These policies were designed to foster anti-British and pro-Japanese orientations as the Japanese "hoped to channel the force of nationalism in Southeast Asia against Japan's enemies."[106] In pursuit of these objectives, Malays were trained in technical fields and acquired clerical and manufacturing skills for jobs previously monopolised by non-Malays.[107] While the Japanese Occupation did not create a Malay nationalist movement, since the origins of Malay nationalism can be traced to the pre-war era, the "Japanese intrusion accelerated processes that had begun earlier."[108] By nurturing anti-British sentiments and by relying more heavily on the Malays for domestic support, the Japanese raised Malay political expectations and set the stage for a more assertive and militant form of Malay nationalist movement. It was only towards

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[104] Joyce C. Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia: Independence and Volunteer Forces in World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 119.

[105] Eunice Thio, "The Syonan Years, 1942-1945," in *A History of Singapore*, ed. Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), 100.

[106] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 292.

[107] Thio, "Syonan Years," 100.

[108] Lea E. Williams, *Southeast Asia: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 192.

the closing stages of their occupation in Southeast Asia that the Japanese eventually encouraged Malay nationalism to turn these movements against Japan's enemies.[109]

Rather than encourage nationalism, Japanese policy sought to unify, as well as to socialise the various local ethnic communities in Singapore through a common school curriculum taught in Japanese, and designed to socialise the local population of Singapore for the support of Japanese rule and the emulation of Japanese culture and norms.[110] Education policy called for the teaching of the Japanese language to meet the "official educational objective of promoting interracial unity through a common educational experience" and the creation of the "Japanese spirit" aimed at assimilating the local population into "the domain of Imperial Japan."[111] As part of the curriculum, students were required to sing the Japanese national anthem and bow to the Hinomaru.[112] In practice, education policies were not successful because of the shortage of both textbooks and competent teachers of Japanese. Despite the move to initiate a common curriculum, the existing separate language streams of English, Malay, Chinese and Indian language schools continued, with each community preferring its own school system.[113] Consequently, with inadequate resources and resistance from the various ethnic communities, the respective ethnic groups were left to provide for their

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[109] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 45-46.

[110] Akashi, "Japanese Occupation of Malaya," 67.

[111] Thio, "Syonan Years," 96-97.

[112] Ibid. The "Hinomaru" refers to a round red sign representing the sun, found on the Japanese flag; *Brinkley's Japanese-English Dictionary* vol. 1 1963 ed., s.v. "Hin."

[113] Thio, "Syonan Years," 96; Williams, *Southeast Asia*, 221.

own education which "institutionalized ethnic distinctions and ossified communal differences."[114]

While attempts to create a uniform school system failed, and with it, the indoctrinating functions, youth training schools succeeded in preparing Malays for leadership positions.[115] In this respect, policies on Malay education and military training require special mention. The Japanese established youth scholarships and military training mostly for Malays, whom the Japanese treated "with preference in planning for future leadership."[116] As Means has noted, "the Japanese cautiously encouraged selected Malay political leaders to organise support among the Malays."[117] In addition, the Japanese encouraged military training for Malays who were enlisted for the Volunteer Army and Volunteer Corps.[118] The Malays were also permitted to use Singapore as a centre to meet politically conscious Muslims from the peninsula so as to foster "greater exposure of Syonan Malays to politically conscious fellow Muslims."[119] Except for resistance to cultural challenges to Malay customs and values, the

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[114] Thio, "Syonan Years," 96.

[115] Akashi, "Japanese Occupation of Malaya," 68.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 45.

[118] Eunice Thio, "The Syonan Years, 1942-1945," 106.

[119] Ibid., 100. While there is no evidence to show that the British prohibited the use of Singapore for similar purposes, there is also no indication that the British encouraged the Malays to exploit the geopolitical position of Singapore. It can be speculated that it was not in British interest to promote Malay political activity since the former had gone to great length to displace Malay authority. Thio defines "Syonan," pronounced Shonan, as "light of the South."

Malays responded favourably to opportunities for military training and access to more technical education.[120]

What was perhaps decisive in the favourable Japanese posture towards the Malays was the collaboration of militant radical Malays with advancing Japanese troops during the invasion. Formed in Singapore in May 1937, members of the dissident left-wing Malay organization, the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM), acted as informants for Japanese troops in return for Japanese respect for Malay religion, customs, and possessions.[121] This group of anti-British Malay activists preached a militant nationalism around the concept of a Greater Indonesia for the Malay peoples: "Its two avowed aims were independence for Malaya and unity with Indonesia. Its line of struggle was non-co-operation with the Government," with attacks on the Malay sultans "for having sold the country to the British."[122] Not surprisingly, the KMM did not enjoy the degree of British tolerance and trust as did earlier moderate Malay associations. All KMM activists were systematically imprisoned in 1940 by the British, "who were fearful that the KMM might collaborate with Britain's enemies," and remained under detention until released by the Japanese after Singapore had fallen.[123] Even then, the value of the KMM to the Japanese was short-lived and the organization was subsequently outlawed by

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[120] Ibid., 100.

[121] Thio, "Syonan Years," 99; Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 44; Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 18. While the Singapore Malays benefitted from the KMM's dealings with the Japanese, the KMM focused its activities in the Malay peninsula.

[122] Yong, "Indonesian Influence," 7; Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism," 15-21; Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 23; Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 232-33.

[123] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 23. While there seems to be an inconsistency in argument between the imprisonment of KMM activists, and the KMM's collaboration with the Japanese, it is highly likely that the Japanese managed to establish contact with low key members of the KMM that had escaped incarceration by the British who were probably unaware of their existence or had discounted their significance to the Japanese. Compare ibid., 23 and 44 for this inconsistency.

the Japanese in June 1942.[124] As a Malay-based party, the KMM was not significant for the Malays in Singapore largely because it was more preoccupied with politics of the peninsula, and because the local Malay population was not receptive of radical politics. As a result of the KMM's role in the Japanese invasion, dividends in the form of favourable Japanese policies were reaped by the Malays for tacit support and open collaboration. The readiness of the Malays to co-operate with the Japanese can be traced to ethnic concerns. The Malays felt that the British administration had been ineffective in dealing with Malay interests. The previous demands from Straits Chinese for citizenship and equal rights could now be exploited by the Japanese to identify with Malay concerns and solicit Malay support.

Japanese policies provided favourable treatment for the Malays in part because of the intense hostility and suspicion of the Chinese in Singapore whose kinsmen in China had been fighting Japanese aggression for more than a decade before the Japanese assault on Singapore and Malaya.[125] During the invasion of the peninsula, many Singapore Chinese "threw their weight behind the British war effort"[126] by participating in resistance activities against the Japanese in Malaya. As Cheah has argued, "The Japanese reliance on Malay support was natural, given their fear and distrust of the Chinese population as potential enemies."[127] These

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[124] Ibid., 44.

[125] Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies*, 114; Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[126] Cheah Boon Kheng, "The Social Impact of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya (1942-1945)," in *Southeast Asia Under Japanese Occupation*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1980), 111. A Malay regiment was also involved in fighting against the Japanese "to the bitter end at all costs" until "Garrisons of their defence positions had been wiped out to a man." Derek da Cunha, "Honour WWII Defenders of Pasir Panjang Ridge," *Straits Times*, 25 February 1992, 28.

[127] Cheah, "Social Impact," 108; Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 44, notes the intense animosity between the Malayan Chinese and the Japanese.

pro-Malay policies, by virtue of favouring one ethnic group over another, served to raise Malay political expectations and aspirations while exacerbating Malay-Chinese rivalries and hostilities. Indeed, the Japanese adopted "policies of rule through communal division."[128] For the Japanese, "expediency dictated that local [and in this case, Malay,] support and cooperation be enlisted whenever possible."[129] As a consequence, ethnic differences became more salient while the earlier divisions afflicting a religiously defined Muslim community were virtually eclipsed.

As such, it was Japanese policy that "indigenous nationalist movements should not be encouraged prematurely;"[130] however, education and military policies certainly stimulated the thinking and communal sentiments of the Malays. Japanese education policies and youth training programs were especially critical in strengthening, and to a certain extent, restoring Malay political consciousness that had abated towards the latter half of the 1940s. Moreover, the revitalising of the KMM by the Japanese when the tides of war turned in 1945, also contributed to maintaining Malay political consciousness. The net effect was an increase in the co-operation between the Singapore Malays and fellow Malays in the region.[131]

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[128] Williams, *Southeast Asia*, 196.

[129] Ibid., 198.

[130] Cheah, "Social Impact," 110; Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies*, 16.

[131] Thio, "Syonan Years," 99.

CHAPTER 3

POST-WAR CONSTITUTIONAL SETTLEMENTS AND THE SINGAPORE MALAYS: 1945-1965

Post-war Constitutional Settlements and the Singapore Malays

Unlike the pre-war and occupation era which saw the Malays in Singapore gradually asserting their presence in politics, the post-war period was characterised by political uncertainty. The post-war constitutional plan to form a Malayan Union immediately after the war, was politically significant for the Singapore Malays because the plan excluded Singapore from the Federation. Formulated by the British during the war and intended to be implemented after reoccupation, the constitutional plan involved the formation of a Malayan Union comprising states of the Malay peninsula, Malacca, Penang and Province Wellesley, with the exclusion of Singapore that was to be treated as a separate Crown Colony.[1] The union plan aimed to afford greater political centralization of the peninsular Malay states to "allow for more efficiency and even for the flowering of the democratic process."[2] In reality, the British plan sought to diminish the legal sovereignty of the Malay sultans in the peninsula.[3]

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[1] Ishak bin Tadin, "Datok Onn and Malay Nationalism. 1946-1951," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* (1960): 56.

[2] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 22-23; K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965), 43.

[3] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 52.

Singapore's exclusion from the proposed union meant that the Malays in Singapore would remain a permanent political minority.

For the Malays of Singapore, the exclusion of Singapore implied that they would be deprived of the privileges and protection, as provided for under the Malaysian Constitution, as the indigenous people. The Singapore Malays subsequently became apprehensive of being politically submerged in a political context where the Singapore Chinese formed the majority. Not surprisingly, the Singapore Malays objected to the exclusion of Singapore from the Malayan Union because it meant that they could not combine with the peninsular Malays to maintain the relative political security of a majority, and where the political and economic arrangements favoured business and as such, the Chinese. Subsequently, the Malays in Singapore found themselves having to depend on peninsular Malay political movements which were, quite naturally, more interested in maintaining Malay political dominance and defeating the union scheme which threatened to diminish the powers of the traditional rulers. It was against this new constitutional context that the leadership, or lack thereof, of the Singapore Malay community becomes critical for understanding the politics of the Singapore Malays.

Various Malay political parties came forward to publicly register their opposition to Singapore's exclusion, but they failed to make much progress in their efforts to defeat the Malayan Union plan or in their fight for Singapore's inclusion in a wider union of Malay states. Formed in Singapore in November 1945 as a branch of the left-wing Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) by remnants of the pre-war KMM, the MNP sought to uplift the Malay community,[4] and initially welcomed the Malayan Union plan subject to Singapore's inclusion; however, as a Malay-based nationalist movement, it later rejected the scheme in competition with UMNO for peninsular Malay support in order to protect the MNP's political survival

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[4] Thio, "Syonan Years," 110.

interests.[5] The MNP could not afford to be seen by the peninsular Malays as being insensitive to the demographic and political implications of Singapore's inclusion on the political status of the peninsular Malays, and subsequently abandoned its fight on behalf of the Singapore Malays.[6] By contrast, the MNP's youth wing in Singapore, the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API) remained committed to the inclusion of Singapore in a wider union.[7] Alike in approach to the MNP, the radical API did not succeed in continuing the fight for Singapore's inclusion because of stringent British anti-leftist policies that "never gave a chance for these groups to consolidate"[8] political power. As a political movement, the left-wing MNP failed to exercise "real influence on the Malay masses either in Malaya itself or in Singapore,"[9] owing to the conservative nature of Malay society. The banning of API in mid-1947, and other radical leftist parties following the onset of the communist-led Emergency in the peninsula in 1948, eliminated open leftist activism of parties seeking to make political gain from opportunities such as representing the Malays in Singapore.[10] By implication, moderated or conservative parties were permitted to engage in political activity. Surviving from the pre-war era without its previous influence, the KMS only managed to echoed the concerns of Singapore Malays that Singapore's exclusion would "raise [social, political, and cultural] barriers between

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[5] Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore 1945-55* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1973), 21-22. The peninsular UMNO did not favour the inclusion of Singapore within a Malayan Federation.

[6] Ratnam, *Communalism*, 45. These concerns which relate to the Singapore Chinese majority will be discussed in a later section.

[7] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 18.

[8] John Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of UMNO & PAS* (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books [Asia] Ltd., 1980), 40.

[9] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 31.

[10] Funston, *Malay Politics*, 40.

peninsula and Singapore Malays."[11] It is interesting to note that accept for the KMS and the few non-Singapore inspired Malay parties, the profound implications of the Malayan Union plan did not provoke the formation and emergence of Malay political parties, nor the organization of Singapore Malays for political action.

While these Malay movements fought for Singapore's inclusion, peninsular Malays vehemently rejected the Malayan Union primarily because the union scheme undermined the authority and position of Malay sultans, and also because the plan allowed equal citizenship status to non-Malays. The easing and extension of citizenship to non-Malays, resulted in the Malay view that the British were reneging on their pre-war policy of providing special privileges to Malays because an extension of citizenship rights would pose a threat to Malay political dominance by allowing the non-Malays, more specifically the Chinese, to formally participate in politics.[12] For these reasons, peninsular Malays "showed every intention of opposing [Malayan Union] to the bitter end."[13] More importantly, leaving Singapore out of the Malayan Union assured an overall Malay majority and the perpetuation of political dominance over the non-Malays in the peninsula. As such, it was politically untenable and imprudent for peninsular Malays to agree to Singapore's inclusion. Professor Ratnam observes that "Despite the exclusion of Singapore from the Union, there was little doubt that . . . Malay political superiority [was] . . . severely threatened"[14] by the abolition of citizenship privileges to the Malays. As far as the inclusion of Singapore was concerned, maintaining an ethnic balance was more paramount for the peninsular Malays than protecting Singapore Malay interests.

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[11] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 225.

[12] Ratnam, *Communalism*, 46.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

The following table shows that non-Malays would have outnumbered Malays with the inclusion of Singapore in a Federation of Malaya which eventually replaced the Malayan Union Plan.

Table 1

Population of the Federation of Malaya and Singapore, 1947

Ethnic Group	Federation	Singapore	Total
Malays	2,427,834	115,735	2,543,569
Chinese	1,884,534	730,133	2,614,667
Indians	530,638	68,978	599,616
Others	65,080	25,978	91,058
Total	4,908,086	940,824	5,848,910

Source: Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development of Singapore 1945-55* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1973), 13; Cheng Siok Hwa, "Demographic Trends," in *Singapore: Development Policies and Trends* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1983), 69.

Without counting the other non-Malays, a 1947 union which included Singapore would have 45% Chinese, and 43% Malays. Taking the Federation on its own, the Chinese numbered only 38% while the Malays constituted a near majority of 49%. Singapore's inclusion in the wider union would have tipped the communal balance of power in favour of the Chinese who would have challenged the Malays for political power.[15] In the circumstance, the peninsular Malays had little reason to be concerned with the political implications of Singapore's exclusion for the Malays in Singapore. Indeed, Singapore's exclusion was welcomed by peninsular Malays, but rigorously challenged by Singapore Malays.

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[15] Yeo, *Political Development*, 13-14.

Notwithstanding religious, linguistic, kinship and cultural ties with the Singapore Malays, the peninsular Malays were clearly concerned with their own political survival as well as that of their sultans which the union plan would have undermined. These ethnic, cultural, and family ties were too weak to withstand the pulls of political self-preservation and as a result, failed to bring peninsular Malay support firmly behind the Malays in Singapore. The attitude of the peninsular Malays to their Singapore counterparts dealt a psychological blow to the belief of Singapore Malays that "their future has always been bound up, irrevocably with that of Malaya itself,"[16] and that their well-being would be considered in the peninsular Malay calculus of action. The position of Malaysian politicians "was even considered by many [Singapore] Malays as a betrayal of their interests."[17] Throughout the Malayan Union issue, the sense of Singapore Malay political insecurity in a Chinese dominated Singapore became increasingly magnified by the absence of a Malay political leadership or political party.

UMNO and the Singapore Malays

Meanwhile, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) formally came into existence in May 1946 as a result of peninsular Malay antagonisms to the plan.[18] The party's leadership came mainly from Malays who were well located in key positions in the government service. As a result, UMNO had easy access to the "administrative structure of the Malay States to accomplish the political mobilization of the Malays."[19] Although UMNO sought to defend the special rights of peninsular Malays, UMNO was significant for Singapore

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[16] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 34.

[17] Zainul Abidin Rasheed, "A Malay Turning Point: Politicians forge 'symbiotic' Relationship with Major Groups," *Straits Times*, 2 May 1985, 16.

[18] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 26; Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 99.

[19] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 100.

Malays because the party included the Singapore Malays in its agenda by stressing that "Malay solidarity was the sole concern of the party."[20] At considerable risk to the Malays of the peninsula, UMNO supported the inclusion of Singapore under a less threatening demographic situation after the union scheme had been successfully defeated and replaced with the Federation Agreement which assured Malay political supremacy.

Security considerations were especially vital in shaping UMNO's decision to consider including Singapore in the Federation. Post-war political alignments and circumstances in Singapore showed a clear tendency towards radical left-wing politics: "Singapore's post-war political climate was ideal for cultivating communist influence."[21] Singapore served as "the primary centre of communist activity in the region."[22] UMNO leaders were particularly concerned with "the Chinese communists, and extremist Indonesian-inspired nationalists operating in Malaya."[23] These fears of an extension of Chinese, and of Communist influence over Singapore, heightened the anxieties of UMNO leaders concerning the demographic imbalance by adding security concerns posed by the threat of a communist Singapore. Military strategists had always realised that "Singapore in the hands of an enemy would mortally threaten the mainland."[24] Indeed, Lau has noted a British official's intimation that UMNO

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[20] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 33.

[21] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 223.

[22] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 58.

[23] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 101.

[24] Mohamed Noordin Sopiee, *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysia Region 1945-65*, (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 1976), 91.

> was strongly in favour of the early fusion of the two territories since [the party] realized that if Singapore was allowed to develop separately, the island would become more and more predominantly a Chinese settlement with allegiance to China and not to Britain.[25]

Although UMNO's leaders were acutely sensitive to the ethnic threat from the Chinese, the focus of party leaders turned increasingly towards the more serious security threat posed by the Communists with the intensification of the Emergency. After the Communist insurgency began in the Malay peninsula in 1948, security and ideological concerns of the Malay leaders in the Federal Government received even higher priority, because the Chinese in Singapore and the peninsula made up the core of communist support. As such, calculations based on ethnicity, ideological alignments, and domestic security were intertwined in the perception of Singapore's political future.

Having been engaged in combatting the communists in the peninsula since 1948, the central government viewed the communist threat with greater urgency than the concern with the ethnic equation. Even if the ethnic element was not completely ignored, its importance was relegated in contrast to the communist factor. The political and economic implications for Malaya of a communist controlled Singapore has been noted by Means who states that:

> With a pro-Communist Singapore Government, British influence in the area could then be eliminated and Malaya (and the Borneo states) could be subverted with impunity. Agitation for merger of Singapore and Malaya could begin *after* Singapore came under effective Communist control. Such agitation for union would mask the political campaign to subvert and defeat the "reactionary" Alliance Government [of Malaya].[26]

In a similar vein, Fletcher has maintained that "the fear of communist ascendancy in Singapore was the primary reason for the [merger] proposal."[27] Grossholtz has also pointed out that the

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[25] Albert Lau, *The Malayan Union Controversy 1942-1948* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), 270.

[26] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 286.

[27] Nancy McHenry Fletcher, *The Separation of Singapore from Malaysia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1969), 9.

central government supported the PAP in the elections of 1963 because it believed "a PAP victory would end the threat of communism"[28] in Singapore so that the island could then become a centre for trade and commerce of the wider Federation. The central government was fully aware of the economic and political ramifications for the Federation of a Singapore under communist control: Singapore's position as a key commercial and trading centre in Southeast Asia would have been severely threatened.[29] The political interests of both the Federation and Singapore coincided and "both governments wanted to hold in check the extreme left wing in Singapore."[30] The Communist threat to Malaya was viewed by the Federation's leaders as being of far greater importance than the political implications of an autonomous Singapore on Singapore Malays. As a consequence, the Singapore Malay community was not treated by the peninsular Malay movements as being a critical component of the latter's political agenda.

UMNO Singapore and the Singapore Malays

Shortly after the founding of UMNO, Malaya's largest Malay party, a branch was also forged in Singapore in 1948 with the name Singapore UMNO (SUMNO).[31] Although UMNO responded to Malay demands and interests in Malaya, SUMNO began to reflect some of the unique interest and concerns of Singapore's Malay community. In the pre-war era, KMS had commanded the support of Singapore Malays, but in the post-war period, KMS was virtually defunct enabling SUMNO to displace it as the prime spokesman for the Singapore Malays.[32]

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[28] Jean Grossholtz, "An Exploration of Malaysian Meanings," *Asian Survey* 6, no. 4 (April 1966): 229.

[29] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 164.

[30] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 279.

[31] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 35.

[32] Wan Hussin, *Dilemma of Development*, 18.

SUMNO also had to compete with the MNP which was ostensibly "non-communal" but attracted Malay support, nonetheless, by stressing a political affinity with Sukarno's *Partai Nasionalis Indonesia*. The turmoil in Singapore politics up to the 1955 elections left SUMNO relatively weak, especially in comparison with the Chinese mass parties that were being formed in the early 1950s. Furthermore, SUMNO was, at this early stage of its existence, unusually preoccupied with politics and the preservation of Malay rights in the Federation that it neglected cultivating Malay support in Singapore.[33]

Despite the emergence of SUMNO as a Malay-based political party, the Singapore Malay community was left in a political limbo for the first two decades of the post-war period. Until merger with Malaysia in 1963,

> the Malay community on the island possessed little sense of comparison of itself (in political terms) with other communities in Singapore, sheltered - some would say neglected - as it was by the British colonial administration.[34]

The heavy dependence of SUMNO on the party leadership in Kuala Lumpur, which was embroiled with politics in the peninsula, for policy making hindered the effectiveness of SUMNO to attract a big following.[35] As a branch without autonomy and spatially distant from its nerve centre in Kuala Lumpur, splits in loyalty developed within SUMNO along a pro-Kuala Lumpur and pro-Singapore fracture; the latter group wanting more autonomy "to control their own local party and participate in Singaporean politics free of restraint from Kuala

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[33] Stanley S. Bedlington, *Malaysia and Singapore: The Building of New States* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 114, 220 footnote 2.

[34] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 113.

[35] Ibid., 116.

Lumpur."[36] The pro-Singapore faction was perhaps keenly aware of the lack of a full commitment of peninsular UMNO support evident during the union issue.

Other factors also undermined the political fortunes of SUMNO. Intra-party fissures from corruption as well as intense internal power struggles and jealousies between Malay and Arab factions further weakened the party.[37] The internal weakness of SUMNO was compounded by the lack of Malay support. No significant Malay support could form around SUMNO because the heterogeneous nature of the Singapore Malay community prevented the development of a mobilized social hierarchy like that of Malay society in the peninsula. Had an established traditional authority structure existed, the Malays would have had to conform to the norms implied in such a structure that required a deferential attitude towards the authority of traditional Malay leaders. Strategically, the absence of a clearly defined social hierarchy and an established authority structure compelled leaders of SUMNO to establish a rapport with the Malay masses in order to maximise support, but such links never developed. Instead, the Malay community agonized over political tactics and was represented by competing leaders with questionable legitimacy.[38] Confronted by these internal and external stresses, SUMNO was unable to organize itself as an effective Malay political party.

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[36] Ibid., 118-22.

[37] Bedlington, *Building of New States*, 203; idem, "Politics of State Integration," 116; it is unfortunate that in "The Politics of State Integration," Bedlington did not elaborate on the Malay-Arab intra-party struggle, but footnoted the information as a statement of fact. I have yet to come across any other information on the internal power struggles between the Malays and Arabs. Since the UMNO in general came to the fore as a Malay-based political party in the post-War era, much research has focused on the Malay element of Malay politics. The fact that there was an Arab faction willing to challenge the Malay leadership of UMNO Singapore, suggests a more complex dynamic which, strangely enough, has not left traces on documentation.

[38] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 42-43.

These tensions within SUMNO as well as between the party and its supporters, ruptured into internal dissent when some of the party's leaders proposed co-operating with the Chinese-based PAP, which had been founded in 1954 and came to power in Singapore with an overwhelming majority in the 1959 Singapore elections. By this time, the moderate faction had taken over full control of the party; however, since the party had depended heavily on the support of unions and students loyal to the radical faction within the PAP, the displacement of the radical faction also eroded and weakened the PAP's support base. Over the decades, the PAP consolidated its power base to remain firmly entrenched in power within Singapore ever since that election.[39] After its accession to power, the PAP made political overtures to SUMNO to effect a multi-communal coalition, or some form of political accommodation to offer some representation to Singapore Malays within the PAP power structure, but the Malayan UMNO, as the parent body, opposed alignment with a Chinese based party and pressured SUMNO not to proceed with co-operation.[40] The application of party discipline by UMNO prompted some SUMNO members to defect to the PAP, lured by patronage and rewards of office. The PAP appeals to SUMNO to cooperate was largely due to the PAP's political weakness. The moderates in the PAP were compelled by this weakness to maximize political capital by reaching out to as large an electorate as possible regardless of race. In addition, the PAP had to obtain Singapore Malay support as part of the party's merger strategies as the PAP sought to demonstrate to the Malay dominated Federal government that the PAP was not pro-Chinese, but sympathetic to the concerns of the Singapore Malays.

During the period from 1945-1965, the Singapore Malay community suffered from ineffective leadership while the community was politically divided and uncertain about its

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[39] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 24; Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 284-85.

[40] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 24-25.

directions and its future. The leftist Malay parties failed to capture Malay support, and while SUMNO had the advantage of being broad-based, it was also unable to develop a strategy that would enable the Malays to play a significant role in Singapore politics.[41] With mass Chinese support, the PAP effectively eclipsed all other parties, including SUMNO.

Despite the apparent failure of left-wing movements in general, some radical Malays argued that the interests of Malay society could be addressed by left wing politics by stressing the relative poverty of the Malays and their position in society as an exploited class; however, such radical Marxist and class-based politics was difficult to sell to Malays who retained a basic conservatism in beliefs and social outlook.

> Malay society generally was not ready for any radical departure from the old social order; . . . [left-wing] political beliefs, . . . were too radical for the great majority of Malays, who continued to look for more familiar leadership.[42]

British policy also "effectively inhibited the growth of left-wing organizations"[43] by defining a "moderate" political environment within which political activity was permissible. Without a traditional leadership, the failure of left-wing Malay movements, and the inability of SUMNO to organize the Singapore Malays, the community found itself overwhelmed by the issues of constitutional reform in the immediate post-war period. Consequently, Malay politics in Singapore paled in contrast to the upsurge of Malay consciousness and political activism of the pre-war era.

In the final account, SUMNO's ineffectiveness as a Malay based political party may be attributed to two main characteristics which distinguish the party from its more successful parent in the peninsula: the inability to organize the Singapore Malays, and the lack of direct

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[41] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 31.

[42] Ibid., 26-27.

[43] Ibid., 36.

access to the administrative structures of the state. Unlike the peninsular UMNO which could exploit state structures to its political advantage, SUMNO operated within a context in which the post-war British administration had a firm hold. As such, the "ingredient of organization" which the peninsular UMNO possessed together with administrative advantages, was put into effective political use to establish vital lines of "an effective system of political communication."[44] In other words, the extent of political positioning and its associated autonomy permitted by the institutional framework, defines the capacity for effective political activism. Since state structures are taken to include also parapolitical or grassroots institutions, the greater the proximity of political actors to these structures, the higher the likelihood of success in establishing the political effectiveness of that actor through both political and parapolitical channels.[45]

These institutional hindrances on political capacity are further magnified by a fragmented Singapore Malay community unreceptive to radical political ideas. Moreover, Malay political parties seeking to win Malay support had to compete with the dominant PAP, which also commanded substantial support from the Malay community which to begin with, had only a small number of eligible voters by nature of the community's proportional size of fifteen percent of the total population. As a result, in a first past the post political system, Malay based parties such as SUMNO which depended solely on Malay support, had less than the total of all eligible Malay voters from which to draw for support.

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[44] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 100. Recall that the KMS in the pre-war period was relatively successful in its aims compared to SUMNO, as the British selection of Eunos, the leader of the KMS, placed him within the framework of state institutions.

[45] Seah Chee Meow, "Parapolitical Institutions," in *Government and Politics of Singapore*, ed. Jon S. T. Quah, Chan Heng Chee, and Seah Chee Meow (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985), 192-93.

The PAP, Merger, and the Singapore Malays

The issue of Singapore's incorporation into the Federation was not laid to rest. The PAP aggressively sought for the achievement of merger by reviving the idea of a union in 1955; however, the union of Singapore with the Federation materialized only in 1959 when the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, perceived an imminent fall of Singapore into communist control.[46] This communist threat manifested itself in the political challenge of the Barisan Sosialis, an extreme left party of the PAP's break-away radical faction, to an extremely weak PAP following the party split.[47] Indeed, "the Communists were making a serious bid to topple the government"[48] of Singapore. From the point of view of Singapore and the PAP, merger was driven primarily by the urgent need for some form of security against communist subversion in Singapore.[49] Since Singapore and the PAP were politically weak and unable to deal effectively with the communists "without at least the *threat* of superior force"[50] as a counterweight, the PAP saw merger as a necessary prelude to eventual independence. For the PAP, merger was also a means of addressing its own survival concerns in face of an intra-party challenge from its pro-communist faction. A merger of Singapore

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[46] Funston, *Malay Politics*, 53.

[47] Ibid. This split resulted in a drastic reduction in PAP voting strength in the Assembly from 43 seats down to a bare majority of 27 in a 51 seat Assembly.

[48] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 294.

[49] Richard Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), 156; Fletcher, *Separation of Singapore*, provides an analysis of other factors involved in the merger and separation issue; Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 251-52, describes the erosion and collapse of right-wing and moderate conservative support.

[50] Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence*, 149.

with the Federation was significant for the Singapore Malays as merger implied the acquisition of majority status and a subsequent political ascendancy over the non-Malays.

The PAP accordingly argued that merger was necessary to provide Singapore with an economic hinterland for industrialization; the subsequent economic vitality would then render ineffective, communist propaganda stressing poverty and hardships in order to stir discontent. The eventual merger of the two territories depended largely on the imperative of containing the communists, as well as the inclusion of the British-protected Borneo states. Malay ethnic superiority was maintained with the inclusion of the Borneo states whose population was majority Malays.

The proposals for merger was welcomed by the Singapore Malays who had previously opposed the governing of Singapore as an entity separate from the Federation. The anticipated political benefits to the Singapore Malays of merger with the federation rekindled Malay hopes and aspirations for an improvement in their political status. The Singapore Malays quite naturally assumed that the special provisions for peninsular Malays enshrined in the Malayan constitution would also apply to the Singapore Malays once Singapore was incorporated into the federation. As paradoxical as it may seem for a Chinese based party like the PAP to succeed in winning Malay support, as well as for Malays to willingly make that support possible, the coincidence of political interests of both the PAP and the Singapore Malays made this anomalous relationship possible. This Malay support for the PAP shows that the party was successful in convincing the Singapore Malays that the PAP was capable of addressing Malay needs. The PAP's merger rhetoric included promises of concessions to Singapore Malays, while merger itself, implied a political reunion of Singapore Malays with their kinsmen in the peninsula. The combination of weak competing Malay political parties, such as SUMNO, and the coincidence of PAP and Singapore Malay interests in merger, provided the

conditions for the PAP to assume the responsibility of advancing Malay interest, subsequently leading to Malay support, as well as an expansion of Malay membership in the PAP.[51]

The PAP was largely responsible for lifting these Malay hopes and enthusiasm during the PAP's campaign for merger. The party went to great lengths to stress that it would attend to the problems of the Singapore Malays and made assurances and compromises to demonstrate its acknowledgement of Malay concerns. In its attempt to convince the central government of the party's sympathy towards the Malays, the PAP's merger strategies aggressively concentrated on Singapore Malay concerns. In the process, the PAP publicly committed itself to protect the interests of the Malays. Politically, the PAP offered to refrain from contesting constituencies in Singapore in which the Alliance party of the peninsula was running; installed a Malayan born Malay as Singapore's first President; ensured that the national anthem was composed in Malay with Malay-style music; invoked Malay and Islamic consciousness with the five stars and crescent moon of the state flag; fostered Malay as the National language; and finally, offered a gesture to closer cooperation with the federation symbolised by the state crest with the Singapore lion and Malayan tiger.[52] The PAP also committed itself to provide special help to improve Malay socio-economic status, and in the area of education, Malay schools were opened, and tuition fees waived for Malays up to and including university level.[53] In the words of Bedlington, "every attempt was made, both for internal and external appearances, to cloak the infant state in the swaddling clothes of 'Malay'-

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[51] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 279.

[52] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 135. This alliance comprised the Malay, Chinese, and Indian parties--UMNO, MCA, MIC--of the peninsula.

[53] Ibid., 126, 135.

ness."[54] Apart from the more concrete education policies, the other symbolic gestures towards the Singapore Malays coincided with the salient issue of political merger with the peninsula and in the process, institutionalized, at least symbolically, the Malays as part of the political framework and process. Prior to this, the Malays were not as much a key political variable and part of the political process as during the PAP's campaign for merger.

With merger, albeit for only two short years, rhetoric had to be translated into concrete policies as the PAP had also to canvass for Singapore Malay support. There was no room for the PAP to back down from its pro-Malay proposals previously used to buttress the primary argument for merger. For example, a US$300 million development program was promptly extended to the Malays for social infrastructure; in addition, the PAP responded to Malay demands for free education as well as subsidised housing.[55] The vote getting potential of these measures are reflected in the snap elections of 1963 in which Malay PAP candidates were successful in all Malay constituencies in Singapore previously held by the parent UMNO.[56] Chan has quite clearly emphasised the impact of these PAP gestures on the attitudes of the Singapore Malays when she notes that

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[54] Ibid., 134-35.

[55] Ibid., 145-47. Both programs were fundamental as a means to challenge SUMNO for Malay support.

[56] Clutterbuck, *Conflict & Violence*, 160. There are two political reasons behind calling this election: the PAP had to consolidate its political position against the communist faction within the party; the PAP felt that its mandate had to be extended before it expired in June 1964 in case of negative effects of merger that would undermine the party's retention of power. See Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 141-42, for a breakdown of polling results in each of the three main "Malay" constituencies.

> The Malay community for a brief period during merger experienced an ascendancy in their political and economic position and cultural aspirations, but with separation and the new political situation, their expectations had to undergo a painful readjustment.[57]

Indeed, the PAP "seemed more effective in advancing Malay interests than the Singapore UMNO"[58] and enjoyed the political reward of widespread Singapore Malay support. Strategies erected on the "Malay" platform were as such, driven by the primary concern to achieve merger, and secondly, to get and consolidate Malay support for the Malay PAP candidates.

Despite these Malay-centred displays, the eventual merger in 1963 hinged on the Federation's perception that Singapore and the PAP were not able to withstand the imminent communist challenge; the federal government wanted "to prevent the emergence of an 'Asian Cuba' in Singapore."[59] It was feared that the communists "would with the help of the communist powers try to overrun the whole of Malaya"[60] after gaining control of Singapore politics. As such, the earlier concern of the central government with a Chinese majority in the event of a merger, paled in contrast to the more imposing threat of the growing political strength of radical elements in Singapore, which tended to bias Singapore politics towards the left.[61] Besides, the ethnic scale was tipped into a delicate balance in favour of the peninsular Malays since the Federation had planned to include the Borneo territories into the union so

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[57] Chan, Heng Chee, "Political Developments, 1965-1979," in *A History of Singapore*, ed. Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), 172.

[58] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 279; Willard A. Hanna, "The Malays' Singapore Part III: The Geylang Area," *American Field Staffs Reports, Southeast Asia Series* 13, no. 4 (January 1966): 5.

[59] Shee Poon Kim, "The Evolution of the Political System," in *Government and Politics of Singapore*, ed. Jon S. T. Quah, Chan Heng Chee, and Seah Chee Meow (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985), 6.

[60] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 293.

[61] Ibid., 292-93.

that "a communal ratio similar to that prevailing in Malaya could be retained" to counterbalance the Singapore Chinese majority.[62] Indeed, the leftward sway of politics in 1955 Singapore has been summarised by Turnbull in her observation that "The future belonged to politicians of the left."[63]

As a first step in its campaign for merger, the Malay Affairs Bureau (MAB) was created in 1954, as an auxiliary unit of the PAP to deal with the problems of the Malays, and more specifically, to "resolve the . . . fears which make the Malay majority in the Federation not want the Chinese majority in Singapore."[64] The MAB's main responsibilities were

> to liaise with Malay members of the party by organizing political classes and other social activities in order to bring the Malay members of the party together. In addition, it is also responsible . . . as intermediaries between the top non-Malay PAP leaders and the Malay community.[65]

The MAB had also to ensure the recruitment of Malay members into the party as well as to canvass for Malay support for the PAP, and was also expected to "educate" the Malays in general through "political classes," to persuade the Malays to accept the party's agenda of action.[66] In short, the MAB was a political arm to extend the PAP into the Malay community for support, and for establishing and maintaining communication links between the PAP and

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[62] Ibid., 293; as on 31 December 1964, the Malays numbered 5,115,846 while the Chinese totalled 4,680,480 after the inclusion of the Borneo territories. See Ibid., 294 table 12 for a detailed population estimate by racial-ethnic groups.

[63] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 252.

[64] Ibid., 267. The MAB was formed to meet the demands of merger more than with dealing with the problems of the Singapore Malays. MAB can be seen as another instance of the PAP's response to Malay demands. The party was prepared to consider the setting up of a body to take care of Malay affairs "if the Malays considered it necessary;" Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 150.

[65] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 84.

[66] Shee, "Evolution of the Political System," 14.

the Malays, and was undoubtedly created with the immediate and broader political issue of merger in mind.

MAB membership is drawn only from the Malay PAP MPs and is regulated by the PAP's Central Executive Committee (CEC) who nominates office bearers to the MAB.[67] Malay party members are unable to influence or pressure the MAB on issues of Malay concern since MAB members do not depend on these party members for support, nor do Malay ordinary members qualify for nomination into the MAB. The independence of the MAB from Malay party members and its dependence on the CEC, makes the MAB accountable only to the CEC but not to Malay members.[68] Due to this insulation of the MAB from the Malay party membership, joining the party as a Malay member does not ensure access to an effective channel through which to articulate Malay concerns. As a result of this relationship, the MAB's image and credibility as a representative of the Malays has been tarnished, and has led to its failure to "mobilize the other Malay organizations in support of its demands since the MAB is but a bureau within the ruling PAP."[69]

The MAB has generally performed its mediating tasks between the PAP and the Singapore Malay community through the religious medium by highlighting the universal nature of Islam that unites "all actions within the framework of religion."[70] MAB leaders embarked on aggressive efforts to "domesticise" Islam by pointing out that various aspects of the koran

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[67] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 85.

[68] Ibid. This concern with accountability of PAP Malay MPs has been a point of contention even up to the present. The Association of Muslim Professionals has criticised this existing dependence of the MAB on the CEC as undermining the effectiveness of the MAB in serving Malay interests. A discussion of this point will be made further on in this chapter.

[69] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 61.

[70] Ganesan, "Role of Islam," 10.

was not antithetical to the modernizing values espoused by the PAP. For example, the Malays were told that "their responsibilities to Islam and to the state were one and the same."[71] In another instance, a MAB leader stressed that "Islam encouraged all Muslims to seek social progress in this world,"[72] in addition to fulfilling spiritual obligations. The object of these efforts was "to counteract conservative forces in Islam,"[73] which were alleged to be at the heart of the disadvantaged Malay position. As with the earlier instance of the Arabs and Jawi Peranakans, social, political, and economic reform had to begin with religious reform.

This religious conservatism of the Malays can be explained by the leadership role of traditional religious teachers in the absence of a Malay political leadership tradition in the Singapore Malay community.

> The only true traditional [Malay] leaders in Singapore are religious. . . . they play a stronger role than Malay political leaders. For instance, during the riots in 1964 political leaders never came to the front. So youths went to the *ulama*, ... These religious leaders . . . can give inner strength to withstand outside pressures.[74]

Due to the relevance and relative appeal of the more conservative traditional religious teachers, the Singapore Malay community tended to be less receptive to "modernising values." Indeed, conservative forces within the Malay community posed a real obstacle to Malay social change.

Summary

The experience with the post-war constitutional settlements clearly demonstrated to the Singapore Malays that they could not completely rely on the peninsular Malays for political representation. During both Malayan Union and merger, the Singapore Malays were

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[71] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 253.

[72] Ibid., 254.

[73] Ibid., 255.

[74] Ibid., 266.

not treated by their counterparts in Malaya as a significant part of the peninsular Malay political equation. In the Malayan Union issue, the main concern of the Federation was in maintaining the ethnic determinant in the peninsular in favour of the Malays; this ethnic factor also surfaced in the merger issue. In addition, the union issue was also entangled with that of the sultan's position, while the merger issue also involved the communist threat. The eventual merger of Singapore for two brief years was motivated by security considerations stemming from the communist threat; however, successful merger in 1963 took place only after the Federal government had ensured the preservation of Malay dominance in the Federation. Intra-party fissures as well as the lack of autonomy from peninsular UMNO prevented the Malay based SUMNO from effectively representing Malay interests until the formation of the PAP. Even then, it was because of broader reasons such as Singapore's, and similarly, the PAP's survival against the communist threat that dictated the PAP's conciliatory posture towards the Singapore Malays. As such, the Singapore Malays played an indirect and passive political role: their political relevance being dictated by the existing political circumstances and arrangements.

The Singapore Malays clearly lacked a leadership with the capacity to mobilize or represent the Singapore Malay community. The dependence of the Singapore Malays on the PAP for political representation put the Malays in a patron-client relationship, in which the Singapore Malays had to operate within a system of bargaining that was not open to the public. It is this lack of transparency in the relationship that some Singapore Malays, especially in the last decade, have come to question the effectiveness of the Malay PAP MPs.

CHAPTER 4

MALAY POLITICS IN INDEPENDENT SINGAPORE: 1965-1991

Political Expulsion of Singapore from the Federation

The fragile merger between Singapore and the Federation eventually collapsed because of tensions, pressures, and disputes concerning social, political economic, and racial factors.[1] Of these factors, the contest for power between the Federal Government and Singapore contributed significantly as a catalyst to the eventual expulsion of Singapore from the Federation. In 1964, the PAP decided to contest the Federal elections on a campaign slogan for a *Malaysian Malaysia* "not identified with the supremacy, well-being and the interests of any one particular community or race."[2] This apparent non-communal approach proposed by the PAP, naturally provoked opposition from peninsular Malays who saw the concept as a threat to their indigenous rights and privileges as provided for under the Malaysian Constitution. By contrast, the Malay-based UMNO sought to protect and preserve these constitutional safeguards for the Malays and sought to create a Malaysia with Malay political dominance and privileges. This difference in the ideological basis of social and political organization was at the core of the dispute between the Malay-controlled Federal government and the Chinese dominated PAP government of Singapore. The ethnic nature of

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[1] For an examination of these factors, see Fletcher, *Separation of Singapore*. Except for a brief commentary on the interrelated political and racial dimensions which are directly relevant to this study, this thesis will not deal with the details of the disputes.

[2] Ibid., 58. The PAP attack was essentially aimed at Malay privileges.

the PAP challenge drove "a sharp wedge between the Central Government of Malaysia and that of Singapore,"[3] that led to the eventual political expulsion of Singapore from Malaysia.

This brief spell of merger was tainted by friction between the Federal and PAP governments over a range of interrelated issues;[4] however, the differences in policy approaches and its implications for the Malays were more fundamental in the dispute between the two parties, eventually resulting in the political expulsion of Singapore from the Federation. Whereas the Federal Government advocated affirmative action policies for the Malays, the PAP government favoured what it called a multiracial meritocracy in which all races were to be treated equally. Secondly, the political ambitions of the PAP to extend itself into the Federation exacerbated the existing inter-government hostilities. This political foray into federal politics was perceived by the Federal Government as a challenge to its authority such that it was left with no other choice but to proceed with the expulsion of Singapore from the Federation in 1965.[5]

The independence of Singapore from the Federation in 1965 was greeted with mixed feelings by various groups in Singapore. The inner circle of the PAP's Central Executive Committee were dejected by the "bitter political defeat"[6] of merger and its far reaching economic implications for Singapore. An independent Singapore appeared not to be viable because it depended on the Federation for water supply and an economic hinterland; however,

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[3] Chan, "Political Developments," 157.

[4] Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 341-45.

[5] See Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2d ed., 353-54, for the Malayan Prime Minister's explanation for his decision to expel Singapore.

[6] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 288.

some members of the committee favoured Singapore's separation from the Federation.[7] On the other hand, others, especially Singapore businessmen, were delighted because political independence implied their autonomy in economic policy that had previously been rigidly regulated by the Federation.[8] Apart from the reactions of these specific groups, there was a general opposition to the separation in both Malaysia and Singapore.

The expulsion of Singapore from the Federation was especially significant for the Singapore Malays because they now had to deal with the political implications of their new position as a minority in a Chinese majority Singapore. Under a new and highly regulated political context, the Malays could not organize themselves politically largely because they could not wield significant political influence as a minority. This minority status was further compounded by the absence of Malay-based political parties in Singapore with the organizational capability to represent Malay interests. SUMNO, the only potential Malay political party in Singapore, was politically crippled by internal conflict and overdependence on the parent UMNO Malaysia for party policy; with the independence of Singapore, SUMNO was left without an internal organizational structure with the ability and cohesion to chart new directions for Singapore Malays in the new Singapore political context. In addition, the presence of UMNO Malaysia as a key actor during the merger period had compelled the PAP to be cautious towards the Singapore Malays, but with separation and the departure of UMNO Malaysia as a player in Singapore politics, there was no built-in mechanism that could provide political "protection" for the Singapore Malays. Oddly enough, no other Malay-based political party emerged to represent Singapore Malay interests during this period of political and psychological crisis. Even if new Malay parties had been formed in Singapore, they would

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

perhaps not have succeeded partly because of the small Singapore Malay population, from which such parties would have had to compete against the PAP which had earlier built a base of Malay support during the merger campaign. Finally, the requirement that SUMNO sever its links from UMNO Malaysia and be renamed SMNO or PKMS, effectively decimated the party because PKMS could no longer obtain financial support by identifying or associating with UMNO Malaysia. Whether this measure was specifically designed to alter the institutional environment to the disadvantage of SUMNO and perhaps also to any other prospective Malay parties is open to question, but the effect was to completely displace alternate sources of Malay political representation to that of the PAP's Malay wing--the MAB. In the absence of a Malay-based party capable of articulating Malay concerns, the Singapore Malay community had to depend largely on the MAB as its only formal channel of political bargaining with the PAP.

The Political Context in Independent Singapore

Despite the upheavals resulting from the political expulsion of Singapore, the PAP has managed to consolidate its political power because of Cabinet cohesion, as well as the support of Singaporeans; these sources of support have entrenched the party's political authority. A straight by-election PAP victory over the opposition in July 1965 demonstrates voter endorsement of the PAP.[9] In addition to intra-party cohesiveness and mass support, the Singapore Civil Service also plays a monumental role in perpetuating the dominance of the PAP in Singapore politics. Contrary to the principle of maintaining the relative autonomy of the administrative service from partisanship, the civil service in Singapore serves as "a close

[9] Ibid., 290.

handmaiden of the party."[10] Through the use of the bureaucracy to implement policies with outcomes that meet the needs of the people, the PAP has managed to consolidate its predominant political position on the basis of an "image of effectiveness."[11] The PAP selection and insertion of personnel into key positions of the civil service accounts for the effectiveness of the bureaucracy in implementing policies.

> The efficacy of a government's performance helps to mobilize commitment and loyalty to the government and the ruling party and gives it a salient position in the individual's web of identifications.[12]

The pervasive role of the bureaucracy in the post-independence era is distinctly obvious from the "deliberate depoliticization of the political arena," and "the allocation of values in society . . . [as] largely an exercise of state management."[13] Instead of wider political participation for Singaporeans, the government plays a widespread role in social, political, and economic management; even the significance of the average elected politician's role is peripheral to that of the bureaucrat.[14] Public political participation or interest articulation is allowed only within a framework of regulated participation "through approved

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[10] Chan Heng Chee, *The Dynamics of One Party Dominance: The PAP at the Grass-Roots* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1976), 224.

[11] Ibid., 224.

[12] Thomas J. Bellows, *The People's Action Party of Singapore: Emergence of a Dominant Party System* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1970), 46; Chan Heng Chee, "Political Parties," in *Government and Politics of Singapore*, ed. Jon S. T. Quah, Chan Heng Chee, and Seah Chee Meow (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987), 163.

[13] Chan Heng Chee, "Legislatures and Legislators," in *Government and Politics of Singapore*, ed. Jon S. T. Quah, Chan Heng Chee, and Seah Chee Meow (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985), 73.

[14] Ibid.

institutions and channels,"[15] and only on issues pertaining to the administration and implementation of public policy. Questions of principle or policy formulation are not entertained.[16] This PAP attitude towards mass political participation, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, isolates and shelters the bureaucracy from public pressure; however, the bureaucracy remains under the strict control of the PAP political leadership despite playing an extensive role and has not emerged as a rival power centre.[17] The subservient and docile nature of the bureaucracy owes much to the structure of appointment and accountability: the bureaucracy does not answer to the large body of voters nor politicians and community leaders, but only to the political élite.[18] The PAP has successfully transformed the bureaucracy into "an institution which shared the same ideology as the ruling leadership."[19] Rather than working independently of the PAP government, the bureaucracy has become fused with the party through the party's strategic location of key personnel within these government institutions. The significance of the bureaucracy to the PAP's survival is best demonstrated in the party's ability to mobilize all resources and functions of the civil service to rebuff the challenge of the PAP's radical splinter group, the Barisan Sosialis, in 1961.[20] Within the context of this political authority structure, power inevitably becomes highly concentrated in

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[15] S. Gopinathan, "Education," in *A History of Singapore*, ed. Ernest C. T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), 280.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Jon S. T. Quah, "Public Bureaucracy, Social Change and National Development," in *Singapore: Development Policies and Trends*, ed. Peter S. J. Chen (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1983), 219. Chan, *One Party Dominance*, 224.

[18] Gopinathan, "Education," 280.

[19] Chan, "Political Developments," 161.

[20] Ibid. The PAP was severely weakened by this split in which the party lost eighty percent of its membership, and 35 of the 51 branch executive committees.

the government as increasingly sophisticated bureaucracy and mechanisms of planning are devised for development. Indeed, the predominance of these bureaucratic devices in Singapore society supports the characterization of independent Singapore as a state which assumes a dominant role in social, political, and economic life.[21]

Party cohesiveness, popular support, and the ability to exploit the access to the bureaucracy to bring about performance legitimacy and support for the PAP has transformed politics in independent Singapore into "a hegemonic party system" where repressive measures against radical left-wing parties have also generally "stymied the development of all opposition parties."[22] This party system creates the conditions under which the implementation of PAP social, political, and economic policies for the new city-state go unchallenged. In the long run, the success of these policies legitimizes PAP rule in the "administrative state"[23] of Singapore. Under these authority structures, the PAP government's firm stand against competitive politics inflicts heavy penalties, and eliminates pressure groups and counter-élites, thereby discouraging the formation of new groups.

With a well established political position, the PAP went on to enunciate its principles of meritocracy as the basis of its governance, where no ethnic group, particularly the Malays who are the largest minority, enjoys special privileges. The party uncompromisingly adheres to this principle as a cornerstone of its public policy, and considers

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[21] The "state" in this instance refers to the government or public bureaucracy which has played a pervasive role in Singapore's development process through effecting social change. See Quah, "Public Bureaucracy," 219.

[22] Chan, "Legislature and Legislators," 73.

[23] Gopinathan, "Education," 280.

> multiracialism to be a fundamental axiom of politics in Singapore. . . . of such vital importance that there can be no room for polite disagreement. It is a key objective in the PAP constitution."[24]

Despite the rhetoric, the PAP has had to continue maximizing and consolidating Malay support at the polls: "from 1956 the PAP has been actively trying to seek political cooperation with the Malay community."[25] While there are compromises between the PAP and the Malays in private, Malay PAP MPs maintain that the "behind closed doors" approach of bargaining with the non-Malay leaders tarnishes the image of the Malay PAP MPs as effective articulators of Malay interest.

Impact of Political Separation on the Singapore Malays

The separation of Singapore from Malaysia after only two years of merger from 1963 to 1965 shattered Singapore Malay expectations and aspirations to reestablish their political status in Singapore.[26] The political majority status Singapore Malays temporarily enjoyed whilst in the Federation became reduced to a minority and threatened their political position. The lost of majority status for the Malays also implied the loss of political dominance and ethnic security against the Chinese, as independence also denied Malays access to UMNO Malaysia as an advocate of Malay special rights, and a political "shield" against potential

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[24] Goh Chok Tong, "A Minority Right: Ensuring multi-racial representation in the Singapore Parliament," *The Parliamentarian* 70, no. 1 (January 1989): 7.

[25] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 23-28, notes that this has been the strategy adopted by the PAP. The former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew has recently been reported to have noted the need to cultivate Malay support for the PAP. Zainul, "Malay Turning Point," 16; Shee, "Evolution of the Political System," 14.

[26] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 112. These hopes of the Singapore Malays were spawned by the many PAP promises made during the merger campaign to improve the position of the Singapore Malays.

Chinese political domination.[27] In the absence of a Malay leadership in Singapore capable of articulating Malay concerns, the Malays have had to accept the PAP application of "equality for all."[28] Consequently, the Singapore Malays have come to doubt earlier PAP promises to improve Malay status since the Malays are now a minority without special privileges.

The attempt in 1965, of Singapore authorities to mollify these Malay anxieties in 1965 is revealing of the Singapore government's sensitivity to the geopolitics encapsulating Singapore. The PAP government has reiterated its commitment to

> continue helping the Malays in competition with UMNO . . . [and] that there will be built in provisions [in the constitution]--to ensure that any government must continue the policy of the P.A.P. government to raise the economic and educational level of the Malays.[29]

The PAP also pledged to retain Malay as a national language in Singapore.[30] These PAP responses reflect the importance of the Singapore Malays as a political constituency, especially in relation to the pressures from the geopolitical context. For example, offers of concessions to the Malays coincided with the PAP's campaign for merger, when the PAP had yet to consolidate its political strength.[31] These measures show that the PAP recognises the strategic significance of the Malays who supported the PAP in the elections of 1964 in which the PAP

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[27] The Singapore Malays enjoyed a majority prior to separation because they were technically part of the Malay population of the Malay Peninsula.

[28] This principle had been the main source of conflict between the PAP and the Federal government during merger.

[29] Ashfaq Hussain, "The Post-Separation Effect on the Singapore Malays and their Response: 1965-66," *Journal of the Historical Society* (July 1970): 68.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Chan, "Political Developments," 159, argues that the PAP was strong; however, it must be noted that this strength was relative to the weakness of other political parties but not within the PAP because of intra-party tensions between the communist and moderate factions.

won three Malay dominated constituencies, previously strongholds of UMNO Singapore.[32] It is noteworthy that even after independence and the solidifying of the PAP's political position, the PAP has consistently been keenly aware of Singapore's situation that can be seen as an analogue of the Israeli geopolitical position.

Ironically, despite the PAP's efforts to allay Malay anxieties by restating the government's commitment to improve Singapore Malay society, significant Malay issues receded in importance with the emphasis shifting towards national economic development. In fact, "former concessions were gradually withdrawn"[33] from the Malays, and even though Malay remained the official language, English became commonly used. While the criteria for the award of educational bursaries to Malays used to be entitlement, these awards are now given sparingly on the basis of merit; however, because many Malays tended to place a premium on religious education, there was a lack of adequate academic preparation for these merit-based awards, and as such, relatively few Malays qualify for these bursaries.[34] Malay discontent eventually arose because of the apparent divergence in the PAP's posture from its actions. The PAP promptly "set out to remove sources of discontent among the Malay community."[35]

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[32] Mohamed Noordin, *From Malayan Union*, 188-89.

[33] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 310-1.

[34] Ibid., 311.

[35] Ibid.

Institutional Changes and the Singapore Malays

Constitutional

After the PAP's establishment of its position in power, various institutional changes with significant implications for the Singapore Malays were implemented by the PAP government. A Constitutional Commission set up to design safeguards to protect racial, religious, or linguistic minorities against discrimination and a Presidential Council for Minority Rights were formed in 1973 on the advise of the Commission.[36] Contrary to the Commission's recommendations, the council was composed of three Cabinet members instead of "a non-elected advisory body composed of . . . citizens without any political affiliation."[37] In addition, the government rejected the suggestion to open council proceedings to public debate, and limited the council's powers to exclude matters and bills which did not have any relevance for minorities.[38] Since council meetings are private and because only a "token second opinion"[39] is expressed on bills which may be seen to be discriminatory to minority interests, the council can be said to have played a symbolic and limited role. Indeed, "the record shows that no adverse report has ever been submitted by the Presidential Council for Minority Rights."[40] Perhaps this lack of active comment from the council stems from the composition of its members, the lack of any visible opposition from Malay organizations or political parties, and the hegemonic nature of the PAP government, such that conditions did not prevail for meaningful action of the council.

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[36] Chan, "Legislature and Legislators," 73.

[37] Idem, "Political Developments," 159.

[38] Idem, "Legislature and Legislators," 73.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 76.

Religious

As noted earlier, geopolitical factors have shaped PAP policies towards the Singapore Malays. Singapore's location between two Muslim dominated states dictates that any government in power has to be sensitive to Malay issues. Regardless of weakened kinship ties between Singapore Malays and their Malaysian counterparts, any disregard for the welfare of the Singapore Malays could lead to Malaysian Malay protests that may subsequently arouse the political sentiments of the Malays in Singapore.[41] In light of the compelling geopolitical circumstances, the salience of Islam as a unifying political force has not escaped the notice of the Singapore government. Accordingly, the Administration of Muslim Law Act was passed in August 1966 as a Bill in parliament. Under this bill, the *Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura* (MUIS) or the Singapore Council of Islamic Religion was established "to contain Malay extremism and religious fanaticism."[42] The MUIS came to play a "hegemonic role"[43] in the administration of Islam in Singapore. MUIS is assigned responsibility for functions such as collecting Muslim obligatory taxes and controlling all Muslim trusts, functions previously carried out by private individuals. MUIS also prepares sermons for Friday prayers, but since mosques are under private management, it is difficult to ascertain whether these vetted sermons are followed to the letter; however, the MUIS is in a position to "intervene if mosques are used as centres for anti-government activities."[44] The pilgrimage has also come

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[41] 'Balancing Act' the No. 1 Test for Malay MPs: Community's Needs Must be Seen Against those of Nation's, says Mattar," *Straits Times*, 5 April 88, 17.

[42] Ashfaq, "Post-Separation Effect," 70.

[43] Siddique, "Administration of Islam," 326.

[44] Ashfaq, "Post-Separation Effect," 71.

under the regulation of MUIS.[45] In short, MUIS has assumed the role of central Islamic religious authority in Singapore with wide ranging powers. Until the emergence of MUIS, the Islamic religion in Singapore had been administered through autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies without executive powers.[46]

The wide ranging functions of the MUIS has shifted the religious focus of the Malays away from various private religious organizations and towards the MUIS. The locus of Malay political support has subsequently been affected by this shift as these Malay religious organizations have in effect become politically sterilized and depoliticized since all Muslim religious activity have to be approved by the council.[47] Furthermore, not only does the MUIS now indirectly act as an intermediary between the government and Muslims, it is also incidentally an institution of political socialization; some values of government appointed members on the executive of MUIS inevitably filters down to the Muslim community through policies and decisions of the council.[48] Over time, a relatively "uniform" and "acceptable" attitude towards religion and government may evolve so that greater control and influence can be achieved. This political compartmentalization of Islam effectively reduces the universal, and as such, political reach of Islam as an all encompassing religion by bringing the religion directly under government supervision. Largely because of its status as a statutory board, the access of MUIS to various forms of valuable government resources and infrastructural support

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[45] Siddique, "Administration of Islam," 327.

[46] Bedlington, "Politics of State Integration," 177-78.

[47] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 97.

[48] Just as personnel in the Singapore Civil Service are required not to be "hostile and afraid of the PAP," the MUIS had also to be composed of administrators of similar attitudes. See Quah, "Public Bureaucracy," 200-201, on the PAP's comprehensive administrative reform of the public bureaucracy, which included "attitudinal reform" of public employees.

allows MUIS to successfully provide facilities for Islamic religious organizations. This capacity to provide for the needs of core Islamic institutions crucial to a Malay's life, reinforces the image and position of the MUIS, and as a result, legitimizes the government which the Malays may come to associate as the agent capable of meeting Malay demands.

The PKMS reacted vehemently to what it perceived as a lack of autonomy of MUIS, arguing that "undue governmental interference would be brought to bear on MUIS"[49] and in the process, preclude freedom of action in the Council. PKMS contended that government screening and approval of members to MUIS would prevent the body from being independent and free from government influence since these appointed representatives would be accountable to the government and not to the Malays. While it could be argued that the administration of Islam was seen by the Singapore government as a necessary measure to curtail the potential of Islam as a political force in Singapore, the by-product of government intervention was the crippling of the PKMS which depended heavily on Malay support. The loss of support for private religious organizations because of the overarching MUIS monopoly of Islamic religious "authority", also meant the weakening of PKMS's support base since private religious organizations could no longer be used effectively by PKMS for political purposes because of the diversion of support away from other Muslim organizations.

Political

Politically, PKMS was required to sever its links with its parent body in Kuala Lumpur. Furthermore, the legal requirement that only Singapore citizens may be members of a Singapore political party implied that a segment of the Malays was effectively excluded from party participation because most Malay parents had failed to register their children born in

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[49] Ashfaq, "Post-Separation Effect," 70; see Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 48-50, for a description of other social organizations which opposed the formation of MUIS.

Singapore prior to 1945.[50] Moreover, party membership was confined by the party's constitution to individuals of Malay origin without the citizenship requirement, while Malay intellectuals from whom leaders could be recruited, were automatically banned from party activism as most were Singapore civil servants.[51] The PKMS eventually "found itself ineffective operating within a multi-racial environment,"[52] in which the PAP had managed to win the support of significant segments of the Malay masses. Also, the PAP controlled all the patronage, and any supporters of the PKMS soon found that their membership entailed a high political price in practical politics and in any interactions with government authority. In sum, the PKMS lost potential support as a consequence of these factors and eventually wilted in a new political setting in which it was required to set its own policy agenda.

Cultural

In the area of culture, the *Majlis Pusat Pertubuhan-Pertubuhan Budaya Melayu Singapura* (Majlis Pusat) or the Central Council of Malay Cultural Organizations Singapore was formed in April 1969 on the initiative of Sha'ari Tadin, Parliamentary Secretary of Culture.[53] Majlis Pusat's official aim is to organize all non-political Malay organizations under a single grouping in order to better co-ordinate improvement programs to advance the social, educational, cultural, and economic status of Singapore Malays.[54]

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[50] Chan, *One Party Dominance*, 208.

[51] Ibid., 207-9.

[52] Wan Hussin, *Dilemma of Development*, 19.

[53] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 30. Unlike the MUIS which is a statutory board, there is no indication that the formation of the Majlis Pusat was a government sponsored initiative. Again, Ismail provides a list of Malay organizations which opposed the formation of the Majlis Pusat but does not furnish the details of the disagreement.

[54] Wan Hussin, *Dilemma of Development*, 30.

Although the Majlis Pusat is not under the administrative hierarchy of the public service, the predominance of civil servants, as well as Malay PAP leaders in the leadership of the grassroots organization could, as in the case of MUIS, incidentally influence the operation of the Majlis Pusat as these leaders are also bound, by virtue of being PAP members, to maintain the status quo by ensuring that Malay cultural organizations do not adopt political postures nor become fronts for anti-PAP political movements.[55] Various other Malay organizations tend to view the Majlis Pusat "with some suspicions as a governmental-sponsored body,"[56] because of the concentration of public servants in the council's leadership. The existence of a socio-economic gap between the leaders of the Majlis Pusat and those of Malay cultural organizations under the council's control, has also given rise to a communications gap between the leaders of the Majlis Pusat and the more traditional and conservative leaders of its affiliates, further compounding Malay scepticism of the council.[57] This cautiousness and apprehension of Malay grassroots organizations in dealing with organizations bearing any semblance of government affiliation or sponsorship, has been a recurring theme in Singapore Malay politics that suggests an uncomfortable relationship between the Singapore Malays and the PAP government.

In the absence of viable competing Malay-based parties, Malay politics in Singapore largely centre around interactions between Malay PAP MPs and Malay grassroots leaders. In part, this confinement of Malay politics to the quasi-political level is due to the absence--the PKMS is basically a spent force that emerges only during elections--of Malay-based political parties capable of contesting against the PAP for Malay votes. The absence of credible Malay

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[55] Ismail, *Problems of Elite Cohesion*, 95-96.

[56] Ibid., 95.

[57] Ibid., 96.

political parties capable of posing a real challenge to the PAP, redefines Malay politics as a direct dialogue between the PAP and Malay grassroots organizations. Malay MPs and the MAB serve as intermediaries in these dialogues as "no political organization remained to channel Malay dissatisfaction"[58] since the political neutralization of the PKMS. Inherent in this structure of informal political dialogue is the dependence of the Malay community on the government to address Malay needs where the Malays constantly adjust and moderate their demands on the PAP government. The caution of the Malay community could stem from uncertainties regarding the government's intentions towards the community, since the government monopolizes the channels through which Malay concerns can be addressed.

By virtue of responding, the PAP administration shows that it does not ignore the minority Singapore Malays because of Singapore's geopolitical position in the Malay Archipelago. Albeit minimal by comparison to the Malaysian Malays, there are government assistance programs specially targeted at the Singapore Malays.

> While the PAP government rejected the granting of 'special rights' as demanded by some Malays, the government was prepared to give special attention to, and to provide special assistance for, any needy Malay family. This took the form of housing subsidies and bursaries for education.[59]

As much as assistance to the Malays in the early post-separation years was largely due to promises made by the PAP in its merger rhetoric, it was also a means to compete against PKMS for Malay votes.[60] Of the changes which took place immediately after political separation, those related to religion and politics were aimed at preventing appeals to Islamic

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[58] Turnbull, *History of Singapore*, 2d ed., 311.

[59] Shee, "Evolution of the Political System," 15.

[60] UMNO Singapore is the branch of the dominant Malay party in the ruling alliance of Malaysia.

solidarity in a generally Malay-Muslim geopolitical context of the region, as a means to raise the political consciousness of the Singapore Malays towards the new nation-state.

Malay Response to the New Political Context in Singapore

These institutional changes initiated by the PAP after separation from Malaysia brought about a strong Malay reaction against the meritocratic principle. The Malays argued that assistance programs to improve their position within the context of a multiracial meritocracy cannot be effective because of prevailing Malay handicap. While this Malay demand can be acceded to in the short term, assistance over an extended period may not be politically tenable for any Singapore political party as the Chinese form the majority. Moreover, if the Malays are unable to narrow the socio-economic gap over a given period, then continued assistance would be extremely difficult to justify to a majority Chinese electorate. In fact, Tania Li has made a critical point that the emphasis on Chinese success has overshadowed the existence of poor Chinese families who are in a similar position as the Malays: she writes that

> the low level of education among Malays was probably shocking to the reviewer and the literate, newspaper-reading public, . . . distorted by the failure to point out the high proportion of Chinese in the same predicament. . . . Identical problems faced by Chinese students from low-income homes are not mentioned.[61]

As a result of this socio-political context defined by the meritocratic principle, the PAP has had to make compromises with Malay MPs "behind closed doors" so as to avoid possible negative reaction from the Singapore Chinese who form the bulk of the party's support.

With respect to the MAB, the Malays did not respond enthusiastically as they did not fully accept Malay MPs in the MAB as legitimate leaders since these MPs were chosen by the CEC of the PAP. Having to depend on the CEC for nomination to the MAB, Malays on the

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[61] Li, *Culture, Economy, and Ideology*, 175-76.

MAB could not appear overly vocal on Malay issues; conversely, had these MPs been directly chosen by a Malay constituency, they would have been free to articulate Malay concerns and demands in public fora. As a consequence, these MAB and other Malay PAP MPs have come to be perceived by Malays as "puppets" of the PAP. Malay MPs generally have been elected to represent constituencies which are mainly Chinese in composition. As such, MAB leaders are confronted with a dilemma: being too vocal on Malay issues would compromise their credibility as national leaders and make them appear to be pro-Malay, while a focus on national objectives, as defined by the PAP, will be perceived by the Malays as a "sell-out" of the Malay community. Until recently in 1985 when a Malay PAP MP was re-elected as the President of a Malay cultural organization, a Malay leader "joining the ruling political party had to severe [*sic*] official links with the organisations they came from,"[62] so as to avoid a conflict of interest.

Malay Politics in the 1980s

Issues concerning the Malays have increasingly become aired in a political environment more tolerant of political debate on controversial issues. The promise of a more "open" political ecology has been associated with a leadership transition from Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong. A difference in political styles in dealing with the masses lies at the heart of this change in political setting. Recent instances of opposition parties winning seats in elections suggests that voters are now more willing to vote non-PAP without fear of reprisals; the relaxation of film censorship criteria is also evidence of a trend towards a more open system. Indeed, the 1984 Majlis Pusat seminar which the First

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[62] Zainul, "Malay Turning Point," 16.

Deputy Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, publicly endorsed at the opening ceremony, signalled a new government commitment to addressing Malay issues.[63]

Malay politics in the 1980s has benefitted from this shift in political norms. Various significant issues such as the launching of MENDAKI in 1982, the Chaim Herzog event of 1987, the question in the mid-1980s of Malays in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), and the Group Representative Constituency (GRC) proposals of 1988, have become politicized because of the change in orientation of the PAP government with regard to "dissent."[64] Despite the more open political environment, it was only with the formation of the Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) towards the close of the 1980s that any organized group has come forward to criticise the status quo as far as it affected the Malays.

The first signs of a definite political effort to address Malay concerns in the 1980s came when Malay PAP MPs were startled by figures of the 1980 population census on the poor educational performance of Malays.[65] The findings were extremely damaging to the political image and Malay support for the PAP, since these results suggested that the PAP administration had yet to achieve an improvement in the socio-economic position of the

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[63] Wan Hussin, *Dilemma of Development*, 32.

[64] "Heat Over the Malay Question," *Asiaweek*, 5 April 1987, 12. Perhaps this shift in orientation could be placed within the context of international trends towards more open political systems, so that the image of the PAP government continues to remain relevant and not anachronistic to present political realities.

[65] "Why the gap between the Malays and non-Malays: The rural people who are under no pressure," *Straits Times*, 5 February, 1983; "about two-thirds of the Malay population were without the GCE 'O' level certificate. Of this, 42 per cent did not pass the PSLE." The Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), is taken at the end of the last year of primary school studies as a requirement for admission to secondary school. The Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Examination (GCE) 'O' level examinations are conducted by the Ministry of Education and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, and sat for at the end of the final year of secondary studies. A pass in this examination is required for entry to a minimum of two full years' pre-university studies.

Singapore Malays, despite various promises and schemes provided by the PAP over fifteen years of independence. These party concerns with Malay education has translated into the emergence of the government sponsored *Yayasan Pendidikan Anak-Anak Islam* (Mendaki) or Council on Education for Muslim Children.[66]

MENDAKI

Since its formation in 1982, MENDAKI has been the "flagship" of Malay socio-economic remedial programs. Initially proposed in 1981 through informal discussions among a group of Malay MPs in reaction to Malay educational performance, MENDAKI was officially launched with government support as a Foundation in October 1982.[67] Registered as an institution of public character, it enjoys tax-exempt status valid for a five year period and renewable upon application.[68] The organization was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee on 28 June 1989.[69]

MENDAKI's primary objective is "to look into ways to improve the educational levels of Malays."[70] To meet this aim, MENDAKI has set up tuition schemes, academic awards, bursaries and educational loans, moral and religious education etc. as a "total approach" to

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[66] Reliable sources interviewed suggest viewing the formation of MENDAKI in light of the rapidly growing Islamic reformist movements in the Middle-East in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The contention being that MENDAKI was a political manoeuvre which refocused the attention of Singapore Malays towards social and economic and away from the religious concerns. The aim was to prevent the religious rejuvenation of Islam from taking root in Singapore by raising the importance of social and economic issues, and dampening religious enthusiasm.

[67] "Mendaki's role in education of Muslim students..," *Straits Times*, 15 October 82, 18.

[68] Wan Hussin, *Dilemma of Development*, 34-43.

[69] MENDAKI, *Yayasan Mendaki Annual Report 1990*, 1.

[70] "Why the Gap," *Straits Times*, 5 February, 1983.

improving the position of the Malays, where Malay parents are also encouraged to embrace the value of education, as MENDAKI sees an urgent need to drastically alter parents' attitudes towards education.[71] In other words, it aims to involve the entire Malay community. MENDAKI's total approach places its programs and goals in relation to "the overall socio-economic and political development of Singapore,"[72] even though it reaches out only to Singapore Malays and Muslims, by providing the Malays with the means to improve their socio-economic position. Although it has not been publicly stated, the speeding up of Malay integration into the mainstream of Singapore society through "levelling up," would improve Malay self-esteem by alleviating alienation and disaffection, and in all likelihood, translate into political support for the PAP.

Akin to the dilemma faced by Malay MPs, MENDAKI's intentions and credibility will be brought into question should it be perceived by non-Malays to be a communal organization which places its specific interests before national interests. Political prudence dictates that MENDAKI adopts a non-communal position to avoid projecting a "purely communal and parochial perception amongst the non-Malay population."[73] Non-communalism is especially relevant for MENDAKI which has strong links to the power centre of the PAP owing to the concentration of Malay MPs in the organization.[74] MENDAKI has to be cautious not to portray itself as an organization that threatens the national interest so as not to jeopardise the

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[71] Wan Hussin, *Dilemma of Development*, 45.

[72] Mansor Haji Sukaimi, ed., *Koleksi Kertas MENDAKI* (Singapore: MENDAKI, 1982), 58.

[73] Wan Hussin, *Dilemma of Development*, 43.

[74] There were eight Malay PAP MPs who were members at the formation of MENDAKI, one of which was its first chairman; Gopinathan, "Education," 285. This number has since declined; "Walking a Thin Line: Malay MPs Play Dual Role of Leading the Constituency and their Community," *Straits Times*, 10 September 1990, 28.

organization's credibility with the PAP. Undermining this credibility would place MENDAKI in an unfavourable position for governmental as well as non-governmental assistance, as a communal posture would contradict the multiracial principles of the PAP government.[75] Not only does maintaining cordial relations with the government imply much needed financial and other infrastructural assistance, it also means relatively unobstructed access to the power centre: "the potential usefulness of official backing for the institution [i.e., MENDAKI] should . . . not be dismissed."[76] Significantly, links to the power center imply the likelihood of immediate attention to Malay concerns, especially during periods of urgency, as it would dispense with some degree of formal bureaucratic procedures. Government support also aids in greater access to reliable and important information regarding impending changes to education policy, such that resources would not be committed to projects which would otherwise be made irrelevant by policy changes.

> The People's Action Party Malay Affairs Bureau and the now-defunct Singapore Malay Union, which was active in the 1920s, made some headway because they had leaders with close links with the political leadership.

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[75] The government advanced a S$10 million grant for MENDAKI to be disbursed for tertiary tuition fee subsidies to Malay students over a period of 7 years beginning from the 1991/92 academic year; interest accrued as well as sums not disbursed, will be utilised for education-related programmes to raise the level of education of the Malay community. MENDAKI, *Annual Report 1990*, 44. This grant is given on condition that the council will invest it and use the income earned for its education schemes. Salim Osman, "Mendaki Special Committee to Oversee $10m Education Grant: Panel will include Representatives from PSC, NUS and S'pore Polytechnic," *Straits Times*, 18 July 1990, 2. Muslim employees authorise MENDAKI to make monthly deductions of fifty cents from their Central Provident Fund (CPF) for a Mosque Building and MENDAKI fund. The CPF is a form of compulsory savings in which a fraction of an employee's salary is deposited into the fund; employers are also required by law to pay a specified percentage of the employee's salary into the employee's account. The respective percentages for the employee and employer need not be matching. These proportions vary according to general economic conditions in Singapore.

[76] National Convention of Singapore Malay/Muslim Professionals, *Forging A Vision: Prospects, Challenges and Directions* (Singapore: Association of Muslim Professionals, 1990), 53.

> Mendaki, in particular, got off the ground mainly because it had the support of Malay MPs who act as mediators between the Government and the community.[77]

Similarly, to gain Malay support for its initiatives, MENDAKI has had to be careful not to project itself as part of the PAP's political machinery so that MENDAKI's credibility will not be questioned by the Malays. As its chairman of the Board of Directors has noted: "One of Mendaki's strengths critical to its success is grassroots acceptance and support."[78] On balance, it is not in the interest of Malays nor the PAP to overtly utilise MENDAKI as a political organ.[79] Nonetheless, the PAP's political gains from MENDAKI cannot be discounted, as the presence of PAP MPs in MENDAKI's upper echelons adds a symbolic party identification with Malay concerns to the tangible dimension. To this extent, a group of Malay/Muslim professionals have criticised the government for tying assistance to MENDAKI with political obligations of support, and have called for a depoliticization of the organization.

The Association of Muslim Professionals

The setting up of the MAB and MENDAKI reflects the political significance of the Singapore Malays to the ruling PAP; however, despite PAP efforts to improve the socio-economic status and overall social and political standing of the Malays, some Malay professionals have expressed the view that structural constraints have crippled the "efficacy of

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[77] "PAP Backing 'has Helped Malay Groups': MP's New Book Evaluates Efforts to Improve the Community," *Straits Times*, 30 August 1990, 22.

[78] MENDAKI, *Annual Report 1990*, 6.

[79] The present Chief Executive Officer of MENDAKI has declined PAP invitations to run for elections as a PAP candidate because he feels that he will not be able to function as effectively by formally associating, as he would by working in co-operation with the PAP; "Malays in the Hot Seats," *Asiaweek*, 9 August 1991, 23.

the present system of Malay leadership."[80] The professionals contend that since Malay PAP MPs have had to work within the PAP framework, these Malay MPs are not as effective as they could have been. These MPs, being exclusively confined to members of the governing party, have left the Malay community with no other channels of interest articulation in times of crisis, and because of the party's selection process, these Malay MPs "have little accountability to the [Malay] community."[81] Furthermore, these MPs have to represent both national and the Malay community's interests without being seen by the non-Malays as solely "Malay" leaders.[82] For the professionals, Malay disaffection is largely due to "two important precipitants or sources, namely Government policies and Malay leadership."[83] These policies have resulted in "a complex set of inadequacies and structural impediments"[84] to Malay progress. Clearly, the main line of criticism has centred around political factors.

Under these circumstances, a group of Muslim professionals led by Dr. Hussin Mutalib, a lecturer in political science at the National University of Singapore, organized a convention of Malay/Muslim professionals in October 1990 to chart new directions for the community. The AMP was subsequently inaugurated in 31 August 1991.[85] In general, the professionals hope to bring about "a major reconstruction of Malay society and thinking," and

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[80] Zuraidah Ibrahim, "Re-shaping the Malays' Future," *Straits Times*, 6 October 1990, 32.

[81] *Forging a Vision*, 20.

[82] Zuraidah, "Re-shaping the Malays' Future," 32.

[83] *Forging a Vision*, 18.

[84] Ibid., 21.

[85] "Launch of AMP a Milestone--PM," *Straits Times*, 31 October 1991, 3; "Group to Gather Feedback on Mendaki Swasta Idea: Malay-Muslim Professionals will then Decide on New Self-help Body," *Straits Times*, 21 October 1990, 3.

in particular, "to transform and revamp" the current system of Malay political leadership centred on Malay PAP MPs; the AMP hopes to offer itself as an additional channel through which to articulate Malay concerns, and in some instances, to seek redress.[86] The hope of the AMP is not to challenge or replace, but to complement the Malay PAP political leadership. If complement means non-challenge, then the AMP essentially agrees on the issues which affect the Malays, but not the methods through which these issues are articulated.[87]

Underlying the AMP approach is a strong unspoken dissatisfaction with the current political leadership in representing Malay interests, and an implicit challenge to the performance legitimacy of that leadership. By arguing that a system with a built-in check-and-balance brings about greater performance and as such, community benefits, the AMP, if successful in its own community improvement projects, could accumulate grassroots support and be transformed into an organization with political potential. In other words, the AMP sees itself as a check-and-balance by locating itself in a position to gain support and legitimacy by out-performing the established Malay political leadership and their informal institutions such as MENDAKI.

In the event that the AMP manages to harness support, it will be interesting to observe if the organization will abide by its ideals and remain non-political.[88] There will be various compelling pressures which may see the organization adopt a political posture. Firstly, it is an opportunity for the community to establish an alternate political leadership in the

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[86] Zuraidah, "Re-shaping the Malays' Future," 32. The AMP's aims as reported in the newspaper is to "be a model Muslim minority community;" however, it is quite explicit that there is a desire to restructure the form of political leadership.

[87] In an interview, a high ranking official of the AMP mentioned the complex and cumbersome method of having to "go through PAP MPs" to address Malay concerns. This approach results in "not many policy options to choose from."

[88] Zuraidah, "Re-shaping the Malays' Future," 32.

absence of viable Malay opposition political parties. Secondly, the emergence of an alternate leadership will perhaps compel the PAP to become more aggressive in designing its programs in competition with the contending party. Finally, the advent of a non-PAP Malay political leadership into national politics will be a watershed in contemporary Singapore Malay politics: the development will mark a break from a political history of the Malay community that has been grappling with the leadership issue since the demise of its traditional leadership. Indeed, the emergence of a viable alternative to Malay PAP political leadership would be consonant with the statement, "They [the professionals] want to shape history."[89]

There were mixed feelings within the Malay community towards the AMP initiative, ranging from

> jubilation and total support, to apprehension, and fears of a split in the community, to complete opposition. . . . The immediate fear is that it might polarise this small community whose leadership resources are already so stretched.[90]

More significantly, the emergence of the AMP implied an open challenge to the existing Malay PAP political leadership which has enjoyed a relatively unopposed political existence, due to the preponderance of the PAP in governing Singapore since independence. Indeed, the cautious welcome of these Malay PAP political leaders to the AMP, suggests a sense of suspicion of the true intentions of the AMP. Some Malay leaders not associated with the AMP have voiced reservations as to the ability of the AMP to succeed without being linked to the government, and in fact, have mentioned that issues brought up by the AMP do not differ significantly from those identified by the Malay PAP MPs.[91] These sentiments on the need to be linked to the government has also been echoed by Malay PAP MPs such as Sidek Saniff,

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Interview with Malay grassroots leader.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education, who agrees with Malay PAP MP Wan Hussin Zoohri that "political linkage must exist or a tacit symbiotic relationship between the community and the political leadership must be forged,"[92] for remedial programs to succeed.

The professionals felt that issues of concern to the Malays had not been adequately addressed and resolved by established leadership.[93] These issues such as the public airing of Malay social and economic shortcomings, the questioning of Malay loyalty to the nation, the abolishment of free tertiary education for all Malays, which the Malays viewed as an erosion of their Constitutional position, were awkwardly nestled in a public policy agenda comprising programs targeted at the Chinese community.[94] The Malays were accordingly confused and remain unconvinced by policy shifts which they perceived as being inconsistent with multiracialism: the new immigration policy to allow one hundred thousand Hongkongers to settle in Singapore has been linked to the government's posture on maintaining an ethnic mix of a 76 percent preponderance of Chinese Singaporeans.[95]

Although the AMP accepts the right of other communities to government assistance, as well as recognizing government efforts aimed at the Malays, it has pointed its complaints at the "unequal" preference given to "Chinese problems":

> the feeling amongst the Malays is that the Government could have done more to apply its full problem-solving capacity. [The Malays have] compared the hesitant manner in which the Government has responded to the problems of the Malays with the zeal that

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[92] Haji Sidek bin Saniff, foreword to *Dilemma of Development* by Wan Hussin, vi.

[93] Chua Beng Huat, "Singapore 1990: Celebrating the End of an Era," in *Southeast Asian Affairs 1991*, ed. Sharon Siddique and Ng Chee Yuen (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), 261.

[94] "Walking a Thin Line," 28; *Forging A Vision*, 53; "Posing a Question of Loyalty," *Asiaweek*, 22 March 1987, 33; N. Balakrishnan, "Politics of Housing: Government Fixes Racial Quotas in 'Problem' Areas," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 March 1989, 24.

[95] *Forging a Vision*, 53.

> officialdom showed to resolve . . . other problems of national proportion, including the predicaments of the majority community.[96]

Accordingly, the AMP has maintained that the Singapore Malays "do not feel that they have a place in this Republic" and are "still far from happy" with their situation because they feel a sense of alienation from Singaporean society, such that "there is a growing perception within the community that they are being marginalized and play only a peripheral role" in Singapore.[97]

The AMP has criticised the Malay PAP MPs and has attributed the root of the Malay situation to the ineffectiveness of the Malay PAP MPs as guardians of Malay interests. In this respect, the AMP aims to provide an alternative leadership to the Malay PAP MPs, sufficiently effective to mobilize Malay/Muslim professionals to work within a framework of non-partisanship, so as to improve the position of the Malays.[98] Although expressing a non-political posture, the AMP has inevitably taken on a political hue with its implicit challenge to the leadership of the Malay PAP MPs. Certainly, the intentions of the AMP is expressed in the statement that the

> need for structural change in [the Malays'] system of leadership . . . is a matter of helping to find a breakthrough . . . where a *real* [italics mine] movement in the search for a solution to the problems of the Malays can be felt.[99]

In the words of Chua, "A 'shift' away from the existing arrangement was what the professionals had in mind."[100]

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[96] *Forging A Vision*, 53; "Walking a Thin Line," 28.

[97] *Forging A Vision*, 15.

[98] Ibid., 2.

[99] Ibid., 62.

[100] Chua, "Singapore 1990," 261.

The formation of the AMP has been attributed to the ineffectiveness of Malay MPs in leading the Malay community, and has subsequently led to a sense of scepticism amongst the Malays of the role and effectiveness of Malay PAP MPs.[101] Being an infant organization without a record of involvement in promoting Malay interests, the AMP was viewed with suspicion and caution as a contender for leadership of the Malay community due to its vocal expression of the need for an "effective leadership . . . to mobilise resources."[102] The main thrust of the AMP's perceived challenge to the Malay MPs is based on the AMP's calls to depoliticise MENDAKI by arguing that the presence of Malay MPs in MENDAKI undermines MENDAKI's credibility and effectiveness. In the long term, the AMP would prefer to see Malay PAP MPs relinquishing their positions in MENDAKI.[103] Nonetheless, the PAP reacted favourably to the emergence of the AMP and in fact, Prime Minister Goh "backed the professionals' efforts because he did not feel that their intention was to rival the MPs."[104] Bearing in mind that Malay MPs have been the *de facto* representative of the community since independence in 1965, it could be surmised that they were probably anxious about the impact of the AMP's emergence on their leadership position. To this extent, the AMP can be seen as an alternative but non-partisan leadership to the PAP's MAB and MENDAKI.

The setting up of the AMP is a manifestation of the emergence of a new generation of young Malay professionals who feel that a "new" initiative is necessary to take up the

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[101] Ibid., 262.

[102] Sumiko Tan and Zuraidah Ibrahim, "Malay MPs 'Doing a Good Job'," *Straits Times*, 8 October 1990, 25.

[103] "Malay Professionals Want Non-Political Leadership," *Straits Times*, 3 October, 1990, 20.

[104] Tan and Zuraidah, "Malay MPs 'Doing a Good Job'," 25.

responsibilities of leadership to solve the problems of their community.[105] Seen historically, the Malay community has been bereft of an effective leadership with the ability to mobilize the Malay community. The political significance of the AMP lies in its organized, explicit, and candid articulation of the problems facing the Singapore Malays.[106] Indeed, the AMP has been described as

> a group of individuals critical of existing community organisations and wanting to go its own way. . . . [and] a group of professionals who made no bones about wanting to be outside the embrace of the Government.[107]

A new breed of leadership has apparently begun to emerge from the Malay community with approval from the younger generation of Singapore Malays. The formation of the AMP was "the most significant extra-parliamentary" political development for the Malay community.[108]

Summary

The institutional changes introduced by the PAP considerably circumscribed the extent of Malay political participation. These changes had the effect of concentrating Malay politics on government sponsored institutions and away from independent Malay political organizations. The "Malay platform" upon which the PAP sought to mollify Federation Malay fears during merger was designed primarily to hasten the merger process. In other words, the Singapore Malays saw an improvement in their political position not because of their own active efforts but as beneficiaries of the prevailing political circumstances. These structural

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[105] "Malay Professionals can Help Guide Community," *Straits Times*, 12 October 1990, 35.

[106] "Candid Exchange at Malay Convention: Topics Range from Speak Mandarin Campaign to SAP Schools," *Business Times*, 8 October 1990, 2.

[107] "AMP Arrives at the Start," *Straits Times*, 4 November 1991, 26.

[108] Chua, "Singapore 1990," 261.

changes also made an impact on the Singapore Malay psyche following the sudden ejection of Singapore from Malaysia. The Singapore Malay uncertainty and anxiety over their constitutionally defined position as the indigenous people of Singapore was complicated by the formation of MUIS which constrained the dynamism of Islam as a political mobilizing force, and separated religion from politics, thereby muting the political role of Islam in independent Singapore. The formation of MENDAKI to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Malays is an indication that the Malay presence exerts a degree of political pressure on the PAP government; however, MENDAKI has been constrained in the extent to which it could become a mouthpiece for voicing Malay grievances because of the nature of its dependent relationship with the government. MENDAKI's position can be seen as an analogue to that of the Malay PAP MPs who have had to walk the thin line between communalism and non-communalism.

These institutional boundaries have caused Malay leadership problems to continue to plague the Singapore Malays in the 1980s as they have throughout the history of Singapore. Malay MPs' in post-separation Singapore continue to be questioned about their credibility and accountability by the Malay masses largely because of the informal, and as such, "unseen" and private manner in which Malay MPs conduct their bargaining with non-Malay leaders at the national level, much of which are carried out privately. As a consequence, the Malays construe this approach as being ineffective leadership since "much of what the Malay MPs fight for behind closed doors appears 'invisible' to the Malay/Muslim public."[109] In real terms, Malay scepticism translates into the questioning of the legitimacy of Malay political leaders, and subsequently, the potential of loss of Malay support at the polls.

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[109] "Malay Professionals Want Non-Political Leadership," 20.

The landmark foundation of the AMP was a reaction to the perceived ineffectiveness of the Malay MPs to lead the Malay community. Alternatively, this development can be interpreted as a "new awakening" within the Malay community with potential political consequences for the Malay PAP MPs. Not only are these professionals fully aware of the problems which beset the community, they are also willing to assume the responsibility of tackling these shortcomings by taking advantage of a more open political environment to vocally articulate what they perceive to be Malay concerns. It is noteworthy that this group of professionals have operated within the context of a non-religious and secular approach so that they do not become bound by the legal strictures of MUIS on religion on the one hand, as well as being independent of the regulation of party discipline which the Malay MPs are expected to observe. Indeed, vocal political representation has been permitted, provided it does not exceed the "allowable" limits imposed by the PAP, while Islamic organizations and potential religious movements with political agendas are controlled by the Administration of Muslim Law Act. Both the flexibility and tolerance of the political environment, as well as the willingness of the Malays to seize the opportunities for political participation provided by that environment, are necessary conditions for the Malays in Singapore to correct their position of political marginality.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Not unlike the period of British rule, the political participation of the Singapore Malays in independent Singapore has been constricted by the institutional setting of the political system. The political role of the Malays has been enhanced or hampered depending on the extent to which political participation is permitted by the political framework. That role is strongly shaped by these structures. Historically, even though native rulers were relieved of their authority during British rule, these rulers retained a share in the administration of Singapore; however, the signing of the treaty of 1824 removed this limited form of participation completely. Thereafter, native Malay rulers no longer exercised any form of authority except within the confines of the Malay community. Until the assumption of leadership by the non-Malay Muslims, "there was no Malay ruling class above [the Singapore Malays] to provide a traditional political structure."[1]

This change in the formal and legal institutions from one based on a traditional Malay authority system to one built around a British system not only displaced, but also lodged the Malay community on the periphery of Singapore politics. In the context of a dominant British administered political system, "the absence of an indigenous ruling élite . . . meant a relatively obscure position"[2] for the Malays in Singapore politics. The Singapore Malays quickly

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[1] Gullick, *Beginnings of Change*, 5.

[2] Siddique, "Administration of Islam," 317.

became a significant political minority in a Malay geopolitical setting soon after the founding of Singapore and had to operate in a constricted political environment.

In contrast to the states of the Malay peninsula where a traditional Malay authority system existed not only as a system of control, but also as a bearer of Islam, the absence of a traditional authority system in Singapore provided the conditions for a religiously inspired non-Malay Muslim group to assume the leadership role of the Singapore Muslim community which included the Malays. As such, the institutional conditions at the community level provided the opportunity for change that would probably not have taken place had there been a rigid traditional hierarchy in place. The non-Malay Muslim leaders who were generally not anti-British, succeeded in reviving the political consciousness of the Singapore Malays despite the leadership lull of approximately fifty years largely because of Islamic religious affinity. The British were tolerant of the ensuing religious and political activities as long as the political order was not disrupted or challenged, but promptly dealt with any perceived threat to that prevailing order. These English-educated non-Malay Muslim élites, who had economic interests, also tended to identify with the Westernized élite and embraced Western lifestyles and as a result, did not disrupt the social, political, or economic stability. Nevertheless, a class gap as well as an emergent ethnic consciousness of the Singapore Malays led to a Malay challenge to the legitimacy of these élites as leaders of the Malay community. While the broader institutional framework permitted some degree of political activism, internal stresses within the Muslim community, characterised by tensions based on class and ethnic identity, gradually divided the Muslim community along ethnic lines. The resultant tensions severely crippled the capacity and bargaining position of the leadership.

It was not until the appointment of Eunos to the Legislative Council, and the formation of the KMS in the early 1920s, that the Malays began to have some official political

representation within the political framework. As with the non-Malay Muslim leadership, this Malay political leadership adopted a non-confrontational posture towards the British authorities, and built its political agitation upon criticisms of the Chinese community. While this Malay leadership initially succeeded in gaining Malay support, socio-economic divisions within the Malay community, between the Western educated leaders and the largely Malay secular educated followers, eventually weakened this Malay leadership. In addition, the KMS did not offer a specific political programme around issues that would have served as a common reference point to mobilize and unify the Singapore Malay community for political participation. As such, while the political framework provided the opportunity for limited Malay political participation, internal fissures within the community hampered the survival of a community leadership.

While the Malays were placed in a relatively favourable position during the Japanese Occupation, they quickly found this temporary political status threatened and eroded in the post-War period. The concern of UMNO and other Malay political parties with politics in the peninsula, left the Singapore Malay community without a political party with the capacity to articulate Malay demands. Despite its existence, the inept SUMNO failed in taking on the responsibility of representing the Singapore Malays during this period.

In independent Singapore, the Malay leadership problem is compounded by the lack of consensus within the Malay community on the direction to pursue in dealing with Malay concerns. This lack of agreement is partly due to the large array of non-political Malay social and cultural organizations catering to disparate groups, which tend to focus the Malays towards non-political activities: "The majority of the Malay associations do not play an active leadership role" in politics and have competed for Malay support.[3] The recently retired

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[3] Chan, *One Party Dominance*, 95.

Minister for the Environment and Minister in charge of Muslim Affairs has implored Muslim organizations to "co-operate, not compete."[4] Even if these non-political associations attempt to ventilate social and economic issues, they will not likely succeed because they would not have a support base large enough because of their competition for support from a limited Malay population.

The PAP's continuous success at the polls has also meant that the leadership of the Singapore Malay community has traditionally come from Malay PAP MPs whose credibility has been constantly questioned by the Malays.[5] The issues of consensus and legitimacy within the community, impede the efforts of Malay PAP leaders to mobilize the community for political action.[6] Despite these drawbacks, developments such as the initiatives of Muslim professionals in the recent past, have shown encouraging signs of a Malay awakening and effort to address the leadership question as a paramount issue. The emergence of the Muslim professionals is a turning point in Malay politics as it represented an independent initiative at offering an alternative leadership to the Malay PAP MPs.

This new group of Malay professionals appear to be seeking to share, if not take over, the reins of leadership from the Malay PAP MPs. Their initiatives have seen the open expression of what they perceive to be the issues impeding the political participation of Malays in Singapore. Whether these Muslim professionals will play a critical role in bringing about significant changes in the Malay community, especially with respect to leadership and increasing political participation remains to be seen as the association is in its infancy and has

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[4] "Mattar Urges Muslim Bodies to Co-operate," *Straits Times*, 6 May 1985, 10.

[5] Chan, *One Party Dominance*, 95.

[6] Ahmad Osman, "Time to Act Together, Say 2 Youth Leaders," *Straits Times*, 8 December 1986.

yet to establish its credibility. Although the effectiveness of the AMP's stated approaches and aims as an alternative to those of the Malay MPs cannot be evaluated at the moment, the initiative symbolizes a positive development in the Malay community: on the one hand, it is partly reflective of a new generation of Malays who deem it their responsibility to attend to matters of concern to the community, and on the other, it indicates a readiness, compared to previous generations, to seize the opportunities provided by a more open political system, to exercise their entitlement as citizens to participate politically. The success or failure of the professionals to establish themselves as a credible alternative Malay leadership would weigh heavily on their ability to fully and effectively exploit their educational, occupational, and socio-economic success which has brought them to par with non-Malay professionals, to create a symbol of leadership around which to mobilize the Malays.

Both the political environment, as well as the internal structure of the Malay community, have affected the position of Malay political leadership. For example, the British neither discouraged nor encouraged the involvement of the traditional Malay rulers although it can be seen that the minimal and restricted political participation of these Malay rulers in public affairs was a striking characteristic during the first few years of the East India Company's presence. In fact, the early years of public administration in Singapore under the Company, saw a relatively accommodating attitude of the British towards both Malay rulers in that there was some semblance of a sharing of power; however, rather than encouraging the Malay rulers to establish themselves in the public sphere, the British gradually made every effort to curtail the political power of these rulers.

The combination of institutional constraints, internal fragmentation of the Malay community, the socio-economic gap between Malay leaders and followers, the failure of Malay political parties to establish themselves during the post-war period, and the lack of consensus

on the form of political leadership have combined to contribute to the political problems facing the Singapore Malays: "in any essentially political battle, *political organizations that can mobilize support* [italics mine] have a significant role to play."[7] Efficacious political organizations presuppose leaders with the capacity to generate tangible results for its supporters because the "inability of leaders to engineer tangible successes can produce strains in even the most well run organizations."[8] To this extent, the bargaining structure between the PAP and its Malay leaders is such that concessions bargained for by Malay leaders remain concealed to the community largely in order to avoid invoking any majority Chinese opposition or challenge to the apparent contradiction to the principle of meritocracy; however, the drawback to this approach lies in the Malay community's legitimacy challenge since compromises and concessions made in private do not clearly reflect the efforts of Malay PAP leaders at effective representation and bargaining.

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[7] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 201.

[8] Idem, "The Resurgence of Malayan Communism," in *Development and Underdevelopment in Southeast Asia*, ed. Gordon P. Means (Ottawa: Canadian Society of Asian Studies, 1977), 163.

ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

AMP. Association of Muslim Professionals.

API. *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (Malay Nationalist Youth Corps); Organization of Youth for Justice, in Malay.

Adat. Malay customary law and practices.

Bendahara. Usage varies according to the Malay state; in Pahang, the term referred to a former Riau-Lingga title of the family that are now Sultans. Treasurer.

Gotong royong. Cooperative self-help.

Haj. Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca.

Jawi Peranakan. Muslims born in Singapore from marriages between local Malay women and South Indian Muslims.

KMM. *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (Union of Malay Youth).

KMS. *Kesatuan Melayu Singapura* (Singapore Malay Union).

Kampung/kampong. A cluster of houses; a hamlet; a traditional Malay village.

Kaum Muda. Conservative or old faction.

Kaum Tua. Progressive or young faction.

MAB. Malay Affairs Bureau of the People's Action Party.

MCA. Malayan/Malaysian Chinese Association.

MIC. Malayan/Malaysian Indian Congress.

MNP. Malay Nationalist Party.

MUIS. *Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura* (Singapore Council of Islamic Religion).

Madrasah. Religious school.

Majlis Pusat. *Majlis Pusat Pertubuhan-Pertubuhan Budaya Melayu Singapura* (Central Council of Malay Cultural Organizations Singapore).

MENDAKI. *Yayasan Pendidikan Anak-Anak Islam* (Foundation for the Education of Muslim Children).

Orang laut. Sea gypsies.

PAP. People's Action Party.

PIS. *Persekutuan Islam Singapura* (Muslim Association of Singapore).

PKMS/SMNO. *Pertubohan Kebangsaan Melayu Singapura* (Singapore Malays Organization); formally known as the SUMNO prior to Singapore's independence in 1965.

Penghulu. Headman or local chief.

Raja. King.

Rakyat/ra'ayat. The common people or masses.

SUMNO. Singapore United Malays National Organization.

Said/Syed. A title given to male descendants of the Prophet.

Sultan. Arabic/Turkish for Monarchy.

Temenggung/Temenggong. Malay dignitary of high rank. First Minister of Justice.

Tunku. Title indicating royal lineage.

UMNO. United Malays National Organization.

Ulama. A learned expert especially in the scriptures.

Umat. People or mankind; Islamic community.

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