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OCCASIONAL PAPER No. 13

Autobiography & Biography in Malay

Historical Studies

by

William R. Roff

May 1972



The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY & BIOGRAPHY IN MALAY
HISTORICAL STUDIES

William R. Roff

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PREFACE

An interesting trend has developed in the last few years in the field of Malay historical writing. Scholars, both local and foreign, using Malay as a major tool in their research, have turned away from the colonial record to indigenous sources in order to write a more authentic history of the Malay peoples and institutions. Among the leaders, has been Professor William R. Roff, Department of History, Columbia University and at present, a Visiting Fellow of the Institute. He did pioneering work a few years ago with his study of the origins of Malay Nationalism. Since then, he has continued to search and study local sources in his effort to add to the growing body of literature on the Malays.

When Professor Roff arrived in Singapore to take up his Visiting Fellowship, the Institute invited him to prepare a paper and give a seminar on a topic of his choice. On March 24, 1972, he complied with that request. His remarks found an interested and lively response from the invited participants. Because of the freshness of the topic and the hope that others will be stimulated to look and use biography and autobiography in their research and writings, the Institute takes pleasure in publishing this paper.

Professor Roff wishes to apologize for the fact that, absent from his notes and library, he has been unable to verify all the citations.

Professor Josef Silverstein
Director

May 12, 1972

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & BIOGRAPHY IN MALAY HISTORICAL STUDIES

by

William R. Roff

It is notorious that there is a relative (some would say a serious) absence of life histories -- autobiographical or biographical -- in many Southeast Asian societies. While I do not propose to discuss any presumed theoretical reasons for this -- a realm of speculation fascinating and no doubt rewarding but for my present pragmatic purposes unprofitable -- one might remark that the great outpouring of self-revelation, self-exculpation, and ego-oriented social commentary that characterizes seventeenth century diarists or eighteenth century politicians in England, contemporary philosophes in France, or present-day public figures in America, perhaps rests in part upon a strong sense of individuation that doubtless has cultural roots, is culturally formed -- in contradistinction to the literary genres of other societies in which, for one reason or another, the importance of the individual is subsumed within that of the community, or in which the individual must of necessity, it can be argued, be held to embody the virtues (or vices) of the society as a whole.

For the present-day historian, however, (and indeed the sociologist, for much sociology, explicitly or not, is built upon life history) there is a certain frustration in the absence of candid autobiographical material concerning not merely the great and the powerful but the ordinary members of society. To be trite, life histories are keyholes through which we may be privileged, without moral stigma, to observe a whole range of phenomena -- artlessly or artfully presented -- to which otherwise we have little but inferential access. I am not so much concerned here with the real difficulties posed by, for example, J.S. Bastin, in his essay on "Problems of Personality in the Reinterpretation of Modern Malayan History",¹ in which he lamented that while it was possible to learn a good deal about the real or declared motives of the servants of the East India Company, it was less easy -- indeed extremely difficult -- to know directly the political motives of the Sultan of Kedah and other Malay leaders of the time. That there is a problem here is beyond question -- not, of course, a completely intractable one, for there are many ways of killing a cat -- but it is undeniable that the Malay rulers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries did not leave autobiographies or private papers, or that if they did they have not survived.

It is not necessary, however, from my point of view, to confine discussion of the general question to matters arising solely or largely out of political history. Increasingly historians have come to interest themselves much more widely in all facets of social life, and to seek new ways of gaining admittance to understanding of the past. Some of the impetus for this search has derived from the social sciences -- social anthropology has been particularly formative in this respect -- and indeed from the personality "sciences"; though I am one of those uneasy at linking "personality" and "science" in this rather largely assumed fashion. Still, it is undeniable that writers such as the psychoanalyst, Erik Erikson have been and currently are extremely influential in attempting to relate what one might call historical personality to inner personality, as witness his studies of Luther and Ghandi. These are, however, rather rarified matters, and though I want to return to them -- and to the other new science of prosopography -- before I finish, let me for the moment attempt, from a more or less bibliographical point of view initially, to discuss as systematically as I can the autobiographical and biographical materials known to be available to students of Malay society in Malaysia and Singapore.

First of all I want to dispose, if that is not too cavalier a word, of the literature known as classical, which presents special features that might well form the subject of another discussion, and indeed frequently do so. It is beyond question now, and I would be the last to deny it, that classical Malay literature contains much biographical and personal information of use and interest, when properly handled. The portraits, and discussions of the well-springs of behaviour, contained in the Sejarah Melayu and Misa Melayu, for example, (especially, perhaps, the latter, where the near-contemporary reign of Sultan Iskandar Shah of Perak, 1756-70, is described at considerable length), are of real value to the historian, as are those in Raja Ali Haji b. Raja Ahmad's Silsilah Melayu dan Bugis dan Sakalian Raja-Raja-nya and the longer Tuhfat al-Nafis.² With the possible exception of the later sections of the latter, however, much of this writing is in the genre frequently described as "heroic", concerned in large part (not unlike much colonial historiography) to elevate and defend the conduct of its chief protagonists. Even here it has historiographical value of a special kind, as illustrating the sorts of behaviour and personal relationships socially and culturally approved. It is perhaps no accident that the paramount work of this kind

is untrammelled by any need at all to observe historical veracity -- the lengthy and brilliant study of Hang Tuah, from which, historical fiction though it is, one may learn a great deal about the Malay society, less of fifteenth century Malacca than that of the somewhat later period at which it was written.³ It should also be mentioned, at least in passing, that in addition to the major works of the classical period -- by which is usually meant pre-1850 or so -- there are quite a number of minor ones, often existing only in single manuscript copies.⁴ I am thinking here, especially, of certain eighteenth century Riau works -- some narrative, some in poetic form -- which, from their titles at least, deal with everyday episodes in the lives of the people described: a wedding, a trader's activities, and so on. Most of this material has yet to be used, much of it yet to be examined even, by historians.

In dealing thus summarily with the "classical" period (a term itself not altogether satisfactory, but for the moment convenient), let me make it quite clear in the light of the controversy -- often the rather repetitive controversy -- of recent years, that I am not in any way derogating the "uses" of Malay literature of earlier times, but merely saying, which is self-evident, that it requires to be treated in special historiographical ways.

Moving on, then, I want to refer to two associated genres in Malay record-making, of which I shall cite specific examples in due course. Both are of great importance, not nearly enough have been found and stored or copied, and I see it, at any rate as an outsider, as being one of the paramount duties of historians of Malay society to seek to discover these materials and preserve them for posterity. It is sometimes unwisely alleged that "the Malays" -- or perhaps more often "the Malays of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" -- had, or have, no interest in the past. Nonsense. And to prove that it is nonsense we have the two historiographical genres that I refer to, the "Salasilah" and the "Buku Peringatan". Strictly speaking, if indeed we can speak strictly on a subject that has received so little discussion, "Salasilah" consist mainly, often entirely, of genealogies -- usually single descent-group genealogies but sometimes, as in the special cases best described by Sayyid Naguib al-Attas,⁵ in the "genealogies" associated with particular Sufi tarekat, or more accurately with the pedagogic line of descent from particular Sufi teachers. Both sorts of Salasilah can form extremely valuable and enlightening historical material. Perhaps they are most useful when they contain, as they often do, additional information about members of the genealogy,

at which point they often move in the direction of the second genre I want to mention, the "Buku Peringatan". I suppose one might translate the latter as "Memory Book" or "Record Book", or more prosaically by the older English term "Commonplace Book" (with which indeed they sometimes share many characteristics), or just "Diary".

Buku peringatan, or at any rate those I have seen and been able to examine, vary widely in the amount of information they give. Though sometimes not much more than an abbreviated record of crucial episodes (births, marriages, deaths, circumcisions) in the life cycle of an individual and his kin, sometimes associated -- often for the purpose of providing contextual dating -- with major local happenings, many buku peringatan go beyond this to provide additional materials of various sorts. I know of one, for example, which alas I have never seen, which was kept in the late nineteenth century by a Kelantan religious teacher, and which in addition to the usual vital statistics concerning his family describes also, or so I am told, his travels to Cambodia in the 1890s to teach there, and similar visits to South Thailand.⁶ Some buku peringatan, indeed, are in almost every respect akin to the kind of Pepysian diary familiar in the West, containing, for long or short periods (and anyone who has ever kept a diary knows how difficult it is to maintain this sort of thing), jottings on daily life or events. A few of these I shall refer to again shortly.

Let me, then, with this in mind to return to, say something about the autobiographies, published and unpublished, for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of which we (or at any rate I) have knowledge. For the moment I interpret "autobiography" fairly loosely, to include the more extended diary accounts of events encompassed by certain buku peringatan.

The most famous of all Malay autobiographies, of course, was also virtually the first of modern times, the Hikayat Abdullah. It is so well known that it is scarcely necessary to say much about it here, beyond observing (as has been observed so often before) that it is characterized by what was then a quite new approach to chronicling -- highly personal, candid in comment, and essentially based on Western models; for Abdullah Munshi was nothing if not a fervent admirer of things Western. In point of fact, his first essay in autobiography, the Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah, an account of his visit to Kelantan in 1838, which preceded the

Hikayat by some years, was written at the instance of an American missionary, Mr. North, who suggested to Abdullah that what he had seen, and his reflections thereon, would be of interest to others besides himself. Abdullah later began, but because of his death in Jeddah in 1854 never completed, an account of the first part of a pilgrimage to Mekkah,⁷ and also wrote a couple of verse descriptions of two great fires in Kampong Glam, eye-witness accounts in the true style of personal journalism.

Abdullah had no immediate successors, so far as is known, though his son Munshi Ibrahim wrote a description of his own visit, as interpreter to the British, to the west coast states of the peninsula in 1872. This is perhaps less autobiography proper than detached reportage, but it conveys enough of the author to warrant the description. Though it may have been lithographed fairly close to composition, first known publication is much later, and it did not become generally available until reprinted by the Government Printer in Johore in 1956. A translation into English of the Kisah Pelayaran Muhammad Ibrahim Munshi is at present being prepared, under the auspices of a committee of which I happen to be a member,

Right at the end of the nineteenth century, there occurs one of the most interesting extended Malay diaries of which I have knowledge, kept by Tengku Zainal Abidin b. Tengku Kundor, Raja Muda of Kelantan, from about 1894 until 1912, and filling some nine foolscap volumes. This is indeed a fascinating document, though somewhat difficult of access, written as it is in Jawi manuscript and having suffered considerably from the deprecations of time. Discovered only relatively recently, it is now in the Arkib Negara and is being worked upon by an historian in Kuala Lumpur. The diary, which I was able to examine to some extent last year, is incredibly full of detail of all kinds, ranging from palace gossip to reportage on major political events in the Kelantan of the time. It is clearly destined to be a major source of Kelantan history at the turn of the century, a period crucial to the state. In addition, of course, it says much, directly and indirectly, about the author personally and as a member of the Malay ruling class in early twentieth century Kelantan, and about palace life in general. Altogether a valuable document which I hope will eventually be properly edited and published.

Another unpublished work, very much shorter, of somewhat the same vintage, is a buku peringatan kept by a Menangkabau trader in Kuala Lumpur in, as I recollect, the first years of this century. Without my notes, details escape me, but the diary, in a small exercise book, was lent to me by the author's grandson, the late Haji Othman Abdullah, and subsequently given by him to the Arkib Negara in Kuala Lumpur. Mohd. Amin Hassan, then of the University of Malaya history department and later of the Arkib Negara and Universiti Kebangsaan, began to transcribe the diary for publication, but has not yet, so far as I am aware, completed it. In addition to the usual features of buku peringatan, in the form of familial information, the diary records a brief period in the life of the author, a shop-keeper in Malay Street, and in particular, I recall, a striking dream that he had while residing there, and the circumstances surrounding this.

The best known of Selangor materials from this period, though published a good deal later, is the Kenang-Kenangan Selangor, based on the diaries of Wan Mohd. Amin b. Mohd. Saïd, Penghulu Adat Isti'adat at the Selangor court. Wan Mohd. died in the early 1930s and in 1937 Abdul Samad Ahmad (for many years with the Dewan Bahasa in Kuala Lumpur) edited the old man's diaries for publication.⁸ They cover, for the most part, the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and give much detail of court affairs at that time. The original diaries, alas, have long since disappeared, so it is uncertain how much editing Abdul Samad did, but although the historian may feel a certain uneasiness over this, the work remains a valuable personal record of a time of great change in Selangor history. It has recently been re-edited (lamentably without indication of the further alterations made, so that only the 1937 edition remains of permanent value to historians) and republished by the Dewan Bahasa, under the title Pesaka Selangor.⁹

Turning again to unpublished materials (though to a work which I am present engaged in editing for publication), an extremely interesting and often amusing autobiography was written in 1941 by Haji Abdul Majid b. Zainuddin, covering the years from his childhood in the 1880s to the mid-1920s. Abdul Majid born near Kuala Lumpur, attended Malay school at Setapak and then the Victoria Institution, from which he graduated after passing the Junior Cambridge examination in 1902. Following a brief period in the Selangor clerical service, he applied to R.J. Wilkinson, then Federal Inspector of Schools, and became one of the first batch of students

to attend the newly opened Kuala Kangsar Malay Residential School (later the Malay College), from 1905, and one of the few attending not of high birth. Passing out top of his class in 1907, with the Standard Seven qualification, then the highest obtainable in Malaya, he was engaged as the school's first Malay Teacher and remained there for ten years. His description of the college at this time, and of Kuala Kangsar, is rich in detail and personal reminiscence. In 1917 he was taken on by Winstedt as one of the first Malay Assistant Inspectors of Schools, and gives an account of his life in this capacity and as the acting headmaster of the then Matang teachers' college. Finally, in 1923, he was approached by the Political Intelligence Bureau of the FMS Police, and engaged as the first Malay Pilgrimage Officer in Jeddah, whence he went annually thereafter for some four or five months during the pilgrimage season. Unfortunately his autobiography stops short during his first pilgrimage, but it is still a document of great interest. Written in English, it portrays the life and mind of one of the leading English-educated Malays of the time, and for this alone, apart from the vast amount of other historical detail it contains, is of interest to the social historian.

While discussing the Malay College, it is worth mentioning another more or less autobiographical work dealing with its brother institution, the Sultan Idris / Teachers' / Training College at Tanjong Malim, founded in 1922. This was written by Ahmad Abdullah (better known as Ahmad Bakhtiar, and a highly productive Malay novelist under this name), who taught at the college from its inception until 1956. In 1959 he gave me a copy of his manuscript "Kenang-kenangan SITC" and when he died not long after I gave it to the Arkib Negara, where it now is, (with an additional photo-copy at the University of Malaya). Although written for publication it did not in fact find a publisher, and no doubt now never will. It is less a personal document (or autobiography) -- especially compared with Haji Abdul Majid's magnum opus -- but it is the only known account of the development of SITC by one of its leading Malay teachers, and a useful record of the time.

Another figure closely connected with Malay education, and to some extent with SITC, Mohd. b. Dato' Muda Linggi, who was for many years active in the combined Malay Teachers Associations and editor of their journal Majallah Guru, left on his death in the late 1940s or early 1950s, a collection of small diaries -- something like two dozen of them as I recall -- written in a tiny

crabbed hand, and recording, I think, day to day events. These repose (or reposed) in the Library of the University of Malaya, but have been little used by historians. They are, indeed, difficult to decipher, and may not have any great historical value except indirectly, but at some point in time it should be worth someone's while to examine them more carefully than I have attempted to do.¹⁰

Education, as is evident (or more accurately the teaching profession) was clearly a considerable stimulus to autobiographical writing, and it has always been a matter of some surprise to me that journalism -- which has seldom failed to flourish in Malay society -- has not had the same effect to a greater degree than it appears to have had. Before the war, to the best of my knowledge, none of the great Malay journalists of the time -- Eunus b. Abdullah, Abdul Rahim Kajai, Sayyid Shaykh Al-Hadi, Othman Kalam, Ahmad b. Ismail, Abdul Kadir Adabi, and others -- wrote autobiographies or, indeed, so far as is known, kept diaries of any sort; though in regard to the latter one has to allow for the deprivations of the war itself, and for the possibility that they have merely remained within the family.¹¹ It is true that just prior to the Japanese invasion Ibrahim b. Haji Yaacob (at that time proprietor and editor of Warta Melayu) produced the first volume of what was intended to be a two-volume work, Melihat Tanah Ayer. Published by Al-Hikmah Press in Kota Bharu, late in 1941, it dealt in large part, in fact, with the east coast. Not strictly autobiography, it is nevertheless a personal chronicle, and gains added interest from Ibrahim's role in wartime Malay politics, and his subsequent career in Indonesia, where he is now known as Iskandar Kamel.

Moving into the post-war period, there have been a number of largely or solely autobiographical works published since 1946, though not as many as one might have expected, given the pace and implications of political change. Perhaps, indeed, the all-absorbing nature of political activity has inhibited reflection, discouraged annotation, and left participants all too little time to "write their memoirs". It is a matter of great regret, for example, that the late Dato' Onn, himself a journalist for many years, did not leave an account of his life, which could scarcely have failed to be of absorbing interest. It is much to be hoped that Tengku Abdul Rahman will recognize his obligations in this respect, and not leave the task to fickle, or subservient, historians.¹²

Looking, however, at what there is, the first directly political autobiography, to the best of my knowledge, was that written by Che' Khatijah Sidek, under the pseudonym "Ardjasni" and published serially in some 15 or so parts in the Hongkong English-language monthly Eastern Horizon from 1960 to 1963.¹³ It is evident from internal evidence that the manuscript was originally written in Malay, and it is just possible that it was published in this form either serially or in one volume, though I do not know of it. English publication in one volume was portended, according to Eastern Horizon, but did not, I think, take place. The autobiography is in many ways a remarkable document, for it describes in detail how Che' Khatijah became caught up in UMNO politics immediately after the war, and one of the first leaders of the Kaum Ibu. Of Indonesian origin, she makes interesting comparisons with political activism across the Straits, and describes movingly her own political career, at any rate until the mid-1950s, though she does not touch upon the PMIP period. I say movingly, for it is clear from her narrative that political life demanded from her many sacrifices as woman, wife and mother.

On the other side of the coin, as it were, we have the very striking autobiographical works -- often thought to be fiction -- of the Malay novelist Abdullah Hussein, whose Terjebak describes his experiences in Indonesia under the Japanese occupation, and the later Peristiwa his share in the Indonesian national struggle in Sumatra between 1946 and 1948. Abdullah, widely recognized as one of the finest post-war writers in Malay, brings to the task of autobiography the hand and sensibility of an artist, as well as, evidently, a copious and (one assumes) accurate memory, for both books are lengthy and detailed. While the Indonesian revolution may be said not to belong to Malay historiography, Abdullah's background is peninsular Malay (he was born and brought up in Yen, Kedah, and is the brother of Ismail Hussein of the University of Malaya and the painter Ibrahim Hussein), and his autobiography cannot be denied a place in Malaysia's national corpus.

If Che' Khatijah's autobiography was the first local work of a directly political kind, the second was probably Abdul Aziz Ishak's Katak Keluar dari bawah Tempurong privately published in Singapore in 1959. Abdul Aziz, younger brother of the late President of the Republic of Singapore, was for many years, as is well known, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives in the Malayan government. The first volume of his autobiography (a

second, less personal and more didactic, was published later under the title Lompat Si Katak Lompat) describes his childhood (and incidentally that of his brother), his early years in government service, and then in politics. Though little of the controversy that marked his later career is present, the first volume of the work is of particular interest in showing the formation of a politician from early roots in opposition to colonial rule.

A third political autobiography is that of Ahmad Bustaman, the first volume of which, published in 1967, is entitled Api dan Ayer Mata.¹⁴ Thinly disguised as fiction (and written under the pseudonym "Ruhi Hayat", which deceived, and probably was intended to deceive, no-one), this work and its successor Api itu Maseh Membara¹⁵ give a fairly vivid account of political life on the left wing in the last decade or so, with a good deal of material concerning detention camps, as well as general reflection on the cast of the times and the ways this affected one individual.

A close colleague of Boestaman's in left-wing politics, rather better known as a writer, Ishak b. Haji Mohd., whose first novel out of close to a score he has written, the famous Putera Gunong Tahan, was published in 1937, has declared his intention of writing his autobiography, to be published by the small publishing firm with which he is now associated, and when I last saw him some three years ago he had indeed completed several chapters dealing with his career in the MCS prior to the War.¹⁶ I do not know its present stage of development.

Ishak, once he left the MCS, was for many years employed as a journalist on several of the Malay papers of the late 1930s. On one of these, Utusan Melayu, when it started in 1939, he was joined by a rather older journalistic stalwart, Zainal Abidin b. Haji Alias, better known as Zabha. Zabha worked for Utusan for a great many years, until indeed his retirement not very long ago, and in 1968 his autobiography was published in a volume edited by the present Minister of State for Education in Singapore, Inche Ghazali Ismail, entitled Tempat Jatoh Lagi di-Kenang.¹⁷ Speaking personally, I find Zabha's narrative of greatest interest when describing his early years, his limited Malay education in the 1920s, his persistence in trying to become a journalist despite the fact that he lived away up at Muar, hardly a metropolis of the craft, and his ultimate success, and that of Utusan, the first newspaper ever entirely owned and run by Malays.

The post-war material seems to me to lack some of the interest of the early period -- but this may reflect more my own preoccupations than anything else.

Finally, in terms of autobiography, I should perhaps mention as examples of a genre increasingly popular, the numerous travel narratives of the Singapore writer Harun b. Mohd. Amin (Harun Aminurrashid), owner of Pustaka Melayu or the Royal Press. A long-time novelist (he began his writing career around 1930, while teaching at SITC), Inche Harun has in the last decade travelled a good deal, and has published diary and descriptive accounts of visits to many parts of Europe and Southeast Asia, and also to Mekkah. Not autobiography in the fullest sense, but rather travel impressions, most are unremarkable, though the Mekkah book holds more interest because the pilgrimage is less described than tourism and is more directly related to the concerns of Malay society.

So much, then, for Malay autobiographies, of which, though there are not as many as the historian (or indeed any one else) might wish, are not as few as one is sometimes led to believe. That we should all welcome more autobiography goes without saying. Though Malay periodical publication is not as numerous now as it once was (even in Malaysia), this, it seems to me, might well become or be made more of a vehicle than it is or has been for autobiography by instalment. It is, on the whole, much easier to persuade a busy politician or public figure, or an old and perhaps tired man, to put down on paper episodes from his past, which can then be published serially, than to lead him to tackle the always formidable task of organizing a complete history of his own life. The problems, of course, are many, but to the historian it must seem imperative that, in a situation where not enough is put on paper, ways be found to encourage production, in whatever form. In this connection, Oral History, in which I know the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, and the Arkib Negara in Kuala Lumpur, have taken a real interest, may prove to be one of the more productive approaches, especially if transcripts can be made available, or even published.

Turning from autobiography, let me say something about its poor relation, biography. Poor, I'm afraid, in more senses than one, for even what biography there is in Malay (or of Malays) is not of very high quality. In the circumstances, I shall not attempt, as in the previous section on autobiography, to be comprehensive, but rather mention a handful of the more important works, whatever their lacks.

Working backwards in time, in this case, there are, as you probably know, three "biographies" of Tengku Abdul Rahman -- or more accurately one full biography and two collections of memorabilia. Miller's biography, though fuller than anything else available, is based very largely on interviews with the Tengku, embodies little additional research on anything with which Miller himself was unfamiliar, and partakes strongly of hagiography.¹⁸ So, of course, do the other two works, the composite Architect of Merdeka put together in 1957 by Abdul Aziz b. Ishak,¹⁹ and the more recent collection of "tributes" edited by S. Durai Raja Singan.²⁰ The less said about either the better, no doubt, though the earnest gleaner may pick up something from them.

A recent political biography of Dato' Onn b. Ja'afar, by Anwar Abdullah,²¹ is more detached, though the author remarks in his foreword that he thinks it still too early for full and impartial appraisal. Based to a large extent on the published sources, and not documented in any way, Anwar's biography has, however, clearly drawn on the recollections of many of Dato' Onn's friends and family, and seemingly on a small number of unpublished documents. In connection with Onn, attention should also be drawn to the B.A. Honours academic exercise written for the department of history, University of Malaya in Singapore, published as an article in the first issue of the Journal of Southeast Asian History, which deals almost entirely with Onn and UMNO.²²

Sayyid Shaykh Al-Hadi, the reformist and journalist, who died in 1934, has been the subject of two biographical attempts, neither published. The first, by S.H. Tan (as she then was), also undertaken as a B.A. Honours academic exercise in the department of history, University of Malaya in Singapore, in 1961, has seemingly been reworked to some extent for the Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, but though publication has been forecast for some years it has never appeared.²³ The second attempt was being made by Sayyid Shaykh's son, Sayyid Alwi, at the time of his death at an advanced age in 1970. I discussed this work frequently with Sayyid Alwi (who had previously written a brief memorial of his father, also unpublished), but am unsure what stage the manuscript was at when he died. It is to be hoped that it can be published in some form, for it certainly contained material available to no-one else.

Another unpublished work of some interest is a biography of the nineteenth century Dato' Shahbandar Tunggal of Sungei Ujong, in the context of a partially autobiographical work written by his grandson Abdul Majid b. Kari, whom I saw as an old man in Seremban in 1968, and who must by now, I think, have died. I possess a copy of this manuscript, which is in English and not very lengthy, and hope to bring it out before long.²⁴

Kelantan, that allegedly illiterate and unlettered land of flourishing literati, has produced a number of biographical studies, of which the most notable are three of To' Janggut, by different authors,²⁵ and two concerning the famous religious teacher To' Kenali, written by his grandson, Abdullah Al-Qari b. Haji Salleh and entitled respectively Sejarah Hidup To' Kenali and Cherpen To' Kenali.²⁶ The first is an admirable piece of local history, well written and well documented, which gives much detail about the life of one of the most influential figures in modern Kelantan; the second is a collection of homiletic tales told by To' Kenali and passed on to the author by ex-pupils, together with some additional biographical information.

Neighbouring Trengganu produced, at a date unknown but probably in the 1920s or '30s, a rhymed account of the nineteenth century reign of Sultan Zainal Abidin III, entitled Shaer Zainal Abidin yang Ketiga and published in Singapore in two volumes (only one of which I've seen) by an anonymous "T.D.K." To the south, Johore has been the provenance of three well-known biographical works, Mohd. Said b. Haji Sulaiman's Hikayat Johor dan Tawarikh al-Marhum Sultan Abu Bakar (Singapore, Malayan Publishing House, 1908; reprinted, Government Printer, Johore Bahru in the 1950s), which is largely devoted to a somewhat conventionally eulogistic account of the life and reign of Sultan Abu Bakar; Mohd. b. Haji Ilyas' Tawarikh Dato' Bentara Luar Johor (Johore Bahru, 1928), which gives the life story of one of modern Johore's Malay pioneers; and Daud b. Suleiman's Rengkesan Tawarikh Orang Kaya-Kaya dan Penghulu-Penghulu Batu Pahat (Muar, 1955), combining good local history with local biography.

Finally, as something of an oddity, there was published in Kuching in 1928 the biography of an apparently well-known Sarawak Malay religious teacher, whose name for the moment escapes me. Written in Arabic and in Malay (half of the page, divided horizontally, given to each) by his son, as I recall, the work is, I think, quite unknown. I came across a copy in the British Museum in 1969, and had a

xerox made, in the hope at some point in the future of following it up and perhaps securing republication either in Malay or in English translation, preferably with annotation and introduction.

There is more, of course, that one might say about biography. There is the two-volume account of Dato' Bahaman, Orang Kaya Semantan (which is somewhat more political history than biography²⁷), and there are numerous ephemera relating to other, mainly heroic, figures from the Malay past -- including, for example, a number by Darus Ahmad of Sinaran Press and intended for school use, of which the best are perhaps his 1957 Raja Haji, Pahlawan Terbilang (which claims to embody original oral research conducted in Pulau Penyengat), and his Dol Said, Pahlawan Naning, also published in 1957.²⁸ There is also a certain amount of oral history of the older sort (oral tradition) set down by people like the indefatigable Inche Zakaria b. Hitam of Kuantan, which is sometimes biographical in nature. Other biographical sources of information (as opposed to biographies proper) are the state or dynastic histories that have appeared from time to time (for example, the fairly recent Takhta Kerajaan Negri Sembilan²⁹ -- though many others might be cited), and of course a bevy of little Who's Who's (the anonymous Siapa dan Siapa di Tanah Melayu, for example, published in Kuala Pilah in the early 1950s, which contains among other things, a longish account of the life of Dr. Burhanuddin).

But now we are scrapping the bottom of the barrel, and I want to return, before finishing, to some general remarks by way of conclusion.

The manner of using life histories -- to illustrate the times, or to provide evidence for events -- has for long been a primary concern of the historian and the historiographer; as far as the West is concerned at least since Plutarch's Lives. Currently -- partly as a result of the move towards more social, and sociological, historical studies (this move itself being part of the history of ideas) -- there is much discussion about a number of relatively, though only relatively, new approaches to biography, of which I want to mention merely two here, and perhaps, briefly, try to relate them to the Malay material, known and potential.

The first of these is what has become known as "prosopography". Coming from the Greek prosope, meaning profile, prosopography is also known to some modern historians as "collective biography", or to

social scientists, more forbiddingly, as "multiple career-line analysis". It is described by the Princeton historian, Laurence Stone, in an excellent survey article in the Winter 1971 issue of Daedalus, as "investigation of the common background characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives". Now that, of course, may well be easier said than done, but as Stone describes it it might, for example, call into play something like the following steps. First, one must establish one's universe of persons, whether members of parliament or (improbably, I'm afraid, for written data) trishaw drivers. Next one must ask of their life histories a series of uniform questions, for example concerning birth and death, marriage and family, social origins and inherited economic position, place of residence, education, life-style, amount and source of wealth, occupational history, and so on. Finally, from all this data, one may draw up a picture or pictures of the group concerned, test the data for internal correlations of significance, or for correlations with other forms of behaviour, action or experience. If this sounds a little arid, this must be conceded to be one of the dangers of the approach, but it may also, in the right hands, offer many rewards. Prosopography has generally been seen as a tool for two sorts of problem -- those relating to exploration of the roots of political action, and involving the detection of deeper structural interests than may appear on the surface; and those involving questions of social mobility, especially in relation to elites (for example, Roman or American Senators, English cabinet ministers or Singapore parliamentarians, and so on).

Two types of historiographical inclination, it may be suggested, are represented by the foregoing -- broadly distinguishable as mass or elite studies. They tend to divide historians down the line which relates (to exaggerate for emphasis) to whether you think great men (individually or collectively) determine the course of history, or whether, rather, broader sociological, or socio-economic, determinants are at work. In either case, it may be urged, prosopography, systematic collective biography based on whatever materials are available, is of great importance and use. Let me give you three examples, taken from Professor Stone's article but all fairly well known: Lewis Namier's Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III (which appeared in 1929); Ronald Symes' Roman Revolution (1939); and R.K. Merton's Science, Technology, and Puritanism in 17th Century England (1938). All three writers were fortunate to possess, in addition to the talent of historical imagination, copious

biographical data on which to base their studies: Namier used rather more than a century of material on his parliamentarians; Symes was able to rely on two German historians who had amassed voluminous data on the Roman senate; and Merton -- who incidentally, as a sociologist, was the most statistically and "mass"-minded of the three -- used that invaluable compendium, the Dictionary of National Biography, or DNB.

There is much need, it seems to me, for collective biography, for prosopography -- whether of the elitist or mass kind -- in relation to Malay history in recent times, and indeed to Malaysian/Singapore history generally. If this proposition is accepted, where is the raw material to come from? I have suggested some of the sources, but it must be admitted that they are pretty thin. Let us, then, at least have a DMNB and DSNB; and let us also encourage students and others to search assiduously for biographical data in newspaper obituaries and articles, and in the myriad of "trivial" biographical sources that do exist, often unrecognized -- in addition, of course, to persuading people to write their memoirs, and to pursuing modern Oral History.

Finally, let me at least allude to what is probably the most controversial form that biographical studies may take today, psychoanalytical biography. Freud himself made more than one attempt to apply his analytical theory to historical personages. It is generally agreed that these attempts, though stimulating to the reader, were not terribly successful. Part of the problem no doubt relates to the fact that Freudian theory concerns the infancy and early childhood of the subject, which is seldom accessible to historians. And perhaps it is for a similar reason that the American psychiatrist Erik Erikson has been more successful. Erikson, moving on, as it were, from Freud, is concerned with the formative "identity crisis" that, he says, takes place at the onset of maturity -- not necessarily, one might add, at chronological adolescence -- and may be highly revelatory of both the man and the society. This period is likely to be rather more available both to the individual himself and to his biographers. Erikson, then, has pioneered what he calls "psychohistory", in which his own psychoanalytical method is applied to existing biographical materials, alive or dead, as embodied in his studies of The Young Luther and Ghandi's Truth.³⁰

There is, it must be admitted, no consensus as to how successful these works are as history, judged by conventional standards, though there is no doubt as to their brilliance and suggestiveness. Other problems also seem to me to arise. Erikson, like Freud, bases his most profound assumptions about human nature and human behaviour, on a psychological model of human development. Do such models, it has been asked, possess universal and cross-cultural validity? Can one, in short, apply Eriksonian insights and psychohistory to other places and times than those dealt with? Well, it is perhaps worth trying, or encouraging others from cognate disciplines to try. Again, Erikson has chosen to study and write about two figures whom he describes as "politico-religious geniuses" -- Luther and Ghandi. Does the process work with more ordinary mortals? Some things, at least, are certain -- and equally unquestionably have been given insufficient attention by historians concerned with this part of the world. Family relationships and childhood upbringing, the web of kinship generally, are by common acceptance of prime importance in the kin-centric societies of Southeast Asia, as determinants of personality, character, and action. It is time that we tried to look at some of this systematically, as historians, if only to take into account the possible importance of the notion of "modal personality" in historical explanation, and of the role of dyadic networks or patron-client relationships in political analysis currently of interest to some political scientist.

I have already, however, become too prescriptive for comfort -- mine or yours -- so let me simply end by saying that in my view Malay autobiography and biography, thin on the ground or not, has a lot of life in it yet.

NOTES

1. In John Bastin & R. Roolvink (eds.), Malayan and Indonesian Studies: Essays presented to Sir Richard Winstedt on his eighty-fifth birthday (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964), 141-155.
2. For a listing of these and certain other works of mainly general historical character, including, however, the apparently more directly biographical Sjair Soelatan Mahmood di-Lingga, see J.C. Bottoms, "Malay Sources", in K.G. Tregonning (ed.), Malaysian Historical Sources (Singapore, Malaysia Publications Ltd., for Department of History, University of Singapore, 2nd. ed. 1965), esp. pp. 43-45 and 52-54.
3. On the Hikayat Hang Tuah, a major new edition of which (by Kassim Ahmad) has recently been published by the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Kuala Lumpur, 1964), see the introduction to that edition and to Kassim Ahmad's Perwatakan dalam Hikayat Hang Tuah. (Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1964), an English version of which, Characterization in the Hikayat Hang Tuah appeared from the same publisher in 1966.
4. For some guide to these, see, e.g. (in addition to the major Dutch catalogues by Van Ronkel and Juynboll), Joseph Howard, Malay Manuscripts, a Bibliographical Guide (Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Library, 1966) and a recent article by Mohd. Taib b. Osman, "Laporan: Naskah2 dan Alatan2 Budaya Melayu di beberapa Pusat Pengajian di-Great Britain dan Jerman Barat", in Nusantara (Kuala Lumpur) I, 1 (1972), pp. 60-62.
5. Some Aspects of Sufism as Understood and Practised among the Malays (Singapore, Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1963). See, esp., Chap. V.
6. Details may be obtained from Abdullah b. Muhammad ("Nakula"), of the Bintang Emas press in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, a great-nephew of the author of this buku peringatan.
7. Under the title "Kisah Pelayaran ka-Judah" this forms an appendage to Kassim Ahmad's edition of the Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah (Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1960) pp. 129-154.

8. Published in Klang, publisher not recollected.
9. Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1966 Raja Haji Bot, of Selangor, is known to have kept extensive diaries, or buku-buku peringatan, covering much the same period, of which some were later lost by flood. Others are still in the possession of his son Raja Ayob (Kuala Lumpur), but are not available to scholars. A buku peringatan kept by Abdul Karim b. Ibrahim (Che' Karim), Sumatran in origin, who opened up the Selama district of Perak in the last quarter of the 19th century, appears to have been lost, but was at one time in the possession of the family of the Orang Kaya Mentri of Perak, in Taiping.
10. I have some recollection of a B.A. Honours academic exercise, written for the department of Malay studies, University of Malaya, which used or examined the diaries in some fashion, but I cannot at present trace the reference.
11. Shaykh Mohd. Tahir Jalaluddin, the well-known religious reformer and first editor of Al-Imam, later associated with Al-Ikhwan and Saudara and a prolific writer in other forms, did in fact complete an autobiography of some length, which was, however, lost in the 1950s by the printer to whom it was given for publication. All that remains is a brief article by him in the Malay journal At-Takwa (exact citation not available). Diaries kept by him (largely in Arabic) at certain periods of his life are still extant, and having been borrowed by the Indonesian writer Hamka are now again, I think, in the possession of Shaykh Tahir's son, Haji Hamdan, Chief Educational Adviser, Malaysia. Some surviving correspondence has, in addition, been deposited by Haji Hamdan in the Arkib Negara, Kuala Lumpur.
12. An appropriate title might be Tengku Tidak Bersiong.
13. Eastern Horizon began publication in July 1960, but stopped for a time before August 1962 and June 1963, on the death of the editor.
14. Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Gunung Tahan.
15. Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Gunung Tahan, 1967. A third book, Malam tak Berbintang (Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Gunung Agung, 1968) is more clearly fictive.

16. To be entitled Megesterit Muda, and published by Pustaka Gunung Tahan. Tan Sri Haji Mohd. Noah b. Onar's Tuan Speaker, Tuan! (Kuala Lumpur, Utusan Melayu Press, 1967), though primarily descriptive of the proceedings of the Dewan Rakyat, contains some material of personal and political interest.
17. Singapore, Penerbitan Riwayat.
18. Harry Miller, Prince and Premier: a biography of Tengku Abdul Rahman Putera al-Haj, first Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya (London, Harrap, 1959). A Malay translation of this has also been published.
19. Kuala Lumpur, privately published.
20. Tribute to Tunku Abdul Rahman (Kuala Lumpur, published by the author, 1963).
21. Dato' Onn (Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Nusantara, 1971)
22. Ishak b. Tadin, "Dato' Onn and Malay Nationalism, 1946-51", JSEAH, I (1960), 56-88.
23. The title of the original was "The Life and Times of Sayyid Shaykh Al-Hadi".
24. There is a reference to it in J.M. Gullick. "The Malay Administrator", Merdeka Outlook (Singapore), I (1957), pp. 69-83.
25. Yahya Abdullah, Peperangan To' Janggut, atau Balasan Derhaka (Kota Bharu, Muslim Printing Press, 1955); Haji Abdullah b. Amirah, Riwayat Hidup To' Janggut dan Peperangan-nya di-Kelantan (Penang, Sinaran Press, 1963); and Abdul Jalil Haji Noor, To' Janggut Pahlawan Kelantan (Singapore, Pustaka Nasional, 1966). Though intended in some degree for school use, all embody a measure of original, local, research.
26. Both were published in Kota Bharu, the first by Pustaka Aman Press, 1967, and the second by Sharikat Dian (late 1960s). It may be noted in passing that Abdullah Al-Qari has published an account of a visit of his own to Jerusalem and other holy places in the Middle East, entitled Mengunjungi Kota Suchi Bait ul-Makadis (Kota Bharu, Pustaka Aman Press, 1969).

27. Written by A. Talib b. Haji Ahmad, both were published in Kuala Lumpur, the first by Pustaka Bahagia, 1959, and the second by Pustaka Garuda, 1961. The recent discovery of the contemporary Pahang hero Mat Kilau has led to some attempt to survey his life; see, e.g., Aeby Muara (pseud.), Mat Kilau: satu churat chirit ka-arrah pengesahannya (Singapore, International Arts Correspondence School, 1970), and the report of the Pahang state commission of enquiry into the 1969 reappearance of Mat Kilau.
28. In addition, Darus published, in 1958, a small volume of biographical sketches of Malay heroes, Orang Besar Tanah Ayer (Penang, Sinaran Press).
29. Publication details (including the name of the author or compiler) are not recollected, and a copy cannot at present be traced.
30. Both were published first in the United States of America; the English editions available for citation were published in London, by Faber & Faber; Luther in 1959, and Ghandi in 1970.

