

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORY OF *JMBRAS*

Introduction

Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society or better known as *JMBRAS* is published half-yearly by the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society or MBRAS, which was founded a hundred and twenty years ago in Singapore. This scholarly Journal is usually published in the month of July and December every year and, sent to all subscribing members of the Society. The latest issue of *JMBRAS* is Volume 70, Part 1 (No. 272), 1997 published in July 1997.

JMBRAS is the chief instrument through which the Society attempts through the publication of papers, to disseminate knowledge and matters of historical nature pertaining to Malaysia and the surrounding region. For this very purpose, it published such original and high quality papers whose contents are relevant and have not appeared elsewhere in substantially the same, or abbreviated form in other journals. Apart from that, such papers to be published in the Journal must be totally communicated through the medium of English language only. In addition, these ideas or information being communicated must be written, clearly and concisely, with the minimum use of jargon to facilitate easy reading and understanding.

It is not too much of an exaggeration, to state substantially that *JMBRAS* has had a rather impressive publishing history and success on its part to be able to be published very regularly without fail from its very beginning in 1877 to this present day. Nevertheless, as any other publication house, there was a short period when the publication of the scholarly Journal was disrupted between 1942-1946 due to World War II and the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, which also affected much of the Society's administration and activities.

Early History of *JMBRAS*

The historic development of *JMBRAS*, one of the most established and learned journal to be published around this region is rather interesting and colourful. *JMBRAS* was not created *ex nihilo* but was the direct successor of what was originally known as the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, abbreviated as *JSBRAS*. *JSBRAS* was published by the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (SBRAS) which was founded in the year 1877 by a group of enthusiastic British colonial officials in Singapore. According to Rule 21 of SBRAS, *JSBRAS* "shall be published when practicable, every six months under the supervision of the Council, It shall comprise a selection of the papers read before the Society, the Report of the Council and Treasurer, and such other matter as the Council may deem it expedient to publish." Apart from that, it was also suggested that if the flow of contributions persisted, maybe more issues should be published as deemed fit.

The first issue of the *JSBRAS* actually came out only on September, 1878 but bore the July 1878 as its publication date. Each issue of *JSBRAS* is given a number, with the first issue being *JSBRAS* 1, July 1878, followed by *JSBRAS* 2, forthcoming in December 1878. A total of 500 copies of this first issue was distributed to members, contributors, the Press, learned societies and put to sale at Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Penang. (AR 1878, *JSBRAS* 2, 1878). The first issue of the Journal contained 15 original articles on various subjects authored by people such as A. Hart Everett, M. de Mikluho-Maclay, A. M. Skinner, W. A. Pickering, W. E. Maxwell and H. J. Murton. From the very start, the Journal has shown its promising future for it faced no such difficulty in obtaining contributions for publication in its Journal. Hose (1878) in his Inaugural Address as President of the Society, said that the Journal was not likely for the present, to be short of papers to be published as there were numerous contributions, which were already forwarded for publication. In actual fact, if the situation persisted, maybe more publication could be produced. All in all, for the first 40 years, the average number of pages published each year in each volume of the Journal amounted to 206 pages (AR 1920, *JSBRAS* 83, 1921). The last number of *JSBRAS* to be issued before the renaming of the Journal to *JMBRAS* in 1923 was *JSBRAS* 86, published in November, 1922 containing 18 articles of various subjects.

From JSBRAS to JMBRAS

In 1923, SBRAS was renamed Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society to signify the increasing sphere of influence of the British over the Malay Peninsula and its surrounding areas. As a result of this change of name, the Society Journal's name was conveniently changed to Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society or *JMBRAS*, the now familiar and well-known abbreviation of its capital letters. The serial number of the *JMBRAS* was continued and in addition to that the Journals of the Malayan Branch were each given a Volume number, and each Volume had several Parts. Thus, *JMBRAS* Volume 1 Part 1 was published in April 1923, *JMBRAS* Volume 1 Part 2 in October 1923 and Volume 1 Part 3 in December of the same year. *JMBRAS* was published uninterrupted until the Japanese invasion of Malaya on 15th February 1942. The last Journal, which the Society managed to publish just before this unfortunate incidence, was Volume 19 Part 3 in December 1941. The next issue to be published by the Society was Volume 20 Part 1, 1947 which came out in June 1947. In fact, by early 1946 as the business of the Society has resumed, there were some efforts to produce a number of the Journal as there were several papers which had been approved by the Council for inclusion in the first issue of the year but was abandoned due to the difficult conditions still existing in Malaya, after World War II. (AR 1946, *JMBRAS* 20 (2), 1947). In fact, well before the Japanese Occupation of Malaya in 1942, there were already a ready source of papers for publication in the scholarly Journal.

It was noted that the number of Parts published in the Journal after 1923 was at times irregular but nevertheless most of the Journals contained three Parts each up to 1950. However, at times , only two Parts were published, for example in 1930, 1931, 1933, 1940, and 1947. Yet, in some years, four Parts of the Journal were published, for example in 1927, 1928 and 1949 maybe more papers were submitted for publication in its Journal. Again starting from 1951 to 1964, most of the Journals contained regularly 4 Parts each. Starting from 1965, the Journals however contained only 2 Parts. The last issue of *JMBRAS* before the change of name in 1964 was Volume 36 Part 4, 1963 which was numbered 204.

In 1964, with the formation of Malaysia, comprising Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore, again the name of the Society was changed from Malayan Branch to Malaysian Branch. The first issue of the *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* was Volume 37 Part 1, Number 205. Hence, the change of name did not bring about a change in the abbreviation of the Journal, which remained *JMBRAS* and also the serial number of the Journal remained unbroken. By the time, *JMBRAS* celebrated its Centenary in 1977, it had already published a total of 232 issues of its Journal, a rather fantastic and historic achievement for such a learned publication in this part of the world. With the current issue, Volume 70 Part 1, No. 272, published in June 1997, the Journal would be celebrating its one hundred and nineteenth year of publication, a rather

incredible feat, which it could be proud of, and that which many learned societies cannot compare with.

History of Editorship

Rule 12 of MBRAS gives the Council, the power to appoint a member of the Society to edit the Society's Journal on its behalf, and to advise him in the selection of material when called upon to do so. To show its recognition of services rendered in editing the Journal, the name of the Honorary Editor would be printed with the list of the Council members for the year at the beginning of each Journal. The appointment as Honorary Editor is valid until the holder resigns or the Council members considered it advisable to make a new appointment.

Since its publication in 1878 to 1913, the duties of the Honorary Editor were carried out by the very person who held the post of Honorary Secretary. In other words, there was no separate appointment of an Honorary Editor to edit the Society's Journal. Hence, the first editor of this learned journal was none other than the first Honorary Secretary and only PhD holder of his time in the Straits Settlement, Dr. N. B. Dennys who himself contributed two articles in the first issue of the Journal. In 1879, A. M. Skinner, who took over as Honorary Secretary became the second editor. In its third year of publication, the Journal had another Editor, Frank A. Swettenham who served only for a short stint from 1880-1882. Taking over from him, was the Honourable William E. Maxwell, who was editor for five years, between 1883-1887. According to Gullick (1991), when

Maxwell took over the editorial responsibility of *JSBRAS*, the Journal was facing a hard time as the initial excitement and eagerness over its publication and the number of contributions for publication began to decline as some had to be rejected as unsuitable. During his tenure of office as Editor, Maxwell did much to keep the Journal going by adding certain columns such as Notes and Queries and other innovations, like publication in Jawi of Malay texts, translation of papers submitted in French into English and inviting contributions from other parts of Southeast Asia (Gullick, 1991). After Maxwell relinquished his post as Editor, H. T. Naughton took over as Editor, serving from 1888 to 1889.

The next member of the Society who became both Honorary Secretary and Honorary Editor was H. N. Ridley, the distinguished natural scientist who was then, the Director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Ridley was destined also to become the second longest serving Secretary and Editor of the Journal, serving for a total of 16 years, between 1890-1911, until his retirement in 1911. However, his tenure of office is interrupted in brief intervals, that is between 1894-1897, 1901 and 1908. During his tenure of office as Editor, Ridley who incidentally was a renowned natural scientist, a great number of articles on Malayan flora and fauna was published in its Journal. For example in *JSBRAS* 35, there were four papers on Malayan fauna and flora by Ridley and three by Robert Shelford, Curator of Sarawak Museum, a biologist. During the brief intervals when Ridley was not the Journal's Editor, the post of editor between 1894-1895 was the outstanding Malay scholar, R. J. Wilkinson,

1896 C. O. Blagden, 1901 P. J. Burgess and 1908 M. Hellier. After the untimely death of Ridley, Dr. R. Hanitsch, Director of the Raffles Museum, took over as Editor in 1912-1913. During the war period, a separate appointment of Honorary Editor was created so as to relieve the Honorary Secretary who was constantly burdened with the running and administration of the Society. Hence, Dr. R van Beuningen van Helsdingin was appointed Editor between 1914-1915 and again in 1920. From 1916-1917, the editor was C. Bazell, the first headmaster of the infamous Malay College Kuala Kangsar, followed by 1918-1919 W. Makepeace and 1921-1922 J. Johnson. During the war period, it was noted that the size of the journal has decreased and its appearance became rather erratic. Some of the papers were technical in aspects much like the kind contributed by Ridley between 1890-1911. The contents in the journal aroused criticism by members because it was difficult to understand and comprehend the subjects compared to previous contents, which were readable and interesting. However, the Council expressed hope for improvement as more contributions were received for the year 1921(AR 1920, JSBRAS 83, 1921). By the time the last series of JSBRAS was published in November 1922, before the change in name of the Journal to JMBRAS , the Society has a total of eighty-six issues of Journals to its credit.

From 1923, when the Journal changed its name to *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, abbreviated as JMBRAS as a result of the renewal programme of the Society and the political changes in the Malay Peninsula, the duties of the Honorary Secretary and

Honorary Editor were again combined. This new Editor of *JMBRAS* was C. B. Kloss, serving from 1923 to 1926. It was at this very time, the Journal contained more articles on natural scientific subjects from museum specialists contributed by Hanitsch, H. C. Robinson and C. B. Kloss himself. Later on, F. N. Chasen who became Hon Secretary (1927-1942), performed superbly as editor of the Journal contributing many papers on Malayan fauna and flora.

From World War II to 1956 , the practice of making two separate appointments of Hon. Secretary and Hon Editor was introduced, though at times, the same individual held both the posts. Nevertheless, for a few years in the 1960s, the two posts were held by different individuals. The following personages were Honorary Editor of *JMBRAS*, C. A. Gibson-Hill 1948-1961, 1962 (not filled), Alastair Lamb 1963-1964, Wang Gungwu 1964-1968, S. Arasaratnam 1969-1970 and Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard 1971-1994. Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard had served simultaneously as both Honorary Secretary and Honorary Editor between 1971-1988 but resigned as Honorary Secretary due to advancing old age and pressure from his other social commitments in 1988. However, Sheppard continued to help out the Society as Honorary Editor until his death in 1994. Hence, in term of service, Sheppard held both the records as the longest serving Honorary Secretary (17 years) and Honorary Editor (23 years). During his tenure of office, the Council decided to include some biographical notes about contributors to the issues of the Journal to improve its scholarliness and to give readers an easy access to the general background of these

contributors beginning with Vol. 48 Part 1, 1975. Apart from that, it was also decided to insert a few relevant advertisements on the end pages of the Journal beginning with Vol. 52 Part 2, 1979. There were two reasons for doing so, firstly to obtain supplementary funds and secondly to give members a preview of recent publications printed by Malaysian book publishers. Before that, in 1948, under C. A. Gibson-Hill's editorship, a "Notice to Contributors" was appended to give some general guidelines to interested contributors on how to organise their manuscripts submitted for publication. These guidelines were later elaborated and improved upon by the editors and the Council for the Society considering the technological changes such as availability of wordprocessor software and computer diskettes to store the submitted writings. On the whole, under his guidance, Sheppard had done a good job keeping the Journal up-to-date with the development of historical journals in term of outlook and contributions. Apart from bringing out the current year's issues, Sheppard also ensured that the delay of late publication of issues was much reduced. In 1984, the post of Review Editor was created to oversee the reviewing of books published in the Journal so as to relieve the Editor some of his routine work. This post has been held from that time by the incumbent Datin Patricia Lim Pui Huen, a member of the Society since 1965 to relieve the much taxed Editor in preparing book reviews for publication in the Journal (Gullick, 1995). Apart from that, a new logo was adopted by the Council in September 1988, which was later added to the cover of the second issue of the Journal in 1988 (AR 1988, *JMBRAS* 62 (1), 1989). From 1995 onwards, Professor Dato Khoo Kay Kim, a former

President of the Society, took over the editorship of *JMBRAS* after the demise of Sheppard, the previous Editor who served from 1971 to 1994.

Contents of *JSBRAS* and *JMBRAS* 1878-1996

The first President of SBRAS in his Inaugural Address to the members of the Society, delivered on 28th February 1878, emphasised and envisaged that the sole purpose of the Journal is to publish various papers investigating subjects connected with the Straits of Malacca and the neighbouring countries (Hose, 1878). Hence, the subjects and contents of the Journals published in *JSBRAS* 1-86 from 1878 to 1922, had always given much emphasis to the Malay Peninsula and its surrounding areas.

Makepeace (1918), in his article reviewing the first 40 years' work of SBRAS has indicated through an index compiled by Barnes in 1909, that from the very beginning, members of the Society had contributed two categories of articles, namely Physical and Literary. The former category embraces subjects such as natural history, philosophy, medicine, improvements of the Arts and physics. On the other hand, subjects under the second category included literature, philology, history, antiquities and ethnology.

On the other hand, C. D. Cowan (1961) who wrote an article about the ideas of history in *JMBRAS* 1878-1941, indicated that the Journal contained little of note from the historical point of view up to the

end of the nineteenth century. This is due to the fact that, in the early years, the contents were naturally focused upon "the early discoveries, surveying and opening up of large areas and their day-to-day activities brought them into contact with the geology, flora and fauna of the Malay lands and the day-to-day life of the people". Moreover, these officials were trying very hard to make themselves at home in their new Malayan environment by exploring. However, there were some papers on historical themes pertaining to state histories translated from Malay chronicles and genealogies or from Portuguese and Dutch accounts with regards to the history of the areas published between 1887 and 1895. Fifteen years later, in 1910, Parr and Mackray co-produced a significant contribution of historical value to the journal on Rembau's history, constitution and customs which was considered a classic still (*JSBRAS* 56)(Cowan, 1961; Gullick 1995). The next major historical contribution was written in 1925 by a professional historian, L. A. Mills entitled "British Malaya, 1824-1867" which was originally written as a doctoral thesis. In the 1930's, there were a sudden appearance of a mass of historical writing on Malaya touching on state histories, ancient history and pre-history. Some of these writings were published as monograph numbers due to its length and number of pages. Hence, it could be deduced that as the Journal matured, it began to publish more articles and papers, which focused on historical themes as indicated by Cowan. Moreover, over the years, all the early discoveries and explorations into the hinterland of Malaya has dwindled and hence, less contributions of such accounts.

However, Choy in her dissertation which was updated by others (1995) did a study on the history of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society which included two chapters on what *JMBRAS* has contributed towards Malaysian and Singapore historiography. According to Choy, the types of historical works contributed in the Journal could be divided into two periods, pre-1950 and post-1950. Much of the contents of the Journal published prior to 1950, were works on state histories, general history of Malaya and traditional Malay historical works. Apart from that, colonial history on the Portuguese and Dutch rule in Malacca and socio-economic history were penned by colonial administrators in the course of their duties. The post-1950 period witnessed the amateur scholarship of colonial officials to professional scholarship as a direct result of the establishment of the University of Malaya in Singapore, 1949. Moreover, the influx of expatriate historians and the training of local historians in the following years, enable the emergence of historical works based on archival research which were written at the University. Much of these works published in the post 1950 period were contributions on colonial history, Malay political history, economic history, works in related disciplines and traditional Malay historical works (Choy and others, 1995).

On the whole, it could be ascertained that *JMBRAS*, over the years has indeed started to give more emphasis and focus on promoting Malaysian historiography as portrayed in the many historical works published in the Journal, especially after the independence of Malaysia in 1963. This change of event is brought about by three factors. Firstly, more

and more Malayan and Malaysian historical writings came into being because of the emergence of professional historians, both local and foreign as the result of the establishment of the History Departments in local universities. Secondly, "the themes of historical writings are no longer confined to political history but instead turned to studies of social and economic aspects of the local communities and local institutions which reflected in order to derive a deeper understanding of the development of the present Malaysian society". Finally, Malayan and Malaysian historiography became more research oriented through the promotion of historical research by professional historians or academicians from the local institution of higher learning. By and large, the contents of *JMBRAS* over the years moved time especially towards the publication of more historical writings.

Prolific Contributors of *JSBRAS* & *JMBRAS* 1878-1996

Since the first Journal was published in 1878, there were many contributors both local and foreign who had been contributing materials for publication by the Society until the present day. Contributions here refers to all articles, long or short, notices, views, book reviews, obituaries and other oddities. However, a survey and preview of its content pages would indicate that many people, both professional and non-professional who were members of the society from its inception in 1877 had contributed some articles. However, it was also noted that only a selected few had continuously shown some prominence in their contributions of more than 20 papers over a certain period of time. Here it should also be

noted that some of these contributions taken into consideration are authored in collaboration with others. In other words, some of these contributions are single-authored, two-authors or multiple authored. Table 5.1 shows the list of the most prolific authors who had authored and co-authored papers or articles in *JSBRAS* and *JMBRAS* over more than one hundred years ago.

The most prolific contributor to this scholarly Journal since its inaugural issue in 1878 till this very moment is R.O. Winstedt, a well-known and prominent scholar-official of his time in British Malaya. Over a period of fifty-two years, Winstedt wrote as many as 144 articles of various length and pages for the Journal. Of these 144 articles, 27 are considered as historical works of much significance towards the development of Malayan historiography. Second to him in term of total contributions towards *JSBRAS* and *JMBRAS* is H. N. Ridley, a great botanist and of rubber fame who authored about 105 articles between 1890 to 1926. In third place is, C. A. Gibson-Hill contributing a total of 49 articles dealing mainly on the subject of boats and historical topics between 1935 to 1960. Following closely behind are C. Boden Kloss, working for the FMS Museum, contributed 48 articles on Malayan fauna and flora (squirrels and wild boar) between 1904 and 1930; W. E. Maxwell, a Malay scholar, produced 36 articles on various subjects such as the Malay folk-lore, Malay proverbs and Perak histories from 1878 to 1886; John M. Gullick contributed 34 articles on Malayan and Malaysian political history from 1949 till the present; W. A. Linehan, President of

MBRAS 1946-1947 contributed 33 articles especially on the history of Pahang (Antiquities, History, King and rulers and Tombs) between 1926-1952; Tom Harrison, a well-known ornithologist and archaeologist, contributed 32 articles on various aspects of Borneo and Malayan archaeology and pre-history between 1953-1977; C. O. Blagden wrote 31 articles mostly about cannons, Malay folk-lore, Indo-Chinese languages and inscriptions from 1894 to 1941; and finally Richard James Wilkinson, an outstanding Malay scholar accounted for 27 articles on various aspects of the Malays of which included social life and customs, its folk-lore and Islam between 1895 to 1941.

On the whole, out of the ten most prolific contributors who wrote and contributed articles towards the Journal were British colonial officials who had a part in the day-to-day administration of then British Malaya or worked as professional scholars or scientists in the Raffles and FMS Museums and the Botanic Gardens. These very individual contributed much before World War II towards the advancement of *JSBRAS* and *JMBRAS* as a scholarly Journal of renowned reputation in the years to come. Among locals who had contributed significantly to the Journal at this very moment are Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad better known as ZABA who wrote 15 articles of various themes about the Malays and Khoo Kay Kim, Professor of Malaysian History who also contributed 15 articles till the present. However it is noteworthy to say that since its change of name to *JMBRAS* in 1923 and 1964, more and more Malayan and Malaysian had contributed to the scholarly contents of the Journal

especially its political and socio-economic history. Even though the number of contribution from Malaysians are encouraging, not many has shown prominence and is prolific enough compared to those who had contributed earlier especially those colonial administrators of yesteryears.

Table 4.1
Most Prolific Contributors of *JSBRAS* & *JMBRAS* 1878-1996

Rank	Contributor	Number of Contributions	Contributing Years
1	Richard Olof Winstedt (1878-1966)	143	1906-1958
2	Henry Nicholas Ridley	105	1890-1926
3	C. A. Gibson-Hill	49	1935-1960
4	C. B. Kloss	48	1904-1930
5	William Edward Maxwell (1846-1897)	36	1878-1910
6	John M. Gullick	34	1949-1996
7	W. A. Linehan	33	1926-1952
8	Tom Harrison	32	1953-1977
9	Charles Otto Blagden (1864-1949)	31	1894-1941
10	Richard James Wilkinson (1867-1941)	27	1895-1957
11	F. N. Chasen	26	1923-1941
12	John Coney Moulton (1886-1926)	25	1911-1923
13	I. H. Burkill	23	1915-1958
14	Roland Bradell	22	1921-1959
15	Dudley Francis Amelius Hervey (1849-1911)	22	1879-1927
16	Nicholas Belfield Dennys	21	1878-1886
17	A. W. Hamilton	21	1920-1947
18	H. Overbeck	19	1914-1934
19	Amin Sweeny	17	1967-1983
20	Zainal @ Zainul Abidin bin Ahmad (ZABA)	15	1922-1951

Editorial Board and Policy

The Journal invites new and original contributions to disseminate knowledge and matters of historical value pertaining to Malaysia and the surrounding region. All papers submitted should be in English, which, if accepted, are not to be published in substantially the same or in abbreviated form elsewhere. Articles submitted should not exceed 10,000 words, unless there are exceptional reasons. As to referencing and other parameters of style, authors may consult the current issue of the *JMBRAS*. To minimise errors and expedite the production of the Journal, it is requested that a diskette with the text typed on a wordprocessor, accompanies the paper submitted. Further guidelines for authors pertaining to the form of presentation : title page, citation style, metric system, footnotes, table and appendices, illustrations, size, and scale are printed occasionally on the back cover page of the Journal for reference by interested contributors. Authors wishing to send their papers or contributions for publication in *JMBRAS* should submit them to the Society's Council at the following address: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 130M, Jalan Thamby Abdullah, Brickfields, 50470 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The papers or contributions received by the Council are then handed over to the Journal's Editor who is appointed or elected yearly by the Council to help screen the submitted contributions and in the process, establish its potential and suitability for publication in the Journal. If deemed suitable meaning that the paper is within the focus of the journal,

it will then be recommended for publication in the coming issue of the Journal by the Editor to the Council. The power to decide or approve for inclusion in the Society's Journal rests with the Council which usually agrees with the final recommendation of the Editor. After receiving the go ahead and approval from the Council, the Editor, with the assistance of one or two members of the learned Society would have the papers edited in terms of conformity with the Journal's needs and standard. However, the contents and its accuracy of papers submitted rest with the authors themselves. Next, these papers or monographs will be sent to the Society's reviewers stationed all over the world, renowned for their expertise and knowledge in their respective subject areas. All in all, the editor and reviewers would examine each paper primarily for its value as a contribution to the dissemination of knowledge and matters of historical values pertaining to Malaysia and her surrounding region.

However, it is clear that from the very beginning, since the first issue of the Journal in 1878, *JMBRAS* has had no Editorial Board to see to the smooth running and publication of its Journal. All editorial duties are performed purely by the Editor who in turn is helped by certain individuals belonging to the Society from time to time or when necessary in the course of editing. In 1984, an Honorary Review Editor was elected to lessen the burden of the Editor especially in the assembling and assessing of book reviews within the focus of the Journal submitted for publication in the Books' Review Section of the Journal.

After the reviewing process, the author will receive a proof copy of his paper and this proof should be corrected not revised and returned to the Editor within two weeks. Authors whose papers are accepted for publication are automatically given 25 free offprints for their use. However, authors can request for additional offprints with advance payment to the Editor. It is also the practice of the Society to hold the copyright of all published articles but nevertheless, permission is normally granted to the authors to reproduce such articles elsewhere. All enquiries pertaining to the Journal and the Society's activities should be addressed to the Council which administers all business matters including submission of contributions, advertisements, subscription and membership of the Society and its Journal.

Visibility of *JMBRAS*

JMBRAS, one of the most established and scholarly Journal in the AHSS disciplines in Malaysia till today can be proud of its high visibility. Visibility here means that the Journal is often referred to, cited and is known to international scholars especially those from the Art, Humanities and Social Science disciplines as bibliographic information regarding its articles can be made available from international indexing and abstracting services to international and local researchers.

As early as 1961, *JMBRAS* already featured in two annotated directories of serial publications, which contain articles on historical study, both published abroad, namely in the United States of America. The first

one is published by the American Historical Association entitled *Guide to Historical Literature* where *JMBRAS* was already featured and numbered as Q176 *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1923 ff., 3 nos. per year), forerunner of the present *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* and successor to *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Singapore, 1878-1922) (Howe and others, 1961). However this *Guide to Historical Literature* does not give much information regarding *JMBRAS* and its subject coverage or contents. On the other hand, there was a long entry on *JMBRAS* in the inaugural publication by Clio Press of the title of "*Historical Periodicals : An annotated world list of historical and related serial publication*" published in May 1961. The editors of this annotated directory are Eric H. Boehm and Lalit Adolphus of Historical Abstracts. *JMBRAS* which was featured and numbered 10 with its name, address and entry given as "Royal Asiatic Society, Journal of the Malayan Branch of the. Covering the territories of the Federation of Malaya, the colonies of Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo, and the State of Brunei". It was also noted that this Journal contained articles on "history, archaeology, ethnology, linguistics, literature and art, dealing primarily with Malays, Singapore and British Borneo, but occasionally also with adjacent areas of Indonesia and Southeast Asia". It added further that the "history articles deal with all periods with special emphasis on European penetration and colonisation in the last 400 years. Many issues were reserved for monographs or symposiums on specific subjects". There were also book reviews and a report including list of members cum index.

The visibility of *JMBRAS* as a scholarly journal in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) is furthered strengthened with the study by Goi (1997). In her dissertation, Goi found that *JMBRAS* tops the list of the journals cited by humanities researchers of the University of Malaya. This is especially true in the field of history, religion and philosophy studies where *JMBRAS* is profiled as the most important journal and often cited by researchers. For example, in the religion and philosophy studies, *JMBRAS* and *Dewan Sastera* received 33.02% citations whereas in the history studies *JMBRAS* received 40 citations out of a total of 344 citations. In a nutshell, the study by Goi has proven beyond any doubt that *JMBRAS* is indeed an important journal in the fields of AHSS.

In another related study by Zainab Awang Ngah (1997) entitled "The coverage of Malaysian scholarly journals by internationally indexing and abstracting services : an assessment of their visibility and common characteristics", it was found that *JMBRAS* is one of the very few Malaysian AHSS journals to be indexed and abstracted by more than one abstracting and indexing (AI) services. According to her, up to this very day, *JMBRAS* is one of the 11 journals in the AHSS disciplines which is being indexed and abstracted by the services under study. As for *JMBRAS*, it is being indexed by both *Anthropological Index* and *Historical Abstracts*.

Indices

Indices, lists of names, subjects, titles and etc. arranged and organised in alphabetical order at the end of a document, namely books, journal's articles, reports or other sources where its contents and pages where they are to be found and mentioned play a rather important role in aiding readers and researchers. A good index will allow the reader or user to locate precisely what he or she needs in the course of their search for information. By and large, indices must be current and have ease of use to meet the challenging times of information finding.

As any other learned journal, *JSBRAS* and *JMBRAS* over the years, has come out with indices with regard to its wealth of information on Malaysiana. *JMBRAS*, fortunately over the years, has its contents compiled and covered in indices prepared by its editors, interested parties or certain individuals undertaken at the request of the Society. Nevertheless, as any other learned publication it still has some lacuna in providing of a complete index covering all aspects, especially when taking into consideration its existence and involvement in journal publication of over more than one hundred and eighteen years.

In 1885, there was a mention of an 'Index of Asiatic journals' being compiled by a certain J. T. Carletti covering all Asiatic journals in the Notes and Queries 69, No. 3, *JSBRAS* 16, 1886, p. 83-84. The index to be readied by the year-end will also include the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, from 1878 (Notes & Queries 69,

No.3, *JSBRAS* 16, 1886). It is not known whether the work was finished or not. Again , in 1898, after a lapse of fourteen years, another index was compiled, that is "Index to the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*" published in *JSBRAS* 31, 1898, p. 153-190. This index was arranged into two sections, namely the first section which contained the subject index and the second section the author index. In 1909 W. D. Barnes, a member of the Society attempted the great task of compiling an index of the first fifty volumes of *JSBRAS* and Notes & Queries I to IV which was subsequently published as *JSBRAS* 51, 1909, p. 1-93. However, Barnes in compiling the index "made no attempt to compile a subject index but placed them under appropriate headings such as Physical and Literary. The former comprises subjects such as natural history, philosophy, medicine, improvements of the arts and physics. Subjects under the second headings included literature, philology, history, antiquities, and ethnology" (Makepeace, 1918).

Later on, the Society managed to produce yearly indices which was occasionally published in its Journal, for example between 1915-1917 and 1922-1927. The yearly indices published between 1915-1917 and 1922 were arranged in alphabetical order comprising both subjects and authors of the articles. On the other hand, the yearly indices from 1923 to 1927 were author index only. In between those years, there were no mention of any indices being prepared or published in the Journals. C. E. Wurtzburg in 1927 compiled "An index to all the journals (nos. 1-86) of *SBRAS* from its foundation until its change of title to *MBRAS*. And to

Notes and queries I to IV" which again was published in *JMBRAS* 4, 1927, p. 1-101. The articles indexed was arranged in alphabetical order appearing under keyword of their title, under the name of the author and under such special subject headings as their contents make desirable.

C. A. Gibson-Hill, editor of *JMBRAS* between 1948-1961 took up the task of compiling an "Index volumes 1-20 (1923-1947) of the Society's journals" which was published in *JMBRAS* 21 (3), 1948, p. 1-66 after the Society resumed publishing the Journal after World War II. His index consisted of two parts, that is, index of papers arranged chronologically under the names of authors and the other part subject index including places in Malaya and adjacent territories. In 1963, Lim Huck Tee and D. E. K. Wijasuriya at the request of the Council of MBRAS, undertook the mammoth task of compiling a comprehensive index covering the entire run of *JSBRAS* and *JMBRAS* up to the year 1963 due to "the inadequacy of existing indexes and the need for a more systematic, thorough, and up-to-date index" (Lim and Wijasuriya, 1970). This index was arranged in two alphabetic sequences, that is author and title sequence and subject sequence, which contained full bibliographic citation for all entries. This index was later published as *Index Malaysiana* in 1970 by MBRAS. In June 1974 the first Supplement to Index Malaysiana was published covering the entire run of the *JMBRAS* from 1964-1973 and included four monographs issued by the Society during the period. Further in January 1985, the second Supplement to Index Malaysiana covering the period

1974-1983 of *JMBRAS*, the Reprint and the Monograph series was published by the Society.

From 1986 onwards no further attempt was undertaken by the Council of MBRAS or its editor to compile any index to cover articles published from 1984 till today. However, in keeping with time the Society in the Annual Report of MBRAS 1995, there was a mention of an impending new edition which is a more up-to-date index including references to the latest issues being planned to amalgamate the new portion with Supplements 1 and 2 respectively (AR MBRAS 1995, *JMBRAS* 69 (1), 1996). Finally, the Society also published *A Complete List of the Contents of the Society's Journals 1878-1980* to enable scholars or researchers to have at hand a quick reference guide to the many learned articles appended in its Journals. With these references as to the contents of the Journals and the many indices produced and published, it is hoped to stimulate further research activities with regard to Malaysiana scholarship using the Journal's articles.

Conclusion

The *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (*JMBRAS*) can look back proudly on its continuous and stable history of more than a hundred and nineteen years and its many achievements. During this long period of time, *JMBRAS* has played a very important role in the continuous promotion of scholarly research and development of knowledge. It has always concentrated in the dissemination of knowledge

relating to the matters of historical value pertaining to Malaysia and the surrounding region. Even though, it was continuously edited by different editors both local and foreign, it has outlived them in terms of lookout and content coverage. *JMBRAS* still remains the most important storehouse of information about Malaya and Malaysia.

This chapter traces the history of *JMBRAS* since 1878 when it was first published in terms of its editorial history, content and coverage, prolific contributors between 1878-1996, visibility of *JMBRAS*, and its publication of Indices.