Chapter 2

The Socio-Cultural and Economic Construction of Modernity

In the preceding chapter, among other things, we have seen how Marx describes his encounter with the Indians and how capitalism shattered their culture and way of life, hence, thrusting them into a modern way of life. From Marx’s point of view, he believes that capitalism is the driving force that revolutionizes the country—the same force which both Giddens and Swettenham describe as the Juggernaut. While ambivalent about this, Clifford cannot also deny the necessity of capitalism, as ‘the great wheel of progress’ his ‘ubiquitous white man’ brought in to Malaya. In essence, the four would agree that the modern way of life would eventually replace the traditional one along the way. For Marx, who spent only a short time in India, his description of what the Indians had to go through in the process of modernization sounded like it was a very straightforward and revolutionary process, but, the two colonial authors had spent more than two decades among their subject people, the task of describing the people and the socio-cultural backdrops of the country was unerringly difficult as suggested earlier. The experience of living with the natives, who learned to accept the colonial officers as one of their own people, leaves a tremendous effect on the two colonial authors’ attempt to describe the ‘unregenerate’ Malays, and the authors’ opinion of the process of ‘regeneration,’ of the Malays. The two colonial authors have to wrestle with their tasks as colonial officers to modernize the Malays, and their love (and
respect) for some of the customs and characteristics of the natives, which the latter had to forego in order to move towards modernity.

For example, in his Preface to *Malay Sketches*, Swettenham states that the purpose of his book is “to awaken an interest in an almost undescribed but deeply interesting people, the dwellers in one of the most beautiful and least known countries in the East” (1895: vii). The diametrically opposed sets of contrast above, the ‘almost undescribed’ and ‘deeply interesting people,’ and ‘the most beautiful’ and ‘least known countries,’ became his mode of writing of the Malays. While Swettenham faces difficulties in his description of Malaya, Clifford experiences the same dilemma in describing the natives. While on one hand, Clifford describes the Malays “of the Peninsula were, to all intents and purposes, living in the Middle Ages” (1897a: 3), Clifford, on the other, laments that with British intervention, “one cannot but sympathise with the Malays, who are suddenly and violently translated from the point to which they had attained in the natural development of their race, and to live up to the standards of a people who are six centuries of them in national progress” (ibid., 3). Therefore, in this chapter, we will come across the authors’ description of these ‘interesting people’ who are ‘living in the Middle Ages’ and the so-called traditional, Malay character, culture and way of life as perceived by the two colonial authors, like Marx, who describes the characters, the socio-cultural and the economic makeup of the Indians. The two colonial writers would then offer their views on what the Malays should do in their preparation for modernity as an
alternative way of life to replace their traditional socio-cultural and pre-capitalist existence.

Swettenham begins his description of the Malays in “The Real Malay” with an interesting epigraph from Byron’s Don Juan, to describe the Malays in general as follows:

He was the mildest manner’d man
That ever scuttled ship or cut a Throat. (1895: 1)

As mentioned earlier, similar set of contrast or duality continues to be apparent in his view of the Malays. As “the mildest manner’d man,” the Malay is “courageous and trustworthy in the discharge of an undertaking” (ibid., 2). While performing his duty as a colonial officer, Swettenham had become accustomed to “cover twenty miles or so a day along ill-kept paths and through rougher terrain, accompanied as a rule by only a few Malay assistants, accepting the hospitality of villagers en route or sleeping with the boat moored to the bank when travelling by water” (Roff, 1967: xiv). This hospitality, another instance of “the mildest manner” of the Malays, offered by the people from one village to another were received well in his writing when he writes that “as with other Eastern people, hospitality is to the Malay a sacred duty fulfilled by high and low, rich and poor alike” (1895: 4)(my emphasis).

To describe the Malay in the superlative form ‘mildest’ would be to suggest the highest degree of kindness and gentleness which, in the context of the colonial
encounter, Swettenham is rationalizing a sense of trust between the colonizer and the Malay as a subject race. Not only that, Swettenham further explains,

To begin to understand the Malay you must live in his country, speak his language, respect his faith, be interested in his interest, humour his prejudices, sympathise with and help him in trouble, and share his pleasures and possibly his risks. Only thus can you hope to win ... not only confidence but the devotion that is ready to give life itself in the cause of friendship (ibid., 1-2)(my emphasis).

The words such as ‘to understand, sympathise, share, risks, confidence, devotion, friendship’ and trust is practically new in the colonial relationship and psyche that Swettenham is highlighting in the first chapter of his first book. These words, I argue, are inclined towards rationalizing modernity than fostering the imperial idea in the works of Swettenham.

For one reason, as opposed to Rudyard Kipling’s “half-devil, half-child” images of the native Indian, where the native is seen as a creature of impulse and lacking self-discipline (Islam, 1979), Swettenham highlights that the Malay is a ‘man’ and is “courageous and trustworthy in the discharge of an undertaking” (1895: 2) as stated earlier. The imperial idea is concerned with projecting the stereotypical images of the natives, whereas Swettenham, is more interested in explaining the ideas of progress, regeneration, change and “awakening” as mentioned earlier in the Introduction. While he be concerned, at times, with describing the historical parallel between Malaya and England, and creating the inevitably stereotypical images of the natives, his main purpose is to project the element of modernity in his works of fiction.
Another reason, Swettenham is describing the Malays in what he calls ‘the moment of transition’ which in this case would mean a transition from an old world into a modern world, from barbarism to civilization. One, of course, could argue that colonization and modernity is fundamentally about conquest (Ashcroft et.al, 1998), but while colonization is the external force that affects the construction of a society, modernity concentrates on the internal process of change. There is an overlapping of the two forces. Therefore, we will commonly find the element of modernity such as trust, confidence and friendship/relationship in his stories. The projection of traditional or static and pre-historical stagnancy in the native society is not too apparent, and if it occurs, Swettenham provides reasons for its continuity and suggests its imminent demise. He is more interested in projecting the images of the Malays after their contact with Western people, an irresistible transition, which would transform the Malay into absorbing modern characters and living in a modern society.

In dealing with this transitional period, Swettenham explains at the outset of the book that

Above all things, he [the Malay] is conservative to a degree, is proud and fond of his country and his people, venerates his ancient customs and traditions, fears his Rajas, and has a proper respect for constituted authority—while he looks askance on all innovations, and will resist their sudden introduction. But if he has time to examine them carefully, and they are not thrust upon him, he is willing to be convinced of their advantage (1895: 3).

The British who knew right from the beginning that the Malay “fears his Rajas” found it easy to manipulate this socially constituted authority. In their policies
towards the Malays, they continued to install the Malay rulers in their pristine place with adequate allowances but kept the running of the government to the Residents and the Colonial Office.

Of course, on the other hand, Swettenham is suggesting that the Malay is capable of being brutal such as 'cut[ting] a Throat.' The Malays live on the "land of the pirate and the amok" (ibid., x), as he mentions earlier in his book. Such a statement, I believe, is aptly used to justify the need for the Government of the Straits Settlement to have control over the Malay States for they are the haunt of the pirate, who continued to disrupt the commercial activities in the Straits of Malacca. The mention of amok (a more detailed description of the subject will be discussed shortly) here is to justify social and cultural intervention for it becomes a moral conviction of the British to 'civilise' the barbaric Malays.

Swettenham also writes that the Malays are "lazy to a degree, . . . and considers time as of no importance" (ibid., 3). The laziness of the Malay, as it was well argued by Syed Hussein Alatas in his book *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (1977), has a somewhat similar justification. Being in the country where food is abundant and there is always fish in the river, the Malays need not worry where their next meal is coming from. As a believer in the egalitarian way of life, the Malay leads a simple way of life. "It was perhaps this natural bounty which gave foreigners the impression that the Malay was easygoing to the point of laziness," writes Shennan (2000: 21). Despite the changes that the British brought into the Peninsula, the Malay, of course,
continued to be “conservative to a degree” (Swettenham, 1895: 3) since the need to compete with others was not there yet. Coming from an industrialized country, the author, of course, sees the ‘laziness’ of the Malays from his biased perspective. However, he is certainly convinced that given enough time, the Malay is willing to change.

In his book *The Real Malay*, Swettenham says: “The Malay hates labour, and contributes very little to the revenue in the way of taxation. He cultivates his rice-fields, when he is made to do so by stern necessity, or the bidding of his headmen, and he is a skilful fisherman, because that is the nature of sport” (1899: 37-38). Such sentiment about the race as people who ‘hate labour’ is similar to what had been argued before by Syed Hussein Alatas in his book, *The Myth of the Lazy Native* whereby the author argues that such portrayal of the natives serves as an important justification for importing foreign labourers, from China and India, to work in Malaya. The fact that the “position he occupies in the body politic is that of the heir to the inheritance...[and that]... The land is Malaya, and he is the Malay” (Swettenham, 1899: 37), persuades his psyche not to work hard for his position in the land is secure and unquestioned. However, Swettenham’s argument is overshadowed by the mere fact the Malay “contributes very little to the revenue in the way of taxation.” The fact that they pay less taxes does not mean that they work less. Most Malays are paddy planters and fishermen and what they produce is limited to local consumption only, as opposed to the tin-mining activities performed by the Chinese. Tin was Malaya’s source of revenue with “five-sixths of the world’s
produce of that metal” (ibid., 43-44). The revenue from the export duty on tin must have been outstanding. The Chinese work hard on their tin-mining activities as do the Malays on their paddy fields and to measure their hard work or laziness from the standpoint of taxation is not the proper yardstick to be used. With modernization, however, Swettenham specially noted that he is “glad to think how many Malays are included in that category [the civil service]” (ibid., 45). Swettenham believes that with the Malays’ participation in work service (where proper taxation can be reduced accordingly), “a healthy rivalry” (ibid.) between the people of Malaya—the Malays as civil servants and the Chinese as businessmen would emerge.

British colonization precipitates social change from mechanical to organic solidarity, to look at it from the perspective of Durkheim, as Swettenham is arguing here. The growth of population would mean that society is becoming more complex in every aspect of its everyday activities. One example, would be the demand for food production. In the traditional way of food production, take for example rice, the Malay only works on the field which will yield enough rice for his family, or a little extra for seedling for the next season. With the coming of the British, however, paddy production had been commercialized, for example, Kedah began to export her rice to Penang and this accounted for a tenth of the state revenue. Now the traditional way of paddy production has changed as the demand for its production increases. New methods and technology have helped to increase the paddy production. The expansion of technology requires specialized workers to work on every level and chain of production. In modern paddy agricultural production, we
have the fertilizer company which produces fertilizer for the farmers, the transport company which takes care of the transportation of paddy to different place and other related businesses. Modern society, with the growth of population, has to cope not only with social density but also with the more complex division of labour as demonstrated above. In the end, Durkheim argues, society has to change from the traditional society to a modern one and to learn to find different moral values in order to maintain its social cohesion. Social development, in the modern era, requires the Malays to struggle for survival and the British Government's policy to encourage the Malays to join the civil services would serve as an impetus for modernizing the Malays, at least, from the standpoint of the economic participation in Malaya.

Next, Swettenham writes, "The guiding principle of the Malay life is, "sufficient for the day," and improvidence is the heritage of the people" (ibid., 50). Gullick in his book Malay Society in the Late Nineteenth Century provides a reason for this. Largely due to the intolerable system of *kerah*—corvée labour, and partly due to the Malay Rulers' right to seize the property of the ordinary people, the author argues that the Malays are "afraid to cultivate more than enough for their actual necessities, or to keep cattle other than sufficient to plough their fields."³ (1987: 100). With the advent of colonial rule, however, the *kerah* system had been duly abolished and the people were entitled to own lands; nonetheless, the sentiment of the race 'sufficient for the day' prevails. Perhaps, the policy of the British is such that "Consideration for the Malays as the people of the soil and the owners of the country has been set before all other considerations" (Swettenham, 1899: 50)(my emphasis).
This causes such sentiments to continue. Such consideration, no doubt, on one hand, gives recognition to the Malays but on the other, establishes the mediocrity mindset of the Malays. Therefore, for the Malays, Swettenham writes that "their cares are fewer, and their enjoyments are possibly greater" (ibid.). This mediocrity mindset, I must stress, is also apparent in the way the British's treatment of Malays' education. Swettenham states that the purpose of sending the Malays to school is to "teach the three R's in the vernacular, and to inculcate habits of order and regularity" in addition "to supply technical and agricultural education" (ibid., 26) so that the new generation of Malays can become better farmers and fishermen.

In his book entitled *Capitalism and Modernity*, Professor Derek Sayer argues that capitalism is the main catalyst in the development of our modern world. For one, capitalism "has brought into existence unimagined forces of production and an unprecedented globalization of social relations" (1991: 55) and two, it "offers more individual mobility than previous forms of society" (ibid., 69). It has become, according to Weber, "the most fateful force" (ibid., 1) in modern life. Economic expansion, during the colonial era, has amounted to a more complex social development and race relation in Malaya. With more capital coming in, from both the British companies and the Chinese businessmen, economic activities and the forces of production increased dramatically. Swettenham verifies later in *The Real Malay* that, "in the time British Residents have controlled the finances of the Protected States, they have succeeded in increasing the revenues over twenty-fold" (1899: 42). This drastic change in the economic outlook of Malaya has created a big
gap between the income of the Malays, as the native people of Malaya, and the immigrant Chinese.

This disparity could be overcome by welcoming more Malays into the civil service as Swettenham suggests above. Economic expansion usually amounts to the expansion of the bureaucracy in the government machinery. After all, the Malays are in dire need for discipline and to quote Professor Sayer again, in bureaucracy, "discipline is the consistently rationalized, methodically trained and exact execution of the received order" (1991: 136). Joining the civil service would ensure the Malays continue to inculcate habits of order and regularity, as Swettenham mentions above.

Modernity that has its roots in the intellectual movement in the West, which question the traditional thoughts and religious practices, can be categorized in a single word called 'reason,' or 'rationale,' to borrow Weber's term. With all the considerations (perhaps, privileges) stated above, Swettenham is hopeful that the Malays "will begin to develop the spirit of acquisitiveness" (1899: 50)—to enable them to reason things out with the reality of modern life, rather to easily content with what they have. The Malays should no longer simply enjoy the privileges given by the British and their considerations, but must learn to reason and develop new forms of thinking, on socio-cultural, and economic reality of the more challenging modern world. After all, Swettenham stresses, "the development of the Malay States is the outcome of native capital, native labour, and native energy" (ibid., 45) and perhaps
one day, with the spirit of acquisitiveness installed, he would be able to administer the country better.

However, the colonial regime and Swettenham, as one of the officers responsible for taking care of the Malay affairs, are rather lukewarm in their efforts to advance the Malays in the sphere of education, or, to choose the right type of education for them. The type of education proposed above by Swettenham is what Durkheim calls 'spontaneous education.' This type of education is perhaps sufficient for the traditional society to maintain its mechanical solidarity as the pupils learn the essential way of life through the example of the adults (i.e. the teachers). Not much of intellectual concepts or moral ideas being taught in the classroom except for the formation of character as Swettenham states, "to inculcate the habits of order and regularity" as mentioned above and this type of education falls into the more modern type of education—the 'moral education'—as Durkheim suggests. Modern society requires 'moral education' for it enables the pupils to learn discipline, to empathize with others, and to create their own natural talents in the complex society they live in. Durkheim views education as a lifelong process. The pupils should get the basic moral values to cope with their physical existence, control their desires and impulses and adjust to an ever-changing modern social environment. In other words, education should prepare the students to survive in a modern environment rather than to conform to what has been traditionally required—that the pupils are to act on their rational grounds, to borrow Weber's term, in performing independent moral reasoning. In this manner, while both Swettenham and Durkheim agree that
civilization of those countries. . . (1897a: 18), whereas the Eastern seashore is "yet untouched by contact with white men, [and] are still in a state of original sin" (ibid., 51). This he does so to create a clearer picture of the 'civilised' Malay of the Western seashore and the Malay of the Eastern seashore "in his natural unregenerate state" (ibid., 52).

Clifford demonstrates his close observation of the Malays of the East Coast in a short story "The People of the East Coast," in which he argues against the notion of, what most people believed, the inhabitants being homogeneous. The following line testifies to his familiarity with them. Clifford writes, "to one who is not used to Malays, the natives of Pahang, Kelantan, and Trengganu have nothing to distinguish them one from another, whereas, after a year or two on the East Coast, what at first are almost imperceptible differences, are soon recognised as being widely distinguishing marks" (ibid., 23-24). After being an expert on the Malay, Clifford does not necessarily share what seems common or similar to most observers for he begins to see them beyond their respective occupations. Simply because the natives of the East Coast participate in the same economic activity as fishermen or paddy cultivators, the generally accepted understanding that they share the same socio-cultural and worldview is misleading.

The Pahang Malay, for example, "thinks chiefly of deeds of arms, illicit love intrigues, and the sport which his religion holds to be sinful" (ibid., 17). The natives of Trengganu "are men of peace. Their sole interest in life is the trade or occupation
which they ply, and they have none of that pride of race and country, which is so marked in the Pahang Malay” (ibid., 20). The native of Kelantan “is, to the native of Pahang, what the water-buffalo is to a short horn” (ibid., 24), that is to suggest their dirtiness. These are the traditional cultural and economic activities of the Malays as Clifford describes them. It is wise, therefore, to compare what Marx has to argue on the traditional peasantry’s economy with that of the Malays. Marx explains and I am going to quote him at length:

The small-holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. Their field of production, the small holding, admits of no division of labour in its cultivation, no application of science and therefore no diversity of development, no variety of talents, no wealth of relationship. Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient: it itself directly produces a major part of its consumption and thus acquires its mean of life more through exchange with nature than in intercourse with society. In so far as there is merely a local inter-connection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class (Marx, 1852/1968c: 170).

When Marx talks about the division of labour, first, I do not think he really means it to be gender specific. Marx does not really discuss women’s participation in the economy (hence capitalism) but views gender as part of the class struggle between men and women. This offers quite an interesting contradiction with the Kelantanese women who are the ones who dominate businesses and this phenomenon does not create any tension between the two genders—it falls naturally into the Malay’s sense of division of labour. Secondly, when Marx talks about the division of labour, he also means to relate it to the ‘alienation’ process whereby the workers are being
separated from participating in the whole process of production, or to be precise, the mode of production is being compartmentalized in which a single worker is not involved in the manufacturing process from the beginning to the end. Each worker is only responsible for a small part of the completely complicated process.

Going back to Clifford’s description above, what becomes obvious is that the Pahang Malays seem to be the benchmark for all the comparison made. This can be easily explained. Clifford was the Resident of Pahang and Pahang Malays comprised most of his loyal assistants who helped him around the house and at work, or while travelling, which accounts for an imperceptible bias. For this reason, Clifford begins his chapter on “The People of the East Coast” with the following adapted epigraph by Kipling

I have eaten your rice and salt.
    I have drunk the milk of your kine,
The deaths ye died I have watched beside,
    And the lives that ye lived were mine.
Is there aught that I did not share,
    In vigil, or toil, or ease,
One joy or woe that I did not know.
    Dear hearts beyond the seas?

There is no doubt that Clifford is dedicating the epigraph to the Pahang people to whom he owes so much for his livelihood ‘have eaten your rice and salt,’ for companionship ‘the lives that ye lived were mine’ and for the cooperation ‘In vigil, or toil, or ease.’
As a whole, the life of the people of Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan, Clifford says,

...is much the same. Up country the natives live more chastely than do the people of the capital; they work harder, age sooner, lie less softly, experience less change, and are chiefly occupied in supporting themselves and their families.... Their lives are entirely monotonous, dull, and uneventful, but the knowledge of other and better things is not for them, and they live contentedly the only life of which they have any experience (1897a: 28-29)(my emphasis).

This theme of the Malays who ‘experience less change’ or live ‘without hope of change’ that Clifford is highlighting here is important to the rest of the chapter. This characteristic, arguably, is what is holding the Malay back and it is especially true when Clifford adds that “the knowledge of other and better things is not for them” that they are succumbing to the so-called fate. The fact that they “live contentedly the only life which they have any experience” shows that they hold on to their past very closely and hate change, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter. Perhaps, Clifford is arguing that the Malays are against the spirit of, what Kant called the slogan ‘Sapere aude (dare to know)’ as a motto of Enlightenment. By accepting the fact that “the knowledge of other and better things is not for them,” “the people of the Peninsula were, to all intents and purposes, living in the Middle Ages” (ibid., 4).

The meeting of the colonizer and the colonised people is not only the meeting of two different people of different skin colour, but also the meeting of two different civilizations set at a different time in a time-space continuum where one claims to be ‘six centuries’ more advanced than the other simply by embracing the ‘dare to know’ Enlightenment motto as Clifford tries to explain in the above quotes. The Malays’
lack of determination to ‘know’ is an obvious reason for their backwardness which Clifford is addressing here. However, Clifford’s ambivalence is projected through his other description of the Malays as hard working people who occupy their lives supporting their families and paying less attention to any form of knowledge that may disrupt the very contented lives they live in.

In his short story “The East Coast,” Clifford maps out the general and historical overview of the East Coast. He begins with the following statement,

In these days, the boot of the ubiquitous white man leaves its marks on all the fair places of the Earth, and scores thereon an even more gigantic track than that which affrighted Robinson Crusoe in his solitude. It crushes down the forests, beats out roads, strides across the rivers, kicks down native institutions, and generally tramples on the growths of nature, and the works of primitive man, reducing all things to the dead level of conventionality, which we call civilization. Incidentally, it stamps out much of what is best in the customs and characteristics of the native races against which it brushes; and, though it relieves them of many things which hurt and oppressed them ere it came, it injures them morally almost as much as it benefits them materially (ibid., 1-2).

This long quotation sums up Clifford’s ambivalent stand towards the native Malays with the encroachment of the Western power. On one hand, he worries about the dullness of western civilization – ‘dead level of conventionality’ as opposed to his admiration of the eastern civilization – ‘native institutions,’ but, on the other, as argued earlier, the Empire would free them from the oppressions of the native rulers and benefit them economically.
hence Malays' backwardness. One of the Malay characteristics which Clifford highlight in his writing is that the “raayat [and their Rulers] would have been content, I fancy, to plod on through the centuries 'without hope of change'” (ibid., 6) which helps to explain their 'six centuries backwardness.' This would certainly call for British intervention in the Malay States.

In approaching modernity, Swettenham and Clifford believe that the Malay needs to get rid of the 'uncivilised' elements in their society. Among the socio-cultural elements of the Malays which two authors give their emphasis on is amok. As it has generally understood, Swettenham writes, amok is perceived by "many English people [as] their only idea of the Malay" (1895: 38)(my emphasis). As amok usually involves killing, it has, to a certain extent, nullified the 'mildest manner'd' qualities the Malays possess. To duly describe the brutality of amok, Swettenham narrates an amok story which is based on an event which took place in Telok Anson, Perak on February 11, 1891. Imam Mamat, the person who ran amok killed six people and wounded three others in one single evening. Imam Mamat himself died of severe haemorrhage twenty-four hours later.

Swettenham begins his story on “Amok” with the following epigraph by Lewis Morris:

There comes a time
When the insatiate brute with the man,
Weary with wallowing in the mire,
leaps forth
Devouring ... and the soul sinks

51
And leaves the man a devil

The fact that Swettenham chooses to write this account of Imam Mamat’s amok, the ‘Imam’ or the priest, being the highest religious authority in the Malay community, intensifies the following facts, as far as amok is concerned, about the Malays. First, to the Malays, even the priest, one of most respected persons in the community is capable of being a “devil,” committing the most brutal crime when his “soul sinks.” This reminds us of the monk in Lewis Morris’ book in which the respected figure is involved in evil. The Malays believe that the amok runners are being possessed by forms of spirit that make them become unconscious of their actions. Secondly, the fact that even the ‘holy’ man is ‘susceptible’ to such an act suggests that the ordinary Malays whose ‘souls’ are not as strong as their priest would be more vulnerable. To make it more apparent, Swettenham claims that he knows Imam Mamat in person as having a good repute with his neighbours, and I [Swettenham] never heard any cause suggested why this quiet, elderly man of devotional habits should suddenly, without apparent reason, develop the most inhuman instincts and brutally murder a number of men, women, and children, his nearest relatives and friends (ibid., 43).

Swettenham is suggesting that it is hard to suspect any person who can be amok-prone. Even the Malay raja is susceptible to amok as Swettenham later writes in “The King’s Way” that “The person of raja is sacred to a Malay, and if he feels that he has been disgraced beyond bearing, the result will probably be, sooner or later, an access of blind fury resulting in a case of amok” except that the raja will receive impunity for guilt “does not apply when the offender is a raja and the injured man of lesser rank” (ibid., 173).
Thirdly, as amok runners usually kill the very persons who are very dear to them including their wives, children and siblings “without apparent reason,” Swettenham predicts that, “It is, quite possible that the man [Imam Mamat] was suffering under the burden of some real or fancied wrong …” (ibid., 43), that he can no longer pull himself together and rationalize the problems. The fact that the amok runners kill their close family and relatives and end up getting themselves killed (in most cases in the present study) shows that such action is beyond formal rationality, as Weber puts it, for the amok runners do not calculate the risks of their own actions. By killing their own family and relatives would suggest to sweep away the whole present generation and future lineage. Perhaps, from the perspective of Darwinism, it is a way of eliminating ‘the unfit species’ of the Malays in their society.

Because of the unpredictable nature of amok or what type of person who is susceptible to it as suggested by Swettenham’s “without any apparent reason,” such incidents not only prove to be detrimental, but are also suggestive of the Malays’ capability of committing any crime without strong motives, enhancing their image as being ‘uncivilized’ and backwards. Reasoning power is associated with human right brain and according to the post-mortem made on Imam Mamat or Imam Mohamed, the surgeon reports the following:

I hereby certify that I this day made a post-mortem examination of the body of Imam Mohamed, [Mamat] and find him to have died from haemorrhage from a wound on the outer side of right thigh; the internal organs were healthy except that the membranes of the right side of brain were more adherent than usual (ibid., 43).
The right brain, according to James A. Corrick in his book, *The Human Brain Mind and Matter*, is the non-verbal cerebral hemisphere capable of processing the spatial relationship and may be Freud's unconscious. Further understanding of the right brain can lead psychologists "to discover the secrets of the unconscious...[and]... the dramatic treatments of various mental illnesses such as paranoia and schizophrenia" (1983: 68). In a book entitled *Functions of the Right Cerebral Hemisphere* edited by Andrew W. Young, the author writes, "right hemisphere damage is more likely to affect performance of a variety of complex tasks" (Young and Ratcliff, 1983: 19). A more detailed clinical evidence to the study of the damage of the right brain appears in Springer's and Deutsch's *Left Brain, Right Brain*, where the authors state the following three types of behaviour patterns of the right brain damaged patients. First, the patients with right-hemisphere damage could be so disoriented in space that they are unable to find their way around a house in which they had lived for many years. This type is categorized as *agnosias*. The second type is called *spatial agnosias* where patients have deficits in their ability to comprehend depth and distance relationships or to deal with mental images, maps or forms. The last category is called *facial agnosia*, a condition where a patient is unable to recognize familiar faces and sometimes cannot distinguish between people in general (Springer and Deutsch, 1981: 16). According to the autopsy report, there is a strong reason to believe that Imam Mamat may have suffered a certain form of paranoia or *agnosia*, which has driven him to run amok. Such action cannot be an outcome of his conscious or rational mind. This is what Swettenham argues here. The fact that he uses the surgeon's report to conclude his story shows how he can
empower his readers through an indisputable scientific autopsy statement. Such ‘clinical’ and scientific sociological approaches, which Swettenham is prescribing here, is comparable to that of Durkheim’s studies of suicide, which makes the former not only a colonial officer and a writer but a world-class ‘sociologist’ as well.

However, in his *The Real Malay*, Swettenham further clarifies that amok is possibly related to insanity, as the earlier right brain autopsy suggests and defies any possibility of being possessed by a devil as claimed by the Malays. Borrowing the words of Sir William Norris in his judgment delivered in 1846 who described amok as “frightfully common” amongst Malays, Swettenham gladly writes in his *The Real Malay* with the introduction of modern Western institutions such as “hospitals, lunatic asylums, and a certain familiarity with European method of treatment,” (1899: 253) “the amok in the colony [Malaya] has almost ceased” (ibid.). The severe punishment of death upon the amok runners surely helps to prevent the recurrences of such brutal acts. Colonization and modernization, according to Swettenham, who quoted his judge friend as saying “[by way of] trusting in that administration of British justice on which the sun never sets” (ibid., 257), the Malays should be on the correct path of modernity.

The concept of trust, especially in the context of ‘trusting’ the alien government here fits well into Giddens’ concept of trust especially when he relates this concept to the nature of expert systems in his book *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990). While trust is a form of ‘faith,’ in which the confidence vested in
probable outcomes expresses a commitment to something rather than just a cognitive understanding" (Giddens, 2000: 27), trusting the British government would mean, "trusting the systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise" (ibid.) of the British whose expertise in governing people is known to around the globe. We will come across more of these types of issues concerning the British administration in the following chapter. Suffice it to say, that the authors are promoting the Malays to have such trust on the British government in order to ensure that the Malays would continue to 'progress.'

Another socio-cultural aspect of the Malays that captures Swettenham's attention is "Latah." Swettenham considers latah not just another interesting phenomenon but associates it with "the well-known disease" (1895: 65), nervous disorder. To substantiate his claim that he is in the position to discuss the subject, Swettenham begins his narration as follows: "In the spring of 1892, I was privileged, by kindness of a friend and the courtesy of Dr. Luys, to visit the Hospital de la Charité in Paris, where I witness ...patients undergoing successful treatment for nervous disorders..." (ibid., 64). He does this in order to inform the readers of his background knowledge, however limited it may be, so that the reader will not later question when he says, near the conclusion that latah is "a nervous disease affecting the brain but not the body" (ibid., 82). He puts himself in the position to find the correlation between a prevailing medical science term, nervous disorder, with that of latah.
To further establish his position, Swettenham also claims that *latah* is hereditary from his "own experience and what I [Swettenham] personally seen, for *no English authority* appears to have studied the matter or attempted to either observe *latah* people, diagnose the disease (if it is one), search for its cause or attempt to cure it" (ibid., 66) (my emphasis). Therefore, Swettenham claims that he is the first English to exercise authority on the *sujets* (he uses this French word instead of using the English word 'subjects' to describe at the same time the patients of nervous disorders in order to give more weight to his authority and to demonstrate his ability to understand French).

Swettenham's observation on this subject is accurate. My own eye-witness experiences as a Malay who has seen the *latah* people in my kampong justifies the two types of a *latah* person as mentioned by Swettenham. First, the kind that utters obscene words and the other that obeys instructions, both take place when the *latah* person is "suddenly startled, by touch, a noise or the sight of something unexpected" (ibid., 72). However, the Malay community seems to enjoy the presence of a *latah* person. Swettenham acknowledges this when he says "I gave orders that the man's infirmity [*latah*] was not be used for this purpose [to climb the watch-tower to take the firewood] again, but in my absence I know . . . Kasim went up the watch-tower . . ." (ibid., 76). In a way, Swettenham does not disapprove of the 'mistratment' of the *latah* person in this story since he does not reprimand those who make use of 'the man's infirmity.' He sees them as entertaining. As a community who works closely together in a kampong to prepare for a wedding ceremony or any other community
services such as 'gotong-royong'—voluntary community work, the presence of a 
latah person adds to the joy among the hardworking, fond-loving villagers. After all, 
he admits that this "nervous disease [affects the] brain but not the body . . . are [also] 
found among the Canadian lumber-men" (ibid., 82). It is a 'disease' that is not 
necessarily peculiar to the Malays after all.

Swettenham’s treatment of this subject is rather neutral, as opposed to amok, 
for the following reasons. First, latah, however peculiar it is to the Englishman, does 
not easily lead to murderous act as does amok. Therefore, latah people are not liable 
to threaten the British administration in the Malay States. Secondly, a latah person is 
not considered as immoral or barbaric, therefore, he or she is not subjected to be 
'civilised' by the white man. Lastly, as indicated by Swettenham, even a small 
proportion of the Canadian lumber workers, another British dominated country, are also known to be affected by latah. It has become what Durkheim considers as 
collective conscience whereby society shares the same logic and understanding on 
the matter. Therefore, it is rather hard for Swettenham to undermine the Malays, for 
latah is also known among the Westerners. However, he still maintains his 
authoritative influence, concerning the Malays, over the readers through his 
knowledge of latah when he says that latah:

is far more common at certain places than at others, and amongst 
certain divisions of the great Malay family. Thus while there is 
generally one or more orang latah to be found in every kampong in 
Krian, where the Malays are mostly from Kedah, in other parts of 
Perak it is rare to ever meet a latah person. Again, speaking generally, 
the disease seems to be more common amongst the people of 
Amboina, in Netherlands India, than those of Java, Sumatra or the 
Malay Peninsula (ibid., 65-66).
Needless to say, Swettenham is making a very close observation here that he is able to identify certain sections of the Malay families that are prone to be afflicted by latah to the very states and provinces where the occurrence of latah is more evident. This ability demonstrates his familiarity with this Malay ‘disease,’ hence, recognizing his claim as the first Englishman to have studied or observed latah as no other English authority has ever done before, reflecting Swettenham’s sociological endeavour. However, as latah is harmless, to both locals and the British alike, the subject matter does not really catch the British’s attention despite Swettenham’s authoritative claim above. It is no coincidence that the word latah is not even absorbed into the English language as is amok.

Swettenham mentions earlier of a Malay being ‘a conservative to a degree,’ and in the following two stories, he substantiates his claims of their conservatism. They are “Malay Superstitions,” and “Ber-hantu.” Of the two, “Malay Superstitions” discusses general aspects of the superstitions. Swettenham points out that the practice is “the survival of a time antecedent to the advent of the gospel of Islam” (ibid., 192) and the fact that the Malay holds on to such practices makes them a conservative race. Swettenham seems to be aware, at this juncture, that even in early Christianity there exists the prospect of a supernatural means of control over human’s earthly environment, therefore, he is not simply condemning the Malayan religion of Islam for the prevailing superstitious practices. He even mentions “a similar power in the Western witch not so many centuries ago” (ibid., 194). Again, this is another example of the historical parallel that Swettenham wishes to establish.
here. There is also a sense of ‘modernity by example’ to use my term to show that Westerners are generally many centuries more advanced as compared to that of the Easterners that it becomes an obligation for Swettenham to put a stop to the practice of witchcraft.

Swettenham points out that the Malays make use of the ‘devil’—witchcraft for several purposes such as a detective device, to heal sick persons, and to protect the owners. It involves the belief in supernatural powers such as the spirits of a stillborn child called bajang, or langsuor, the female version, hantu or ghost and Jun. The ability for one to possess one of the above spirits marks one as having elemu sehir - witchcraft. To put it into practice normally requires some type of sacrifice in the form of fowls or buffalo. To convince his readers of witchcraft, Swettenham narrates his own experience watching the pawang or the medicine man performing witchcraft to locate the thief for Swettenham’s missing property. Although he has “no great faith in this method of detection, but I [Swettenham] was anxious to see what could be done, for the East is a curious place” (ibid., 201). Towards the end of the ceremony, although Swettenham admits that the experiment is “certainly [pointing out at] the person whom there was most reason to suspect” (ibid., 207), he “did not, however, impart that piece of information to the company” (ibid., 205), suggesting his doubt.¹¹

As a person who belongs to an advanced race and works as a Colonial administrator to a lesser race, Swettenham cannot accept the Malay’s way of
detecting the thief even though the method pointed out the exact suspect—English civil laws cannot accept such an unorthodox method—the means cannot justify the end. In the case of the Malays, the end justifies the means. If a patient is recovered from his illness (the ends), by whatever method of witchcraft (the means) being used is not to be questioned as long as the patient lives. But if the patient dies, the witch is to be blamed for the death of his patient, and the witch is duly sentenced to death for his/her practice. Such practice of killing the witch who had caused the deaths of the villagers\textsuperscript{12} took place, according to Swettenham “Before the advent of British influence ... not very many years ago” (ibid.), and is happily abolished by now.

Ber-hantu “to devil, to raise the devil,” (author’s emphasis) is a Malay form of curing the unknown disease, or simply incurable by any other means known to the Malay. It is rather their last resort, whatever cost or waste it incurs. What is so special about this short story is that in “Ber-hantu,” Swettenham is allowed to witness the proceeding of a dying King, a rather remarkable eyewitness for “the only white man” (1899: 66) in a foreign land. Having given the advantage, Swettenham details the proceeding, and to his “great excitement ... the King recovered [his] consciousness” (1895: 159). It must be remembered that the Malays, other than “conservative to a degree” (ibid., 3), are also “proud and fond of his country and his people, venerates his ancient customs and traditions, fears his rajas, and has a proper respect for constituted authority” (ibid.)(my emphasis). In this case, Swettenham emphasizes that even the Malay Sultan venerates his ancient customs and traditions. It so happens that at the end of the proceeding, the Sultan, “clothed
and in his right mind, sent to say he would like to speak to me [Swettenham]. *He told me he took part in this ceremony to please his people and because it was a very old custom*” (ibid., 159)(my emphasis). In other words, Swettenham highlights that even the Sultan cheated his ‘death’ for the sake of his people in order to preserve their own customs and traditions. Thus, the Sultan himself is not a ‘true believer’ of the Malay’s own customs and traditions.

In both cases discussed above, the confession of the Malay Sultan is especially important here for Swettenham is using the highest Malay authority to question the Malay’s beliefs system, as if his doubt in the Malay’s method of detection is not enough to convince his readers otherwise. Such confession helps to explain the reason behind this longstanding practice in the Malay States—Malay customs and traditions receive (or pretend to receive) its support from the Malay higher authorities. In this case, Weber’s objective culture, or Durkheim’s social facts are interwoven with Simmel’s idea on domination by a principle or law that authorities play their role in the maintenance of the Malays’ customs and traditions.

However, the element of superstition is not necessarily well accepted at all levels of Malay society as portrayed here. The religious body of Islam, the supervisory body to the court of the Malay sultanate, is not happy with the prevailing practice of Malay superstitions. Swettenham reveals this when he inserts in his story a letter from Haji Wan Muhammad, the guru or teacher to the Highness the Sultan of Perak questioning the whole practice. Part of the letter runs as follows:
... that practice is a deadly sin to the Muhammadan Faith, because those who engage in it lose their reason and waste their substance for nothing; some of them cast into the water, while others scatter it broadcast through the jungle... this practice is very hard for the poor. The Headmen collect from the rayats, and then they make elaborate preparations of food, killing a buffalo or fowls, and all this is thrown away as already stated. According to Muhammadan religion such proceedings lead to destruction\textsuperscript{13} (ibid., 209).

The insertion of this letter and the confession of the Malay Sultan serves the following intentions. First, it suggests that the British is not necessarily forcing the Malays to eliminate such evil practices, since it involves Malay customs and religion, which the British should not have laid their hands on. It is a ‘request’ from a certain segment of the Malay population who are against such practices such as Haji Wan Muhammad. Such movements in a society fit well into the true sense of modernity as an internal force affecting change in a society. Secondly, Swettenham uses the Malay raja’s faithlessness in his own Malay customs to suggest the possibility of a top-down approach for the British to tackle the problems of Malay superstitions. As Malays consider loyalty to his Raja as “an article of faith” (ibid., 164), individual domination as the primary form of domination which Simmel talks about surely gives way to an effective method to affect change in a society. It is no coincidence that the British put the Malay rajas in pristine offices in the British administration of Malaya for their influential position on the Malay society.

Nonetheless, as the saying goes old habits die hard, so do Malay superstitious beliefs as Swettenham wishes to share with his readers in “To the Reader” section of his \textit{The Real Malay}. Swettenham writes,
Indeed, I remember that, some years ago, an epidemic of cholera broke out in a district of a Malay State, and I went there to see what could be done for the people. When I arrived, I found there had been a good many deaths, but the usual "scare" was absent. On inquiry, I learned that a medicine-man had appeared, shortly after the outbreak of the disease, and had sold, to almost all the Malays, a cholera-specific, for the reasonable price of one dollar per charm. Talking to the group of people, I asked to see the charm, and they all held out their right hands, and showed a small piece of thin string tied around their wrists.

"Is that all?" I asked.
"That is all," they said.
"Where is the medicine-man?" I inquired.
"He has left the district."
"How many people bought the prophylactic?"
"About five hundred."
"The man has robbed you."
"Why?"
"Because the thing he sold you only a bit of string, and useless."

"But we told him so, and he promised that if any one who had bought the charm was attacked by cholera, and died, he would, in every case, give back the dollar (1899: vii-viii).

This long quotation above suggests the following characteristics of the Malays in which the author wishes to highlight here. First, the vulnerability of the Malays in accepting the words of the stranger—the medicine man, in light of the problems they are facing, the outbreak of cholera without being inquisitive about the effectiveness of the charm. Secondly, the simplicity of their minds in accepting the charm on the premise given by the medicine man that it is refundable upon its ineffectiveness. Counting on those two reasons, Swettenham, at the end of the above narration says, "Needless to say, I made no further attempt to shake so great a faith" (ibid., viii) to suggest that he had no further comment on the Malays' sense of supernatural beliefs.

For Swettenham, there is no point arguing with simple-minded Malays on their belief system, which appears to be ridiculously irrational to his Western rationality, that he
sarcastically called it faith, just to put the end to the matter. The Malays are not capable of, to use Weber's term, making the rational calculability in their decision making process. The philosophy of Enlightenment, which spurs the intellectual energy, and enthusiasm\(^4\) for the past three centuries, is yet to take place in Malaya at the time of Swettenham's writings. One of the religious dogmas faced by the Enlightenment was "superstition...[as] the major evil to be attacked" (Cassirer, 1951: 162). The fact that this long above quotation appears at the outset of The Real Malay, would project the creation of the preconceived ideas of the Malays as vulnerable and simple-minded people throughout the book. This is especially true when we come to discuss Malay idiosyncrasy in a short story entitled "A Silver-Point" of the same book in the following chapter.

While Swettenham confidently explains the nature of amok using his scientific approach, Clifford offers his own explanation on the matter in "The Amok of Dato Kaya Biji Derja" in a different manner. Since the understanding of this peculiar human behaviour is still new to Westerners, Clifford states that the notion that the white men "are apt to attribute amok running to madness pure and simple" (1897a: 78), is incorrect. There is an obvious contradiction here between Swettenham and Clifford for the latter believes that amok is caused by insanity as discussed above. Clifford explains that *amok* running is a result of "a condition of mind which described in the vernacular by the term *sakit hati*\(^5\) - sickness of liver - that organ, and not the heart, being regarded as the centre of sensibility" (ibid., 79). The man who runs amok may not be conscious of his acts since he has lost "both his
head and his temper” (ibid., 83). He cites an example to prove his point. Dato Kaya Biji Derja, who just comes back very late at night from attending his sick father, is mistakenly accused of committing infidelity by his wife and is not allowed to enter his house. He cries to his wife to unbar the door but she disobeys his command at first, only at length, she finally opens the door. The fact that his wife accuses him of committing infidelity and disobeys his command to open the door causes him to sakti hati, hence, amok takes place. He kills nine people, including his own wife, and wounds his baby child and three others. Amok, which the Malays are prone to commit, causes disorder in the society and this is “one of the many respects in which a white man differs from a Malay” (ibid., 95) Clifford concludes. This is to say that amok is peculiarly Malay in character and those who are familiar with the amok runner should be able to identify such tendencies in a person much earlier and can prevent such an act from happening as in the following instance.

In late 1888, while Clifford was in Pekan, Pahang with his loyal follower, Raja Mahmud, there was news from Selangor which announced the death of Mahmud’s father. The news causes Raja Mahmud ‘sickness of liver’ and Clifford writes, “I spent two nights awake by the side of Raja Haji Hamid (Clifford mentioned earlier in his Preface that Raja Haji Hamid is his fictional character of Raja Mahmud), with difficulty restraining him from running amok in the streets of Pekan, because his father had died a natural death in Selangor” (ibid., 79). Gullick writes in his *Malay Society in the Late Nineteenth Century* that the Malays use
“violence [such as amok] as a means of release from tension” (1987: 83) as in the above two cases.

Therefore, we can say that the causes for sakti hati vary from one incident of amok to another. For example, in the case of Dato Kaya Biji Derja, jealousy is the cause of his sakti hati, while in the case of Raja Mahmud, he was probably angry for not being told of his father’s illness much earlier. The Malay or the Muslim is taught to visit the sick one and in the case of close relatives or parents, the children should be by their side until their parents finally close their eyes. In the case of Raja Mahmud, his presence is much more important for the dying father probably appoints his successor among those who are around his deathbed. Not being around would eliminate his chance of being selected, unless earlier arrangements have been made on who would take over the father’s position.

It is interesting, however, in Clifford’s observation of amok that he equates amok with what the West would describe as suicide. Clifford says, “the state of feeling which drives a European to take his own life makes a Malay run amok” (1897a: 80). As opposed to Swettenham who associates amok with insanity, Clifford argues that amok runners do possess some form of rational thought in their mind for “A man who runs amok, too, almost always kills his wife. He is anxious to die himself, and sees no reason why his wife should survive him…. He also frequently destroys his most valued possessions, as they have become useless to him…” (ibid.).
This really explains why in the amok cases above, Imam Mamat kills his wife and Dato Kaya Biji Derja does the same with his wife.

Nevertheless, Clifford's hypothesis on amok, in my view, does not really differ greatly from the earlier understanding of the Westerners (or that of Swettenham's) on the subject. What is earlier considered as pure madness, sakit hati or liver sickness is not an attribution of a rational cognitive action either—it is still being regarded as simple and irrational behaviour that less 'civilised' people are capable of executing. In fact, the most controversial issue related to amok lies not in what seems to be the cause of amok but rather on the state of mind of the amok runner at the time of him (rarely her) committing the act as a basis for the judicial punishment he should receive, in case he survives the brutal act. The concept of judicial justice is not held of the utmost importance in Malay society. The native forms of judiciary system in which the power lies on the Malay Rulers and their chiefs will be discussed later in "A Tale of a Theft" and "His Heart's Desire" but it is suffice to say at this juncture that the reliability of the system is put to question by Clifford. The Malay justice system does not appeal to the rational Western minds. Clifford is correct as far as using Dato' Kaya Biji Derja as an example here since in general Malay men are mostly amok prone and women committing amok is practically rare and only committed by upper class women as we will discuss in the succeeding chapter. As far as Clifford's two divisions of Malay society is concerned, amok seems to be committed by both upper and lower level people but as Swettenham mentions earlier amok "does not apply when the offender is a raja and
the injured man of lesser rank” (1895: 173). Before the advent of British influence in Malaya, the Malay Chiefs and Rulers were regarded as the ‘untouchable’ people and their impunity contributed to the many injustices in traditional Malay politics and administration (we will come across more of these instances in the following chapter). To turn quickly to Clifford’s Since the Beginning, we get the feeling that the British’s sense of justice recognizes that there should be no boundaries between upper class or lower class, and that neither should receive special treatment. Judging the two classes equally in the eyes of the law, Jack Norris kills the Sultan’s man when the latter runs amok in the town of Pelesu.

It must be noted here that during the era of 1890s, we have Swettenham, Clifford and Wildman16 discussing the same matter in their works of fiction. It is extended up until the era between the two wars when Henri Fauconnier in The Soul of Malaya (1931) chose to write on the same subject matter. It seems to suggest that amok is particularly peculiar to the Malays from the eyes of the Englishmen, the American and the French. Each author has his own interpretation on the matter and different methods of convincing the readers as to the causes of such a barbaric act of running amok.

Surprisingly enough, none of the authors above or the two colonial authors under study here relates amok running to the Malays from the religious standpoint albeit Swettenham make use of the Islamic priest—Imam Mamat as his example of an amok runner. Perhaps, Swettenham agrees with Clifford’s statement in “Among

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the Fisher-Folk" that the Malays in general "are Malays first and Muhammadans afterwards. Their religious creed goes no more than skin deep, and effects but little the manner of their daily life" (1897a: 148). The cultural organization of the Malays has not been modified or changed by their religion. The beliefs in supernatural powers and demons (as we have come across in Swettenham's "Malay Superstitions" and "Berhantu") fill many volumes of their every day life. Such beliefs and customs have become "the unwritten law...recognized and understood by all concerned.... 'Let our children die rather than our customs,' says the vernacular proverb, and for once an old saying echoes the sentiment of a race" (ibid., 139). Similarly, since religion affects so little of their daily life, the possibility of the act of amok and suicide has everything to do with the lack of it is hardly deniable. Any form of suicide, in particular, the anomic type in the case of a Malay lady in "One More Unfortunate" which we will come across in the later chapter is considered a sacrilegious act to Islam for there is a strong correlation between her action and her lack of religious knowledge.

In addition to treating Islam second and the Malay Custom first, Clifford's "Among the Fisher-Folk," also explains the Malays from their economic standpoint. Clifford writes, "The average monthly earnings of a fisherman is about sixteen shillings ($8), and...to a simple people it is sufficient. A fisherman [and his family] can live in comfort on some three shillings a month" (ibid.). This would give a fisherman a chance to save more than ten shillings a month in savings. This income is slightly less than the salary of a cook or a water carrier in a European household in
Malaya where both receive fourteen Straits dollars and ten Straits dollar respectively as their monthly incomes. Nonetheless, the fishermen are always thankful for what they have.

Another aspect of the fisherman's economy that Clifford touches upon is the spirit of working together between the owners of the boat and the fishermen themselves. Clifford writes, "The owners of boats and nets receive far larger sums [of monthly income], but none the less they generally take an active part in the fishing operations. From one end of the coast to the other, the capitalist who owns many crafts, and lives upon the income derived from their hire, is almost unknown" (ibid.). There are two substantial claims in Clifford's assessment in the Malays' way of running their business here. One, the Malays' cooperation in performing their task as fisherman limits the sense of division of labour as Durkheim suggest in his study of modernity and two, the spirit of capitalism (that it is successful in the West but not in other non-European societies) as echoed in Weber's economy is not really accurate here. Capitalism is not really being practiced here in Malaya in the above case. Such instances where the capitalists and their subordinates work together surely make Marx happy for there seems to be no group or class in exercising any form of dominance over the other. Perhaps, this would be the ideal form of capitalism where the capitalists themselves participate in the true division of labour rather than reaping all the benefits from the blood, sweat and tears of the working class. Clifford seems to favour this form of cooperation in Malays' business and feels glad that the knowledge of the division of labour and Western capitalism is not yet becoming the
way of life of the Malays. Perhaps, this spirit of cooperation will stay with them forever.

Two, the Malay's form of cooperation, which does not involve any elements of capitalism, is found in the practice of *berderau*¹⁸ whereby the paddy cultivators collaborate with one another to harvest the paddy during harvesting season. It is different from *kerah* or corvee labour because *berderau* does not involve the element of force by the upper class or the Malay Rulers. The villagers willingly help one another even though there is no money being paid for their hard work. This emphasizes that no element or knowledge of capitalism has yet to enter the Malay economic sphere. The fact that the villagers collaborate together on the field forms what Marx envisions as a classless society. Such an organized togetherness would also fit into Weber's rational organization where the spirit of cooperation is the main emphasis. However, while being critical of capitalism, Marx also believes that the same driving force helped change the peasants' economy in India; on the contrary, Clifford's admiration of this Malay economic practice, being non-capitalist in nature and practicing classlessness, would be inadvertently changed by the capitalist economy, no matter how much Clifford tries to stop 'the wheel of progress' from entering into the Malay society.

As a person who is very close to the Malays in his daily life, Clifford is faced with an ambivalence when it comes to the scientific study (that is to say, the western scientific study) of *latah*. Clifford writes in "Some Notes and Theories Concerning
Latah” that “So much has been written, of late years, by scientific and medical men on the subject of the strange affliction called latah...[that] ...I [Clifford] should feel ...the scientists have, to my [Clifford’s] thinking, persistently made a radical error from the beginning, starting with a false hypothesis...” (1897b: 186-187). For him, latah “is an affliction which cannot so easily be explained by psychology.... [Latah] is an affliction, a disease...which causes certain men and women to lose their self-control, for longer or shorter periods... whenever they are startled, or receive any sudden shock” (ibid., 188-189). It is an affliction Clifford claims, since Sat, one of his Malay followers is known to be a latah person, “a number of other people in my [Clifford’s] household began to develop signs of the affliction” (ibid., 192). From his observation, Clifford notices two groups of Malays who are susceptible to latah. The first group is found “among the well fed and gently nurtured, as among the poor and indigent” (ibid., 195). Secondly, it is frequently found that it is the female rather the male. One striking phenomenon is that latah only involves adults, not children, and particularly adult female Malays, not males. Hence, Clifford accepts that when it comes to latah, it is “a racial rather than an individual weakness” (ibid., 201).

While Swettenham warns that man’s infirmity—latah—was not to be misused for any reason (to limb the watch-tower to take the firewood in the above story), Clifford comes to the point of accepting latah as dangerous and lethal. Clifford tells of an unnamed father who accidentally murders his daughter during his moment of latah in “In a Central Gaol.” Being a Malay, the mother of the girl does not blame her husband for killing their only daughter—it is an action that is done without the
doer knowing about what he or she is doing. Malays, in general, do not blame latah persons for they believe that latah persons are temporarily unconscious or are being possessed by an evil spirit. Nonetheless, Western encounters with latah is relatively new and the actions of a latah person is judged on his action, without paying much attention to their state of mind at the moment the action takes place. After knowing that the white man would certainly blame him for his action, the father in the short story decides to ‘imprison’ himself by staying away in the jungle for the period of fifteen years before he surrenders to the British authority when he is then put in proper gaol.

The father in the story, however, is soon released from the gaol after the two judges who review the case consider “The murder was an accident, and the conviction a mistake” (Clifford, 1899: 136). Latah as one of many Malay traits cannot be fully understood by Western minds for it is “a thing that we (Westerners) shall never really get the hang of” (ibid.). Clifford stresses one more time in his story that latah is not caused by madness. The doctor who examines the father “gave evidence swearing that there was no madness in my [the father’s] mind,” which was true (ibid., 134).

Therefore, the colonial officers cases of amok and latah, which are discussed above are actually dealing with Western encounter with the East, but rather than just looking for the probable causes for both amok and latah, the two authors discuss the possible solutions to the problem. They are anticipating not only the principles of
efficiency in modern medical science to probe into the two Malay traits, but also
provoking change with the very ideas that Malay minds simply accept the two
occurrences as part of their culture.

To promote more change taking place in the minds of the Malays, the British
government decided to bring some of the Malay Rulers to England. Clifford takes
the opportunity to narrate a short story entitled “Piloting Princes” to tell his
experience escorting selected Malay Rulers to the Coronation of King Edward VII in
London in 1902. Upon their arrival in London, most of them are amazed to witness
the city of the white man. Clifford writes,

London itself froze their [the Malays] speech at the source. They
could only shake their heads and ejaculate the names of Allah and His
Prophet. As they gradually grew more accustomed to the wonderful
sight of the crowded footways and the dense throng of traffic, they
began to assert their impressions and to comment upon the things
which chiefly appealed to them. What struck them most forcibly was
the amenity to discipline which the multitudes displayed, and the way
in which every individual seemed to assist rather than obstruct the
authorities (1929: 185).

Here, the city of London becomes to the Malays, what I would call, modernity by
example. Urbanisation has yet to take place in Malaya at the turn of the twentieth
century and the Malays are only familiar with kampong life; living in the community
where most people are related to one another or at least know each other. The city
dwellers are mostly strangers to one another. In other words, this is where the city
life is symmetrically different from that of kampong life. Whilst the kampong
dwellers are physically and psychologically closer to one another (since most of
them are working in community and always dependent on one another); the city
dwellers are physically closer but psychologically apart. The form of relationship that may exist is no longer related to one clan or another, rather it is based on the division of labour. One may encounter one’s own officemates, one’s own boss or one’s own clients but all of these relationships are very much related to the economy Simmel talks about in his *Philosophy of Money*.

In the city, where people are constantly involved in countless activities, the relationship that may take place does not include much emotional connection, as we may find in the traditional society where most activities are carried out in communal cooperation. This is exactly the crux of the modern life where individuals have to preserve the autonomy and individuality of their own existence against their surroundings. In this case, Marx argues that “it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness” (Marx, 1859/1968b: 181). This is very much applicable to city dwellers. Living in an environment where social forces are stronger than the individual will, city dwellers are easily influenced by the forces generated by society at large. Sensations are harder to overcome in the city.

It is also interesting to note how Clifford perceives the Malays’ notion of the individual assisting rather than obstructing the authorities in the above quotation. Coming from a society where authorities (i.e. the Malay rulers) are to be feared, the Malays in the story are witnessing another good example of modernity where the mutual trust and the shared common-values are being reinforced without subjugating
any member of the society. City dwellers have come to share what Durkheim regards as the collective conscience or what Simmel called objective culture, another instance of societal encroachment on the individual. Perhaps the issue here boils down to the complexity of urban life itself that the Malays in the story are actually fascinated with, per se. The complexity of city life “forces [the city dwellers] into punctuality, calculability, and exactness and transforms the world into an arithmetic problem” (Craib, 1997: 169), as opposed to the monotony of kampong life which Clifford mentioned earlier.

Perhaps, I should move on and begin talking about punctuality, a notion of time which Clifford appreciates and discusses in his book. When Swettenham mentions that one of the purposes of sending the Malays to school is to inculcate in them the habit of order and regularity, he implicitly suggests that the Malays are, in general, not good at following orders and managing their time well. Clifford, however, openly states in “Piloting Princes” that the Malays have “the inability...to appreciate the advantages of punctuality. [They]...held time to be valueless, and regarded an hour or two either way as a thing of no account” (1929: 172). Certainly, school can teach the young Malays the habit of punctuality, as Swettenham suggested earlier, but Clifford believes a trip to the white man’s country would certainly open up their minds to this fact of life.

Hence, in this chapter, we have seen, some of the biggest challenges to modernity for Malay society to overcome, or to get rid of, and its traditional socio-
cultural aspects, or as I would call it social-cultural ‘extra-baggage,’ that have dampened the ability of her society to progress. For one, the Malay society venerates existing culture as an important part of its tradition; therefore, its people have learned to accept it without much questioning. Secondly, people in this society, in general, hate change. Many would rather stick to what has been practised and passed down by their ancestors than allowing any outside influence (i.e. moral individualism), as we will witness in the succeeding chapter. For the moment, we have come across some good traits and traditions of the Malays, which the two authors raise and promote in their writings, but we have also observed same elements of Malay traits and tradition, which are deemed unnecessary, or to a certain extent futile to the progress of the race, as the two colonial officers highlighted in their works of fiction. While trying their very best to describe the Malays’ socio-cultural and economic characteristics by establishing historical parallels (which could be interpreted as their proof of western advancement), the two colonial authors are actually trying to describe the economic processes of development and the social processes of modernization of the Malays in their writings. The change that they wish to see happen in society, which venerates ancient customs, would eventually constitute a violation of the norms but they are hopeful. To restate what Swettenham says in his first book, “The Malays of the Peninsula will not disappear, but they will change.” Clifford, almost in prayer mode states, “Let us hope that succeeding generations [of the Malays] will become used to the new conditions.” The new Malays should continue to be well-mannered, courteous, hard-working, non-superstitious, inquisitive and time-conscious people. They will be living in a society, which is
ruled by instrumental rationality—they would be able to express opinions and to exchange and possess property legally. On top of that, they will be involved in the division of labour and its organizational distribution like never before. Their sociocultural and economic life will be oriented towards the principles of efficiency and change. These are the new conditions that they have to live up to. Some of these conditions might not have yet existed during the time when Swettenham and Clifford wrote their works but their writings certainly encourage modernity to take place, albeit under colonial rule. Meanwhile, as Malays in general fear their rajas, the best way to affect change would be to approach and enlighten the upper class Malay. The subsequent chapter will deal with this subject.