

THE ORIGINS OF BRITISH COLONIALIZATION OF MALAYA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS TIN

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INTRODUCTION

IN 1957, ALL OF THE territory formerly known as British Malaya, with the exception of Singapore, attained independence as the Federation of Malaya.¹ In 1963, this Federation of Malaya, together with Singapore, British North Borneo (Saba) and Sarawak, formed the Federation of Malaysia. (However, Singapore seceded from the Federation in 1965.) The earlier Federation of Malaya territory, recently referred to as West Malaysia, is of course the greatest tin and rubber producing center in the world.

The first piece of Malayan territory to become a British possession was Penang, an island off the west coast. This event took place in 1786. It was followed by the occupation of Singapore, at the hands of Stamford Raffles, in 1819. Malacca, taken temporarily from the Dutch by Britain during the Napoleonic Wars and returned in 1818, was finally annexed by Britain in 1825. In this way, the three colonies which were later to form the Straits Settlements were all in the possession of Britain by the 1820s. However, it was not until a half century later that Britain began to exert territorial control over the Malay states. In 1874, Britain made the three tin producing states on the west coast of Malaya her protectorates, and with these as a foothold, steadily expanded her political control over the entire area that was later to be called British Malaya.

The above account of the British colonialization of Malaya is a part of the accepted corpus of Malayan history. However, even specialists in Malayan history disagree when it comes to definitively interpreting the step-by-step takeover of Malaya by the British. These differences in opinion do not derive solely from

¹ Precisely speaking, British Malaya before World War II consisted of the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, and the Unfederated Malay States. The Straits Settlements included the Labuan Island off North Borneo, together with the Cocos Islands and the Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean; the protectorate of Brunei was also placed under the jurisdiction of the Governor of the Straits Settlements. In 1946, immediately after World War II, Britain set up the new Malayan Union, which would unite the nine Federated and Unfederated Malay States together with Penang and Malacca under a strong central government, and made Singapore a separate crown colony. (In the same year, Labuan was incorporated into the new crown colony of North Borneo, while Brunei was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Governor of the new crown colony of Sarawak.) However, because of the strong Malay opposition movement, the Malayan Union (1946-48) was dissolved after a brief duration and the Federation of Malaya was formed. This Federation of Malaya achieved independence in 1957.

the postures of individual historians. In as much as, strictly speaking, it was only after World War II that serious study of not only Malayan economic history but also political history began, there are still a number of questions which have not been fully answered. The present paper seeks to deal with two issues raised in recent scholarship on the origins of British colonialization of Malaya; firstly the reasons for the occupation of Penang, and secondly the reasons for the extension of British colonial rule over the three tin producing states on the west coast.

I. THE OCCUPATION OF PENANG BY A "COUNTRY TRADING CAPTAIN"

In 1786 three vessels sent by the British East India Company, and led by Francis Light, occupied Pulau Pinang—the Island of Betel-Nut. In those days, the island, inhabited only by a small number of Malays, was a part of the domain of Kedah, a Malay state on the opposite shore. The Sultan of Kedah, hoping for an alliance with the British East India Company to defend his country against a re-invasion by its former suzerain Thailand, agreed to a permanent lease of the island. The East India Company had no intention of defending Kedah, and left that point vague while carrying out the occupation of Penang. The Sultan attempted to recapture Penang but failed, and in 1791 was forced to cede Penang and, again in 1800 a strip of the coastline of Kedah opposite the island (Province Wellesley), both in exchange for a certain sum of money annually.

What were the motives of the East India Company's occupation of Penang? With what intent was this historical event, now famous as the initial step in the British colonialization of Malaya, carried out? According to K.G. Tregonning, however, an erroneous interpretation has been dominant until recently even among professional historians [34, p. 69ff.]. This interpretation, remarks Tregonning, is best exemplified by D.G.E. Hall's *A History of South-East Asia* (1955) [20].

According to Hall [20, p. 421ff.],² during the eighteenth century when the Anglo-French struggle for the upper hand in India was found to depend largely upon the naval control over the Bay of Bengal, the need for a repair-depot on its eastern coast became a matter of urgency for the British navy. Because the navigation by sailing vessels off the Coromandel Coast (the western coast of the Bay of Bengal) was handicapped by a lack of good roadsteads. It was particularly dangerous from October to November, i.e., at the beginning of the north-east monsoon season, when the violent hurricanes blew up, during which the British fleet patrolling those waters was obliged to retire to its Bombay base, and was not able to return until April the following year. The French fleet, its base then at Mauritius, would take advantage of this vacuum, to launch attacks against the British. Thus, on the occasion of the Seven Years War, Madras was besieged by French forces for about two months at the turn of 1758. Similarly in 1782, toward the end of the American War of Independence, after a series of indecisive

² Since Tregonning's criticism is much abbreviated, I have added the main contentions of the Penang naval base theory directly from Hall's work.

engagements with the French fleet in the Bay of Bengal, the British fleet was forced by stormy weather to retreat to Bombay. By the time the British fleet returned to its patrol waters the following year, the French fleet, after refitting at Aceh Roads off the northern extremity of Sumatra, had driven British commerce out of the Bay and nearly succeeded in blockading Calcutta. In short, for the British fleet to gain control over the Bay of Bengal against the French, it would be necessary to secure a naval base on the eastern side of the Bay offering protection against the north-east monsoon. British occupation of Penang would provide just that. The above then is the gist of the Hall interpretation which has also been advocated by many other historians.

According to Tregonning, however, this hypothesis is based on a complete misunderstanding of the facts. Contending that evidence speaks louder than argument, he asserts that since its occupation by Britain, Penang has never been used as a British naval base. This is because first Bombay and later Trincomalee in Ceylon were sufficient for the needs of the British Navy. In other words, insists Tregonning, British occupation of Penang was carried out not for strategic but for purely commercial reasons.

What were these commercial reasons? According to Tregonning, "during the eighteenth century two great developments had occurred among the British in the East" [34, p. 70]. First, the transformation of the British East India Company from a purely commercial enterprise to a political power ruling millions of people; second, the sharp increase of imports of Chinese tea into Britain, especially after the Commutation Act of 1784 which drastically reduced the import duty on tea. It was during the latter half of the eighteenth century that the drinking of tea in Britain became a national custom rather than the hobby of aristocracy.

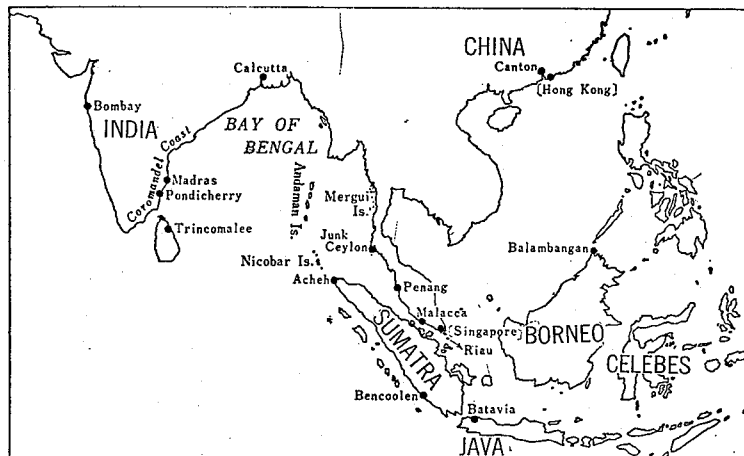
Chinese tea imports were the monopoly of the East India Company. The huge profits tea provided saved the company financially, enabling it to maintain itself as a political authority. On the other hand, however, to pay for its increasing imports of Chinese tea, Britain had to export tremendous amounts of silver, for, in those days, British products had not yet penetrated the Chinese market. It was not that British merchants had nothing to sell to the Chinese side. Chief of these commodities were tin and pepper produced in Southeast Asia. Those engaged in this trade on the British side were based in India and were known as "country traders."³

Consequently, it became a matter of great concern to the British East India Company to develop this "country trade." In other words, the company felt a keen need to secure a base for the collection of tin and pepper for the country

³ Generally speaking, the term "country trade" refers to the coastal trade of India and the trade between the Indian ports and the Asian and African ports east of the Cape of Good Hope, whether carried on by natives or Europeans, in the days when the British East India Company monopolized Oriental trade. According to M. Greenberg [15, p. 10], although the origin of the term is obscure, it was apparently being used from the end of seventeenth century up to as late as the middle of the nineteenth century. It was applied at first to the coastal trade of India and nearby ports, later especially to Eastern trade from India. As to the country trade, besides Greenberg's, see H. Furber [14], Wong Lin Ken [39, p. 12ff.].

trade. It was desirable, however, that the base should be located on the shore of a country not hostile to Britain, and that it should not only be convenient for the China trade but also, in view of European politics, not bluntly defying the Dutch vested interests in the Indonesian Archipelago.⁴ The British East India Company, seeking a base which would fulfill these requirements, in fact repeatedly, in the 1770s and 1780s, dispatched missions to Aceh, Kedah, Balambangan (off the northern extremity of Borneo), and Riau.⁵ (See Figure 1.) After all these attempts

Fig. 1. Search for Bases by British East India Company in the 1770s and 1780s



Note: British bases founded in the nineteenth century are shown in brackets.

had failed, the East India Company adopted the Penang plan recommended by Francis Light as the only remaining candidate for the base site.

Francis Light, now entrusted by the East India Company with the task of occupation and management of Penang, was a country trading captain with his headquarters at Junk Ceylon (P'uket),⁶ an island rich in tin that lay off the Kra Peninsula. He also suggested that the Company establish a base in Junk Ceylon, but this plan did not materialize because the island became a battle ground between the Burmese and Thai forces. About fifteen years before the British occupation of Penang, when Light was resident official in Kedah for a Madras trading firm, he became friendly with the Sultan. At that time he had suggested a plan to establish a base in Kedah to the East India Company. Thus the British base

⁴ Since 1685 the British East India Company maintained a factory at Bencoolen in southwest Sumatra. From about the middle of the eighteenth century up to the occupation of Penang, this was the Company's only commercial base (pepper collecting depot) in Southeast Asia. But it was too far away from the China route.

⁵ Chronologically these sites were:

1772: Aceh and Kedah

1773: Balambangan

1778: Cochin-China

1784: Aceh and Riau

1786: Penang

⁶ Clodd's *Malaya's First British Pioneer* [10] contains useful data about Light as country trader and administrator.

in Penang meant that Light's long-held hope had been realized, though, ironically enough, the need for a tin and pepper base for the Chinese market had diminished by that time, due to the introduction of Indian opium as a far more profitable substitute. Subsequently, opium exports to China through country traders increased year by year.

The above summarizes K. G. Tregonning's view of the purpose and background of the British East India Company's occupation of Penang. For convenience, it may be termed a "country trade base" theory. On the other hand, if Tregonning's criticism is correct, D.G.E. Hall's contentions constitute a "naval base" theory. In fact, however, Hall's arguments are by no means a consistent naval base theory. It is true that, at the beginning of the chapter dealing with the British East India Company's occupation of Penang in his *A History of South-East Asia* [20, pp. 421-33], the naval base theory emerges as a pre-stated conclusion. This is followed by the explanation that, after a powerful French fleet made its appearance in the Indian Ocean in the late seventeenth century, it became the aspiration of the British East India Company throughout the eighteenth century to have a naval station on the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal. However, Hall also points out that, by the latter half of the eighteenth century, it became increasingly necessary for the Company to seek a port which might serve as a repair base on the China route, as well as a country trade base for dealing with the Malay Archipelago, in order to solve the silver export problem stemming from the China trade. After describing the Company's repeated failures in attempts to find a base in the 1770s and 1780s, Hall finally refers to the Company's occupation of Penang. In his descriptions here, however, he distinctly points out that the objectives of the Company directors in taking this action was not to solve the naval question but to break the Dutch trade monopoly and to secure the greater safety of the China shipping. In this way, Hall's arguments on motives for the Penang occupation are singularly inconsistent; he shifts the focus of his inquiry as he progresses, yet fails to make clear what he is doing.

Rejecting Hall's inconsistent descriptions, Tregonning frankly confronts the question of whether Penang was founded as a naval or a commercial base. However, as the term "commercial warfare" in the age of mercantilism indicates, it is obviously one-sided to argue as if the strategic and the commercial elements in the motives of the British East India Company to establish a base along the China route in the eighteenth century were mutually exclusive. It was just that during the long search for such a base, the Company authorities had emphasized its strategic value in time of war and its commercial value in time of peace [2, pp. 122-40]. In the case of the Penang base, the Company started out emphasizing its commercial value [13, pp. 52-54], but later, though for just a brief period, it saw its prime value in strategic terms.

Nevertheless, it should be recognized that it was Tregonning's biased presentation which brought into such vivid relief Penang's profile as a country trade base. In fact, Penang did develop as a country trade base. As news of the opening of the port of Penang spread to nearby countries, the number of natives' ships gathering for trade increased gradually. Native *prahus* or junks from Kedah and other parts

of North Malaya, as well as from Junk Ceylon and other parts of South Thailand or South Burma, brought to Penang their small cargoes of tin and other jungle produce such as benjamin, edible birds'-nests, rattan, and dammar, while *prahus* from Aceh and North Sumatra brought mainly pepper. In Penang, these commodities were traded for piece-goods, opium, and other items from Madras and Bengal. Besides these, Bugis' ships with the cargoes of gold, sarongs and others came to Penang from Riau and the Celebes (present Sulawesi) further to the south, avoiding the watchful eyes of the Dutch East India Company. Naturally, with the development of the country trade, the population of Penang, including Malays, South Indians, Chinese and others, showed a marked increase. The cultivation of pepper was started in some parts of the island.

However, it is not our concern here to trace the early history of Penang.⁷ We shall therefore give just a brief account of the developments leading up to the British takeover of Singapore and Malacca. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, immediately following the foundation of Penang, the surrounding international situation began to undergo profound changes. The area in fact experienced the effects of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Britain took this opportunity not only to remove the long-standing French menace to India from the sea by securing Cape, Mauritius, and Ceylon, but also to place the vast commercial sphere, extending from the Straits of Malacca to the Indonesian Archipelago, under its influence by occupying Malacca, Padang (Sumatra), the Moluccas and even Java.

Thus there began to appear in this commercial sphere British cotton goods, alongside Indian piece-goods. Those engaged in this trade were the British free traders who advanced as far as Batavia, which constituted the emporium of the Indonesian commercial sphere. This advance was accelerated by the abolition (1813) of the British East India Company's monopoly of trade with India. However, the British-controlled Indonesian commercial sphere which had been brought into being under the protection of Raffles, was short-lived, because, after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Britain, which needed the Netherlands as a European buffer state against France, returned Indonesia and Malacca to the Netherlands. However, when the Dutch actually came back to Indonesia and began further to consolidate their trade monopoly of that vast commercial sphere, the British repulsed them. Raffles took the lead in this move. After securing the acquiescence of the Governor-General of India, he occupied Singapore, an island off the southern extremity of the Malay Peninsula, in 1819.

There was a lapse of thirty-odd years between the occupation of Penang and that of Singapore. This corresponded to the progress of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, which was responsible for British cotton goods penetrating the Indonesian market. Raffles, however, was not necessarily the willing mouthpiece for this newly-risen free trade and cotton interests. Raffles directly opposed the Dutch monopoly of Indonesian trade, but while glaring at Indonesia from Java,

⁷ As to the early history of Penang, see Tregonning [35, Chapter 9, pp. 127-46], Clodd [10], and Cowan [11].

he imposed even harsher trade restrictions than those of the Dutch, and was planning to monopolize the Banka tin trade [3, pp. 115-42] [31]. On the other hand, Raffles, as the initiator of the free port of Singapore, contended that this port was indispensable not only for the security of the China shipping route but also for active transit trade with surrounding areas, including the Indonesian Archipelago. These aims of his coincided with the expectations of the rising manufacturing interests in Britain [3] [33, Chapters 4, 9, and 12].

The Netherlands, which had at first opposed the Singapore base, finally compromised with Britain. In 1824, a treaty was concluded between the two countries. They exchanged Malacca and Bencoolen, and confirmed the fact that, with the Straits of Malacca as a boundary line, Malaya belonged to the British sphere of influence, and Indonesia, including Sumatra, belonged to the Dutch sphere of influence. The two countries also promised not to monopolize the commerce of the Archipelago. (This last provision, however, was never observed.) Furthermore, Britain held negotiations with Thailand on its claim of suzerainty over the northern part of Malaya. Britain was able to force Thailand to limit its claim of suzerainty to north of Perak and Pahang. In 1826, when this understanding was reached, Singapore and Malacca were placed under the jurisdiction of Penang, this event virtually completing the formation of the Straits Settlements.⁸

II. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WEST COAST TIN PRODUCING PROTECTORATES

As stated in the previous section, Britain did not exert territorial control over the Malay states for about a half century after the annexation of Malacca (1825). Consequently, this period has sometimes been referred to as one of non-intervention policy. In fact it was just that the Straits authorities did interfere from time to time in the affairs of the Malay states [36, pp. 166-83], whilst at the same time the British Government refused to accept responsibility for colonial rule in these states. It should be noted that during this period—already by the end of the 1850s—Britain had established her Indian Empire, covering the entire area of that vast sub-continent together with the whole coastal territory of Burma, and had compelled China to cede Hong Kong and to open her main ports. Furthermore, the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), which facilitated the use of the steamship from Europe to the East, and the extension of the European telegraph from India to Singapore (1870) made it easier for the European shippers to ship directly to the East [12, p. 24] [6, pp. 101-16]. At about the same time the unification of Germany as well as the end of the American civil war added to their respective commercial strength in the East. Under these circumstances the Straits of Malacca had become all the more vital for the overall interests of Britain in the East. Moreover, as we shall discuss later, during the same period the Straits Settlements became a sort of supply base for the development of

⁸ The Straits Settlements were transferred to the jurisdiction of the India Office with the dissolution in 1858 of the East India Company, and finally became a crown colony under the jurisdiction of the Colonial Office in 1867.

Malayan tin mining which was being carried out by Chinese enterprise. Thus did the Malay states, as a strategic and commercial hinterland of the Straits Settlements, come to be increasingly important for Britain.

However, British colonial rule in the Malay states began only in 1874. In that year, Britain intervened in internal disturbances in Perak, Selangor, and Sungei Ujong (a part of Negri Sembilan), forcing each of these to recognize the British Resident System, with the result that these three principal tin producing states in Malaya became British protectorates.⁹ This was a significant change from the old policy of abstaining from accepting responsibility for colonial rule. Following this line of active intervention, Britain continued making other Malay states into protectorates, eventually bringing British Malaya into being.¹⁰ The establishment of the three protectorates in 1874, therefore, proved to be decisive in the formation of British Malaya. Why did Britain make such important policy change towards Malaya at that time? This question has naturally become a major problem for historians of Malaya.

However, interestingly, it is only recently that substantial studies on this issue have begun to be published. Two of the foremost are C. N. Parkinson's *British Intervention in Malaya, 1867-1877* [30], C. D. Cowan's *Nineteenth-Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control* [12]. Of the two studies, Cowan's, which extensively used among others official and private manuscripts including the Kimberley Papers, has been regarded as "becoming the newly orthodox view of a well known crux in Malayan historical interpretation" [9, pp. 81-93].

Cowan, in order to illuminate the origins of British intervention in the 1870s—particularly of the establishment of three protectorates in 1874—traces minutely the development of actual events in Malaya, as well as the London Government's reaction to them, for about ten years since 1867, when the Straits Settlements became a separate Crown Colony. Using this method, Cowan emerges with three sorts of causes to explain the policy change. First, "there were a number of factors which created conditions favourable to intervention" [12, p. 263]—increase in the amount of trade of the Straits Settlements with Southeast Asia including Malaya and changes in their trade patterns; increased commercial interests of the Straits Settlements merchants (Chinese and British) in the Malayan Peninsula; the disintegration of local Malay authorities (especially in the tin producing states); the need of the Straits Settlements to take steps to protect their own internal security and that of their trade, etc. Secondly, "there were instances where the authorities in Whitehall had taken all or some of these factors under considerations, and had reached definite policy decisions governing action in Malaya" [12, p. 263]. Cowan attaches special importance to the motives or subjective intentions of the policy makers, and brings into focus the motives for the decision to intervene made by the then Colonial Secretary Lord Kimberley in 1873. The third sort

⁹ In the case of Sungei Ujong, the institution of Resident System was rather the result of the concerted action of both the Singapore Government and its territorial chief, who tried to use the British to overthrow the rival chief.

¹⁰ Pahang became the British protectorate in 1888, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Trengganu, which had all been under the suzerainty of Thailand, in 1909, and finally Johore in 1914.

was the "unauthorized actions" taken in Malaya by the Governors and officials of the Straits Settlements, "which were either subsequently approved or which, though they were disapproved, could not be undone" [12, p. 263]. So far as the institution of the Resident System in 1874 was concerned, there was undoubtedly an element of arbitrary action on the part of Governor Sir Andrew Clarke. Of the above three sorts of causes or origins of British colonialization of Malay states in the seventies, remarks Cowan, it is difficult to determine their relative importance.

The reason the Cowan interpretation has attracted the attention of historians, however, is that his conclusion on the second point differs from all previous interpretations.¹¹ According to Cowan, "the decision" made by Lord Kimberley in 1873 "to take some action in Malaya, and if necessary to intervene in the affairs of the states, was provoked not by conditions in the Peninsula, nor by any consideration of British economic interests there, but by fear of foreign—specifically German—intervention" [12, p. 169]. But did the possibility of German intervention in Malaya actually exist at the time, or did the Colonial Secretary really believe so? These are the questions that should be answered by the Cowan interpretation. While Cowan admits that there is no evidence at all that there was any likelihood of foreign intervention in Malaya at that time, he cites as proof a minute left by Kimberley expressing such an apprehension, as well as his draft dispatch to the Straits Governor which contained the same apprehension when submitted to Prime Minister Gladstone. There was ample reason for Kimberley's anxiety, for he had received a letter from a group of Selangor tin mining concessionaires and associates including a British lawyer and a British merchant, both exercising considerable influence in Singapore politics. The point was the context of the letter, which gave Lord Kimberley the impression that the Viceroy of Selangor—the man who had acted as leader of one of the sides in the Selangor civil war of the time—might appeal for German intervention if the British Government did not step in. What did this mean? In order to understand the Cowan interpretation, it is necessary to explain briefly the relationship between the Viceroy of Selangor and this influential British group in Singapore, as well as the general relation of the civil wars in Selangor and in Perak to the Straits Settlements [18] [19] [37].

Common to the civil wars in Selangor and Perak was that both were inseparably linked to the rapid development of tin mining in these states by Chinese enterprise from about the late forties. In other words, with the arrival of a large number of Chinese miners, new tin mines were opened here and there, and the output increased steadily. (Notable examples of the new mining centers of the day were Larut in North Perak and Kuala Lumpur in Selangor.) These developments were the outcome of the mining ventures promoted by local Malay chiefs.

¹¹ [12, p. 169]. A somewhat similar view is shown in the following article, W. D. McIntyre [23, pp. 63-69]. In addition, according to E. Chew [9, p. 82] there is another study which mentions the possibility of Germany obtaining a footing in the Peninsula as one of the factors inducing Kimberley to intervene: M. Knowles' Ph.D. thesis, 1936. *Malaysia: Selected Historical Readings* [24, pp. 184-214] provides the quotations from the works by F. Swettenham, Cowan, McIntyre, N. Tarling, offering four different views on the subject.

What drove them to open up tin mines was the fact that by the middle of the century the central authority of the Sultans of both Selangor and Perak had become nominal because they had no more effective control over the whole state revenues, which by then came to depend mainly on the export of tin. Therefore those local chiefs who had happened to make fortunes by opening up the rich tin mines could exert a great influence on the internal politics, especially on the question of succession to the Sultanship. While the local chiefs thus took the initiative in exploiting tin mines, it was the Chinese merchants living in the Straits Settlements who supplied necessary capital and Chinese miners. As these Chinese merchants were also the heads of certain "secret societies" established in the Straits Settlements, they could send their subordinate Chinese immigrants as a labor force into the unhealthy and politically unstable interiors of these states for tin mining.¹² However, Chinese miners working in neighboring mines often belonged to rival societies, with the result that there were continual confrontations, such as conflicts over mining sites or water rights, which easily led to open fighting. These Chinese secret society mining conflicts soon merged with Malay chiefs' power struggles, leading to civil war in Selangor in the latter part of the sixties and in Perak at the beginning of the seventies.

Once the war broke out, both factions came to depend more on Chinese and British merchants in the Straits Settlements for their financial support. In the case of Selangor, it was the above-mentioned British group in Singapore who financed the Viceroy's faction in return for a monopolistic mining concession. In this way the Straits Settlements became supply bases not only for tin mining but also for the civil wars. However, when the chaotic situation brought about by the wars were no longer tolerable, the Chinese and British interests concerned appealed to both the Straits authorities and the London Government for British intervention.

Returning to the Cowan interpretation, it should now be clear how the group holding the Selangor tin mining concession was connected to the Viceroy of Selangor, and how the letter of the group gave Kimberley a "German shock." The reason the group was so eager for the British Government to intervene in Malaya was its desire to establish credit for the tin mining company being formed in London on the bases of its mining concession. (It should be noted that although this company was subsequently liquidated for lack of capital, the lawyer—the central figure of the group became the first British Resident of Selangor.) Nevertheless, according to Cowan, Kimberley ignored the interests of this group. He was likewise unmoved by a petition, addressed to the Straits Governor by some 250 Chinese merchants at about the same time, asking to restore peace and order in the west coast states. (Parkinson's contrasting view emphasizes the effects of this petition [30, pp. 109–112].) Cowan, to repeat, attributes primary importance to Kimberley's fear of German intervention in Malaya.

Cowan emphasizes this point, not only on the basis of existing documentary

¹² See Blythe [5], which gives a number of new hints as to the nature of the so-called Chinese secret society.

evidence, but also because the prevention of possible foreign intervention in Malaya was consistent with the basic theme of British policy in Malaya and Indonesia laid down in the first half of the nineteenth century. According to Cowan, the basic theme of the traditional British policy towards the area was the protection of the trade route to China, the ruling elite of the day regarding the China trade as the major interest of Britain and the Straits trade as subsidiary. It was the same concern which prompted Kimberley to contemplate some form of intervention in the tin states in the early seventies. Cowan stresses therefore that the British Government's concern over the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea was, from Kimberley's standpoint, not colonial but strategic. Kimberley's instructions to Governor Sir Andrew Clarke consisted of a request that the Governor first should report on any steps which could properly be taken by the Colonial Government to restore peace and order, and to protect trade and commerce with the native territories, and a further request that the Governor should consider whether it would be advisable to appoint a British officer to reside in any of the states. According to Cowan, what Kimberley had in mind when formulating these instructions was an extension of the existing treaties with Perak and Selangor, although he also vaguely envisaged the possibility that a British agent might be stationed in each state. Sir Andrew Clarke, however, upon receiving the vague instructions, took it upon himself to initiate a form of intervention in the affairs of these states without first consulting Kimberley and the Colonial Office. The actual form of intervention which the Governor forced first Perak and then Selangor to accept in 1874 was the Resident System. This Clarke's policy was formally approved by the new Conservative Government in the same year. It should be noted that the Resident System was intended to create a new regime based on the disguised principle of government by advice, but in practice it meant the direct control of government by a British Resident of the state concerned. So in case of Perak, the implementation of the new system had to go through the armed rebellion of Malay chiefs in 1875. At any rate, the institution of the Resident System was nothing but the expansion of the Imperial Frontier into Malaya.

In conclusion, let us once again review the main points of the Cowan interpretation.

(1) There can be little objection to Cowan's view that the British Government, in the person of Colonial Secretary Kimberley, in its decision to intervene in Malaya in the early seventies, was basically concerned with protecting the trade route to China as well as defending British India. As Cowan indicates, this basic concern was the continuing theme of British policy towards Malaya from the first half of the nineteenth century. Therefore what was new in Kimberley's decision to intervene in Malaya was the way by which this basic concern was provoked, i.e., Kimberley's fear of foreign—specifically German—intervention. This is the essence of the Cowan interpretation.

(2) There can be little objection, too, to Cowan's arguments which illuminate fear of foreign intervention as the most important factor influencing Kimberley's decision to intervene, although it is by no means clear why Kimberley was so

apprehensive of foreign intervention in Malaya at the time when such possibility was non-existent. What is objectionable is the way in which Cowan treats other factors such as changing conditions in Malaya or British economic interests there as if they did not influence Kimberley's decision to intervene. It is certainly possible to trace the influence of these factors, however secondary they were.

(3) Even if Kimberley's decision to intervene in Malaya was really prompted by fear of German intervention, his subjective wish cannot be taken as the major cause of the British colonialization of the three tin producing states on the west coast at that time. Accordingly, Cowan points out the three sorts of causes leading to the establishment of these protectorates, and has to admit, as mentioned earlier, that while the presence of these different strands is clear, the prominence which each ought to be given in the complete picture remains obscure. In other words, the intention of forward policy-makers—the official mind of imperialism, as R. Robinson and J. Gallagher put it [32]—can explain only one aspect, if vital, of the complex process of Britain's imperial expansion in the nineteenth century.

(4) It is interesting to note that Cowan's emphasis on the consistency of British policy towards the East in the Victorian era makes a sharp contrast to J. A. Hobson's characterization of late Victorian colonial expansion policy as New Imperialism.

Cowan, for instance, points out that the direct correlation between the expansion of the tinplate production in Britain, the rise in price of tin in the early seventies, and the growth of a demand for political action in the tin producing states of Malaya, is not necessarily conclusive. According to Cowan, even if the trade in tin did become relatively more profitable than other openings for capital investment overseas, and even if the political conditions in Malaya had been stable, British investors at this time must in any case have chosen Australian colonies over Malaya [12, p. 141]. In fact, the above-mentioned Selangor tin mining company failed to attract the public support in London and finally fell through. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century when British political control over the tin producing states was firmly established that Cornish tin mining capital and British general investors embarked on the exploitation of Malayan tin mines. Therefore, it is not valid directly to relate British colonial expansion policy in Malaya to British investment in tin mining in the manner of J. A. Hobson.

(5) On the other hand, it is equally true that there existed the close correlation between the increased demand for tin in excess of its supply in the Industrial West, particularly in Britain, the upward trend of its price from the late forties to the early seventies in the Straits Settlements, the development of tin mining enterprise based on a new wave of investment from the mid-century by the Straits Chinese merchants on the west coast of Malaya, especially in Perak, Selangor and Sungei Ujong, the outbreak of civil wars in these states which threatened the security and trade of the Straits Settlements, and the growth of a demand for British intervention in these states by the Straits merchants, Chinese and British alike, who had a stake in these states.

Generally speaking, these factors may be termed the underlying causes of British

colonialization of Malaya in 1784. Cowan himself admits the presence of these factors as the conditions favorable to intervention. He also illustrates how the successive Governors or Acting Governors of the Straits Settlements in these days were forced to interfere from time to time by the new situation in Malaya, which was created by the chain reaction of the above factors. The peculiar feature of the Cowan interpretation, however, is his rejection of the impact of these factors upon Kimberley's decision to intervene. If one sticks to this sort of interpretation, one has to conclude how Lord Kimberley—the so-called fresh blood and a seemingly most able minister at the Colonial Office—was ignorant and unrealistic about the conditions in Malaya.

In the next section, I would like to draw attention, as one significant aspect of the economic causes underlying British colonialization of Malaya, to the development of Malayan tin mining industry from about the middle of the nineteenth century. This theme I have already described to a certain extent in this section. What follows is just a brief note on the theme put in historical perspective.¹³

III. THE INCREASED DEMAND FOR STRAITS TIN IN BRITAIN AND THE FRESH SPURT IN MALAYAN TIN MINING INDUSTRY FROM THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

Tin is used for a wide variety of purposes today [42, Chapter 1] [21, Chapters 9 and 10]. However, the largest amount of tin, accounting for above 40 per cent of the world's total consumption, is used in the manufacture of tinsplate. It was during the nineteenth century that a remarkable increase in the demand for tin for manufacturing tinsplate took place. The demand such as this was mainly provided by the development of the British tinsplate industry, which dominated the European and American tinsplate markets throughout the nineteenth century [27, p. 25ff.]. (However, in the last decade of the century it lost the American market owing to the tariff policy of the United States.) It is assumed that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the chief industrial use of tin in Britain was in the manufacture of tinsplate and of tin alloys, especially pewter, solder and bronze, and further that the tinsplate industry was then already absorbing between one-third and one-half of the total annual consumption of tin in Britain [38, pp. 14-15]. While the domestic demand for tinsplate in Britain increased along with the development of new uses, e.g., gas meters, enameled ironwares, etc., the overseas demand was much greater. From the third quarter of the century the uses of tinsplates for the manufacture of tin cans for preserving food in the United States, Australia and Western Europe, and for the manufacture of oil cans and for roofing purposes, both mainly in the United States, rapidly increased the demand for tinsplate. Consequently, the consumption of tin by the British tinsplate industry, then almost monopolized the world market, increased remarkably. Next to the tinsplate industry, the manufacture of Britannia metal (a tin alloy, which by the mid-century had displaced pewter in the manufacture of many articles

¹³ It must be added that the next section owes much to Wong Lin Ken's work [40].

previously known as pewter ware) and of white metal (also a tin alloy, used for bearings) contributed significantly to the increased consumption of tin [40, pp. 5-6]. In short, the demand for tin as industrial raw material in Britain increased by leaps and bounds throughout the nineteenth century.

Such increased demand for tin in Britain was met almost entirely by the supply of Cornish tin in the first half of the century. But from about the mid-century dependence on imported tin for British consumption increased rapidly. According to Wong Lin Ken's estimates shown in the final column of Table I, the share of

TABLE I
PRODUCTION, EXPORTS AND IMPORTS, CONSUMPTION OF TIN
IN BRITAIN, 1801-1910

	Cornish Tin		Overseas Tin		Total Exports	Assumed Domestic Consumption		
	Production	Exports	Imports	Re-Exports		Domestic	Overseas	Total
1801-10	26.1	14.9	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	11.2		11.2
1811-20	30.5	14.1	..	n.a.	n.a.	16.4	..	16.4
1821-30	44.2	18.0	1.9 (1.8)	1.9	20.0	26.2	..	26.2
1831-40	{ 46.4 [2.0]	10.8	9.8 (9.2)	9.8	20.7	35.6	..	35.6
1841-50	{ 66.5 [1.6]	15.8	9.2 (8.2)	4.9	20.7	50.6	4.3	54.9
1851-60	{ 64.0 [1.8]	17.9	{ 23.7 (15.4) 26.2*	{ 2.2 4.5*	20.1	46.1	21.6	{ 67.7 [67]
1861-70	{ 94.0 [3.2]	43.7	{ 44.0 (34.2) 48.1*	{ 7.2 12.3*	50.9	50.3	36.8	{ 87.1 [96]
1871-80	96.5	{ 46.8 [58.0]*	132.6*	46.0*	104.0	49.7	86.6	{ 136.4 [139]
1881-90	92.3	[52.0]	257.4	140.5	192.6	n.a.	n.a.	[167]
1891-1900	64.6	[56.0]	317.8	178.0	234.0	n.a.	n.a.	[176]
1901-10	45.8	[81.4]	408.3	277.7	359.1	n.a.	n.a.	[184]

Sources: Prior to the 1870s: Wong Lin Ken [14, pp. 8, 9, 14, 16]. Figures marked * and those after the 1880s: B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge at the University Press, 1962); and *U.K. Statistical Abstract*.

- Notes: 1. .. =negligible; n.a.=not available.
2. Figures in brackets are according to C.T. Saunders, "Consumption of Raw Materials in the United Kingdom: 1851-1950," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A (general), Part 3 (1952); it is assumed that exports after the 1880s include tin produced from imported ore.
3. Figures in parentheses under Imports are imports from British colonies in the East (mainly Malaya); Wong and *Abstract* figures for Exports and Re-Exports differ slightly.

imported tin in the total home consumption was 32 per cent for the fifties, 42 per cent for the sixties, and 63 per cent for the seventies. However, such growing dependence on imported tin for home consumption did not continue in the following decades. Because from the eighties Britain began to increase imports of tin ore, which was smelted in Britain either for home consumption or for export.

In this connection, C. T. Saunders' estimates give the following figures (see Table II). These figures suggest that dependence on imported tin ore instead of imported tin for home consumption increased from the turn of the century, as the production of Cornish tin declined.

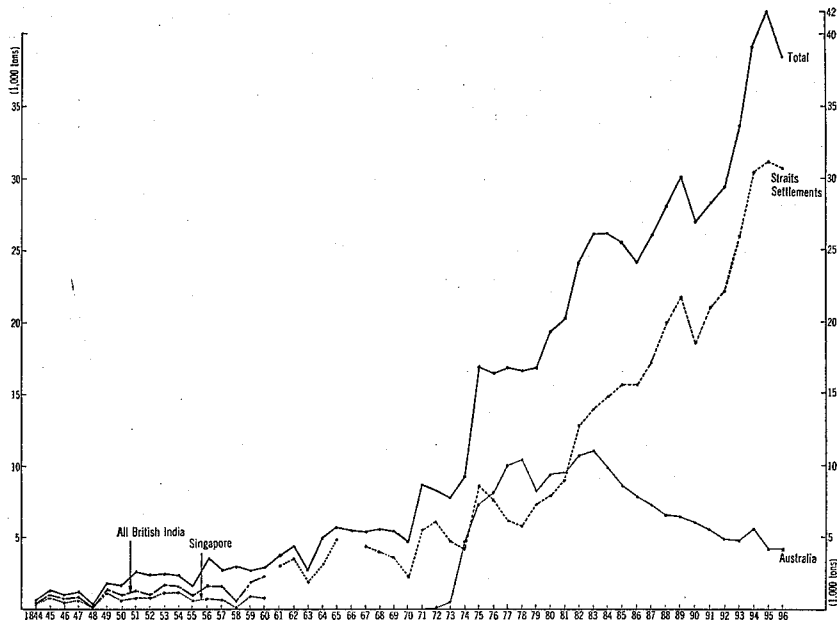
TABLE II
SHARES OF PRODUCTION AND IMPORTS IN TOTAL HOME CONSUMPTION OF TIN
IN BRITAIN: ANNUAL AVERAGES FOR SELECTED YEARS (Tons)

	Total Home Consumption	Smelted in Britain			Imported Tin
		British Ore	Overseas Ore	Total	
1853-63	8	7	0	7	1
1883-90	17	9	1	10	7
1907-13	24	5	16	21	3

Source: C. T. Saunders, "Consumption of Raw Materials in the United Kingdom: 1851-1950," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A (general)*, Part 3 (1952), p. 337.

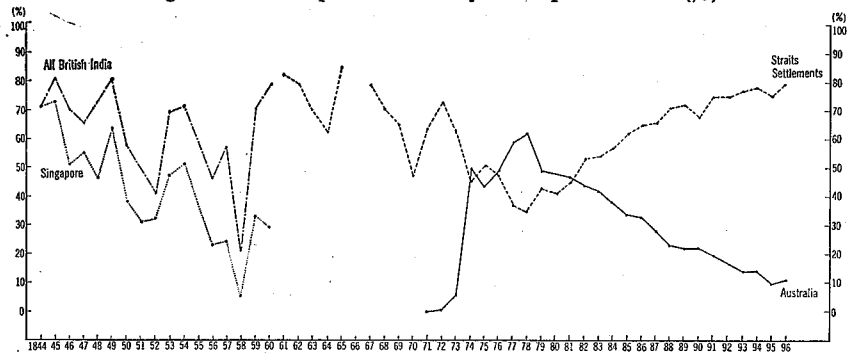
At any rate, Table I clearly illustrates a rapid and continuous increase in the amount of not only tin imports but also its re-exports from about the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. (It should be added that the proportion of tin re-exports to total tin imports increased with the passage of time, and that the main destinations of these re-exports were the United States and Europe.) This influx of overseas tin was, in fact, closely related to the tin tariff policy of the

Fig. 2. U.K. Imports of Tin by Principal Markets (1,000 Tons)



Source: Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, "Returns of Tin Imports and Exports," 1844-96.

Fig. 3. U.K. Imports of Tin by Principal Markets (%)



Source: See Figure 2.

British Government, by which import duties on tin and tin ore were drastically reduced in 1842 (in this case differential tariffs were introduced in favor of imports from the British overseas possessions), then import duties on tin ore were abolished in 1845, and finally import duties on tin for home consumption were wholly abolished in 1853. These reforms were, needless to say, to facilitate the development of British tin-consuming industries including the tinplate manufacturing, by abandoning the old protectionist policy for Cornish in mining.

It was Malaya that supplied mainly overseas tin to Britain, except in the period from the late seventies to the early eighties, as is indicated by Figures 2 and 3. Today Malayan tin is well known by the commercial name of Straits tin. This trade name seemed to have first appeared on the British market at about the 1830s. (It must be noted that Straits tin was not necessarily the tin produced in the Malay states, though a larger proportion of it was.) But it fetched at first a lower price than Banka tin as well as Cornish tin. However, the price gap gradually narrowed because of improved quality of Straits tin, and by 1865 it was in popular demand in the British market [40, pp. 14-16].

It is difficult to ascertain, however, how much of the quantity of Straits tin imported into Britain was retained for home consumption. In the case of tinplate industry, it is said that tin was supplied mainly from Malaya and Australia in the later nineteenth century [24, p. 29] [27, pp. 57, 103]. In the absence of statistical data, it is safe to say that Straits tin was mainly used up to at least 1874 by the industry [40, p. 17].

Now turning to the data from Malayan side, Table III and Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the principal export markets of Straits tin from the 1840s to the outbreak of World War I. The most important export market for Straits tin was Britain, followed by the United States. The quantity of exports to Britain was constantly increasing (with the exceptions of the late 1890s and the early 1910s), since the 1860s attaining rates from 40 per cent to 60 per cent of the total exports. (It is assumed, as mentioned above, that considerable portion of Straits tin exported to Britain was re-exported to the United States or Europe.)

However, more significantly, these data suggest that from the middle of the

TABLE III
DISTRIBUTION OF EXPORT MARKETS FOR STRAITS TIN, 1844-1914

(1,000 Tons)

At 5-Year Intervals	U.K.	U.S.A.	Industrial West ^a	Asia ^b	Total ^c
1844-48	2.9 (24)	1.1 (9)	5.2 (43)	6.1	12.2
1849-53	5.6 (31)	3.5 (19)	11.6 (63)	6.1	18.3
1854-58	6.4 (34)	4.7 (25)	13.2 (70)	4.5	18.8
1859-63	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1864-68	21.2 (53)	6.7 (17)	28.6 (72)	10.5	39.6
1869-73	21.4 (43)	13.9 (28)	35.7 (71)	13.7	50.3
1875-79	24.6 (39)	12.9 (21)	38.9 (62)	22.8	62.4
1880-84	36.5 (41)	27.2 (31)	64.9 (73)	21.0	88.5
1885-89	79.6 (58)	23.9 (18)	114.8 (84)	18.6	136.5
1890-94	103.2 (51)	38.2 (19)	178.9 (89)	21.9	201.4
1895-99	82.0 (34)	87.7 (30)	221.5 (91)	15.7	242.4
1900-04	130.5 (49)	86.4 (33)	252.7 (95)	9.2	265.7
1905-09	174.0 (58)	70.8 (24)	284.3 (95)	10.2	299.2
1910-14	172.5 (56)	83.3 (27)	292.6 (95)	9.8	308.8

Source: Wong Lin Ken [14, pp. 12-13, 212].

Notes: 1. Figures in parentheses show percentage in proportion to total exports.

2. The intervals for 1875-79 onwards are slightly different from previous ones.

^a Totals for U.K., Europe, and U.S.A.

^b Totals for China and India.

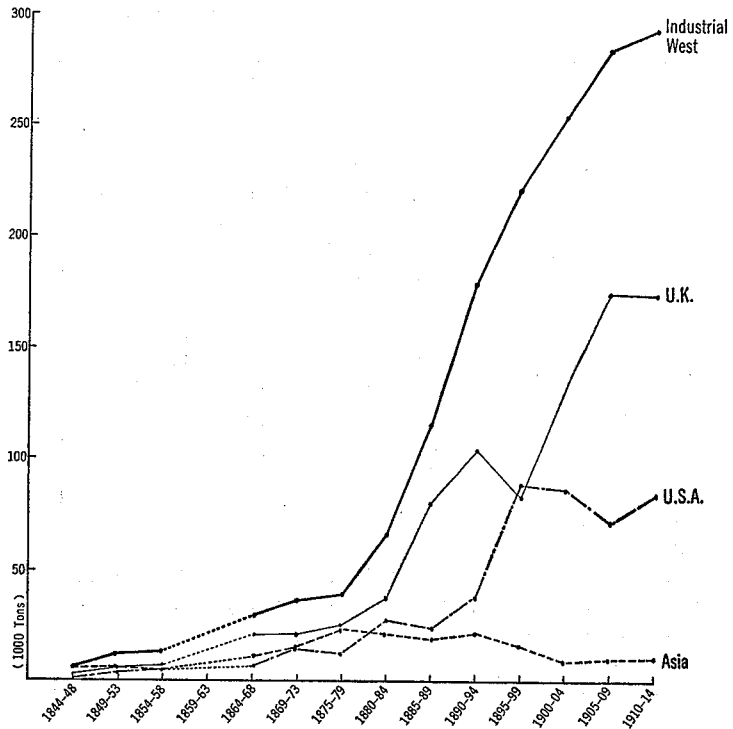
^c The total includes others not mentioned in the table.

nineteenth century the quantity of exports to the Industrial West (U.K., U.S.A. and Europe combined) came to overtake that of exports to Asia (China and India combined), increasing the gap more and more with the passage of time.

In Section I, we have drawn attention to the profile of early Penang as a country trade base for collecting tin and pepper. It reflected the importance of Straits tin as a commodity for country traders to sell to China and India. Straits tin was then a local commodity in the Asian market [7]. Moreover, Cornish tin was exported by the British East India Company around the turn of the eighteenth century [41, pp. 332-34] [30, p. 355]. From about the 1850s, however, an opposite flow into the Industrial West began to increase, accelerating even more as the century wore on. Thus Straits tin was transformed from a commodity of the eighteenth century country trade into a modern commodity indispensable to the capitalist world, at the time led by Britain.

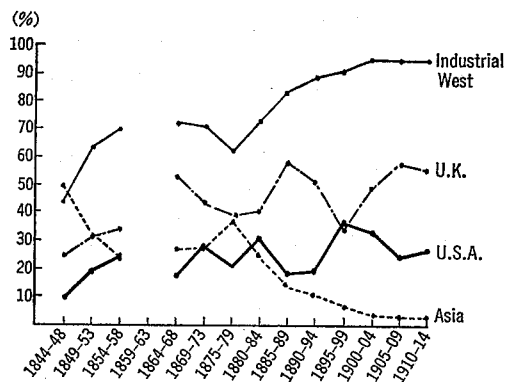
As we have seen in Section II, there was a fresh spurt in tin mining on the west coast of Malaya from the middle of the nineteenth century. It was actually the work of Chinese merchants and Chinese immigrant workers, and was stimulated by the industrial demand for tin especially from Britain and the United States. As to the tin mining enterprise on the west coast in the 1820s and 1830s, there were contemporary observers like J. Anderson, J. T. Newbold and J. Begbie, whose accounts reveal the fact that the Chinese were already actively engaged in tin mining along with the Malaya [1] [28] [4]. Yet it was the mid-century when

Fig. 4. Straits Tin Exports by Principal Markets (Thousand Tons)



Source: See Table III.

Fig. 5. Straits Tin Exports by Principal Markets (%)



Source: See Table III.

noticeable developments of tin mining took place with a large inflow of Chinese miners in Perak, Selangor and Sungei Ujong, the three principal tin states on the west coast. Therefore Yip Yat Hoong emphasizes 1850 as the beginning of major developments in the Malayan tin mining industry [43, p. 57].

In other words, the period between 1850 and 1874, when the three tin states were made British protectorates, was very important in that it laid down the foundation of tin mining in Malaya. The main actors of tin mining enterprise in this period were no doubts Chinese merchant/advancers and local Malay chiefs [16] [17] [25] [8]. In the annuals of tin mining in Malaya therefore, the period may be termed the "Years of *Towkay Labors* and Malay Chiefs." These years were also characterized by the civil wars fought out between rival parties, both comprising *towkays* and chiefs, in Perak, Selangor and Sungei Ujong. When the wars were brought to a halt by the Pax Britannica, the new period covering up to the end of the century started. It may be termed the "Years of *Towkay Labors* and British Residents," during which Malaya—to be exact, Perak and Selangor—was to become the biggest supplier of tin to the Industrial West. Whatever Kimberley's intent in the intervention policy of the early seventies might have been, it is this fact which objectively defined the economic role of Colonial Malaya.

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