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THE MUSEUM AS ARTEFACT, MADE IN MALAYSIA

Thesis submitted by

Paulette DELLIOS  
BA Deakin Univ., BA (Hons) Deakin Univ.,  
Grad. Dip. Ed. (TESOL) Univ. S.A.

in September 1999

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the School of Anthropology and Archaeology  
James Cook University of North Queensland

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9/9/1999  
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## **Abstract**

### The Museum as Artefact, Made in Malaysia

Museums were made in Malaysia long before Malaysia was made.

Historical, socio-political and civilisational-cultural factors are crucial to an understanding of the museum as artefact, made in Malaysia and an understanding of Malaysia as artefact, made in the museum. Hence, this study attempts an historical overview of inter-related artefactual processes: museum-making, colony-making and nation-making. These processes reveal ambiguities, paradoxes and subtleties which call for innovative strategies to overcome the epistemological stasis of museology.

The predominant museological approach has been to view all museums according to the same Eurocentric archetype. However, museums are socio-cultural artefacts and this study develops several theoretical generalisations about the nature of artefactual expression, empirically grounded in the Malaysian cultural landscape.

To argue that the museum is an 'artefact' is an appropriation of the terminology of museology but museology has yet to elaborate a conceptual position on the museum as artefact. Through a diachronic analysis of Malaysian museums, a set of recurring questions emerges which unavoidably challenges the efficacy of museology's conceptual tools.

As cultural institutions, museums may be assumed to be centrally concerned with culture. Museology seeks to comprehend culture via mutually exclusive terms such as material/non-material culture, tangible/intangible heritage, real thing/replica, movable/immovable objects, among other binary oppositions. These frames of reference are not only rejected as inappropriate to the Malaysian context but disputed as 'universal' categories of museological investigation. Museology, dominated by a Euro-American scholastic monopoly, is ideologically and conceptually ill-equipped to interpret museums in other societies.

Because the museum is an artefact and artefacts are polysemantic, it is maintained that museums in Malaysia possess an extensive repertoire of meanings. This applies to both colonial and post-colonial museums.

Museums in colonial Malaysia were composite artefacts that combined colonial ideologies and indigenous cosmologies.

Similarly, post-colonial museums in Malaysia do not simply replicate national narratives. Museums accommodate multiple and, at times, conflicting 'storylines'. These are particularly pronounced in the cultural labyrinth of national culture, Malaysian culture, popular culture, cultural tourism, and 'museal culture'.

Cultural institutions in Malaysia defy a facile congruence between museum and nation. This lack of conformity between cultural constructs is clarified through the notion of 'museal culture' which, as an interpretive medium culture-specific to the museum, reconstructs and deconstructs its artefactual domain. Inquiry into the meaning of 'artefacts', whether of objects, museums or nations, must move beyond the assumption of static entities filled with traits and qualities that are surveyed to be affirmed rather than interrogated.

In this Malaysian artefactual odyssey, both the museum and the nation are treated analytically as artefacts. They are mutually materialised and artefactually involved but the museum transacts through its interpretative filter of 'museal culture' and hence it does not, and cannot, represent the nation. The dynamic complexities of 'museal culture' are examined in Malaysia but analytical implications are not limited to Malaysian museums.

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## STATEMENT ON SOURCES

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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(Paulette Dellios)

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## Introduction

*When you paint a tiger you only paint his skin, not his bones.*

(Chinese proverb)

### Limits of Knowledge in the 'Museum World'

This thesis sets out to examine the unexamined meanings of museums in Malaysia, based on the supposition that the museum is an artefact of its own culture. A further assumption is that museums in Malaysia are multivocal and multi-purpose artefacts. Thus, the central questions also appear in multiple dimensions. Museums possess artefacts but are museums artefacts? What analytical insights might be gained from such a perspective? What does such an approach imply for current museological interpretations of the museum? The method will entail refining the museological term 'artefact' to a level of theoretical abstraction that can accommodate both the museum as artefact and the nation as artefact. The objective is not only to elucidate the diverse relationships among artefactual forms in Malaysia but to propose alternative ways of approaching the study of museums.

A further aim is to expand the limited knowledge of Southeast Asian museums through an analysis of museums in Malaysia. In 1971 Morley (1971: i) indicated that museums in Asia are "imperfectly known to the rest of the museum world". The situation has not changed perceptibly even though over a quarter of a century has elapsed. A review of the literature reveals a predominant focus on museums of the developed Western world (see also Prösler 1996: 23). One exception to the preoccupation with the West in museological literature is the volume, *Museums and the Making of "Ourselves": The Role of Objects in National Identity* (Kaplan 1994b), although the analytical concerns are recognisably Western. No Asian nations are included in this volume which is intended "to redress the balance of what is known of the development of museums outside the major western centers" (Kaplan 1994a: 10). To 'redress the balance' is unrealisable without questioning the very premises of knowledge formation in a 'museum world' of disproportionate cartography.

Therefore, this study also aims to evaluate whether museological modes of knowing are also 'imperfectly known'. The basic premise is that museology has neither the conceptual vocabulary nor epistemological foundation to theorise about 'non-Western' museums. As a consequence, the main obstacle to the study of museums in Malaysia is museology itself. Museology is ostensibly the 'study of museums' but it also projects a tacit worldview. The essence of my argument is that the museum is a cultural artefact and museology is also an artefact of its own Euro-American cultural matrix. To attempt an analysis of the former is to confront the constraints of the latter as a knowledge field.

### **A Temporal, Spatial and Artefactual Outline**

The temporal scope of the study spans Malaysia's colonial past to the envisaged future of 'Vision 2020', the national agenda to make Malaysia into a fully industrialised nation. Consequently, one will be able to discern the temporal processes of museum-making and Malaysia-making, and the complex ways in which they interact. The expositional advantage of a diachronic study is that it is embedded in a history and a context.

Contextual information about museums as socio-cultural artefacts was obtained through the research method of fieldwork. Fieldwork was conducted in three stages: 1995 (preliminary stage), 1996 and 1997. Interviews were also held with individuals from both museum and non-museum backgrounds. The material for this study was drawn from a variety of sources, both in English and Bahasa Malaysia. Prior to the commencement of doctoral research, the indispensable bridge to linguistic knowledge was built over a period of ten years in Malaysia.

A context-embedded, diachronic analysis circumvents the possibility of reproducing a dominant museological approach—the 'Third World' as anecdotal artefact (Chap. 11). The comparative evidence, drawn from other 'non-Western' societies, illustrates the artefactual nature of museological knowledge in which its past is as problematic as its present and future. Therefore, this study is structured according to four interlinked themes of the 'artefact'.

Part I, **Museology: Knowledge as Artefact**, examines museology as a system of knowledge (Chap. 1) which shapes the museum into a museological 'artefact' (Chap. 2) but which fails to comprehend the analytical scope of the term 'artefact' (Chap. 3). Part II, **The Museum as Artefact, Colonial Construction**, begins with the historical background to Malaysia and the activities of colonising and museumising are critically examined to discern their multiplex relationships (Chaps 4, 5). In addition, the political transition period leading to independence indicates the potential of colonial museum practices to semi-colonise the post-colonial future (Chap. 6). Part III, **The Museum as Artefact, the Nation as Artefact**, discusses 'national-type' institutions to question a prevalent assumption that museums reflect the nation, which itself is examined as an 'artefact' (Chap. 7). Moreover, prevailing museum orientations and predominant museum displays in the thirteen states of Malaysia reveal how the museum as artefact and the nation as artefact traverse each others' 'storylines'. (Chaps 8, 9, 10). Part IV, **The Museum as Replica?**, scrutinises museological approaches to the 'Third World' (Chap. 11) and Eurocentric projections of the future (Chap. 12) to demonstrate that the museum may be shaped into a fused entity of 'artefact' and 'replica'.

### **The Conceptual Contours of the 'Artefact'**

As implied in the foregoing examples, the concept of the 'artefact' embraces the ideational and the material. It will not be explicated further here, in the conviction that to do so, without the appropriate contexts, would be akin to painting the proverbial tiger. The 'artefact' as heuristic device is expounded and exemplified in each chapter so that a processual form of theorising cumulatively develops. Although museologists and material culture analysts have produced a plethora of studies on the artefact as object from a variety of theoretical perspectives (e.g. Kavanagh 1991c; Miller 1991, 1994; Pearce 1990, 1992, 1994d; Schlereth 1982, 1985; Stocking 1985b), the artefact as idea, ironically, remains unexamined in the literature (Chap. 3). Museology, as the study of museums, is itself examined as an object of study. My approach, therefore, does not adhere to any one disciplinary or theoretical position. The premise is that no one theoretical framework can successfully accommodate, let alone do justice to, the complexities of museum-making in Malaysia. Insights are drawn from several fields of knowledge: anthropology, sociology, archaeology,

history, political science and socio-linguistics. In order to understand the significance of the museum as artefact in Malaysia, one must also have a knowledge of Malaysia. This also unfolds cumulatively in Parts II and III. However, some background information may help set the scene.

### **Malaysia: 'Census, Map, Museum'**

Benedict Anderson's interpretive insight in 'Census, map, museum' (1991: chap. 10) is discussed in several areas of this study but his elaborate political argument will not be introduced here. Instead, his three key terms—census, map, museum—are interpreted literally. In this regard, the tiger's skin is painted first and the bones will be added subsequently.

#### • Census

As of 1997 the population of Malaysia was 21,665,400 (Turner 1998: 933). According to *Information Malaysia: 1997 Yearbook* (1997: 65), the population in 1991 was 49% rural-based and 51% urban-based, which may be compared to 1980 figures of 66% and 34% respectively. *Information Malaysia: 1997 Yearbook* (ibid: 62-63) classifies Malaysians into sixty-four ethnic or culturally differentiated groups, fifteen of which are termed "major racial groups" (ibid: 63). These fifteen major groups are condensed into three main categories, as shown in Table 1 (p. 5).

The term 'Bumiputera' refers to Malays, Orang Asli (literally 'original people') of Peninsular Malaysia, and the diversity of indigenous inhabitants of Sabah and Sarawak (*Information Malaysia: 1997 Yearbook* 1997: 62). Andaya and Andaya (1982: 4), in their *History of Malaysia* surmise, "Malaysia's racial composition has contributed to a political structure which seeks to combine some of the main features of a parliamentary system with the practical realities of the local situation." The Head of Government is the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The Head of State is the King (the Yang di-Pertuan Agung), a rotating position among the Sultans of the peninsular states (ibid: 4). Because of the history of the nine Malay-Muslim States, the Federation of Malaysia adopted Islam as the official religion, though Malaysia is not an Islamic state and religious freedom is guaranteed in the Constitution (Mohd Taib 1985a: 1-2).

Percentage	Peninsula	Sabah	Sarawak	Malaysia
Malays	55.25	—	—	—
Malays & Oth. Bumiputera	—	82.9	69.3	59.0
Chinese	33.9	16.2	29.4	32.1
Indians	10.2	—	—	8.2
Others	0.65	0.9*	1.3*	0.7
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

\* Including Indians

Table 1. Ethnic composition of Malaysia's population, according to census of 1980

Source: *Information Malaysia: 1997 Yearbook 1997*, Berita Publishing, Kuala Lumpur, p. 65.

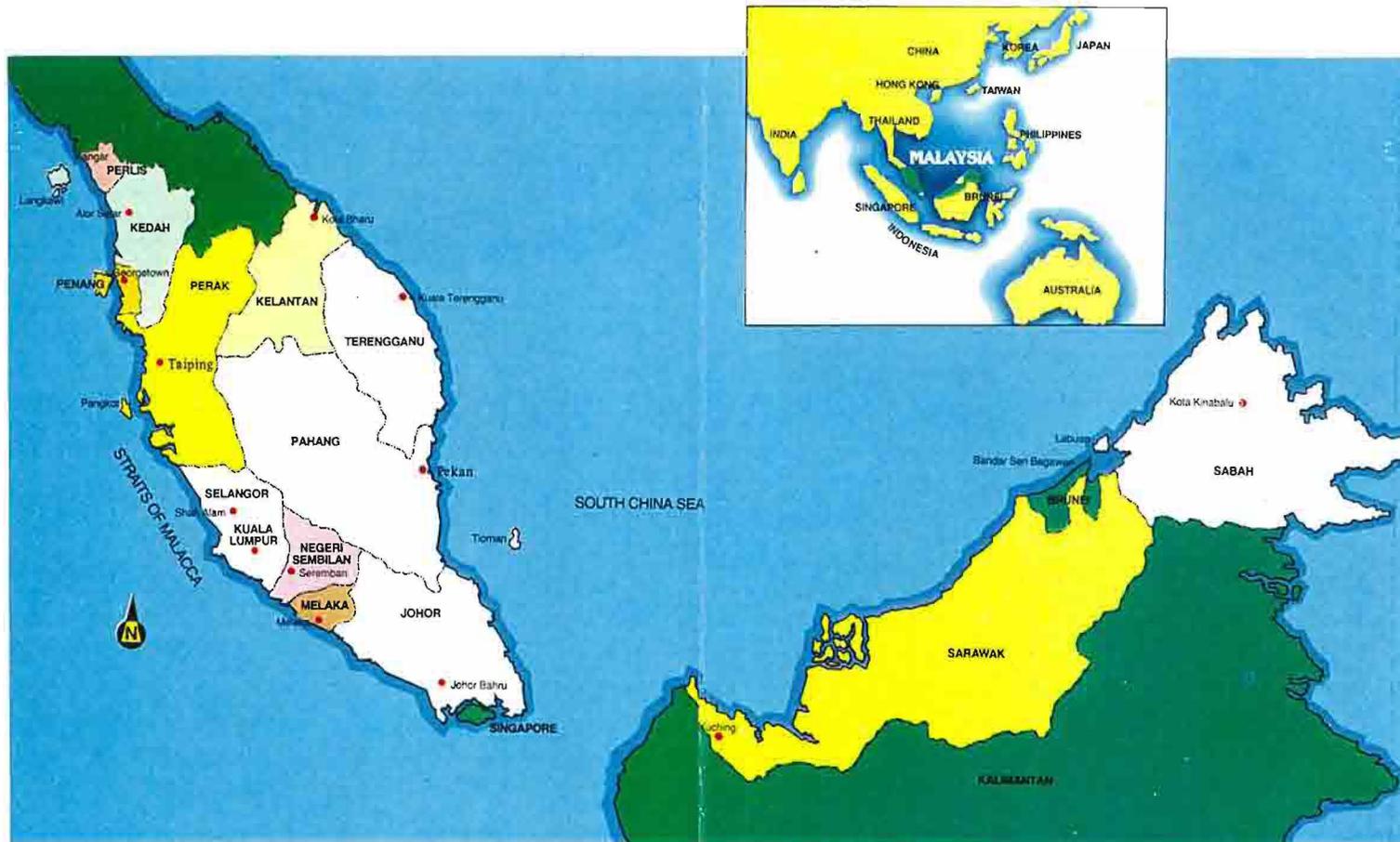
- Map

*Information Malaysia: 1997 Yearbook* includes information in a sequential order of 'census, map, museum' (1997: 62-69) but the map in *Museum Land Malaysia* (Mohd Zulkifli 1990) not only links themes but regions (see Map 1, p. 7). Malaysia lies between 1° and 7° north of the equator, and variations in its fairly uniform tropical climate are marked by changes in rainfall linked to the cycles of the monsoon winds, which played a significant role in early trade routes in the region. Malaysia, covering an area of approximately 330,000 square kilometres, has two geographical components which are separated by the South China Sea. Of Malaysia's thirteen states, eleven are in Peninsular Malaysia, as is the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. The two States of Sarawak and Sabah are situated on the island of Borneo. The political boundaries of Malaysia are one outcome of colonial rule. Another outcome, equally relevant, is the institution of the museum for museum history in Malaysia officially begins in the British colonial era.

- Museum

The 'museum' for the purposes of this study includes museums, memorial museums, art galleries and other institutions and cultural sites that are 'museal', a museological term meaning 'museum-like'. The question of the conceptual boundaries of the museum in Malaysia is delineated in Chapter 2 and a chronological list of museums is included in Chapter 8 (Table 7).

The tiger proverb, introducing the Introduction, was selected both for its sagacity and for the tiger's symbolic significance in Malaysia. Before the economic crisis engulfed Southeast Asia in mid-1997, 'tiger economies' were a metaphor for the economic success of the nations in the region (a regional perspective is discussed in Chap. 12). The tiger is a rich multivocal symbol in Malaysia's diversity of cultures and two tigers form the national crest of Malaysia (Plate 1, p. 8). Although the tiger is a "proud and integral symbol of Malaysia, its Government and its people" (Anak Enggang 1997: 6), in Malaysian museums its polysemantic symbolism is reduced to one meaning—a stuffed specimen in natural history displays (Plate 2, p. 8). The museum paradox of this 'integral symbol' will become more meaningful as the proverbial tiger's bones are painted in to illustrate the 'museal' meaning of things.



Map 1. Federation of Malaysia, with inset of regional location

Source: Mohd Zulkifli Haji Abdul Aziz (ed.) 1990, *Museum Land Malaysia*, Museums Department Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, inside cover.

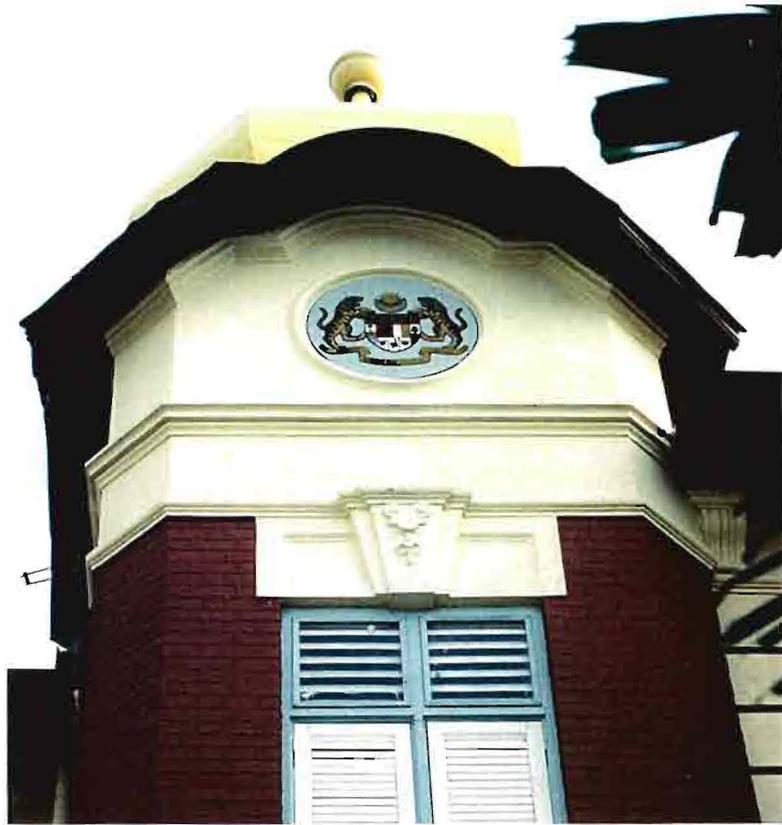


Plate 1. Tigers of the national crest, detail from facade of Proclamation of Independence Memorial, a federally administered memorial museum  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 2. Stuffed tiger in National Museum's natural history gallery  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

## PART I. MUSEOLOGY: KNOWLEDGE AS ARTEFACT

### Chapter 1. Museology: A 'muse' and an 'ology'

*A man may be ready to hunt elephants and tigers, but what can he do about the bugs beneath his pillow?*

(Malay proverb)

#### Introduction

This chapter is the story of the bugs beneath the museological pillow. Museology is conventionally associated with 'telling the story' of museums and the development of museology is, in itself, an enigmatic story. It is claimed to be a scientific discipline (Boylan 1989; van Mensch 1989a), and the opposite is just as strongly asserted by rhetorical critics (e.g. Sola 1987: 46; 1992c: 101). Moreover, issues do not neatly reside in mutually exclusive camps for there are several museologies, implying multiple museological 'truths'. This chapter will explore the premise that museological knowledge is an artefact. Artefacts are not fixed in meaning: "Their truth is precarious and in constant need of re-articulation" (Shanks & Tilley 1987: 96). Re-articulation is not ahistorical; it is contoured along the lines of both continuity and change. The 'truths' of museological knowledge are precarious not because of a plethora of forms, but because their re-articulations have been largely inarticulate. This is effectively demonstrated by the manifold 'new' labels for museology. The labels oscillate between inner and outer logics in a tripartite frame of reference: creating the boundaries of the 'discipline' museology, crossing the boundaries of other disciplines, and responding to other disciplines 'transgressing' museological boundaries. In the broader disciplinary spectrum, museology is but one artefactual device among many for the study of museums.

## The Beginnings

Ordinarily, stories begin with a beginning. However, it is not easily discerned in the case of museology (or the museum, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter). The genesis of museology is not one creation story but several. Moreover, museology is a creation story still in the making. Sola (1992b: 393) dates the origin of museology to the 1970s: "[T]his critical mass of questions upon the future of the museum as an institution, and the quantity of proposed answers, has marked the birth of museology, which ... has spanned some twenty years". In contrast, Cameron (1995: 48) traces the origins of museology to the late nineteenth century: "It was born out of the movement for universal education ... in Europe, Britain and North America." Pearce (1992: 116) relates an older creation story, made possible by the creative addition of the word 'structure': "The museological structure, paralleling modern structures of knowledge and sentiments in general, is now moving towards its sixth century ...". In summary, we have three stories beginning a quarter of a century ago, one century ago and, over five centuries ago. There is no single museological 'past'.

Etymology also suggests a temporal frame for museology. Linguistically, the mythical Muses, first institutionalised in the word 'museum', were then theorised in the late nineteenth century and later professionalised (see *Professionalising the Muses: The Museum Profession in Motion* edited by van Mensch 1989b). Nineteenth-century examples of a 'logy' appended to the 'muse' are found in an 1885 issue of *Science* and the *Proceedings of the Boston Society for Natural History* of 1887 (see *Oxford English Dictionary* 1961, 6: 781). However, the terms 'museography' and 'museographer' appeared over a century earlier in the literature. Neickel's *Museographia*, a user manual for the amateur collector, was published in 1727, and the word 'museographer' appeared in *Elementary Conchology* in 1776 (ibid: 781). Another issue is that of 'back-dating' exemplified by the article, 'Museography and ethnographical collections in Bologna during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in which Bologna is referred to as a 'museological' centre (Laurencich-Minelli 1985: 17). The genealogy of museology illustrates Lowenthal's (1985: 40) theme that the past may be used for validation of the present. The question of 'dating' museology is not one of etymology, nor of chronology, but one of legitimacy and disciplinary status.

## The Logic of Labels

Traditionally, the domains of museology and museography had little to distinguish them, excepting their suffixes. A categorical division of labour was absent and the two terms were used interchangeably until the second half of this century when the elevation of 'logy' above 'graphy' became discernible. In 1971 the International Council of Museums (ICOM) made the distinction that museology is a "museum science" and museography "covers methods and practices" (see Teather 1991: 407). In the *Lexique de muséologie/Glossary of Museology* (Blanchet & Bernard 1989: 75-76), museology is described as the "science or study concerned with the management, organization and equipment of museums", and museography as the "techniques and methods used in the classification and display of museum objects" but neither the descriptions nor the demarcation are tenable. Inexplicably, the *Glossary of Museology* identifies 'museographer' as a 'neologism' (ibid: 75), although the word has an established history of usage. For instance, *Athenaeum* of 1880 informs: "Between the museographers and the pure historians works of art are in danger of becoming transformed into scientific specimens" (quoted in *Oxford English Dictionary* 1961, 6: 781). Similarly, the prolonged process of transforming the 'muse' into a 'scientific specimen' is not without its dangers. The museology/museography distinction remains a modern and post-modern muddle: in the same edited volume of 1990 co-exist titles on "post-modernist museography" (Shelton 1990) and "methodological museology" (van Mensch 1990). Other 'specimens' illustrating contemporary terminological contradictions are enumerated in Sola's article, 'The concept and nature of museology' (1987: 45).

A new label, 'museum studies', emerged in the 1970s but its inner logic remains obscure for it merely intensified the terminological and conceptual confusion. Whereas in some perspectives 'museography' had been subsumed in 'logy' as 'applied museology' (see, for example, van Mensch 1989a: 87), 'museum studies' was intended to assimilate both museology and museography in a wider conceptual framework, that is, a bigger and better story. However, its scope is now increasingly identified with pragmatic rather than theoretical issues (Teather 1991: 408; Moore 1997: 8). 'Museum studies' and 'museology' may be used as interchangeable terms (as is still the case with museology and

museography). Nevertheless, 'museology' gained a heightened official status when the International Council of Museums (ICOM) established the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) in 1977. The growing emphasis on the term 'museology' was accompanied by the familiar Logos of 'logy'. For instance, van Mensch (1989a: 85) designates museology a "science" and an "academic discipline", with its emerging "'schools' of thought". Moreover, van Mensch (ibid: 87) contends that museology could be divided into five sub-fields—a remarkable achievement considering that there is, as yet, no consensus on the *one* field. He classifies these five sub-fields as: "general museology", "special museology", "historical museology", "applied museology" and "theoretical museology"; the latter, in his assessment, being the least developed of the five sub-divisions (ibid: 87).

### **New Museologies for Old**

It was partly this issue of theory, or perceived lack of it, which prompted several museologists to claim that museology was neither a science nor a discipline (Sola 1987; Weil 1988b: 33). The logical conclusion of this epistemological vacuum, according to Sola, is that "there is no museological message because there is no museology" (1987: 46). However, some maintained that a message could be found in the 'new museology', which by taxonomic inevitability created an 'old museology'. This process echoed the earlier attempts to differentiate between 'museology' and 'museography'. Paradoxically, the 'old museology' was dismissed as being concerned with technical and practical matters (but this domain had been previously equated with the label 'museography' not 'museology'). A collection of essays entitled *The New Museology*, edited by Vergo in 1989, is usually considered a definitive moment in the articulation of the 'new museology'. It was contrasted with the 'old museology' which was "too much about museum *methods*, and too little about the purposes of museums" (Vergo 1989: 3, emphasis in original).

Once again, the origins of this 'new' phenomenon are indeterminate, even though it emerged in the more recent past. Several writers have drawn attention to the existence of the term 'new museology' prior to Vergo's volume of 1989 (Boylan 1996: 50; Macdonald 1996: 15, fn. 8; Walsh 1992: 161-2). J. Harrison (1993: 165), who traces the 'new museology' to the

1970s, claims: "This paradigm replaced the 'old museology' ...". The application of the term 'paradigm' is misleading. Neither in the 1970s nor in the 1990s is there a mark of a paradigm—either in the sense of a grand theory or in the sense of a general theoretical perspective. Moreover, the question still remains of how the 'old museology' was "replaced" when its replacement is an unacknowledged or even an unknown entity. Stam (1993: 269) informs in 'The informed muse': "Some of the writers who are here labelled New Museologists might be surprised to be included under this title. Some do not use the term, and some may never have heard of it ...". Boylan (1991: 87-8) muses: "I suspect that many of us in UK museums have been practising New Museology for decades, thinking all the time it was Old Museology!" These comments suggest a paradigm may exist *incognito*.

J. Harrison (1993: 166), elaborating upon the emergence of the 'new museology' in the 1970s, argues that this 'paradigm' was engendered by the ecomuseum movement. It is unclear why 'new museology' came to dominate the terminology and not 'eco-museology' which was based on the work of the French ecomuseum movement. van Mensch (1988: 6) considers 'eco-museology' to have a prior claim to the "so-called 'new museology'". Boylan (1996: 50) also associates the ecomuseum with the emergence of the *nouvelle muséologie* or 'new museology' in 1972. Paradoxically, the "most recent 'new museology'" (Harrison, J. 1993: 170) is found in the ideas of the ecomuseum: it has taken a quarter of a century for an 'old' eco-museology to be considered the 'newest' new museology. To overcome "the fatal timidity of 'ecomuseology'", Sola (1987: 49) proposed the term 'heritology' to encompass the study of a broader range of heritage institutions. In addition, Sola (1991: 134) dismisses the term 'museology' as "impossible" and 'museum studies' as "protestant".

### **The 'Rectification' of Names**

As a symptom of growing discontent and a sign of cumulative confusion, weight is shifting from suffixes to prefixes. The "critical museology" of van Mensch is described as another "new museology" (Halpin 1997: 53). Riegel (1996: 91) singles out Cannizzo's "reflexive museology" which evidences a "recent critical, reflexive turn in museology" (ibid: 84). Macdonald (1996: 7) also discerns "a new wave of critical, self-reflexive scrutiny" in museology.

Teather's (1991) article, entitled 'Museum studies: Reflecting on reflective practice', reflects the same trend. The word 'reflexive' invariably appears in museological writings of the 1990s, particularly those associated with ideas of the 'new museology' and its numerous incarnations. However, the usage of 'reflexivity' conceals a mediocrity of reflection. For 'reflexivity' to be convincingly applied to a field of knowledge would entail it reflecting an institutional, not individual position. This is not apparent in museological knowledge for the reflective views of some individuals (both museologists and non-museologists) cannot be amplified to represent a philosophy of 'reflexive' museology. Moreover, this 'reflective' stance founders when shifted to reflections on non-Western museums, as will be demonstrated in Part IV.

The creation of compound museologies may focus attention on the first half of the compound whilst conveniently ignoring the meaning of the second half. The choice of words to re-articulate museology is not arbitrary; the compound words show both continuity (in the second half) and change (in the first half). Ames advocates a 'liberated museology' (see Harrison, J. 1993: 171). Similarly, the International Workshop on New Museology, held in Spain in 1987, proposed that museology should strive for the 'liberation' of society (see Weil 1989: 32). It needs to be asked: from what is society to be liberated? The conceptual trail of 'liberation' eventually leads to 'reconciliation', as expressed in Galla's (1995) article, 'Urban museology: An ideology for reconciliation'. Although urban museums are discussed in detail, Galla does not define 'ideology' and 'urban museology' is feebly described as "an inclusive museological discourse" (ibid: 45). The museological exclusion of all that is non-urban highlights the irony of such discourse. In practically identical language, Teather (1991: 413) suggests of 'museum studies': "We are building the skills of deconstructing our ideologies and itemizing the politics of exclusion versus inclusion." These simplistic views—which dichotomise realms of thought into liberated and unliberated, urban and provincial, exclusive and inclusive, and old and new—demonstrate that deconstructing ideologies is the same ideological process as constructing ideologies. Significantly, the 'new museology' is depicted as an "ideological movement" (Stam 1993: 272) and prior to the emergence of 'new museology', museology "remained blind to ideology" (Witcomb 1994: 240). Part IV will elaborate whose ideology has seen the light.

Another affixed museology has been inspired by the prevailing economic environment within which museums operate. Teather (1991: 414) has invented the term 'economuseology' to underline the growing influence of economics—particularly in the form of commercialisation—upon museological endeavours in the United Kingdom. Conforti (1995: 345) outlines the same context underpinning American "shifts in museological values" elaborated as "pragmatism driven by a kind of market consciousness". Similarly, J. Harrison (1993: 166) identifies in the 1990s, what she labels "another type of 'new museology'" which she links to the business management model of the museum combined with the Disneyland model of presentation. This 'newer' new museology or 'economuseology', in Teather's terms, is simply an 'old' museology shifted to the market-place, for the primary concern is still *methods*, albeit those of economic rationalism and museum rationalisation.

'Museum studies', assumed to be a transparent, self-defining expression, is less afflicted by affixes. However, what is lacking in word qualifiers is compensated by quantity so that the sheer volume of words articulates the status of 'discipline'. For instance, Sherman and Rogoff (1994a: xviii) proclaim that their volume, *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, marks "the coming of age of museum studies as a discipline in its own right". 'Age' and the 'coming of age' are two of the sub-plots in the museological story. The conventional master plot is the study of museums, which have also "come of age", according to an editorial in *Journal of Material Culture* (1996, 1(1): 6). At this juncture, it is relevant to examine the process of 'coming of age'.

For museology (museography, museum studies), this rite of passage, rather than consummated, appears to be in a prolonged liminal phase. In the dialectic between the 'muse' and the 'logy' this could be promising, for it is in the liminal phase that the greatest potential for creativity occurs (Turner 1974: 255). Indeed, the numerous incarnations of museology may be viewed as expressions of this liminal process. Nonetheless, these new appellations also express fundamental museum preoccupations: collecting, classifying, naming. Sola (1991: 134) believes in the wondrous museological opportunity "to be a grown-up and yet be able to choose one's name". This philosophy as applied to the museological 'name' ought not be confused with the Confucian outlook on the 'rectification' of names (the correct use of terms). 'Coming of age' is another term that

requires 'rectification', for in museology it is often conceptualised as a finished product rather than a transitional state. Halpin assumes that now museology has attained "its *maturity*, [it] can challenge, *play with*, and separate itself from the always serious academic voice" (1997: 56, emphases added). Again, the element of liminality is apparent in the expression 'play with' but the belief in 'maturity' needs to be examined more closely in the wider context of multiple academic voices, as follows.

### **Museology on the Margins**

Just over a decade ago, Dominguez (1986: 546) asserted that "museology has been relegated to the status of a non-issue in general anthropology journals". The status of an 'issue' has now been achieved in journals such as *Museum Anthropology* and *American Anthropologist*, the latter of which has a regular section on exhibition reviews. Moreover, the museum has become a new 'object' of study, a new inanimate 'other' of anthropological investigation. Cossons (1991: 15) suggests that critiques of the museum "have moved [it] from the twilight to the spotlight". Who have been the movers? Anna Jones (1993: 203) locates them in academia: "A trend toward criticism of museum practice from academic anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and even English professors, is creating new tensions between museums and the academy." Similarly, Conforti (1995: 339-340) identifies the most powerful critiques—which support a "virtual publishing industry in the 1980s and 1990s academia"—as those coming from outside the museum's frame.

The earlier concern that museology was a 'non-issue' has been inverted. Apprehension that other 'logies' are 'encroaching' on the traditional domain of museology is a relatively recent phenomenon. Teather's (1991: 404) comments reverberate such concerns: "... there has been an explosion of more theoretical views of the museum emerging from anthropology, sociology and semiotics, many prepared by academics interested in museums but who study them from external perspectives". Interestingly, the division between internal and external perspectives also highlights an implicit 'Us and Them' perspective—a puzzling position for a 'discipline' whose essence is identified as multi-disciplinarity (see Dubé 1994). A more detailed examination of the multi-disciplinary setting occurs later in the chapter.

The questioning of disciplinary status, content and theory is a cross-disciplinary commonality. Anthropology provides particularly germane examples. Wagner (1981: 27) issues a cautionary note on anthropological constructs: "... they are part of our understanding, not its object, and we treat them as 'real' at the peril of turning anthropology into a wax museum of curiosities ...". Giddens (1995: 274) insists:

To persist with a substantive definition of anthropology as about non-modern societies and cultures would mean turning the subject into a version of museum studies. The anthropologist would be a sort of curator of an historical museum of humanity's past.

The irony for museological knowledge is not its questionable epistemological status but its reduction to an apocalyptic warning in the hierarchy of knowledge fields. Earlier concerns about museology as a marginal enterprise are now turning into anxieties about marginalisation. 'Coming of age', as process or as construct, needs to be viewed in this wider academic context—a context where museology is considered "on the *fringes* of academic circles" (Teather 1991: 404, emphasis in original).

### **Disciplinary and Non-Disciplinary Approaches**

Whereas museology is characterised by its cross-disciplinary approaches, other disciplines seldom look to museology as a source of inspiration (see also Sola 1991: 133). Weil (1988b: 33) questions whether the body of knowledge known as museology has the scope and depth to require its own course of study. Others, less pessimistic, proceed to fill in the gaps of museological knowledge by collecting 'disciplines'. Dubé (1994: 47) acknowledges that although museology lacks a "clear or formal structure", its very strength lies in its multi-disciplinary base. van Mensch (1989a: 85) maintains that museology is a "science" but admits it is "highly determined by inter-, supra- or multidisciplinary scholarship". In summary, a collection of disciplines sustains a 'scientific discipline' called museology which is devoid of its own theories, methods, and structure. Teather (1991: 403) who concedes that "[t]he subject, theory, structure and inner logic of museology is not readily apparent", then proceeds to prophesy a "museological renaissance" (ibid: 414). This is a perplexing contradiction for the logic of a 'renaissance' implies a pre-existing condition.

It is pertinent here to explore a related field of study, material culture studies, to examine alternative approaches to disciplinary status. An editorial in the recently launched *Journal of Material Culture* (1996 1(1): 13) emphasises that it is advantageous that material culture is not a discipline because by being "undisciplined" it avoids the rigidity of structures and the rules of boundary maintenance. Interestingly, this editorial (ibid: 7) positions museology within material culture boundaries: "As museums give rise to museology, it becomes clear that the point of articulation with the rest of the academic world is through material culture studies." However, the customary 'points of articulation' have been, according to Maroevic (1995: 28), through the *scientific disciplines* of art history, archaeology, anthropology and natural sciences. The discipline of history should not be omitted and the historical impact of the natural sciences, particularly evolutionary theory, will be examined in Parts II and IV. Notably, museology has followed the evolutionary path of spawning a 'new' self, as was the case with the 'new anthropology', 'new archaeology', and the 'new history' (see respectively, Foster 1994: 374; Isaac 1971: 124; Schlereth 1980: 1). However, none of these disciplines has exhibited the same collector's passion for affixes as museology. It is also pertinent that these disciplines, which traditionally provision the museological enterprise, undergo episodes of identity crises (on anthropology, archaeology and history, see respectively, Asad 1973a; Fletcher 1989; Patterson 1989). What does this imply for museology? Predictably, museology has "a serious crisis of institutional identity and a crisis of concept" (Sola 1992c: 102).

Crossing the boundary into the field of 'undiscipline', however, may not alter the substantive character of museology. The anomaly of museology is that it cannot escape the limits of its institution—the museum. Museology is trapped in its own zoo whereas, in comparison, zoology is not confined to nor identified with the zoo. The zoo analogy is deliberate for the zoo (a display of living collections) belongs to the larger taxonomic scheme of the 'museum', according to the ICOM definition (ICOM 1994a: 278). Moreover, the analogy provides another level of interpretation in which the museum is "a paradox; like a lion's cage in a zoo where history or art pads restlessly up and down with blunt, soft teeth" (Krusse quoted in Kavanagh 1983: 141). The 'blunt, soft teeth' of museology would be an analogical extension for "it is impossible to found a scientific, theoretical endeavour

on the basis of one sole institution" (Sola 1991: 133). Whilst museology may use multi-disciplinary approaches, all approaches lead to the museum—the museological cage.

### **Spreading the Word of Museology**

In 1970 Wittlin (1970: 216) underlined that museology was "a vacuous term". Over a quarter of a century later, there is not one 'vacuous' museology but many, tagged with the rhetoric of their affixes. In addition, Stam (1993: 267) identifies the "rhetoric of the New Museology" in the languages of structuralism and deconstruction. Cameron (1992a: 384) adds the museological appropriation of "political rhetoric". Another rhetoric speaks in the language of museological mystification. Cameron (1995: 48) indicates that "[museology] does get lost in the thicket of terminology we have invented—museonomy, musealia, museography, museality—and other museale epithets" ('museal' terms are clarified in Chap. 7). It is generally accepted that all disciplines have a repertoire of invented terminology. Moreover, invented words may reveal museological minds constantly at play in their liminal phase. However, museological neologisms could also work to disguise an epistemological void. What does it mean to be told that "the new museology *museumizes* the community" (Halpin 1997: 53, emphasis added)?

Cameron (1995: 48), who acknowledges that museology beats around its terminological bushes, nevertheless maintains that a definition of this "new 'science'" is possible. Definitions of museology have not been discussed to date because they are largely bereft of meaning. Three brief examples may suffice to illustrate this point. Cameron (1995: 48) simply proposes that museology is about 'why', not about 'how to'. This formulation fails to consider how 'why' operates without a 'how to' or how 'how to' materialises without being informed by a 'why'. Teather (1991: 403) suggests that museology is easily defined as "the study of museums", but adds pragmatically, "What is difficult is getting beyond definitions". An ICOM (1986: xiii) publication, deceptively entitled *Dictionarium Museologicum*, states: "It is not a dictionary of museology, although it contains the word stock of this developing discipline." The *Dictionarium*, which is not a dictionary, lists the equivalents of the word 'museology' in twenty European languages (ibid: 210).

Museology could be considered a 'logy' without a 'muse' or a 'muse' without a 'logy' or an area of study devoid of both. One field of study has assumed diverse and multiple forms. There is no common appellation, no definitive definition, no single 'science' nor a single approach to the study of museums. The museological condition illustrates Hoepfner's (1987: 27) premise that knowledge is an 'artefact' shaped by society. If knowledge is considered an artefact, it does not imply that it is a finished product. The museological story is a continuous process of articulating both the 'muse' and the 'logy' in order to shape a museum-specific knowledge which is specifically Euro-centred—but with global ambitions.

Museology has a global ideology and is informed by a pervasive belief in its 'universal' relevance. Teather (1991: 415), for instance, talks of a "modern global museology" for the future. van Mensch, at the beginning of his article, claims that museology "*is now* an accepted discipline all over the world" (1989a: 85, emphasis added). However, the contradictions within museology are mirrored in his own argument, for at the conclusion of his article, van Mensch proclaims that museology "as a scientific discipline *will become* ... universally accepted" (ibid: 95 emphasis added). The issue is not whether museology is or will be a 'scientific discipline' but whether museology is, or should be, 'universal'. As with the term 'global', 'universal' may be limited to a worldview, which often represents only one part of the world, and which proposes to proselytise the rest. In the report of a regional assembly of ICOM in Asia and the Pacific, the Chairman of the ICOM International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM), refers to ICOFOM's "museology apostles" and the work of the "voluntary missionary" (Sofka 1989: 15). The missionary zeal of museology and its contemporary colonial narratives will be examined more fully in Part IV.

The geography of museology brings us full circle to its origins. Kuhn (1996), the historian of 'logy', has demonstrated how science is contingent upon culture and society. Scientific movements in the realm of ideas and paradigms can be linked to wider movements in society. The three Western 'births' of museology according to Sola, Cameron, and Pearce, can be re-examined in this context. Its 'birth' in the 1970s was produced by the dramatic changes in contemporary society (Sola 1992b: 393); its 'birth' in the late nineteenth century was the result of the movement for universal

education (Cameron 1995: 48); and a 'museological structure' emerged during the Renaissance and its philosophy of knowledge (Pearce 1992: 116). These three contemporary views concur that a particular socio-cultural climate of ideas gave rise to museology, but diverge significantly on when it came into being. One must also heed the unvoiced story: museology has *yet* to come into being. Pearce, herself, refers to Kuhn's argument on the production of knowledge to point out the "social character and consequent, bias of museums" (1992: 116). Such insights, extrapolated to museology, also imply acknowledging its knowledge biases.

The word for 'knowledge' or 'science' in Bahasa Malaysia is *ilmu*, which is derived from the Arabic. *Ilmu* encompasses several inter-related meanings: knowledge, knowledge of the traditional type, magic, study and science. European sciences are often expressed as *ilmu*, such as *ilmu bahasa* (linguistics) or *ilmu falsafah* (philosophy). One who has knowledge or who has magical powers is *berilmu*. A vast lexical repertoire exists for *ilmu* as magic (ranging from sorcery to supernatural magic). In contrast, *silap mata* (literally 'mistaken eyes') is used for Western-style magic tricks. This linguistic detour is necessary to avoid the Western bias of concepts and terminology. For instance, the museologist would be indivisibly *berilmu* in the following examples: "If we pretend to be what we are not and to possess powers which we do not have we are practising magic, not curatorship ..." (Pearce 1992: 264); "What is this myth whose magic sustains our power?" (Cameron 1993: 166). The *ilmu* of museums is not what it seems, and this is not due to mistaken eyes. Elsewhere in this study, other key terms will be elaborated in Bahasa Malaysia (based on the Malay language) in order to comprehend socio-linguistic nuances of knowledge.

## Conclusion

One may be ready to hunt elephants and tigers but the bugs beneath the museological pillow bite. What type of *ilmu* do we have when the histories are not comprehensive, the questions remain unasked, the assumptions not addressed, the ethnocentricity unexamined, and the words not unequivocal? Significantly, in Bahasa Malaysia no linguistic connection exists between *ilmu* and the museum (*muzium*); museology is *muziologi*. For the purpose of consistency, I shall use the term 'museology' rather than 'museography' or 'museum studies' in this study.

However, it is not a statement about its disciplinary status for there is no single discipline but "a kaleidoscope of approaches clumsily labelled 'museology'" (Dubé 1994: 48). In addition to museology, other knowledge bases such as anthropology, sociology, socio-linguistics, archaeology, history, political science and material culture studies, will also be used in the tradition of multi-disciplinarity.

The museological story may have echoed a familiar narrative: a quest for a grand theory, for academic credentials, and for a 'new' name. However, there is a unique moral to the story. Museology does not passively study its object—the museum—it actively shapes it. The logic of museology attains its logical conclusion not in a study of what the museum is or was, but in a vision of what the museum *should be*. Crimp (1985: 49) discerns an inflexible pattern in this process: "And the history of museology is a history of all the various attempts to deny the heterogeneity of the museum ...". The next chapter will examine how the museum is constructed as a museological artefact.

## Chapter 2. The Museum as Museological Artefact

*Don't ask a monkey to settle an argument about bananas.*

(Dayak proverb)

### Introduction

Shelton (1990) in his article, 'In the lair of the monkey: Notes towards a post-modernist museography', aims to expose what is unwritten, unrecorded, undisplayed and unclassified—all swallowed up by the literary monkey of Jorge Luis Borges. This chapter is not intended to disclose all the unknowns in the monkey's lair nor to settle the monkey's post-modern arguments. Indirectly, the inquiry will examine whether there is sufficient debate to constitute a museological 'argument' by directly addressing the questions of museum histories, definitions and boundaries. The first question, 'when is the museum?', also subsumes the questions of 'what is the museum?' and 'why is the museum?'. My purpose is not to provide comprehensive histories nor detailed conceptualisations but to analyse the museological shapes of the museum. These forms will then be discussed in relation to ideas of the museum in Malaysia.

### When is the museum?

The previous chapter examined origins to understand the development of museology. Similarly, to comprehend concepts of the museum necessitates consideration of its genealogy. Histories of the museum begin in several times. They are not mutually exclusive, but different strands are accentuated in museological writings. On the continuum of credibility, I shall begin with time memorial and move toward time immemorial.

The most recent history focuses on museums as modern European phenomena, giving a dating of approximately two hundred years (e.g. Cameron 1992b: 8; Sola 1992c: 102). Bennett (1995), in *The Birth of the Museum*, also identifies the nineteenth century as the 'birthing' period of the museum. The 'birth' involved the establishment of public museums, many of which arose from the transformation of royal and private

collections. The shift from private to public domain underlined a more profound change: the public domain became the province of government (Bennett 1995: 28). The transformation also entailed the introduction of scientific classification schemes and the interpretation of objects (Frese 1960: 8). The emergence of a museum profession (Ames 1992: 17) and knowledge of conservation and restoration techniques yielded a different vision of temporality. Because objects were to be preserved in 'perpetuity', museums could 'possess' and, indeed, shape posterity. Consequently, a future time implicitly informs the 'museum age'—shorthand for the nineteenth-century growth of public museums. The 'museum age' was conceptual, temporal, as well as spatial: the 'museum movement' being an equivalent term for this period. The 'museum movement' aptly expresses the physical movement of the museum's form to Europe's colonies. Welsh maintains that the museum's "short history can be traced directly to colonial expansion and domination" (quoted in Ames 1992: 148). The complex circumstances of the establishment of museums in colonial Malaysia will be critically discussed in Part II.

An older history locates the 'birth' of the museum in a Renaissance closet. A beginning in the 'closet of rarities' or the 'cabinet of curiosities' is exemplified in the title, *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Impey & MacGregor 1985b). The 'birth' may be pinpointed with even greater precision: "[T]he museum as a modern institution *came to birth* around the middle of the fifteenth century in the Renaissance cities and courts of Italy ..." (Pearce 1992: 1, emphasis added). The Renaissance is thus translated as the 'naissance' of the museum. This period produced the "prototype of the modern museum" (Stocking 1985a: 6) or the 'proto-museum' (Newton 1994: 270; Walsh 1992: 18). The museological appropriation of the 'cabinets' means equating the individual (the collector) with the institutional (the museum as collective collector) and maintaining an unqualified concept of collecting. This Great Chain of Having is reiterated by Pearce (1992: 92) who claims that by approximately 1650, "collecting had become the widespread mania which remains its characteristic up to the present day". By logical extension, the contemporary museum would be institutionalised 'mania'. The line of historical continuity from 'cabinets of curiosity' to contemporary

museums is also endorsed in *The Origins of Museums* so that "museums are still in the business of 'keeping and sorting' the products of Man and Nature" (Impey & MacGregor 1985a: 1). As will be argued at a later stage, sorting genealogies will enable an understanding of museums as 'products of Man and Nature'.

Another museum "prototype" (Alexander 1979: 6) begins in classical history and Greek mythology. The most common approach is to trace the etymology of 'museum' to its Greek derivation, *mouseion*, which means a seat of the Muses (ibid). The next procedure is to link the nine Muses to Ptolemy Soter who, in about the third century BC, erected a learned institution in Alexandria to venerate the nine goddesses (ibid). The Mouseion at Alexandria thus becomes the *first* museum (e.g. Alexander 1979: 6; August 1983: 137; Vergo 1989: 1). Although museological writers concede that the Mouseion took the shape of a philosophical institution (Alexander 1979: 6; Ripley 1978: 24), the idea of a 'collection' is also highlighted (Alexander 1979: 6; Vergo 1989: 1).

Several museological gaps prevail in this 'historical' account. Firstly, the history of the Mouseion is 'obscure' (Pearce 1992: 93) and secondly, the history of the Muses is equally enigmatic (Jobes 1962: 1138). From an original three of varying parentage, the goddesses became fixed at nine, each with the province of epic poetry, history, love poetry, music, tragedy, sacred song, dance, comedy and astronomy (ibid: 1139). The Muses were not divine curators, collecting and sorting objects of the material world (see also Sande 1992: 186). However, museologists are undeterred; the Muses came to be associated with 'collections'—the gifts and offerings of devotees (Ripley 1978: 25). The emphasis on continuity has eschewed other discontinuities: the Muses are female but the hereditary line from *mouseion* to *museum* has, in many aspects, disinherited the female line. This ancestral paradox remains unexamined in feminist critiques of the museum such as 'The legacy of Eve' (Jones & Pay 1990).

Inexplicably, one thread of mythological continuity has been entirely overlooked in museological literature. The Muses possessed the gift of prophecy (Guirand 1994: 119). Museums are assumed to have the same power: "Our self evident and central concern for posterity can have the power and promise of prophecy" (Sullivan 1985: 14). To assert that the museum is the "institutional descendant" (Newton 1994: 269) of the

Mouseion serves to both remythologise the 'descendant' and legitimise a claim to classical and divine origins, which may be considered a better pedigree than birth in a closet.

The final history under consideration appropriates time immemorial and mere mortals. Lewis (1992: 5), in 'Museums and their precursors: A brief world survey', locates the museum's origins in "an inherent human propensity" for acquisitiveness and his material 'evidence' is extracted from Palaeolithic times. A similar view is expressed in the belief that collecting is "instinctive" (Alexander 1979: 9), a "fundamental human trait" (Bloom et al. 1984: 35) or "a universal behavior" identifiable in "all times and all places" (Cameron 1971: 14). Such perspectives imply a series of equivalences: collecting is a human trait; collecting equals the museum; the museum is a human trait. According to this line of reasoning, the 'proto-museum' was born within the 'proto-human'. Thus, one need not search elsewhere for origins: the museum was in the beginning.

Pearce (1992: 90) presents a chronological chart entitled 'Genesis and history of museums' which spans the histories outlined in this section (see Fig. 1, p. 27). In this scheme, museum histories appear as orderly and inevitable as the evolutionary museum displays of the nineteenth century. This process of 'natural' museum evolution is traced back to its "genesis"—"psychic roots deep in the prehistory of European society" (Pearce 1992: 90). The museological mysticism of 'psychic roots' recalls the divine Muses and the deified Museum. Pearce's transcendentalism disguises a deeper mystery: if we are to talk of the museum's 'psychic roots', why are they specifically European? Lewis (1992) overcomes this dilemma by applying his "inherent human propensity" theory of collecting to other societies. No concept of collecting is outlined (except that it is inherently human) and Eurocentric collecting is made natural, universal and inevitable. Lewis' subheadings, 'Early Islamic collecting' and 'Early oriental collecting' (ibid: 6-7), reveal more about the assumptions of the museologist than the 'collecting' activities of these societies. Viewed together, Pearce's and Lewis' propositions imply that although 'non-European' societies have this 'inherent human propensity' to collect, their 'psychic roots' are lacking.

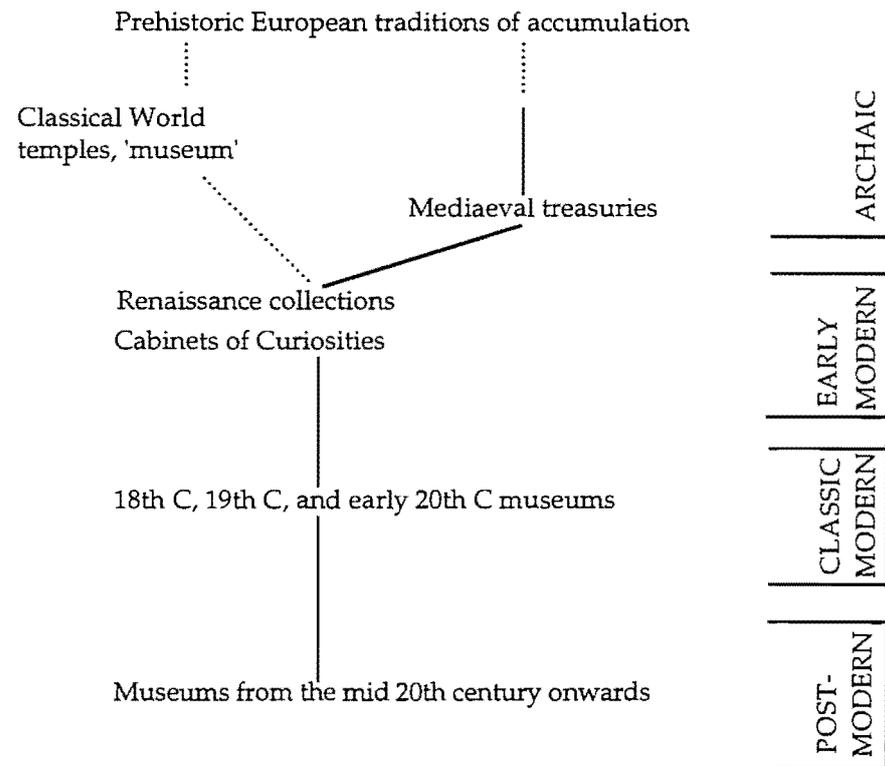


Fig. 1. Pearce's evolutionary scheme of museum origins

Source: Pearce, S. 1992, *Museums, Objects and Collections*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, p. 90.

Although museologists use the expression the 'birth' or 'genesis' or 'history' of the museum, with differing meanings and dates, in the final analysis they may be merged into unitary totality—exemplified by Pearce's evolutionary scheme (similarly, for an evolutionary sequence in narrative form, see Kaplan 1995: 41-2). The dating techniques are strikingly similar; they start from the same premise—that 'museumness' is measured against an 'historical' idea of collecting and collections. Hoepfner (1987: 29) applies the term 'cultural artefact' to modern theories which create divisions that did not exist in the past. The term could be extended to modern judgements which forge epistemological continuities that did not exist in the past. As with museum artefacts, museologists deem it crucial to date the museum as artefact. Dating the museum is only superficially about 'history': identity, meaning and legitimacy equally shape the narrative. These multiple stories provide varied answers to 'when is the museum?' and they also implicitly answer 'why is the museum?'. The human instinct theory, in particular, obviates the exigency for further interrogation. Whether the museum is 'inherent' or the outcome of a 'natural' evolutionary process, how does one argue against the 'laws of nature'? Significantly, the museum is museologically constructed as both a natural and artefactual form; it is a 'product of Man and Nature'.

### **Who or what is the museum?**

The museum as a 'natural' form, rather than an unnatural one, is reflected in museological writings replete with body metaphors. For instance, Strong (1983: 76, 78, 79) informs that the museum is a "living organism"; its exhibitions are the "museum's tongue"; and its "central artery" is the permanent galleries. Pearce (1994b: 62) states: "Collections are the heart and soul of any museum." Kavanagh (1994: 7) claims: "If the collections are the skeletal system, then the visitors are the life blood of the museum." In an anatomical contrast, Cossons (1991: 24) indicates: "The lifeblood of the museum is their collections, the heartbeat is provided by good curatorship and conservation." Wittlin (1970: 143) locates the museum's "navel cord" which is still attached to private collections of the past. Cameron hopes to transform the museum body by 'A change of heart' (1992a) and by 'Getting out of our skin' (1992b). The 'body' is a metaphorical sanctuary which offers museological rationalisations for the

'natural' order of things. The body metaphors translate the museum into a 'natural' body, with 'natural' functions and a 'natural' right to exist.

The body metaphors accentuate the anatomical role of collections, although the anatomies are classified in an erratic, 'unscientific' scheme. The question of 'what is the museum?' has also been directly addressed in museum histories. The common core of the histories is embedded in collecting—the doing, having and *being* of museums. The questions of 'when', 'what' and 'why' are museologically indivisible. Alexander (1979), in a chapter entitled 'What is a museum?', includes the subheadings: 'Museum definitions', 'Ancient and medieval prototypes', 'Museum functions'. Kavanagh makes the links less explicit: "The better the definition, the better the museum, and the more able we can be at making a lucid and *convincing case* for it" (1994: 1, emphasis added). Kavanagh (ibid: 1) also highlights the definitional difficulties of museum committees at the national and international level "to put meaning into the word 'museum'". To put meaning into this word is a creative and artefactual process, as a discussion of definitional formulas will demonstrate.

Approaches to museum definitions are aptly summarised by Teather (1991: 412): "The very definitions of museums [sic] are being pushed and reformed all the time—a definition is chaos." Nevertheless, some patterns are still perceptible in the 'chaos'. One pattern may be called the definition by negation—what the museum is not. Wittlin (1970: 203) offers: "[A]n establishment in which objects are not used at all or are not used as main carriers of messages are not museums ...". The negative definition is also exemplified by Moore (1997: 23): "For museums are not museums if they are not centrally about material culture." The usage of the term 'material culture' implies a wider conceptual scope than the word 'object'. Reeves reiterates this perspective: "Museums are, by their very definition, institutions interested in the material culture of society ... As a result *a concept of culture* necessarily occupies the core of any museum's work" (1989: 121, emphasis added).

Paradoxically, the word 'culture' rarely appears in standard definitions of the museum, a condition called definition by omission. Hudson (1977: 3) indicates that "Anglo-Saxon countries tend to avoid the word 'culture'", adding that the International Council of Museums (ICOM) "has acted prudently in omitting it from its current [1974] definition of a museum".

Furthermore, Hudson (1977: 2-3) observes that "developing countries" use the word 'culture' in their museum definitions but cautions that the word has "nationalistic overtones" (ibid: 3), hence "community" is the preferred replacement (ibid: 3). The implication is that 'Anglo-Saxon' museums exist in a nationalistically-free zone, safe from the 'contagion' of culture. Thorough policing of its definitional boundaries has kept the word in a cultural exile in the revised ICOM definition of 1986 (ICOM 1994a: 277-8). The word appears so conceptually threatening that no chances are taken that it may infiltrate through 'material *culture*'—the expression 'material evidence' is used instead (ibid: 278). Notably, in a further revision of 1989 the only change was the gender equality of 'material evidence': 'of man' became 'of people'. The definition by omission is as communicative as the definition by commission.

Another pattern is the form of chaos itself, as proposed by Hooper-Greenhill (1992: 191): "There is no essential museum. The museum is not a pre-constituted entity that is produced in the same way at all times." Weil similarly suggests that "differences ... far exceed whatever elements [museums] have in common" (quoted in Moore 1997: 14). Consequently, the frequent reference to the 'museum community' (e.g. Blanchet & Bernard 1989: 77; Bloom et al. 1984: 32-3; Hudson 1977: 3; Shaman 1987: 275; Teather 1991: 413) must be deemed a particularly pronounced delusion. Interestingly, Kavanagh who argued the case for tighter definitions later concedes the chaos of possibilities by acknowledging the 'multi-culturalism' of museum forms: "We invest our own *culture* in the institutions we create" (1994: 3, emphasis added). This also applies to the definitions we make, even though they do not include the word 'culture'.

Reformers of the museum definition point out that definitions "tend to be static, whilst reality is dynamic" (van Mensch 1988: 10). The question needs to be asked: are museologists talking about the same 'reality' or different realities? Whose reality (and whose definition) count in the museum world? It should be explained at the outset that the museum world is Europe and America, not because of supremacy in museum numbers but on the basis of the sheer output of museological texts. The three most quoted definitions originate in this museum world. They comprise the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the United Kingdom's Museums Association (MA) and the American Association of Museums (AAM). This trinity weaves the largest pattern in the fabric of definitional

chaos. Ambrose and Paine (1993: 8) arrange the ICOM, AM and AAM definitions in a box, almost as if its boundaries could keep out the impending chaos. The trinity is reproduced in *Museum Provision and Professionalism*, edited by Kavanagh (Ambrose & Paine 1994: 15-6). It is also reproduced in Moore (1997: 13), safely boxed in. The ICOM, AM and AAM definitions also appear singly or in various combinations in innumerable museological texts.

These three dominant definitions duplicate a catalogue of key words: institution; collects or acquires; conserves or preserves; exhibits; material evidence; and the public. The conceptually loaded term 'institution' is explained in the MA definition as "a formalised establishment which has a long-term purpose" (Ambrose & Paine 1993: 8). The anthropologist, Mary Douglas, stresses that every institution acquires its legitimacy through "a formula that founds its rightness *in reason and in nature*" (1986: 45, emphasis added). The 'nature' formula, in museum histories and body metaphors, has already been investigated. The 'reason' component is carried in the rest of the key words which describe 'natural' functions. Weil (1989: 29) justifiably argues that functions, that is, collecting, preserving and exhibiting, should not be mistaken for the museum's *raison d'être*. He shifts the question from 'what is a museum?' to the equally problematic issue of whether museums have "a positive impact" on people's lives (ibid: 32). However, to realign definitions from functions to purposes, does not alter the assumption that the institution (of nature and reason) will benefit the public. Tausie (1979: 65), commenting on the Pacific Islands, sees nothing inherently beneficial in the museum idea: "The western concept of putting things on show may be hastening the death of our creative art." If the histories follow Eurocentric contours, the definitions equally do so. In the metaphorical body language of the museum, this translates as: "Eurocentricity seems to be *genetically coded* in our museum ethos" (Cameron 1992a: 382, emphasis added).

Another pattern, with a strong hold on museological minds, is manifested in the 'real thing'. Although it is not articulated as a 'definition', it plays a definitive role in identifying the essence of the museum. The logic of the 'real thing' argues that the museum has 'authentic' artefacts, that is, the 'real things' which distinguish the museum from other institutions (e.g. Finlay 1977: 171; Hudson 1977: 3; Pearce 1992: 24)). My intent is not to

discuss the philosophy of reality, but to understand how one real thing (the artefact) makes another real thing: the museum. The conceptual trail from the 'real thing' to the 'real' museum is typified by Watkins (1994). Firstly, Watkins (ibid: 27) begins with a 'real' definition: "A quick reading of any dictionary definition of the word 'museum' should be sufficient to gain an understanding that objects are of prime importance to the publicly-recognized museum concept." After establishing that the central position of real objects determines "what museums really are" (ibid: 29), Watkins concludes that one must "separate the real museums from the pretenders" (ibid: 33). In reality, the two real things—the artefact and the museum—are mutually defining. The consummate irony, however, is revealed in 'A real museum for fake objects: The Museo del Falso' (Colby 1994). This Italian museum, with no permanent collection, displays counterfeit objects. The museum meets its antithesis and museumifies it.

### **Shaping Museum Boundaries**

Watkins' division of museums into the 'real' and the 'pretenders' introduces the issue of the museum's conceptual boundaries. Vaessen (1989: 27) deploys the term "invasion" to describe the current crisis of the museum's boundaries—boundaries which formerly articulated and maintained "a special identity" (ibid: 26). The museum's identity has been delineated in histories and definitions, but its 'identity crisis' (Sola 1992c: 102) closely follows the contours of its shifting boundaries. What counts as a museum is a contemporary existential dilemma. The museum landscape includes: "quasi-museums" (Devenish 1986: 191); "fly-by-night museums" (Hudson 1987: 194); "para-museums" (van Mensch 1988: 5); "non-museums" (Sande 1992: 185); the "anti-museum" (Cameron 1993: 168); the "metamuseum" (Bal 1992: 560); and Watkins' "pretenders" (1994: 33).

Watkins (1994: 32) fixes the limits by firstly eliminating the 'pretenders': "Museum work cannot be entrusted to businesses or civic centers ...". He then proceeds to contract the boundaries so that only those *museums* that concentrate on "instruction through objects" are called the "true museums" (ibid: 34). In this tautological exercise the 'true museums' are the "real museums" (ibid: 33). Sola (1992c: 106) offers a more realistic appraisal: "The truth is, we do not know any more what a museum institution is. ... All the former limits are blurred ...". Sola's perspective is

diametrically opposed to that of Watkins. Sola (1991: 130) stretches the boundaries to include "museum-like institutional forms" and under the rubric of the heritage care sector, the borders dissolve, promising a panorama "from scientific institutions to the theme and leisure parks, from closed to open spaces, from movable to immovable objects, from dead objects to living beings" (ibid: 130). By shifting the parameters, the museum becomes just one of several "heritage care institutions [which] will, like social glands, pump in the secretion of collective wisdom ..." (ibid: 132). Strikingly, this portrayal recalls the analogies from nature. Whereas Sola sees the blurring of boundaries as a boundless opportunity for museums, Watkins (1994: 32) darkly sees "forces that will destroy them". Between the two poles exists a range of opinions that cluster in varying degrees around the ideas of inclusion or exclusion.

Another consideration is whether territorial expansion is the equivalent of philosophical expansiveness. In addition to institutions labelled 'museums', ICOM recognises the following sites as falling within its definitional domain (ICOM 1994a: 278):

- (a) Conservation institutes and exhibition galleries maintained by libraries and archive centres;
- (b) Natural, archaeological, and ethnographical monuments and sites and historical monuments and sites of a museum nature, for their acquisition, conservation and communication activities;
- (c) Institutions displaying live specimens such as botanic and zoological gardens, aquaria, vivaria, etc.;
- (d) Nature reserves;
- (e) Science centres and planetariums.

In ICOM's accountancy, the formula, "to put meaning into the word 'museum'" (Kavanagh 1994: 1), means computing a 'collection'. Similarly, the American Association of Museums gathers under the term 'museum': botanical gardens, zoological parks, aquaria, planetariums, historical societies, and historic houses and sites that meet its definitional range (Ambrose & Paine 1993: 8). The subheading, 'The expanding museum universe' (Bloom et al. 1984: 18), also highlights the expanse of American institutions dwelling in the 'museum universe'. Although museums have been examined as microcosms (see, for example, Hooper-Greenhill 1992), museologists have yet to analyse the macrocosmic museum enterprise, with its expanding inventory of institutional stock-taking.

To pronounce 'quasi-museum', 'para-museum', 'non-museum', 'meta-museum' or 'anti-museum' is also a macrocosmic declaration. The word 'museum' is qualified but not abandoned. An exception to the museological norm of expanding the museum's territorial and linguistic domain is Sola's (1991) approach of subsuming the museum in a larger heritage care category. Others suggest the solution lies in discarding the word 'museum' (see, for example, Ames 1992: xv). The arguments for and against boundary maintenance may appear as two opposed forces—the traditionalists and the reformists—but this is a deceptive division. Neither semantics nor identity propels the 'debate'. The fundamental issue, in the language of the museum's evolutionary histories, is 'survival'. Watkins (1994: 34) talks of museums being "threatened" and Moore's rallying cry is that "we must *defend* museums ... as museums" (1997: 23, emphasis added). Sola (1987: 49) foresees a museum future plotted by three courses: their disappearance, their transformation into data bases, or their mobilisation for "environmental harmony" (museum futures are revisited in Chap. 12). The museological 'debate' is essentially about whether institutional survival can best be achieved by contracting, expanding or removing the boundaries.

Where one draws the lines of the museum underlines that the museum is a museological artefact, though still in the making. This is not only manifest in the shaping of definitions and institutional boundaries, but also in the telling of museum histories. In artefact studies any interpretation of the artefact must include its 'biography'. The examination of the museum's abridged 'biography' has attempted to unravel the ways in which the museum has been museologically constructed. The shape of this background knowledge has also cast shifting shadows over the museum idea in Malaysia.

### **Identifying the Museum in Malaysia**

Because the museum is a museological artefact, of European genesis and genetics, and documented in Euro-American discourses, the museum idea in Malaysia traditionally refers to these 'significant others'. Significantly, the Euro-American museological worldview largely excludes the 'other' in the outlines of museum definitions, institutional boundaries and museum histories (particularly, chronicles of colonialism, as will be

shown in Chap. 5). The extent of these Western monologues will be examined in the Malaysian museum literature. I shall also focus on museum parameters and categories to delineate what will 'count' as a museum in this study.

The Bahasa Malaysia word *muzium* is a legacy of British colonialism. This lexical connection frequently denotes an historical continuity, beginning with European museum ancestors: from the Mouseion, through the Renaissance cabinets, and until the eighteenth and nineteenth century public museums (e.g. Mohd Faisal 1995: 1-2; Mohd Redzuan 1991: 3-4; Mohd Zulkifli 1974: 5-6; Wan Zakaria 1995a). It is in this later period of a generalised European museum history that a particularised Malaysian museum history emerges as the 'beginning'. Malaysian museum history is habitually traced to the establishment of museums in the nineteenth century under British colonial rule (e.g. ASEAN 1988: 86; 1995: 55; Kamarul Baharin 1986: 103; Mohd Redzuan 1991: 5). However, the biological tenet of museology, the museum as an 'inherent human trait', is conspicuously absent in the Malaysian literature.

The Earl of Cranbrook, who worked at the Sarawak Museum between 1956 and 1958, in an article of 1992 commences with the "natural human instinct" theory of collecting (1992: 219), but he makes no attempt to extend the conceptual implications to Malaysian museums. He then proceeds to outline the familiar evolutionary sequence of European museum histories (ibid: 219-221). Cranbrook dismisses any possibility of a museum idea prior to the arrival of the British. He emphasises that although "collectable objects" (ibid: 220) featured in the history of Southeast Asian trade, a concept of the museum, as in the European sense of the word, did not exist. The assumption that the museum idea is both foreign and recent in Malaysia is rarely questioned. However, Othman (1988) claims that in Malaysia and Southeast Asia the museum idea has a pre-colonial history. He asserts that in the classical Malay empire, the royal palace was the educational and cultural centre of the empire, as well as the "custodian of the material culture of the empire" (ibid: 98). This could be an attempt to reinterpret, 'Malaysianise' or legitimise the museum idea (Othman's assertion will be further expounded in Chap. 8). Nevertheless, the standard colonial beginning embedded in European histories of the museum shows an overwhelming tenacity in Malaysian museum writings.

Definitions of the museum in Malaysia usually consist of an uncritical repetition of the ICOM definition of 1974 (see, for example, Mohd Redzuan & Mohd Kassim 1993: 3; Jabatan Muzium dan Antikuiti 1994: 112). van Mensch (1988: 5) surmises that the 1974 ICOM definition gradually became a "standard" and this appears to be the case in Malaysia. Wan Zakaria (1995a), after listing definitions from ICOM and the Museum Associations of Canada, America and the United Kingdom, questions the silence of the Museum Association of Malaysia which has yet to formulate its own definition. Although the ICOM definition is the most often quoted, its manifestation may be less pronounced. Mohd Redzuan and Mohd Kassim (1993: 8), under the heading 'The problems of museums in Malaysia', indicate that museums are not established according to the concept of museums as defined by ICOM. Interestingly, the 'problem' is perceived as not following the 'rules'; questioning the 'rules' is not considered.

Although the ICOM definition is superficially accepted as a 'standard', what is delimited as a museum is less uniform. A chronological perspective is necessary to arrive at a tentative conclusion of what counts as a museum in Malaysia. The 1977 *Directory of Museums in Malaysia* (Mohd Zulkifli 1977) includes: (1) museums with the status of national museums; (2) state museums; (3) departmental museums; (4) art gallery; (5) zoo and aquarium; (6) parks; and (7) caves. The same range of sites and institutions recognised as a 'museum' appears in the chapter on Malaysia in *The Directory of Museums of ASEAN* (ASEAN 1988), plus a new form, memorials. *Museums of Malaysia* (MTPB 1994) includes museums, art galleries and memorials but excludes zoos, parks and caves.

A paper produced by Jabatan Muzium dan Antikuiti (1994), the Department of Museums and Antiquities, cites the ICOM definition of 1974 and proposes that this definition may be adapted. The resulting version in Bahasa Malaysia (ibid: 112) is identical except for the ending: "*bukti-bukti sejarah, kebudayaan, dan alam semula jadi*", that is, 'material evidence of history, culture and the natural world'. Significantly, the word 'culture' has been retrieved. It is then proposed that only those institutions that accord with this definition and that are specially housed in a building "*dinamakan 'Muzium'*"—called a "Museum"—are to be classified as museums (ibid: 112). Curiously, the museums listed (ibid: app. A) include institutions that are not called 'museums', such as memorials and the

Sarawak Cultural Village. Another contradiction is that although this paper (ibid: 112) recognises ICOM's definitional boundaries (which include living displays and nature reserves), the parameters of the 'Muzium' omit zoos, parks and caves. Another paper entitled 'Museums, memorials and art galleries in Malaysia', produced by the Department of Museums and Antiquities (c. 1995), intimates that the triad in the title represents the conceptual scope of the museum. Zoos, parks and caves are excluded, as well as the Sarawak Cultural Village, but the National Science Centre and National Planetarium are included (ibid: 6).

What counts as a museum in Malaysia is in a state of flux, which also conforms to the larger museological pattern. Here, it is useful to re-examine Watkins' (1994: 32) exertions to erect lines of demarcation between the 'real' museums and the 'pretenders', the latter of which include museums managed by civic centres and businesses. Does this make the museums in civic centres in the State of Sarawak mere 'pretenders'? Are the museums managed by the Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation any less 'real' because they are a spatial fusion of museum and shopping centre? If these museums are recognised as 'museums' in Malaysia, it would be an ethnocentric exercise to apply external 'standards'. Hence, internal criteria will be used to measure the 'museumness' of the museum in Malaysia.

The contours of the Malaysian museum mould are not fixed and the internal criteria shift. The chronological account of the boundaries of the 'museum' has indicated both expansion and contraction. The *alam semula jadi* (the natural world), culturally expressed as zoos, aquariums, parks and caves, has been gradually eliminated from official museum literature and publications. This study will not include these sites because the boundaries are being closely delineated in the contemporary, Malaysian terms of reference. Those institutions that have remained the most immutable in the Malaysian chronology—the museum, the art gallery and the memorial—form the basis of this study. The conceptual scope also extends to those institutions that appear in the interstices of the boundaries (museologically labelled 'museum-like' institutions) for their ambiguous identity may provide insight into the reworking of the museum idea in Malaysia.

The total number of museums in the nation tends to fluctuate because to count museums one must first establish what counts as a museum. As of 1993, two papers (both written by staff of the Department of Museums and Antiquities) give a different tally: one figure is 52 and the other is over 60 (see respectively, Mohd Redzuan & Mohd Kassim 1993: 3; Kamarul Baharin 1993: 86). Neither paper delineates what constitutes a 'museum'. A year later, the total number has made a significant leap (not as a result of new museums). The Department of Museums and Antiquities (Jabatan Muzium dan Antikuiti 1994: app. A) lists a total of 78 museums comprising museums, art galleries, memorials, the Sarawak Cultural Village, as well as two museums to be established by the Department. In 1995, calculations show even less consensus. The Department of Museums and Antiquities (c. 1995), in 'Museums, memorials and art galleries in Malaysia', enumerates a total of 80 (inclusive of the National Science Centre and National Planetarium) for the year 1995. Another Department of Museums and Antiquities' estimate of the same year (Mohd Faisal 1995: 1) gives a figure of over 145 museums, although what is identified as a 'museum' is not revealed. As of 1997, the figure may be estimated at 88 museums, based on the core identity of museums, art galleries and memorials (a comprehensive list is provided in Chap. 8, Table 7).

The delineation of conceptual boundaries is only one aspect of identifying the museum. An equally important consideration is its categorisation. The Department of Museums and Antiquities (Jabatan Muzium dan Antikuiti 1994: 111) classifies museums as: (1) federal museums administered by the Federal Museums Department; (2) state museums administered by State Museum Boards; (3) state museums administered by State Museum Departments (only applicable to the States of Sabah and Sarawak); (4) departmental museums administered by government departments; and (5) museums administered by institutions of higher learning. The Department of Museums and Antiquities (c. 1995) reveals a slightly different classification scheme in 'Museums, memorials and art galleries in Malaysia'. The categories are listed as: (1) federal museums; (2) state museums; (3) specialised museums (most of which are managed by various government agencies); (4) departmental museums (mostly governmental); (5) private museums; (6) memorials; (7) art galleries (the last two types are under federal and state government structures).

These classification schemes indicate that museums are predominantly a government enterprise. If we regard the museum as an artefact, we may clearly discern the identity of the 'artefact-makers'. Whether such a high involvement in official museum-making translates as 'official' museum-products will be discussed in subsequent chapters. The idea of museums as the 'responsibility' of the Government has been traced to the British colonial period (see Jabatan Muzium dan Antikuiti 1994: 110). These considerations will be more fully explored in Part II. Another historical development concerns the unique position of the States of Sabah and Sarawak in Malaysian Borneo. The Department of Museums and Antiquities at the federal level has no jurisdiction over Sabah and Sarawak which have their own museum departments and their own cultural property legislation. Their autonomy may be traced to the political conditions underlying the formation of Malaysia in 1963. Part III of the thesis will elaborate on the shape of museums in the diversity of regional identity.

## Conclusion

Once the museological 'arguments' over histories and definitions have been distilled, the museum appears as a 'natural' and artefactual entity with elastic boundaries. The proverbial monkey knows what counts as a banana but what counts as a museum is more elusive. However, whose 'arguments' count are more visible—recorded in the Euro-American 'lair of the monkey'. The monkey warrior, Hanuman, from the Hindu epic *Ramayana*, is a familiar character in Southeast Asian *wayang kulit* (shadow play). Tentative attempts are being made to 'rescue' or 'Hanumanise' the museum idea in Malaysia. For instance, Wan Zakaria (1996: 11) stresses the need to rethink the museum idea for a Malaysian context. The art and substance of *wayang kulit* is in the play of the shadows, not the intricate and ornate puppets behind the screen. The shadow is the artefact; it is the 'real thing'. There is no 'real' museum. The museum's conceptual boundaries expand and contract; content is not constant; meaning is fluid. Yet, this museological diversity remains embedded in a mono-cultural worldview (even though the word 'culture' is banished from definitions) which casts its lengthened shadow. The museological questions of 'when', 'what' and 'why' is the museum also

implicitly reinforce 'whose' museum it is, as chronicled in the museum's multiple 'births'. Museology has gathered a miscellany of ideas into its 'lair' to assemble the museum as museological artefact. In this chapter I have referred to the idea of the museum as an artefact without formal exegesis of the concept, which is the focus of the following chapter.

### Chapter 3. Artefacts: Ideas of Things

*Every gallstone would like to become someone's lucky charm.*

(Malay proverb)

#### Introduction

Theories adopted from other disciplinary domains are the 'lucky charms' of museology. Collectively, such theories have extended museological content from functionality to philosophy. Nevertheless, each theory used to reflect on the museum idea bears its own 'reflection'. The first part of this chapter will briefly explore some of the more recent theories of the museum. However, my major theoretical concern may be summed up by the question: museums have artefacts but are museums artefacts? In analogous terms, I am taking the 'gallstone' approach because the 'artefact' is primarily the province of museology and material culture studies. Ironically, the idea of the museum as artefact has been scarcely theorised in museology, as a review of the museological literature will demonstrate. The most obvious barrier to this approach has been the restricted notion of 'artefact' whereby its identity has been created within the museum and its scope has been restricted to a museum object. According to van Mensch (1989a: 89), 'museological theory' proceeds by the reduction of the cultural and natural world to an arrangement of objects, which may be further reduced to the object as the unit of study. I shall reverse the procedure by starting with the object and expanding its conceptual scope. Theories of the artefact will be discussed and tested against the museum as artefact. The museum as artefact idea may be usefully compared to the proverbial gallstone: each carries the potential for enhanced meanings.

#### Theories of the Museum

*Museum Culture* (Sherman & Rogoff 1994b) catalogues the major theoretical influences on the conceptualisation of museums. These include the theories of Michel Foucault, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, as well as Marxist and Hegelian analyses (Sherman & Rogoff 1994a: xiv). Similarly, Michel Foucault, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Baudrillard are listed as the major

intellectual influences on the contributors to *Art Apart* (Pointon 1994a: 4). In addition to chronicling theories, *Theorizing Museums* (Macdonald & Fyfe 1996) also provides a critique of them. For instance, Macdonald (1996: 4-5) cogently argues that museums cannot be solely reduced to texts, ideological instruments, agencies of social control or sites for defining distinction. After criticising the assumptions of a range of theoretical perspectives, Macdonald (ibid: 8-13) offers the formula of 'context, contest and content' for the analysis of museums. The borrowed theoretical orientations are expressed in borrowed languages, evidenced in the subtitles of these three volumes: *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World* (Macdonald & Fyfe 1996); *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology Across England and North America* (Pointon 1994b); and *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (Sherman & Rogoff 1994b). The languages of 'histories', 'discourses', 'spectacles', 'ideology', 'representation', 'identity' and 'diversity' talk about the museum as a world of ideas, not a world of things.

Another sample of three titles appears to bring us back to the realm of things, that is, 'objects'. The museum world represented here is: *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Pearce 1992); *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (Pearce 1994d); and *Museum Languages: Objects and Texts* (Kavanagh 1991c). The difference in emphasis cannot be explained by chronology for this factor is negligible. Overtly the distinction appears to be between 'macro-museological' treatments (social commentary on the museum and its externalities) and 'micro-museology' treatments (institutional perspectives on the museum's internalities).

However, a common denominator may be discerned in these two contrasting realms: the theoretical approaches are almost identical in both the first and second set of titles. For instance, *Museum Language: Objects and Texts* (Kavanagh 1991c) employs the languages of semiotics, interpretative sociology, ethnomethodology, psychology, semiology, cultural studies, gender studies, post-structuralism and phenomenology. All six works basically discuss the museum idea in these standard dialects. Another commonality is that all of the works adhere to theories originating from a Euro-American intellectual tradition and apply them to Euro-American museums. Similarly, the collection of essays in *The Formation of National Collections of Art and Archaeology* (Wright 1996b) discloses that the term 'national' is formed by the political geography of

Europe and North America. The rest of the museum world remains invisible. What type of discourse, what kind of ideology and what manner of diversity does this imply in a 'changing world' where the museum axis is always fixed in Euro-American space? This question will be examined more extensively in Part IV.

Kavanagh (1991a: 5) regards the diversity of theoretical approaches to the study of museums as a "search for theories and methods which both strengthen practice and empower positive, constructive change". However, it could also testify (as indicated in Chap. 1) that museology has no theories of its own and must be as adept at appropriation as is the museum. Thus, the museum may be 'constructed' or 'deconstructed' primarily as an ideology, as a communication system, as a contested site, as a text, as a dialogue, as a myth, as empowerment, as cultural hegemony, as an identity-marker, as a technology of taxonomy, as performance, as social memory, as appropriation, or as a symbol of the nation-state. The list is not exhaustive but merely a synopsis of what is contained within various theoretical frames, with their borders of inclusion and exclusion.

### **The Museum as Artefact**

An alternative approach to the object of study is to regard the museum as an object. The major theoretical assumption is that the museum itself is an artefact, socially constructed and reconstructed, as well as symbolically constituted and reconstituted. In addition, although the museum-artefact is the 'object' being shaped, it also performs as a 'subject' doing the shaping. As an artefact, the museum has a spectrum of interlinked meanings, which may be termed 'multivocality', as used by Turner (1975) in symbolic analysis. Although several authors (e.g. Ames 1986: 32; 1992: 15; Appelbaum 1993: 60; Meltzer 1981: 114; Preziosi 1996) have alluded to the possibilities of viewing the museum as an artefact, the prospect remains unrealised in museological research. Moreover, the idea has yet to be examined diachronically in the context of a nation-state. Theorising the museum as artefact has been limited in scope, depth and imagination. In its current form it exists as fragments of an idea or, to borrow Donato's (1978) expression, as 'textual artefacts'. The following instances will illustrate how the museum is perceived in a variety of artefactual shapes.

Schlereth (1980), who has been at the forefront of material culture studies in America, offers an analysis of historic house museums as artefacts. However, his 'artefact' appears purely pedagogical (orthographically, 'artefact' will be used in this study unless 'artifact' is cited in the original). In Schlereth's (1980: 1) scheme, the museum is an educational resource in an artefactual repertoire in which "every artifact—textbook, museum, community—[is] a learning environment". The subject of Hamp's article, 'Subject over object: Interpreting the museum as artifact', also concerns the "educational landscape" (1984: 37). The only reference to 'the museum as artefact' is in the subtitle. The museum is not 'interpreted'; it is merely depicted as an educational tool: "Museum education, with this priority of subject over object, is not an ... overlay on top of a selection of artifacts. Education ... is the business of all associated with the museum" (ibid: 37). The museum as a pedagogic artefact is a rather pedestrian approach that neither comprehends the meaning of 'museum' nor 'artefact', nor the conceptual magnitude of the museum-artefact.

Ames (1986: 32) suggests that the museum may be studied as an artefact of one's own society, by extending the notion of the object to include the museum itself. The example he provides "as an artefact of our own" is a museum exhibition of "another culture" (ibid: 32). Ames (1992: 15), in a later work, again posits museums "as artefacts of society, as exhibits in their own right". Once more, he limits the applicability of the idea to museums of anthropology. This type of museum has an in-built structure of 'Us' representing 'Them' and hence the ready-made shape of an artefact of 'Us'. Although Ames' example does not explore the range of artefactual possibilities, his premise that the concept of the artefact must be expanded is a feasible starting-point.

Cameron (1993) acknowledges that the museum is a product of a particular socio-cultural environment, but for him, the more compelling issue is its relevance to 'non-European' societies. He states: "The museum ... is not only a cultural institution, but, de facto, an artifact of its own culture. ... The traditional museum of European invention cannot then be made integral to another culture" (ibid: 167). The idea represented here is the 'decontextualised' museum-artefact where its original meaning(s) are meaning-less outside its origins. Kaepler (1994: 41) offers a more inclusive interpretation of the museum as 'cultural artefact' in a discussion of the Pacific Islands: "Museums themselves are cultural artifacts, and how they

will manifest themselves in specific places is part of the culture and history of that place." This perspective offers the possibility that 'decontextualised' artefacts can be made integral to another culture by 'recontextualisation'. The insights of Cameron and Kaeppler have important implications for Malaysia, where the first museums are analysed as colonial artefacts.

The title, 'Ideology and material culture', gives a visible clue as to what type of museum-artefact Meltzer (1981) constructs. He analyses the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., as an "ideological artifact" (ibid: 125), which contributes to the legitimisation of the state and the socialisation of its citizens through the ruling class ideology. This interpretation has close affinity to Duncan's (1994) meaning of 'cultural artefact'. Duncan examines art museums as ritual sites that reinforce the ideology of good citizenship (her museological ideology will be discussed in Chap. 11). She describes the art museum as a "ceremonial monument", that is, "a cultural artefact that is much more than what we used to understand as 'museum architecture'" (1994: 280).

Preziosi (1996: 166) attempts to fathom "the evidential and disciplinary character of the art museum as cultural artifact". His evidence however is limited to a Euro-American cultural environment. Preziosi's argument that art museums originated as and continue to be 'evidentiary artefacts' leaves unexamined the character of artefactuality. Moreover, he condenses the meaning of 'evidentiary' to an inflexible frame of 'presentness' and 'modernity' (ibid: 170-1) but his analysis fails to incorporate the future in this frame (a subject resumed later in this chapter, and in detail in Chap. 12).

The semiological 'cultural artefact' is the interpretative stance of Hooper-Greenhill (1991). She (ibid: 51) indicates that semiotic analyses of the museum proceed from a starting point of "the consumer of the museum as a cultural artefact, rather than from the point of view of the producers of such an artefact". Although Hooper-Greenhill's museum as 'cultural artefact' appears ideologically unfettered, the terminology of 'consumers' and 'producers' betrays a 'culture' of consumption. Moreover, the segregation of 'consumers' and 'producers' is analytically untenable as will become evident in Parts II and III.

These depictions of the museum as *cultural* artefact highlight the inherent ambiguity and interpretative labyrinth of the word 'culture'. In contrast, the word 'artefact' is assumed to be unequivocal, not requiring further analytical treatment. In some instances, it is merely appended as a 'textual artefact'. For instance, MacDonald and Alford (1989: 3) describe the Canadian Museum of Civilization as a "modern artifact", contrasted to "a structure that merely houses artifacts". A logical extension of their premise is that a non-modern museum is not an artefact.

Here, it is appropriate to consider the traditional doctrine of the 'artefact' whereby its value is assessed in terms of its antiquity. "Museum pieces" is Horne's (1984: 14) descriptor for the grand archaeological museums established in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. "Exhibits in their own right" is Strong's (1983: 80) appraisal of the interior restoration of British nineteenth-century museums to faithfully reproduce the past. In addition, Strong (*ibid*: 80) describes the result as "a fatal irony". Artefactual analysis would have revealed neither fatality nor irony, but 'things' ordinarily embedded in composite images. Zeppel portrays the nineteenth-century Sarawak Museum in Malaysia as "*an authentic historic exhibit*, a reminder of former methods of collecting and displaying artefacts" (1994: 154, *emphasis added*). The usage of the word 'authentic' is suggestive for it assumes that 'authenticity' is an objective, static state and it implies the possibility of an 'unauthentic' museum-artefact. Further commentary on the 'authenticity' and architectural symbolism of Malaysian museums will be made in Parts II and III.

The symbolism of the physical shape of the museum-artefact has been little explored (excepting the focus on 'temple' architecture). Appelbaum (1993: 60) discusses the architectural identity of museums and ventures that "the [museum] building becomes the primary artifact" (cf. the Canadian Museum of Civilization as 'modern artefact'). However, Appelbaum (*ibid*: 60) does not restrict his artefactual analysis to material considerations alone for he moves from an empirical to a transcendental level within the one sentence: "If the museum building can be seen as an expressive artifact, it can also be considered a moral artifact, a summation ... of our slowly evolving humanity." Appelbaum's (*ibid*: 60) extravagant

rhetoric of the museum, as a "marvelous, humbling, and inspiring artifact of our moral evolution as human beings", should not obscure the ways in which the museum as artefact accrues symbolic meanings.

Another moral dimension is outlined in Sullivan's 'The museum as moral artifact' (1985). He begins: "Museums, in and of themselves, are artifacts; social documents that reflect, present and transmit the belief and values systems of the societies that create them" (ibid: 2). However, Sullivan's focus is more on the moral than artefactual implications of the museum idea. Consequently, the museum as an agent of social change should be involved in "moral education" (ibid: 3) and therefore, "a museum's mission is not only to interpret the world but also to change it" (ibid: 14). Changing the world means offering society a 'safe-haven' of stability: "In a society that stresses discontinuity, disposability, change and fragmentation, museums and their collections can stand as symbols of continuity, tradition, preservation, posterity and human respect" (ibid: 17). Viewed together, Sullivan's and Appelbaum's versions of the museum as 'moral artefact' produce a Janus-faced portrait. The latter sees the museum as a symbol of the moral evolution of humanity and the former as a counterbalance to its moral devolution. The meaning of 'morality' is as problematic as the meaning of the museum.

Sullivan's (1985: 2) claim that museums 'reflect' society is a prevalent museological belief. Sola's (1987: 48) literary fragment also presses this point: "The ecomuseum is not a decorative artefact of the social environment: rather it is its mirror." The common conviction that the museum reflects society assumes that the 'mirror' does not distort (an assumption critically examined in Parts II and III). Furthermore, the museum is seen as a 'one-way' mirror. As Macdonald (1996: 4) effectively argues, the museum has "a formative as well as a reflective role in social relations". It is also important to add that museums themselves are formative processes. The idea of the museum as both product and process is suggested by Weil (1988a: 39):

Museums are our own human creation ... and they are a creation that we are free to shape and reshape as may best suit our needs. In giving museums their shape, it is not even required that we confine ourselves to a single shape.

The idea of shaping and *reshaping* the museum-artefact subsumes a diachronic approach to the study of museums. Weil, however, leaves unanswered the questions of which segment of the 'we' does the shaping or reshaping, who is to define 'our needs' and how 'free' this process is. Weil also fails to move beyond the assumption that the museum is a part of 'our needs'. The 'natural' is inseparable from shaping the artefactual, and the museum as museological artefact is not only 'natural', but 'primordial' (see Chap. 2).

### **Ideas of the Artefact**

Teather (1991: 412) offers the most banal meaning of the museum as artefact: "Museums are equally artifacts for study and are the essence of museological investigation." However, 'museological investigation' rarely takes the form of the museum as artefact. To borrow Strong's expression, there appears to be a 'fatal irony' when a major museological preoccupation with objects has failed to encompass the museum as object. "Artifacts surround us as if we were in a forest" (Ascher 1982: 333), and to use a familiar phrase, museological inquiry has found the forest but missed the trees. The fragments of the museum as artefact idea that have been outlined above reveal another irony—no attempt to systematically correlate ideas of the museum-artefact and the object-artefact. To work within this void, a conceptual foothold is required. Artefact studies will be critically examined to assess whether they can be extended to include the museum-artefact. The intent is not to provide an exhaustive theoretical survey of the artefact but to enlarge the conceptual domain of the artefact to include the museum. Here, the words 'object', 'thing' and 'artefact' will be treated as interchangeable for the emphasis is on the validity of the concept rather than terminological distinctions.

No distinction is made between 'movable' and 'immovable' artefacts for the property of mobility is not a quintessential feature of artefactuality. Neither is it useful to maintain an unrealistic division between 'artefactual' and 'natural' environments (a position also held by Miller 1994: 398), nor between the artefact as a material entity and an abstract one. The artefact is made by human hands and also by human minds. Tuan (1980: 462) stresses that the artefact is both a material and mental construct, and Foster (1994: 366) maintains that symbols are artefacts.

However, such views have yet to be assimilated into mainstream museological thinking which barely ventures beyond the security of a standard dictionary. For instance, Pearce (1986: 198) limits the definition of artefacts to "objects made by men through the application of technological processes". Moreover, the term 'artefact' "is usually reserved for moveable pieces rather than structures, and is concerned with inorganic or dead materials ..." (ibid: 198). Pearce (1992: 5) still maintains these definitional distinctions in her later, major study: *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*. It should also be clarified that the unstated assumption is that the 'artefact' is a 'real thing', and consequently the 'replica' has no epistemological status in artefact analyses (a subject resumed in Chap. 10).

One of the most productive recent approaches in artefact studies has been to recognise that the artefact has multiple meanings (see, for example, Miller 1994: 406; Smith 1989: 19; Tilley 1989: 191). If the same approach is applied to the museum as artefact, it becomes untenable to reduce the museum to a monolithic meaning and squeeze it into a single theoretical framework. Coupled with the idea of multivocality, is the notion that meanings of the artefact do not remain constant (see, for example, Errington 1989: 49; Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 196; Smith 1989: 19; Tilley: 191). Thus, any interpretation of the artefact must include its history, also called its 'life-cycle' or its 'biography'. Similarly, to 'interpret' the museum as artefact means investigating the historical processes of mutable meanings. The status of colonial museums in a post-colonial nation and the conversion of former colonial buildings into museums typify these considerations in the Malaysian context. Miller (1994: 407) points to "the symbolic malleability and power" of artefacts and his comment applies equally to the museum-artefact.

A further amplification of the artefact idea is provided by Ascher's (1982: 333) concept of 'superartefacts' that reach beyond place and time and that connect different times and places. 'Superartefacts' provide intellectual insights into an era and Ascher's examples include Stonehenge and the Coca Cola bottle (ibid: 335). Museums could also be incorporated in the category of 'superartefacts'. Indeed, museums were "creations of the *age of artefacts*" (O'Neill 1991: 32, emphasis in original) and the concept of the museum was "a fitting metaphor for the mentality of the age" (Pearce 1992: 93). Moreover, the "museum age" has re-emerged, marked by the global

proliferation of museums and the diffusion of 'museumification' processes (see Sande 1992: 185). Both the Coca Cola bottle and the museum claim to possess 'the real thing' but this factor does not adequately explain their ubiquity, durability, and their ability to transcend time and space. Baudrillard (1990: 43) indicates that one must look at another level—the abstraction of artefacts: "Objects are in this sense, beyond the use to which they are put ...". The museum as 'superartefact' illustrates a similar propensity of 'beyondness' of use in space, time and mind.

### **The Artefact as Analytical Tool**

The concept of the museum object has not been analytically expanded in museology to encompass the museum as object. Approaches to the study of artefacts have been fairly uniform. In *Museums, Objects and Collections* Pearce (1992: 265-273) provides six schemes or models of object analysis, inclusive of her own, selected for discussion here as it is one of the most recent. Pearce's model consists of four characteristics of the artefact: its 'material body', 'history', 'environment', and 'cultural significance' (ibid: 273). Also included in the model are approaches to gathering data for each characteristic such as description, identification, categorisation, dating techniques, location and distribution (ibid: 272). Reference has already been made in Chapters 1 and 2 to the dating techniques, the identification, categorisation, location and global distribution of the museum-artefact. My primary concern here is the four-fold characteristics of the artefact and whether this scheme can be extrapolated to accommodate the idea of the museum as an artefact.

The 'material body' of the museum is a complex, active system comprising the building and its contents (people, ideas and objects). In addition, unlike a museum object, the museum building is an artefact that may be dramatically altered in material form. Yet, the artefact and the museum share the property of three-dimensionality. The museum's three-dimensionality may be regarded as a supra-dimension of its artefacts, as illustrated by the conviction: "The museum, if it is not a collection, is nothing" (Cossons 1991: 24). The other common assumption is that the collection, if not permanent, is nothing. The materiality and longevity of artefacts provide a particular orientation to time. Mention has been made of the history, 'life-cycle' or 'biography' of the artefact. Pearce uses the word

'history' as a characteristic of artefacts. Unfortunately, the word has an intrinsic limitation for it excludes the full scope of temporality. The temporal web of past, present and future finds an institutional home in the museum. The museum-artefact has an immense potential for permanence; it is intended to transcend the generations (unlike most museum objects which have become permanent as 'accidental' artefacts). Indeed, one of the principal rationales of the museum is the posterity argument (e.g. Rankine 1985: 20; Ripley 1986: 16; Sullivan 1985: 14). Thus, the museum is future time—a symbol of posterity's materiality.

The 'material design' of the artefact may be equated with museum architecture, the museum as 'expressive artefact' in Appelbaum's phrase (1993: 60). However, museum architecture does more than clothe a material form. As Eco (1987: 296) indicates, architecture "is an act of communication" and this is achieved through symbolic means. The symbolism may be read literally in the case of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the 'modern' artefact, whose architecture makes it a "national symbol" (MacDonald & Alford 1989: 1). Ritchie (1994: 12) claims that recent museum architecture has now become a "generator of a particular urban composition". Such a view implies that the museum-artefact is not simply a passive reflection of society but it may also shape society (Chap. 9 expands on this perspective). An editorial in the *Journal of Material Culture* (1996 1(1): 6) also highlights this dialectical relationship whereby the structures that are created, in turn, influence the creators. Pearce's four-fold scheme of characteristics excludes the possibility of a 'creative' dimension to artefacts.

The characteristic of 'cultural significance' has been expressed in the form of the museum as an 'ideological', 'cultural', 'evidentiary' or 'moral' artefact, each signifying a range of divergent meanings. Inherently more difficult is the process of elucidating the spatio-temporal dynamics of 'cultural significance'. Hudson (1987: 3) stresses that "museums, like Christianity, take on the colouring of the society in which their activity takes place". In the case of museums in Malaysia, the more germane religious analogy would be Islam. If the museum is a product of its own society, one would expect the museum to assume culture-specific forms. Yet, culture-specific forms in Malaysia did not arise independently; they are linked to another time and place—the British Empire (the multiple 'cultural significances' of the colonial museum are expounded in Chap. 5).

Even in a contemporary context, other 'colourings', to borrow Hudson's expression, are merged in the cultural spectrum of the museum. Consequently, it is argued in Part IV that a diachronic analysis of the museum as artefact must engender a conceptual vocabulary that also engages the idea of the museum as 'replica'. Such an understanding will reveal how 'cultural significance' is not fixed. Pearce (1992: 273) proposes that at the analytical stage of 'cultural significance' any one of a variety of theoretical frames may be employed. Yet, as argued earlier, each approach has its theoretical blinkers resulting in various shades of reductionism expressing *the* significance, rather than significances. In contrast, the 'artefact' as analytical tool is intended to expand expositional possibilities.

Pearce's (1992: 272) division of the environmental characteristic into 'micro' and 'macro' is analytically useful to situate the Malaysian museum-artefact in the 'macro' context of the Western world. It is also the Western world that generates artefact analyses. However, the terminology of artefact analysis is not characterised by a 'macro' perspective. Pointedly, the 'history' or 'life-cycle' of an object has yet to come to terms with the 'life-force' of the object. The Eurocentric derivation of theories of the museum, is replicated in artefact models. Whether characteristics are counted at four or more, one property remains significantly absent. In the Asia-Pacific region do the 'spirits' of objects find a place in the analytical dimensions of the material world? "Being *lifeless* is what privileges museum artifacts" (Lowenthal 1991: 13, emphasis added) is indicative of the privileged position of Eurocentric discourse. How would theories of the object accommodate the Malay world belief in *semangat* (spirit, soul, life-force)? All objects, both animate and inanimate possess *semangat*. Thus, humans, the natural environment, and objects made by humans possess *semangat*. More will be said of *semangat* and artefacts in Parts II and III. Here, the main concern has been to test approaches to artefact studies against the museum as artefact. The approaches themselves are inevitably 'cultural artefacts' for they arose in specific cultures and they convey specific ideologies, particularly in their silent spaces.

No single theoretical approach can provide *the* definitive interpretation of *the* museum. According to Preziosi, the art museum institution proceeds by "*enframing* history, memory, and meaning" (1996: 170, emphasis added). One must look beyond framed boundaries to see excluded prospects and to recognise that 'history', 'memory' and 'meaning' are fluid

in semantic space (Parts II and III resume these strands). Each theory of the museum, or of the artefact, provides a 'frame' (an apt lexical instance of how the conceptual and artefactual are intertwined). Each frame customarily provides two views: that which is inside and that which is outside the frame. The museum-artefact has no frame. The idea exists in a betwixt and between dimension, an anomalous position in two theoretical structures. Yet, one anticipates that a feature of being betwixt and between is the potential for creativity (Turner 1974: 255). The museum as artefact idea is unfettered, unframed, and unexplored. It exists on the peripheries of museological writings not because it is a peripheral idea but because museologists live in material world, where the word 'artefact' is both the most prized possession and the most illusory perception. This is evident in the long-standing and absurd debate over whether the museum is about 'things' or 'ideas' (for an astute summary, see Weil 1989). In a museological world divided into things and ideas, the most appropriate mediator—the artefact—remains transfixed as a museum 'thing'.

## Conclusion

Artefact studies underline that the artefact is multivocal and open to a range of interpretations which mediate the reflective and the formative, the material and the symbolic. The 'artefact' will mediate between 'things' and 'ideas', and between 'gallstones' and 'lucky charms' in my examination of the museum-artefact. An editorial in *Journal of Material Culture* (1996 1(1): 5) stresses that artefacts have "no obvious disciplinary home", and this intellectual 'movement' will inform this study. Although the obvious 'disciplinary home' of the museum is museology, I have already demonstrated that museological nomadism is the 'disciplinary' norm. Yet, cross-disciplinary forays have failed to bring the 'artefact' back home because museologists hold firm to the traditional talisman—the artefact as object. The customary approach in which the museum encompasses the artefact (as object) can be inverted so that the artefact (as idea) encompasses the museum. Ingold (1996a: 3) maintains that a theory is an "ongoing process of argumentation". This processual element of theorising means the artefact as a heuristic device will be further refined in other sections of the study. This process proceeds to the Malaysian landscape in Part II: 'The Museum as Artefact, Colonial Construction'.

## PART II. THE MUSEUM AS ARTEFACT, COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION

### Chapter 4. Mapping the Museum on *Tanahair* (Homeland)

*Know the present from the past as you would examine your face in a mirror.*

(Chinese proverb)

#### Introduction

Malaysian museum history officially begins with British colonial rule. However, to begin with the British would limit the examination to one face in the 'mirror'. Consequently, this chapter commences with a brief outline of the past of present-day Malaysia. In terms of Malaysia's museum history, a significant period is the nineteenth century during which three distinct political entities were formed: 'British Malaya' on the Peninsula, and, on the island of Borneo, Sarawak under Brooke rule and British North Borneo (now Sabah). An outline of the nineteenth century colonial advance will set the stage for the museum advance, which will be examined with reference to Benedict Anderson's (1991: chap. 10) analysis of three interlinked forms of 'imagining' the colonial state: the census, map, and museum.

#### National Ancestry

The federally administered Muzium Sejarah Nasional (which has been translated in museum literature as either the National Museum of History or the National History Museum) is an appropriate place to start examining ancestral faces in the 'mirror'. Under the heading 'Palaeolithic culture', a text explains that the archaeological evidence of the earliest human inhabitants of Malaysia is based on three sites: the Niah Caves (40,000 years ago) in the State of Sarawak, Kota Tampan (30,000 years ago) in the State of Perak in Peninsular Malaysia, and Tingkayu (27,000 years ago) in the State of Sabah. The text also firmly places Malaysia on an extensive chronological scale: "Geological research has shown that these [three] sites were used as early as the first interglacial era or the second glaciation during the Pleistocene epoch some 500 000 years ago." As in all nation-states, human

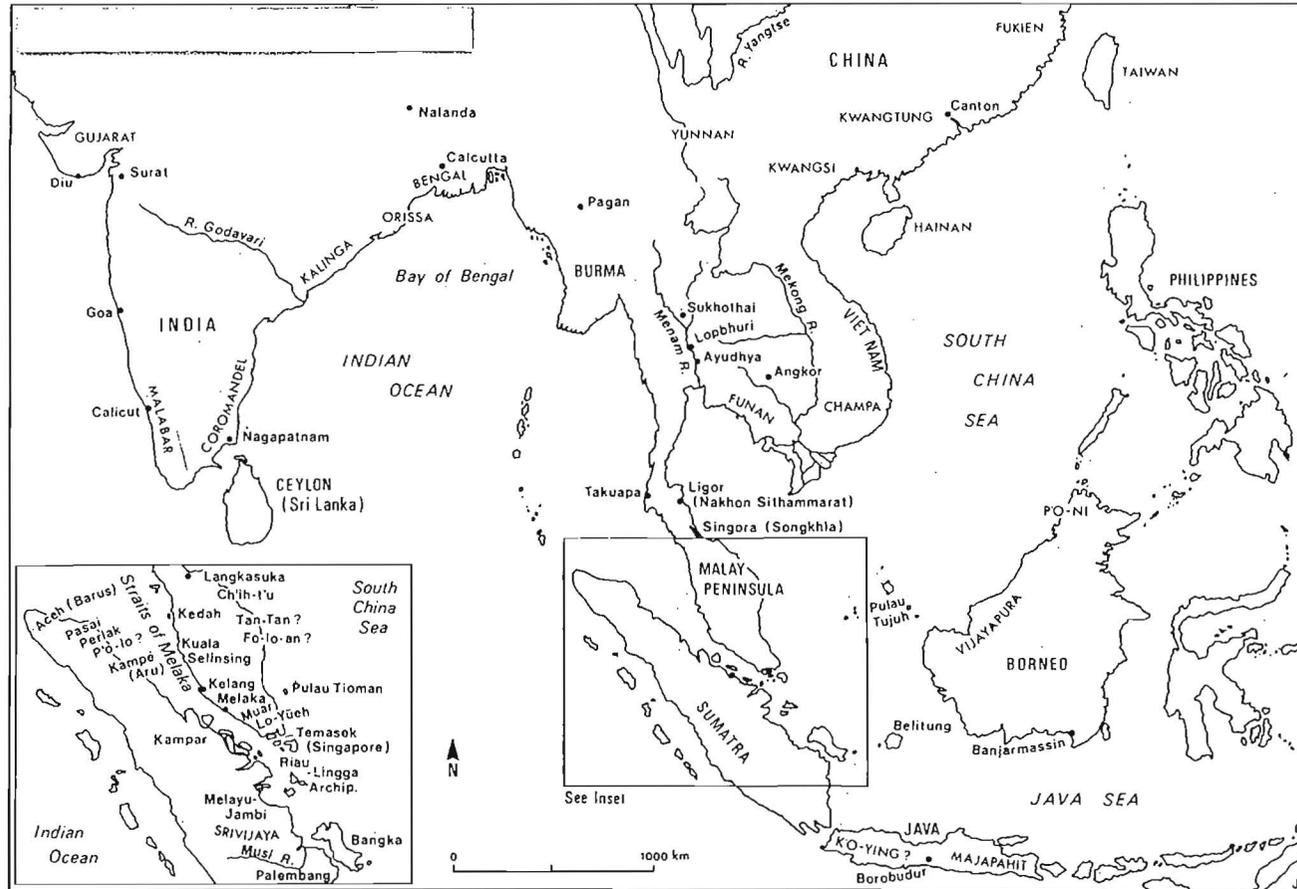
links are traced back as far as archaeologically feasible and reclaimed as national ancestors. As I shall critically discuss in a later section, Anderson (1991: 185) maintains that the colonial states laid this groundwork by using archaeology to legitimise their own ancestry.

Another text in this museum, 'Malaysia's history and culture', provides a more comprehensive view of the nation's 'ancestors' in an introductory chronology to the past:

As a result of research over the past century, a broad picture has emerged of the history and cultural development of this country's ancestral peoples, which can be outlined as follows:

1. Prehistoric Times
  - 1.1 Stone Age Cultures
    - Palaeolithic
    - Mesolithic
    - Hoabinhian
    - Neolithic
  - 1.2 Metal Age Cultures
    - Iron Age
    - Bronze Age
    - Slab-Built Graves
    - Megalithic
2. Proto History
  - 2.1 Kuala Selinsing, Perak
  - 2.2 Hindu/Buddhist Cultures
  - 2.3 Influence of Islam (Kuala Berang)
3. The Historical Era
  - 3.1 The Malay Sultanate of Malacca
  - 3.2 Later Malay Sultanates
    - Johor Lama
    - Beruas
  - 3.3 Arrival of Foreign Powers
    - Portuguese
    - Dutch
    - British
4. Independence
5. Malaysia

Chronologies not only inevitably compress a "country's ancestral peoples" into manageable sequences, but also conceal cultural and historical overlap. For instance, although old Malay society passed through periods of animism and Hindu influence before Islamisation, these periods were not discrete divisions and there is still contemporary overlap in varying degrees of interaction (see Mohd Taib 1989: chap. 1). Another example is the Negrito people (for details, see Bellwood 1985: chap. 3; 1993), a sub-group of Malaysia's aboriginal inhabitants who are collectively known as 'Orang Asli' (literally 'original people'). The Negrito span the entire sequence — from prehistory to the present. Moreover, a "picture" constructed from chronologies may fragment holistic themes such as the significance of maritime trade, a key factor in the shaping of the *Nusantara* (Malay-Indonesian Archipelago) and the forging of relationships between people in the region and beyond (Map 2, p. 57). Andaya and Andaya (1982: 10) state: "During the first millennium AD the skills of merchants, sailors and suppliers from India, the Arab lands, China and the archipelago had been brought together in a close-knit commercial relationship." Furthermore, trading was not limited to the material goods of cultures but incorporated elements of these cultures as well. "Trading cultures" is an apt term used by Ferguson (1997: 3) to describe the movement of goods, ideas, norms, languages, forms of government, and religions in the trade process, as well as those cultures that primarily engaged in trade.



Map 2. Geography of early regional trade

Reproduced from Andaya, B.W. & Andaya, L. 1982, *A History of Malaysia*, Macmillan, London, p. xviii.

## The Colonial Ancestry

The lure of trading wealth also brought the "foreign powers", as labelled in Muzium Sejarah Nasional. During the fifteenth century, the Sultanate of Malacca rose to become a great trading and cultural centre in the archipelago. In Malacca's Ethnography and History Museum (Muzium Etnografi dan Sejarah), the interaction of 'trading cultures' is particularly vivid in the area of intermarriage. The wedding tableaux of various contemporary Malaccan communities include that of the 'Chitty' community (descendants of Malay-Indian intermarriage during the sultanate era); the 'Baba', also known as the Straits-born Chinese or Chinese Peranakan (with a pre-colonial history of cultural interaction with Malays, inclusive of intermarriage), and 'Portuguese descendants' (who trace their ancestry to the 16th century). The Portuguese captured Malacca in 1511 and remained until 1641 when they were replaced by the Dutch. The museum, itself, is housed in a Dutch building, the Stadthuys (Plate 3, p. 59). In its complex history of adaptive re-use, the Stadthuys building was later occupied by the British.

The British colonial advance in the nineteenth century, is recounted in Muzium Sejarah Nasional's text 'The British in Malaya (1786 -1941)':

At the time when trade between east and west was peaking, the British realized that they did not possess a proper base between Canton and Calcutta ... . As a result of efforts by Francis Light, in 1786, the Sultanate of Kedah pledged Pulau Pinang [Penang] to the British East India Company. Attempting to find a more strategic location, Stamford Raffles subsequently selected Singapore, which in 1819 became a center of British commerce. In 1824, Malacca was surrendered to British administration in a Dutch-British treaty. ...

No more is said of the Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824 but historians note that the treaty severed the cultural unity of the Malay world (see Andaya & Andaya 1982: 122) comprising the lands and the coastal areas around the Straits of Malacca, the South China Sea, and the Java Sea (refer to Map 2, p. 57). Through the treaty of 1824 the shapes of 'British Malaya' and the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia) were beginning to emerge.



Plate 3. Malacca's Stadthuys building, side-view showing museum signage  
An outdoors signboard informs (excerpted): "Stadthuys means Town Hall. It was the first building the Dutch erected soon after taking over Malacca from the Portuguese in 1641. It is believed that this building was built in the 1650s over the Portuguese ruins and is the oldest Dutch structure in Southeast Asia."

Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

The text, 'The British in Malaya (1786 -1941)', in Muzium Sejarah Nasional continues:

In the beginning, the British came ... without any intention of interfering in matters of local politics or administration. However, the unstable political situation in the Malay States, the wealth of economic resources and certain socio-economic and socio-political changes in Europe pushed the British to interfere after all... [I]n 1826, Pulau Pinang, Malacca, Singapore and the Dindings were brought together under a single administration which was called the Straits Settlements ...

The signing of the Pangkor Treaty in 1874 in the State of Perak accelerated the British advance in the Peninsula. Hirschman (1987: 566) describes this process in emotive terms: "Pushed by the prospects of enormous economic gain, the colonial administration, using chicanery, brute force, and bribery, in measured portions, took effective control of the entire peninsula in the years following 1874." The Muzium Sejarah Nasional as 'mirror to the past' reflects a political *politesse*:

As a result of this Agreement [Pangkor Treaty], a British resident was appointed to help with the management of the [Perak] State's administration. British interference continued to expand to Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang ... ultimately united ... as the Federated Malay States. A British resident was appointed to administer finance and other matters, with the exception of Malay customs and the Islamic religion.

The British pattern of 'indirect rule' through the Residential System resulted in the creation of the Federated Malay States in 1896 (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 183). By 1914 Britain had collected the northern States of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu, and the southernmost State, Johor, and labelled them the Unfederated Malay States (ibid: 197-200). By 1919, "the deceptively unified term 'British Malaya'" (ibid: 157) gained acceptance as a label for the colonial state which comprised a medley of administrative units: the Straits Settlements (S.S.), the Federated Malay States (F.M.S.) and the Unfederated Malay States (U.M.S.). A 'British Malaya' had been already imagined as early as 1884 by Frederick Weld, then Governor of the Straits Settlements (see Weld 1983: 43). 'British Malaya' appears as a double

appropriation for the term was based on the Malay territorial concept of the peninsula as *tanah Melayu*, literally 'land of the Malays' (for the early usage of the term, *tanah Melayu*, see Milner 1994: 107).

The nineteenth century was also a definitive period in shaping the boundaries of 'British' Borneo (Sarawak, Brunei and British North Borneo). In north-western Borneo two "unique — indeed eccentric — expressions of British colonialism" (Church 1995: 73) emerged, whose territorial gains reduced the Sultanate of Brunei to two tiny enclaves within Sarawak. In 1839 James Brooke, an English adventurer, arrived in Sarawak (then a dependency of Brunei) at the height of a rebellion against Brunei control. Brooke succeeded in overcoming the rebellion and the Sultan of Brunei installed him as Rajah and Governor of Sarawak in 1841. This was the beginning of the 'White Rajahs', a dynasty that was to expand the territory of Sarawak to form its present boundaries and that was to maintain its rule until 1941 (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 125). Some "foreign powers" may be perceived as less 'foreign' or, possibly, more 'ancestral' than others. For instance, the *raja/rajah* (king, prince, ruler) is an indigenised-Indian institution in which the *rajah* was invested with a mystical and divinely ordained power. James Frazer ([1922] 1993: 89), in his customary bricolage approach to 'divine kingship', reveals: "The Dyaks of Sarawak believed that their ... Rajah Brooke was endowed with a certain magical virtue ...". In the Sarawak Museum a spatial and historical disjunction separates the headings, 'Brooke period' and 'Colonial period (1946-1963)' when "Sarawak was formally incorporated into the British Empire". Although in Muzium Sejarah Nasional's introductory chronology the "foreign powers" are included in the category of "the country's ancestral peoples", all foreign ancestors are treated as having identical 'powers': the display on 'Foreign powers in Sarawak' and 'Foreign powers in Sabah' is subsumed in the sequence of British colonial rule under the overall heading 'The foreign powers'.

In northern Borneo, in the late 1870s, a British business consortium acquired the rights to most of the area now known as Sabah (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 184-6). These rights were acquired from Brunei and the Sultanate of Sulu (the southern Philippines). In 1881 the business consortium persuaded the British government to charter a company to administer this area, which became known as 'British North Borneo', and

which was governed by the British North Borneo Chartered Company until World War II (ibid: 184-6). In the Sabah Museum this aspect of the State's past (that is, from 1881) is recounted in a text entitled 'British North Borneo Chartered Company' and the events from 1946 to 1963 in the text, 'The British Colony'. Notably, unlike the Muzium Sejarah Nasional, both the Sabah Museum and the Sarawak Museum only apply lexical variants of 'colonialism' to their states' post-war political shapes. The two political entities in Borneo, one ruled by the 'White Rajahs' and the other by a Chartered Company, have been described as "two of the most unusual colonial powers to operate in Southeast Asia" (Osborne 1995: 77). These two distinctive forms, although markedly different from the case of the Peninsula, nevertheless shared a common British ancestry. This ancestry was recognised in 1888 when both Sarawak and North Borneo (as well as Brunei) were given protectorate status by the British Government (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 187).

The transformation of *tanahair* (homeland) to *tanah jajahan* (colony) has been presented chronologically to highlight the pace of the British advance. Obviously, there was resistance on the part of the inhabitants and these rebellions and their leaders have been kept alive in local legends, history texts, popular culture, as well as in museum displays. Here, my primary concern has been to sketch the making of British territories. The colonisation process was artefactual: colonies and protectorates were 'man-made' creations. This process peaked in the nineteenth century which, notably, was also known as the 'museum age' or the 'golden age of collectors' (see Bazin 1967: 193). It is not coincidental that during this period the imperial powers were 'collecting' their colonies or territories like artefacts in an imaginary museum (nor is it accidental that they swiftly materialised museums in their colonies). It is now opportune to turn to the style of 'imagining' the colonial state.

### The Power Grid

Anderson, in *Imagined Communities* (1991: chap. 10), identifies three institutions of colonial power: the census, the map, and the museum. These three forms intersected one another in a "totalizing classificatory grid, which could be applied with endless flexibility to anything under the [colonial] state's real or contemplated control" (ibid: 184). However, Anderson's (1991:

178) central concern is not the museum *per se*, but "the museumizing imagination", embedded in colonial archaeology. Consequently, his argument is weakened by this conceptual stricture and the full extent of interaction among the three forms remains unrealised. Several intersecting lines of Anderson's power grid will be discussed in this chapter and the following chapter will examine the colonial museum in detail, for it is in the details that the totality of the museum's 'power' loses its explanatory coherence.

Anderson grounds his analysis of census on Charles Hirschman's studies of colonial censuses in 'British Malaya'. Hirschman (1987: 561) indicates that without precedents for census-taking in the colonies, the categories "had to be 'invented' from experience and common knowledge". He also points out that as the colonial regime expanded, census categories began to shift terminologically from 'nationalities' to 'race', a transition that was complete by 1911 (*ibid*: 561). Anderson (1991: 165) underlines the arbitrariness of racial classifications in which a label would stand for a disparate 'collection' of imagined identities. Moreover, the different colonial regimes had divergent classifications. For instance, the 'Malay' census category in 'British Malaya' differed from the 'Malay' enumerated in the neighbouring colony of the Netherlands East Indies (*ibid*: 165).

Similarly in Borneo, labels for the indigenous peoples reflected differing colonial conceptualisations. The Dutch labelled all non-Muslim indigenes 'Dayaks', whilst the British reserved the term for the 'Land Dayak' (Bidayuh) and the 'Sea Dayak' (Iban), the latter being the most populous in Sarawak (Kedit 1991b: 18). British North Borneo (Sabah) also presented classificatory dilemmas: "By the time the Europeans arrived in the 19th century, Sabah was already inhabited by a profusion of peoples and cultures which defied simple ethnic classification" (Lasimbang & Moo-Tan 1997: 2). I.H.N. Evans ([1922] 1990), author of *Among Primitive Peoples in Borneo*, worked as a junior civil servant in British North Borneo before making a career as a museum curator in the Federated Malay States. His observations are thus particularly insightful. Evans (1990: 35), recognising the complexity of his task, first describes the 'Dusun' (now known as Kadazan-Dusun), as "an assemblage of tribes". Subsequently, he refers to the British North Borneo census of 1911 in which the 'collection' of 'Dusun' is tidily placed under the classification "by race" (*ibid*: 54).

In Evans' (1990: 28) chapter, 'Population and races', his ethnography reveals another classificatory system at work: "The natives of the up-country regions far excel those of the coasts in good qualities, the latter being usually boastful, lazy, tyrannical ... lawless, gamblers, borrowers and spendthrifts ...". He puzzles whether "such difference in character is due to the fundamental difference in race" (ibid: 28) or in religion. The threads of census, race and stereotype cannot be easily disentangled in colonial categorisation.

The racial design of the Federated Malay States (F.M.S.) census of 1911 is reproduced in Table 2 (p. 65) to illustrate the artefactual formula of early twentieth-century censuses.

European Pop. by Race  
 (17 subcategories)  
 Eurasians  
 Malay Pop. by Race  
   Malay  
   Javanese  
   Sakai  
   Banjarese  
   Boyanesse  
   Mendeling  
   Krinchi  
   Achinese  
   Bugis  
   Other  
 Chinese Pop. by Tribe  
   Cantonese  
   Kheh  
   Tie Chiu Kheh  
   Hokkein  
   Hiu Hua  
   Hok Chiu  
   Hailam  
   Kwong Sai  
   Other Tribes  
 Indian Pop. by Race  
   Tamil  
   Telugu  
   Punjabi  
   Bengali  
   Malayali  
   Hindustani  
   Afghan  
   Gujerati  
   Maharatta  
   Burmese  
   Other Indians  
 "Other" Pop. by Race  
   Africans  
   Annamese  
   Arabs  
   Armenians  
   Filipinos  
   Japanese  
   Jews  
   Siamese  
   Singhalese  
   Unspecified

Table 2. 1911 census of the Federated Malay States

Source: Hirschman, C. 1987, 'The meaning and measurement of ethnicity in Malaysia: An analysis of census classifications', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 46(3), p. 574.

The same format is used in the censuses of 1921 and 1931, except 'Malay' had been replaced by the category 'Malaysian' in the census of 1931 (Hirschman 1987: 574-5). This category was intended to accommodate Malays and peoples from Borneo and Indonesia (ibid: 563). The 'Orang Asli' (the derogatory term 'Sakai' was used in the census) were also placed in the 'Malay'/'Malaysian' category in the censuses of 1911, 1921 and 1931. Another identity that became submerged, and subsequently lost in the census schemes, was the Chinese Peranakan ('Baba' or 'Straits-born Chinese'). In earlier censuses the 'Straits-Born' were a sub-category of the 'Chinese Tribe' (ibid: 571-3) but the community 'disappeared' when the census became racially constructed. Hirschman (ibid: 569) concludes this was the census consequence of being racially unclassifiable. In Chapter 5, I shall discuss a similar 'dilemma' and almost identical solution to museum objects that showed inter-cultural influence, and hence, defied 'racial' classification schemes.

Hirschman (1987: 568) indicates that the shift to 'race' in census categories in 'British Malaya' was influenced by Darwinian theory that was shaped into an imperial ideology to rule "peoples at 'lower evolutionary stages' throughout the world". Chapter 5 will examine the impact of evolutionary thinking on colonial museums. Here, I wish to indicate one particular methodology of this ideology and how this accords with Anderson's scheme. One of the ethnographic techniques then fashionable for the classification of the human race was the study of craniums or 'craniology'.

Evans ([1922] 1990: 312), who devotes a chapter to 'Dusun' head-hunting, concludes his book with an appendix on their cranial measurements. Studying and collecting heads (of the living or the dead) were 'scientific' pursuits, exemplified by the terminological finesse of a "craniological collection" comprising "valuable specimens"—some of which originated in the indigenes' cemeteries (see Skeat & Blagden 1906, vol. 1: 96, 99, note by W.L.H. Duckworth). Craniology is but one example of a prevalent European head cult, which reached its zenith in the census—a collection of classified and counted heads—the trophy of the white man's power.

Another significant feature of the census that Anderson (1991: 166) explores is the management of ambiguous identities through the category, and sub-categories, of 'Other' (see Table 2, p. 65). This taxonomic scheme devised a place for every race. The work of defining, redefining, rearranging and reinventing racial categories shows the artefactuality of the process. Anderson (1991: 169) emphasises that once persons were placed in the appropriate 'series' of a particular racial category, colonial administration could function more efficiently "on the principle of ethno-racial hierarchies". Classification may be seen as "an act of domination as well as analysis" (Harris quoted in Weil 1989: 30). Although the comment refers to the museum, it is equally descriptive of the census (post-colonial intersections of the census and the museum are explored in Chap. 10). Another level of museum comparison rests on the idea of the artefact. The census as knowledge artefact created the person as census artefact. Gradually, these imagined artefacts became the 'real things' whereby the "reification" of identities was effected through the intensification of the administrative machinery (Anderson 1991: 165).

If the shape of the colonial census was a 'natural' evolution of the theory of race, it was axiomatic that the 'white' race found its place. Hirschman observes 'Europeans' were placed first in the censuses (see Table 2, p. 65) and "subclassified in obsessive detail, in spite of their relatively trivial demographic size" (1987: 562). If the census is compared to a museum display, the place of what is regarded as the really important 'real things' is always a strategic decision. 'Race' as the organising principle of the census arose from a nineteenth-century culture informed by Darwinian theory, a culture also shared by the colonial museums. Because Anderson's 'museumising imagination' is bereft of the museum institution, he leaves unexamined the interplay between the colonial census and the colonial museum. Only a few comparisons will be made as Chapter 5 will discuss these issues in greater depth.

The colonial curator's duties in 'British Malaya' included attendance at the meetings of the Central Census Committee (see Wray c. 1902: 4), an incisive example of the power grid's intersecting lines. Anderson (1991: 169) argues that the census was a serialisation of persons in which the individual became "one digit in an aggregable series" of a replicable category. The 'series' as a conceptual order was a dominant style of imagining persons and

objects in colonial museums. Anderson (1991: 163) also indicates that the possibilities of colonial imagining were greatly enhanced by the factor of reproducibility. Significantly, ethnographic displays in the F.M.S. museums were one of the major sites for the reproduction of the racial formula. In addition, Hirschman (1987: 567) maintains that the racially devised census was "not the inevitable solution to the ethnographic maze but rather a particular construction of European taste", and in a like manner, the ethnography that informed colonial museums was a particular European predilection.

The map, the second element of Anderson's tripartite scheme, is a tool closely related to the census. In the words of Anderson (1991: 173), the map-makers were attempting "to put space under the same surveillance which the census-makers were trying to impose on persons". Just as people could be 'made' and 'remade', the maps of the imperial states could be drawn and redrawn. They had an artefactual quality. Anderson (ibid: 175) explains that the colour-coded system for colonies (London's imperial maps used pink-red for British colonies) created a "jigsaw puzzle" with detachable pieces that could be removed from their geographical contexts. *Tanahair* (homeland) became the jigsaw pieces in the map of *tanah jajahan* (colony or 'colonised land'). It is useful to contrast conceptualisations of space as 'jigsaw' or as 'patchwork'. Wolters (1981: 9) indicates: "The map of early Southeast Asia which evolved out of the ancient networks of small settlements was a patchwork of often overlapping *mandalas*, or 'circles of kings' ...". The Sanskrit term *mandala* signified a fluid management of space "in a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries" (ibid: 9).

The Malay Peninsula is an instructional exercise in map-making. Begbie (1967: 2), in *The Malayan Peninsula*, first published in 1834, informs that the "best authorities" had set "the geographical limits of the Malayan Peninsula" at a latitude of 8° north, that is, inclusive of southern Siam. In 1909 the signing of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty stabilised the dividing line between 'British Malaya' and Siam, and hence the Peninsula became reshaped into the cartography of colony. In a section on 'Area, boundaries and divisions', Scrivenor (1923: 2) limits the description of the Malay Peninsula to a latitude of 6° 50' north, which is the upper reach of "British rule or influence". If the northern limit appears somewhat arbitrary, the rest of the boundaries appear 'natural': the seas surrounding the Peninsula (ibid: 2).

In contrast, the seas for the peoples of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago were not considered boundaries but maritime extensions of land-based influence. Indeed, the Malay-Indonesian word *tanahair* (translated as 'homeland', 'motherland', or 'native land') means literally 'land-water'. The colonial carving of space in the archipelago was essentially control of *tanahair* —the land and the seas—fundamental to the control of maritime trade routes. In terms of historical geography, the logic of the map replaced the fluidity of the indigenous trading *mandalas*. The reproducibility of the map in the ethnographic museums of imperial centres highlights another link in the power grid: the map as both colonial artefact and museum artefact. The Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde in Rotterdam exhibited maps showing the latest colonial advances in the Netherlands East Indies (Frese 1960: 13).

Anderson (1991: 181) associates the third 'institution of power', the 'museum', with the legitimacy of the colonial regime. His central motif is not the museum *sui generis*, but the 'museumising imagination' (ibid: 178) which materialises as the political appropriation of antiquity, particularly ancient monuments. Anderson (ibid: 178) concentrates on the history of colonial archaeology in Southeast Asia, an enterprise which he claims made the emergence of museums possible. 'British Malaya' is not discussed for it does not fit into Anderson's regional pattern. Lamb (1965: 100) claims that the dearth of ancient monuments in 'Malaya' discouraged the British from developing "an ambitious archaeological and museum service" and consequently, the colony was unable "to compete with the archaeological and cognate work ... sponsored by the French in Indochina and the Dutch in Indonesia". The element of imperial competition is noted by Anderson (1991: 179; fn. 30): the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient was established in 1898 in Saigon, the Archaeological Department of Burma (then part of British India) in 1899, closely followed by the establishment of the Directorate of Museums and Historical Monuments of Indochina, and in close pursuit, in 1901, the Dutch colonial Antiquities Commission.

In colonial Malaysia the 'museumising imagination' took hold earlier than the above examples, and was imagined without a bedrock of monumental archaeology, as will be shown in the next section.

### Unofficial and Official Museum Origins

Museum genealogy in Malaysia is traced to the respective colonial governments in 'British Malaya' and 'British' Borneo. Contemporary museum writings concur that the Perak Museum, founded in 1883, was the first museum in the Peninsula (e.g. ASEAN 1988: 86; Mohd Kassim 1995b; Peacock c. 1958: 17). However, this official narrative excludes a prior history. The slogan 'Malacca where it all began' in Malacca's Ethnography and History Museum may be appropriated for Malaysia's museum history. This museum, in its section 'British era', displays an illustration of the Anglo-Chinese College (1818-1843) in Malacca. The label does not mention that the Anglo-Chinese College also had a museum (see Harrison, B. 1976: 254). Begbie ([1834] 1967: 368) describes the mission of the College as "promoting a reciprocal knowledge of the two languages amongst the English and Chinese, and of communicating the privilege of the gospel to the latter". The College, closely associated with the London Missionary Society, was from its inception, intended as a missionary base in Southeast Asia (Harrison, B. 1976: 246).

The mission of the museum is less apparent. A description of the museum's contents is provided by B. Harrison (1976: 254): "Chinese drawings, maps and charts, Chinese anatomical plates, specimens of Chinese musical instruments, bronze figures, etc., specimens of the rocks in Palestine, birds of paradise, cups of Bacchus, and petrifications." An evangelical theme is not identifiable, nor does the museum correspond to Frese's (1960: 31) typology of 'missionary museum' in which the collection consists of "historic documents relating to the [missionary] work, ethnographic specimens, and often examples of acculturated religious art". Unfortunately, records do not elaborate on the museum component of the Anglo-Chinese College which was eventually transferred to Hong Kong in 1843.

Nevertheless, the collection hints at the possibility that the missionary museum in Malacca may have been as much an expression of museum zeal as of missionary zeal. Hunt (1978: 70-1) argues that museum collections, which contributed to an understanding of the cultures in the colonies, were as necessary to the colonising process as were missionary activity and military conquest. The missionary museum, therefore, would have had a

twofold advantage. However, this combination was not repeated elsewhere in 'British Malaya' nor in 'British' Borneo, although in both territories mission schools became more widely established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 222, 230, 235-6).

Missionary activity did not provide the impetus for the establishment of museums. Neither was archaeological discovery the driving force in the formation of museums. In the nineteenth century, five museums were established: one in Singapore, two in the Peninsula, one in Sarawak and one in British North Borneo. All were supported by and closely integrated into the various colonial administrations. All of them predate Anderson's Southeast Asian chronicle of archaeological institutions which he links to the 'museumising imagination'.

Singapore was acquired in 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles on behalf of the East India Company. Museum origins in Singapore are traced to a library founded in 1844, which originally was housed in the Raffles Institution (Hanitsch 1908: 621). Although 1874 is a definitive date in shaping the museum, the details vary. According to Hanitsch (*ibid*: 621), 1874 marks the colonial government's decision to establish a museum combined with a library. The government acquired the Singapore Library and the institution was renamed the Raffles Library and Museum (*ibid*: 621). Another account notes that the initiative came from the British Secretary of State who, in 1874, requested a permanent exhibition of colonial products (ASEAN 1988: 160). The Raffles Library and Museum was temporarily housed in the Raffles Institution until a purpose-built structure was completed in 1887 (Hanitsch 1908: 621). In the same year, Sir Frederick Weld, Governor of the Straits Settlements (1880-87), officially opened the institution. Significantly, the museum was named after a professional empire-builder and an amateur naturalist. Raffles (1781-1826) pursued his scientific interests wherever he was stationed in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. Whilst in Java, he was instrumental in securing a natural history collection for the East India Company Museum in London (Bastin 1990: 7). Raffles' last years in England were spent in his Middlesex home where one of the rooms, called 'The Museum', housed his natural history collection (*ibid*: 20). The 'age of collecting' is a concise shorthand for colonial collecting, be it of territories or objects.

In the Peninsula, the signing of the Pangkor Treaty in Perak in 1874 marked formal political intervention in the Malay States. After Perak, British rule was extended to Selangor, and in both these economically valuable States, the British were quick to develop an infrastructure centred on the tin mining towns (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 181). For instance, in Perak the first railway line was opened in 1885 and the first museum in 1886 in Taiping, the administrative centre. It had commenced in 1883 as a temporary museum in the State Building and within three years a new museum building took shape (Mohd Kassim 1995b: 87). The first curator was Leonard Wray who was also the state geologist (and brother of the British Resident to Pahang State). The museum was the initiative of Sir Hugh Low, the British Resident to Perak (1877-89), who had proposed the idea in the 1870s (ibid: 86). Low's prior career is instructive. He first arrived in Sarawak in 1845 as a naturalist on a botanical collecting expedition (for details, see Cowan 1968: 330-1). Rajah James Brooke persuaded Low to become the Colonial Secretary of Labuan (1848-77). Thus, the naturalist embarked on a long career as administrator, first in 'British' Borneo, then in 'British Malaya'.

The second colonial museum in the Peninsula, the Selangor Museum, was founded in 1888 in Kuala Lumpur by a group of residents (Kloss 1985: 285). The museum received a small grant from the government and it was initially housed in the old Government Offices (ibid: 285). In the early 1900s the colonial government proposed a new museum building, more ambitious than that of the Perak Museum (Peacock c. 1958: 17). A report on the Selangor Museum for 1902 heralds the changes which will enable "the transformation of the Museum into a Scientific Institution" (Zacharias 1903: 1). The new museum building was ready for occupation in 1906 (Robinson 1909b: 99). With the establishment of the Selangor Museum, Wray was appointed Director of Museums, Federated Malay States (F.M.S.) in 1904 (Wray 1906b: 83) which meant he directed the newly created F.M.S. Museums Department. The *Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums* commenced publication in 1905 and was distributed to "various parts of the civilised world" (Knocker 1909: 33).

In Sarawak the rule of the White Rajahs commenced in 1841. The first Rajah, James Brooke, was known as a collector of people (Cowan 1968: 332). James Brooke collected the naturalist, Hugh Low, and in a reverse to Low's career pattern, A.H. Everett entered the Rajah's civil service and later emerged as a renowned ornithologist (ibid: 332). An important component

of the Rajah's 'collection' was the naturalist, Alfred Russel Wallace, who arrived in November 1854 and spent over a year in Sarawak. Edward Banks (1983: 59), in his 'Reminiscence of a curator', traces the origins of the museum idea to the first Rajah's involvement with the naturalist: "It seems certain Wallace persuaded Brooke to have a museum and orders were given for this. Later events delayed the start but Charles Brooke, the second Rajah, ... went ahead with the scheme for a Museum."

It appears that the first Rajah laid the groundwork with his 'collection' of people and his nephew, the second Rajah, proceeded with the next stage—the collection of objects. However, Cranbrook (1992) offers a different explanation for Rajah Charles Brooke's museum initiative. Both visitors to and residents in Sarawak (including Hugh Low, A.R. Wallace and A.H. Everett) had sent 'specimens' to the British Museum and other European museums. Consequently, Charles Brooke's decision to create a museum arose partly as a result of the museum fashion and partly as "concern about the loss of Sarawak material" (ibid: 221). In this account, the Sarawak Museum becomes the product of the dual essence of the 'museum movement'.

In 1878 Charles Brooke announced his proposal to establish a museum in the *Sarawak Gazette* (26 Mar. 1878): "H. H. The Rajah intends on a future day to establish a Museum for all specimens of interest in this country, for which a suitable building will be constructed at Kuching by the Government." In October 1886, a temporary museum was opened to the public by Rajah Charles Brooke (Chin et al. 1983: 1). Rajah Brooke expressed his vision of a permanent museum in a letter of 1889: "Our Museum shall be second to none in the East" (quoted in Harrisson, T. 1961: 17). By 1898 a new museum building was under construction, in a garden setting in Kuching. Significantly, Wallace (1869: 249), in his 'Museums for the people', had recommended a park or public garden as the ideal location for a museum. Moreover, Wallace was in Sarawak on a collecting expedition whilst the museum was being built and he provided much encouragement to the project (Chin 1987: 91). The Sarawak Museum was officially opened by the Rajah in 1891 (Chin et al. 1983: 1). The Rajah's personal interest extended to selecting curators (Runciman 1992: 219) and daily rounds of "inspecting new specimens" (Nicholl 1957: 4). After first obtaining the Rajah's sanction, the first issue of the *Sarawak Museum Journal* appeared in 1911 (Moulton 1912: 5).

In British North Borneo, museum history takes a cyclical rather than linear course. The British North Borneo Chartered Company commenced its rule in 1881 and a museum apparently existed in the early years of Chartered Company rule. An account in the *British North Borneo Herald* (1 Aug. 1886) reveals: "It is proposed ... to revive the Museum originally initiated by Mr. D. D. Daly to be called the 'British North Borneo Museum' ...". The Governor offered one of the rooms in the Government's offices to house the museum (*ibid*). The reconstituted museum was set up in approximately 1890 (Markham 1934: 25), situated in Sandakan (the then capital). The British North Borneo Museum appears to have functioned until 1905. Macaskie (1961: 118-19), a Chartered Company officer, offers two reasons for the museum's dissolution. The space occupied by the museum was required for a printing office and the Chartered Company, to attract prospective financiers, intended to exhibit some of the collection in its offices in London. In 1923 the Governor, in a dispatch to the Court of Directors, proposed to restart the museum and the Directors in the same year approved the proposal (Conway & Gordon 1964: 143). In 1925 the twice-revived British North Borneo Museum occupied part of a new building that housed the Secretariat and the Automatic Telephone Exchange (Macaskie 1961: 119).

Monumental archaeology was lacking in Singapore, the Peninsula and in Borneo, although archaeological investigation was not entirely absent. The avid collector and Sarawak civil servant, A.H. Everett, undertook exploratory surveys of Sarawak between 1873 and 1878, organised by Darwin, Wallace and Huxley in quest of the 'missing link' of human evolution (Solheim 1983: 35). In addition, the British Association for the Advancement of Science sponsored Everett's 1878-1879 exploration of caves at Bau and Niah in Sarawak (Cranbrook & Leh 1983: 17). However, the 'missing link' did not surface and further effort was deemed futile (*ibid*: 17). It was not until 1947 that archaeological activity, conducted by the Sarawak Museum, made any significant progress (Solheim 1983: 35) and ironically, the 'missing link'—the 40,000 year old Niah skull—that had been missed earlier was soon to be discovered. Similarly in the Peninsula, archaeological research, apart from the work of early 'antiquarian' colonial administrators, was stimulated by the Perak Museum and later the F.M.S. Museums Department in the early twentieth century (Adi 1986: 21).

Contrary to the Southeast Asian sequence outlined by Anderson (1991: chap. 10), archaeology was not the impetus for the emergence of museums in colonial Malaysia. Indeed, the process was reversed: it was museums that provided the impetus to the archaeological enterprise.

The flaw in Anderson's argument is to cement the museum to an archaeological foundation. Anderson's (1991: 181) basic premise is that the concentrated effort to investigate, restore and 'museumise' ancient (and invariably, religious) monuments was explicitly linked to the effort to legitimise the colonial state. Through archaeological services, each colonial regime could extend its ancestry by becoming the keeper of ancient sites, now desacralised: "Museumised this way, they were repositioned as regalia for a secular colonial state" (ibid: 182). Because the nineteenth-century cultural landscape of 'British Malaya' and 'British' Borneo was devoid of ancient monuments to be museumised, does the 'museumising imagination' then imagine things differently? One could posit that because there were no ancient monuments to colonise, museumise and, ultimately, legitimise one's ancestry, the colonisers created their own monuments—museums. However, this is but one exegetic denouement when examining the multiple meanings of the colonial museum—the subject of the following chapter.

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided a spatial and temporal background to Malaysia as well as a preliminary sketch of some of the "country's ancestral peoples". From 'trading cultures' the focus shifted to 'collecting cultures' during the nineteenth-century colonial advance. In contrast to the 'trading cultures', the imperial 'collecting cultures' redefined trading, people, space, time and objects in new classification schemes. The power grid of 'census', 'map' and 'museum' was superimposed on the *tanah* (land, earth, country). Historical patterns of fluidity became rearranged as grids of fixity. Anderson's insights, however, are inhibited by his limited imagining. Abstracted as the 'museumising imagination', the museum terrain is left unmapped. I have demonstrated that Anderson's theory of monumental archaeology (that is, the 'museum' in his formula) in colonial Southeast Asia is inapplicable to

colonial Malaysia. Alternative approaches to understanding are sought in Chapter 5, where the colonial museum is examined as multiple modes of imagining. To surmise that the museum is an 'institution of power' is only one angle of the mirror's myriad views.

## Chapter 5. The 'Cultivation' of Colonial Museums

*One bamboo does not make a row.*

(Chinese proverb)

### Introduction

This chapter will examine the orientations of museums in 'British Malaya' and 'British' Borneo. In the process, several museological assumptions concerning colonial museums are questioned and certain conceptual voids are indicated. The proverb at the head of this chapter is illustrative of my approach: no single perspective can comprehend the complexity of colonial museums as multi-purpose artefacts, enmeshed in visions of Empire, colonial imaginings, scientific epistemology and local cosmologies. Historical, political, cultural, economic, and individual factors are tenaciously interlocked in the development of colonial museums and, consequently, these are not analysed as discrete entities. Some of the areas of inquiry will intersect the categories of artefact analysis (Pearce 1992: 272-3), that is, the properties of 'material body', 'history', 'environment', and 'cultural significance'. However, as detected in Chapter 3, models of artefact analysis have inherent ethnocentric inadequacies. Consequently, the characteristic of artefactual multivocality will be highlighted for it expands the imagination of museums into a multiplicity of forms. As will be argued, the colonial museum was a creation of the colonisers and an interpretation of the colonised, but the museum was also interpreted *by* the colonised.

### Intellectual Climate and Tropical Climate

Before examining the 'museumising imagination' in colonial Malaysia, it is expedient to explore the intellectual climate of this period, that is, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The interwoven strands of politics, economics and science dominate the 'age of collecting' (whether of colonies or artefacts). Imperial expansion saw the emergence of anthropology as a distinctive discipline, a temporal concurrence intensely scrutinised in *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (Asad 1973b). Trigger (1984: 362) contends that colonial ethnologists and archaeologists regarded the cultures in Africa as a "museum of the past". In contrast,

I.M. Lewis (1981: 35) maintains anthropology ensured that colonised peoples would not be imagined as "museum specimens"—an assumption to which I shall return.

The "great period of museum anthropology" commenced in the 1890s (Stocking 1985a: 8) and saw the rise of ethnographic museums (also called anthropological or ethnological museums) in imperial capitals. Imperial expansion directly benefited ethnographic museums which owed their identity and continued existence to the colonies (Frese 1960: 9). Several museums in Britain, Europe and America acquired substantial collections of ethnographic objects from 'British Malaya' and 'British' Borneo (see respectively, Shahrum 1965: 78; Tillotson 1996: 45). Objects were obtained through expeditions and individual collectors, some of whom were colonial administrators, such as Charles Hose in Sarawak, and in Malaya, W.W. Skeat, who spent the second half of his career at the British Museum (Gullick 1988: 129). Metropolitan museums also made direct arrangements with colonial museums (Zacharias 1903: 2).

Colonial collecting resembled an inverted realisation of Melanesian cargo cults. The museums in the imperial capitals had a steady and abundant supply of 'cargo'—indigenous objects, flora and fauna, products with economic potential, and other miscellaneous collectibles. Meanwhile, Melanesian islanders waited in vain for their cargo—the most desired European goods that they saw but never possessed. This artefactual inversion is marked by a further irony. Harris (1977: 105-6) recounts how the leader of a cargo cult in New Guinea was overawed by the display of objects from his homeland at the Queensland Museum, Australia, and he became convinced that the museum held "the secret of cargo" (ibid: 106). The secret of the cargo was not only the power to possess goods but the ability to control their meanings or impose new meanings. At the forefront of new meanings was the evolutionary revolution which impelled the semantic shift in museums from 'curiosities' to 'specimens'. More importantly, natural history and human history converged in the one frame of reference, or more accurately, on the one ladder of 'progress', with Europeans positioned at the topmost rung. The colonised races were living 'specimens' in various, but lower, stages of an evolutionary hierarchy.

Natural history museums and renowned naturalists played an important role in forging the zoology of anthropology. Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913), first became interested in the Malay Archipelago after noting the 'missing gaps' in the British Museum's natural history collections (Bastin 1986: xii). Wallace, a contemporary of Charles Darwin, travelled widely in the Malay Archipelago and obtained natural history specimens for his own collection, as well as for museums. He also formulated his theory of natural selection whilst in Sarawak (1854-1856) and in the Sarawak Museum he is regarded as the 'co-founder of evolutionary theory' (Chin et al 1983: 1; Loh 1967: 446-7). Wallace's influence on the establishment of the Sarawak Museum was indicated in the previous chapter. Here, I shall focus on his theory of museums as formulated in his article, 'Museums for the people' (1869). Wallace drew inspiration from the emerging idea of the museum as an 'educational' and 'moral' artefact. He envisaged the 'museum for the people' as "an important agent in national education and the elevation of the masses" (ibid: 244). He proposed that an ideal museum of natural history should represent all the sciences in five sections: geography and geology, mineralogy, botany, zoology, and ethnology (ibid: 245). Although zoology was given the greatest emphasis, Wallace (ibid: 248) provided a thorough description of the ethnological ideal:

The chief well-marked races of man should be illustrated either by life-size models, casts, coloured figures, or by photographs. A corresponding series of their crania should also be shown; and such portions of the skeleton as should exhibit the differences that exist between certain races, as well as those between the lower races and those animals which most nearly approach them. Casts of the ... remains of prehistoric man should also be obtained, and compared with the corresponding parts of existing races.

All objects could be "illustrated by a series" that began with "prehistoric races", followed by "modern savages" (Wallace 1869: 248) and the series thus continued until it eventually arrived at its foregone conclusion—European "civilized man" (ibid: 249). The nineteenth-century museum idea was to materialise in the evolutionary ideal, with museums 'illustrating' the stages of humankind's evolutionary progress. The pinnacle of this progress was 'civilisation'—what the colonised peoples lacked and the colonisers could provide, at least by the example of their presence. To extend an earlier analogy, the 'civilising mission' became the Europeans' rationalised 'cargo'.

This 'civilised' order of things reflected a 'natural' hierarchy as expressed by the naturalist, Wallace: "[I]t is certainly a singular fact that no civilized nation has arisen within the tropics. That rigour of nature ... of our northern climes has ... been one of the acting causes in the production of our high civilization" (quoted in Savage 1984: 125). Proponents of the "climatic theory" argued that the inhabitants of tropical lands could not possibly become 'civilised' without the benefit of Western rule, embodied in men bred in climatically superior Europe (Savage 1984: 186). The environmental theory of civilisation united the intellectual climate and climatic conditions in a promising ideological alliance.

Other symmetries developed in the reciprocity between knowledge and empire. Natural history museums, ethnographic museums and 'universal survey' museums, such as the British Museum (Coombes 1994a: 103), were the direct material beneficiaries of imperialism but empire also benefited from these institutions (see, for example, Durrans 1988: 154; Wittlin 1970: 131). Coombes (1994a: 109) notes that the nineteenth-century guides to the collections of the British Museum underline their utility for prospective colonial administrators and their importance in providing knowledge about the colonised cultures for more effective colonial government. In other British institutions, the advancement of imperialism and the advancement of science was also mutually beneficial (on the British Association for the Advancement of Science, see Worboys 1981; on the Royal Society, see Gascoigne 1998). Brockway (1979: chap. 7) documents this relationship in the case of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, which was closely involved in research on Malayan rubber—a major product in the colonial economy.

Having briefly surveyed the intellectual and climatic conditions, it is also important to scrutinise some contemporary museological perspectives on this period. Newton (1994: 271) credits imperial collecting agencies with preserving the material culture of those cultures that "were probably doomed", an undertaking labelled "honorable" (to be explored elsewhere in this chapter). Other museum writers have been trenchantly critical of the roles of European ethnographic museums and the major museums of former imperial centres (see, for example, Coombes 1994a; Durrans 1988). Whether museum voices denounce or exonerate, one may legitimately inquire why the colonial museum is a marginal voice. Although Sheets-Pyenson's (1988) *Cathedrals of Science* could be considered a major work on

colonial museums, it is severely restricted in its scope, with its focus on the sub-category of colonial natural history museums through case studies in white settler colonies. Coombes (1994b), in her *Reinventing Africa*, meticulously examines museum-made imagery of the colonised 'other' in the British landscape but her horizon was not reinvented to encompass colonial museums in the African landscape. The diversity of topics in *Colonialism and the Object*, edited by Barringer and Flynn (1998), does not extend to the colonial museum as object. Although Western museum literature has analysed with compulsive detail the genealogies of the museum, the history of colonial museums appears in the crevices of mainstream museological discourse. Museum history takes the form of a self-referenced chronology but with an other-indexed amnesia.

The survey in Chapter 2 of Malaysian writings on museum history shows the uncritical acceptance of the European museum myths of origin, myths which are silent on the actual origins and roles of colonial museums. Encounters between museum history and colonial history speak of an ahistorical museology. Morley (1971: 17), in *Museums in South, Southeast and East Asia*, aligns the founding of the region's museums in the nineteenth century with "the general course of museum growth ... in the world" but the word 'colonialism' is absent. Kaplan (1994a: 1) offers an evasive history in which colonialism is only present in its departure: "The spread of museums in the 19th century was apparently spurred by burgeoning science and capitalism in the West; and in the 20th century, by industrialization, change and the demise of colonialism." Complexities, continuities and contradictions are completely erased in a reductive formula of diffusion, as in Lewis' (1992) article, 'Museums and their precursors: a brief world survey'. The nineteenth-century museum idea in Europe was simply "transmitted to other parts of the world through trading and colonialism" (ibid: 12); nothing more is said of colonialism. Instead, Lewis offers a spatio-chronological catalogue of museums under the heading 'Museum development outside Europe' (ibid: 12-16). In such a 'world survey' the only interpretation of colonialism is that it was good for 'museum development'. The inverse of this relationship has been either absolved in a museological amnesty or dissolved in museological amnesia.

If the form of the museum institution was 'transmitted' to the colonies, one would anticipate the 'new museum idea' to accompany it. One of the key components of the 'new museum idea' was its educational imperative (see Bennett 1996: 6; Coombes 1994: 123). McMichael (1989: 22), in his address 'Museums and social education in Asia and the Pacific', states: "Because museums of this kind were perceived to be socially beneficial, they spread rapidly to the colonies of the European powers." To whom museums were 'socially beneficial' is an ambiguity McMichael (1989: 22) subsequently clarifies: "During the latter part of the last century and the first half of this one, these [colonial] museums played a very important role in collecting and documenting the cultural and natural heritage of the countries concerned ...". Significantly, in another memory lapse, colonies transform into 'countries' and a contemporary 'heritage' role is reconstructed for colonial museums. The 'natural diffusion' theory of museum 'development' not only fails to critically examine the relationships between museumising and colonising, but reduces the complexity of the museum-artefact into the deceptive simplicity of replication: colonial museums were simply functional reproductions in a different locale. Moreover, as will be shown later in this chapter, the dominant rationale of 'education' expressed in the 'new museum idea' was absent in Malaysia's colonial museums.

Prösler (1996: 22) also criticises the museological gap between European imperialism and the diffusion of museums. However, Prösler (*ibid*: 25) uses the familiar 'world survey' approach to establish that by the 1870s, "a worldwide museum boom began to fill in the blank spaces in the museum map" (though Malaysia's colonial museums remain a blank space on Prösler's map). The error he commits in his "macrosociological perspectives" (*ibid*: 24) is presaged by his expression, 'the museum map'. As demonstrated by Anderson (1991: chap. 10), the 'map' imposes a unitary totality. It engenders a way of imagining museums as little pictures that stand for the big picture—in Prösler's perspective—globalisation. For Prösler, the expansion of colonial museums is a minor thesis in his larger argument on globalisation and museums (to be resumed in Chap. 12). His argument would have been better illustrated not by constructing a nineteenth-century 'museum map', but by plotting the ties that intersected spaces. The following sections will explore some of these connections whereby colonial museums were worked out in imperial, colonial, curatorial and indigenous sites of overlapping meanings.

### Colonial Museums as Multi-Purpose Artefacts

Lewis (1992: 12) indicates that the British Government had no policy on the formation of museums in colonies; consequently, it was a decision of the colonial authorities "to take the initiative". Because Lewis follows the 'diffusion theory' of colonial museum history, he merely maps the 'wheres' (ibid: 12-16) but does not examine the 'whys'. In 'British Malaya' and 'British' Borneo the museum initiative was taken early (see Chap. 4). Were colonial museums indirect tools of British 'indirect rule'? Ames (1986: 10) argues that the 'museumification' of other cultures is the "exercise [of] a conceptual control over them". His reference is to contemporary anthropology museums, but in the case of colonial museums 'conceptual control' was predicated upon the circumstances of colonialism. The museum histories recounted in Chapter 4 reveal that the dates of the colonising and museumising processes are in close proximity. Mohd Redzuan (1991: 5) argues these chronologies are not coincidental. Contemporary Malaysian perspectives on colonial museum origins follow two separate rationales—the political and the economic—though in the colonial reality the two were inseparable.

Mohd Faisal (1995), of Malaysia's Department of Museums and Antiquities, explicitly links museumising and colonising. He contends that collecting and information gathering on the country's culture and history served the needs of the British Residents, for to inadvertently break cultural taboos could have resulted in Malay rebellion (ibid: 6). The theory of the museum as a tool to understand and control the local population may be traced to the Pangkor Treaty of 1874 which, in 1875, resulted in the assassination of the first British Resident of Perak, J.W.W. Birch, by a group of Malays. According to one museum curator, the killing of Birch stunned the British into the realisation that they needed a deeper understanding of the indigenous population (Kamarul Baharin Buyong, pers. comm., 17 Apr. 1995). It may be recalled that Sir Hugh Low, the third British Resident of Perak (1877-89), initiated the idea for a museum in the late 1870s and ensured the realisation of the Perak Museum (see Chap. 4). Notably, in 1905, portraits of Sir Hugh Low and J.W.W. Birch were placed in the Perak Museum (Knocker 1909: 43). Although the former is the founder of the museum, the latter's indirect contribution is not without significance. The colonial regime was not merely portrayed by portraits in the museum,

its highest ranking representatives paid official visits to the Perak Museum (see, for example, Knocker 1906: 95; 1909: 42).

Routinely, collections of objects and information were made by colonial administrators. One of these administrators in British Malaya, W.W. Skeat, presented in 1898 his ethnological collection of over 1,000 artefacts to the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, University of Cambridge (Gullick 1988: 136, fn. 36). Skeat's *Malay Magic* (1900) was published soon afterward, and in the preface, C.O. Blagden praises the book's scientific worth but more so its practical value: "[T]here can be no doubt that an understanding of the ideas and modes of thought of an alien people in a relatively low stage of civilisation facilitates very considerably the task of governing them" (in Skeat 1900: viii-ix). Blagden dismisses criticism of such studies by his former language teacher, Wan Abdullah, who regarded them as "perilous to the soul's health" (ibid: viii). More will be said about the state of the soul in subsequent sections.

The 'colonial museum' in Frese's (1960: 29) typology was a new type of institution, politically and economically motivated, and intended to keep the public informed of developments in the colonies. Therefore, these museums arose in the imperial capitals of Europe, although Frese (ibid: 29) concedes that some museums in the colonies were established on this model. Frese (ibid: 29) also labels the colonial museum the 'geography-economy' museum because attention was focused on commercial aspects of the colonies. The second Malaysian account of museum origins centres on their economic role. Mohd Zulkifli (1977: 9) suggests that in 'British Malaya' the initial focus was on the natural sciences, "especially with the opening up of the country" and on the flora and fauna which held an "economic significance". As will be demonstrated, the economic dimension of colonial museums appears more pronounced in the Perak Museum and the British North Borneo Museum, and the least emphasised in the Sarawak Museum.

The first report on the Sarawak Museum for the year 1891 (Haviland 1892: 45-46) describes the collections under the following categories: ethnological, zoological, botanical and geological. No reference is made to the economic utility of plants or other substances. The two main curatorial concerns are the adverse effects of the tropical climate and the standardisation of nomenclature (ibid: 45). A museum report for 1906 (Hewitt 1907) devotes five pages to the zoological collection, four pages to the ethnographical

collection, two pages to the archaeological collection and under the heading 'Economic collection' four lines on 'Nipah' salt and 'specimens' of local fruits. This lack of economic focus is directly attributable to the White Rajahs. Sir Charles Brooke, founder of the Sarawak Museum, and his predecessor, Sir James Brooke, did not encourage Western commercial development. A common explanation is that the Brookes feared that such activities would be detrimental to the indigenous way of life, as well as a threat to their own authority (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 126).

Wray, curator of the Perak Museum and state geologist, in his report on the Perak Museum for 1897 (c. 1898: 1) lists the departments of the museum as ethnology, economic botany, history, antiquities, mining, geology and mineralogy. In the report, the largest section is devoted to 'Mining'. The section 'Economic botany' details the progress made with seeds of the Para rubber trees in the museum grounds (ibid: 3). Hence, the 'cultivation' of colonial museums could also entail actual cultivation. By the early twentieth century, rubber and tin had become the two keys to the colonial export economy. In a museum report of 1901, Wray (c. 1902: 2-3) records his visits to tin mines and his attendance at the Mining Conference but he also reports that the new ethnological galleries were ready for occupation (ibid: 3). The Perak Museum opened its new ethnological wing to the public in December 1904 and credit for the "most comprehensive collection illustrative of Malayan ethnology extant" (Knocker 1906: 90) was given to Wray, a man more at home in tin mines. Although the commercial component is marked in the museum's initial focus, changing orientations are also apparent.

According to Regis (1990: 31), the museum, which first emerged after the Chartered Company had established its rule in British North Borneo, was established "in line with the popular museum movement occurring in Great Britain". However, subsequent developments support a different interpretation of the 'museum movement'. As shown in the previous chapter, the British North Borneo Museum had a fragmented history, but Macaskie (1961: 118) provides a description of the museum prior to 1905:

The building was about twenty by sixty feet; its front portion provided space for a collection of minerals, timbers, weapons and specimens of native art. The walls were adorned with brass gongs and trophies. ... The glass cases covered a variety of ores (including gold and silver); and lurking amongst them were a few lumps of tin ore, which caused many visitors to make enquiries

whence they came. The Chartered Company's officials replied to the effect that the tin ores came from Malaya and were exhibited to incite explorers to discover tin in the country (a hope which has never materialised).

In 1905 the collection was scattered, but most of it was sent to the Chartered Company's offices in London to convince bankers and financiers of the economic potential of the Chartered Company's territory (Conway & Gordon 1964: 143; Macaskie 1961: 119). The collection was thus considered more useful in the imperial capital than as part of the colonial museum in the territory. The 'museum movement' may have a uniquely colonial connotation.

Contrary to Frese's taxonomic scheme, the 'colonial museum' is not necessarily the terminological equivalent of the 'economy-geography' museum. The commercial component existed in varying degrees of emphasis and the 'economic' section was not the totality of these museums. The label 'geography-economy' can neither comprehend the complexity of the museum's scope, the nature of change, nor the multiple motives in the establishment of museums. Colonial museums cannot be understood in their entirety as utilitarian projects.

It is also useful to draw out some comparisons of the three aforementioned museums. The precarious existence of the museum in British North Borneo reflects the dominance of the Chartered Company's commercial interests. In contrast, the White Rajahs of Sarawak imagined themselves as the "guardians of local culture" (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 221). The Sarawak Museum then becomes an extension of this 'guardianship'. In her article, 'The Sarawak Museum', Fraser-Lu (1982: 115) indicates that "the Brooke family appreciated the importance that local pride and tradition played in the lives of the diverse people whom they governed". Political and cultural control were not divisible in Sarawak. A further contrast is 'British Malaya' where the Pangkor Treaty of 1874, removed political and economic power from the Sultans and left them in charge of the largely symbolic domain of Malay customs and religion. If the Sultans' role was reduced to the guardian of Malay culture, what did the emergence of museums, which quickly followed the extension of British rule, symbolise?

The symbolic significance of the colonial museums may be discerned from several talks presented to the Royal Colonial Institute, London, in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The speakers represented "some of the best-known and most influential figures in the history of British Malaya and British Borneo" (Kratoska 1983: 1). One of the speakers was Sir Frederick Weld (Governor of the Straits Settlements 1880-87) who addressed the Royal Colonial Institute in 1884. Weld (1983: 46) begins by emphasising the "capacity for governing is a characteristic of our race". He then inventories the buildings and infrastructure materialised by the 'governing race' in Singapore (ibid: 49-50). Weld (ibid: 51) also refers to the proposed new museum in Singapore, to be built "on a large scale, which will render it the most complete institution of the kind in that part of the world". Weld (ibid: 51) continues: "I am anxious to establish a scientific department in charge of it. Our mineralogical resources are little known. ... not only the Colony, but science generally will be benefited." It may be recalled that Weld officially opened the Raffles Library and Museum in 1887.

W.E. Maxwell, a senior colonial administrator in British Malaya, addressed the Royal Colonial Institute in 1891. Maxwell, like Weld, focused on the theme of 'progress':

Those who travel at the present day in the Protected Native States ... and remark around them *the outward signs of an advanced civilisation*—good roads, comfortable houses, ... railways, lines of telegraph, hospitals, schools, and a ... contented population—can hardly picture to themselves the same States as they were under purely native rule (Maxwell 1983: 132, emphasis added).

Maxwell (ibid: 134) expands on this theme in the State of Perak by itemising the public buildings, inclusive of "a museum (chiefly geological and ethnographical, founded by Sir Hugh Low, and well arranged and managed by Mr. L. Wray junr.)".

The museum as an 'outward sign of an advanced civilisation' is also pictured by Sir Frank Swettenham, another senior colonial administrator in British Malaya, who addressed the Institute in 1896. Swettenham (1983: 185) chronicles in detail the infrastructure (the railways are described as "works of art") and the numerous buildings, inclusive of the "admirable Museum" in Perak. Swettenham (ibid: 190) also stresses the importance of learning the language and customs of the Malays, and moreover, these methods "will

serve equally well with any other native race that comes under British influence".

E.W. Birch (a former British Resident of Perak and son of the assassinated first Resident), presented his talk to the Institute in 1912. Birch (1983: 356), too, commences with "some of the things we have done for Malaya" and includes in his chronicle of accomplishments, the Perak Museum, "complete in its ethnographical department as could be wished".

Charles Hose presented his paper, 'Sarawak—an independent State within the Empire', to the Royal Colonial Institute in 1923. Hose was an amateur ethnologist and naturalist, and an important source of objects for the Sarawak Museum and European museums whilst he served under Brooke's administration (1884-1904). Hose (1983: 377) provides, what has come to resemble, the mandatory list of achievements, which he describes under the term "development and progress". Included in the list is "a fine Museum which has a very complete and representative collection of specimens of the Natural History and Ethnography of the country" (*ibid*: 377).

Colonial administration and museum administration were in a civilisational dialogue, as evident in G. Brown Goode's 'The principles of museum administration' of 1895: "The degree of civilization to which any nation ... has attained is best shown by the character of its public museums and the liberality with which they are maintained" (quoted in Sheets-Pyenson 1988: 93).

Chapter 3 discussed Meltzer's notion of the contemporary museum as an 'ideological artefact' and it is equally applicable to colonial museums. The multiple imperialist ideologies, in the above examples, are expressed in an almost identical format. In particular, the inventory of 'what we have done for them' reinforced the ideology of 'progress' contingent upon the 'civilisation' of the 'governing race'. These 'progress' reports on formal and informal Empire clearly demonstrate that the colonial museum was a master symbol of civilisation—not of those 'illustrated' within but—of those who constructed them. To borrow Maxwell's apt expression, colonial rulers could "picture to themselves" the success of their 'civilising mission' or to return to Benedict Anderson's terminology, the museum was one of the forms of imagining civilisational and racial superiority.

The museum was imagination set in bricks and mortar, built to endure (unlike the fate of many wooden indigenous structures). Sheets-Pyenson (1988: 46) indicates that colonial museums followed the architectural standard of the imperial homeland so that multi-storeyed, monumental structures were built, with towers and arches, symmetrical facades and impressive entrances. These features were also prominent in Malaysia's colonial museums but Sheets-Pyenson ignores the totality of the colonial architectural landscape. The museums in colonial Malaysia were no more ostentatious than the rest of the colonial buildings fashioned as cultural props. Ghafar (1997) provides a comprehensive pictorial survey of buildings re-created in the 'imperial tradition' in his *British Colonial Architecture in Malaysia 1800-1930*. Ghafar (ibid: 4, 8) describes the prevalent styles as Tudor, Neo-Classical, Neo-Gothic, and the hybrid Moorish style.

The colonial museums were often of more than one style, even before new wings were added or other structural renovations made. The Sarawak Museum, before a major extension in 1911, has been described as both a Normandy town hall (Chin et al. 1983: 1) and as a Victorian building in the Queen Anne style (Leh 1993: 16). Furthermore, the Sarawak Museum (see Plate 4, p. 90) as "an authentic historic exhibit" (Zeppel 1994: 154) was architecturally altered several times during its long history (for details, see Leh 1993). The Selangor Museum (see Fig. 2, p. 90) has been described as Flemish style architecture, with Victorian style displays (Sheppard 1964: 34) and the Perak Museum as 'Moorish' architecture (caption in the Perak Museum). All of these buildings were specifically constructed as museums in the European 'landscape' tradition.



Plate 4. Sarawak Museum of the 19th C., shrouded by the haze of Sept. 1997  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1997

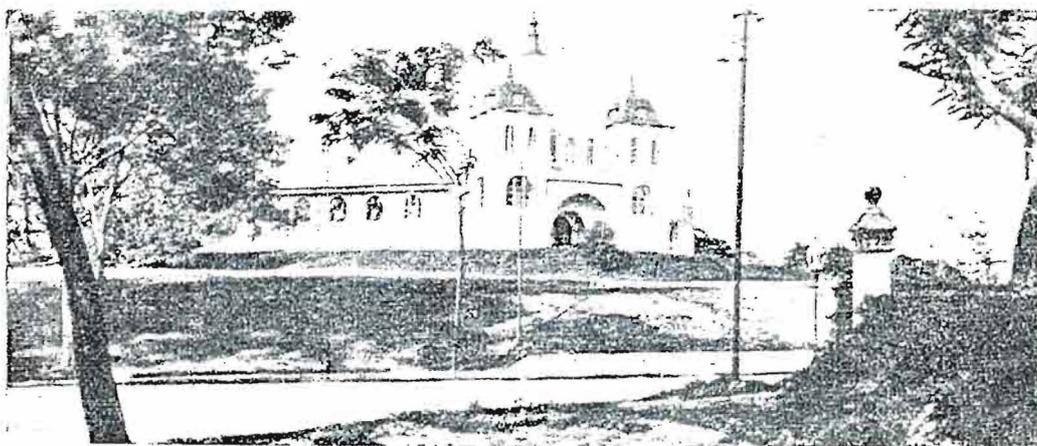


Fig. 2. Selangor Museum in 1910, prior to its enlargement in 1914  
Source: Sheppard, M. (A.M.S.) 1964, 'The bombing of the Selangor Museum', *Malaya in History*, 8(2), p. 32.

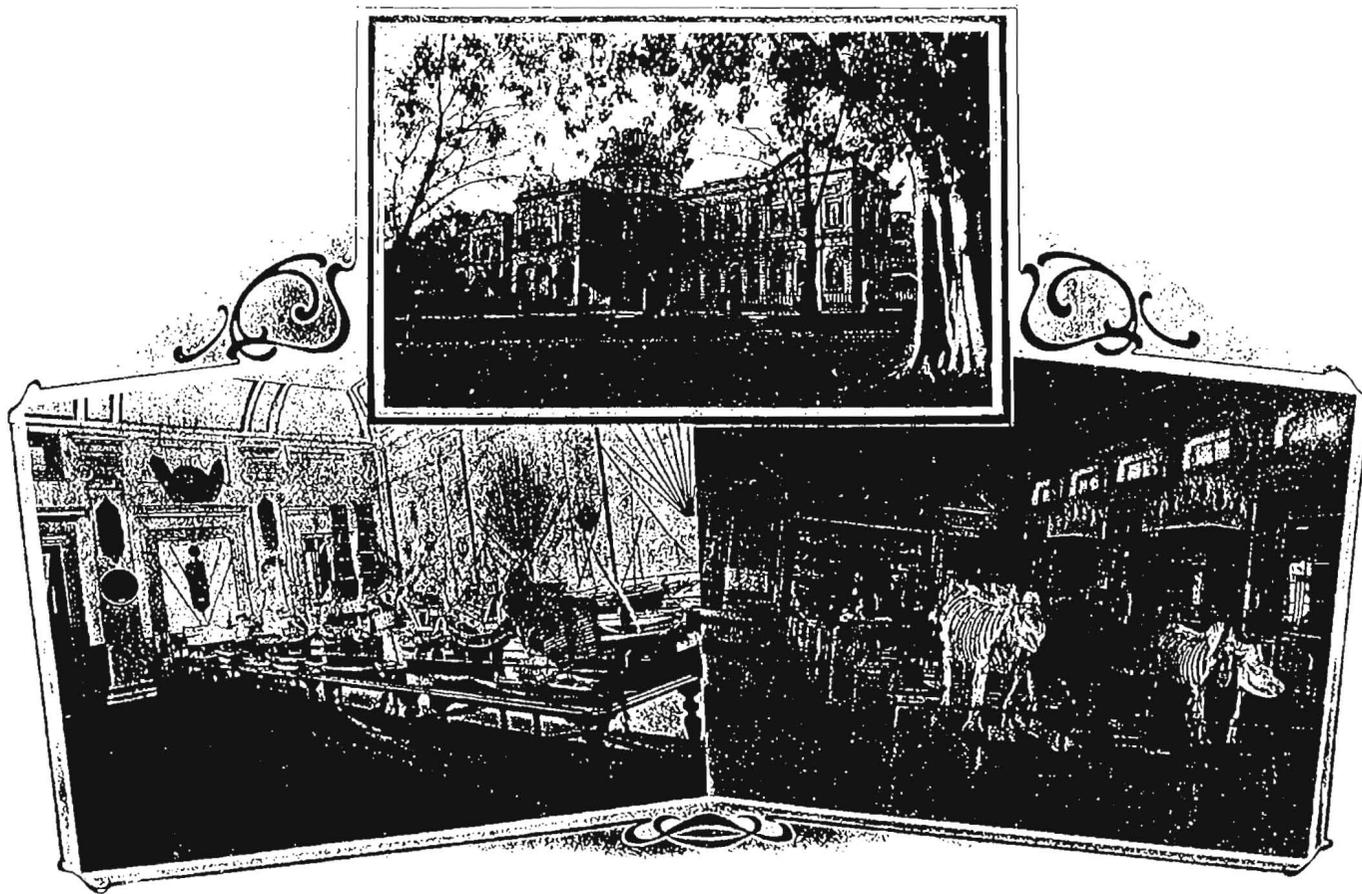


Fig. 3. Raffles Library and Museum, early 1900s

Source: Wright, A. (ed.) 1908, *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya*,  
Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Co. Ltd, London, p. 621.

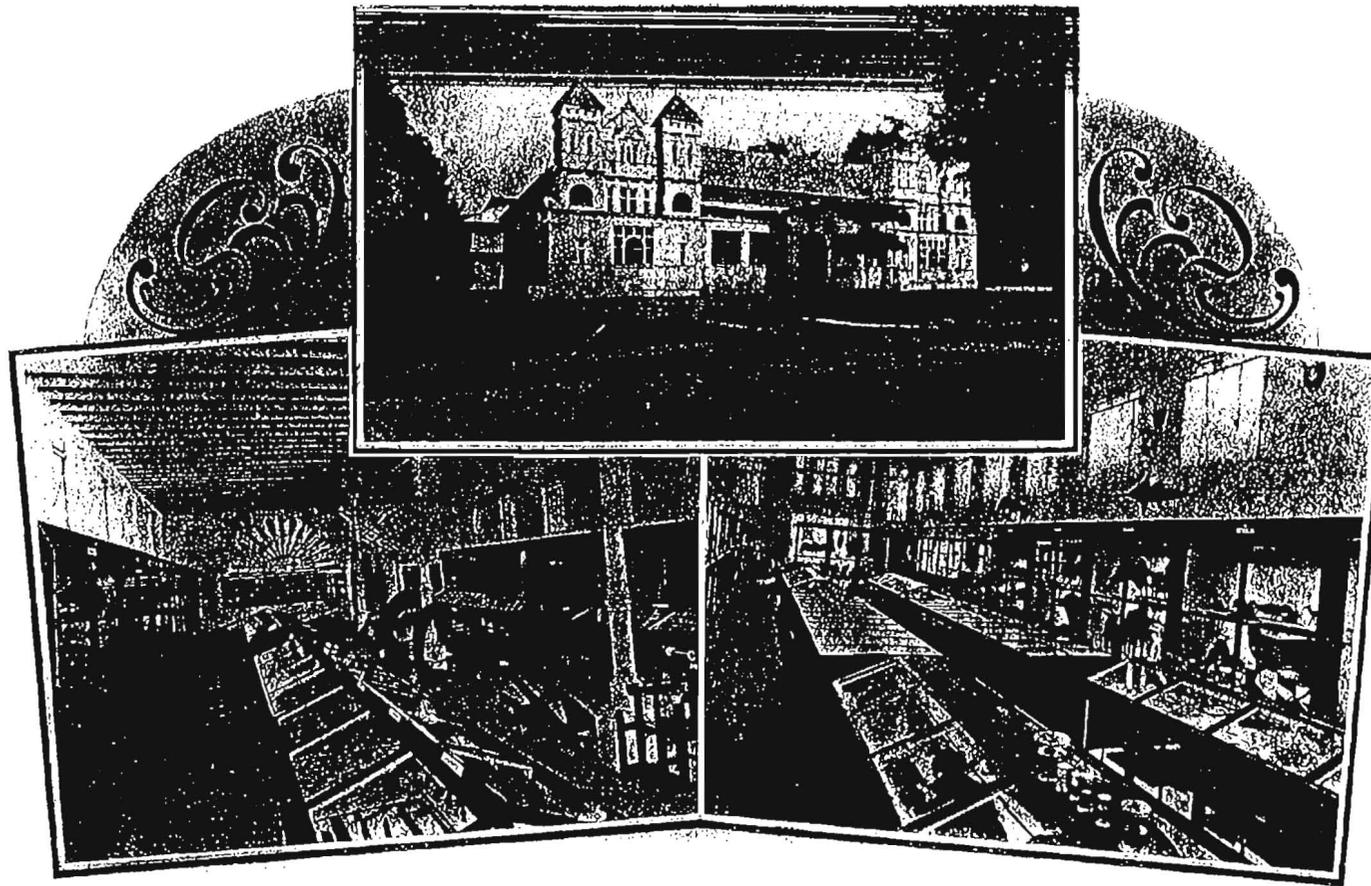


Fig. 4. Perak Museum, early 1900s

Note the four pyramid-shaped towers which, in 1904, had replaced the 'Moorish' domes.

Source: Wright, A. (ed.) 1908, *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya*, Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Co. Ltd, London, p. 873.

*Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya*, edited by A. Wright in 1908, also contains photographic impressions of the exteriors and interiors of the Raffles Museum and the Perak Museum, with their Victorian style displays (see respectively, Fig. 3, p. 91 and Fig. 4, p. 92). These photographic records (in the same volume, see also Wray 1908) vividly portray a sense of viewing any European ethnographic or natural history gallery of that period. The geographical setting of 'British Malaya' approaches a photographic illusion or *silap mata* ('mistaken eyes'). The European-inspired architecture and the Victorian style arrangements were the 'real' artefacts; the local objects within were merely 'specimens' in the 'series' of predominantly evolutionary displays. Museums of this period were 'cultural' artefacts of Western rationalism, science and technology. In addition, the colonial museum as an 'ideological' artefact of the 'governing race', was a powerful statement on the political monopoly of evolutionary progress. As an 'expressive' artefact, colonial museum architecture characterised an imagining of Britain, or at least Europe's imperial centres, but more significantly, it was an 'outward sign of an advanced civilisation'. The vivid contrast between the museum-artefact and its artefacts warehoused within reinforced the symbolic disparity of the civilisational 'haves' and 'have-nots', the objects of the latter being signs that stood for the distance from *the* 'civilisation'.

Imperial exhibitions in the centres of Europe were also symbolic, albeit temporary, reconstructions of imperial ordering. These exhibitions, monumental in scale and scope, displayed colonies as 'artefacts' in the illustrious story of Empire. Between 1851 and 1940 over twenty-five major exhibitions on the imperial theme were held in Britain, the period after the 1880s being particularly marked by heightened imperial propaganda (Greenhalgh 1988: 58-9). The first was the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, which also included Borneo (*ibid*: 53) in an impressive collection of colonies, territories and dominions. According to Greenhalgh, in *Ephemeral Vistas*, the twofold purpose of the Great Exhibition was to exalt, as well as domesticate, empire for the British public through a process of commodification in which countries were exhibited "as quantifiable batches of produce rather than as cultures" (*ibid*: 54). Similarly, in other European capitals, imperial competition for dominance manifested itself in universal exhibitions, several of which resulted in the establishment of new museums in Europe (Frese 1960: 11-12).

Colonial museums also played supportive roles during the era of international imperial exhibitions. Wray, curator of the Perak Museum, collected and prepared the items for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 in London (see Wright 1908: 245). Upon the request of the High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States, the Perak Museum in 1911 sent on loan a selection of ethnographic objects for the Coronation Exhibition of the Arts, Industries and Resources of the British Empire, held in White City (Robinson 1912: 5). The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 was another imposing display of colonies and dominions in which both Malaya and Sarawak were represented (Greenhalgh 1988: 57). This imperial display also exhibited human 'specimens': twenty Malays were listed under the Official Guide's heading, 'Races in Residence' (ibid: 95). For this particular Exhibition, the Director of the F.M.S. Museums, H.C. Robinson, organised and headed the Arts and Crafts Section of the Malayan Pavilion (Kloss 1930: 4), though it is not recorded whether he was responsible for the human 'collection'.

The British Empire Exhibition, Glasgow 1938, continued the tradition of illustrating the progress of the Empire (MacKenzie 1990: 291). The Exhibition also provides a vivid illustration of the artefactual nature of the imperial exhibitions. If colonial rule was a matter of putting "the house of 'natives' in order for them" (Abraham 1997: 17), then the Exhibition conceptualised the imperial landscape as an orderly 'Colonial Avenue' containing the regimented 'Colonial Court'. Malaya, British North Borneo and Sarawak were set in the panoramic display of colonies, protectorates and dependencies melded into an artefactual synthesis (Greenhalgh 1988: 62). At the centre of the monumental artefact was Britain, depicted with its ports and trade connections in a close spatial proximity to its territories—a reinvented map of the colonisation of space. The Colonial Court was Britain's artefactual *mandala* in the map of European imperialism, and British civilisation was quantified by the comprehensiveness of its 'collections'.

The Royal Colonial Institute talks were 'progress' reports on the benefits of Empire to a privileged audience, whereas the imperial displays were the popular artefactual equivalent, a spectacle of 'possess and impress'. If the Colonial Institute talks emphasised the moral advantage of what had been done for the colonised, the imperial exhibition was able to visually represent the material advantage of this moral order. Similarly, colonial

museums in the shape of 'moral artefacts' could demonstrate their service to empire and simultaneously participate in ephemeral moments of glory. Imperial exhibitions revitalised the bonds between Empire and colonial museums but bonds were maintained in other ways as well. The F.M.S. museums sent collections of botanical and economic 'specimens' to the Imperial Institute in London (see, for example, Knocker c. 1908: 2; Wray 1906b: 85), The Imperial Institute was founded to exhibit products of colonies to promote business investment (Coombes 1994a: 104). In addition, the F.M.S. museums sent objects and economic products to the Malay States Information Agency in London (see, for example, Robinson 1912: 5, 8).

The colonial museums' most substantial and prolonged ties were, however, with other museums, forming a wide network of interactions. These relationships traditionally involved: the reception of overseas expeditions (Shelford 1901: 5); object exchanges with metropolitan museums and 'specimen' identification by the latter (Robinson 1906b: 100); donations of 'specimens' (Wray 1906b: 85-6); loans of 'specimens' (Robinson 1913: 7, 10); and sales of 'duplicate specimens' (*ibid.*: 1, 8). MacLeod claims that objects moved in one-way traffic from colonial museums to metropolitan museums (1996: 312). However, more innovative transactions are also evident. Wray, curator of the Perak Museum, made a collecting expedition to England, where he obtained ethnological 'specimens' "to fill up gaps in the series" (Wray 1906a: 33; on further acquisitions from England, see Knocker c. 1908: 2). Wray also collected duplicate geological 'specimens' from the British Museum of Natural History (Wray 1906a: 32).

The British Museum, in particular, appears as the centre of the colonial museums' universe. Shelford (1901: 13) acknowledges the Sarawak Museum's indebtedness to the British Museum, a debt which "is shared by the Curators of many other colonial and foreign Museums". An early report on the Selangor Museum for 1904 (Robinson 1906b: 100) gives some indication of the expanding circles of correspondence and object exchanges, involving the British Museum, the Imperial Indian Museum (Calcutta), the Pitt-Rivers Museum (Oxford), the Hope Department, University Museum (Oxford), the Raffles Library and Museum (Singapore), and the Royal Museum of Zoology and Ethnography (Dresden). However, did the 'new museum idea' as well as museum objects travel along these 'global' networks?

More precisely, did the seed of the 'new museum idea' (in its form as an educational imperative) take root in the colonies? Earlier in this chapter, McMichael's educational reconstruction of colonial museums was questioned. This may now be substantiated by museum reports from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century in colonial Malaysia. The first reference to 'education' appears in a report of the Selangor Museum for 1902, where the acting curator proposed an anthropological survey of "the races inhabiting the Peninsula" (Zacharias 1903: 2); such a survey would "enhance the value of the Museum as an educational factor" (ibid: 4). A more conventional understanding of education was envisaged by F.W. Knocker, curator of the Perak Museum, but his efforts were solitary and short-lived. Knocker's (1906: 96) report on the Perak Museum for 1904 describes the pedagogic benefits of linking museums and schools as practised in Great Britain, Europe and America. Between 1905 and 1907 five local English-medium schools visited the Perak Museum and Knocker also gave a talk on zoology to teachers from an English-medium school (Keilich 1909: 97; Knocker c. 1908: 2; 1909: 42). The Curator's departure also signalled the departure of the museum's 'educational' role for subsequent reports mention neither education nor school visits.

Museum 'education' for schools was restricted to a certain type of school in the colony. As Knocker (1906: 97) understood it, museum education was "highly desirable amongst the class of scholars aspiring to English education in this country". In the early 1900s only a small local élite was permitted the privilege of an English education—a preparation for clerical duties in the colonial government bureaucracy (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 222). Peacock (c. 1958: 20), in his 'Report on museums in Malaya', includes a section on 'Public education in F.M.S. Museums' wherein he concludes that museums "were but little concerned with the public". In the Sarawak Museum it was only in the late 1930s that 'education' was given serious attention. The curator (Banks 1940: 1) explains the significant increase in attendance in 1939 by "a startling awakening of interest among schools, due to a more pleasing arrangement of exhibits and an extension of labelling in the vernacular". He added that adults were also attracted to the "new style" museum which had discarded its "almost Victorian assembly of little cases ... in favour of habitat groups" (ibid: 3).

We are told nothing of the local environment except: "Most directors were imbued [sic] with a sense of purpose largely derived from their role as transmitters of scientific culture to an *inhospitable* environment" (Sheets-Pyenson 1988: 12, emphasis added). Sheets-Pyenson presents a drama of *wayang kulit* where the curator-demigods do battle against their visible and invisible adversaries: "Their museums stood as *symbols of triumph*, not only over intellectual adversity but also over physical, emotional, and moral forces that ... appeared to be in league against them" (ibid: 12, emphasis added). In this narrative of conquest, we have the 'triumph' of the museum as mini-empire.

I have argued that the colonial museum is a multivocal artefact which was of political, practical and symbolic value to Empire, colonial governments and colonial curators. Next, I shall examine the transmission of what Sheets-Pyenson terms 'scientific culture'. Although the 'seed' of the educational idea failed to germinate in colonial museums (hence, negating the 'diffusion theory' of museum development), the theory of evolution—anthropologically appropriated and ideologically appropriate—was a more dominant orientation.

### **The Place of Race**

Europeans' racial mode of thinking became institutionalised by the early 1900s in the British 'spheres of influence' (Hirschman 1986; 1987). The previous chapter discussed the British perception and construction of race in the censuses of the Malay Peninsula. Museums, as much as censuses, were exercises in racial classification. Classification was to assert the authority of the classifier and to 'convert', as in missionary parlance, prior states of being. Some of the most enlightening instances are the treatment of 'anomalous' objects. Routinely, 'specimens' that did not neatly fit the classification schemes of 'race' were attributed to 'foreign civilisations'. For instance, the curator of the Sarawak Museum proposes that certain finds in Sarawak are evidence of a former "foreign civilization, possibly of a higher grade than any that is to be found in Borneo at the present day, European and Chinese races, of course, excepted" (Shelford 1901: 7). To be locked into a 'race', was to be locked into a certain 'grade of civilisation' and unknown 'specimens' were understood through known racial stereotype. The Malay tin ingot currency in the shape of animals, which would have indicated an

economically 'civilised stage' was labelled in the Perak Museum 'Malayan tin toys' (Wray 1908: 241). Even after the passage of fifteen years, Evans (by then, curator of the Perak Museum) rejects the evidence of a "learned treatise" that the 'toys' were indeed currency (Evans 1985: 283). Objects were signs of races; races were signs in the sequence of social evolution; the 'series' was the illustration of the prevailing paradigm. The museumising procedure was determined not by interpretation but by the classification of preconception.

In the early 1900s, a lengthy account on racial "interbreeding" featured in a Selangor Museum report, although it remains unclear who was 'interbreeding' with whom in Zacharias' report (1903: 3). In the section 'Ethnological collections', he proposes a different type of collecting activity:

In the future development of the Museum it would be well to work on two distinct and parallel lines—ie., *the races* inhabiting the Peninsula should be studied on a strictly anthropological basis as well as from a sociological and ethnological point of view (Zacharias 1903: 2, emphasis added).

Zacharias (ibid: 3) urged the Government of the F.M.S. to institute a survey which would include photographic records, physical measurements, the collection of languages and folklore, as well as psychological data. He emphasises that such a survey "would be of the highest scientific interest" (ibid: 3) and also provide "important practical results for the country" (ibid: 4). I indicated earlier Zacharias' understanding of this proposal as the enhancement the museum's 'educational' value, a view that demonstrates the post-colonial Malaysian understanding of the museum as a colonial tool. My intent, here, has been to show that museum surveys were already racially imagined (on museum preparations for the measurement of 'races', see Robinson 1906a: 36).

Skeat and Blagden's two-volume *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* was published in 1906, and also discoursed on the "admixture of blood" (vol. 1: 40). The authors acknowledge the assistance of Robinson, as well as Wray, then Director of the F.M.S. Museums, who read portions of the book in proof and provided photographs for some of the illustrations (ibid: xii-xiii). Wray (1906b: 85) also records his contribution of "a series of twenty-eight photographs". In the list of illustrations for Skeat and Blagden's book (1906, vol. 1), the photographs are of 'specimens': 'Negrito Type', 'Aboriginal

Dravidian Type', 'Suggested Aboriginal Malayan, or "Savage Malay" Type' and numerous other 'types', inclusive of the 'Mixed Type'. It is highly likely that this type of 'specimen' photography was also the norm in the Perak Museum which showed a "series of photographic enlargements of Asiatic races" (Knocker 1906: 90). Photographs of 'racial types' were like any other ethnographic object, that is, part of a 'series' and also part of the transactions with metropolitan museums. For instance, in 1903 Wray presented a "series of photographs of natives of the Malay Peninsula" (Wray 1906a: 33) to the British Museum of Natural History, a 'natural' repository for 'specimen-natives'.

It is useful to recall Anderson's (1991: chap. 10) comments on the colonial power grid expressed through the reproducibility of the 'series'. This power could be substantially amplified in museums where racial classification was reproduced as human objectification. I.M. Lewis' (1981: 35) benign view of colonial anthropology may now be inverted: it ensured that people would be regarded as "museum specimens", particularly in museums. Skeat and Blagden's 'specimens' are transformed into human-scale maps, measured from head to toe with infinitesimal details (1906, vol 1: 573-601). *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* reflects the dominant anthropological preoccupation with classification of humankind into distinct races, but once this had been achieved, the next question was whether differences were a product of the diffusion process or of Darwinian evolution (Gullick 1988: 130). Evolutionary overspill was not only between the lines: "a curious pre-Darwinian version of the evolution of man from the ape" is Skeat and Blagden's (1906, vol. 2: 189) translation of a local legend which ascribed human origins to a pair of white gibbons.

Soon attention shifted from miscegenation to forms of racial extinction. In 'British Malaya' the issue was tied to demographic changes and the future of the Malays with the influx of immigrants from China and India. B.O. Stoney, the Honorary Secretary of the Malay Settlement, Kuala Lumpur, first outlines the pessimists' view that Malays "will survive only as *objects of scientific interest to the ethnologist and the historian*" (1908: 227, emphasis added). However, Stoney (ibid: 227) remains optimistic, for the Malay is a "'brown man', living in the 'brown man's' zone, and therefore, more suited to the climatic conditions ... than the 'yellow' Chinaman or the 'black' Tamil". In this colour-coded environmental determinism, the Malay

could not "deteriorate" further because "the climate has [already] done its worst for him" (Stoney 1908: 227-8).

The 'vanishing races' theory for colonial curators meant a race against time. For instance, during 1904 "very special attention" was paid to the ethnological section of the Selangor Museum (Robinson 1909a: 47). Also in the same year, the Perak Museum opened its new ethnological wing. Shelford (1904: 1), curator of the Sarawak Museum, expressed his concern in 1904 at the pace of change: "Even in Sarawak, well-protected as it is against European exploitation, great changes have taken place amongst the natives within the last thirty years ...". Moulton (1912: 5), in his 'Report on the Sarawak Museum, 1911', underlines "the pressing need for recording, without further loss of precious time, notes on the customs and life of these fast vanishing races of man". The pressing philosophical dilemma was not the fate of peoples, but the 'vanishing' time to provide ethnological records as contributions to the Europeans' own "historical consciousness" (see Dominguez 1986: 548). Newton's (1994: 271) claim that colonial collecting was an 'honourable' response to cultures that 'were probably doomed' highlights how museology selectively reconstructs its past (for additional readings of 'vanishing' societies, see Coombes 1994b: 121).

Moulton's (1912: 3-4) report of 1911 also includes the arrangement of the Sarawak Museum's collections. Only the ethnological collections are reproduced in Table 3 (p. 102). Moulton does not elaborate but it appears that the arrangement was a two-fold scheme: general collections representing "many different tribes" (Moulton 1912: 5) and special collections differentiated by object-type. Many of these objects were held in common and thus would have cross-cut the general collections. With only Moulton's scheme as a guide, it is impossible to conjecture whether Alfred Russel Wallace's evolutionary theory, as expressed in his 'Museums for the people', had a perceptible impact on the Sarawak Museum's ethnological gallery. Paradoxically, Wallace's evolutionary scheme is more recognisable in the displays of the Perak Museum.

Detailed records on the Perak Museum afford an opportunity to examine the intricacies of ethnographic 'representation'. Possibly, the tenet of 'vanishing races' contributed to the Perak Museum's change in focus that saw a heightened effort to gather ethnological collections and information in the early 1900s (see Knocker 1906: 90; 1909: 33). Another factor in the museum's shift in focus was the administrative amalgamation of the Perak Museum and the Selangor Museum into the F.M.S. Museums Department (see Chap. 4) which led to increasing specialisations: the former museum concentrated on ethnology and the latter focused on zoology and botany.

The Perak Museum's new ethnological wing (opened in 1904) comprised the downstairs 'general ethnological room' and the upstairs 'local ethnology room' (Knocker 1906: 90). The 'general ethnology room' is described elsewhere as the 'comparative ethnological room', containing exhibits "of other nationalities resident in the Federated Malay States", as well as "photographs of types of different races in the archipelago and the surrounding countries" (see Wright 1908: 872). By 1907 the 'overcrowded' Malayan collection (Knocker c. 1908: 2) in the local ethnology room had colonised a large area of the 'general ethnology' room. The next development in the ethnological collections is described in a museum report of 1911 (Robinson 1912: 5): "[A]ll exotic specimens not bearing directly on the races now inhabiting the Peninsula [were] removed, enabling the strictly Malayan specimens to be spaced out...". Thus, ethnological expansion took the form of an increasing 'racial' restrictiveness. The selection of objects was a classificatory exercise in itself: a culling process excluded "debased" objects (see Zacharias 1903: 2) that showed inter-cultural influence (an approach reiterated in Kloss 1985: 291; Robinson c. 1910b: 268; Wray 1906b: 83). Similar to the colonial census, the 'mixed-type' object was consigned to the classificatory netherworld.

The most thorough description of the arrangement of the Perak Museum's contents is a chapter entitled 'Museums', which appeared in *An Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States 1923*, edited by C.W. Harrison ([1923] 1985c). Harrison begins with a lengthy quotation from the amateur historian, R.J. Wilkinson, who described the Malay Peninsula as "a curious historical museum showing every grade of primitive culture" (in Harrison 1985a: 6). Wilkinson's 'grades' include the "humble Negrito", "the Sakai", "the primitive Semang" and the Malays who have reached "the boundary between primitive culture and civilisation" (ibid: 6-7). Even though the

terms 'Sakai' and 'Semang' were at an early date recognised as "really bad" (Annandale & Robinson 1903: 1), most writers retained them "for the sake of convenience" (ibid: 1).

At this juncture, I shall examine how the Malay Peninsula as an imaginary 'historical museum' was manifested in the 'real thing', the Perak Museum. I.H.N. Evans, as curator, contributed the revised article on the Perak Museum in *An Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States 1923*. The lay-out of the museum illustrates 'every grade of primitive culture' in a spatial order that works horizontally and vertically. From the zoological hall on ground level a passage leads to the newer two-storey wing of the building, housing the ethnographical collections (Evans 1985: 268). This passage linking zoology and ethnology is possibly a transitional evolutionary space between the animal and human realms. The passage contains wall-cases of photographs "illustrating the physical characters of the Negritos, the Sakai, and the Jakun—pagans of three distinct races who inhabit the wilder parts of the Peninsula,—while one case ... will eventually be filled with types of the Malays" (ibid: 268). The 'reproducible' inhabitants of the Peninsula were inescapably, in the museumising imagination, 'museum specimens'. Once in the lower ethnography gallery, the object 'specimens' of the people 'specimens' are on display. These include handicrafts, weapons, adornments and ceremonial objects, as well as some prehistoric stone and iron implements (ibid: 269-273). These implements are conjectured as the work of "a race comparatively advanced" in comparison to the "present wild tribes" (ibid: 270-1).

The upper ethnographical rooms contained "the most valuable portions of the Malay collections" (Evans 1985: 274). Here, one detects that the Malays have reached, in Wilkinson's terms, the 'boundary between primitive culture and civilisation'. There are 'specimens' of Malay silversmith work, gold ornaments, jewellery, pottery, leather puppets for *wayang kulit*, musical instruments, and "magical apparatus of various kinds" (ibid: 279-285). Also on display is the 'converted' tin currency, described by Evans as "toys pure and simple" (ibid: 283). These animal-shaped tin ingots in Perak and Selangor embodied complex socio-religious beliefs for "tin had a 'soul spirit' which could be controlled by ceremonial magic" (Muzium Numismatik Maybank n.d.). Most of the space is occupied by table-cases of Malayan weapons, with the *keris* being "represented by a large number of specimens" (Evans 1985: 274). Evans (ibid: 274), taking a specimen approach,

catalogues the types but only provides a fleeting reference to their "magical properties". The *keris* (a dagger with a usually sinewy, but sometimes straight, blade) had *semangat* ('soul spirit', 'life-force', 'soul-counterpart') and because of its *semangat*, the *keris* could assume a life of its own. One *keris* in the Perak Museum was a 'living legend'. It was said to leave its glass case every night, kill a person, clean itself, and return to the museum before daybreak (see Sharp 1971: 8).

Evans had discussed the concept of *semangat*, both in the Peninsula and Borneo in his major works: *Among Primitive Peoples in Borneo* ([1922] 1990); *Studies in Religion, Folk-Lore, and Custom in British North Borneo and the Malay Peninsula* (1923); and *Papers on the Ethnology and Archaeology of the Malay Peninsula* (1927). Studies concerning belief systems had an early tradition but according to Skeat and Blagden (1906, vol. 1: xxv-xxvi), it was only from 1890 onwards that one could identify them as 'anthropological'. A wealth of literature was produced on beliefs and cosmologies in Malaya and Borneo (see, for example, Annandale & Robinson 1903, 1904; Hose & McDougall 1912, 2 vols; Roth 1896, 2 vols; Skeat 1900; Skeat & Blagden 1906, 2 vols; Wilkinson 1906). In addition, innumerable articles on indigenous cosmologies were published in the *Sarawak Museum Journal* and the *Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums*.

Undoubtedly, colonial curators (especially those who wrote on the topic) were cognisant with belief systems in which animate and inanimate things were "be-souled" (Hose & McDougall 1912, vol. 2: 113). Writing on the colonial enterprise in the Pacific, MacLeod (1998: 312) suggests that "Western science failed to recognize the animistic qualities of inanimate objects, the intimate relationship between spirit and history". In colonial Malaysia it was, by no means, a failure of recognition but a privileging of perceptions. *Semangat* and 'specimen' belonged to two distinct museum macrocosms (an argument to be resumed in subsequent sections).

Museum objects were both 'specimens' and signs in a reproducible series of races. Objects that defied racial patterning were from 'foreign' or 'more advanced' civilisations or, as in the case of tin currency, were reconstituted to accord with the imagined 'stage of civilisation'. Persons held dual membership in a category of 'race' as well as in one of the categories of 'primitive', 'pagan', 'wild tribe' or 'semi-civilised'. It was an ideological

combination that served the colonial powers and was served up in their ideological artefact—the colonial museum. In this symmetry of imagining, the Malay Peninsula was imagined as a museum and the Perak Museum was imagined as the Malay Peninsula. Evans describes the Perak Museum as "the *illustration* ... of the Malay Peninsula" (1985: 262, emphasis added). The 'illustration' was not crafted from a conceptual void; it was imagined along preconceived lines—the place of 'primitive' races. As Goldberg (1993: 109) remarks of racialised categories, they invoke the 'natural' laws of the universe thereby abrogating social relations. In the museum displays, literature and annual reports of the period, humans are depicted as racial 'things'. Not surprisingly, local staff of the F.M.S. museums seldom had names: they were invariably identified by race (see Robinson 1909a: 48; 1912: 8; 1913: 2) As will be shown in the discussion of visitor statistics, some museums also categorised their publics according to race.

### **Colonial Museums: Measuring 'Usefulness'**

Pearce (1992: 273) in her model of artefact analysis, includes the characteristic of 'cultural significance'. One may ask of the colonial museum-artefact, cultural significance for whom? Its cultural significance for colonial governments and curators has been documented, but what did it signify to the local cultures? The response of local populations to colonial museums is informed by both a paucity of information and facile assumptions. Sheets-Pyenson (1988), who devotes chapters to the worship of 'cathedrals of science', offers only a few lines on their 'publics'. She concedes that in Africa, natural history museums only survived in centres that had a high population of 'whites' (ibid: 16). In addition, she mentions that colonial museums in Africa, as well as in India, "were irrelevant to the vast majority of the populace" (ibid: 17). Similarly, Wan Zakaria (1991: 6) proposes that colonial museums in 'British Malaya' ignored "the needs of the local people". How (or if) 'relevance' or 'needs' can be measured makes this issue more problematic. Consequently, visitor statistics will be examined to understand the usage of the colonial museum by the local inhabitants.

The installation of new technology (a mechanical recorder and turnstile), in May 1897, facilitated record-keeping of visitors to the Perak Museum (Wray c. 1898: 5). The visitor statistics for the remaining portion of 1897 are reproduced in Table 4 (p. 107).

Month	Days Open	Maximum	Minimum	Total	Daily Ave.
May, from 17th	12	175	59	1,378	114.83
June	22	267	52	2,724	123.81
July	27	151	54	2,857	105.81
August	24	158	32	2,522	105.08
September	26	185	61	2,852	109.69
October	26	175	32	2,559	98.44
November	25	179	71	2,982	119.28
December	24	359	70	3,536	146.33

Table 4. Visitors to Perak Museum, May - Dec., 1897

Source: Wray, L. c. 1898, 'Government of Perak: Report on the Museum for the year 1897, by the Curator and State Geologist', p. 5.

The total attendance at the Perak Museum for this eight-month period was 21,410 (Wray c. 1898: 5). In 1901, the total had risen to 40,644 and by 1904, it had reached 52,854 (Knocker 1906: 95). The standard format for recording visitors shown in Table 4 reveals very little, except the colonial obsession with quantification. Occasionally, further commentary is provided so that it becomes possible to determine who the visitors were, or were not.

Knocker (1906: 93) in his report on the Perak Museum for 1904 observes:

... if the European community of the State would only remember that a Government Museum actually existed, and that the welfare and ultimate success and utility of such an institution depends almost as much on the united help and active interest taken in it by the populace at large as it does upon its chief officer and staff.

Knocker's (1909: 41) report on the Perak Museum for 1905 is more revealing:

A rough analysis of the attendance would ... show that Tamils far outnumbered other native races; and then in order of numbers: Chinese, Malays, Indians (exclusive of Tamils), Europeans and Eurasians, and Siamese and Burmese in small numbers.

Experimental opening on public holidays was successful only in the case of native festivals ... and towards the end of the year opening on European holidays was discontinued.

In a report for the year 1911, H.C. Robinson (1912: 5), then Director of Museums, F.M.S., lamented the poor response of Europeans to the Perak Museum. Robinson (1913: 7) has more to report on the Europeans in the following year's report:

The Museum continues to attract very large numbers of visitors, but Asiatics are overwhelmingly in the majority and it is open to question whether the very long hours during which the Museum is open both on week-days and on Sundays are justified by the very meagre European attendance for whom, in the main, these hours are arranged ...

Records of visitors to the Selangor Museum are more informative as visitors were not only quantified but categorised in a census format (with Europeans positioned first). The visitor statistics (see Table 5, p. 109) in the 'Report on the Selangor Museum, 1903' are tabulated in terms of the "percentage distribution according to race" (Robinson 1906a: 36).

	1901	1902	1903	Population (1901) of Kuala Lumpur
Europeans	1.3	1.2	1.3 )	3.2
Eurasians	5.1	2.8	2.5 )	
Bengalis	3.7	4.1	3.2 )	13.7
Tamils	18.4	19.7	16.5 )	
Malays	29.5	27.2	22.7	11.5
Chinese	42.0	45.0	53.1	71.6
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	

Table 5. Visitors to Selangor Museum, 1901-1903

(The actual total for 1903 falls short by 0.7% but this does not affect the overall pattern of visitor usage.)

Source: Robinson, H.C. 1906a, 'Report on the Selangor Museum, 1903', *Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums*, vol. I, Jan. 1905 - May 1906, p. 36.

Here, the analytical focus is the usage of the museum rather than conceptualisations of race. Robinson (1906: 36) concludes of these Selangor Museum statistics that of the 33,409 visitors in 1903, the Malays represent the highest proportion of visitors in terms of the total population, the Chinese the least, and "European interest appears to be almost negligible". The previous acting curator (Zacharias 1903: 1) had also underlined that the Selangor Museum was well attended by "the native population, at large (which contrasts strongly with the apathy exhibited by the European community)".

In the second report of the Sarawak Museum (Shelford 1901: 5) the curator mentions the Rajah's order to open the museum on Sundays and public holidays, and the curator notes that "the attendance of native visitors on those days certainly justifies this step". Moulton's (1915: 2) report on the Sarawak Museum for 1914 indicates its dual roles: "... to be of use to the scientific world outside, in addition to fulfilling its function of providing a place of interest to the natives of Sarawak". Although visitor statistics followed a racial patterning, curatorial conclusions were drawn on what was visited, rather than the nature of the visitor. The two-storey museum was divided into ethnological collections at the upper level and zoological collections at the lower level—a locational priority possibly influenced by Wallace. The tabulation of visitors (Moulton 1913: 4), reproduced in Table 6 (p. 111), thus reflects this spatial division.

The same format for visitor attendance is continued in the museum reports of subsequent years and the curators similarly conclude that the discrepancy in attendance between the two levels is due to the 'inconspicuous' staircases to the upper rooms (Moulton 1915: 4; Mjöberg 1923: 14). In a report of 1924 the curator (Banks 1925: 3) offers the following analysis:

... it is of some interest to note the numbers of the different races who have had the enthusiasm to go up the stairs at all. Of rather less than 17,000 Chinese visitors about 1,500 failed to ascend; of a slightly larger number of Malays there were about 900, but of over 9,000 Dyaks only about 200 failed to reach the top.

Zoological Collections (Lower Rooms)					
Year	Europeans	Malays	Chinese	Dayaks etc.	Total
1910	235	5,831	4,386	2,436	12,888
1911	225	6,632	5,739	2,550	15,155
1912	256	8,111	5,564	3,158	17,089
Total for the 3 years	716	20,574	15,689	8,153	45,132
Ethnological Collections (Upper Rooms)					
Year	Europeans	Malays	Chinese	Dayaks etc.	Total
1910	223	5,506	3,825	2,221	11,775
1911	195	6,268	5,064	2,333	13,860
1912	209	7,627	4,811	2,876	15,523
Total for the 3 years	627	19,401	13,700	7,430	41,158

Table 6. Visitors to Sarawak Museum, 1910-1912

Source: Moulton, J.C. 1913, *Report on the Sarawak Museum, 1912*, Government Printer, p. 4.

In a Sarawak Museum report spanning the years 1915 to 1923, Mjöberg (1923: 14) remarks that during this period, "the Museum has been visited by 1,785 Europeans and 144,681 natives, making an average of 7 Europeans and 1,500 natives per month, or 0.2 Europeans and 50 natives per day", but he offers no further interpretation. It is difficult to draw a conclusion as percentages of the population are not given. Nevertheless, it can be seen that, as in the Peninsular museums, Europeans represented an insignificant proportion of the visitors to colonial museums. In one of his early Perak Museum reports, Wray (c. 1898: 5) maintains that "the measure of the usefulness of a Museum is best gauged by the number of visitors it attracts". Without the numerical weight of the 'non-European' visitors, colonial museums could hardly have been considered 'useful' in Wray's terms. The word 'non-European' is not intended to negatively define the local populations but to circumvent the difficulties of sub-categorising indigenous and immigrant communities.

The incontrovertible evidence discloses that visitor usage of colonial museums was predominantly non-European. In contrast, the 'apathy' of the Europeans was exhibited by their 'meagre' and 'negligible' attendance. Moreover, infrequent visits by overseas scholars and inspections by key colonial officials would hardly constitute the museum as a 'public' institution, though such visits sustained its esteem. Non-Europeans supported these museums in ways which had possibly not been anticipated. The pronounced, but unsuccessful, efforts of the curators at the Perak Museum to cater to the local European population appear to indicate the lack of fit between curatorial expectations and visitor reality. Conversely, the Sarawak Museum's extended opening hours were explicitly linked to 'the attendance of native visitors'. As evident from the earliest records of the museums, the non-European visitors came and continued to come. Consequently, their sustained usage of the museums cannot be explained away as initial curiosity. Neither Malaysian museum literature nor general museological texts have included the colonial museum's audiences as a unit of analysis. The investigative tool of visitor statistics can reveal who visited, but one is left with an intriguing question: why did the non-European population overwhelmingly patronise these European institutions?

## Imagination of Realities

From the data on these three museums, one can only draw tentative conclusions. The sole source of information on the perceptions of non-European visitors is filtered through remarks in the annual reports of the Sarawak Museum. Nonetheless, these comments, though sparse, help bridge the quantitative and qualitative poles. Mjöberg (1923: 14) in his report on the Sarawak Museum, 1915-1923, explains that the greatest number of visitors in the history of the museum on a single day was recorded on 16 May 1921 (18 Europeans and 1,208 non-Europeans) when the statue of a Hindu god, discovered in Sarawak, was put on display. Mjöberg (ibid: 14) remarks: "Offerings were made to the little Ganesa with religious ardour such as must have been customary in olden times." It may be noted that Hinduism was not the identifiable religion of the non-European visitor categories (Malays, Chinese and Dayaks) as tabulated in the attendance records. It is also important to add the spiritual power of certain objects had neither 'racial' nor 'religious' divisions (see Banks 1939: 4). Mjöberg (1923: 14) is so delighted with the attendance record that he hopes, "If we have good luck we may perhaps discover another new and popular little god!"

It was not only recognisably 'sacred' objects that were revered. For example, Moulton (1910: 11) records that an unusually-shaped piece of antimony, presented to the museum, had been "the object of worship amongst some Chinamen". One may also recall, here, the Malay belief in the *semangat* of tin. In another museum report, Banks (1925: 3) observes: "The Dayak appears to take a thorough interest in what he sees, even to the extent of taking a seat on the floor ... in front of any exhibit which takes his fancy." One museum report (Banks 1940: 3) describes the addition in the zoological section of a case of "good and bad omen birds still so dear to the pagan native". We do not know what the 'pagan natives' thought of their dead omens imbued with a new life. We do know that people had complex and multifaceted relationships to animals, and even for the colonial curator, a scientific specimen was not all 'science': the products of taxidermy were regarded as 'works of art' (see Shelford 1901: 10; Evans 1985: 266).

Another fragmentary clue comes from an early Malay term for 'museum', *ajaib khanah*, (*ajaib* meaning wonderful, extraordinary, incredible, miraculous, and *khanah* meaning a building or storehouse). The emergence of museums may have seemed extraordinary but the majority of objects

came from the Malay Peninsula. Moreover, many of the ethnographic objects were 'ordinary' everyday items (see Wray c. 1898: 2). Similarly, the founding collection of the Sarawak Museum comprised items of everyday use (see Tillotson 1996: 39). It is improbable that the local inhabitants related to the objects as 'curios' or 'exotica', a perspective more reflective of curatorial perceptions (for these terms, see respectively, Knocker 1906: 96; Robinson c. 1910a: 1). It is plausible that the *ajaib* element of the museum expressed the extraordinary accumulation of *semangat*. Where the colonial curators imagined the museum as collections of 'specimens', the non-Europeans may have imagined a storehouse of *semangat*—the *ajaib khanah*. Although in contemporary terminology, 'artefacts' have replaced 'specimens', the same understanding may still apply: "For a cultural artifact ... is not merely ... something which is put in a showcase in a marvellous museum ... It is something that, for a particular people, is a living thing ..." (Stétiét quoted in Mulvaney 1985: 93). As highlighted in Chapter 3, ethnocentric models of artefact analysis have excluded the possibility of the 'real thing' also being a 'living thing' and in consequence have excluded or marginalised alternative meanings not only of the artefact but also of the museum.

In addition, museology has failed to question its near universal vision of the 'new museum idea' replicating itself in the colonies. The simplistic 'diffusion theory' of colonial museums is sometimes imagined as an agricultural endeavour in which "the British *planted* British-type museums" (Hudson 1987: 1, emphasis added) and analysis proceeds from "how to *grow* a museum in the hinterland" (see Sheets-Pyenson 1988: 16, emphasis in original). The language of agriculture 'cultivates' imagery of the museum as a 'natural' product but it also makes the product entirely dependent on the European 'planter' rather than the complex environment necessary to support it (for an alternative critique of the 'growth' metaphor, see Weil 1995: chap. 4). Moreover, 'planting' may recognise no division between culture and nature for in the Peninsula and Borneo, rice agriculture was also a ritual and magical activity associated with the rice-soul or rice-spirit (Endicott 1991; Sabah Museum 1993b). The British 'planted' their British-type museums in a specific socio-cultural environment. To return to the scheme of artefact analysis, the 'environment' is considered a key characteristic (Pearce 1992), crucial to understanding the complexity of the museum-artefact. Though cosmologies varied within—as well as between—the Peninsula and Borneo, a common

essence was the belief in the life-force, spirit or soul of animate and inanimate objects. Shelford (1905: 2), Curator of the Sarawak Museum (1897-1905), used the term *samangat* for the "vital spark" and, for the sake of clarity, I have used *semangat* to refer to the core of a cross-ethnic concept.

The implication is that the non-Europeans a century ago would not have imagined the colonial museum in the same mode as the colonial state, the curators, or infrequent European visitors. The museums had European architecture and Victorian style displays of glass-encased 'specimens' to illustrate the 'series'. The colonial museum may have materialised as a symbol of the achievements of the alien 'civilisation' but the museum was a malleable symbol and its 'real things' may have held different realities. The museum's 'specimens'—whether placed in the artificial categories of ethnology, zoology, botany, or geology—were simultaneously items without an artificial division between the material and metaphysical substance. The colonial curators' classification schemes 'illustrated' their own realities but did they obliterate alternative meanings? It is timely to recall the Melanesian example of the 'white man's' museum as the secret of the cargo. In colonial Malaysia, one feasible interpretation of the non-European patronage of the colonial museum may be embedded in the cosmological scheme of *semangat*. The history of the archipelago is marked by the ability to select and shape different elements of foreign cultures into indigenous forms (Mackerras 1992: 75). A pertinent example is *ajaib khanah*, two Arabic words that signified 'museum' in the Malay language. The colonial museum was undoubtedly a foreign cultural element but it was not beyond assimilation, particularly through *semangat*. The colonial museum was an artefact of European minds but its usage was largely in non-European hands. Contemporary studies of museum audiences concur that visitors actively construct the museum experience according to their own socio-cultural identities (see Hooper-Greenhill 1994: 47). Was not the colonial museum also a negotiated reality between two cosmologies?

It is also of interest to note that the colonial museums established by the French in Indochina drew the bulk of their visitors from local populations—a fleeting observation made by Gwendolyn Wright (1996a: 130). Because she is not concerned with the responses of the colonised to colonial museums, any comparative approach is precluded. Wright (ibid: 138) maintains that "the very idea of a museum as an institution represented a strange intrusion in Vietnamese life", yet she fails to reconcile

this perspective with visitor statistics which are consigned to a footnote in the colonial museum narrative (ibid: 140, fn. 15).

A final point requires reconsideration of Anderson's (1991: 185) argument that colonial states in Southeast Asia gained legitimacy through the museumising imagination, as materialised in ancient monuments. Control was exercised over the temporal dimension of the artefact (ancient monument) and its cultural significance. For instance, Anderson (ibid: 182) says of the secularisation of reconstructed monuments: "... they were to be kept empty of people, except for perambulatory tourists (no religious ceremonies or pilgrimages, so far as possible)". In colonial Malaysia the museumising imagination materialised in the colonial museum which was a closely related 'series' of states of mind: imperial visions, government imaginings and illustrated ideologies. The question of who had the power to museumise whom must also include a wider spectrum of the museum's 'power' relations. The power to accumulate objects, which themselves possessed power (for instance, the omen birds and the *semangat* of tin and of the *keris*), does not imply that colonial curators and collector-administrators were consciously and conscientiously collecting *semangat*. Neither does it preclude an awareness of the power of certain objects. One may recall the offerings to the Ganesa statue in the Sarawak Museum and the curator's aspiration for more of these 'little gods'. Objects were museumised but not necessarily desacralised. The ambiguity of 'power' in the museum appends another line to the power grid: the colonial curators' appropriation of goods was cross-cut by the non-Europeans' appropriation of meanings. The double-entendre of objects, within the coherence systems of European science and local cosmology, enabled the accommodation of multiple imaginings of the colonial museum. The 'museumising imagination' was not the sole prerogative of the colonial state.

## Conclusion

A museum's 'usefulness' may be measured in manifold ways. One bamboo does not make a row; one specimen does not make a series; one meaning cannot make a museum. Colonial museums have been analysed as multi-purpose artefacts to enable a holistic understanding. The colonial museum was examined as an instrument of colonial rule, a symbol of 'civilisation', a symbol of curatorial 'triumph', a place of racial 'order', and a storehouse of

'be-souled' objects. A Malaysian museum studies lecturer says of the colonial museum rationale: "It was meant for them, not us" (Wan Zakaria quoted in Abishegam 1995: 2). In one sense this is accurate, but one must also consider how the 'us' made sense of the 'them'. The complexities and ambiguities of colonial museums have neither been recognised in the Malaysian museum literature nor in general museological texts. In Malaysia, the museum as a colonial tool is a standard, but somewhat limited approach, though not uncommon in post-colonial nations (for African examples, see Myles 1976). Museology merely provides lessons in horticulture: the seed of the museum idea is carried to the colonies, the colonial rulers plant museums and the colonial curators make them grow. Western museological and post-colonial Malaysian perspectives start from different premises but arrive at the same unmapped destination: the colonial museums' visitors who are either absent or passive recipients of others' imaginings.

Bennett (1996: 6) asserts that the 'new museum idea' was international and was energetically promoted throughout the British colonies. Exceptions such as 'British Malaya' and 'British' Borneo in the colonial museum world highlight an abundance of assumptions but a paucity of empirical studies. Chapter 1 discussed one of the 'births' of museology, which was traced to the movement for universal education in Europe, Britain and North America in the late nineteenth century (Cameron 1995: 48). If this course of museum history is taken, it leads to an exegetic impasse in the colonies. Whose histories count in museology? Is museological amnesia cured by a selective recollection of the imperial activities of Western museums? Even this literature is regarded as "the sanitized histories of museums and collectors" (Jones 1993: 215). The contemporary and contentious issue of restitution (further discussed in Chap. 10) is another factor contributing to museological malaise about its own history. McMichael's (1989: 22) expurgated reconstruction of colonial museums as contemporary guardians of heritage omits any mention of colonial museums supplying objects to museums in the metropole. It was a political process that 'empowered' the British Museum to possess "the cultural heritage of the world" (Wilson 1989: 116). Without the British Empire, the British Museum would have been powerless to complete its heritage 'series' of the world. The next chapter will examine another form of heritage—the colonial museum heritage.

## Chapter 6. The Colonial Museum Heritage

*My dear child, why do you cry?  
Perhaps for want of a name! Let me give a name  
like the name of a stream, so that there will be  
prowess in catching fish.*

*My dear child is growing up, so clever is he  
Lindung fish, with a sword so long; Kali fish,  
its body a shield; freshwater turtle, with its hat;  
and the python.*

Kadazan-Dusun lullaby, Sabah (Aripin 1997: 17-18)

### Introduction

After the initial flush of colonial museum activity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the next spate of concerted museum building occurred in the 1950s. The time-span under consideration, however, is more comprehensive: from the early 1940s to the early 1960s. In historic time, these two decades are marked by the Pacific War and the Japanese occupation; the transformation of British North Borneo and Sarawak into British Crown Colonies; the Communist Emergency in Malaya; *Merdeka* (Independence) in 1957; and the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. The amalgamation of colonial and post-colonial time is an analytical expediency. The transition from 'colonial' to 'post-colonial' museums articulates the semantic space of colonial museum heritage. 'Heritage' is used here not in its conventional association with the past, but in its entanglement with future time. The Kadazan-Dusun lullaby at the head of this chapter also sings of the future. The lullaby is intended to firstly, accentuate the significance of a 'name', secondly, to examine how relationships between people and the natural environment are translated in the museum environment and thirdly, to register a discordant note in the 'soothing refrain' that political independence is synonymous with a museum 'awakening' (see, for example, Mohd Redzuan & Mohd Kassim 1993: 2; Shahrum 1989: 42; Tengku Alaudin 1996: 2).

## Museum Additions and Subtractions

Until the 1950s (with two exceptions to be discussed shortly) no new museums were established. Efforts were concentrated on the consolidation and expansion of the existing colonial museums in the Peninsula, Singapore, Sarawak, and to a lesser extent in British North Borneo. To accommodate expanding collections, museums underwent a series of major extensions (for the Raffles Museum, see *ICOM Newsletter* Dec. 1993: 11; Perak Museum, Paiman & Mohd Yassin 1981: 1-2; Selangor Museum, Kloss 1928: 1; Sarawak Museum, Leh 1993: 16-17). The museums' growing collections of natural history and ethnography were also competing for space with archaeological finds (see, for example, ASEAN 1995: 117). Rajah Charles Brooke's concern that the Sarawak Museum would prove too small (Harrisson 1961: 17) was a predictable prophecy, and not only in Sarawak. The logic of collecting was limitless, and it dictated the continuous aggrandisement of museum space.

Although structural additions to existing museums were the predominant pre-war pattern, two new additions to the colonial museum fold may be noted, both in the Peninsula. In 1929 the Forest Department's display of timber and forest-related products was transferred to its newly established Forest Research Institute (FRI) in Kepong, Selangor, to become the FRI museum (Markham 1934: 19; Ratnam 1995: 72). The museum displayed "timber specimens" and forestry products "housed in showcases around the walls" (Markham 1934: 19). The second museum under consideration has less documentation. According to Nicol-Smith (1965: 12), a small museum was set up in the St Xavier's Institution in 1941 by Penang residents, but it was destroyed during the Japanese invasion. It is timely to consider the impact of the Pacific War on museums in colonial Malaysia or, more precisely, the museum 'subtractions' of our equation.

In British North Borneo the twice-revived museum was ill-fated: both museum and collections "disappeared during World War Two with the subsequent bombing and destruction of Sandakan by Allied Forces at the end of the war" (Regis 1990: 31). The Allied Forces were also responsible for the destruction of the Selangor Museum in Kuala Lumpur. In March 1945 their misdirected bombs struck the museum, instead of the railway marshalling yard across the road (Sheppard 1979: 226). Most of the exhibits

(primarily of natural history) were destroyed but some of the ethnographic objects were salvaged and temporarily housed in the Perak Museum (ibid: 226).

After the war, the British resumed their rule in 'British' Malaya which in 1948 was to become the Federation of Malaya (the Malay equivalent being *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu*). The Federation comprised the Federated and Unfederated Malay States, the Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca, but with Singapore as a separate Crown Colony (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 255-6). North Borneo and Sarawak became British Crown Colonies in 1946 owing to the financial burden of post-war reconstruction (ibid: 255). In Malaya, according to Peacock's (c. 1958: 21) assessment, "No time was lost in the effort to put the [Museums] Department back on its pre-war footing ...". However, in Peacock's (ibid: 21) understanding, the "rehabilitation of museums" was measured by the swiftness of appointing an Acting Director of Museums, which took place in 1946. The fact that the Museums Department had only one museum to manage, the Perak Museum, did not necessitate the 'rehabilitation' of bureaucracy.

M.W.F. Tweedie had been one of the Acting Directors for a brief four months in 1946 but he returned to the Raffles Museum, Singapore (Peacock c. 1958: 21). Tweedie (1949: 3-4), in his report on the Raffles Museum for the year 1948, mentions a visit to the museum by Tom Harrison, Curator of the Sarawak Museum, and a request of M. Sheppard, a senior administrative officer in the Peninsula, to examine an iron age site in his district. Harrison and Sheppard were to become key figures in museum developments in the region. Both identified strongly with the local population (or more accurately, specific segments of them). Harrison, whose ideals were shaped by the Brooke legacy, will be discussed first.

Tom Harrison first visited Sarawak on an Oxford University Expedition in 1932 and he records his impression of the "archaic Sarawak Museum" (Harrison 1938: 45). In 1945 he returned to Sarawak, as a British military agent during the Japanese occupation, dropped by parachute into the Kelabit Upland (Sandin 1975: 311). The Kelabits initially mistook him for a Rajah Brooke and received him with great hospitality, an event which marked the beginning of an enduring bond between the Kelabits and Harrison (ibid: 311). After the war, Harrison succeeded E. Banks in 1947

as Government Ethnologist and Curator of the Sarawak Museum, a position Harrisson was to hold until his retirement from the Sarawak Civil Service in 1966 (Sandin 1975: 311). As with pre-war curators, Harrisson's interests were manifold but his personal preferences steered research into the fields of archaeology, ethnology and ornithology (Cranbrook & Leh 1983: 25). In Sarawak, archaeology is inscribed by a 'Harrisson' chronology: "the pre-Tom Harrisson period, Harrisson period, and post-Harrisson period" (Solheim, Wheeler & Allen-Wheeler 1985: 11-12).

Harrisson also appears as a marker in the history of the museum. Cranbrook and Leh (1983: 19-27) divide the history of the Sarawak Museum into the 'first period' beginning with Rajah Charles Brooke, followed by the 'post-war period' commencing with Harrisson's appointment and spanning his 'reign' of two decades. Curiously, there is no further periodisation though the authors cover developments up until the early 1980s. Harrisson identified his curatorship of the Sarawak Museum as a continuation of the Brooke tradition of "poly-duty responsibility" (Harrisson 1961: 19). His duties included: Keeper of Ancient Monuments; Keeper of the State Archives; Editor of *Sarawak Museum Journal*; Government Ethnologist; Controller of the Edible Birds' Nest Industry; Vice-Chairman of the National Parks Board and Executive Officer of the Turtle Board (Harrisson 1959: 251). In addition, Harrisson was Magistrate of the Fourth and Fifth Divisions (Harrisson 1961: 19), the area inhabited by the Kelabits (Sandin 1976: 147). In his own 'territory', Harrisson had an 'Orang Ulu Annex' built near his quarters to accommodate his stream of visitors from the interior regions (ibid: 147).

Harrisson (1959: 249-250), outlined seven priorities of the Sarawak Museum, the first two focusing on the museum's local audiences:

1. To present a well-selected display of exhibits, so arranged so that even illiterate people—still a large part of the population—can enjoy the museum.
2. To keep the atmosphere of the museum informal, airy and cool, so that even people from the far interior in loin cloths can feel relaxed—and stay in the place all day if they like.

The idea of "providing a place of interest" (Moulton 1915: 2) for the local inhabitants was a long-established Brooke tradition. Harrison also performed the unwritten duty of 'Keeper of the Brooke Legacy'. In Harrison's (1961: 17) article, "'*Second to none*": Our first curator (and others)', the first half of the title is a quotation of Rajah Charles Brooke's anticipation of the future museum. Harrison pursued an identical vision and declared that the Sarawak Museum remained "second to none in the East" (ibid: 21). The Sarawak Museum also remained the only museum in Borneo until the Sabah State Museum emerged in 1965. In the same article, Harrison, after detailing the museum's renovations and rearrangements in 1958, declares that "the *spirit* of ... our activities remains basically inside the vision of that so far-seeing man, H.H. Sir Charles Brooke" (ibid: 22, emphasis in original).

Although "powerful romantic forces" (Lamb 1977: 8) informed some of Harrison's activities in Borneo, he was also extremely practical. Harrison instituted the system of Honorary Curators in 1955 (Cranbrook & Leh 1983: 27) and it enabled him to gather a pool of specialists and enthusiasts, mostly expatriates (see Harrison 1958: xvi). He encouraged overseas scholars to conduct research in Sarawak (Chin et al. 1983: 1) and his own research, particularly archaeological, extended to North Borneo and Brunei (Tweedie 1976: 150). In addition, the Sarawak Museum, through Harrison's initiatives, provided support for museum and archaeology trainees from Brunei and North Borneo (Harrison, B. 1961: 63). Like the name of Brooke, the name of Harrison was known beyond the boundaries of Sarawak. In 1954 it was anticipated that the Sarawak Museum would "form the hub of an inter-colony system for British Borneo" (*Sarawak Museum Journal* 1954, 6(4): 187). Was this Harrison's vision of a museum empire or a version of a museum *mandala*? However, in North Borneo a different design emerged.

In North Borneo, which had been devastated by the war, the colonial government was concerned with the massive task of reconstruction (Sullivan 1988: 3). Nonetheless, the possibility of a thrice-revived museum was also present. Governor E.F. Twining, soon after his arrival in 1947, informed his Chief Secretary that a North Borneo Society or Institute should be established, which would include among its manifold duties the formation of a museum (Archives File 446/47 Secretariat: 27 Feb. 1947).

The Governor proposed a committee comprising R.E. Parry (Director of Education) as Chairman, G.C. Woolley (a former Chartered Company Officer) and "a native representative and a Chinese representative" (Archives File 446/47 Secretariat: 27 Feb. 1947). The committee produced an interim report in November 1947 with the suggestion that the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund could finance the formation of the museum (ibid: 27 Nov. 1947). The proposed 'North Borneo Museum' was to be arranged according to the familiar, late nineteenth-century taxonomy of 'Ethnological', 'Historical', 'Economic' and 'Natural History' sections (ibid: 27 Nov. 1947). However, at this stage, plans stalled. The 1948-1955 Post War Reconstruction and Development Plan for North Borneo underlined: "The building of a permanent Central Museum ... cannot be contemplated within the next few years" (quoted in Sullivan 1988: 3). A museum was not established within the lifetime of the colony (1946-1963).

However, the catalyst had already been set in place by G.C. Woolley, who died in 1947, one month after the interim report. He bequeathed his collection of artefacts, books and plate negatives to the Society yet to be formed for a museum yet to be established (see Regis 1990: 31-2). Both were eventually realised. The Sabah State Museum was established in 1965, with the Woolley Collection as the foundation collection (ibid: 32). Woolley's posthumous achievement was that a miscellany of items became a 'collection' and its peripatetic condition mobilised efforts to find a permanent home.

## **Phase II of Museum Construction**

The 1950s saw the intensification of archaeological activity in Sarawak and the Peninsula (Solheim et al. 1985: 5). The key figures in archaeological excavation and research in Malaya were the men who held the major posts in the Federation Museums Department. They included P.D.R. Williams-Hunt (also Adviser on Aborigines), G. de G. Sieveking, and B.A.V. Peacock (ibid: 5). The expansion of archaeology under the Federation Museums Department was unrelated to museum expansion during this same period. The establishment of new museums was largely due to the efforts of individuals external to the Federation Museums Department, and in the case of M. Sheppard, his initiatives were later to earn him a position as head of the Museums Department.

The second phase of museum building, which commenced in the early 1950s, was limited to the Peninsula during a turbulent phase of Malaysia's history—the Communist Emergency (1948-1960). A State of Emergency had been declared throughout the Federation of Malaya in June 1948 and it was still in force at the time of *Merdeka* (Independence) in 1957 (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 258, 262). During the 1950s several new museums were established, initiated by Lieutenant-General Sir Gerald Templer who encouraged state governments to form their own museums (Peacock c. 1958: 24). Templer had arrived in the Federation of Malaya as the new High Commissioner in February 1952, committed to "the formation of a united Malayan nation" (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 261).

Templer was not only acclaimed for conducting an effective campaign to combat the communists and instituting new political structures (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 261-2), but he was also credited with fostering a "cultural revival" (Singam 1955). Templer's proposals included a museum in Kuala Lumpur to replace the destroyed Selangor Museum, the formation of local museums, school loan collections and travelling exhibitions, although not all plans were immediately realised due to "financial and other considerations" (Federation of Malaya 1953: 196). The main 'other consideration' was the Emergency, and it had delayed implementing a proposal of 1947 to replace the Selangor Museum (Sheppard 1964: 34).

Sheppard, who had been promoted to British Adviser of the State of Negeri Sembilan (1951-1956), records the influence of Templer on his own subsequent activities:

In April 1952 Templer made what is sometimes called a 'Policy Speech' in which he emphasised the urgent need to preserve the arts and crafts of Malaya and to stimulate and encourage Malayan artists and craftsmen. I had helped to draft his speech and a few days later I proposed a Resolution ... to form ... 'The Arts Council, Federation of Malaya' (1979: 195).

Sheppard (1979: 196) became the chairman of the Malayan Arts Council and Templer provided "great support and encouragement". Templer was also instrumental in the foundation of historical societies (Singam 1955: 133). Templer (1954: 3), in his address to the inaugural meeting of the Malayan Historical Society in 1953, emphasised the dual role of the

Historical Society in preserving "both material and knowledge". *Whose* knowledge would determine the scope of both material and knowledge will be explored in subsequent sections. The formation of the Malayan Historical Society spurred state branches and these were closely associated with the establishment of new museums. Sheppard (already Chairman of the Malayan Arts Council) became one of the six Councillors of the newly formed Malayan Historical Society and he soon established a branch in Negeri Sembilan (Sheppard 1979: 197).

In 1952 Templer ordered the construction of a small temporary museum on the site of the destroyed Selangor Museum (Singam 1955: 132). The building, described by Sheppard (1979: 226) as an "army canteen", was a single room measuring 60 feet by 24 feet. Templer officially opened the new museum in Kuala Lumpur on 12 February 1953 (Singam 1955: 132). Significantly, the museum was not named after the State (Selangor) nor the capital (Kuala Lumpur), nor a person (as in the case of the Raffles Museum). Templer named it Muzium Negara/National Museum (Fig. 5, p. 126).

A nation yet-to-be had been materialised in a national museum produced by the colonial regime. Templer (quoted in Singam 1955: 131) outlines his nation-building vision:

Critics may say that in the middle of an Emergency we have no time to develop this kind of enterprise. I do not agree. The Emergency cannot be won by guns and barbed wire alone but only by capturing the hearts of the people ... by making them conscious of the greatness of their cultures ... [by] showing them how these cultures have in the past contributed and will still contribute to the building up of the Malayan Nation.

As Cameron (1993: 167) argues, the museum "can be a powerful weapon in the battle for the mind".



Fig. 5. The first Muzium Negara, at the time of the temporary exhibition 'Progress in Malaya' in 1958

Source: Mohd Zulkifli Haji Abdul Aziz (comp.) 1977, *Directory of Museums in Malaysia*, Muzium Negara, Kuala Lumpur, p. 2.

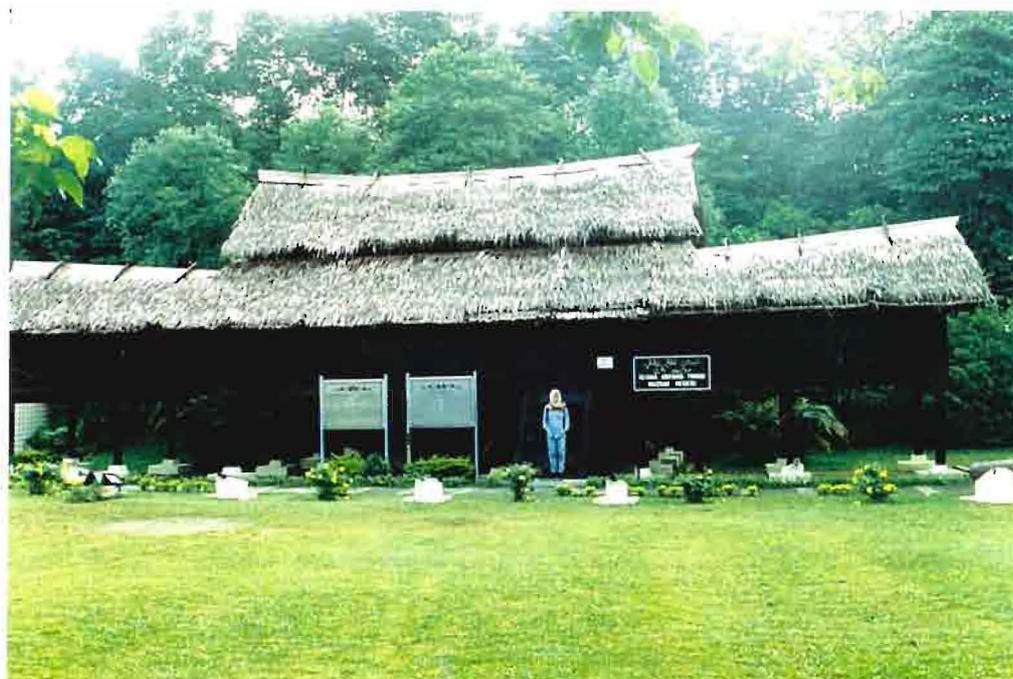


Plate 5. Istana Ampang Tinggi, the first Negeri Sembilan State Museum. The museum was inaugurated by Templer on his farewell tour in 1954. Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

The pace of museum development moved briskly despite, or because of, the Emergency. Templer played an important role in the modernisation of Malaya's Police Force (Halal et al. 1994: 141) and the Royal Malaysian Police Force traces the founding of its museum to 1952, during Templer's term (MTPB 1994: 15). Templer was also responsible for the establishment of the Malacca Museum which was opened in March 1954 (Peacock c. 1958: 24). Templer had made available a Dutch house built in about 1660 which, prior to its conversion, had been used as government quarters (Mohd Zulkifli 1977: 31). The museum was primarily historical in focus (Wan Zakaria 1995b: 21) and it was jointly administered by the Malacca Historical Society and the State Government (Peacock c. 1958: 24).

In May 1954 another museum (Plate 5, p. 126) was opened in Negeri Sembilan. Sheppard (1979: 194), as the State's British Adviser, played a pivotal role in its establishment and he acknowledged Templer as his inspiration. Sheppard (ibid: 194) discovered in Negeri Sembilan the "roofless ruin of an old timber palace" which had been built in 1865 in the style of Minangkabau settlers from Sumatra (Dumarçay 1991: 79). After obtaining permission from the Ruler of the State (the eighth Yang di-Pertuan Besar), the front portion of the palace, Istana Ampang Tinggi, was dismantled and transferred to the State's administrative centre, where it was reconstructed (Sheppard 1979: 195). Members of the royal family and prominent community leaders donated many of the exhibits (ibid: 195). Inside the museum a text on the relocation and transformation of the palace concludes: "... the first pillar was re-erected with due ceremony on 19th May 1953. The building was officially opened as the State Museum on 20th May 1954 by General Sir Gerald Templer". The prior "traditional ceremony" (Sheppard 1962a: 88) was conducted by a relative of the last royal occupant of the palace (for rites associated with palace buildings, see Dumarçay 1991: 82-83). Thus, the museum was the subject of two ceremonies, each stemming from different cultural foundations.

In the State of Kedah the establishment of a museum was closely linked to the formation of the state branch of the Malayan Historical Society in July 1956 (Wan Shamsuddin 1993: 10). The president of the Kedah branch, Tunku Nong Jiwa, proposed the establishment of a museum, a proposal strongly supported by Sheppard who was by then President of the Malayan Historical Society (ibid: 10). A small museum was inaugurated by Kedah's Raja Muda (heir-apparent) in February 1957 (ibid: 10). The museum was

initially under the administration of the Kedah Historical Society and most of the contents comprised the Society's archaeological collection featuring Hindu-Buddhist relics from excavations in Kedah (Wan Shamsuddin 1993: 10).

The Muzium Sejarah Kedah/Kedah History Museum was housed in a small room on the ground floor of the royal Balai Besar (see Fig. 6, p. 129). The history of the Balai Besar (audience hall or literally 'great hall') is explained in a signboard outside the building:

The principal official building in Alor Setar during the 18th century was a large Audience Hall that was built at ground level, and was the scene of Royal and official ceremonies. The Sultan's palace stood close behind it. In early 1904 ... the old building was demolished and a new, two storeyed Audience Hall was constructed with handsome additions. This Great Hall has been the centre of Royal and official ceremonies ever since.

The Kedah History Museum remained in the royal Balai Besar just under five years. Shortly after *Merdeka* on 31 August 1957, representations were made to the State Government to finance the cost of a new museum building (Wan Shamsuddin 1993: 10). Sheppard played a decisive role in determining the architectural design, which was adapted from the Balai Besar building (ibid: 10). In December 1961, the museum shifted from the real Balai Besar to the building modelled on the Balai Besar, and was renamed the Kedah State Museum (Fig. 7, p. 129). The museum was the first indigenous architectural artefact, although the term 'indigenous' eludes political boundaries. The museum building reproduces some of the Balai Besar's distinctive Siamese architectural features.



Fig. 6. Balai Besar, Kedah

Reproduced from MKNK 1986, *Intisari Kebudayaan Melayu Kedah*, Majlis Kebudayaan Negeri Kedah (MKNK), Kedah, front cover.

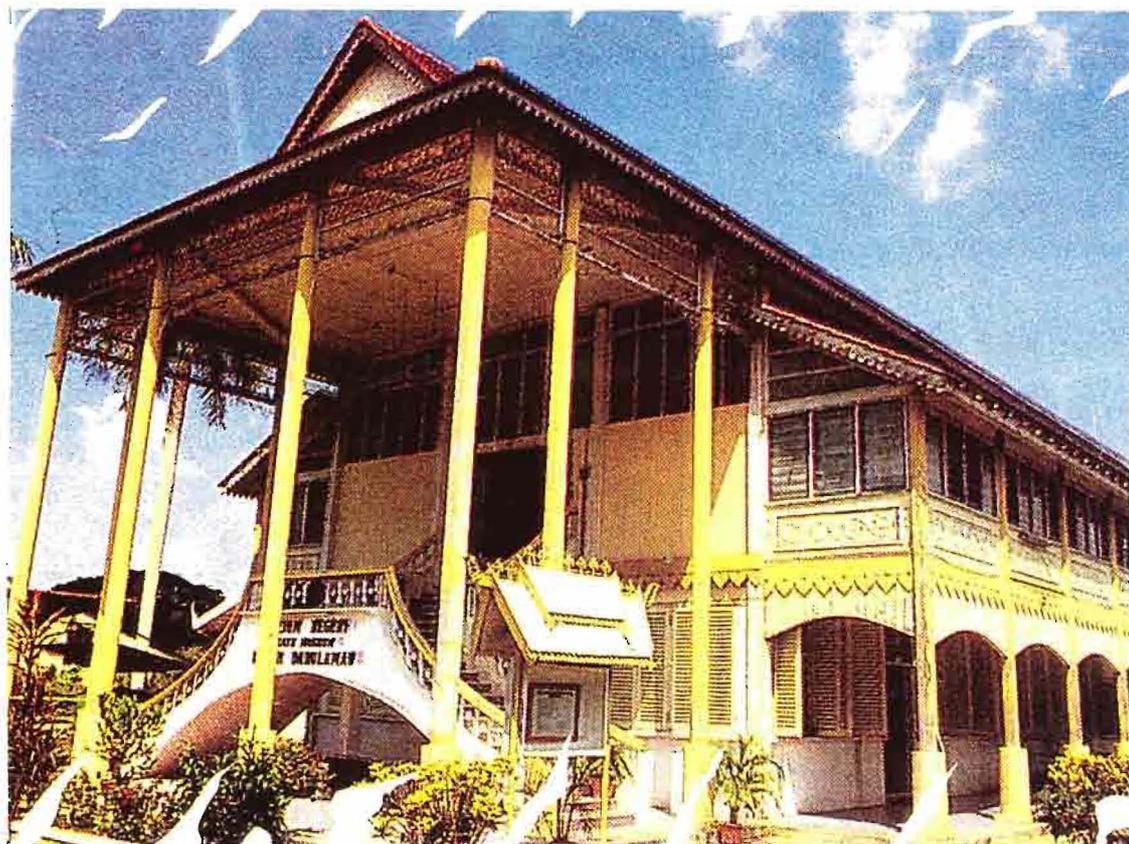


Fig. 7. Kedah State Museum

Reproduced from Lembaga Muzium Negeri Kedah 1993, *Ulang Tahun ke-36 dan Perletakan Batu Asas Bangunan Baru Muzium Negeri Kedah Darul Aman*, Lembaga Muzium Negeri Kedah Darul Aman, Alor Setar, Kedah, front cover.

Though the Kedah State Museum was a home-grown artefact, one could also ask who were the artefact-makers and whose concepts of museum-knowledge counted? Whilst acknowledging the input of Sheppard, Rahimah Mat of the Kedah State Museum, indicates that the museum was not a colonial enterprise (pers. comm., 3 Dec. 1996). It is problematic to measure the 'colonialness' or 'post-colonialness' of a museum, especially in its processual form. Factors such as museum chronology within political chronology, levels of 'Malayan' and 'non-Malayan' involvement, museum ideology and architectural identity evade simplistic pronouncements. The museum in Kedah foreshadows some of the recurring issues in museum development during pre-independence to post-colonial time.

In July 1957 another museum was established in the State of Perak. The Geological Museum was housed in the newly opened building for the Geology Department. A plaque outside the building commemorates its official opening by Sir Donald MacGillivray, the last High Commissioner for the Federation of Malaya. A second plaque informs that the building was funded by "Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom under the Colonial Welfare and Development Act 1945". One may recall the attempt to form the 'North Borneo Museum' in 1947 with proposed financial assistance from the Colonial Welfare and Development Fund. Similarly, Colonial Welfare and Development funds financed some of the Sarawak Museum's research activities (see, for example, Sarawak n.d.: 165). Was the museum a sign of 'colonial welfare and development', a pre-independence equivalent of the early colonial museum as an 'outward sign of an advanced civilisation'?

At a superficial level, museums were politically expedient symbols that appeared to cater to the 'development' of British colonies and simultaneously looked after the 'welfare' of Britain's image prior to the hand-over. However, other political motivations may have been at work. For instance, Templer's propaganda campaign to 'capture the hearts of the people' had its cultural component in the establishment of museums during the Emergency. Templer (1954: 4) had emphasised that the "new token National Museum" was merely a prelude to a grander scheme for the "new nation ... springing into being". Museums that emerged during this accelerated growth period were promoted as a general panacea for

deeply entrenched ethnic, linguistic and socio-cultural divisions (that were largely due to colonial policies, as will be discussed elsewhere in this chapter). Templer operated on the principle of 'psychological warfare' (Halal et al. 1994: 141) and possibly he believed in the efficacy of the museum as a psychological tool in constructing the 'Malayan Nation'. Keeping in mind that museums are multivalent artefacts, one could also ask whether museums were mere 'tokens', that could quickly 'spring into being' to deflect attention from the more fundamental political issues?

The 1950s saw a renewed attempt to establish a museum in Penang. In 1956 under the directive the British Resident Counsellor, a small collection, "the nucleus of a museum" (Nicol-Smith 1965: 13), was placed in a house but when this was demolished, the collection was scattered. Subsequently, the museum initiative passed to the Penang Historical Society and the Penang Arts Society. Eight years after *Merdeka*, with the State Government's financial support, the Penang Museum and Art Gallery was inaugurated in 1965 (ibid: 12). The institution was housed in the former Penang Free School (dated to 1821), a site proposed by one of its previous pupils, the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman (ibid: 12). Penang was the first State to combine a museum and art gallery and, here, it is appropriate to examine the emergence of institutionalised art activities during the 1950s.

Unlike museums, art was part of the formal educational system in English medium schools which closely followed developments in art education in Britain (Piyadasa 1994: 33-4). In 1951 Peter Harris was appointed to the newly created post of Superintendent of Art Education and in 1952 Tay Hooi Keat was appointed as Inspector of Schools in charge of art education (ibid: 34). Both individuals established art groups in the early 1950s, the former in Kuala Lumpur and the latter in Penang (ibid: 34). Another significant development, outlined earlier, was the formation of the Malayan Arts Council in 1952, with Sheppard as chairman and Peter Harris as one of the founder members (Sheppard 1979: 195). Piyadasa (1994: 35) underlines the major contribution of the "multi-racial English-educated" members of the Malayan Arts Council. The mixed composition of the Malayan Historical Society could be described in similar terms (see Sheppard 1979: 196-7). The English-educated local élites and the residential English élites ('for want of a name') were critical in determining the shape of pre-*Merdeka* cultural institutions for a post-*Merdeka* future.

The Malayan Arts Council was the driving force to establish an art gallery in Malaya and the idea of a *national* art gallery had taken hold in the Arts Council as early as 1954 (Syed Ahmad 1983). According to Syed Ahmad (ibid), Tunku Abdul Rahman (then Chief Minister) first announced the idea of a national art gallery at an art exhibition in March 1956. Sheppard (1979: 222) claims he, himself, made the first public mention of "a need for a National Art Gallery" at an art exhibition in June 1957. Despite this discrepancy, the main characters are not in dispute and the dates still accord with pre-*Merdeka* time. Sheppard, who headed the Arts Council, also became chairman of the planning committee for the gallery, which comprised the English-educated élites and the residential English élites (see Syed Ahmad 1983). On 27 August 1958, four days before the first anniversary of *Merdeka*, the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, formally declared open the National Art Gallery which was housed in the temporary premises of the Dewan Tunku Abdul Rahman building (ibid).

The Malay equivalent of 'National Art Gallery' was 'Balai Seni Lukis Negara' (Sheppard 1979: 226). The name contains key words that, as linguistic artefacts, elucidate the lullaby expression 'Let me give a name'. The word *balai* was first mentioned in the context of the Balai Besar in Kedah. It may mean a court or audience hall of a ruler's palace and it may also refer to a public hall in general. In the case of the National Art Gallery, *balai* was selected to represent the notion of a 'gallery'. In addition, *balai* was used to signify a museum 'gallery' (see Sheppard 1963). In its original usage, *balai* had been circumscribed by people and activities, not objects. Moreover, the *balai* was often constructed with an open-fronted or low-walled section (Sheppard 1979: 8, 266). This architectural feature in the ruler's *balai* (refer to Fig. 6, p. 129) was designed to accommodate a variety of activities such as weddings, ceremonies, official occasions, dance-drama performances and other forms of entertainment (Sheppard 1986: 59). This was a manifest contrast to the semantically redefined *balai* as specialised, closed-in space expressed in the Balai Seni Lukis Negara, and as re-created in the Kedah State Museum or in the new National Museum which also borrowed from the Balai Besar design (to be discussed shortly). The architectural and lexical borrowing from *balai* was divorced from its conceptual content. The museum as a static hall of objects precluded the possibility of the museum as a multi-purpose *balai*.

In the Balai Seni Lukis Negara, *balai* signified 'gallery' and *seni lukis* stood for 'art'. The word *seni* embraces a broad range of meanings as apparent in the following forms: *seni bahasa* (literary skill or style), *seni bina* (architecture), *seni pahat/ukir* (sculpting), *seni kata* (lyrics), *seni suara* (singing), *seni tari* (dancing), *seni lakon* (acting), *seni silat* (martial arts), *seni khat* (calligraphy), and *seni lukis* (drawing, painting). The *seni* of the newly established art gallery was restricted to only one hue of the spectrum, that is, *seni lukis* as defined in the curriculum of the English-medium schools and propagated by the British and local élites.

The final term under consideration, *negara* ('state', 'nation', 'country'), will be discussed in greater detail in another section. Here, it is significant to note that a *national* art gallery was first envisaged in 1954, though it was not to materialise until four years later with the support of the first Prime Minister. It may be recalled that the temporary museum established by Templer in 1952 had been named the *National* Museum in preparation for the 'Malayan Nation'. A contrast is provided by Singapore, which had been granted internal self-government in 1958 (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 270) but which only gained a national museum in 1969, four years after independence, when the Raffles Museum was renamed the National Museum (Kwok 1996: 2). In Malaya, the colonial process of orchestrating national symbols was transpiring before the creation of the nation.

One further development fits the ideological pattern of this period: the construction of the new National Museum/Muzium Negara. Sheppard was again to play an prominent role, as detailed in his autobiography, *Taman Budiman: Memoirs of an Unorthodox Civil Servant* (1979: chap. 9). In 1957, Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman appointed Sheppard to the newly-created post of Keeper of Public Records which also included responsibility for museums (ibid: 223). In September 1958, the Prime Minister embarked on the project of a new National Museum to replace the temporary one of 1952 (ibid: 226) and the post of Director of Museums (1958-1963) was added to Sheppard's duties (see Solheim et al. 1985: 4).

The immediate post-*Merdeka* years were also momentous in Sheppard's autobiography: he converted to Islam and he became a citizen of independent Malaya (1979: 217, 224). A brief digression on his career may help explain the Muzium Negara-artefact Sheppard shaped. Pointedly, Sheppard commences his autobiography with his arrival in Malaya in

1928—only then does his life commence. He styles himself the 'Clifford Cadet' (Sheppard 1979: chap. 1) after the legendary scholar-administrator, Sir Hugh Clifford, High Commissioner for the Malay States. Clifford—who had learnt the Malay language and customs, and who held a romantic perception of rural Malay life (Savage 1984: 287)—was Sheppard's "much admired model" (Gullick 1995b: 3). Sheppard had established a reputation as an eminent Malay linguist (*ibid*: 3), an expert in Malay culture and an 'old-school' historian (Khoo Kay Kim 1995b: 223) long before his official museum career began.

Sheppard (1979: 226) ensured that the architecture of the new National Museum would not be entrusted to a British architect, whose design "showed no trace of Malayan or oriental culture". Sheppard (*ibid*: 227) recruited the architect, Ho Kok Hoe, and together they toured Malaya for architectural inspiration, resulting in the Prime Minister's selection of a design based on the Balai Besar (Fig. 8, p. 135).

Having successfully managed the architectural component, Sheppard (1979: 227) reflects: "It is given to few mortals to plan the interior of a new National Museum *ab initio*, but while recognising my unique good fortune I was painfully aware of my ignorance ...". He consulted museum experts in London, as well as Leiden, Cairo and Baroda, and he secured a museum specialist from UNESCO (*ibid*: 227). Elsewhere, Sheppard (1963) provides a more detailed account of the foreign experts involved in the preparation of the exhibits. The choice of content for the displays appears to have been determined by Sheppard (1979: 228): "The list gave emphasis to my personal interest in Malay ceremonial, traditional music, costumes and crafts...". For the gallery allotted to 'Malayan History', it is useful to quote Sheppard at length (*ibid*: 228):

... I planned to position a life size bas relief of Hang Tuah, the legendary Malay warrior hero from fifteenth century Malacca, at the far end of the gallery, so that it could be seen from a distance of a hundred feet. Hang Tuah's best known saying, '*Ta' Kan Melayu Hilang di Dunia*' — 'the Malays shall never vanish from the world', which was reproduced in relief above his head, was intended to be more than a memorial. It was an indirect appeal to preserve the traditions, character, identity and wise philosophy of the true Malay in the modern world.



Fig. 8. Muzium Negara

The architecture of the National Museum was influenced by the Balai Besar of Kedah.

Yacine Collection postcard, photo: S.T. Lee

It is not my intention to debate the issue of the 'true Malay' nor its earlier incarnation—the 'real Malay', that is, Swettenham's *The Real Malay* of 1900. Was the 'true Malay' an artefact of Orientalism and museum displays? Notably, Sheppard was a member of the Malaysian Society for Orientalists (as was Tom Harrison, see Alisjahbana, Nayagam & Wang Gungwu 1965: 2). Was the Muzium Negara itself an artefact of romantic yearnings and 'true Malay' nationalism? Muzium Negara has been described as a "monument" to Sheppard's achievements (see Suffian's foreword in Sheppard 1979: viii; Shahrum 1963: iii). As will be argued elsewhere in this chapter (and in Chap. 7), one cannot ascertain a monument's meaning(s) without consideration of time as a variable. The timing of the official opening of the new Muzium Negara was also opportune: 31 August 1963, the sixth anniversary of *Merdeka*.

This was two weeks before another significant date: the making of a new nation-state, the Federation of Malaysia. The Muzium Sejarah Nasional displays a text, 'The formation of Malaysia (1963)', which concludes: "Malaysia was proclaimed on 16 September 1963 as a federation comprising the states of Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore." There is no 'post-script' on Singapore's secession in 1965, nor any mention of the special conditions guaranteed to the two Borneo States. These twenty special concessions are exhibited in the Sabah Museum's 'Dua puluh perkara'. When Sabah and Sarawak joined the Federation of Malaysia, List II A (State List for Borneo States) was added to the Federal Constitution, giving the two States some exclusive rights and powers over cultural matters, inclusive of museums, monuments and historic sites (Adi 1996: 116). This political background is necessary for an understanding of the diversity of museum-making in post-colonial Malaysia (elaborated in Part III).

### **'Let me give a name'**

The previous section moved precipitately through the events of pre-independence, *Merdeka* and the formation of Malaysia. This section will examine more closely the political and socio-cultural setting of this period to understand the shaping of the museum. Husin Ali (1982: 7) contends that although the formation of Malaysia in 1963 substituted the word

'Malaysian' for 'Malayan', this was "merely a change of name, not of substance". However, the term 'Malaysian' has a pre-1963 history. In the colonial censuses from 1931 to 1957, 'Malaysian' referred to an inclusive category of Malays, Aborigines, and the peoples of Borneo and Indonesia (Hirschman 1987: 563). Hirschman stresses that the formation of Malaysia "gave a new meaning to 'Malaysian' as a *citizen* of the country, regardless of ethnic origin" (ibid: 563, emphasis added). The word for 'citizenship' is *kewarganegaraan* (literally 'membership of the *negara*'). The recent museological rhetoric on museums and citizenship has little to contribute to my discussion. For instance, Bennett's (1996: 2) article, 'The museum and the citizen', in the Eurocentric tradition of museology, confines the "civic role of museums" to "modern western societies". He concludes that in the 1990s the museum's civic role is "one orientated to *schooling* a population into tolerance of, and respect for, diversity" (ibid: 13, emphasis added). Though I am not discussing the same society or temporal frame as Bennett, nor engaging his philosophy, the issue of museums, the 'citizen' and ethnic diversity in Malay(si)a needs to be addressed.

As Errington (1989: 59) points out, the new nation-states emerging in Southeast Asia were not of the same cast as those in nineteenth-century Europe. Ethnic diversity was one of the key differentials. Templer was acutely aware of this diversity: "In Malaya the task of building a nation is immeasurably greater than it is in those countries peopled by a single race, with one religion and one culture" (quoted in Singam 1955: 136). Ethnic groups who identified with their respective communities were to be 'schooled' in museums to identify with the greater notion of the 'Malayan Nation' as "citizens" (see Templer 1954: 3). Apart from questioning the assumption of the museum's omnipotence, one must query how the Muzium Negara of Templer's time would shape 'citizens' when the concept of *negara* itself was unformulated. Similarly, the Muzium Negara of 1963 scarcely had time to form itself as a museum before the formation of Malaysia when the ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity of Sabah and Sarawak were added to the existing complexity of *negara*. Nevertheless, the choice of the name *negara* was significant. The Muzium Negara (of 1952 and 1963) and the Balai Seni Lukis Negara (1958) were the first institutions that announced *negara*-hood in their names. This, in itself, was an ideological accomplishment for *negara* was a politically neutral term for 'nation', compared to other alternatives in the language (see Tan Liok Ee 1988: 45). The *negara* comprised *warganegara*, 'citizens'.

The word *negara* was the real substance in Muzium Negara and Balai Seni Lukis Negara: it was the 'artefact' that belonged to all *warganegara*. As in the lullaby at the head of this chapter, the power of the 'name' is intended to evoke the inner state of the person.

In 1953 Templer (1954: 4) expressed the prevailing sentiment in Malaya: "A nation must have a common background, and must acknowledge it with a common pride." His words, however, disguised the paradox of the colonial ideology of race which in a large measure had precluded the realisation of 'a common background' (see Abraham 1997; Hirschman 1986). In the new ideology of colonial nation-building the 'races' that had been kept apart during colonial rule had to be brought together to form a viable assemblage for independence. It was only a recent two decades earlier that the colonial state had come to accept the Chinese and Indian communities as permanent instead of transient groups (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 239-240). At the time of *Merdeka*, Malaya inherited an ethnically partitioned society, with "separation nurtured by the 'cultural laissez-faire' policy of the colonial government" (Sani 1990: 42). Other analysts (Abraham 1997; Hirschman 1986) maintain that it was the very policies of the colonial government that had created geographical, economic, social and cultural segregation. The policy on education, for example, had produced Malay-educated, Chinese-educated and Tamil-educated segments of the population (at the primary school level), and the English-educated élites (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 264).

Only the privileged classes of the three main ethnic groups were able to access English education and hence an arena for inter-ethnic interaction. This small segment of society could be accurately described, in Templer's terms, as having 'a common background'. It was this very group, the English-educated multi-ethnic élites, who shared a common interest in supporting historical societies, art activities and the museum 'movement'. However, one cannot disentangle them from the sociological strand of the residential English élites. This expanded 'common background' was essentially a Western cultural framework constructed through the English language, a language which accelerated the colonisation of non-Western modes of thought. As Piyadasa (1994: 23) argues, colonial education was a profound experiential displacement:

The real impact of the new Western-type education introduced by the British lay in the propagation of radically new modes of perception ... of reality. ... the new education afforded the multi-racial population a more pragmatic, analytical and individual approach to knowledge that differed from the more traditional religio-centred world-views of the Malays, the Dayaks, the Kadazans, the Chinese, the Indians and other communities.

Significantly, in Malaya during this period, the word for museum, *ajaib khanah*, recedes as another colloquial term, *sekolah gambar*, gains dominance. *Sekolah gambar* may be translated as a 'school of pictures' or a 'pictorial school'. In Malaysian museum literature, the *sekolah gambar* is associated with an indeterminate past described in Bahasa Malaysia as "*dahulu*" (see Mohd Zulkifli 1974: 4, 14; Othman 1996: 1; Tengku Alaudin 1996: 5). However, the *sekolah gambar* of an unspecified past time may be aligned with a more specific past. Muzium Negara, when first established, was known as "*Sekolah Gambar*" (*Ensiklopedia Malaysiana* 1996, vol. 8: 549). This linguistic shift suggests that *ajaib khanah* was being eclipsed by a different cultural orientation during the political transition period. Hood and Hassan (1990: 1) assert that the shift in terminology from *ajaib khanah* to *sekolah gambar* and to *muzium* was closely linked to changes in the concept of the museum. A wider perspective would embrace the process of socio-cultural change itself and, in particular, the impact of education in the *sekolah* system.

*Sekolah gambar* spoke of a more restricted understanding of the museum than the semantic ambiguity inherent in *ajaib khanah*. The process of formal education had encouraged a different perception of the cosmos and understanding of objects within it. A 'school of objects' was the educational, creeping colonisation of the museum as *semangat*, even though museum content may not have altered dramatically. According to Othman (1996: 1), the displays in the *sekolah gambar* consisted of ancient relics, historical photographs and prints, and miscellaneous items, that is, the *gambar* element, and Mohd Faisal (1995: 1) describes the *sekolah* component as the accompanying written information. However, it is doubtful whether visitors compartmentalised the museum in this manner. The *sekolah gambar* was a place to be 'schooled' and the medium was the museum. The more profound significance of *sekolah gambar* is not the radical transformation of the museum but of its users. As in the lullaby, the expression 'Let me give a name' sings words of knowing.

The museum as an educational institution is also emphasised during the late 1950s, particularly by B.A.V. Peacock, who held the post of Curator of Museums, Federation of Malaya, 1956-1958. Significantly, the nineteenth-century museum ideal of education (see Chap. 5) eventually arrived in the mid-twentieth century. Peacock (c. 1958) in his 'Report on museums in Malaya' devotes half of the report's contents to the didactic role of museums, considered their "primary purpose" (ibid: 16), although concepts of education are unexamined. A large portion of Peacock's report (ibid: 3-15) is concerned with Euro-American museum development dating from the late 1800s to the present in order to construct an image of the museum as an institution inspired by educational ideals. However, he fails to reconcile this view with the reality of early colonial museums in 'British Malaya' (see Chap. 5). Peacock offers Euro-American museum models for the Federation of Malaya so that it may catch up with the Western model. Peacock's remarks adumbrate the new 'evolutionary theory' of museum development for the following decades (a theme to be examined in Part IV).

Peacock's (c. 1958: 30) ethnocentric terms of reference also inform his research proposals: "Anthropologically there is even more call for haste in adding to our knowledge of the primitive peoples of Malaya before it is too late." Such a project would have "inestimable value in the reconstruction of the social and cultural history of the Far East and indeed of the whole world" (ibid: 31). His view is reminiscent of statements made in the early 1900s when knowledge was self-referenced for the Europeans' own historical self-fulfilment. It may be added that the historical trajectory assumed the standard linear configuration of time, as will be analysed in Muzium Negara, the National Museum.

The National Museum's 1963 souvenir programme (Muzium Negara 1963) shows the lay-out of the East Gallery containing 'Malayan prehistory' and 'History', that is, 'Pera-sejarah Tanah Melayu' and 'Sejarah'. The prefix 'pera' (from the English 'pre') exemplified that certain concepts of 'history' had to be reformulated to comply with a Western framework of historiography. The Malaysian historian, Khoo Kay Kim (1979: 299), indicates that *sejarah*, the word now commonly used for 'history', was only one of a spectrum of approaches to understanding events of the past but there was no "specific indigenous term for 'history'". The different ways of knowing the past, as recorded in early Malay texts, defied the

categorisation schemes of Western historians (see Errington 1979). Moreover, verbs in the Malay language do not show tense (ibid: 28), and hence, temporal relations are not expressed as fractions of divisible time in a uni-directional pathway.

The museum display spanning prehistory-history was divided into fourteen subsections in a linear sequence, beginning with 'Digging for history' and ending with 'Early Kuala Lumpur' (Muzium Negara 1963). B.A.V. Peacock, then history lecturer at the University of Malaya, was responsible for the prehistory display and J. Lowry, on loan from UNESCO, for the history display (ibid). McKinley's (1979: 313-5) research in the early 1970s on Malay concepts of time underlines that 'religious eras' and 'political periods' were the key temporal markers, though not as strict chronological divisions of historic time. The 'history' on display at the National Museum was as much an artefact as the artefacts exhibited. Museum 'education' was a schooling in Western thought modes. How persistently these modes have adhered may be reviewed in Chapter 4 (p. 55), which shows the chronology of history in Muzium Sejarah Nasional, opened in 1996.

Of equal import was that the new museum classification of 'history' locked artefacts into 'historical' modes of seeing, the instructional medium of the *sekolah gambar*. In the early colonial museums, 'specimens' defined as 'archaeological' or 'historical' had less fixity of meaning and place, slotted in wherever they could fit in terms of space, not time. 'History' or 'Sejarah' as a new museum classificatory label may be traced to the 1950s, with the impact of the educational system and the role of the Malayan Historical Society/Persatuan Sejarah Malaya. It should be noted that the idea of 'Malayan history', as a branch of specialised knowledge, was itself novel for previously it had only existed as a fragment in the annals of empire: the 1946 Cambridge School Certificate of Malaysia's current Prime Minister shows the subject, 'The history of the British Empire' (displayed in House of Birth of Mahathir Mohamad).

The natural history in the National Museum was a recognisable continuation of colonial tradition. The Natural History Gallery, Balai Sejarah Kejadian, was low on Sheppard's priorities for nothing was done for two years (Sheppard 1963; 1979: 233). Moreover, work on the gallery was disrupted by Indonesia's declaration of 'Konfrontasi' ('Confrontation')

in January 1963 against Malaya's proposal to form the Federation of Malaysia (Sheppard 1979: 233). Consequently, the gallery, consisting primarily of natural habitat dioramas, was only one-third complete at the time of the museum's official opening (Sheppard 1963).

Sheppard, a Malay language scholar, uses the term *sejarah kejadian* for 'natural history' (Sheppard 1963). The lexical maladjustment of *sejarah* and 'history' is further exaggerated in the term *sejarah kejadian*. The word *kejadian* (the root being *jadi*) signifies 'event', 'happening' and 'evolution'. Theories of evolution, however, would exclude transformation from one being to another—the *jadian* (were-animals) such as *harimau jadian*, the were-tiger. The multivocal tiger symbolism expressed in beliefs, legends, rituals and art of Malaya's multi-ethnic population was well-documented during this period (see, for example, Locke 1954: chap. 9; Lamb 1961). Appropriately, Sheppard (1979: 264) concludes his autobiography with a tiger proverb of the Malays: "When a tiger dies it leaves its striped skin to be admired: when a man dies he leaves his good name."

Here, I am concerned with the 'names' left behind as classificatory labels. To give a name also meant to systematically structure exclusion of other knowledge systems. The gallery of *Sejarah Kejadian* had no conceptual space for the *jadian*-were-animals, or other non-Western-educated interpretations of the environment. 'Let me give a name' of the Kadazan-Dusun lullaby evokes images of the natural environment as a cosmological environment. The name *sejarah kejadian* evokes a set of museum images. For Europeans, the cultural significance of animals was restricted to their value as trophies or as museum specimens (Gullick 1995a: xlv). Animals were not experienced as 'be-souled' creatures inhabiting the same symbolic universe. 'Natural history' was a culture-specific term, a way of viewing the world that evolved historically but was by no means universally 'natural' (cf. Foucault 1970: chap. 5 on the history of natural history).

Sheppard's Malay language equivalent for the 'Ceremonial Gallery' was 'Balai Kebudayaan' (Sheppard 1963), but the latter expression would normally be translated as 'cultural gallery'. Elsewhere, Sheppard (1979: 231) refers to the Gallery "allocated to Ceremonial and Culture". This inconsistency highlights the difficulty of trying to streamline 'culture' in

words that carry differing cultural content (further elaborated in Chap. 7). Nevertheless, the name of the gallery was a lexical rupture with the early colonial galleries of 'ethnography' or 'ethnology'. Possibly, Sheppard wished to avoid these negative colonial connotations and the symbolic shift from local inhabitants as ethnographic objects to 'active' subjects is indicated by the emphasis on "a number of life-sized tableaux" (Sheppard 1979: 231). Sheppard's 'personal interest' (ibid: 228) in Malay culture was replicated in the gallery: the displays being predominantly of Malay 'ceremonies', interspersed with some 'ceremonial' representation of other ethnic groups (see Muzium Negara 1963).

Interestingly, exhibits on the 'Aborigines' were not included in this gallery at all, but segregated in the miscellany of the East Gallery which also included prehistory and history, Malayan crafts and weapons, rubber and tin industries, fishing and forestry, and agricultural implements (Muzium Negara 1963). Only one display in the Ceremonial Gallery indicated that Malaya's cultures had anything in common, apart from being marshalled together in a museum. This was 'A collection of traditional musical instruments in Malaya: Malay, Chinese, Indian' (Muzium Negara 1963), though a collection of objects does not necessarily signify a collective of subjects. Although the Ceremonial Gallery/Balai Kebudayaan carried a name change and was realised according to different exhibition techniques (tableaux and dioramas), one principle remained fundamentally colonial—an implicit racial conceptualisation and ordering of the population.

'Ceremony', 'history' and 'natural history' were not simply words to delineate museum space, they embraced worldviews. They also established a museum precedent. For example, the souvenir programme of the Penang Museum and Art Gallery (MBSLPP 1965: 16-17) shows the classificatory divisions of 'History', 'Natural history' and 'Chinese culture and customs' (if or where other ethnic groups were represented is not shown). These sections were in the museum on the ground floor; 'art' was sequestered in the art gallery on the first floor. Tay Hooi Keat, mentioned earlier in the art education field, contributed 'The history of the development of art in Penang' to the souvenir programme. Tay Hooi Keat (1965: 24) reflects: "The chief characteristics of our art shows now, are ... variety and individuality of expression, ranging from Realism, Post-Impressionism to Patternism, Symbolism and even Tachism." 'Individuality' was little more than a

reproducibility of the 'real thing'—the European art tradition. 'Art' and *seni* could overlap but they were not mutually inclusive.

*Seni*, restricted to *lukis* as defined by Western educated élites, was the domain of the 'art gallery' and other forms of *seni* were the province of the 'museum'. For instance, Muzium Negara's East Gallery contained a section on 'traditional' forms of artmaking labelled 'Malayan crafts' (Sheppard 1963). The remainder of the *seni* was implicit. The Muzium Negara building was a striking example of *seni bina* (architecture) and *seni ukiran* (wood carving) for the interior (see Ho Kok Hoe 1962; Sheppard 1963). Sheppard's (1963) 'Ceremonial Gallery' could also be interpreted from a *seni* stance: the displays included *wayang kulit* (shadow play), Mayong (dance-drama), Manora (dance-drama), musical instruments, traditional Chinese theatre and *silat* (Malay art of self-defence), among other *seni* forms. The National Museum, the National Art Gallery and the Penang Museum and Art Gallery were *seni*-tised according to Western classificatory traditions.

The early 1950s to early 1960s was a crucial stage in the compartmentalisation of *seni*. Moreover, the growing number of cultural institutions during this period accelerated this process of fragmentation into separate classificatory realms such as *muzium* and *balai seni lukis* or *sejarah* and *sejarah kejadian* (classification schemes are updated in Chap. 10). In a volume entitled *The Imagination of Reality*, Becker depicts the imagining of Southeast Asia:

The assumption has been, since the first intimations of colonialism ... that people become more alike—that they learn our languages, our terms, our conceptual system—and *abandon their own cultures to museums*, where they will be properly looked after (1979: 1, emphasis added).

For the period under discussion in Malay(si)a, the Western conceptual system was already firmly embedded in museums. The museum may have 'worked' as a cultural refuge but it was also an ideological artefact of European culture. A final remark on language may help illustrate this point. The word *bahasa* signifies 'language', 'politeness' and 'appropriate behaviour', and in the pre-colonial Malay world its connotations were wider (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 54). As Errington (1979: 38) demonstrates in

an essay on Malay literature, "the idea that the world is real and words or language artificial is reversed in traditional Malaya where ... *bahasa* was real, solid, present and almost palpable, while the world was something which would not endure". With the museumification of words, *bahasa* was manoeuvred into the 'reversed' mode: the world of objects would endure and the words would merely do the work of someone else's cognition. As explained earlier, the significant exception to the *bahasa* of museums was the word *negara*.

### Heritage Prospects

Wan Zakaria (1991: 6) describes Malaysia's colonial museum history as museums established by and for Europeans but he is one of few writers to acknowledge a colonial continuity: "In fact, those who took over the museums, even sometime [sic] after independence, tended toward the status quo and felt inhibited about making changes ..." (ibid: 6). Close scrutiny of the state of the 'status quo' has shown that the art, history, and museum activists of pre-independence were the same persons, or of the same ideological stock, as those of independence to post-independence time. Sani (1990: 42) maintains that the political transition also has this quality of continuity. Both in the context of the 'nation' and the 'museum', the transfer of power left many issues unresolved. *Negara* as a process had already been imagined as a product in the Muzium *Negara* and the Balai Seni Lukis *Negara*—themselves imagined as 'national' before the nation's emergence. The first Muzium *Negara* had already materialised before the nation had materialised and the second Muzium *Negara* before the formation of the new *negara*, Malaysia. The colonial museum heritage was already operating in future time.

To append *negara* to an institution creates a terminological triad: an institutional 'representation' of the nation, an institution for the nation's citizenry and a nationally administered institution. The first two aspects have already been discussed, and it is to the third element I turn. Both Muzium *Negara* and Balai Seni Lukis *Negara* were 'national' in the sense of funding and administrative structure. This was also reflected in the Federal Constitution, the Federal List (9th schedule) article 13 (b) detailed: "Libraries; museums; ancient and historical monuments and records; archaeological sites and remains" (Government of Malaysia 1970: 212).

Both the National Museum and National Art Gallery were placed under the newly created Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, formed in 1964 and headed by Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman (Board of Trustees of the National Art Gallery 1965: 3). This administrative lineage may be traced to its colonial progenitor. A Department of Museums and Antiquities paper informs that since the establishment of the Perak Museum by the colonial government, the management of museums has been a governmental concern and financial responsibility (Jabatan Muzium dan Antikuiti 1994: 110). Such was the colonial administrative heritage for the post-colonial nation. Possibly, this official view of museum genealogy may account for the exclusion of the earliest museumising activity, the Anglo-Chinese College museum (see Chap. 4). The line of succession only acknowledged 'legitimate' ancestors.

Ancestral inheritance is a related issue. Part of the new nation's patrimony was the 'tangible heritage' of early colonial museums. Where did these museums fit in the imagining of a post-colonial nation? In newly independent Zimbabwe, for instance, suggestions were made to close the colonial museums (see Mazel & Ritchie 1994: 231) but in Malay(si)a this option was not considered. Indeed, the leader of the nation, Tunku Abdul Rahman, strongly supported cultural institutions. Tom Harrisson's 1957 'Editorial preface' to the *Sarawak Museum Journal* presents another scenario that did not eventuate. Harrisson (1957: viii-ix) warned against Southeast Asia's "new nationalism" and "practical politics" which would argue: "If our Museum collections are worth \$4,000,000.00 ... why not, then, sell the lot, and build another stretch of road?" (ibid: ix). "But no road can ever lead into the spirit of a race," is Harrisson's response (ibid: ix). No museums metamorphosed into roads in independent Malay(si)a. Harrisson's 'practical politics' failed to recognise the significance of the museum's symbolic politics.

Another point of interest is Harrisson's expression 'spirit of a race' which returns us to a well-travelled road—the 'racial' mode of thinking, either latent or manifest in museums (also discussed in Chap. 10). Similarly, Tay Hooi Keat's turn of phrase in the souvenir programme of the Penang Museum and Art Gallery encapsulates the double-entendre of the heritage of race: "Like all contemporary art ... it has assumed an international character, without however, losing its local charm and its inherent *racial heritage*" (1965: 24, emphasis added). Though I commenced with the

notion of the museum as 'tangible heritage', it fails to signify if severed from the museum as 'intangible heritage'. Contrary to conventional museological terminology, the terms 'tangible' and 'intangible heritage' are not diametrically opposed but dialectically engaged.

Another museologically defective pair of mutually exclusive terms is 'movable' and 'immovable' heritage. These terms when applied to colonial monuments accentuate their definitional incongruity. In addition, a focus on the movement of monuments will disclose how the former colonial masters were to be assimilated into the post-colonial cultural landscape. It should also demonstrate the rigidity of Anderson's formula of the museum as 'an institution of power' (1991: 163) for it omits transitional periods and shifts in power.

In Kuala Lumpur, a bronze bust of King Edward VII (unveiled in 1912) and a bronze statue of Sir Frank Swettenham (unveiled in 1921) had been strategically placed outside the Selangor Secretariat building (*Malaya in History* 1962: 40-41). After independence both monuments were removed "as a result of protests by sectors of the public" (Unni 1978: 8). The two monuments were then erected in front of the new National Museum, later placed inside the museum in the history gallery, but subsequently placed outdoors at the rear of the museum (Shahrum Yub, pers. comm., 24 Apr. 1995).

Currently, King Edward VII and Sir Frank Swettenham (see Plate 6, p. 148) stand in a landscaped garden, their imperial gaze scanning the museum's carpark. According to the former Director-General of Museums, "We cannot be without British monuments because there has to be a continuity of history and these monuments stand as proof and illustration of what they [the British] have done for this country" (Shahrum quoted in Unni 1978: 9). Similarly, at the Penang Museum and Art Gallery, the colonial monument of Francis Light became peripatetic heritage: "In 1975 the statue of Captain Light was removed from the back corridor to the front lawn, a location considered to be more befitting the Founder of Penang in 1786" (Lembaga Muzium Negeri Pulau Pinang n.d.: 15). The Perak Museum also has movable 'immovable' colonial monuments as outdoor displays, one of which is a memorial slab originally from the site where J.W.W. Birch, the first British Resident of Perak, was assassinated.



Plate 6. Statue of Sir Frank Swettenham, Muzium Negara  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

A renowned Malaysian author described the British monuments as reminders of "our cultural heritage" (quoted in Unni 1978: 8). Colonial monuments in Malaysia draw attention to the flawed concept of movable and immovable heritage for these once 'immovable' colonial statues were transformed into post-colonial 'heritage' through acts of mobility. Neither 'heritage' nor 'immovability' is a static attribute of objects. The dynamics of monument movements, particularly the sequence in the National Museum, conveys the ambivalent attitudes towards colonial rule. As in the early colonial museums, where ethnographic galleries illustrated the hierarchy of 'race', monuments of British supremacy had to be accommodated in a new conceptual and spatial order. The 'museumification' of the 'other' may be both a realignment of the political relationship and a rearrangement of the parameters of heritage. British monuments retained their original meaning as commemorative statues of colonial conquerors and accrued another meaning as museum objects of heritage value. Contemporary analyses of monuments in material culture studies tend to be synchronic and mono-semantic (e.g. Miller 1991: 124). Collins (1990) maintains monuments and statues in Malaysia are "politically motivated" (ibid: 11) and they provide "important clues to the unique character and history" of the nation (ibid: 14). In Collins' selective viewing, history only begins with independence, hence he excludes from his field of reference colonial monuments that meander in meaning and in space.

The expression 'colonial museum heritage' is not simply the patrimony of early colonial museums and monuments. As elaborated in preceding sections, its expanded signification embraces a dynamic, conceptual process during the political transition period. It operates through language, taxonomy, education, epistemology and museum ideology, which have been filtered through the shared mind-set of the English-educated élites and residential English élites. The word 'heritage' in this chapter has been intentionally left unexplained in order to allow its meanings to emerge unencumbered by traditional and neo-traditional definitions. In museological discourse 'heritage' is a word that has become semantically overloaded but remains analytically inept. The 'heritage industry', made familiar by Hewison (1987), is only one aspect of the academic industry of heritage which has spawned invented heritage (Dominguez 1986: 550-1);

heritage as the "manipulation of history" (Pearce 1992: 208); as "bogus history" (Hewison 1987: 144); as ideologically motivated, selective preservation (Walsh 1992: 4) among other innumerable examples. Lowenthal (1985: 412) maintains heritage is remade—but it is rarely rethought. Conceptualisations of heritage share a common nucleus: it is a manifestation of the past or it mediates between the past and the present, and it is usually envisaged as a material form, that is, "the natural, cultural and built environment" (Millar 1989: 9).

This chapter has underlined that 'heritage' is not restricted to materiality nor to a temporality truncated from a concept of future time. Heritage is a process that stakes a claim on the future, *masa yang akan datang*, 'the time that is to come'. Wan Zakaria says of the museums first established in Malaya: "The British wanted to leave a mark to propagate themselves in this country" (quoted in Abishegam 1995: 2). His comment implies future time and provides an insight into the process of 'propagation', for it operates on the abstract as well as the material level. Museums were dual-track artefacts: reproduced as physical entities and reproducing the knowledge system of the artefact-makers—the commingled élites'—identified either as *being* English or *having* English. Whether it was the intent of the British to perpetuate themselves in the museum format is impossible to ascertain. One can only indicate the 'forward movement' of colonial museum heritage in 'the time that is to come'.

Gathering the heritage strands of the sultanate, the royal *balai* and the museum enables some conjecture on the role of traditional rulers. Royal families were supportive of museum activities in their states (in those states where the institution of the sultanate was still intact). This was exemplified by the commitment of the royal family in Kedah (where the museum was initially housed in the royal Balai Besar) and the support of the traditional ruler in the establishment of the museum in Negeri Sembilan. The new Muzium Negara of 1963 was inaugurated by the Paramount Ruler, the Yang di Pertuan Agung, (a position that rotates among the Sultans of the Peninsular states). In its preparatory stage, Muzium Negara received loans of royal items as well as other forms of assistance from the ruling families (see Sheppard 1963). Such instances of royal involvement could signify that sultans were reasserting and making visible the symbolic domain of Malay culture that had been substantially eroded during early colonial rule (see Chap. 5 and Chap. 8 provides a

contemporary view). Alternatively, it could be an indication of a Western orientation to the 'management' of culture for young princes were among the first to receive an English education during colonial rule (see Andaya & Andaya 1982: 227).

Whether traditional rulers, British expatriates of colonial to post-colonial service, and multi-ethnic local élites shared an identical vision of cultural institutions is difficult to assess. More readily discernible is a shared awareness of socio-cultural changes and their impact on traditions, skills and 'material culture', as well as the idea of deliberate preservation of the past (see, for example, Ho Kok Hoe 1962; Sheppard 1962a; Singam 1955; Templer 1954). Significantly, the non-premeditated preservation of living traditions and skills which would have been a customary procedure in the royal *balai* was not conceptually transferred to the museum incarnation of *balai*. Hence, the exclusive focus on 'material culture' as materialised in museums. Every act in the present, that aims to preserve the past, is subtly fettered to future selectivity.

The formation of museums and art galleries is generally identified with élites in society (see, for example, Mazel & Ritchie 1994: 225). In the Malay(si)an case, the mixed composition of local and British élites does not challenge this pattern but it does contest the categorisation of museum history into pre-*Merdeka* and post-*Merdeka*. Malaysia's mixed museum ancestry is more clearly understood in its epistemological rather than temporal frame. As will be elaborated presently, the meaning of an historical date may oscillate between chronological record and symbolic statement, and between alternative conceptualisations of time. *Merdeka* in 1957 and the formation of Malaysia in 1963 are chronologically post-colonial but during this period in the history of museum-making such synchrony is not apparent. To demonstrate the complexity involved, 'dating techniques' are borrowed from archaeological periods in Malay(si)a, based on two articles, both of which were written in the mid-1980s.

An account by non-Malaysians (Solheim et al. 1985: 5, 9) claims that archaeological activity from the early 1950s to the mid-1970s constitutes the "third period" of Peninsular archaeology. In contrast, the Malaysian Curator of Archaeology at the National Museum maintains that the "third period" commences in 1957 with independence (Adi 1986: 21). If one considers this discrepancy according to McKinley's (1979) analysis, then

political events are the temporal markers orientating Malay perceptions of time. Solheim et al. (1985: 9) use nationality as the temporal marker, for they argue that until the mid-1970s, "archaeological research was almost totally in the hands of British archaeologists". Both these approaches to the periodisation of museum activity in Malay(si)a would fail. Independence was a continuation of the museum momentum set in motion during pre-independence time. Museum activity was 'in the hands' of the English-educated local élites and the English residential élites. Furthermore, key museum figures—Sheppard in the Peninsula and Harrisson in Sarawak—defy simplistic categorisation by nationality or by pre- and post- political periods.

The differing circumstances in Sarawak and the Peninsula also result in divergent museum genealogies. In Sarawak there was only one museum to consider, headed by Harrisson from 1947 to 1966. As with archaeology in Sarawak, museum history was largely defined by Harrisson who was credited with shaping 'one of the best museums in Southeast Asia' (see Haile 1976: 145; Sandin 1976: 147). Chin et al. (1983: 1-2) in their article, 'Development of the Sarawak Museum', only refer to the formation of Malaysia to underline that by this time the museum had already established an international reputation. Leh (1993), who covers developments at the Sarawak Museum from 1886 to 1993, excludes mention of the formation of Malaysia in 1963. Political markers in the Peninsula do not necessarily carry the same symbolic content as those Sarawak. It may also be recalled that in the Sarawak Museum's 'Galeri Sejarah' (History Gallery) the history of 'colonial' rule is brief, measured from the time Sarawak became a British Crown Colony in 1946 (see Chap. 5).

In Peninsular Malaysia, Muzium Sejarah Nasional chronicles the long narrative of colonial rule in 'Arrival of foreign powers' (Portuguese, Dutch and British). Independence from British rule in 1957 makes *Merdeka* a political marker rich in symbolic capital. Predictably, *Merdeka* is used to condense the complexity and non-uniformity of museum developments (as well as archaeological activity) during the political transition period. Museum literature in Peninsular Malaysia routinely reproduces the *Merdeka* alignment. For example, Shahrum (1989: 42) states:

After Malaya achieved independence in 1957, the spirit of nationalism created an awareness of the need to protect and preserve the ... historical and cultural heritage. This led to the establishment of various museums ... such as the Kedah State Museum in 1959, the National Museum in 1963, Penang State Museum in 1965, Sabah State Museum in 1965 ...

Similarly, Mohd Redzuan and Mohd Kassim (1993: 2) plot the sequential course of independence, heritage awareness and the establishment of new museums. My analysis has questioned this temporal framework as well as the sequential causality.

Moreover, the museum usage of the label 'heritage' is a deceptive post-dating. The only reference to 'heritage' appears in Templer's speech at the opening ceremony of the National Museum in 1953 where he states: "A nation must preserve a pride in its cultural heritage" (quoted in Singam 1955: 132-3). However, the word is conspicuously absent from museum literature of the period under discussion (e.g. MBSLPP 1965; Muzium Negara 1963). Whether 'heritage' created museums, or museums created 'heritage' is open to debate (a debate resumed in Chap. 8). *Merdeka* brought political independence but the museum 'movement' was a process, where *Merdeka* was only one point on the continuum from the early 1950s to early 1960s.

### **The 'Museumising Imagination' Re-imagined**

Anderson (1991: 178) claims that the proliferation of museums in contemporary Southeast Asia is a "process of political inheriting" originating in the nineteenth-century 'museumising imagination'. His 'museumising imagination' is understood, here, not in archaeological origins, but in its museum manifestation, Anderson's temporal tidiness does not assist in explaining the Malay(si)an case for the 'process of political inheriting' was, in fact, two processes: the museumising imagination of the early colonial period and that of the political transition period (early 1950s to early 1960s). These processes underline a predominant theme of artefact analyses, that is, the museum-artefact may change, shed or accrue meanings. Meanings are not fixed: the discontinuity of the two museum periods is also expressed by the linguistic 'colonisation' of *ajaib khanah* by *sekolah gambar*. Moreover, certain meanings may re-emerge (colonial imaginings in contemporary Malaysian museums are traced in Part III).

The marked disjunctions between the early colonial period and the political transition period highlight that the 'museumising imagination' may be imagined in plural forms. During the early colonial period the public was largely perceived as peripheral to the museum's *raison d'être*. Early colonial museums did not express a public-related ideology and hence visitors had a greater autonomy of interpretation. In contrast, during the political transition period museums were reshaped into 'public' institutions and "social services" (see Federation of Malaya 1956: viii). This changing orientation is also exemplified by the new curatorial terminology of 'exhibit' (e.g. Harrison 1959; Sheppard 1963) which was gradually supplanting the word 'specimen' (e.g. Tweedie 1957; Peacock c. 1958). The 'specimen' orientation was intrinsically an exercise of curatorial serialisation, whereas an 'exhibit' implied a concept of an audience.

Another crucial difference was the trajectory of future time. In the early colonial museums, the future was elaborated in artefactual terms: prospective collecting expeditions, planned rearrangements of galleries, and proposed museum extensions and renovations. In the museums of the transitional period was a palpable sense of preparing for a future that was populated by people (e.g. Peacock c. 1958; Sheppard 1963; Templer 1954). Abdul Aziz (1966: 240) claims that it was only after Malaya's independence that museums were perceived as playing an important role in the "consciousness of nationhood" and "expanded education". Although his chronology is disputed, the museum 'curriculum' is undeniable.

Augé (1997: 214) stresses: "Every colonization is also a colonization of the imaginary." Museums of the transitional period resemble the 'imaginary museum', a term which has wider applicability than its post-modern connotation (for the latter, see Jameson 1984: 65). The devaluation or displacement of the 'imaginary'—indigenous coherence systems—through the medium of the museum was presumably unintentional but nonetheless consequent. I have attempted to show this process at work through concepts of art, education, classification, language, time, space and nationhood. It was a process which emerged in the early colonial period but only reached its zenith in the political transition period spanning pre-*Merdeka*, *Merdeka* and post-*Merdeka*. During this period, the population had become increasingly absorbed into another

epistemological matrix, with the consequence that *ajaib khanah* had largely lost its hold on the language (although the concept of *semangat* maintains a hold in the contemporary museum worldview, as will be shown in Chaps 9 and 10).

## Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the colonial museum heritage is a mentality, expressed in and through the materiality of the museum. As in the Kadazan-Dusun lullaby, I have sought to articulate the power of a 'name', as well as who has the power to pronounce, 'Let me give a name'. The lullaby itself, as a form of *seni*, should serve as a reminder of the arbitrariness of classifications that become reified in the museums' imagination of reality. One of the paradoxes of 'imaginary museums' in Malay(si)a is exhibited in the 'expressive artefact' of architecture. Both the Kedah State Museum and the new National Museum were modelled on indigenous architecture, yet, the mental architecture was of the Western educated élites. Another paradox was the emergence of a colonial National Museum. Nations have been defined by an inventory of artefactual forms, including flags, anthems and national museums (see Foster 1991: 252; Smith 1986: 228) but generalisations consume ambiguities. Muzium Negara, though a temporary museum, endured from 1952 until 1959 when plans were made to replace it with the new Muzium Negara on the same site. The colonial museum heritage of pre-independence was already infiltrating the post-independence future. This chapter has also been intended to serve as a bridge between the theme of Part II: 'The Museum as Artefact, Colonial Construction' and that of Part III: 'The Museum as Artefact, the Nation as Artefact'.

## PART III. THE MUSEUM AS ARTEFACT, THE NATION AS ARTEFACT

## Chapter 7. The National 'Collection': The Imagining Museum

*Without its hilt, no 'parang'; without a past, no present.*

(Malay proverb)

*The past is like a mirror, the future like lacquer.*

(Chinese proverb)

### Introduction

Part II examined the museum as artefact, made in colonial Malaysia, inclusive of the political transition period. Part III will discuss the museum as artefact, made in Malaysia, when museum-making becomes a Malaysian initiative. Chapter 6 detailed the museums which emerged during the political transition period, and two distinct categories are identifiable: national and state. Here, the focus is on museums of the 'national-type' from the mid-1960s until the present (state museums are discussed in the next chapter). The first phase of nation formation was Malaya's independence in 1957 and the second was the formation of Malaysia in 1963. Anderson (1991: 204) suggests that a "nation's biography" is not narrated but fashioned from interlocked processes of remembering and forgetting. Similarly, 'telling the story' in museums is a creative act. The aim of this chapter is to examine both museum narratives and national narratives to reveal some of the parallels, as well as the discontinuities, paradoxes and contradictions in the intersection of 'storylines'.

As in all nations, nation-building is an ongoing process, but differences are marked by "how clearly perceived the nation-building function is and how consciously it is articulated" (Camroux 1994: 5). It may be articulated through the medium of the museum, but it will be argued that the museum also re-articulates the nation. Although the narrative is far from straightforward, one narrative thread remains constant, and hence requires minimal elaboration: government-funded museums are not financed so that they may denounce or subvert the legitimacy of the nation-state (for a similar view, see Kaeppeler 1994: 35). To expect museums

to deliberately deconstruct the nation (see, for example, Halpin 1997) is museological myopia. The new museology fixes its gaze firmly on itself as an "ideological movement" (Stam 1993: 272) and inevitably sees what it anticipates.

### **The National Management of Culture**

To explore the multiplex relationships between the museum and the nation, it would be exegetically deficient to limit the analysis to only one institution, Muzium Negara (National Museum). Museological investigation has been too narrowly concentrated on the national museum institution (e.g. Boylan 1995; Newton 1994; Wilson 1992). According to Newton (1994: 273), a national museum is "a statement about the nation itself and its heritage". His statement is vacuous on the grounds that it fails to 'say' anything and, moreover, it singles out one 'artefact' for study whilst ignoring the rest of the 'collection'. Artefact studies emphasise that any collection needs to be studied as a collection (Pearce 1994c: 245; Silverstone 1994: 165). Consequently, this chapter will examine museums, memorials (memorial museums) and other institutions fully funded by, and under the administrative purview of, the Federal Government.

Not all of the institutions use the label 'national' in their nomenclature, hence the expression 'national-type'. The national 'collection' includes five museums managed by the Department of Museums and Antiquities (DMA) in the portfolio of the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism; seven memorials (memorial museums) under the National Archives in the portfolio of the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism; the National Art Gallery managed by a board of trustees, responsible to the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism; the Islamic Museum administered by the Islamic Affairs Division in the Prime Minister's Department; and the National Planetarium and the National Science Centre, both administered by a division of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment. In regard to the latter two institutions my intent is not to determine the boundaries of the museum idea (see Chap. 2). They are included here not only to complete the national 'collection', but because they are also cultural institutions, regardless of their subject matter.

During the political transition period, the institution of the museum was never challenged, for it was one of the material and symbolic foci of nation-building, as exemplified by the first Muzium Negara of the 1950s and the second of the 1960s. In 1967 Abdul Aziz (1967: 6) of Muzium Negara stated: "We feel our museum is helping Malaysia ... find a national identity." He also alludes to the complexity of the task: "Malaysia today is a multiracial, multilingual, multicultural country. We seek understanding among our country's cultural groups" (ibid: 6).

The fragility of understanding was soon to be exposed in the "traumatic event" of May 1969 (Mohd Taib 1988: 278). After the general elections in May 1969, political confrontation between Malays and Chinese led to racial rioting in Kuala Lumpur (see Andaya & Andaya 1982: 280-1). May 1969 is described as a "turning point" or a "watershed" in Malaysia's history (see respectively, Mohd Taib 1988: 278; Crouch 1996: 166). Lee (1990: 491) describes the incident as "collective memory". No reference is made to the events of May 1969 in the national-type museum which meticulously chronicles chronology, that is, Muzium Sejarah Nasional (National Museum of History or National History Museum, a semantic question to be discussed later). The only museum that includes the incident is the Royal Malaysian Police Museum, with a photographic display and a text entitled 'The May 1969 tragedy' (also to be incorporated in its newly constructed building, Halal Hj. Ismail, pers. comm., 12 Nov. 1997).

'May 1969' in Peninsular Malaysia has been recalled to contextualise the impact on the cultural arena for it precipitated a pronounced articulation of the nation-building function. Forging 'national unity' and 'national identity' became more urgent tasks (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 281). Creating a 'national culture' was a major component of the nation-building process. In 1971 the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) organised a congress on national culture at the University of Malaya, resulting in the following formulation of 'national culture' (in Mohd Taib 1988: 279):

- (a) the national culture of Malaysia must be based on the cultures of the people indigenous to the region;
- (b) elements from other cultures which are suitable and reasonable may be incorporated into the national culture; and
- (c) Islam will be an important element in the national culture.

Artists who participated in this congress questioned prescriptions for art activities and the loss of artistic autonomy. The artists, among them, Syed Ahmad Jamal (later the Director of the National Art Gallery, 1983-89), walked out in protest (see Sabapathy 1994: 71). It will be demonstrated shortly that the National Culture Policy, expressed in a policy format, discussed in political science analyses, and interpreted through cultural institutions, emerges as a fragmented discourse. In 1972 the Director of Culture of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) presented 'The search for a national culture' to a museum symposium (UNESCO ICOM Malaysia), held in Malacca. He reiterated the tri-faceted interpretation of 'national culture' but made no link, either explicit or implicit, to museums (see Baharuddin 1972, vol. 2, document 33).

A brief description of the development of the Ministry into its present form is necessary for future reference. In 1987 the cultural division of the MCYS was combined with the tourism division of the Trade and Industry Ministry to create the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which was renamed the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism in 1992 (*New Straits Times* 21 May 1997). Aziz Deraman (1990: 9) in 'Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan Malaysia' ('The National Culture Policy of Malaysia'), a working paper of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, mentions the Ministry's role in 'cultural education' and he lists the 'government agencies' under the Ministry: "Muzium Negara, Arkib Negara [National Archives], Perpustakaan Negara [National Library] dan Balai Seni Lukis Negara [National Art Gallery] ... ". However, he does not clarify the implications of the National Culture Policy for cultural institutions. Aziz Deraman's (ibid: 13) only other reference to museums is to indicate their potential as 'cultural excursions' for children.

A 'cultural excursion' through the *Guide to the Cultural Gallery Muzium Negara* (Othman & Raiha 1986: 1) reveals:

Malaysia has an extensive cultural history, with many interlocking foreign elements: Paganism, Indian, Chinese, Islam and European, each of which has left some evidence that can be recognised and appreciated today as Malaysia's cultural heritage.

How does a conceptualisation of Malaysia's 'interlocked' cultures accord with the official formulation of 'national culture'? Lim Chong Keat (1983), member of the Board of Trustees, National Art Gallery, stressed that culture was without boundaries and did not "depend on official definitions or prescription". Sani (1990: 44), a political scientist, points out:

The very first thing that must be said of the National Culture Policy is that there is up to date no officially and clearly stated policy, although we have always had a ministry directly taking care of 'culture'.

An official from the Sabah Cultural Board (a subdivision of Sabah's Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports) proposed that although the National Culture Policy seemed clear-cut, the innumerable appendices allow "a greater scope of meaning and ambiguity" (Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan, pers. comm., 22 Oct. 1997).

The former Director-General of the National Archives, Zakiah Hanum, suggests that culture in contemporary Malaysia has transcended the élitism of the past: "In this day and age culture belongs to everyone alike" (Zakiah 1990: 8). Culture may 'belong' to everyone but the management of official culture is the government's exclusive domain. Although continuity of structural organisation may be traced to the 'heritage' of the colonial and political transition periods, a major significant divergence is the scale of the bureaucratisation of culture. The implication, as expressed by a former director of the Sarawak Museum, is: "Museums in Malaysia are managed and funded by Governments, hence professionally we are basically government officers, governed and regulated by official rulings" (Kedit 1996: 1). However, as implied in the case of the National Culture Policy, official rulings need not signify a consensual interpretation.

According to Shahrum Yub, the former Director-General of Museums (1972-91), perspectives of culture cannot be separated from political perspectives (pers. comm., 16 April 1995). One may also append that perspectives change perceptibly, as in the aftermath of May 1969, and also less dramatically, as in the ministerial union of tourism and culture in 1987. Although this signals a greater amplification of the official management of culture, the issue is far from straightforward. In its tourism capacity, the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism promotes

'Malaysian culture' (see King 1993). It becomes increasingly problematic to decipher what the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism means by 'culture'. One meaning proffered by an official of the Ministry was, "Culture is money" (pers. comm., 14 April 1995). Tourism (generally of the 'cultural tourism' category) was ranked fourth in the country's foreign exchange earnings of 1995-96 (Chow Ee-Tan 1996: 7). By mid-1997, tourism had climbed to second position (Gunasegaran 1997: 26).

Malaysian culture and national culture are not coterminous and both are interpretative webs. King (1993: 108), in 'Tourism and culture in Malaysia', indicates that official Malaysian publications (that is, of the then Ministry of Culture and Tourism) depict "Malaysian culture" in "uncontroversial and neutral" images. The official promotion of tourism presents the nation's ethnic and cultural diversity as its major strength whilst "Islam is distanced in official promotions" (ibid: 109). Din (1989: 194) asserts that tourism has neither revitalised old cultural forms nor helped create new ones. His assessment is inaccurate (see Kamarul Baharin 1993: 87; Kedit 1990b; 1995: 95; Mohd Kassim 1995a: 84; and Chaps 8 and 9 will provide additional clarification). It has also missed the point: the most significant impact of tourism on culture may ultimately lie in the conceptual realm, in a new format of 'trading cultures': 'national culture' and 'Malaysian culture'.

Malaysians have offered diverse descriptions of 'Malaysian culture'. Tan Wee Kiat (1995: 34) suggests: "Malaysian culture is ... that elusive entity that is still evolving from our rich ingredients of Asian cultures — Malay, Chinese, Indian, indigenous, others — and the cultures of Western nations who have dominated us." Hon (1989: 285) indicates that there is "no dominant Malaysian culture but a proliferation of cultures and sub-cultures". Kerk Choo Ting (1989: 185), who envisages a "Malaysian multi-culture", elaborates a multi-civilisational approach rather than the standard frame of multi-ethnic identities. Othman outlines some of the Museums Department's tasks in preserving 'Malaysian culture':

... the Museums Department was able to preserve objects of religious significance not only related to Islam, monuments of architectural value, and objects of historical, cultural and artistic merit ... [It] is now preserving sixth/ninth century Hindu-Buddhist *chandi* or temples in Lembah Bujang, Kedah; collecting Chinese and South East Asian ceramics discovered in Peninsular

Malaysia; preserving Portuguese and Dutch forts and buildings ... as well as many buildings built by the British in the nineteenth century. They are an intrinsic part of *Malaysian culture* and history (1989: 31, emphasis added).

Since the amalgamation of culture and tourism in the one ministry, the duties of the government agencies under this Ministry have expanded. Tourism promotion has been added to cultural heritage preservation, public education, national unity and national identity formation, and national treasures repository (see, for example, Balai Seni Lukis Negara 1995: 3-5; Mohd Kassim 1995a: 83-5; Othman 1989: 31-2). One of the recurring motifs of this chapter is the ways in which national culture, Malaysian culture, popular culture and museum culture intersect and disengage from their conventional analytical boundaries.

One further remark on 'Malaysian culture' is the emphasis on good manners, correct conduct, tact, and appropriate language, all intoned in *budi bahasa*, which some regard as a shared civilisational trait (see Sulaiman 1989: xxviii). *Budi bahasa* is clearly expressed in museum displays on colonialism: texts convey a consistent neutrality of tone, both in national-type and state museums (see also Chap. 4, textual excerpts from Muzium Sejarah Nasional). *Budi bahasa* may also determine more specific museum choices. In the Second World War Memorial museum (run by Kelantan's state museum authority) several photographs of Japanese atrocities were removed, after Japanese nationals had complained. The museum's philosophy was summed up as: "We do not want to antagonise people" (Salleh Hj. Mohd Akib, pers. comm., 18 Nov. 1996).

Mainstream museological analyses have yet to decipher the 'exchange' value of the 'real thing' and the 'real person'. Although heightened tourism awareness should not be discounted, it may also be assumed that this new element is mediated through the older tradition—*budi bahasa*. According to Shahrum (1987: 142), former Director-General of Museums in Malaysia, museum visiting is comparable to receiving guests at home: "... we should give every courtesy and material comfort to the guest".

Similarly, *budi bahasa* may determine what is included in the museum. The Proclamation of Independence Memorial in Malacca (managed by the National Archives) shows in its final display all the state flags (see Plate 7, p. 164). Although the memorial museum's "cut-off point" is Malaya's independence on 31 August 1957, the flags of Sabah and Sarawak were included as a "matter of courtesy" (Mohd Zawawi, pers. comm., 7 Nov. 1996).

Historical 'truths' may be interpreted through other priorities. Museology, itself, is a Euro-American product and its modes of analysing museums are mono-cultural. The examples of *budi bahasa* that inform museum practices are not an attempt to enter the debates of cultural relativism and 'Asian values' (see Dupont 1996; Hitchcock 1994), but rather to recognise cultural context in museums as cultural institutions (on museums' cross-cultural miscommunications, see Dellios 1996a). Museologists who depict museums as cultural institutions (e.g. Galla 1995: 40; Pearce 1994a: 1) do not specify *whose* culture. *Budaya* (culture, civilisation) in Malay, like *bahasa* (language, politeness), incorporates a conception of 'right conduct' or a 'moral universe'. *Budaya* is a compound of *budi*, spanning wisdom, intelligence, kindness, goodness; and *daya*, denoting force, power, energy, and ability. *Budaya* (culture, civilisation) is expressed in and generated by the dialectic between the two. In Chinese, *wénhuà* (culture, civilisation) contains *wén*, meaning an articulated pattern, character, script, writing; and *huà*, signifying change and transformation. Thus, literature and learning bring about transformation (many thanks to Wang Guo-Fu of Suzhou University for the exegesis, 17 Dec. 1998; the unsophisticated interpretation is my own). Cultural orientations may be embedded in the lexis itself. To talk of 'culture' or *budaya* or *wénhuà* requires an acknowledgment of heterogenous strands of signification.



Plate 7. Flag display in Proclamation of Independence Memorial, Malacca  
The national collection of state flags is an artefact of *budi bahasa*.  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

### The National 'Collection':

- **Balai Seni Lukis Negara (National Art Gallery)**

As outlined in the preceding chapter, the Balai Seni Lukis Negara was an artefact of a Western-centred orientation to art. The emblem of the National Art Gallery, displayed outside the building, is explained as: "The stylised human eye represents [the] vision of the artist, the rectangular shape represents the visual arts, the long oval shape represents the inner content [of art]." This tripartite scheme omits 'society' or for that matter 'nation'. Sabapathy (1994: 52) argues that art works cannot be read as "mere social documents" bereft of aesthetic value. My purpose is not an aesthetic evaluation of art in Malaysia, but its documentary value in the national narrative and institutionalised value in the context of national-type museums. The Balai Seni Lukis Negara's financial allocation has been described as a "starvation budget" (Ooi Kok Chuen 1995: 171; see also budget figures in Balai Seni Lukis Negara 1995: 38-9). The gallery has approximately 2,000 works in its permanent collection, of which only 60 works are displayed on a rotational basis owing to space constraints (National Art Gallery 1995). These "national treasures" (ibid) do not constitute a national 'portrait' but they do provide a 'collage' of visualisations of nationhood, spanning pre-independence to contemporary time.

The predominant themes of the 1950s and early 1960s were depictions of idyllic, Malay rural life and pristine *kampung* (village) scenes (the *kampung* as art and artefact is the analytical focus of Chap. 9). The approaches vary, with the traditional Chinese style, the Western-derived art styles and the eclecticism of the Nanyang school which melded Western, Chinese, and Southeast Asian influences (Piyadasa 1994: 30). The *kampung* theme is shared by Chinese and Malay artists. Lai Foong Moi's *Morning in the Kampung* (1959); Abdullah Ariff's *Bumi yang Bahagia* (The Fortunate Land) (1960); Ahmad Hassan's *Old Fisherman Mending his Net* (1960); and Yeoh Jin Leon's *Padi Field* (1963) being some of the examples in the permanent collection. Piyadasa (1994: 31) suggests that the Nanyang artists focused on the "multi-cultural realities of Malaysia" in a search for a "Malaysian identity" (ibid: 32). After May 1969, this aesthetic search for a 'Malaysian identity' had to confront the less idyllic side to 'multi-cultural realities of Malaysia'.

Sabapathy (1994: 71) describes the impact of May 1969 on the Malaysian art scene: "Throughout the 1970s, artists began the difficult, painful process of rethinking their positions, and recasting their perceptions of culture, language, race, state/nation and identity." Dualities, dichotomies and uncertainties are re-presented through art works, such as Zulkifli Mohd Dahlan's *Separate Reality* (1975) and Sulaiman Haji Esa's *Waiting for Godot* (1977). The 1980s and 1990s have seen a broadening of concerns, such as Ismail Hashim's *Environment Grafik (Bersih, Cekap, Amanah)* (1984) which makes a photographic statement on the rhetoric and reality of political slogans; and Ahmad Shukri Mohamed's *Target Series: Butterfly Story IV* (1994), a work that targets the ideology of collecting and the power of possession. That the work, itself, is part of the Gallery's permanent collection appends another layer of meaning. It is not possible to survey the entire collection but it is possible to recognise a growing rapprochement between the emblem of the Balai Seni Lukis and another tripartite formula: the individual artist, societal content and national context.

After forty years, the Balai Seni Lukis Negara is soon to be housed in its own building (currently it occupies a former colonial hotel). The new building, in the genre of modernised, Malaysianised architecture, has been described as "a work of art" (Ooi Kok Chuen 1996: 4). Moreover, it will incorporate "state-of-the art" technology (National Art Gallery c. 1997). The state of art also has not been static. The 'art' or *seni lukis* of the gallery has broadened its artistic horizons since the political transition period. For instance, some of the exhibitions of 1994 included *senifoto* (photography), *seni fiber* (fabric art), *seni video*, and *seni seramik* (ceramic art) (see Balai Seni Lukis Negara 1995: 12, 16, 20, 24). 'Caricatures, Cartoons and Comics' is another form of *seni* that Balai Seni Lukis Negara displayed in its 1989 exhibition. These art forms, which show critiques of political, social and economic conditions through the idiom of humour, have been described by Mulyadi (1995: 3) as potent "*senjata budaya*" ('cultural weapons'). Their effectiveness is more pronounced because they are part of "*budaya popular*" ('popular culture') which links the artist and society (ibid: 6). This leads to the next subject, Muzium Negara, where 'popular culture' became a permanent theme through a temporary medium.

• **Muzium Negara (National Museum)**

In his working paper on national culture, Aziz Deraman (1988: 3) of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, underlined that the Malaysian conceptualisation of culture as 'entertainment' required rectification. As will be demonstrated presently, culture as entertainment evolved as one of the guiding principles of Muzium Negara under the directorship of Shahrum Yub. Certain individuals have played an important role in shaping museum-artefacts and Shahrum Yub is one of the prominent *dramatis personae* of the post-colonial era. His career at Muzium Negara was to span twenty-nine years and a brief biographical note is expedient.

Shahrum came from "humble beginnings ... in a village without piped water or electricity" (Peters 1990: 13). On a Perak Government scholarship, he obtained in Britain an Honours Degree in Anthropology (ibid 13). In 1959 Sheppard, then Director of Museums, arrived in London on a recruitment mission and persuaded Shahrum to undertake the Diploma of the Museums Association of Great Britain, in preparation for a post at Muzium Negara (Chiang Siew Lee 1991: 43). In 1962 Shahrum filled the position of Curator of Ethnology at Muzium Negara, became Director of Museums in 1966 and then Director-General of Museums in 1972 (Peters 1990: 13), a post he held until his retirement in May 1991. The Director-General of Museums heads the Department of Museums and Antiquities (DMA). As much as Shahrum shaped Muzium Negara's identity, the museum shaped his identity so that Muzium Negara's "best exhibit is its director-general" (Chiang Siew Lee 1991: 40) and his name is "synonymous with the National Museum" (Peters 1990: 10).

Shahrum had inherited a *sekolah gambar* show-piece produced by the élites during the political transition period. His own 'humble' background may have determined his priority "to make Muzium Negara (National Museum) a people's museum—one that the common man would not hesitate to come to" (Shahrum 1987: 141). The procedure entailed holding "all kinds of temporary exhibitions, especially those that would have popular appeal to a large section of the public" (ibid: 141). Shahrum's frequent comments that the museum was not only for "the highly educated", "the intellectuals" and "the privileged" (see respectively, Koffend 1974: 8; Kuttan 1989; *Malaysian Business* Oct. 1978: 41) indicates that he was rethinking the *sekolah gambar* effect.

He was also re-evaluating the relationship between Muzium Negara and its *warganegara* (citizens). The *warganegara* included the urban poor in the 1960s and 1970s, especially the high proportion of squatters living in the vicinity of the museum. Shahrur (1987: 141) explained: "I thought the museum should be a source of pleasure to the poor. What other entertainment and activities do they have? The rich have many ways to fill their leisure."

Consequently, it was not sufficient to have a museum 'show-piece', it had to 'perform'. Shahrur developed a policy for Muzium Negara that would be described in contemporary terminology as 'popular culture', though this term contains implicit Eurocentric distinctions. For instance, Moore (1997), in *Museums and Popular Culture*, maintains that post-modernism has challenged the divide between 'high' and 'low' culture. The Malaysian 'popular culture' philosophy, which emerged three decades before Moore's formulation, was unique to Malaysia's socio-cultural and political circumstances.

For instance, Shahrur narrates of Muzium Negara:

What is envisaged is not a narrow nationalism but ... an understanding among [the nation's] multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural groups.

And so the Muzium Negara *dramatizes* for everybody ... the interplay and blending of many cultures within a single nation (1979: 52, emphasis added).

The objectives remain identical to those outlined in the mid-1960s (see Abdul Aziz 1967: 6), but the means had altered. Although the change in orientation was visible before the events of May 1969, this 'turning point' accelerated Muzium Negara's search for a new way of being a museum for its *warganegara* (citizens). The museum as a serial 'performance' could do the work of 'dramatising' that the permanent galleries could not. Shahrur informs: "Special exhibitions based on almost any popular theme ... are a *constant feature* of the museum's activities" (1979: 52, emphasis added). Exhibition openings were described as "village fairs" (Umemoto 1983: 88) and they dramatised the nation through the familiar Southeast Asian medium of the 'show' and the 'extravaganza' (see ASEAN 1986: vi). Significantly, a consonance also emerged between

*seni* and *balai*, that is, the museum's performative identity and its architectural identity, based on the Balai Besar (see Chap. 6).

From 1964 to 1991 Muzium Negara held an average of ten to twelve temporary exhibitions a year (Mohd Kassim 1994: 6). Some examples may help visualise the spectrum of Malaysian 'popular culture'. In October 1968 the 'Tamil Temple Architecture' exhibition was held in conjunction with the Hindu festival of Deepavali, which was followed in February 1969 by 'The Hajj' exhibition in conjunction with the Islamic pilgrimage (Shahrum 1969: 3). In September 1969, Shahrum gave a speech, 'The role of the National Museum in a multiracial society', to the Rotary Club, Kuala Lumpur. He notes that because the four main religious festivals fall close to one another from 1969 to 1970, the museum would stagger the special exhibitions (Shahrum 1969: 3). It should be remarked that his speech was given soon after the events of May 1969, which was later to result in the formulation of the National Culture Policy in 1971. Shahrum's plans to hold in the 1970s a Buddhism exhibition and a Christmas exhibition, in conjunction with these festivities, were vetoed by the authorities (Shahrum Yub, pers. comm., 16 Apr. 1995).

Nonetheless, Shahrum's post-May 69 speech presaged the direction of the National Museum: "[It must] become a *cultural centre* in which all sections of the community may find an interest" (1969: 2, emphasis added). The reality, however, was an institution labelled a 'museum' and a 'national' one at that. His approach, often called 'unconventional' and 'unusual' (see, for example, Koffend 1974: 7; *Asia Magazine* 16-18 Mar. 1990: 40) resulted in an unstated, workable compromise: the permanent galleries remained largely intact and the temporary exhibitions became the 'real' substance of the museum. An indigenous analogy would be Muzium Negara as *wayang kulit* (shadow play). In a *wayang kulit* performance, the shifting shadows are the 'real things' (see Chap. 2). Similarly, Muzium Negara's artistry was to realise the substance of the 'shadows'.

Shahrum (1987: 141) explains: "My policy regarding temporary exhibitions was, and is, to give the people what they want, keeping away however from subjects which are sensitive or divisive in nature." Although this policy does not appear to conflict ideologically with the socio-cultural and political environment, it was to prove a challenge of hermeneutics to the

managers of official culture. The tensions between the Government's National Museum and the 'people's museum', the official concept of national culture and the museum's concept of popular culture, are encapsulated in a temporary exhibition on the famous film star and singer, P. Ramlee. His death in 1973 was marked by a retrospective exhibition; the museum was kept open until midnight, with film screenings and live performances by popular singers and film stars (Umemoto 1983: 92). The three-week exhibition drew over one million visitors but it also drew the criticism that the National Museum had been converted into a "nightclub" (see Shahrum 1987: 142). The denouncement came from the then Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (Shahrum Yub, pers. comm., 3 May 1995).

Not all exhibitions were as "controversial" (Umemoto 1983: 92) as the P. Ramlee exhibition, but many were considered outside the traditional scope of a museum (see Speed 1990: 13), such as the 1975 boxing exhibition held in conjunction with the Muhammad Ali's heavyweight title fight (Mohd Kassim 1994: 7). Other eclectic themes included an exhibition featuring the works of Lat, a popular Malaysian cartoonist, and the exhibition, 'Durian—King of All Fruits', complemented with foodstalls, both held in 1986 (Shahrum 1987: 141). The temporary exhibitions were clearly an attempt to find a common denominator in the multi-ethnic population. A 'popular culture' policy proved popular with the population, but did not generate the same approval rating in the official hierarchy (Shahrum Yub, pers. comm., 3 May 1995). Shahrum (1987: 142) alludes to this dilemma:

... some have criticized us saying that some of our exhibitions are not of high scientific or cultural value. My answer is that the function of the museum is to present not only the past, but the present.

For instance, the exhibition 'Snakes and Society' of 1988-89 was timed to coincide with the Chinese New Year celebration, heralding the year of the snake (Muzium Negara c. 1988: 1). As part of the exhibition, a snake-charmer was confined with one hundred cobras and the museum was kept open 24 hours a day (Speed 1990: 17). 'The Magnificent Cat' exhibition of 1987-88 (Muzium Negara c. 1987), complete with cats and a catwalk show, traversed the past, present and future: it became a permanent museum in Sarawak's capital, Kuching (*kuching/kucing* means 'cat').

'Treasures from the Grave' of 1989-90 marked the first attempt at an international, civilisational perspective (see Fig. 9, p. 172). The exhibition showed items such as grave goods, burial poles, coffins and mummified remains, on loan from overseas museums (Muzium Negara c. 1989). In the exhibition booklet (*ibid*), Shahrum briefly refers to 'controversial issues' that arose because of the exhibition's focus on death, hence the decision was made to limit exhibits to archaeological artefacts. An objection that the exhibition would be unIslamic was also a factor that had to be negotiated with the authorities (Shahrum Yub, pers. comm., 3 May 1995).

As a government agency, Muzium Negara also had (and still has) traditional roles and official duties to perform inclusive of special exhibitions for the annual National Day celebrations. As indicated previously, since the amalgamation of culture and tourism within the one ministry, the museum's role in tourism promotion is also of increasing importance. It would have been highly significant to the Ministry that Muzium Negara, a government agency, won the 1989 award for Cultural Contribution to the Tourism Industry, a private-sector event. In this regard, 'Treasures from the Grave', held in conjunction with 'Visit Malaysia Year 1990' (the first major government tourism campaign), conveys how the 'weighing scales' of culture and tourism may be balanced. Muzium Negara's institutionalised role as "custodian of Malaysia's cultural heritage" (Shahrum 1979: 44) also displays a certain symmetry. 'Malaysia's cultural heritage', as dramatised in the metaphor of the 'shadow play', was actualised through the constancy of the ephemeral. The dual identities of the 'people's museum' and the government's museum overlapped, but there was not a one-to-one correspondence. The Muzium Negara artefact that Shahrum shaped was ephemeral in nature and enduring in impact (see Mohd Kassim 1996: 9; Wan Zakaria 1996: 11).



Fig. 9. Lat's cartoon of 'Treasures from the Grave' exhibition, featuring Dato' Shahrums Yub, then Director-General of Museums Postcard, NST Group

The former Assistant Director of the DMA refers to Muzium Negara in the past tense: "Muzium Negara *used to* organise monthly temporary exhibitions ... which were popular and enjoyed by all [who felt] at home there" (Mohd Kassim 1996: 9; emphasis added). Muzium Negara is in a transitional phase. Since the retirement of Shahrum, Muzium Negara has neither retained its previous identity (or in synonymous terms, Shahrum's identity) nor asserted a new one.

The future orientation of the museum is still being formulated. According to the then Assistant Director, DMA, Muzium Negara will become a "cultural museum" as its history gallery has been absorbed by Muzium Sejarah Nasional; its natural history gallery will form part of the proposed Natural History Museum; its ethnology component will be incorporated into the proposed Ethnology Museum of the Malay World in the National University (Mohd Kassim Hj. Ali, pers. comm., 20 Apr. 1995). The current Director-General of Museums indicates that these modifications will enable Muzium Negara to focus primarily on *seni*: "This will include performing arts, menora, art, sculpture, ceramics etc. This will be *seni* in the broad sense of the term" (Kamarul Baharin Buyong, pers. comm., 16 Dec. 1996). After more than three decades, classifications of *seni* are being redrawn.

- **Muzium Perak (Perak Museum)**

The Perak Museum is administered by the DMA. As a result of the colonial museum heritage, the Perak Museum became an administratively inherited 'national-type' museum. The alternative nomenclature (Mohd Zulkifli 1977: v) of "Museum of National importance with the status of National Museum (under Federal Government)" is not only unwieldy but provides no assistance in determining 'status'. The Perak Museum's collections may or may not be of 'national importance' for the records are conflicting. The Perak Museum suffered no structural damage during the Pacific War years, but according to Mohd Kassim (1995b: 90), "a large number of specimens", deemed "irreplaceable" had disappeared. In contrast, Sheppard maintained no looting had occurred at the Perak Museum (see Solheim, Wheeler & Allen-Wheeler 1985: 4).

The Perak Museum's status as the oldest museum in the Peninsula is probably the source of its 'national importance'. The process of transforming colonial monuments into post-colonial heritage was outlined in Chapter 6. The Perak Museum may be understood in similar, but expanded, terms for the museum as 'heritage' contains 'heritage' and is itself of architectural 'heritage' value, classified as an historical monument.

Its displays, though updated, retain much of their early colonial classificatory and spatial orientation, both in the natural history and ethnology galleries. Its upstairs gallery is still identifiably 'Malayan', that is, objects of the Orang Asli and the Malays. The Perak Museum has largely survived as an historical artefact because funding and priorities have been focused elsewhere (see Mohd Kassim 1995b: 91). However, the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-95) provides for "the revitalisation of the Perak Museum" (ibid: 91). The Perak Museum, with its status of national museum, in its knowledge schemes and visual ideology, shows the imagining of colonial Malaya. Clifford (1985: 245) maintains that outdated museums should be preserved to document the history of collecting. His examples pertain to museums in the Western world that contain non-Western objects (ibid: 245). The Perak Museum as a colonial museum in a post-colonial nation, will need to determine the conceptual scope of 'preservation' and what this implies for its own past and future. For the present, the Perak Museum (Plate 8, p. 175) endures as the nation's heritage of the nineteenth-century museumising imagination.

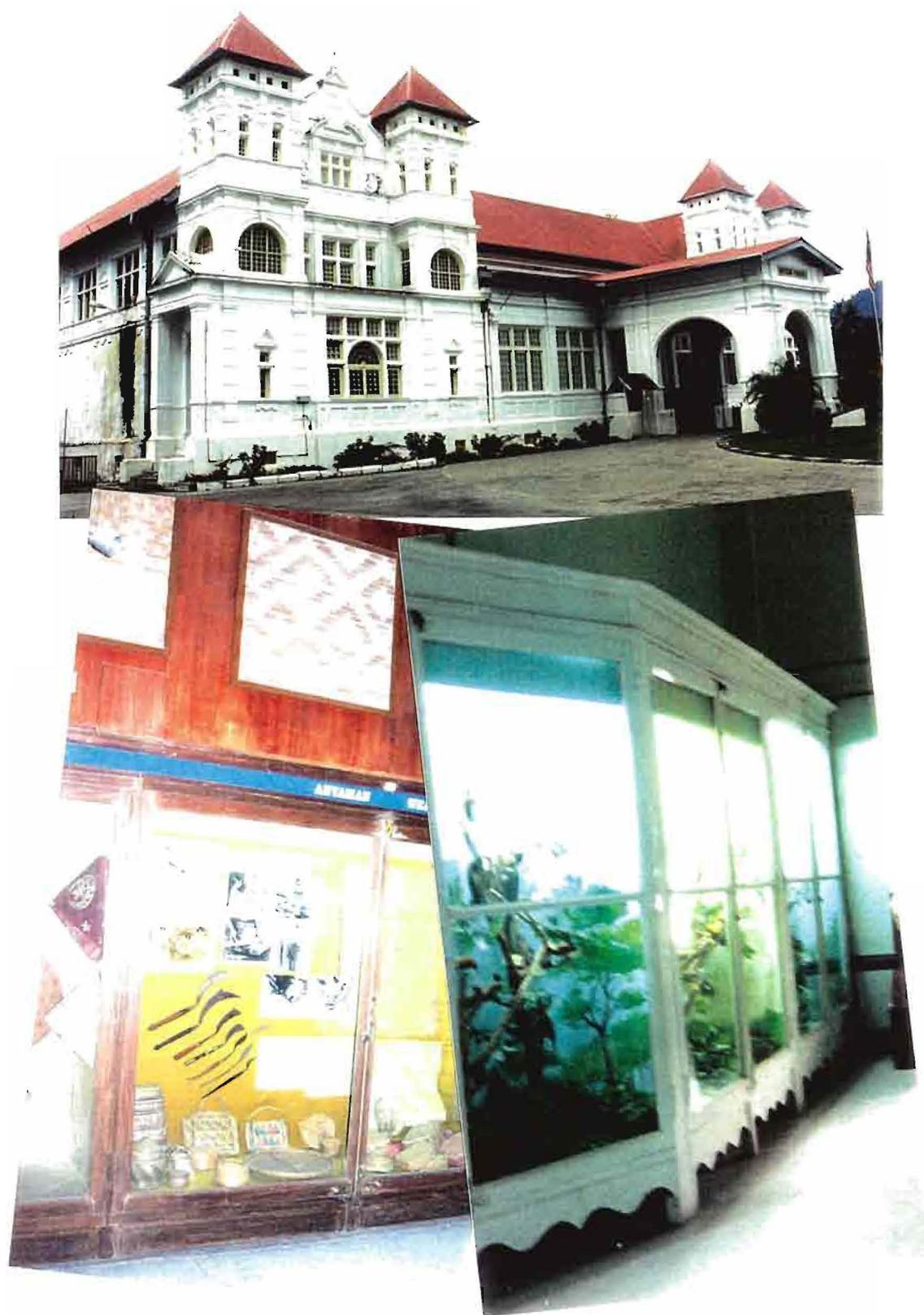


Plate 8. Perak Museum, composite view:  
museum building (top); lower room leading to 'Orang Asli and Malay  
Handicrafts' (left); natural history (right)  
Photos: P. Dellios, 1996

• **Muzium Arkeologi, Lembah Bujang (Archaeological Museum, Bujang Valley)**

The Muzium Arkeologi of the Bujang Valley in the State of Kedah, administered by the DMA, is also categorised as a 'Museum of National importance with the status of National Museum under the Federal Government'. It was established during Shahrum's tenure as Director-General of Museums. The site museum forms part of the Bujang Valley Archaeological Project. The Bujang Valley, site of a flourishing entrepôt from the 4th or 5th century until the 14th century, was home to the earliest Malay kingdom which fused elements of Hinduism and Buddhism with its own cultural identity (Adi 1995: 102).

The site museum was inaugurated by the Sultan of Kedah in 1980. The booklet of the official opening, *Pembukaan Resmi Muzium Arkeologi Lembah Bujang* (Jabatan Muzium 1980), reveals some of the opposition the Museums Department faced by unnamed quarters who objected to the 'glorification' of other religions when Islam was the official religion. The initiative of the Museums Department is explained as one guided by history and the preservation of "*warisan kebudayaan kita*" ('our cultural heritage') (ibid). The Bujang Valley site, and its surrounding natural environment, was conceived of as a 'National Historical Park' in the 1970s (Al Rashid 1971: 81) and it remained as such in English, but a name change occurred in Bahasa Malaysia. From 'Taman Sejarah Nasional' it was 'upgraded' to 'Taman Sejarah Negara' in the 1990s (Jabatan Muzium c. 1990: 17). Although this does not alter the English translation, the usage of *nasional* and *negara* approach 'nation' through asymmetrical paths. *Nasional* is a relatively recent loan word. *Negara*, a Sanskrit loan word, has a long indigenous history in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. As indicated in Chapter 6, *negara* is a powerful lexical artefact, based on the conviction that words possess efficacy. The question of national status in the vocabulary of *negara* or *nasional* is resumed elsewhere in this chapter.

• **Kota Ngah Ibrahim (Fort of Ngah Ibrahim )**

The restoration of the Ngah Ibrahim Fort in Perak was one of the projects of the Monuments Division of the DMA under the Sixth Malaysia Plan, 1991-1995 (Jabatan Muzium c. 1990: 10). The site is known variously as Fort of Ngah Ibrahim (Kota Ngah Ibrahim), the Historical Complex of Ngah Ibrahim Fort (Kompleks Sejarah Kota Ngah Ibrahim) or the Perak Historical Complex (Kompleks Sejarah Perak). It is undeniable that the fort's history is complex but as a 'historical complex' the fort, as the 'real thing', is secondary to the re-created 'real thing'—the museum display. In 1923 C.W. Harrison (1985a: 53) recounted some of the fort's colourful history in a colonial hue:

In 1879, the Matang Fort was described ... as having been built by the second Mentri [Minister] Ngah Ibrahim, which would make the date of its building not earlier than 1857. It has, therefore, no archaeological interest. Its human interest, however, lies in the fact that in 1876 it was used as a barrack for British troops engaged in the Perak expedition and as a court for the trial of the Maharaja Lela and others ... [for] the murder of Mr. J.W.W. Birch, the first Resident of Perak. The Maharaja Lela was hanged in the precincts. Previous to this the place was rendered uninhabitable during the Chinese disturbances in Larut ...

The 'disturbances', known as the 'Larut Wars', between rival clans of tin-miners were not confined to the Chinese, for Malay Chiefs also allied themselves, and fought, with the different clans (Badan Warisan Malaysia 1987: 13). The Minister Ngah Ibrahim and his fort became focal points of these clashes (ibid: 13-14). The disruption of the tin economy and disputes among the Malay ruling class provided the opportunity for the British to intervene in Perak and conclude the Pangkor Treaty of 1874 (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 154-5). This brief narrative is necessary to understand that the museum, housed in the fort, expunges the fort's history.

The 'crisis of identity' in the museum's name is reproduced in its scope. The prominent display, 'Preservation and conservation of monuments', is an account of such efforts in Perak—but not of the preservation and conservation of the fort. The two artefacts on display are both unrelated to the fort. Weapons confiscated during the Larut Wars are housed in the

Perak Museum (Mohd Kassim 1995b: 90), not the Ngah Ibrahim fort-museum. The upstairs area is a chronological sequence of displays on Perak history, beginning with 'Palaeolithic period' and concluding with 'Nationalism and independence'.

At the time of my visit (Dec. 1996) the grounds were laid out with pegs in preparation for archaeological excavation. Though 'archaeological interest' may have been discovered, 'human interest' and the historical narrative had been interred. As an historical landmark that spans pre-British intervention to Japanese occupation (it was used as Japanese headquarters, Harsin Ahyari, pers. comm., 7 Dec. 1996), it is understandable that the fort-museum is classified as of 'national importance'. More difficult to comprehend is how 'history' became so 'complex'. It will be argued in a subsequent section, that any attempt to explicate the curatorial supervision of space, time, concepts, objects and words must be seen within the larger aggregate of 'museum culture'.

• **Muzium Sejarah Nasional (National Museum of History or National History Museum)**

The final and most recent national-type museum under the management of the DMA is Muzium Sejarah Nasional which was opened to the public in 1996. The museum displays its name in both Bahasa Malaysia and English at the entrance. On a visit to the museum in November 1996, the English equivalent of Muzium Sejarah Nasional was given as 'National Museum of History' (Plate 9, p. 179). On a visit in November 1997, the English name had become 'National History Museum' though 'Muzium Sejarah Nasional' remained unchanged (Plate 10, p. 179). Although both English translations are linguistically possible, a 'national-type' museum of history and a *national history* museum register a semantic incongruity. It has already been indicated elsewhere in this study that the Sabah Museum and Sarawak Museum portray their 'history' in a different configuration to the 'national history' of Muzium Sejarah Nasional. It was also mentioned earlier in this chapter that not every historical 'turning point' is chronicled.

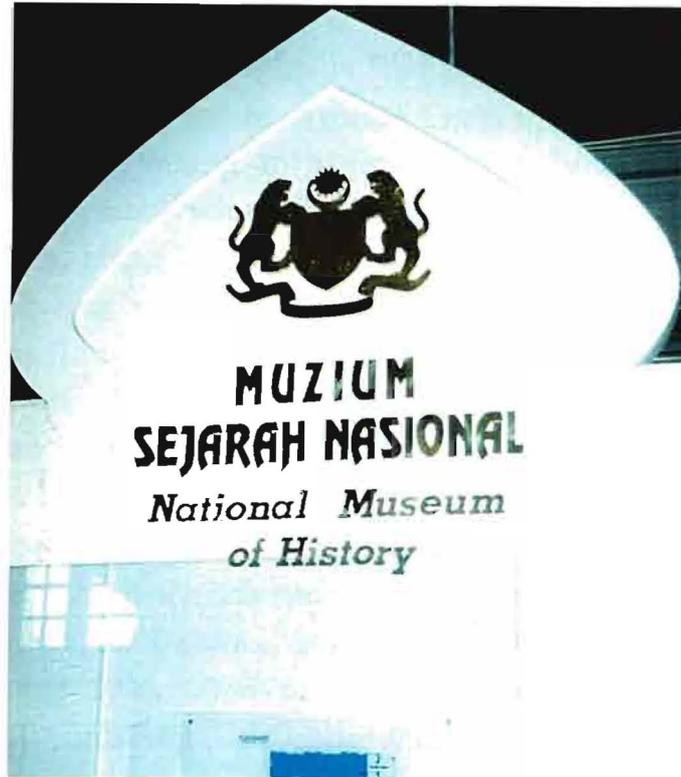


Plate 9. Entry sign at Muzium Sejarah Nasional, Nov. 1996  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 10. Entry sign at Muzium Sejarah Nasional, Nov. 1997  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1997

The larger than life relief sculpture of the fifteenth-century Malay warrior, Hang Tuah, that Sheppard originally displayed in Muzium Negara as a reminder to preserve 'the true Malay' (see Chap. 6), has been shifted (along with other objects pertaining to history) to Muzium Sejarah Nasional. Hang Tuah is a symbol whose meanings also shift. In the Literature Museum, Malacca, Hang Tuah is depicted as a multi-cultural hero: "As a child Hang Tuah was made to learn the Quran, Grammar, and languages such as Chinese, Tamil, Siamese, etc. ..." (excerpt from text, 'The saga of Hang Tuah'). Mohd Taib (1988: 284) stresses that Hang Tuah is no longer the unquestioned ideal warrior and Hang Jebat, the rebel warrior killed by Hang Tuah, has been elevated in status to challenge the feudalistic social values of the past. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad refers to Hang Tuah to symbolise both the inevitability and desirability of change: "The Malay race of today, for instance, is not the Malay race of the Hang Tuah era ... " (Mahathir 1996: 14). Whether the relief of Hang Tuah in the 'national history' museum was understood as a novel interpretation of Hang Tuah as a 'museum-piece'—a part of an historical era detached from the present—remained conjectural until the addition of a caption in 1997. It remains faithful to Sheppard's imagining of the 'true Malay'.

Chronology is the interpretative key to the museum and the visitor pathway is structured to 'progress' from 'Palaeolithic culture' to 'Malaysia', an odyssey spanning three floors. The final destination of history is the display on Malaysia's future, 'Vision 2020' (*Wawasan 2020*). Vision 2020 is Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's proposal to transform Malaysia into a fully developed (that is, industrialised) nation by the year 2020. The proposal was first announced in 1991 and in conjunction with National Day celebrations of the same year, an exhibition on Vision 2020 was held at Muzium Negara. The exhibition booklet (Muzium Negara 1991), *Wawasan 2020: melangkah ke hadapan* ('Vision 2020: The Way Forward'), lists the nine "challenges" of Vision 2020. The first is to establish "a united Malaysian nation" which is "made up of one 'Bangsa Malaysia'" (Muzium Negara 1991). 'Bangsa Malaysia' has been rendered as both 'Malaysian nation' (e.g. Lee Lam Thye 1997: 13; Zurinah 1994: 2-3) and 'Malaysian race' (e.g. Nair 1997: 47; Ridge 1996: 67) for *bangsa* denotes both 'race' and 'nation'. As a political concept, 'Bangsa Malaysia' has a multiplicity of meanings, one of the most salient being identity: ethnic,

Malaysian and national identity in a context where globalisation may also imply the assumption of Western identity (for a discussion of the latter view, see Raja Abdul Razak 1997: 8; Zakiah 1990: 3). The other eight 'challenges' or objectives outlined in Vision 2020 are equally challenging in their interpretation. Vision 2020, as a museum display in Muzium Sejarah Nasional (Plate 11, p. 182), is a series of blow-up photographs of the nine 'challenges' in the 1991 exhibition booklet *Wawasan 2020: melangkah ke hadapan* (Vision 2020 as a museum artefact is revisited in Chap. 10).

In Muzium Sejarah Nasional, the past, present and future merge as one national, natural evolutionary vision. To museumify the future for the present is simply a temporal adjustment of museumifying the past for the present. Epistemologically, the museum reveals much about Western linear narratives of time and the gospel of 'progress'. Though Muzium Negara's future form indicates that the colonial compartmentalisation of *seni* is being dismantled, Muzium Sejarah Nasional's grasp of 'history' and 'time' reveals the tenacity of the colonial museum heritage, and its new relevance for the future. This 'adaptive re-use' of the museum idea appears in conformity with the adaptive re-use of a British colonial building to house the museum (Plate 12, p. 182). Another colonial affinity is the re-emergence of the 'vanishing cultures' theme. The DMA stresses the urgency of preserving historical and cultural heritage which is being increasingly threatened by economic development programmes (Jabatan Muzium c. 1990: 3, 8, 26, 42-3). How Vision 2020 translates as a heritage 'challenge' is not part of Muzium Sejarah Nasional's Vision 2020 display.



Plate 11. *Wawasan 2020/Vision 2020* display in Muzium Sejarah Nasional  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 12. British colonial architecture of Muzium Sejarah Nasional  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

All the museums managed by the DMA are of the 'national-type' but not all incorporate the 'nation' in their appellation. Whether a museum is classified as *nasional* or of the *negara*, suggests a 'status' hierarchy: Muzium Negara; Taman Sejarah Negara (the Bujang Valley archaeological site); Muzium Sejarah Nasional; Historical Complex of Ngah Ibrahim Fort (or Perak Historical Complex); and the Perak Museum. That Muzium Sejarah is *nasional*, and not of the *negara*, is not a lexical oversight. Another significant omission is that although Muzium Sejarah Nasional was opened to the public in February 1996, to date it has not been inaugurated by a dignitary, as is the customary procedure. The managers of official culture have withheld official approval (an insight owed to Othman Mohd Yatim, pers. comm., 6 Nov. 1997). The National Museum of History or National History Museum presents a semantic and exhibitionary ambiguity generated by the confluence of political culture and 'museum culture' (the latter term will be examined shortly).

The National History Museum/National Museum of History, the National Historical Park (Bujang Valley archaeological site) and Perak Historical Complex (Kota Ngah Ibrahim) all convey 'history' in their names, but does this signify that the museum is a storehouse of 'memory'? Museological literature frequently refers to the notion of the museum as 'memory' (Newton (1994: 288), as 'collective memory' (Ambrose & Paine 1993: 3) or as the 'cultural memory' of a nation (Mazel & Ritchie 1994: 234). Clifford (1988: 248) justifiably asks "Whose memory?" but questions accrue. Which 'memories' should be kept alive? What is meant by 'memory' in museology? A haphazard collection of tangible things transformed into an intangible, homogenous 'collective memory' hardly constitutes a valid concept of memory.

As Anderson (1991: 204) surmises of a nation's 'biography' of recall and amnesia, Douglas (1986: chap. 6) hypothesises that institutions perpetuate structural processes of remembering and forgetting. In Muzium Sejarah Nasional not all of the nation's 'biography' is recounted (May 1969 is one of the more obvious absent memories). Social scientists (e.g. Ingold 1996c: 202; K uchler 1996: 226-7) stress that analysis of the relationship between history and memory is a daunting task. In contrast, museologists assume 'history' is commensurate with 'memory'. If the National Historical Park represents the nation's pre-Islamic past, it was not a 'memory' all wished to remember. The Perak Historical Complex (Ngah Ibrahim Fort)

materialises memory loss. Muzium Sejarah Nasional constructs diverse, and conflicting, national narratives of history. Its bifocal view of memory and vision is an imaginative insight into the imagining of the nation.

• **Arkib Negara (National Archives)**

Arkib Negara Malaysia is in the industry of memory. According to Zakiah Hanum, the former Director-General of the National Archives, "We have a responsibility to ensure that the collective memory of our people does not fade away and diminish" (Zakiah 1990: 2). Moreover, the role of memorial museums in the 'collective memory' is to "keep alive the names of our national heroes" (ibid: 2). Although the nation had an embryonic National Archives since independence (Sheppard was the first Keeper of Public Records, 1957-62), it only gained memorial museums in the 1980s and they materialised in rapid succession. The National Archives manages the following:

- (1) Tun Abdul Razak Memorial (Malaysia's second Prime Minister, d. 1976), Kuala Lumpur, opened in 1982;
- (2) Proclamation of Independence Memorial, Malacca State, opened in 1985;
- (3) P. Ramlee Memorial (d. 1973), Kuala Lumpur, opened in 1986;
- (4) P. Ramlee's House, Penang State, opened in 1991;
- (5) House of Birth of Mahathir Mohamad (Malaysia's current Prime Minister), Kedah State, opened in 1992;
- (6) Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Memorial (Malaysia's first Prime Minister, d. 1990), Kuala Lumpur, opened in 1994;
- (7) Malaysian Public Services Memorial, Kuala Lumpur, opened in 1995.

According to the director of the Proclamation of Independence Memorial, memorials are divided into two categories, those "based on events and those based on individuals" (Mohd Zawawi Abdullah, pers. comm., 7 Nov. 1996). In the above list, this categorisation scheme is not an exact duplicate, nor is a sense of 'completion' required for memorialisation. The two memorial museums on former prime ministers were the initiative of, and inaugurated by, the current Prime Minister (Arkib Negara Malaysia c. 1997; undated brochure, 'Memorial Tun Abdul Razak'). It would be deceptively easy to conclude that memorials under the National Archives represent the nation's officially sanctioned memories. However, the questions of how, why, when, and where 'memory' is re-collected point to additional areas of inquiry.

No perceptible pattern informs the Bahasa Malaysia translation of 'memorial'. The Proclamation of Independence Memorial and the Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Memorial are both rendered by *memorial*. The Tun Abdul Razak Memorial is either a *memorial* or a *pustaka peringatan* (Arkib Negara Malaysia 1994: 45). The P. Ramlee Memorial is a *pustaka peringatan*, as is the Public Services Memorial. *Pustaka* signifies 'book' and *peringatan*, 'memory'; combined they produce 'memorial'. Significantly, the Sanskrit term *pustaka* also means a 'book of divination'. The question "How do we shape the future?", posed by the former Director-General of the National Archives (Zakiah 1990: 1), intimates that memorial museums are both about 'telling' and 'foretelling'.

Hence, a divinatory process may be applied to an understanding of the memorial enterprise. It emerged in the 1980s, a very recent development in comparison to museums and the art gallery. Consequently, the memorial may be considered an entirely Malaysian initiative, again, in contrast to the latter institutions. However, the model for Malaysia's memorials is derived from the United States of America, where staff were also sent for training (Mohd Zawawi Abdullah, pers. comm., 7 Nov. 1996). The question is not only who or what is to be remembered, but how?

In *How Societies Remember* (1989), Connerton argues that social memory is conveyed and maintained through ritual performances. One of the nation's major ritual performances is the annual celebration of National Day when nationhood is remembered, displayed, celebrated and projected into the future in a choreography of time. In the specific context of memorial museums, they conduct annual commemorative religious ceremonies in memory of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak and P. Ramlee (Arkib Negara Malaysia c. 1997). Nonetheless, the memorials' commemorative medium is primarily their permanent displays. Exhibits consist of archival and library materials and museum objects (Arkib Negara Malaysia 1994: 37). The supremacy of the written word combined with a museum format creates a fixity of meaning unimaginable in the almost obsolete medium of oral traditions where memories of significant persons and events were transmitted, transmuted and recontextualised for the present. Notably, the word for a traditional story-teller, *penglipur lara*, means 'a soother of cares'. It will be argued that memorials, as modern story-tellers, also perform a psychological role for the nation's psyche.

To address the question of why 'memories' became institutionalised in the 1980s requires consideration of the socio-economic and political background. In 1981 Dr Mahathir Mohamad became Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister. Shortly afterwards, he announced the 'Look East' policy, basically an economic policy using Japan and South Korea as a model for work ethics (Camroux 1994: 30). In the words of the Prime Minister, "We have for a long time been looking West ... But the West is no longer a suitable model" (quoted in Pathmanathan & Lazarus 1984: 110) This new orientation, according to Camroux (1994: 30), required "nothing less than a *revolution mentale*".

It should be restated that 'memory management' models were still looking West, or more specifically to America. As Sheppard (1986: 202) also wryly observes, although Malaysia was looking East, it overlooked the Japanese model of 'living treasures'. Memorials materialised as a complex interlocked process of looking East, looking West, and looking inwards. Camroux (1994: 34) maintains that only since the 1980s has Malaysia begun to sever psychologically the relationship to its former colonial power, for the relationship was not forced into re-evaluation by *Merdeka*—Independence was won without a bloody confrontation. Camroux (ibid: 34-35) makes a political analysis that is equally pertinent to memorials: "In the context of economic success and national security the cathartic declaration of psychological and ideological independence can now occur."

Memorial museums may be understood as artefacts of this process. Memorials have very specific memories within nation-specific parameters. In contrast, Muzium Sejarah Nasional allocates considerable display space to the sequence of 'Foreign powers'. Memorials by narrowing the focus to 'individuals' or 'events' can create a frame that disentangles 'memories' from, and projects them beyond, the intricate web of pre-nationhood. This is also reinforced by the 'authenticity' of the memorial-artefact. The buildings are associated with the particular events or persons being commemorated. For instance, the Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Memorial (Fig. 10, p. 188) comprises the Residency (occupied whilst he was Chief Minister and then Prime Minister) flanked on either side by two additional buildings constructed on the site. An undated brochure, 'Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Memorial', describes the memorial as "a concrete and lasting symbol of the nation's gratitude to a great leader and statesman who freed the nation from the yoke of colonial domination".

The brochure adds that "this labour of love [is] the biggest Memorial in the world". Space, as well as time, has its symbolic psychology. Being 'looked at' was another strand in the scheme of looking East, West, and inwards.

Another factor to consider in recollection development and the acceleration of memories is the American model. Bodnar (1991) outlines three stages in the development of public memory in America. In the early nineteenth century the new nation had a tenuous hold on public memory but in the first half of the twentieth century "[c]ultural nationalism and a state-dominated memory system" became powerful forces, only to be increasingly challenged by "vernacular memory" in recent decades (ibid: 251). It is not possible to plot the future trajectory of Malaysia's memory system but it is possible to correlate Malaysia's memorial model with America's first half of the twentieth century. Mead (1983: 101) maintains that acceptance of the Western museum model results in loss of control over indigenous cultures and philosophy. Here, it is essential to remember that the Western conceptual system was already entrenched in museums during the political transition period (see Chap. 6). 'Foreign' and 'indigenous' elements may be intertwined and recombined to express new philosophies of cultural or memory management. This ability to assimilate foreign cultures has already been noted in the dynamic process of 'trading cultures' (see Chap. 5) and the complex issue of foreign models will be discussed fully in Part IV.

A final point may help clarify the temporal continuum of memory in the national narrative by comparing the inventory of museums and memorials under the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism. Seven memorials emerged between 1982 to 1994. Institutions also need to have 'memories' planned ahead and the National Archives has proposed seven memorials which will focus on political leaders, women, national heroes, and historical events (Arkib Negara Malaysia c. 1997). The Department of Museums and Antiquities plans for two new museums and currently has five museums, spanning colonial to post-colonial time (1883 to 1996). Although in the overall tally, museums far exceed memorials, here, the comparison is of the Ministry's national-type institutions. In this context of 'foretelling', memorialising the nation is outpacing museumising the nation. The two types of institutions may use similar display techniques, and both may assert a claim on 'memory'. Yet, museums have others' memories embedded in them: both in content and origins.



Fig. 10. Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Memorial, Kuala Lumpur  
Reproduced from undated brochure, 'Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Memorial', National Archives of Malaysia.



Plate 13. Islamic Museum, partial view of exterior  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

- **Muzium Islam (Islamic Museum)**

The Islamic Museum is administered by the Islamic Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department. The museum is adjacent to the Pusat Islam (Islamic Centre) and situated near the National Mosque. It was first established as the Islamic Exhibition Centre and was officially opened by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in 1985. Hence, it may be seen as an artefact of the Islamisation policy which was introduced in 1983 (for its domestic and international implications, see Camroux 1994: 20-1; Nair 1997: 92).

The Islamic Museum (Plate 13, p. 188) has been described as a "combination of modern cubist architecture and traditional Islamic design" (MTPB 1994: 17). It will emerge that the 'traditional' and the 'modern' are two themes that blend as well as collide in the museum. The Islamic Museum is international in scope: the vast majority of artefacts derive from beyond the nation's boundaries. Malaysia's first museum on Islam has little Malaysian content.

The Islamic Museum presents additional incongruities. It has an impressive international collection of weaponry near the entry area. As an 'introduction' to Islam, the location of this section serves to perpetuate Western stereotypes of Islam. Some of the weaponry recalls civilisational conflicts whilst, elsewhere, other artefacts highlight civilisational exchanges, particularly the Chinese Islamic ritual objects and the Chinese architectural influence on Malacca's mosques. The impact of 'trading cultures' is pronounced in some of the Southeast Asian artefacts which reveal the early influence of Hindu-Buddhist traditions in the region (for a discussion of Islamic art in early Southeast Asia, see Zakaria 1994).

The museum conceptualises space as an art gallery and the artefacts as art objects. The labelling is also in the art gallery tradition of brevity. Islamic concepts of art may be expressed with many shades of meaning. The representation of living beings, *taswir* in Arabic, is an ongoing debate in Islamic art (Ahmad 1981: chap. 4; Brend 1991: 19). The Qur'an and the *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet collected after his death) do not provide absolute answers as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of *taswir* (Ahmad 1981: chap. 4). On a continuum from the modernists to the traditionalists,

*taswir* ranges from the permissible to the forbidden (Ahmad 1981: 63). The issue of representation is not limited to paintings and sculpture, but extends to representational forms on textiles, metalwork, pottery and other cultural products (Brend 1991: 19). In some of the state museums in Malaysia, *taswir* is extended to museum mannequins and hence, in accordance with traditionalist interpretation, the facial features are absent. The Islamic Museum portrays the full spectrum of *taswir* interpretation in the collection of artefacts, as well as a three-dimensional display of a life-like and life-size horse and rider, featuring 17th century armour. Mashitah Abdullah of the Pusat Islam (Islamic Centre) considered this "realistic representation" as inappropriate in an Islamic museum (pers. comm. 6 May 1996).

One of the most abstruse questions the Islamic Museum generates is 'what does it mean to museumify Islam?' Here, it is pertinent to recall the museological tenet of the 'collecting instinct' (see Chap. 2). Lewis (1992: 5), among others, locates the museum's origins in the "inherent human propensity" for "inquisitiveness and acquisitiveness". In his world survey of museums, he applies his Eurocentric 'acquisitiveness theory' to all societies, and "Early Islamic collecting" is made to fit this model (ibid: 6). Nonetheless, he concedes that Islamic 'collecting' was unrelated to the museum idea and it arose from "religious motives ... associated with the tombs of Muslim martyrs" (ibid: 6). When is the 'collecting instinct' acquired? Mumford (1966: 434) describes the historical development of the European museum as "a product of the economy of limitless acquisition". Similarly, Cameron (1992b: 9) contends that 'acquisitiveness' was acquired through specific historical circumstances, thereby creating a European museum model, depicted in Veblen's dictum of 'conspicuous consumption'. Cameron's (1993: 166) formula, "the museum as an 'acquisitor'", shifts the focus from instinctive to culturally determined acquisitiveness but the museum's ethos remains unchanged. The concept of acquisitiveness is also clarified in the Qur'an (Surah 102: 1-2):

The mutual rivalry  
For piling up (the good things  
Of this world) diverts you  
(From the more serious things),

Until ye visit the graves.

'To pile up the good things of this world' is an interpretation that comes close to Cameron's analysis of the secular museum. In the context of Islam in Malaysia, "an indigenised modern form of Islam, appropriate for a dynamic industrialising nation" is being advanced for the future (Camroux 1994: 20). Significantly, the Islamic Museum's opening statement is: 'Lessons from the past lead us towards a brighter future'. This leads us to the ambiguity of the 'future': it could signify in this life or the afterlife, for the museum displays grave markers on the second floor. As Nair (1997: 100) explains in her study of Islam in Malaysia, traditional understandings of fate are being increasingly dissuaded by a reorientation towards "'this worldly' activity so that every Muslim's life does not simply serve as preparation for *dunia akhirat* (the after life) but as enterprising activity that is religiously sanctioned". Hence, the term the 'new Malay' (*Melayu baru*) is intended to embody this religio-economic ideal (ibid: 100).

It lies beyond the scope of this chapter to plot the course of the 'real Malay', the 'true Malay' (see Chap. 6) and the 'new Malay' on the historical horizon of the person as 'artefact'. It suffices to remark here that the person, the object and the museum overlap in the semantic space of artefactuality (a topic explored in Chap. 10). Like the concept of *taswir*, the 'lessons' in the Islamic Museum are open to a range of interpretations, and constitute an ongoing debate on Islamic identity, models of development and the direction of spiritual values in Malaysia in general (for the latter perspective, see Tan Wee Kiat 1995: 34). Islamic nuances also inform the next two national-type institutions to be discussed.

• **Planetarium Negara (National Planetarium) and Pusat Sains Negara (National Science Centre)**

Planetarium Negara and Pusat Sains Negara, both under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, represent recent additions to the fold of national-type institutions. Planetarium Negara was officially opened by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in 1994. The Planetarium was established with the mission of creating "a scientifically progressive society and sustain[ing] competitive edge, research and development on contemporary space science and technology in the coming era" (Bhattacharyya 1997: 1). One of the exhibits on display is a model of the launch vehicle which sent the first Malaysian satellite into orbit in 1996.

Planetarium Negara's science of space (terrestrial) is an almost post-modernist landscape. Outdoors is the 'Ancient Observatory Park' with miniaturised replicas of ancient observatories in China and India, as well as Stonehenge, all of which possibly represent the civilisational traditions which have converged in Malaysia. The architectural design of the Planetarium also communicates layered meanings. The building is a blue dome structure resembling a mosque, with an observatory in the form of a minaret (Bhattacharyya 1997: 1; Lam Seng Fatt 1996a: 21). The architecture may have been designed to recall the heritage of Islamic achievement in astronomy (on early observatories, see Nasr 1976: 112-14; 1984: 80-88). The Planetarium's architecture is a recognisably religious artefact, not merely the addition of Islamic architectural adornment as in the case of the Islamic Museum. Hence, another layer of meaning is the elevation of 'science' to the status of 'religion'. In the sacred space of the mosque the minaret issues the call to prayer. In science space, the minaret issues another summons, repackaged in the familiar and powerful symbolism of Islam. The third level of meaning is the ideological chasm between religion and secular science: Muslims are perceived as being unreceptive to the call of science and technology and the new 'faith' that it heralds (see, for example, Othman Alhabshi 1996: 13). The articulation of the relationship between the two also informs the Pusat Sains Negara (National Science Centre).

Pusat Sains Negara was officially opened by the Prime Minister in November 1996. The Prime Minister stated in his speech: "[O]ur country will not be developed and our dignity as well as religion will not be redeemed as long as we cannot acquire knowledge in sciences and current technology efficiency" (Mahathir quoted in Mergawati & Lim 1996: 1). Both the Planetarium Negara and the Pusat Sains Negara are artefacts of Vision 2020 (unveiled in 1991). The sixth objective of Vision 2020, as described by Mahathir Mohamad, is "the challenge of establishing a scientific and progressive society, ... one that is not only a consumer of technology but also a contributor to the scientific and technological *civilisation* of the future" (Mahathir 1997: 14, emphasis added). In Bahasa Malaysia translations of the sixth objective, 'civilisation' is rendered by *tamadun* (e.g. Muzium Negara 1991). Notably, *tamadun* came into increasing usage by Muslims in 'British Malaya' to express modern Islamic civilisation in contrast to Western civilisation (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 336). Again, as noted in the architecture of Planetarium Negara, Islam is being

recontextualised into a new 'civilisational' format for the future. The director of Pusat Sains Negara also concentrates attention on the 'future' (Sharifah Barlian 1996: 2-4) and labels the science centre a dynamic, "third generation museum" (ibid: 1). Pusat Sains Negara and Planetarium Negara may be classified as 'third generation museums' by their display techniques but they also belong to the 'first generation' because their ideological message echoes that of the early colonial museums as 'outward signs of an advanced civilisation'.

### **Civilisational Calculus and Museum Culture**

Museological writings present the relationship between museums and civilisation as self-evident. The civilisational 'record' begins with the assumption that museums are almost "as old as civilisation itself" (Vergo 1989: 1), a claim made in *The New Museology*. Once the museum is firmly embedded in the ideology of civilisation, it requires little imagination to translate one into an expression of the other. The equation between museums and a nation's level of civilisation was clearly spelt out by G. Brown Goode in the nineteenth century (see Chap. 5). Ambrose and Paine (1993: 2) in *Museum Basics* restate the same view in contemporary terms: "The status and standing of many countries today is in large part measured by the attention they pay to cultural facilities." This foundation, when built upon, means the more museums, the greater the affirmation of one's civilisational credentials. The next procedure is to measure a nation's civilisational 'level' by the number of museums it possesses, as exemplified by Hudson and Nicholls in *The Directory of Museums and Living Displays*:

... developing countries will make great sacrifices in order to have museums, which are needed both to reinforce and confirm a sense of national identity and to give status within the world community. To have no museums, in today's circumstances, is to admit that one is *below the minimum level of civilization required of a modern state* (1985: x, emphasis added).

Here, the naive assumption that only 'developing countries' are concerned with 'national identity' will be deferred to Chapter 11 in order to explore the second formulation—the civilisational hierarchy and the notion it can be measured using basic museum mathematics. Prösler (1996: 23) describes this type of approach as "unreflective Eurocentrism".

The issue of whose 'level' of civilisation is the international 'standard' is, as in the colonial era, self-referenced. Lewis (1992: 18) draws on an ICOM report of 1982 to underline that two-thirds of the world's museums are located in industrialised nations and that "this gap appears to be widening with the major growth in museums occurring in the industrialized countries". Again, the colonial *mentalité* emerges in the depiction of the civilisational 'haves' and 'have-nots' (see Chap. 5). Lewis' (1992: 18) display of comparative statistics—one museum to every 43,000 Europeans and one museum to every 1.3 million Africans—is intended to illustrate the magnitude of this civilisational 'gap'. That Africans may elect to engage their civilisation in other ways rather than museumify it, and then quantify their museums to measure their 'level' of civilisation against a Euro-centred yardstick, is not considered. Is it coincidental that the avid quantifiers of 'civilisation' originate in the industrialised nations that have the greatest quantity of museums?

In Malaysia the topic of civilisation, particularly since the mid-1990s, has become increasingly significant on the intellectual agenda, with a series of international seminars on civilisational and inter-cultural dialogues hosted by Malaysia (see Bong 1997: 8; Choong 1996: 1; Choong & Jasbir 1996: 15; Farish 1996a: 13). The first was in 1995 with the international seminar on Islam and Confucianism: A Civilisational Dialogue (*New Straits Times* 15 Mar. 1995). Malaysia's initiative is not only understandable in the context of a growing sense of regional identity in Southeast Asia, but more specifically in domestic terms, for Malaysia's national boundaries contain a 'multi-civilisational' population. It must also be seen against the backdrop of Samuel Huntington's (1993) thesis in 'The clash of civilizations?'. Huntington defines "the nature of civilizations" (ibid: 23) in terms of "cultural identity" (ibid: 24) but his definitional context discloses that it is in 'the nature of civilisations' to clash, an apocalyptic view expanded in his book of 1996. Significantly, the study of Asian civilisations recently became a compulsory subject in Malaysian universities (Cohen 1997: 45). The new civilisational consciousness is also marked in Singapore which opened its Asian Civilisations Museum in 1997 (discussed further in Chap. 10). In Malaysia the challenge will be to resist civilisational siren song of museum mathematics and to consider the scope of inter-civilisational and cultural dialogues in the existing museum format.

Nevertheless, the task will be onerous, not on account of multiple civilisational-cultural identities nor a singular national identity but, because of the culture of the museum institution itself.

Civilisational calculus is merely one facet of 'museum culture'. The meaning of 'culture' has provisioned social scientists with a veritable 'culture industry'. Although the word 'museum' does not approximate the definitional industry of 'culture', a growing awareness of its contested meanings has emerged (see, for example, Cameron 1995; Sola 1991; Weil 1989). However, when 'museum' and 'culture' are partnered in museology to compose 'museum culture', the inherent complexities of both components are not only erased but a new conceptual synthesis is proclaimed, though rarely analysed. Leicester University Press has published a series of works in its 'Contemporary Issues in Museum Culture' although the issue of 'museum culture' as a museological construct is not addressed in the series. The essays in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacle*, (Sherman & Rogoff 1994b), revolve around the key words of the subtitle but the title, itself, is a silent presence. Sherman and Rogoff (1994a: xii) only mention the term once and its meaning remains adrift: "The processes of reception of the display strategies that museums present also participate in the constitution of a museum culture." Beard and Henderson (1994: 7) describe the essence of 'museum culture' as "appropriation" (the 'ownership' of civilisation could also be included here). Others identify 'museum culture' as the institutional norms and practices of a museum profession (e.g. Kavanagh 1991b: 10; O'Neill 1991: 29; Pearce 1992: 122). If culture is "shared meaning" (Peacock 1986: 99), 'museum culture' does not exist.

The word *muzium* in Bahasa Malaysia carries its colonial ancestry. The word for 'culture', *budaya*, as shown previously, is culture-specific. In Malaysia, *muzium* (museum) and *budaya* (culture) have not been coupled as in current museological practice. However, *Muzium Budaya*, that is, the Cultural Museum in Malacca, gives some indication of what museums do with culture. Further elaboration requires scrutiny of three ill-defined, museologically muddled terms: 'musealisation', 'museumification' and 'museumisation'. These have gained increasing currency in museological texts but no attempt has been made to clarify or compare their meanings.

van Mensch (1988: 8) refers to the recent trend in which artefacts or art are no longer the exclusive domain of the museum as the "musealization of cultural and commercial institutions". In contrast, Schouten (1992: 285) uses the term 'musealisation' to describe the reconstruction of reality, which is then deemed better than reality itself. Macdonald (1996: 2) identifies "a diffusion of the museum beyond its walls, a 'museumification' of ever more aspects of culture". Ames (1986: 73) questions the 'museumification' of living traditions in museums. Halpin (1997: 53) considers 'museumisation' a positive force in engaging communities. Teather (1991: 412-3) refers to the activity of making museums as 'museumising'. Vaessen (1989: 19-20) draws on the work of Herman Lübe to posit that 'museumisation' is both a growing commitment to cultural heritage, as well as compensatory reaction to the project of modernisation. Kempers (1989: 7) views 'museumisation' as a process by which objects, displayed in the museum, derive their function and meaning from the museum context. Though a tenuous thread of the shaping of 'reality' is identifiable, no consensus exists on the meaning of each term nor a recognition of their differences.

The fractured concept of 'museum culture' will be reinterpreted through the term 'museal', 'museum-like' (for an alternative usage of the term, see Adorno 1981: 175). 'Museum culture' is of and beyond the museum, which may be abbreviated to the term 'metamuseal' (for a 'metamuseal' of a different order, see Bal 1992: 583). It operates on an object level, with museum objects as 'musealia' (van Mensch 1990: 145) but anything may be imbued with 'museality' (van Mensch 1988: 7), thus the conceptual scope extends to the larger realm of material culture, as well as abstractions such as 'culture', 'society', 'civilisation', and 'nation'. To realise reality, the museum can only 'musealise' (unfortunately, this verb does not exist in museology) or museumise or museumify it. As a meaning system, built on the foundation of the museum, it is legitimate to presume a 'museum culture'. However, to avoid the interpretive impasse of this term, the conceptual vocabulary of 'museal culture' and its lexical inventory will be used instead. The expanded conceptual elasticity of 'museal culture' also surmounts the definitional constraint of 'museum culture' premised on a museum 'profession' for in Malaysia, according to Wan Zakaria (1991: 4, 7), a museum profession is barely discernible.

It is opportune to revisit the question of how history became so complex at the historical complex of Fort Ngah Ibrahim for it represents one of the most conspicuous examples on the spectrum of the musealisation process. To comprehend this museum 'reality', it is germane to consider Canizzo's (1994) line of inquiry in her study of the National Barbados Museum. Canizzo (ibid: 31) asks whether the museum will be able "to portray history as a process" and to "illustrate" the inter-cultural, racial and class relationships of the society. An answer is inconceivable because the questions asked are incongruous to the museum medium. A museum can neither 'portray' nor 'illustrate' history or society; it can only articulate them through its own 'voice'. This view is reinforced by Cameron (1993: 167) who intones "the museum can speak only in the language of its own reality". 'Museal culture' not only impinges on the question of what Weil (1988a: 35) terms 'museumhood', but also on the interpretation of nationhood.

### **The Nation as Double-Entendre Artefact**

In his essay, 'The nation as artefact', Zialcita (1990) endorses Anderson's theory of the nation as an 'imagined community'. Zialcita (ibid: 249) indicates: "Because the nation is ultimately an artefact ... [t]here are no a priori genetic or metaphysical bonds that can be appealed to. Commitment to this imagined community has to be renewed constantly." The nation-state may be conceptualised as a "symbolic artifact" (Dittmer & Kim 1993: 21) as a "human artifact" (Errington 1989: 52), or as "cultural product" and "artifact of modern times" (Foster 1991: 235, 252). The political concept of the nation as artefact has not been matched by a museological explication of the nation as artefact. The reasons for this epistemological void in artefact analysis have been discussed in Chapter 3. The double entendre of the nation as 'artefact' refers to its combined political-museological signification.

Anthropologists, with a prolonged tradition of the 'object' (the subjects of ethnographic scrutiny), are more receptive to what Foster (1991: 249) terms "objectification of the nation". However, this activity in which "museums play a crucial role in conserving and displaying the nation in objective form" (ibid: 249) does not capture the magnitude of the musealisation process, for to display the nation means not only to imbue it with

'museality' but to interpret it as an 'artefact'. Cameron (1992b: 9) stresses that the museum has an immense power not just to alter but to invert the meaning of artefacts. This argument can also be extrapolated to the nation as artefact. Museum perceptions of reality are, as argued earlier, part of the complex matrix of 'museal culture'. To consider the museum as merely a medium for 'objectifying the nation', is to ignore the powerful medium of musealisation.

Tengku Alaudin (1996: 2), an official of the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism maintains that the concept of a 'collection' is not confined to museum objects but includes historical buildings, sites and landscapes. One could also add that the 'collection' also encompasses the 'nation'. *Museum Land Malaysia* (Mohd Zulkifli 1990), published by the Museums Department Malaysia to coincide with 'Visit Malaysia Year 1990', is more than a tourism motto; it is a museal materialisation of the nation. The Museums Department (Jabatan Muzium n.d.: 6) had already proposed in the early 1980s an increasing musealisation of the landscape by adding to the vicinity of Muzium Negara, a history museum and a planetarium, all of which would form a "*Kompleks Muzium*" ('museum complex').

This proposal has not only been realised but greatly amplified in a pathway of national space. 'Museuming' (a nineteenth-century term for visiting museums) may follow a pathway of: Muzium Negara, Planetarium Negara, Muzium Islam, Balai Seni Lukis Negara (in its present premises) and Muzium Sejarah Nasional, which is just a short distance from Bank Negara Malaysia, with its Money Museum. Each museum becomes a 'gallery' of the 'musealised' nation. Following the same sequence we have 'culture' and 'natural history' (what remains at Muzium Negara), 'science and technology', 'official religion', 'art', 'history' and 'economy'. One may contrast the scale and scope of the contemporary musealisation process with that of the early colonial period when the Malay Peninsula was a 'curious historical museum showing every grade of primitive culture' as materially expressed in the Perak Museum's galleries (see Chap. 5). The post-colonial 'museumising imagination' translates into a metamuseal map of the nation *in situ*. The pathway also includes architectural heritage in the form of British colonial buildings: the Railways Building, Sultan Abdul Samad building and the Selangor Club, with its field named Merdeka Square.

The nation is a perambulatory museum of itself. The musealisation of the nation works on the spatial and temporal dimensions of the nation-artefact. The nation is transformed into a 'musealium' (singular of 'musealia'). Stransky defines a musealium as an "object separated from its actual reality and transferred to a new, museum reality" (quoted in van Mensch 1990: 145). It was indicated in Chapter 6 that the characteristic of 'movability' is immaterial to the study of objects. Whether museums hold the nation's cultural property or whether museums hold the nation as cultural property is an irrelevant distinction in the methodology of musealisation. All is grist to the museum-mill. 'Museal culture' as an interpretive perspective is a way of knowing, being, having, and creating. If the distorting lens of the museum may be discerned in the interpretation and representation of ethnographic objects, in concepts of time and of culture (see, for example, Ames 1992; Karp 1991; Lumley 1988; Weil 1995: chap. 1), why should the nation be regarded as immune from musealisation? The nation is transformed into an 'artefact', a 'musealium', simply another museum-generated product. 'Museum Land Malaysia' is the museal style of imagining the nation.

As has been elaborated in preceding sections, the relationship between the museum as artefact and the nation as artefact does not always manifest itself as a parallel series. Nor does the collectivity of national-type museums collectively imagine the nation as an identical artefact, replicated throughout the national 'collection'. The 'labels' that follow for the national 'collection', like all museum labels, are inevitably a reduction of complexities and contradictions. The Balai Seni Lukis Negara, soon to render the nation as a 'work of art', reproduces the nation as 'collage'. Until the early 1990s Muzium Negara was the *negara's* dramatisation for its *warganegara* (citizens) in a 'shadow play' where the roles were being constantly recast. The Perak Museum is the nation's inherited 'memory': the colonial museumising imagination in the present. The National Historical Park, Perak Historical Complex and Muzium Sejarah Nasional are not the 'collective memories' of the nation. The memorial museums of the National Archives constitute the archival record of the nation's catharsis. The Islamic Muzium reviews the national question of this-worldly and other-worldly existence in a world defined by goods. Planetarium Negara and Pusat Sains Negara materialise the nation's 'vision'.

As a national 'collection', the national-type museums may be less arbitrary than a traditional museum collection, but it remains incoherent without an ordering principle, in this case, the 'national' as a classificatory dimension. Clifford (1988: 13) proposes that any collection implies a "metahistory" and his premise may be extended to a national 'collection' but with the proviso that any collection is not a representation of reality; it presents "metaphors for 'reality'" (Pearce 1992: 263). Donato (1979: 224) argues the representational mode of the museum, whether metaphoric or metonymic, is destined to failure for "representation within the concept of the museum is intrinsically impossible". In a fundamental sense, the museum's metaphorical activity is a transformative project of altered 'reality'. Thus, a collection, inclusive of a national 'collection', may be viewed as metahistorical, metaphorical and metamuseal.

An alternative approach to national 'portraiture' is through the medium of money (only a cursory view is possible here). The central bank, Bank Negara Malaysia, issued between 1982 and 1984 new currency designs with a 'Malaysian culture' theme. This is highlighted as a display, 'Cultural artifacts depicted in notes', in Bank Negara's Money Museum. The reverse of the RM50 currency note features the cultural artefact, Muzium Negara (Fig. 11, p. 201). Muzium Negara is part of the nation's 'symbolic capital', but does it signify the museum or other national-type institutions symbolise the nation? Significantly, *Information Malaysia: 1997 Yearbook* (1997: chap. 4) omits the National Museum in its list of fourteen 'National symbols'. Notably, the most recent 'national symbols' are the national car and two new buildings: Menara and Petronas Twin Towers (ibid: 29-33).

Prösler (1996: 34) claims that the museum is a symbol of the nation-state. His argument has three major weaknesses. Firstly, it excludes the notion of a 'collection'. Secondly, both symbolic analysis and artefact analysis foreground the complexity, multiplicity and interconnectedness of meanings (see Douglas 1973; Foster 1994; Turner 1975). Thirdly, any synchronic study 'freezes' both the nation and the museum, a process identical to that of museums 'freezing' their artefacts in timelessness. The museum is one of the materials in the nation's symbolic repertoire but to decode the museum's symbolisation is by no means a straightforward process: symbols change, accrue and discard meanings, as exemplified in the histories of the Perak Museum and Muzium Negara.



Fig. 11. RM50 currency note featuring Muzium Negara, with 'Malaysian culture' motifs forming the border

## Conclusion

The two proverbs at the head of this chapter convey the metaphorical relationship to temporality, an abstraction understood through picture-images. The picture-image does not constitute a theory of 'reality', neither does the proverbial museum. This chapter has argued that nation-making and museum-making are not essentially identical processes for an epistemological space exists where 'museal culture' elaborates its own meanings. A study of a nation's 'collection' of museums negates the microcosmic tidiness of Prösler's (1996: 35) microscopic view: "The museum takes on the form of a complete microcosmic representation of the sovereign nation state." As much as national-type museums are the nation's artefacts, the nation is the museums' artefact. Both are objects of each others imaginings. How the nation is imagined as a community and how the museum imagines this imagined community extends the range of the 'imaginary museum' (see Chap. 6), to the imagining museum. The museum's nation-artefact, whether experienced as national space or materialised as a national collection, is neither a reflection nor a representation of the 'real thing'; it is its musealisation. This is the essence of the nation as double-entendre artefact.

One may also add to the hermeneutic cauldron of artefacts, Foster's (1994: 367) contribution: "The artefacts of culture, constituting the web that holds its institutions together, are symbols ...". Symbols as artefacts of culture and artefacts as symbols of culture form a tenuous 'web' of signification if cultural context is ignored. Consequently, national, Malaysian, popular, tourism and museal cultures may interact in ways that readjust, as well as reinforce the 'web'. This phenomenon of 'trading' cultures has been discussed in a broad temporal framework to highlight the complexity of the cultural matrix in which the museum as cultural artefact operates. Moreover, the official management of culture reveals a political metahistory that needs to be understood from colonial times to the present, and of particular museum purport is the recent reconceptualisation of culture in the expanding tourism 'mindscape'. The tourism thread will be resumed in the following chapter, 'The Musealisation Movement', which will examine museum-making in Malaysia beyond the central government panorama.

## Chapter 8. The Musealisation Movement

*Once the needle is in, the thread will surely follow.*

(Malay proverb)

### Introduction

The proverb at the head of this chapter refers to the inevitability of a course of action. Some of the inherited circumstances of museums have been discussed in previous chapters. This chapter is more concerned with the thread's patterns after the needle is in. Particular attention will be paid to the predominant patterns that have emerged among museums under the jurisdiction of state governments, principally within the past decade which has seen significant museum expansion. This period between 1986 and 1997 is also notable because it illustrates the conceptual expansion of the artefact: from the museum object to the museum building, the museum zone, the museum complex and the museum state. As with the nation converted into artefact, a state may be exhibited as a 'musealium'. Schlereth (1980: 4) describes entire landscapes as 'artefacts', by which he means, "cultural documents of the ways we were and are". However, the second half of his formulation may be redefined as: 'the ways museums imagine we were or are, or should be'. The imagining process operates on two interlocked dimensions: space and time and these are the recurring strands of the musealisation design.

### Movements Towards Musealisation

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, museal culture has a creative capacity and a transformative potential. It also has an historical context. Harvey (1989: 272) pinpoints the temporal axis of 'museum culture' to the late nineteenth century when space and time became radically transformed (cf. the 'heterotopia' and 'diachrony' of the 19th century museum as elaborated by Foucault 1986: 26) The late nineteenth century is also known as the 'museum age' or 'museum movement', with its spectrum of museum ideologies (see Chaps 2, 4, 5). Moreover, the second half of the nineteenth century is regarded as a worldwide museum 'boom

time' with the diffusion of the museum throughout the global landscape (Smith 1989: 8; Prösler 1996: 25). Thus, the 'museum movement' was a spatio-temporal phenomenon, which through the operation of museal culture, produced spatio-temporal transformations.

As detailed in Part II, the form of the museum may have moved to colonial Malaysia, but 'education' as a component of the 'museum movement' was an absent constituent until the political transition period. However, it is possible to talk of the colonisers' introduction of a 'musealisation movement'. Colonial museums transformed space, time, objects and persons according to the ideology and museal culture of the nineteenth century. The second phase of the musealisation movement occurred during the political transition period of the 1950s to 1960s, a period that moved the museum into new conceptual domains informed by new ideologies. Identification of a 'movement' requires both a certain scale of museum-making and a sense of direction, or at least particular orientations. These two components are recognisable in the first two phases, simplified, here, to colony-building and nation-building (the second phase being largely actuated by the colonisers). The third phase of the 'musealisation movement' is more difficult to demarcate.

The chronological list in Table 7 (pp. 206-10) documents the scale of museum-making which, excepting the early colonial period, has been subdivided into approximate decadal periods. The predominant, current administrative forms are indicated in the key. Most museums are directly or indirectly part of governmental structures (federal and state). Private museums and corporate sector museums are few. These different management forms, architectural information, as well as other pertinent details are shown in the 'Comment' column.

Table 7. Chronological list of museums, 19th C. - 1997

## KEY

- National-type (federal government funding)
- ▲ State Museum Board/Body/Unit/Corporation in Peninsular Malaysia only (funded by respective state governments)
- \* Sarawak Museums Department (under State Ministry of Social Development)
- Department of Sabah Museum (under State Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports)
- () Altered form of the same museum
- KL Kuala Lumpur, federal territory; other place names refer to states

MM (MUSEUM)	DATE	COMMENT
~~~~~1820s-1920s~~~~~		
Mm in Anglo-Chinese College, Malacca	c. 1820s	College functioned 1818-1843; transferred to Hong Kong
Perak Mm ●	1883/1886	
Raffles Mm	1874/1887	Singapore's National Museum
Sarawak Mm *	1886/1891	Obtained Dewan TAR building across the road for display space in 1983
Selangor Mm	1888/1906	Destroyed WWII
North Borneo Mm	c. 1880s	Twice-revived; destroyed WWII
Forest Research Institute Mm, Selangor	1929	Now FRIM Museum, Forest Research Institute Malaysia (Govt statutory body )
~~~~~1953-1963~~~~~		
Temporary National Mm	1952-1959	Demolished for new National Museum
Royal Malaysian Police Mm, KL	1952/1961	New building (replica of colonial Officers' Mess) under construction on different site
Malacca State Mm ▲	1954	Shifted to Dutch Stadthuys building in 1982 & renamed Malacca History Mm; Stadthuys renovated & re-opened as Ethnography & History Mm in 1992
Negeri Sembilan State Mm ▲	1954	Palace-mum (Istana Ampang Tinggi); shifted to Cultural Complex (1986)
Kedah State Mm ▲	1957/1961	New building under construction, same site
Geological Survey Mm, Perak	1957	Geological Survey Dept Malaysia
National Art Gallery, KL ●	1959	2 temporary premises; new building under construction on different site
National Mm, KL ●	1963	Recently completed renovations & new annexe for Dept of Museums and Antiquities

## ~~~~~1964-1974~~~~~

Penang Mm & Art Gallery ▲	1965	Renovations on British colonial building began in 1994 & Art Gallery shifted to separate site; Penang State Museum re-opened in 1997
Sabah State Mm ■	1965	2 temporary premises until new Sabah Museum Complex opened in 1984
Sarawak Police Mm	1971	Housed in 19th C. fort of Brooke era
Asian Art Mm, KL	1973	University of Malaya; Mm later absorbed university's Malay ethnography collection

## ~~~~~1975-1985~~~~~

Sultan Abu Bakar State Mm, Pahang ▲	1976	British colonial building converted into official palace in 1948; subsequent mm conversion
Terengganu State Mm ▲	1977	Temporary premises in state secretariat building; new museum complex opened in 1996
Archaeological Mm, Bujang Valley, Kedah ●	1980	Site known as National Historical Park; extension block planned for museum
Kelantan State Mm ▲	1981	Housed in Jahar Palace; shifted to British colonial building in 1990
USM Mm & Art Gallery, Penang	1982	Universiti Sains Malaysia
Tun Abdul Razak Memorial, KL ●	1982	Extensive renovations 1994-95
Forestry Mm, Penang	1983	Penang State Forestry Dept
Kedah Royal Mm ▲	1983	Palace-mm
Kedah Art Gallery ▲	1983	British colonial building of early 1900s
Institute of Medical Research Mm, KL	1983	British colonial building
Sabah Art Gallery	1983	Under State Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports; housed in Sabah State Mm
(Sabah Mm) ■	1984	A new museum complex of buildings
Royal Malaysian Navy Mm, Perak	1984	Collection absorbed by Maritime Museum Complex of Malacca
Gedung Raja Abdullah, Selangor ▲	1984	Warehouse of 1850s; restoration project of Heritage of Malaysia Trust
Baba Nyonya Heritage Mm, Malacca	1985	Private museum; ancestral home
International Handicraft Mm, KL	1985	Absorbed by Malaysian Handicraft Devt Corp.
Royal Malaysian Armed Forces Mm, KL	1985	
Royal Malaysian Air Force Mm, KL	1985	
Proclamation of Independence Memorial, Malacca ●	1985	British colonial building, facing 'Heroes Square' where proclamation of independence was made
Islamic Mm, KL ●	1985	Originally Islamic Exhibition Centre

## ~~~~~1986-1997~~~~~

Mini Malaysia, Malacca	1986	Also known as Malacca's 'Cultural Village'; tourism project of Malacca State Devt Corp.
Cultural Mm, Malacca ▲	1986	Replica of 15th C. palace; first govt-funded museum to charge entry fee
Perak Royal Mm ▲	1986	Palace-mm
P. Ramlee Memorial, KL ●	1986	His former residence in Kuala Lumpur
National Handicraft Mm, KL	1986	Absorbed by Malaysian Handicraft Devt Corp.
Cultural Complex, Negeri Sembilan ▲	1986	Complex of 3 buildings inclusive of Istana Ampang Tinggi, the original state museum
Mm JHEOA, Selangor	1987	Federal Dept of Orang Asli Affairs; new building under construction on same site
Maybank Numismatic Mm, KL	1988	
MARA Mm & Art Gallery, Selangor	1988	MARA Institute of Technology
Timber Mm, Sarawak	1988	Sarawak Timber Industry Devt Corp. (state govt agency)
Sibu Civic Centre Mm, Sarawak	1988	Financed by State Ministry of Social Devt
Bau Civic Centre Mm, Sarawak	1988	Ditto
Kapit Civic Centre Mm, Sarawak	1989	Ditto
Bank Negara Money Mm, KL	1989	Under Malaysia's Central Bank
KL Memorial Library	1989	KL City Council; British colonial building housing exhibition and research centre on history of Kuala Lumpur
Sultan Alam Shah Mm, Selangor ▲	1989	State museum of Selangor
Royal Abu Bakar Mm/ Grand Palace, Johor	1990	Initiative of Sultan of Johor in 1982; palace (1866) still used for ceremonial functions
Sarawak Cultural Village/ Living Mm	1990	Initiated as tourism project by Sarawak Economic Devt Corp.
Pasir Salak Historical Complex, Perak	1990	Perak Foundation under state govt; conceived as tourism project; complex being developed in stages; site of J.W.W. Birch's assassination in 1875
Jasin District Mm, Malacca ▲	1990	1920s British colonial building
Alor Gajah District Mm, Malacca ▲	1990	Replica of traditional Malay house
(Kelantan State Mm) ▲	1990	Shifted to British colonial building
Royal Mm, Kelantan ▲	1991	Palace-mm (Istana Batu)
Handicraft Mm, Kelantan ▲	1991	Part of Handicraft Village
Mm Islam, Kelantan ▲	1991	1902 residence of Kelantan's Chief Minister
P. Ramlee's House, Penang ●	1991	Major restoration work on house of 1926
Shah Alam Art Gallery, Selangor	1991	Art Foundation of Selangor; state govt support
Mm of Royal Customs & Traditions, Kelantan ▲	1992	Palace-mm (Istana Jahar)

Natural Rubber Mm, Selangor ▲	1992	
MISC Maritime Mm, KL	1992	Malaysia International Shipping Co.
Mm Darul Ridzuan, Perak ▲	1992	1926 residence of prominent Chinese tin- miner
(Ethnography & History Mm, Malacca) ▲	1992	Renovated Stadthuys building
Youth Mm, Malacca ▲	1992	1750s Dutch building; also houses Malacca Art Gallery
People's Mm, Malacca ▲	1992	1940s British colonial building; also houses Beauty Mm & Kite Mm
Royal Mm, Seri Menanti, Negeri Sembilan ▲	1992	Palace-mm
House of Birth of Mahathir Mohamad, Kedah ●	1992	House built in 1900
Sarawak Islamic Mm *	1992	1931 building; former religious council & school
Cat Mm, Sarawak	1993	Originally exhibition at Mm Negara; 1988 at Sarawak Mm's Dewan TAR building; 1993 shifted to & run by Sarawak North City Hall
Chinese History Mm, Sarawak *	1993	1911 Chinese Court building
Limbang Regional Mm, Sarawak *	1994	Replica of 1897 fort burnt down in 1989
World War II Memorial, Kelantan ▲	1994	1912 bank building
Telekomuzium, KL	1994	Telekom Malaysia (corporate); 1928 telephone exchange building
Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Memorial, KL ●	1994	
National Planetarium , KL ●	1994	
Pulau Keladi Cultural Village, Pahang ▲	1994	Village site, re-created buildings
Johor Art Gallery	1994	Johor Heritage Foundation (state financed); 1910 residence of Johor's Chief Minister
Maritime Mm, Malacca ▲	1994	Replica of Portuguese galleon; Phase II is the Maritime Museum Complex by 1998
Beauty Mm, Malacca ▲	1994	Originally 'Enduring Beauty' 1992 exhibition at Mm Negara; same building as People's Museum
Mm of Literature, Malacca ▲	1995	Early 1900s British bungalow
Jade Mm, KL	1995	Private
Perlis State Mm ▲	1995	Part of Heritage Complex; Mm is a replica of 19th C. house built during Siamese rule
Perak Historical Complex ●	1995	19th C. Malay fort of Ngah Ibrahim
Kite Mm, Malacca ▲	1996	Same building as People's Museum
Malacca Art Gallery ▲	1996	Same building as Youth Museum
(Terengganu State Mm) ▲	1996	New museum complex on 27-hectare site
Beruas Mm, Perak ▲	1996	
Agop Batu Tulug Mm, Sabah ■	1996	Limestone caves, one of which contains a burial site of carved coffins

LKH Hospital Memorial Mm, Sarawak	1996	Housed in former Lau King Howe Hospital, Sibü; initiative of Sibü Chinese community & Sibü Branch of Malaysian Medical Assoc. (run by latter)
Muzium Sejarah Nasional, KL ●	1996	British colonial building
National Science Centre, KL ●	1996	
Crafts Mm in Crafts Cultural Complex, KL	1996	Malaysian Handicraft Devt. Corp. (Ministry of Entrepreneurial Devt)
Textile Mm, KL	1996	Ditto; early 20th C. Moorish-style building
Crafts Cultural Complex, Langkawi, Kedah	1996	Ditto; 3 museums within commercial complex
Baram Regional Mm/ Fort Hose, Sarawak *	1997	Replica of fort (c. 1898) burnt down in 1994
Aborigines Museum, Malacca ▲	1997	Architecture based on longhouse of Sarawak
Adanza Marbeck Museum, Malacca	1997	Private, family home in Portuguese community

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In the decade following the formation of Malaysia in 1963 four museums were established, two of which (Penang and Sabah) were the realisation of processes set in motion during the colonial period (see Chap. 6). In the first decade (1964-1974) of the new nation, one cannot discern a musealisation movement or new orientations. The next decadal period, 1975-1985, shows a marked increase in museums: nineteen museums emerged and a new museum complex was built for the Sabah Museum in 1984. The period 1986-1997 shows accelerated expansion with the addition of over sixty museums. This period of museum expansion replicates a global trend in the proliferation of museums (Prösler 1996). However, because the museum is a cultural artefact, it is surmised that its proliferation will also assume specific socio-cultural contours. Although the periods in the chronological list have been divided into approximate decades for easier comparison, the divisions are not entirely arbitrary. Subsequent sections will evince that the period 1986-1997 constitutes the third phase of the musealisation movement. Firstly, however, some of the emerging patterns of the 1975-1985 period will be discussed to set the scene.

### **Heritage Takes Hold**

The decade beginning in the mid-1970s is characterised by three main museum themes: national identity, state identity and identifying heritage. The national 'collection', already discussed, will only be mentioned for comparative purposes. The state museums played a significant part in developing new orientations that presaged the following decade (1986-1997). Firstly, I shall briefly examine the emergence of 'heritage'. Chapter 6 demonstrated that although key individuals promoted concepts of 'preservation', the word 'heritage' was absent in Malaysian museum literature during the political transition period and it remained so until the early 1970s. Several factors, internal and external, brought 'heritage' to prominence. Regional and international organisations were important in disseminating the heritage message. Most active during the 1970s were UNESCO, the ICOM Regional Agency for Asia, and the Cultural and Social Centre for the Asian and Pacific Region (under ASPAC—Asian and Pacific Council). Malaysia hosted a UNESCO-ICOM symposium in 1972 (National Committee of ICOM Malaysia) and was also involved in the ASPAC conferences and meetings, with themes such as 'Preservation of Cultural Heritage' (see ASPAC 1971, 1972).

The Southeast Asian nations were being 'schooled' in a heritage curriculum that duplicated the earlier emphasis on material objects during the political transition period, and widened the divide between 'tangible' and 'intangible' heritage. 'Heritage', which had previously been a peripheral word in Malaysian museum discourse, became a pivotal reference point but its terms of reference were largely dictated by external perspectives. In addition to 'heritage', terms such as 'preservation projects' and 'cultural property' began to appear in the Malaysian literature of the 1970s (see, for example, Al Rashid 1971). ICOM's *The Protection of Cultural Property: Handbook of National Legislations* (Burnham 1974) included Malaysia's Antiquities and Treasures Trove Ordinance of 1957. This was later replaced with the Antiquities Act of 1976, which was the outgrowth of a 1972 ICOM Meeting of Experts on the Protection of Cultural Property in Southeast Asia, held in Malacca (Othman 1987: 5).

Once museums had become heritage enhanced, the message had to be communicated to the public. In 1980 Muzium Negara launched a nationwide campaign on heritage awareness and the implications of the new Antiquities Act (see Jabatan Muzium 1981; Othman 1987: 5). The activities of Muzium Negara and from 1976 onwards the rapid succession of new museums, dispersed throughout the country, were expanding the heritage map which, however, was simultaneously perceived to be diminishing due to a rapidly changing physical and socio-cultural environment (see Jabatan Muzium 1981: 4). This perception was not only confined to Peninsular Malaysia. Chin (1984: 104), a former director of the Sarawak Museum, stated: "Our heritage is not only being increasingly threatened by natural causes of decay, but also by economic and social changes." The heritage imperative also resulted in the formation of non-governmental organisations that aimed to sensitise the wider community to the notion of heritage. In addition to the long established Malayan (Malaysian) Historical Society founded in 1953 with Sheppard as a founding councillor (see Chap. 6), the Heritage of Malaysia Trust emerged in 1983 with Sheppard as the co-founder, and the Penang Heritage Trust was formed in 1986.

Sarawak had its own heritage related legislation, the Antiquities Ordinance (replaced by the Cultural Heritage Ordinance of 1993). In 1983 Sarawak held its 'Year of Heritage' campaign. This year was also chosen to celebrate Sarawak Museum's centenary. Chin and Kedit (1983: ix) explain that although no definitive date exists for the 'birth' of the museum, 1983 was selected as the centenary because it coincided with three major events: the opening of the museum's new extension building (Dewan Tun Abdul Razak), Sarawak's 20th Anniversary of Independence from the British, and also the 'Year of Heritage' campaign. In the special centenary issue of the *Sarawak Museum Journal* (1983, vol. 32, no. 53) one section is devoted to 'Cultural heritage' with the first article, 'Our heritage and the need to preserve it', by the Sarawak Museum's director. He indicates that traditional dances, music, arts and crafts, and oral traditions are in the "most danger of being lost" Chin 1983b: 64). Paradoxically, the remaining articles cover aspects of 'material culture'. Once heritage had been identified, it could be 'preserved' or 'lost', but as will be shown in a subsequent section, it could also be created or reconstituted by museums. Incidentally, 'history' could also be reconstituted: eight years after marking its centenary, the Sarawak Museum celebrated its 'Centennial Year' in 1991 (see Chin & Kedit 1991: x).

What counted as 'heritage' was something that could be quantified and, preferably, collected and displayed. The non-material aspects of the heritage 'curriculum' were largely seen as extraneous. The Sarawak Museum in the 1980s was requested to conduct archaeological reconnaissance surveys in areas that were planned for hydro-electric development (Chin 1983a: 153). The communities in the affected areas also asked the museum to exhume and rebury the dead with their gravegoods (ibid: 153). The then director of the museum concludes: "This unusual type of fieldwork is time consuming ... sometimes to the extent of interrupting or deferring normal museum activities" (ibid: 153). According to the standard ICOM (ICOM 1994a: 277) definition, the museum is "in the service of society". The Sarawak Museum's exhumation and reburial activities, were perceived as 'unusual', as having no relationship to heritage. The 'heritage' that was being propagated in Malaysia and other newly emergent nations was a heritage of materialism succinctly expressed in the language of cultural 'property'. The heritage construct of this period (1975-1985) would inevitably shape the 'time that is to come'.

## Museums Take Hold

It is timely to reconsider a question first posed in Chapter 6: did heritage awareness generate museums or did museums engender the heritage idea? It is likely that after the initial outside stimulus, the two propelled each other. As the number of museums increased between 1975 and 1985, their presence and activities contributed to an augmented heritage focus. Heritage awareness also translated into a greater emphasis on institutional or organisational forms of heritage preservation, hence more museums were established (and the two Heritage Trusts). A Malaysian interpretation of museum expansion fails to clarify these points:

By the late 1970s and early 1980s there was a sudden arousal of interest, by the states of Malaysia and some of the government agencies ... in establishing their own museums. They wished to preserve and to display items which were of both historical value and cultural interest. These museums ... were not under the control of Muzium Negara, being controlled by separate entities under the jurisdiction of the various states and government departments (Othman 1987: 3).

This analysis leaves museums in a developmental vacuum. Firstly, the 'suddenness' of interest, was rather a 'graduation' from heritage schooling that had commenced in earnest in the early 1970s. Secondly, state museums were as much an expression of state pride as of the heritage mandate. The fact that state museums were not under federal management structures meant they were able to create museum-artefacts under state enactments, with some degree of independence (the term 'degree' is an acknowledgment of the complicated financial and political relationships between the federal and state governments). Thus, another significant factor in museum expansion during the 1975-1985 period was the assertion of state identity in the Federation of Malaysia. After the establishment of the Penang Museum and Art Gallery (1965) and the Sabah Museum (1965), several other states followed suit: the state museum of Pahang called Sultan Abu Bakar Museum (1976), the Terengganu State Museum (1977) and the Kelantan State Museum (1981).

The States of Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan form the east coast belt of Malaysia, and are often referred to collectively as the 'East Coast'. The difficult terrain and the closure of the east coast during the monsoon season effectively protected these states from the full extent of British

'protection'. Demographically, the states were also similar in maintaining a predominantly Malay character during British rule (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 182). These three states with the least obtrusive colonial impact were among the first to adopt a colonial medium of expression—the museum. Unlike Penang and Sabah, these states lacked a prior history of museums. I do not propose to document the founding of each state museum but will refer to the Terengganu State Museum to highlight the significance of state identity and dispute the notion of a 'sudden arousal of interest'.

The Terengganu State Museum (1977) links its ancestry to the discovery of the inscribed Terengganu Stone (*Batu Bersurat*) which is dated to 1303 AD (for the controversies over dating, see Naguib al-Attas 1984). The stone, inscribed with Islamic laws, is regarded as proof that Terengganu was the first Malay State to receive Islam, thus pre-dating Malacca's Islamic credentials by one hundred years (see ASEAN 1995: 61). The Terengganu Stone, discovered in 1902, was sent to the Raffles Museum in 1923 because the British Adviser to Terengganu determined that the State lacked proper facilities for its safekeeping (Muzium Negeri Terengganu 1992). Its journeys from Terengganu to the Raffles Museum, to the newly-established Muzium Negara and its eventual return to Terengganu State in 1991 are also an important feature of its 'biography' (for details, *ibid*). The prolonged efforts to establish a museum to house the Terengganu Stone and the resolute campaign for its return are inseparable in the Terengganu State narrative (see Misbaha 1983). Thus, the state museum materialised as a direct consequence of the absence of an artefact.

### **Emerging Threads of Musealisation**

Before examining the musealisation movement, some of its threads are discernible in state museum orientations of 1975-1985. For example, the other two East Coast States, Pahang and Kelantan marked state identity with the artefacts of architecture: palaces (*istana*) converted into museums in 1976 and 1981, respectively. Kedah, however, was the first state to convert a palace into a royal museum rather than a repository for a state collection. Kedah already had a state museum (1961), based on the Balai Besar design, and it also had a national-type Archaeological Museum (1980) featuring the pre-Islamic past (see Chaps 6, 7). Shortly afterwards, Kedah established its Royal Museum (1983) and Art Gallery (1983) in its

historical zone featuring an architectural concentration of the major symbolic markers of the sultanate and Islam (the sultans are also the guardians of Islam). The Kedah Royal Museum, formerly the Kota Setar Palace, is adjacent to the Balai Besar, and it was opened in conjunction with the silver jubilee of the reign of the Sultan of Kedah. The zone also includes the Balai Nobat (a 1912 tower housing the sacred instruments of the royal orchestra) the 1912 mosque, Masjid Zahir, and a recreational field. Kedah may be considered the first state to materialise a museum circuit in an historical precinct.

In contrast, Malacca intended to remodel an entire historical precinct to develop the State's tourism potential (Jabatan Muzium 1982: xiii). The State Museum of 1954 (housed in a Dutch house) shifted in 1982 to the much larger premises of the Dutch Governor's building, the Stadthuys (for a description, see Chap. 4). In the same year the state government announced a plan to establish a "*Kompleks Muzium*" ('Museum Complex') (Jabatan Muzium 1982: xiii). This proposal to establish fifteen 'mini-museums' in the historical buildings of the St Paul's Hill area was only to be realised (and modified) in the following decade, 1986-1997. It should be recalled that at the federal level, the Museums Department had already proposed the creation of a 'Museum Complex' in the vicinity of Muzium Negara (see Chap. 7). The Sarawak Museum was also putting together its "museum complex" (Chin et al. 1983: 3) in 1983. This comprised the old Sarawak Museum and the new exhibition building (Dewan Tun Abdul Razak inherited from the state government) as well as the buildings for administration, storage, the reference library and state archives (ibid: 3-4). This haphazard collection of buildings was a marked contrast to the Sabah Museum's conceptualisation of a museum complex.

The new Sabah Museum of 1984 was conceived of as an integrated "museum complex" of several buildings on the one site (Regis 1990: 34; Sullivan 1988: 5). The buildings (Fig. 12, p. 217) manifest a creative approach to indigenous architectural forms. Rather than being modelled on an existing building (as in the case of the Kedah State Museum and Muzium Negara), the Sabah Museum was an architectural innovation to symbolise Sabahan identity. In the words of the then director, Sullivan (1988: 5), the museum complex was intended "to embody the 'Spirit of Sabah'".



Fig. 12. Sabah Museum Complex:  
main building (right), Science Centre (centre), Art Gallery/Theatre (left)  
Postcard, Natural History Publications (Borneo) Sdn. Bhd., Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.  
© Photo: Tommy Chang

The following architectural description is a considerably condensed account from Sullivan (1988: 5). The main building is in the form of a longhouse of the Murut and Rungus peoples, with extended beams representing the 'Sumazau' dance position of the Kadazan-Dusuns and Muruts, and the Muslim position for thanksgiving prayer. The shape of the Science Centre represents a traditional food cover; the Art Gallery/Theatre is in the shape of a Sabahan hat; and the Conservation Centre is based on the design of the betel-nut container used by many of the indigenous groups.

The museum buildings, an architectural manifestation of 'trading cultures', were elaborately designed artefacts intended to symbolise the unity among Sabah's multiple ethnic communities. The buildings were set in a site of over 16 hectares of natural and planted landscape. Planting for the museum's Ethnobotanic Gardens commenced in 1984, based on an 1981 advisory report by a representative of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew (Sullivan 1988: 7). However, the original concept of the report, formulated as a botanic garden, was modified to more accurately express the manifold relationships between plants and Sabah's various ethnic groups (Sabah Museum 1993a: 1, 3). This instance provides further elucidation on the 'indigenisation' of foreign models mentioned in the previous chapter. Another project envisaged in 1984 was the construction of replica traditional houses on the museum site (Regis 1990: 35) but this component of the complex was only realised in 1990.

In brief, the 1975-1985 period is characterised by a heritage-museum spiral and an expanded material expression of state identity. Certain approaches, still ill-defined, were to be amplified and diversified in the following decadal period. These include the nascent themes of a museum 'complex', the conversion of palaces into royal museums, the addition of traditional houses as museum objects and the intensification of the museum's architectural symbolism. The three museums managed by the Kedah State Museum Board exemplify the museum medley of architectural forms: vernacular architectural adaptation, sultanate ancestry and colonial space. Chapter 6 demonstrated that there was no ideological malaise in absorbing colonial monuments into the nation's cultural heritage and this is also confirmed in the adaptive re-use of colonial buildings as post-colonial museums (see 'Comments' in Table 7, pp. 206-210). Subsequent sections

will also show that this approach was taken one step further with the architectural reproduction of colonial structures.

### **Musealisation Phase III: 1986-1997**

The third phase of the musealisation movement is marked by the radical transformation of the spatial-temporal axes. This section, divided into four subsections, will examine the main musealisation patterns of this period: the replica building, the museum complex, the palace-museum and the traditional house. This most recent period is marked by the addition of over sixty museums, the expansion of the conceptual boundaries of the museum and the creation of new orientations. Although, the strands of nation-building, state-building and heritage awareness maintain their momentum in the period 1986-1997, the addition of tourism awareness has perceptibly altered the dynamics of museum-making. Two factors combined to elevate tourism to a major government priority in Malaysia. Tourism had grown at an appreciable rate of 15% between 1972 and 1985 (Din 1989: 191) and in the aftermath of the mid-1980s recession, the Government decided to diversify its commodities-based economy (*Asian Tourism Monitor* Dec. 1990: 17). The emergence of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 1987 reflects this new direction (see Chap. 7). The realisation of the economic potential of cultural tourism was a considerable impetus to the musealisation process.

It should be remarked that the chronological list of museums in Table 7 includes Malacca's Mini Malaysia (or 'Cultural Village') of 1986, Sarawak Cultural Village (or 'Living Museum') of 1990 and Perak's Pasir Salak Historical Complex of 1990, all three of which are commercial tourism-related ventures initiated by the respective state governments. If the standard ICOM (1994a: 277) definition of the museum is employed, their 'for-profit' motivation would efface them from the museum landscape. Definitional rigidity and boundary maintenance (see Chap. 2) function as constraints on analytical efficacy. In Malaysia, museums have influenced or been directly involved in the shape of these tourism products (see Faezah 1995: 169; Kamarul Baharin 1993: 86) and, in turn, these tourism-inspired projects have had a manifest impact on museums. The federal government's 'Visit Malaysia 1990' was the first major tourism campaign, the second being 'Visit Malaysia Year 1994', with 'Visit ASEAN Year 1992' in between the two.

The relationship between museums and tourism should not be considered a new phenomenon (for a general account of tourism in colonial Malaya, see Stockwell 1993). The contents of the guidebook, *An Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States*, edited by C.W. Harrison (c. 1910) and with its fourth impression in 1923, proposed an alluring mixture for the imagined tourist: 'Through the Malay Peninsula from north to south', 'Notes for travellers', 'Hints for motorists', 'Big game shooting', 'Museums', and 'Mining'. Thus, it appears the three major attractions on offer were shooting, 'museuming' and mining. Moreover, big game shooting (as taxidermic products) and mining (as displays) also featured in museums' contents.

One of C.W. Harrison's (1985a: 118) colonial travelogues in 1923 conjures a "whirligig of time" in Malacca. Analysis of the third phase of musealisation movement commences in Malacca for it has redesigned the 'whirligig of time'. Of equal import is that several states have looked to Malacca as a model for museum-tourism development (Engku Azman Engku Yusoff, pers. comm., 17 Nov. 1996; *New Straits Times* 22 Sept. 1995).

In 1989, to give impetus to the tourism industry, the Prime Minister declared Malacca an 'Historical City' (Nik Abdul Rashid 1995: 77). In 1990 the state government announced its plan to turn Malacca into an 'open museum' ("*muzium terbuka*") (*Berita Harian* 3 Oct. 1990). Subsequently, the state government declared Malacca 'The State of Museums' (Nik Abdul Rashid 1995: 77) and Malacca was also labelled a 'Living Museum' (ibid: 77). Malacca State as a 'musealium' required a different approach to 'collections management'. Hence, the Malacca Museums Corporation, better known by its Bahasa Malaysia acronym, PERZIM, was formed in 1992. PERZIM manages the state's growing collection of museums and is also involved in commercial tourism projects, such as the 'light and sound show' (Pandiyan 1991). In 1994 the state government embarked on a project to establish 101 museums (Nik Abdul Rashid 1994). This state of multi-layered colonial histories was set to build a museum empire: 101 museums by the year 2,000 (ibid: 9). By the end of 1996, the proposal was being reviewed (*The Star* 5 Dec. 1996). In mid-1997 the state government announced that the proposal for 101 museums would be reduced to between 20 and 30 museums (Hamidah 1997).

As mentioned previously, the tourism-related plan for museum development in Malacca had been initiated in the early 1980s. However, the plan to house museums in historical buildings was only to materialise in the 1990s. Because gazetted historical buildings, sites and monuments in Peninsular Malaysia are under the control of the federal Department of Museums and Antiquities, restoration work and its funding (allocated under the series of five-year Malaysia Plans) is the province of the federal Museums Department, not the respective state museum authorities. Consequently, the time lag between a proposal and its implementation may be considerable. However, for a state (or any other entity) to construct a new museum does not require authorisation at the federal level. Malacca's new Muzium Budaya (Cultural Museum) materialised in 1986 and was officially opened by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

The Cultural Museum is at the foot of St Paul's Hill, crested by the ruins of St Paul's Church, built by the Portuguese in the 16th century. At the foot of the hill is another ruin, the gateway known as Porta de Santiago, all that remains of the Portuguese fortress. This is a few steps away from the former Malacca Club, established by the British in 1911, which now houses the Proclamation of Independence Memorial (Fig. 13, p. 222). St Paul's Hill and its environs are saturated with Dutch, Portuguese and British buildings. Added to and 'predating' this multifarious colonial landscape was Muzium Budaya (Plate 14, p. 222), a replica of a fifteenth century Malacca sultanate palace.

Because historiographical certitude coalesces on the founding of Malacca in the early 1400s, the history of Malaysia is usually refracted through Malacca (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 7). 'Malacca, where it all began' ("*Melaka di mana semuanya bermula*") is the opening phrase in Muzium Budaya's introductory text. Thus, 'real' history begins with Malacca. Andaya and Andaya (1982: 7) underline: "The story of Malaysia does not ... begin at Melaka but stretches back deep into the past." Malacca acknowledges no prior beginnings in 'the story of Malaysia'. In Muzium Budaya's introductory text Malacca is not only associated with the birth of a nation, it is also regarded as the birthplace of Islam and the foundation of 'Malay Islamic civilisation'. The extremely long introduction has little to say about the museum. Rather, it is an introduction to the glorious age of the Malacca Malay Sultanate and its political and socio-cultural legacy.



Fig. 13. Proclamation of Independence Memorial, Malacca  
Reproduced from undated brochure, 'Proclamation of Independence Memorial', National Archives of Malaysia.



Plate 14. Malacca's Cultural Museum as a replica palace, the 15th C. palace of Sultan Mansur Shah  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

Due to a colonial twist of fate, Malacca has no contemporary sultanate. It was displaced when the Portuguese seized Malacca though the sultanate institution re-emerged in other states of the Peninsula (Khoo Kay Kim 1995a: 8). Malacca unlike other peninsular states has no palaces, that is, until the replica palace materialised. It is believed the fifteenth-century palace was situated on Malacca Hill (now known as St Paul's Hill) (Khamis 1996: vii). Whether Malacca's Muzium Budaya represents a symbolic conquest of its former colonisers is a question that will be deferred until the remainder of the state's museums have been discussed.

A Heritage Trail sign (sponsored by American Express) on 'Malacca Sultanate Palace' informs: "This replica of the original 15th Century palace of Malacca's extinct sultanate was based entirely on sketches found in the ancient *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals)." There are no historical drawings of the palace which was consumed by fire (Sherwin 1981). The replica is based on a textual description in the 'Malay Annals' (*Sejarah Melayu*) and both the text and its English translations are, by no means, unambiguous. In an article written before the museum replica was built, Sherwin, an architect, offers his reconstruction of the palace (see Fig. 14, p. 224) based on his interpretation of the text. Sherwin (1981: 1) also reproduces a 1963 illustration of the palace (by an officer of the Public Works Department) which he dismisses as more like an "'artist's impression' than a serious building study". This illustration (Plate 15, p. 224) is on display in Muzium Sejarah Nasional in the section on the Malaccan Sultanate. A different illustration (an artist's impression) of the palace appears on the front cover of *Malaysia in History* (1969, vol. 12, no. 2), the journal published by the Malaysian Historical Society.

Another version is the museum replica. This exposes an epistemological conundrum in the notion of authenticity (a subject to be further examined in the next chapter). If there is no possibility of knowing the original palace, what is the ontological status of the 'replica'? Does the 'replica' have a greater claim to 'authenticity' on the basis of being a museum product? The issue of 'authenticity', however, is meaningless without taking into consideration the methodology of musealisation. The palace is not an unauthentic replica of the 'real thing'; it is the 'real thing'. It is the artefact that obliterates any future interpretations or reconstructions of Sultan Mansur Shah's palace. The 'palace' already exists.

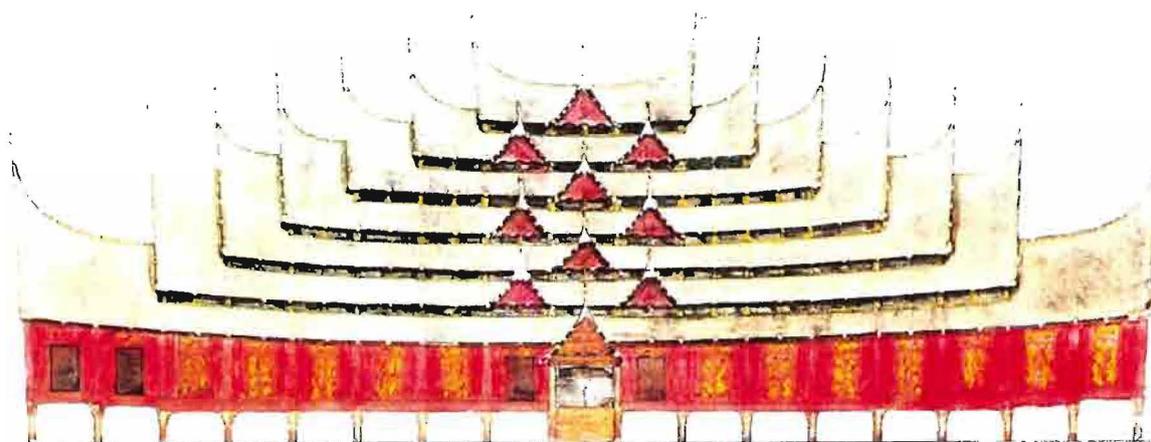


Fig. 14. Reconstruction of Sultan Mansur Shah's palace, according to Sherwin

Reproduced from Sherwin, M.D. 1981, 'A new reconstruction of the palace of Sultan Mansur Shah of Malacca', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 54, Fig. 1, facing p. 4.

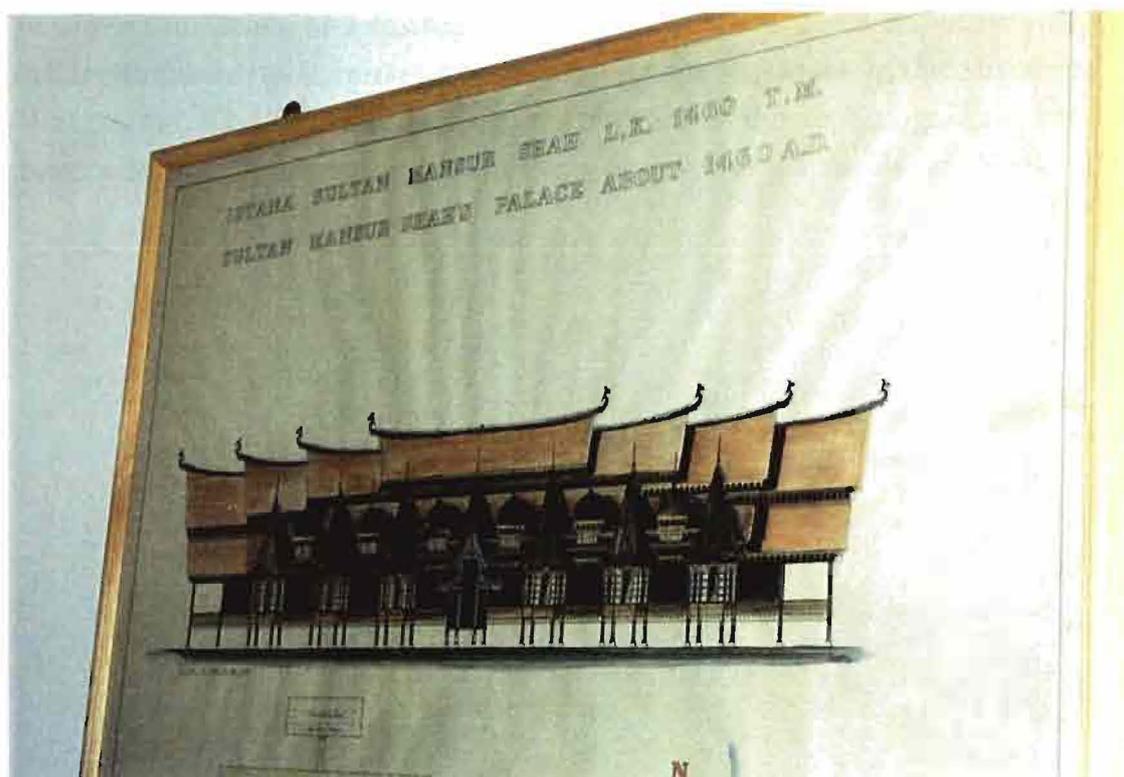


Plate 15. Illustration of Sultan Mansur Shah's palace, Muzium Sejarah Nasional

Photo: P. Dellios, 1997

PERZIM also runs the 'Light and Sound Show' which features the historical buildings of St Paul's Hill in the role of their original selves and Muzium Budaya in the role of the Sultan Mansur Shah's palace. The show melds national, state, and heritage narratives within a tourism-defined temporality: six centuries condensed into sixty minutes. The musealisation of space and time has a distinctively Malaccan design. In just over a decade Malacca has established its colony of museums: thirteen museums, ten of which are in the historical St Paul's area and its surrounding environs.

Within walking distance from Muzium Budaya is another museum housed in a replica, the Maritime Museum, which was officially opened by the Prime Minister in 1994. The museum is a replica of the 16th century Portuguese galleon, *Flor de la Mar* (Plate 16, p. 226), that sailed off with the plunder of the Malaccan Sultanate. If one had assumed that the 'replica' palace was a symbolic subjugation of former colonisers, the replica of the Portuguese galleon appears to be a symbolic revival of colonialism. A booklet (PERZIM 1994: 6), in conjunction with the museum's opening, justifies the choice of a Portuguese galleon in terms of its superior size and 'attractiveness' as a museum, in comparison to local Malaccan ships of that period. The colonial discourse replicated in the replica galleon has not been without its detractors in Malaysia (see, for example, Farish 1996b: 13).



Plate 16. Malacca's Maritime Museum as a replica Portuguese galleon, *Flor de la Mar*

Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

Similarly, the 'longhouse' design of Malacca's Aborigines Museum (1997) expresses a colonial genre: the generalised 'native' as artefact. The Aborigines Museum is an architectural expression of an Iban longhouse of Sarawak. Chow Kum Hor (1997: 8) notes that the walls of this longhouse structure were specially woven by the Semai tribe of Perak. According to a display in the JHEOA Museum (under the federal Department of Orang Asli Affairs), only the Temiar sub-group used to reside in longhouses, which were dissimilar to those of the Iban. There is no Temiar population in the State of Malacca (Amran 1991: 9). This latest museum adds the 'native' element to the Malaccan 'mix and match' configuration of space, regardless of which people are matched with which dwelling. The longhouse, in a process analogous to the Portuguese galleon, was most probably selected for its tourism 'attractiveness'.

Another telling sign is the label 'Aborigines'. The term 'Orang Asli' is the official designation used in both Bahasa Malaysia and English (see also Amran 1991: 241, fnn. 4, 5). The official term would not be linguistically comprehensible to overseas tourists. Although the historical background of the earliest Orang Asli group remains conjectural, their presence in the region has been estimated to between 25,000 to 10,000 years ago (see Amran 1991: 6; Bellwood 1993). Malacca's slogan of 'where it all began' is a contemporary truncated translation of time. The Aborigines Museum raises more unsettling concerns than a replica 15th century palace or a replica 16th century galleon (resurrected vanished objects) for the Orang Asli are a people existing in the present, though re-created in a 19th century colonial frame for the contemporary tourist gaze.

Malacca represents the most intensive form of the musealisation matrix of time, space and person. Malacca, 'Historical City', 'Open Museum', the 'State of Museums', the 'Living Museum', is set to embark on its ultimate transformative project, an historical heritage complex estimated to cost RM600 million (*The Star* 5 Dec. 1996). The 'Malacca Heritage Complex' will include the St Paul's Hill area but will encompass a wider territory known as Bandar Hilir, with its historical buildings. One of these is a school dated to 1880, which is planned for conversion into a museum. The school authorities do not wish to relocate and the state authorities maintain that the school is inappropriately sited for tourism development plans (see Hafiz Yatim et al. 1997: 10). A student of the school, in a letter to

the editor, asks: "But what can we ordinary and powerless people do if the authorities still want to relocate us?" (Cheong Peck Huang 1996: 13). In Chapter 7, the term 'musealisation' was used to surmount semantic obfuscation such as Halpin's (1997: 53) 'museumisation', construed as a positive force in engaging the community. Conversely, the term 'musealisation' makes no *a priori* assumptions about museum-community relationships.

The 'Malacca Heritage Complex' is expected to be 60% historically-related and 40% commercially-based, inclusive of hotels (Hafiz Yatim et al. 1997: 10; *The Star* 5 Dec. 1996). The percentage of musealisation has yet to be imagined. Another letter to the editor, by a Malaccan resident, questions the logic of creating "an artificial complex and in that process destroy[ing] the real heritage" of Malacca (Osman 1996: 13). Yet another letter to the editor cautions against Malacca's trend of "instant antiquity" (Abdul 1996: 15). The 'instant antiquity' of the Malacca sultanate palace and Portuguese galleon is also 'instant heritage', reproduced in the 'Heritage Postcard' series of *The Sun*, Malaysia. For this particular museum orientation, one may conclude: 'Malacca, where it all began'. Musealisation, thus, does not only work on 'things' already in existence but it can summon 'things' into existence. Beyond the metaphoric representation of reality or an altered reality, lies the potential of the invention of reality. Moreover, the post-colonial 'museumising imagination' may come full circle to re-imagine its colonial self.

### **Musealisation Phase III:**

#### **• Replica Replication**

The replica building is a Malaccan-derived orientation and it has been widely replicated elsewhere. Boundaries demarcating replica, reconstruction and restoration are permeable. The Pasir Salak Historical Complex (1990) in Perak contains two traditional, timber houses which are known as 'Rumah Kutai'. In the Perak Malay dialect *kutai* means 'old' or 'ancient' (undated brochure, 'Historical Complex Pasir Salak'). Rumah Kutai I (Plate 17, p. 229) was approximately ninety years old and Rumah Kutai II (Plate 18, p. 229) was "a recently built reconstruction", according to a Museums Department officer who had assisted in the project (pers. comm., 6 Dec. 1996).



Plate 17. Rumah Kutai I, Pasir Salak Historical Complex, the old 'old' house  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 18. Rumah Kutai II, Pasir Salak Historical Complex, the new 'old' house  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

Another example is in the State of Pahang, at the Pulau Keladi Cultural Village (1994). Pahang is the home state of Malaysia's second Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak (d. 1976). Among other buildings, the 'village' contains the House of Birth of Tun Abdul Razak. A text informs that the timber house is a replica on the same site where the original had once stood. P. Ramlee's House (1991) in Penang is a slight variation in theme. The National Archives carried out "restoration work" on the house, originally built in 1926 (Arkib Negara Malaysia 1994: 46). Because the house was made of timber, only 10% of the original materials could be re-used in its restoration (Arkib Negara Malaysia c. 1997). As noted in Malacca, there may be percentages of 'authenticity'. A member of the Penang Heritage Trust questions the restoration methods of P. Ramlee's House that resulted in "demolition of the original" so that a "newer, better replica" could be built (pers. comm., 30 Nov. 1996).

Perlis was the last State in Malaysia to materialise a state museum (1995). Perlis shares a border with Thailand and an interwoven history. The museum's architectural identity, based on a prominent residence built during the Siamese rule of Perlis (1821-1842), is explained in a museum text (*Sejarah Rumah Tetamau Kangar*). The text reveals that the house was one of the oldest structures in the state but was declared structurally unsound and demolished in 1991. In the same year the state government started work on a 'substitute building' ("*bangunan gantian*") on the same site to house the state museum. The text is accompanied by two black and white, undated photographs of the original building and although the contemporary museum building (Plate 19, p. 231) shows some resemblance, it is not an architectural 'substitute'. As noted earlier, the 'replica' may become the new, improved 'real thing'. A similar narrative may be discerned in the new Royal Malaysian Police Museum, Kuala Lumpur. The building is a replica of a British Officers' Mess, over one hundred years old, that originally stood on the site but was declared beyond restoration (Halal Hj. Ismail, pers. comm., 12 Nov. 1997).

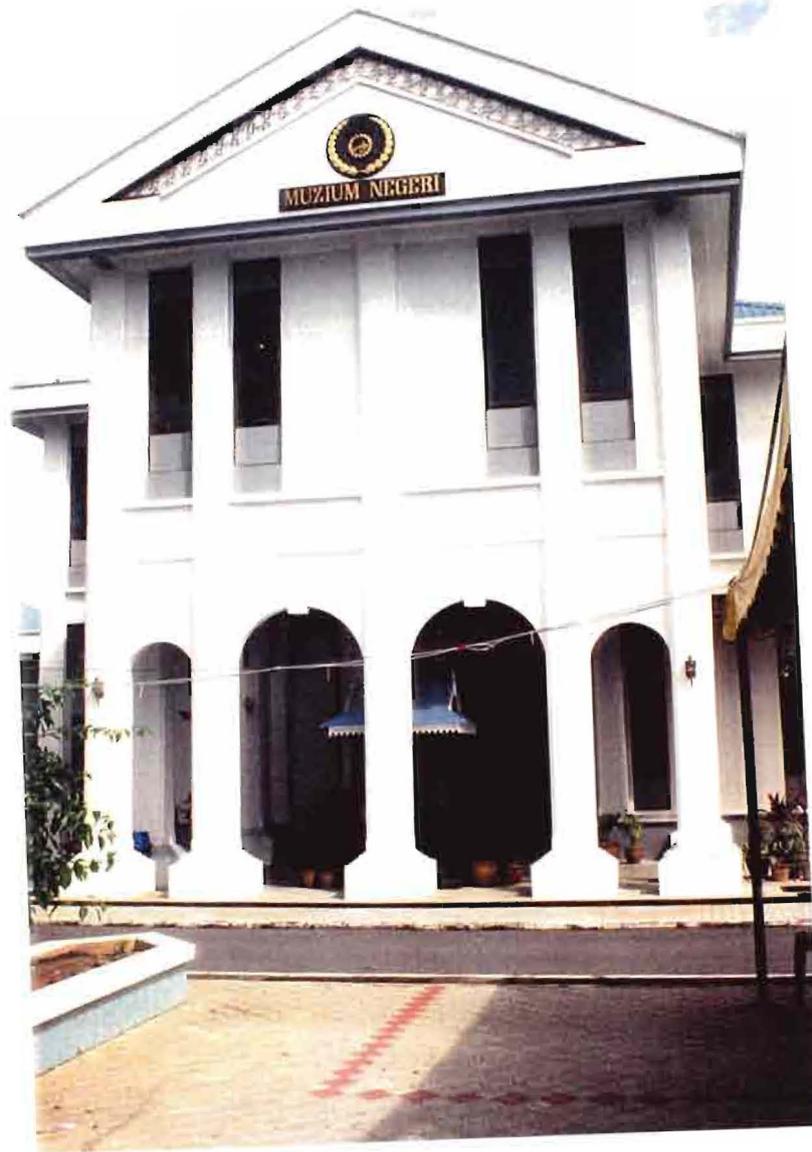


Plate 19. Perlis State Museum, replica of a 19th C. residence  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

The final two examples are drawn from Sarawak. The Limbang Regional Museum (Plate 20, p. 233) of 1994 explains its origins in the text, 'Old fort, Limbang':

This two-storeyed wooden building was built in 1897. It first served as a fort during Rajah Charles Brooke's reign ... It was burnt down in September 1989. As it had been declared a historical monument in 1985, this building was rebuilt on the exact site following the original design and architecture in 1991.

Another new, old fort houses the Baram Regional Museum (Plate 21, p. 233) of 1997. The original fort (c. 1898), Fort Hose, was named after Charles Hose, the nineteenth-century Sarawak administrative officer and collector (see Chap. 5). The text, 'History of Fort Hose', reveals the fort was declared an historical building in 1971, was razed by fire in 1994, and in 1995, "all the different communities of the Baram each contributed a belian [ironwood] pole for the reconstruction of this historical monument ... according to its original dimensions and materials".

The foregoing examples manifest different interpretations of replica, restoration and reconstruction. They also feature a diversity of structures, ranging from the indigenous to the colonial. The structures may be motivated by different concerns but they share a common museal essence: the re-creation of time through space and the imaginative re-use of site. Whether the replica replaces a structure embedded in recent memory or calls into being a structure only recalled through historical memory is not significant. Musealisation can offer refreshed, improved 'memories' that by their rematerialisation suggest a vision of immortality. The argument that museums are 'cultural memory' (see Chap. 7) and serve 'posterity' (see Chap. 2) is a powerful claim on chronology and cosmos. The replica museum building represents the pinnacle of the musealisation movement: it can recycle memory in perpetuity. Landscapes of new 'old' buildings, 'instant antiquity' and ahistorical historical monuments ought not be confused with the post-modern movement, which is assumed to question master narratives (see Lyotard 1984: xxiv). The musealisation movement is the master of narrative.



Plate 20. Limbang Regional Museum, Sarawak, replica of a 19th C. fort  
Note the date '1897' on the gable.  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1997



Plate 21. Baram Regional Museum, Sarawak, replica of Fort Hose  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1997

• **Museum Complex, Kompleks Muzium, Complexe Muséale**

One of the French equivalents of 'museum complex' is 'complexe muséale' (Blanchet & Bernard 1989: 77) which expresses a greater linguistic precision than its English equivalent. However, it was the Germans who first developed the idea of a museum complex: Berlin's 'Museum-insel' (Museum Island) which was shaped during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Lewis 1992: 11; for a detailed account, see Gaehtgens 1996). Thus, the nineteenth century spawned the museum complex, museum culture and the museum movement, creating a powerful configuration of space, time and ideology. This configuration adapts readily to a contemporary context and local circumstances. In Malaysia the *kompleks muzium* emerged as a pronounced musealisation pattern of the 1986-1997 period. My usage of the term, *kompleks muzium*, is based on the Sabah Museum model, that is, a planned development of buildings on the one museum site. Because the complex is a collection of physical structures, one of its common characteristics is the musealisation of greater expanses of space.

Negeri Sembilan's Cultural Complex (1986) is administered by the State's museum board. It is set in over three hectares, but its constituent parts are clustered close together. The complex is a concentration of Minangkabau identity. The descendants of the original settlers in the state came from Minangkabau, in Indonesian Sumatra, and they maintain their matrilineal system and customs known as *adat perpatih*. The complex comprises the Minangkabau-style palace, Istana Ampang Tinggi (relocated and converted into a museum in 1954), which was again relocated to the present site. A Minangkabau house, constructed without nails, and thought to date to 1898, was also shifted to the site (Lembaga Muzium Negeri Sembilan c. 1993: 4). The main building, Teratak Perpatih (Plate 22, p. 235), also of Minangkabau architecture, was moved to the site and modified after it had been originally set up for a Qur'an reading competition (ibid: 2). It was declared the state museum when the complex was opened (Lembaga Muzium Negeri Sembilan c. 1996: 2)



Plate 22. Main building of Cultural Complex, Negeri Sembilan  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 23. Minangkabau-style display unit in main building  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

The complex is a large-scale exercise in movable 'cultural property': all three timber buildings were shifted to the site. This propensity for mobility is, itself, symbolic of the Minangkabau migration patterns of the seventeenth century (Andaya & Andaya 1982: 72). Settlements such as those in Negeri Sembilan, outside the Minangkabau heartland, were known as *rantau* (ibid: 72) and the verb, *merantau*, means to journey or to travel to a foreign land. The resettled buildings of the Cultural Complex are a variation of the traditional *merantau* theme. In contrast to the Sabah Museum complex where Sabahan identity had to be architecturally innovated, the Cultural Complex of Negeri Sembilan could simply move the architectural forms into place. The Cultural Complex resembles a museum *rantau* within the larger *rantau* of Negeri Sembilan. The complex appears as a spatio-temporal enclave: its displays (indoors and outdoors) emphasise customs and traditions, though hermeneutically sealed off from the present.

Paradoxically, Minangkabau architecture, with its elaborate roof structures (Plate 23, p. 235), has been one of the most replicated forms in modern Malaysian architecture so that the symbolism of the Minangkabau may *merantau* throughout the peninsula. One example is the Selangor residence of the first Malaysian director of JHEOA (Department of Orang Asli Affairs); the Minangkabau-style house was later converted into the JHEOA Museum (Plate 24, p. 237). This hybridity of identities is being maintained in the new, larger building of Minangkabau design, being constructed to house Orang Asli artefacts (see Plate 25, p. 237).



Plate 24. J.H.E. Orang Asli Museum, Selangor  
The new museum under construction can be seen to the left.  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

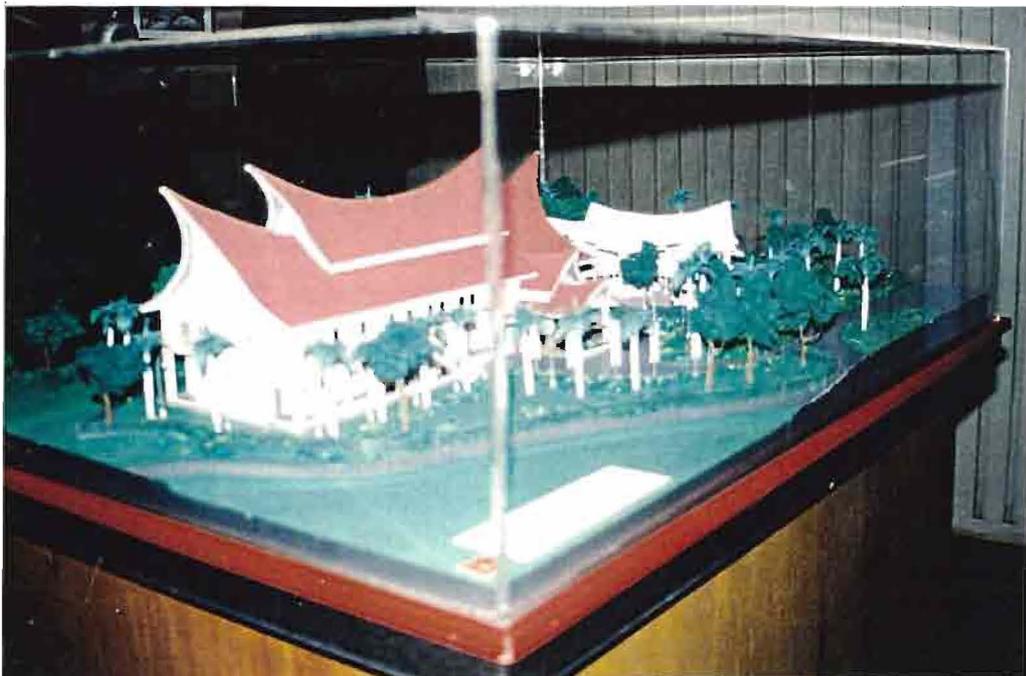


Plate 25. Model of new J.H.E. Orang Asli Museum, displayed in the present museum  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

The imagining of time and space in the Perak Historical Complex (Fort of Ngah Ibrahim) has already been examined as part of the national 'collection'. Also in the State of Perak is the first historical complex, Pasir Salak Historical Complex (1990), which was initiated by the State's Chief Minister (Yayasan Perak c. 1990: 1). The complex is being developed in stages, as indicated in the following excerpt:

Today, the Historical Complex of Pasir Salak consists of two 'Rumah Kutai' or Traditional Malay House [sic] exhibited with historical and cultural artifacts within its premises, two historical monuments and an old mosque. Later, further extensions include a special museum called the 'Time Tunnel', chalets, a watch tower, an amphitheatre, a floating restaurant, Fort of Dato Maharaja Lela and a water sports recreation centre for tourists (ibid: 2).

On a visit in 1996, some of these latter developments were taking form on the site of over 3.5 hectares. The Perak State Government plans to make the complex into a "one-stop tourist destination" (*New Straits Times* 28 June 1996). Pasir Salak Historical Complex is superimposed on a Malay *kampung* (village), in a remote area of central Perak. As noted above, the village mosque, which is still in use, is part of the complex. The present shape and future development of Kampung Pasir Salak are extracted from its past. It was the site of the assassination in 1875 of J.W.W. Birch, the first British Resident of Perak (see Chap. 5).

The historical complex is spread along the bank of the Perak River (Birch was killed while bathing in the river) and the place is marked by a colonial monument, as well as a contemporary marble slab. At a short distance is the 'Warriors Memorial' dedicated to those involved in the killing of Birch:

The monument is actually a gigantic "sundang", a type of Malay Sword generally called a "kris". It was erected to commemorate the bravery of ... [those] who helped arouse the spirit of nationalism at Pasir Salak. A "sundang" of this type was believed to have been used in the assassination of British Resident James Birch (undated brochure, 'Historical Complex Pasir Salak').

In Rumah Kutai I the Pasir Salak incident, and its aftermath, is depicted as the first nationalist uprising against the British. On display is a painting of the killing of Birch and the caption informs the weapon used was a *lembing* (a Malay ridged spear). Earlier it was noted that the *sundang* was described as the weapon of assassination. Other contradictions in the interpretation of history merit attention. The historians, Andaya and Andaya (1982: 162), argue that if this incident is regarded as "the first stirrings of an incipient nationalism", this factor must also be conceded in attacks against the Dutch in Kedah and Perak in the seventeenth century. Similarly, in the Minangkabau area of Nanning, the year-long Nanning War of 1831 against the British cannot be ignored (ibid: 123). Perak's claim to the 'birth' of nationalism resembles Malacca's claim to the 'birth' of the nation.

In the symbolism of space, Rumah Kutai I (the Birch narrative thread) is separated from Rumah Kutai II (cultural display of the Perak Malays) (refer to Plates 17 and 18, p. 229). The complex and its promotional literature reveal a composite structure of state identity, national identity and touristic identity. The souvenir shop includes in its offerings the British colonial hat. In an apt parallel from colonial times, C.W. Harrison's (1985b: 169-170) chapter of 1923, 'Notes for travellers', advises the purchase of the local *mengkuang* (palm leaf) hats, sold at the Perak, Selangor and Raffles Museums. The material colonisation of the former colonisers is also suggested in the museum known as the 'Time Tunnel', which was nearing completion at the time of my visit. The 'tunnel' is a timber building on concrete stilts, that is, a large-scale adaptation of a traditional house (*rumah kutai*). The 'time', according to a newspaper report (Rajendram 1997: 24), is "Perak's historical moments", depicted in a series of re-enactments using life-size wax figures. The article also includes a photograph of the re-enactment of the Pangkor Treaty featuring the wax colonisers as the museum objects. The complex as a re-creation of British colonialists is almost an inversion of the re-creation of the 'natives' during British colonialism. However, the Historical Complex is a more complicated process for it includes the musealisation of an entire village, Kampung Pasir Salak.

A newspaper feature (Mimi 1996: 13) on the parliamentary seat of Pasir Salak provides some insight into the villagers' reception of the historical complex growing in their midst. A security guard from the village, who works at the complex, questions its location in Kampung Pasir Salak: "The village is small and the complex dwarfs it even more" (ibid: 13). This is a seemingly description of the scale of musealisation. Another villager welcomes the increased job opportunities the complex provides in an agricultural community but underlines the experience of "a kind of culture shock" (ibid: 13). Musealisation may be perceived differently by the community affected and by the initiators of the project (cf. the proposed Malacca Heritage Complex).

Finally, it is instructive to include the observations of two non-Malaysian museum professionals. Bassing (1994: 7), of the Smithsonian Institution, was most impressed with the aesthetics of the location: "The setting is quite pretty, right on the river, and the set of buildings takes full advantage of the environment." Kalb (1995a: 17) of the New England Folklife Centre, Massachusetts, enthused: " ... it is the most vital cultural site I have seen in Malaysia, filled with local people". It was 'filled with' locals because her visit coincided with a major religious holiday (ibid: 16) where it is the tradition for relatives to *balik kampung*—'return home to the village' to fulfil familial, social and religious obligations.

In 1982 the Terengganu state government agreed to the construction of a new 'Kompleks Muzium' for the Terengganu State Museum (Muzium Negeri Terengganu 1996: 15). The Sabah Museum's conceptualisation of a complex, had a discernible influence on the new Terengganu Museum complex of 1996. The complex (Fig. 15, p. 241), situated on a site of 27 hectares, is also an architectural artefact featured in the most recent brochure of the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board. (The state recently had its own 'Visit Terengganu Year 1997'.)

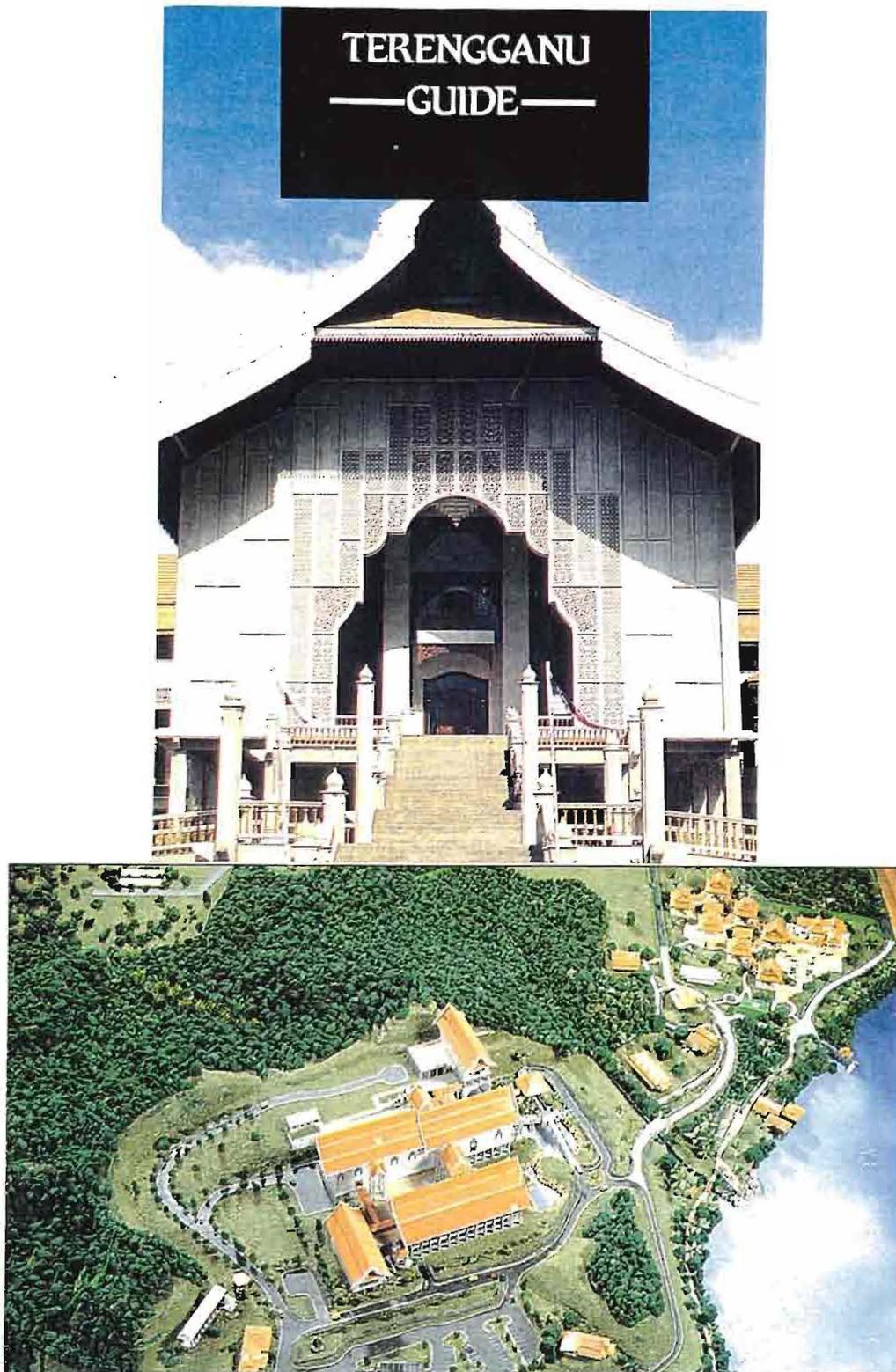


Fig. 15. Terengganu State Museum complex, composite view:

Top: one of the four structures of the main building

Bottom: aerial view of the Terengganu State Museum complex

T: Reproduced from undated brochure, 'Malaysia: Terengganu Guide', Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism.

B: Reproduced from Muzium Negeri Terengganu 1996, *Upacara Perasmian Muzium Negeri Terengganu, pada Hari Sabtu, 20 April 1996*, p. 15.

The main building is an extraordinary amplification of traditional architecture. As explained by the museum's director, the concept is based on "dynamic culture" so that the traditional house design can be enlarged in scale and made permanent with durable building materials (Mohd Yusof Abdullah, pers. comm., 21 April 1996). This massive main building is supported on sixteen concrete stilts (another adaptation of traditional architecture) and comprises four buildings interlinked with decorative walkways.

In addition to the main museum building, the site contains two spacious timber buildings: the Gallery of Trade & Sailing which also has two large sailing vessels as outdoors exhibits, and the Fisheries & Marine Park Gallery, with its outdoors exhibits of a dozen 'Fishermen's boats' and 'Traditional fisherman's house'. Similar to the Sabah Museum's emphasis on ethnobotany, the Terengganu Museum has a herb garden of plants used in traditional medicine. The site also includes a display of four relocated 'traditional houses', and these will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Visually, 'tradition' is the most prominent theme uniting the component parts of the Terengganu Museum complex. This is also reinforced in the promotional brochure 'Muzium Negeri Terengganu': the most frequently recurring word is *tradisional* (traditional). However, one exception to the 'traditional' theme is the petroleum gallery. In the composite structure of the main building are the following galleries: textiles, customs, royalty, ethnology, weapons, chief ministers, history, Islam, and petroleum (natural history is being prepared). The petroleum gallery has its own opening plaque which informs that it was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of the State in October 1994. (The entire complex was officially opened by the Sultan of Terengganu in April 1996.) The petroleum gallery, sponsored and set up by Petronas (the national oil and gas company of Malaysia), informs: "The petroleum industry has served as a catalyst for Terengganu's socio-economic growth and development ...".

Terengganu's wealth is derived from the petroleum industry and the wealth of the State is on display in this 'kompleks muzium' (estimates of its cost vary between RM50 million to RM70 million). Petronas operates oil and gas fields off-shore Terengganu but the main economic activity of the Terengganu people is fishing. This emphasis is evident in the galleries and outdoor displays dealing with fishing, boat construction and maritime

trade. The 'traditional' aspects of these activities are well documented in the museum complex but appear truncated from present practices (on new fishing and boat technologies, see Khalid 1995: 8) The theme of the sea as a resource in these tradition-oriented galleries has no thread of continuity in the petroleum gallery where the sea is also a vital economic resource. This gallery exists in a separate physical and conceptual space, truncated from 'traditional' practices. According to a Malaysian who has worked on the off-shore sites, when inexplicable difficulties are encountered on a rig, a *bomoh* is brought in to perform special rites (Fong Tuck Hong, pers. comm., 24 April 1996). A *bomoh* is a Malay ritual specialist and healer. The operation of dual coherence systems in a contemporary frame is not part of the Terengganu Museum's concept of 'tradition' or 'dynamic culture' (for another tradition-technology amalgam, see Amry 1996: 1).

Although the displays of the Terengganu Museum complex are devoid of temporal continuity, the monumental complex in its symbolisation of space imparts a contemporary communiqué. Trigger (1990: 119) identifies the defining characteristic of 'monumental architecture' as "its scale and elaboration [which] exceed the requirements of any practical functions that a building is intended to perform". Although Trigger's (ibid: 127) thesis is primarily concerned with the monumental archaeology of past civilisations as symbols of political power, he alludes to the implications for contemporary architecture. The Terengganu Museum complex, as a monumental musealisation of space, presents a profound ambiguity. The massive complex is a statement of petroleum wealth and within the complex is the tiny 'Traditional fisherman's house' in its stark simplicity. The most vivid paradox of the Terengganu Museum complex is the disparity in these two economic portraits. These contradictions are ignored in reports of Bassing (1994) and Kalb (1995a), both of whom appear overawed by the museum's monumental and ornamental architecture. Their comments on the new Terengganu Museum complex are almost identical. Bassing (1994: 9) reports: "It is state-of-the-art museology ...". Kalb (1995a: 19) describes it as a "sparkling state of the art museum" which can serve as "a wonderful case study" (ibid: 20) for the future planning of Malaysian museums.

The characteristics of Malacca's 'museum complex' have already been detailed. However, the Maritime Museum Complex is emerging as a complex within a complex. Presently, it comprises the Maritime Museum (replica Portuguese galleon) on the bank of the Malacca River as it flows into the Straits of Malacca. Across the road is a former godown displaying shipwreck artefacts and also housing the Royal Malaysian Navy Museum. Beached on the land in front of the Navy Museum is a 110-tonne, 30-metre naval vessel. Another building, adjacent to the Maritime Museum, is being prepared for the complex 'collection'. Ironically, on the 'deck' of the replica Portuguese galleon one may observe the fluidity of the 'real thing': the movement of battered cargo boats and modern ferries between Malacca and Sumatra (Plate 26, p. 245), and the bustle of activity at the quayside, with its row of godowns. The word 'godown', *gedung/gudang* in Bahasa Malaysia, is a linguistic legacy from Portuguese rule. The movement of goods, languages, ideas and people—the quintessential features of 'trading cultures'—provides continuity in Malacca's maritime history but it is being increasingly obliterated by the fixed structures of the Maritime Complex.

The final two complexes, both opened in 1996, differ substantially from the previous examples in that they are museums within commercial complexes. The Crafts Cultural Complex on Langkawi Island (Kedah State) and the Crafts Cultural Complex in Kuala Lumpur are projects of the Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation (MHDC). MHDC also established the Textiles Museum (1996) in Kuala Lumpur but this is not part of a 'complex' structure. The Craft Cultural Complex (Kompleks Budaya Kraf) in Kuala Lumpur is set on a 20 hectare site and that in Langkawi covers 35 hectares. Both have the characteristic monumentality of the 'complex'. The site in Langkawi (a popular tourist destination) has been described as a "multi-million ringgit shopping complex-cum-museum" (*New Straits Times* 11 Nov. 1996). Within the "massive cultural complex" (ibid: 14) are three museums on heritage, Islam and royalty. The latter museum is linked to an era when master craftsmen were under the royal patronage system which ensured "crafts heritage" (MHDC 1996: 23). Notably, the MHDC (ibid: 10) has assumed this role in the modern era.



Plate 26. View from 'deck' of replica galleon housing Maritime Museum  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

The MHDC (1996: 13) explains that its museums are founded on the "Museum in Education" concept so that they serve as resource and documentation centres on crafts and crafts producers. Other museum activities include a "Preservation Programme" for handicrafts and an "Adiguru Programme" to ensure the skills of master craftspersons are passed on (ibid: 36). One of the objectives to establish museums within the complexes was to "bridge heritage continuity from past to present" (ibid: 13). The juxtaposition of museum displays and commercial displays of crafts generates a 'heritage continuity' largely absent in the traditional museum complexes that have been discussed to date.

Although the complexes are hybrids of commerce and culture, the expression 'commercial culture' is deceptive. The dual objectives of commercial productivity and heritage preservation (MHDC 1996: 10) merge spatially in the complexes. The museum adds 'authenticity' to shopping, and shopping is enhanced by the museum experience. The 'Museum Shoppe' is where "Malaysia's rich cultural heritage is embodied in a variety of souvenirs ... [and] life-sized mannequins of craftsmen at work re-enact typical scenes of village workshops" (undated brochure, 'Craft Cultural Complex Kuala Lumpur'). It is unclear from the promotional literature whether the Museum Shoppe is the Crafts Museum or vice versa. In fact, they are a fused entity: the absence of price tags on the artefacts demarcates the invisible boundary between the two. The Museum Shoppe is also a feature of the Langkawi complex and the Textiles Museum.

The Crafts Cultural Complex/Kompleks Budaya Kraf is a spatial merger of the museum idea and the shopping complex. The word 'complex' (*kompleks*) was introduced into Malaysia with the construction of shopping complexes in the 1970s, first in Kuala Lumpur and later in other urban centres. Both museum complexes and shopping complexes have multiplied and diversified in scope in the past decade, particularly in their adaptations to tourism potential. An undated Tourism Malaysia brochure, 'Shopping around Kuala Lumpur', advises that visiting "historical relics and heritage buildings" is an incomplete experience without visiting the "ultra-modern, one-stop shopping complexes". Similarly, the Craft Cultural Complex advertises itself as a 'one-stop craft centre'.

Here, it is opportune to evaluate some of the museological comparisons made between shopping and museum visiting. In Radley's (1991: 72) department store analogy, whilst visitors do not 'purchase' the artefacts, they garner knowledge of these objects "as a kind of cultural commodity". The museums and Museum Shoppes of the MHDC dissolve this partition for many of the objects on museum display are also available at the Museum Shoppes' displays. Miles (1986: 77-8) employs Falk's analogy to divide museum visitors into "window-shoppers" and "serious-buyers". What is 'on sale' is an educational experience (ibid: 78). Shopping and museum visiting is not an analogy at the Cultural Crafts Complexes; it is the indivisible reality. Finally, Shaman (1987: 272) criticises the development of museums into "department stores which serve as centers for entertainment rather than forums for education". The MHDC's perspectives on the 'Museum in Education' have already been described. My concern, here, is not Shaman's critique of museums, but his critique of department stores. His supposition that they are devoid of 'educational' value warrants closer examination in the Malaysian context.

Excepting the MHDC museums, commercial display techniques have had little impact on museums and museum complexes. However, in the past decade shopping complexes have borrowed eclectically from museum ideas, particularly since the escalation of tourism. 'Malaysia Fest' introduced in 1987 and organised by the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, involves the participation of a large number of organisations and institutions. A small sample of activities at commercial sites in Kuala Lumpur, during 'Malaysia Fest' 1997, may give some insight into the transferability of museum processes to shopping complexes. Many of the programmes were organised jointly by the shopping complexes and state governments (through their tourism promotion agencies). One shopping complex held a 'Sabah Ethnic Music and Dance' promotion and exhibition. The programme also included craft demonstrations and handicraft products for sale. In another shopping complex Kelantan was promoting its 'Visit Kelantan Year 1998' through exhibitions and demonstrations. Another shopping centre promoted 'The Craftsmanship of Excellence' with displays, demonstrations, and dances of the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities.

Shopping complexes are lively venues for cultural activities and exhibitions not only during tourism promotion campaigns, but throughout the annual cycle of religious celebrations. Because of the multi-religious composition of the population, public holidays are gazetted for the major religious festivities. Closely following 'Malaysia Fest' in September 1997 was the Hindu celebration of Deepavali in October. One of the most widespread activities in shopping complexes was decorating the floors of their entrances with immense *kolam* designs. These intricate designs, traditionally made with naturally dyed rice, usher in Deepavali in homes and, increasingly, in shopping complexes. One shopping complex in Kuala Lumpur had participants of diverse religious backgrounds from a variety of schools and youth movements working on a *kolam* of the Hindu epic, *Ramayana* (*New Sunday Times* 19 Oct. 1997). It is possible to review the assumption that department stores do not possess any educational value. The museum idea as translated in Malaysian shopping complexes is no less 'educational' than the museum idea in the museum. Nor is commercial culture any less 'authentic' than culture presented in or created by museums.

Like museums, shopping centres can be places to pass the time. However, entry into shopping complexes is free. Since Malacca's PERZIM introduced an entry fee in 1986, several state museum authorities have followed suit. Some charge a standard fee (Malacca, Pahang); others have a two-tier scheme for 'Malaysians' and 'foreigners' (Terengganu, Kelantan). The Sarawak Cultural Village categorises visitors as residents of the State and 'foreigners'—foreign 'foreigners' and Malaysian 'foreigners'. The Royal Abu Bakar Museum, Johor, classifies visitors into locals of the State, other Malaysians and foreigners. These classification schemes call to mind the early colonial censuses (see Chap. 4). To date, most state museum authorities have maintained a policy of free entry (Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor, Perak, Sarawak, Sabah; the latter plans to introduce an entry charge in the near future). All the 'national-type' museums are free except the National Planetarium and National Science Centre. Muzium Negara introduced an entrance fee (RM1) in January 1991. Subsequently, attendance figures were halved; the half that has 'disappeared' is represented by "the casual local visitor" (Mohd Kassim 1994: 16). The user-pays policy may be contrasted to the earlier policy of catering to the lower-income sector of Malaysian society (see Chap. 7).

Employing Miles' terminology, the 'window-shoppers' of the museum may decide to 'window-shop' at shopping complexes, with their spectrum of 'popular culture' events, exhibitions, activities and cultural performances. Museums have yet to come to terms with the movement of musealisation to commercial sites that, significantly, do not require museum structures.

Civic centres in Sarawak offer an alternative combination of complex and museum. The establishment of museums within a larger complex, the civic centre, is an initiative of the State's Chief Minister. To date three civic centres have been built and the plan is to extend the scheme to other major towns of Sarawak (Mullie 1992). The towns are widely dispersed in Sarawak, the largest state in Malaysia. Because of the terrain, most settlement has occurred along the coast and riverine systems, which provide the main means of transportation throughout the rugged interior, as in the case of the Kapit Division. The combination of museum and civic centre facilities is a Sarawakian solution to demographics and ethnic identity, for the civic centres (*dewan suarah*) are also perceived as symbols of Sarawak's multi-ethnic diversity and unity (Mullie 1992). This is pronounced in the multi-ethnic museum contents and also in the architecture of the civic centres. Again, the Sabah Museum's creation of a composite architectural identity may be perceived as an influence.

The Kapit Civic Centre (Fig. 16, p. 250) is based on the longhouse design of the Ibans, the largest group of inhabitants in the Kapit Division. The supporting pillars of the longhouse are adapted from the architecture of another community in the area, the Orang Hulu. At the entry to the Bau Civic Centre is an Islamic style arch, with statues of Chinese guardian lions at either side. The main building is a longhouse structure linked by an extended verandah to the museum. This is based on the *baruk* which, among the Bidayuh (the most populous group in the area), was a meeting place as well as a keeping place of skulls. Similarly, the Sibuh Civic Centre merges Islamic and Chinese architectural markers within an overall longhouse design. Sibuh has a predominantly Chinese population.



Fig. 16. Kapit Civic Centre, Sarawak, containing museum on ground floor  
Reproduced from Dewan Suarah Kapit, n.d., *Annual Report, January 1991 - December 1991*,  
front cover.

Each civic centre provides a range of facilities oriented towards their local communities. According to the manager of the Kapit Civic Centre, the community has also been involved in the museum through the loan or donation of objects (W. Panyau, pers. comm., 6 Oct. 1997). Most of the museum's visitors are students from the Kapit administrative district, an area of just under 39,000 sq. km (ibid). All three civic centre museums are of a human scale, with a human touch. For example, the Sibiu Civic Centre museum uses 'non-standard' museum language such as "our Melanau brothers and sisters".

One may recall Watkins' division of museums into 'real museums' and 'pretenders', the latter of which included museums in civic centres and museums run by businesses (see Chap. 2). In Watkins' taxonomy the civic centre museums in Sarawak and the museums in the MHDC complexes would be classified as 'pretenders'. Conversely, Malacca's Muzium Budaya and the Maritime Museum would be labelled 'real' museums (that is, run by a legitimate museum authority). Watkins' procedure is an elimination of difference not an elaboration of 'museumness'. As Weil points out, the merit of a museum ultimately rests on "the worthiness of its goals, not the mere fact that it *is* a museum" (1995: xv, emphasis in original).

#### • Palaces and Museums

Another musealisation pattern of the 1986-1997 period is the conversion of palaces into museums. Othman's view that the museum idea has its historical roots in the palace (*istana*) of the classical Malay empire (see Chap. 2 ) may now be examined at length. Othman (1988: 98) suggests that a variety of cultural activities were held at the palace which also functioned as the 'custodian of material culture'. His assertion has not been examined in Malaysian museum literature. In the Peninsula, the conversion of several palaces into museums may signify a rediscovery of this tradition but a spectrum of other factors must also be considered.

The first factor is the intensification of heritage awareness during the period 1975 to 1985. Sheppard was one of the first in Malay(si)a to promote the heritage value of timber palaces and it was his initiative that transferred and transformed the Istana Ampang Tinggi into the state museum of Negeri Sembilan in 1954. Sheppard maintained his interest in timber palaces and advocated the preservation of these unique

architectural forms showcasing traditional craftsmanship in their construction and decoration (see Sheppard 1962a, 1962b, 1969, 1986, 1989).

Sheppard (1989: 130), in 'Heritage in danger', relates that the earliest Malay palaces, constructed of timber, were largely destroyed by fire, floods and warfare. Subsequently, with the influence of British rule, the sultans preferred to build Western style palaces of durable materials and the earlier palaces fell into disuse (ibid: 130). There was no concept of preserving the timber palaces (ibid: 130), that is, until the heritage idea began to take hold. Paradoxically, the Western influence that contributed to the demise of the timber palace was also to be a contributing factor in its resurrection. Heritage-enhanced museums became directly or indirectly involved in salvaging timber palaces. For example, the timber palace, Istana Satu, was shifted from Terengganu to Muzium Negara and re-erected as an outdoors display in 1974. The Terengganu State Museum, once it had acquired the land for its complex in the early 1980s, also began to collect Terengganu timber palaces. Two of its four 'traditional houses' are timber palaces.

The musealisation movement, however, generated a new orientation. Of special significance was the construction project of Malacca's replica timber palace, Muzium Budaya, which was opened in July 1986. The emerging 'palace' focused the attention of the other states on their own palaces which were the 'real things'. The Istana Kenangan in the royal town of Kuala Kangsar became the Perak Royal Museum in November 1986. In Johor, the Royal Abu Bakar Museum, Grand Palace, opened to the public in 1990. In Kelantan, the Istana Batu and Istana Jahar became respectively the Royal Museum (1991) and the Museum of Royal Customs and Traditions (1992). In 1992 the Istana Lama at Seri Menanti, Negeri Sembilan, was turned into a royal museum (featured on the latest Tourism Malaysia brochure on the State). The rapid succession of palace-museums between 1986 and 1992 may evidence the symbiosis between heritage and tourism but additional factors should be examined.

Malaysian museum writings make no reference to the transformation of palaces into museums, though the impact of the French Revolution on the democratisation of royal collections in Europe has received commentary (see, for example, Mohd Zulkifli 1974: 6; Othman 1996: 3). One could also ask whether the museum 'movement' into palaces was a democratisation of royal residences. The Istana Kota Setar (now Kedah

Royal Museum) provides some insight through an examination of its history of adaptive re-use. Upon the death of the last royal occupant of the *istana* in 1941, the palace was used as a training school, the headquarters of the Kedah Ladies Group, the St John's Movement, the Scouts Movement, and the Kedah State Ex-soldiers Association, before it was restored and opened as a museum in 1983 on the occasion of the reigning Sultan's silver jubilee (museum text, 'Royal Museum'). The 'democratisation' of the royal residence preceded its musealisation. Moreover, an historical perspective will reveal that although the institution of the sultanate was embedded in feudalistic structures, the ruler's palace was accessible to the ruled (for details, see Sheppard 1986: 38-40).

Kedah's museum development within an historical precinct in the early 1980s had a marked influence on Kelantan's 'cultural zone' of the early 1990s. The zone, in the historical centre of the state's capital, includes the State Mosque built between 1916 to 1926 (still in use) and five museums, two of which were former palaces. The symbolic and physical centre of the zone is the 1840s palace, Istana Balai Besar (not open to the public) which is used for investiture ceremonies and state functions.

A brief background discussion will elucidate that the 'cultural zone' may also be interpreted as a political zone. Conflicts over power between the Sultans and Chief Ministers have occurred at the state administrative level, leading to state-federal disputes (Crouch 1996: 143-4). Between 1983 and 1993 a series of events led to attempts to curb the Sultans' powers through constitutional amendments, in which the Government succeeded eventually (ibid: 147). During the 1990 elections, Kelantan became the flash point of tension between the Sultan and the Federal Government when the state was won by PAS (Parti Islam se-Malaysia), the opposition party (Vatikiotis 1992: 31). Significantly, Kelantan's 'cultural zone' started to take shape in 1991. The lay-out of the 'cultural zone' signals "the traditional geometry of the ancient Malay kingdoms" (ibid: 32). The museum housed in Istana Jahar (Plate 27, p. 254) and that in Istana Batu, with the imposing Istana Balai Besar as centre-piece, make a sultanate statement that cannot eradicate the politics from the zone of culture. This is not to imply all palace-museums were artefacts of similar circumstances. Nevertheless, the political symbolism of palace-museums cannot be discounted.



Plate 27. Istana Jahar, one of the museums in Kelantan's 'cultural zone'  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 28. Istana Lama of Sri Menanti, Negeri Sembilan  
It is considered the last major timber *istana* to be built and is the latest to be musealised.  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

In other state museums, sultanate history has been accommodated in royal galleries (to be discussed further in Chap. 10). My primary concern, however, is the palace-museum for it affords an opportunity to examine both the musealisation of time and space. There is no better place to begin than in Malacca, 'where it all began'. Sharifah Maznah (1993: 64) describes the construction of Sultan Mansur's palace in Malacca during the fifteenth century as an example of the "indulgence and waste" of the ruling feudal class. Is Malacca's replica palace a re-enactment of the feudal age? The texts in Muzium Budaya make no mention of the feudal age but frequently refer to the 'golden era'. Deconstructing "the myth of the golden age" (ibid: 27) in historical narratives of fifteenth-century Malacca is a primary objective of Sharifah Maznah's study. It is not my intent to distinguish between historical narrative and myth, but merely to identify their museum-embedded versions.

According to Sheppard (1989: 129), the new palace of Sultan Mansur Shah (the architectural model for the museum) was built to replace the one "which had been defiled by Hang Jebat and had been the scene of the famous duel with Hang Tuah". On the ground floor, at the far end of the 'palace' is a tableau, 'The clash of champions', depicting the legendary duel between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat (right characters, wrong palace). At the opposite end of the 'palace' is a tableau with 21 figures, labelled 'Audience hall'. Upstairs, one end houses a large display entitled 'Royal bedchamber'. Much of Muzium Budaya/Cultural Museum is concerned with re-inventing images of sultanate culture during the 'golden era'. Muzium Budaya excludes from its cultural domain the meaning of the 'golden era' for the subjects of the feudal ruling class. The fifteenth-century sultanate images not only recapture Malacca's lost glory but shift the 'golden era' into the present through its museum manifestation: imagined fifteenth-century time carved out in twentieth-century narrative space. The musealisation of time through space (the 'palace') means that Malacca, 'where it all began' is also where it never ends.

The Istana Lama of Sri Menanti (Plate 28, p. 254) in Negeri Sembilan, the most recent royal museum, is considered the last major timber palace to be built in the peninsula (Sheppard 1989: 129-130). The palace was completed in 1908 and abandoned in 1933 when a new masonry palace was built nearby (ibid: 130). This palace and most others built before the beginning of the twentieth century differ substantially from later palaces in terms of

building materials and size. Dumarçay (1991: 81) observes that palace architecture until the early twentieth century "did not differ from that of the houses of the ordinary person except in the care devoted to the building and certain technical accomplishments, like, for example, the absence of nails ...". Similarly, Sheppard (1986: 28) states: "A peasant's hut might be supported on bamboo posts and a prince's palace on carved pillars, but the principle never varied." The human scale of palaces is exemplified by these timber palace-museums. In Peninsular Malaysia the paradox of scale is most vividly expressed in the juxtaposition of these small palace-museums and the monumental museum complexes (in the case of Terengganu Museum complex, the latter also houses the former). This architectural contrast provides a spatial commentary on temporality.

Although the focus of palace-museums is primarily a visual record of royalty, in a few cases, the names of the master craftsmen who constructed the palaces are also recorded. Generally, however, the palace-museums show a distinct lack of historical interest in the details of construction and those who constructed them (for lesser known aspects, see Sheppard 1986: 32; 1989: 129). As the name 'royal museum' signifies, historical consciousness is hierarchically defined. The term 'royal museum' may be understood as a museal display of royalty. The royal museums are not displays of royal collections, although some royal objects and gifts presented to the sultans may be on display. Neither do they house the royal regalia of the sultans (with one exception to be discussed shortly). The interior of the palaces could best be described as a museum in residence in a royal residence. This occupancy registers itself in copious amounts of written information, tableaux to represent royal ceremonies, some rooms that have been reconstructed to a timeless past and showcases (which in the Museum of Royal Customs and Traditions are as ornately crafted as the palace architecture). The most 'authentic' museum display is the palace building although this, too, may have been modified to accommodate museum spill-over. For instance, the timber Istana Kenangan (Plate 29, p. 257), supported on pillars, had its original flooring replaced with marble tiles. This area beneath the palace has a series of screens displaying photographs and texts (Plate 30, p. 257). In *Cultural Heritage of ASEAN* (ASEAN 1995: 56) Malaysia's royal museums are described as "traditional palaces that are historical monuments with unique architecture". The adjectives 'traditional', 'historical' and 'unique' are open to a range of interpretations.



Plate 29. Perak Royal Museum, housed in Istana Kenangan  
The palace, built in 1926, was designed as an artefact: the shape of a sword in its scabbard when viewed from above.

Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 30. Display on ground level of Perak Royal Museum: a series of eight screens

Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

The Royal Abu Bakar Museum, Grand Palace (Plate 31, p. 259), in Johor provides a striking contrast to other palace-museums. The palace, built between 1864 and 1866, is not small-scale. It was not styled on traditional architecture nor constructed with timber. The text, 'The Grand Palace and Royal Abu Bakar Museum', explains:

It is in the Renaissance style, but with clear Anglo-Malay influence, and it was built by local workmen under the supervision of a European architect. Much of the original furniture was ordered in England by his Majesty Sultan Abu Bakar in 1866 ... The building has been enlarged and renovated several times. In 1912 the east wing was pulled down and the present banqueting hall erected in its place.

The most significant difference to other royal museums is that the Royal Abu Bakar Museum is a semi-functioning palace. The throne room is still used for coronation and investiture ceremonies, and preparations in the banqueting hall may be observed. The palace-museum also houses the royal regalia, sacred objects still in ceremonial use. The regalia consist of twelve objects, three of which are 'Ceremonial Kris', 'Mace of Religion' and 'Mace of the Universe'. Visual messages of power are repeated in the *in situ* lay-out, the royal collections, and the very opulence of the palace itself. The museum presence is subtle and discrete. The palace-museum reinforces the living heritage of power and ideology through the medium of the palace which, however, can only be made fully accessible through the medium of the museum. Interestingly, the Sultanate of Johor was the direct heir of the dispersed Malaccan Sultanate. The Malaccan palace is summoned to 'life' through the power of the museum; in Johor the palace as locus of power is given a public extension of life through the museum.

Royal museums, the museum in a semi-functioning palace, and the museum as a resurrected palace are heavily steeped in sultanate symbolism and history but the palace-museum is a contemporary creation. Whether the museum idea has now come full circle to its sultanate origins in the classical Malay empire is debatable. The palaces of the past, as centres of royal patronage, supported the work of master craftsmen (cf. the modern, patronage role of the Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation). The palaces also supported other *seni* forms, particularly dance-dramas and shadow play. Contemporary palace-museums are not a continuation of these palace-embedded activities.



Plate 31. Royal Abu Bakar Museum/Grand Palace, view from rear  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

Othman's (1998: 98) claim that the palaces of the classical Malay empire performed the role of 'custodian of material culture' may also be contested on terminological grounds for 'material culture' is too heavily laden with contemporary connotations. As indicated earlier, originally, timber palaces themselves were not preserved for the sake of preservation. All material things were fated to a terminal life-span. One ancestral strand that Othman fails to explore is the political significance of the palace.

Dumarçay (1991: 134), in his thorough study of Southeast Asian palaces, concludes that palaces which originally functioned as 'political centres' are being transformed into 'cultural centres', exemplified by the palace-museum in Laos. Such an interpretation in the case of palace-museums in Peninsular Malaysia is too limited. The palace may reclaim its 'political centre' through the musealisation of sultanate space and time. What cannot be reclaimed may be re-invented and remythologised as in Malacca's replica palace. Similarly, restoring palaces as a heritage act does not preclude the possibility of rejuvenating their political symbolism or asserting their powerful symbolism in contested political spheres.

A final example may illustrate that Dumarçay's palace thesis errs in its uni-linear sequence. The Balai Besar (Great Hall) in Kedah is the centre of royal functions and official ceremonies. It is not a palace-museum but it is occasionally used as an exhibition venue. One exhibition, viewed in May 1996, portrayed the ruling party's history in conjunction with its 50th anniversary. The exhibition was subtitled *Antara Warisan dan Wawasan*—'Between Heritage and Vision'. This expression is a cogent summary of the spatio-temporal grid of palace-museums. The adaptive re-use of palaces may also signal the adaptive re-use of past ideologies.

#### • Traditional Houses and Museums

The next theme shifts in social structure from the dwelling places of the royals to the dwellings of 'commoners'. Moreover, both these patterns musealise ongoing social institutions. the former the sultanate and the latter, the traditional house embedded in the village community. This section merely aims to document some examples of this period to establish that the traditional house has become a common and widespread subject (and object) of the musealisation movement (also refer to Plates 17 and 18, p. 229).

The following examples (not an exhaustive list) are classified by state to give some indication of the distribution (and actual physical movement) of the traditional house:

#### **MALACCA**

Mini Malaysia: replica traditional houses representing all states of Malaysia (and house types of ASEAN members were added in September 1991).

Alor Gajah District Museum: architecture based on a Malay house.

Aborigines Museum: replica of a longhouse from Sarawak.

#### **NEGERI SEMBILAN**

Cultural Complex: reassembled Minangkabau house.

#### **SELANGOR**

Forest Research Institute of Malaysia: two reassembled traditional houses from Malacca and Terengganu near FRIM Museum.

Shah Alam Gallery: building based on traditional Malay house.

#### **PERAK**

Pasir Salak Historical Complex: 'Time Tunnel' architecture based on traditional house, Rumah Kutai I and Rumah Kutai II, as well as the village setting.

#### **PENANG**

Pinang Cultural Centre: reassembled traditional house from Negeri Sembilan, as well replica houses (inclusive of longhouses).

#### **TERENGGANU**

Terengganu State Museum complex: four reassembled traditional houses (two of which are palaces), replica of traditional fisherman's house.

#### **KELANTAN**

Handicraft Museum (under state museum authority): modelled on traditional house, and part of Handicraft Village.

#### **PAHANG**

Muzium Sultan Abu Bakar (state museum): reassembled traditional Malay house in compound.

Pulau Keladi Cultural Village (under state museum authority): replica houses in village setting.

#### **SABAH**

Sabah Museum's Heritage Village: a collection of replica traditional houses.

#### **SARAWAK**

Sarawak Cultural Village: a collection of replica traditional houses.

#### **KUALA LUMPUR (FEDERAL TERRITORY)**

Heritage of Malaysia Trust: reassembled traditional house from Kedah.

The traditional house ranges from replica to 'real thing' and it spans a variety of settings: from the traditional house as a single exhibit to an entire re-created village. This recurrent domestic imagery also extends to museum architecture replicating traditional house design and building materials. As with the previous musealisation patterns, the dating is significant. It was mentioned earlier that the Sabah Museum's traditional houses project of 1984 only materialised in 1990. In the meantime, Malacca's Mini Malaysia (1986) had already emerged. It was initiated as a tourism project of the Malacca State Development Corporation. Similar to the impact of Malacca's replica palace in the realm of palace-museums, Mini Malaysia focused attention on the traditional house. However, in contrast to the palace-museum, the traditional house is not confined to Peninsular Malaysia. It is the one museum theme that could be considered 'Malaysian' both in terms of subject matter and geographical distribution.

As stressed in Chapter 6, heritage is as much to do with shaping the present and reaching into the future as it is with preserving the past. During the period 1986-1997, the traditional house has taken a visible hold of the museum imagination. It is a musealisation pattern that requires a comprehensive analysis of concepts such as 'tradition', 'authenticity and 'nostalgia' in their spatial-temporal dimensions. Consequently, the following chapter will seek to clarify traditional houses as museum collections and the museal interpretation of the *kampung* (village).

## Conclusion

In the past decade (1986-1997) the main patterns crafted by the proverbial needle have been the replica building, museum complex, palace-museum, and the traditional house (and/or village). These musealisation patterns have the potential to reproduce themselves in the future (assuming Malaysia's economic recovery from the financial crisis which emerged in mid-1997). The replica building offers triumph over transience and boundless opportunities to remodel the 'museumising imagination' for imaginings of the museum. State rivalry will encourage the perpetuation of the museum complex. Significantly, Terengganu's 'state of the art' state museum complex has been recommended as a future model by Western museum professionals. It is a model based on monumental architecture, monumental cost, and monumental paradoxes. The palace-museum is

unlikely to maintain its trajectory, for it requires an inexhaustible supply of unoccupied palaces. Nevertheless, the possibility cannot be entirely discounted: a palace may be invented (Malacca) or it may continue as a ceremonial venue and double as a museum (Johor). The next chapter will demonstrate that the trend of traditional houses and cultural 'villages' has the potential to become one of the most pervasive musealisation designs of the future.

The third phase of the musealisation movement is not only marked by these four major motifs but also by movement beyond the spatial boundaries of the museum. It has moved into the shopping complex and the village: two contrasting sites on the orbit of the musealisation movement. Although this third phase also coincides with the period of Malaysia's economic prosperity, it would be simplistic to reduce museum expansion to a material reflection of economic growth. I have indicated a diversity of factors at work in museum-making without treating them as separate analytical strands. Factors such as heritage, tourism, nation-making, state identity and political culture are not mutually exclusive. Nor are the patterns produced necessarily mutually exclusive: a replica building, a palace and a traditional house may all be housed in a museum complex (Terengganu State Museum). To shift metaphors, these four orientations constitute the compass points of the musealisation movement. The compass needle that points to the traditional house (and/or village) promises a view of national, state, museum and ethnic identity on the same cultural horizon. This horizon is scanned in the next chapter, 'Where is the village going?'

## Chapter 9. Where is the village going?

*A turtle lays a thousand eggs without knowing it; a hen lays one egg and the whole town knows.*

(Malay proverb)

*No hen is too old or too wise not to fear the coming of Spring.*

(Chinese proverb)

*Duck eggs are sometimes hatched by hens.*

(Iban proverb)

*On two stilts and hundreds of thatched roofs?  
- A chicken.*

(Riddle of Sabah)

### Introduction

Chickens are an integral, animated feature of village (*kampung*) landscape. As in the Sabahan riddle, the chicken is expressed in the visual imagery of the village house. The riddles of the Kadazan-Dusun peoples are known as *sundait* and the 'riddling' activity takes place in the rice fields during the harvesting season (Sabah Museum 1993b: 12). The *kampung* is usually set in an agricultural landscape, but long-established urban *kampungs* also exist. The 'traditional' houses and 'villages' to be examined in this chapter do not rear chickens and are embedded in different economic structures. The secondary riddle of this chapter's title is 'what is a village without chickens?' Elsewhere, this study has shown that museal culture does not confine itself to museum structures. The nation, the state, the village, the house may all be appropriated as artefacts. The re-created village, in particular, creatively combines imaginings of all four on the one site.

For the purpose of this chapter the terms 'village' and *kampung* will also refer to longhouse communities in Sabah and Sarawak. Yeang (1992: 195) describes the longhouses as "an entire village" living in one rectangular, timber and thatch structure on stilts. As formulated in the proverbs, a chicken is a polysemantic linguistic device. Similarly, the 'traditional' house and/or village requires multiple perspectives as it appears in a multiplicity of forms. These include model houses as exhibits; house cross-sections as museum displays; the reassembled house as a single exhibit;

the replica house, museum structures set in real village sites; re-created villages; eclectic use of house architecture for museum buildings, as well as combinations of these forms. The musealisation pattern of the 'traditional' house/village draws on a domestic theme, identifiable as 'Malaysian' in imagery and geography. It also manifests some of the responses to socio-cultural change in contemporary Malaysian society. Consequently, the theme mediates between societal metaphors and museal metaphors.

### The 'Traditional'/'Tradisional'

Before surveying the traditional house as a museum object, the connotations of 'traditional' ought to be examined. The absence of any analytical discussion of the term 'traditional' in Malaysian museum literature compels recourse to non-Malaysian sources. Hudson and Nicholls, in their directory of museums, define 'traditional' as "the pattern of living and working which existed in an area before mechanization, industrialization and the internal combustion engine combined to *destroy* the habits of generations" (1985: xvi, emphasis added). This Euro-American conceptualisation of 'traditional' as extinct life-ways affords no insight into the Malaysian context.

Kahn (1995) in her analysis of Western museums' representations of Pacific Island cultures and Tillotson (1996) in her study of ethnographic museum collections from Borneo confine their discussions of the term 'traditional' to museum objects. Both argue that the 'traditional' in museums has been defined by the temporal frame of pre-European culture contact (Kahn 1995: 332; Tillotson 1996: 37). They also point to the absence of a sense of temporal continuity in conceptualisations of the 'traditional' in museums (Kahn 1995: 333; Tillotson 1996: 47). More pertinent for my discussion are the writers' views that "tradition is a continual process of creative, dynamic invention and reinvention" (Kahn 1995: 334) and one cannot identify historically "an unchanging tradition" (Tillotson 1996: 49).

The Bahasa Malaysia equivalent, *tradisional*, is suggestive of the recent temporality of the 'traditional'. When concepts of time have shifted into divisible realms of 'past' and 'present' and 'future', the category of the 'tradisional' may emerge as a new temporal marker (cf. Chap. 6 on the elevation of *sejarah* ('history') as a temporal orientation). However, it does

not imply the same temporal disjunction as Hudson and Nicholl's definition. The *tradisional* in Malaysia accords more closely with Kahn's and Tillotson's definition of the 'traditional' as an ongoing process of modification. In this chapter it will also emerge that the *tradisional* has a salient spatial component: *rumah tradisional* ('traditional houses'), particularly as a collection of a re-created 'village'. The spatial assertion of the 'traditional' is expressed in the following remarks of the then director of the Sarawak Museum which, itself, was closely involved in the development of the Sarawak Cultural Village/Kampung Budaya Sarawak:

The Cultural Village includes *traditional* houses of the major ethnic groups. These houses will be *traditionally* constructed and *traditionally* furnished as well. Skilled craftsmen and women will live in these houses and will demonstrate *traditional* handicrafts ... In addition, *traditional* cultural performances ... will be organised in the premises. The village will ... be a living museum (Chin 1989: 102, emphases added).

This portrait of a 'living museum' with live-in families suggests living traditions. The 'traditional' in this passage implies a certain temporal continuity. Interestingly, the Sarawak Museum was instrumental in ensuring that the Cultural Village would also feature a replica of the "traditional Melanau rumah tinggi ... no longer in existence today" (Chin 1989: 102). This 'traditional' Melanau 'tall house' (Plate 32, p. 267)—traditionally constructed and traditionally furnished, and site of traditional handicrafts demonstrations—no longer exists in the traditional landscape. Tradition may be reconfigured in new ways.

The Iban traditional longhouse in the Sarawak Cultural Village materialises another connotation of the 'traditional'. The longhouse is a combination of two segments: old traditional (split palm trunk flooring and notched log-ladder entry) and nouveau traditional (ironwood floor boards and staircase entry). Zeppel (1994: 248) describes this longhouse as "unusual in that it combines both [the] traditional and contemporary", and its "modern section" reflects post World War II changes. The 'traditional contemporary' or the 'modern traditional' longhouse are equally valid descriptions (for a concise account of pre- and post-war Iban longhouse architecture, see Bin 1991: 233-4). Tradition is not immutable, and as will be shown in subsequent sections, the 'traditional' is an open-ended term.



Plate 32. Melanau 'Tall House' at Sarawak Cultural Village  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1997



Plate 33. House cross-section in Ethnography and History Museum, Malacca  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

### Traditional Houses Housed in Museums

The discussion will begin with the smallest scale, the model house, and proceed to an examination of the 'village', representative of the largest scale of the traditional house continuum. Models of traditional houses in Malaysian museums are too numerous to itemise. All examples use the descriptor 'traditional' or *tradisional* but it exists in a temporal vacuum. In state museums, the miniature *kampung* houses and longhouses usually reside in an ethnography gallery. The labels are generally brief, such as 'Model of Iban traditional longhouse' in the Sarawak Museum and 'Model rumah Melayu tradisional Negeri Perak' (Model of traditional Malay house, Perak) in the Perak Museum. It is assumed that the 'traditional' is both timeless and self-evident.

The next stage in scale is the reconstructed traditional house built inside museums which do not possess traditional houses as outdoors exhibits. As with the models, these larger scale reconstructions are part of ethnography galleries and 'traditional' time is indeterminate. Malacca's Ethnography and History Museum (re-opened 1992), contains a cross-section of a *kampung* house, labelled 'The Malacca Malay house' (Plate 33, p. 267). An excerpt from the text shows the temporal latitude: "The Malacca houses have been traditionally built on pillars without nails until modern times." The 'rooms' are furnished with artefacts of the 'traditional' category, that is, modern items or objects made of modern materials are excluded. Nearby, in a glass showcase is a model of another Malaccan house.

The Sarawak Museum has two recreated longhouses, one in the old building and one in the Dewan TAR extension building (opened 1983). In the extension building, the longhouse comprises three sections, as described in a text: "This gallery is a stylized form of a long-house. It displays traditional skills and artistic expressions of the Iban, Bidayuh and Orang Ulu ethnic groups ...". This non-traditional ethnic residential cluster in a non-traditional longhouse of traditional building materials to display traditional artefacts shows the interpretative scope of the 'traditional'.

The walk-through longhouse leads to a spatially separate display of three Penan dwellings which, in contrast to the longhouse, show the 'ethnographic present' up to the present:

Attempts are also made to depict the changing pattern of Penan life-style, from that of hunting and gathering to settled village life. The two constructions beside the traditional hut are stylized village houses adopted by the Penan. Photographs on the wall panel portray some of their new settled life.

The other longhouse display is in the old building of the Sarawak Museum. It was set up in 1968 and thus predates the musealisation movement. The museum still maintains its nineteenth-century spatial lay-out with zoological displays on the ground floor and ethnographic displays upstairs (see Chap. 5). The recreated, two-room Iban longhouse of "almost natural size" (Chin 1978: 2), minus its stilts, occupies one end of the upstairs level. The only textual information on the longhouse is in the loft, accessible by a narrow log ladder, steeply inclined. Here, a text refers to the seclusion of unmarried girls, noting that "this custom was continued up to the middle of the last century". Thus, the mid-1800s is the only indicator of temporality on display. Sandin's (1968: vii) description of the longhouse in 1968 (when it was first installed) reveals: "It is traditionally and elaborately furnished with war weapons, human skull trophies, valuable jars and brassworks and other household belongings normally found in a long-house some 50 years ago." This would date the 'traditional' to the second decade of the 1900s. Similar to the Malaccan house cross-section, 'traditional' time is fluid in interpretation.

### **Collectible Traditional Houses**

The next form in the series of the traditional house is the 'real thing' as a museum display. Hilton (1992: 39) labels the Malay house an 'artefact' and, significantly, during the third phase of musealisation (1986-1997), it has become a collectible artefact. These artefacts are usually larger than the reconstructed houses for interior museum displays. In some instances, however, the size is deceptive for not all portions of the house have been relocated, as will be noted. The peninsular Malay house was designed so that 'shifting house' was a literal exercise. In northern regions, with sufficient manpower, the house—"like a gigantic many-legged cupboard, resting freely on a number of supporting stones"—could be lifted and

moved (Hilton 1992: 47). In southern parts, the house was dismantled, moved to its new location and reassembled (ibid: 47). Construction methods and materials were suited to house mobility, and to expansion or contraction as household needs altered (Chen Voon Fee 1990: 75).

Chapter 6 demonstrated that the museological division between 'movable' and 'immovable' artefacts is arbitrary. It was also shown that through the act of movability, 'immovable' colonial monuments were shifted into the post-colonial heritage domain. The 'fixed' logic of museology negates the possibility of dynamic processes at work and hence precludes the implications of such movements. Parallels exist between the movability of colonial monuments and traditional houses, particularly in terms of their transformation into heritage items and museum objects.

Another colonial narrative strand is identifiable in the history of the Minangkabau house (Plate 34, p. 271) which was shifted to the Cultural Complex of Negeri Sembilan (see Chap. 8). During British rule, this late 19th century house was dismantled and transported to Britain for an exhibition in 1924 (Lembaga Muzium Negeri Sembilan c. 1993: 4). This was most likely the 1924 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, which had a display of 'Races in Residence' (see Chap. 5). Thus, the movement of the traditional house (one of the patterns of the contemporary musealisation movement) has its forgotten predecessor in the colonial past.

The state museum of Pahang has in its compound 'Pahang's traditional Malay house' (Plate 35, p. 271) which is on stilts, constructed of timber and with roofing of *attap nippah* (palm leaf thatch). An introductory text explains that three types of traditional houses are known in Pahang. Details are given on the original location of the reassembled house, its owner and its date (built between 1902 and 1913). The house was reassembled in 1991, minus the kitchen which was already in ruins. Photographs document the process of reassembly which also involved the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) and the German Forestry Research Project. The interior of the house is decorated with household artefacts that also belong to the 'traditional' realm, that is, no objects that are of modern manufacture. The traditional house is classified under the category of 'monuments'—objects and sites that have historical, religious, or archaeological value (Lembaga Muzium Negeri Pahang c. 1995: 13).



Plate 34. Minangkabau House at Cultural Complex, Negeri Sembilan  
In the tradition of *merantau*, the house has a long history of movability.  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 35. Pahang traditional house at Pahang's state museum, Muzium Sultan Abu Bakar  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

The Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) in Selangor displays on its grounds two reassembled houses from Malacca and Terengganu (Plates 36 and 37, p. 273). The FRIM Museum houses many wood-crafted artefacts and the two traditional houses are "an extension of this role" of "preserving and recording traditional uses of wood" (Ratnam 1995: 78).

The Terengganu house, over one hundred years old, was constructed without nails and its earthen tile roof is a characteristic of East Coast architecture (Ratnam 1995: 78). The house on display is only one half of the structure; the other half owned by another family member remains in Terengganu (Jaafar Ahmad, pers. comm., 26 Oct. 1996). The Malacca house, built in about 1917, shows Minangkabau influence in the roof design (Ratnam 1995: 78) and the house "is used as a teahouse for visitors ... rather than serving just as a 'dead' museum display" (ibid: 79). At the time of my visit (Oct. 1996) the Malacca house had reverted to a 'dead museum display'. Neither of the houses was open for viewing.

Outside the Terengganu House is a series of diagrams and texts entitled 'Houses and settlements: traditional and modern'. These explain the advantages of traditional house design, building techniques, materials and settlement patterns that have evolved in a specific natural and socio-cultural environment. In comparison, the modern house is depicted as a modern regression. There is no attempt to show the interaction of these two forms (to be discussed elsewhere in this chapter).



Plate 36. Traditional house of Malacca at FRIM, Selangor  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 37. Traditional house of Terengganu at FRIM, Selangor  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

The Terengganu Museum complex has four 'traditional houses' in its collection (see also Chap. 8). The Terengganu State Museum Board (Lembaga Muzium Negeri Terengganu n.d.: 7) collected its first "*rumah tradisional*" in 1987. Of the four buildings, only Rumah Tele (Plate 38, p. 275) was open for public viewing. A text reveals that the house of 1888 was originally located in a palace compound. Its present museum site was the second 'shifting house', the first being in 1970 upon Sheppard's initiative. When the house was reassembled at the museum, a slight modification was made with the outside wooden staircase (ibid: 7).

House alterations were also carried out on the Rumah Tengku Ngah Aishah. The text points out that the house characterises the roofing style known as 'Limas Bungkus' and then goes on to inform: "In 1989 this house was reconstructed at the present site with modification of roofing style from Limas Bungkus to Limas Belanda."

Thus, traditional houses as modified 'real things' also reveal that tradition is a dynamic process. In the main museum building of the Terengganu Museum complex, the Islamic Gallery includes a text on the philosophy of the house (*Falsafah Rumah*). A diagram (Plate 39, p. 275) shows the anthropomorphic architecture of the traditional house: every component of the house has its symbolic and structural equivalent in the human body (on the symbolism of the 'house as body', see Waterson 1991: 129-132). A different philosophy of the traditional house is displayed in the architecture of the main museum building, a monumental expansion of the traditional house design (see Chap. 8).



Plate 38. Rumah Tele at Terengganu State Museum  
The modified staircase is to the left.  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

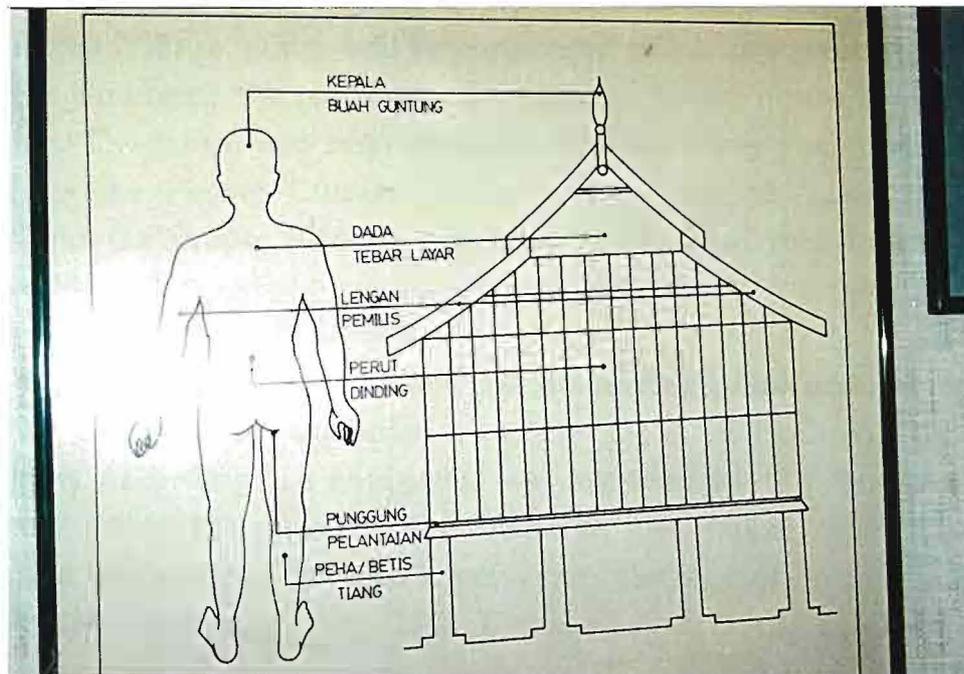


Plate 39. Anthropomorphic house correspondences, Terengganu State Museum  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

The Heritage Trust of Malaysia, at its Kuala Lumpur headquarters, has in its compound a reassembled Kedah house which was one of its restoration projects. A newspaper report (*New Straits Times* 10 Aug. 1996) details the ceremony for raising the *tiang seri* (central post) in the reconstruction process:

Chief Secretary to the Government ... performed the *tepung tawar* [rice-paste] ceremony of the house ... and placed three pieces of red, white and black cloth on top of the *tiang seri* [central post]. He also placed under the *tiang seri*, a 1996 RM1 gold coin and a 1916 Straits Settlement coin ... found when the house was dismantled, indicating the time it was built. It is believed that the tradition of placing the coin is to ensure the well being of future tenants.

The house has no tenants. It is open to visitors and serves as an example of the preservation of architectural heritage. A member of the Heritage of Malaysia Trust explains: "By reconstructing it here ... [w]e are not saying that we don't want modern buildings, just don't forget the old" (ibid: 15). Significantly, the rituals accompanying the reassembly of the traditional house are not forgotten.

The Pinang Cultural Centre, established in 1993, is managed by a developer of tourism projects. It forms the centre of a larger project, the 'Cultural Theme Park' which was opened in 1996. The Cultural Theme Park also includes the 'Village' which will be considered in a subsequent section, the emphasis here being the reassembled traditional Malay house from Negeri Sembilan. The house had been abandoned for fifty-five years until it was bought by the Pinang Culture Centre which, after its relocation, also "conducted the proper blessing ceremony to cleanse the house" (*New Shopper* 1996: 6).

Inside the house, inserted between the supporting pillar and the ceiling, could be glimpsed an unobtrusive white piece of cloth with a Jawi inscription. According to a guide, this was intended for the "house spirit". Sheppard (1986: 44) refers to the belief in the house 'spirit' among peninsular Malays and it is also a pervasive element of Southeast Asian cosmologies (Waterson: 1991: 136). The *semangat* (soul, life-force, vital force) of animate and inanimate objects was discussed during the colonial era (see Chap. 5). In the contemporary context, the tradition of 'shifting

house' has altered in purpose but significantly, some of the accompanying traditions adhere. The traditional house is a dynamic artefact: it may be moved, modified, expanded or contracted, and it is a living artefact for the house is believed to be 'be-souled' (for details on the *semangat* of houses, see Endicott 1991: 51, 112-13; Waterson 1991: chap. 6)

### **Traditional Houses to House Museums**

The next form in the series is the replica traditional house of a standard size or expanded design. The building is constructed with traditional building materials and built to house museums. Examples include the Alor Gajah District Museum (Plate 40, p. 278) and the Aborigines Museum (longhouse design), both of which are in Malacca. In Selangor, the Shah Alam Gallery is housed in an amplified design of a traditional Malay house. It was mentioned in the previous chapter that the Pasir Salak Historical Complex in Perak combines a variety of forms: the Rumah Kutai I ('old house'), the Rumah Kutai II (new 'old house') and the museum called the Time Tunnel which resembles the Perak traditional house on an expanded scale. In Pahang, the Pulau Keladi Cultural Village contains the Tun Abdul Razak Gallery, a wooden building reflecting the architecture of a *kampung* house. In Kelantan, the Handicraft Museum in the Handicraft Village, is also an adaptation of traditional house architecture.

The next level is a greater amplification and innovation of the traditional house design using modern construction techniques and building materials. Examples of this approach include the main building (longhouse concept) of the Sabah Museum complex, the three museums housed in civic centres (longhouse design) in Sarawak and the main building (traditional house design) of the Terengganu State Museum complex. The traditional house as expressed in its diverse forms, from the miniature to the monumental, is a predominant museum theme throughout Malaysia. The *kampung* context, however, expresses the artefactual culmination of the traditional house.



Plate 40. Traditional house architecture of Alor Gajah District Museum, Malacca

The sign on the tiled steps requests visitors to remove their footwear: a prevalent museum tradition borrowed from house tradition.

Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 41. Replica of Monsopiad's house, housing a museum, Sabah  
It is a component of Monsopiad Cultural Village in Kampung Kuai.

Photo: P. Dellios, 1997

### Musealisation Movement into the Village

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to analyse the tourism movement into real villages. Nevertheless, it should be remarked that villages throughout Malaysia are being increasingly reinterpreted as tourist sites, whether as part of tour itineraries or home-stay programs (see respectively, Kedit 1990b: 222; Mazwin 1996: 6). It was indicated in the previous chapter that the musealisation movement has also moved into the village. Perak's Pasir Salak Historical Complex (1990) growing in the midst of Kampung Pasir Salak is the most extreme example of the musealisation of the *kampung*. The other two cases to be discussed, here, differ in that they are spatial enclaves within a *kampung* area but are not superimposed on a *kampung* community.

The Pulau Keladi Cultural Village/Kampung Budaya Pulau Keladi (1994) was established by the Pahang State Museum Board. Kampung Budaya is set in the village of Malaysia's second prime minister. The re-created village comprises: a Handicraft Centre, a Handloom Weaving Centre, a canteen, the Tun Abdul Razak Gallery (*kampung* house architecture), and a replica of the House of Birth of Tun Abdul Razak (see Chap. 8). A text maintains that the replica house of the second Prime Minister highlights "traditional architecture in a traditional surrounding". This 'traditional' house was constructed by local 'traditional' craftsmen using 'traditional' construction techniques and materials (undated brochure, 'Kampung Budaya Pulau Keladi'). Kampung Budaya draws on the theme of the 'traditional', as seen in the earlier museum contexts of house forms, but by identifying itself as a *kampung*, the 'traditional' assumes a more comprehensive spatial-temporal premise.

The other 'cultural village' in a *kampung* environment is Monsopiad Cultural Village in Kampung Kuai, Sabah. This family enterprise was established in 1995 as a tourism project to offer "an insight into the past pagan era of the Kadazan people" (undated brochure, 'The Legend of Monsopiad'). The Cultural Village is named after Monsopiad who lived in Kampung Kuai. He became known as "the most fearsome warrior" who during his lifetime collected "42 trophy-heads" (undated brochure, 'Monsopiad'). A replica of Monsopiad's house (Plate 41, p. 278) is situated on the original site.

The Cultural Village also includes: the House of Skulls (the 42 trophy heads); a rice granary; a souvenir shop; handicraft workshop; the main building (for cultural shows) and a paddy-field. All the buildings were constructed by the nearby villagers with traditional building materials. In addition, the staff are from the real village which is linked to the Cultural Village by a hanging bridge across the river.

The Cultural Village uses museum-style texts to furnish socio-cultural background and Monsopiad's replica house is also known as the Monsopiad Museum. It shows a variety of items (in showcases and on open display), with accompanying texts, and also a faded black and white photograph of Monsopiad's house, though no mention is made of when he lived. The only temporal clue in the Cultural Village is a text describing a stone monolith in which "the era of Monsopiad" is dated to "about 300 years ago". The late 1600s may be contrasted with the date of 1780 given by the guide. Monsopiad, the 'legend' (undated brochure, 'The Legend of Monsopiad'), is not about chronological time but mythical time. Mythical time is governed by ritual cycles mediated by the ritual expert or "high-priestess" known as *bobohizan* who is "the medium of direct communication with the spirits" (undated brochure, 'Monsopiad'). The costumes and ritual objects of the *bobohizans* and photographs of their ceremonies are displayed in the Monsopiad Museum. The House of Skulls also displays photographs of the *bobohizans* performing rites for the skulls.

The pervasiveness of spirits is the theme that binds the cultural components of the re-created village. The ceremonies associated with the rice-spirit are documented in the rice granary. 'Spirit jars' are on display in Monsopiad's Museum. There are also two spirit jars in the House of Skulls containing Monsopiad's forty-two trophy heads. Here, a text reveals: "The *Magang* feast would be held every five years to appease the spirits of the skulls." These spirits not only continue to exist but in 1996 they consented to the Keeper of the Skulls' request to permit visits by non-family members (undated brochure, 'Monsopiad'). The House of Skulls had no lock on the door. According to the guide, the spirits guard the security of the Cultural Village. Mead (1983: 101) provides an Oceanic parallel in the form of 'custom houses' where the concept of *tapu* (taboo)

renders padlocks and security officers superfluous. The stone monolith, dated to Monsopiad's era, is associated with the spirit 'Gintutun' and "through recent consultation by the 'Bobohizans', the spirit 'Gintutun' was officially appointed as keeper of Monsopiad Cultural Village" (text, 'The Monolith').

The 'culture' component of the Cultural Village may be interpreted in several ways but to analyse the Village as a 'material culture' site would obliterate the suffusion of the spirits. Significantly, the guide informed that ritual performances for tourists were "different" as the participants did not "speak to the spirits". The museological-structural oppositions of material/non-material and tangible/intangible reveal more about the subjects who do the theorising than the subject matter being theorised. The 'village' component is the re-created 'traditional' architecture of the buildings on the original *kampung* site. Without this spatial setting, the temporal dimension of mythical time cannot be re-created. It was mentioned earlier that the Cultural Village also includes a paddy-field. This will be transformed into a carpark to contain the increasing number of tour buses. It is the responsibility of the *bobohizans* to "undertake the preservation and well-being of the Rice Spirit" (text, 'Pesta Kaamatan'). The spirits, to date, have been accommodating of contemporary demands.

### **Museal Villages**

The remaining re-created villages to be discussed are located in both urban and non-urban landscapes but not in existing villages. Mini Malaysia (1986), also known as Malacca's 'Cultural Village' in its promotional literature, was set up as a tourism project by the Malacca State Development Corporation (MSDC). It is situated in Air Keroh, approximately 15 kilometres from Malacca town centre. Mini Malaysia comprises replica traditional houses of each of the thirteen states. The houses are complete with museum-style displays of artefacts, mannequins, tableaux and texts. Mini Malaysia does not replicate the monumental scale of Mini Indonesia (1975) nor its variety of themes. However, it has expanded with the addition of Mini Asean (replica houses of ASEAN members) which was completed in time for 'Visit ASEAN Year' in 1992.

The collection of replica houses are "authentically crafted" (undated brochure, 'Air Keroh Recreational Area') and are intended to represent the "traditional architecture" of each state (undated brochure, 'Taman Mini Malaysia & Mini Asean Melaka'). How is the representative house determined? The choice of houses for the Borneo States of Sabah and Sarawak is based on representation of the largest ethnic group in each state: the Kadazan-Dusun longhouse of Sabah and the Iban longhouse of Sarawak. The Malays form the largest ethnic group of the eleven peninsular states. However, each state has a multiplicity of traditional architectural forms of the Malay house (recall the different house types in Pahang and Terengganu). Hilton (1992: 40) proposes that the peninsular house types of Mini Malaysia represent "houses built by comparatively well-to-do villagers, so that the full potentialities of the style in size, design, and decoration, can be displayed". Architectural scope is not the sole determinant: the dwellings of villagers who are not 'well-to-do' would hardly do as a tourism display of Malaysia in Mini Malaysia. Significantly, a journalist (Lam Seng Fatt 1996b: 21) observes that for overseas tourists Mini Malaysia is "something unique" but for Malaysians "who are so used to seeing Malay homes in kampungs while driving along rural roads, Mini Malaysia is nothing much to shout about".

The rural Chinese house is unrepresented in Mini Malaysia. Hilton (1992: 40) describes this type of dwelling as a "standard design" unaffected by geography or language group, whereas the peninsular Malay house varies according to regional styles. Hilton also excludes from his study the rural Chinese Peranakan house form (Fig. 17, p. 283) in the States of Kelantan and Terengganu. These houses are constructed of timber and supported on stilts. Tan Chee-Beng (1993: 7-8) reveals that some of the Chinese Peranakan houses in Terengganu are so characteristically Malay that only the Chinese couplets at the main entrance differentiate them from the Malay houses. Tan Chee-Beng (ibid: 7) also emphasises that the rural Peranakan-type houses are no longer being built and the ones that remain should be "preserved" as "an important part of our national heritage".



Fig. 17. Chinese Peranakan house, Terengganu, 1987

This type of house has yet to be musealised.

Reproduced from Tan Chee-Beng 1993, *Chinese Peranakan Heritage in Malaysia and Singapore*, Penerbit Fajar Bakti, Kuala Lumpur, plate 14.



Plate 42. Malacca house in Mini Malaysia/Cultural Village, Malacca  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

Another instance of 'trading cultures' in traditional house architecture is the Malacca house. These timber structures on stilts have a distinctive feature of ornate stone and tiled steps at the entry, an adaptation from Chinese architecture (Plate 42, p. 283; cf. Plate 40, p. 278). Because of this stylistic innovation, Malacca Malay houses are considered "unique" (Tan Sin Nyen 1991: 103). The introduction to the Malacca house in Mini Malaysia refers to the 'famous' ("*terkenal*") steps but omits mention of its origins. Mini Malaysia could have afforded an opportunity to explore material 'civilisational dialogues' through the medium of domestic architecture. However, Mini Malaysia in its architecture of space reveals a set of implicit boundaries. As a manifestation of the nation's architectural identity, Mini Malaysia does not represent a collection of Malaysia. The replica traditional houses, like any museum collection, are informed by selection procedures. Thus, Mini Malaysia is also a collection of omissions and an implicit statement on who belongs to the nation as 'village'.

One of the major display themes in the houses is the tableau of the traditional wedding. The Malacca house, for instance, features the *bersanding* ceremony—the 'sitting in state' of the bridal couple (Plate 43, p. 285). Here, a comparison with a text on a Malacca Malay wedding in the Ethnography and History Museum is pertinent. The wedding is described as "unique" because prior to the *bersanding* ceremony, the bride wears the traditional costumes "of other races"—an influence ascribed to Malacca's cosmopolitan history. In the Malacca house of Mini Malaysia, one frozen moment of the *bersanding* ceremony fails to manifest the intricate symbolisation of 'trading cultures' (a theme expanded in Chap. 10).

The *bersanding* ceremony continues to be an integral component of contemporary Malay weddings. In villages, the ceremony is still held in the home but urban settings offer a greater variety of venues. In the Malay language the *rumah* (house) is etymologically linked to marriage: *rumah tangga*—'household' and 'wedded state'; *serumah*—'the whole family' and 'married'; and the verb *memperumahkan*—'to marry off'. The *rumah* and marriage are linguistically and experientially interconnected. Consequently, the emphasis on wedding tableaux in the peninsular *rumah* of Mini Malaysia appears as a continuation of a tradition that has been merely shifted to a re-created village.



Plate 43. *Bersanding* display in Malacca house, Mini Malaysia  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

## PAKEJ ISTIMEWA MAJLIS PERKAHWINAN



Fig. 18. Wedding package brochure from Mini Malaysia  
The brochure offers the wedding experience as "*warisan kebudayaan*" ('cultural heritage').

Reproduced from undated brochure, 'Pakej Istimewa Majlis Perkahwinan', Karyabudaya Sdn. Bhd., Taman Mini Malaysia/Mini Asean, Melaka.

Of greater significance is that Mini Malaysia also offers Malay weddings as the 'real thing' in its 'Special Package Wedding Ceremony' (Fig. 18, p. 286). A prospective bride and groom may hire the facilities of Malacca's 'Cultural Village' for their 'traditional' wedding ceremony. The facilities and services include all the traditional ingredients of a *kampung* wedding in a *kampung* environment (undated brochure, 'Pakej Istimewa Majlis Perkahwinan'). The 'traditional', as noted also in the case of Monsopiad Cultural Village, is constantly reworked for a contemporary context.

The sociologist, J. Kahn (1992: 169-170), has interpreted Mini Malaysia as a material symbol of "Malay cultural revival". A 'revival' assumes that cultural forms have been resurrected from a inert period, from a time that is 'past' or almost 'past'. However, in the case of the Malay weddings (tableaux and 'real things') his claim is semantically flawed. In Malacca's Cultural Village (Mini Malaysia), and also the Monsopiad Cultural Village, cultural continuity cannot be ignored in the analytical frame of new socio-economic contexts. Kahn's (1992: 165) shorthand for 'cultural revival'—"neo-traditionalism"—presupposes a definitive temporal rupture and, hence, 'traditional traditionalism' is denied exegetic value. Whether one discusses the marital state or the state of the spirits in re-created cultural villages, the cultural horizon is neither fixed nor ahistorical.

Kelantan opened its re-created Handicraft Village/Kampung Kraftangan in 1991. It is situated in the 'cultural zone' of the state capital. The 'village' comprises the Handicraft Museum (Plate 44, p. 288), an art gallery, a souvenir shop and a restaurant. All the structures are of timber but the traditional Kelantanese architecture is enlarged in scale and enhanced in stylistic embellishment. The Handicraft Museum focuses on *songket* weaving (textile with gold threads); embroidery; wood carving; *anyaman* (weaving with plant materials) and *batik*. Handicraft demonstrations are also held. Similar to Mini Malaysia's museal package of *rumah*, *kampung* and weddings, Kelantan's Handicraft Village weaves together the museal strands of *rumah*, *kampung* and handicrafts. Traditionally, handicrafts were produced at home in *kampungs* and, according to Mohd Taib (1988: 229), this approach has endured "where village life has not changed very much". The urban Handicraft Village is a change of venue but, as evident in previous 'villages', cultural continuity is also identifiable.



Plate 44. Handicraft Museum in the Handicraft Village, Kelantan  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

Sabah Museum's project of replica 'traditional houses', conceived in 1984, was intended "to record Sabah's rich cultural heritage before it is overtaken by change and modern technology" (Regis 1990: 35). The realisation of this plan emerged in two stages under different museum directors. According to the first inauguration plaque, the five replica houses were officially opened as 'Traditional Houses' in 1990. The then director, Regis (1990: 35), indicates the houses were built by "the kampung people themselves, employing traditional methods and using traditional materials". A second plaque informs that the 'Traditional Houses' display was upgraded to 'Kampung Warisan' (Heritage Village) in 1995, and was officially opened in 1996 in conjunction with Sabah Museum's 25th anniversary.

To the original five dwellings, seven more replica houses and a number of huts (*sulap*) have been added (see Plate 45, p. 290). The more recent structures are in a circular pattern around an artificial lake (a borrowed layout from the Sarawak Cultural Village which is itself a borrowed idea from Hawaii's Polynesian Cultural Centre, according to Shackley, 1994: 396). There is a small zoological park of real creatures (birds, animals and reptiles) and life-size fibre-glass animals (rhinoceros, elephant, water buffalo). The 'village' is home to the Sabah Museum horse (real), used for the Bajau horseman performance during official museum ceremonies. There are no chickens.

The twelve replica houses represent the traditional dwellings of ethnic groups indigenous to or settled in Sabah: Bonggi House; Rungus Longhouse; Murut Longhouse; Tambunan Bamboo House; Lotud House; Bisaya House; Bajau House; Semporna Bajau House (the *lipa-lipa* house-boat); Brunei House; Chinese Farm House (Plate 46, p. 290); Suluk House; and Iranun House. The 'village' also includes a Skull Hut (*Sulap Bangkawan*) and several huts (*sulap*) portraying traditional agricultural processes. Kampung Warisan is set in ethno-botanical landscape that highlights the traditional uses of plants.



Plate 45. Sabah Museum's Heritage Village, partial view  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1997



Plate 46. Chinese Farm House at Heritage Village  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1997

If the Monsopiad Cultural Village offers the theme of the spirits, 'the spirit of Sabah' appears to be the theme of the Heritage Village/Kampung Warisan. The 'spirit of Sabah' was used by a former director of the Sabah Museum to describe the architecture of the new complex of 1984 (see Chap. 8). The complex was an elaborate architectural symbolisation of Sabah's ethnic diversity. Similarly, the museum gathers together and recombines ethnic diversity in its collection of traditional houses in Kampung Warisan/Heritage Village. Kalb (1995b: 5), suggests that for first-time visitors to Sabah, the distinctions among the houses (then totalling nine) were too subtle to warrant construction of further types. Firstly, Kalb assumes her own perceptions are the basis of extrapolation for first-time visitors to Sabah. Secondly, she assumes limits should be set on the basis of 'non-discerning' non-Sabahan visitors (visitor usage among Sabahans will be discussed in a subsequent section). Kalb's comments have entirely missed the fundamental point: to assemble an aggregate of ethnic identities. As Regis (1990: 35) expresses it: "At the Sabah Museum, Sabah's diverse cultures are forged in one place."

The Sarawak Cultural Village (Kampung Budaya Sarawak) was established by the Sarawak Economic Development Corporation. It was completed in time for 'Visit Malaysia Year 1990', and was officially opened by the Prime Minister. The Cultural Village, on a site of 7 hectares, is situated at the foothill of Mount Santubong. Similar to Malacca's Cultural Village, the traditional houses of Sarawak Cultural Village show a socio-economic portrait of a well-to-do 'village'. The 'village' accommodates seven replica traditional houses set around an artefactual lake, shelters for traditional activities and agricultural processes, a large restaurant, a souvenir shop and a building for cultural performances held twice a day. The traditional houses comprise: the Iban Longhouse; Bidayuh Longhouse (and the head-house, Baruk); Penan Huts; Orang Ulu Longhouse; Melanau Tall House; Malay House; Chinese Farm House, with the nearby Pagoda that serves Chinese tea. Interestingly, the 'Chinese farmhouse' in both Sabah and Sarawak is considered part of the traditional landscape. Although Hilton (1992: 40) is correct in his architectural assessment that this type of dwelling shows little regional variation, other determinants of choice operate in these two states, in contrast to Mini Malaysia in Peninsular Malaysia.

The houses have furnishings and artefacts that accord with the 'traditional' time frame of the houses. There are no showcases nor labels. Outside each house is a large placard that provides detailed information on each ethnic community but little on their architecture and building techniques. The placard on the Melanau Tall House, for instance, fails to mention that this type of house is no longer constructed in Melanau communities. Similarly, the placard on the Iban longhouse does not indicate it is a combination of the old and nouveau 'traditional'. According to Zeppel (1994: 248), this latter feature was the outcome of a local political decision intended "to show the Iban as modern and progressive". Interestingly, the Cultural Village is also a 'Headhunters Theme Party' venue for incentive groups (a theme which draws on the Iban old tradition). In addition, the nouveau traditional is offered in "authentic" wedding packages (Fig. 19, p. 293) in a choice of Iban, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu or Malay (undated brochure, 'Sarawak Cultural Village'). The question of 'authenticity' will be examined shortly. Here, it is important to reiterate that authentic weddings in re-created *kampung* venues highlight the theme of cultural continuity.

Hitchcock (cited in Shackley 1994: 396) characterises the Sarawak Cultural Village as a sanitised, selective version of heritage. Museums could be described in similar terms. However, when such a description is applied to re-created villages, it implies a judgement of unauthenticity. Shackley (1994: 397) points out that some approaches in cultural tourism emphasise "the quality of visitor experience ... not the authenticity of the attraction". Similarly, Zeppel's (1994: 277) study on tourist experiences of Iban culture at the Sarawak Cultural Village concludes that "authenticity can be found in a recreated setting". Moreover, real weddings in replica villages may be interpreted as 'authenticity' of the participants' experience. However, these perspectives shift 'authenticity' to a level of subjective experience. My concern is at the ideational level. The term 'authenticity' entered Malaysian museum vocabulary in the late 1980s when several tourism projects of recreated 'cultural villages' were being planned (cf. the appearance of the term 'heritage' in the early 1970s). 'Authenticity' (as with 'traditional') has yet to be analytically examined in the Malaysian museum literature. Nevertheless, excerpts from museum writings on the Sarawak Cultural Village may help contextualise its meanings.



***Getting Married in Style...***

*This is no fairy tale. It is an actual wedding held in the Finest Tradition of one of the ethnic tribes of Sarawak...Iban (Sea Dayak), Bidayuh (Land Dayak) Orang Ulu and Malay. The ritual and costumes adopted in each of the four wedding Packages are authentic and each has its own charm and appeal...a memorable wedding celebration!*

*All you need to do is, choose and leave the rest to us...*



Fig. 19. Wedding section of brochure from Sarawak Cultural Village  
 Extracted from undated brochure, 'Sarawak Cultural Village', S.E.D.C. (Sarawak Economic Development Corporation), Sarawak.

Chin (1989: 102), then director of the Sarawak Museum, states: "We in the Museum are playing an important role in the [cultural] village to see that the traditional architecture of the houses ... the crafts and the cultural performances are authentic." In addition, Chin (ibid: 102) describes the Sarawak Cultural Village as a 'living museum'. Hon (1989: 287-8) focuses on the tourist value of the Cultural Village with its "traditional houses" in their "authentic setting and with live-in families undertaking traditional activities in a live museum context". Hon (ibid: 287) argues that 'authenticity' and 'traditionalism', the elements that tourists seek, can be 'reproduced' in cultural villages.

The tripartite scheme of the 'authentic', the 'traditional' and the 'museum' is a recurring motif of other commercial 'villages'. For example, the Monsopiad Cultural Village has its museum component and Malacca's Cultural Village (Mini Malaysia) has its museum displays in the traditional houses. The 'authenticity' package offers the 'museum', the 'traditional', and its most important element—the re-created village. Once the *kampung* has been replicated, its symbolic repertoire of culture can be drawn upon as sources of authentication, inclusive of real weddings. If the 'traditional' is considered a kit of considerable elasticity, 'authenticity' may be comprehended in identical terms.

The earlier section on the movement and reassembly of traditional houses underlined the artificial divide between movable and immovable property. In a similar vein, the dominant museological notion of authenticity demarcates two mutually exclusive domains: the 'authentic' and 'unauthentic' (e.g. Smith 1989: 18; Spalding 1991: 169-170). Such a perspective assumes that 'authenticity' has universal ontological status which admits no permutations of meanings. The etymology of 'authenticity' further questions prevalent assumptions. It derives from a Greek lexis, signifying the self-authority of a person to act, and contemporary interpretations signal who has the 'authority' to impose a monolithic meaning.

Furthermore, approaches to 'authenticity' ignore the meanings of musealisation. If the museum is a metaphorical representation of reality, are some metaphors more authentic (or unauthentic) than others? Does metaphorical activity require 'authenticity'? According to C.S. Smith (1989: 18), "the notion of authenticity ... lies at the heart of all museum activity".

At the 'heart' of the museum's disarrayed anatomy is the delusion of the 'real thing' which, by cumulative hoarding, translates into the 'real' museum (see Chap. 2). Only one version of 'reality' is recognised by the authoritarian form of 'authenticity'. Graburn (1995: 170) assesses the authenticity debate in succinct terms: "One man's 'myth' can be another man's reality."

The Pinang Cultural Centre's 'Cultural Theme Park' was opened in 1996. The two-hectare site includes the 'Village', comprising replica houses constructed of traditional materials. Set around the familiar lay-out of a lake are: the Orang Ulu Longhouse of Sarawak; Rungus Longhouse of Sabah; Fisherman's House of the East Coast; Minangkabau House and Aceh House. There are also sheds depicting agricultural processes, a spice and herbal garden, and an aviary. Bordering the open area known as Village/Garden Dining is a series of stalls with handicraft demonstrators. The site also includes a reassembled timber Malay house from Negeri Sembilan, which was discussed in a previous section. The largest building is the Istana Malay Theatre Restaurant, based on palace architecture of the late nineteenth century (undated pamphlet, 'The Istana, Malay Theatre Restaurant'). Similar to Malacca, Penang without a sultanate, could materialise its timber 'palace'.

The predominant theme of the Cultural Theme Park is food, as evident in the promotional literature, 'Special Venues for Theme Dinners'. In addition to the Istana Malay Theatre Restaurant, the replica traditional houses and the reassembled house from Negeri Sembilan also function as dinner venues. An idea of the cultural interpretation of food may be gained by the titles of some of these 'theme dinners'. The Orang Ulu Longhouse offers Head-Hunters Night, Native Night and Sarawak Harvest Festival (undated brochure, 'Special Venues for Theme Dinners'). The Rungus Longhouse offers 'theme dinners' of Native Night and Sabah Harvest Festival (ibid). The house from Negeri Sembilan, described as the 'Antique Malay House', offers the themes of the Royal Feast, An Evening of Malay Tradition, Penang Melting Pot, and the Malay Wedding (ibid). In this case, the wedding is a cultural performance, not the 'real thing'. As in other 'villages', the Village also emphasises the themes of the 'traditional' and the 'authentic': the two longhouse dinner venues are decorated with "authentic tribal artefacts" (undated brochure, 'Pinang Cultural Centre').

The most recent version of the *kampung* is the Perkampungan Pelukis or Artists Colony (1997) of the Craft Cultural Complex, Kuala Lumpur. The word *perkampungan* may mean a group of villages or it may refer to a place where people gather for a short period of time to carry out a particular activity. The Perkampungan Pelukis draws on both referents. Its lay-out comprises structures grouped together in clusters to form the 'village'. The Perkampungan also draws on *kampung* architecture. The design of the buildings is based on the *wakaf*, "the traditional wooden building of the East Coast state of Kelantan" (undated brochure, 'Perkampungan Pelukis/Artists Colony'). The *wakaf*, a small rest facility for the community, is still part of the contemporary rural landscape of Kelantan. The Perkampungan structures, instead of being open-sided *wakaf*, have walls that can be folded back—a feature which is the "only departure from tradition" (ibid).

This structural innovation of the traditional *wakaf* is necessitated by its new function as a commercial painting venue in an urban setting. On display are not only the artists' works but the artists at work. The remodelling of time and space may also be complemented by the remodelling of persons (see Chap. 8). In the Perkampungan Pelukis, it is the invented category of the 'village' artist. One should also recall earlier categorisation schemes of re-created 'villages': the 'traditional' villager, the 'native' and the 'head-hunter'. As the familiar medium of the *kampung* becomes appropriated by exoticism, Orientalism may become self-musealised. Colonial narratives do not cease with the cessation of colonialism (see also Mazel & Ritchie 1994).

The final 'timber example' in the village panorama deviates somewhat from the forms discussed to date. The State of Selangor has grown a 'village' in its Malaysia Agriculture Park (1988). The agro-forestry park occupies 1,258 hectares and is under the Ministry of Agriculture. The 'Idyllic Village' is a collection of traditional houses set amongst the greenery. The choice of the descriptor, 'idyllic' is indicative of the contemporary romanticisation processes at work on *kampung* imagery. The traditional houses have modern amenities for they are intended for 'authenticity' of use. They may be hired as accommodation venues for visitors wishing to stay at the Park.

The romanticisation of the *kampung*, however, should be viewed from historical contiguity. According to Savage (1984: 289), the 'romantic' British administrators in Malaya and Brooke in Sarawak appreciated "the idyllic kampong [old spelling] landscapes and the indigenous way of life". The former saw the landscape peopled with "'noble peasants'" and the latter with "'noble savages'" (ibid: 289). A sense of continuity unfolds from colonial to post-colonial imaginings of the *kampung*.

In addition to the existing artefactual 'villages', it is appropriate to survey future renditions. Kedah's State Economic Planning Unit has commenced work on its 'Kampung Melayu' project. The Chief Minister indicates: "We are bringing a traditional Malay village to the town to help boost our tourism industry" (quoted in *New Straits Times* 5 Nov. 1997). Negeri Sembilan is planning to establish in Kampung Terachi a "*Perkampungan Budaya*" ('Cultural Village') which will be based on the concept of "*muzium hidup*" ('living museum') (Ziauddin 1996: 5).

Kelantan has proposed a museum project known as "*Taman Rekreasi Tradisional*" ('Traditional Recreational Park') on a site of over 4 hectares (Perbadanan Muzium Negeri Kelantan c. 1996: 8). The site will be the permanent location of the state museum and will also include Kelantanese buildings of 'traditional architecture', 'village houses' and 'traditional medicinal plants' (ibid: 10). In addition to the objective of preserving the 'traditional', the project is highlighted as a 'tourism product' (ibid: 9). The proposed Taman Rekreasi Tradisional has all the 'traditional' constituents of the re-created village. The Selangor State Museum Board has produced a concept paper on *Kompleks Perkampungan Selangor* which will display the "original houses of about twenty sub-ethnic groups" and will also provide overnight accommodation for tourists (Mohd Lofti, pers. comm., 21 Nov. 1996). The 'Kompleks Perkampungan' sees the merger of two major motifs: the museum complex and the museal village.

A project in Terengganu will meld several musealisation patterns. A district member of parliament has proposed a 'heritage village' on a six-hectare site in the village of Kampung Raja (*New Straits Times* 26 Feb. 1996). The project will include the restoration of several historical buildings, inclusive of the Kampung Raja old palace, as well as the construction of a museum (ibid). Another development planned for

Kampung Raja is a private museum to be established by a traditional woodcarver (see Shukor Rahman 1997: 6). He has already collected and reassembled two traditional houses of Terengganu and plans to add more "traditional-style buildings" in a landscaped setting of herbal plants (ibid). This appears to accord with the 'village' motif, which in this case, will also be part of the real village, Kampung Raja. Moreover, the establishment of a Student Arts Centre to "teach traditional Malay woodcarving in order to perpetuate the art" (ibid) will re-create the *kampung* tradition of apprenticeship to a master craftsman.

Another proposal for a 'village museum', in "a traditional rural setting within a village complex" (Raja Fuziah & Sharifah Zuriah 1991: 171), has yet to determine the locality. This proposal for the 'village museum' was outlined in an article tellingly entitled 'Now and the future in Malaysia' (ibid). These proposed forms of the *kampung* illustrate that it is a rich artefactual resource for the future.

### **The Kampung as Art and Artefact**

The *kampung* and *rumah kampung* are recent forms of museal reproduction. In contrast, they have been an enduring form of artistic reproduction for over half a century. On display at the National Art Gallery is one of the earliest portraits of a *kampung* scene: Yang Mun Sen's *The Village* of 1935. The *kampung* was a predominant art theme of the 1950s and early 1960s (see Chap. 7). The recently opened Malacca Art Gallery (1996) provides a view of contemporary orientations. Significantly, the major theme in 'Exhibition Space 3' and 'Exhibition Space 7' is rural life with art works depicting *kampung* houses and scenery, fishing villages, paddy-fields and agricultural activities set in the *kampung*. Another insight is provided by the Sabah Art Gallery's annual art competition which includes categories for primary and secondary school students. Notably, the *kampung* and *rumah kampung* are also popular choices among this young generation of artists. The competition of 1996 included the scene of a *kampung* house entitled *Baru Balik* (Just Returned), the *kampung* house set against the rice fields, entitled *Pemandangan di Sawah Padi* and another work entitled *Kampung-Kampung II*.

If one traces the artistry of the *kampung/kampung* house over the past sixty years two salient features emerge. Firstly, the *kampung* theme cannot be considered a revival for it has maintained its artistic continuity since the 1930s. Secondly, it reflects a remarkable consistency in style—an instantly recognisable realism—immune to changing art fashions.

Parallels may be drawn between the *kampung/kampung* house as a one-dimensional form and its museal three-dimensional form. They are both intended to be 'works of art'. For this reason, to debate whether these artefacts are 'authentic' or 'unauthentic' is unproductive. Like the representational forms in art, the re-created villages are instantly recognisable as *kampung* landscapes. The other congruence between these two representational modes is that they are both idyllic and idealised. Moreover, the re-created village has a higher ideal to uphold as a visual statement on the nation and/or state (hence, the absence of chickens with their non-idyllic droppings).

Although *kampung* imagery has been an enduring subject of artistic expression, recently the discourse of Malaysian art has incorporated notions of 'nostalgia'. Mulyadi (1995: 9, 11, 23), an art reviewer in the capital city, discusses art works in terms of the "*nostalgik*" ('nostalgic'). The absence of an indigenous word for 'nostalgia' in Bahasa Malaysia signifies that one is dealing with a recent, imported concept. Similarly, 'Nostalgia' was the theme of Md Sani Md Dom's 1997 solo exhibition at the National Art Gallery. The watercolours were predominantly of rural landscapes and *kampung* scenes. Yet, the temporary exhibition 'Nostalgia' was not juxtaposed with the permanent collection of 1950s to 1960s *kampung*-derived art to question whether 'nostalgia' is a meaningful construct in Malaysia. It should be remarked that the perceptions of both artist and art reviewer may reflect their own urban surroundings.

It is difficult to discern whether one is discussing individual perceptions of nostalgia, of a Western influenced artistic interpretation of nostalgia or a wider societal phenomenon. The *kampung* is a powerful symbol and before one can analyse the meanings of the re-created 'village', one must comprehend the contours of its prototype, which is the next subject under examination.

### 'Balik kampung' ('returning home')

A recent editorial, 'Modernisation and villages', in Malaysia's *New Straits Times* (25 Jan. 1996) also touches on the topic of nostalgia:

Folklore, customs, craftsmanship, ornate architectural works are threatened by economic development and migration. The extended family, farms, religion ... could so easily be relegated to nostalgia the same way some Singaporeans felt the loss of their last two kampungs three years ago. Modernisation is essential, but it must also blend with the people and its cultures, not impose itself.

This same editorial (ibid) reveals that 3,000 villages nationwide have been targeted for modernisation by the Rural Development Ministry. Villagers may have their own interpretation of 'modernisation' as suggested in the following account (Saiful & Zubaidah 1997: 2). A fishing village comprising 600 families in Kuala Kedah questioned being relocated to a resettlement site of multi-storey flats, when they had been assured by the previous state administration that each family would be a given wooden house. According to a state government authority, "the proposed wooden houses were found to be unsuitable in view of the State Government's aspiration to transform Kuala Kedah into a modern township" (quoted in Saiful & Zubaidah 1997: 2). Essentially, the villagers were not opposed to resettlement but merely wished to re-create their *kampung* with wooden dwellings on the new site.

Another newspaper report suggests that even the imagery of the *kampung* may be perceived as anti-modernity. According to the creative director of an advertising agency in Malaysia, advertising images of "rural or kampung scenes ... are frowned upon because the Government believes they will cause people to look back and not forward" (Tan quoted in Rastam 1995: 7). The director adds, "when we point out that Malaysia is still 60 per cent rural, and therefore we are just trying to reflect reality, they've resisted" (ibid).

Manifold reflections of 'reality' need to be considered. How does the Government's vision of modernity accord with its encouragement of re-created villages? Notably, the Prime Minister officially launched Mini Malaysia and the Sarawak Cultural Village (for federal government support of 'cultural villages', see Kamarul Baharin 1993: 86; Mohd Kassim

1995a: 84). Are re-created 'villages' created for the tourism industry a way of looking forward backwards? As tourism-driven projects, are they perceived to operate in a different political and socio-cultural domain? Alternatively, are their messages to be interpreted differently, according to the categories of domestic and international tourist?

Din (1989: 198), in his study of tourism in Malaysia, asks: "Is there a possibility of fostering national unity by using tourism (especially domestic tourism) as a means of increasing regional awareness and integration?" Although his study excludes re-created villages, the question is particularly pertinent in this context. Four 'villages' re-create the houses of several ethnic groups: Sarawak Cultural Village, Sabah Museum's Heritage Village, Malacca's Cultural Village, and the Village at Pinang Cultural Centre. These manifest a model of national or regional settlement patterns totally unrelated to *kampung* reality. A Malay village in Peninsular Malaysia will not have longhouse dwellings in its midst. Neither will a village in Sarawak or Sabah have all the ethnic groups congregated, with their respective house styles, in the same community. Is the national or state message for Malaysians that they all belong to the 'one village', that is, *orang sekampung*? The integrated re-created village may have a deeper domestic resonance than implied in its international tourist facade.

A significant proportion of the tourists at re-created villages is of the 'domestic' category. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, colonial museums were not originally established for local consumption, but it was local populations who overwhelmingly supported and actively interpreted colonial museums according to their own socio-cultural frameworks. In analogous terms, if re-created villages are primarily established with the objective of tapping into the international tourism market, this does not preclude the possibility of Malaysians appropriating the *kampung* for their own usage (particularly if the entry fee is not prohibitive). Observations at the Sabah Museum's Heritage Village (currently, free admission) are pertinent in this regard because of the high proportion of local visitors. In comparison to other 'villages', the facilities at the Heritage Village are the most 'basic': no structured time-table of cultural performances nor 'themed' packages, no souvenir shop and no restaurant. A small wooden shelter, with wooden benches, serves local coffee and cakes and two other stalls sell cold drinks (Plate 47, p. 302).



Plate 47. Refreshments stall, Sabah Museum's Heritage Village  
The authentic tradition of the humble refreshments stall is not evident in other museal villages. Another authentic practice is the traditional roofing covered with plastic sheets as a double insurance against rain.  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1997



Plate 48. Rumah Lotud at Heritage Village  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1997

The Heritage Village was well-frequented by Sabahans, particularly during the week-ends. The 'village' is basically a display of twelve traditional houses. The house interiors have not been transformed into museum displays. What do Sabahans do in the 'village'? Apart from strolling around the grounds and the houses, the predominant pastime was sitting on the verandahs (which most houses have) relaxing and conversing in groups, as well as engaging passers-by in conversation (a customary recreational activity in real *kampung*s). Sabahans had interpreted the Kampung Warisan (Heritage Village) as a *perkampungan* venue, that is, a place to gather for a short period of time to engage in a particular activity.

To return to 'nostalgia' has taken a circuitous route but without surveying the meanings of the *kampung*, one cannot address the question: are re-created 'villages' in Malaysia expressions of a nascent 'nostalgia'? Although the concept of 'nostalgia' has been competently discussed by several writers (see, for example, Stewart, K. 1992; Stewart, S. 1984), their analyses are Euro-centred.

The most relevant approach for the Malaysian context may be sought in the etymology of 'nostalgia'; it is derived from the Greek 'nostos' which means 'to return home'. The model house, the house cross-section, the reassembled traditional house, the replica traditional house and the re-created *kampung* are a reproducible series of returning home. The word *kampung* itself may be envisaged as a series of expanding concentric circles. The expression *balik kampung* (return home) may refer to one's home, one's village, one's home-town, or to one's state in the Federation of Malaysia. In a novel interpretation of domestic tourism, a Malaysian journalist (Azeman 1996: 6), in "'Balik kampung" can be rejuvenating', suggests that Malaysians should also rediscover their *kampung* as holiday destinations rather than travelling elsewhere. The writer (*ibid*) concludes: "Our kampungs ... are for the tired soul, a warm welcome home."

*Balik kampung* as an exodus from the cities is particularly marked during the public holidays for the religious festivities of the respective ethnic communities. Even if it is not one's own festive occasion, the opportunity is taken to *balik kampung*. Malaysian cartoonist, Lat, shows the normally traffic-clogged roads of Kuala Lumpur deserted for Chinese New Year, to the bewilderment of two overseas tourists (see Fig. 20, p. 304).



Fig. 20. Lat's 'KL exodus' cartoon  
 Note the 'Visit Malaysia 1990' sign in the depopulated shopping district.  
 Reproduced from Lat 1994, *Lat as Usual*, Berita Publishing, Kuala Lumpur, p. 43.

J. Kahn (1994: 39-40) refers to the "iconisation of the 'traditional Malay village' in the modern Malaysian cultural industry" and relates this phenomenon to the emergence of the new Malay middle classes. Kahn (ibid: 39) suggests that these new middle classes have yet to adapt culturally to urban living and the reinvention of *kampung* imagery is one facet of the Malay encounter with modernity. It should be pointed out that his study is a sociological analysis which is exclusively concerned with the construction of Malay identity in Peninsular Malaysia. In this respect, it only provides a partial view of the *kampung* landscape. The collective totality includes re-created *kampungs* in Sabah and Sarawak. One should not ignore the possibility of a more comprehensive Malaysian imagining of the *kampung*. Jones (1992: 9) argues that exhibition themes reveal the preoccupations of their times. The traditional house and 'village' is a musealisation preoccupation of the past decade (1986-1997) and it points to some of the profound paradoxes in the shaping of Malaysian society.

The museal *kampung* symbolises two interdependent, contemporary currents in Malaysia—cultural continuity and cultural change. Consequently, the issue of development is more complex than a shift from "Rice Culture to Industrialised Society" or from "kampung to condominium" (Yusof 1996: 53). Although modernising processes are at work in the *kampung* one must also acknowledge *kampung* processes at work in the midst of modernity. The musealisation movement of the *kampung/kampung* house has also been accompanied by a wider architectural movement (see also Kahn 1994: 35).

Hijjas (1995: 29) indicates that urban architecture is increasingly drawing on indigenous structures of the past to create a sense of "cultural continuity" and the tendency toward "kampung architecture" (ibid: 30) is regarded as a sign that "people would still prefer the kampung house in the city if possible" (ibid: 33). A renowned Malaysian architect, J. Lim, recommends that urban housing estates should be planned according to *kampung* lay-out, with the houses raised off the ground, replicating their *kampung* counterparts (see Rastam 1996: 1). One can only conjecture to what extent the museum's appropriation and diversification of the *kampung* house have contributed to modern architecture's rediscovery of an old frame of reference. Both the musealisation movement and the

architectural movement signal the 'adaptive re-use' of the *kampung*. The concept of 'nostalgia' is premature but the generational project of Vision 2020 (Malaysia as a fully industrialised nation) may, in the future, bring home the meaning of 'returning home' to its English connotation.

### **Who are the Keepers of Kampung Culture?**

The living village as 'musealium' is exemplified by Pasir Salak Historical Complex, where villagers avow the benefits of development but experience 'culture shock' (see Chap. 8). It was remarked earlier that real villagers, when relocated for development purposes, may desire a 'real' *kampung*. According to a member of the Penang Heritage Trust, development projects are impacting on both rural and urban *kampungs*: "The threat to urban kampungs has reached a very critical stage ..." (Ahmad Chik quoted in Shukor Rahman 1995: 35). Another organisation, ABIM (Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement), questioned whether development would erode the heritage and norms of the rural *kampung* and eventually result in the demise of village communities (*New Straits Times* 26 Mar. 1996). Kedit (1990a), a former director of the Sarawak Museum, argues that the longhouse is a socio-cultural entity and that resettlement schemes and urban housing projects need to adapt the characteristics of longhouse design. Malaysians are becoming increasingly interested in the question of 'where is the village going?' on the national and state maps of modernity. The re-created forms of the *kampung* may be an indicator of an emerging Malaysian malaise.

However, it is too simplistic to reduce re-created 'villages' to mirror reflections of societal processes. It was argued in Chapter 3 that the museum-artefact may reflect the society that creates it but it also plays a formative role in social relations. The musealisation of the *kampung*, in contrast to that of the sultanate, may suggest that 'ordinary' culture has been deemed museum-worthy. The linguistic packaging of 'heritage', the 'traditional' and 'culture' in re-created villages (with names such as 'cultural village' or 'heritage village') produces, however, a narrative of contradictory strands.

Firstly, one could question whether the re-created villages are contributing to or accelerating the erosion of the original *kampung* landscape. The re-created *kampungs* are cleaner (no chickens), newer and more 'idyllic' than the real things. Significantly, the replica building, another musealisation pattern of 1986-1997, is also reproduced in the *kampung* pattern. It was maintained in the previous chapter that museums housed in replica historical buildings could indefinitely extend the temporal axes of 'memory' and 'posterity'. Similarly, replica traditional houses and re-created villages may promise a vision of an improved permanence. For the purpose of displaying the 'idyllic' nation and/or state the *kampung* has to be remodelled and reinvented.

The museum literature on replica traditional houses and replica villages emphasises their value in preserving cultural heritage and traditional architecture (e.g. Chin 1989: 102; Regis 1990: 35). Kedit (1991a: 21) claims that the Sarawak Cultural Village is a good example of "cultural revival and preservation" for the purpose of tourism. One may ask what is being preserved and revived in re-created villages?

An answer can only be attempted by indicating the 'preservation' patterns in village and longhouse communities. Kedit (1991a: 20) emphasises that longhouses are the "centres of traditional knowledge, custom, and socialization for young cultural practitioners". In a like manner, Mohd Taib (1985b: 53) indicates the peninsular Malay *kampung* is a socio-cultural unit defined by social relationships and obligations, expressed as "*orang sekampung* or 'belonging to the same village'". Do replica villages re-create norms and values, social and cultural orientations embedded in the prototypes? The question of what is being preserved must be viewed in tandem with the question of who is the cultural authority on these socio-cultural environments? A Malaysian political scientist (Sani 1990: 40), though disputing the narrow definition of heritage preservation as a physical act, nevertheless betrays the politics of élitism: "Heritage preservation ... is in fact an intellectual act ... of guiding cultural continuity." Whose intellects do the 'guiding'?

Re-created villages reflect the underlying assumption that the 'keepers' of *kampung* culture cannot be entrusted with their own culture. According to Ramli (1994: 36), the Pinang Cultural Centre is both a tourist attraction and a research centre which works toward "preserving the national heritage in the face of modernization". He also asserts it is an educational centre for youth: "Villagers send their young to the centre to learn silat [art of self-defence], dances, handicrafts, *traditional values and customs*" (ibid: 36, emphasis added). Customarily, real villages, not re-created villages, are considered the keepers of 'traditional values and customs' (see also *New Straits Times* 25 Jan. 1996; *New Straits Times* 26 Mar. 1996).

Sabah provides another vivid illustration of museum-induced inversion. Doris Blood (1990: 90), in her essay on the social organisation of the Lotud, maintains that despite socio-economic changes in their village communities, a strong sense of continuity undergirds village life which defines and maintains Lotud identity. Her subsequent remark (ibid: 90) on future prospects is telling: "One hopes that the Lotud culture will not become a 'museum-piece', but that [their] values ... will be the foundation of the Lotud culture of the future." The Lotud house has already become a 'museum-piece' in Sabah Museum's Heritage Village (see Plate 48, p. 302).

The museal village is a new type of cultural production dislodged from the habitat of the 'cultural practitioners', to borrow Kedit's phrase. This new form uses as its foundation the traditional house which, itself, has a long ancestry. The longhouse is considered the oldest architectural form in Sarawak, "going as far back as the history of the ethnic groups can be remembered" (Bin 1991: 231). Similarly, the timber house on stilts has been described as characteristic of the "material culture" of the early Malays during Southeast Asia's prehistory (Alisjahbana 1965: 29). These two house types have survived in Malaysia—until recently—without the concept of preserving them as forms of 'material culture'. The longhouse as 'an entire village' and the community of houses as a *kampung* house mentalities. These worldviews embrace the religio-cultural, socio-political, and natural environment, though not subdivided into these discrete categories (see also Kedit 1990a; Mohd Taib 1985b). The categories of 'preservation', 'material culture', 'heritage' and the 'traditional' underline that the museum institution is also a mentality, a mind-set that is becoming increasingly 'at home' in the *kampung*.

## Conclusion

The *kampung* represents a spatial-temporal template that can be shifted to new landscapes (recalling the tradition of traditional house architecture designed for shifting house). Rural 'roots' may be transplanted to new environments for new purposes. Alternatively an old environment—an actual *kampung*—may be 'moved' conceptually into a new museal worldview. Currently, Kuala Lumpur and eight out of thirteen states have some form(s) of a re-created 'village'. If one were to include proposed 'cultural villages', the state figure would rise to eleven. It requires two more states to reproduce the *kampung* as artefact and the 'series' would be complete: an open display of Malaysia as a museal village. In Chapter 7, it was proposed that the nation may be experienced as a musealium of national space in the nation's capital city. The forms under discussion in this chapter are not national-type museums. Indeed, they are marked by a diversity of administrative structures and range from the non-profit to the for-profit rationale, but their geographical diffusion and uniformity of theme represent a national orientation. They materialise Malaysia as an idyllic *kampung*. The village is the theme; Malaysia is the venue.

National identity, state identity, museum identity and ethnic identity may all be refracted and reconfigured through the *kampung* metaphor. These four identities are the basic modules used to construct the museal village—a powerful locus of re-imagining. As a predominant musealisation motif, it is cultural construction in its most literal sense, yet it also encapsulates the interplay between continuity and change in the cultural landscape. In this regard, it is opportune to recontextualise the traditional sayings at the head of this chapter. The Malay proverb, 'A turtle lays a thousand eggs without knowing it; a hen lays one egg and the whole town knows', also contains an incisive message. The hundreds of thousands of 'living villages' in Malaysia may be juxtaposed with the re-created villages which advertise themselves as the guardians of *kampung* culture. The Chinese proverb, 'No hen is too old or too wise not to fear the coming of Spring', hints at the 'time that is to come'. 'Nostalgia' may emerge as *balik kampung* ('returning home') to the museal *kampung* of the future. The Iban proverb, 'Duck eggs are sometimes hatched by hens', serves as a reminder that as in the colonial past, local inhabitants may appropriate the musealised *kampung*'s meanings for their own usage.

The answer to the Sabahan riddle, 'What is on two stilts and hundreds of thatched roofs?', requires a foreknowledge of cultural context. The answers to the riddle, 'where is the village going?', have also been sought in the underlying socio-cultural, economic and political matrix. From the *kampung* and the *rumah tradisional* as musealia, the following chapter turns to a more traditional artefactual domain, the artefacts housed within museums.

## Chapter 10. The Museum's Artefacts: Things and Thoughts

*If you want to understand the affairs of a nation, read the books of the ancients.*

(Chinese proverb)

*Books do not catch every word and words do not catch every thought.*

(Chinese proverb)

### Introduction

The first proverb proposes the ideal source of knowledge whilst the second acknowledges the inherent limitations of this medium. Similarly, the medium of the museum cannot catch every word, thought and thing. Museums are not collections but acts of selection (of thoughts, things and words) which are then processed through musealisation. As a corollary, the selection of 'artefacts' for discussion in this chapter is guided by the identification of commonalities in Malaysian museums. Previous chapters have argued that the concept of the artefact embraces the museum, the house and/or village, as well as abstract ideas such as the nation. This chapter examines a more restricted range of the 'artefact' idea: the museum's 'artefacts' within the museum. These include objects ('real things' and replicas), ideas, persons, and classification schemes, as well as artefactual 'silences'.

### The Person as Artefact

Tuan (1980: 462) emphasises that artefact analyses must maintain the broadest sense of the artefact "as a humanly constructed object, material or mental". Tuan (ibid: 465) surveys a vast artefactual horizon inclusive of the adorned human body. The person may be interpreted as an 'artefact' in other contexts. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1991: 415), for example, maintains that contemporary live exhibits turn people into 'artefacts'. Bennett (1995: 20) underlines that the nineteenth-century museum ideal was to transform and reform the population, premised on the assumption of the visitor as an "artefact of historically differentiated techniques of person formation" (ibid: 179). These artefactual designs directly or indirectly

allude to the social construction of the person. However, the term 'artefact' has yet to be applied to the museum construction of ethnic identity. The musealisation of ethnicity is another manifestation of the person as 'artefact'.

In Peninsular Malaysia, the museum focus on the categories of the 'Malay' and the 'Orang Asli' has its origins in colonial collecting and 'representation' (see Chap. 5) which was reinforced by Sheppard during the political transition period (see Chap. 6). The musealisation of ethnicity is rarely devoid of stereotyping, whether in the colonial past or post-colonial present. In Malaysia one of the most widespread museum displays in ethnography or culture galleries is the Malay wedding tableau (see also Kalb 1997: 70-1). Museums in Malaysia produce a stereotype of the Malay as a marital artefact. The wedding tableau may be considered, borrowing Anderson's (1991: 185) terminology, a 'replicable series'. The artefactual ancestor may be traced to Sheppard's Muzium Negara of 1963 (see Sheppard 1979: 231). This tableau is still on display (Plate 49, p. 313).

The standard wedding tableau features mannequins representing the bride and groom 'sitting in state' (the *bersanding* ceremony) on the elaborately adorned bridal dais, with accompanying ritual objects. Rather than exhibiting an empty dais, most of the tableaux use mannequins and these are usually represented with life-like facial characteristics. One may recall that at one end of the continuum of the Islamic concept of *taswir*, such realism is forbidden (see Chap. 7). This deceptively minor point has a greater significance in interpreting the Malay wedding tableau.

The contradiction, as well as convergence, between traditional Malay customs of a pre-Islamic past and Islamic practice has been discussed by numerous scholars (e.g. Endicott: 1991; Mohd Taib 1989). Mohd Taib (1989: 32) states: "The Malay marriage is legalized through a contract based on Islamic law (*akad nikah*), but the wedding itself is not complete unless ceremonials reminiscent of Hindu rituals are also observed." The 'sitting-in state' (*bersanding*) has an "essentially Hindu core" (Endicott 1991: 25). This apt illustration of 'trading cultures' is not mentioned in any of the explanatory labels for the numerous wedding tableaux.



Plate 49. Sheppard's prototype wedding tableau in Muzium Negara  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 50. Wedding tableau in Terengganu State Museum  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

Kalb (1997: 71) interprets the museum theme of the Malay wedding as "a reclamation of Islamic religion and dynasty" but omits to explain the paradox that the Malay wedding tableau is never displayed in Islamic galleries or Islamic museums. It would be too contentious under this classification scheme. The Malay wedding tableau as a contemporary museum choice may bring Islam and traditional, pre-Islamic Malay customs into conflict. A curator of the Terengganu State Museum (Mohd Noor Ismail, pers. comm., 21 Apr. 1996) acknowledged that the museum had received complaints that their Malay wedding tableau was "unIslamic" (see Plate 50, p. 313).

Because objects and, by extension, tableaux are polysemantic, Kalb's assertion that the Malay wedding display is a 'reclamation of Islam' is seriously defective. Kalb's (1997: 71) claim that it is a "contemporary" phenomenon, illustrating "postcolonial cultural recovery", fails to acknowledge Sheppard's creation of the prototype. She neither explains from what Malaysia is 'recovering', nor addresses the museum phenomenon of the post-colonial expression of colonial culture. The tenacity and reproducibility of the traditional wedding display must also be considered together with a contemporary trend of real Malay weddings at re-created villages (see Chap. 9). Significantly, in 1997 the Balai Seni Lukis Negara (National Art Gallery) was the venue of an installation artist's actual wedding ceremony (the *bersanding*), held in conjunction with his first solo exhibition entitled 'Wedding' (see Ooi Kok Chuen 1997: 3). Sociology, anthropology and history may offer more fertile ground for inquiry than museology. The Malay wedded to weddings may indeed prove to be both socio-cultural fact and museum-authenticated artefact.

The artefactual person also informs the narrative of the JHEOA Museum, administered by the federal government's Department of Orang Asli Affairs. Hirschman's (1987: 563) study of census classification schemes, spanning 1881 to 1980, reveals the history and fluidity of the 'Aborigines' category and the term 'Orang Asli' ('original people') is, itself, a relatively recent linguistic artefact. The Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia, comprising less than one percent of the total population (Rachagan 1990: 101), are an exhibitionary component of several museums. The national-type Perak Museum has maintained its colonial structure: the 'Orang Asli' and the 'Malay' form the basis of the ethnography gallery (see Chap. 7). The new Aborigines Museum (1997) in Malacca was examined elsewhere

(see Chap. 8). Other states also exhibit artefacts of those Orang Asli communities within their respective state borders. Muzium Negara had a comprehensive permanent display on the Orang Asli (see Mohd Kassim 1979), much of which was later absorbed by the JHEOA Museum established in 1987. Muzium Negara is now planning to establish an Orang Asli gallery (J. Tee, pers. comm., 11 Nov. 1997).

Here, I shall focus on the JHEOA Museum for it is exclusively concerned with the Orang Asli and is located in an Orang Asli community on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. Above the museum's entrance a quotation reads: "Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls) — al-Quran." The Orang Asli are classified into three main groups for administrative purposes, each consisting of numerous sub-groups (Amran 1991: 3-4). The Orang Asli are predominantly 'animists', with some adherents of Islam, Christianity and the Baha'i faith (ibid: 102); consequently, the quotation at the museum entrance is a selective interpretation in which the words 'do not catch every thought'.

Moreover, the 'condition of a people' that requires 'change' expresses a cultural stereotype of Orang Asli 'backwardness'. Hood (1990: 147), in 'Orang Asli in Malaysia', cautions: "We must be aware and sensitive to paternalistic orders which try to frame the problems of tribal peoples as if they are in need of civilizing." Also at the entry to the museum is a map of the distribution of the Orang Asli. They are mapped, classified and displayed photographically, but the individuals are nameless—labelled according to tribe, reminiscent of the early colonial museum displays of persons as 'racial specimens'. Hood and Hassan (1990: 2-3) imply that Malaysia's museums have yet to entirely overthrow the colonial ideology of the 'primitive' on display.

Anderson's tripartite scheme of census, map and museum (see Chap. 4) may appear in various reconfigurations, even where the intent is to document ethnic diversity, as in Malaysian Borneo. The Sabah Museum displays a map and list of seventy-two ethnic groups under the heading 'Indigenous people of Sabah', illustrated by thirty-two black and white photographs dated between 1910 and 1928. The Sarawak Museum displays a map, pie chart, photographs and list of ethnic groups. The list has three

components, the first being 'Main groups' (23), with each main group subdivided into detailed sub-groups; the second is 'Other indigenous' (18); and the third is 'Others': 'Indonesian, Other Asian, Eurasian, European, Indian'. Elsewhere in Sarawak, maps, charts, photographs and tables of ethnic groups are also exhibited in the Baram Regional Museum, Limbang Regional Museum, Sibü Civic Centre Museum and Kapit Civic Centre Museum. Sarawak's Chinese History Museum, under the heading 'Population census', shows pie charts and tables of Chinese dialect groups. Can the 'museumising imagination' only imagine ethnicity through the census, map and museum?

Colonial and post-colonial imaginings of the person as 'artefact' are not easily disentangled. This is particularly evident in the Baram Regional Museum (1997) in the reconstructed Fort Hose, Sarawak. The Fort was named after Rajah Brooke's administrative officer, Charles Hose, and the museum has a photographic display entitled 'Charles Hose's images of Sarawak around the turn of the century'. The photographs of Sarawak's indigenous people (unlike the photograph of Hose) are nameless; their collective identity is expressed in the label 'Hose collection'. This collecting cycle in the museum is also illustrated by an undated black and white photograph taken during Brooke rule, showing Sarawak Museum officials during their collecting expedition. The collectors (the Sarawak Museum officials) have become the collected by the Sarawak Museum (the regional museum is under its administration). The lack of diachronic studies on the dynamic interplay between collectors and the collected, spanning colonial to post-colonial time, exposes yet another museological unknown.

The interpretation of the colonial experience in post-colonial museums has received scant scholarly attention in comparison to scrutiny of colonial museum practices of collecting and representing the 'Other'. Telling the colonial 'story' was already documented in the transmigrations of colonial monuments (see Chap. 6). In addition, the post-colonisation of the other 'Other'—the former coloniser—was mentioned in the context of the Historical Complex of Pasir Salak, Perak (see Chap. 8). It was also noted that in Sabah and Sarawak the colonial story departs from the narrative of Muzium Sejarah Nasional, the National Museum of History or Museum of National History (see Chap. 4). Muzium Sejarah Nasional, in particular,

affords an opportunity to examine the post-colonial encounter with colonialism for much of the museum is concerned with Portuguese, Dutch, British and Japanese rule.

In the museum's 'British period' is an artefact, with the label: "Ceremonial sword used by Tan Sri Abdul Mubin Sheppard when he was the British Adviser to Negeri Sembilan 1951-1956" (see Plate 51, p. 318). Paradoxically, Sheppard (d. 1995) the Malay(si)an citizen, historian, museum director, arts and heritage activist, collector of the traditional weapon, the *keris*, is symbolically represented by a British sword. Sheppard, who in his own judgement was 'unorthodox' (Sheppard 1979), has become a stereotype of a British colonial administrator. In the National Museum of History or Museum of National History, Sheppard's colourful history and his contribution to museum history are entirely absent. The man who produced a 'monument'—Muzium Negara—is reduced to a colonial artefact. Museum institutions and the worldviews entrenched in them were not the only legacy of the colonisers, for they left behind themselves as future subjects of museum objectification.

The Muzium Sejarah Nasional, housed in a British colonial building, devotes considerable space to 'The foreign powers'. The British, in particular, are well represented in the museum's linear narrative of the nation. The disproportionate space allocated to colonial history in comparison to the history of Malaysia as a multi-ethnic society is a striking paradox. The British profoundly shaped the demographics of Malay(si)a but the emergence of the country's multi-ethnic population has no place in the museum. Yet, museums are deemed to have an important place in Malaysia, as a "multiracial, multilingual, multireligious and multicultural society" (Mohd Kassim 1995a: 85). This artefactual silence is the subject of the next section.



Plate 51. Display of Sheppard's sword in Muzium Sejarah Nasional  
It is undetermined if the mannequin holding the sword is intended to represent Sheppard for another label describes the mannequin's attire as that worn by the first Governor of Penang.  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

### The Missing Gap of Malaysia

Since post-independence until the present the rhetoric of Malaysian museum writings has been consistent: a chronicle of Malaysia as a "multiracial and multicultural country" (Abdul Aziz 1966: 239). Moreover, museums had a crucial role in fostering inter-cultural understanding in this "multiracial, multilingual, multicultural country" (Abdul Aziz 1967: 6). This point was further stressed by Shahrum (1969) in his speech, 'The role of the National Museum in a multiracial society', given soon after the racial conflict of May 1969. Shahrum (ibid: 4) stresses the museum's "integrating function by uniting, preserving, analysing, interpreting, and presenting the multiracial cultural heritage". Shahrum (1987: 143) claims that in a "multiracial, multilingual, multireligious and multicultural society" national harmony and unity can be promoted in museums (for a similar view, see Othman 1989: 32). Mohd Kassim (1994: 14; 1995a: 85) expresses an identical perspective on the important role of Muzium Negara in a "multiracial, multilingual, multireligious and multicultural society".

Wan Zakaria (1996) and Mohd Kassim (1996) have been among the few museum writers to acknowledge the gap between museum rhetoric and reality (the reality of museum multi-lingualism in bi-lingual, and sometimes tri-lingual, labelling should be acknowledged, however). Mohd Kassim (1996: 3) describes the "particular challenge" of developing collections of "Malaysian society". Wan Zakaria (1996: 7) indicates that Malaysian museums neither portray 'Malaysian culture' ("*kebudayaan Malaysia*") in its multi-cultural entirety nor question the prevalent approach to ethnicity through discrete clusters of the representative artefact. Consequently, Wan Zakaria (ibid: 7) concludes that Malaysian museums 'do not reflect' Malaysian society. Closely related to this artefactual blank is the absence of the concept of 'trading cultures' in its comprehensive sense of goods, ideas, religions, values, and symbols as detailed in Chapter 4 (and as materialised in Malay weddings in this chapter). The 'missing gap' in Malaysian museums is Malaysian society, both in its historical and contemporary forms.

Malaysia's multi-ethnic neighbour, Singapore, provides an instructive parallel in its Asian Civilisations Museum (officially opened in 1997). The director (Kwok 1996: 4) informs that the Museum aims "to promote awareness of both intra- and inter-ethnic cultural history". The incongruity of the Museum of Asian Civilisations (note the plural) is that is entirely concerned with Chinese civilisation which, according to the introductory video, is "the first chapter in the story of Asia". The Chinese proverb, 'Books do not catch every word and words do not catch every thought', is judicious counsel. The museum's introductory text explains that this 'first wing' focuses on Chinese civilisation and a second wing will "include the other relevant regions of Asia". The second 'wing' is growing on a separate site, severed from the main body. The physical cleavage of Asian civilisations will make it onerous, if not impossible, to present 'intra- and inter-ethnic cultural history'. Will the future form of the Asian Civilisations Museum be a presentation of the 'Chinese' and 'Others'?

Singapore and Malaysia, with their intertwined colonial history, their brief union as one nation-state, and their shared colonial museum inheritance, have both maintained an implicit colonial census scheme in museums, merely reconfiguring and repositioning the hierarchy of 'races'.

### **Artefacts: Musealia and Museal Replicas**

The colonial encounter should also be briefly examined in the context of restitution for it offers insight into the meaning of 'things'. According to the former Director-General of Museums (Shahrum 1982: 65), many post-colonial nations, inclusive of Malaysia, became aware of the issue of restitution in the 1970s. In 1974, after visits to overseas museums with artefacts from Peninsular Malaysia, it was concluded that these artefacts collected during colonial times were legitimately obtained and that many were already represented in Malaysian museums; those that were not, were still available within the country (ibid: 65). Consequently, restitution was considered a "closed issue" (Shahrum Yub, pers. comm., 16 Apr. 1995). The former Director-General of Museums revealed an additional perspective: "It would have been *malu* to ask for the return of these objects" (ibid). The term *malu* (shame, disgrace) can best be understood as an important cultural component of *budi bahasa* which guides appropriate conduct.

In a similar vein, Mohd Kassim (1986: 41) of Muzium Negara indicates that restitution is not the only response: artefacts, colonially obtained and held overseas, could be regarded as 'ambassadors of the nation'. My intention is not to examine the shifting tides of restitution (see Othman 1987: 5) but to construct a cultural bridge between restitution and replicas. Approaches to artefact studies (see Chap. 3) have not only failed to theorise comprehensively the concept of the artefact but have also neglected the meanings of museum replicas. To distinguish between these two types of artefact, the terms 'musealium' and 'museal replica' will be used.

The Kedah State Museum displays a museal replica of 'Bunga Emas and Perak' (two trees of gold and silver flowers). The accompanying text explains that they are replicas of the originals presented to the King of Siam by the State of Kedah and that the originals are still held in the Grand Palace, Bangkok. The text also proffers two interpretations of the gift's political significance: in the view of the Siamese and the English, the tribute was regarded as "a direct admission of sovereignty on the part of Kedah" whereas the Malay Sultans viewed it as "just a token of alliance and friendship". The text concludes by paying tribute to the royal household of Thailand for enabling the replicas to be made. The museal replicas, as much as the original musealia, may be culturally-laden symbols of 'friendship'. Such replicas may represent an alternative response to restitution and signal the prioritisation of people over things (see also Chap. 8).

Kalb (1997: 74) offers a different interpretation of the 'Bunga Emas and Perak', which she terms a 'commemorative object', according to her theoretical frame of nation-building. However, Kalb fails to identify the object's diplomatic significance in a nation's bilateral relations. As a consequence, she also fails to recognise the symbolic significance of museal replicas. In Kalb's (1997: 73, 74) museologically constrained worldview, a replica only merits attention so that it can be dismissed or denounced. One interpretation (Wright 1989: 147) of replicas has been that telling the story is more important than the object. However, one must also concede that the museal replica 'tells' a new story.

In conformity with her theory of 'nation-building', Kalb (1997: 70) inserts replication in the "narrative of nationalism". However, she omits the para-national narrative of the 'Bunga Emas and Perak' replica and she excludes the paradox of museum replication of colonial buildings (see Chap. 8). As will be further explicated, Kalb's flawed formula ignores entire realms of meaning.

Chapter 3 highlighted the ethnocentrism of artefact studies, manifested in the exclusion of the 'life force' of objects. The concept of the 'house soul' was mentioned in the previous chapter and the belief in *semangat* was explored during the colonial period (see Chap. 5). *Semangat* is not a subject that has been examined in Malaysian museum writings but it offers insight into the dynamic interplay of dual coherence systems. In this context, one may recall the spirits of the skulls at Monsopiad Cultural Village, Sabah. In the Sarawak Cultural Village, replica skulls are displayed in the Iban longhouse because of "a taboo against placing real skulls in the longhouse" (Zeppel 1994: 253). The relationship between musealium and museal replica, thus, may have another level of signification.

In the Jade Museum (1995), a private museum in Kuala Lumpur, many of the jade pieces on display had a red string tied around them. According to the director-owner, these objects "became disturbed and started shaking" during the period they had to be shifted into the museum (N. Ng pers. comm., 28 Apr. 1996). The owner consulted a Chinese spirit-medium who advised tying the red string to pacify them and "the disturbances stopped" (ibid). Jade is believed to have a powerful 'life force' (Wan Seng 1995: 79-80). Similarly, Malay houses, fishing boats, musical instruments, leather shadow play figures, and the *keris* possess the power of *semangat* (Sheppard 1986: 44, 133). All of these are represented in numerous museum collections. A museum curator in Kuala Lumpur informed that certain artefacts, such as the *keris* and *wayang kulit* figures have "their own spirit" and prayers must be offered to appease them (pers. comm., 5 May 1996). If ritual procedures are not maintained, the artefact becomes "disturbed" (it moves or shakes), and one solution is to return it to the original owner and "display a replica instead" (ibid). This is another possible meaning that may be added to the museal replica whereby it becomes a *semangat* substitute.

Instead of substitution, the relationship between musealium and museal replica may be one of proliferation. This is exemplified by the Terengganu Stone (for its history, see Chap. 8). The inscribed Terengganu Stone is the centre-piece of the new Terengganu State Museum complex (1996), as well as the logo of the Terengganu State Museum Board. This musealium has multiplied into ten museal replicas (at the last count in Nov. 1997). It is displayed in several state museums, general museums (see Plate 52, p. 324), Islamic museums and even the museum on telecommunications, Telekomuzium. An excerpt from 'The Terengganu Stone' in the Islamic Museum, Sarawak, informs: "The inscription is the oldest Malay inscription in the Arabic script ... and the earliest ... record of Islam as the official religion of the ruler of a Malay Kingdom in the Malay Peninsula." To complete the superlatives, the Terengganu Stone is also the most replicated museum object in Malaysia.

It is apt, here, to revisit Anderson's remarks (1991: chap. 10) on the colonial 'museumising imagination' and the 'replicable series'. Anderson (*ibid*: 182) provides the example of the Borobudur monument and its "infinite reproducibility" which was made possible through the technologies of print and photography. The secular colonial regime crafted a desacralised Borobudur, replicated and eventually transformed into an instantly recognisable 'logo' (*ibid*: 182). In Malaysia, the 'infinite reproducibility' of the Terengganu Stone connotes an inverse logic to Anderson's argument. Most of the museal replicas are in glass showcases. Few labels mention they are replicas. In one of the museums in Kuala Lumpur although permission was granted for photography, this did not extend to the Terengganu Stone replica. The glass showcase or the 'do not touch' sign generate an aura of sanctity (cf. Anderson's (1998: chap. 2) latest position on reproducibility and its association with 'aura'). Hence, the museal replica, the profane object, becomes sacralised through museum reproducibility and display strategies. The boundary separating musealium and museal replica is slender. The Terengganu State Museum, which traces its origins to the Terengganu Stone, displays the original Terengganu Stone in its foyer and an equally impressive replica in its Islamic Gallery upstairs.



Plate 52. Replica of the Terengganu Stone, USM Museum & Art Gallery, Penang

Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 53. New Watercraft Gallery of Pahang's state museum  
Museal replicas are preferred to musealia.

Photo: P. Dellios, 1996

Kalb (1997: 76), who places the Terengganu Stone in the predestined category of 'commemorative objects', concludes that "the Terengganu Stone's place in the museum legitimizes local Islamic power and rule". Firstly, there is nothing recognisably 'local' in the nationwide representation of this replica. The Terengganu State Museum (through the materialisation of its new museum complex) has become the symbolic *mandala*, the sacred circle, to which the other states pay their museal tribute. Notably, the Terengganu State Museum in its "impressiveness" even "outshines" the National Museum (see Lam Seng Fatt 1995: 20). Moreover, this modern *mandala*, as in the past, is buttressed by its wealth (see Chap. 8). Secondly, Kalb fails to fathom the significance of reproducibility. The 'museumising imagination' can not only reproduce objects but invest its reproductions with a certain quality of sacredness. The musealium reduced to a 'commemorative object', and minus its replicable counterparts, is not the entire reality of the 'real thing'.

The museal replica must also be considered in the context of the new and improved 'real thing'. This subject, in the form of replica buildings, was discussed in detail in Chapter 8. Here, the philosophy of the 'better' museal replica is best illustrated by Muzium Sultan Abu Bakar, the state museum of Pahang. The museum's new Watercraft Gallery (Plate 53, p. 324) was nearing completion at the time of my visit (Nov. 1996). The gallery was situated on an artefactual island set in a real river. The museum's director informed that "all the boats on display are reconstructions made by craftsmen based on original designs" (Mokhtar Abu Bakar, pers. comm., 13 Nov. 1996). These replicas were praised not only for their craftsmanship but their durability (*ibid*).

Other examples of museal replicas are too numerous to document. One however, again, reinforces the notion that *the dividing line*, between musealium and museal replica, may itself be the *artefact*. In the Sabah Museum a replica of the Oath Stone was originally on open display. According to the museum's conservator, the fibreglass Oath Stone was placed in a glass case when it began to show signs of deterioration (A. Chong pers. comm., 13 Oct. 1997). Conserving the replica may be as meaningful and full of meanings as conserving the 'real thing'.

Although material culture studies and museology have examined extensively the artefact-object, the 'shadow' of the artefact—the replica—remains in obscurity. The museal replica linked to alternative restitution, *semangat* substitution, symbolic proliferation or artefactual improvement may indicate that Malaysian museums have yet to subscribe to what van de Wetering (1989: 84) calls a Western "authenticity cult". Mead (1983: 100) makes a similar point in his analysis of museums in Oceania: "Preserving the past meticulously is a Western preoccupation ...". In Japan the preservation of material forms may be secondary to perpetuating the skills and rituals of re-creation which produce faithful replicas and maintain the continuity of 'Living National Treasures' (see Lowenthal 1985: 384-5).

Although museologists adhere to the notion that the artefact is polysemantic (see Chap. 3), few apply the same logic to the museal replica. Wright (1989: 147), for example, explains the usage of replicas as a shift in emphasis from possession to interpretation. The replica as an interpretive aid or educational device (see also UNESCO 1965: 16 and app. I) is a particularly Western analysis of the meaning of 'things'. The belief in the "use of replicas for educational purposes" (Frye 1987: 37) has a long ancestry. It may be traced to the nineteenth-century creed of the museum's educational value and thus replicas "came to play a special role" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 395).

In the contemporary context the proposition that the museal replica may have special roles (not only educational) requires further research in non-Western societies. Nevertheless, the Malaysian repertoire of replicas indicates that alternative approaches that delve deeper than the superficiality of materiality need to be explored (not exemplified by Brown (1984: 140) who explains away the replicas in Mini Indonesia as a lack of finances to purchase 'genuine artefacts'). Kalb's (1997: 73) comments on this subject are indicative of the current conceptual quagmire: "In Malaysia, replicas are a museum fact ... and issues of authenticity and uniqueness are not of critical concern." A 'fact' possesses a history, a cultural context, and multiple meanings which are coincidentally some of the characteristics of an 'artefact'. These considerations suggest that museologists have tended to reproduce a tradition of interpretation rather than address the actual data they purport to be investigating (a subject elaborated in Chap. 11).

The final object under consideration is the 'heirloom' jar. This comprises one of the most prevalent museum displays in Sabah and Sarawak (for details, see Dellios 1997: 8-9). Paradoxically, Kalb (1997) fails to include heirloom jars in her analysis of 'culture displays' in Malaysian museums. The recurring motif of the heirloom jar in Malaysian Borneo may be regarded as the display counterpart of the replicable series of the wedding tableau in Peninsular Malaysia. These heirlooms (*pusaka* in Sabah and *pesaka* in Sarawak) have their individual histories as well as a metahistory. They first appeared in Borneo in the tenth century as trade items from the Asian mainland (particularly China) and were subsequently transformed into ceremonial objects and symbols of the indigenous peoples' cultural identity.

The Sarawak Museum's text, 'Ceramics and their uses', informs: "These objects form an integral part of the culture of the indigenous people and are closely linked with their customs and their beliefs in the spiritual world." These early trade items, which both epitomise and materialise the concept of 'trading cultures', have accrued another level of cultural meaning—the secular Western notion of collecting. Heirloom jars are displayed in vast quantities in Sarawak's museums and in the Sabah Museum. As objects that form an 'integral part' of indigenous cultures, what is the implication when they become increasingly removed from circulation?

The museum's role should not be underestimated: "From the beginning the practice of local people selling their heirlooms to the Sabah Museum was encouraged and continues to be an effective way of building the collections and protecting material culture property" (Regis 1993: 13). 'Building' collections may be juxtaposed with an intangible form of 'building': "The ownership of jars passing ... from one generation to another fostered strong cultural ties and helped build social cohesion" (text, 'Jars and people of Sabah'). Are museums accelerating the shift from valued *pusaka* to valued cash? Put in more general terms, are museums as 'collecting cultures' redefining 'trading cultures'?

In the Sibü Civic Centre Museum, Sarawak, a label in the Melanau section reveals: "These objects proudly displayed in the family rooms, are zealously treasured as valuable heirlooms (*pesaka*) ...". If these objects are so 'zealously treasured', why do hoards of them exist in museums? The term 'hoard' may be substantiated by reference to the Sabah Museum collections. The Museum has a permanent and extensive display of jars in its Ceramics Gallery. At the time of my visit (Oct. 1997), the temporary 'Exhibition of jars collection' was also on display. One of the items in the exhibition was a colour photograph of endless rows of jars, captioned: "A photograph showing heirloom jars are preserved by the Sabah Museum in a ceramic collection room."

Heirloom jars are, or were, important display objects in their original domestic context. In Chapter 9, the question of who are the keepers of *kampung* culture, could be reformulated here in analogous terms: who are the rightful heirs of heirlooms? An excerpt from a label in the Sibü Civic Centre Museum, Sarawak, explains that heirlooms on display "indicate the wealth and status of the owner in the longhouse and the neighbouring communities". Do museum hoards and displays of heirlooms give a corresponding message about the wealth and status of the institution?

Another level of analysis cannot ignore the dual layers of the idea of display, itself. Museum displays of heirloom jars, which were also display objects in the longhouses, are often recontextualised in reconstructed longhouse settings. The heirloom jar—as a display of a display—in Malaysian Borneo has its counterpart in Peninsular Malaysia with the Malay wedding tableau. The *bersanding* or 'sitting-in-state' ceremony is a state of sitting in immobility on display to the assembled guests. Significantly, these two predominant museum displays in Malaysia, though divergent in content, draw on indigenous and pre-museum practices of the exhibitionary ritual to regulate social and community relationships. Also of interest is the gradual interchange of themes. The National Museum recently set up a permanent display of jars from Sabah and Sarawak and the museums in these two States are incorporating wedding tableaux in their displays (see Plates 54 and 55, p. 329).



Plate 54. Muzium Negara's display of jars from Sabah and Sarawak  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1996



Plate 55. Sarawak Museum's tableau of a Malay wedding  
Photo: P. Dellios, 1997

### Classifications Have 'No Fractions'

Classifications are ways of seeing and museum classification schemes have much in common with colonial census schemes: "The fiction of the census is ... that everyone has one — and only one — extremely clear place. No fractions" (Anderson 1991: 166). Heirloom jars, the quintessential expression of 'trading cultures' in Borneo, are displayed under the category of 'Ceramics' in the Sabah Museum, Sarawak Museum and National Museum. The tiger (significantly, symbolised on the national crest) is not pursued as a powerful, multivocal and multicultural symbol in Malaysia, but remains ensnared as a stuffed specimen in natural history displays (see Chap. 6, and for detailed examples, Dellios 1996b: 18-19). There is no crossing of classificatory boundaries. The classification, as much as the object, itself, is an artefact. Chapter 6 concluded that the colonial museum heritage semi-colonised classification schemes of post-colonial museums. Galleries of 'Culture' or 'Ethnography', 'History', and 'Natural History' (the predominant divisions of Sheppard's Muzium Negara) became the models of classificatory thought in museums of post-colonial Malaysia. In addition, the category of 'Art' has remained a separate realm even where, in some cases, an art gallery has been located within museum premises.

In contrast to the colonial taxonomic legacy, museum categories of the 'traditional' house/village, the sultanate, Islam, and science and technology are post-colonial typologies that are recognisable products of the musealisation period of 1986-1997 (see Chap. 8). The contemporary classificatory divisions of museal village, the sultanate and Islam place a living heritage of institutions and beliefs in a non-living environment—the museum—for 'heritage' preservation. The future may already be implied in present musealisation patterns. The museal village has already been examined at length in the previous chapter. Royal museums were discussed in Chapter 8 and most state museums have a gallery on their respective state's royalty. In addition, the category of the sultanate and that of Islam are interwoven, and both are not static entities filled with unchanging attributes. The institution of the sultanate and the Islamic religion are closely identified with Malay identity which is, like all ethnic identities, an ongoing process. The Malays as Muslims are now being refashioned as the 'new Malay', the *Melayu baru*, who will strive to accumulate the material goods of the here and now rather than being primarily oriented toward the hereafter (see Chap. 7).

Islamic museums in the role of 'the museum as acquirer' project a visible, panoramic model of this worldview. Moreover, the conversion of palaces into museums is not only of tourism value but provides an overt, domestic model for 'piling up the good things of this world'. Nor should it be forgotten that royal museums may be the products of conflicting political undercurrents (see Chap. 8). In addition, federal-state perceptions of Islam may differ substantially, particularly in the case of Kelantan ruled by Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) since 1990 (see Chap. 8). In a widening web of complexity, interpretations of Islam have been disputed also within Kelantan. In 1996 the Chief Minister of the State directed action to be taken against the organisers of the State Development Expo "for defying a ban on night entertainment at the expo site" (Badrul 1996: 11). The state museum authority and a private firm—joint organisers of the Expo—were accused of failing to comply with "Islamic principles" (ibid: 11).

Kalb (1997), with eyes fixed firmly on museums as 'nation building' tools in her article, 'Nation building and culture display in Malaysian museums', constructs a nation of Islamic identity and sultanate ancestry (ibid: 78). These two elements are regarded as unambiguous, fixed attributes and the term 'nation' is not comprehended analytically but merely appropriated to forge an analogical relationship between national ideologies and the nation's museums (this style of museological imagining will be expounded in Chap. 11). Kalb presents Islam as a monolithic religion, ignoring layers of contested meanings, and she disregards emerging new meanings such as the 'new Malay' which implies the 'new Muslim' (see also *The Australian* 8 July 1998). Moreover, she has failed to consider the political and cultural ramifications of the constitutional amendments to the sultans' powers. Reclaiming the symbolic powers of the sultanate through the medium of the museum must be seen in tandem with its polar opposite: 'museum-pieces' can only become so through their place in museums. Subtle nuances and ambiguities, shifting zones of power and the power of musealisation are all banished from Kalb's narrative which permits 'no fractions'. Also excluded are the other two prevalent classificatory domains: the re-created village and science and technology.

The future is more explicitly expressed under the category of science and technology, which may be regarded as the most recent addition to museum classification schemes. The national-type institutions of the National Planetarium (1994) and the National Science Centre (1996) are products of the 1990s. Similarly, the Telekomuzium in Kuala Lumpur, which uses sophisticated technology in its museum displays of telecommunications, was opened in 1994. The USM Museum and Gallery (1982) of Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, opened its Science and Technology Floor in 1994. The Sabah Museum added to its Science building, the Broadcasting Technology Gallery in 1996. A recent proposal to establish a museum of science and technology in Malacca was justified in terms of the objectives of Vision 2020 (see Nik Abdul Rashid 1996: 15). This emphasis on science and technology has already been outlined in the context of Vision 2020, the envisaged industrialised future of the nation (see Chap. 7).

### **Vision 2020: Thoughts into Things**

Vision 2020, itself, is also an object of musealisation. It was first announced in 1991 and in conjunction with the National Day celebrations of the same year, Muzium Negara held the temporary exhibition, 'Vision 2020: The Way Forward', which presented each of the nine 'challenges' or objectives. In 1996 the National Day exhibition at Muzium Negara had narrowed its focus to the sixth challenge, that is, the leap forward into science and technology. The exhibition's title was based on the official theme of 'Culture determines achievement'. The exhibition was divided into six headings, one of which was: 'Working together to realize the national vision: Vision 2020'. All the display items and texts pertained to the nation's economic, scientific and technological achievements. The introductory text makes this point unequivocally: "This exhibition includes graphics and three-dimensional displays focusing on several great projects which show the strength and success of our way of life." 'Culture' was interpreted as the 'culture' of success and the exhibition had become a reversal: 'Achievement determines (the meaning of) culture'.

'Vision 2020' is as much a museum object as the more traditional objects on display. The Vision 2020 display in Muzium Sejarah Nasional was already discussed in Chapter 8. The state museum in the Cultural Complex of Negeri Sembilan displays a poster on Vision 2020 in its entry area. The Kedah State Museum has on display its objectives which are also tied to those of Vision 2020. The Telekomuzium in Kuala Lumpur exhibits a sensor-animated robot adorned with '2020' and the museum's pamphlet refers to Vision 2020 as "a tangible reality for all Malaysians". The Youth Museum in Malacca displays newspaper articles, photographs and posters on Vision 2020.

Art galleries, however, offer more variegated interpretations. In the Sabah Art Gallery, Rosli Zakaria's work, *Between Now and Tomorrow*, shows a disconnected head, soaring buildings and dark shadows, framed by a computer screen with the words 'Document V2020'. One window shows the font 'New Roman' crossed out and substituted with 'New Malaysian'. The other window is open at the 'Edit Scroll' with the choice 'Save All' circled in red.

In the MIT Museum and Art Gallery, MARA Institute of Technology, Mohd Che In's series of *Kesan Pembangunan* (Effects of Development) links Vision 2020 to golfing landscapes juxtaposed with pieces of indigenous bamboo containers. In the same Gallery, Mohd Rapino Md Zain's *Perpaduan Kaum di Malaysia* (Ethnic Unity in Malaysia) tries to materialise the ideal of 'Bangsa Malaysia' as envisaged in Vision 2020. The shaping of a united 'Bangsa Malaysia' is the first challenge outlined in Vision 2020. According to a feature in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Kulkarni et al. 1996: 19), Vision 2020 sets "a time frame for the creation of a pan-Malaysian 'race'". 'Bangsa Malaysia' has been translated as both Malaysian 'race' and Malaysian 'nation' for 'bangsa' signifies both (see Chap. 7). Here, my focus narrows from the semantics or politics of the term to its museum interpretation as a component of Vision 2020.

Vision 2020, whether on display as museum object or as a subject of museum discussion (to be examined shortly) has been recast as a myopic vision. Malaysia's museum personnel have reproduced a message without necessarily being aware of the full ramifications of its meanings, particularly the first 'challenge' or objective of a united 'Bangsa Malaysia' (see also Chap. 7 on the issue of Vision 2020 as a heritage 'challenge').

In 1991 the Museums Association of Malaysia organised two events "to interpret and assess the role and contribution of museums to Vision 2020" (Regis 1993: 2). Kamarul Baharin's (1991) contribution, 'The Malaysian museums: Towards achieving the 2020 Vision', is indicative of the fundamental misinterpretation of this ambitious agenda for Malaysia's future. In order for museums to become "centres par excellence" (ibid: 3) by the year 2020, they would have to concentrate on "professionalism" and "quality control" (ibid: 4) and develop "new technologies" (ibid: 5). Similarly, Regis' (1993) Masters dissertation, 'Planning towards year 2020 in the Sabah Museum', focuses on museum management, human resources and quality control but 'Bangsa Malaysia', the first challenge of Vision 2020, is a conspicuous omission.

On the whole, the 'challenges' of Vision 2020 for the Malaysian museum world have been translated in terms of technology and human resources. The museum, thus, will be refashioned into an improved, technologically sophisticated, quality-controlled artefact. The other point of convergence between museums and Vision 2020 is the projection of more museums or galleries of science and technology on the museum landscape. The greatest challenge for Malaysian museums (and possibly for the nation) is the imagining of 'Bangsa Malaysia'. The question moves beyond issues of who is (or is not) included in museums, or of who speaks for whom, but of *how* to accommodate a non-ethnically defined, 'Malaysian' identity in museums. 'Bangsa Malaysia' is hypothetical but as an object of museum imaginings its manifestation is characterised by severe impoverishment. The challenge of Vision 2020 for museums will ultimately lie in reviewing their inventory of 'artefacts': thoughts, things and persons.

Although it has been predicted that the recent economic and political events in Malaysia will erase the vision of a fully developed nation by the year 2020 (see *The Australian* 22 Sept. 1998), the vision of 'Bangsa Malaysia' may have a more tenacious hold. The politics of ethnicity in Malaysia is a familiar topic of discourse in political analyses. As Camroux (1994: 7) indicates, "the multi-ethnic character of Malaysian society is still considered as potentially its greatest fault line". 'Bangsa Malaysia' provides one means of negotiating the 'fault line' at a national level. At a display level, Malaysian museums have yet to consider the conceptual and artefactual possibilities of the notion of 'trading cultures' in its entire

spatio-temporal and ideational magnitude. In the intellectual arena the recent emergence of civilisational-cultural dialogues holds promise (see Chap. 7). Yet, ideational constructs may become completely inverted or subverted through the musealisation process. This has already been noted in Singapore's Asian Civilisations Museum, a civilisational census scheme for the 1990s. Similarly, the ideational construct of Vision 2020 in Malaysian museums, becomes a selective artefact, a musealium bereft of its collection of meanings. In museum translation, Vision 2020 is equated with technological mastery for a successful future, be it for the nation as redesigned artefact or the museum as remodelled artefact.

## Conclusion

With the addition of the latest classificatory category, the nation has become a museum-drafted grid of Ethnography, History, Natural History, Art, Islam, Royalty, Museal Village, and Science and Technology. Anderson's power grid—the census, map and museum—requires further clarification in this contemporary setting. Anderson's (1991: 178) usage of the term 'museum' is a shorthand for colonial practices of archaeology of which museums were merely the by-product. As demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5, colonial Malaysia did not fit his Southeast Asian archaeologically-derived model. Nevertheless, his insights may still be utilised by bringing the museum back into the 'museumising imagination'.

The power of the 'museumising imagination' is its ability to create and re-create the census, map and museum. The 'census' is materialised in the person as artefact, mapped ethnic boundaries which admit 'no fractions' and the hierarchy of 'races' reconfigured horizontally in display space. The 'map' is the museum divided and subdivided into classificatory museumscape of imagined reality. The 'map' cannot match reality for it is drafted according to the musealisation design (cf. Schouten 1992). The 'museum' is not a collection of musealia (and museal replicas). The 'museum' is musealisation, with its infinite possibilities to invert, misinterpret, obliterate or suppress meanings. To recast Anderson's words (1991: 184), the museum is a 'totalising classificatory grid, which may be applied with endless flexibility' to anything that comes within the purview of its 'museumising imagination'.

The museum's artefacts—whether material or mental—are acts of musealisation, not signs of representation. Contrary to Kalb's assumption in 'Nation building and culture display in Malaysian museums' (1997), the nation is not 'built', it is musealised. Kalb's conclusion is, itself, a classification scheme (the wedding dais, Islam, royalty) that omits other equally significant, categorisations such as the museal village or science and technology which is also entitled to the label 'culture display'. Moreover, the cultural displays are analysed as unproblematic mirror reflections of the nation. To 'understand the affairs of a nation', then simply becomes a proverbial exercise in exchanging 'books' for 'museums'. This study has maintained that the 'artefact' (be it nation, museum, idea or object) must be understood as dynamic and multivocal, as well as ambiguous in meaning. One of the objectives of Part III, 'The Museum as Artefact, the Nation as Artefact', has been to question whether analytical preoccupation with the discrete object has precluded exploration of the 'real thing'—musealisation—which maps the entire artefactual terrain. In its current theoretical state, is museology conceptually equipped to investigate the 'affairs of a nation'? Kalb's thesis is inextricably bound to a Western construction of museology and its ambivalent, and often stereotypical, approach to non-Western museums. The assumptions of 'global' museology and their implications for 'Third World' museums are the concerns of Part IV: 'The Museum as Replica?'.

## PART IV. THE MUSEUM AS 'REPLICA'?

### Chapter 11. Museology and the 'Third World' Artefact

*The man who sticks bananas in your mouth will also stick  
thorns in your bottom.*

(Malay proverb)

#### Introduction

Part IV, 'The Museum as Replica?', consolidates some of the arguments presented in Parts I to III to question whether museology is an ideologically neutral mode of knowing. The inquiry commences by returning to Chapter 1, with Sola's (1987: 46) conviction that "there is no museological message because there is no museology". This is only a partial truth for although there is no museology, it generates multiple museological messages. This chapter brings into sharp relief some of the implicit messages of museology targeted at the 'Third World'. Consequently, my focus does not extend to their reception. It suffices to note that 'non-Western' nations (for want of a better name) have their own approaches to interpreting and reinterpreting the museum idea and the museological message.

Mainstream, that is, Euro-American museological interpretations of museums in these non-Western societies will be analysed according to four interrelated premises. These comprise the 'Third World' as a museological artefact; museology as a contemporary missionary activity; the 'civilising mission' of museology; and the new evolutionary theory of the museum. These four interlinked themes are also indicative of a prevalent, but usually unquestioned, Eurocentricity in museological practice and scholarship. This chapter is introduced by a Malay proverb which intimates that seemingly benevolent deeds may disguise other machinations. In analogous terms, Western perspectives on museums in the non-Western world are, by no means, devoid of 'thorns'.

### The 'Third World' as Artefact

Generally, museologists are uniformly silent on the question of Eurocentric museology (for exceptions see, Cameron 1995: 51; Prösler 1996: 23). In contrast, archaeologists have demonstrated a growing interest in excavating the history of their disciplinary biases. For instance, the edited volume, *Politics of the Past* (Gathercole & Lowenthal 1990), the outcome of the World Archaeological Congress, includes the section heading, 'The heritage of Eurocentricity'. This 'heritage' still informs contemporary museological thought and practice, and is exemplified by the usage of the analytically flawed term—the 'Third World'. Goldberg (1993: 163) stresses that this term is "expressly linked to racialized premises" and the tripartite scheme of 'First World', 'Second World', and 'Third World' perpetuates racialised relations among the powerful, the power-less, and the powerless (ibid: 164). Goldberg (ibid: 164) also spells out some common assumptions:

The Third World is located baking beneath the tropical sun in contrast to the moderate climate of the Northern Hemisphere so conducive to intellectual productivity. It is the world of tradition and irrationality, underdeveloped and overpopulated ... It is also non-European and nonwhite.

Mention has already been made of the climatic theory relating climate to 'racial' ability, a theory which gained currency during imperial expansion (see Chap. 5), and which appears not to have been entirely abandoned in the contemporary intellectual climate. Goldberg (1993: 167) suggests that substitute terms for the 'Third World', such as 'underdeveloped' or 'developing societies' or 'post-colonial', are no less value-laden. He emphasises that social science analyses should proceed not from surrogate expressions but from the realm of epistemology, for the term the 'Third World' and its euphemisms assume the identification of "something real, some natural condition that is virtually given and unchangeable" (ibid: 168).

Museology, which has been labelled 'multi-disciplinary' (see Chap. 1), has borrowed eclectically from the terminology of political science, inclusive of the term 'Third World'. Cameron (1992a: 384) has been highly critical of the museological borrowing of political jargon words such as 'empowerment', 'democratisation' and 'multi-culturalism'. However, he omits from his inventory the term 'Third World' which is symptomatic of

museological Eurocentricity. Moreover, the rhetoric of museological writings disguises two political ironies. 'Empowerment', 'democratisation' and 'multi-culturalism' are absent in the thought modes of mainstream museology and these appropriated terms are regarded as only applicable to Western museums (an issue expounded later in this chapter).

The otherness of the 'Third World' is museologically constructed from several fragments, language usage being the most readily identifiable. Museologists reveal a certain consensus in their imagining of the 'Third World', such as the formulaic equivalence between 'problems' and the 'Third World'. Harms (1990), in his article on ethnology museums in Germanic-speaking countries, indicates that in the 1970s these museums shifted their focus to "the problems of the Third World" (ibid: 459) and again in the 1980s museums revived their emphasis on "the problems of the Third World" (ibid: 461). Similarly, Stocking (1985a: 12) informs that Western museologists are increasingly emphasising "the need to represent the problems of present day life in the Third World". Thus, the 'Third World' comes to be primarily defined by 'problems'.

Hudson (1987: 173) in his *Museums of Influence* predicts the five 'main world problems' of the future, one of which is:

the truly tragic fact that decolonisation has not worked, in the sense that the world's former colonial territories are, with only four exceptions — the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada — poorer, more insecure, and worse-governed than in the days when they were controlled by a European power.

This is a vivid portrait of what Goldberg terms the 'racialised premise'. For Hudson, the 'problem' can be disassociated from colonialism and recodified as a 'problem' of colour: the 'white' and 'non-white' territories (a partition which also denies the complexities of 'non-white' minorities in 'white' territories). Having classified the nation-artefacts, Hudson then delineates his interpretative stance in 'How misleading does an ethnographical museum have to be?' (1991). He maintains that "nowadays it is almost taboo to tell the truth about what are euphemistically called 'the developing countries', or even to hint that important parts of reality are not for discussion" (ibid: 458). Thus, the 'truth' is akin to an object waiting to be collected and presented as objective 'reality' in a Western

ethnographic museum. Is 'reality' a euphemism for ethnocentrism? McEvelley offers an alternative view of 'reality': "The Museum pretends to confront the Third World while really coopting it and using it to consolidate Western notions of quality and feelings of superiority" (quoted in Jones 1993: 205).

It is also imperative to consider how this ethnographic 'reality' might be realised or, in my terms of reference, 'musealised'. Tillotson (1996: 40) observes that ethnographic museum displays are now offering "a 'warts and all' reconstruction of life in a Third World town, often complete with sounds, smells and participatory activities". Tillotson (*ibid*: 41) justifiably argues that such displays, devoid of context and history, are a form of "ethnographic fiction". They are also a form of civilisational conceit—a hidden hierarchy of an unblemished 'Self' and the 'warts and all' of the 'Other'. Hudson's entreaty for more 'warts' has its own hidden truths. Moreover, Hudson recommends that ethnographic exhibitions employ "*real* people", from their own countries as exhibit-interpreters, who "would bring a much-needed element of *reality* into the situation" (1991: 463, *emphases added*). Hudson adds a new dimension to the person as 'artefact'—the museum's 'real thing'—appropriated to interpret an 'ethnographic fiction'.

Schouten's (1989) commentary on museums and cultural tourism reproduces another strand of Western, neo-colonial conceit. He (*ibid*: 112) advocates the example of Amsterdam's Tropenmuseum, with its tourism programme "in which experienced travellers in the Third World advise those planning a journey on the situation in different countries and the various do's and don'ts". Why is the 'Third World' category singled out for the museum's authoritative attention? Again, the Eurocentric assumption is that Europeans (and European museums) have superior, 'real' knowledge of non-European countries. Moreover, such an encounter with an absent 'Other' may result in the Western museum transforming the 'Third World' into an anecdotal artefact. Significantly, museums in the anecdotal Third World may, themselves, become museological anecdotes. For instance, Brown (1984) in a two-page article, attempts to examine two museums in Thailand and two in Indonesia. Brown (*ibid*: 140) concludes: "The museums raise many questions about the conflict of development versus tradition in developing countries ...". This simplistic dichotomy based on a conflict model, itself, raises many

questions. Once the 'Third World' model is taken as an analytical 'reality', museological inquiry becomes not investigation but a replication of the model's assumptions.

Duncan (1994) has shown an aptitude for transforming the 'Third World' and its museums into anecdotal artefacts in her essay, 'Art museums and the ritual of citizenship'. Although her analysis is largely confined to the West, the 'Third World' has a 'ritual' status of its own. In a remarkably naive political and museological analysis, Duncan (ibid: 279) contends:

By providing a veneer of western liberalism that entails few political risks and relatively small expense, art museums in the Third World can reassure the West that one is a safe bet for economic or military aid.

Duncan's (1994: 279-280) monolithic 'Third World' consists of two examples: the Philippines and Iran during the 1970s. Moreover, her macro-analysis is based on the assumption that the units of analysis are identical. Duncan's (ibid: 282) examination of "the politics of public art museums" imagines that all the key terms have a universally applicable meaning and that they combine in a universally prescribed manner to buttress "real power" (ibid: 283). Implicitly, her anecdotal 'Third World' is denied a museological value in itself but is converted instead into a 'textual artefact', which by its anecdotal nature reinforces the unstated notion that the 'real power' of museum analyses emanates from the West.

Although Kalb (1997) examines museums not art galleries, she cites Duncan and borrows her ideological framework in order to slot Malaysia within the 'Third World' museum model. Kalb (ibid: 69) proclaims:

Malaysia deploys its museums as a signal that it has at least a veneer of proper respect for Western civic-mindedness. For Malaysia to participate in global politics and the international economy, it must also traffic in art and public culture.

The political-economic assumptions of a 'conformist' Malaysia will be neglected to focus on the museological ones. Both Duncan and Kalb imply that museums of the 'Third World' lack their own substance and meanings. They are simply a 'veneer', to borrow the descriptor of both Duncan and Kalb. Consequently, they can be explained away as contorted

shadows of the West. It has been indicated in earlier chapters that in Southeast Asian *wayang kulit* performance, the 'shadow' is the meaningful artefact, the 'real thing'. Western museologists have yet to realise that they have been sitting on the wrong side of the *wayang kulit* screen.

Another common museological combination is the 'Third World' and 'nation-building' or 'national identity'. Durrans (1988: 152), for example, claims: "In most developing states ... museums operate not just as repositories for things of the past, but as instruments for building new national identities ...". Durrans (*ibid*: 153) adds that the museum appeals to "many Third World countries because it offers a means of recapturing, elaborating, or inventing their own distinctive cultural traditions as a countermeasure to past or present domination". Durrans implies that the monolithic 'Third World' is preoccupied with 'recapturing, elaborating, or inventing' its traditions, whereas these processes are absent in the 'non-Third World', which he specifies as Europe and North America (*ibid*: 153). Bodnar's (1991) *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*; Horne's (1984) *The Great Museum: The Re-presentation of History* which focuses on Europe; and Bennett's (1988) *Out of Which Past? Critical Reflections on Australian Museum and Heritage Policy* are but a few reminders that these processes are not 'Third World'-specific. As pointed out in Chapter 7, all nations undergo the nation-building process, but differences may be discerned in how this process is articulated or when it becomes accentuated.

The 'Third World' paradigm shows no signs of being discarded as apparent in Kalb's (1997) recent analysis of a restricted range of museums in Malaysia (see also Chap. 10). Her conclusions do not offer new interpretations but merely replicate the narrative of the 'Third World' as anecdotal artefact in a world defined by Western thought modes. Kalb, adhering to the 'Third World' model, asserts: "In modern Malaysia, museums serve the *additional task* of nation-building" (1997: 69, *emphasis added*). This contention, similar to Durrans' claims, makes it appear that issues of 'nation building' and 'national identity' are a particularity or peculiarity of the 'Third World'. Moreover, the model's assumptions then structure museum analysis. Kalb's assertion is devoid of an historical perspective: the political transition period witnessed the colonial regime's

materialisation of the National Museum before the nation, itself, came into being.

Analogous to the museum reconstructions of 'Third World' towns described by Tillotson above, the textual reconstructions of the 'Third World' are bereft of context and history. If the former is 'ethnographic fiction', the latter could be termed 'museological anecdote'. The museum cliché of 'telling the story' obscures the circumstance of the 'story-teller'. The museological 'storyline' rarely deviates: a reproduction of the 'Third World' stereotype and its textual 'logoisation', to borrow Anderson's terminology (1991: 182). This associative link to colonial imagining is intentional for museology has yet to confront its contemporary colonising practices embedded in deeper power structures.

### **Missionary Museology**

Museology as a missionary activity may be traced to the era of colonialism, and colonial curators whose 'missionary zeal' conquered the 'frontiers of civilisation' (see Chap. 5). A missionary philosophy also informs contemporary perspectives. Hunt (1978: 75), in 'Museums in the Pacific Islands: A metaphysical justification', ventures: "Museums can be justified on many levels. But in the end, if asked whether museums are useful institutions, I would answer like a Christian—I do not know; but I believe." Ames (1992: 147) questions whether museum curators are "missionaries of the postmodern age". Sofka (1989: 15), chairman of the ICOM International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM), refers to "ICOFOM's museology apostles" and the work of the "voluntary missionary" at a Regional Assembly of ICOM in Asia and the Pacific. Moreover, Sofka (*ibid*: 12) maintains that "to improve this unsatisfactory situation" of museology in the region, much work needs to be done (that is, much 'conversion').

These missionary comparisons are not accidental, nor without significance. Missionary activity is underpinned by a belief in the certitude and superiority of one's convictions and hence the 'moral obligation' to convert others to the doctrine. Ironically, at a time of theological debate on missionary activity being "linked both to the Western mentality and the colonial conquest of the world by the West" (Clémentin-Ojha 1997: 170),

museology has neither perceived nor questioned its missionary premise. The International Council of Museums (ICOM), through its regional networks, may be considered as the official missionary agency, with its ongoing "international museum crusades" (Wittlin 1970: 197). ICOM's and UNESCO's Eurocentric curriculum of 'heritage schooling' was already outlined in Chapter 8 (for an earlier history, see Morley 1966).

In 'ICOM at fifty', Boylan (1996: 50) documents the organisation's litany of 'achievements' and concludes that "today its worldwide membership is far greater than that of many otherwise comparable NGOs". However, the 'international' component of the International Council of Museums is somewhat misleading. According to an editorial in *Museum Management and Curatorship* (1993, 12(1): 5), ICOM's membership of 8,000 consists of 72% in Europe; nearly 14% in the United States of America and Canada; 5.3% in the Asia-Pacific region; and less than 3% in Africa.

Cameron (1995) raises the pertinent issue of the role of international museum movements (both before and after World War II). Cameron's (ibid: 51-2) questions address wider issues of power relations: "Did the political and economic power of the North Atlantic enclave allow us to export the ideologies of the industrialized north to the developing south through the international museum movement?" When museology discovered 'ideology' and the 'politics of the museum' in the 1990s (see Chap. 1), museums were interpreted as ideological institutions that served the nation-state (see, for example, Hooper-Greenhill 1994: 118; Karp 1991: 14).

Paradoxically, few museologists—Cameron being a notable exception—have been able to extrapolate this theorising beyond the insularity of the museum institution. Thus, the ideology of museology is seldom contextualised in the global power matrix. Cameron (1995: 51) underlines that the approach of the international museum movement toward 'developing' nations "raises questions of cultural transfer, or export". Cameron's critique is timely but, here, I wish to examine another form of 'cultural export' which has yet to surface in museological writings. This recent phenomenon concerns the commercial 'missionaries' in Southeast Asia.

The industry of 'cultural heritage services', as it is innocuously termed in Australia, is in the commercial business of 'conversion'. Australia's main agency, AusHeritage (see *Smarts* 1995: 6), identified its export market as the Asia-Pacific region, particularly Southeast Asia at a time when the economies of these nations were thriving. In an article entitled 'Selling heritage in Asia', the executive director of AusHeritage (Ramsay 1997: 14) informs: "In addition to commercial gains, trade offers leverage when defence pacts are negotiated, and a rigorous multilateral trading exchange enriches all countries involved." 'Selling heritage' is thus a package deal of culture, politics and economics, which in linguistic seduction 'enriches all'.

It appears one of the initial tasks of AusHeritage was redefining economic relationships to allow 'enrichment' to proceed: "Marketing heritage services to Asia on a commercial basis can still be quite challenging, given that in the past such services have largely been funded through development aid" (*Smarts* 1997: 44).

AusHeritage has been involved in several building conservation projects in Malaysia and also museum training workshops. In 1996 it conducted at Muzium Negara a four day conservation seminar, with a fee of RM800. A member of the Malaysian Museum Association (pers. comm., 23 Oct. 1996) commented that museum practitioners were used to paying around RM80 rather than RM800, which effectively shut out the small museums that could most benefit from the seminar. During the introductory session which also provided an outline of the four day programme, not once was any reference made to traditional conservation techniques in Asia. What was really being conserved in this conservation seminar—a Eurocentric conviction in the privileged position of one's own knowledge systems? Perhaps AusHeritage did not wish to enter "the debate on Western methods [which] is a common source of disagreement among museum conservators throughout Asia" (see Pennelis 1993: 52).

AusHeritage workshops in Malaysia, such as 'Caring for collections', are all about the 'old' museology, the methods and mechanics of the museum, as interpreted by the West (see Chap. 1 on the 'old' and 'new' museology). The 'old' museology format, being exported to ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), in the form of museum training, is also being promoted by Australia's Asialink Arts and Museums Australia (see, for

example, Cochrane 1996; Devenport & Ramsey 1998; Kronenberg 1995). Are Southeast Asian museums perceived as being at a lower evolutionary level (an idea expounded in a subsequent section)? Does the rhetoric of museum 'reflexivity' (see Chap. 1) operate in segregated realms? AusHeritage was recently successful in securing a joint agreement with ASEAN to develop a regional policy for cultural heritage, which will be jointly funded by ASEAN and Australia (*Smarts* 1998: 8-9; Stewart 1998: 7).

The missionary success of AusHeritage, however, has been dented by the very factor that propelled AusHeritage into Asia. The changing economic fortunes of the region have impelled AusHeritage to look for new markets of 'conversion'. According to the executive director of AusHeritage, "Ever since we started we've been quietly keeping an eye on Eastern Europe ..." (Ramsay quoted in *Smarts* 1998: 9).

Here, it is opportune to briefly examine Eastern Europe as a potential site of commercial missionary activity. In an article of 1992, the museologist, Sola (1992a), emphasises that Eastern Europe must develop its own museum directions and not follow in the tracks of Western Europe. Sola (*ibid*: 171) elaborates that to pursue the latter alternative is "needlessly self-denying" and will result in a "constant lagging behind the West". Eastern Europe or Southeast Asia or the category of 'Third World', when plotted on the museological map, become implicitly defined by centre-periphery relationships. The museological centres are Western Europe and North America (Australia may be regarded as a 'periphery' with 'centre' ambitions).

Combined, Western Europe and North America represent over 85% of ICOM's membership. Both Western Europe and North America have been dominant in the business of "selling heritage expertise" in Asia (*Smarts* 1997: 44). A cynical interpretation might be that the ideological groundwork was laid by ICOM on its 'museum crusades' and the economic benefits are now being reaped by the commercial 'missionaries', who also disseminate the original missionary message. Ames (1992: xv) indicates that new museum directions will be "difficult to achieve where vested interests in the standard model are strong". He fails to specify these 'vested interests' but his cryptic message has resonance. The 'constant lagging behind the West', that Sola highlights, is a trajectory that sustains its own museological momentum: the Western museum/heritage model

is the 'real thing' and museums in the non-Western world can be made into 'replicas', and increasingly at a price.

### Civilisational Correlations

Missionary methodology in museology does not significantly diverge from the colonial 'civilising mission' to which both missionaries and colonial curators subscribed. It was indicated in Chapter 7 that museology propagates the creed that a nation's level of civilisation can be quantified by the number of its museums. Statistically, the 'Third World' thus becomes a civilisational 'have-not'. The contemporary civilisational ideology of the museum is merely a continuation of the 19th century museum ideal which, as articulated by Goode (1994: 44) in 1895, was the 'necessity' of a museum in "every highly civilized country", for in the 19th century the museum was believed to have a 'civilising' effect on the populace (Bennett 1996: 5). It may be recalled that the first museums constructed by the British in Malaya were part of the civilisational repertoire of the colonial regime, as outward signs of *their* advanced civilisation (see Chap. 5). Are museums in non-Western societies being 'schooled' to climb the evolutionary ladder of someone else's construct of civilisation?

'Museums, civilisation and development' was the theme of the ICOM Encounter in Jordan, 1994. The premise that the three belong to the same conceptual set is not questioned in the papers compiled into a volume of the same title (ICOM 1994b). Nor is there any attempt to debate whether the terms 'museum', 'civilisation' and 'development' are Eurocentric concepts (for 'civilisation' as a Eurocentric notion, see Morphy 1996: 257, and similarly for 'development', see Sivaraksa 1989). Indeed, the ICOM papers reveal a striking consistency of faith, as expressed in 'The civilizing mission of contemporary museums' (Mohamed Jassim 1994). Has ICOM's 'civilising mission' been a colonisation of minds? The colonial 'climatic theory' which correlated the level of civilisation to the type of climate has been reformulated in museology—substituting the nature of climate with the number of museums. Both rationalisations reflect their European origins and embody a Eurocentric model of ordering the world.

Museums in the already 'civilised' Western societies are perceived as having 'progressed' to the highest stage of museological development, that is, the 'democratisation' of museums (for the 'democratisation' ideology see, for example, Galla 1995: 42; Halpin 1997: 52). Moore (1997: vii) claims that in the past museums were regarded as civilising agents but in the present museums are informed by the 'democratising' principle. Teather (1991) argues that the "process of museological democratization" (ibid: 413) requires new approaches, inclusive of valuing "equally the developed [and] the Third-World countries" (ibid: 414). Ironically, the proposed parity is expressed in the Eurocentric language of the 'Third World' artefact so that new ways of thinking are articulated according to old dichotomies: 'Us' and 'Them'. To return to the 'civilising mission' of museology, the message is for 'Them' to cultivate more museums, and hence, more closely resemble 'Us'. A Eurocentric 19th century museum ideology is being disseminated by museology's 'apostles' and 'missionaries' to those nations perceived to be "below the minimum level of civilization" (Hudson & Nicholls 1985: x). Is the unstated rationale that these nations can be 'reformed' through the 'civilising' effect of museums? It is doubtful whether the 'democratisation' of the museum world order will emerge from the Western civilisational monologue.

### **The New Evolutionary Museology**

Underlying museology's civilisational rationale and its official or commercial missionary activities is a belief in institutional Darwinism. Museums in the 'Third World' have been placed on the various lower rungs (differentiated by degrees of 'Third Worldliness') of the evolutionary museum ladder. The 'new evolutionary theory' of museums, as with the 'missionary' methodology and 'civilising mission' of museology, has its conceptual foundation in the past. Wittlin (1970: 135) describes the museum philosophy of the late nineteenth century as 'Museological Darwinism' and the New Evolutionary Museology of the contemporary age may be considered an evolution from its nineteenth-century predecessor. The major difference between the two periods is that Museological Darwinism arranged and ranked object-artefacts and the New Evolutionary Museology classifies and grades museum-artefacts (for the latter approach, see Hudson 1987). The major similarity of the two is that they are both implicit schemes of sorting and ranking societies.

Walsh (1992: 54) characterises Darwin's theory of evolution as a 'metanarrative' which emerged during the period of 'modernity', a temporal frame he contrasts to 'post-modernity'. The narrative tradition of evolutionary theory (see Chap. 5 on colonial museums) cannot be so easily disengaged from contemporary, museological space and time (whether labelled 'post-modern' or not). A more informative perspective on Darwinian thinking is Ascher's concept of 'superartefacts' that offer intellectual insights into an era through their temporal longevity and spatio-temporal interconnections (see Chap. 3). Unfortunately, Ascher limits the usage of his term to material forms but this study makes no such distinctions and, hence, Darwin's theory qualifies as a 'superartefact'. The extra-Darwinian use of evolutionary theory thus recognises neither the boundaries of space nor time although its metaphorical content may remain fairly constant: this 'superartefact' is carved from a developmental logic.

Devenish's (1986) account of museums in the West Indies is an apposite specimen of evolutionary theory applied to the anecdotal 'Third World'. Devenish makes no attempt in his five-page article to situate his commentary within a socio-cultural and political context. Museums in the West Indies become an opportunity to celebrate the 'superiority' of 'Self' by cataloguing the 'deficiencies' of the 'Other', one of which is to be "primitive technically" (ibid: 192). Museums in the West Indies are implicitly classified into two types: "museums and 'quasi-museums'" (ibid: 191). The former category includes "a museum by our definition" (ibid: 195), although 'our definition' is never stated; in the latter category, one site "by our ideas" (ibid: 195) is not really a museum; and the displays of another "hardly constitute a museum" (ibid: 195). Devenish's primary objective is not to examine museums of the West Indies, but to indicate where they fall short of the Eurocentric evolutionary ideal.

An alternative approach to the evolutionary theory is typified by exclusionary practices in museology. For instance, Bennett's (1996) essay, 'The museum and the citizen' (see also my discussion in Chap. 6), lists four general principles—of the civic roles of the museum—"that would recruit more or less universal support in modern *western* societies" (ibid: 2, emphasis added). Bennett (ibid: 3) argues that these principles have evolved over the past two hundred years and, therefore, the exclusion of non-Western societies is an implicit statement that non-Western

museums have yet to gain a foothold on the evolutionary ladder. The uncharted museum map may illustrate the conviction that 'non-Western museums' are not sufficiently 'Westernised' to warrant inclusion. All the sermons on 'democratising museology' carry the message that both 'democratisation' and 'museology' will be set and defined by Eurocentric parameters.

Attempts have been made by the 'Third World' recipients of the museological message to redefine these parameters but these proposals have been made within the organisational framework of museology, itself (see, for example, Schouten 1993: 385; Sola 1987: 46), so the elimination of an evolutionary premise is unlikely. Ironically, the very ability to side-step the evolutionary museum ladder has been recently singled out for museological attention. Ames, for instance, suggests that "we need to look to minorities, indigenous groups, small communities and to *developing nations* for creative innovations" (1992: xv, emphasis added).

Ames' assumption is that 'developing nations' have been immune to museological missionary activity, offering a 'pristine' museumscape. Two of the 'creative innovations' recently identified are the 'cultural centres' of the Pacific (Kaepler 1994; Kasahérou 1998; Newton 1994: 277) and the 'culture houses' of Africa (Layton 1989: 10; Ucko 1994). Now that the museological gaze is gradually turning to areas traditionally classified as 'Third World', what form will this particularised 'looking' take? Will it herald a shift in the power imbalance between 'Us' and 'Them'? Or will it 'look' to non-Western museums and imagine nostalgic enclaves of a pre-culture contact museology? These questions are resumed in the next chapter.

## Conclusion

According to Goldberg (1993: 168), the 'Third World' has become monolithic, "something real". In museology it has been converted into a museological artefact. Its identity is defined by 'problems', and an obsession with 'inventing' traditions and 'building' nations. The 'Third World' is also 'conveniently' pre-classified by its numerological identity and, hence, its position on the evolutionary museum ladder is assured. Nevertheless, it can be 'aided' to climb or 'buy' its way gradually up the

ladder, one evolutionary rung at a time. The rung captioned, 'civilisation', for instance, requires the development of museums for the development of a civilised society (see Inumaru 1989: 7). The 'civilising mission' of museology, as in the colonial past, does not preclude a commercial mission. Missionary museology is a hybrid of the 'new' museology and the 'how to' of the 'old' museology so that it becomes a manual of 'how to' convert the non-Western museum. The methodologies are manifold. Handler (1985: 215) informs that one of the responses of Western museums to the issue of "Third World repatriation claims" is to dispatch foreign aid for the construction of their own museums. Is it possible to differentiate between the proverbial 'thorns' and the 'bananas'?

Kuhn (1996: 182) uses the expression 'symbolic generalisation' to refer to a disciplinary formula used unquestioningly by its practitioners. The four interrelated premises examined in this chapter also assume the form of 'symbolic generalisations' which take on the appearance of 'laws of nature' (ibid: 183). Museology's symbolisations and logoisations are deployed largely without self-interrogation, and they bear the deep imprint of their makers. Museology is Eurocentric in its thought modes and hegemonic in its logic. If the 'new museology' is understood as "a critique of linear narratives" (Witcomb 1994: 240) of the museum, there appears scant critique of the 'linear narrative' of development which has been propagated by museology in the 'Third World'. Museological imaginings of the 'Third World' reveal a mentality in urgent need of a *révolution mentale*. Whether this is likely to eventuate in the future may be apprehended in the next chapter, 'Museums, Museology and Futurology'.

## Chapter 12. Museums, Museology and Futurology

*A cart ahead means a track behind.*

(Chinese proverb)

### Introduction

The Chinese proverb is intended to accentuate that the trail of the 'future' cannot be disentangled from the epistemological foundations of museology. The aim of this chapter is not to evaluate the accuracy of museum prophecies, but to consider the shape in which they are imagined, both in mainstream museology and in Malaysian museum writings. The discussion will consider museums of the future, the future of museums, future prospects for museology, as well as the museum's appropriation of posterity. When museology has turned to futurology, the museumising imagination has become fixated on the 'global village'. If the museum is understood as a 'global symbol' (Macdonald 1996: 2), is it interpreted as a multivocal symbol in museology? This issue is addressed by juxtaposing museum visions of the 'global village' and of the 'museal village' in Asia. The Southeast Asian region is discussed in greater depth in this chapter for Malaysia has been steadily mapping its future in a regional context (see also Camroux 1994).

### Museum Imaginings of Futurity

Schouten (1993: 381), in 'The future of museums', claims that museums "happen to look backwards rather than forwards". Contrary to his assertion, museum imaginings of the future have a long history. Over two hundred years ago Mercier, in *L'An 2000* (published in 1770), predicted the museum of the future: on the building's facade would be the declaration, 'An Abridgement of the Universe' (cited in Mumford 1966: 434). The affirmation of "the expanding museum universe" in *Museums for a New Century* (Bloom et al. 1984: 18) brings Mercier's macrocosmic prediction up to date. My intent is not to provide an historical or comprehensive survey of futurological writings but to demonstrate that they may be understood as two temporal frames, one being concerned with 'museums of the future' and the other with 'the future of museums'.

A distinct interest in the future shape of museums is evident since the 1960s. Bazin (1967) includes a chapter, 'Present and future' in *The Museum Age*. Ripley's (1978) *The Sacred Grove: Essays on Museums*, first published in 1969, contains three chapters, in a linear narrative of 'Museums and the future'. The 1970s is introduced by Wittlin's (1970) *Museums: In Search of a Usable Future*. The title is a misnomer as it is primarily an historical narrative of the museum institution. One brief section that could be interpreted as future-oriented is a future still unfolding in the present. This section, with the heading 'The area of new expectations' (ibid: 193), surveys newly emerging nations in Africa and Asia, and the efforts of UNESCO and ICOM in these regions. The missionary expectation of these organisations was an evolutionary museum future for Asia and Africa.

Museum confidence continued into the 1980s. "Museums can help bring about what futurists call a 'choiceful future'" is one of many optimistic statements in *Museums for a New Century* (Bloom et al. 1984: 23), a report commissioned by the American Association of Museums. Hudson's (1987) *Museums of Influence* includes the chapter, 'Pointers to the future', which is offered as "a *recipe* for survival and growth in the museum field" (ibid: 194, emphasis added). These brief examples from the 1960s to the 1980s are indeed 'recipes' to make the 'museum of the future': add a touch more educational emphasis, mix in a pinch of better collections management (see Bloom et al. 1984: 31-33), stir in more interactive technology, sieve through some cultural pluralism (see Schouten 1989: 111, 115). This 'recipe book' approach to the future also spills over into the early 1990s. Boylan's (1992) introduction to *Museums 2000: Politics, People, Professionals and Profit* is entitled 'Museums 2000 and the future of museums'. The basic assumption is that museums will have a future once they master the new recipe of the four "P's" in the volume's title. Similarly, Schouten's (1993) article, 'The future of museums', belongs to the same culinary model in which museums could be kneaded into a better shape.

Vaessen's (1989: 27) prediction for the future follows the incline of institutional Darwinism and attains its apotheosis: "It is likely that the museum ... will evolve, by way of 'mutations', in such a way that new institutions will emerge to deal with new challenges and problems." Museological evolution into the 'mutant museum' does not, however,

confront the issue of whether museums and museology are part of these 'problems'. Rather, museology is preoccupied with its own predicament: the future direction of 'natural selection'. Museum articles, such as 'The museum curator as an endangered species' (Anderson 1985); 'The contemporary curator — endangered species or brave new profession?' (Mayer 1991); 'Museum professionals — the endangered species' (Sola 1992c); and 'Endangered specimens' (Miller 1992), are the metaphorical assessment of survival prospects (cf. the anthropomorphic museum in Chap. 2; here, 'anthropos' becomes objectified as the museum's specimen).

Addressing the topic of the 'future of museums' has become a more pronounced concern since the 1990s, and it is partly the consequence of the cumulative effect of the multiple 'identity crises' of the museum (for early diagnoses, see Cameron 1971; Weil 1983: 3-23). *Towards the Museum of the Future: New European Perspectives*, edited by Miles and Zavala, appeared in 1994. The essays in this volume do not conform to a unitary viewpoint or theoretical frame but they do "show museums struggling to find a role for themselves in a culturally and politically unstable world" (Miles 1994: 1). In this instance, too, the title of the volume is a misnomer for the real issue is 'the future of the museum', typified by the remarks of Silverstone, one of the contributors. Silverstone (1994: 161) maintains that the museum is "no longer certain of its role, no longer secure of its identity, no longer isolated from political and economic pressures or from the explosion of images and meanings ... transforming ... contemporary society". The volume is, in essence, a European portrait of the insecure museum in the 'unstable world'.

Cameron (1992b: 7) forecasts a museum future that he predicts will not eventuate: "The probabilities that the ... museum can get out of its skin and assume a new identity for a future role in the 'service of society and its development' are very poor." To save the museum's 'skin', he proposes "metamorphosis" (ibid: 7) of the fundamental precepts of the museum. Cameron (1992a: 379) advances the same 'metamorphosis' solution elsewhere, so that a transformation of the museum will prepare the way for "the tomorrows that can be" (ibid: 386). Conforti presents similar views in an article on museum 'survival' which is ominously lacking a 'future'

in the title: 'Museums past and museums present: Some thoughts on institutional survival' (1995). Conforti (ibid: 341) speculates where the future does not lie:

... museums will not be able to address these issues simply by joining in the universal quest for better collection management practices, or embarking on new educational initiatives ... [nor] by speaking in multiple, less authoritarian voices ...

Both Conforti and Cameron foresee museum survival contingent on the re-evaluation of value systems in order to secure the museum's "continuing relevance" (Conforti: 1995: 353) and to "rebuild for new uses" (Cameron 1992a: 385). As will be discussed presently, 'rebuilding' may not be the most constructive alternative.

Sola (1992b: 400), in 'The future of museums and the role of museology', offers a future rarely contemplated:

The future of museums has to contend with the phenomenon of death, as it is a part of our life-cycle. By doing so, it will be possible to break with the exhausting obligation to keep the physical evidence alive. ... This also comprises the death of museums and similar institutions, ideally, through their fulfillment—through their closing the circle and coming back to life, thus decreasing the need for them.

Sola's proposal to de-accession the museum mentality must be seen against the powerful forces of the museum as 'acquisitor' (Cameron 1993: 166) and as 'conspicuous consumption' (Cameron 1992b: 9). Having mastered the materialisation of the 'cargo cult', will museums strike the 'fatal' blow to their own mastery? Museums have not been 'coming back to life' through death, as evidenced by the sustained quantitative increase in museums throughout the world (see Macdonald 1996: 1; Sherman & Rogoff 1994a: ix; ).

The 1997 edition of *Museums of the World* (Bartz 1997) includes 193 countries with a total of 27,380 museums (compared to 24,624 museums in 1995). Owing to "judicious selection" (ibid: vii), this must be considered a conservative figure. The section on Malaysia lists twenty-five museums, which may be contrasted with eighty-eight (the core identity of museum, memorial museum and art gallery). Moreover, the ten museal villages are

not included although the directory incorporates the category of 'open air museum'. Consequently, the Malaysian total in the directory represents approximately one-quarter of the actual total. It may be inferred from this one example out of 193 countries that *Museums of the World* is an unrealistic reckoning of the global mathematics of museum-making. Sola's prognostication of a museum life-cycle pattern must confront another design taken from nature: the ever-expanding spiral.

Sola (1992b: 394) emphasises that one must treat together the two topics: "the future of museums and museology (if we still call this theory by that title)". Sola has set himself a formidable task to foretell the future of museology, for he has consistently maintained that museology 'does not exist' (1987: 46; 1991: 132; 1992c: 101). Not surprisingly, Sola predicts a future where museology is also non-existent: "A *new theory* (I refuse to talk about any that we know) must have the quality to explain the past logically, ... fit the present and ... be useful for the future" (1992b: 398, emphasis added). Sola's solution to the future of museums and museology is the 'renaissance' that will never transpire. Sola is not a 'museum prophet' likely to gather a wide following for his faith portends 'self-sacrifice'.

Teather's (1991: 414) vision of futurity is a "museological renaissance". This will be achieved through a "Global Museology" which will place on a par "the developed with the Third-World countries" (ibid: 414). It was maintained in the previous chapter that such parity is doubtful for it will merely extend the museological map over a wider territory, rather than question the fundamental biases of the map-makers. Whether one talks of a 'global' museology, or a 'new', 'reflexive', 'liberated', or 'post-modern' museology (see Chap. 1), the suffixes are as much defined by Western modes of knowing as is the term 'museology'. The 'cart ahead' of museology will most likely be loaded with additional suffixes and, whilst the term 'museology' will retain its global usage, it will remain devoid of theoretical significance. 'Global museology' is as meaningless as the usage of the term 'globalisation' in museological discourse.

## The 'Global Village' and the 'Globalised' Museum

The theme of 'globalisation' has had a visible impact on the genre of 'futurology' in museum writings, but as a concept, 'globalisation' is treated in an intellectually unsophisticated manner. Schouten (1989: 112), for instance, gathers globalisation, tourism and museums into a tidy triad for a promising future. His recommendation that museums become more acutely involved in this globalisation process by providing tourism advice on 'Third World' destinations was noted in the previous chapter. In the interrogative frame of Featherstone (1990: 9), is globalisation a process in which 'other cultures are largely mastered'? Macdonald (1996: 14) suggests that one of the challenges for museums will be to infer a sense of continuity "in the face of the apparent acceleration of transnational movement and global transformation". A greater challenge for museums is to conceptualise globalisation. Teather (1991: 414), who argues for a 'global museology' and underlines the 'global commercialisation' of museums, fails to include any reference to 'globalisation' in her study. To borrow a phrase of Teather's (1991: 411), what are the 'museological models-of-knowing' globalisation theories?

With one exception (to be discussed presently), globalisation theories are absent from museological analyses. However, museology is not absent from globalisation theories. Anthony Smith (1990: 176), in 'Towards a global culture?', predicts that "tourism and museology alone will preserve the memory of an earlier era of 'national cultures'". This is a revelatory irony: museology is thrust backward into an 'earlier era', when it has become so preoccupied with recounting its future in a 'globalised' world. One exception to the museological omission of globalisation theories is Prösler's (1996) essay, 'Museums and globalization'. He provides a sophisticated macro-analysis that fills a void in the epistemology of museology but his analysis is not without its shortcomings (see Chap. 5). Here, I wish to focus on a narrow area of Prösler's inquiry—the 'Third World'—to resume one thread of the argument in the previous chapter.

Prösler (1996: 23) exhorts: "The 'Third World' has to be taken thoroughly into account if one is to gain a truly global perspective ...". Herein lies a scenario that has yet to be imagined: a shift from the 'Third World' as anecdotal artefact to a topic of mainstream museological discourse. Presuming such a reorientation occurs, it will most likely assume the form

of 'salvage museology'. Akin to the philosophy of 'salvage ethnography', it will 'collect' and document museums in those societies which retain some vestiges of a pre-globalised, pre-post-industrialised and pre-post-modernised existence. This is intimated in Prösler's (1996: 40) comments on 'culture-specific' interpretations: "For example, religious offerings are sometimes placed at display cabinets containing sacrificial objects in First as well as 'Third World' ethnographic museums." The very example he selects is not arbitrary. It points to traditions that have yet to be overpowered by the global order of things. His example also symbolises one of the epistemological divisions in approaches to the meaning of things in the 'museum world'. The 'otherness' of the Other, which has marked exclusionary practices (see Chap. 11) of the past and present, may become the very basis for future inclusion. This is not the same sugar-coated vision of futurity outlined in Teather's (1991: 411) 'global museology' which will promote global 'harmony' on this 'one earth' we all share.

The museological shape of the world that is to come is often reproduced as the 'global village'. As will be demonstrated, this idea has become a museum 'artefact' — minus its explanatory label. Museologists neither offer exegesis nor question the deeper issues of ideology. Hence, the 'real thing', is assumed to 'speak for itself'—a museological conviction still encountered in the literature (see, for example, Wilson 1992: 85). MacDonald (1988), in 'The future of museums in the global village', assumes that by mentioning museums in the geographical landscape of Asia, Europe, the 'New World' and the United States of America, he has captured the meaning of the 'global village'. The meaning of the 'future of museums' is projected in a vision of the 'globalised' museum based on the American model of the 'global village'. MacDonald (ibid: 70-1) predicts that the 'integrated theme park' approach, with multi-media presentations, highly structured programmes and elaborate marketing techniques, will become a global museum orientation of the future. Is the 'global village' a 'white man's' village? More importantly, who is the 'village' headman?

Imaginings of the 'global village' and the 'globalised' museum materialised in the Canadian Museum of Civilization (in the singular). *A Museum for the Global Village: The Canadian Museum of Civilization* (MacDonald & Alford 1989) has little to say on the two key concepts of its title: the 'global village' and 'civilisation'. The following profile (ibid: 4) of the museum resembles more a 'missionary' than a 'mission' statement:

The product is a microcosmic reflection of the global village and, at the same time, its spiritual counterpart the universal church, celebrating the cultural achievements ... from the Ice Age shaman who painted the caverns at Lascaux to the Space Age wizards who plot spiritual pathways in fibre-optic cables. The reference here, and in the book's title, to the 'global village' is not casual.

The 'reference' is purely that: reference to Marshall McLuhan's concept of the global village but not explication. Elsewhere, it has been argued that the museum translation of ideational constructs is problematic and the outcome is not 'product' and 'reflection' as indicated in the above passage, but 'artefact' and 'musealisation'. Cameron (1993: 162) suggests that McLuhan's message was seldom understood properly: his 'global village' was not intended as "an analogue to the Christian mission to the world".

Shelton (1992: 28), in his article 'Constructing the global village', advocates that museums confront their ideologies in order to find a relevant role in the 'global community' but he fails to confront the ideology of the 'global village'. Museums, thus, should become tools in the active 'construction' of the 'global village'. Shelton's (ibid: 27) subheading, 'The global village', has nothing to say about this subject, nor about globalisation, but is concerned with 'comparative thematic exhibitions'.

This type of approach to exhibitions is exemplified by Birmingham's 'Gallery 33', which according to Ramamurthy (1992: 33), has the 'global village' as its central notion but fails to address the central issue of power and inequality. Ramamurthy's (ibid: 33) critique coalesces the past and the future: "The imperial aggression of Europe and America, over the past two centuries, has ensured that the concept of a global village has been hurled a long way into the future." Where museologists have been keen to push their 'cart ahead', anthropologists have been more wary. Strathern (1987: 269) indicates that anthropologists do not "take on trust the idea of a global village" which she labels "an interesting fiction".

Cameron has been one of the few museologists to question interpretations of the 'global village': "Limited in our vision as we were by the ideological frames of our culture, it is perhaps not surprising that we failed to see this *new evangelism* more clearly" (1993: 161, emphasis added). These comments recall the narrative of missionary museology, and they point to an issue that was left largely unexamined in the previous chapter: 'globalisation' and the non-Western interpretation of the museum idea.

Recently, a growing interest (although still a marginal topic in museological literature) has been shown in the question of whether the Western museum concept is appropriate to, or even inimical to, non-Western societies (e.g. Cameron 1993: 167; Kaeppler 1994: 19; Ucko 1994: 260). For instance, Cameron (1993: 167) claims that non-European museums will have to find 'new' ways of being museums, "otherwise there is the risk of a festering, alien implant infecting its host or doomed to atrophy and die". Clifford (1988: 248) provides an alternative perspective: "Resourceful Native Americans may yet appropriate the Western museum ... Old objects may again participate in a tribal present-becoming-future."

Whether the museum is viewed as 'alien implant' or apposite 'appropriation' its temporality must be contextualised. This entails consideration of factors such as contemporary globalisation processes, colonial historical processes, and the 'living heritage' of missionary museology. Within such a conceptual-temporal framework, Cameron's (1993: 159) proposition that "new 'museums' in non-European cultures must be created afresh, outside of the anachronistic and culturally specific philosophy inherent in the museum as we know it" is largely unimaginable. It will be shown that his terms of reference—defined by 'new', 'afresh' and 'outside of'—are museological obfuscation. However, an alternative way of philosophising on the 'culturally specific philosophy' of the Western museum concept is possible. The anthropologist, Marc Augé (1997: 213), proposes that "the so-called globalisation or mondialisation of culture can be thought of in terms of cultural contact". This is a useful interpretative insight for it enfolds the concept of 'trading cultures' and the activity of 'missionary museology'.

Augé's (1997: 218) analysis of cultural contact and the history of religious conversion in Africa and Central and South America are invaluable in grasping the complexity of such religious processes in which a "Christianization of Paganism" encounters a "paganization of Christianity". Augé (ibid: 217) stresses that the resulting religions cannot be understood as merely an overlay or "a copy".

The history, and continuity, of museum-museological encounters is equally entangled. Museums in many non-Western societies have taken on their own socio-cultural contours but they cannot be analytically severed from the philosophy inherent in, and often inherited from, the Western museum. The 'creative innovations' of the Pacific 'cultural centres' and African 'culture houses' are no exception. Cultural contact may be discerned not only in the derivations of both 'cultural centres' and 'culture houses' in the form of European influence and expatriate initiatives, but also in the phenomenon of mass tourism (see Ucko 1994: 246, 275, fn. 3).

The complexities of the process of 'trading cultures' should also be underlined. Western museologists are now 'looking to' these two forms for new directions. In the previous chapter it was suggested that non-Western museums have not been sufficiently 'Westernised' to warrant museological attention. Now, non-Western museums may become objects of museological scrutiny if they remain sufficiently 'non-Westernised' or 'outside of' the gravitational pull of the Western museum.

Augé's thesis of globalisation as cultural contact enables a further analytical expansion of the 'artefact' idea: the museum as artefact is intermixed with the museum as replica. This is no more unusual than the proposition that the past and future are intermixed. 'New' museum directions precede a museological track in which the future can be endlessly recycled out of the past. To illustrate this point, it is opportune to shift house from the 'global village' to the 'museal village'.

### 'Museal Village' and 'Global Village'

The 'museal villages' of Southeast Asia have been labelled 'open-air living museums' or 'open-air heritage parks' (see respectively, Shackley 1994: 396; MacDonald 1988: 69). Although these labels fail to capture the quintessence of the 'village' idea, they provide a means of identifying the future in the past, and of exploring globalisation as cultural contact. The history of the open-air museum is traditionally traced to the Swedish 'Skansen' which opened in 1891 and from Sweden the movement spread to other parts of Europe (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 401). In America the open-air museum materialised in the 1920s and 1930s (Bennett 1988: 18) and the idea "soon spread throughout the world" (Alexander 1983: 8). Its acceptance into mainstream museology was more sluggish. What counts as a 'museum' has an historical axis: the open-air museum was absent as a 'museum type' in the 1973 issue of *Museums of the World* (Braun 1973).

This late nineteenth-century, European museum idea has found a renewed context in contemporary Southeast Asia. Wood (1980: 571) suggests that in Southeast Asia "the museum idea has been extended to artificial reproductions of traditional houses, craftsmen's ateliers, and often whole villages". Wood (ibid: 571) mentions Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines and Thailand. Malaysia is absent from the list as its ten museal villages appeared after the mid-1980s. Similarly, one should add to the Southeast Asian village landscape Singapore's re-created 'Malay Village', 'Asian Village' and 'Ming Village'. One could extend the survey to a wider region, for both China and India have produced re-created villages (see respectively, Shackley 1994: 396; Greenough 1996: 226-7).

According to Wood (1980: 571), whose analytical focus is tourism in Southeast Asia, the 'artificial reproductions', which cater largely to a domestic audience, provide "an artificial and sanitized experience". Issues of 'authenticity' (see also Shackley 1994; Zeppel 1994) appear to preoccupy both tourism studies and museology. My interest, here, is not the 'artificiality' of the reproduction, but the reproduction and diffusion of the village idea. What I have termed the 'museal village', MacDonald (1988: 69) has labelled 'open-air heritage parks' of Southeast Asia in his article, 'The future of museums in the global village'. Paradoxically, his choice of terminology leaves unrealised the conceptual connection between the 'global village' and the 'museal village' of Southeast Asia.

The globalisation process understood in terms of Augé's concept of 'cultural contact' has a longer and more sinuously complex history than is readily apparent in the futurology of museology. Moreover, contrary to MacDonald's (1988: 69) emphasis on 'hi-tech features' in these 'open-air heritage parks', Malaysia's re-created villages deliberately suppress 'technology', as will be shown elsewhere in this chapter.

Regrettably, no comprehensive treatment of the museal village as an Asian phenomenon exists in the literature and this precludes the making of meaningful comparisons. One can only identify the proliferation of the museal village throughout Asia, and speculate whether it will come to be considered an 'Asian' interpretation of the museum idea, as in the case of Pacific 'cultural centres' and African 'culture houses' (which linguistically secure 'culture', cf. the banishment of 'culture' in Chap. 2). This question awaits future researchers.

It should be emphasised, however, that in these three forms, the display of objects is only one component in a wider setting of dance, music and crafts skills, among others, and notably in the Malaysian case, real weddings. The Malaysian case study (see Chap. 9) may suggest where investigations should not begin. In its current ideological state, museology is a conceptual cul-de-sac. The field of tourism studies appears to be as conceptually mired as museology, particularly in its understanding of 'authenticity'. Cultural investigation through boundary-crossing disciplines or 'non-disciplines' would, hopefully, offer more than 'anecdotalisation', 'logoisation' and 'symbolic generalisations'. Having indicated the museal village may have a wider regional significance, I next turn to imaginings of the future in the Southeast Asian region.

### **The 'Asian Renaissance' and 'Asianising' the Museum**

A consideration of the contours of the future requires a temporal backdrop. In Asia, regional cooperation in the field of museums was encouraged since the early 1970s (see Chap. 8). Currently, the main active organisations include ACCU (Asian/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO); ICOM Asia-Pacific Regional Organisation; SPAFA (Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts under SEAMEO—Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation); and COCI (Committee on Culture and Information under

ASEAN—Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Significantly, the latter two organisations (both established in the late 1970s) are regional initiatives.

The concept of a regional identity based on cultural commonalities is underlined in the major publications of ASEAN's Committee on Culture and Information. ASEAN's project-related publications include: *The Cultural Traditional Media of ASEAN* (1986); *The Directory of the Museums of ASEAN* (1988); *Sali'ng Lahat Saling Tanggap* (1993); *The Aesthetics of ASEAN Expressions* (1994); and *Cultural Heritage of ASEAN: Selected Treasures from ASEAN Museums* (1995). The growing regional cooperation in terms of economics, trade and security (Hitchcock 1994: xi) also has its cultural component. This comprehensive cooperative cluster may be regarded as a realisation of 'trading cultures' in the contemporary context (Ferguson 1997). Malaysia's civilisational-cultural dialogues (see Chap. 7) should also be seen in this expanded regional framework.

In a socio-political climate of regional cooperation and economic prosperity, the idea of an 'Asian Way' gained currency in the early 1990s and by the mid-1990s the idea had gained the attention of Western academics and political analysts (e.g. Dupont 1996; Hitchcock 1994; Naisbitt 1995). My intent is not to debate the political, ideological and economic dimensions of the 'Asian Way', a way that articulated an Asian identity with distinctive values and practices during a period of economic prosperity. My concern is the prediction of an 'Asian Renaissance' (predicated on the 'Asian Way'). The term 'Asian Renaissance', like the term 'Asian Way', has a range of differing and diffuse meanings, hence, the focus is restricted to museum-related concerns.

Naisbitt's (1995) *Megatrends Asia* contains some mega-mistakes in his futurological discourse. However, as stated earlier, the accuracy of prophecies is less significant than the forms in which they are projected. Naisbitt (ibid: 63), under the heading 'Renaissance in Asian art', has an entirely pecuniary interpretation of 'renaissance':

The assertiveness of being Asian is rippling through the world of art. Money has a liberating influence on the soul, and as Asians begin to display greater confidence in themselves, they will focus on and appreciate indigenous culture.

The logic of Naisbitt's argument is constructed from Western notions of capitalism and art, so that 'indigenous culture' and the 'soul' (not in the sense of *semangat*) are 'renaissanced' as the culture of consumerism. Cajipe-Endaya (1993: 4), in the editorial to the project on indigenous art materials in ASEAN, recommends their usage because they are natural resources that are cheaper than manufactured imports, and they can extricate art from commercialism. Cajipe-Endaya (ibid: 4) urges "a movement for indigenization of ASEAN art both in spirit and material". This appears to be a divergent translation of 'Renaissance in Asian art' as conceived by Naisbitt.

Naisbitt (1995: 63) expands on his economic model of the 'Asian Renaissance': "The soon-to-be-opened Singapore Art Museum is on a buying spree to put together a collection of the best from the region." This sense of 'Asianness' in the 1990s has been materialised elsewhere in Singapore: the Asian Civilisations Museum (see Chap. 10) and the 'Asian Village'. Malacca's Mini Malaysia (also known as Malacca's 'Cultural Village') saw the addition of 'Mini Asean'. In Kuala Lumpur, an ASEAN Sculpture Garden was strategically added near the National Monument. Moreover, Malaysia plans to establish an Ethnology Museum of the Malay World in which the scope will be an extensive Asian region (see Hood & Hassan 1990; Jabatan Muzium c. 1991: 4-5; Kalb 1997: 78).

The 'Asianisation' or 'Aseanisation' of the museum has proceeded through an increased artefactual, geographical representation of the region but it has yet to occur at the ideational level (Dellios 1996c: 4-5; Manalo 1994: 251-2). Ooi Kok Chuen (1994: 167), a Malaysian contributor to *The Aesthetics of ASEAN Expressions*, calls for the "Aseanization of art". However, his interpretation of art is expressed in the colonial mould of *seni lukis* (painting/drawing) and 'aesthetics' is assumed to be a category of universality. Hence, Ooi Kok Chuen's (ibid: 167) statement, "It is time we take charge of our own cultural destiny", ignores the pathway of the past. The prospect of an 'Asian Renaissance' for the museum is comparable to Cameron's pessimistic prognosis for museum 'metamorphosis'.

The concept of 'Asianness' has been manifested by an accumulation of artefacts, be they object-artefacts or museum-artefacts. With the terminological eclipse of the 'Asian Way' by the 'Asian Crisis', this approach is not likely to be as materially accessible in the immediate or longer term future. What will museums do with their 'Asianness'? An absence of money may have a 'liberating influence on the soul' (to rephrase Naisbitt), if it diverts museum attention from the acquisition of material things to the realm of concepts. Regional economics is also likely to impinge on commercial missionary activities, that is, the Western 'heritage' exporters. The interim may provide an opportunity to examine the economics, politics and culture of heritage export, and the implications of the merger between museological and 'missiological' missions (a theological term adapted from Clémentin-Ojha, 1997: 167). However, intense scrutiny is doubtful, given the recent agreement between ASEAN and AusHeritage to develop a cultural heritage policy for the region.

This agreement of 1998 between AusHeritage and ASEAN makes the shape of museum futures more difficult to delineate. It may be assumed that AusHeritage will maintain an 'old museology' orientation in which a 'material culture' focus simultaneously expresses the culture of materialism in all its 'enriching' possibilities. It may also be assumed that the principle of 'trading cultures' will continue to inform Malaysian orientations so that foreign elements are borrowed and reshaped in a dynamic process of indigenisation. More difficult to predict is whether the concept of *semangat* will maintain its place in museum modes of knowing. It has been demonstrated that since colonial times until the present *semangat* has not been displaced, although its 'powers' have diminished. Ultimately, the fate of a 'be-souled' worldview will not be determined by Malaysian museums nor commercial missionaries, but the future shape of Malaysian society.

### **Multiple Museum Visions in Malaysia**

Here it is timely to consider the time that is to come, *masa yang akan datang*, in Malaysia. Chapters 8 and 9 demonstrated that the museal village, already diffuse, has the potential to become one of the most widespread museum motifs of the future. Currently, ten museal villages are distributed throughout Malaysia, and seven more have been proposed,

some of which are already taking shape. Museal villages are eclectic combinations of 'tangible' and 'intangible' forms, of material-based and performance-oriented culture, of real and replica houses. It is in this relocated, reconstructed and re-created domestic realm that *semangat* may have a more tenacious hold, as revealed in the rituals for 'house-spirits' and the revitalisation of the spirits in Monsopiad Cultural Village.

The museal village as a vision of futurity should be counterpoised with that of Vision 2020. As indicated in Chapter 10, museum interpretations of Vision 2020 have narrowed its meaning to technological mastery. Hence, museums of the future are projected as technological *master*-pieces. In museal villages, technology (whether sophisticated or conventional) is anathema: even electrical wiring or lighting fixtures are inventively disguised. Furthermore, museal village displays of indigenous inventions, under the heading 'traditional technology', demonstrate that 'tradition' had a prior mastery of 'technology'. It may be predicted that the seven proposed museal villages will also be closely modelled on their predecessors. Hence, the museum vision of futurity is one firmly tied to the concept of 'traditional' (in all its dynamic connotations). In contrast, the museum imagining of futurity constructed from a condensed Vision 2020 is forged by 'technology'.

The matter is more complicated than one museum 'community', two visions. Official museum pronouncements have plotted a definite, technological trajectory (see Chap. 10) but views expressed unofficially indicate other imaginings. A curator who attended the Museum Association of Malaysia meetings of 1991, held to discuss the role of museums in Vision 2020, noted, "Paradoxically, we came to the conclusion there wasn't a place for the museum in 2020" (pers. comm. 29 April 1995). The question of museums of the future and the future of museums is a temporal extrapolation of the idea of the museum as artefact, the nation as artefact. They are both packed with museal meanings which cannot be 'read' as one-to-one correspondences.

The technological strand of Vision 2020 was strengthened in 1999 with the launch of Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor, envisaged as the information technology centre of Asia (see Stewart 1999: 29). It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the potential impact of electronic information technologies on Malaysian museums (for North American

assessments, see ed. Jones-Garnil 1997) and the intricate question of information technology as "the engine of globalising processes" (*Museum National* 1998, 7(2): 13). Correspondingly, the related issue of globalising processes advanced through tourism and the global scale of the tourism industry (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton 1999: 360-363) does not fall within the parameters of this investigation. Nevertheless, the complex forces of 'cultural globalisation' (ibid: chap. 7) must be considered in conjunction with the equally complex forces of emerging 'Asianisation' (see also Ferguson 1997: 40-43). Significantly, the Asian region contributed 88.1% of Malaysia's tourist arrivals during the 'Visit Malaysia 1994' campaign (Menon 1995: 27) and this trend is predicted to continue (Hall 1997: 115). It should also be recalled that cultural or heritage villages initially intended for the category of international tourists had become largely the preserve of domestic tourists (Chap. 9; for parallels in Thailand, see Peleggi 1996). How Malaysian museums will envision their audiences would require a separate study.

A closing remark on alternative visions will illustrate the drawn-out trail of temporality. The word *modern* (modern) entered the Malay language in the 1920s (Za'ba 1980: 111); the shape of the future in Malaysia has been articulated through the 'modern' and the 'traditional' at least since this time (see Khoo Kay Kim 1995a: chap. 6; Za'ba 1980). The ways in which these two elements may be engaged and disengaged, combined and recombined, do not constitute a new topic of discourse. Rather, the new component is the materialisation of an artefactual arena—the museum—in which these ideas are played out.

### **Prophecy and Posterity**

The discussion of museums, museology and futurology would be unconcluded without mention of one of the key rationales for the museum—posterity. This rationale may be considered a truly 'global' characteristic of the museum idea. In Malaysia, the justificatory link between the museum and the *jenerasi yang akan datang* (future generations) is also a familiar theme (e.g. Jabatan Muzium c. 1990: 35; Kedit 1995: 95; Mohd Kassim 1986: 40; Nik Abdul Rashid 1994: 25-6). Museum writings have generally failed to question the underlying assumptions of the posterity argument. The prevalent assumption that 'future generations'

would wish to inherit museums with all their accumulated 'things' has received some critique (e.g. Aagaard-Mogensen 1989: 214-5; Moore 1997: 31).

One unexamined assumption is that unborn generations will understand the meaning of 'things' in an identical philosophical framework. Ironically, despite the rhetoric of 'global transformations', the 'future generation' is envisaged as a 'replica' of the present one. In effect, it is an 'imagined community' that can be invoked to silence dissenting voices (for additional usages of the "Unborn" but of non-replica status, see Anderson 1998: 362). With its grasp on temporality (see Chap. 3), the museum can not only reclaim ancestors but appropriate their unborn progeny. Conveniently, neither 'voice' can speak back. This is the unstated 'vision' of museum immortality. Sola (1992c: 104) refers to a more specific claim to immortality through conservation and restoration techniques which deny the object "the right to die". Synthesised, the macrocosmic project of immortality comprises artefacts that do not die and generations yet to be born.

The crux of the museum's claim on posterity is depicted as an 'ethical' (Sola 1992c: 104) and 'moral' issue (Aagaard-Mogensen 1989: 214). One may recall Appelbaum's (1993: 60) portrayal of the museum as a 'moral artefact' of humanity's 'moral evolution'. To question the misplaced faith in the museum as a 'moral artefact' also implies an interrogation of how and why the ideological labyrinths of 'morality' and 'evolution' are reunited in the museum. Moreover, Appelbaum (1993: 55) maintains this 'moral artefact' plays an essential role in "the global neighbourhood". The myth of the 'moral artefact' must be understood in conjunction with the fiction of the 'global village'. Lowenthal (1985: xvi) argues that the past is an 'artefact of the present'; the future, too, has an artefactual quality.

## Conclusion

The previous chapter concluded that museology required a *révolution mentale*. Sola's life-cycle model, inclusive of death, for the museum is a promising but solitary sign. The prevailing museological-missiological conviction remains: "The past and present of the museum is part of the past, present and future of us all" (Pearce 1992: 264). The 'future of us all' in museology has not included all of us: an anticipated circumstance since non-Western museums have been hardly 'museum-worthy' in

museology's past or present. Because museology is a Western ideology, futures assume Western-specific shapes. Museologists at the centre of the museological universe (Europe and America) have been quick to spread the message of the 'global village'. The Malaysian re-created village may be a museal 'iconisation' of the *kampung* (see Chap. 9) but one must also consider the museological iconisation of the 'global village'.

Part IV, 'The Museum as Replica?', has attempted to demonstrate that the 'heritage of Eurocentricity' highlighted in the previous chapter also reaches into the time that is to come. 'A cart ahead means a track behind' is an apt summation of the museological journey. Museums in the category of 'non-Western' have been expected or expressly schooled to conform to the Western museum model. There is no shortage of 'recipe-books' for a replicated museum future. Museum imaginings are mapped onto a 'global' future that is no less Euro-centred and Eurocentric in its construction. With a vision of a 'global museology' to study the museum which is a 'global symbol' in a 'global village', is museological knowledge little more than a replicated series of imaginings? Using Augé's concept of globalisation as cultural contact, I have theorised that the museum as 'artefact' is indivisible from the notion of the museum as 'replica'. The conceptual spectrum of the 'artefact' in relation to Malaysian-made 'artefacts' is summarised in the Conclusion which follows.

## Conclusion

*The mind travels farther than the heart but the heart travels farthest.*

(Chinese proverb)

*The sea is the correct field for a ship and reflection is the correct field for the heart.*

(Malay proverb)

### A Conceptual Map of the Artefact in Malaysia

The 'artefact' radiates in many directions in a borderless, conceptual map of material things and abstract ideas. Any discussion of the 'artefact' cannot ignore conceptualisations of the 'object'. The term 'artefact', which has been restricted in meaning to a movable, three-dimensional museum object ('real thing'), reveals much about museological modes of knowing and not knowing. The "tangible and visible world of objects" (Pearce 1995: 15) is a world incarcerated. The very language of museology is imprisoned by its binary oppositions. 'Movable' and 'immovable' artefacts are immaterial to the movements of Malaysia's colonial monuments and traditional houses. The dichotomy of 'real thing' and 'replica' is also irrelevant for the museal replica may have multiple meanings, inclusive of *semangat* substitution. The characteristic of *semangat* or the 'life-force' or 'spirit' of objects is also excluded from the field of artefact analyses, premised on the tradition of Western materialism which deposits 'lifeless' or 'dead' objects (see Chap. 3) in a classificatory charnel house. To persist with the claim, "[t]he museum object is an object of reality, a part of the movable cultural heritage" (Maroevic 1995: 25), leaves museology immobilised.

The central question, however, has not been ideas of the object as artefact but the comprehensive, analytical development of the 'artefact' idea. The subject of the museum as artefact has not been theorised in museology and to do so I have inverted the traditional order of 'things' to enable the artefact to encompass the museum. The museum as artefact is multivocal and open to a range of interpretations that weave between the reflective and the formative, the material and the symbolic, as well as micro and macro perspectives. A diachronic approach shows the continual process of

how the museum, made in Malaysia, has not only been 'made' but 'remade', and how it may possibly be remodelled in the future. The concept of the museum as artefact has been concerned with both products and processes, embedded in the meaning system of 'museal culture'. Because museums are multivocal artefacts, they may incorporate multiple agendas, but these are always refracted through the museum's own interpretive and transformative medium—'musealisation'.

The museum as artefact, made in Malaysia, has also had to review how Malaysia has been 'made'. The artefactual processes of shaping the colony 'British Malaya' and the Borneo territories, of Malaya's independence, and the formation of Malaysia were all intricately meshed with the artefactual processes of museum-making. The museum-artefacts that were produced during the political transition period, particularly the National Museum before the materialisation of the nation-artefact, highlight the powerful symbolic nexus of 'artefacts'. The survey of the national-type museums mapped out the ways in which the museum as artefact and the nation as artefact intersected as objects of each others' imaginings. This museum mode of imagining, musealisation, was further examined in four distinctive architectural-artefactual forms of the past decade (1986-1997). The architecture of 'Museum Land Malaysia' is dominated by colonial heritage, sultanate heritage, *kampung* heritage, and the 'complex' architectural heritage of vernacular adaptations. If the museum is an 'expressive' artefact, conceptualisations of space express a dynamic process of managing temporalities and identities. This creative process is also manifest in the fluid interpretations of 'heritage', 'authenticity', and the 'traditional'.

The concept of the museum as an 'artefact' of its own society does not negate the notion of the museum as 'replica': processes of colonisation, globalisation (colonial museums also belonged to a global network) and nation-formation may all be intermingled. This compound entity is encapsulated in the Proclamation of Independence Memorial, based on the American model, housed in a colonial building and commemorating the nation's independence. In Malaysian museums, there is no ideological antipathy to the incorporation of colonial 'ancestors' or the adaptive re-use of their buildings as museums. Even replica buildings of former colonial powers—in the enduring tradition of 'trading cultures'—are reconstructed to house contemporary museums. Artefacts are made and

remade in an ongoing process in which meanings are created, accrued, condensed, altered or shed. Alternatively, meanings may remain relatively constant as in the case of the person as 'artefact' in colonial and contemporary museum displays. The rapidly proliferating museal villages draw their essential meanings from the *kampung* but simultaneously subvert its cultural authority. The landscape of the re-created village was also examined in relation to Vision 2020 to illustrate that the future, too, has artefactual attributes. The conceptual scope of the 'artefact' is not limited to Malaysia and the analytical range was extended to museological constructions of the 'Third World' and the 'global village'. The cartography of the artefact is the art of erasing deeply engraved boundaries.

### **Shadows of 'Malaysianising' Museums**

Because the museum as artefact admits the idea of the museum as replica, the term 'Malaysianising' is not an antithesis to 'Westernising', but an allusion to a spectrum of Malaysian identity. Unlike the call for an 'Africanisation' of the museum (Myles 1976: 197; Stone 1994: 21), 'Malaysianising' the museum has not been explicitly articulated but it has been materialised in several ways. The museal village is one theme that may be construed as 'Malaysian'. The symbolic repertoire of architecture also expresses a facet of 'Malaysian' identity (inclusive of the colonial cultural heritage). Another distinctly Malaysian feature is that many museums request visitors to remove their shoes before entering. This may not seem a significant gesture, but it derives from a cultural worldview that is Malaysian. This Malaysian (and Asian) custom is observed before entering homes or places of worship. By maintaining this tradition, the Malaysian museum gives an implicit message of hospitality and respect for one's visitors. It also gives an implicit message that perhaps, as in a place of worship, one may find spiritual sustenance in the museum.

The museum's 'spiritual' dimension and its impact on the 'heart' have been emphasised by Othman (1996: 9). Similarly, Mohd Kassim (1996: 9) maintains that "the museum must constantly celebrate intelligence and heart". These two Malaysian perspectives were presented at the International Congress on East Asia Museum Networking in 1996, organised by the state museum of Selangor. This congress reiterates the significance of regional cooperation but, more importantly, it signifies that

some Malaysians are scouring traditional coherence systems. Muzium Negara's approach to celebrating the ephemeral in its series of temporary exhibitions may also be regarded as part of this process. The heart-mind modes of knowing have deep cultural resonance in Malaysia, as affirmed in the proverbs heading the Conclusion. The Chinese *xin* or 'heart-mind' apprehends the interdependence of the cognitive and affective attributes of thinking (Hall & Ames 1995: 224). In Islamic perspectives the heart is identified as the seat of intelligence (Nasr 1978: 99). In Hindu texts only the heart's knowledge enables passage from "the unreal and the illusory to the real" (Meslin 1987: 234). The implications for museum knowledge must be addressed.

To confine what is 'real' to the empirical nature of things and to the realm of the secular is but a partial knowledge (see also O'Neill 1996). Tan Wee Kiat (1995: 34) explains that the "traditional Asian worldview which Malaysians have inherited" draws on the concept of 'illusion' as well as the concept of basic unity, and it denies any cleavage between the spiritual and the material. These questions of meaning and reality are inevitably philosophical issues for the museum which mediates between the illusion of reality and the reality of illusion.

The complexity and diversity of Asian philosophies, religions and traditional belief systems defy succinct explication here. However, it is conceivable to insinuate the interconnectedness of reality-illusion and of the spiritual-material in Asian worldviews by highlighting shadow theatre (see also Chaps 2, 5, 7, 10, 11). It is considered the most ancient form of theatre in much of Southeast Asia, with the oldest traditions traceable to India, China and Indonesia (Othman Mohd Yatim & Raiha Mohd Saud 1986: 12, 17; Sheppard 1986: 68-69). Shadow theatre is known as *wayang kulit* in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago and here as in most of Southeast Asia the stories dramatised are drawn primarily from the Hindu epics—the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (ibid: 69)—and hence enact religious, social, moral and political ideals.

The shadows of the characters are thrown onto a screen which is sometimes referred to as the 'wall of the world' (Sheppard 1986: 70, fn. 1). The shifting shadows "symbolise the state of the world — half illusion, half reality — while the *dalang* [puppeteer] who controls all becomes a metaphor for the cosmic forces governing human existence"

(ed. Mackerras 1992: 76). At a further interpretive level, Geertz (1973: 134) reveals of *wayang kulit*: "... in the depths of the fluid interior world of thought and emotion they [Javanese] see ultimate reality itself".

In the crafted interplay between illusion and reality, between cognition and emotion, the spiritual-material realm is indivisible. Moreover, *wayang kulit* incorporates preliminary rites to safeguard the human troupe (which includes the *gamelan* orchestra) and invocations to the spirits to awaken the shadow puppets (Endicott 1991: 26). Mention was made (Chap. 10) of the traditional Malay belief that shadow puppets possess *semangat* ('life-force'), which itself denotes a worldview: *semangat* pervades all creation and conceptually registers "the unity of the cosmos" (Endicott 1991: 79). The physical and metaphysical entirety of *wayang kulit* eludes strict classification. *Wayang kulit* may be drama, theatre, performing art, puppetry and a cultural traditional medium (ASEAN 1986) or a fusion of art form and religious rite (Geertz 1973: 132).

Classifications through their cultural histories can act as powerful constraints, as signified by museology's recalcitrant binary oppositions. Compartmentalisation into the 'spiritual' and 'material' disregards the living religious philosophies and traditions of Asia. Industrialisation, modernisation and nation-building in the region have not resulted in religious decline (Keyes, Hardacre & Kendall 1994: 15; ed. Mackerras 1995: 511, 515-17). Indeed, these processes may intensify religious outlooks (ibid: 514). The *Rukunegara*, the five principles of Malaysian nationhood (introduced after the May 1969 incident, see Chap. 7), enshrines the principle of belief in God. The fourth challenge of Vision 2020 posits a society "strong in religious and spiritual values" (Muzium Negara 1991). However, one cannot assume all religious and spiritual values will be accorded equal ideological status in this ongoing process of defining nationhood, nor in the artefactual domain of the museum.

The developmental pathways of museum history and Western culture, according to O'Neill (1996: 188), have concluded in the dissociation of religions from museums. In the Asian context, the philosophy of religions would have disciplinary merit in the study of museums (already the subject of disparate disciplines, as noted in Chap. 1). The heart-mind must travel far to engage in those worldviews where the material and non-material worlds interpenetrate, in those religious traditions where all

things in this world are understood as impermanent, and in those belief systems which are intermingled (exemplified in *wayang kulit*; see also Cheu Hock Tong 1988; Mohd Taib Osman 1989). The foregoing issues have yet to enter museum writings on Southeast Asia (infrequent as these are) but they foreshadow expanded themes. This study has set the stage for the exploration of two interrelated questions: to what extent are Asian worldviews embodied in modes of museum interpretation and how are Asian religious traditions translated in the museum format? Some intimation of this was imparted in the account of Malaysia's Islamic museums.

Further elicitation obliges a parting glimpse of the shadows, still adhering (a *wayang kulit* puppeteer was the first recipient of Malaysia's National Arts Award, instituted in 1996). *Wayang kulit* is an ancient form of interpreting the world, as well as a dramatisation of "metaphysical psychology" (Geertz 1973: 134). In comparison, museums are relatively recent 'actors' on the stage of Southeast Asian cultural production. Notably, shadow puppets have become 'real things' as museum exhibits in Malaysia and elsewhere in the region. Both the museum and *wayang kulit* may express worldviews but only the former currently subsumes the latter.

These wide-ranging reflections lead back to a fundamental issue. Concurrent with the processes of Malaysianising the museum are the processes of musealising Malaysia. Museums cannot reflect or represent reality; they can merely screen it through their own 'wall of the world' which may reinforce, reconstitute, distort, transform or invert the meaning of things—inclusive of Malaysia as artefact. Museal culture is not culture-specific to Malaysia; it is the quintessence of the museum.

### **Realigning the 'Grid'**

The most visible 'artefactual' blank in museums is the concept of 'trading cultures' which has not only shaped Malaysian society but Malaysian museums as well. Malaysia as a 'multiracial, multilingual, multireligious and multicultural society' in Malaysian museum writings is not altogether replicated in the permanent displays of Malaysian museums. Three main determinants make the museum, made in Malaysia, largely bereft of a *Malaysian* narrative. These comprise the colonial museum

heritage, the history of post-colonial politics and the 'museumising imagination' with its inability to imagine outside the grid of 'census, map, museum'. Here, it is timely to close the circle of Anderson's (1991: 164) argument which he suggests is 'tentative' and needs to be tested in a wider historical and geographical setting. My analysis in a narrowed field may also contribute to hypothesis testing.

Anderson (1991) has restricted the scope of his argument by equating the 'museumising imagination' with monumental archaeology. This was absent in the colonial history of both Malaysia and Singapore. Nevertheless, certain Andersonian contours can still be discerned in subsequent post-colonial museum imaginings of 'census, map, museum'. If the two conceptual components of the 'census' and the 'map' are not flawed, Anderson's imagining of the 'museum' is.

The museumising imagination originates in the *museum*. Anderson's thesis of the museumising imagination must intersect its institutional manifestation: the imagining museum. Anderson's three 'institutions of power' may be interlocked in the grid but it is only the *museum* which can fuse classificatory ability and three-dimensionality to extend its imaginings to any section of the grid. Both colonial and contemporary 'museal culture' incarnate the 'census, map, museum', and archaeology has been a marginal factor in both temporal structures.

Museums in Malaysia originated as, and continue to be, multi-purpose artefacts in the political, economic, socio-cultural, symbolical and cosmological matrix. Yet, the question of how multiple imaginings crosscut the 'grid' remains largely unexamined. In colonial Malaysia this was exemplified by the colonised subjects who re-imagined the colonial museums as storehouses of *semangat*. In contemporary Malaysia, I focused on how the 'museumising imagination' also extends to the nation, whether it is replicated nationwide as a series of the 'idyllic village' or concentrated in the form of 'national space' in the nation's capital. This study has demonstrated that nations imagine their museum-artefacts but museums re-imagine their nations as 'artefacts'. This dialectical encounter of 'artefacts' generates both meanings and paradoxes. Paradoxically, museology, preoccupied with museum artefacts, has failed to recognise both the political and museological significance of the nation

as artefact. The nation reconfigured as the museum's artefact is the culmination of the museumising imagination.

### **The time that is to come**

This study suggests several areas of inquiry that have been neglected both in the Malaysian and regional context. As emphasised previously, a crucial challenge will be to reconnoitre the juxtaposition of religious and museum worldviews. It has already been proposed that the Malaysian motif of the museum-generated village may benefit from a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary study of cognate forms in Asia. Similarly, the musealisation movement into the shopping complex may herald the creation of a new cultural site. An investigation of this phenomenon would inevitably raise the question of where the museum will 'move' if this new cultural site can increasingly match or even surpass museum offerings.

This study has also drawn attention to the marginalisation of colonial museums. Museological investigation of the colonial enterprise rarely deviates from an itinerary of imperial collecting institutions and a catalogue of colonial collectors. Similarly, museology has yet to approach the museum reality that post-colonial nations collect and display (and in the Malaysian case rematerialise) colonial material culture. How a nation interprets its colonial ancestors may also shed light on the post-colonial condition. The post-colonial encounter with colonialism in museums has wider implications than the Malaysian context. Yet, the topic of museums' post-colonial dialogues with colonialism is a heavy silence. Conversely, the plethora of studies focusing on Western museums' displays of non-Western cultures is not only a cultural compulsion but an implicit statement on the place of subjects and objects in the 'museum world'.

The museum, like Coca Cola, is a 'superartefact' that transcends time and place and also connects different places. Malaysia's cultural heritage, and that of its ASEAN neighbours, has recently become of central concern to Australia's AusHeritage. This organisation has Western-derived concepts of 'culture' and 'heritage' and a commercial heritage devoid of a *semangat* worldview. Hence, an important direction for future research is how Southeast Asia will 'trade culturally' with the 'cultural heritage' industries in the region. Thus, a comparative museum map of the region

is required and this, in turn, may help clarify Anderson's (1991) map. It is hoped that this study will contribute to a discussion of the 'artefactual' scope of museums in Southeast Asia, a region in which critical museum discourse is beginning to emerge, but the heart-mind should travel farther than this destination.

Appadurai and Breckenridge (1992: 35) stress the paucity of studies on museums in India and their analysis is proffered "so that comparative evidence from non-Western, postcolonial societies can be brought into the mainstream of theory and method". This study on Malaysia's museums may also offer 'comparative evidence' but my intention is the reverse of these authors. It is not my intent to bring such comparative material into the museological mainstream, merely to fill in the missing gaps of the museological 'collection' by adding more anecdotal 'Third World' museums (see Chap. 11). Comparative studies are imperative to rethink the mainstream of theory and praxis but this re-orientation has scarcely begun. An examination of museums in a 'non-Western' society is inextricable from an inquiry into the nature of museology and its hegemonic imaginings of the museum 'Other'. The style of imagining the international 'museum community' merits a separate analysis. Museology has neither interrogated itself deeply nor extensively. Retrospectively, museology's claim to be 'reflective' has been demonstrably deceptive.

If one concludes that the museum is a 'cultural' artefact of its own society, this is no less true of museology. The sustained scholarly endeavours in the Euro-American centres, that produce and refine artefact models, which conceptually cannot accommodate other cultures nor comprehend the complexities of the artefact as idea, are cause for epistemological concern. However, a greater concern is the fundamental ideologies of museology. Museological modes of knowing form an interlocked design of missionary methodology, evolutionary theory and Eurocentric vision. Museological reproductions of the monolithic 'Third World', reveal a deep epistemological and moral dilemma. This dilemma will not be resolved by crafting a 'global' museology and applying it over greater expanses of the uncharted museological map. The 'democratisation' of museology requires its 'decolonisation'. Museology will have to recognise its own political grid of 'census, map, museum' before it can reflect on the journeys of the heart, as expressed in the proverbs of the Conclusion.

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Where possible, the arrangement of non-English names has respected the conventions of the nations concerned. In Malaysia two approaches are evident, that is, retaining the sequence of Chinese names (except those with an Anglicised given name) and Malay names, as well as transposing the elements of names. Consequently, the same author may be referenced differently, according to which practice has been followed. Where known names have been known, these have appeared as such in my list of References Cited. In other cases, to avoid confusion, not all elements of names have been initialised.

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