

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

THE BORIA :

A STUDY OF A MALAY THEATRE

IN ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

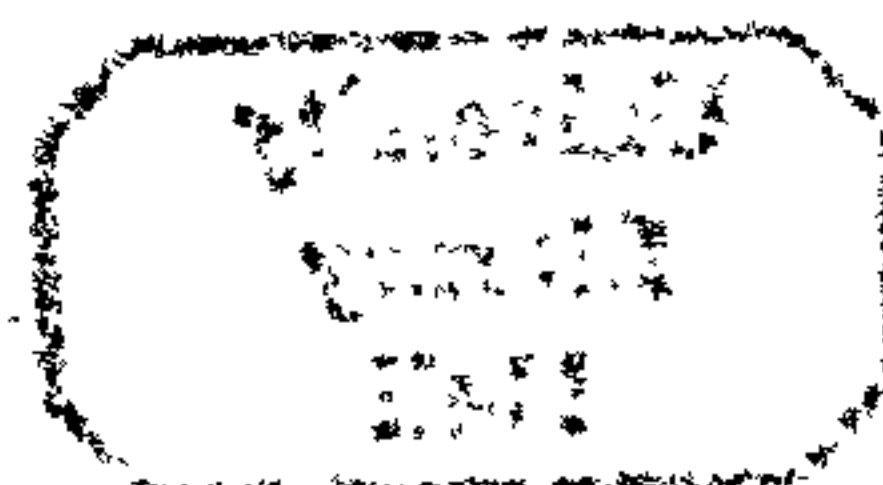
in the University of Hull

by

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Ayah ku

Biarpun kau sudah lama pergi

Berjumpa dengan Tuhan mu

Aku tahu kau gembira

Pabila, hasil dari pemisahan sementara yang

Menjadi pemisahan selama antara kita,

Memperolehi buah kemenangan

Bukti impian bersama kita

Direstui Tuhan Asawajala;

Untuk sambungan cita cita bagi yang masih ada

- Aku, keluarga ku dan dunia.

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The inspiration for this study was James L. Peacock's research on Ludruk theatre as the Javanese proletariat's symbolic rite of modernization. I first read his book 'Rites of Modernization' in 1969. It was to greatly influence my own literary approach to Malaysian arts, and I began to develop an anthropological perspective. I saw in Boria certain parallels with Ludruk, yet also observed interesting differences.

At the same time Malaysia was forging a national identity, and a momentum had begun towards developing a national culture and an awakening of a national cultural consciousness. The concept of a national culture is roughly based on three criteria which are in essence a call for inter-ethnic participation with Malays on the cultural basis of Malay-Islam. I wish to play my part in this movement.

The study itself draws heavily upon these two ideas. It landed the researcher into several periods of groping with such concepts as personalities (social and symbolic), interaction and communication in an attempt to find a proper path to the study. At such times the invaluable first guidance offered by the late Professor M.A. Jaspan and Dr. J.L. Peacock himself,

who through letters and information across the Atlantic had taken his time to offer voluntarily personal advice, will never be forgotten. Then once I had fully embarked on the study in Penang, I got information, help and advice from the people there. To my assistants and the whole of the Malay boria participants of Penang I owe my gratitude.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of the boria, a popular form of Malay theatrical entertainment. In it I attempt to distinguish significant elements in the boria and analyse them in the context of modern Malaysia. Central to the study is a description and analysis of the boria as a drama form today, with particular concentration on characters, stories, songs and music, together with the mechanics of performance. An attempt is made by considering the themes, performers and audience, to investigate boria in the society where it is best developed, that is, in the Malay society of Penang. This involves setting the boria in its historical, political and socio-cultural context. It further requires placing it in the wider perspectives of Malaysian national policies for cultural development and the scholarly study of the performing arts of South-East Asia.

The need for such a study becomes apparent if we consider the progress made so far in three related areas of activity : the recent development of a concept of a Malaysian national culture, the investigation of performing arts in West Malaysia, and the work on performing arts elsewhere, particularly

in South-East Asia. In this chapter therefore I shall examine each of these activities in turn, drawing from them as I proceed the themes which are to dominate the above consideration of the boria into a statement of the aims, problems and methods of the thesis.

1. The Concept of a Malaysian Culture

Malaysia was created as a political entity on 16 September, 1963 from 14 states : the nine hereditary Malay monarchies (Johore, Kedah, Kelantan, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Perlis, Selangor and Trengganu), the three former members of the British Straits Settlements (Malacca, Penang and Singapore) and the two British crown colonies of Sabah (formerly British North Borneo) and Sarawak.¹ The term Malaysian was used, regardless of ethnic designation, to refer to all citizens of the new Malaysia.

For the government, the creation of Malaysia was understood to mean not only a political unification of the diverse territories, but the beginning of a new cultural unity. From its viewpoint, Malaysia

1. It was reduced to 13 states when Singapore separated from Malaysia and established itself as an independent state in 1965.

was a product of evolution from a common heritage. Malaysians are seen as having "had a common background from the earliest historical times and as having been subjected to common cultural influences".² However, Malaysians are considered as comprising two main categories of citizens : indigenous and immigrant :

"The Malays, Dayaks, Dusuns and other indigenous peoples of these territories are all descended from the same ancestral Malaysian race which appears to have migrated, in prehistoric times, from the Asian mainland in the regions of the Yunnan Plateau into the lands of what is today Malaysia.

The immigrant elements among the peoples of Malaysia are almost the same in all these territories though the proportions vary. The Chinese, Indians and Eurasians are found everywhere. They represent the recent streams of immigration during the past century or so and the descendants of more ancient immigrants who came to these lands in the pre-European era."³

The implication of this statement is that two distinct groups of Malaysians - indigenous and immigrant - actually exist, and that the indigenous peoples

2. Malaysia, Malaysia the New Nation; (Kuala Lumpur : Publicity Division of the Ministry of Culture, n.d.)

3. ibid.

are the more deep-rooted in Malaysia. However, between the two categories one is not seen as culturally 'pure', or 'isolated' from the other; rather they are considered as having transformed their character cross-culturally by the assimilation of one another's cultural elements in a multi-racial society. The constitution adopted Malay as the official national language of Malaysia with English next in importance in 1965, and emphasized the importance of the Malay group within the indigenous category of citizenship. Under the umbrella of Malaysian culture two main types of cultural forms belonging to the indigenous category were considered important : kebudayaan teras (root culture) which are those forms already rooted and popular among the Malays, and kebudayaan suku (regional culture) which becomes so because they have remained a small group activity within certain regions only. Other cultures, that is immigrant type cultures, were to be allowed to find expression in the communities and regions as part of the country's encouragement of the new nation's artistic and intellectual activities. Under this policy traditional cultures were reinterpreted or given new life and new ones found opportunities for expansion.

Not surprisingly such activities led to a more

diversified culture, which appeared paradoxical in relation to the government's aim of a united Malaysia. The very nature of the multi-racial Malaysian society supported a diversity of artistic traditions that although interacting, had remained highly tangential to one another. Indigenous culture had, directly and indirectly, incorporated varying elements from many cultures including, among others, Indian, Indonesian, Thai and Chinese. In particular where there had been close contacts, as for example in areas along the Thai border where Thai and Malay communities had intermingled for centuries, or among the Baba and Nyonya Chinese of Malacca, the culture of the Malaysian indigenous communities had been strongly influenced by other traditions. Though on the one hand they offer an enriching process, the exposure to and the adaptation of cultural forms could only lead to a diversification of Malaysian indigenous culture into communal-type cultures, creating more and more kebudayaan suku. The indigenous people themselves in actuality are also diversified and identifiable according to locality or dialect, besides being further differentiated by their origins into Javanese, Bugis, Minangkabau, Dayak, Murut, Semang.

to mention only a few. ⁴ In the cultural 'melting pot' are included the immigrant ethnic groups of Malaysians, especially the Chinese and Indians who constitute a significant proportion of the population. They, when allowed to indulge fully in their preferred cultural activities, have maintained traditions reflecting more of their ethnic origins than of the indigenous cultural environment. This diversity is again broadened by the cultural divisions among the Chinese and Indians themselves, based on their village of ancestry, regional origins, religion, dialect/language group, clan or occupation. ⁵ It must be recognized then that among the three major ethnic groups of Malays, Chinese and Indians broadly responsible for creating a diversified cultural tradition in West Malaysia, there are within each group further differences of locality, language, religion and origin which amplify the cultural distinctions that can be made within Malaysia.

In the early years of Malaysia, the paradox of government support for the arts in the national

4. Roff W.R., The Origins of Malay Nationalism; (London : Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 36-7.

5. Turnbull C.M., The Straits Settlements 1826-67 : Indian Presidency to Crown Colony; (London : Athlone Press, 1972), pp. 107-108.

interest which led to more rather than less diversity was not considered to be of immediate importance. An atmosphere of lax goodwill and tolerance persisted until the political tensions between different communities exploded into inter-racial riots on 13 May 1969.⁶ The overall effect of the May 13 Incident was an immediate pressure on the government to seriously consider the state of the society as a whole, in terms of its future as a multi-ethnic nation. The first step towards reuniting the troubled country was the introduction of five nationalistic precepts, known as rukunegara, which later became the government's guiding principles in a national philosophy aimed at improved political, economic, social and cultural relationships in Malaysia.⁷

On the socio-cultural level, the government, striving for unity in diversity, called for a national cultural streamlining. A new Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport was formed and held responsible for conceiving and implementing a suitable policy. The

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6. Malaysia, The May 13 Tragedy - A Report; (Kuala Lumpur : National Operations Council, October 9, 1969).
Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj, Tunku, May 13 Before and After; (Kuala Lumpur : Utusan Melayu Press Ltd. - rep. English ed., October 1969).
 7. Malaysia, Rukunegara; (Petaling Jaya : Jabatan Penerangan, Kementerian Penerangan, n.d.).

ministry was aided, at the state level, by departments of Culture, Youth and Sport set up in every Malaysian state.

The culture sections of the state departments were initially involved in attempts to arrive at some understanding of the cultural ethnography. Traditional regional forms of performing arts were investigated and documented. New and existing ones gained fresh impetus with financial support from the state departments of culture. At the national level, various regional forms of music, dance, songs, arts and crafts, theatre and so on were documented, each under their specific genres. Independent individuals assisted by carrying out serious cultural studies of art forms as their contribution to the documentation of a cultural heritage. Such activities not only involved writing the ethnography of Malaysian cultural traditions but further led to genetic correlations with similar art forms existing elsewhere in South-East Asia. The need to examine these correlations and point out their regional differentiation, if any, led to an international conference in Kuala Lumpur in 1969, under the patronage of the Malaysian government. The papers discussed in this International Conference of Traditional Drama and Music of South-East Asia were

later published in book form.⁸ The general result of the conference and festival was a closer cultural understanding between the participating countries of South-East Asia; and, on the Malaysian national level, it led to a reawakening of drama, music and dance. By 1971, the renewal of such activities was perceived as a need, at the national level, for certain already existing forms to be taken as the national cultural heritage in the realization of cultural identity.

Thus the problem of a national culture arose as an urgent topic for public consideration. In 1971, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport sponsored a national congress in the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur with the then Prime Minister as patron. Well-known scholars and artists in the study of Malay culture and arts were invited to expound their ideas on this concept.⁹ The congress accepted three major conceptual guidelines as a basis for the national culture. They are, first, that the national

8. Mohd. Taib Osman (ed.), Traditional Drama and Music of Southeast Asia; (Kuala Lumpur : Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1974).

9. The congressional papers were later published in a book : Asas Kebudayaan Kebangsaan; (Kuala Lumpur : Kementerian Kebudayaan, Belia dan Sukan, 1974).

culture of Malaysia should be based on the indigenous culture of its people. This implied that any immigrant-based culture could not be considered within this national cultural framework. Of the indigenous cultures, Malay-based culture was selected by majority choice as the most important. Secondly, the congress accepted that certain traits from other cultures were important, especially those stemming from Chinese, Indian and other cultures within the country and if they were found 'suitable or sensible', they could also be considered as a basis for national culture. And, thirdly, it was agreed that Islam should be the basis for the creation of a national culture.¹⁰ The overall implications of the three conceptual guidelines, as far as national drama, music and dance were concerned, was that the forms must, theoretically, be Malay in essence with allowance for non-Malay participation and adaptation to cater for other than Malay audiences; and they must be within the bounds of Islamic rules and constraints. With these aims established, the realization of a national cultural identity became the new target. Incentives in the form of regular competitions from state to

10. ibid., Preface, p. ii.

national levels using the media of radio, television and theatre, provided active participation for individuals and institutions alike in the attempt to achieve the new aims. Traditional forms of theatre, that were dead or almost extinct, were revived and shown on television; this helped to familiarize the people with the different types found in the various states of Malaysia. Encouragement was given to attempts at modifying existing forms and to creating new ones. The nation became enthusiastically involved in such activities. But the actual acceptance of any one type of every cultural genre, which was for some time the general trend, as the basis of a national cultural identity had not gone further than a dabbling with forms. For example, 'joget', a modern Malay dance type, has been performed with a mixed cast of Malays in Chinese dress, Chinese in Indian dress and Indians in Malay dress. In practice, generally, there has been only a loose adherence to the three basic concepts of a national culture.

This programme to create a cultural identity for the development of a new national culture obviously raises many problems. It is not difficult to criticize the guidelines that were adopted at the Kuala Lumpur

Congress of 1971. Indeed, in 1975 a number of independent individuals who felt it necessary to review the three concepts organized a seminar in Malacca under the auspices of the National Writers' Association (Gapena). Except for the third guideline, however, the majority of the participants were in agreement with what had been laid out in the 1971 Congress. The application of Islam as the all-important basis for the realization of a national culture became the main point of argument in the seminar, which ended in a vote for using 'Malay-Islam' in preference to 'Islam'. The term 'Malay-Islam', as I view it, was aimed at reducing future complications over the conceptual guidelines. Islam in the true and orthodox sense is a belief in the oneness of God. Orthodox Muslim leaders frown upon mysticism and spirit worship in any form, whatever their purpose. Public performances of dance and drama that bring about sensual pleasure are also condemned. The term 'Malay-Islam' when used reduces the severity of the designated concept in terms of its religious connotation. 11

11. 'Malay-Islam' is not true orthodox Islamic faith, as its teachings came to the Malays via Shi'ite Persia and India. In Malaya it was further influenced by the Hindu-Buddhist and animistic beliefs of the Malays. Malay-Islam is therefore Islam influenced by Malay culture, law and custom.

However, it is not my intention to criticize the three guidelines here. Rather taking as a baseline the political view that national demands increased emphasis on the cultural unity of the peoples of the state, I believe that it is vital we understand the nature of our actual cultural heritage of theatrical forms, however cultural heritage may be defined for the purposes of national unity. Drama and music are not simply things to be collected and exhibited as specimens of cultural achievement in a museum nor are they curious attractions for the entertainment of tourists. They are life itself, dynamic not static, aspects of living societies not easily extracted from their social milieu. Any programme for cultural development must necessarily treat them as such, for development without understanding will be sterile.

2. The Study of Malaysian Drama

There is a large, uneven and fragmented literature on Malaysian drama, although it goes well back into the nineteenth century. For the most part, the earlier works are literary in motivation. Their authors were essentially concerned with the collection of materials and with the understanding of drama by textual analysis. Much of the rest is concerned with

the generally uncritical accumulation of data to service a range of hypotheses on cultural origins. Though literary analysis and origin theories are of limited concern to this thesis, the early material has its ethnographic value and is particularly important in providing an historical perspective for modern studies. Some of it will be examined in detail in the history of the boria below.

Since independence, the promulgation of the concept of a Malaysian cultural identity has encouraged the study and publication of an appreciable amount of descriptive work. This has been most important as an ethnographic salvage task, but it must be emphasized that it is nevertheless descriptive rather than analytical, and this highlights the need for more penetrating studies. The symposium edited by Taib Osman,¹² including papers on the varieties of South-East Asian shadow play and other traditional theatre as well as of music and musical instrument variations put matters on a new level, setting the stage for more detailed studies in the 1970s.

The first and most serious study was Amin

12. Mohd. Taib Osman (ed.), op. cit.

Sweeney's on wayang siam in which he described one of the four types of wayang kulit in Malaysia. ¹³ He provided some sociological background to wayang siam followed by an intensive and exhaustive treatment of the narrative of the Ramayana and the dramatic form of the wayang repertoire. He omitted the other three wayang kulit types since they were almost extinct. The only remaining studies of drama forms are those by Rahmah Bujang of bangsawan ¹⁴ and by Mohamed Afandi Ismail of mak yong. ¹⁵ Both were written in Malay and were descriptive. The study of bangsawan was undertaken at a time when the form was already on the wane. It served basically as a documentation of a once popular theatre, and analysed the economic and socio-political reasons leading to its extinction. Mak yong was once a court theatre tradition and is now performed only for special occasions by enthusiasts who have formed a troupe to save it from

13. For further information on 'wayang siam' see P.L. Amin Sweeney, The Ramayana and the Malay Shadow Play; (Kuala Lumpur : National University of Malaysia Press, 1973).

14. Rahmah Bujang, Sejarah Perkembangan Drama Bangsawan di Tanah Melayu dan Singapura; (Kuala Lumpur : Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1974).

15. Mohamed Afandi Ismail, Mak Yong - Satu Kajian Dari Sudut Persembahan; an unpublished B.A. Dissertation in Malay, (Kuala Lumpur : University of Malaya, 1973).

extinction. Afandi Ismail's study concentrated on this troupe and provided a historical description of the new form of the mak yong theatre.

However, there remain other theatre types, so far relatively neglected, which deserve serious treatment. Examples include dike, andai andai and menora siam, all of which face extinction. They were once popular theatre of minority groups. Dike belongs to the Thai or Sam Sam Malays in the border regions separating Perlis and Thailand.¹⁶ The Malaysian dike probably originated from the yike theatre of Thailand. Andai andai is a theatre type once popular among people of Sumatran descent in Selangor and it can be traced to the andai of the Minangkabau of Sumatra. Finally menora siam was once a popular theatre form of the Malays in Kelantan and the Thai border regions. In Thailand it is called simply menora. All three forms, however, need considerable further investigation for if the generally accepted sources are correct, then the Malaysian forms are certainly very different from the original ones.

Two other forms still very active are boria and sandiwara (or its modern equivalent derama).

16. Archaimbault C., 'A Preliminary Investigation of the Sam Sam of Kedah and Perlis', Journal of the Malaysian Branch Royal Asiatic Society; Vol. 30, pt. 1, May 1957, pp. 75-92.

These have received little serious mention in the literature. Sandiwara is a theatre type closely resembling western theatre of the Romantic period. It is played by amateurs and part-time professionals and there are no fully professional or permanent troupes. In contrast to sandiwara, boria as a theatre type, has ancient roots in Malaysia. Though of Indian origin, it has until very recently not only been centred in Penang, but also through adaptive processes, has become the one and only theatre type of the Penang Malays.

From this brief sketch I hope it is clear that serious studies of Malay drama are limited and a great deal of work remains to be done even to produce a comprehensive literary and ethnographic picture.

However, much more than this is desirable. If we return to the research implications of the national cultural concept, then it is the socio-cultural aspects of drama which need to be investigated. Consider the case of wayang siam as found in Kedah and Kelantan. Its presence among Malays there and elsewhere in its full form suggests that it has some social, cultural and psychological importance peculiar to these particular Malays. Tailored to their society, moulded through time, only among them

does it have its full symbolic impact. Performed elsewhere in its Kelantan form it is something different, because it lacks its home audience, and hence the special relationship with that audience. To understand it then, we need to know not merely the form, but its methods of communication within its own particular culture and society. A simple point perhaps, but this holistic conception of theatre is not only necessary for broader and better dramatic studies, it is also a kind of comprehension necessary to prevent the programme to establish Malaysian drama forms nationally being hamstrung from its inception. Since each drama is part of a particular social fabric, a process in time, not a static entity, we risk, in isolating it from its original social milieu, producing national forms which are the lowest common denominators, not the highest common products. From the national viewpoint then, there is a case for intensive local studies now, before the greater powers of the national media swamp the rich regional forms. Boria is such a form, professional and localized, but already through competitions, radio and television, it is moving on to a national stage, becoming both more amateur and more narrowly professional in the

process.

3. The Study of South-East Asian Drama

For any student of performing arts in South-East Asia, James R. Brandon's Theatre in Southeast Asia¹⁷ is a basic work. Brandon attempted to give an overall picture of the theatre types of the area within their socio-cultural context. He classified the various theatre genres into four major types : folk, court, popular and western. Folk theatre is essentially village theatre, sponsored by the community or individuals within it for village audiences, often performed by specialists, fairly simple in form, and frequently associated with animistic belief and ritual. This is contrasted with the complex theatre of the courts in which outside high traditions are important. Popular theatre is commercial with travelling professionals, while western theatre, mainly amateur, caters for the western-educated elite. In his consideration he has two basic themes in mind : first, the great tradition - little tradition continuum, or variants of it such as folk-urban, high-low cultures.

17. (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1967).

Secondly, he gives a strong historical perspective, bringing out the 1930s as the heyday of South-East Asian theatre, and its changes with the decline of the courts and the advent of new media such as films.

I would like to take up several issues raised by his work. First, he correctly points out that theatre in South-East Asia is much more closely integrated with society than in the west.¹⁸ This is very important, because the questions often raised in western studies about the relationship of the theatre to society tend to imply an enormous gulf between the two, so that one is given the impression of a theatre largely cut off from the masses where questions like 'what is the extent of the influence of theatre on society?' become important. These kinds of questions are puzzling ones in a South-East Asian context where whole communities participate in theatre as a normal part of social life, and where understanding the drama is essentially understanding the society.¹⁹ In this situation it is the

18. Brandon, op. cit.; p. 80.

This point is also reiterated by Peacock J.L., Rites of Modernization; (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 3.

19. Rosemary Firth put this succinctly in her study of the Kelantan Malays when she wrote : ... "the way in which people 'play' is as important as the way in which they 'work' as an indication of the sort of society in which they live...". Firth R., House-Keeping Among Malay Peasants; 2nd. ed., (London : Athlone Press, 1966), p. 189.

concepts of the social anthropologist which would appear more appropriate than those of the sociologist of western theatre. It is these I attempt to employ primarily here, though obviously many of the questions I ask have long since been posed by sociologists for western theatre. ²⁰

Secondly Brandon makes a crucial distinction for understanding the forms of theatre found in South-East Asia compared with those in the West. This is the distinction between play and genre. In the West the emphasis is on the uniqueness of the play; a very different concept to that emphasized in South-East Asia. He wrote :

"In Southeast Asia the aim of production is not to produce one play, or even ten or a hundred separate plays, but to stage examples of a specific genre. The genre, not the play, is the unit of production. Production is organized around permanent troupes of from ten to a hundred and fifty actors, writers, producers, musicians, singers, technicians,

20. See for example the lines of research suggested by Georges Gurvitch in 1956, translated in Burns E. & T. (eds.), Sociology of Literature and Drama; (Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1973), pp. 76-78.

and administrative staff. It is not at all unusual for actors to have performed together in the same troupe several thousand times. Since a troupe performs in a single genre (with few and minor exceptions), dancers are expert in the dance patterns of the genre, musicians and singers know its traditional melodies and songs, actors know the story on which plays are based, the standard dialogue patterns, and the style of performance. As a rule a troupe performs a different play every night. Actors play the same type of role night after night, and in some cases they play the same character all their lives (for example, the clowns). A few standard types of scenery, costumes, and make-up satisfy the production needs of any play that might be given. If theatre productions are "hand-crafted" in the West, they are "prefabricated" in Southeast Asia. In successive performances the standard parts of the genre are shifted, rearranged, put into different combinations. Each of these particular combinations is, of course, a "play". Like the patterns of a kaleidoscope, all the combinations or plays are regroupings of the same basic elements. No two patterns are exactly alike; none are totally different." 21

This perception of South-East Asian theatre holds

21. Brandon, op. cit.; p. 147.

very well for popular theatre in Malaysia, and is particularly apt for the boria in Penang. Certainly there we are more concerned with the genre rather than the individual play.

Thirdly, although Brandon has provided a general treatment of South-East Asian drama, his task was made difficult by the lack of more detailed data on certain areas of South-East Asia. These would have given a sounder basis for his classification and qualified certain aspects of his analysis of the intermingling of theatre types. His study therefore indicates the need for deeper analysis of theatre forms specific to certain areas of South-East Asia and justifiably paves the way for such studies.

To my knowledge there is only one major study which has wholeheartedly attempted to provide a deeper understanding of a theatre form by social anthropological analysis in South-East Asia. This is James L. Peacock's study of ludruk in Java.²² Ludruk is a popular entertainment for the working class urban population of Surabaya. It consists

22. Peacock J.L., Rites of Modernization; (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1968). But see also Barbara Hatley, 'Ludruk and Ketoprak : Popular Theatre and Society in Java' in Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs; Vol 7, No. 2, July - Dec. 1973, pp. 38-58.

of song, dance and sketches performed by professional troupes. Peacock treats ludruk as a rite of modernization. That is, he considers how "ludruk helps persons symbolically define their movements from one type of situation to another - from traditional to modern situations".²³ The notion of ludruk as a ritual aiding transition was suggested to him by Van Gennep's classic study of rites of passage. These symbolically define individual and group transitions from one status to another in the life cycle, seasonal and calendrical cycles, territorial movement and suchlike. Peacock sees ludruk symbolizing movements from country to town, from peasant to factory worker, and from one pattern of thought to another. Ludruk enables the participants to make sense of such movements in three ways. First, "it helps ludruk participants to apprehend modernization movements in terms of vivid and meaningful symbolic classifications; second, it seduces ludruk participants into empathy with modes of social action involved in the modernization process; third, it involves the participants in aesthetic forms that structure

23. Peacock, ibid.; p. 6.

their most general thoughts and feelings in ways stimulating to the modernization process." ²⁴ He shows that two distinctions in Javanese thought (symbolic classification) are critical for understanding ludruk. One is the ancient contrast between alus (refined) and kasar (coarse) thought and action which is vital for analysing art, religion, status and class in Java. ²⁵ The other is the recent ideological distinction between madju (progressive) and kuna (traditional) attitudes towards social change. These distinctions are expressed over and over in ludruk, and as the particular form it takes is innovative rather than cyclic it emphasizes kasar and madju values and encourages social action towards modernization. ²⁶

Though this sketch only outlines the bare bones of Peacock's argument, it should show up both the originality and importance of his study. Clearly there would be a value in direct comparison of ludruk in Surabaya with boria in Penang, for there are interesting similarities between them. The most

24. ibid.; p. 6.

25. See also Geertz C., The Religion of Java; (New York : Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), pp. 232-251.

26. Peacock, ibid.; esp. pp. 5-11, 234-256.

appropriate place for this would be after I have presented the boria material, and I therefore consider this in the conclusion. More important at this stage is to emphasize the general value of his methodology for a study of boria. In particular, I adopt the anthropological holistic approach²⁷ which I have already suggested has value for the study of Malay drama. I do not, however, see the need for restricting my approach by adopting his viewpoint of drama as a rite of modernization. Again this is a problem I shall deal with specifically in my conclusion.

What I do in this study is to view boria as symbolic of the social actions of its participants. Though acknowledging the value of Peacock's pioneer work, the main basis of my analytical approach is that of Kenneth Burke's treatment of symbolic or "representational" action,²⁸ and also that of Turner who views such art forms as "those liminal ... forms of symbolic action, those genres of free-time activity, in which all previous standards and models are subjected to criticism, and fresh new ways of

27. For which he presents an amusing argument, op. cit.; pp. 6-11.

28. Kenneth D. Burke, Philosophy of Literary Form; (New York : Vintage Books, 1957), pp. 3-120, (pp. 8-11 "Symbolic Action").

describing and interpreting socio-cultural experience are formulated".²⁹ From the viewpoint of symbolic action as both "representation" (from Burke) and "instigation" (from Turner) the question posed throughout the thesis will be how the structure, content and functions of boria relate to the socio-cultural milieu in which it is found. In particular I attempt to establish how boria contributes not only to the maintenance of tradition, but also to moulding, channeling and redefinition of traditional social values and action into a modern form. This approach comes close to that taken by Rosemary Firth when she wrote : "Popular art forms have as important a part to play in maintaining tradition as in popularising change : in fact they can act as a powerful solvent between the old and the new."³⁰

4. The Study

a) Aims Problems and Methods

With this perspective then, I chose live theatre as a crucial part of the Malaysian cultural

29. Turner V.W., Dramas, Fields and Metaphors - Symbolic Action in Human Society; (London : Cornell University Press, 1974), Preface p. 15.

30. Firth R., op. cit.; p. 189.

heritage for research. I have set out to investigate one live theatre form and analyse its social dynamics. For I consider the communicative element of symbolic interaction between player and audience in a live theatre to be more direct than in other media. I see the constant repetition of similar theatre shows within a single community as influencing group solidarity, while the acting by live players to live audiences, especially when both actors and audiences belong to a single social group or region, allows a particularly meaningful interactive process between its participants. The medium of interaction to be investigated is the employment of verbal symbols of narration and non-verbal symbols in the usage of facial expressions, bodily gestures, and representation of role by attire.

Based on these perceptions, the boria of Penang was felt to be the best choice for the study. This was determined by the form and genre of the boria as theatre. As a form it presently consists of two dramatic elements - a farcical comic sketch and a song-dance finale - both embodied in a thematic whole. As a genre it is ^apopular theatre of the Malays of Penang. Nowadays it is also enjoyed as a live show in other regions of Malaysia such as

neighbouring Kedah and Perak. It has a growing importance as a show in other media, particularly radio and television. In all these shows the players are mainly Penang Malays, who either originated in or still live in Penang. Its expansion in the wake of cultural nationalism demonstrates not only the lack of any other regional forms but its propagative possibilities, though the change in audience in particular should present problems for the players which may modify it considerably. This is a possibility worth further investigation, but it has been felt necessary to lay emphasis in this study on boria shows as played and watched in dialect by Penang Malays within their communal context in Penang. This narrowing down is considered essential for a meaningful study in view of the fact that boria originates, is maintained, and finds expression in Penang. Indeed it is totally identified with Penang Malays.

Essentially, the aim of the study is to consider one kind of theatre in Malaysia socio-logically for reasons both academic and political. Boria as the theatre chosen, and the Penang Malays, as the social group in which it is to be studied, form a single and convenient unit for research.

The intention is to show that the quality of studies of Malaysian theatre can be improved by adopting an approach which draws on insights provided by social anthropology.

The problems are manifold, and to a large extent they have already been spelt out in the preceding discussion. At one level they are those of writing modern ethnography; at another they are testing concepts evolved in the study of symbolism in the context of a particular theatre and in a particular society.

The methods and techniques employed are derived from the aims and problems of the study. Modern ethnography demands the elaboration of a set of analytical concepts and a field study. The need for analysis led to the adoption of a basically holistic approach deriving from social anthropology, while the particular subject matter invited an interdisciplinary viewpoint deriving useful concepts from studies of symbolism, ritual and drama. These concepts have been mentioned above. The need for fieldwork demanded not just the usual gathering of texts from shows or audience reaction surveys but also a study of the show within its social context. This in turn led to the use of the techniques set out

in Appendix I.

b) Sources on Boria

The sources on boria are fairly limited, consisting of short articles, odd comments in wider studies of theatre and scattered notes. Boria was first mentioned by name by H.T. Haughton in a brief note in 1897.³¹ According to him it was first brought into Penang Island in the year 1845 by the Twenty-First Regiment of Madras who had been transferred there to garrison the port. A song and dance form, it was played by the Indian Muslims of the regiment during ten days in the month of Muharram when they had holiday leave to celebrate the annual Shi'ite festival of mourning for Hussein, a grandson of the prophet Muhammad.

Under the designation of the Muharram festival therefore, sources on boria date back to 1845 by Haughton's authority. In 1858 J.D. Vaughan mentioned it as an activity of the Jawi-Pekan of Penang.³² Another significant early source is

31. Haughton H.T., 'Boriah' in Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society; No. 32, 1897, pp. 312-3.

32. Vaughan J.D., 'The Malays of Penang and Province Wellesley' in Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia; New Series, Vol. II, Singapore, 1858, (Nendeln Kraus Rep. 1970), pp. 116-175.

the Penang Riot Commission Report of 1868.³³ In this report investigation into the cause and effects of the Penang Riots in 1867 revealed that two rival Malay associations, the Red Flag and White Flag societies, formed a few years earlier to perform in the Muharram festivities, had become allied to Chinese secret societies and were involved with them in the Riots. The committee's proposals in the report led to the future confinement of activities to religious festivities in their own village areas. Though there is no information in the report on boria as a drama form, it does provide us with a contemporary source on the locations and political activities of some of its players.

In 1910, R.J. Wilkinson, a Straits Civil Service Officer and noted Malay scholar, discussed boria as a form of Malay amusement.³⁴ He compared the boria of Madras to that of Penang and established that the resemblance lies only in name, for the show as then known in Penang had a totally different form.

33. Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Penang Riots of 1867, hereafter referred to as the 1867 Riot Report, Straits Settlements Sessional Papers 1868, Colonial Office, Penang.

34. Wilkinson R.J., 'Malay Amusements' in Papers on Malay Subjects; Pt. 3, (Kuala Lumpur : Government Press, 1910).

In 1920, A.W. Hamilton in his article 'The Boria', gave a description of the performance as found in Penang then. This is a substantial account, the fullest description of boria extant. It is most valuable on all major aspects of boria, and even contains details of several choruses and names some fourteen troupes active at that time. ³⁵

A description of the performance and its division into three parts was made in 1922 by Mohd. Yusof bin Sultan Maidin in his attempts to show the evils of boria. ³⁶ According to him boria performance was separable into a day performance, a night show and a closing ceremony. In a study of secret societies by Mervyn Llewelyn Wynne ³⁷ published in 1941, boria activities were significantly connected to Muslim secret societies with thuggist elements in the mid-nineteenth century.

In 1962, N.J. Ryans observed that the boria of Penang had acquired theatrical forms which

35. Hamilton A.W., 'The Boria' in Journal of the Straits Branch Royal Asiatic Society; No. 82, Sept. 1920, pp. 139-144.

36. Mohd. Yusof bin Sultan Maidin, Boria dan Benchananya; (Penang : United Press, 1922).

37. Wynne M.L., Triad and Tabut; (Singapore : Government Printers, 1941).

placed it "On the borderline between dancing and theatre ...".³⁸ At this time it was a conglomerate of song, dance and comic sketches incorporated as a whole into a single show. There were no hard and fast rules as to the sequence of these three components. It was mentioned again in 1965, by the then editor of the Malayan Historical Society Journal, in his article 'The Penang Boria'.³⁹

Quoting and commenting on Haughton and Wilkinson he suggested that it was a Penang theatre still in process of adapting to contemporary taste. He points out its modern spread onto the mainland, but does not offer any detailed information on boria on the lines of Hamilton's article. The article contains the only published photographs on boria that I am aware of. The photographs, by courtesy of the National Archives, show a boria troupe for that period and a boria troupe of players wearing animal masks performing round about the year 1905. As the use of animal characters are no longer

38. Ryans N.J., The Cultural Backgrounds of the Peoples of Malaya; (Kuala Lumpur : Longmans of Malaya, 1962), p. 63.

39. Tuan Hj. Mubin Shepard, 'The Penang Boria' in Malaya in History; Vol. 10, No. 1, April 1965, pp. 39-41.

employed in boria the photograph provides graphic evidence of shows in that period.

In April 1974, the state Cultural Department sponsored and organized a two-day seminar on boria at Batu Uban all-purpose hall (Kompleks Pelbagai Guna, Batu Uban). At this seminar the future of boria was conjectured through three topical discussions on boria of the past, the present, and the future each introduced by a short paper.⁴⁰ Though the papers given were somewhat sketchy, the fact that it was held meant a great deal to boria participants.

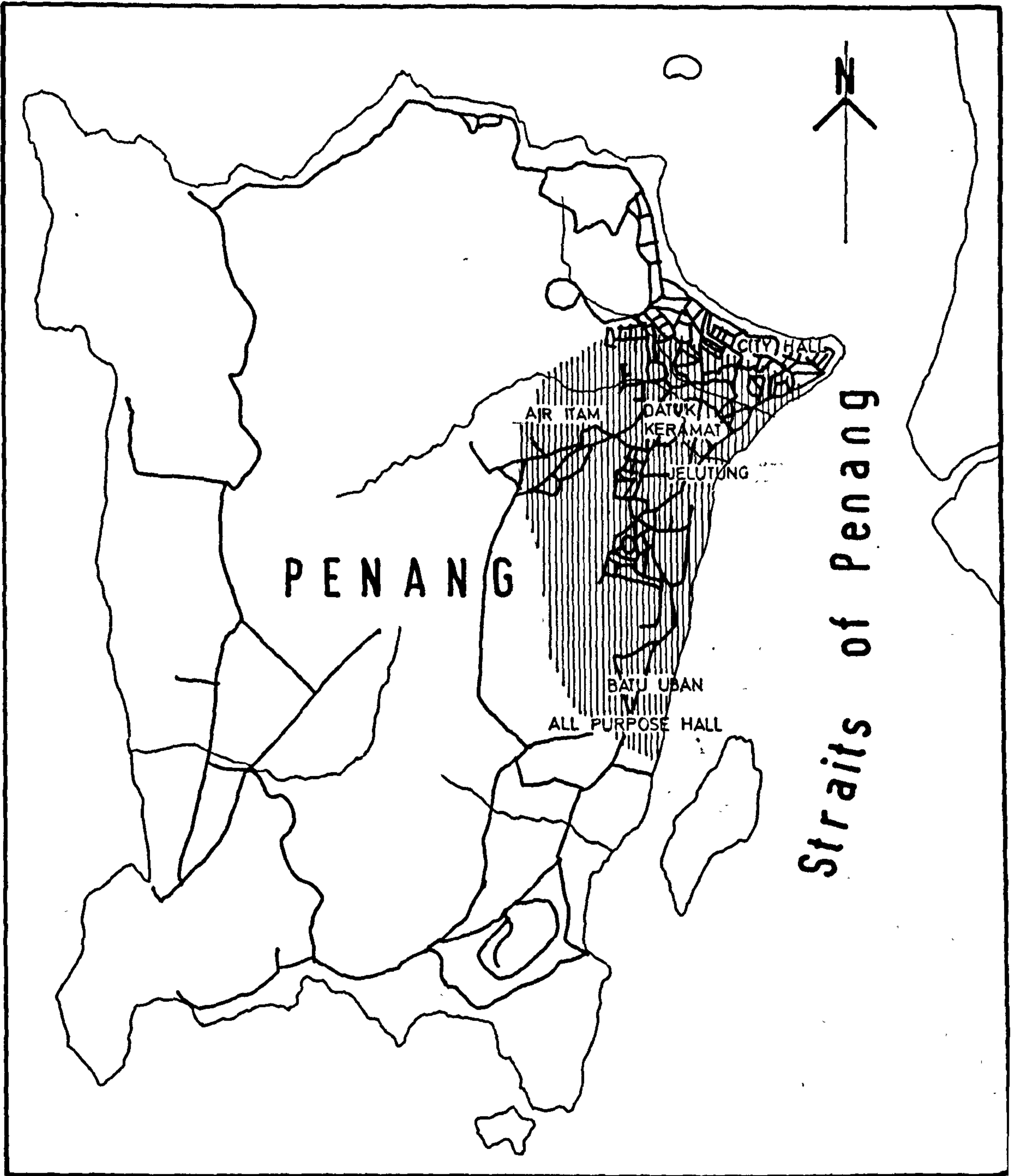
c) The Research Area

As a result of preliminary investigations it was established that though boria had in the past been identified with Penang Island as a whole it is now significant only in certain Malay areas. These are further confined to certain suburban villages around the capital city of Georgetown. The most dominant areas of boria activity were found to be

40. I was able to consult an unpublished manuscript of the papers in this seminar : 1) 'Boria Dahulu' by Abas Marican, 2) 'Boria Sekarang' by Mohd. Habib Syed Ahmad, and 3) 'Boria Akan Datang' by Shukri Ismail, kept in the State Department of Culture in Penang, 1974.

in the south of Georgetown in the villages of Sungai Pinang, Kampung Dodol, Kampung Jawa, Dhoby Ghout and Jalan Hatin within the Datuk Keramat region. Boria activities from this region also extend outwards into areas such as Air Itam, Jelutung adjacent to Datuk Keramat; and further afield to other areas in Penang and Province Wellesley, Kedah and Perak. Within its immediate locality, however, boria has become a household word and is an important part of the residents' leisure activities, so much so that a large number of its inhabitants turn out for any boria held in the vicinity. These were the areas in which fieldwork was undertaken, and a questionnaire was administered to a random sample of Malay households. It was estimated that at least a third of the Malay population there had at one time or another, taken some active part in performing arts, especially boria.

The region also housed a number of boria troupes. There are in Sungai Pinang village itself two wellknown boria troupes, one the 'Kumpulan Boria Sungai Pinang' under the leadership of Pak Daud who likes to let his players be known as professionals. Indeed his actor players are very good and were always well received by their audiences. The other



ISLAND OF PENANG

Map I : sketch map showing Research Area
(shaded area of map)

troupe is known as 'Ria Seni Pesaka Sungai Pinang' under the leadership of Ba'in, who was the lead singer (tukang karang) in the chorus group of Pak Daud's troupe before he left and formed his own boria troupe. His troupe consists of semi-professionals, especially the actor players who had been involved in boria for more than fifteen years. Kampung Jawa boasts of an all-girl chorus group under the leadership of Abu Bakar Ghauth. An amateur troupe under the supervision of Syed Agil and consisting of an all-girl membership of student dental nurses became famous when they won the 1974/75 national annual boria competition held in Dewan Sri Pinang in Penang. There were two other amateur troupes in the area, one under the auspices of UMNO youth branch at Jalan Hatin and another at Kampung Dodol. After the fame of the student dental nurses' boria troupe, some student nurses from the General Hospital, Penang, started forming a troupe of their own also under the supervision of Syed Agil. Indeed Datuk Keramat region exhibits a degree of involvement in boria not found elsewhere in Penang.

As the boria players' performances occurred in close proximity to their homes and many of them had contacts with households in the villages chosen, it

was assumed that between the players and the community, especially in the case of Malays, there was a close relationship. It was found later that the players were connected within the community by either kinship relations or through similar interests in boria.

d) The Ordering of Research

The ordering of research was in a different form to the thesis. It began with the collection and gathering of historical information on boria including library work and interviews with boria or related personnel. This took place between 1973 and the beginning of 1974. It was followed by a period of library research in England when I developed my analytical ideas. Returning to Malaysia in 1975 I spent five months in fieldwork in Penang. The details of this are in Appendix I, but in brief this involved employing research assistants, administering a questionnaire to participants in boria and Malays in the neighbourhood selected, watching and recording shows and participant observation in the area. I then returned to England for the final writing up of the thesis.

The ordering of material in the thesis proved

difficult, but once the first full draft was produced the present form began to emerge. After this introductory chapter, the first part of the thesis explores the historical development of boria from being part of an Indian Muslim religious festival to its present popular theatre form among Penang Malays. Then an attempt is made to place the boria within an analytical framework by examining its contemporary structure, content and functions within the structure of Penang society. It is hoped in this way to view boria as symbolic of the social action of its participants. The main bent of the study is the analysis of the sketch and the song-dance in which the analysis of the sketch is in the stories and the nature of audience reaction to them. The song and dance act has a different dramatic structure which lends itself more readily to traditional methods of verse form analysis. While still examining sociologically the modes and expressions of individual and participant interaction, I also analyse textually the song or musical verse in terms of usage of cognate sounds and tones. In addition I deal with the repetition and reversal of words in the verse in relation to steps and movements on the stage.

From these findings an attempt is made to demonstrate that boria plays a mediatory role within Penang Malay social milieu and acts as a catalyst between it and the wider world : a form of expression which continuously eases the transition of the participants into a more modern world.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF BORIA

In this chapter I shall investigate the evolution of Penang boria from its inception up to the present. In the process of outlining the changes in the form of boria in Penang, I shall also examine the social groups involved in an attempt to assess certain of the conditions responsible for change.

1. The Origin of Boria

A brief note by H.T. Haughton published in 1897,¹ was the earliest written article mentioning boria (spelled 'boriah') by name. In it he attempts to establish the origin of boria in Penang from ceremonies performed by Muslim troops of the Madras Infantry during the month of Muharram in as early as 1845. In view of its importance the note is reproduced in full :

"In part II of Clifford and Swettenham's Malay-English Dictionary, under the head of BORIAH, I find Boriah, **بوریه** A topical song. Bacha boriah **بوریه باج** To sing a topical song.

No derivation of the word is given. The use of the word is chiefly confined to the

1. Haughton, 'Boriah', op. cit.

pantomimes or mimic plays which are acted by Malays in Penang Town during the month of Muharram. It is of Persian origin, according to Forbes, and means a 'mat' in Hindustani. The following account of the word as I have received from an Indian in Penang will throw some light on the subject, as I believe, fanciful derivations of the word have been suggested.

"The plain meaning of the word Boriah in
"the Hindustani and Deccan language is a
"place of prayer (praying carpet), and in
"Malay they call it Tikar (a mat). Formerly
"in the year 1845, the 21st. Regiment was
"transferred from Madras to Penang. The
"Mohammedans of the Regiment used to be given
"10 days' leave in the month of Muharram for
"the purpose of mourning for the grandsons of
"the prophet. These military men used to
"form parties and sing songs of mourning. For
"instance, representing four persons, Nanak
"Shah, Jogi Majnun, Balva Ghaghri, and Boria,
"they used to dress up in clothes made of
"mats and mourn for Husain, and used to recite
"the following piece of poetry :-

"Boria the best of its kind;
"Boria everywhere in the world;
"Boria the beautiful (was) seen;
"Sacred and pure Boria.

"In the countries of Madras
"The Boria is made of grass;
"Fences are made with bamboo;

"Boria is green in colour, etc., etc.'

"But in Penang the name Boria is from the 21st.

"Regiment, and has become celebrated. Now-a-days the Malays have given their own different names to it, but they call all of them Boria for the purpose of asking charity for them. In Madras wherever the Regiment is the Boria play is performed." "

Haughton's account reveals certain points of interest concerning the boria. Besides trying to trace the etymology of boria, he tells us that boria was a pantomime or mimic play performed as part of the Muharram festival. It is associated therefore with the Shi'ite Muslims who put on a passion play (ta'ziya) ² to commemorate the occasion. In the Encyclopaedia of Islam the play is described thus :

"Ta'ziya. (Arab). The Passion Play of the Shi'is.

Among the Shi'is the word means in the first place the lamentation for the martyred imams. In particular, however, it is mourning for Husain. The tabut, a copy of the tomb at Kerbela, in popular language is called ta'ziya. It is a model kept in the house, often very richly executed. Ta'ziya however means particularly the mystery play itself. The time for its performance is the first third of the month of Muharram especially the 10th Roz-i-Katl, the day of the murder of Husain and the Ashura festival.

2. The Encyclopaedia of Islam; (London : Luzac and Co., 1934), Vol IV, pp. 711-2.

The local usages in Persia and in the Shi'i regions of Mesopotamia and India are very varied. In a wider sense the plays include the street processions such as the calvacade with Husain's horse, the marriage procession of Husain's son al-Kasim with Hasan's daughter Fatima (see below) the procession to the cemetery with the tabut, all popular celebrations of a kind at which the deepest grief does not exclude a part being played by comic figures.

Lastly ta'ziya means the actual performance of the passion play itself. The stage is erected in public places, in caravanserais, even in mosques and in imambara (enclosures) specially erected for the festival. The chief properties required for the stage are a large tabut, receptacles in front to hold lights, also Husain's bow, lance, spear and banner. The participators in addition to the players are the rawza-khwan, the poet, (lit. he who pronounces the eulogy for the dead). He speaks the introduction and with gestures indicative of lamentation chants a khutba with many hadiths in a voice of lamentation surrounded by a choir of boys called pesh-khwan, (lit. announcers) while the nuwa-hannana, dressed as mourning women, utter the lamentations of the women and mothers. The spectators are separated according to sexes. They are given muhr, cakes of earth from Kerbela steeped in musk, on which they press their foreheads in abject grief. While on the stage the hunger and particularly the thirst of the martyrs is most realistically expressed, water and other refreshments are provided for the spectators.

* * *

The motives and to a great extent the words are the same in the great number of such plays which are often touched up and expanded by the poets. The commonest are Persian but they also exist in Arabic and Turkish. The term drama can only be applied with reservation to the series of sometimes 40-50 independent tableaux which constitute the performance....

More important, and also more serious, is the fact that these spectacles produce a completely biased view of the figures of early Muslim history upon the Shi'is.

* * *

The fury against the Sunnis is so pronounced that non-Muslims are tolerated as spectators but certainly not non-Shi'a Muslims. National hatred of Arabs (and also Turks) is seen in such scenes as that in which Husain's widow Shahrabanu returns to her home in Persia or the young Fatima II is rescued by a Persian king.

The scenes.... have grown out of various sources, but the material and the words are often old; verses of the Kur'an interpreted from the Shi'a point of view, and particularly traditions with Shi'a bias, which are clothed in a form calculated greatly to impress the hearers On the other hand songs of lamentation are still written in modern times.

* * *

In their elaborate form, the ta'ziya are recent and at one time could not be carried

through without opposition from the mollas, on account of their crude dogma and irreligious accompaniment of dances and processions. It is probable that ancient rites of earlier mythological festivals like the Tammuz and Adonis cults have survived in the subsidiary plays which in India have been adapted by some Sunnis and even Hindus; the banners for the processions, a large staff, the hand which is carried round by those who summon to the festival and is now interpreted as the hand of Husain which was cut off, have thus their ancient prototypes. That the significance of the sacred properties has altered is shown by the fact that among the Shi'a Tatars the tabut is called the "marriage house of Kasim". In many places there are accompanying rites with water, which were originally indigenous; the throwing of the tabut into water among the Indian Shi'is may be due to Hindu influence. Even the style of the mourning garments is partly influenced by earlier forms. But the passion play itself is the popular expression of that religious feeling which has its roots in the historic facts of Kerbela."

The ta'ziya of the Muharram festival is seen to be commemorative of the murder at Kerbela of the prophet's grandson Hussein during the period of schism in Islam when Muslims divided into two factions

of Shi'ites and Sunnites. ³ The ta'ziya is also characteristic of India's Muharram festivals and the Encyclopaedia accords its form in India to indigenous influences. In Haughton's account we are told that the boria in Penang then was an activity of Muslim Indian soldiers who would presumably be Shi'ites as such.

The play described by Haughton's informant mentions four characters in the Indian boria. They are Nanak Shah, Jogi Majnun, Balva Ghaghri and Boria; the last character's name was later used to designate the Penang Muharram festival performance. These characters were described as dressed up "in clothes made of mats". Wynne described the Muharram festivals of India ⁴ naming eighteen classes of characters and mentioning five of them as identifiable, in name at least, with Haughton's four characters. These are as follows :

<u>Haughton</u>	<u>Herklots</u> (in Wynne)
1. Nanak Shah	1. The Nanak Shahi.
2. Jogi Majnun	2. The Jogi.
	3. The Majnun Fakirs.
3. Balva Ghaghri	4. The Ghagriwala.
4. Boria	5. The Bhar-Bhariya.

3. The schism in Islam into the Sunnite and Shi'ite Muslims is described by Wynne M.L., pp. 154-6.

4. Wynne M.L., pp. 176-9.

The character resemblance in the Muharram festival of Penang to that in India is however not followed by similarities in the dress of the characters described in each instance. The characters of the Muharram festivities were depicted in Haughton's case as wearing mats. The Muharram festival of India mentioned only two characters as wearing mats or matting. However, they are not the aforesaid characters but two others, one named Jalali (or Khaki which means "dustcovered") who is said to "have no special dress but wear fancy caps of various shapes and immense turbans made of straw, leather or mat ..."; and Khodungarun (which means "digging and burying") who is described as wearing "on his head a straw cap or turban encircled with ropes, his body is covered with a mat through a hole in which his head is thrust, ...". 5

2. The Muharram Festival and the Indians of Penang in the Mid-1850s

Haughton's note, though referring to boria in 1845, was actually written in 1897. There are earlier accounts of Muharram festivities which offer more substantial first-hand material on the antecedents of boria. The earliest is J.D. Vaughan's

5. Wynne M.L., p. 178.

description of the Muharram celebrations in his article on the Penang Malays published in 1858.⁶ Vaughan presents a rather different picture from that of Haughton. Far from being an activity limited to Indian soldiers of the port garrisons, he reported Indian and Jawibukan participants.

The Jawibukan he had previously described as "offsprings of Malay mothers and Kling or Bengali fathers".⁷ In 1858 he tells us that :

"Jawibukan appears to be the right term and no doubt was originally used by the Malays to distinguish the half breeds from themselves; ... The Jawibukans possess all the courage of the mother combined with the activity, intelligence and cunning of the father; they easily acquire habits of business, prove smart traders, and a great number have amassed considerable fortunes; they compete successfully with European and Chinese Merchants, and of course gain a great ascendancy over their fellow countrymen. Those of the poorer classes possess the same good qualities, but chance affords the one an opportunity of rising to opulence while the other sinks into the drunkard or opium smoker; with few exceptions they are all addicted to the

6. Vaughan J.D., 'Notes on the Malays of Penang and Province Wellesley', op. cit.; pp. 138-9.

7. Vaughan J.D., 'Notes on the Chinese of Penang' in Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia; Vol. VIII, Singapore 1854 (Nendeln Kraus Rep., 1970), p. 12.

above vices as well as gaming; they prove the smartest seamen and policemen, but unfortunately their predilections render them untrustworthy. They are plucky and it is no uncommon sight to see a Jawibukan engage in a stand-up fight with an European seaman or soldier; they are mischievous and fond of pilfering but withal under strict discipline they are preferable to the real Malay or native of India; they are generally taller and handsomer than their progenitors, but equally muscular and lighter about the lower limbs which improves them. They however deteriorate in the second or third generation and are then too slight in build for arduous employments and usually gain a livelihood as menials.

In this stage they possess all the bad the (sic.) qualities of their paternal relatives to the exclusion of Malayan virtues, they become invariably sots, opium smokers, gamblers, brothel keepers, cheats, and in fact the vilest of the vile." ⁸

More directly for our purposes, he describes their part in the Muharram festivities :

"The Jawibukans are addicted to making vows; as a return for any particular gratification they promise to undergo certain penances,

8. ibid.; pp. 137-8.

pilgrimages &c., which they scrupulously fulfill; this custom is derived from their fathers. They join heart and soul in all the amusements of the Mohurum and Dusserah festivals and will perform every species of buffoonery for the purpose of obtaining money.

They disguise themselves in a variety of ways to prove amusing, some dress as beggars of various nations, others as birds and beasts; some of them study the habits and movements of wild beasts so well, especially the tiger, that their imitations of the brute are splendid; some assume the attire of Europeans and dance various fashionable dances including the polka, their performances are rewarded by showers of cents principally subscribed by Europeans and Portugese who are attracted out on such occasions; their love of fun and devilry leads them to imitate burlesquely all the ceremonies observed by the Mahomedans and Hindus of India, to the amusement of bystanders. They also form bands, led by some desperate fellows, and attack parties of Klings or Bengalies who may be proudly parading with their images; the attack begins in fun but eventually ends in blows and even bloodshed; the principal work of the Police is to watch these bands of Jawibukans who issue from their houses merely for the purpose of annoying the real devotees. Such scenes are despised by the Malays,

they will not join in them nor will the most respectable portion of them visit the town during the celebration of heathen festivals, - no milder term can they apply to the orgies of the Moharum, (sic.) and they identify them with all other heretical rites. ⁹

Here then we have a description of a comic parody of the rituals, taking place at the same time, and also including parodies of daily life in the community. To what extent this bufoonery can be seen as a normal or traditional part of the festival is not clear. We know ta'ziya included comic figures, and that it stimulated violence between Shi'ite and Sunnite Muslims; is this what Vaughan is describing? The impression given is of a degenerate religious activity which invariably ends in violent disturbances. Yet the evidence we have suggests this may have been its nature long before it came to Penang. As a police official himself, Vaughan was likely to dwell on its disorderly aspects and on the nature of the more unruly elements in a popular holiday festival.

This was a period of Penang history marked by an incoming stream of Indian immigrants; which

9. ibid.; pp. 138-9.

roughly began with the ceding of the island to the British East India Company by the Sultan of Kedah on the third of July, 1786. We can distinguish three major categories of Indian immigrants. First, soldiers and administrators who were stationed in Penang temporarily. Being tied under contract to the East India Company's headquarters in India, they had to return there on the expiry of their appointments. Some may have later returned to Penang or other parts of the Straits Settlements, particularly if they had married locally. Secondly, there were the merchants and traders, commonly Chulias, who had been trading in Kedah before Penang was developed by Francis Light.¹⁰ The third category was convicts, their first prison to be cited in the literature being Chowrasta Lines along Penang Road.¹¹ These convicts were later liberated and many stayed on under ticket of leave from prison.

In time, all three major categories of Indians intermarried with the Malays and their children were called Jawi Pekans (or peranakan or Jawibukans : the difference in their reference being either

10. Davies D., Old Penang; (Singapore : Straits Times Press, 1956), p. 7.

11. ibid.; pp. 46-48.

linguistic adaptation arising from mispronunciation to the fact that the names themselves designated the group's social standing. Taking the latter possibility, *peranakan* connoted all offspring of mixed marriages between Malay and non-Malay, i.e. it would include Malay-Chinese; while *Jawibukan* would distinguish the offspring of Indian-Malay unions from others; it means simply 'Town Malays'. Anyway they formed a community of Muslims, who occupied a socially transitional position between the Indian group on the one hand and the Malay group on the other. From their parents they acquired a mixture of cultures and religions. Acculturation and assimilation processes between these people was an active social process in comparison with the offspring of Malay-Chinese parenthood, or 'Babas' as their males are called and 'Nyonyas' as their females are called. An extract from 'Notes on the Chinese of Penang' on the rise of *Jawibukans* in Penang describes their overall effect on the customs and manners of the time,

"The Chinese in Penang ... are so attached to the habits of their forefathers, that notwithstanding an intercourse for the last 60 years with the natives of all countries, they have jealously adhered to their ancient customs, and no doubt the European settler

in China would recognise in the 'Baba' of Penang and his peculiarities, a strong resemblance to his progenitors. It is not so with the Mohamedan and Hindoo settlers. These have gradually intermixed their religious ceremonies. To a Musjid in George Town, consecrated to the memory of a Mohamedan saint, both races subscribe indiscriminately and they imitate each other, as well as the Chinese, on their holidays by firing crackers and beating gongs. On the continent of India they utterly despise and hate each other, and could not under any circumstances suffer a junction, especially in religious affairs. Caste is very much laid aside here. I have seen Mussulman seated in the houses of orthodox Hindoo eating off the same board. The Hindoo also takes a Malay woman to wife." 12

Vaughan's description of the Jawi Pekans shows the assimilative tendencies of the Indians into Malay society and that their product, that is the Jawi Pekans, were seen as becoming naturally acculturated into their parents' cultures. Their adaption included their parents' Islamic religion, which though Islam in essence was derived from two opposing traditions, Shi'ite and Sunnite. In their compromise between these two traditions, it would appear that in the Muharram

12. Vaughan, 'Notes on the Chinese of Penang', op. cit. pp. 1-2.

festival, for one, Jawi Pekan performers made it more secular than previously. This also marked the first transition of the festivities away from their purely Indian Shi'ite foundations. Nevertheless the celebrations still began on the first of Muharram and ended on the tenth of the month, which was the day of the death of Hussein at Kerbala. The show ended with the ritual cleansing of mandi kerbala which for the Shi'ite was a religious ceremony, but for the Jawi Pekans it became an annual occasion of fun when they, the performers, congregated at a fixed spot near a river or stream to bathe, frolic and have a feast.

3. The Implications of the Penang Riots of 1867

In August 1867 there were serious riots in Penang. The report of the Commission of Enquiry published the following year shows that important changes had taken place since Vaughan's account of the Muharram festivities. In the report four secret societies were cited as "solely concerned in the ... riots".¹³ These were the Ghee-Hin and Toh-Peh-Kong, both Chinese, and the Red and White Flag societies with Malay and Indian members. The Ghee-Hin society

13. 1867 Riot Report; Penang, 1868, p.iii.

carried a white banner and its members were labourers and artisans mostly resident in areas within the same districts as the White Flag. The Toh-Peh-Kong carried a red banner and its members included merchants and shopkeepers, mostly residing in areas within the same districts as the Red Flag society. The Ghee-Hin and the Toh-Peh-Kong were rival societies, and likewise the White Flag and the Red Flag were opposed to each other. Sometime prior to the 1867 Riots the Ghee-Hin members began to band with those of the White Flag and the Toh-Peh-Kong members allied with the Red Flag society. The Report revealed the rivalry between the two Chinese secret societies as stemming from their place of origin in China. The Ghee-Hin society was Cantonese, while the Toh-Peh-Kong was founded by men from Fukien Province in China. Their rivalry was ancient and appears to have lain in trying to gain power over each other. ¹⁴

Like the Chinese secret societies those of the Red and White Flag were dominant in certain districts. These were : White Flag - Chulia Road to Simpang Ampat, Hutton's Lane, Macalister Road and Jalan Bahru, Pulo Tikus village, Klawie and Tanjong Tokong; Red Flag - Jalan Sampah, Titih Papan, Penang Road, Datu

14. ibid.; p. iv.

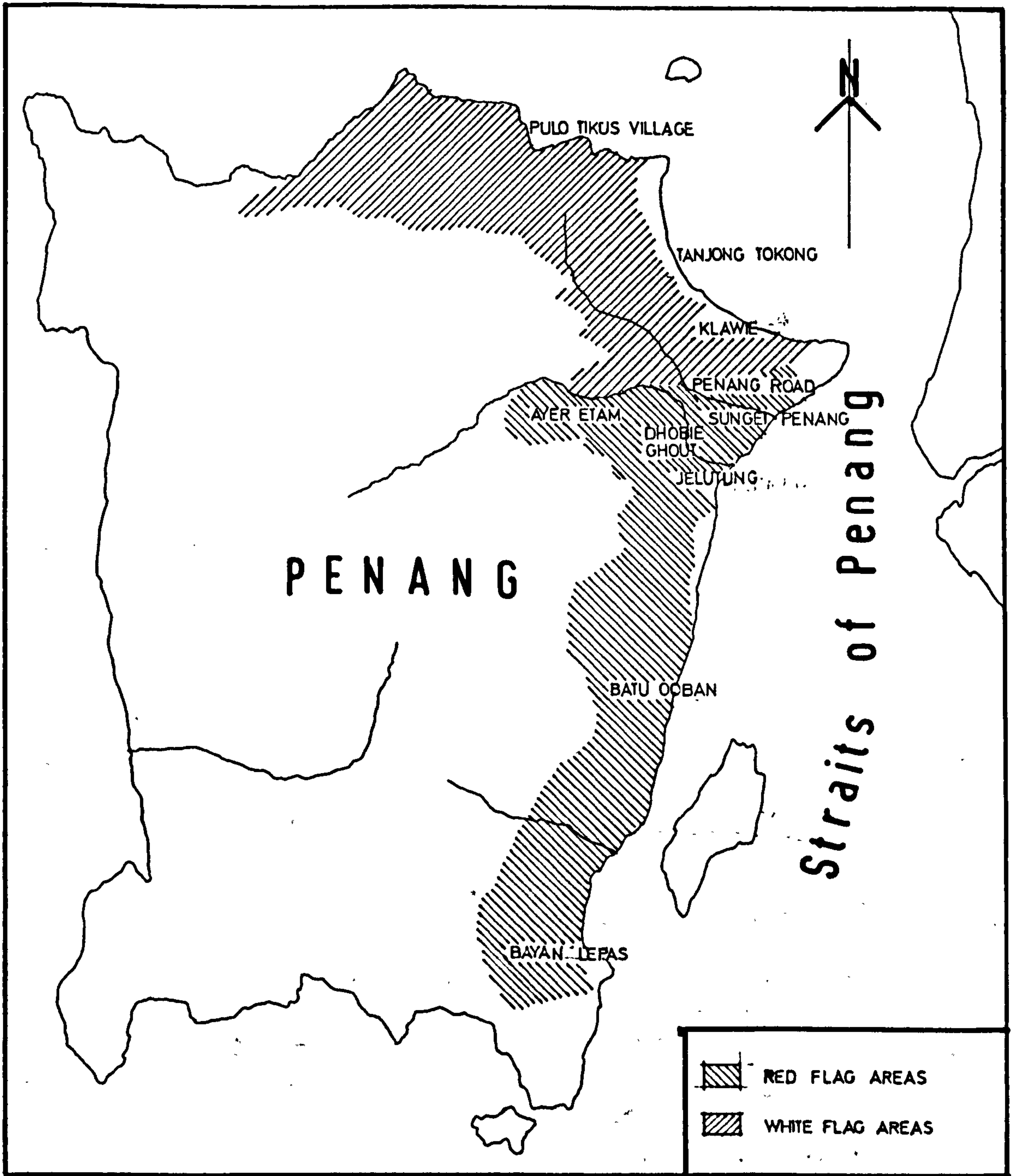
Kramat, Dhobie Ghaut, Campong Lama, Campong Bahru, Ayer Etam, Teluk Jelutang, Sungai Penang, Sungai Gelugor, Batu Ooban, Sungai Nibong, Batu Mau, Teluk Coomba, Bayan Lapas.¹⁵ (see Map II) The Red and White Flag societies were initially formed for religious purposes. Most witnesses at the Inquiry stated that the White Flag was formed about ten or twelve years prior to the riot (ie. c. 1855-57) and the Red Flag was formed about eight years prior to it (ie. c. 1859),¹⁶ though one thirty-four year old witness said it was established before he was born (ie. pre-1833).¹⁷ The White Flag society was founded with the object of aiding and attending its members' religious ceremonies such as marriages, funerals and circumcisions. The Red Flag formed in opposition to its White counterpart's orthodox views

15. ibid.; p. 50.

(At the 1974 seminar, troupes from Jalan Hatin, Jalan Baru, Sungai Pinang and Jelutung were named as some of the troupes belonging to the White Flag; while those troupes from Kampung Kolam, Kampung Tokong, and Kampung Makam were cited as belonging to the Red Flag - Seminar Paper 1 : 'Boria Dahulu' by Abas Marican, in Seminar on Boria; organized by the State Cultural Dept. in Penang; 27 and 28 April 1974.

16. ibid.; p. iv. and v.

17. ibid.; p. 73.



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Map II : sketch map showing Red and White Flag Society Areas (based on 1867 Riot Report)

of religious activities and thus from the outset it was in rivalry with the White Flag. ¹⁸ The Muslim involvement in the 1867 Riots of the Chinese secret societies emerged in the Commission of Enquiry, wherein it was stated that, following the year 1863, the Red Flag and the Toh-Peh-Kong had entered into an alliance for offensive and defensive purposes. ¹⁹ The Report also revealed that the August Riot of 1867 had been instigated earlier in June, and enmity continued and developed. Assaults between rival factions were not uncommon until ~~it~~^{they} led to the murder of a Malay diamond merchant in a Red Flag quarter. At this point the Toh-Peh-Kong took up the fight in aid of the Red Flag Malays and the Ghee-Hin stepped in to ally with the White Flag. The gang fights between society members came to a head in August 1867.

Wynne suggested that this escalating violence was due to the advent of thuggist influence in Muharram activities in Penang and Singapore at that time, and that this was mainly accounted for by the influx of criminal Indians into the Straits Settlements especially Penang. His detailed analysis of the origin of this influence among Indian convicts

18. Red and White were originally the emblems of Hasan and Hussein, the Shi'ite martyrs. (1867 Riot Report; p. 74.)

19. 1867 Riot Report; p. v.

in Penang who after release became free residents in the Straits Settlements, can be consulted for further information.²⁰ It is interesting to note, however, that this was not recognized at the time by the Riot Commission, who placed the blame squarely on the Chinese secret societies. For our purposes it suffices to say that during this period, the Red and White Flags, which at first functioned to differentiate rival secular Hasan and Hussein parties among Muharram participants, had along the line been manipulated into a link with Chinese and Malay-Indian secret societies.

The riots and the findings of the Riot Commission led to a curbing of secret society activity in Penang, and this separated the Muharram festivities from their violent criminal associations. Although these celebrations were not banned as they had been in Singapore in 1842,²¹ the troupes were restricted to performing in their own localities. The Red and White Flag societies renounced their violent activities. The story told me by one of my informants, Syed Agil, a man in his forties, is that on the day of Mandi Kerbala, his father Syed Deget

20. See Wynne M.L., Triad and Tabut; pp. 157-172.

21. Buckley C.B., An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore; (Kuala Lumpur, 1965), p. 375.

called together all the troupe leaders in a field where Penang Maternity Hospital stands today. There the red and white flags of the troupes were ceremoniously burned as a symbolic declaration against future associations with secret societies. This story seems to be generally accepted by boria performers today, and was mentioned at the 1974 seminar.²² Logically we would expect this event to follow directly from the riots or within a few years after the measures suggested by the Riot Commissioners had taken effect. If my informant was born very late in his father's life, it is just possible that his father as a very young man did do this; or conceivably it was his grandfather. Since he was quite positive that it was his father then the event could have taken place much later - perhaps around the late part of the last century or even in the early part of this century.

4. Muharram Festivities in the Late Nineteenth Century

There are no contemporary sources enabling us to trace the development of boria after the Riot Commission Report until Haughton's note of 1897. However a short booklet on boria by Mohammad Yusof

22. Abas Marican, 'Boria Dahulu', op. cit.

bin Sultan Maidin ²³ probably refers largely to this period and gives us at least an inkling of its form at the time. It is an interesting work because he discusses aspects of Muharram festivities which no other authority had mentioned previously, but at the same time it is difficult to assess because it is an argument about the nature and development of boria without reference to sources or a specific period. Muhammad Yusof demonstrates his staunch (Sunnite) Muslim belief in the booklet. His main purpose was to show that boria was an evil secular activity for Muslims which had arisen from the degeneration of a serious religious festival through association with criminal elements, such as the secret societies. From this viewpoint it refers to boria in the latter half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. According to Muhammad Yusof in this period boria had taken on a competitive form. Every kampung and district had its own troupe eager to earn as much as possible from the show. The fact that the show was confined to ten days in the month of Muharram increased troupe rivalry. Each band tried to perform at as many houses as possible over this short period

23. Mohd. Yusof bin SultanMaidin, op. cit.

of time. Muharram celebrations had three major parts. There were Koli Kallen, Boria, and Mandi Kerbala.

Koli kallen was carried out during the daytime for all the ten days of the festival. The performers visited houses in bands for donations. They dressed as beggars, urchins and transvestites. They dirtied their faces with charcoal marks, some covered them with cloth masks with holes cut out for the eyes and the mouth. Attired thus they went from house to house singing and chanting funny nonsensical songs. Usually the words were jokes about themselves. To cite an example from Mohd. Yusof's booklet : "Who are the children of Koli Kallen ?" would be sung by the leader and the chorus would chant that they were the children. According to him koli kallen meant in Tamil 'fowl thieves'. Calling their act a 'fowl thieves performance' may not be too far from the original significance of the show, in that it could have originated in a custom in which license was given for the performers in an important ritual (i.e. that of Muharram) to take a chicken as their due if they were not rewarded for their performance at a house. Such license on special occasions is a common feature of ritual in many societies. ²⁴ In Penang its

24. Especially in saturnalia. See for eg. Frazer J.G. (Sir), The Golden Bough; abridged ed., (London : Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1963), pp. 553, 555, 558, 583.

performance was tolerated as a harmless outlet for hooliganism and as an incitement of audience interest in the coming show proper. The custom was that a household who rewarded the koli kallen performance with a nominal sum of money would have made a booking for the night's performance by that troupe. The performers who were ill-dressed beggarly characters during the day had by the night transformed themselves into fine fellows with the resplendent costumes with which they had outfitted themselves for the year's performance. Usually their costumes imitated the household members they went out to woo for money. Thus some troupes dressed up as Europeans and performed fashionable western dances popular during that time, others appeared as Arabs and Chinese.²⁵ They sang and danced to the accompaniment of appropriate music from their troupes. Their songs in comparison to the koli kallen were not self-humiliating but geared to praise their hosts. The performance was carried out in the host's front garden with chairs placed out for guests invited to witness the show. The performance was also well rewarded with money, and refreshments were provided for the players.

25. Vaughan, 'Notes on the Malays of Penang and Province Wellesley', op. cit.; p. 138.

The mandi kербala formed the closing ceremony of the Muharram festival and was only executed on the tenth day of the month of Muharram. It maintained the religious aspect of the festival and functioned as a ritual cleansing and a levelling back into normal life. On the tenth day all these activities had to end. The performers assembled at the sunrise of the tenth day at a fixed venue near a stream or river. Here the troupes aligned themselves into two parties under red and white flags and engaged in a final contest to determine the better party. The winners would proceed to jump into the river, each pulling one opponent in with him. Those who still saw the significance of the performance as a religious procedure would carry out a ritual cleansing by casting a bracelet or yellow cloth into the water, a rite which was likened by Wynne to the emblem of the tabut or Ark of the Covenant which symbolized the standards dipped in the water during the Muharram festival in Persia and India.²⁶ This rite was followed by a feast after which the members dispersed to their homes.

26. Wynne, Op. cit.; p. 179.

My informant, Syed Agil, was able to give further information on the mandi kerbala. According to him, during this ceremony the troupes who had used red and white flags to distinguish their districts would band into two factions. The white flag members would face the red flag members and they would proceed to sing alternately in repartee, till one of the two sides showed a weakness in their versification and thus lose the competition. The winning members would rush to the river to bathe, each dragging a member of the losing band with him. More often than not such encounters ended in blows and gang fights.

According to Wynne the rite itself had degenerated from its Islamic source into one closer to the Hindu Durgapuja festival and further admixed with animistic ritual of tolak bala (avoiding evil). After all, it is generally understood that Islam in Penang, like elsewhere in the Malay Peninsula had come via Persia and India, first to Pasai with traders, then was established in Malacca before spreading all over the country.²⁷ In the process it was subjected to Hindu-Buddhist influences, and within Malaya to local animist beliefs as well.

27. Paul Wheatley, Impressions of the Malay Peninsula in Ancient Times; (Singapore : Eastern Universities Press, 1964), pp. 129 and 186.

This syncretism of animist, Hindu and Islamic beliefs has only obscured the origins of those rites which were near identical in all the beliefs. Secularism is another factor which helped to distort the religious nature of the rite. In Penang the ritual of mandi kerbala was closely akin to the animist rite of appeasing evil spirits through offerings made to the stream; such rituals being the mainstay of animist Malays before the advent of Islam. ²⁸

In the northern Malaysian states of Penang, Kedah and Perlis there seems to be a vestige of the Muharram rite of mandi kerbala still retained at the present time. In some households the month of Muharram is treated with reverence and a special kind of sweet called bubur asyura (a concoction of flour mixed in coconut milk with many types of beans and steamed in a tray) is made for the household, and close neighbours are invited to partake of the delicacy. Some also seem to observe the cleansing rite of mandi kerbala, which is more popularly called tolak bala,

28. For further information on Malay animism see Wilkinson R.J., 'Papers on Malay Subjects - Customs and Beliefs' in Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society; No. 180, Vol. 30, Pt. 4, Nov. 1957, pp. 10-16; and, Endicott K.M., An Analysis of Malay Magic; (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 101-2.

in the privacy of their own homes. Its observance is carried out by the household member washing himself with water made holy by saying a prayer over it. This too is apparently becoming less frequently practised among Malays in general.

5. Boria in the Early Twentieth Century

In 1910 Wilkinson described the show thus :

"Nowadays there are many varieties of the boria. Sometimes the singers blacken their faces and dress up as Negroes, this is the 'Boria Anak Habshi'. Sometimes they disguise themselves as Chinese, this is the 'Boria China Canton'. Sometimes they disguise themselves as Tamils and call themselves 'mamak tongkang'. They carry Chinese lanterns and perform at night only. One of their number takes the part of a clown and is dressed up to look ridiculous with a painted face and an exaggerated paunch." ²⁹

In 1920, Hamilton gave a more lengthy account. ³⁰

From it we learn that boria was part of an annual festival carried out during ten days in the month of Muharram. It was now a ~~troupe-type~~ show performed by several troupes. Each troupe consisted of 20 - 30 youths within a locality, and was financed by a manager. Within each there was a

29. Wilkinson, 'Malay Amusements', op. cit.

30. Hamilton, 'The Boria', op. cit.

song composer or tukang karang who was also the leading tenor in the song-dance routine. The rest of the troupe members were divided into musicians and players, who were further divided into star-turns and chorus.

The outfitting of the troupes with costumes and musical instruments was the responsibility of the manager. Troupes might represent any class of people; for example a band of Europeans, or Arab soldiery, or a group of Chinese or Javanese. The musicians had six or so instruments each associated with a nationality represented. For example, a calvacade of Bedouins would give prominence to the maruas (tambourine). A group of Indians represented would call for constant use of the dol (a small drum). Chinese and Europeans would be incomplete without the accompaniment of che che (cymbals) and a drum (tambur) respectively. The violin was essential to accompany the recitation of the tukang karang.

The star-turns made their debut with the chorus. The latter mimed by appropriate dance-steps whatever nationality was being depicted and they were in turn mimicked by the star-turns. The star-turns also played roles portraying well known figures and

aspects of the daily life of the nationality represented. The chorus executed their dance steps with hand props suitable for the occasion. So for example soldier type choruses would call for the holding of wooden guns. While if Chettiars were depicted this would call for the use of such items as walking sticks and umbrellas. The tukang karang opened his troupe performance with a song verse. Each verse he sang was punctuated by the chorus. The singing of the tukang karang and his choral group narrated an amusing story on a current topic of interest.

When the performance, which was carried out in the garden of a house, was completed, the troupe went on to another household in the same village. Each troupe would receive payments from as little as M\$5.00 to as much as M\$80.00 for their performance from each household. A boria season's takings for a troupe would fall within the range of about M\$400.00.

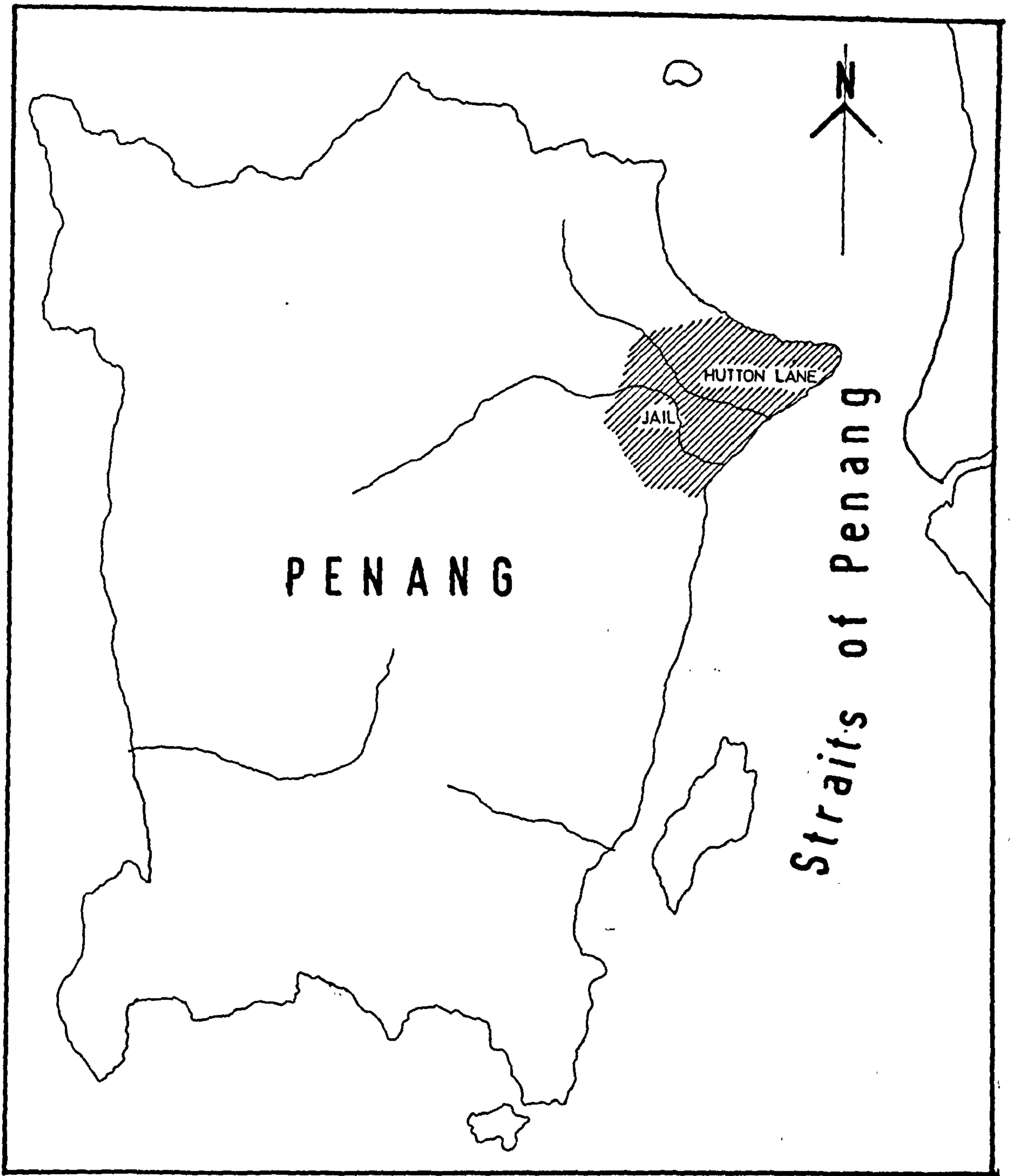
From the samples of chorus verses given in the article by Hamilton, one can deduce that boria troupes came from the following areas : Hutton Lane, Kampung Melaka along Kedah Road, Tanjung Tokong village area, Mukim Bagan along Bagan Jermal Road, Tanjung Bunga, Tarik Ayer along Burmah Road, Titi

Papan area from Kampung Deli and surrounding areas, Padang Garam along Kimberley Street, Kampung Jawa area, Lorong Yahudi off Yahudi Road, Lorong Pusi along Abu Siti Lane, Kebun Nyior area next to Datuk Keramat Jail, Datuk Keramat area, Jalan Baharu along McAlister Road, and, Lorong Sekerat (see map III attached).

The character of the boria show described by Wilkinson and Hamilton demonstrated a change in emphasis of its form from a pageantry to one geared mainly to making money. Nevertheless it would appear to be still confined to Muharram festivities, and in this form showed that the kinds of themes in the boria are changing. In particular animal costumes appear to have been dropped and human ones are firmly established, suggesting increased secularization and a certain amount of commercialization.

6. Changes in Ethnic Perspective

Sometime between 1867 and 1897 the festivities appear to have become known as boria and also to have become in some sense more Malay. Haughton in 1897 implies they are Malay, and this is confirmed by Wilkinson in 1910 who refers to them as 'Malay Amusements'. But clearly they were not yet totally



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Map III: sketch map showing Hamilton's Boria Troupe Areas - (1920)
(shaded area of map)

Malay, because in 1920 Hamilton's more detailed account ascribes them to Malays and Jawi Pekans. Quite how the boria became 'Malay' is unclear though there is the obvious Muslim connection. It would appear to be related to the increasing assimilation of the Jawi Pekan by the Malay community through successive generations; a slow process which would appear to have culminated in the 1940s and 50s with their complete absorption, for they are not seen as a distinct group under the new name of Darah Keturunan Keling (of Indian Blood Heritage).

Local literature of the 1920s and 30s had in the exposition of its plots included Jawi Pekan characters as the villains and no-goods. Through literature distrust and dislike of the Jawi Pekan by the Malays were expressed. They were dubbed with the acronym DKK from the phrase darah keturunan keling. The word keling had been used in literature to convey the cynical meaning attached to the word, a cynicism which was meant to range from a lowering of the Jawi Pekan's social status viewed against Malays to a rejection of their kind from the Malay community. The word keling had been used with the stereotyped implication of the Indians as a low caste people, irrespective of their actual high caste (Brahmin)

or low caste (Pariah) standing. The term also seemed to imply the darker complexion of Indians from southern India, usually much to the annoyance of the fairer northern Indians. The use of the term had, in the past, been viewed as an easy way of inciting quarrels with an Indian or for that matter a Jawi Pekan. Local Malay writers of the pre-war period like Abdul Rahim Kajai, a prolific short story writer till his death during the early part of World War II, Rashid Talu and Ishak Haji Mohammad had often cast a DKK as a villain.³¹ But post war contemporary literature no longer shows any obvious attitudes directed against them as a group. The word keling when used today, no longer invokes a distasteful feeling in either the user or the victim. More often it is used to poke fun at friends or acquaintances whom it is felt will make no inference other than that a light-hearted joke is intended. Obviously, the derogatory implication of the word is still there but its popular usage carries a different

31. For example, Kajai's short story 'Rahsia dalam Rahsia' (Secret within Secret) in his anthology of short stories Lain Padang Lain Belalang (Different Field Different Grasshopper), portrays a DKK as a no-good. In Rashid Talu's novel 12 Kali Sengsara (12 Times of Suffering) a DKK character named Bibi was cast as no good.

attitude from that of pre-war society. Among friends the connotation of the word keling would be as lightly meant as the equivalent word mamak, another term^{used}/from then to now. Later on in the thesis the usage of the word keling and mamak in boria will be analysed in terms of the social implications of the show.

One must remember at this point that before the war it was the general ethnocentrism among Malays to be against non-Malays. The Jawi Pekan and Muslim Indians were called DKK. The English, especially those in the civil service, were referred to cynically as expatriates. Yet of the two major immigrant categories, the Chinese and Indians, ~~the Chinese and Indians~~, the Chinese were less mentioned. This is because in the inter-war period the Chinese had kept to themselves and had not tried to assimilate to the Malay way of life. The Indians on the contrary, were intermarrying and becoming assimilated to Malay culture much to the resentment of some Malays, especially as these immigrants and their descendents seemed to be taking over control of the economic sector at the expense of the Malays. So though there was a general feeling against non-Malays at the time, the Indians and Jawi Pekans received the larger portion of it.

7. Boria since 1945

After the war there were no boria shows until 1948.³² In February of that year boria was once again performed, but this time under the auspices of a national political movement known as the United Malay National Organization (UMNO). This show was performed on the occasion of the realization of the Federation of Malaya Agreement in 1948 between the British and the Malay Rulers. With the Federation of Malaya Act, the Malay states and the Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca became one entity under British Military Administration. The sultans remained as sovereign rulers of their respective Malay states and Penang and Malacca remained a British Territory with the High Commissioner as Governor. Singapore was administered as a separate British Colony. The agreement was viewed by some as reinstating the Malay rulers' position. This factor created a rift among Malaysians and communist insurgents were quick to seize the opportunity to create further trouble. The nation was propelled into two factions; that of the majority preferring a peaceful transition to democratic self-rule, and that of the left-wing minority attracted to the communist ideology. Of

32. Abas Marican, 'Boria Dahulu', op. cit.

this minority group the ethnic group most involved was the Chinese in Malaya. This was evident in the statistics of Chinese deported to China during the emergency period of 1948 - 1956 under the Emergency Regulations in an attempt to rid the country of communist elements. China was at this time in the midst of her own Communist Revolution. During the period of active deportation of Chinese from Malaya statistics showed that for the years 1949 and 1950 a total of 10,463 Chinese were repatriated to China; at least up until China's closed door policy in 1949 made deportation impossible. By comparison only 225 Indians were repatriated to India. From 1950 onwards the Emergency Regulation of rehabilitation and Malayan socialization of detainees (especially Chinese) was carried out to prepare them for future life as Malaysians. 33

In the democratic majority of the nation the active members were Malays and Jawi Pekans. The fact that boria was recommended as an activity associated with UMNO in 1948, gave the Malay and Jawi Pekan participants a protective fraternity under the wing of the patriotic majority. It was said that the

33. ^{Anon.} 'Emergency Regulation' in Journal of South-East Asian History; Vol. 6, No. 2, Sept. 1965, pp. 17-39.

boria performance of 1948 lasted till the early hours of the morning. The verse songs accompanying the show were a topical treatment of political matters and alluded to the people's aspiration for independence. It set the topical framework-type treatment as the pattern of future shows; a pattern employed by UMNO to voice its members' wishes for independence. The UMNO political inclination of the shows fitted the political leanings of the majority of Malays.

In Penang previously boria had actually played an important part in the recreational activities of members of the community and its political functions appear to have been very limited after 1867. But boria after the war ~~had~~ never really extended its influence over the other ethnic groups. Being now 'Malay' and an activity associated with UMNO youth it is only at present showing signs of a trend towards inter-ethnic acceptance. The new leanings are in consonance with the national culture desired for the new Malaysia. The scope of this study is limited to the investigation of such patterns to determine actual Indian and Chinese participation, if any, in the boria. More justifiably the symbolic actions of participants (both players and audience)

and the Malays would reveal the social process of ethnic intermixing and acceptance or otherwise. Though troupes had been observed to branch out and away from the patronage of UMNO political bodies into other interest groups like independent recreational and cultural bodies, the political constraint caused by the possibility of suspicion of pro-communist tendencies has inflicted certain sanctions upon players' improvisation of dialogue. The new impetus to the boria activity of the late sixties and seventies of this era is itself a guided action mainly associated with UMNO, a fact which from my preceptions of the political duality of Barisan Nasional (National Front) rule in Penang State (UMNO and GRM - see Chapter III page 127-128) may distort the content of boria to emphasize ethnic intermixing. Other modern political tendencies in the boria will be examined in due course.

From the sources available, ³⁴ it would appear that the present form of the boria in Penang ³⁵ had become fairly well established by the mid-nineteen fifties. I agree, however, with Shepard

34. Ryans, Shepard, 1974 Seminar on Boria and informants.

35. See Chapter III, pp. 87-92.

that the boria is still in a process of change. For one thing performers are beginning to be drawn from both sexes, thus breaking up the male-based tradition of the boria. Towards the end of 1971 further incentive for the boria was offered players in a National competition which was planned to become an annual event.³⁶ Winning troupes are given additional prominence through the opportunity to appear regularly on television and radio. Likewise many more that failed in the competition returned to obscurity till the next year's competition brought members together again to vie for a place in the winning box. In 1973 through weekly boria shows on television such troupes like the Sungai Pinang Troupe of Penang became famous. Television and radio also helped the boria to reach a wider audience.

Significant changes have occurred since Hamilton's description. I would emphasize three features. One is that Muharram festivities are now a shadow of their former selves, and boria has separated off from them and become a distinct theatre form. It is now performed at any time in the year. Secondly, boria has become Malay and tended to exclude certain participants because it has also

36. See Appendix III for an upto date list of winning troupes.

become associated with a political party. Thirdly, it has become a theatre of national interest spreading into the mainland and into new media, and as the concept of a national culture is increasingly felt, attempts have been made to make it multi-ethnic once more.

8. Conclusion

To conclude, in this chapter I have attempted to show that modern boria originated in Muharram festivities in Penang. As these were likely to take place wherever there were Indian Muslims in the Straits Settlements, it is possible that boria, perhaps under another name existed in Penang as sketches, song and dance acts prior to 1845 and performances by Indian soldiers as suggested by Haughton. In this connection it is not without significance that Muharram festivities were banned in Singapore for their violence as early as 1842.³⁷ The secularization of Boria derives partly from the secularization of the Muharram festivities during the nineteenth century during which period their function as a popular holiday with mass entertainment appears to have become increasingly dominant. Partly

37. loc. cit. p. 62 of this Chapter.

it lies also in the existence of secret societies in Penang in that period, for through them the license of ritual became violent, unruly and eventually criminal. The destruction of the criminal activity led to an emphasis on local troupes of performers, and in time the drama form recognized as the boria today emerged.

Another element has been stressed here. This is the assimilation of Indians generation by generation into the Malay community. Over time partly through interbreeding and partly through the subtle flexing of ethnic categories part of the Indian category has moved from Indian to Jawibukan to Jawi Pekan to DKK to Malay. In doing so they appear to have brought certain elements of boria with them as part of their contribution to Penang Malay culture. What these elements are and to what extent modern Penang Malay participants recognize Indian origins are questions to be considered in later chapters. Equally an attempt has been made to show why Chinese, at one time certainly regular sponsors, were gradually excluded from participation as boria became more Malay. The events of the Emergency and the 1867 Riots cast a shadow here; and it is recently that there are signs of a change.

CHAPTER III

THE BORIA SHOW AND ITS PENANG SETTING

1. The Show

a). The Stage

A live show is generally played on an impromptu or roughly made stage, usually a wooden platform two and a half to three feet above the ground. The person hiring the show is expected to make this platform ready for the troupe. An assembled stage would consist of a floor of wooden planks joined together with nails and ropes, placed on oil drums or tree trunks at its four corners. Attached to the front corners of the stage are usually long strong poles for fixing electric wires for stage lighting and power for the band, if used. Without walls, the stage becomes an arena only for the musicians and players acting out a scene. Those on cue or due to exit make use of a rough ladder from the ground to the rear end of the stage. In most cases a simple shelter with canvas or corrugated iron roofing and a few chairs is provided for players to use when resting or changing. This shelter is situated behind the stage. Stage lighting is basic and serves only to light the stage and give visibility to players

and audience alike. Sometimes gas is used instead of the more common electric lighting. The stage has no sets, the only props ever used being hand props. Audiences usually have to imagine, for example, the shape of doors and chairs which the players make, or appear to make use of in the farcical comic sketch. The rear of the stage is usually occupied by the troupe's band of musicians which is comprised of a rhythm guitarist, lead guitarist, a drummer, an accordian player or a tambourine player. The front half would be the players' area during the show.

On state and national occasions and in competitions a proper stage in a hall is used, such as the Dewan Sri Pinang (City Hall) of Georgetown or the Dewan Pelbagai Guna (All-purpose Hall) at Batu Uban. Even then there are no stage settings or props. On radio and television the genre is slightly altered to conform to certain technical needs. On radio, for example, the sound part of acting and singing is emphasized and, obviously, players need not dress up for their parts. On television, however, stage settings and props are included in the sketch. The costumes of the choral group are also more elaborately fashioned with frills or sequins to give added gaiety.

b). The Composition

On each occasion the players enact two shows. The first would treat of themes closely related or directly related to the occasion in hand and dedicated to the person or body hiring the troupe. The second show accompanying the first, acts as a supplementary show taking on themes more general in nature. Each show is divided into two sections - farcical comic sketch followed by a song-dance sequence. Though different in presentation both sections deal with the same theme.

i) The Farcical Comic Sketch

The sketch is acted out by four to six players, all of them representing kampung dwellers except one, who has the role of official. The kampung dwellers represent one or both of the two age categories of the community, that is ^{as} the older and the younger generations. The government official (usually a penghulu or doctor) assumes an authoritative role. The actors are usually all men dressed up in the roles accorded to them. Only amateur troupes would attempt to deviate from this acting norm in boria and anyway they are well-received as the former type. Nevertheless such irregularities point to a new trend in boria participation and may eventually prove significant.

But the participants rate an all male troupe as the more popular in general and their actor players are also considered to be the 'cream' of the troupe members.

At a glance the act is a comical and ridiculous treatment of real social problems minus the stage trappings associated with western drama. Yet it is a play type wherein the actors are free to improvise and make use of slapstick as long as they remain within the overall theme. Despite the extempore behaviour of the actors the exposition of the plot is carried out to completion, and the action of the sketch is quite thought provoking. There is also the band accompaniment providing the music or noise backgrounds necessary to add variety to the act. Clearly it is a little less than a play in western terms because of the lack of western conventions of action and scenario. As a genre it is certainly not tragedy for there is nothing tragic about the act nor for that matter are the characters very special people who have to face up to critical phases of their lives and make life or death decisions. Their actions are not catastrophic in nature and likewise create no catharsis for the action or the onlooker. Instead the sketch portrays ordinary people who, should anything befall them in the action, would not directly

disturb the society around them. On the other hand, in terms of aesthetic value the action in the sketch would be good comedy in the sense that its content reveals clearly and explicitly the form, which Feibleman suggests "consists in the indirect affirmation of the ideal logical order by means of the derogation of the limited orders of actuality."¹

I therefore use the term farcical comic sketch for this part of the boria show. Boria is comedy but becomes less so when the sketch is seen with the song-dance sequence as a whole. Comparatively they are quite different in genre requiring a different style of approach in their appreciation by the audience and the analyst. For this reason I will consider the farcical comic sketch and the song dance separately in later chapters, paying particular attention to audience reception. It is hoped that the value significance of the show as social expression will be revealed by the contrast between them.

ii) The Song-Dance Sequence

The second section of the show, the song-dance sequence is played by ten to twelve 'sailors'² and

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1. Feibleman J.K., In Praise of Comedy; (New York : Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 178.
 2. I have been unable to trace the origin of this term. My boria informants suggested that long ago the troupes drew their members from the harbour area, but I have no evidence to refute or support this derivation.

one tukang karang (composer). The tukang karang stands on the centre front of the stage. He carries a straight staff as a hand prop in his right hand. The staff which is made of cane or varnished wood is about two feet long and tapers slightly at one end. The other end is decorated with shiny copper, aluminium or a polished steel head. This he would point or pivot in his hand as he sings as though to emphasize his points. He himself is dressed in black trousers with a bright plain coloured shirt and ^a sash over which is an embroidered or patterned open sleeveless jacket. The only variation in the costume of the tukang karang between troupes is in the motif of the jacket, others wear a floral motif jacket, or a sequinned jacket for added attraction. The sailors who stand behind the tukang karang in two parallel rows of five to six players each, are dressed in black trousers, bright plain coloured shirts and sash like their leader. Their shirts are normally of two contrasting colours, for example sailors in the front row would wear bright red shiny shirts with green sashes while sailors in the back row would wear bright green shirts with red sashes.

The act begins when the band strikes up a rhumba or cha cha beat and the tukang karang sings his opening verse which introduces in short the troupe and their

aim in the show. Meanwhile the sailors have on the opening cue from the band, started to move in step together - moving first two steps left and back, then two steps right and back, followed by two steps front and back, finishing with two steps back and back returning to their original position, and so on - and at the same time moving their hands and swaying their bodies in unison to the overall tempo of the music. By the time the tukang karang finishes his verse the group of sailors have been through the step routine twice over. Still carrying on with the side, front and back stepping they sing the chorus of the verse sung by the tukang karang, finishing the verse on the last step in the fourth round. The tukang karang then sings another verse while the sailors execute their dance routine behind him. So it goes on with the sailors singing the chorus after the end of each verse, until the tukang karang comes to the final verse which rounds off the main topics under discussion in his whole song. Sometimes he closes the song on an apologetic note in case he has made some rude or unwarranted remarks in his singing; though in the same breath he affirms what he suggests in the song. The sailors who had been doing the same dance step throughout now sing the closing chorus verse. When all is completed and the music

stops they bow to the audience and as the band strikes up an exit number, the tukang karang leaves followed by the sailors who dance-step off the stage in single file.

The tukang karang would sing between twelve to twenty verses depending on how thoroughly he wanted to dwell on the themes in the show. Each verse has four lines with an almost regular number of twelve to thirteen syllables per line. Each verse has the rhythmic beat of the iambic pentameter with one stressed and unstressed syllable. Each verse ends with the same rhyming of, for example, a for the first verse, c for the second verse and so on a c, a c, a c. Thus the whole verse form is regularized and the music and dance steps of the sailors only accentuate the regularity. Before the troupe continue with the second show, an intermission with individual singing by members of the troupe helps the players to change and rest as the case may be, in the shelter provided for them at the back of the stage.

c). The Actors and the Troupes

There are usually about four to six players in the sketch, and ten to twelve chorus singers with a lead singer making eleven to thirteen to a choral group. The players are mostly grown men in their

forties with two or three male teenagers thrown in to play supporting youngster roles. Women and girl roles are played by them, with the exception of some all-girls' troupes like the Student Dental Nurses' Troupe and the Nurses' Troupe, in which all roles are played by females. A mixed troupe would also have a male cast acting out the roles of women characters though sometimes using girls to play the female supporting role of the teenager. More often they divide the cast into male players for the sketch and female players for the song-dance sequence. The choral group singers (sailors) must always be even in number and they stand in two equal rows. The lead singer (tukang karang) stands in the front close to the microphone and he holds a staff in one hand. As he sings he uses his staff as a hand prop. Other hand props used in the sketch include a real umbrella for a player in a Chettiar role, and a real walking stick for a Haji in a skull cap. There are also hand props that are crude imitations of the real thing, for example pop group players would normally act out their roles with rough imitations of 'guitars' and 'trumpets'. Obviously props and scenarios are not important to a show. Boria participants seem to acquiesce in this indirectly when they agree that jokes are the crowd pullers and the clown character is not the only star attraction

of a troupe, but makes or breaks a troupe's livelihood.

Boria in actuality belongs to two interest groups. One is involved in amateur boria and the other in professional and semi-professional boria. Amateur boria has always been politically associated with youth movements. Such boria troupes as are formed, receive financial aid from organizational bodies. Such an organization is the UMNO youth with strong patronage from officials of the government network, of which there is one branch in almost every sub-district (mukim) in Penang. Then there are also the cultural activities in schools and training colleges like teacher training centres and dental and other nursing colleges, of which boria is the most popular performing art.

The UMNO youth have formal ties with the central political party of UMNO, as in fact it is a subsidiary voluntary body of the UMNO political movement. Yet the members may be active with GRM (Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia) while still participating as UMNO youth members. Through the leadership, advice and counsel of government officials they act as a bridge between the state department of culture and the kampung people.

Whatever the motivation of the amateur troupes their composition and activity is centred on the teenage section of the society. They may or may not

have close ties with the community concerned. Thus UMNO youth boria troupes and school troupes are usually composed of Penang-born youths to whom the activity of boria carries the implication of either kinship ties with seasoned boria players or a close interaction with famous local troupes. For instance, the 1974 champion boria troupe for the school level was led by the son of a once well known comic actor and boria song-writer, Pak Din. Troupes formed by such training colleges as Teachers' and Nurses' Centres of training are mostly composed of non-local amateur players who come from all over Malaysia. The Student Dental Nurses' Troupe, which became famous when they won the 1974 national boria competition, contained only three local Penang girls. The others in the troupe came from other Malaysian states such as Kedah, Perlis, Perak, Pahang, Selangor and Johore.

The activities of amateur troupes are not stable. Generally the troupes are formed for some particular aim connected with their institution. For example school troupes are bands formed for annual school functions such as Hari Ibu Bapa (Parents' Day). Within a short space of time their players are quickly assembled, undergo rigorous practice and rehearsals, put on a show, and having completed their purpose, disband. If there are annual competitions on

institutional levels like the annual boria competition for schools in Penang, those school troupes observed to be promising by their teacher-in-charge, would pit themselves against one another for the title. For them, however, the uppermost aim is their school studies and once the competition is over the winners too would disband and go into oblivion. For youths of training colleges and other organizations their activity with boria troupes of their respective institutions would have a longer life by comparison. Those that have achieved some public recognition through competitions or good sponsorship would be called forth to put on shows to the public. Such media as Radio Penang and Television Malaysia are quick to invite such troupes to put on shows thus rendering some public recognition of their popularity. The local papers had also played their role in occasionally bringing up some facets of boria past and present.³ Nevertheless successful troupes can well be forgotten before the year is out and the fact that players in training colleges are only temporarily attached to Penang and on graduation have to go elsewhere to follow their occupation, does not help the troupe activity. Once a player is known

3. eg. a) New Straits Times, Saturday 16 August 1975, p. 12,
b) The Malay Mail, Friday 18 April 1975, p. 12.

it is quite a loss to the troupe when he has to leave, for it would take time and effort to train another.

Training of amateur troupe members is undertaken voluntarily by well known established players, or by a member within the same institution as most of a troupe's members who is familiar with boria. The UMNO Youth of Jalan Hatin Troupe acquired the assistance of Pak Man, a player from Ria Seni Pesaka who specializes in penghulu roles. Datuk Keramat area amateur troupes have been acquiring the advice and counsel of Syed Agil, and troupes in the area under his assistance include the Student Dental Nurses' Troupe, the Student Nurses' Troupe and Peseni. He himself is not a boria player although his involvement goes back to his father's active participation.⁴ Being employed in the Penang Medical Institution himself, it becomes convenient for rehearsals with the players who are themselves mostly trainees in the medical profession. Syed Agil himself regards the heavy voluntary responsibility as an honour. And when one of the troupes he trained won the annual boria competition his happiness knew no bounds. Indeed I observed that:

4. His father was responsible for the denouncement of the use of red and white flags by boria troupes, see Chapter II, pp. 62-63 of this thesis.

it led to a genial relationship between him and the then head of Penang Dental Services. In work he was also given some privileges. For example I was able to interview him for over an hour at times at his workplace with the permission of his immediate superior. The nature of his job also makes it possible for him to put his work schedule either forward or back by mutual arrangement with his colleagues. Thus he can be with troupes at any time that his service may be needed; a factor that must be fundamental to a troupe's success.

Then there is the professional and semi-professional boria, whose actors are local, long-standing boria players. Theirs is a close-knit group of relatives and friends. Their members range in age from sixteen to fifty or more years old. The random sample showed that about fifty percent of the participants have kinship ties with boria players. The area of concentration for sampling may be misleading for Penang in general; but in the areas with a high intensity of boria activities, a close-knit relationship of the community to boria was revealed. Members of the area in the sample are found to be local to Penang and more than three quarters of the residents had lived in the area for more than ten years. Those that have moved house have been found to have come back within a period

of less than five years and even then for most of them the movement away and back is only to villages within the same vicinity. Of the participant sample, it was also found that approximately a quarter of the sample (205) had participated in boria at one time or another and among them a quarter (54) are still actively involved and have been for over a period of twenty years. Within this area three boria troupes had attained 'professionalism' to a certain degree. They are the Sungai Pinang Troupe, the Ria Seni Pesaka, and the Kumpulan Kampung Jawa. The term 'professional' has nothing to do with high payment charges. Boria, both amateur and professional, are generally non-profit making. For most shows that are professional, improvisation techniques in sketch dialogues is the mainstay of shows. Attempts at elaborate theatricality is not the professed aim. As one troupe leader, Daud, puts it, "the roles are not foreign to the audience. In a simple costume a player immediately transmits his role to his audience. After all the episode and the character resembles the audience themselves."

The professionalism lies in the stability of its troupe and the specialized roles of its members. For all performances staged, a professional troupe would cast the same person in the same designated role. Leaders would rate their troupe as professional when

there is no need for regular rehearsals. Each knows their part and only last minute instructions prior to a show would suffice. Any group practice to be done is for the choral group should the dancers want to synchronize new dance movements on the stage. Boria participants would rate a troupe as semi- or professional when there are actor players over 40 years of age in the troupe. Their argument is that the part of actor players are very important and being improvised can only be well played by an experienced player. Such roles are the clown, the village elders, and the penghulu. On the other hand, audiences seem to prefer the sailors and the tukang karang to be younger men, or women as the case may be, of whom the sailors must be of uniform age and costume to add colour to the performance. In Penang Malay society the names of old established professionals such as Daud, Ibrahim and Shafie would immediately bring to mind good boria.

Of the active troupes in Penang Island, the Kumpulan Boria Sungai Pinang was rated the number one troupe at the time of the research. Its popularity was created by Shafie, the clown character of the troupe. The troupe's tukang karang, Ibrahim, also played an important part in the troupe's popularity. However when he broke away from this troupe and formed

his own, they were able to find a good replacement. The split between players which led to Ibrahim's withdrawal was due to differences over payment. Because of this the tukang karang and some others opted out and formed a new troupe called Kumpulan Ria Seni Pesaka.⁵ Shafie stayed with the old troupe. The troupe leader, Daud, later told me that had Shafie left the troupe it would have killed it. As it was they were able to find a replacement tukang karang for it is comparatively easy to find people who can sing and dance. The new troupe under Ibrahim also made some impact with a cast of new players. They were also invited to perform frequently, but I learnt from the bodies hiring them that they would only book Ibrahim's troupe when they either had only his address or they could not book Daud's troupe in time. When asked why they would rather take Daud's troupe to perform, the answer was inevitably the attraction provided by Shafie's presence in the troupe. Daud himself agreed that having Shafie had enabled him to choose the area of performance, so that he usually selected the more accessible places taking into account the remuneration for his show.

5. Originally the troupe had another name, the Kumpulan Ria Sungai Pinang. Ibrahim changed the name to its present one because his audience mistook his new troupe for Daud's, the Kumpulan Boria Sungai Pinang.

Shafie's comic abilities had also been spotted by television producers and he was offered the opportunity to star in a series of comedy shows of his own. He refused the offer, because he considered the payment of M\$450/- per show was too low, for he had heard of other comics getting M\$1,000/- per performance. Secondly, his fate after the end of the series was uncertain. Thirdly, the offer meant having to move to Kuala Lumpur to be near the television centre, either on his own or taking his family with him. Either way the move would create a lot of unnecessary expenditure with the relatively higher cost of living in Kuala Lumpur compared with Penang. Fourthly, he preferred the stability of his low paid but steady job as a chauffeur, and there was also no need to uproot his wife from her familiar surroundings nor his children from their schools and friends. For himself the satisfaction lies in live shows. Television is so impersonal in comparison with his comic roles in live shows among his own community, where he can utilize daily incidents to put him and his audience in close interaction. Acting is not the consuming passion of his life, though it gives him a 'satisfaction' and a 'peace of mind' in his daily routine. It gives vent to his frustrations and emotions thus giving him renewed relish for life. Knowing that he has rejected

some good offers gives him a certain pride in his present meagre living conditions. He lives with his family in a rented wooden house. The house has a single room, partitioned into two, the smaller one being the kitchen and the larger one serving as a living room with a bedroom devised from cupboards and curtaining for the walls. The house itself was simply furnished with a few rickety chairs, an old bench-like table and a radio. The walls were plastered with newspapers and pages from magazines. The kitchen boasts a kerosene stove and some basic kitchenware. Shafie's personal pride is his cupboardful of trophies and knick-knacks, all of which are connected with boria activities - some trophies won during competitions, photographs, and albums all jumbled together with his son's school and sports prizes.

As a youth Shafie had been a wanderer. After his father died in a small rural kampung in Jitra, Kedah, conditions had driven him away to search for 'something or anything'. In his opinion he had wasted his youth, a realization which probably made him treasure his own family life. When he finally got married to a girl of twenty in his thirties, it was rather late in life to bring up a family. And although he was from Kedah his association with the boria activity and his friendship with Daud finally led him

to settle in Penang. He admitted having a small plot of land inherited from his parents, but it was too small and too far away for him to tend to personally so that his relatives take care of it for him. The land was his guarantee of a place to go to in his old age. In his wife his respect remains for her loyalty in standing by him at all times. But it is upon his son that all his dreams of success now rest. To hear him talking about the young boy I could almost feel his regret for his past and his determination that his son will not experience the same life that he has had.

Daud, the actor and leader of the troupe, has a wife and a teenage son. Theirs is a family dedicated to boria. Daud's wife, Insun, is the wardrobe mistress of the troupe, making and taking care of costumes. His son, Dzul kifli, is its drummer and musician. The whole family live in a modest wooden house raised on wooden stilts. The house has a small, bare living room about five by eight feet with a narrow corridor that leads to two small bedrooms and at the rear opens into the kitchen area. Daud always insisted on carrying out official and business matters in his grandmother's house, which is situated just across the road facing his house. He jokes that the house is his 'office'. The house is very much bigger and sturdier than his own. The living room is well furnished with

a television set, hi-fi, dining table and chairs, armchairs and settees - the stereotyped modern trappings of a 'middle-class' family who can afford such luxuries. Daud's grandmother and sister did not seem to mind. In fact they were rather hospitable to Daud's guests, plying them with drinks and cakes. His grandmother told me that when Daud's son marries she wants the ceremony to be carried out in her house. I was to learn later that all the people who are active in boria or have family members involved in it are well related through blood or marriage. Pak Daud for example is known by everybody in the kampung not only by virtue of his role in boria but also because the majority of the kampung dwellers are in some way related to him. For example Pak Daud and his wife are distant cousins. She is the first cousin once removed of the former penghulu and also second cousin of Ibrahim, Daud's former tukang karang. Although there was a small dispute between Daud and Ibrahim over boria they remain friendly with one another. This blood tie probably facilitated their quick reconciliation. Ibrahim and the new penghulu of the kampung are closely related for he is Ibrahim's uncle. Ibrahim's home belongs to his parents-in-law and is a big wood and brick house situated near the equally large penghulu's house. Both share the same footpath

to the main branch road, with a common wooden bridge over a small dry ditch separating one road from the other. The bridge is comfortably accessible for a van to cross into the compound of the two houses, and is thus convenient for Ibrahim to have his troupe members assemble there with the rented mini-bus or van that transports them to the place of performance.

Most of Daud's troupe members live in the kampung of Sungai Pinang or in neighbouring ones like Dhoby Ghout, Kampung Melayu and Counter Hall. Those living further away include Shafie, who, not being Penang born himself, rents a house about five miles away in the Jalan Kelawai area. Daud acts as the leader and go-between for troupe news and informs members as well as decides their next show. This troupe does not carry out rehearsals, like Ibrahim's new troupe, but matters concerning the streamlining of sketch and song-dance are settled immediately before the show. Players are given their specific roles and it is up to them to improvise and act their parts on the basis of past experience. The sailors are the responsibility of the tukang karang with the prepared verses memorized by him prior to a show. However, he always has some difficult verses or parts to the song scribbled on a piece of paper or on his palm, at which he can glance occasionally during his act to refresh his memory.

According to my informant, Pak Nyak, boria troupes in his young days were judged, apart from their performing ability, on the strength of troupe association with the district. If a Sungai Pinang boria troupe was well known it meant that the community in which it was located was strongly consolidated. This is no longer necessarily so. The attachment of a troupe to a particular district, kampung or institution merely coincides with, for example, its leader residing or working there or by the dwelling place of the majority of its members. Yet present troupe leaders like Daud and Ibrahim used to associate their troupe name with that of Sungai Pinang, so that the name of Kumpulan Boria Sungai Pinang of the one, and Kumpulan Ria Sungai Pinang of the other used to confuse audiences outside the community. It was soon rectified when Ibrahim took another name for his troupe - Kumpulan Ria Seni Pesaka. It was once, then, very significant that only one boria troupe came from one district with its members also residents of that area. Now this has changed from a close identification of boria groups with particular communities to a more loose association of boria members with particular social groupings. Taking the Sungai Pinang as an example, not only have the members split into two, but by so doing they have

created two troupes within one kampung as well as brought other kampung members into their fold.

This does not mean that there are no more competitions between troupes. Indeed, that 29 troupes from all over West Malaysia took part in the 1974/75 competitions of boria is in itself an indication of their rivalry. Rivalry today is mainly confined to competitions, when cultural bodies and institutions form 'instant' troupes nearing the season for the competition. Overriding this inter-troupe conflict the presentation of sketches and songs of the tukang karang shows a striving for national unification. As such themes also touch on government-guided nation building policies like the national ideology (rukun negara), buku hijau (green book), and the latest, rukun tetangga (principles of neighbourliness). Present troupes exist as free voluntary bodies actively participating and interacting in various areas. Troupe names like Sungai Pinang, Kampung Jawa, Dental Nurses' Troupe, Teachers' Association Troupe, UMNO Youth Branch Troupe are still loosely associated with area or occupation. Nowadays areas and bodies can pick or choose the troupe they want to hire or invite to perform, even when they already have a troupe activity in their area.

Penang Malay boria participants, especiallyⁱⁿ the

Sungai Pinang suburban area of Georgetown City, rated two or three troupes as the most popular in Penang. When asked which troupes they know well participants never failed to mention the two Sungai Pinang troupes, though some mistakenly considered them as one troupe. Both these troupes are not only popular in areas in Penang but also outside of Penang especially in Kedah and Perak, being the only troupes frequently asked to perform outside of Penang state. The leaders of them estimated that on the average they put on two performances every month in the year, with charitable events and weddings being the most frequent occasions.

Another troupe that seems to be well-liked by boria participants is the Kampung Jawa Troupe under the leadership of Abu Bakar Ghauth. The troupe consists of male players and female song-dance casts. The troupe has, like the Kumpulan Sungai Pinang, been called to put on performances on radio and television; factors which probably made them popular among Penang participants.

Then there are those less known amateur troupes which had managed to reach the semi-final or final of the national boria competitions. Such troupes from Penang include Student Dental Nurses' Troupe, Kelawai Troupe, Kampung Baru Troupe from Air Itam, Kumpulan Peseni, Kebun Lama Youth Troupe, Kumpulan Tarinas and

Kumpulan Bergema also of Air Itam.

d). Occasions and Audiences

i) Weddings

The first boria show of a wedding always treats wedding themes, dwelling on the pros and cons of big wedding celebrations, ending with good wishes for the new couple's future. The second show is generally about certain aspects of domestic and social problems that are currently felt in the area. For both shows the main characters of the sketch are normally an elderly couple of husband and wife, a few youngsters, the village penghulu, and a Chinese or Indian thrown in for good measure to represent a cross-section of the village community.

Audiences during boria performances at weddings are guests and hosts as well as children from the neighbourhood. In the five performances observed at weddings I noted that the audience could be divided into three broad categories. The children mainly occupied areas directly in front of the stage. Groups of some teenage boys and girls and some men were on the left and right wings of the stage with some scattered behind the children. The area on the ground behind this was empty, probably to allow a clear view for the third category of audience which was

arranged near and around the house. Here married couples and older guests sit on chairs against the walls or on the steps. Others look out from the windows or verandah. About the only person not watching at all is the bride who is resting in her bridal chamber in another part of the house. The bridegroom would be seen among the guests.

A troupe at a wedding is given special attention by the host's representative. They are given food and drinks before and after the performance and feted as a group. The actual payment, however, is quite small - about M\$100 - \$150 a night with or without the provision of transport. Most often the players assemble at the troupe leader's house and transport home is either provided, or the costs met, by the host.

ii) Institutional, State and National Celebrations
or Charitable Performances

In Penang boria performances are part and parcel of institutional, state and national occasions concerned with charity, fund-raising and anniversary celebrations. Boria participants list educational, followed by occupational and political institutions, as most popular in the institutional category. The associations concerned in hiring or forming boria troupes to perform on such occasions include parent-teacher

associations for Parents' Day, Speech Day, and other extra-mural school activities; Health Institutions during Health Week; Workers' associations on Labour Day; Farmers' associations; the Penang Malay Association and UMNO sub-branches' for political or other celebrations; and the Department of Culture for Independence Day and Penang Week. Performances are also put on during religious celebrations and national holidays such as the Prophet's birthday (Maulud), Muharram, Hari Raya celebrations of raya puasa (idilfitri) and raya haji (idiladha), the Governor's birthday, and the anniversary of UMNO. When more than one troupe is called on to perform for a single occasion they normally do so in competition. This is the case with Penang Festival Week and Independence Day. Besides that there is also the Annual National Boria Competitions specially organized at the end of the year to choose the year's best boria troupe performance. Whether competing or not, the troupes' choice of show centres on themes relating to socio-political and socio-cultural events both specific to Penang and general to Malaysia. Unless the troupes are competing, the first of the performance's two shows is always directly connected to the kind of occasion in hand. When it is a competition only one show, however, is permitted per troupe.

Themes having a socio-cultural content are always associated with western cultural influences especially when they concern the younger age groups. Such themes treat drug taking, pop songs, pop music and 'wild' western dances, boy-girl relationships and disrespect for older people. These are all categorized as bad western influences prevalent among the youth of the area. On the other hand themes of indebtedness, gossip, gambling, material envy and rivalry between individuals and families are the generally popular themes with every age of adult in the locality. The penghulu and other adults in the role of officials are in these cases the only ones represented as free from the personal weaknesses portrayed in other roles. There are also specially treated themes of socio-political interest such as encouraging Malays to participate in business, expounding the governmental policies of nation-building, and party balloting and campaigning.

The audience distribution during such shows varies according to whether an improvised or a fixed stage is employed. In cases of audience distribution around a makeshift stage in an open space or field a pattern is discernable by age and sex. The area immediately in front of the stage is dominated by women and children, some seated on the ground and some women with

babies on their laps. They are surrounded by a fringe of standing males, either husbands or fathers of those seated in front. Then there is a mixed group of all ages and both sexes, behind which groups of youths make up the audience furthest from the stage. This demarcation though dominant is not rigid as there is a certain amount of intermingling of all sexes and age categories in the audience.

The second kind of audience distribution is determined either by the priced or ordered seating position of well arranged chairs in the hall facing the stage. The audience as such is usually grouped not so much by sex and age but more by social/occupational rank and status consciousness. Thus the VIPs usually there by invitation are seated in the front few rows with government officials and separated from the other seats by a rope or a space. Even within the front rows the rank and status of persons are further distinguished by some cushioned chairs in the middle. Behind them seating is allocated by price, ranging from the higher priced seats near the front to the lowest at the back of the hall. The back rows are the cheapest and are occupied mainly by youths, manual workers and their families. The middle priced seats are filled by teachers, clerks, and so on. These are not absolute categories in themselves

but roughly divide the audience.

There are also events when themes that do not directly treat problems of local domestic or group relations are put on. These are, for example, Maulud or the anniversary of the army; and on one occasion, the state wedding of the Governor's daughter. In the performances on these occasions fanfares and spectacles are preferred to clowning and bickering. Comic elements are not so much ridicule or satire as plain jokes and slapstick, and any interaction between players and audience is superficial and within the confines of the show as the entertainers and the entertained. This is partly because the audience and the occasion itself are quite out of the social milieu of boria players and partly because of the generality of themes. For example, Maulud Rasul borders on adulation of the prophet, Army Day praises the army, and the wedding dwells on the virtues of the governor and his daughter who are the sovereign family in Penang. At such performances boria functions as dramatic entertainment pure and simple.

2. The Penang Setting

a). General Background

Penang Island, Province Wellesley on the mainland side of Peninsular Malaysia, and a few adjacent

islands together constitute the state of Penang with a total land area of 388 square miles. It lies on the west coast of Malaysia and at the northern extremity of the Straits of Malacca. Penang island and Province Wellesley are separated by a strait ranging from two to ten miles in width. Penang Island is about 15 miles at its longest and nine miles at its broadest and is about 108 square miles in area. Local inhabitants affectionately called it 'Pulau Mutiara' (Pearl Island) which led to its nickname 'The Pearl of the Orient'.

Penang state is divided into five administrative districts - Central, Northern, and Southern in Province Wellesley on the mainland, and Penang North-East and Penang South-West on Penang Island. Each district has several mukim (sub-districts). Table I gives the latest field count summary for the population of Penang in 1970. ⁶

6. R. Chander, Rengkasannya Kiraan Luar; (Kuala Lumpur : Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 1971), pp. 53-55.

Table I : Population of Penang (by Districts and Household)

Districts	Household	Population		
		Male	Female	Total
Central	20,879	58,723	59,036	117,759
Northern	29,276	81,380	80,225	161,605
Southern	11,074	31,683	31,963	63,646
Penang North-East	63,227	185,948	187,138	373,086
Penang South-West	10,892	30,311	30,363	60,674
Penang State (Totals)	135,348	388,045	388,725	776,770

Apart from visits to Batu Uban in Penang South-West to see boria shows, the research was confined to Penang North-East district. Table II shows a breakdown by mukim of population for the research area. Penang North-East has about half the total number of households for the state and about half of the total population. In this district is located the mukim of Georgetown which has a third of the total population of Penang state with 270,019 inhabitants in 45,611 households and virtually equal numbers of males to females.

Penang Island is at present the only area in Malaysia having a Chinese communal majority with an average of more than 60 percent of the total population

of the island. Taking into ^{account} the Chinese dominance in urban centres in Peninsular Malaysia,⁷ the urban area of mukim city of Georgetown can be assumed to have a large Chinese majority.

Table II : Pulau Pinang North-East (Population) ⁸

Sub-districts	Household	Male	Female	Total
City: Georgetown	45,611	134,685	135,334	270,019
Town: Air Itam	4,589	12,236	13,426	25,662
Batu Feringgi	397	1,279	1,195	2,474
Bukit Bendera	164	450	441	891
Glugor	1,540	4,819	4,371	9,190
Tanjung Bunga	1,893	4,251	4,635	8,886
Tanjung To' Kong	2,249	5,891	6,401	12,292
Village: Sungai Nibong	83	273	277	500
Remainder of District	6,701	22,064	21,108	43,172
TOTAL	63,227	185,948	187,138	373,086

7. See Malaysia, Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan 1971 - 1975; (Kuala Lumpur : Government Press, 1973), p. 25.

8. R. Chander, op. cit.; p. 90.

Georgetown, the port and capital city, is the state's centre of activities. It is the business centre of the island with shops, big and small, selling all sorts of commodities from foodstuffs to luxury goods. Within the city there are patterns of ethnic grouping. For example shops along Pitt Street are the monopoly of Indian Jewellers, while those along Chulia and Penang Streets are predominantly Chinese jewellers' areas. The city is also the centre of the state's administration, which is under the local ruling political party of Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (GRM) led by the Chief Minister, Dr. Lim Chong Eeu.

b). The Malays of Penang

The Malays of Penang comprise about 30 percent of the island's population. They can be broadly grouped in two categories : indigenous Malays of Indian descent, and other indigenous Malays. The majority of the first category of Malays are by descent long-standing local inhabitants of the island. The latter category are mainly those incoming groups from other Malaysian states. They have, in some cases, acquired permanent habitation, others have married locally.

In terms of distribution, the Malays of Penang are mostly concentrated in the outlying rural areas.

Those furthest from the urban centre of Georgetown are nicknamed by the urban Malays orang ulu or orang balik pulau.⁹ The rural Malays are mainly farmers and factory workers.

There are also Malays in the urban areas. They are mostly concentrated in kampungs (villages) of which there are many peripheral to the town centre. In the kampung the pattern of housing also shows some form of ethnic grouping. The Chinese live nearer the main roads and usually earn a living in a shophouse dwelling. The Malays live away from the main roads and usually have the penghulu's (Village Chief) house as their focus. The Indian households are interspersed among the two major ethnic groups. The urban kampung Malays are mainly engaged as office workers or labourers in both government and private enterprises. Their participation in small business as stall-owners is mainly a part-time supplementary basis. Some of them, especially housewives, act as middlemen between Chinese and Indian owned shops and Malay customers. In such cases the most popular items for sale include

9. Orang balik pulau : The term actually has two meanings. It can mean that the person termed thus is from the island of Balik Pulau, or it connotes people staying far away from the town centre. Another name more officially used is luarbandar meaning 'rural'.

jewellery, pottery, cloth and clothing. ¹⁰ Another interesting instance of Malay enterprise is witnessed during state or national celebrations. When such a celebration calls for a fair, Malay stalls mushroom into a brief existence selling foodstuffs and drinks. Apparently among Malays wage-earning, and for the more prosperous property, are more attractive in the long run than suffering the ups and downs of making a fulltime business prosper. On this issue many of them agree that to earn a monthly salary is more stable. This attitude is also reflected in their preference for having their children work in jobs with regular pay even if the salary scale is comparatively low. Among youths such preference is further reflected in the preponderance of school dropouts among the unemployed and casual workers, who for the most part are eventually absorbed into factories as shift workers. And although these Malays are already familiar with such sophisticated saving facilities as banking, the favourite way of saving among them is still to buy gold or diamonds for their wives. ¹¹

In Penang Malay society there is no rigid class

10. For further details of Malay women's economic enterprises, see Firth, Rosemary, op. cit.; pp. 30-34.

11. For further details on Malay saving patterns see, for example, Swift M.G., Malay Peasant Society in Jelebu; (London : Athlone Press, 1965), especially pp. 74-77.

system. Instead it is more appropriate to talk of status categories which grade into one another. Status or lifestyle is ultimately determined by wealth and education, which are closely related variables. Descent is also important in status considerations, in that people who claim connections to families with titles such as Tengku, Ungku, Said or Syarifah expect to be accorded some deference. Other acquired titles influence individual and family status; these are Datuk and Tan Sri which when awarded confirm already high prestige, and Haji and Hajjah accorded to those who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Older people place more emphasis on descent and religious achievement while the younger generation are more aware of wealth and education. Overall the Report on the Harun Salary Commission (Laporan Suruhanjaya Gaji Harun) published in 1975 and based on education, occupation and income provides a framework which coincides quite well with Penang peoples' ideas of social ranking.

The highest status Malays are the wealthy - top level administrators and successful private entrepreneurs. This is group A of the Harun Report. They live in large brick houses of their own or leased to them by their employers. Their social life is centred on groups of men congregating in exclusive

clubs for relaxing over a drink or a game of cards, or women getting together in their homes for elaborate teas and high society gossip. Besides this they have a normal routine of dinner parties and state functions.

Below them in status are people of more modest means whose livelihood depends mainly on a salaried occupation. Their status has been achieved mainly through education which has given them access to ~~middle~~ government and commercial posts, particularly in teaching. In the Report this ~~category~~ is divided into groups B and C. As a white collar category they are often seen as an emergent 'middle class'. They live in the better quality wooden houses and dwellings with part brick or totally brick walls. Those in the teaching profession ^{often spend their} ~~are often spent~~ leisure hours in the school grounds for extramural society activities such as games and sports practice or school society activities. Otherwise social life revolves round the family and family members, with occasional involvement in activities within the community like weddings and 'kenduri'.

Still lower in the status situation are manual workers such as labourers and factory workers who have a take home wage of less than M\$200 - \$300 per month. They are ~~group~~ D of the Report. Their housing reflects

their status and home to them is usually a small rented house, or an inherited house mostly dilapidated and untended. When such a family has two or more wage earners shared responsibilities help to minimise household expenditure. For the family with a single wage earner and no other income, household responsibilities are aggravated by a large family and a rented house. Their hope for higher status lies in their children's intelligence and performance in school. A child who is seen to be intelligent in his or her early years is the parents' hope of improving his position in society. With the introduction of free primary education, such hopes and aspirations are becoming more attainable.

The mass of people in the last three categories of the Harun Report live in the urban and rural kampungs and are reasonably well off as Malaysia is a politically and economically stable country. Ever since independence the ruling party has won a comfortable majority in national elections. Rises in the price of consumer or commodity goods have been matched by wage rises or production subsidies as the case may be. Prices of essential foodstuffs such as rice, sugar and flour have been government-controlled and the country has experienced an overall stable cost of living. Meat is in part a luxury item, the

staple food being rice supplemented by fish, vegetables, sambal (hot and spicy sauce) and eggs, usually rounded off with coffee and sweets. More often than not the eggs come from chicken coops under or behind the houses. The people are generally healthy and have modern conveniences such as tap water and electricity in their homes. One common feature of kampung housing is the bucket or pit lavatory which is built as a wooden cubicle separate from the main house. However, better kampung homes are changing to indoor flush toilets. The main forms of social ^{intercourse} - / among local community members are at the kampung mosques and suraus where older and mature men gather while waiting for the next prayer; in boria troupes with their rehearsals, and in activities associated with voluntary organizations which are the mainstay of youth activities in the area. It must be noted that among these last two categories of the Penang Malays, boria offers an ever popular recreational type entertainment. The last category are the ones most actively involved, many of them viewing it as a semi-professional venture.

c). Political Background

To understand the local politics of Penang and their influence on boria it is necessary to consider briefly recent politics. On independence in 1957

UMNO (The United Malay National Organization) emerged as the most powerful party.¹² In coalition with the MCA (The Malayan Chinese Association) and MIC (The Malayan Indian Congress) a multi-ethnic government, The Alliance, emerged under the premiership of Tunku Abdul Rahman. The government had a laissez-faire policy towards the problems arising from the multi-ethnicity of the new state. The failures of this policy were revealed by the May 13 Tragedy of 1969, when Malays and Chinese fought each other in the streets of Kuala Lumpur, the capital. The Prime Minister then found that he was in disfavour in certain quarters. The Malay intellectuals, in particular, instigated by an UMNO leader, picketed and demonstrated for his resignation. Disillusioned, the prime minister resigned. Tun Razak took his place. The second prime minister was more methodical in his approach to nation building. He set about it with a declared policy of pro-Malay ethnicity, setting his goal as a boosting of Malay living standards to produce a more egalitarian distribution of national income. When the MCA began to wane in popularity, he began to build a new coalition comprising UMNO, the GRM (Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, the Chinese

12. Henceforth abbreviations will be used to name political and other organizational bodies.

majority party in Penang), the MCA, the MIC, the PMIP (Pan-Malayan Islamic Party, the Malay majority party in Kelantan), and other majority parties from East Malaysia. This was finally realized in 1973, the coalition being known as the National Front (Barisan Nasional).

From 1969 onwards the Prime Minister sought to emphasize Malay rights and national unity. This policy was part of three Government of Malaysia plans : the first, 1969-72, the second 1972-75. Following the sudden death of Tun Razak in 1976, the present and third plan has been continued by his successor Datuk Hussein Onn. UMNO has still the largest number of seats in Parliament.

In Penang Chinese political parties have been dominant. Up to the 1969 elections the MCA was the ruling party, but then the GRM won control. At the time this was an exceptional victory for the new party, but then with the decline of the Alliance, the GRM entered the new national coalition, the National Front and was again returned in the 1974 elections in Penang. The Malays in Penang throughout the period since independence have been mainly supporters of UMNO.

Under the National Front government the

administration of Penang Island as part of Penang state came under the general responsibility of the national government with certain responsibilities vested in the GRM members who lead the administration. In Penang island the administration is divided into the urban City Council of Georgetown, and the two Rural District Councils of North, and Central and South. These Councils including the Rural District Council of Seberang Prai are at the state level responsible to the Board of Management, Pulau Pinang (LPKT - Lembaga Pembangunan dan Kemajuan Tanah).

The cultural administration and development of Penang are the responsibility of the Penang State Department of Culture, Youth and Sport. It is funded by and is responsible to the Federal Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. One stated aim of the department is to "promote cultural talents among Malaysians with the objective of creating a national culture by developing and promoting the knowledge and understanding of the arts and also to promote the development of literature, drama, music and dance especially among the youth through which national integration identity can be achieved".¹³

13. The Malay Mail, op. cit.; p. 153.

The Dewan Sri Pinang (City Hall) in the centre of Georgetown, and the Dewan Pelbagai Guna (Multi-Purpose Youth Centre) in Batu Uban rural area in the Central and South District, serve as venues for state or state-sponsored cultural activities in the urban and rural areas respectively.

By and large, the state department of culture is there to provide an incentive for the spread of national cultural activities amongst local inhabitants irrespective of ethnic differences. The national Malay-based cultural activities besides being the department's main interest, also get enthusiastic sponsorship from business and other bodies of all ethnic compositions. To cite an example, the 1975 state-level national dance competition under the auspices of the state department of culture was organized by a Chinese-led club and funded by local businessmen. The competitors were young people (of all ethnic groups) who had been involved in the Malay dance classes organized by the culture department. If Malay dance has made a step forward in the trend for improved inter-ethnic relationships in Penang, the drama of boria and the Chinese Lion Dance and Chingeh¹⁴ have still a long way to go

14. An art of balancing, wherein long thin poles of varied lengths and tied with flags at the end are held on the palm, balanced on the hip, the foot and so on while in procession.

to overcome the ethnic ^{prejudices} / surrounding them. Much remains to be done to promote the lion dance and chingeh among non-Chinese ethnic communities in Penang. This being so, the department works within the guidelines of national culture and can only consider developing Malay-type Islamic cultural traditions which in Penang mainly involves joget (a dance form), silat (martial art) and boria (a theatre form). At the same time, the local ruling party of GRM has been encouraging other ethnic communal activities, especially the Chinese cultural arts. While cultural multiplicity is good for a rich cultural background of an area, the nationalist argument states otherwise. I, for one, view the polarised activity of the Malay-based cultural arts on the one hand and the other ethnic arts on the other as a retrogressive factor in unifying the multi-ethnic communities, as it slows down their participation and identification with a mainstream national culture. The Chinese and Indian cultural arts have always been isolated from national cultural considerations because of their non-Islamic religious associations with Buddhism and Hinduism. Islam created certain dissension among religious individuals which lead to the recognition of Malay-Islam, which is but one way of describing the

secularization of the religious-based culture. Nevertheless the lion dance and chingeh have been acquiring secular features which might in the future allow their incorporation into a Malaysian cultural tradition. Until the national culture concept changes from taking into consideration and accepting only indigenous cultural tradition, this polarising is the inevitable destiny of multi-ethnic art forms in Penang.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORIES

In this chapter I shall give in some detail ten popular stories from boria sketches. They have been chosen to illustrate shows considered suitable for various occasions and the range of stories employed. Essentially they are foundation plots used by many troupes; within the basic framework each troupe will vary the story to suit the particular audience and to bring out the skill of its own performers. The dialogue is actually extempore. It is for these reasons that generalized stories are presented; transcribing and translating entire stories from my recordings, apart from increasing the bulk of the text, would tend to conceal the features common to all without giving the reader any clearer an idea of the content of the sketches. I have also noted some of the audience reaction beyond the normal amusement encouraged by the actors in certain roles.

1. Examples of Stories

A. Kisah Kenduri Kahwin (Wedding Story) : 1

The scene opens with a middle-aged couple discussing the impending marriage of their daughter. The central focus of argument is on the type of wedding they are going to have. The bride's mother wants a big wedding. She argues that her daughter will be feted but once in her lifetime, which is her first wedding, and also that as a mother she does not want to suffer the shame of a small wedding feast. She must be better than her neighbours, and if they can have big wedding feasts for their daughters she must have a better one for hers. The father is all for a small kenduri selamat (thanksgiving) in view of the fact that a big ceremony is beyond their means. To have one would mean going into debt.

This disagreement leads them into a duel of humorous repartee. This word battle is the important comic element in the sketch at one level, complemented by their clothes, countenance and gestures at another. The type of argument seen to be most popular with both players and audience alike seems to run in a thrust and parry dialogue, as demonstrated in the

1. This version is derived from two shows observed on 17 February 1975 at Gelugur ^{and performed} by Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe, and, 5 April 1975 at Butterworth ^{and performed} by Boria Sungai Pinang Troupe. Both shows were for wedding occasions.

example below :

Wife: "But she is our only child ! Her 'catch' is a clerk who works in an office" ... pauses in happy contemplation ... "I want to show him off to my neighbours."

Husband: (in an aside addressing the audience, but meant to be heard by his wife) "Clerk! Hah! she thinks a clerk's so great. Thank God she doesn't get an ADO (Assistant District Officer) or a Tungku (person of royal blood heritage) for a son-in-law ... or else"

Wife: (Coming out of her reverie) "What? Others can get a clerk son-in-law, and so can I. If si-anu-tu (so-and-so; referring to a neighbour) can get one why can't I? Anyway mine is more handsome than hers. So we will have a big ceremony."

Husband: "Woman, are you the one marrying him or your daughter? Was I not more good-looking when I was young and when I married you ..." (and so on) "Anyway with what are we going to buy the foodstuffs for the feast? With leaves?"

Wife: "Do not talk rubbish. Why we will borrow money. Ah Chong the local shopkeeper of our

village will surely let us have a loan."

Husband: "There you go again. That is the problem.

We must borrow from him, the Chinese. That surely means interest on our loan."

Wife: "I will not let you borrow from a Malay. Do you want the world to know of our debt?

Anyway who would be rich enough to have ready cash to lend it to us. They are all like us."

Husband: "That is easier said than done. Do you think Ah Chong will give us a loan without a surety of some kind? I have nothing save our old house and the piece of land it is standing on. Then again even if he allows the loan, how are we going to repay him?"

Wife: "Are you such a Pariah that you can't think of ways of paying him? The trouble with you is you are stingy like a Chettiar." (Indian money-lending caste)²

This continues with the wife finally winning the argument. It is decided that they^{will} borrow money and buy provisions for the feast on credit from Ah Chong, trusting to pay him with the gifts of money they hope to get from their invited guests. Because of that

2. The main speech reported here is taken from a show put on by Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe at Gelugur on 17 February 1975.

they also decide to invite more government workers who have a regular salary. (It is the custom during a wedding ceremony for guests to bring gifts of presents or money. The presents would be the right of the bride; but the gift of money that of the parents).

The borrowing scene between the father and Ah Chong involves arguing and haggling between them before the loan of M\$500.00 is finally transacted. This scene is optional and is sometimes omitted by a troupe.

In the following and final scene, the parents are seen together after the wedding. They talk about the wedding that had passed. The woman is very dejected. Many of her guests had not turned up. Her husband blames her for inviting office workers who had no time to come to their daughter's wedding. She is also sad for they had received only a small amount of money as gifts (less than M\$200.00) which means that they cannot pay Ah Chong in full. In the face of such dejection, the husband is quite triumphant for he can now 'pulang paku buah keras' (a saying which means to give back or to be accorded a chance to reprove her for her bad judgement/). He begins to blame her for wanting a big ceremony in the first place, but for his every attempt to make her feel

guilty, the wife always has an answer ready. She blames her husband for allowing her desires in the first place. She also blames her guests for being "skint". She even turns her wrath against her son-in-law whom she now calls a useless upstart, for he is himself heavily in debt to help pay his mother's ceremony for him. So he is unable to help his in-laws in their difficulty.

Finally when the husband is satisfied that his wife has realized her folly in the first place, he suggests a ruse to avoid paying the loan. He will feign madness when Ah Chong comes to collect the payment. They decide to practise the mad scene with which they will fool Ah Chong. The wife pretends to be Ah Chong, but keeps forgetting her pretended role and becomes a wife again in her concern whenever her husband tries on his mad character. Their antics, the confusion of the wife and the anger of the husband at being interrupted, create quite a hulla-balloo on stage. In the confusion a loud knock to herald Ah Chong's arrival is heard. The wife in sudden latah³ jumps into her husband's arms. As they are disentangling themselves, Ah Chong enters. From here

3. Latah : A term for a neurotic syndrome involving absent mindedness; in which the person afflicted can easily be provoked into hysteria.

on everything happens at a fast pace and the audience responds excitedly. The husband quickly pretends madness, but Ah Chong not knowing that he is 'mad', immediately asks for his money. Every time he mentions money, the husband feigns increased madness. His wife adds to Ah Chong's confusion when she tries to get tips on how to answer Ah Chong's inquiries. This is of course done behind his back, so that there are repeated actions of the wife looking at her 'mad' husband who gestures back to her; Ah Chong looking at the husband, but seeing only a mad person and so on. The audience have by now joined in the action, by shouting and urging Ah Chong to look behind him at the man who is trying to tell his wife what to say.

Unknown to the three characters the penghulu has passed by and seeing their chaos is listening in. When the truth has sunk in, he calls their attention to his presence. The wife, who is totally confused, utters obscenities in a state of melatah and jumps into the cradle of Ah Chong's arms - causing both of them to fall over. The husband seeing the incident has a fit of jealousy, and quite forgetting that he should be mad, begins to scold Ah Chong. Ah Chong soon realizes that the madness was just a pretence. They ~~are~~ about to argue when the penghulu steps in.

He is now looking disdainfully at all of them. The three characters, cowed into silence by shame, can only listen obediently to the penghulu's advice and admonition. Acting as a judge he settles their argument by making the husband pay the M\$200.00 then and agree to pay the remainder in instalments without interest later. Before leaving the stage, the penghulu again reminds his audience not to borrow or lend especially when unnecessary and to use the action just portrayed as a lesson in itself. They then leave the stage together, Ah Chong still complaining that he seems to be getting the worst end of the bargain.

B. Rumah Siap Pahat Berbunyi (Though the House is Finished the Chisel Still Sounds) : 4

The scene opens with an elderly Malay couple conversing on stage. Their dialogue reveals that it has been two months since their daughter's marriage. The wife is especially happy and relieved that they have been through the worst. Her husband, however, is less enthusiastic. His reasons soon became clear as he voices his resentment at having had to fulfil

4. This version is derived from shows observed on 16 February 1975 at Jelutong ^{and performed} by Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe, and, 3 February 1975 at Datuk Keramat by the same troupe. Both shows were for wedding occasion.

her wishes over a big wedding celebration. He has had to sell off a piece of his land to help pay for the ceremony. He also mentions his doubts that his daughter's marriage may not be the end of his or her (his wife's) problems. One never knows when she and her husband would have a misunderstanding and come to them with their troubles.

They are disturbed by a young girl, whom we soon find out to be the daughter they have just married off, carrying a suitcase in her hand and crying. She rushes into her mother's arms. There is confusion for a while. The parent's inquiries into her plight are interspersed with the father's triumphant remarks to his wife on the conversation that has just passed. Finally both of them become quite impatient at their sobbing but speechless daughter. Finally the father threatens that unless she tells him what is the matter, he will kick her. Falteringly the girl begins to tell them that she and her husband have quarrelled. Between sobs she reveals that her husband has thrown her out.

Her mother's reaction is explosive, for she lets go with a torrent of abuse at such men as her son-in-law who would stoop so low as to beat their wives and chase them out of the house. The father,

feeling that he is being dragged unwillingly into his wife's general abuse of men starts to argue with her sweeping statement. She is quick to dub him as no better if not worse than the rest of them. He retorts that men become bad through the demands that women make upon them. This only incenses his wife further. Quite forgetting their daughter's plight in the first place, they began to argue about the rights of men and women with each trying to uphold their own sex. Their argument leads them into a recital of their own quarrels and those of their neighbours besides. Lost in their row they are unaware that their son-in-law has come in. He sees his wife and goes towards her to make amends. But the wife, seemingly still hurt, runs to her parents and brings them back to the situation in hand.

The mother angrily asks her son-in-law why he chased her daughter away from his home. He quickly explains, making them realize that their daughter was actually more to blame than he, because of her excessive demands on him. These had continuously increased until the day came when she wanted him to buy her expensive jewellery which he could not afford. He has had to be careful with money for a few months to help his mother settle the debts she incurred to give him

a wedding beyond her means. His wife, because he could not fulfil her desires, accused him of caring for his mother more than her saying "if he must give his mother money then he should marry her instead". He had become so angered by this sacrilegious remark that he had slapped her and told her what her place was in his heart and in his parent's household. All the while that he is explaining the the girl is crying. The audiences interpreted this crying to mean that she is sorry.

The girl's parents, realizing their hastiness, apologize for their most 'unparently' behaviour. They both agreed that big weddings are not worthwhile if one has to go into debt because of them. It would be better if the wedding gifts/^{were to} be used to help the newly-weds to put up a home of their own. At least that would launch their new life without them having to go into debt. Realizing their mistake they then caution their daughter to be less demanding on her husband and to be aware of the trials and tribulation of newly-weds. The son-in-law agrees to get them a house of their own as soon as he has paid his parent's debt.

With that the misunderstanding is cleared up and they all exit in relief.

C. Kisah Gitar Rancak (Pop Music) : 5

The scene opens with three youths making a lot of noise one night in their rented room. They are playing the guitar and singing funny songs that they have composed. Their attire looks like a cross between a cowboy and a hippie - floral shirts and jeans, jacket and boots for one and bare feet for the other two, chains of flowers round their necks and flowers stuck in their hair. They are also smoking cigarettes. Their manners are both boisterous and uncouth. Their songs contain topics of interest closest to their hearts; the songs are their own words fitted to the favourite tunes in the classic Malay song repertoire.

As they sing and joke the landlord's daughter passes them. Before she can go on they stop her. They begin to flirt and woo her attention with sweet talk and one of them even serenades her with a song. Thus preoccupied they do not see that the landlord has come in. He pounces on them, letting loose with a torrent of abuse. The girl hurriedly exits

5. This version is derived from a show seen on 22 March 1975 at Air Itam (Kampung Melayu) ^{and performed} by Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe. It was held in conjunction with a charitable occasion for the Muslim Orphanage there. It is also derived from a show seen at Kubur Panjang in Kedah by the same troupe on 20 March 1975, in conjunction with the Parent-Teachers' Association Fair.

leaving the boys to explain themselves to her father. The boys blame each other, so that they end up squabbling as to which one is more wrong than the other and becoming quite oblivious of the landlord.

But the landlord brings them down to earth when he reprimands them for their failure to pay the three months rent due to him. He insists that either they pay the rent or they must leave that very night. He also suggests that if they cannot pay the meagre sum of M\$20.00 per month rent then they must never try to woo a girl. When the youths try to answer back on the issue, he quickly shows his dislike of tenants who disturb neighbours in the middle of the night with such wild, senseless singing. The youths, especially the leader in boots, are always ready with some retort to the accusations and abuse showered upon them by the landlord. The argument is carried out in a thrust and parry style. For example, :

Landlord: "Liars, you haven't paid your rents for three months."

Youth: "I did. I sent it by cheque."

Landlord: "Your father's head." ⁶ "Do you think that you own the bank?"

6. The phrase 'your father's head' (kepala bapak hang) brings strong humiliation to the recipient as it is his father's honour that is questioned.

Youth: "The cheque must have a hole in it, such that
the money was mislaid on the way to you."

Landlord: "How stupid can you get? Where do you put
your brain?"

Youth: "What?"

Landlord: "I said where do you put your brain, you
nincompoop."

Youth: "Why ... eh ... on my knee."

Landlord: "Don't you have any common sense?"

Youth: "Sure I have. I can sing."

This sort of thrust and parry goes on in a mood of mounting anger on the part of the landlord. He tries to inject some sense into them, but the youths are always ready with another stupid retort which is more deliberate than silly. In the argument they even succeed in making the landlord look silly in return, when out of exasperation he calls the guitar they are playing a 'binatang' (beast), which brings responds of laughter from the audience and further witticisms on the part of the youths.

Finally the landlord tells them to move out that very night. The youths reply in defiance that they can always go to the Muslim hotel (ie. the mosque) where the doors are always open for travellers. The landlord bridles at this, telling them that the likes

of them are fit only for the hen-coop. Finally after much bickering the youths agree to leave so long as the penghulu is not called in to settle the matter, which was the landlord's final trump card against them.

D. Kisah Anasir Barat (Western Influence) : 7

The scene opens with an elderly mak aji⁸ who is talking to a friend on stage. Her designated role is made clear by her friend's address to her as well as in her attire. She wears a black jubah.⁹ The scene is on the road on the way to the mak aji's house. On the other side of the stage is the house itself, or rather, one room in the house. Here we see a group of youths - two girls and three boys - closely involved together. Some are smoking; one boy is making intimate glances at a girl, his hands opening and closing as though with sexual desire.

The mak aji and friend have meanwhile completed the preliminaries of greeting - which is done more in

7. This version is derived from shows observed on 20 March 1975 at Kubur Panjang, Kedah/^{and performed} by Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe; 5 April 1975 at Butterworth/^{and performed} by Boria Sungai Pinang Troupe; and, 1 May 1975/^{and performed} by Boria Sungai Pinang Troupe at Dhoby Ghout, Penang.

8. Mak aji : A colloquial term of respectful address given to a woman who has been on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

9. Jubah : Malay equivalent of the costume worn by Arabs and copied by some Malays who have been to Mecca.

mime than words. They commence a dialogue. They talk about their children who have now become youths. Mak aji has a grown daughter. From the way she talks of her one has the impression of a devoted daughter who does all that her mother wants of her which includes praying regularly like a good Muslim, and wearing the Malay kurung,¹⁰ which her mother describes as respectful and proper. She tells her friend how good her daughter is, such that her prayer mat and prayer clothes are always laid out ready in her room. While praising her daughter she treats her friend condescendingly as a woman who lacks the respectability of a mak aji and the wisdom of one who has been to Mecca. Her friend, however, seems to know something that the mak aji does not know. She shows resentment to her friend's attitude to her, in every reply. For example, she insinuates that probably those who wear kurungs are hiding 'coins' (kudis)¹¹ on their 'rusty legs'. She proudly contradicts the mak aji's opinions by saying that on her part she would rather be easier on her children so long as they do not violate her trust behind her

10. Malay kurung : A type of Malay costume which is the national dress and consist of a long blouse and sarong. Kurung literally means 'to cover' (hide).

11. Kudis : Scabies or spot infections from insect bites; thus 'coins on rusty legs' actually applies to the infections or scar marks on the brown skin of the legs.

back. If they must wear skirts and tight pants she will allow them provided they respect her opinions in return by dressing sensibly and not straying too far from the morality required of Muslims.

Their conversation progresses on to such elements of modern life as the youth of today, touching on such activities as smoking cigarettes, drug addiction, wild pop music and the wild dances accompanying it. On these topics there is always a difference of opinion in that the mak aji condemns them as 'highly unethical of our Eastern society' while her friend more diplomatically compromises a mid-way stance between her and the new generation.

Suddenly the mak aji changes the subject and says, "Why here we are already at the front door of my house. So engrossed in our conversation I didn't quite realize that we were here. Timah (her daughter) is probably praying, so I shall not call her." Then miming the act of opening a door (imaginary door) she makes a sound as of a door creaking and invites her friend to come in. They then enter the living room scene and see the goings on. The mak aji in a state of shock, faints, but her friend catches her and saves her from a nasty fall. Seeing them the party quickly breaks up leaving one girl who appears

to be more frightened for herself than for her mother's plight - for she is Timah, the mak aji's daughter. The friend still with the mak aji propped against her tells Timah to fetch some water, which she does. Then the friend tells her to change into sensible clothes, and while Timah has gone to change she douses the mak aji with the bowl of water.

Mak aji comes out of her fainting fit and almost immediately cries out for Timah, at first as if in sad reverie, but with the arrival of complete consciousness her tone changes to one of anger. Timah comes in, now with a sarong over her miniskirt. As soon as she gets close enough to her the mak aji takes hold of one of her earlobes, pulls her nearer and begins to beat the girl with her free hand. While beating her she lets her wrath break loose in a torrent of curses upon her daughter. Timah screams and entreats her mother's friend to help. She tries to separate them but only manages to get a few of the blows herself. In the pandemonium of beating, crying and scoldings, the friend manages to get in a few triumphant remarks on her friend's faults and the futility of hoping to exercise complete control over one's children. She points out that Timah had come into bad company because she had learnt to hide and do things furtively.

Her attitudes would have been healthy ones if she, the mother, had given her some freedom and good advice instead of strict discipline and control.

The mak aji reduced to shame by her friend, continues to punish Timah who keeps crying out for help. In the confusion the father and the village penghulu come upon the scene. The penghulu has come over with the girl's father for a friendly visit. The father steps in and sets them apart. He scolds his wife for her 'madness'. Seeing the penghulu the mak aji quietens down and hangs her head in silent obedience, while her friend explains the scene that has just passed. With her husband and the penghulu on her friend's side, she has to agree to her own faults. Timah is also remonstrated with by her father. Apparently really sorry for her hypocrisy behind her mother's and father's back she agrees, between sobs, to change her ways.

E. Kisah Nombor Ekor (Gambling on Numbers) : 12

The story begins with three friends; Amat (a

12. This version is derived from two shows observed on 15 March 1975 at Kampung Melayu, Ait Itam, ^{and performed} by Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe on the occasion of Parent-Teachers' Day; and, on 26 March 1975 at Datuk Keramat by the same troupe for a wedding occasion.

Malay), Sami (an Indian) and Ah Chong (a Chinese), who want to get rich quickly. They want to stake their money in the three-number lottery. They also want to be sure they will win. They decide to get help from the spirit world of the dead, and agree to Amat's proposal that they should seek the help of a Muslim spirit, who, according to Amat, 'will tell no lies as would a Hindu or Taoist spirit'. There is much argument prior to the agreement. Finally having decided upon the tomb of a very righteous man in the village they fix a certain Thursday night for their attempt to invoke the help of his spirit.

On the night agreed the friends are again assembled together, this time in the graveyard for the purpose of invocation (menurun). Amat, being a Muslim, is given the responsibility for the menurun. He is equipped with a small earthenware dish filled with burning coal into which he occasionally throws in some kemenyan.¹³ While doing so he greets the spirit of the grave and entreats it to come forth at his bidding. All the while he is trembling, and his friends standing behind him are hugging each other in

13. Kemenyan : Incense crystals that emit smoke and a sweet smell when burnt; widely used by Malays and Indians for performing rituals.

fearful anticipation. Occasionally Ah Chong places the palms of his hands together and moves them up and down in silent prayer. Sami, whose knees are knocking together, follows suit, one hand on his forehead to touch the revered red spot and the other outstretched like a beggar seeking alms. The audience seem to enjoy their predicament as more of a joke than total fear. And Sami also manages to abet their laughter by making rude gestures, occasionally lifting two of his fingers a little higher or totally bending in three fingers to leave the index finger and the ring finger to continue in an up and down movement.

Absorbed in their activities they do not realize that the spirit is already behind the thick haze of smoke. It speaks in a loud booming voice asking why they disturb him in his rest. This startles them. Ah Chong and Sami attempt to turn tail and run but are ordered to stop by the spirit. They quickly huddle against Amat who tells the spirit falteringly of their wish. The spirit at first refuses, because of the desecration of his burial place by non-Muslims. The spirit says also that Ah Chong ate pork and Sami spat his betel juice all over the place. Amat tries to appease the spirit by explaining that Ah Chong has not eaten pork for a

week to qualify for his approval and Sami will promise not to spit again. Sami, who even then is chewing on a betel quid, has to swallow it. Even Amat has to qualify himself for the spirit's esteem, by saying that he has been faithfully attending Friday prayers at the village mosque.

Finally the spirit tells them to stake their money on number 184. The three friends are jubilant, and in the ensuing excitement the spirit departs. Each thinks aloud about their plans for the winnings. They finally come back to the matter in hand when Sami asks how much they are going to bet in the lottery. When they have made up their minds Amat wants to know what the numbers were. They disagree : two saying 148 and the other, 184. In the end they decide to pool their money and put it on the majority's number. Sami puts in all his monthly drinking money happy that he can drink as much 'toddy' (unrefined coconut wine) as he likes later with his winnings. Ah Chong hopes to steal a little of the daily takings of his provision shop so his wife will not notice the loss. Amat who is jobless then says that he will pawn his wife's best clothes (songket and batik Jawa) until he can claim them back with his winnings. They then exit with full hopes.

In the next scene, the three friends are together again. The lottery has been drawn and number 184 has won just as the spirit foretold. They quarrel, blaming each other for backing number 148. Sami and Ah Chong being the two most sure of 148 are severely berated by Amat. He is especially fearful of what his wife will do to him when she finds out her loss. Sami and Ah Chong try to avoid the blame by accusing Amat of choosing a Muslim spirit who had played havoc with their memory.

(A few ^{members} of one audience later told me that they should have halved their money and bought both the numbers instead of letting their greed get the better of them. Others argued that it is only right that they should lose for it is wrong to seek the help of the supernatural in such evils as gambling; more so because they had desecrated a Muslim burial ground. Adults and elders also interjected that the story demonstrates the futility of number gambling which is quite a common vice of the community).

Preoccupied with their arguments the three friends do not see a woman, who comes in and listens to their bickering. The more she hears the more her anger grows until unable to contain herself any longer she pounces triumphantly upon Amat. She snatches Sami's umbrella and proceeds to beat Amat with it.

His friends also receive some of the same treatment whenever they try to appease her. In the midst of Amat's calls for help and his friends' undecidedness, the woman shouts at Amat to return her possessions including jewellery that he had pawned long ago. She goes as far as to ask for divorce of the final order (talak tiga).¹⁴ In the commotion the penghulu happens to come by. He brings them to their senses by assuming control of the situation. Everybody receives a scolding befitting their follies. It ends up with the three friends acknowledging their mistake and Ah Chong offering to help Amat redeem the pawned clothes. The penghulu promises to look round for a job for Amat.

F. Kisah Rumah Sewa (Rented Houses) : 15

The scene opens with two married couples who

14. Talak tiga : In Islamic marriage law a husband can annul his marriage in three stages - talak satu, talak dua, and, talak tiga. After the talak tiga a woman cannot remarry her ex-husband unless she first marries and divorces a Muslim convert, an act known as cina buta.

15. This version is derived from a show observed on 18 April 1975 at Air Itam by Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe for a charitable occasion. I was able to watch two rehearsals of the same sketch for a radio recording. Both rehearsals were witnessed by a small group of audience, and were held at Sungai Pinang by the same troupe.

are neighbours in rented flatlets. The flatlets are part of a large house in which their landlord also lives. They are facing each other and carrying on a heated argument, or rather the wives are arguing while the husbands are trying to see that things do not go too far. They are accusing each other of envy and jealousy. Each angrily provokes the other with such comments as "just because I buy a black handbag you must do so too" to which the retort is, "who said so, do you think I want to buy such cheap-jack things as yours? My handbag is more expensive and it is real leather," and so on. Their dialogue reveals that each has been putting her ear to the partition wall between their rooms in order to be one up on the other in any act of showmanship. The discovery only increases their anger as they decry each other. Before long they begin a back and shoulder slapping which borders on fighting. Whenever their husbands try to separate them they too receive the onslaught of their flailing arms.

In the midst of this, the landlord enters in a huff, and tells them to stop quarrelling. He complains that their row is disturbing the other occupants of his flats. Instead of quietening them, his appearance adds fuel to the fire. Both women turn on him, and

as though of one accord unleash their resentment against him. They blame his miserly housing facilities for their quarrel. Even the husbands join with their wives, making complaints such as the flats are too small and unfit for human beings. Luckily for the landlord, the penghulu happens by at that moment. He inquires about the matter and then entreats them to discuss their grievances like sensible adults instead of quarrelling like hooligans. He rebukes them for their behaviour in setting a bad example to the neighbourhood. He also promises to look into the matter of the housing and reminds them that the government are building low-cost homes for such people as themselves. He ends the lecture on a reminder that they must try to better themselves and be aware of what is being done by the government to help them.

G. Kisah Bomoh dengan Doktor (The Traditional Curer and the Modern Doctor) : 16

The scene opens with a girl lying sick in bed

16. This version is derived from three shows observed: a) 20 March 1975 at Kubur Panjang in Kedah ^{and performed} by Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe on the occasion of Parent Teachers' Association Fair; b) 26 March 1975 at Datuk Keramat by the same troupe during a wedding; and, c) 18 March 1975 at Ayer Hitam in Kedah ^{and performed} by Boria Sungai Pinang Troupe on the occasion of Farmers' Association Fair.

(a mat on the floor) and a bomoh (traditional curer) tending her. The girl's mother is hovering nearby and wringing her hands in worry. Placed near the girl are the bomoh's paraphernalia, with which he is attempting to deliver the girl from the evil spirit which is occupying her body and causing the illness. This includes cooked yellow rice (pulut kuning), curried chicken, bananas and ready sliced fresh pineapples; uncooked eggs and a piece of white cloth on a plate; uncooked plain rice with yellow rice on a saucer; a prepared incense burner and a betel leaf concoction. The bomoh selects a betel leaf and chews it slowly. Then he spits the juice on top of the girl's head and all around her ending at her feet. The girl winces at the contact of the red saliva. Then the bomoh seats himself comfortably and proceeds to partake of the rice and chicken, eating noisily. (This brings comments from the audience, who tell him off for the noise he makes.) Once a mischievous teenager shouted for him to give him some). He finishes his meal with the fruit and asks for some drinking water from the girl's mother, which she dutifully brings. Meanwhile the sick girl had been moaning and groaning as if in tempo with the bomoh's eating mannerisms, but the bomoh ignores her completely. Taking the glass of water, he goes to

the edge of the stage, takes a mouthful of water, gargles noisily and spits the contents out again making the audience step back merrily to avoid his spittle.

Meanwhile seeing all the good food which she had hoped was meant for her has gone, the girl goes limp and closes her eyes in sick exhaustion. Her mother, who is watching her, quickly attracts the bomoh's attention, addressing him as Tok.¹⁷ The bomoh is now picking his teeth. He replies that the state of the girl is a good sign that the evil spirit in her has been weakened by too much mockery by him, the bomoh. He adds that a few days of such demonstrations by him will drive the evil spirit away in frustration. (In one case this statement brought a shouted response of 'liar' by a youthful male voice. Generally, many of the audience laughed cynically at this statement). The bomoh's comments receive dark looks from the patient.

He then proceeds to administer his cure. He takes a handful of the plain and yellow rice and throws it unceremoniously at the girl, who winces at

17. Tok : In its prime context a term of relationship used in address meaning 'grandfather'. In a wider context it is simply a respectful form of address eg. to policemen, and in the sketches it is used to show respect for characters such as the bomoh and penghulu.

the sting of the rice grains hitting her skin. He is now muttering unintelligible incantations. Finally he takes the white cloth, covers the girl with it, then taking one egg in each hand he rolls them over the girl from her head to her toes. He tells her mother that the disease is now partly trapped in the eggs, since they musn't be eaten he will take them with him to avoid accidents. (By now the audience had become quite bold and some were heard to shout such things as "boil it and eat it for breakfast" and suchlike). Finally the bomoh bids her goodbye, at the same time refusing the money offered him with one hand though taking it with the other.

When the bomoh has gone, the mother laments the poor state of her daughter and despairs of the many bomohs she has hired to cure her. (The audience responds to her action with comments of "call the doctor" and "bomoh are humbug"). As if in answer to the audience her husband arrives with a stranger. He is dressed in a white overall coat, carries a black briefcase and sports a stethoscope, hanging round his neck. Her husband introduces him to her as a government doctor, telling her that since she didn't want to bring their child to him he has

brought the doctor to her. The woman is embarrassed at her husband's words, and finding herself face to face with such eminence is cowed into uneasy sheepishness. All she can say is to ask the doctor what he wants prepared for the cure. The doctor seeing the remains of the bomoh's meal on the floor laughs and tells her that he will need nothing for he carries all his medicines in his bag. So saying he briskly opens his bag takes out a syringe and tests it. He tells the father to hold the girl's arm and proceeds to inject her with it. Then he swabs the spot with cotton wool and tells them he has completed his cure. He smiles condescendingly at the woman who has been looking open-mouthed at the whole procedure, turns on the father and tells him to see that the girl is well fed and in a week's time to bring her to his clinic for a final check-up. He then bids the family farewell and exits.

When the doctor has left, the woman at last finds her voice and full of awe begins to praise the doctor for bringing his own cure. The fact that she need not prepare anything beforehand pleases her enormously. To see the girl, who has by now sat up and is looking already well on the way to recovery, has made her believe in the doctor greatly. The husband takes the opportunity to chide her for her

old-fashioned ways. He makes her promise to seek the aid of the doctor first before seeking other means of cure in future.

H. Kisah Menyambut Hari Raya (Hari Raya Festivities) : 18

It is the tenth morning of the month of Dzulhijjah and it is Hari Raya Haji day. Muslims are celebrating the occasion in respect of their fellows carrying out their homage to Allah in their pilgrimage to Mecca. It is the season of the Haj.

Onstage Amat, Sami and Ah Chong are assembled and are greeting one another (selamat hari raya) and executing the Malay style handshake of salam. 19
The greetings and salam have a comical element through them overdoing the actions. When the preliminaries are finally over the friends begin to reminisce ^{about} their past year's experiences. Their

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18. This version is derived from two shows ^{and performed} :
a) 16 January 1975 at Batu Uban, Penang/ by Boria Sungai Pinang Troupe on the occasion of the Army Camp hari raya celebration, and, b) 19 January 1975 by the same troupe as heard on 'Radio Penang'. It was part of the local station's fortnightly shows of boria.
19. Salam is an act either of greeting or goodwill and forgiveness. When one does salam with another he extends his straightened hands, clasps the other's hands between them; then withdrawing his hands places them close to his chest before putting them down.

recollections range from funny to unhappy incidents in the neighbourhood. Their encounters onstage as three friends in other boria sketches are also discussed. Amat, for example, tells them how happy he is that his family is not broken by his gambling follies. Ah Chong says that because his shop has been doing quite well he will give all the Muslim children who frequent his shop on that day an extra sweet. Amat points out that if he is here with them how is he going to fulfil his promise. Ah Chong scolds him for his stupidity and says he has left instructions with his wife who is minding the shop. Sami, too, not to be outdone, mentions his own good deeds, telling them that he has been visiting his temple (kuil) regularly.

As they reminisce about amusing incidents, most of their jokes have an ethnic slant. For example Amat and Ah Chong remind Sami of the time when they put belacan²⁰ (prawn paste seasoning) into his betel leaf instead of the usual lime and areca nut. The reminder brought forth a hurt expression from Sami much to the friends' glee. They

20. Belacan is a pungent paste made by pounding shrimp and salt and kept in compact pieces to prevent rot. It is used as an additive in cooking hot food and is a must in sambal (hot chilli sauce).

talk further on the goodness of belacan, with Amat and Ah Chong showing an obvious liking for it, while Sami seems disturbed that some of the food they had offered him had contained belacan. Amat is made fun of for his 'fear' of his wife and his wife's 'queen-control' of him. They begin to mime and mimic the role with Sami pretending to be Amat and Ah Chong as the wife, with a goodly measure of exaggeration. After everybody has felt the butt of one another's jokes they again return to the festive goodwill of the moment and repeat the salam.

At this juncture the penghulu comes on to the scene. He greets them and when the preliminaries of greeting and salams are over, tells them that he has just returned from hari raya prayers at the mosque. As he says this he is looking at Amat. Amat, who realizes that the penghulu's looks mean he knows that Amat did not attend the prayer, sheepishly conjures up an excuse for himself. He says that he could not wake up early because he has had to help the wife cook ketupat²¹ the night before. Amat asks the penghulu's forgiveness for his absence. The penghulu says that it is not for him to impose a

21. Ketupat : A special rice dish prepared for Hari Raya.

penance, for that is between Amat and God, but that he hopes that Amat, like every good Muslim, will try to attend such important religious prayers. They talk a few minutes longer, with the penghulu this time occupying the main talking role in the conversation with his hopes and aspirations for his village community for the coming year. Mostly he hopes for an extension of goodwill, hard work and the people's loyalty to the government. Then he invites them to his house for a breakfast feast and they all exit.

I. Buku Hijau (The Green Book) : 22

The scene opens with Amat, who comes in rubbing his eyes. He faces the audience and with his eyes still sleepily half-closed complains that his wife had rudely awakened him, for he wanted to finish dreaming a beautiful dream in which he met a princess before being rudely parted from her. Suddenly, as though a bright idea has just struck him, he proceeds to look around the stage. Seeing nobody about he curls himself up on the floor and is soon snoring loudly in

22. This version is derived from shows observed on 3 February 1975 at Datuk Keramat ^{and performed} by Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe on the occasion of a wedding; and, 16 January 1975 at Batu Uban ^{and performed} by Boria Sungai Pinang.

deep sleep.

A woman comes in calling for Amat. She looks round but does not see him. She begins to grumble aloud about Amat's laziness and how fond he is of sleep. She complains that if he is not sleeping he is wasting his time with his useless friends in the coffee shops. As she prattles on, she adds that Amat is a great one for talk but not for deed, for he is always the first one to shy away from work. She calls Amat's name again and again. Then seeing him curled up and asleep, she pauses in anger, then smiles wickedly. Shaking her finger in silent conspiracy with the audience she brings on a bowl of water. This she throws on the sleeping Amat, causing him to leap up and yell in shocked awakening. The audience enjoys this, and with its support his wife becomes more daring. With hands on hips she defiantly asks Amat if he has met any princesses in his dreams. Amat evades his wife's remarks by arguing that it is still too early to be awakened to till the soil for even the soil is still asleep and would not like being disturbed. She retorts how 'numb-skulled' he is and what ridiculous things he says just to avoid work. She also points out the ease of tilling the soil when there is still dew on the ground, which means easier work for the

likes of one as lazy as he. Amat still trying to play for time, asks her why she suddenly has this fervour to cultivate the little plot of land around their house. She explains that she is only trying to respond to the government's green book policy. Amat, who apparently does not want to know what this is, has to listen to his wife's explanations though only half-awake. Suddenly she shouts into Amat's ear and makes him jump.

At this point, the penghulu enters, greets the couple with a good morning and compliments their early rising. He asks if Amat is, like him, going to do a spot of hoeing and planting. Amat's wife triumphantly faces Amat and says even the penghulu himself has got up early to cultivate his garden. She then turns to the penghulu to tell him of Amat's reluctance to do what is required of him. The penghulu, realizing Amat's ignorance, begins to lecture him on the virtues of the green book. According to him apart from providing one with fresh home-grown vegetables, the exercise also inculcates good health. The 'greens' give vitamins badly needed to prevent skin diseases like scabies, and the exercise makes better persons of us all. He points out to Amat's wife, much to Amat's pleasure, that the activity is not the domain

of men alone for womenfolk can help with weeding and watering the vegetables. They finally exit together as though to carry out the task in hand.

J. Kisah Rukun Negara (The National Ideology) : 23

The scene opens with three friends, Amat and Abu both Malays, and Sami, an Indian, in the middle of an argument. One of them says that his son came home one day and asked him most condescendingly if he, the father, knew anything about the National Ideology. The question, he says, had given him a feeling of shame for he can only answer in the negative. He wants to know of his friends what the places of education have come to and why the government is always putting forward all sorts of policies for people to learn and remember. He says his own preoccupation with work ~~to~~ to earn a living for his large family is the only ideology he could think of and the belief in God is the only ideology for the life after death. If he has to start thinking of other ideologies besides, it will only 'crack' his poor brain. His

23. This version is based on a show observed on 4 May 1975 at Batu Uban all-purpose hall in Penang and performed by Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe on the occasion of Labour Week. A similar version was reported by the troupe leader to be recorded for a radio programme of boria earlier in the year.

friends laugh at him and one of them points out that it is very easy to know what the National Ideology is all about for even in daily life we are practising some of its themes. He points out that belief in God is but one of them, and that is not too difficult to remember. Drawing examples from daily happenings he explains the five tenets of the National Ideology. The other two manage to add some comicality to the expressed ideologies. For example, in the first principle of belief in God the Indian friend is mocked by one of the Malay Muslims. He angers Sami by suggesting that Sami believes not in one but many gods and they are all idols anyway. Sami protests saying that Amat is a dunggu (ignorant fool) for the idol is just a symbol and the many gods are symbolic of various aspects of divinity like love and so on. The other friend acts as an informant and interpreter to their confused minds. When the third principle is mentioned, Amat who appears to be the most ignorant of the three, asks who writes and draws up the laws. Sami answers that it is the police and the army. Abu, the other friend, laughs and tells them that these people are just the mechanism to uphold the law. The law-makers are called lawyers. Amat parries, saying that if laws are made by lawyers then

there must be a lot of bad laws because of the number of lawyer buruk (quack lawyers) around. Abu interjects that such lawyers are ones like Amat himself; real lawyers had to be properly trained in the arts of the laws before they can be given a practice.

While they are arguing the penghulu happens by and joins in their conversation. He points out that what really matters for laymen like Amat and Sami is not to probe into the theory of the matter but to learn to live together as a united nation of citizens. One must not think that one lives only for oneself but must remember the social importance of a community. For a large community to work smoothly there must be certain ideologies present and made workable in the society. He tells Sami and Amat to shake hands. They do. Then he asks them why they do this. Sami replies that it was because he told them to. Laughingly the penghulu asks him if he has ever done it at other times. When Amat answers in the affirmative he asks why he did it then. Abu says that it was a show of goodwill and friendship. The penghulu congratulates him on his cleverness, much to Abu's pleasure, and says that that is but one example of living together in peace and goodwill.

In the conversation between the penghulu and Abu, it is revealed that the ideology of the nation or the National Ideology is to foster a united society. The first principle is the major guiding principle of a goodly life. Belief in God is the guiding principle of humans to consider all racial and other human differences as human shortcomings. It is also an acceptance of a greater power beyond human conception. The second principle is necessary to unite a nation. Just like a father is the head of a family, so is the king to a nation. The penghulu also points out his role in the kampung likening himself to the father and the king. The third and fourth principles are necessary to regulate good behaviour and prevent unruliness, strife and in the extreme, unnecessary cruelty of any kind. Once laws become antiquated they can and must be adapted to suit the times. And people are united as a nation under the constitution of the approved government. The fifth ideology promotes a cultural and moral life so that we will not become wild and immoral.

To all these revelations Sami and Amat listen open-mouthed, occasionally bringing out some silly and funny implications of the ideologies. Their near blank looks make the penghulu shrug his shoulders in desperation and end the discussion by inviting all

of them to his house for a drink and to talk things over more genially and comfortably.

2. Subjects of Other Sketches

An idea of what has been excluded can be gained from the tabulated list below :

Theme (Types)	Titles of Sketch
1) Weddings	a) Cancelled Wedding. b) 'Tangkap Basah' (Shotgun Marriage). c) The Marriage of ... (usually a state leader eg. the Governor's daughter in 1968 and so on). d) The Idolised Son-in-Law. e) Marriage Rites.
2) Domestic and Social	a) Serba Salah (Undecided) b) Good for Good. c) The Radio. d) Goings on in the Coffee Shop. e) A Cultured Society. f) A Democratic Society. g) The (Loose) Morals of Factory Workers. h) Women and Progress. i) Imperfections in Society.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> j) About Hawkers and Hawking. k) The Aedes Mosquito. l) A New Outlook. m) Saving Electricity. n) Peace-Making. o) Tourism. p) The Role of the Teacher. q) Rearing Domestic Animals. r) The Role of the Police. s) Anti-Hoarding.
<p>3) Political Propaganda</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Rural Development. b) Communist Threat. c) A Tribute to ... (UMNO, MCA, etc.). d) Anniversary of UMNO's 25 Year. e) Pulau Pinang (Penang Island). f) Government and the People (Co-operation). g) Rukun Tetangga (Principles of Neighbourliness). h) A Progressive Nation.
<p>4) Others - Religious, Festive etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Challenge of Islam. b) Prophet Mohammad's Birthday. c) Hari Raya Puasa (New Year Celebrations).

	<p>d) The Soldiers of Malaysia - a Tribute.</p> <p>e) The Malay Association of Penang - a Tribute.</p> <p>f) A Tribute to the Father of Malaysia (ie. the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman).</p> <p>g) Thaipusam (Indian Festival Day).</p>
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CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF STORIES

Participants distinguish three types of stories in boria sketches : kisah rumahtangga (domestic stories), kisah masyarakat ('social' stories), and kisah propoganda politik (political stories). Of the 42 shows observed, the stories of six were domestic, 25 were social, and eleven were political. This categorization appears to relate essentially to the occasions on which boria shows are performed (see Chapter III). It only gives a rough guide to content as even a brief glance at the table given above will show. Constructing a classification based on the subjects of sketches is a more complicated matter. For though all boria stories have a similar content, the humorous commentary on ordinary people's daily life and everyday ideas acted out with slapstick and witty dialogue, within the stories certain themes recur again and again, regardless of the type. The basic theme is the traditional one of Malay drama, order versus disorder; and it is especially concerned with the roles of morals and authority in maintaining an orderly progress within a changing society. This underlies the more concrete themes that provide the

plots for particular sketches, namely, youth versus age, the old versus the new, male versus female, and marital, family, community and national unity versus disunity. These are expressed within a limited series of relationships, namely, husband and wife; parent and child; individual and government official; Malay and non-Malay (which is virtually synonymous with Muslim and non-Muslim); family and neighbours. Though each story tends to centre on a single relationship, it usually succeeds in covering a range of other relationships besides. I will therefore consider these themes and relationships in more detail in this chapter.

1. Youth Versus Age

Boria sketches show the conflict between the two categories within the bounds of the consanguineal relationship of the parent (old age) and the offspring (youth) and also the economic relationship between the landlord (age) and the tenant (youth). Of the two plots that of parent and child conflict is the most popular and is treated as a main theme in a sketch, for example as in sketches D and B in order of importance. Of the second plot type in the conflict of the landlord and tenant it is incorporated into the Pop Music story of sketch C as part of the whole theme. I shall construct the plot sequence in order to bring

out the theme.

In sketch D, in bringing out the theme of the bad western influence on the young, the plot focuses on two mothers who treat their offspring differently. The mak aji, mother number one, imposes upon her daughter the strict moral and religious ethics of Islam. Mother number two prefers the happy balance of youthful indulgence within the bounds of Islamic morals. As it turned out the offspring of mother number two got the best of both worlds, whereas the offspring of mother number one became an adept liar and hypocrite in relation to her own mother. When the truth is revealed there is conflict between mother (age) and daughter (youth). Eventually all becomes well for mother and daughter and they are reconciled to a new future of mutual adjustment in line with the policy practised by mother number two. In sketch B the follies of the parent are demonstrated by the offspring's conflict of marriage partnership. It is also the young husband who points out the parents' faults and through him order is brought into the family situation.

In both cases the issue of youth versus age is wound round the theme of conflicting morals and authority between the western secular ideas of the

youth, on the one hand, and the eastern religious values of the parent, on the other. The treatment of plots in the sketches reveals the boria preference for a happy balance of the two poles of influence, which is used to bring overall order into the conflict of interest between the parent and the child.

Sketch C brings forth still another approach to the theme of morals and authority again manipulated within the plot of youth versus age. Here the limits of credit enjoyed by the tenants, three youths, from their landlord have been reached; they have failed to acquire enough funds to pay three months back rent. The youths' disrespectful behaviour also gave the landlord cause to upbraid them. Though the resulting argument challenges the respect that should be paid to landlords and elders (within the eastern complex of behaviour), the ultimate acceptance of traditional conventions is evidenced by the successful removal of the youths from their landlord's tenancy.

In Penang Malay society interfering in a person's affairs can only be the prerogative of his parents and the penghulu. The teacher is usually the only other person who can rightfully consider himself in the substitute position of the parent. Even so his role

in this respect is confined to the classroom and then only as long as the child is under his control. His concern tends to be further restricted to matters of academic interest. Close relatives like parent's brothers or sisters may or may not lend a hand in a youth's welfare. If they have children of their own their immediate responsibility is to their own offspring. Many parents adamantly disapprove of the new freedom within the younger generation. Some would take real life instances to prove their point, and thus the case of the neighbour's girl who attends too many parties and social gatherings, or so and so's son who although his parents do not know it is a drug addict. When they themselves are asked to offer advice or to make known certain deviant habits to the parents of the children in question, they assume an attitude of defensiveness. For many the most popular excuse is that they are the outsiders in the family's affairs, and anyway they themselves have their own children to see to and guide in the 'proper' way. On this issue the youths themselves do not welcome outside interference. Next to their own parents, about the only other persons from whom they will accept rebuke are the teacher, the occupational superior or the penghulu; as long as the reprimand is within the bounds of their authority. The most resented categories

are 'nosy' neighbours who are themselves parents. A teenage girl who is also a boria player revealed that she is the victim of many side glances from the neighbours, but she did not really care so long as her own parents give her the freedom to take part in the shows. In the same situation another girl around the same age reacted differently. She was a sociology undergraduate who worked as my research assistant. After two nights of watching boria and coming home well past midnight she reluctantly withdrew. Her reasons, as she explained, were rather 'delicate'; she did not want her parents to have to wait up for her. In actuality she was only protecting her parents' interests against neighbours.

Boria participants agree that themes pertaining to conflict between young and old are popular and serve a useful purpose for both parents and children alike, allowing them to see and weigh each side more fairly. For some the symbolism presented in the sketches and joke manipulation by players helps prevent similar real life conflicts between, for example, father and son. Troupe leaders view the choice as a means of attracting both age groups to the show. The mainstay technique is joke manouvering and comic actions. In the youth versus age category,

the accepted social norm is that it is the place of a younger person to always show respect for his or her elders. In boria the manipulation of the jokes frequently seems to reverse this social concept. Symbolically this reversal bridges the gap between senior and junior while at the same time reaffirming its basis. While participants are not aware of this symbolism, they confirm it in other ways. They all agree that the disrespect was shown in fun. They also point out the fact that the rude youngsters get their deserts at the end of the sketch, as in story C. Some of the youngsters interviewed dislike the way boria portrays their symbolic counterparts, especially taking the wearing of clothes and general appearance as a first impression of deviant behaviour. Though they were not actually able to draw from real life cases of very good youths who wore dirty or revealing clothes, they suggested one should never judge a book by its cover. Some bold youngsters question the viability of joke references by players to the truth of the matter. They argue that a joke directed at youth may after all be biased as the main role of the youth in the sketch is always played by an older man.¹ Even though he may be chosen

1. In fact this is another example of the symbolic unification of oppositions.

because of his ability at clowning, his rendering of the jokes could very easily be biased by his own age. Their opinions were, however, not without a certain degree of subjectivity themselves, for they also agreed like other participants with the view that the player in the youth role was the one able to draw most of the laughter response by his witticism and good acting.

Thus in the exposition of the youth versus age plot the issues are normally in terms of the traditionally accepted behaviour of socialization for the old category, as opposed to behaviour considered by the old as overly liberal among the young age group. Boria players said that this is their favourite way of prolonging the conflict, whenever necessary, between the two character types. The usual cause of such conflicts are the chance discovery of a parent or older relative of their children engaged in such deviant activities, in their opinion, as of drug-taking, noisy singing and playing and dancing. The symbolic actions of a misguided youth in the sketches and their social delinquency is associated with western cultural activities and is dubbed as 'yellow culture' (kebudayaan kuning). Initiated by the elder person's indignation at such pastimes coupled

with the youngster's guilt at being caught in the act, the trend of dialogue that follows demonstrates the elder's supremacy over the youngsters who are in turn not too defiant in their retorts. Their attempts at self defence are in the words of an older person "like trying to straighten a wet thread" (menegakkan benang basah). In the sequence of accusation and attempted justification for the act there is also an overall subtle cynicism directed at the attitudes of both generations depicted in the symbolic action and conveyed to the members of the audience.. It should be noted here that youth categories in boria sketches do not conflict among themselves over values or morals as do members of the other age categories.

2. Old Versus New

Of all the themes mentioned in the beginning of this chapter the theme of the old versus the new is either central or at least important in most boria sketches. The theme gets a full treatment in sketches A and G, and part-treatment in sketches B, C, D, I and J in the sample stories. The theme is revealed through such issues as conflicts of interest between two people over customary traditions, beliefs and values. I shall set out the various issues applied to expose the old versus new theme in the sketches

cited.

In sketch A the issue in question is marriage customs and the morals of the married couple. Bearing in mind that the issues concern only the Malay ethnic group in Penang socially, and boria symbolically, the exposition would probably have a bias to Malay stereotypes. In the story two senior characters conflict over whether to have a complete wedding ceremony following custom, or a much reduced alternative, desirable because it is within their means. The victory of the old over the new produces chaos when the economic reality is faced and they are plunged into debt. This first disorder leads to another when as a solution to the first the couple plan to fake madness to try to fool the creditor. In the ensuing fraud still another disorder is created when against Muslim moral-values, the wife in a fit of absent mindedness jumps into the arms of a man who is not her husband. The situation is brought to order by the intervention of the penghulu.

In sketch G a different kind of issue to bring out the theme is used. Here the ethics of curing between the traditional method is brought to test against the modern method. The plot clearly exposes the unnecessary and wasteful trappings of a traditional

curing technique. On the other hand, the doctor's actions and mannerisms are both brief and to the point, and his cure is cheap and effective.

Elsewhere in the sample stories this theme abounds. In story B, for example, on the issue of wedding ceremonies the old and the new way are again brought forth. In story C the old value of respecting an elder is brought to test under the new and more immediate economic correlation of the landlord and the tenants. Story D involves eastern and western ethics wherein two elderly friends find a difference of opinion over their practices. Story I exposes the problem of a domineering wife as one where the traditional relationship, in which the wife is envisaged as submissive, has been inverted. Here the penghulu uses his authority to bring peace, but stresses a new order of co-operation rather than domination by either partner. And finally in stories E and J the common issue of the traditional Malay beliefs in opposition to the new more orthodox Islam is manipulated through the ethnic sentiments of a Malay towards his Chinese and Indian friends.

Of significance in the exposition of the old versus the new theme besides the conflict that arises in consequence between the aged and the youth, is the

conflicts in interest between two or more older persons in the sketch. In their dialogue they are always referring to the moderation of one as opposed to the extremity of opinion of the other. Favourite kinds of conflict here are those relating to the social norms of the community. Indeed as I perceive it, the movement of Penang Malays towards modernization and acceptance of new values is more concerned with the worries of the older generation in adapting to the times and adjusting to suit their children's needs. As for the children themselves their degree of adherence to old ways is largely a handing down from their parents through socialization. For example in stories A and B, participants blame parents for wanting to show off and overspend at their children's wedding. The mother role is portrayed as a nagging wife, who regardless of whether her husband can afford it or not makes unnecessary demands on him. Audiences blamed the mother for the newly weds dilemma in the sketch. Their immediate response is that the mother is decidedly funny as a silly and vain woman who forgets her own station in life. Hers is the plight of a vain fool, who brings disaster on her family.

Some mothers use the sketch as an excuse for making smaller wedding celebrations and find

justification and catharsis by watching the sketch taking shape in favour of their own action. A well-to-do family who had just celebrated their daughter's wedding on a quite big scale was interviewed. They had had boria and ghazal music performed for the wedding, and had hired a well known singer to accompany the ghazal group. The wedding was celebrated from the morning to the early hours of dawn of the next day. The mother told me that about a thousand guests were invited. To the community such a wedding ceremony is of a grand scale. Yet the boria troupe performing had used the same story as in A. When asked her opinion the woman seemed not to mind the plot at all. Instead she took it as a polite reminder to her guests and neighbours. For one thing the show seemed to satisfy the woman's ego, for she said that it helps to curb, if not stop altogether, the neighbours' comments and cynicism about the layout of food and the ceremony itself. The test came when I was interviewing some of the neighbouring houses and manipulated my questions to draw out their opinion of the wedding ceremony they had witnessed. Although some were tactfully evading any personal answers, there were those who blatantly criticized the half-cooked rice, the lack of meat sufficient to go round the table and the ill-suited

wedding couple. Yet they also agreed on the measures sounded in the boria show as necessary to combat the rising costs of living. There were seven cases of weddings seen during the fieldwork. Five had boria performances and the other two did not hire any entertainment. In all cases the hosts when flattered for their graciousness, were quite modestly playing down their expenditure for the wedding. There were many ways of explaining their modesty on such occasions. For some the excuse made was that only neighbours and close relatives were invited. Some gave the excuse of doing away with the customary gifts of hard boiled eggs in special individual baskets, as a means of economizing. Still others explained that because of the rise in living costs they had to serve mutton instead of beef or chicken. Mutton is not too popular at weddings because of its smell. But no one would think of doing what boria shows suggest, which is to hold small parties with biscuits and coffee or tea to celebrate weddings. They generally argued that the symbolic action was not attempting to teach such drastic measures, but rather that boria points out to participants how any wedding celebration which does not involve such extreme economies is in itself an example of how the hosts are taking great pains to

entertain their guests. One must therefore not see the shortcomings of such weddings but think of how the family celebrating the occasion has managed to rise to such levels. In addition there is also the factor of cooperation in such matters as weddings and funerals when relatives and close friends rally round offering help, with aid in goods from the haves and in labour from the have-nots.

I was able to discern that among parents the cynicism of the wedding tales told by boria players was never taken as a direct insult on a personal level. Rather they seem to accept the comicality of the symbolic situation as a lesson to members of their community. Their acceptance and response are slow but sure. This is apparent in the reduction of wedding expenses as perceived in the doing away of certain items and the guests' acceptance of them as necessary. And although tongues still wagged about the lack of this or that, such complaints are considered highly petty, made by persons who reveal their reputation as 'loose-tongued', by themselves unwittingly accusing boria players of directing such messages more at them than at the host. Perhaps the important point to be made here is that boria sketches, as clearly exemplified by this story, can be employed

to support modernity or tradition, depending on the participant's own viewpoint. In fact it acts as a symbolic mediator between the two states.

In story G, though the issue pertaining to the old and the new theme is different, the message is similar. The issue is the choice between the traditional cure and the modern cure. Here the mother character is again portrayed as the upholder of tradition. The victim of her belief is her sick daughter, who seems to be aware of the harm done her by the administration of the traditional cure but who is helpless against it. The father saved the situation by bringing in a government doctor to examine her. When the girl looks better after the doctor's injection, the mother's opinion of modern curative techniques also changed for the better.

Traditional curers are still very much alive in the country. For example, in the area of Datuk Keramat around Dhoby Ghout there are two active bomohs, a woman and a man, both in their fifties. They themselves do not disown the good work of the doctors and hospitals. They would advise a patient to go to them for treatment if they find him or her incurable. They would also try to help one who finds that the hospital cannot offer a cure. These bomohs

stress that their cure concerns only sicknesses of the spiritual kind. Participants that go to them include people competing for jobs, wanting a spouse, and desiring protection from the evils of a rival, usually the madu (husband's other wife or wives). The Malays of Penang, including the youths, were not observed to be antagonistic toward bomohs. Rather bomohs are respected by some and tolerated by others, with the knowledge that they will always be there when their help is required. Audience participants did not think that the story is against bomohs in particular, though they accept that some bomohs do cheat for personal gain. They see the trappings that accompany a cure like food for the bomoh's satisfaction as wrong. A participant told me that it is up to the host to offer food and not for the bomoh to ask. Other paraphernalia like communicators for the curing rite which include a quarter of a dollar in money, which acts as the pengkeras (licence ensuring a cure) are necessary. Without them the cure will not be effective. In the words of a bomoh, "any money given must be accepted as not part of the cure but as a separate and unconnected contribution voluntarily given by the host".

Behavioural, religious and moral ethics are the

other areas of life in conflict within the above theme. Boria participants cite the modern economy as the chief factor in changing life styles. This awareness is evident in the inclusion of certain topical inter-relations of the conflicting ideas in stories. Note, however, that they are manipulated as jokes about social taboos. They are so named because though considered as a joke and regarded as funny in the sketch, the participants can never accept them in real life. They are, as social actions, frowned upon by the community, but their very presentation on the stage inculcates unconsciously more tolerant attitudes to them among the audience.

Examples as portrayed in the boria include :

- 1) the bringing of non-Muslim onto Muslim sacred grounds like a mosque or a graveyard. In sketch E we see the Malay character bringing his non-Muslim friends into the Muslim burial ground. In effect the symbolic act carries a religious implication. A non-Muslim entering a Muslim graveyard with irreligious intent (to get a gambling forecast) and what is worse, calling up a spirit of the dead are all desecrations of the Islamic faith.
- 2) Episode A in which a wife, in a fit of melatah

jumps into the arms of a man who is not her husband. Gossip sanctions a wife who behaves too familiarly with her husband's friends or colleagues. Even with her own relationship in public with her husband must appear cool. Kissing in public, even between married couples, is frowned upon. As one wife puts it, she would rather be caught dead than be seen in another man's arms. In boria the incident is funny because the woman did so in a fit of latah; anyway, participants argued, the role of the wife was actually acted by a man.

- 3) So far the trends discussed in the old versus the new theme have been those much in favour of the new. In stories B, C and F, however, the treatment of the theme gets a slight twist into a disfavouring of the new. Characters symbolic of the old are the elders, though this is not an absolute type-casting; and the new are the youths. But in the stories mentioned they are portrayed as stupid, quarrelsome and crude mannered people (story C) who would go so far as to point out in none too nice terms the faults of their elders (stories B and F). The fact that the youths in story C are also the clown characters probably explains the physical

and behavioural degeneration to emphasize the comicality of the situation. A clown character is usually also the main butt of the jokes themselves be it in the form of other characters imposing on him or by his own action and words on stage. His role is not so much a presentation of physical appearance or dress in accordance with his designated role; but rather that of a person who is an exception to the rule of the community. The character himself may be any common member of the community with which the sketch is at the moment concerned. If the clownish character role is projecting a hippy youngster image, for example, he would be flashily, untidily, or crazily dressed to over-emphasize the image in symbolic extremity. In the story the landlord is also meant to be a clownish character, who tries to command the respect of such delinquents which is surely a futile effort on his part. As for the youths they are the clownish characters lost in their new found (and misguided) conceptions of modernity and the good life as they see it. Stories B and F are more partial to the youth in that, according to the participants, their overstepping of customary respect for the elders

is justified by the elders' follies.

- 4) Ethnicity is another issue involved in the old and the new theme. Boria sketches that include a Chinese and Indian character are explained by some players as an answer to the call for a national culture and an attempt on their part to involve non-Malays into their theatre, a point on which I shall dwell when considering another related theme in this chapter. More significant here is that the non-Malay and Malay characters are actually played by Malay players and are Malay stereotypes. The Chinese is depicted in all incongruity in the clothes most popular with his forefathers, the first Chinese immigrants. He wears dark samfu clothes of loose top and pants and has a black skull cap and a pigtail. The Indian appears in a white singlet or vest and white unsewn sarong folded round his middle with the bottom bit pulled up to give easy movement. He is always carrying an umbrella (either of black cloth or coloured paper) and sports a red or white spot on his forehead just above his nose and between the eyebrows. The Malay character would be presented as a villager wearing the favourite sarung pelikat and kurung shirt top, with a

ketayap (white skull cap) on his head. Boria participants though in agreement that most real life people of the three ethnic categories depicted are often seen wearing the 'new' dress of shirt and trousers, feel it necessary to use the symbolic differentiation in their overall appearance as a way of portraying their ethnicity more clearly. As one participant puts it, "One can tell their ethnicity even before their names are mentioned," which is sometimes never. Indeed the very incongruity of the dress seems to draw smiles in anticipation of the show in hand in the audiences' faces. For the role players themselves the action most utilized to create a lively interaction between them would involve jokes bordering on ethnic, religious and related social taboos. Popular stereotypes of ethnic and religious differences and peculiarities of ethnic groups become the constant butt of jokes in sketches making use of the symbolic Chinese, Indian and Malay characters. The jokes falling into this category in boria include,

- a) the physical appearance and clothing of each group, which is a means of poking fun at the traditional costumes,

- b) religious stigma attached to the Chinese as a pork-eating community,
- c) cultural stigma attached to the Indians as a betel quid chewing group who also have the dirty habit of spitting the juice anywhere and everywhere they like, and,
- d) the social stigma of the Malay man who does not wish to be caught being "queen-controlled" by his wife.

3. Male Versus Female

Male-female conflicts occur in boria sketches between husband and wife roles. The main types of conflicts include,

- a) one spouse trying to outdo the other in words and deeds. Their persistent duelling triggers some comic actions which are made more amusing by the interpolation of asides.
- b) The wife's domination of her man though in the end it is always the man having the (public) upper hand.
- c) Concept of the woman as the weaker sex and men as the stronger sex sometimes being distorted and deviated.
- d) Denouncing the old view of women as great gossips and declaring the new idea of men as

equally, if not bigger, gossips than women.

- e) The idea of women as the big spenders, (viz. stories A, B, and F) except in story E where both men and women are equally blamed for gambling habits.

More concretely the conflicting roles of husbands and wives in the boria would extend beyond the above conflicts to issues of spending, matters arising over the upbringing of children, enmity and quarrels with neighbours, as well as the laziness of the husband.

When asked as to their opinions on husband and wife relationships as seen in boria, participants agree that in boria it is exaggerated though it is also quite usual in the community with certain families. Some female assistants were quite indignant at the idea of boria portraying women as domineering wives, one outspoken one arguing that their kind are the most enslaved category as they have to tend house and children all day every day. Most of the wives in the selected area are non-working wives. Of the 370 female sample only 184 were working and out of this total 81 were working full time. Some male participants, however, disavowed any hen-pecking in their marriage. All the respondents agree that hen-pecking of husbands must be regarded as a social

disease. In terms of this they agree that though boria shows the funny side of the husband-wife relationship it also left them with a feeling of irony. Most couples also agree that each must try to correct the other on any of their deviatory habits or pastimes. They also emphasized the use of diplomacy by couples in correcting each other. Among Malays in the area cases of divorce are negligible but a second marriage would be considered as demonstrating a certain lack in the first wife. Among Muslims a man can take four wives at any one time, but he is usually content to have only one in his lifetime. Older women in the community are generally wiser about making a marriage work. The more rational ones seem to hold on to the policy of rope-pulling as a means of husband control. This analogy as described by a participant is to know when to hold the rope loose and when to pull it, wherein the rope is the control factor over the husband.

However, in my observations and interviews, whenever I established a close liason with the wives and they are willing to talk, they seem to enjoy telling tales of woe and suppression by their husbands. Likewise the husbands when interviewed separately, like to assume an air of righteousness in their treatment of the wives. They always seem to project

or to want to project an air of superiority over family matters. My own sex as a female interviewer may have some bearing on the nature of the interviewee's outlook, but out of the total husband and wife sample almost two-thirds tended towards such an orientation. I was also struck by the observation that when I was visiting a married couple who stayed in his parents' house, the wife would not on her own accord sit in on the conversation. Instead after offering us refreshments she would disappear into the kitchen area. A few would hover occasionally in the area dividing the kitchen from the hall, or just sit listening in the background. They are bolder when they live in the house of the girl's parents. The mother or mother-in-law, as the case may be, would however be sitting in on the conversation getting involved whether or not they are requested to. Couples not living with parents behave more freely and would sit in together on the conversation.

Story B touches on the issue of husband-wife privacy though concerned with another marriage theme. The moral of the story seems to not only point at the follies of overspending at weddings, but also that the money could be better spent if given to the newly weds to start a new life together away from the tethers

of the parental home. The sum of the male-female relationship can be extracted from story I, where in the authoritative voice of the penghulu it is pointed out that women are not excused from the responsibilities of home-building, which in the story is brought out by the penghulu's reminder to the wife to help her husband in crop growing for the home.

4. Unity Versus Disunity

Boria themes on unity versus disunity in essence revolve around communal group relationships. It is observed that there are two kinds of group relations - the social and the economic. Within both there are further distinctions in the relationships of a husband to wife, male to male, female to female, Malays to non-Malays and the official to the individual. Sketches A, B, F, G and I are built on husband and wife relations. Stories C, E, G, H and J are built on male to male relations. Stories D and, in part, F are built on those between females. Stories A, E, H and J are about Malay to non-Malay; and, in all sketches the penghulu, father or other figures of authority are brought in or cited to bring order to conflicts and misunderstandings.

Social action is bound by the values imposed by the group. The preferred relationship is one that is

confined to one sex only. The friendship relation round a coffee shop table is male dominant. So also the religious congregation at mosques during Fridays is confined to males. Likewise is the sexual segregation of groups of male teenagers gathered under trees in leisurely interaction. In less intimate confines both sexes may mix freely : for example, in the school grounds, at weddings, at work or in public places on festive occasions. Here females are able to feel on the same level as their male counterparts, and sometimes even to be more privileged than them. In weddings, for example, the female guests are given the honour of sitting in the guest area nearest the wedding dias. Male guests can only look in through the door or stand in the areas to the rear of their seated womenfolk. Otherwise they will have to wait for the bridal couple to be brought out into the compounds in the front part of the house. Even then the guests are sexually demarcated in order of invitation. The men are usually invited between the hours of one to three in the afternoon while the women are invited from three to five o'clock to coincide with the bersanding (sitting in state of the wedded couple), which also means that most of the male guests would not have the chance to watch it anyway. There are, however, evening guests - where a

wedding includes a dinner - who are couples and work colleagues invited around eight in the evening to grace the couple's first meal together. They are not sexually demarcated and both sexes can mingle together. Such entertainments like boria, musical bands and so on would be performed during this part of the ceremony.

In the symbolic action a disordering of the accepted communal relationship is exemplified in the illicit gathering of youths of both sexes in 'wild' pastimes and activities that are frowned upon by the parents (viz. story D); and the interference of another into a husband-wife conflict, especially over family matters (viz. stories A, E, and F).

There is another kind of group relationship which is symbolically significant here. It has to do with the inter-ethnic interaction between a Malay, a Chinese and an Indian. In the symbolism onstage they are introduced as close friends who in their banter would poke fun at each other's special ethnic habits. The fact that the players and audiences are Malays may give some idea of the kinds of ethnic jokes made on stage and the audience reaction. The role allocation of the Chinese character who is shopkeeper and money-lender, the Indian who is a toddy drinker and Hindu devotee, and the common Malay character who is a good-

-for-nothing points to the stereotypes held by Malays and goes deeper than its apparent symbolism.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic nation with Malays, Chinese and Indians comprising the main ethnic groups in the country. Penang is no exception. Each group is quite different from one another in many ways. Yet they are a nation undergoing an active process of assimilation and acculturation through intermarriage, religious conversion and constant social interaction. In daily life each ethnic group would invariably associate with others in schools, shops or at work. Yet there is the major differentiation of religion which acts as a barrier to their final assimilation into a culturally homogeneous group. A Malay is a professed Muslim, a Chinese a ~~Taoist~~ or Christian, and an Indian a Hindu, Sikh, Christian or Muslim. The religious diversity has led to certain social and cultural deviations which have become part and parcel of their everyday life as religiously inclined citizens. One should also bear in mind that each ethnic group is itself internally diversified.² Thus among the three categories of Malays, Chinese and Indians the intra-ethnic differences may create a more conducive atmosphere, by the very virtue of its parallelism of

2. See Chapter I, p. 6.

problems, toward Malaysianization. Yet one must note that any ethnic dissimilarities, however marginal and insignificant, do help to add to the multiplicity of ethnic features of groups and boria players are quick to integrate these into their sketches. Thus when symbolized they are regarded as clownish characters, ridiculous in their extreme ethnicity, and are distinct archetypes of common village people. Broadly, the joke manipulation of the ethnic groups as perceived are an element of unity for Malay boria participants and an evocation of a feeling of camaraderie during the performance. It may follow from this that the clownish image is itself conducive to audience perception of all the ethnic groups as symbolically unified; in other words, since they share the same characteristics, the differences between them are reduced.

Then there are female to female group relationships, which in boria tend towards the theme of disunity. In other words boria presents this motives as rivalry and jealousy. Their conversation shows they are rivals, one condescending, the other jealous. At the same time they symbolize the clash between strict old-fashioned religion and liberal, modern Islam. The moral of the story is that personal differences can be overcome by compromise and unity achieved. Sketch D demonstrates this very well. In

the story two female friends have conflicting ideas about the proper upbringing of their children.

In sketch F the female to female relationship of rivalry is again brought to the fore over neighbourly envy and jealousy of material possessions, until on the arrival of the landlord their personal quarrels are forgotten and their common difficulties over the unsuitable housing create a united front against the landlord. By contrast male to male relationships are presented as ones of comradeship be it in terms of good or evil.

The relationship of individual to official is always clearly brought out in costume and characterization. The common villager is often portrayed as a stupid uneducated person, dressed in sarong, vest or kurung top and skull cap. In contrast, the person of authority commands respect in his western male garb of a shirt, trousers and shining black shoes. His authority is unquestioned and his role is to put things to order, to advise on and correct misdeeds and mistakes made by the common man.

The most important figure of authority in the boria is the penghulu. His rights and duties in his village are seen in the sketch to extend from family

conflicts, community members' disputes, religious affairs, to the lawful arrest of transgressors. As boria sketches are formulated on conflict the penghulu role is the embodiment of the authority brought forth to settle the disputes. He commands and is obeyed by the members of his village because of his legitimate authority. In the sketch therefore he is the communal symbol of unity and order. Following the Weberian concept of authority his can be classified as a traditional-type authority. Yet the character is far from traditional in appearance. He is also the main link between the community members, the government and the outside world. The symbolic action of the penghulu as a broker and mediator in boria generally parallels the social action of the penghulu's role as analysed by Bailey in his study of the penghulu role in a Malay village society.³ There is however one marked difference. Bailey describes the penghulu as representing the Sultan (ruler). In Penang this role has disappeared for historical reasons, and in boria the penghulu is explicitly a broker of government policies and implicitly a broker of modernity within the bounds of his traditional role.

3. Conner Bailey, Broker, Mediator, Patron and Kinsman; (Ohio : University Centre for International Studies, 1976), pp. 18-19.

Thus he wears a batik shirt in accordance with the modern government policy of popularizing the use of batik among government workers and regarding it as a national costume. Here the western clothes emphasize modernity, while the use of batik indicates tradition and nationalism. He also explains government policies to the villagers and propagates their virtues, yet above all he exudes the traditional morality and piety often lacking in his community. The synthesis of old and new, western and eastern in the single role makes him then the symbolic mediator of traditional manners within modern modes.

In all aspects the symbolic presentation of the penghulu is consistent with the social and real personage in Penang, who is in his community a solid figure of wealth and superiority. The bringing forward of the penghulu in the role of symbolic broker and mediator in boria not only presents a legitimation of the real life role of the penghulu in the community, but also demonstrates he is the model character within village society. His appearance at the end of the sketch to initiate harmony and order among the village characters also has relevance for status seeking by participants.

There are also stories treating the theme of unity as a whole. Such stories as that of H and J in

the sample are particular manipulations of ethnic relations within the local community and national perspectives. In story H for example the main theme is the spirit of goodwill occasioned by the festivity of hari raya celebrations. The symbolism of the theme is made more pungent by the bringing together of the Malay, Chinese and Indian friends on stage, each rising to the occasion and each one affirming their mutual friendship. Any injections of ethnic jokes are taken by participants as a light-hearted banter permissible between friends. The significance of the occasion as a time to forget past wrongs is a main factor in the license for such jokes.

Story J is more politically motivated by the very choice of story. However, its theme is more one of understanding to bring about unity. This is because although the issue is propagandist, the exposition of the plot maintains that boria participants need to be told in simple terms about the concepts that lie behind a united nation. Boria players demonstrate their partiality to poke fun at shortcomings of the Malays with jokes directed at government agencies and policies (eg. questioning the credibility of the country's law, as in story J, or the availability of land plots for urban village areas to keep up with the green book policy, as in story I). Tactfulness

is however observed to be the mainstay of such jokes, with the joke rendered in such a way as to imply more the stupidity and ignorance of the clown than that of the policy or official involved. Nevertheless, this is what the players term a joke in bad taste. Troupe leaders are rather wary when asked to comment on jokes that could hit at government policies and agencies which are in their view inadequate. They would never think of endangering their troupe by being politically critical. Yet there is evidence of an indirect criticism which in the subdued cultural context is surely as effective as open ridicule. Participants generally agree that some of the characters may seem stupid and ridiculous, but that they get away with certain criticisms by being so. For example, a clownish and silly character complains that it is good to have renewed inspirations but one cannot live on that alone. One needs something to give one inspiration like a piece of land to till and plant vegetables on, money to work them, and a market in which to sell them. He concludes that he would not live by eating vegetables alone, he is no Brahmin. And whatever the criticism, the end of such sketches always comes in the form of the penghulu who serves as a coercive force within the community, calling for the suppression of dissent in view of the more

immediate need for national identity and harmony.

5. Conclusion

Elder Olson in The Theory of Comedy, wrote, "Comedy disavows all cause for concern; often producing its characteristic relaxation by treating lightly all things which we take most seriously. There are jokes of aggression or attack, jokes of defense, jokes about war and soldiery, religious, ethnic or national jokes, jokes about social taboos, and least of all jokes of pure fun." ⁴

Boria participants by agreeing that what really sustains their interest in boria is the injection of jokes by players in the sketch, and the almost always lighthearted treatment of all familial, communal and social responsibilities confirm once again the function of a joke. Whatever the jokes and the types they are classified into, they all point to their attempt by witticism to criticize, satirize, and sanction Malay social, religious, and political values as accepted on both familial and communal levels within the national culture concept. Certain incidents are played up in boria, as one leader of boria puts it, to bring home more clearly

4. Elder Olson, The Theory of Comedy; (London : Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 39.

issues that need to be accounted for by the public. They are always poking fun at problems most prevalent in their audiences. That is also why they have a selection of stories to suit weddings, charitable or state-national occasions. All they need to do is modify or suit episodes to the locality to which they have come to put on a show.

In boria comic elements and joke manouvering become acceptably funny to participants by the blending of such elements as follows :

- a) clownish characters,
- b) unreal characters (viz. man playing woman role, Malay stereotypes),
- c) the employment of thrust and parry in dialogue,
- d) the employment of asides by players, bickering or arguing,
- e) the application of irony and frivolity, and,
- f) the employment of abnormal actions induced by such elements as latah or madness.

In the show the only characters exempted from the traits listed above is the person of authority such as the doctor and the penghulu. Every other role becomes stamped with humorous characterization to bring out more fully the themes or sub-themes of the sketch. Whatever the theme or role the aim is to

draw out what participants think is good from the issues in conflict for their own guidance in society. Thus boria arbitrates social change issues for the participants in their everyday interactions.

CHAPTER VI

THE SONG-DANCE

1. Introduction

Song and dance have been suggested as a necessary element in communal type traditional and popular drama performances.¹ In boria they are certainly an integral and important part of the show. The song-dance element is incorporated to complement the sketch and complete the symbolic action of the whole. Since the introduction of the form into Penang, boria has always involved singing and dancing. In the early days of boria, however, the song and dance were highly individualized and each player was allowed his own version. According to an old veteran of the art, Pak Nyak, the individual dancers were ascribed their own medley of steps in accordance with their role. Thus, for example, one would find a player in Arab attire doing an Arabian dance step, a soldier imitating drill and a Chinese

1. See Brandon, op. cit.; p. 125.
See also Suresh Awashti 'The Traditional Theatre of India and its Affinities with the Theatre of Southeast Asia', in Taib Osman, op. cit.; pp. 180-184.

towkay mimicking real persons of the time. Since World War Two the sequence has taken on a whole new form of ordered rhythmic movement of body and arms with measured and repetitive dance-stepping by the sailors in unison.

Today the tukang karang leads the sequence with his composition on the sketch's main theme or themes. He sings the verse and the sailors provide a chorus at the end of each stanza. The chorus is the first verse of the song, which states in essence the aim of the song sequence, for example the first verse and chorus of Kisah Nombor Ekor (Gambling on Numbers) is :

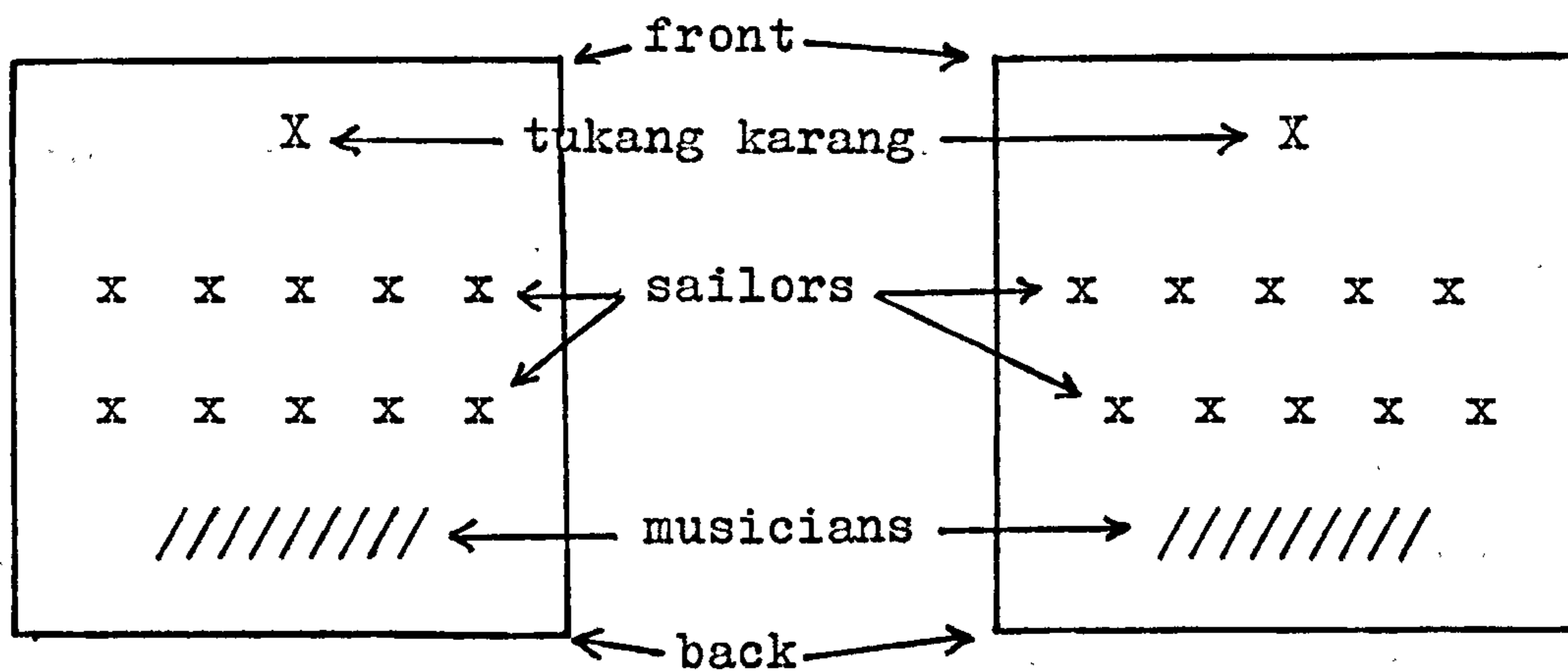
"Many a person has been had
By the follies of gambling
The result is always unfortunate
Ria Seni Pesaka offers objective criticism."

The song and the dance keep time with the rhythm of the musical accompaniment. The regularity of the song pattern - a four lined stanza with about 14 to 20 stanzas per song - and the liveliness of the synchronized dance steps give the sequence a high regularity of movement. The three elements of music, song and dance work together to create a simultaneous unity to this part of the show. The uniform costume

of the choral group with shirts and sash of bright shimmering satin contrasts with their sombre black or blue trousers. At rest, this accentuates the image of regularity; in motion it creates a kaleid-escopic effect.

2. The Players

There are ten or twelve sailors to a troupe, the usual number being ten. They are positioned in two rows from the left to the right side of the stage, and alternate between position A and position B in the diagram below.



Players' Position A

Players' Position B

Youths ranging from 18 to 22 years old who are school leavers, unemployed or factory workers usually take the sailor roles.

The leader, the tukang karang, is usually older than the sailors. Among Penang participants he is

also called tekong (a Malay word in Penang dialect which in English means leader). Besides a good singing voice he must be more dashing than the others in the song-dance sequence. His costume is flashier or smarter than his sailors and he always carries a staff in his right hand. Both the two Sungai Pinang troupes have tukang karangs who are more mature, each in their early thirties. They appear satisfied with their role and do not aspire to become actor players. This is, however, contrary to the players' view that the most desired and difficult role in the whole show is the acting role of the clownish character. Audiences also demonstrate their esteem for the acting role by their praises of the clown character above all others. In these troupes, each troupe leader has a somewhat different attitude to the song-dance performance. This difference probably has some links with their role in the show. Ibrahim is the tukang karang of his troupe. He admits that he is closer to his sailors than his actors and he tries to bring them together at weekends under the pretext of boria practice, while his players usually practice in another house. He confessed his wish to be more direct about topics that touch on politics and political issues, but felt it better to concede to

public and political interests. I shall not go into this here as I will be discussing it in the next chapter. Suffice it to say that at the time of research Malaysia was preparing for the general elections of 1975 and the government was ensuring that no incidents similar to the 13-May Tragedy would follow, as it had in the last elections in 1969. The other troupe leader, Daud, who is well in his fifties, considers himself an old-timer in the business. His role is mostly that of elderly villager. He has an air of resignation and acceptance of the situation around him. By comparison his sketches convey an overriding sense of simple mastery by such players as himself and Shafie. His tukang karang, Hussein, who is the most educated of his troupe members, feels the need for more people from his walk of life (he is a teacher) to join the fold of players. He foresees a vast future for boria in shaping the national culture. His own aspirations in this have so far only extended to his song-dance sequence where in his capacity as the tukang karang he utilizes some stage props and stresses social reawakening, whenever and wherever the song refers to it, by an enthusiastic shaking of his staff or opening his arms out to the audience.

During the time the research was in progress girl

dancers had become an added attraction to the song-dance, and almost all amateur troupes would include girls in the song-dance sequence. In these troupes the girls would form the whole song-dance cast of tukang karang and sailors, or make up part of the chorus. While participants strongly disapprove of females acting in sketches, a dislike arising from the fact that women's acting is regarded as unrealistic and stiff, they were quite happy at the inclusion of girls in the show. The sole woman ever to get involved in professional boria for a long period, over 20 years, did not do so as a player, but as a costume director and tailor of her husband's troupe. Her case is an exception to the rule for present trends show the girls involved are mostly below 22 years old and are unmarried. Of the girl players sample of 24 all but one said they would prefer to stop at marriage. The composition of chorus is therefore rather unstable for players would leave when they are past thirty, get married, or even get a stable job.

Older people in the community who are not actually involved regard it as a 'fad of the times', referring especially to the western style dance of the sailors. Young participants, on the contrary, admire the sailors for daring to appear onstage in defiance of the views of the older generation.

3. Songs and Music

Samples of the songs are given with a prose translation in Appendix II. The form is regular four line rhyming verse. The rhyme is kept at a a a a for one stanza; b b b b for the next and so on with very little variation. Out of 194 total verses comprising the ten songs reproduced here only one verse had a slightly irregular rhyme, which is the last verse of song C with a rhyming of a b b b. The metre is also highly regular with an average of thirteen syllables per line in every verse. The least number of syllables per line is ten and the most 16, giving a maximum variation of six.

In the Malay literary tradition the quatrain is the standard verse form. The best known is the pantun which has played an important role in Malay culture and was the dominant poetic tradition of kings and commoners alike. It is an oral art that overshadowed its less popular counterparts like seloka, gurindam, which are also oral, and the syaer, which is written. In the pantun the first two lines carry no explicit meaning and mainly serve the purpose of aestheticism. They are called the pembayang maksud (screen of the objective) and contain references to the beauty of the surroundings and so on.

The last two lines of the verse carry the meaning and are called the maksud (objective). The whole verse is built to accent the rhythm and rhyme and it has been used to communicate poignant expressions of love, friendship, greetings, gratitude and so forth.

In the 1920s modern poetry began when the pembayang maksud was dropped in favour of utilizing every line as a maksud. This form still continues, but contemporary poets have introduced a free verse form which competes with it. Free verse poetry has become a trademark of the 'new' Malay literati, especially those identifying with western education and civilization; choices of theme include political ideologies and philosophies and other general but abstract themes. Generally the free verse asks a question which is left to be solved by the reader. Nowadays, four line regular 'modern' verse remains significantly associated with local arts. This is the form used in boria.

The song is accompanied by the western 'modern dance' music of rhumba and quick step, or 'soul' music. As one might expect, the 'modern dance' music is the earlier form, preferred by the older generation. Since the late sixties 'soul' has become more popular, and is favoured by the younger generation. The choice

in the choreography has been made to fit the rhythmic regularity of the song and the music to the dance.

4. Themes of Songs

The themes of songs are identical with those of the sketches, for the song-dance repeats in a different form the message conveyed in the sketch. I therefore shall not duplicate my analysis of the sketches by dwelling on the song themes. Instead I have made a selection of key verses from the sample in Appendix II to illustrate in short these basic themes.

Song A : "Listen not to insinuations

On how to equip a wedding complete

Do only what's within your means

Count not what's gold, sapphire or diamond";

and repeated in a following verse thus :

"Bother not with what society may say

Only use your own better judgement

Your own self must first be measured

For no good will come out of a big wedding."

Song B : "The old customs leave aside

It has never been the will of Allah

To one cling too firmly to them

For one's marriage is bound to end in
disaster."

Song C : "Let us unite in a single aim
Clear our culture of its rust
Take interest in our tradition
And leave alone the cultures of the west."

Song D : "Instead let us unite in oneness
Achieve a harmony in culture and religion
Make certain matters a law
Only then will we be able to determine its
quality."

Song E : "Because of the gambling
My land, house and jewellery I have pawned
Following the whims and fancies of the devil
Almost landed myself in Tanjung Rambutan. ²"

Song F : "In such communities you can never be certain
Many a problem is always present
You need to be patient and give way
To avoid certain conflict."

Song G : "Refrain from over indulgence
Use your head with intelligence
Whether doctor or bomoh their aim is the same
Each has their use, each in their place";

and repeated in the last verse of the song thus :

2. A town in Perak, Malaysia well known for its mental institution called 'Taman Bahagia'. The institution is popularly called 'Tanjung Rambutan' which was its previous name.

"Do not let yourself get confused
But utilize both the old and the new
Doctor or bomoh both have their teachers
Those of use we take into account."

Song H : "As this is man's duty
Bring out your money and hoard it not
Almsgiving is an act of atonement
Assisting the lives of the poor."

Song I : "For time is golden and must not be wasted
So let us up and strive forward
Catch hold of the hoe and the rake
Working to get tribute from the soil."

Song J : "Malaysia is independent and honourable
The people must unite in their wishes
Clean up the rot
And polish our personality until it shines."

The themes of the songs, as exemplified in the significant verses from each song above, bear in effect the same message. That is that Malay culture and society are a solid foundation for the future. The audience is told to live within its means, to lead a life of diligence, morality and harmony within a multi-ethnic society because the norms of the society are worthwhile even though they must be modified in the changing times. To stress Malay ethnicity in

this way demands restraint on the part of the tukang karang; overemphasis might strain inter-ethnic relations.

5. The Contrast between the Song-Dance and the Sketch

Though the themes of songs repeat the themes of the sketch, in every other way the song-dance sequence is in deliberate contrast to the sketch. While the sketch is highly improvised and the dialogues are exchanged between village characters who are often crude in manner and address, the song-dance is carefully practised to give the sequence a high precision. The main characters in the sketch are selected because of their individual skills. They have the ability to improvise and to keep the sketch alive. The sailors in the song-dance are chosen because of their age and build, to sing and dance as a group.

As the sketch features older age players, so the song-dance is the area of younger participation. Youngster roles in the sketch are predominantly of deviant youngsters engaged in wild dancing, singing and party-going, with bad habits like smoking, and having uncouth mannerisms. Their main preoccupation is doing what their parents disapprove of and forbid.

In the song-dance their role is reversed. From the stiff, gawky and rebellious teenagers of the sketch, the young-~~aged~~ players now emerge in the song-dance as a united force backing their leader. Audience participants adjudged the portrayal of youth in the sketch as 'unpleasant' but 'true' of only certain areas of the community.

There are in fact more and more youth-activated voluntary associations in Penang that are basically an attempt to create a cultural association between members. In Datuk Keramat area alone there are the Dental Nurses' Association, Medical Association and the more prominent Peseni. Though culturally motivated to promote education and healthy recreation like music group lessons, part-time classes to help school dropouts through examinations, silat (Malay martial art of self-defense) lessons and boria rehearsals, the associations more importantly offer the youth a Malaysian socialization programme. The leadership, however, is still under the control of older people who motivate the group activities. Likewise most voluntary associations such as those in schools and the UMNO Youth need older people as leaders and organisers. Older participants within the community felt that youths must be properly 'led' to avoid them

'going astray'. To be responsible is the encumbering attitude of the older generation often undermining the capabilities of their young in determining their own future.

Question 34 in the questionnaire of Appendix I ³ was aimed at elucidating participant impression of parts of the show. Answers reveal that both players and audience participants seem to regard the role-playing of the clown and the episodes in the sketch as the more important aspect. Observation of behaviour of participants during shows confirm this general idea; for though tense and absorbed during the sketch, the audience, especially grown-ups, would visibly relax during the song-dance sequence. On occasions where there are other attractions like a Hindi film alongside a boria performance, some of the womenfolk and older people would move away from the song-dance in order to watch the film; thus reducing the audience that had been fully concentrated on the boria sketch. Younger people prefer to stay on, though from what I overheard it appears that for some of them their attention was more directed to the dance movement and the clothes of the players than the words of the song itself; after all the song stanzas are repetitive and the

3. See Appendix I, p.342.

chorus singing is often incomprehensible in the rear of the audience. The tukang karang, can always be clearly heard as he has the microphone to help him.

For young participants then the song-dance offers modernity and spectacle in a manner which flatters youth instead of condemning it. For those that wish to become players it offers an opportunity to join a troupe as one of a standardized, and therefore to some extent faceless, chorus in an undemanding role. Later when they have overcome their stage fright and gained experience, they may become actors in the more demanding roles of the sketches.

6. The Combination of Old and New

Since the song-dance is associated with youth and modernity, why is the 'traditional' song form of the quatrain retained in contrast with the 'modern' type of music and dance ? Indeed when the boria is so Malay in sentiment why does the song-dance employ 'western' music and dance at all ? These are pertinent questions and there are several answers.

First, the Sungai Pinang troupe leaders ascribed the style of song composition to one Othman, a man in his late fifties or thereabouts. He is Malay educated and the new free verse is unknown to him. This and his affection for and knowledge of the Malay

literary activities of the inter-war years, may together account for his adherence to the 'modern' quatrain which was new in his youth. His own skills as poet and tukang karang may further explain the widespread adoption of the form. It was also widely agreed by the choruses that the quatrain is very effective for 'drumming in' the message by its repetitive rhyming form. But when one considers the very few professional troupes in comparison with the many (if not long lasting) amateur troupes drawing their players from a different generation and educational background these can only be partial explanations.

If we consider the dance, then Malays have a variety of traditional dance forms which are available for adaptation to boria. In particular joget has emerged as widely popular, and has been expanded into three major variations of step and movement. Why not joget instead of adulterated versions of quickstep, rhumba or soul ? The dancers say that it is too jerky to be suitable for boria, and none of them thought it possible to change western style dance numbers to an eastern variation. They thought it would create 'disharmony' and reduce the attraction of the shows. Ibrahim said more directly that as the theme was of a new outlook on life the dance must also

be symbolic of modernity. Here then is a problem for the exponents of national culture - how, if Malay is traditional, and western, modern, can Malay become modern? Perhaps only by the acceptance of forms of diverse origin as Malay, a process of adaptation which probably has been accomplished in Borneo several times in its history. In which case the main problem of national culture lies in its own earnestness, time alone being necessary to produce what is desired.

The critical point here is the importance of harmony to the participants. The song form and the music and dance are regarded as occurring together in harmony. Even the contrast of the sketch presentation and the song-dance sequence is viewed as 'harmonic'. The show opens with a representation of a cross-section of the members of the community. In the manipulation of the symbolic action the characters mainly express their uncouthness and dim-wittedness. Any flashes of intelligence, usually by the clowns, are few and far between and often overshadowed by their funny antics. The characters in their various roles only serve to highlight the stature of the authoritative personality (eg. the penghulu) who always comes in towards the end of the sketch. Yet the whole show is rounded off by the chorus of young performers whose part, though

rendered in an altogether different style, communicates the very same message enacted in the sketch. The importance of youth in the song-dance counteracts the symbolic expression of their deviance in the sketch. The symbolism of uselessness in the sketch is replaced by hopefulness in the song-dance. This convention in boria shows the twin role of youth in society, and equally the dual role of western influences, for both are viewed as 'bad' in the former and 'all right' in the latter.

This harmony can be conceived of in a slightly different way. The dialogue of the sketch carries along a simple plot, but is improvised to exploit the spontaneous reaction of the audience. It is tempered by the personal interaction of the players and their emotional needs. The verse of the song-dance carries the same ultimate message, but being scripted it aims to sway the audience into accepting its moral more directly. In other words, while the sketch is influenced by the audience; the song-dance attempts to influence them. In the song-dance a dashing young tukang karang leads his followers, the sailors, into a song of persuasion to opt for progress. He and his followers call for participants to have an open mind to all incidents, right the wrongs, better the odds

and aim for a progressive Malay society. The songs always dwell on a note that reminds participants of their 'Malayness' irrespective of their rural or suburban styles of life, and thus the overriding motivation aspiring for a united aim through religion, culture and personality in balance with old and new, traditional and modern.

Here then one sees that the dynamic traits have been assimilated into a cultural form - not in their entirety but by a selection of those elements which are appropriate to and consonant with the culture which is absorbing them. The traits themselves are not static - western dance music is represented by quickstep, rhumba and soul, forms in vogue at very different periods - nor is Malay culture - the quatrain is a traditional form only because it persists in its four line stanza form, whereas in actual fact it is modern because it is still in the process of shedding the tight rhythm and rhyme or for that matter syllables associated to its traditional form. This assimilation and adaptation is not a matter of foreign fragments being attached for a time to a monolithic Malay culture, but of elements intermingling constantly to produce new forms which are as Malay as any other elements. All cultures are syncretic, the problem in studies of

South-East Asian societies being that they have been seen as overly syncretic by academic surgeons determined to dissect them into their 'original' components.

CHAPTER VII

BORIA AND ITS PENANG PARTICIPANTS

1. Introduction

In this chapter an attempt is made to examine the symbolic action of boria in relation to the social action of the community which is its milieu. That is, I try to relate the meaning of the performance to the ideals and behaviour of the society in which it is performed. As has been stated earlier, the relationship between theatrical production and society in South-East Asia is of a different order to that between drama and society in the west. In South-East Asia there is a complex and closely integrated relationship between symbolic action and social action; western drama largely lacks this - with its stress on the relation between dramatic action and the audience.

The urban kampung Malays of parts of Penang have been involved in boria to such a degree as both audience and players, that virtually all the community have at one time or another been participants. This being so, the question of how to relate an audience which is a fraction of a community to the total

community to establish relationships between drama and society does not arise : the participants are the community. In this situation, symbolic action can be related very directly to social action. The relationship exists; the problem lies in exposing the ways in which it is manifested; this can be established by examining participant involvement with and reaction to the symbolic action both inside and outside the theatre.

2. Boria Participation

In terms of the experience of participants with boria, the Sungai Pinang troupes regularly interact with the Datuk Keramat, Air Itam (town)¹ and Jelutung Malays both during the show, when their communication takes the form of role player and active recipient, and in daily life as socially interacting categories of people. It was in these areas of deep involvement with boria that the research was most intensive. In all, there was a random sample of 340 participants from Datuk Keramat area, 174 from Jelutung and 137 from Air Itam town area; together totalling a

1. Air Itam is divided into two sub-districts : Air Itam area that comes under the City Council and Air Itam area that comes under the Central and South Rural Council. Air Itam (town) refers to the area under the City Council of Georgetown.

participant sample of 651 people. A special survey of players was also taken in the troupes in these areas and 79 became the player sample.

The community is the suburban kampung. The inhabitants are mainly in the 'working class' category based on the participant sample's monthly income, the majority earning M\$300 and less (see Table III).

Earning Scales ² (monthly rates)	Datuk Keramat		Jelutung		Air Itam	
	Total	%age	Tot.	%age	Tot.	%age
dependants/unemployed	147	43.2	61	35.1	58	42.3
M\$300 and below	169	49.7	95	54.6	49	35.8
M\$300 - M\$600	19	5.6	13	7.4	25	18.3
above M\$600	5	1.5	5	2.9	5	3.6
TOTAL	340	100	174	100	137	100

Table III : Monthly Cash Incomes of Participant
(Audience) Sample.

Ethnically they are Malay and are mainly non-skilled workers. They commute to the capital city of Georgetown to work. The players are in the same social

2. These aggregates were based on the 1975 Harun Salary Commission. By early 1977 a new commission was implemented whereby the lower income groups especially categories B, C and D benefitted by an average of a further 50% increase in salary. The commission only directly affected the salaries of quasi-government and government workers.

category as the other participants. Of the 79 players in the sample 16 were unemployed, 59 were earning less than M\$300 and four were earning between M\$300 - M\$600 per month.

Within his social milieu and among fellow participants, a player is known and respected by virtue of his role in boria. Outside at work he is no more than the next person or colleague. Thus the highly respected penghulu role player, Pak Man, who is a trishaw puller receives abusive remarks daily from his passengers while haggling over prices unless he is recognized. Daud who is well known and respected among Malay people finds himself only blatantly disrespected by most of his Chinese fellow-employees. As he operates from his workplace - printing his office telephone number in a small card he uses to promote his troupe - this has led in his absence to incoming calls or inquiries for him being received rudely and in an offhand manner. His job as an office boy makes it necessary for him to be more often outside than inside his workplace. It all acts as a deterrent in his boria promotional activity. The atmosphere in Ibrahim's workplace is more cordial. He is also incidentally one of the players who earn above M\$300 monthly. His colleagues were more ready to accept his

calls and find him for visitors and enquirers. Both Daud and Ibrahim work in privately-owned enterprises. Most of the players work in quasi-government institutions or are self-employed and are thus able to arrange and coordinate their occupation to suit their pastime. Of the 59 employed players in the sample, 29 work with private companies or are self-employed and 35 were either employed by or trainees in governmental institutions.

No boria troupe keeps a proper record of how many performances they have given per year. Of the two troupes - the Ria Seni Pesaka and the Boria Sungai Pinang - that I was concentrating on, only the former troupe's leader made any such attempt. His fresh memory was probably due to the fact that he had newly launched the troupe and was therefore eager to observe its progress. In the first year of the troupe's activity, from the later parts of 1974 to the end of 1975, the troupe leader said that his troupe put on 24 performances in Penang and 18 elsewhere. Of the 24 locally held shows seven were for wedding occasions, six for cultural state-level shows and seven were for charitable benefits by various institutions. Four of the local shows were then recorded for part of a weekly radio programme of boria in 1975. Of the 18

performances elsewhere ten were live shows in Perak, Perlis and Kedah and eight were shows recorded for television. In the second year of the troupe's activity, in 1976, due to the troupe leader's ill-health and regular hospital treatment, his troupe were only able to put on seven local shows and five elsewhere. Of the seven local shows two were for weddings and the rest institutional invitations. Of the five shows elsewhere, two were in Kedah and three in Perak, with only one for a wedding occasion, three for charitable occasions and one in conjunction with the Lumut Sea Festival in Perak. Ibrahim, the troupe leader for Ria Seni Pesaka, admitted that he had put on more local shows than he had actually noted down. What really arrested my attention was the troupe leaders' almost nonchalant attitude towards keeping proper track of their troupe activities. This carelessness on their part seems to be viewed by them with pride rather than shame. From my observations I was inclined to think that besides the activities being non-profit making, thus making it less of a business venture that had to contend with proper records from the economic point of view, there was the implicit attitude of participants to take boria shows as a symbol of their communal way of life. While expressing dissatisfaction with the payments received for performances on radio or

television as being too small, they would shun any show of monetary greed when putting on performances locally, especially those for charity. On the other hand when they were called to put on shows in other states (viz. Perlis, Kedah and Perak) they would consider the payment as the priority factor in accepting the invitation. Troupes like Daud's and Ibrahim's would charge almost double their local rate for shows outside of Penang Island. The payment for local shows ranges from M\$100 - M\$200. The increased cost of an 'outside show' was ascribed by leaders to the cost of meeting the expenses (mainly transport, food and refreshment) when these were not provided. Apart from the economic aspect, the leaders also ascribed the higher cost to the request to put on shows that treat themes required by the hiring bodies.

There are broadly two categories of audience. The first, with which I am most concerned here, is composed of people who regularly attend boria performances. They are mainly the urban kampung Malays whose involvement in boria is participant. These Malays provide the players, the occasions, the audience; for them boria is an integral part of their normal lives. The second kind of audience is one composed of spectators rather than participants. They

see performances occasionally, and having little understanding of boria in its total context, would either regard it as pure entertainment and seronok (enjoyable) - a favourite comment from rural Malays who can get to such shows but rarely - or tend to look for aesthetic values in the shows. This latter category are mainly Malays who are well educated and in the upper income groups of Penang state and the Malay peninsula, with a sprinkling of people from other ethnic groups and tourists. The Malays among them arrange and attend shows because it is the 'done' thing - ie. for reasons such as because it is traditional in certain contexts, because they feel their guests will enjoy it and because of national political policy. They find boria very limited in comparison with the western type drama with which they are more familiar, and are unhappy with the use of the Penang Malay dialect and associations which they find difficulty in understanding. These literati are inclined to promote boria nationally, but in line with the concept of a national culture they wish to see it improved - with more sophisticated drama, more standardized language, a national referent in the jokes and allusions instead of a local one, more sophisticated organization, troupes with mixed male

and female players, and troupes with players from different ethnic groups. For example the April 1974 Seminar on Boria organized by the Penang Department of Culture had the express aim of changing boria to 'suit the times'. The change suggested, but not implemented because they did not receive wholehearted cooperation from troupes, were : a) to break the sketch into plots, sub-plots and scenes, b) to bring in stage settings, c) to include the use of some traditional musical instruments, d) to encourage male and female participation, and e) to form a committee at the state level to help streamline and organize existing troupes toward that end. The obstacle to the kind of progress suggested is that the core boria of the urban kampung Malays in which participation is high is largely content with what it is. Those involved are pleased by a wider interest in their activities and are willing to go along to a certain extent with change by performing on radio or television or outside Penang, making adjustments to cast and to plots (especially by accepting 'propaganda' themes). Yet they recognize their limitations and accept that their local base is their best market. Here the local political situation is important. With the state cultural department promoting Malay arts as Malaysian culture and the Chinese political administration encouraging

Chinese arts, boria is curiously being encouraged to be more Malay. Its political association with UMNO and its promotion by Malays, artificially create competition with the Chinese arts. What is happening is that Penang 'transitional' or perhaps 'participant' boria for want of an exact term, is being separated out from a new Malaysian boria which is a syncretism of western and Malay forms more suited to the media of television and radio. If the new form succeeds, then paradoxically again the participant form may also flourish, for, as the political pressures on it to change relax and its political associations weaken, its sketches can become more local in their themes and attract a wider audience as in pre-war days. We are back to the problem with which we commenced - is it better to allow communal performing arts to develop freely and continue with a rich, varied and localized pattern of culture or to attempt to produce new hybrids and discard their forbears. The present policy emphasizes the latter course, but in the process it appears to strengthen the case for promoting the new and retaining the old. This should become clearer if we return to our examination of the participant type of boria.

3. On the Meaning of the Term 'Boria'

The origin and meaning of the term boria were considered in Chapter II. Originally it derived from the Indian name 'Boria' which meant 'matting'. Today, the folk etymology is 'borak' (to bluff) referring to the sketch and 'ria' (to be happy) referring to the song-dance sequence. Neither derivation tells us anything of its modern social usage. Apart from the direct reference to the show, I found three modern usages which are illuminating.

The first was impressed on me by a young mother who scolded her six year old son in front of guests for fondling his penis, and the scolding had the desired effect. Here boria is a euphemism to avoid the commoner and cruder kote used to describe a child's genitals, part of the Malay malu (shy) complex³ of polite behaviour and good manners (sopan santun). More generally circumlocutions such as anu or benda tu (that thing) are resorted to whenever conversation demands a reference to the genitalia. The second usage is by adults such as married couples

3. See also Zainal Kling, The Saribas Malays of Sarawak; (a Ph. D. Thesis submitted in the University of Hull, 1973.); pp. 180-181 for a fuller description of the malu syndrome in Malay society.

and close friends. When they wish to question the sincerity or seriousness of a conversation they use the phrase hang ni main boria ke ? (are you playing boria ?). The third was heard on one of my visits to a participant's house. The house was full of family visitors and she apologized for the noise, to their amusement by remarking "this household is as noisy as boria". All three usages appear to derive from a concept of boria as laughingly reprimanding and correcting behaviour.

4. Boria and its Symbolic Action

In boria the symbolic action can be categorized into status of main characters, goal of main characters, outcome of action, agency to bring about the outcome, setting, and time to bring about the outcome. Status of main characters refers to their rank which is accorded mainly by title, age, wealth and power. Goal denotes a future state of affairs anticipated by the actor. Outcome of action is the end result of the goal of main characters and refers to the state of affairs actually existing when the action ends. Agency denotes the main device to bring about the outcome, which may be the means or the condition that brings about the outcome. Setting denotes those devices that are not included as agency,

for example the socio-cultural milieu in which the action is set. Time denotes the fictional duration of the action usually based on a character's claim (for example a character says, "It has been two weeks now since ...") although the story unfolds onstage within as short/as ^{a time} 45 minutes.

These categories offer ways of analyzing the plot and are seen in the sketch of shows. Through the plot the theme unfolds. The movement of the action is episodic rather than dramatic though the audience do admit a tense moment or two that is close to a climax or anti-climax in the play. This episodic movement shows that boria is more traditional in form with the action mainly created by the clownish characters on stage who produce a variety of sub-plots and sub-themes by their jokes and bantering. In the stories dwelling on the Malay's old/traditional versus young/modern values (stories A,B,C,D and G in the sample), for example, the stories unfold with a parent or elderly person conflicting with either one of their children or a young person. The conflict arises out of differences of values and except for story A is brought about by the deviant actions of the younger person. The conflict is settled through the good work of the village chief, the penghulu, who

offers advice and guides the act of compromise. The action unfolds over a time span of less than a fortnight at the most, and in a few hours at the least, from the time the conflict starts to its resolution. The setting is the kampung throughout.

Let us pick out the sketches and view them in retrospect. In the sample sketches dealing directly with yellow culture are episodes C and D. In both cases the players treatment of the issues is light-hearted, though the jokes reveal their general opposition to yellow culture. The symbolization of the younger age group as a 'useless' lot, useless because they are fun-loving, pleasure seekers, is perceived to be a means to induce a counter psychological reaction among the young audience. The characters use foul language, abuse their elders, cheat upon their parents, disturb public peace and altogether are presented as thoughtless of the wider consequences of their acts. Yet by utilizing the clown character as the delinquent whose antics are on first impression more funny than rude can create an interaction of like manner from some young quarters in the audience. One such incident at a show brings out the kind of reaction parallel to the unfolding of the symbolic action on stage, which demonstrated

poignantly to me the interactive effect of boria on its audience. The show was enacting sketch C. In the audience there was a group of boys who seemed set upon enjoying themselves. Among them a youth stood out for he wore a sarong and Malay kurung top with the songkok (hat) placed the wrong way round on his head. His friends wore pants and shirt tops. Like the clown on stage he was keeping up a lively parley by offering loud comments on the action of the delinquent characters onstage. A woman nearby muttered 'kurang ajar' (illmannered !) under her breath. Others near the group were either bemused or disdainful. As the banter onstage continued the boy's retorts also became more vigorous. The other boys in the group happily nudged him on. As the story progressed, however, the young roles onstage began to reflect more and more of their negative aspects of stupidity and crude mannerisms. Likewise the group of youths became more and more conscious of the people around them and by then they appeared uncomfortable and some began to keep their attention more on the stage and to ignore the youth. The youth made further attempts at rowdy clowning but his enthusiasm grew weaker and trickled to a stop. By the end of the sketch and when next I turned in the group's direction they were gone,

presumably to another part of the audience area. I was unable to follow up the boy's reactions for the next show for I lost him in the crowd, but my neighbour's comments voiced my own when she said that that should teach him a lesson in not making a fool of himself in future. Reflecting on this incident I perceived that by playing up certain aspects of western cultural influences in the symbolic action, the players had managed to bring out a like response from the youthful audiences. But as the action onstage progressed and the theme of wild western influences took on a bitter flavour, what had been enthusiastic response became a conscious effort to dissociate from what was represented on stage. In a sense, the boy in the audience was as effective an intermediary for the theme of the sketch, as the clownish character on the stage. The fact that this particular show was an outside show - a Farmers' Association fund-raising venture in Yan, Kedah - and the fact that it was a second experience of a live boria show for the village and could well be a first for the group of boys brought home more realistically the close interactive procedure of the players and audience. Boria players were actually quite fond of utilizing this theme of old/traditional versus young/modern usually making it a theme for their

first performance or including it in their second performance, or both performances in a show as the case may be. Of the 42 shows seen 20 contain this theme.

In the selection process from the western cultural influences the symbolic action in boria seems to accept what is viewed as good and suited to local needs and rejects what is contrary to Islamic standards. Those rejected are dubbed 'yellow culture of the west'. Boria players list such activities like wild music and dance, especially those involving male female sexuality, gangsterism, nudism including 'streaking', drug addiction, 'hippyism' associated with lax moral values and slovenliness. These are labelled as yellow because they are the deviant type activities that are not only wild but also encourage a person's forgetfulness of Islamic teachings. Another participant who is better educated than most of the players associated the yellow colour with the popular view of 'otak kuning' (yellow brain) which is another way of saying that a person is mad. Thus yellow culture to him is mad culture and therefore unacceptable. Based on their views the sketches that treat themes on yellow cultural activities are concerned with these two conflicting elements. Those representing

Malay eastern cultural tradition are associated with the younger people especially teenagers. Accordingly the old traditional are set against the young and western as the positive versus the negative. However the exposure of the two viewpoints in a sketch, shows a process in which the gradual assimilation into society of young and western attitudes is taking place, and some at least of the new culture is seen as positive. This attitudinal change is communicated through the symbolic actions of boria.

However, boria players do not always present modernity and modern age values negatively. For example, western medical expertise is preferred to the spiritual curing of the bomoh. The attire of the penghulu in contrast to the picture presented by the common villager who wears the traditional dress of the Malay, the Chinese or the Indian, as the case may be, is in favour of western type clothing. In considering the generational conflict both youth and age are given negative and positive values. For example, numbers gambling is a negative type preoccupation of the elderly person in the symbolic action. A youth is never involved in such incidences. Then again the preoccupation with traditional methods of cure becomes a negative value of the elderly person in which youth

is dragged in as the unwilling object of the exercise. Also the preoccupation of the older person with the show of material success, whether real or assumed, is always pointed out as an evil to the community. The point is that boria points more to the social evil than to the actual members of the society, for the evil can be symbolized with equal clarity by any young or elderly character. Too obviously we see in the sketches that an elder, epitomized by the penghulu role, is always right; a youth is not given the authority to prove his worth. His is the case of the second class citizen by virtue of his age as well as his behaviour. The elderly person is always rated as first class in relation to the youth; any lowering of their status takes place within the category of elders, so that overall the attitudes of respect towards them are maintained. Thus in the issue of modernity, positive values become approved and negative values rejected. In sum, favourable values of modernity are presented by the older age category which confirms their status, while unfavourable values of modernity are rendered by either the older or the younger age categories. Favourability or otherwise can be discerned in audience reaction. Players who find certain treatments generally applauded remember to incorporate this

experience into future shows. For example, in sketch G the bomoh's behaviour received boos and catcalls from the audience. It incited the role player to introduce further bawdiness to the part. By contrast the doctor was received with a silence, and this was perceived as respect for his official but offhanded treatment of the matter in hand. Similarly the penghulu role is always accepted quietly by the audience, the quietening down of the onstage action by the entrance of the penghulu being followed by them; a symbolic experience that sums up community experience of these two authoritative characters.

The symbolic action plays up the negative character by his coarse and crude mannerisms and attire, which are a direct contrast to his positive counterpart. Yet the symbolic action had for want of a direct association communicated an intermixing of western and eastern values. For example the bomoh character is old and traditional but materialistic,⁴ an association of unwholesome western value stamped on to him. The doctor is young and modern in outlook and attire yet refuses the money offered him. More

4. Materialism as a modern western type value is discussed by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana in Values as Integrating Forces in Personality, Society and Culture; (Kuala Lumpur : University of Malaya Press, 1966), - pp. 46-49 and 126.

practically such symbolism meant simply that the bomoh must accept the money in order to support his livelihood, whereas the doctor finds his monthly salary enough and more to keep him comfortably off. Yet the bent of the symbolic action onstage seems to disregard the two characters' social station in emphasizing the greed of one in contrast to the other. The attitude symbolized here emphasizes the upholding of certain cultural traits and values. The motivation towards modernity here, and elsewhere in boria shows showed symbolic actions of like nature. It is observed to have but one main objective, that of conservatism; thus moderation in any act of modernization.

This motivation is communicated to the participants and expressed in their acceptance or rejection of a character not so much to the character as to the particular role played. Thus, a wife is antagonistically viewed for her unreasonable demands upon the husband. It is her selfish vanity that is blamed. When she is sorry at the end of the symbolic action onstage and her husband reassumes control over her, the audience smiled and sighed in relief. A husband looks upon his wife, who is carrying a child astride her waist, with superiority and smiles gratefully at her.

The participants' rejection of the youths is

accounted for by the youths' overzealous pursuit of such fads of their time as pop songs and music, or fashion fads which at the time of research included boots and beads. Symbolically their presentation is as ill-dressed and uncouth characters whose activities are motivated at the wrong times and situation. Boria participants impress upon one the importance of a cleanly appearance to determine a person's good character. This kind of exposition of a character's worth was again demonstrated in story D with a slight twist of irony, when the girl praised by her mother as obedient and loyal to her mother's needs who wears kurung every day, was revealed as her true immodest self when she and her friends were caught wearing outrageous clothes. The moral here is not so much to not wear such clothes as to exercise moderation in dress and other social activities.

Set as a contrast is the song-dance sequence. In the mode of the symbolic action of the song-dance is discerned a syncretism of the total positive values of boria sketches. The characters are young, the dance is modern and the music bright and cheerful. The movement and the songs are regular and symmetrical. The result is a conscious effort of players to represent all that they consciously consider as positive into the

finale of the song-dance rendering. There are both a harmonious blending of old/traditional and young/modern in the song-dance, synthesizing all the choice positive values in the hope of swaying the participants into an acceptance of the desirable symbolic action.

Overall the symbolic action conveyed the message for a kind of moderation, of the striking of a happy balance between the characters in conflict. Thus the sketches with husband and wife present a moderate path between the two extremes of marriage in which one partner dominates the other, and offers a modern compromise based on equal status. Participants are known to liken their daily conflict to that of boria by such remonstrations as "hang ni main boria ke ?" (are you playing boria ?) when provoked by their spouse's idleness, gambling, nagging, demanding household luxuries or jewellery. To be put in the same category as a spouse in boria is no small accusation and becomes even more pregnant with meaning by virtue of its subtle instead of direct reprimand. The usual reception to such an analogy is weak protestation dying off into bashful laughter. Yet such remarks are not harmful and are taken with no obvious loss of face, so that a harmonious relationship can be quickly resumed.

In boria, jokes are the mainstay of the dialogue by the clownish character, and may not be directly related to the episode in hand. Tactically they are made to avoid a too straightforward sequence of episodes. Thus they are usually jocular insertions to rouse audience response. Having once achieved it, the comedian prolongs the laughter by telling more jokes in a similar vein. The favourite ones highly rated by participants are those touching on Malay ethnocentricity. It abounds in all sketches but more so in stories involving the three ethnic groups. By ridiculing Chinese and Indian ethnic traits, the Malay player emphasizes his own group affiliation with the audience. Closely associated in the ethnocentrism are the virtues of the groups' values as for example the teachings of Islam. Thus we find a Malay character in the sketch poking fun at his Chinese friend for his pork-eating habits. This witticism at the Chinese character's expense brings more than a superficial reaction from the audience, because in the community the revulsion at the mention of pigs goes deeper than accepting "pigs are unclean animals". Grown ups and children alike would either hold up their breath and hurriedly pass a Chinese restaurant that displays cooked or roasted pork or go as far as to

cover their mouth and nose with a handkerchief. In one audience a young boy who responded with a snorting sound to imitate pig noises was slapped heartily by his mother. When the Malay character ridiculed Chinese flat noses as a result of eating too much pork, simultaneously putting his fingers to flatten his nose and shaping his mouth into a snout shape, the audience responded with gales of laughter. The Chinese economic role as shopkeeper is also a source of jokes. In the scene where Amat wants to borrow some money from Ah Chong he has no success despite offering his house and bicycle as collateral, until he mentions that he is the relative of the penghulu, whereupon the loan is soon transacted. Amat would then quip to his audience about the Chinaman who would sell even his own child for profit. In another instance Amat goes as far as to pull at Ah Chong's 'pigtail'. The action is made excusable because Amat does it when he was not in a right frame of mind and it becomes accepted as funny. In Malay society, and for that matter Chinese and Indian society as well, the head is a venerated object not to be vilified under normal circumstances. The fact that there is no similar occurrence to a Malay character's head sheds light on another element of social structure. The cathartic feeling associated

with the defilement allows the participants' envy of Chinese superiority in the economic structure to be purified, and the Malay audience become more accepting of their social status vis-a-vis the Chinese in the total community. In this sense the act of plait-pulling reverses the status factor and creates a subliminal levelling into an acceptance of the social reality.

The Indian representative is also ridiculed, but the witticisms and jokes piled upon him are relatively less severe in connotation and also less frequent in the shows. Certain kinds of ridicule like pointing out and emphasizing the Indian's dirty habits are quite interesting. For example, the betel-chewing habit of the Indians, which has also become a Malay habit through the process of assimilation, is actually poked fun at. A player inserts jocular remarks about his Indian friend's bad habit of spitting out the juice from the betel leaf concoction, usually followed with a mimed simulation directed towards the audience. Some audience participants turn away instinctively as though to avoid the (imaginary) spittle, and at the same time laughing as much at their reaction as at the action on stage. As I see it the reactionary bias against the Indian is not so much to the betel-chewing as to

the polluting habits of Indian mannerisms.

There were ten shows treating ethnic themes or sub-themes. The pattern of victimization of characters shows the Malay as victimizer and Chinese and Indians as victims.

	Chinese	Indian	Malay
victimizer	0	0	10
victim	8	8	0

Table IV : Ethnic Victimization

(based on ten shows)

Of the ten shows in the table, six included Chinese, Indian and Malay characters, two included Chinese and Malay and two included Indian and Malay characters.

There are also cases of Malay victimization by the Chinese or Indian character, but they are not regarded as ethnic type jokes. The fact that these characters are played by Malays for a Malay audience puts the Malay ridicule into another category altogether. The two types of ethnic joke refer to what I shall for convenience term the negative and positive values respectively of the Malay ethnocentric continuum. The Malay social process has been one of acculturation,

assimilation and adaptation. The identity associated with Malay is broadly one who speaks Malay, has a Malay parent and believes in the Islamic religion. In this group identification the factor of Islamic values seems to be most treated in boria. Politically, the declaration making Islam the official religion in the country and giving preference in the national culture to Islamic types of expression, have given the added incentive to players to give free reign to their own value-motivated experiences. The thematic choice is the existing eastern values pitted against the incoming western ones. The trend is similar to that of Malay against non-Malay (Chinese and Indians) ethnicity, except that the ethnic evaluation is clearly of Malays as positive and non-Malays as negative, while in the participant reaction to eastern versus western values the demarcation is less polarized.

Political 'propaganda' stories present another thematic treatment of the symbolic action. In these stories, however, the enactment of action is often discursive rather than motivated by conflicts. In sample story J, for example, the sketch was a discussion of the tenets of the national ideology. In story I we perceive some kind of conflict between a wife and her husband over putting the Green Book policy into

practice. Such political 'propaganda' stories divide the characters into the enquirer and the informant. Performances of political 'propaganda' stories are never seen during wedding occasions, only occasionally during shows for charity and always during state and national-type occasions. Such stories feature a great deal in competitions and political rallies, wherein boria shows provide the entertainment-cum-persuasion media. As far as boria players are concerned it is their function to mediate newly made government policies in the way best accepted and understood by participants. Any allusions to inefficiency in or drawbacks of the carrying out of these policies appear to suggest more upon the participants' ignorance than that the government is at fault. Players prefer to explain them as incidental though necessary. More practically the political 'propaganda' stories serve as a sporadic communications network for the flow of information to the participants by the participants. More abstract themes of political discussions such as the national ideology are less enthusiastically accepted than the socio-political propaganda of crop growing, animal husbandry and so on that could be built upon conflicts between characters.

5. Boria and its Community

Most of the significant features of the actual social structure and everyday life of the Penang urban Malay villages under study have already been brought out in earlier chapters, and it seems pointless to repeat them here. I have in mind matters such as interethnic relations which are generally good on a personal level between Malays, Chinese and Indians as local residents and also in the market and workplace, but which deteriorate in more general and abstract commentary. Also their political affiliations, work relationships, urban ties and voluntary associations. What I want to take up here are certain aspects of Malay community life particularly important for boria.

In essence boria sketches are an ensemble performance particular to the social life of the participants. The players playing the roles of members of the community are themselves members of it familiar with the goings on and gossip. What they observe to happen in real life within their community is enacted during shows with the expressed aim of both social reprimand and social reinforcement. Boria serves as a socially significant institution of the community in driving opinion towards the establishment of a 'desired' society. By virtue of the fact that boria

participants of live shows are actors and audience interacting within the same social community of Malays and are also interacting with other ethnic groups locally in the market place and outside especially in the work place, the stories are in themselves symbolic actions of community. The main theme is the ongoing social process of modernization; influences of educational, economic and political factors being the elements of motivation. There is also the overall control of Islam which serves as a regulating force. Socially, the Malays themselves are divided into the old/traditional group at one extreme, who cling to the values of their forefathers and try to inculcate these values in their children. At the other extreme are the new/western-oriented group who accept modernization as necessary and regard western type culture as the primary requisite for progress. In the Penang Malay community boria offers a merging together of the two extremes through a symbolic process of selection or rejection of the traditional and modern values. Though the guiding discipline is still the teachings of Islam, the faith is now less confining and restricting in accordance with social trends. Thus as I see it the social change taking place in these Penang Malay communities is a selective process in which modernization

is tempered by traditional values. Questions 28 and 29 in the questionnaire were designed to elicit information on this and confirm my observation. The answers show that while secular achievements such as educational attainment, industrialization and economic gains as well as political stability were considered the important factors for growth and stability, there was also just as much emphasis laid on religion, good deeds and ethnic goodwill.

The symbolic action of 'community' as shown in boria has imperative association with eastern cultural values acting as the regulatory factors in social change while western cultural values and the young age groups act as the main forces for change. The political atmosphere in the country acts as the overall manoeuvring agent in both the symbolic action and the communal process guiding their activities.

The sample sketches show some interesting examples of the upholding of such value-behaviour in the relations between the young and old members of the group. While the value of hormat (respect) and sopan (good behaviour) of the young toward the elder is the norm, it is apparently not a permanent or unquestionable virtue deemed as always necessary during young-old interactions. Certain factors

contribute to the type of interaction. In episode B the young husband has to act in reversal of the behaviour norm for the sake of his own family interest. His expressed wish to reconcile and resume his relationship with his wife made him act against the norm and succeeded in injecting some feeling of shame into his in-laws. In this case the reversal of the behavioural conduct of the young demonstrates the limitation of such values to certain situations of action. Most participants and especially females agreed that marriage is a kind of social attainment giving a certain position of respectability in the community. In such cases the husband who lodges in his parental home with his wife would have to maintain a balance between his own responsibilities as son and as a spouse. The latter is often considered as secondary in terms of his responsibility as an offspring; a situation that puts him in a liminal status position. The wife's actions and movements must be reserved least she offend her in-laws. Likewise an elder person must guard against swearing or blaspheming in front of the young. But faced with blatant rudeness from them, as in sketch C, an elder reverts to the same tactics and rudely swears at them - going as far as to swear 'on their fathers' head'. In Penang Malay society to

blaspheme by mentioning the parent is a way of condemning the righteousness (mulia) of oneself. The cognitive significance of cursing a person by abusing their parent is a heavy imposition of the malu (shame) complex on the abuser. In the symbolic action the use of such terms is accepted as an emotional release for producing a good end. Within the dynamics of daily life the constraints on such remarks are sometimes relaxed; for example in light hearted banter between close friends. But when actually uttered by an adult who directs it at a naughty child, the consequences can be open quarrels or enmity should it be heard by the child's parent. Besides not being tolerated, it would also reveal to the recipient the person's coarse upbringing. In group relationships such remarks about one's parents or ancestors are almost taboo, and if employed could well result in open enmity between the persons involved.

An incident that comes close to such rude remarks is cited here to demonstrate its consequences. On one of my visits to Jelutung, I saw four boys sitting around a coffee table near an open air food stall. A woman passing their way stopped at their table and scolded them. She was especially concentrating her indignation upon one of the boys, who in due course

was revealed to be her brother's son. The boy was reduced to sullen silence out of reluctant respect in the face of his elder. His friends looked angry but said nothing. Finally the woman, seeing no decided reaction wagged her finger at them and told the boy that she would tell his father. Muttering to herself that he (her brother) needed to be told a thing or two about a child's upbringing, she left the boys in a huff. As soon as the woman's back was turned the boys came to life and her nephew shook his fist at her. His friends applauded him. The woman, who had not gone out of earshot heard the laughter and turned to see if she was the object of the insult. But the boys were quicker and all she saw was a suspicious sniggering. She glared at them then carried on her way. Left on their own the boys became bold and everybody started talking to cover up their wounded pride. As though to clean himself of the humiliation, for onlookers had witnessed the dressing down, one boy began to blame his friend for it was after all his aunt who had told them off. The other boys followed suit, blaming the boy for his aunt's sharpness. The boy turned his anger from his humiliation by his aunt upon his friends. Their quarrel grew noisier and soon they were all standing up. The boy who started the quarrel pushed

his friend into a chair and with a superior manner mocked him by assuming the woman's voice chastising him. He ended rather rudely with the reminder that the boy was her nephew and that he, his father and his aunt were therefore three of a kind. The boy thus ashamed, first by his aunt and now his friend, harshly but defensively told his friend not to drag his father into the ridicule. But his friend went on cynically harping on the woman's threat to tell her brother off. Seeing his father's good name now being smeared, the boy, livid with anger, banged the table top and told his friends to shut up. He shouted that his aunt's scolding was enough for his hurt pride and that he would not tolerate any more from them. Then saying that his aunt was after all not far from wrong when she insinuated that he kept bad company, he left them.

Among grown-ups in the community enmities borne from reported gossips and rivalries between individuals or families are less significant. The outward relationship between neighbours is cordial. Community members usually uphold the good relationship by word and deed. When a neighbour comes outside, for example to hang out her clothes and sees her neighbour in similar activities, she would greet her and carry on a polite conversation, in which the length of time spent talking

would be an indication of friendliness. Even a smile would serve its purpose. Behaviour out of the normal during such interactions would be an indication that something is wrong. To cite an example, a woman participant told me that one day her neighbour ignored her even though they had come face to face with one another outside their house. Consequently she sensed something wrong and asked her friend if anything was the matter. Her friend retorted curtly that 'when one eats the chilli one would feel the heat' (siapa makan lada, dia kena pedas). The saying stung her curiosity and she asked what caused the remark. The friend ignored her enquiries but before she went inside she suggested that Timah,⁵ another neighbour, knew why. Why didn't she ask her ? Upon further enquiries and after confronting Timah the truth was revealed. The enmity had arisen out of Timah's report that she had thrown away the food her friend gave her (neighbourliness is sometimes shown by the gift of a person's cooking or sweets to a household). Timah had distorted the real incident, for what had actually happened was that her daughter had dropped the offered food on the floor so that it had to be thrown away.

5. A pseudonym used for this example.

The friends were reconciled and Timah kept her distance from them for some time through loss of face. The point to consider here is the social value attached to neighbourliness. In this case a deviation from the norm had served in the end to right certain wrongs in the social relations of the group involved. The value of positive relations between neighbours even with such mundane greetings perpetuates or rectifies sociability.

In the above instance relations within the community are both broken and reconciled by the individuals affected on the personal level. The communal affability of members is partly maintained by the consistent manifestation of boria shows mediating social wrongs and correcting them to create participant consciousness of community. In boria, social misunderstandings and contradictions are resolved by the penghulu, who acts as the stimulus and agent in the sociability of the symbolic community. Socially the penghulu in the communities under study, especially the Sungai Pinang village on which I concentrated my observations, is there as a figure to be respected as leader of the community. Only when problems could not be solved personally was he brought in to act as mediator. The penghulu has^a/relatively minor role today, because in the urban context almost

all his functions have been taken over by specialized government officials and he has thus been bypassed by proliferation of bureaucracy. Nevertheless, he is always mentioned by community members with respect. His presence as an authoritative person in their midst appeared to be sufficiently functional for group solidarity to be maintained. Presumably this has also led to the term ketua kampung (village head) being also used to refer to a penghulu.

In practice the urban villages house Malays that are 'urbanised' for cordiality of any great degree between village members is only extended to within two or three houses in the immediate vicinity of home. Yet when community members get together for such occasions as weddings, kenduri or funerals there is perceived a closeness of the group, for everybody seems to know everybody else and an atmosphere of sociability prevails all around. Among the younger age groups, however, it appears that this kind of relationship is becoming less observed, as relationships are slowly becoming more individualized. No longer do all children get the same education, and their ties of friendship are extending more outside of community to school friends from other areas, and later to colleagues from their workplaces. It probably explains the current

popularity in amateur troupes of younger players of changing the penghulu role to one of a young official of a government institution quite separated from the community. Syed Agil himself prefers to put in a knowledgeable character of indefinite office, making him an abstract personality - more like an authoritative jack of all trades. He is always a young person who has no specific designation in the sketch other than being brought in to correct wrongs and solve problems. One wonders if the decreasing number of professional troupes in Penang has anything to do with this change of the mediatory role. The fact that they are still in popular demand for weddings and other activities indicates that certain 'traditional' values are still strong within the community. Whatever the choice, this almost God-like role is made to recur ritually in shows; seeking to manoeuvre and reconcile opinions and values into a politically accepted framework of *communitas*. In terms of role-playing the official and the villager interact through suggestion and reaction as giver and recipient respectively, to communicate moral values.

This consistent ritualistic portrayal of an old or young villager in relation to the official can also be seen in the context of the social reality. In practice there is perceived a duality of role among

elder categories. Other than the traditional concept of parental authority within the family, there is also the rational authority of the leader role or the administrative leader role within the wider social context. The very existence of associational groups whether voluntary or otherwise legitimizes their existence and their authority over the members. For example the driving force of Peseni, the biggest state level cultural association in Penang, ⁶ was at the time of the research Mohd. Noor, a cultural officer with the State Department of Culture, Youth and Sport. The association's chairman in the year 1975/76 was Omar Farouk, a hospital assistant and representative of the Medical Section in the association, who also had been chairman in the previous year. Though he was voted into office by popular choice and was himself in his forties, I observed that he still turned for advice to the cultural officer in question. This authority, when exercised, often impairs youth interaction and participation during meetings. Peseni itself may not experience overbearing authority because most of its

6. Peseni is the shortened name for Persatuan Seni Budaya (Cultural Arts Association). It is a private organization concerned with improving and teaching the arts of Malay culture, eg. silat, poetry, literature, drama, dance, boria etc.

active members are already working or in training anyway. Discussions and disapproving comments are offered from the floor quite readily. But more often than not an association is formed with the leading authority very much above the ordinary members. Such one-way interaction may be dominant when the leaders are white collar officials while the members are mainly school dropouts or school leavers. Such a one was the Jalan Hatin UMNO Youth Branch. The meeting I attended was called to decide about forming a boria troupe to fill in the gap in the entertainment programme of their political activities in their area and the surrounding district. Officials felt that there was a need for the UMNO Youth to form a boria troupe offering entertainment-cum-persuasion to draw crowds to future UMNO political rallies. There was also the motive of getting a troupe trained to enter the annual boria competition to be held in August of that year, 1975. ⁷

Between the committee and ordinary members there was an invisible but acutely felt wall of social difference. The chairman himself who officiated at

7. This is an annual boria competition organized on the state level in a field called Padang Lorong Kulit. It is situated behind the City Stadium of Georgetown.

the meeting was a Chief Clerk in a government office. The committee members were either in their thirties or themselves white-collar workers except for one who performs the mediatory role between the chairman and the members. He was a labourer with the electricity board. The ordinary members were mostly young, ranging in age from 16 to 22 years old, and were ill-dressed by comparison with the stiff-collared shirt, well ironed pants, smooth hairdo, sunglasses and tie which completed the general smartness of the chairman. Short of whispered comments, more naughty than useful, there was not much response from the floor and the meeting was quite one-sided; the committee members providing both the questions and the solutions while the members on the floor listened, nodded or gave a show of hands to agree to their decisions. Even when members can mix more freely, both before and after the meeting, the general pattern is for the elders and leaders to group together and the youths to remain apart, feeling more at ease among themselves.

The following scene in this meeting best describes the role of authority. When I arrived some members were busy arranging the chairs and desks in the UMNO branch office-hall and were directed by a clean-dressed young man in his early thirties. Some

elderly men were standing by or leaning on a low cement wall. Among them was 'Man Lancar' (Rahman the rickshaw puller) who was to be the new troupe's advisor. He is actually the penghulu role player of Ibrahim's Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe of Sungai Pinang. Meanwhile the seating had been sorted out in the hall. There was a row of desks joined in a straight line with chairs, six of them, facing the other desks and chairs which had been placed in an oval around and facing the six chairs. The young man who had been directing the procedure so far called the members to be seated. He then disappeared to come back a little later accompanying the leader (I learnt later that he had been waiting in his car outside all the while). When the two had seated themselves the meeting began and immediately progressed to the issue at hand. Man Lancar was also seated at the head of the table, but at the end. Near him sat his contemporary and friend who was responsible for bringing him to the meeting. There were two teachers in the committee seated at the main table area, the chairman (Chief Clerk), the young man (labourer with electricity board) who was the go between, with the youths seated on the floor, and two other men who together constituted the committee occupying the chairs at the head of the table.

They were all males. The meeting fixed the venue for picking out a cast of players as well as raising the question of taking girls into the troupe as co-players. There was some muttered side comments from the groups of youths on the floor which appeared to approve the involvement of girls but the committee finally did away with the idea.⁸ I also noted that although these issues should involve Man Lancar's opinion as well as his service, this was never asked for. He was simply introduced to the members as their trainer.

On the family level, the teenagers' role can be correlated with that of their symbolic roles in boria. Many changes, particularly in extended formal education have reduced parental decision making on occupations for their offspring, the choice being limited by the individual's educational attainment.⁹ But in the community parents are still known to exercise their

8. The committee decided against girls because the UMNO Youth movement has only male members and they wanted the troupe formed quickly. Attempts at recruiting girls would hamper progress for forming the troupe.

9. Though only touched on in this thesis, the extension of formal education has been one of the most important forces for social change throughout Malaysia. This is extensively considered in relation to village life and political structure by Noorhalim bin Ibrahim in his thesis 'Social Change and Continuity in the Matrilineal Society of Rembau, Negeri Sembilan (Malaysia)'; (M.A./ M. Phil. Thesis, University of Hull, 1976).

traditional authority though at the same time accepting their children's changing opportunities offered with progress. A case in point would demonstrate the parent's insistence on their traditional role in the face of educational challenge. A youth who had passed his O-level examinations (ie. the Federation of Malaysia Certificate of Education) with a third grade pass also held a typewriting proficiency diploma of 60 words a minute through attending classes at a private commercial tuition centre. Seeing these educational attainments advertised as requirements for clerical posts in a government job, he hopefully applied for the situation. But though his parents wanted him to get the job they were not too sure of his capabilities. So they arranged for the local bomoh to aid him. This bomoh is well known in Penang Malay urban village communities. He specializes in making candidates for a job get the post by a bathing ritual, a symbolic cleaning away of ill luck from a person's self. The boy told me that he was never consulted by his parents over their decision to make him undergo the ritual. He only knew of it on the first Friday of the rite when his parents gave him instructions to go to the bomoh's house. On knowing his parents' intention the boy could still have withdrawn from his ordeal, but he

uncomplainingly complied. In his own words the rite was "a harmless tradition" and anyway it was "exhilarating" to be bathed and cleansed. For the next two Fridays, making up three Fridays of bath rites to completely rid him of ill luck, he underwent the same procedure. When the interview finally came and he was successful his parents' general jubilation at the success of the bath rite led to their showering presents on and giving dinner to the bomoh. The boy himself was more confident of his educational achievement though in his reflections he showed signs of gratitude for his parents' concern. As I see it he was lucky enough to have the double protection of the traditional authority and the authority of modern progress.

The Penang Malay community under study attach great importance to the efficacy of traditional bath rites. Incidents cited by bomohs during my interviews with them show that bath rites are also administered when someone wants to get out of a bout of bad luck, or in other words is hoping for a spell of luck, in which case the rite is similar in motive and ritual to the job seeking bath rite. The staunch believers are mostly elderly women. Usually, as the bomohs concerned revealed, recipients of the rite would be brought in by the mother, aunt or close friend. If the recipient

is no stranger to the bomoh he or she needs no introduction except for the mother's agreement. Another similar incident may prove interesting. A woman in her thirties was brought in by her mother to be administered the rite. The reason was that her husband had taken a second wife. Her mother hoped that the woman would appear attractive again after the bath rite so that her husband would come home to her house more often. The bomoh also found out that the woman had had some ailments in her abdominal region which had impaired her sexual life. Whilst administering the rite she also made the woman take some herbs to cure her ailment and restore her sexual ability. Wisely the bomoh finished off her repartee by saying that a wife must take care of her 'wares' if she wanted to keep her husband.

The administration of the rite was based on an assortment of communicators. There must be betel leaves and nuts, lime (chalk) as the condiment to go into the betel leaf concoction, an assortment of sweet smelling flowers, whole lemons (limau perut) of a special variety where the skin is gnarled and thick, water in an earthen bowl to be filled by the recipient of the rite, candles and matches, white cloth, a sharp knife to cut the lemon and last but not least

incense. There were three main things associated with the rite itself which as I perceived it seem to suggest a single motive. They are the act of chewing the betel leaf concoction, the act of lemon cutting and dropping liquid wax into the bowl of water, and the bath itself. The first was the initiation into the rite. The second act was the measuring of one's future, which is read in the omen of the procedure. For example a cut lemon piece that jumps wildly before landing on its cut side is a bad omen and likewise the droplets of wax that stay away from each other are a bad sign. Contrarily a lemon piece that lands neatly on its skin side is a good omen and wax droplets that tend to group together are favourable. Usually a recipient has three attempts at the measuring of their future, wherein should a first attempt be bad the bomoh tries again to see if his luck could change. The third act is the actual cleansing and is often supervised by the bomoh. The scented water is poured in three stages over the recipient's head and body, she or he is made to gargle the water three times and the final act is the throwing of the remaining contents in the earthen bowl - flowers and coconut husks - over the left shoulder by the recipient, as a final symbolic ridding of bad luck.

Bath rituals are seen as a function of gaining confidence, a psychological upboosting; and that is what boria is all about in the community. The symbolism is similar though the mode is different. It is simple in the bath rite because it involves a one-to-one relationship but complex in the other because it involves a community. Just as the three stages of the bath rite serve as a stepped transition towards self-confidence, and followed usually by the maintaining of certain taboos to keep the confidence alive; so also does the boria, from the sketches portraying community ills to the song-dance where alternatives are offered. For in boria constant recurring shows citing current and popular local incidents keep up a vigil for group goodwill. The device seems to point towards a utopian doctrine acting as an inducement to the achievement of utopia. In the case of boria the utopian doctrine induced is the coactivity of the positive traditional and the positive modern elements each aiding the other in moderation. It is a symbolic action of the community's needs and non-needs and the juxtaposition of the players and audience give meaning and communicate the actions.

Within this functional role, the difference in motivation and stories between the professional and

amateur troupes becomes clearer from a social viewpoint. Three major differences between them have already been made in the thesis. Age difference in troupe composition is one, where amateur troupe members are usually youths ranging from 15 to 25 years of age who are trained by an advisor while professional troupes are composed of members ranging in age from 15 to 45 and over and are themselves adept in the art having been involved in it for the better part of their life. Motivation is another aspect, for amateur troupes get organized for competitions and purposeful shows (viz. educational or political institutional gatherings), while professional troupes keep going out of interest and the fact that for them the boria is their ancestral heritage of expression. Considering that the individual remuneration for a boria show is almost negligible, their active participation obviously goes deeper than just for monetary gains. In the face of the amateur challenge they have managed to hold their own, becoming more and more closely associated with their communities while accepting more and more outside shows. Another difference is the choice of character for the official role. Amateur troupes, closely associated with their work or interest associations go more for the young government official or the

'know-all' to assume the mediator role at the end of sketches. Professional troupes out of close association with their villages tend to favour the penghulu role here above all else. A difference in the treatment of ethnic characters is also discernible between these two troupe types. The amateur troupes ridicule ethnic groups less, and bring them together if necessary (especially for political propaganda stories) in an overall atmosphere of friendship. Professional troupes takes such situations, where characters from different ethnic groups come together on the stage, as an excuse to create puns and ridicule ethnic traits which are in actuality archaic types hardly apparent among the majority of the real Chinese and Indians in the wider society.

Such characteristics are related to the nature of activity of the amateur troupe. They go for the more general themes of nation building. They themselves are of course drawn from a wide cross section of Malaysian society. Their show is less participant in nature but offers a transitional type boria more suited to the general Malaysian public. Professional troupes are more confined to the small Malay communities and in the process their boria becomes more participant and 'closed'. Outside shows are also mainly confined

to audiences that are within the lower status category of rural Malay society. Yet they too can suit their shows when desired to the transition type boria, especially for radio or television and state occasions.

This idyllic picture does not mean that between troupe members there are no differences of opinion over the presentation of theme. Any disagreements are usually quickly settled because group participation is the main thing. A serious case of players' clash of interest has usually been rectified by the breaking up of a troupe into two different troupes. This occurred between the troupe leaders of the Boria Sungai Pinang and the Ria Seni Pesaka troupes. When Ibrahim was Daud's tukang karang he had disagreements with Daud over what he called "stories that adulate the government". This undercurrent of minor ideological difference later found open conflict over issues of payment for members. The result was his opting out and forming his own troupe. But personal conflicts were smoothed out as soon as Daud got a replacement tukang karang and Ibrahim has got his troupe actively participating. The reconciliation between the two leaders was explained by Insun, Daud's wife, as "we are related" and "blood runs thicker than water".

When Ibrahim had taken over a new role as leader

of his troupe he found that he could not really do anything radical in the way of changing his shows. If anything he admitted that his players demonstrated more doubt about government projects and policies, an innovation in the theme that had already been Shafie's own speciality, but that it was always counteracted by the appearance of the penghulu character. As I view it when players become leaders they find that they have to compromise with players views, public needs and social trends leading ultimately to a suppression of self-interest. Ibrahim's curbed sense of justice shows up in the consistently traditional presentation of the official role. He justified his bent, however, by explaining that the penghulu role was 'modern' in everything else that the role symbolized.

As a tukang karang himself, Ibrahim admitted he had not really gone far from the usual form of his song verse. He ascribed this to his advancing age and his recent marriage that had cooled his political fervour. I was, however, more inclined to the explanation that it was due to political restraint imposed on individuals. The elections of 1969 had been followed with racial riots over socio-political issues. ¹⁰ The government was determined that the

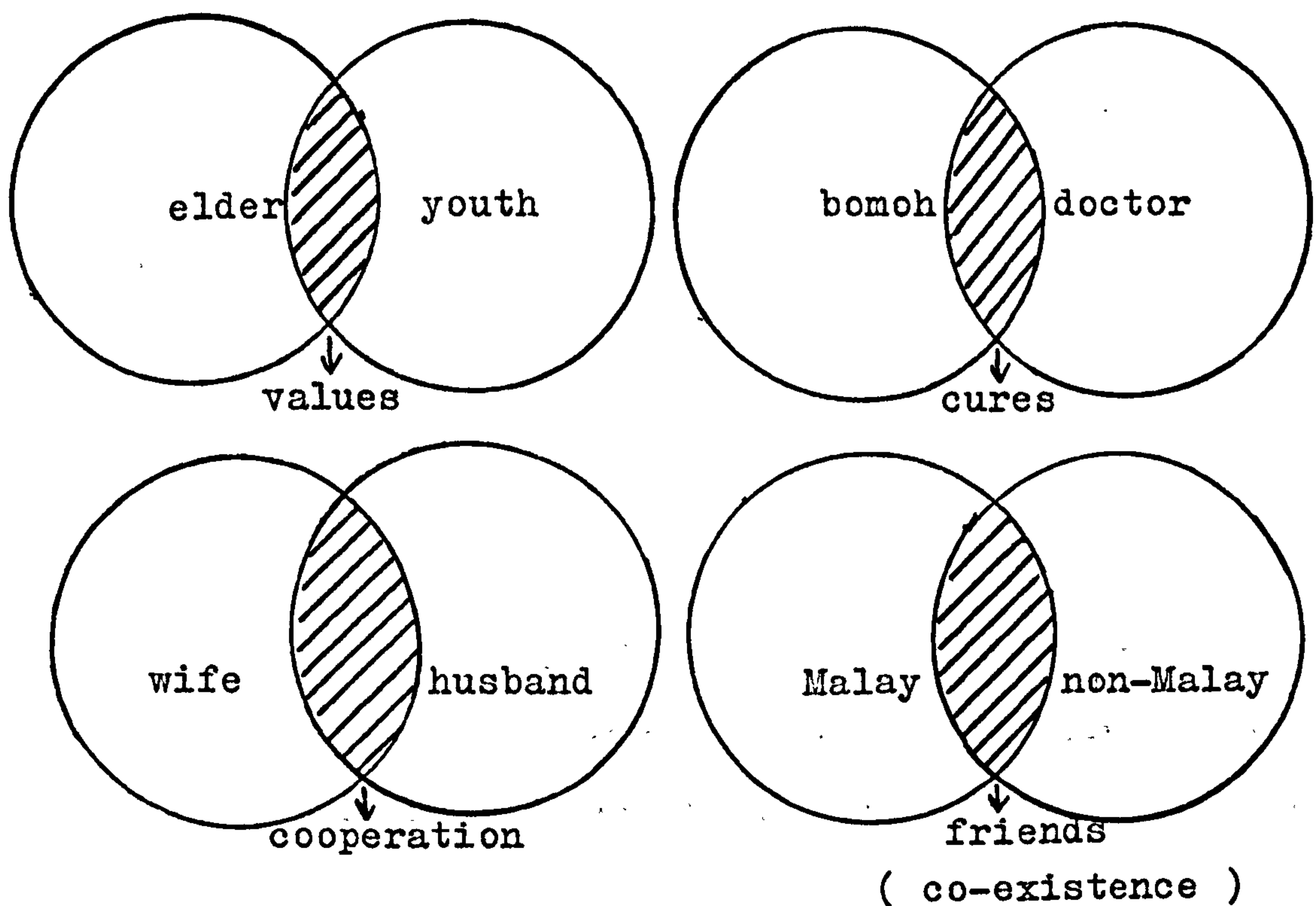
10. For further information see Abdul Rahman Putra, Tunku, op. cit.

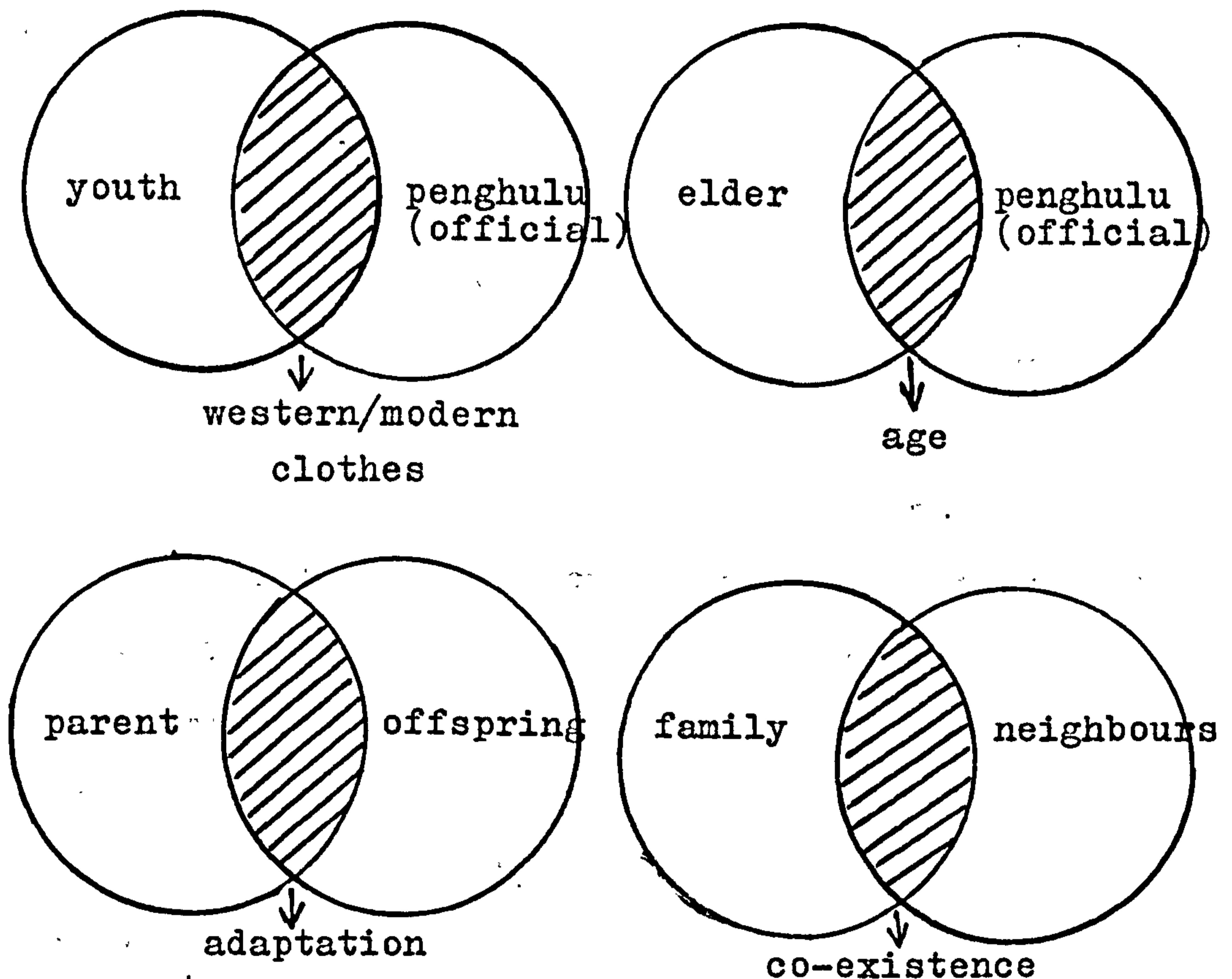
1974 elections would not be a case of history repeating itself. Many leftist political leaders and suspects were detained under the Internal Security Act. In late 1974 there was an incident at Baling, Kedah, of a family that died from slow starvation and this issue was taken up by some radical student bodies and individuals. But the government quickly rectified the unrest caused by claiming that it was a direct mistake of the local government. As a result of the incident there followed stepped up duties for government officials, an increase in rubber prices and government subsidies on basic necessities like flour, sugar and rice prices. It also led to a clamp down on student unrest and public demonstrations by students were severely maimed by the arrest of their more active leaders.

Though Penang Malays and boria players themselves had not been much involved, except for the politically inclined student movement of the University Science Malaysia in Penang; they were very aware of the restraints and some boria players even showed their loyalty to the government by condemning such student factions in a boria show entitled 'Buku Hijau' by the Student Dental Nurses' Troupe and recorded in March 1975. Political restraint and the fact that the

death incident happened outside of the Penang Malay community made leaders like Daud and Ibrahim choose to evade such matters in their live performances. Daud's resigned attitude was probably reflected in the less dominant use of the penghulu role in his troupe's sketches. Instead he breaks the role playing with a wise elderly villager (a role he likes to play himself) to bring the message of goodwill and right wrongs in the symbolic action.

A scrutiny of the thematic treatment and social preference of professional and amateur troupes would bring into focus traditional and modern values and their parallel accomodation for a moderate compromise. (see diagramatic illustrations) :





6. Social Issues not Dealt with by Boria

If the professional troupes are participant, and the communal values of rights and wrongs, dos and don'ts are the mainstay of their treatment of their themes, boria shows within the community nevertheless have kept certain social ills out of their repertoire. Certain themes such as the problems of the illegitimate child, thieving or drunkenness are avoided because they are sensitive issues. More than this, to provide suitable themes, problems must be issues that can be presented as experiences for all participants to laugh

about. Chastisement is the order of boria, not condemnation.

Illegitimacy among Penang Malay community is not a thing to be made a hue and cry about. Socially it is an act condemnable only when it is known publicly. The usual case is for the parent of the seduced girl to force the youth responsible into marriage. In a case in the community known to me, the girl purposely became pregnant out of wedlock so that her parents had no alternative but to marry her off to the man of her choice. Participants recalled that in the year 1970 or thereabouts when khalwat (being alone with the opposite sex in a lonely place) and tangkap basah (caught in the act of khalwat) was a big issue in parliament and the religious institutions, boria had manipulated such stories about illicit love affairs with a humorous flavour. But with the problem no longer on the bail in public debate, this has gone out of popularity at the moment.

In the case of some social ills considered too sensitive to present they could well be the participants' indulgence. In the case of drinking, for example, I learnt that for some boria veterans their pastime once or twice a week is to meet at a certain coffeeshop in Georgetown at about ten in the

morning. From twelve onwards it would become a venue for drinking sessions which would drag on till late in the afternoon or till the participants are 'soaked' in drink. My interviews that were carried out there had had to conveniently stop by noon.

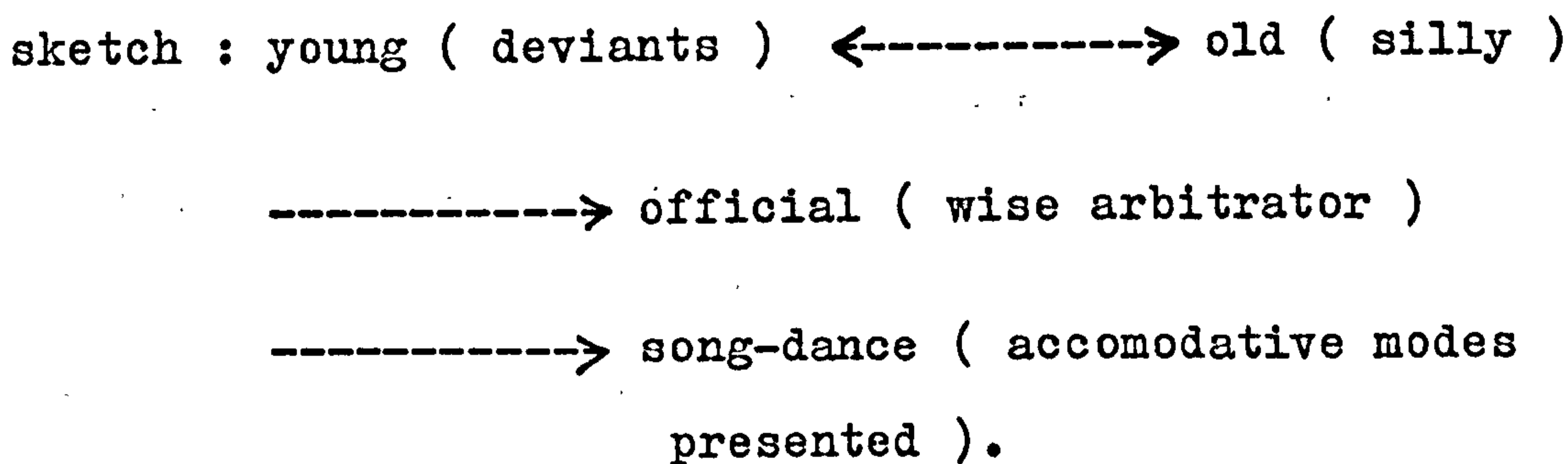
We have seen in one commonly played plot in boria the remonstrations of the official over spouses who would too easily seek or want to seek divorce over quarrels. But in the 42 shows observed none dealt with the issue of polygyny as a social ill. One wonders if to the community such ills are not only too sensitive, but also contrarily, accepted with resignation and regarded as incurable or inevitable. Professional troupes are mainly men and in line with the saying ikut nabi (follow the prophet's example) they look at polygyny with favour, as it is permissible in Islam. Amateur troupes, especially female troupes are those who might turn to such themes for their purpose. But their motivation has so far kept them away from such thematic treatment.

In the community I perceived that parents are quite happy to know that their daughter, who is still single, has a steady boyfriend; as long as she sticks to the one. This is their compromise with the modern desire of their daughters to lead an active social life

and chose their own husband, for parents regard the idea of having only one steady boyfriend with favour, secure in the knowledge that if anything undesirable happens they can always hold him responsible. Thus they would not go all out to stop their children, especially girls, from an active social life as long as it stays within the bounds of good moral conduct and the restraints of Islamic culture. As a girl's ultimate destiny to her parents is marriage the knowledge that she has a regular boyfriend is a great comfort to them. Most girls admit that their parents' surveillance of their conduct boils down to the fact that regular letters to boyfriends are permissible, and boys and girls are allowed to go out in groups. A girl may be permitted by her parents to go out once in a while, for example to see a film show, with her steady boyfriend; but secret meetings must never be made known to them, for to be seen in public once too often is to the parent like a 'slap in the face'. Yet male members of families are encouraged to show their manliness and parents take pride that their son catches the eyes of girls in the community.

As I see it the fact that professional troupes omit such themes as polygyny, homosexuality or promiscuity from their shows is because, if cases do

occur they are very rare. The community is quick to sanction such trends and stem further occurrences. Free mixing is associated more with the urbanized, individualized society where one cares less with what others have to say about oneself. For in the community group sanctions are still strong and boria shows reflect this in preferring to dwell on social ills in a way that is more character building than degrading in motivation. The whole atmosphere in boria participation is a spirit of camaraderie where participants can laugh together despite knowing that they are the victims of the enactment onstage, mainly because the symbolic actions expressed are those in the process of adaptation into their community. A chart of the relationships in the symbolic action would yield these actions,



CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

A study of the boria and its symbolism in this thesis has, of necessity, involved both literary and anthropological treatments in an attempt to synthesize its many facets. The method becomes unavoidable when portraying and analyzing the show as a symbol of social action in an attempt to relate it to the ongoing process within its society. Within this framework boria becomes a symbol of interaction, communication and mediation that through frequent performances helps to ease and arbitrate social process.

1. The Development of Boria

In sketching the development of boria as a performing art in Penang, it has been found that its popularity has since its origin been motivated by the social groups participating in it at the time. Its ancient origin was basically ritual and when the Muslim Indians brought it into Penang the form was very much, even though Wynne viewed it as 'degenerated', still ritualistic in nature. Wynne's view supposed a change in its function from that of a ritual enactment of the heroism of the first Shi'ite Muslims to something

more like an entertainment among the Indian soldiery in Penang. Yet the essence of the ritual was as a reminder of the schism in Islam and the original breaking up of Muslims into Shi'ite and Sunnite. Known then as the Muharram festival it was a ritual of ta'ziyah meant to keep alive among Shi'ites their rivalry with Sunnites. In this the Penang version was certainly successful, for Vaughan tells us that the rite was abhorred as sacrilegious by the Sunnite Malays of the time.

The acculturation and assimilation of the minority Indian group by Malays through intermarriage and constant contact led to the almost inevitable change in boria. The offspring from these marriages, the Jawi Pekans, began to get more and more involved with the Malay way of life. Yet at this point of their acculturation and assimilation they were a marginal category free to discard, adapt or adopt their parents' ways. Boria was one part of the Indian heritage that gradually incorporated non-sacral features, first animal characters, later parodied human characters. At this point boria possessed features of comicality which lent it a more secular than ritual character. Although this change of function was viewed by Shi'ites as abusive and evil, the new form was more acceptable

to the Sunnite Malays and to the Jawi Pekans themselves, as they slowly but surely identified more and more with them. Through secularization the form was eventually refined into a performance of social mimicry; characters were manipulated by players to symbolically portray those social groups and personalities that interacted most closely with them. That was why in the early part of the twentieth century players caricatured rich Arabs, Chinese and Europeans in the community, as these people were those responsible for the remuneration of the troupes.

The latest symbolic transition of boria was into a totally Malay activity, which began in the eventful year of 1948, when it was renewed under the patronage of UMNO and Malay nationalism. After that boria activity never turned back to its Indian heritage, and the Jawi Pekans became identified as Malays.

Contemporary live boria has, by virtue of being closely supported by certain Malay suburban villages in Penang, maintained community solidarity while introducing certain new social trends. The Malays involved were mainly in the middle and lower status groups who live and perform mainly on the urban periphery of Georgetown. The characters symbolize and criticize current shortcomings of Malay society.

The ridicule of symbolic action is directed at those characters regarded as impeding the group's social process. They are chided for their foolishness to bring home their waywardness. Thus the ludicrously presented deviant youth 'lost' in their glorification of bad western influences, the elders who cling too seriously to tradition, and the playing up of set Malay stereotypes of other ethnic groups, all provide an incentive for the adaptation of old and the new into a new mode that combines the best of both. The symbolism of the form is 'old' (comedy, song and dance) but the message is 'new' for it calls for a compromise between the virtues of tradition and modernity. Boria through this symbolism mediates the community's exposure to change.

2. Communal and National Boria

I have by outlining the development of boria up to the present brought together written and unwritten materials concerning it from both before and after it got its present name. More significantly I have also traced the socio-cultural significance of the cultural heritage of boria from certain crucial turning points in the history of its activity. I have also attempted an explanation of its current form in order to bring out more lucidly its communal features.

This was for the dual purpose of analyzing its symbolism for its participants, and considering how the national culture concept brought changes in certain features of boria activity to create a widening public participation. The latter perception has produced a new type of boria more suited to a national public, a form that could well fill up the vacuum of a theatrical genre in the national cultural heritage, indeed, a form that could eventually lead to the expansion of boria from a regional type culture (kebudayaan suku) to a national type culture (kebudayaan teras).

The study of live boria performances within the Malay communities reveals active participation in it by lower status Malays, specifically those who live in urban kampungs in and around Georgetown and who are employed in menial work by the city council and private concerns. The participants in shows outside Georgetown are rural small landowners and their families and other lower status Malays of their communities. In both areas these are communities of Malays closely related by blood and marriage. Neighbours are usually relatives, a situation brought about by the Malay system of inheritance in which the parent's land is divided up among their children when

or before their death; ¹ or in the case of sale, by selling the land among relatives.

These communities are conservative, and their boria symbolizes this as tradition. There is some communal desire to change but not without a lot of apprehension about certain issues associated with change. The communal idea of change and progress is westernization, and the symbolism associated with it is usually more bad than good. The wish to change but slowly is reflected not only in the fact that in shows such issues of modernization and westernization are brought into conflict with tradition but also by the bringing in of the penghulu character at the end of a sketch to mediate the kind of change the participants could accept. In boria the penghulu symbolizes both tradition and change. In the community the penghulu is a respected figure who also happens to be richer than others and able to lead a comfortable life with modern advantages.

What live performances of boria within the lower status Malay communities of urban kampungs around Georgetown, Penang and rural kampungs of Kedah and

1. Though with widening employment prospects, this feature of old established villages is becoming less marked in newer communities.

Perak expresses is Malay communal type theatre. What live and recorded boria shows among a wider social group of Malays expresses is national type theatre. This divergence of interest and activity in contemporary boria brings us back to the realization of my statement at the beginning of this thesis, namely, that though the exposure to and the adaptation of other cultural forms offers an enriching process for a national culture, this could only lead to a splitting of Malaysian indigenous culture into communal type cultures. For boria it has created a Malay communal and regional type of theatre on the one hand and on the other a new type of theatre that though boria and Malay in essence has taken on new themes and new modes to suit its wider audience. The former has persistently remained a regional cultural expression while the latter has emerged as a national type culture.

Let us reconsider the differences in the presentation of the communal type of boria, that belonging to and expressed by professional troupes; and the national type of boria, that which is the special activity of the amateur troupes and is also performed by professional boria when it suits them. Communal type boria performs for a community, makes use of the garden of a house in the village or uses the open

fields of the village school or some open unused space in the village area. The occasion would be weddings and socio-cultural activities associated with the community, such as entertainments for farmers' association, parents' association and so on. The national type boria performs to a wider Malay society, utilizes large open fields, halls with stages or theatres in both town and country. The shows are usually for occasions of state or national festivities. Sometimes they perform for purposes of competition and sometimes for entertainment. Communal boria theatre is performed by an all male cast, while national boria can have an all male, all female, or a mixed male and female cast, or even have all male actors playing the sketch and all females performing the song-dance. Communal boria always brings in the penghulu role to solve problems and answer questions. The only alternative characters used were appropriately the doctor and the wise elderly villager who usually turns out to be the father. The penghulu acts as the government official and the mediator for community problems and conflicts. The sketch of a communal boria has more onstage activity through play-acting and slap-stick and the clowns produce more jokes to achieve a closer participation and establish rapport

with their audience. The sketch of a national boria show is more discursive in nature and is usually built on onstage conversations between characters, though some do employ play-acting to build up the plot of the sketch. Communal boria performances cater for narrow community interests while national boria has a nation-building bias whereby socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural issues of the day are incorporated into shows and occasions as required. Troupe activity is another aspect of this diversification into regional and national forms. Village participants almost always employ the professional troupes like Ria Seni Pesaka and Boria Sungai Pinang to put on performances. The leaders of these troupes maintain the community's preference for an all male cast. As I view it the all male composition is a license for ribaldry and slapstick onstage; so much so that not only is the audience's interest and enjoyment increased but also a close rapport is achieved between players and audience - they mutually interact. They are a performing troupe of 'free' agents of entertainment in the sense of not being bound to a particular institution which would determine the content of their show. The national type shows are usually performed for sponsored occasions. The interest of the sponsor has priority

over the needs of the audience. The aim is entertainment with a purpose of swaying audiences into accepting the ideas put forth.

Yet the performance of the regional and the national boria are similar in motive if different in mode. The former being apparently entertainment may at first sight be less effective in producing change, though in fact it is unconsciously bringing about a feeling of *communitas* even more surely than the latter. This, being geared to a purpose, hopes to induce change; if the message is successfully communicated between the players and the wider audience, the result could prove beneficial to government interests associated with the national culture. Yet while probably succeeding in creating wider public interest in boria through competitions, television shows and so on, changing the boria form into a national type dramatic genre could in the long run prove a waste of effort. For the moment the process of the divergence of one form from the other in boria activities is one of the paradoxes produced by the national culture policy. For the traditionalism of communal boria now emphasizes the insularity of certain Malay communities in a way that is detrimental to the progress of Malaysianization and the development of a national culture. One can

almost certainly foresee here a continuing process of inversion of the communal type. While the national form is catering for a wider and more diversified public, the former is confined more and more to the less privileged Malays who see their social reality expressed in the shows. Already Chinese and Indian art types are not even considered worth preserving and are left, like the communal boria, to fend for themselves. In Penang they flourish through the sponsorship and interest of individuals and associations within their ethnic groups. For the Malaysian identification and harmony so strongly propounded by government agencies and the mass media in the national interest, this is surely a kind of adverse side effect of the process of nation-building. However minimal, in reality it is still a problem that could assume bigger, and perhaps uncontrollable, proportions under certain conditions of ethnic and social stress and strain. Looking at boria more narrowly, the communal type could bring about a will to progress in its participants, or alternatively, for some, a resignation to their way of life and the 'hidup segan mati tak mau'² existence vis-a-vis

2. 'Hidup segan mati tak mau' : A Malay proverb; lit. 'Too idle to live, unwilling to die'.

the more privileged Malays. Indeed with the divergence of boria shows into regional and national types the situation might arise wherein Malays involved only in regional boria would augment change slowly while Malays exposed to national boria become more dynamically tuned to the rapid means of progress.

3. Boria and Ludruk

This study began by referring to the importance of Peacock's analysis of ludruk in Java. Peacock's work inspired me to attempt to go beyond previous studies of drama in Malaysia of which even the best were literary and ethnographic in perspective, and, to try to produce a more rounded analysis of one drama form by employing similar sociological/anthropological concepts to his. It therefore seems appropriate to conclude by assessing my findings on boria in relation to his study of ludruk.

An obvious similarity between ludruk and boria lies in their participants. In both cases they are mainly people at the lower end of the status scale in their societies. There the similarity ends, for Peacock rightly terms the Javanese participants proletarian because they constitute a politically conscious class in a clearly stratified society,

while the Malays of Penang though status conscious, have no class system. Peacock's description of the Javanese of Surabaya shows them as more urbanized than the Malays of Penang. Though they both live in kampungs, the former appear less closely tied by either blood or marriage relations than the latter, though this is not a matter which has been investigated by Peacock in his study. Though each set of participants tend to be from one ethnic category of a multi-ethnic society, the Malays are locally a minority to Chinese who have political and economic power, and the Javanese are numerically and politically the majority in Surabaya. The Javanese though largely nominally Muslim have in practice a complex syncretic religion in which Hindu-Buddhist and animist elements are prominent. The Malays are Muslims, and are fairly orthodox Sunnites despite their beliefs in spirits, superstitions and magical practices. All these features are critical differences between the two sets of participants, and of special significance in considering the kinds of shows performed.

Peacock's study concentrates on ludruk as a professional theatre which puts on long regular performances for anyone who buys tickets. Compared with boria it has well equipped stages and permanent

sites. It is essentially urban - Surabaya is after all the largest city in Java - while even the professional boria, with its short irregular performances, entrance by invitation as frequently as by ticket, its temporary premises and its ties to a community rather than a venue, still has village features. A ludruk show has three elements : the preliminary skit, the main story, and the interlude with two characters - the transvestite and clown - who according to Peacock form a 'symbolic opposition' to the main story. The stories making up the ludruk repertoire are also different in Peacock's study from that of boria sketches in mine. Ludruk stories are classified by Peacock into the T-type (traditional/kuna) and the M-type (modern/madju) stories. Their classification into the T-type and M-types is based on the solution to problems in stories. All stories in ludruk show a proletarian character, usually a girl, wishing to climb socially. She either succeeds by marriage into a higher class or is revealed to be a daughter from a long forgotten marriage by an aristocrat father, or fails and commits suicide. T-type stories always either end in the death of the heroine or the strengthening of familial ties between father and daughter. M-type stories always end in a

triumphant marriage between the proletarian girl and her aristocratic lover and a retribution by the imprisonment of the troublemaker who had caused the lovers much initial heartache. The more frequent occurrence of interludes in T-type stories than M-type ones confirmed Peacock's view of a trend in ludruk towards evolving into a 'rationalized, sustained thrust of action that culminates in a social climb and emotional climax'.³

How different this is from the domestic and local squabbles of boria sketches, where the conclusion is reached by the intervention of authority. It might be possible to use the notation of T- and M-type stories with boria, the M-type being those taking up 'propaganda' themes, but really this would suggest a degree of similarity between the shows that is not warranted by the evidence. In boria modern stories emphasize that individual and communal progress is achieved by technological improvement, educational success, and national solidarity. They never stress increased equality between classes or social advancement by marriage. Here the basic differences in class structure between the two societies is very marked.

3. Peacock, J.L., Consciousness and Change; (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1975), p. 177.

Peacock also attempted an appraisal of the symbolism of the clown and transvestite roles in which the clown is revealed as a godly figure in worldly settings (symbolized by the proletarian jacket and ngoko (low) Javanese he speaks) while the transvestite is a symbolic reincarnation of a god in otherworldly settings (symbolized by her refined gown and krama (high) Javanese she speaks). This analysis compares the clown characters with those in the more popular wayang kulit shows who are actually gods in disguise. His parallel brings out that the clown characters in both wayang kulit and ludruk are harbingers of fate, and, belonging to a common tradition, are recognized as such by the audience. Boria clownish characters, though often wise in their ignorance, are neither gods nor prophets. Indeed the only boria characters that remind one of wayang kulit are the penghulu and the more modern wise official roles. They restore order and goodwill at the end much as gods, or persons with supernatural powers do in Malayan wayang. No doubt the variations in repertoire of Malay as opposed to Javanese wayang kulit could be broadly related to the marked differences in the societies.

To return to the matter in hand, the transvestite

nature of both shows gives them a superficial resemblance. The playing of female roles by men in boria derives from the traditional Muslim aversion to theatrical performances in general, and to women on the stage in particular. In Java, the preference for young girls playing male roles appears to derive from a Hindu concept of purity, while the preference for males playing female roles may have a Muslim origin. In modern ludruk these origins may be obscured by the decidedly homosexual nature of the theatre form, something not apparent in boria at all.

In 1963, at the time of Peacock's research, ludruk was associated with the PKI, the Indonesian Communist Party. The shows expressed ideas close to their ideals and indeed some players were members.⁴ In consequence, when the PKI were ousted from political power by the army, and a widespread purge of people with communist affiliations took place, ludruk was deeply affected. The alternative to closing down was to change in accord with the ideas of the new regime, and ludruk reverted to T-type stories.⁵

4. Peacock, op. cit.; p. 182.

5. Ibid.; p. 182.

In 1975, at the time of my research, boria had political affiliations with UMNO, the Malay nationalist party, and had been associated with it since the revival in 1948. The influence of UMNO was most marked in the shows performed for wide audiences, rather than in the communal, participant shows in which boria has its modern roots. Political policy is now pushing boria into a new national form, markedly different to the local one. Thus it is clear that for both ludruk and boria the political climate is of considerable importance in influencing the kind of stories performed, and in the case of boria, even the form of the show is in process of changing to adapt to new ideology.

The core of Peacock's argument is that ludruk is a ritual, a rite of modernization. He sees the ritual as being a rite of passage, an analytical concept derived from Van Gennep.⁶ The idea is an exciting one, for though the idea of theatre as ritual, or deriving from ritual, is well established, Van Gennep's concept of rites of passage being used to analyze the form of the ritual has been neglected in studies of drama. The notion that the show is a transition rite

6. Arnold Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage; Trans. Vizedom, M.B. and Caffee, G.L. (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1960).

for the participants, in which reversals of normal behaviour can take place, illuminates certain features of the performance, such as the fact that it takes place on a raised platform (the stage) and that some players are transvestites. At the same time I find it difficult to apply to modern boria. I have shown that boria does derive from a ritual - the ancient Muslim Muharram rites - but I can only conceive of modern boria as having a very general ritual form.

Thus the whole communal type show can be seen as a rite of passage for its participants, from which they emerge as new social persons in so far as they have experienced the rite. Entering the place of performance is a rite of separation from the community, leaving it a rite of re-incorporation with society. The period of the show is one of transition, in which the key participants mark their 'sacredness' by being elevated above the ground, and wear costumes which change their workaday roles. Elements in the show, most particularly the arrival of the penghulu who affirms the values of the society, can also be seen as rites, in this case as a rite of re-incorporation. Such an analysis takes one only so far, whatever its promise, and as modern boria becomes increasingly entertainment for an audience, the harder it becomes to gain insights from ritual.

My study comes closer to Peacock' in considering the importance of popular theatre as a symbolic process of its society. Peacock's 'rite of modernization' is a perspective in time of a theatre form that had been symbolic of the proletarian Javanese social process towards modernization. My study is in effect a perspective through time of a theatre form that is symbolically mediating and influencing the Penang Malay's social process of modernization. The occasion of a story, the type of story and the type of participants are important and correlated factors in the symbolism; each functions dynamically mediating, interacting and catalyzing change. It approaches Rosemary Firth's view of a popular art form acting as a powerful solvent between the old and the new, but suggests that boria is far more than a solvent in that it brings together tradition and modernity to conflict, harmonize, and suggest compromises.

Two forms of modern boria have been distinguished - the regional and the national. Both forms augur change and progress. However, the regional type, those performances confined to peasant rural Malay communities of Kedah and Perak, and those belonging to lower status urban kampung Malays of Penang, suggest the Durkheimian perspective of harmonious change, of

changes in theatre and drama reflecting the social process of its society. Stories, though modern in theme and built up on conflicts between old/traditional and new/modern values, are put in a symbolic mould of traditional society. Characters are kampung people and the all-knowing respected official is suitably portrayed as the penghulu, who always comes in towards the end of stories to settle conflicts and suggest compromise. He arbitrates and mediates the kind of 'change' the symbolic action wants; and in a way prepares the audience for the song-dance sequence. The important message throughout is the transition towards modernity of the symbolic society on stage; but the form of acceptance of change is still traditional and in harmony with the values of its community.

The emerging national boria is more in accord with the Weberian perspective of theatre reacting on society. Thus we see symbols of modernity becoming more and more the order of the 'new' boria. It is a purposeful symbolization of the wider society, within which the particular social system finds expression. Symbolic old/traditional and new/modern conflicts are solved by young officials whose very role is symbolic of the new/modern image of Malay man in authority. Conflicts are motivated for the

victory of new (young)/modern, a breaking asunder of set cultural traits and opening vistas of the new. Likewise the song-dance becomes modified into an intermixing of male and female players; a bringing home more fully by the symbolic enactment onstage of the social process of the wider society, which in this case is the increasing equality of the sexes.

In sum, both forms are symbolic of society, the participant society of the one and the wider society of the other. The policy of national culture has resulted in a conscious collective effort, on the wider social level, to contribute to the changes in the form, which has resulted in the latter type boria.

As I conceive it, the regional boria has through its symbolic mediating role stimulated a slow but sure change in its community, a kind of solidly based progress which I see as being in the best interest of the community, and ultimately of the nation. For the wider society, however, change is more rapid. The regional type boria has become obsolete in its symbolism for such a society. The national cultural policy has led to the involvement of educated and politically conscious Malays in boria activity. They are changing the face of boria making it more modern and more progressively motivated

in a conscious effort to change the society through their new symbolism. Their policy is in a sense coercive, for they aim for national unity by active and officially backed promotion of the cultural forms they desire while neglecting other forms. This will lead to the decline, and probably the eventual demise of worthy art forms through competition, lack of funds and official encouragement. They stress cultural homogeneity to achieve Malaysian social homogeneity, but one is not essential for the other. Once structural homogeneity has been achieved by other means, perhaps it will be perceived that cultural heterogeneity could have been a national asset rather than the handicap it is being made today. In conclusion, I hope that this study of the evolution and present condition of boria, and my speculations on future trends produces some second thoughts about a Malay art form in the melting pot and its implications for future policy.

APPENDIX I

FIELDWORK

My main techniques for gathering information employed throughout the field research were participant observation and interviews. For two parts of the research, however, I employed research assistants. These were for the questionnaire designed to elicit background information on the audience and players, and for observation of audience and players simultaneously during a boria show. In this appendix therefore I describe my own research, the research assistants employed, the observation of boria shows and the questionnaire.

1. Field Research :

Successful initial attempts at getting to know some of the players and Malays of Penang had been made in 1973 and 1974. Acquaintance with a number of boria performances had also been made prior to 1974 in all three media of live theatre, radio and television. This was considered an important first phase of the research. After constructing a basic questionnaire to establish the social background of the boria participants, the final phase of the research was carried out

between January and May 1975. Having established contacts earlier and made my intentions clear I found no special problems or hindrances. There was no need to approach any authorities to explain my presence there, except when I wanted to interview them. New friends were easily made through my initial informants and contacts and my maintaining my acquaintance with well-known boria players. I usually met with responsive attitudes from interviewees, particularly from members of boria players' families. Originally I had planned to live with a boria player's family, but being a married woman with a small daughter made it impossible. It would have been considered rather irregular, especially when I had relatives in Penang. Furthermore, most of the players have large families themselves living in small houses with no room to spare. I had to be satisfied with staying for the research period in the home of my sister-in-law, even ending up with taking in one of my research assistants as well. Her house, however, was in close proximity to the areas of my concern, barely four miles away, and I was able to make use of my friends' homes during most of the day in Air Itam and Sungai Pinang.

Language posed no problem in the investigation.

The usage of Penang Malay contains differences more of pronunciation than of meaning. Semantic differences are not many, and were quite detectable. In any case I was familiar with the dialect which is similar to that of Kedah and Perlis used by my husband and his family. Any misunderstandings on my part were more often amusingly corrected by assistants and interviewees alike, and paradoxically were found to be quite fundamental in providing insight into the song-dance analysis. I also found that the best approach to informants was to attempt to talk to them in their own dialect.

Visits were made to the homes of boria players more than once in each case and troupe leaders' homes were visited twice a week on average. The first visit was always concerned with familiarizing myself with certain members of the household, tracing friendship and kinship ties or just talking about local incidents. Later visits were more specific in nature involving guided interviews and often included watching rehearsals. The last was especially the case in troupe leaders' houses where boria troupe members gather at times prior to a live show and during weekends, unless they have a special place to practice. This social activity among boria troupe

and family members provided information on group dynamics, not only in the shaping of their everyday lives, but also in the shaping of their improvisations on the themes played out on stage, for topics of conversational interest or gossip were immediately absorbed into the play as themes or sub-themes, whenever and wherever possible.

2. Field Assistants :

Field assistants were employed for two main activities; the observation of boria shows and the administration of questionnaires. The assistants were selected because they were able to understand the nature of the investigation, the participant-observation technique, and the data processing of questionnaires. Fortunately a major part of the research period coincided with the school and university long vacations. Three of the assistants were first year students from the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang. Two were Malay girls from the Sociology and Anthropology Department of the University. The two girls were most conscientious in their work and were only too happy as the experience was useful in their academic discipline. The third was an Applied Science student, who was chosen

because he was a Chinese who spoke fluent Malay, and was able to gather data from the non-Malays in the investigation. He showed extraordinary enthusiasm for the research. He had to leave the group halfway through the investigations because of his studies. He wanted time to revise for a paper which he had to resit in the examination. But his place was taken by a fourth assistant, a Malay undergraduate student. The fifth was a Malay A-level student from a school in Kuala Lumpur. Being the least knowledgeable his work was mainly secretarial in nature, but he also proved invaluable in approaching the younger members of the sample, especially the school-leavers and young teenagers to whom he was easily acceptable. This group, interact with one another in front of a local coffee-shop or under trees in groups of three or more. He also assisted in observing participants' interaction during Friday prayers in the mosque, an essentially male activity in the area. Two of the five assistants were local people, having been born and bred in Penang. They also acted as secondary informants especially on the subject of gossip, and the family histories of primary informants. Finally, one of the research assistants

was especially valuable as secretary and babysitter leaving me free to devote myself to the fieldwork in hand.

Two types of briefing, on separate days, were given to prepare the assistants before the actual fieldwork. The first was given on the techniques and requirements of participant-observation. All the assistants had seen some boria before, so the briefing was directed towards instilling a consciousness among them of audience reaction to players' actions, both verbal and non-verbal. The second was on interviewing and the administration of questionnaires.

3. The Observation Of Boria Shows :

There were three categories of participants I wanted to observe : the players, the adults, and the youths or teenagers. To enable a spontaneous observation of all three categories, two assistants were assigned as observers of each category of audience, while I observed the players on stage. They were also instructed to approach some of the audience and obtain their comments on the show as it proceeded. My own task was mainly to concentrate on how the actors interacted with one another on stage, and how their actions were stimulated or

influenced by the audience. Short interviews and directed conversations were carried out during intermission between two shows. The assistants were very helpful in the observation of group interaction, it being essential at certain times and within certain group categories to extend their enquiries. This was made possible by the tendency of the audience to group itself into children and older women seated on the ground in the space immediately before the stage, men probably husbands, standing in a semicircle flanking those seated, and teenagers and youths spread out at the rear. The problem posed by employing help during this participant-observation was my inability to supervise my assistants during the show. Therefore they were carefully prepared prior to each investigation. The following day was spent in discussion and writing up the data accumulated during the performance.

Boria scripts, or rather the song-dance sequence of verses which the leader would write beforehand, were collected and arranged thematically. The farcical comic sketch, however, was highly improvised and live recordings made. The farce section of the show was observed to sustain the overall treatment of the theme in the verse of the

song-dance act. Scripts collected included those prepared for live shows, radio and television. For these categories the difference lay in the treatment of the theme.

In all, 42 shows were seen : ten outside of Penang Island, three rehearsals for radio recording, 26 live shows in Penang Island, and the rest during the final of the boria competition. The shows outside of Penang Island were in Perak, Kedah and Bukit Mertajam, the mainland side of Penang State. The shows in these states were mainly concentrated in rural areas rather than in towns. Of the ten shows outside of Penang Island, three were for weddings, two for charity, and the remaining five were staged as local festivities by associations. Of the 26 live shows seen in Penang Island, eight were for weddings, six for charitable occasions, six for local festivities and the remaining six for state and national-level occasions.

4. The Questionnaire :

The questionnaire (see below) was administered in Malay in two sections. Section A consisted of 16 questions constructed mainly to draw out the informants' social background and status, and social

interests. The questions asked attempted to establish the individual's personal particulars - name, age, sex, marital status, family structure and economic stability as well as how active they were in certain group activities.

Section B consisted of 17 questions designed to determine something about the informants' ideas on culture - how strongly they were attached to boria in particular and drama in general. Not all the questions in this section were administered to informants, and assistants were told to omit asking questions 19 (b), 20, 21, 23, and 24 as well as 29 unless the answer to question 19 (a) was in the affirmative, in which case answers were required to determine their role in boria. Although this section did reveal the informants' involvement and opinions on boria and other cultural arts, the answers to this section were not treated as critical in the analysis. They were also useful for comparison with actual reactions perceived or extracted out of interviews and conversations heard or overheard. Thus they served as a guideline in comparing what people said with what they actually felt about cultural tradition, and what they think of present trends such as that of governmental guidance on choice

of themes, the formation of new troupes having an all-girl or a mixed male-female cast and so on.

A pilot survey was carried out at a national boria competition held in Georgetown City Hall on 8th. February, 1975. Its viability was tested on 70 boria participants, and the survey proved useful for clarifying the questions posed in later questionnaires. Questions left unanswered were considered as either ambiguous or embarrassing, and corrections were made by means of omission or rephrasing. The final questionnaire employed is the one given below.

The main survey was made in the urban kampungs of Sungai Pinang, Kampung Dodol, Dhoby Ghout, and Kampung Jawa of Datuk Keramat district, Jelutong district and the urban area of Air Itam district.¹ The questionnaire was administered in every second Malay house in these areas. Within each house the questionnaire was completed by one willing respondent in each generation represented there (see Table A). The generations selected were youth (16-24 years), adult (25-49 years), and old (over 50 years). These

1. See Chapter I pp. 35-39 for reasons of this selection.

are really arbitrary categories, but roughly correspond to the local youth, adult and old age distinctions. The demarcation between youth and adult is based on two factors : the relatively late age of maturity of individuals in the area as observed; and secondly, the governmental job or training opportunities for new would-be employees wherein advertised opportunities for job situations to beginners venturing into a job must be below 24 years of age.

The response was excellent, no house visited failing to yield at least one set of answers. In all 674 audience questionnaires were completed. These include 23 non-Malays (ie. Chinese and Indians) but since their participation was found to be almost nil, they were not considered in the final analysis. The sample is therefore 50% of the Malay houses of the selected areas. Table B shows the distribution of audience participants by area; Table C, the number of player informants.

The survey was administered between 15 February to 30 March 1975. Four assistants were employed for the survey, the same assistants engaged for other parts of the research. They

were instructed to go into the research area in pairs until they had become known in the locality, when they could proceed singly. The first area chosen was Jelutung, and they were to proceed progressively to Datuk Keramat and on to Air Itam. They were told to explain their presence in very simple terms. In brief, they were to say that they were university students conducting a cultural research project with emphasis on boria; and that the particulars and opinions of those interviewed would be kept confidential unless they were given permission to do otherwise. The assistants were also told to ask in their own way the questions in the schedule; in other words to use their own discretion in order to avoid too much detail lest it create boredom in their subjects, and to write up the answers themselves. The subjects were, however, to be allowed to fill in the questionnaire themselves on request, provided that they were literate enough to do so; but even then the assistants were instructed to supervise this.

There was an initial problem in this field-work. The first four households in a village area thought we were government employees and some even thought we were newspaper people. But they were

soon duly corrected and told that we were an independent research group from the university and that their opinions would be kept confidential.

The work of administering the questionnaire was carried out every day of the week from ten in the morning to twelve noon, and again from two in the afternoon to five in the evening. These were the usual times when the subjects were not too occupied with household chores or when they were at home. The entire project was to be completed over a period of one month. It was later found that about 800 questionnaires took the four assistants and myself about 45 days to complete, the hot weather, sudden downpours of rain and availability of subjects having slowed down the expected progress. Even so the extra time spent on the project led to valuable conversations which helped significantly the satisfactory culmination of the whole research.

The Questionnaire :

Section A : Personal Data

Put a tick ✓ in the brackets () provided where in your case is applicable.

1. Your name :.....

2. Your home address :

3. Your age : 15 - 20 ()

21 - 24 ()

26 - 30 ()

31 - 35 ()

36 - 40 ()

41 - 49 ()

above 50 ()

4. Your sex : male ()

female ()

5. Marital status : single ()

married ()

divorced ()

6. Education : no formal schooling ()

primary schooling ()

lower secondary ()

upper secondary ()

university ()

7. Languages spoken : Malay ()

English ()

Tamil ()

Chinese ()

Others ()

Please state

8. Your occupation :

9. Your religion : Islam ()
 Christian ()
 Hindu ()
 Buddhist ()
 Others ()
 Please state

10. (a) Your residence 5 years ago :
 here ()
 elsewhere in Penang ()
 elsewhere in Malaysia ()

- (b) If elsewhere in the 5 years you have moved :
 1 - 3 times ()
 4 - 6 times ()
 more than 6 times ()

(c) State the names of places that you have
 resided over the last 10 years :

.....

11. Responsibilities to dependents (family) :
 self only ()
 two ()
 three ()
 four ()
 five ()
 more than five ()

12. Your ancestry : Malay ()
 Indian from parent ()
 Arab from parent ()
 Indian from grand-
 parent ()
 Arab from grandparent ()
 Others ()
 Please state

13. Properties : (fill in the blanks)

<u>Property (own)</u>	<u>Nos. / Acreage</u>	<u>Inherited</u>	<u>Bought</u>
Rubber padi land
land (general)

House	.....	.....	.....
Car	.....	.....	.....
Motorcycle	.....	.....	.....
Bicycle	.....	.....	.....
Television	.....	.....	.....
Radio	.....	.....	.....

14. Your income (monthly) : (fill in the blanks)

Occupation

Dollars (\$)

Main occupation
 Part-time jobs / sidelines
 Rentals of houses, land, etc.
 Pension / scholarships

15. Membership in performing arts troupes (if any) :

- (1) Leader ()
- (2) Clown/actor ()
- (3) Singer/choral ()
- (4) Musician ()
- (5) Ordinary member ()

16. Membership in other social or political organizations :

- (a) political party : leader ()
- secretary ()
- committee member ()
- ordinary member ()

(b) business organization (for example, Taxi drivers' Association, Factory Workers' Association, etc.) :

- leader ()
- secretary ()
- committee member ()
- ordinary member ()

(c) religious associations :

leader ()

secretary ()

committee member ()

ordinary member ()

(d) socio-cultural associations :

leader ()

secretary ()

committee member ()

ordinary member ()

Section B : On Performing Arts

Fill in the blanks or put a tick ✓ in the brackets () where applicable.

17. Tick the performing arts you know below :

(i) Boria ()

(ii) Dike ()

(iii) Mak Yong ()

(iv) Andai andai ()

(v) Sandiwara ()

(vi) Derama ()

(vii) Bangsawan ()

(viii) Kuda Kepang ()

(ix) Wayang Kulit Jawa ()

(x) Wayang Kulit Siam ()

(xi) Others ()

(Please state)

18. Fill in the spaces provided below the types that you have seen or heard :

- (i) Television
- (ii) Radio
- (iii) Live show
- (iv) Heard from others
- (v) Read somewhere

19. (a) Have you been involved in performing art troupes yourself ?

Yes ()

No ()

(b) If yes, state what performing arts you have been involved in :

.....
.....

20. How long have you been involved in the performing arts of your choice ?

(1) under 5 years ()

(2) 5 - 15 years ()

(3) since childhood ()

(4) since marriage ()

21. Roles played in performing art types :

(1) heroine/hero ()

(2) ketua kampung ()

(3) penghulu/pegawai kerajaan ()

- (4) villain/bad role ()
- (5) clown ()
- (6) singer/dancer ()
- (7) lead singer/dancer ()
- (8) musical band player ()
- (9) others (please state) ()

22. Any family members active in boria : (in each case please state which)

- (1) wife/husband ()
- (2) father/father-in-law ()
- (3) mother/mother-in-law ()
- (4) sister/brother ()
- (5) cousins ()
- (6) aunts/uncles ()

23. Why do you take an active part :

- (1) money ()
- (2) interest ()
- (3) following a friend ()
- (4) following family ()
- (5) others (please state) ()

24. When you do perform on stage how do you feel ?
Why ?

.....
.....

25. What in your opinion are the performing art types most likely to keep alive and popular and in each case give your reasons :

In Penang : (1)

(2)

(3)

In Malaysia: (1)

(2)

(3)

26. Why do you think the government wants to keep our performing art forms alive ?

.....

.....

27. In the list below are certain factors involved in Malaysia's progress. Please put numbers in the brackets provided in what you think is the order of importance of the factors listed below :

- (1) agriculture () 1
- (2) industries () 1
- (3) national/international peace () 2
- (4) religion () 3
- (5) education () 1
- (6) ethnic unity () 2
- (7) national and purposeful cultural performing arts () 3

- (8) social concord () 2
- (9) political parties () 3
- (10) allegiance / servitude () 2 *

*(Group : 1 - absolute categories
 2 - abstract categories
 3 - institutional categories)

28. If you are given a sum of money to fulfil only one specific need, what would you use it for ?
 (note that you only choose one from the list below) :

- (1) build school ()
- (2) buy land ()
- (3) start a business ()
- (4) build a mosque ()
- (5) donate to children's home ()
- (6) start a boria troupe ()

29. (a) As a boria troupe member you may have played certain roles like choral singer, lead singer and actor player or even leader at certain periods of your career. On the other hand your role may not have changed at all from the one you hold now. In terms of your role or roles in boria then and now answer the questions in the appropriate sections and place a tick in the spaces

you think fit :

Your situation now 5 years ago 5 years from now

1			
2			
3			
4			

(b) Why do you think you place yourself in the specific numbering you did ? Any plans or factors aiding or preventing your situation in borla ?

Reasons :

.....

Factors aiding or preventing :

.....

30. Which of the propagation stated below do you think most necessary in the achievement of a national culture? (Choose only 3 by circling appropriate numeral in the table below.)

Propagations		(i)	(ii)	(iii)
1)	Adaptation of ethnic cultural forms	1	2	3
2)	Islamic based cultural forms	1	2	3
3)	Malay type regional arts	1	2	3
4)	Radio and television	1	2	3
5)	Live theatre shows	1	2	3

6)	One type of each genre only	1	2	3
7)	Others (please state)	1	2	3

31. (a) Do you approve of men playing women roles in boria ?

Yes ()

No ()

Give your reasons :

(b) Do you approve of the present trend of having women taking roles in boria ?

Yes ()

No ()

Give your reasons :

32. On the whole, do you believe that the clown character is really funny ?

Yes ()

No ()

Reasons :

33. Tick in the spaces provided below () the occasions you see boria performances:

1) marriage ceremonies ()

2) national day celebrations ()

3) on invitation from associations for their celebration ()

(4) for charity ()

(5) just for fun ()

(6) others (please state) ()

34. Which part of boria attracts you most ? Put numerals in the brackets () provided in your order of preference :

(1) the type of story ()

(2) clowning and clown ()

(3) the moral of the story ()

(4) the choral singing ()

(5) others (please state) ()

Table A : Showing Age Composition Of Informants.

Age Composition	Audience Participants	Player Participants	Total
15 - 20 yrs.	160	19	179
21 - 25 yrs.	122	50	172
26 - 30 yrs.	121	6	127
31 - 35 yrs.	56	1	57
36 - 40 yrs.	41	1	42
above 41	151	2	153
TOTAL	651	79	730

Table B : Showing Number Of Malay Participants.

Nos.	Name of Area	Houses Visited	Total Questionnaire Per Area
1)	Datuk Kezamat	232	340
2)	Air Itam	87	137
3)	Jelutung	118	174
	TOTAL	437	651

Table C : Showing Number Of Player

Informants.

Nos.	Name of Troupes	No. of Players Per Troupe	Total Quest. Per Troupe
1	Sg. Pinang Troupe	30	19
2	Ria Seni Pesaka	26	18
3	UMNO Youth, Jln. Hatin	18	7
4	Student Dental Nurses	24	13
5	Kg. Jawa Troupe	23	13
6	Peseni Troupe	20	9
TOTAL		141	79

APPENDIX II

THE SONGS A - J : (AND TRANSLATIONS)

For the sake of profundity all translations are kept as close as possible to the original meaning - thus the non-convention to the verse form.

A. Kisah Kenduri Kahwin.

- 1) Kerana menunjuk segala keadaan
Kenduri kahwin besar perbelanjaan
Inilah akibat membawa kepapaan
Ria Seni Pesaka menunjuk persediaan
- 2) Sebab takut malu pada jiran tetangga
Kenduri dibuat tidak terhingga
Penat lelah kahwin belum lega
Si penagih hutang dah tunggu depan tangga
- 3) Kerana tak mahu kalah dengan bisan
Dibeli barang yang mahal alat perhiasaan
Kenduri selesai hutang jadi kesan
Bila dikira boleh membawa pengsan
- 4) Konon adat tak boleh ditentang
Kalau tak cukup bergadai berhutang
Sampai lupa kesusahan masa akan datang
Sampai beranak cucu tak habis bayar hutang
- 5) Kerana mengikut kehendaknya hati
Nak tenguk anaknya kahwin sebelum mati
Kenduri besar besaran dibuatnya mesti
Biar tanah kampung digadai pada ceti

- 6) Timpa perasaan banyak cedera
Kerana tak siasat tentang kenduri kendara
Dengan tak banyak soal bicara
Segala perbelanjaan tidak dikira
- 7) Sanak saudara tak ajak berpakat
Takut kemahuannya pulak disekat
Kalau timpa balak boleh diangkat
Timpa perasaan nak cari nama dan pangkat
- 8) Manusia timpa perasaan memang bahaya
Nasihat orang tidak dipercaya
Kalau miskin nak berlagak kaya
Diri sendiri nanti kena terpedaya
- 9) Timpa perasaan memang pandai berlagak
Disebabkan menantu berpangkat dan segak
Kerana kemahuan yang hendak ditegak
Tak ubah seperti telur dengan gagak
- 10) Kerana nak menunjuk pada orang ramai
Kendurinya besar indah dan permai
Penyakit timpa perasaan kalau diamai
Akhirnya penghidupan tak aman damai
- 11) Koran dan Hadis sudah berfirman
Buatlah ikut segala hukuman
Kenduri kahwin perkara kelaziman
Janganlah sampai hilang pedoman
- 12) Adat dan Sarak tidak menegah
Jagalah jangan sampai bercanggah
Kerja kenduri kahwin nak sombong dan megah
Akhirnya kaum keluarga tentu bertelagah
- 13) Ugama tidak menegah dan melarang
Tapi tak disuruh bergadai harta dan barang
Disebabkan kenduri tak mahu lebeh kurang
Takut malu dikata orang.

- 14) Banyak kenduri secara istimewa
Dijemput lapisan masyarakat semua
Habis dikorban harta dan nyawa
Kita yang menangis orang yang ketawa
- 15) Perkara kenduri kahwin dah jadi cerita
Mahu di kampung atau di kota
Ada yang puji ada yang mengata
Boleh menimbul bermacam sengkita
- 16) Harus kita fikir sendiri
Tentang tanggung jawab kahwin kenduri
Hanya setakat nak jadi raja se hari
Ingatlah beban yang datang kemari
- 17) Jangan didengar segala asutan
Kenduri kahwin punya peralatan
Buat setakat mampu punya perbuatan
Jangan dihitung emas berlian dan intan
- 18) Kenduri kahwin bukan sekali sekala
Turun temurun sejak dahulu kala
Buatlah setakat yang mendatang pahala
Jauh daripada yang membawa bala
- 19) Masyarakat nak kata jangan dihairan
Gunalah kita punya akal fikiran
Diri sendiri mesti dibuat ukuran
Tak guna kenduri secara besar besaran
- 20) Bukanlah saya hendak mengata
Hanya sedikit hendak bercerita
Kisah kenduri kahwin punya sengkita
Baik pun di kampung mahu pun di kota.

A. The Consequences Of Wedding Feasts :

- 1) For the purpose of showing off
A big wedding feast is celebrated
Into poverty is the result
Ria Seni Pesaka¹ discuss its course
- 2) For fear of shame from the neighbours
A feast is thrown regardless
But no sooner have the pains and efforts
passed
Than comes the creditor for his dues
- 3) In rivalry to better their in-laws
Only expensive furnishings are bought
The feast ends leaving in its wake debts
When counted will be enough to make the
debtor faint
- 4) 'Tis said that customs should be maintained
If lacking wealth than pawn or borrow
Oblivious to the future
The debt remains till their children's
children
- 5) For to fulfil the heart's desire
To live and see their child well married
A big merry feast becomes a must
Though to the Chettiar their family plot
be mortgaged

1. The name of the boria troupe lit. 'Boria Art Heritage'.

- 6) Overcome by emotion many are hurt
 For without considering, in the celebration,
 Without much question and queries,
 All expenditure flows unaccounted.
- 7) Kith and kin are never consulted
 Lest they restrict the spending,
 When pinned by fallen timber one can raise it
 When overcome by emotion one seeks for name
 and position. ²
- 8) A man overpowered by emotion is a danger
 No advice will they accept
 Though poor he pretends wealth
 Only his own self is deceived
- 9) Overcome by emotion he becomes pompous
 Because his son-in-law is titled and smart
 But since all there is is desire
 He is like an egg beside a crow. ³
- 10) For the sake of showing off to the others
 The feast celebrated is joyous and gay
 Overriding emotion is a disease too often
 Ending in a life of no peace or unity
- 11) It is written in the Koran and Hadith
 Only the proper need be practised
 Marriage feasts are a usual thing
 Do not by them forget your faith.
- 12) Though tradition and religion do not
 prohibit (the feast)
 Take care not to upset (the family)
 When a marriage feast was lavish for vanity
 and pride
 The result would certainly be family feud

2. ie. Natural disasters be overcome, but desire
 for prestige destroys one.
 3. ie. is feeble, easily crushed.

- 13) Religion neither prohibits nor forbids
But disallows pawning and selling property
If only for the sake of a really big feast
Made thus for fear of what people would say.
- 14) Many a feast makes a great occasion
Inviting all levels of society
By the sacrifice of property and effort
While others laugh, we the poor hosts cry
- 15) The story of wedding feasts has been told
The same is the case in village or city
Whether it be praised or condemned
Many a conflict is caused by it
- 16) One must think for oneself
On the responsibilities of weddings
If only to be King for a day
Remember the burden that accompanies it
- 17) Listen not to insinuations
On how to equip a wedding complete
Do only what's within your means
Count not what's gold, sapphire or diamond
- 18) A wedding ceremony is not a thing unique
Brought down from our ancestors
Do only what is deemed necessary
But avoid whatever bring ill
- 19) Bother not with what society may say
Only use your own better judgement
Your own self must first be measured
For no good will come out of a big wedding
- 20) I am not trying to condemn
But only a short story to tell
About the follies of weddings
In both villages and cities.

B. Rumah Siap Pahat Berbunyi :

- 1) Rumah siap pahat berbunyi
Di dalam masyarakat tidaklah sunyi
Berbagai irama sudah dinyanyi
Boria Sungai Pinang nasihat memberi
- 2) Nikah selesai mula bertengkar
Segala rahsia habis dibongkar
Hutang keliling pinggang mula melingkar
Sanggup penghidupan sebagai ayam mencakar
- 3) Pertengkaran yang sejuk dah jadi garang
Timbullah pasai bergadai barang
Kerana hendak bersiap lebeh di orang
Sehingga sanggup menanggung apa sebarang
- 4) Dari bercakap mula bergaduh
Kata mengata tuduh menuduh
Habis dikeluarkan perkataan yang hodoh
Bukankah ini pendapat yang bodoh
- 5) Kerana suami isteri tidak sefahaman
Rumah tangga selalu nanti tidak aman
Tambahan pula tidak ada iman
Ibarat bahtera tak ada peduman
- 6) Soalan rumah tangga bukannya mudah
Dikalangan masyarakat banyak terdedah
Hidup perkongsian tak berfeadah
Akhirnya nanti buruknya padah
- 7) Soalan rumah tangga perkara tak ringan
Inilah suami isteri ampunya tanggungan
Terpaksa menempuh segala rintangan
Hidup kasih mesra bercerai jangan

- 8) Kalaulah timbul perkara yang lebeh kurang
Beralah suami isteri salah seorang
Kalau sama sama nak tunjuk garang
Akhirnya nanti punca berperang
- 9) Aturan rumah tangga mesti berpakat
Barulah hidup bertambah berkat
Sebarang pekerjaan kalau disukai
Kekallah jodoh tidaknya singkat
- 10) Banyak rumah tangga yang jadi sengketa
Kerana isteri tamakkan harta
Jikalau boleh disuruh beli kereta
Akhirnya nanti duduk rumah berkota
- 11) Pikul tanggung jawab bersungguh sungguh
Bina rumah tangga supaya teguh
Masing masing kewajipan jangan bertangguh
Supaya keturunan menjadi jaguh
- 12) Jangan terlampau hendak berlagak
Kerana mendapat isteri yang segak
Keamanan rumah tangga nanti tak tegak
Kalau kemahuan mereka teragak agak
- 13) Kepentingan suami isteri mesti dijaga
Baharulah aman rumah tangga
Saling mengerti menjadi bangsa
Bukan kerana mas semayam sesaga
- 14) Hiduplah dengan saling mengerti
Pandailah pula mengambil hati
Bena rumah tangga dengan sejati
Baharulah nyata sehidup semati
- 15) Insaplah kamu kaum isteri
Kerana suami hendak mencari
Bila tak dapat kemahuan yang digemari
Jangan tinggal rumah nak cabut lari

- 16) Rukun kasih sayang mesti disemai
Baharu rumah tangga aman dan damai
Ikutlah contoh masyarakat ramai
Supaya penghidupan indah permai
- 17) Ada ketika suami naik radang
Muka isteri tak boleh pandang
Bila bergaduh disepak tendang
Ini perbuatan tak ada undang undang
- 18) Banyak terjadi pada anak muda
Seronok mula bergurau senda
Pujuk rayu kanda dan dinda
Bila dapat satu anak jadi janda
- 19) Adat yang kolot ketepi sebelah
Ini tidak disuruh oleh Allah
Kalau berpegang tidak beralah
Akhirnya nanti berpecah belah.

B. Though The House Is Finished, The Chisel Still Sounds :

- 1) Though the house is finished, the chisel
still sounds
In society such a thing is always occurring
All kinds of tunes have been sung
Boria Sungai Pinang ¹ gives some advice
here.
- 2) Once the marriage rites are over the
quarrels set in
All secrets are exposed
Of debts all around one
Living like a scratching chicken
- 3) Cold quarrels have flared into flames
Cases of pawning jewellery are raised
For the sake of preparation better than others
They are willing to carry any burden
- 4) From discussions quarrels start
Each blaming and accusing the other
Out come all the ugly words
Isn't this in itself stupid ?
- 5) When between husband and wife there is no
understanding
Home life will never be peaceful
On top of this they have no direction
Like a boat without a rudder

1. The name of the horia troupe, in this case the place name Sungai Pinang.

- 6) Domestic problems are not trifles
 For many cases have been exposed in society
 When a life of togetherness brings no gain
 In the end the result is misfortune
- 7) The question of family life is no light matter
 It is but the husband and wife's responsibility
 To overcome all difficulties with forbearance
 Living in loving duty - not divorce.
- 8) When a triviality should arise
 One party must give way
 Should both try to show arrogance
 The result is only the beginning of a fight
- 9) The rule of marriage is alliance
 Then only would life be more profitable
 Anything when done with deliberated measure
 Ensures a togetherness not shortlived
- 10) Many a household comes to grief
 Because of a wife's material greed
 Should she want to have a car bought
 The husband can end in a towered home. 2
- 11) Carry your responsibilities in all seriousness
 Build a firm family life
 Neither one shirk your duties
 So your descendants will be champions
- 12) Do not be too haughty
 Because a beautiful wife is got
 Family peace is never upheld
 Because everything is fleeting

2. 'towered home' : prison.

- 13) Each other's interest must be sustained
 To achieve peace in marriage
 Understanding and harmony creates a nation
 More than quantities of gold.
- 14) Learn to live harmoniously
 Know also the art of winning hearts
 Establish a family life in all earnestness
 In order to realize a life together unto
 death.
- 15) Repent you housewives
 For your husbands go out to earn a living
 When your wants are not fulfilled
 Do not pack up and leave home.
- 16) The commandment of love must be sowed
 And a household of peace and quiet would be
 achieved
 Follow the example of our common society
 And life will be beautiful and serene
- 17) At times husbands lose their heads in anger
 That the sight of their wife they cannot bear
 When quarrelling they boot and kick
 This practice is very unlawful
- 18) Many a young man has experienced
 Starting life in fun and frivolity
 Sweet name-calling of dear and dearest
 Yet after the first child divorces
- 19) The old customs leave aside
 It has never been the will of Allah
 To one cling too firmly to them
 For one's marriage is bound to end in disaster.

C. Kisah Gitar Rancak :

- 1) Gitar rancak ampunya pukulan
Kesenian asli sudah ketinggalan
Pemuda-pemudi didalam khayalan
Ria Seni Pesaka membuka simpulan
- 2) Gitar rancak mula melarat
Kesenian gila dibawa dari barat
Pemuda-pemudi semua dah gelorat
Kalau tak dijaga tentu nanti mudharat
- 3) Kerana mengikut peredaran zaman
Jangan terlupa adat dan resaman
Fikirlah dengan otak yang siuman
Kesenian inilah mengoncangkan iman
- 4) Tempo lagunya konon sangat bijak
Kalau menari terlompat terlonjak
Di sini pusing di sana genjak
Tersilap langkah kaki nanti kena pijak
- 5) Bila menari dihingut bergoncang
Sekali dipandang macam duduk berbincang
Apatah lagi kalau temponya kencang
Hingga terburai sanggul dan tocang
- 6) Bila menari tersangat gembira
Dengan berlagak berbagai cara
Inilah keganasan teruna dan dara
Kesenian sendiri tidak dipelihara
- 7) Tarian ini kononnya cukup bebas
Boleh menghilangkan lenguh dan kebas
Kalau dipandang sekali imbas
Tak salah macam orang menebas

- 8) Kadang kadang menyanyi terpekek terlolong
Badan yang betul dah nampak terlolong
Macam mangsa baru kena polong
Tak ada siapa yang hendak menolong
- 9) Ada kala terdapat macam masuk hantu
Terhinggut terkulai kesini kesitu
Sehingga tak ada masa dan waktu
Alang alang tak sabar macam nak baling batu
- 10) Kesenian asli apalah kurang
Bukan siapa yang hendak melarang
Tidak sedikit pun nampak curang
Tidak menjolok mata semua orang
- 11) Kesenianlah yang mengenalkan bangsa
Sebagai sengat yang mengenal bisa
Kesenian sendiri kalau di Persia
Kesenian barat dah tentu berkuasa
- 12) Memang cantik kesenian asli
Serata dunia sudah mengenali
Janganlah dihapus sama sekali
Kesenian tak boleh dijual beli
- 13) Marilah kita fikir sejurus
Tarian asli kesenian yang lurus
Sesama kita dapat mengulus
Baik yang gemok atau yang kurus
- 14) Apabila datang rombongan muhibbah
Tarian asli juga yang disembah
Sangatlah susah kalau hendak digubah
Kebudayaan sendiri janganlah diubah

- 15) Cubalah kita selidik dan kaji
Tarian asli memang terpuji
Janganlah hendak kita mengaji
Kesenian bangsa mulalah disaji
- 16) Adat resam bangsa bukan perkara olok olok
Budi pekerti perkara yang elok
Jika tak faham secara selok belok
Di khalayak ramai sanggup berpelok
- 17) Jagalah kita sebelum terkena
Adat sendiri jangan dihina
Kebudayaan sendiri mesti dibena
Kepada bangsa sangat berguna
- 18) Sudah sampai waktu dan ketika
Bongkarlah bangsa ampunya pesaka
Kerana negara sudah merdeka
Kebudayaan bangsa mesti bangun kemuka
- 19) Budi pekerti kita memang segak
Kesenian bangsa mesti ditegak
Berusahalah terus jangan tertagak
Dalam tanah air tempat berlagak
- 20) Marilah kita bersatu hasrat
Berseih kebudayaan dari berkarat
Kesenian bangsa sendiri diambil berat
Hindarlah kebudayaan orang orang barat
- 21) Marilah kita pakat menanti
Gunalah kesenian bangsa yang satu
Kalau umat Melayu semua membantu
Kebudayaan kesenian tetap bermutu.

C. Pop Music :

- 1) The effect of pop music
Traditional arts are left behind
Young men and women lost in dreams
Ria Seni Pesaka presents the problem
- 2) Pop music has begun to spread
A wild art brought from the west
Young men and women are all influenced
If care is not taken ill fortune could result
- 3) In trying to keep up with the times
Forget not our own custom and tradition
Think with a right mind that is sensible
The wild art shakes your goodly faith
- 4) The song rythm is said to be clever
The dance is all hopping and jumping
Here you turn there you step
A wrong move and your feet get trodden on
- 5) When dancing you sway and jerk
Looking like two people (gesticulating) in
conversation
What's more when the beat is hot
Buns and plaits are shaken loose
- 6) When dancing they are so merry
With all sorts of pretentious action
This is the rashness of teenagers
Their own art is nurtured not

- 7) The dance is said to give freedom
 And helps one to rid of the cramps
 To observe at a glance it appears
 Like a person cutting grass with a sickle
- 8) Often accompanied by lusty vociferous
 singing
 A body once upright looks lolling
 Like a victim just stricken by evil ¹
 With nobody wanting to help
- 9) At times looking like one possessed by an
 evil spirit
 Swaying and drooping here and there
 Like there is no time and season for other
 things
- 10) Nothing is lacking in traditional art
 No one would forbid it
 Nor is it uncouth
 It has nothing to disturb the eye of others
- 11) One's art reveals one's nation
 Like a sting that knows its venom
 If your own art has gone to Persia
 Western art would take over
- 12) Traditional dance is indeed beautiful
 Has been known throughout the world
 Do not get rid of it totally
 For art cannot be bought and sold

1. ie. Polong : a blood-sucking grasshopper conjured
 up by witchcraft which can be sent
 to attack a victim.

- 13) Let us think for a while
Traditional art is a simple and
straightforward art.
We can all do it together,
Whether we are fat or thin
- 14) When comes a delegation of peace
Traditional dance is presented.
It is most complicated to compose
And our own culture changes not
- 15) Let us investigate and examine
Traditional art is praiseworthy
Do not only learn it
But perform it besides
- 16) A nation's customary tradition is no
triviality
Virtuosity and graciousness are goodly matters
When its conventions are not understood
In public one is willing to hug
- 17) We must beware before we are affected
Our own tradition condemn not
Our own culture we must nurture
To our race it is very useful
- 18) The time and moment has come
To probe into our racial heritage
Because our nation has got its independence
Our culture too must come to the fore
- 19) Our good deeds have always been well known
Now our arts must be upheld
Striving without hesitation
Our country is the place to show them off

20) Let us unite in a single aim
Clear our culture of its rust
Take interest in our own tradition
And leave alone the cultures of the west

21) Let us in unison pause
Use only the art of our race
If all Malay citizens were to help
Our cultural arts are bound to have quality.

D. Kisah Anasir Barat :

- 1) Pemuda-pemudi di zaman sekarang
Banyak terpesong dari asal tujuan
Mengikut napsu ampunya kemahuan
Ria Sungai Pinang menunjuk panduan
- 2) Kerana mengikut contoh tauladan
Cara orang barat ampunya mordan
Tak payah sanggul sikat dan dandan
Busuk dan hangit segala tubuh badan
- 3) Pemuda sudah berambut panjang
Pemudi bermuni sekat sampai telanjang
Hidupnya pula suka membujang
Perangai liar seperti kijang
- 4) Disimpan rambut panjang berjela
Rantai dan tasbih digantung pula
Sekali pandang macam orang gila
Kesana kemari bermaharajalela
- 5) Agarnya seumur hidup tak pernah mandi
Bercopang caping semacam abdi
Ada yang kurus sebagai lidi
Terhoyong hayang macam kena todi
- 6) Agarnya pantang muka kena pisau
Janggut dan misai dibiarkan berpusau
Sekali pandang macam otak sasau
Mereka sedikit pun tak rasa risau
- 7) Baunya busuk mencucuk hidung
Ada yang berselindang ada yang bertudung
Ada yang tidur di tepi gedung
Tak tentu tempat mereka melindungi

- 8) Apakala madat sudah dikena
Ada yang menyanyi ada yang lena
Kadang terjerumus ke lembah yang hina
Tak hiraukan apa segala bincana
- 9) Mereka tidak ada beragama
Haram dan halal semuanya sama
Tak pilih tempat hendak bercengkerama
Itulah dajal dah turun menjelma
- 10) Inilah Hipis ampunya kemajuan
Hidup mereka tak ada haluan
Jauh dari segi kemanusiaan
Apakah maana dan apakah tujuan
- 11) Konon mengikut peredaran zaman
Sanggup melanggar adat resaman
Liar dan buas dah jadi kelaziman
Inilah penyakit barat ampunya kuman
- 12) Mengikut zaman sains dan teknologi
Habis nak dimakan apa yang disaji
Ada tak tahu mengucap dan mengaji
Dituduh kolot lebai dan haji
- 13) Terlampau mengikut kemajuan alam
Sampai dah tak tahu kapir dan Islam
Habis asyek berseronok itulah kalam
Syurga mereka di kelab malam
- 14) Kemajuan barat secara kebetulan
Mereka dah sampai naik ke bulan
Kitalah bangsa yang banyak ketinggalan
Menggangur sepak kertas di tengah jalan
- 15) Kemajuan dunia baratlah miliki
Tetapi soal moral tak dapat dibaiki
Perkara sosial perempuan dan lelaki
Itulah bangsa barat ampunya teka teki

- 16) Kewajipan ibu bapa memberi asuhan
Semasa anak anak didalam persekolahan
Asas pertama mengenai tuhan
Jangan dimanja dan dibelas kasihan
- 17) Asuhlah anak anak dengan sempurna
Beri ilmu pengetahuan sangat berguna
Setelah dewasa dapat membina
Supaya hidup tidak merana
- 18) Wahai sekalian yang bijak pandai
Alim ulama yang banyak modai
Janganlah keritik kata dan sidai
Maruah bangsa ugama habis tergadai
- 19) Marilah kita pakat bersatu
Adat dan ugama menjadi sekutu
Membuat undang undang perkara tertentu
Baharulah dapat menilai mutu
- 20) Dari sekarang kita mesti berpakat
Segala kebudayaan liar kita sekat
Sebelum roak kita punya masyarakat
Hambatlah dia jangan bagi dekat
- 21) Kerajaan patut mengambil tindakan
Pengembara Hipis patutlah dihapuskan
Kemajuan sendiri dapat dikekalkan
Mana yang salah mahulah dibetulkan
- 22) Kerajaan dan menteri sudah mengaku
Teras kebudayaan Melayu sudah terpaku
Tetapi apapun belum dilaku
Belum ternampak barang apa satu suku.

D. Youth And Bad Western Influence :

- 1) The youths of our progressive times
Many deviate from their original aims
Succumbing easily to their desires
Ria Sungai Pinang shows the way
- 2) For to follow the example
Of the westerners in their modernity
There is no need to comb or clean
Till all their bodies have a fetid smell
- 3) Young men start to sport long hair
Young women in miniskirts almost naked
Leading a life of happy bachelorhood
With behaviour wild as the stag
- 4) Keeping long flowing hair
Round their necks hang chains and talismans
At a glance they look like madmen
Going here and there in revelry
- 5) Probably never bathed in all their lives
Wearing patched clothes like a slave
Some as thin as a rook
Walking unsteadily like a drunkard
- 6) Probably never a blade touched the face
Beard and moustache left to grow unkempt
They look as one berserk
They however are not the least disturbed
- 7) The stench quite overpowers our noses
Though some wear shawls and scarves
Their sleeping place is near a warehouse
With no proper place for shelter

- 8) And when drugs have taken over
 Some start a-singing while some go to sleep
 Others become ensnared in evil
 Without a care for any danger
- 9) For them there is no religion
 To them the forbidden and the approved are
 one
 Any place is suitable for frolicking
 In them the Evil One ¹ has emerged
- 10) This is progress for the Hippies
 A life without aim or direction
 Away from that of humanity
 What is it's meaning and purpose ?
- 11) So as to follow the lead of the times
 Must be willing to oppose tradition
 To be wild and rash is usual
 This is but the infection of western sickness
- 12) To keep with the times in science and technology
 They are willing to eat anything laid out
 Many know not how to acknowledge God or pray
 Branding the religious teachers as antiquated
- 13) Too devoted to worldly progress
 They forget what is pagan and what is Islam
 Abandoned to pleasure is their fate
 Their heaven is the night club

1. ie. Dajal : In Malay belief, a one-eyed man who will come near the world's end and force Muslims to sin, eg. by eating pork.

- 14) The progress in the west incidentally
Has made them reach to the moon
But our race is still lagging behind
Unemployed except for kicking street trash
- 15) World progress is a thing of the west
Yet their moral values need reappraising
The relationship between men and women
Has always been a puzzle in the west
- 16) A parent's duty is to inculcate
While a child is still in school
The first basic about God
Instead of pitying and spoiling them
- 17) Train your child properly
Give them knowledge fundamental
When they grow up it will build
A life that is not miserable for them
- 18) I call to all the wise people
And to garrulous religious teachers
Do not be so openly critical
In the process lowering our religious esteem
- 19) Instead let us unite in oneness
Achieve a harmony in culture and religion
Make certain matters a law
Only then will we be able to determine its
quality
- 20) From here on we must join
And rid ourselves of all wild cultures
Before our society become degenerate
By chasing let us keep them away

- 21) The government should take action
Hippy travellers must be barred
Our own civilization be upheld
Those that err should be corrected
- 22) Government and ministers have sworn
The pillar of Malay culture has taken root
Yet nothing has been done
Not even a quarter of the (promised)
activities have been seen.

E. Kisah Nombor Ekor :

- 1) Banyaklah orang sudah terkena
Pasal judi ampunya kerana
Akibatnya ini membawa merana
Ria Seni Pesaka keritik membina
- 2) Judi merebak seluruh semenanjung
Lebeh lebeh lagi di Pulau Pinang Tanjung
Asyek dok tikam tiga empat nombor hujung
Surat gadai di peti dah naik sejunjung
- 3) Bila waktu petang semua sudah bising
Sebab nak adu untung nasib masing masing
Bila tak kena kepala dah naik pusing
Hingga duk rer kaya kepada bangsa asing
- 4) Pada tuan tuan Pak Long nak sebut
Bila waktu petang semua orang dah kelam kabut
Menunggu keputusan nombor yang dicabut
Bila tak kena nombor anggota semua dah naik
lembut
- 5) Kerana minta nombor yang tentu
Pak Long pergi menurun sana dan situ
Segenap pokok pongsu dan batu
Sehingga Pak Long tak takut Jin dan hantu
- 6) Pak Long pai Angkong-Ji di bukit Western Road
Tok Kong bagi nombor betul semua tak karut
Satu lapan empat disuruh berturut turut
Sampai habis barang bibi Pak Long dah lurut
- 7) Waktunya muda Pak Long cukup joli
Duit ringgit tak sayang sekali
Hailan rumah tangga Pak Long tak ambil
peduli
Sampai naik berkerak hutang benggali

- 8) Kerana judi ekor ampunya buatan
 Habis tergadai tanah kampung emas intan
 Asyek duk ikut napsu iblis dan syaitan
 Nyaris Pak Long tak tergelincir ke Tanjung R
 Rambutan
- 9) Kerana judi ekor mula mula asai
 Dengan bini bini Pak Long dah jadi pasai
 Ke rumah Tok Kadhi talak tiga minta selesai
 Pak Long pun menangis baru rasa menyesai
- 10) Setengah perempuan punya kerja
 Hari nak tikam nombor diperkurangnya belanja
 Dimasak ikan kering dengan kuah pedas saja
 Bila tak kena nombor dengan anak laki dia
 bekerja
- 11) Bini Pak Long dapat alamat yang cukup tepat
 Disuruh Pak Long tikam nombor satu lapan
 empat
 Dua helai kain batik Pak Long sudah lipat
 Dipajak gadai Pak Long dah rapat
- 12) Mimpi Pak Long kadang kadang tak simpang
 Bila hendak cuma Pak Long tikam sekupang
 Duit diterima hati Pak Long rasa lapang
 Bila Pak Long kalah rumah kawan Pak Long
 tumpang
- 13) Bila tak kena nombor bini Pak Long sudah bebai
 Anak teriak sedikit banyak dia tebai
 Hati naik panas muka merah cabai
 Bila Pak Long tengking dia baling dengan
 kembai

- 14) Bila dah jadi pasai kerja dapur dia mogok
Anak didalam hendoi disuruh Pak Long tanggok
Disuruh basuh kain bajunya selongok
Sampai tak dan minum kopi setegok
- 15) Pak Long dapat nasihat daripadanya sahabat
Perkara judi ekor disuruh Pak Long taubat
Disuruh buat amalan jangan terlambat
Takut tak boleh jawab Nungkar Nangkir sebat
- 16) Bukan Pak Long hendak mengada ngada
Pada tuan tuan sekalian yang mana ada
Setakat ini Pak Long punya propoganda
Kisah riwayat Pak Long waktunya muda.

E. Gambling On Numbers :

- 1) Many a person has been had
By the follies of gambling
The result is always unfortunate
Ria Seni Pesaka offers objective criticism
- 2) Gambling has spread all over the peninsula
Especially in the Island of Pulau Pinang
By concentrating on buying three and four end
numbers
Pawn tickets in the box have mounted high
- 3) By evening everything's burst asunder
Because they have tried their luck against
others
When their's fails they become dejected
While the non-Malay bookie gets richer by the
hour
- 4) To the audience Pak Long wants to tell
How by nightfall everybody has the jitters
Waiting for the number to be drawn
When their number loses they go limp
- 5) To try to get a winning number
Pak Long seeks help from the spirits
At every existing anthill and rock
Quite losing his fear for genies and ghosts
- 6) Pak Long frequents Angkong-Ji ¹ on the hill
of Western Road
The god gave a most truthful number
One eight four to recite and remember
Secretly Mak Long's belongings I pawn

1. Angkong-Ji : name of a Chinese temple.

- 7) During my youth I was a spendthrift
 Of money I have no love
 Wasting it on friends and neighbours
 irrespective
 Till well encrusted become my debt with the
 Bengali
- 8) Because of the gambling
 My land, house and jewellery I have pawned
 Following the whims and fancies of the devil
 Almost landed myself in Tanjung Rambutan.²
- 9) My obsession with numbers gambling
 Led to conflict with my wife
 The religious judge³ she asked for a final
 divorce
 Bringing me to tears of sorrow
- 10) However some women gamblers
 Use part of their housekeeping money to buy
 tickets
 Cooking only saltfish in hot soup
 And venting their wrath on their family when
 they lose
- 11) Once my wife dreamt of a number
 Told me to buy one eight four
 So two batik sarongs I folded
 And to the pawnshop I did go

2. Tanjung Rambutan : A town well known because of
 a Mental Institution which was
 once having the same name. The
 institution is now called
 Hospital Bahagia.

3. Religious judge : Muslim judge called Kadzi.

- 12) My own dreams are not often wrong
 Only ten cents I gamble when I am in need
 Then the winnings make my heart light
 But if I lose I seek solace at my friend's home
- 13) For whenever I lost my wife was sullen
 Our child cried and trivial were punished
 Our hearts were angry our faces red as chillies
 When her actions I rebuked she throws a basket
 in reply
- 14) When conditions worsened she stopped cooking
 And made me rock our baby in the crib
 Also made me wash our dirty clothes
 So that I had no time to snatch even a gulp
 of coffee
- 15) My friends gave me advice
 Told me to leave off gambling
 And to turn to religion before it was too late
 Or my ignorance make Nungkar Nangkir ⁴ beat
 me
- 16) I am not trying to be fussy
 With you all that are here
 But that is all my moralising
 About the story of my younger days.

4. Nungkar Nangkir : The names of the angels guarding the world of the Dead who are believed by Malays to be the interrogators and prosecutors of Muslims in their life after death.

F. Kisah Rumah Sewa :

- 1) Akibat rumah sewa ampunya kerana
Sesama jiran menjadi bincana
Tak pernah aman serta sempurna
Ria Seni Pesaka keritik membina
- 2) Kisah bermula rumah sewa
Ragam masyarakat muda dan tua
Bermacam halian boleh bersua
Sedeh duka gelak ketawa
- 3) Rumah disekat berbilik bilik
Ada yang buruk ada yang bersolek
Kisah kelamin dapat ditilik
Ada terdapat kelakuan yang pelek
- 4) Pagi pagi sudah dengar suara
Bermacam hilai ampunya perkara
Tandas dapur pancur itulah perkara
Kerana merebut hendak segera
- 5) Di pancur air duduk membongkok
Ramai mencuci pinggan mangkok
Kata mengata soalan pokok
Yang mana tak ada semua ditokok
- 6) Di rumah sewa memang tak enak
Perangai jiran liar dan jinak
Terlampau susah masa menanak
Kadang kadang bergaduh pasai anak
- 7) Bermacam gaya bilik disekat
Sewanya pula bertingkat tingkat
Sesama jiran tak mahu sepakat
Itulah rumah sewa ampunya masyarakat

- 8) Di rumah sewa kerap berparang
Kisah budak budak ditegor dilarang
Kerana orang tua nak tunjuk garang
Akhirnya berlaku serang menyerang
- 9) Di rumah sewa serba salah
Boleh didapati berbagai masaalah
Terpaksa bersabar serta mengalah
Supaya tidak jadi berbalah
- 10) Di rumah sewa berbagai keturunan
Adat resam sangat berlainan
Jikalau terdapat mana tak berkenan
Tenguk dan perhati itulah layanan
- 11) Tuan rumah penghisap darah
Sewa diletak mahal dan murah
Kepada penyewa habis diarah
Pantang tersilap dikata dimarah
- 12) Tuan rumah memangnya sombong
Berkehendakkan hasil seperti lombong
Tak pernah diperbaiki atap dan bumbong
Yang mana patah tak mahu disambung
- 13) Cukup bulan sampainya masa
Sewa rumah diminta dipaksa
Kepada penyewa habis digesa
Dengan sedikit tak bertimbang rasa
- 14) Tuan rumah tersangat ranggi
Tak mahu langsung kejalan yang rugi
Hasil air api melambang tinggi
Sewa rumah dipernaikki lagi
- 15) Kepada penyewa dikata dipesan
Tak mahu menerima segala alasan
Kejam dan zalim itulah keputusan
Penyewa dianggap bukannya insan

- 16) Kepada tuan rumah menjadinya pantang
Segala perentahnya kalau ditentang
Disuruh berhemat beradap intang
Sewa rumah tak diberi berhutang
- 17) Kepada penyewa disuruh berhemat
Pada dirinya disuruh hormat
Air dan api disuruh cermat
Kalau hendak duduk dengan selamat
- 18) Bila tuan rumah bertimbang rasa
Cukup bulan sewa rumah tak dipaksa
Ada penyewa nak tunjuk bisa
Ditempuh sewa esok dan lusa
- 19) Duduk rumah sewa sedarlah diri
Jangan nak buat macam rumah sendiri
Cukup bulan sewa segera diberi
Jangan bertangguh hari kehari.

F. On Rented Houses

- 1) All because of a rented house
With the neighbours one conflicts
Never to have peace and quiet
Ria Seni Pesaka offers objective criticism
- 2) Incidents are most likely to occur in
rented houses
Involving the community young or old
All sorts of acquaintances can be met
Producing tragedy, sadness or happy laughter
- 3) The house is partitioned into many rooms
One well kept, the other ungroomed
Occupants' activities are no secret
Revealing some peculiar habits
- 4) At dawn voices can be heard
With all sorts of noisy laughter
At the toilet, kitchen, tap
Each trying to have an early turn
- 5) Around the tap sat a-squatting
Many engaged in plate-washing
Gossip being the main attraction
Whatever's lacking finds provision
- 6) It is unwholesome in rented houses
With neighbours having habits wild or gentle
Making it quite impossible to cook
When arguing over quarrelling children

- 7) Rooms are divided in many ways
With rentals charged by stages
Between neighbours there is no co-operation
Such is their social organisation
- 8) In such communities violent incidents
Can arise with children being corrected
Incurring resentment in the parent
Resulting in open conflict
- 9) In such communities you can never be certain
Many a problem is always present
You need to be patient and give way
To avoid certain conflict
- 10) Such communities house various heritages
With very different cultural traditions
When there is one that is scorned
The treatment is reproving looks and glances
- 11) The landlords are blood suckers
Imposing rents some expensive, some cheap
And all sorts of rules on the tenants
Any faults make him scold and reprimand
- 12) House owners are arrogant
Wanting returns as from a mine
Never mending roofs or ceilings
Things that get broken are not repaired
- 13) By the end of the month the time has come
Rents are claimed by force
Tenants are made to pay
With not even a show of mercy
- 14) The landlord is most cheeky
Never willing to lose anything
So when water and electricity payments are
increased
The same is done to the rented houses

- 15) To the tenants instructions are given
Without listening to any reason
A tyrant's whims is the consequence
Treating their tenants as less than human
- 16) To the landlord it is an adversity
If their orders are not followed properly
They are to scrape and save irrespective
Never accepting rental indebtedness
- 17) To their tenants they preach thriftiness
Demanding their respect
Water and electricity they are told to spare
If they want to live in peace
- 18) But when landlords are kind
Not forcing the rent at the end of the month
The tenants in turn show their sting
Postponing payment to tomorrow, and tomorrow
- 19) Living in a rented house you must realize
You can't treat it like your own
At the end of month your rent quickly pay
Instead of putting off it day after day.

G. Kisah Bomoh Dengan Doktor :

- 1) Marilah kita fikir bersama
Untuk faedah bangsa dan ugama
Walaupun cara baru dan lama
Ria Seni Pesaka sedia terima
- 2) Kebanyakan masyarakat orang Melayu
Kepada bomoh dipercaya terlalu
Segala kemahuan diturut melulu
Mengikut adat resaman dahulu
- 3) Berteh disedia tepung dan beras
Tepak sirih diisi pengkeras
Bomoh menjampi perlahan dan deras
Menilik penyakit ampunya paras
- 4) Bomoh membuat berbagai ramalan
Tentang penyakit ampunya hailan
Kerana terkena disimpang jalan
Dimasa hantu sedang bualan
- 5) Bomoh petua pada yang sakit
Masa hadapan ingat sedikit
Bila sudah semboh boleh bangkit
Disuruh menjamu jembalang di bukit
- 6) Bomoh mengesah yang bukan bukan
Kerana masyarakat selalu lalaikan
Kepada jembalang tak diberi makan
Kepada bomoh disuruh serahkan
- 7) Banyak masyarakat sudah terkena
Kerana bomoh ampunya bincana
Segala permintaan habis disempurna
Inilah adat yang paling tak guna

- 8) Kepada masyarakat menjadi kelaziman
Dipegang kuat adat resaman
Dipercaya bomoh ampunya pedoman
Habis dilanggar agama ampunya hukuman
- 9) Bila memulas sakit perut
Kepada bomoh disuruh turut
Sembur dan jampi serta dibarut
Itulah ubat sangat mengarut
- 10) Perkara ini memangnya nyata
Walau di dusun atau di kota
Dipercaya bomoh ampunya dusta
Diturut dengan membabi buta
- 11) Marilah kita mengubah fikiran
Mengikut kemajuan ampunya aturan
Dibawah kerajaan ampunya anjuran
Dengan doktor yang cukup terpelajaran
- 12) Kalau di rumah sakit bukannya senang
Tak payah pengkeras bersirih pinang
Diberi rawatan dengan senang
Itulah kemajuan yang telah tercanang
- 13) Kerajaan belanja berjuta juta
Untuk kesenangan rakyat jelata
Didiri rumah sakit merata rata
Kerana merawat yang sakit derita
- 14) Di rumah sakit disedia rawatan
Cukup lengkap segala perubatan
Doktor berpengalaman memberi perkhidmatan
Sehingga terpulih segala kesakitan

- 15) Di rumah sakit kita dipereksa
Apa jenis sakit atau biasa
Rawatan diberi dengan sekejap masa
Segala penyakit hapus binasa
- 16) Didiri kelinik di merata tempat
Jikalau sakit pergilah cepat
Nasihat rawatan tentu mendapat
Hindarlah perasaan takut ampunya sifat
- 17) Jangan difaham secara kolot
Luka dan kudis hendak dibalut
Dipantang makan segala pulut
Bila merebak baru bergelot
- 18) Segala hantu syaitan jangan percaya
Adat kolot yang membawa bahaya
Jikalau berikhtiar jalan berjaya
Jangan sampai kena terpedaya
- 19) Janganlah kita terlampau nakal
Gunalah fikiran dengannya akal
Doktor dan bomoh sama setangkal
Yang mana berguna jangan disangkal
- 20) Janganlah kita jadi terkeliru
Gunalah aturan lama dan baru
Doktor dan bomoh sama sama berguru
Yang mana faedah kita meniru.

G. The Doctor And The Traditional Curer (Bomoh) :

- 1) Let us together pause and reflect
For the good of nation and religion
Whether our path should be the new or the old
Ria Seni Pesaka willingly accepts them
- 2) Many a Malay community
Has complete trust in the bomoh
Their demands are fulfilled unquestioningly
In accordance with old traditions
- 3) Puffed cereals of wheat and rice
Betel holders filled with cash for fees
The bomoh incants both quiet and loud
Whilst the patient's face he examines
- 4) All sorts of suggestions the bomoh makes
As to the causes of the disease
The patient disturbed at a crossroads
Two ghosts that were conversing
- 5) The bomoh's cautioning of the sick
To take more care in the future
When fully healed and on his feet
To feed the spirit on the hill
- 6) The bomoh talks of many a nonsense
That society has quite forgotten
Demonic spirits they feed not
To the bomoh the offering is given
- 7) Many a community has been swindled
By the doings of the bomoh
All his wants are provided
This I think is a most useless custom

- 8) To the society it is customary
To strictly adhere to tradition
Like believing in the bomoh's words
Even when they deviate from religious rules
- 9) When the stomach is gripped with pain
The bomoh must be brought
Spitting and incantation and bandaging
Are cures most nonsensical
- 10) This situation is always found
In both village and city
A belief in the bomoh's tricks
Obeying his will with blind devotion
- 11) Let us change our thinking
In accordance with the times
Following the policy of the government
Visit the well trained doctor
- 12) Is it not most convenient in the hospital
No need for hand-outs or betel leaves
So easily is treatment given
That is the progress that should be announced
- 13) The government has spent millions
For the benefit of the people
Building hospitals everywhere
For the care of the very sick
- 14) In the hospitals treatment is provided
Complete with all known medicines
Experienced doctors give their service
Till all sicknesses are cured

- 15) In the hospitals we are examined
Whatever the disease or the pain
Quickly is the treatment given
Soon gone is all the pain
- 16) Clinics are established everywhere
For your convenience when sick
Advice and treatment you will certainly get
Cast aside your fears of them
- 17) Do not succumb to superstition
Dirty cuts and sores bound up
Taboos on eating glutinous rice
For when the sickness worsen you (not the
bomoh) will panic
- 18) Do not believe in ghosts or demons
And backward customs inflicting harm
When doing something in the proper way
You can never be involved in trickery
- 19) Refrain from over indulgence
Use your head with intelligence
Whether doctor or bomoh their aim is the same
Each has their use, each in their place
- 20) Do not let yourself get confused
But utilize both the old and the new
Doctor or bomoh both have their teachers
Those of use we take into account.

H. Kisah Menyambut Hari Raya :

- 1) Selamat menyambut aidilfitri
Ibu dan bapa saudara dan saudari
Ampun dan maaf mohon memberi
Boria Sungai Pinang ucapan memberi
- 2) Hari raya ampunya hikmat
Allah mencucuri berbagai rahmat
Sedarlah Islam ampunya umat
Kepada saudaramu yang tak merasa nikmat
- 3) Semasa gembira bersuka ria
Kerana menyambut hari yang mulia
Ada juga insan yang tidak terdaya
Hanya bersyukur pada yang maha kaya
- 4) Hari yang mulia lagi gemilang
Berseronok suka bukan kepalang
Ada insan yang berhati walang
Mengenang nasib yang sangat malang
- 5) Takbir bergema diwaktu pagi
Keseluruh alam empat persegi
Memuji kebesaran yang maha tinggi
Insan bersyukur tak berbelah bagi
- 6) Setelah bersyukur kepada tuhan
Di jiwa insan mula kasihan
Hatinya lembut tidak tertahan
Mengenang saudaranya didalam kesusahan
- 7) Hukum disuruh berzakat fitrah
Kerana mengamal dasar pemurah
Mengenang saudara sedaging sedarah
Pada zaiif miskin tempat menyerah

- 8) Ada insan yang hidup senang
Namanya masyur sudah tercanang
Kepada yang susah tak mahu ditenang
Nasib fakir miskin tak pernah dikenang
- 9) Raya disambut di kampung dan kota
Ada yang berjalan dan berkereta
Mereka tak hirau insan yang derita
Tak hendak berkorban pun sedikit harta
- 10) Adat dunia memang begitu
Nasib insan tak boleh ditentu
Marilah kita pakat membantu
Baharulah Islam dapat bersatu
- 11) Jangan terlampau bakhil berkira
Untuk membantu sanak saudara
Menolong meringankan segala sehgsara
Supaya mereka sama sama bergembira
- 12) Sebagai insan ampunya kewajipan
Keluirlah harta jangan disimpan
Zakat dan fitrah tanda keinsafan
Menolong fakir miskin ampunya kehidupan
- 13) Disamping kita sama sama bersuka
Cubalah kenang detik ketika
Pada perajurit nasib mereka
Mempertahankan maruah negara merdeka
- 14) Mengenang perajurit gagah perkasa
Sedia bertugas setiap masa
Mereka lah banyak yang telah berjasa
Mempertahankan negara dan juga bangsa

- 15) Mereka meninggal anak dan isteri
Kerana mempertahankan bangsa dan negeri
Tak pernah berehat walau sehari
Di dalam hutan berkorban diri
- 16) Perajurit sanggup lapar dan dahaga
Kerana negara hendak dijaga
Jasa dan bakti tak ternilai harga
Patut kita merasa bangga
- 17) Kerana perajurit banyak berbakti
Kepada bangsa negara sejati
Kaum ibu sudah membuktikan
Kuih dihantar tanda simpati
- 18) Hadiah diiringi bersama salam
Sedia berkhidmat itulah kalam
Selamat hari raya bersamudi sulam
Kerana bertugas siang dan malam.

H. Hari Raya :

- 1) A happy idilfitri is our wish,
To mothers fathers boys and girls
Your forgiveness we hope you give,
Boria Sungai Pinang tell you about it.
- 2) The magic of hari raya
Is a gift bestowed by Allah
Have compassion you Muslims
For your unfortunate fellows
- 3) While in happiness and fun
We celebrate the festive day
Remember there are people less well off
Yet thankful of the Lord's will
- 4) On this honoured and wonderful day
Many are absorbed in merriment and revelry
Yet there are fellow beings who are sad,
Think on their misfortune
- 5) The call to prayer is heard at dawn
In the four corners of the earth
In praise of the almighty
Humanity offers its wholehearted thanks
- 6) After worship and praise of God
In their breasts compassion rises
And their hearts soften
Thinking of their suffering fellows
- 7) The law demands charity and alms
To promote kindheartedness
To have deep feeling for kin and kind
To donate to the poor and distressed

- 8) Some people live in plenty
Their names known far and wide
Yet for the poor they have no consideration
And the fate of the very poor bothers them not
- 9) The festival is celebrated in villages and cities
Some walking and others driving
Many oblivious of unhappy people
Not willing to sacrifice their own possessions
- 10) That is the way of the world
A man's fate is never sealed
We must join hands to help others
Only then will Islam be united
- 11) Do not be stingy and calculating
When helping our fellows
Lighten their burdens
So they can be happy
- 12) As this is man's duty
Bring out your money and hoard it not
Almsgiving is an act of atonement
Assisting the lives of the poor
- 13) Beside engaging ourselves in revelry
Keep a short moment for reflection
And think of the fate of the soldiers
Protecting their nation's independence
- 14) Think of our vigorous soldiers
Always ready to take up arms
They are the ones who have loyally served
To protect our nation and people

- 15) Leaving behind their wives and children
In order to protect the people and the nation
Never resting even for a day
In the jungle their lives they sacrifice
- 16) Soldiers willing to suffer hunger and thirst
Keeping vigilance over what's ours
Their good work and deeds immeasurable
To them we must feel grateful
- 17) Because the army has been instrumental
In securing our nation's legitimacy
Our womenfolk have shown their devotion
By sending them cakes in appreciation
- 18) Gifts are sent with best wishes
Ready to serve is their message
With happy hari raya wishes beautifully
inscribed
With thanks for their duty day and night.

I. Karangan Kisah Buku Hijau :

- 1) Dalam tahun tujuh puluh lima
Seruan kerajaan sudah bergema
Rancangan buku hijau disuruh utama
Ria Seni Pesaka turut bersama
- 2) Kerana buku hijau kerajaan merancang
Soalan implasi yang hangat dibincang
Supaya penghidupan tak jadi pincang
Meneguh negara dari bergoncang
- 3) Buku hijau ampunya polisi
Untuk menghapus perbuatan implasi
Kesulitan hidup dapat diatasi
Rajin dan usaha serta dedikasi
- 4) Buku hijau punya tujuan
Kerajaan sedia memberi panduan
Patutlah rakyat menyambut seruan
Sain dan teknologi zaman kemajuan
- 5) Dasar buku hijau ampunya susunan
Mengikut negara didalam pembangunan
Rakyat mesti memainkan peranan
Kerajaan sedia memberi layanan
- 6) Kerajaan berazam penuh berhasrat
Mencegah implasi daripada melarat
Dari Malaysia Timor hingga ke Malaysia Barat
Supaya rakyat hidup tak gelorat
- 7) Kerajaan memang cukupnya sedar
Tentang penghidupan di dalam dan di luar bandar
Rancangan buku hijau yang sedang diedar
Menjamin rakyat hidup tak pudar

- 8) Untuk mengatasi segala soalan
Terutama implasi ampunya kesimpulan
Rajin dan usaha itulah jalan
Bercucuk tanam jangan ketinggalan
- 9) Rajin usaha tandanya jaya
Patut diamal rakyat Malaysia
Bercucuk tanam sipat yang mulia
Sehingga penghidupan menjadi bahagia
- 10) Hingga menjadi perkara yang nyata
Dapat menyaksi dengannya mata
Siapakah menunai pandu buku hijau punya peserta
Yang bercucuk tanam tinggal di luar kota
- 11) Disegi agama disuruh tunaikan
Didalam kitab al-Quran ada membuktikan
Pardu kipayah disuruh amalkan
Bercucuk tanam telah diwajibkan
- 12) Allah memang sudah berfirman
Kepada Muhammad nabi akhir zaman
Bercucuk tanam meneguh iman
Tentang segala implasi ampunya ancaman
- 13) Seluruh dunia memang mengalami
Kenaikan harga sangat dikagumi
Cara implasi hendak dibasmi
Bersahabatlah kita dengannya bumi
- 14) Rancangan buku hijau punya matlamat
Semangat bercucuk tanam hendak disemat
Disuruh belanja dengannya cermat
Supaya penghidupan menjadi selamat

- 15) Janganlah suka membuang masa
Hidup segan malas sentiasa
Pandai mencela membuat dosa
Merugi kepada negara dan bangsa
- 16) Sekarang bukan zaman bercakap
Berpelok tubuh tangan nak dakap
Sain teknologi ketika yang lengkap
Ubahlah fikiran tukarlah sikap
- 17) Bukan masa yang hendak dileka
Sebarang kemusykilan boleh dikemuka
Berbagai kemajuan sejak merdeka
Apakah lagi yang rakyat tak suka
- 18) Masa itu mas jangan dibuang
Bangun berusaha rajin berjuang
Hayunlah cangkul tajak dan sewang
Dari bumi keluarkan wang
- 19) Janganlah ikut perasaan melulu
Ikutlah contoh orang dahulu
Rajin berusaha tak segan silu
Kepentingan hidup yang mereka perlu
- 20) Dizaman merdeka masyarakat sekarang
Negara yang maju lengkap sebarang
Tak payah harap pertolongan orang
Sain teknologi cukup tak kurang.

I. The Green Book :

- 1) In the year nineteen seventy five
The call of the government we receive
To carry out the green book policy
Ria Seni Pesaka also takes up the issue
- 2) The aim of the green book planning
Is to tackle the problem of inflation
To prevent a fall in living standards
And to stabilize the nation
- 3) The policy of the green book
Is to reduce the effects of inflation
And overcome the problems of living
By dedicating ourselves to hard work and toil
- 4) The aim of the green book
Is by the government readily explained
Citizens should accept any challenge
In this time of scientific and technological
progress
- 5) The basis of the green book plan
To rally the nation in its development
Is for the citizens to play their role
And for the government to render service
- 6) The government has set out in all determination
To prevent the spread of inflation
From East to West Malaysia
In the hope of the people's betterment
- 7) For the government is fully aware
Of the nature of life in and out of towns
The green book plan that has been offered
Offers the people the way to a better life

- 8) In the hope of overcoming all difficulties
Especially in solving the problems of
inflation

Hard work and diligence is the only answer
By cultivating one will not be left out

- 9) Diligent hard work is a sign of success
Should be the practice with Malaysians
Gardening is a respectable activity
And ensures one of a happy future
- 10) Until it has become a reality
That we can see with our own eyes
The people involved in the green book venture
Are only those who live in the country
- 11) Religion has asked us to practice
As written in the holy Quran
The good deeds that are necessary
Which includes cultivating and gardening
- 12) Allah has already spoken
To his last prophet, Mohammad,
That love of growing things strengthens the
faith
And helps against inflationary threats
- 13) The whole world has been threatened
By increases in prices unchecked
The only way to counteract it
Is by being a friend to the soil
- 14) The aim of the green book plan
To instil in one the will to grow food
To teach to spend but thriftily
Is so one's livelihood will forever be safe

- 15) Do not take pleasure in wasting time
Living always in laziness and sloth
Good at gossip which is sinful
And running down the nation and the people
- 16) For now is gone the age of prattle
Of arms folded round oneself
The growth of science and technology is
complete
With it we must change our whole outlook
- 17) One should not forget the passing of time
For many problems have been brought out
Much progress have been made since independence
So what else is amiss
- 18) For time is golden and must not be wasted
So let us up and strive forward
Catch hold of the hoe and the rake
Working to get tribute from the soil
- 19) Never be a blind follower of emotion
But follow the example of our ancestors
To whom diligence and hard work was no shame
For they had the need to survive life
- 20) In these modern days of independence
The nation has made successful progress
And has no need to seek the help of others
As our science and technology are not lacking.

J. Kisah Rukun Negara :

- 1) Asallah rakyat Rukun Negara
Di dalam Malaysia aman dan sejahtera
Muhibbah dan perpaduan itulah cara
Ria Seni Pesaka membawa bicara
- 2) Lima perkara rukun ditentu
Asallah rakyat setiap waktu
Muhibbah perpaduan lambang bersatu
Bangsa dan negara tetap bermutu
- 3) Rukun yang pertama percaya Tuhan
Menjadi penganut agama ampunya pilihan
Ikutlah perintah segala suruhan
Buat kebajikan jauh kesalahan
- 4) Percaya Tuhan dasar yang utama
Tercatit sejarah dalam tiap tiap agama
Manusia yang menganutnya memang menerima...
Secara amal ibadatnya saja tak sama
- 5) Percaya Tuhan itulah iman
Pada manusia menjadi pedoman
Disegala lapisan kitab ada berpirman
Ditunjuk kearah sejahtera dan aman
- 6) Rukun kedua taat dan setia
Kepada Raja Negara Malaysia
Asallah ia sedaya upaya
Tak kira miskin atau pun kaya
- 7) Raja itu Ketua Negara
Berhak berjalan segala upacara
Lambang kedaulatan membawa sejahtera
Baginda yang Dipertuan Agung Allah pelihara

- 8) Tumpulah taat setia tak berbelah bagi
Ikutlah perintah disegala segi
Negara Malaysia tetap bermutu tinggi
Masyur perintah di alam empat persegi
- 9) Amallah rakyat setiap hari
Rukun Negara di dalam negeri
Lagu kebangsaan hormat memberi
Berilah sokongan pada pak pak Menteri
- 10) Rukun ketiga keluhuran perlembagaan
Menjadi rakyat ampunya kebanggaan
Rakyatlah juga membuat tekaan
Mengikut zaman masa dan keadaan
- 11) Rakyat sudah memberi keputusan
Berkehendak kerajaan tegas dan berkesan
Demokrasi berparlemen itulah alasan
Supaya tidak jemu dan bosan
- 12) Mengikut perlembagaan di dalam negeri
Hak kebebasan rakyat memang diberi
Untuk mencapai hasrat di sanubari
Secara pentakbiran yang digemari
- 13) Rukun keempat kedaulatan undang undang
Di sini jelas rakyat dapat memandang
Kerajaan tak sekat apa yang dicadang
Agar perlembagaan tinggi menyandang
- 14) Kedaulatan undang undang kerajaan cipta
Pada seluruh masyarakat ampunya anggota
Tak kira di dusun atau di kota
Adil saksama tak membabi buta

- 15) Undang undang tak kenal keturunan dan bangsa
Berdaulat dan tegas setiap masa
Adil saksama bukan dipaksa
Pada sekalian yang menjadi mangsa
- 16) Rukun kelima kesopanan kesusilaan
Perkara ini secara kebetulan
Tanggung jawab rakyat memberi kesimpulan
Itu satu tanda tanya serta soalan
- 17) Negara Malaysia merdeka berdaulat
Rakyat mesti bertekad bulat
Oucilah segala senam dan kulat
Bentuk peribadi bangsa sampai berkilat
- 18) Bahasa itu menunjuk bangsa
Pahlawan yang masyur kerana perkasa
Sopan dan santun budi bahasa
Seni budaya adat biasa
- 19) Kesopanan kesusilaan mengikut sejarah
Rakyat Malaysia banyak keturunan darah
Warga negara berbagai daerah
Muhibbah perpaduan bersatu arah.

J. Our National Ideology :

- 1) When people follow the National Ideology
Within Malaysia is peace and prosperity
Goodwill and unity is the way
Ria Seni Pesaka opens the discussion
- 2) Five features determine the ideology
As long as the people at all times
Maintain their goodwill and cooperation for
unity
Nation and people will retain their character
- 3) The first tenet is Belief in God
The first choice of a religious person
Is to follow the ways of the chosen
Practice welfare and avoid wrong
- 4) Belief in God is the prime basis
Of every religion in history
This all the faithful have accepted
Even if differing in their practice
- 5) Belief in God that is the faith
Being all the people's guidance
In all religious books it has been stated
As the way towards prosperity and peace
- 6) Tenet number two is to be loyal and true
To the ruler of Malaysia
As long as he in all fairness rules
Over both the rich and the poor
- 7) The King is the National Leader
By him all ceremonials are conducted
His symbol of majesty brings prosperity
His majesty the di Pertuan Agung Allah protects

- 8) Give your undivided loyalty
Follow his directives in all matters
And the Malaysian nation will forever be great
The ruler famed in all four corners of the
world
- 9) The people must daily practise
The National Ideology in the state
Pay respect to the national anthem
Give support to the ministers
- 10) The third tenet upholding the constitution
Is the pride of the people
For they are the ones who pave the way
In accordance with the times, place and
situation
- 11) The people have given their decision
For a government that is sure and effective
Parliamentary democracy is the reason
For avoiding distrust and boredom
- 12) According to the country's constitution
The people's rights are given
To achieve their specific aims
Under the approved administration
- 13) The fourth tenet is Rule of Law
In which the people can clearly see
That the government do not hinder any
suggestions
For the upholding of the constitution

- 14) The rule of law is created by the government
To embrace all aspects of society
Irrespective of whether in village or city
Fair and square without blindness
- 15) The laws care not for ancestry or race
Always honourable and justifiable
Justice is not a thing imposed
On those who commit offences
- 16) Tenet number five Good Behaviour and Morality
Becomes a thing of necessity
The responsibility of the masses to solve
That is itself a question to be answered
- 17) Malaysia is independent and honourable
The people must unite in their wishes
Clean up the rot
And polish our personality until it shines
- 18) Proper speech defines a nation,
A warrior's fame lies in his might
Etiquette and mannerliness
Tradition and art are our normal custom
- 19) Good behaviour and morality derives from
history
The Malaysian people have many a heritage
Citizens of varied districts
Move together towards goodwill and unity.

^{MCCL}
The Provenee Of Songs.

Song	From	Troupe	Name Of Place	Date
A	Ibrahim Mohammad	Ria Seni Pesaka	Gelugur, Penang.	17th. Feb., 1975
B	Daud Ibrahim	Boria Sungai Pinang	Kg. Sungai Pinang, Datuk Keramat.	20th. April, 1975
C	Ibrahim Mohammed	Ria Seni Pesaka	Air Itam, Penang	22nd. March, 1975
D	Daud Ibrahim	Boria Sungai Pinang	Dhoby Ghout, Datuk Keramat.	1st. May, 1975.
E	Ibrahim Mohammad	Ria Seni Pesaka	Kg. Melayu, Air Itam.	15th. March, 1975
F	Ibrahim Mohammad	Ria Seni Pesaka	Air Itam, Penang	18th. April, 1975
G	Ibrahim Mohammed	Ria Seni Pesaka	Kg. Kubur Panjang, Kedah.	20th. March, 1975
H	Daud Ibrahim	Boria Sungai Pinang	Soldiers' Camp, Batu Uban, Penang	16th. January, 1975
I	Ibrahim Mohammad	Ria Seni Pesaka	Kg. Sungai Pinang, Datuk Keramat.	3rd. Feb., 1975
J	Ibrahim Mohammad	Ria Seni Pesaka	All Purpose Hall, Batu Uban.	4th. May, 1975

APPENDIX III

The research in 1975 coincided with the national annual boria competition. The final was held in Dewan Sri Pinang (City Hall), Georgetown, on Saturday 8 February 1975. On the same occasion the finals of three other song-type competitions were held there. Boria, Dikir Barat and Ghazal troupes and Dondang Sayang contestants competed within their own song-type section for the championship under the auspices of 'Dendang Rakyat'.¹

List of Troupes (not in order of merit) that went into the Semi-Finals of the Annual Competition 1973/74:

(Held in January 1975)

Nos.	Troupe	Story
1	Teachers' Association, Province Wellesley.	The Teachers' Role in Education.
2	Capital City's Troupe, Kuala Lumpur.	Anti-Hoarding.
3	Kampung Baru Troupe, Air Itam, Penang.	Small Food Stalls.

1. 'Dendang Rakyat' : Dendang means 'song' and rakyat is a word used to connote 'the people' or 'the masses'. Together they mean 'the songs of the people'. It can be a song of praise, criticism, or even witticism. Boria belongs to Penang, dikir barat to Kelantan, dondang sayang to Malacca, and ghazal to Johore. But in the competition there was no strict adherence to such regionality, and any state could take part in any of the four types.

Nos.	Troupe	Story
4	Student Dental Nurses' Troupe, Penang.	Progressive Women.
5	Kumpulan Peseni, Penang.	Knowledge.
6	Boria Kg. Perlis, Province Wellesley.	Towards Peace.
7	Youth Association, Sg. Petani, Kedah.	The Aedes Mosquito.
8	Ria Gabungan Desa, Yan, Kedah.	Rural Development.
9	Tarinas Troupe, Penang.	Neighbourliness Policy.
10	Police Association, Kelantan.	The Function of Police.
11	UMNO Youth Action Troupe, Alor Star, Kedah.	A New Attitude.
12	Belia Troupe, Butterworth.	About Animal Rearing.
13	Belia Kebun Lama, Penang.	Saving Electricity.

List of Winners of Boria Competitions in Penang :

Year	Troupe	Title
1971/72	1. Sungai Pinang Troupe, Penang.	The New Economic Policy.
	2. Padang Sera, Penang.	Safety on the Roads.
	3. Kelawai, Penang.	A Cultured Society.
1973/74	1. Student Dental Nurses, Penang.	Progressive Women.
	2. Teachers' Cultural Troupe, Province Wellesley.	The Teachers' Role in Education.
	3. Capital City's Troupe, Kuala Lumpur.	Anti-Hoarding.
1975/76	1. Customs Sports Club, Penang Island.	Let Me be Blind.
	2. Teachers' Cultural Troupe, Province Wellesley.	Degenerate Society.
	3. Bergema Troupe, Air Itam, Penang.	Thrift and Saving.

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PHOTOGRAPHS OF BORIA

1. A reconstruction of a pre-war boria show, performed at the 1974 Seminar on Boria in Penang. (Photographs by courtesy of the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport, Penang).

Photographs a), b) and c) - Scenes from the sketch.



a) Arab characters swearing allegiance to fight.



b) European soldiers being briefed.



c) The war (resulting in victory for the Arabs).

Photographs d), e) and f) - Scenes from the song-dance.



d) "Sailors" assembling for song-dance.



e) The song-dance in full swing.



f) The song-dance : Note the transvestite dancers.

2. Showing ensemble performance of boria now. Pictures taken during the 1974 Seminar on Boria. (By courtesy of the Department of Culture, Penang).



a) The sketch :
'Cultured Society
Story'.



b) The song-dance : Note tukang karang and sailors.



c) The song-dance showing players in another pose.

3. The boria song-dance of the future, also taken during the 1974 Seminar on Boria. (Photographs by courtesy of the Department of Culture, Penang).



Song-dance rendition : Note the intermixing of male/female sailors.

4. Photographs of Boria in the 1950s. (By courtesy of Din Julap of that troupe).



Glugor Club Boria Troupe (1952)
(Note the musical instruments used)



A Sketch Performance (1957) for
Merdeka Celebrations.



A song-dance performance, the Merdeka celebrations 1957.



Boria Troupe photograph in the 1950s.

(Note : Chinese peasant - standing extreme left,
his wife - sitting third from left,
Chinese towkay - sitting second from right,
European couple - sitting second and
fourth from left).

5. Photographs of boria troupes studied.



Kampung Jawa Troupe pictured after a television recording of their performance in 1974.

(Abu Bakar Ghauth, the troupe leader, is squatting on the extreme left).



Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe after a television recording of their performance in 1974.

(Ibrahim, the troupe leader, is seated in the middle)



Scene from a sketch 'Tourism' held in Langkawi Island Festival, 1975.

Troupe : Ria Seni Pesaka.



The Song-Dance : Langkawi Island Festival
1975.

(Note the two girl dancers and the musical
instruments)



A Scene from a Sketch : Western
Influence Story.

The Song-Dance by an all-girls dancers
(Kampung Jawa Troupe)



The Tukang Karang (Aini Omar)



The Sailors (dancers).

Scenes from a Wedding Occasion (Ria Seni Pesaka Troupe).



The Sketch



The Song-Dance



The Audience

Corrigenda:

p. viii title of Chapter VII to read PENANG PARTICIPANTS (not COMMUNITY).

p. 345 1st line : clarity (not profundity).

3rd line : I have not conformed (not the non-convention).

Addenda:

Diagrams on pages 289-290 should be labelled : To Show Where Symbolic Categories Overlap and Compromise in Treatment of Themes in Boria Sketches.

(Shaded area indicates the compromise of categories.)

Addenda:

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The New Straits Times, Saturday 16 August 1975, 12.

The Malay Mail, Friday 18 April 1975, 12.

Addenda:

Glossary of some Malay words used:

- baju kurung : a loose-fitting Malay dress consisting of a long-sleeved shift-like top and a sarong gathered in pleats at one side and tied at the waistline.
- belacan : a pungent paste made by pounding shrimps and salt, and kept in compact pieces to prevent rot. It is used as a seasoning to cooking of hot, spicy food.
- bersanding : the highlight to a Malay wedding which involves a sitting in state on a raised dais of the wedded couple.
- bomoh : traditional medicine man, curer of spiritual sicknesses.
- bubur asyura : a concoction of flour mixed in coconut milk with many types of beans and steamed in a tray. Usually associated with the Muharram celebrations, served as food.
- dunggu : a term used to describe someone who is both ignorant and stupid and usually stubborn.
- Haji (pak aji) : a religious title conferred on a man who has done his holy pilgrimage to Mecca. Pak aji - colloquial address of elderly haji.
- Hajjah (mak aji) : a religious title conferred on a woman who has done her holy pilgrimage to Mecca.

Mak aji - colloquial address for an elderly hajjah.

- Hari Raya : festive days celebrated by Muslims in Malaysia on two occasions:
- (i) Hari raya puasa (idilfitri) - in celebration of the end of the one month Ramadan fast for Muslims,
 - (ii) Hari raya haji (idiladha) - in celebration and honour of those on their holy pilgrimage to Mecca.
- Kebudayaan suku : regional culture. The Malay term used to connote indigenous cultural forms belonging to small groups and confined to regions.
- Kebudayaan teras : root culture. The Malay term used to connote those cultural forms belonging to indigenous Malaysians and which are not only widespread and well-liked but also have been active over a long period of time.
- kenduri selamat : thanksgiving feast.
- kemenyan : sweet-smelling incense always used in traditional rites viz. curing rites, funeral rites and so on. The incense is burned in a pot of burning coal to emit the sweet-smelling smoke.
- ketupat : a special rice dish, wrapped in coconut leaves, prepared for festive occasions like hari raya.

- kudis : a type of skin disease like scabies, commonly resulting from insect bites upon sensitive skin.
- latah : a kind of neurotic syndrome involving forgetfulness.
- melatah : actions in a state of forgetfulness wherein the person afflicted (usually an elderly female) would mimic the words and actions of the tormentor.
- mamak : a nickname ascribed to the Muslim Indians. Also used among Jawi Pekans as a term of address for relatives of uncle status.
- mandi tolak bala : a ritual bathing to cleanse one of ill luck and to avoid evil.
- madu : a term used to show state of relationships of the wives to a man practising polygyny. bermadu - in a state of madu.
- pengkeras : a gift in money or goods that is usually fixed (usually 25 cents, a pinch of salt and tamarind) which acts as a fee to ensure the potency of a cure or to acquire esoteric knowledge.
- salam : an act either of greeting or goodwill and forgiveness. When one does salam with another he extends his straightened hands, clasps the other's hands between them; then withdrawing his hands places them close to his chest before putting them down.

- sarung pelikat : a sarong made of cotton or silk material printed in small or large square patterns. Usually two yards in diameter it is worn round the waist to come down to the feet.
- surau : a house built especially for a village's religious activities. In status lower than a mosque, it is not used for important group prayers like Friday prayers or hari raya prayers.
- Tok : in its prime context a term of relationship used in address meaning 'grandfather'. In a wider context it is simply a respectful form of address, e.g. to policemen, and elderly persons viz. bomoh and penghulu.
- ulu : rural; orang ulu - a backward person in terms of not having a progressive attitude. Also used to describe a place that is very rural, other terms used being luarbandar or for the really rural areas pendalaman.