

Reproduced from *From British to Bumiputera Rule: Local Politics and Rural Development in Peninsular Malaysia*, by Shamsul A.B. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986). This version was obtained electronically direct from the publisher on condition that copyright is not infringed. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the prior permission of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Individual articles are available at < <http://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg> >

FROM BRITISH TO BUMIPUTERA RULE

*Local Politics and Rural Development
in Peninsular Malaysia*

The **Institute of Southeast Asian Studies** was established as an autonomous organization in May 1968. It is a regional research centre for scholars and other specialists concerned with modern Southeast Asia, particularly the multi-faceted problems of stability and security, economic development, and political and social change.

The **Institute** is governed by a twenty-two-member Board of Trustees comprising nominees from the Singapore Government, the National University of Singapore, the various Chambers of Commerce, and professional and civic organizations. A ten-man Executive Committee oversees day-to-day operations; it is chaired by the Director, the **Institute's** chief academic and administrative officer.

The responsibility for facts and opinions expressed in this publication rests exclusively with the author, and his interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views or the policy of the Institute or its supporters.

FROM BRITISH TO BUMIPUTERA RULE

*Local Politics and Rural Development
in Peninsular Malaysia*

Shamsul A. B.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia



INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

To my wife, Wendy

First published in Singapore by
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Pasir Panjang
Singapore 119614
E-mail: publish@iseas.edu.sg
World Wide Web: <http://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg>

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

© 1986 Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore
First reprint 1990
Second reprint 2004

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Shamsul A. B.

From British to bumiputera rule: local politics and rural development in Peninsular Malaysia.

1. Rural development – Malaysia – Selangor – Political aspects
2. Selangor – Rural conditions – Case studies
3. Malays – Malaysia – Selangor – Political activity
4. Malaysia – Economic policy
- I. Title
5. Anthropology – Malaysia – Fieldwork.

HN706 K15S53 1986

ISBN 9971-988-06-2 (hard cover)

ISBN 9971-988-22-4 (soft cover)

Typeset by WORDMAKER Design & Typesetting Services, Singapore. This text is set in 10 pt. Palatino and chapter headings in 16 pt. Novarese Bold.

Printed in Singapore by Markono Digital Solutions Pte Ltd

CONTENTS

Preface to the Second Reprint Edition 2004

vii

Preface

ix

People and Places

xi

1

INTRODUCTION

1

2

SWAMP TO SETTLEMENT

The Formation and Consolidation of Kampung Chempaka

15

3

LIVELIHOOD AND SOCIAL DIVISIONS

*Agriculture, Occupation and Class
in Post-independence Kampung Chempaka*

84

4
OLD ANTAGONISMS, NEW RIVALRIES
*Sectional Interest and Political Rivalries
in Kampung Chempaka*
139

5
POLITICS OF BUMIPUTERA POLICY
*Distribution of Development Benefits
under the New Economic Policy in Kampung Chempaka*
188

6
CONCLUSION
232

Abbreviations
247

Glossary
250

Bibliography
256

Index
277

PREFACE TO THE SECOND REPRINT EDITION 2004

That Malaysia has undergone a tremendous socio-economic transformation during Dr Mahathir Mohamad's rule as Prime Minister (1981–2003) is not too difficult to describe and explain. Indeed, a few Malaysianists have successfully carved a niche for themselves from an activity that I would refer to as “Mahathir watching” winning mostly the hearts and minds of an ever increasing number of Mahathir detractors. But Mahathir was not the only noticeable and predictable feature of that period.

What had also developed into something predictable was the phenomenon called “money politics” within UMNO (United Malays National Organization), the major partner in the ruling coalition. It was indeed a troubling trend whose origins were not unrelated to UMNO behaving like a large corporation as a result of the general ethical paradigm shift in Malaysia after the concept “Malaysia Incorporated” was adopted as the ruling ethos by the Mahathir government.

Mahathir came into power when the first part of the two-year field research for this book (originally a Ph.D. thesis) had just been completed. In the second part of the fieldwork the “money politics” trend became more obvious and was on the rise, worrying even Mahathir himself.

Even though the research was not about money politics specifically but a micro-level study of the political economy of rural development in Malaysia, the ethnographic data revealed that “rural development” was viewed by those at the grassroots, especially by UMNO officials

and supporters, as a major business proposition and an enormous source for wealth accumulation.

Mahathir has now retired. But the “Malaysia Incorporated” ethos he had introduced is still being practised. Indeed, it is deeply entrenched in Malaysian socio-political life, especially, amongst the Malays and UMNO. Over the last two decades, since this book was first published in 1986, “money politics” has reinvented itself into various forms serving a host of political and economic interests.

I thought for those, today, who want to know the origin and the phenomenology of “money politics”, both at the micro and macro level, within the sphere of Malaysian politics as well as its wider, structural underpinnings, this book would certainly serve that purpose. For those who thought that 1998, the year Anwar Ibrahim was removed as the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, was the height of the drama in Malay politics, this book would help them to realize that it is not. For instance, hardly a month after Anwar Ibrahim joined UMNO in early 1982, a senior UMNO politician was murdered, on 14 April 1982, by a senior cabinet minister from UMNO too (see p. 229, Ch. 5, fn 30 in this book). The news may not surprise the world but it did shock the nation. In the Khaldunian sense, Malay politics and the drama it produces occur in cycles and do not operate in a unilineal progression. I am quite certain new episodes of the drama will appear in the not too distant future, perhaps more exciting than previous ones.

What is also certain now is that, after winning a landslide victory in the 21 March 2004 general elections, the UMNO-led Barisan Nasional government, with the new Prime Minister Dato’ Seri Abdullah Badawi at the helm, has embarked on reviving the agricultural sector of the Malaysian socio-economic landscape through the introduction of high-tech agro-based industry, namely, the bio-tech industry.

Since this book primarily deals with rural Malay peasants and labourers involved in that sector, it would be interesting to ask: Are we witnessing *petani Melayu terakhir* (the last of the Malay peasants)? If so, I would like to claim that this book will be one of last few detailed and in-depth anthropological accounts available on a soon-to-be-extinct group in the developing industrial Malaysian society called “Malay peasants”.

Shamsul A.B.
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi
April 2004

PREFACE

This book is an examination of the complex interplay, at the local level, of politics and developmental processes in Malaysia. It is based on the study of a rural Malay community and combines the methodologies of anthropology and history. However, it is not simply a study of one community in Malaysia; rather it is a study of Malaysian political reality through the presentation of the social life of one rural community. More specifically, it is a study of how the implementation of development measures at the local level, before and after independence, were both shaped by, and in turn influenced the political context in which they were applied. It has been observed that both the policies themselves, and the sometimes paradoxical local forms that they take, are the consequences of inherent tensions and unresolved contradictions, at the national level. This study – one oriented to the social history of local politics – aims to provide a milieu for a more meaningful analysis not only of the issues of Malaysian economic development and planning, but also of the operation of the Malay party politics.

Inevitably, I am indebted to many individuals and institutions in the course of the study. Fieldwork was made possible by an award from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and a travel grant from Monash University. A fellowship from the Institute of Southeast

Asian Studies, Singapore enabled me to revise my doctoral thesis into the present study.

Professor S. Husin Ali of Universiti Malaya gave me guidance in my early days as a graduate student and helped to shape my future interests and direction. The late Professor Michael Swift of Monash University gave me guidance at every stage of the research in the true tradition of British social anthropology. His untimely death was a great loss to Malay studies. Rashmi Desai and Michael Stevenson of Monash University, and John Butcher of Griffith University helped me in many instances throughout the study. So, too, did my colleagues at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, particularly, Halim Ali, Hood Salleh, Mohd. Dahlan Hj. Aman, Rustam A. Sani, Salleh Lamry and Samad Hadi. Shaharil Talib of Universiti Malaya taught me the trade secrets of the historian. Dato' Dr Mohd. Nor Ghani, of the Prime Minister's Department, assisted me at the initial stage of the research. At the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, Sharon Siddique gave great encouragement in the preparation of the book, and Pauline Khng was responsible for improving my manuscript.

My father, Hj. Baharuddin Hj. Yaakub, and my parents-in-law, Stella and Howard Smith, unselfishly provided their love, support and precious time. Joan and Peter Green in Melbourne, Cikgu Suratman Markasan and family, Mohamed Ahmad and family, Ibrahim Othman and other friends in Singapore were generous with their time and help.

Of course, my deepest gratitude goes to the villagers and others in the research area in Selangor, into whose lives I intruded for about two years. For ethical reasons, I am not able to list their names.

Last but not least, my thanks go to my wife, Wendy, both for her help with the book itself, and above all, for her continued patient encouragement. To her I dedicate this book.

Needless to say, none of the individuals and institutions mentioned above are responsible for any of the failings in this book.

Shamsul A. B
(Shamsul Amri Baharuddin)

Seremban, 1986

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Listed below are the pseudonyms of individuals and places which appear frequently in the text. They are crucial social actors and important places of the ethnographic account presented in the study. Given the highly personal nature of much of the illustrative case material examined, it is necessary, on ethical grounds to protect the identity of the people and the places.

This list is to assist readers in following the description, analysis and arguments in the study. It should also help the reader to separate the pseudonyms from the real names as the former are listed below. See Map 3 for the location of the places mentioned.

It is important to note that there is no surname system in Malay society. A full Malay name consists of two given names separated by a gender indicator *bin* (son of) or *binte* (daughter of) for example, Anis bin Ali. The names listed below are first names only.

(a) People

Abu

Headmaster of Kg. Mawar's primary school, a loyal supporter of

Timah, the state councillor for Mawar; on the board of directors of the latter's private company or *syarikat*.

Abdullah/Ustaz Abdullah

A rubber smallholder and part-time religious teacher and was responsible for establishing a branch of PAS in Kg. Asal in 1958.

Ah Chong

A rich and established Chinese contractor from Sungai Ikan; a trusted ally and business partner of Timah and on the latter's private company board of directors; the main figure responsible for running the company.

Ahmad

The first unofficial village head or leader of Kg. Asal, of Sumatran origin, and known to be very religious; considered a "rebel" by the *penghulu* for initiating rubber growing in his village against the colonial government's land regulation.

Ali

The first village head of Kg. Kasturi and a close ally of the *penghulu*.

Anis

The son of Ali and later the village head of Kg. Kasturi on his father's death; a confidante of Timah.

Bakar

An independent candidate formerly a shop attendant who contested Timah for the Mawar state councillor seat, sponsored by the latter's political opponents.

Cikgu Din

A teacher at Kg. Chempaka primary school; an active member of the Kg. Chempaka UMNO branch and the Village Development and Security Committee; an enterprising oil palm and rubber smallholder.

Cikgu Hassan

One of the first two teachers (the other was Cikgu Omar) of Kg. Chempaka primary school; often consulted by the villagers for advice and help on bureaucratic matters but mostly remembered for his role as a mediator in a feud between two well-off local families.

Cikgu Omar

A teacher at Kg. Chempaka primary school, but more well-known for his business and economic activities; a relative of the *penghulu*.

Hamzah

A smallholder from Kg. Asal who was a strong supporter of the local PAS branch but switched camp and joined UMNO after a conflict with the PAS leaders.

Haji Abdul

The first village head of Kg. Chempaka, a close ally of the *penghulu* and was at the centre of the "1934 scandal" after which he left and went back to Java; before he left he was also a successful petty contractor.

Haji Salam

From an assistant to Haji Abdul he succeeded him as the village head of Kg. Chempaka; a successful petty contractor who accumulated a lot of wealth and land; had two wives and a large family.

Haji Zam Zam

A religious teacher and an active committee member of the Kg. Asal PAS branch; contested as PAS candidate in various elections at the state and federal levels but did not win any.

Johar

A smallholder and an active PAS committee member of Kg. Asal branch; contested in various elections at the state level on PAS's ticket but never successful.

Karim

The son of Umar, the first village head of Kg. Teratai; a reliable assistant of his father when the latter was ageing and often ill.

Kasman

A smallholder from Kg. Chempaka proper who donated a piece of land for the site of the village mosque in an effort to resolve the "1936 mosque controversy" in Kg. Chempaka.

Malik

The first son of Haji Salam, a successful building contractor and businessman, an active UMNO official of the Sungai Ikan branch which opposed Timah in the 1974 pre-selection and during the election itself; has two wives.

Manap

The second son of Haji Salam, a successful petty building contractor, replaces his father as the village head of Kg. Chempaka, presently the chairperson of the Village Development and Security Committee and leader of Kg. Chempaka UMNO branch; has four wives.

Raja Rustam

The first MP for Malawati and formerly an Assistant District Officer of the Malawati district during the late colonial period, the founding chairperson of UMNO Malawati.

Ramlee

A teacher who was the leader of the UMNO Sungai Ikan branch which opposed the selection of Timah as the ruling party candidate in the 1974 state election.

Sudin

The third son of Haji Salam, a shopkeeper and a middleman by occupation; has two wives.

Suhin

The Mawar state councillor from 1959 until 1974, responsible for securing Timah, his daughter-in-law, as his successor; a successful businessman himself.

Timah

The Mawar state councillor from 1974 to 1982; daughter-in-law of Suhin; the central figure in the "1974 pre-selection dispute" in Mawar.

Umar

The first village head of Kg. Teratai, but his duties were mainly performed by his son, Karim, because of age and poor health.

Zainal/Haji Zainal

The successor to Ahmad as the leader of Kg. Asal after the former left the village; was involved in many of Kg. Chempaka's conflicts.

Zubir

A rich landowner and businessman of Kg. Chempaka; owns a few shops and lorries; the only person in Kg. Chempaka who holds a licence to buy or sell oil palm fruit.

(b) Places

Kg. Abok

A village in Mukim Asap whose inhabitants were mainly rubber smallholders, some of whom became the pioneers of the Kg. Chempaka village complex (consisting of Kg. Asal, Kg. Teratai, Kg. Kasturi, Kg. Baru and Kg. Chempaka proper).

Kg. Asal

The first settled area within the Kg. Chempaka village complex; one of the PAS strongholds in Mawar and Malawati.

Kg. Baru

The last of the settled area within the Kg. Chempaka village complex, only opened in the mid-1960s, located in Mukim Enau, east of Mukim Mawar.

Kg. Chempaka

A village consisting of two smaller villages – Kg. Chempaka proper and Kg. Asal. The field research was conducted in these villages.

Kg. Mawar

A village on the coast of the Malacca Straits where the Mawar township, the administrative centre for Mukim Mawar is located.

Kg. Silang

A village in Mukim Mawar surrounded by large plantations; the villagers were mainly rubber smallholders and were partly responsible for opening up the Kg. Chempaka village complex in 1916.

Kg. Kasturi

A village within Kg. Chempaka village complex, shares a boundary with Kg. Chempaka and Kg. Teratai.

Kg. Teratai

A village within Kg. Chempaka village complex, shares a boundary with Kg. Chempaka and Kg. Kasturi.

Malawati District

Formerly the capital district of Selangor until 1857; divided by a river, the northern part of which is the rice area and the southern part, the cash crop (rubber, coconut, oil palm) area.

Mukim Asap

The mukim north of Kg. Chempaka village complex, from where part of the latter's pioneers came from.

Mukim Mawar

The southernmost mukim in Malawati district, and its physical area coincided with the Mawar state electoral constituency; in 1981, there were 11 villages and 14 plantations in the mukim.

Sungai Bilis

The southernmost township in Mukim Mawar, populated mainly by Chinese fishermen.

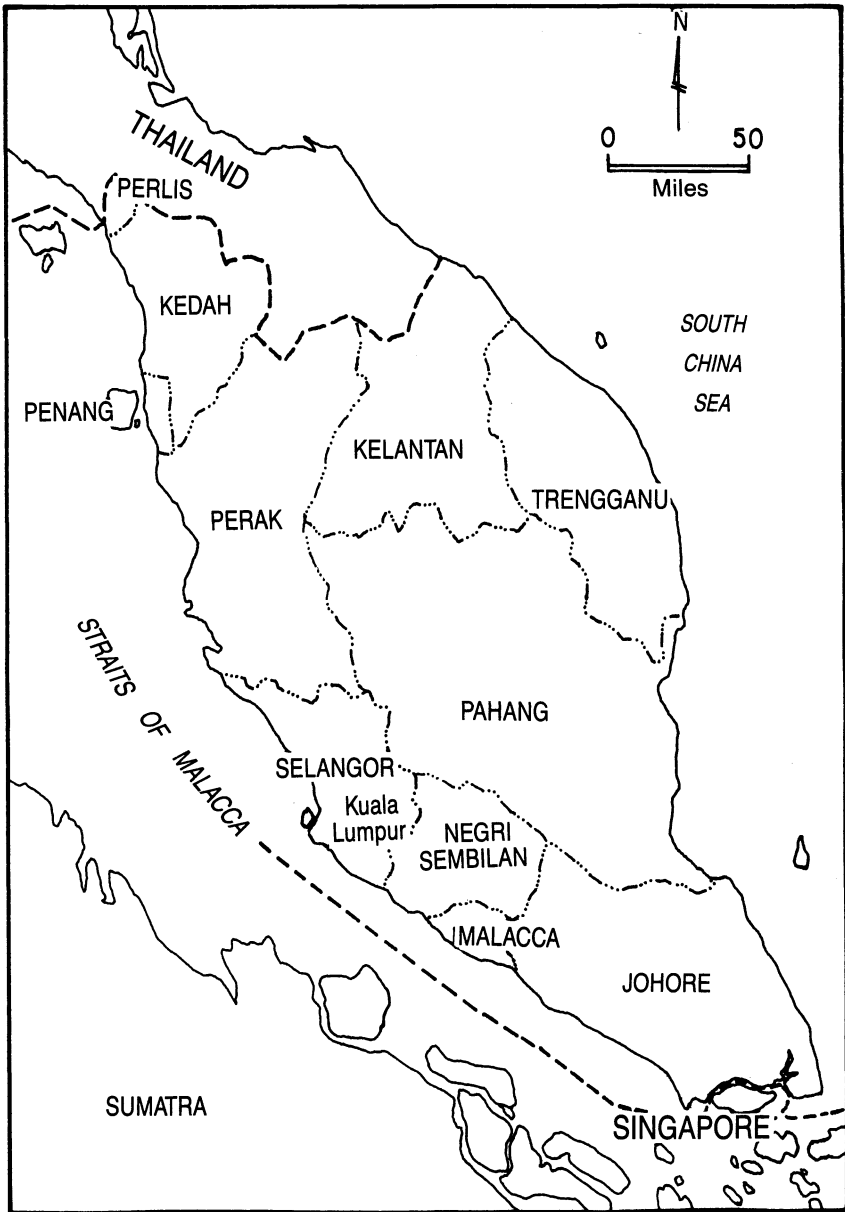
Sungai Ikan

A village at the northernmost end of Mukim Mawar, where Sungai Ikan town, the fishing and business centre of the *mukim* is located;

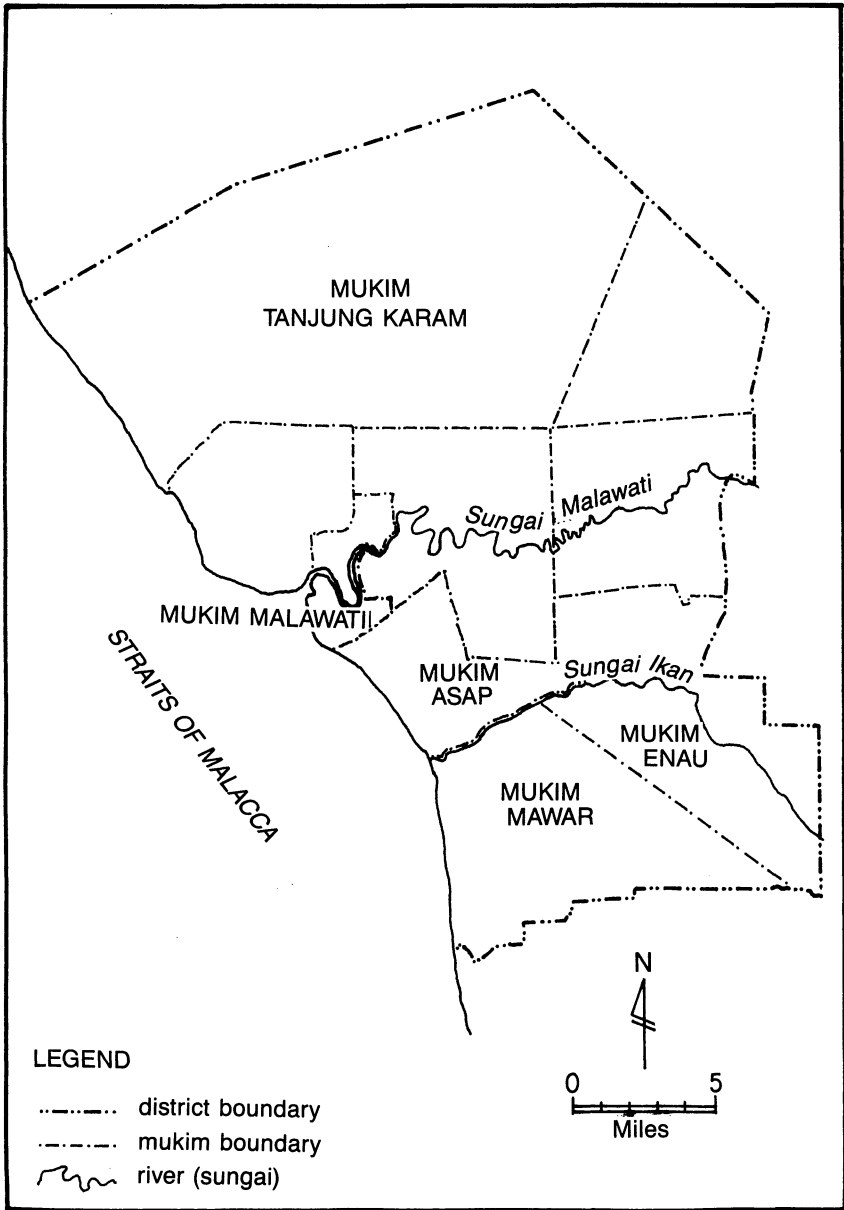
the town is Chinese-dominated and the surrounding area populated by Malays.

Tanjung Karam

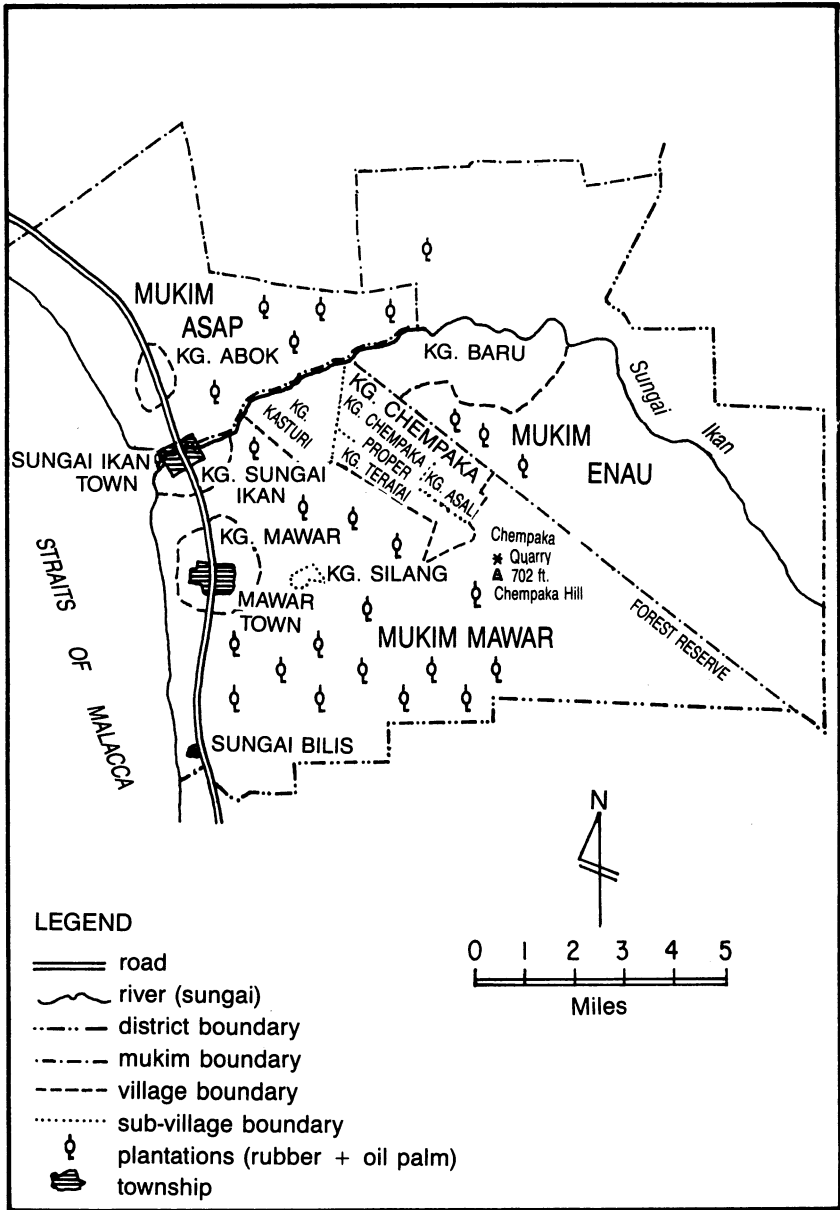
A rice-growing area north of Mukim Mawar; has been considered one of the PAS strongholds in Malawati district; many people from Kg. Chempaka came from this area and migrated back during the colonial period.



Map 1: Peninsular Malaysia.



Map 2: Mukim Mawar and the neighbouring mukim in Malawati District.



Map 3: Detailed map of Mukim Mawar.