

## **HISTORY OF JOURNAL OF THE MALAYSIAN BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY (JMBRAS) 1878-1997: AN OVERVIEW<sup>T</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Traces the historical development of JMBRAS since 1878 when it was first published as JSBRAS in terms of its editorial history, content and coverage, prolific contributors between 1878-1997, visibility of JMBRAS, and publication of its indices.*

**Keyword:** JMBRAS: Historical development; Editorial history; Content analysis; Prolific contributors; Visibility; Indices; Malaysia; Authorship; Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, better known as *JMBRAS* is published half-yearly by the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society or MBRAS, which was founded a hundred and twenty years ago in Singapore. This scholarly journal is usually published in the months of July and December every year and, sent to all subscribing members of the Society. The latest issue of *JMBRAS* is volume 70, part 2 (no. 273), 1997 published in December 1997.

*JMBRAS* is the chief instrument through which the Society attempts to disseminate knowledge on matters of historical nature pertaining to Malaysia

and the surrounding region. For this purpose, it publishes original and high quality papers whose contents are relevant and have not appeared in substantially the same, or abbreviated form elsewhere in other journals. Apart from that, such papers to be published in the journal must be in the English language and ideas or information must be written clearly and concisely with the minimum use of jargon to facilitate easy reading and understanding.

It is not too much of an exaggeration to state that *JMBRAS* has had an impressive publishing history in that it has been published regularly without fail from its very beginning in 1877 to this present day. Nevertheless, as with other publications, there was a short period

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when its publication was disrupted between 1942-1946 due to World War II and the Japanese occupation of Singapore, which also affected much of the Society's administration and activities.

### **EARLY HISTORY OF *JMBRAS***

The history of *JMBRAS*, one of the most established and learned journals to be published in this region is quite interesting and colourful. *JMBRAS* was not created *ex nihilo* but was the direct successor of what was originally known as the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, abbreviated as *JSBRAS*. *JSBRAS* was published by the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (SBRAS) which was founded in the year 1877 by a group of enthusiastic British colonial officials in Singapore. According to Rule 21 of SBRAS, *JSBRAS* "shall be published when practicable, every six months under the supervision of the Council. It shall comprise a selection of the papers read before the Society, the Report of the Council and Treasurer, and such other matter as the Council may deem it expedient to publish." Apart from that, it was also suggested that if the flow of contributions persisted, maybe more issues should be published as deemed fit.

The first issue of the *JSBRAS* actually came out only in September 1878 but bore 'July 1878' as its publication date. Each issue of *JSBRAS* is given a number, with the first issue being *JSBRAS* 1, July 1878, followed by *JSBRAS* 2, forthcoming in December 1878. A total of 500 copies of this first issue were

distributed to members, contributors, the press, learned societies and put up for sale at Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Penang. (AR 1878, *JSBRAS* 2, 1878). The first issue of the journal contained 15 original articles on various subjects authored by people such as A.Hart Everett, M.de Mikluho-Maclay, A.M. Skinner, W.A. Pickering, W.E. Maxwell and H.J.Murton. From the very start, the journal has shown its promising future for it faced no difficulty in obtaining contributions for publication. Hose (1878) in his Inaugural address as President of the Society, said that the journal was not likely for the present, to be short of papers to be published, as there were numerous contributions, which were already forwarded for publication. In actual fact, if the situation persisted, more numbers could be produced. All in all, for the first 40 years, the average number of pages published each year in each number of the journal amounted to 206 pages (AR 1920, *JSBRAS* 83, 1921). The last number of *JSBRAS* to be issued before the change of the name to *JMBRAS* in 1923 was *JSBRAS* 86, published in November 1922 containing 18 articles on various subjects.

### **FROM *JSBRAS* TO *JMBRAS***

In 1923, SBRAS was renamed Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society to signify the increasing sphere of influence of the British over the Malay Peninsula and its surrounding areas. As a result of this change of name, the name of the Society's Journal was conveniently changed to *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* or

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*JMBRAS*, the familiar and well-known abbreviation by which it is known. The serial number of *JMBRAS* was continued from *JSBRAS* and in addition to that the journals of the Malayan Branch were each given a volume number, and each volume had several parts. Thus, *JMBRAS* volume 1, part 1 was published in April 1923, *JMBRAS* volume 1, part 2 in October 1923 and volume 1, part 3 in December of the same year. *JMBRAS* was published uninterrupted until the Japanese invasion of Malaya on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942. The last issue, which the Society managed to publish just before this unfortunate incidence, was volume 19 part 3 in December 1941. The next issue to be published by the Society was volume 20 part 1, which came out in June 1947. By early 1946 as the business of the Society had resumed, there were some efforts to produce a number of the journal as there were several papers which had been approved by the Council for inclusion in the first issue of the year but was abandoned due to the difficult conditions still existing in Malaya, after World War II. (AR 1946, *JMBRAS* 20 (2), 1947). In fact, well before the Japanese occupation of Malaya in 1942, there were already ready sources of papers for publication.

It is to be noted that the number of parts published in a volume after 1923 was at times irregular but nevertheless most of the volumes contained three parts each up to 1950. However, at times, only two parts were published, for example in 1930, 1931, 1933, 1940, and 1947. While in some years, four parts of the volume were published, for example in 1927, 1928 and 1949 which maybe due to more

papers being submitted for publication. From 1951 to 1964, most of the volumes contained regularly 4 parts each. However, starting from 1965, the volumes contained only 2 parts. The last issue of *JMBRAS* before yet another change of name in 1964 was volume 36 part 4, 1963 (no.204).

In 1964, with the formation of Malaysia, comprising Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore, again the name of the Society was changed from Malayan Branch to Malaysian Branch. The first issue of the *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* was volume 37 part 1, number 205. The change of name however, did not bring about a change in the abbreviation of the journal, which remained *JMBRAS* and also the serial numbering of the volumes continued. By the time *JMBRAS* celebrated its centenary in 1977, it had already published a total of 232 issues, a great achievement for a learned journal in this part of the world. With the current issue, volume 70 part 2, no. 273, published in December 1997, the journal would be celebrating its one hundred and nineteenth year of publication, a rather incredible feat for a learned society.

### **HISTORY OF EDITORSHIP**

Rule 12 of MBRAS gives the Council, the power to appoint a member of the Society to edit the Society's journal on its behalf, and to advise him in the selection of material when called upon to do so. To show its recognition of services rendered in editing the journal, the name of the Honorary Editor would be printed with the list of the Council

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members for the year at the beginning of each volume. The appointment as Honorary Editor is valid until the holder resigns or the Council members considered it advisable to make a new appointment.

Since its appearance in 1878 to 1913, the very person who held the post of Honorary Secretary also carried out the duties of the Honorary Editor. In other words, there was no separate appointment of an Honorary Editor to edit the Society's Journal. Hence, the first editor of this learned journal was none other than the first Honorary Secretary and only Ph.D. holder of his time in the Straits Settlements, Dr. N.B.Dennys who himself contributed two articles in the first issue of the Journal. In 1879, A.M.Skinner, who took over as Honorary Secretary became the second editor. In its third year of publication, the Journal had another editor, Frank A. Swettenham who served only for a short while from 1880-1882. Taking over from him, was the Honourable William E. Maxwell, who was editor for five years, between 1883-1887. According to Gullick (1991), when Maxwell took over the editorial responsibility of *JSBRAS*, the journal was facing a hard time as the initial excitement and eagerness over its publication and the number of contributions for publication began to decline as some had to be rejected as unsuitable. During his tenure of office as editor, Maxwell did much to keep the Journal going by adding certain columns such as Notes and Queries and other innovations like publication in Jawi of Malay texts, translation of papers

submitted in French into English and inviting contributions from other parts of Southeast Asia (Gullick, 1991). After Maxwell relinquished his post as editor, H.T. Naughton took over as editor, serving from 1888 to 1889.

The next member of the Society who became both Honorary Secretary and Honorary Editor was H. N. Ridley, the distinguished natural scientist, who was then the Director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Ridley was destined also to become the second longest serving Secretary and Editor of the Journal, serving for a total of 16 years, between 1890-1911, until his retirement in 1911. However, his tenure of office is interrupted by brief intervals, that is between 1894-1897, 1901 and 1908. During his tenure of office as Editor, a great number of articles on Malayan flora and fauna were published. For example in *JSBRAS* 35, there were four papers on Malayan fauna and flora by Ridley and three by Robert Shelford, Curator of Sarawak Museum, a biologist. During the brief intervals when Ridley was not the journal's editor, the post of editor between 1894-1895 was assumed by the outstanding Malay scholar, R.J. Wilkinson, 1896 C.O. Blagden, 1901 P. J. Burgess and 1908 M. Hellier. After the untimely death of Ridley, Dr. R. Hanitsch, Director of the Raffles Museum, took over as Editor in 1912-1913. During the war period, a separate appointment of Honorary Editor was created so as to relieve the Honorary Secretary who was constantly burdened with the running and administration of the Society. Hence, Dr. R van Beuningen van Helsdingin was appointed Editor

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between 1914-1915 and again in 1920. During 1916-1917, the editor was C. Bazell, the first headmaster of the famous Malay College Kuala Kangsar, followed in 1918-1919 by W. Makepeace and in 1921-1922 by J. Johnson. During the War period, it was noted that the size of the journal was decreased and its appearance became rather erratic. Some of the papers were technical in content much like ones contributed by Ridley between 1890-1911. These aroused criticism by members because it was difficult to understand and comprehend the subjects compared to the contents of the earlier volumes, which were readable and interesting. However, the Council expressed hope for improvement as more contributions were received for the year 1921( AR 1920, *JSBRAS* 83, 1921). The last issue of *JSBRAS* was published in November 1922. Before the change in name of the journal to *JMBRAS*, the Society had a total of eighty-six issues of the journal to its credit.

From 1923, when the journal changed its name to *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, abbreviated as *JMBRAS*, the Honorary Secretary also served as Honorary Editor. The new editor of *JMBRAS* was C.B. Kloss, serving from 1923 to 1926. It was at this time that the journal published more articles on natural scientific subjects contributed by museum specialists such as Hanitsch, H.C. Robinson and C.B. Kloss himself. Later, F.N. Chasen who became Honorary Secretary (1927-1942), performed superbly as editor of the journal contributing many papers on Malayan fauna and flora.

From World War II to 1956, the practice of having two separate appointments of Hon. Secretary and Hon. Editor was introduced, though at times, the same individual served in both capacities. Nevertheless, for a few years in the 1960s, different individuals held the two posts. The following scholars have served as Honorary Editor of *JMBRAS*, C.A. Gibson-Hill 1948-1961, 1962 (not filled), Alastair Lamb 1963-1964, Wang Gungwu 1964-1968, S. Arasaratnam 1969-1970 and Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard 1971-1994. Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard had served simultaneously as both Honorary Secretary and Honorary Editor between 1971-1988 but resigned as Honorary Secretary due to advancing age and pressure from his other social commitments in 1988. However, Sheppard continued to serve the Society as Honorary Editor until his death in 1994. Hence, in term of service, Sheppard held the records as the longest serving Honorary Secretary (17 years) and Honorary Editor (23 years). During his tenure of office, the Council decided to include some biographical notes about contributors to the issues of the Journal to enhance its scholarliness and to provide readers with some general background information on these contributors beginning with vol. 48 part 1, 1975. Apart from that, it was also decided to insert a few relevant advertisements on the end pages of the journal beginning with Vol. 52 Part 2, 1979. The reasons for this were, firstly to obtain supplementary funds and secondly to give members a preview of recent books by Malaysian book publishers. Before that, in 1948, under C.A. Gibson-Hill's editorship, a "Notice

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to Contributors” was appended to give some general guidelines to interested contributors on how to organise their manuscripts submitted for publication. These guidelines were later elaborated and improved upon by the editors and the Council for the Society considering the technological changes such as availability of word processor software and computer diskettes to store the submitted writings. On the whole, under his guidance, Sheppard had done a good job of keeping the journal up-to-date with the development of other historical journals in terms of outlook and contributions. Apart from bringing out the current year’s issues, Sheppard also ensured that the delay caused by late publication of issues was much reduced. In 1984, the post of Review Editor was created to oversee the reviewing of books published in the Journal so as to relieve the Editor some of his routine work. This post has been held from that time by the incumbent Datin Patricia Lim Pui Huen, a member of the Society since 1965, and a former chief librarian of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, to relieve the much taxed Editor in preparing book reviews for publication in the journal (Gullick, 1995). Apart from that, the Council adopted a new logo in September 1988, which was later added to the cover of the second issue of the journal in 1988 (AR 1988, *JMBRAS* 62 (1), 1989). From 1995 onwards, Professor Dato Khoo Kay Kim, a former President of the Society and a renowned historian, took over the editorship of *JMBRAS*.

**CONTENTS OF *JSBRAS* AND  
*JMBRAS* 1878-1997**

The first President of SBRAS in his Inaugural address to the members of the Society, delivered on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1878, emphasised and envisaged that the sole purpose of the journal is to publish various papers investigating subjects connected with the Straits of Malacca and the neighbouring countries (Hose, 1878). Hence, the subjects and contents of the journals published in *JSBRAS* 1-86 from 1878 to 1922, had always given much emphasis to the Malay Peninsula and its surrounding areas.

Makepeace (1918), in his article reviewing the first 40 years’ work of SBRAS has indicated through an index compiled by Barnes in 1909, that from the very beginning, members of the Society had contributed two categories of articles, namely Physical and Literary. The former category embraces subjects such as natural history, philosophy, medicine, improvements of the arts and physics. On the other hand, subjects under the second category included literature, philology, history, antiquities and ethnology.

C.D. Cowan (1961) who wrote an article about the ideas of history in *JMBRAS* 1878-1941, indicated that the Journal contained little of note from the historical point of view up to the end of the nineteenth century. This is due to the fact that, in the early years, the contents were naturally focused upon “the early discoveries, surveying and opening up of large areas and their day-to-day activities brought them into contact with the geology, flora and fauna of the Malay lands and the day-to-day life of the people”. Moreover, these officials were

trying very hard to make themselves at home in their new Malayan environment by exploring. However, there were some papers on historical themes pertaining to state histories translated from Malay chronicles and genealogies or from Portuguese and Dutch accounts with regards to the history of the areas published between 1887 and 1895. Fifteen years later, in 1910, Parr and Mackray co-produced a significant contribution of historical value to the Journal on Rembau's history, constitution and customs which is still considered a classic (*JSBRAS* 56) (Cowan, 1961; Gullick 1995). The next major historical contribution was written in 1925 by a professional historian, L. A. Mills entitled "British Malaya, 1824-1867" which was originally written as a doctoral thesis. In the 1930's, there was a sudden appearance of a mass of historical writings on Malaya touching on state histories, ancient history and pre-history. Some of these writings were published as monographs due to their length and number of pages. Hence, it could be deduced that as the journal matured, it began to publish more articles and papers which focused on historical themes as indicated by Cowan. Moreover, over the years, all the early discoveries and explorations into the hinterland of Malaya had dwindled and hence, less contributions of such accounts were forthcoming.

However, Choy in her dissertation which was updated by others (1995) did a study on the history of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society which included two chapters on what *JMBRAS* has contributed towards Malaysian and

Singapore historiography. According to Choy, the types of historical works contributed in the journal could be divided into two periods, pre-1950 and post-1950. Much of the contents of the journal published prior to 1950, were works on state histories, general history of Malaya and traditional Malay historical works. Apart from that, colonial history on the Portuguese and Dutch rule in Malacca and socio-economic history were penned by colonial administrators in the course of their duties. The post-1950 period witnessed the change from the amateur scholarship of colonial officials to professional scholarship as a direct result of the establishment of the University of Malaya in Singapore, 1949. Moreover, the influx of expatriate historians and the training of local historians in the following years, enabled the emergence of historical works based on archival research which were written at the University. Many of these works published in the post 1950 period were contributions on colonial history, Malay political history, economic history, works in related disciplines and traditional Malay historical works (Choy and others, 1995).

On the whole, it could be ascertained that *JMBRAS*, over the years has given more emphasis and focus on promoting Malaysian historiography which may be seen in the many historical articles published in the journal, especially after the independence of Malaysia in 1957. This change has been brought about by three factors. Firstly, more and more Malayan and Malaysian historical writings came into being because of the

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emergence of professional historians, both local and foreign as a result of the establishment of the History Departments in local universities. Secondly, “the themes of historical writings are no longer confined to political history but instead turned to studies of social and economic aspects of the local communities and local institutions in order to derive a deeper understanding of the development of the present Malaysian society” (Choy and others, 1995). Thirdly, Malayan and Malaysian historiography became more research oriented through the promotion of historical research by professional historians or academicians from the local institution’s of higher learning. By and large, the contents of *JMBRAS* over the years moved with time towards the inclusion of more historical writings.

#### **PROLIFIC CONTRIBUTORS OF *JSBRAS* & *JMBRAS* 1878-1997**

Since the first number was published in 1878, there have been many writers, both local and foreign, who contributed materials for publication by the Society. Contributions here refer to all articles, long and short, notices, views, book reviews, obituaries and other oddities. However, a survey and preview of its contents pages show that many people, both professional and non-professional who were members of the Society from its inception in 1877 had contributed some articles. However, it is to be noted that only a selected few have continuously shown some prominence in their contributions of more than 20 papers over a certain period of time. Here it should also be noted that some of

these contributions that have been taken into consideration were authored in collaboration with others. In other words, some of these contributions are by single authors, two authors or multiple authors. Table 1 shows the list of the most prolific authors who had authored and co-authored papers or articles in *JSBRAS* and *JMBRAS* for over more than one hundred years.

The most prolific contributor to this scholarly journal since its inaugural issue in 1878 until this moment is R.O. Winstedt, a well-known and prominent scholar-official of his time in British Malaya. Over a period of fifty-two years, Winstedt wrote as many as 144 articles of various lengths for the journal. Of these 144 articles, 27 are considered as historical works of much significance towards the development of Malayan historiography. Second to him in term of total contributions towards *JSBRAS* and *JMBRAS* is H.N. Ridley, a botanist famous for his research on rubber, who authored about 105 articles between 1890 to 1926. In the third place is, C.A. Gibson-Hill contributing a total of 49 articles dealing mainly on the subject of boats and historical topics between 1935 to 1960. Following closely behind are C. Boden Kloss, working for the Federated Malay States Museum, contributed 48 articles on Malayan fauna and flora (squirrels and wild boar) between 1904 and 1930; W. E. Maxwell, a Malay scholar, produced 36 articles on various subjects such as Malay folklore, Malay proverbs and Perak histories from 1878 to 1886; John M. Gullick contributed 35 articles on Malayan and Malaysian political history from 1949 till the



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present; W. A. Linehan, President of MBRAS 1946-1947 contributed 33 articles especially on the history of Pahang (antiquities, history, kings and rulers, and tombs) between 1926-1952; Tom Harrison, a well-known ornithologist and archaeologist, contributed 32 articles on various aspects of Borneo and Malayan archaeology and pre-history between 1953-1977; C. O. Blagden wrote 31 articles mostly about cannons, Malay folklore, Indo-Chinese languages and inscriptions from 1894 to 1941; and finally Richard James Wilkinson, an outstanding Malay scholar accounted for 27 articles on various aspects of the Malays which included social life and customs, folklore and Islam between 1895 to 1941.

On the whole, the ten most prolific contributors who wrote and contributed articles to the journal were all British colonial officials who had a part in the day-to-day administration of then British

Malaya or worked as professional scholars or scientists in the Raffles and Federated Malay States Museums and the Botanic Gardens. These individuals contributed much before World War II towards the advancement of *JSBRAS* and *JMBRAS* as a scholarly journal of renowned reputation in the years to come. Among local scholars who had contributed significantly to the journal, are Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad better known as ZABA who wrote 15 articles of various themes about the Malays and Khoo Kay Kim, Professor of Malaysian History, University of Malaya who also contributed 15. However it is worth mentioning that since its change of name to *JMBRAS* in 1923 and 1964, more and more Malayan and Malaysian scholars have contributed to the scholarly contents of the journal especially in political and socio-economic history.

Table 1: Most Prolific Contributors of *JSBRAS* & *JMBRAS* 1878-1997

Rank	Contributor	Number of Contributions	Contributing Years
1	Richard Olof Winstedt (1878-1966)	143	1906-1958
2	Henry Nicholas Ridley	105	1890-1926
3	C. A. Gibson-Hill	49	1935-1960
4	C. B. Kloss	48	1904-1930
5	William Edward Maxwell (1846-1897)	36	1878-1910
6	John M. Gullick	35	1949-1997
7	W. A. Linehan	33	1926-1952
8	Tom Harrison	32	1953-1977
9	Charles Otto Blagden (1864-1949)	31	1894-1941
10	Richard James Wilkinson (1867-1941)	27	1895-1957
11	F. N. Chasen	26	1923-1941
12	John Coney Moulton (1886-1926)	25	1911-1923
13	I.H. Burkill	25	1915-1958
14	Roland Bradell	22	1921-1959
	Dudley Francis Amelius Hervey (1849-1911)	22	1879-1927
16	Nicholas Belfield Dennys	21	1878-1886
	A. W. Hamilton	21	1920-1947
18	H. Overbeck	19	1914-1934
19	Amin Sweeny	17	1967-1983
20	Zainal @ Zainul Abidin bin Ahmad (ZABA)	15	1922-1951

#### EDITORIAL BOARD AND POLICY

The journal invites new and original contributions to disseminate knowledge and matters of historical value pertaining to Malaysia and the surrounding region. All papers submitted should be in English, which, if accepted, are not to be published in substantially the same or in abbreviated form elsewhere. Articles submitted should not exceed 10,000 words, unless there are exceptional reasons. As to referencing and other parameters of style, authors may consult the current issue of the *JMBRAS*. To minimise errors and expedite the production of the journal, it is requested

that a diskette with the text typed on a word processor, accompany the paper submitted. Further guidelines for authors pertaining to the form of presentation : title page, citation style, metric system, foot-notes, table and appendices, illustrations, size, and scale are printed occasionally on the back cover page of the journal for reference by interested contributors. Authors wishing to send their papers or contributions for publication in *JMBRAS* should submit them to the Society's Council at the following address: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 130M, Jalan Thamby Abdullah, Brickfields, 50470 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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The papers or contributions received by the Council are then handed over to the journal's Editor who is appointed or elected yearly by the Council to help screen the submitted contributions and in the process, establish their potential and suitability for publication in the journal. If deemed suitable, the Editor will then recommend it for publication to the Council. The authority to decide or approve for inclusion in the Society's journal rests with the Council which usually agrees with the final recommendations of the Editor. After receiving the consent and approval from the Council, the Editor, with the assistance of one or two members of the learned Society would have the papers edited to conform with the journal's needs and standard. However, the contents and accuracy of the papers submitted rest with the authors themselves. Next, these papers or monographs will be sent to the Society's reviewers stationed all over the world, renowned for their expertise and knowledge in their respective subject areas. All in all, the editor and reviewers would examine each paper primarily for its value as a contribution to the dissemination of knowledge and matters of historical value pertaining to Malaysia and the surrounding region.

However, it is clear that from the very beginning, the Journal has not had an Editorial Board to see to its smooth running and publication. All editorial duties are performed solely by the Editor who in turn is helped by certain individuals belonging to the Society from time to time or when necessary in the course of editing. Nevertheless, in

volume 70, part 2 published in December 1997 there is a note mentioning that papers submitted to the journal would be reviewed before publication by an Editorial Committee. This Editorial Committee comprises Professor Dato' Khoo Kay Kim as Chairperson and Dr. Cheah Boon Kheng, Mr. H. S. Barlow and Datin Patricia Lim Pui Huen (book reviews) as committee members. The inclusion of the names of the Editorial Committee was not a tradition that was adhered to before. In 1984, an Honorary Review Editor was elected to lessen the burden on the Editor especially in the assembling and assessing of book reviews submitted for publication.

After the reviewing process, the author will receive a proof copy of his paper and this proof should be corrected, not revised, and returned to the Editor within two weeks. Authors whose papers are accepted for publication are automatically given 25 free offprints for their use. However, authors can request for additional offprints upon advance payment to the Editor. It is also the practice of the Society to hold the copyright over all published articles but nevertheless, permission is normally granted to the authors to reproduce such articles elsewhere.

### **VISIBILITY OF *JMBRAS***

*JMBRAS*, one of the most established and scholarly journals in the arts, humanities and social sciences (AHSS) disciplines in Malaysia till today can be proud of its high visibility. Visibility here means that the journal is often referred to, cited and is known to

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international scholars especially those from the art, humanities and social science disciplines as bibliographic information regarding its articles can be made available from international indexing and abstracting services to international and local researchers.

As early as 1961, *JMBRAS* already featured in two annotated directories of serial publications, which contain articles on historical studies. Both were published in the United States of America. The first one was published by the American Historical Association entitled *Guide to Historical Literature* where *JMBRAS* was featured and numbered as Q176 *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1923 ff., 3 nos. per year), forerunner of the present *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* and successor to *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Singapore, 1878-1922) (Howe and others, 1961). However, this *Guide to Historical Literature* does not give much information regarding *JMBRAS* and its subject coverage or contents. On the other hand, there was a long entry on *JMBRAS* in the inaugural publication by Clio Press under the title of *Historical Periodicals : An annotated world list of historical and related serial publications* published in May 1961. The editors of this annotated directory are Eric H. Boehm and Lalit Adolphus of *Historical Abstracts*. *JMBRAS* was featured as number 10 with its name, address and entry given as “Royal Asiatic Society, Journal of the Malayan Branch of the. Covering the territories of the Federation of Malaya, the colonies of Singapore,

Sarawak and North Borneo, and the State of Brunei”. It was also noted that this journal contained articles on “history, archaeology, ethnology, linguistics, literature and art, dealing primarily with Malaya, Singapore and British Borneo, but occasionally also with adjacent areas of Indonesia and Southeast Asia”. It added further that the “history articles deal with all periods with special emphasis on European penetration and colonisation in the last 400 years. Many issues were reserved for monographs or symposiums on specific subjects”. There were also book reviews and a report including list of members cum index.

The visibility of *JMBRAS* as a scholarly journal in the AHSS is further strengthened in the study by Goi (1997). In her dissertation, Goi found that *JMBRAS* tops the list of the journals cited by humanities researchers at the University of Malaya. This is especially true in the field of history, religion and philosophical studies where *JMBRAS* is profiled as the most important journal and often cited by researchers. For example, in religion and philosophical studies, *JMBRAS* and *Dewan Sastera* received 33.02% citations whereas in the history studies *JMBRAS* received 40 citations out of a total of 344 citations. In a nutshell, the study by Goi has proven beyond any doubt that *JMBRAS* is indeed an important journal in the fields of AHSS.

In another related study by Zainab Awang Ngah (1997) entitled “The coverage of Malaysian scholarly journals by international indexing and abstracting services: an assessment of their visibility

and common characteristics”, it was found that *JMBRAS* is one of the very few Malaysian AHSS journals to be indexed and abstracted by more than one abstracting and indexing service. According to her, up to this very day, *JMBRAS* is one of the 11 journals in the AHSS disciplines which is being indexed and abstracted by the services under study. *JMBRAS* is being indexed by both *Anthropological Index* and *Historical Abstracts*.

### INDICES

Indices, lists of names, subjects, titles, etc. arranged and organised in alphabetical order at the end of a document, namely books, journal’s articles, reports or other sources, where their contents and the pages where they are to be found are mentioned, play a very important role in aiding readers and researchers. A good index will allow the reader or user to locate precisely what he or she needs in the course of the search for information. By and large, indices must be current and be easy to use in order to meet the challenges of information searches.

As any other learned journal, *JSBRAS* and *JMBRAS* have over the years come out with indices with regard to the wealth of information on Malaysiana contained in them. *JMBRAS*, fortunately over the years, has its contents compiled and covered in indices prepared by its editors, interested parties or certain individuals undertaken at the request of the Society. Nevertheless, as a learned publication the absence of a complete index covering all aspects is most felt,

especially when taking into consideration its existence and involvement in journal publication for the past one hundred and nineteen years.

In 1885, there was a mention of an ‘Index of Asiatic journals’ being compiled by a certain J. T. Carletti covering all Asiatic journals in the *Notes and Queries*

69, No. 3, *JSBRAS* 16, 1886, p. 83-84. The index to be readied by the year-end will also include the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, from 1878 (*Notes & Queries* 69, No.3, *JSBRAS* 16, 1886). It is not known whether the work was finished or not. Again, in 1898, after a lapse of fourteen years, another index was compiled, that is “Index to the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*” published in *JSBRAS* 31, 1898, p. 153-190. This index was arranged in two sections. The first section contained the subject index and the second section the author index. In 1909 W.D. Barnes, a member of the Society attempted the great task of compiling an index of the first fifty volumes of *JSBRAS* and *Notes & Queries* I to IV which was subsequently published as *JSBRAS* 51, 1909, p. 1-93. However, Barnes in compiling the index “made no attempt to compile a subject index but placed them under appropriate headings such as Physical and Literary. The former comprises subjects such as natural history, philosophy, medicine, improvements of the arts and physics. Subjects under the second headings included literature, philology, history,

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antiquities, and ethnology” (Makepeace, 1918).

Later on, the Society managed to produce yearly indices which were occasionally published in its Journal, for example between 1915-1917 and 1922-1927. The yearly indices published between 1915-1917 and 1922 were arranged in alphabetical order comprising both subjects and authors of the articles. On the other hand, the yearly indices from 1923 to 1927 were author indices only. In between those years, there was no mention of any indices being prepared or published in the Journals. C.E. Wurtzburg in 1927 compiled “An index to all the journals (nos. 1-86) of SBRAS from its foundation until its change of title to MBRAS. And to Notes and queries I to IV” which again was published in *JMBRAS* 4, 1927, p. 1-101. The articles indexed were arranged in alphabetical order appearing under the keywords of their titles, under the name of the authors and under such special subject headings as their contents dictated.

C.A.Gibson-Hill, editor of *JMBRAS* between 1948-1961 took up the task of compiling an “Index volumes 1-20 (1923-1947) of the Society’s journals” which was published in *JMBRAS* 21 (3), 1948, p. 1-66 after the Society resumed publishing the journal with the end of World War II. His index consisted of two parts, that is, index of papers arranged chronologically under the names of authors and the other part was a subject index including places in Malaya and adjacent territories. In 1963, Lim Huck Tee and D. E. K. Wijasuriya at the request of the Council of MBRAS,

undertook the mammoth task of compiling a comprehensive index covering the entire run of *JSBRAS* and *JMBRAS* up to the year 1963 due to “the inadequacy of existing indexes and the need for a more systematic, thorough, and up-to-date index” (Lim and Wijasuriya, 1970). This index was arranged in two alphabetic sequences, that is author and title and subject sequences, which contained full bibliographic citations for all entries. This index was later published as *Index Malaysiana* in 1970 by MBRAS. In June 1974 the first Supplement to *Index Malaysiana* was published covering the entire run of the *JMBRAS* from 1964-1973 and included four monographs issued by the Society during the period. Further in January 1985, the second Supplement to *Index Malaysiana* covering the period 1974-1983 of *JMBRAS*, the Reprint and the Monograph series was published by the Society.

From 1986 onwards no further attempt was undertaken by the Council of MBRAS or its editor to compile any index to cover articles published from 1984 till today. However, in keeping with the times the Society in the Annual Report of MBRAS 1995 mentions of an impending new edition, which is a more up-to-date index including references to the latest issues, being planned to amalgamate the new portion with Supplements 1 and 2 respectively (AR MBRAS 1995, *JMBRAS* 69 (1), 1996). Finally, the Society also published *A Complete List of the Contents of the Society’s Journals 1878-1980* to enable scholars or researchers to have at hand a

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quick reference guide to the many learned articles appearing in its journals.

**CONCLUSION**

The *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS)* can look back proudly on its continuous and stable history of more than a hundred and nineteen years and its many achievements. During this long period of time, *JMBRAS* has played a very important role in the continuous promotion of scholarly research and advancement of knowledge. It has always concentrated on the dissemination of knowledge relating to

matters of historical value pertaining to Malaysia and the surrounding region.

Even though, different editors both local and foreign continuously edited it, it has outlived them in terms of outlook and content coverage. *JMBRAS* still remains the most important storehouse of information about Malaya and Malaysia.

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