The Origin and Development of the Malay States Guides
by Abdul Karim bin Bagoo,

The Resident’s Guard, Perak, and the Larut Police,
1874-1876

Geographically Larut is distinct from the remainder of Perak, and prior to 1874 it enjoyed a measure of independence, particularly under the last and most powerful of its rulers Mentri Ngah Ibrahim (1840-1895). By 1870 he had a force of 200 armed Malays to maintain order among the Chinese miners from whom his revenue was derived, but it had dwindled to only some forty men when fighting broke out between the Ghi Hin and Hai San factions in 1872. Under such conditions it proved wholly inadequate. The following year the Mentri, by this time compelled to live in semi-exile in Krian, obtained British recognition. Subsequently he induced T.C.S. Speedy to resign his post of Superintendent of Police at Penang, and raise a small force of sepoys for him. Speedy enlisted 110 discharged sepoys at Calcutta and took them straight to Larut. This force had scarcely begun to restore order when the Pangkor Engagement was signed, and the Mentri’s period of virtual independence came to an end.

Speedy and the sepoys were still in Larut; and Sir Andrew Clarke appointed him Assistant Resident. In a despatch to the Colonial Office, Clarke explained that he had made the appointment because he wanted to have on the spot immediately a man ‘who had the confidence of [the Straits Settlements] Government, of the Chiefs of the Malay Government, and of the headmen of both the rival Chinese factions in Larut.’ The sepoys were to be the nucleus of the Perak Police. Speedy was instructed to discharge them, and then re-enlist such as agreed to serve as the Resident’s Guard. This provided him with an effective armed force to continue the restoration of law and order, and to lend dignity to his position and that of the Commission.

3. Perak Enquiry Papers, 2, 1876; statement of Mat Ali, ‘We had an interview with Captain Speedy in the Mantri’s shop. Captain Speedy promised to assist him with men if he gave him £15,000. The Mantri promised to give the money’. For a biography of Speedy, see J.M. Gullick, JMBRAS, 26, (3), 1953.
4. S.S. Des 24 dated 28 January 1874. As a result of Speedy’s enlisting discharged Sepoys An Act to control recruiting in British Indian for the service of Foreign States was passed by the Viceroy in Council (Act IV of 1874). A copy occurs in C.O. Des. 56 of 6 May, 1874.
5. S.S. Des. 15 of 1874 dated 26 January P.P.C. 111: 175

appointed to settle the points in dispute between the two groups of Chinese miners.

Speedy established his men at Kota, a small village on the Larut River, then one and a half miles south of Taiping, but now a suburb of the town. No barracks were built at this stage, and he billeted the sepoys in Chinese houses in the village. For a short time Speedy’s younger brother acted as second in command of the force, but he resigned later when he fell ill. Otherwise the unit lacked officers, for the posts of Assistant Superintendent and British Inspector were still vacant the following year. Speedy was thus compelled to rely on an Indian non-commissioned officer, Inspector Deen Mohammed, to maintain order and train the recruits. The local recruits were inferior in quality, but according to Gullick the Indian Police, especially the elite of the Residency Guard, were excellent, so long as Speedy, who understood them and their language, was in charge. Later, under officers who took over from Speedy, the situation deteriorated; the discipline became lax and the force inefficient, partly because the recruits were ill-trained, and partly because the officers did not understand the men under their command.

The Larut Police Force was well paid, and the terms of engagement, leave and gratuities were generous. It consisted of a Residency Guard of twenty-five sepoys, together with ‘about 160 Punjabi, Malay and Chinese uniformed Police.’ Thus from its inception the force was a mixed body of men. Its distribution to the best advantage was a problem which Speedy met by retaining half the men, mostly the Indians, in the Taiping area to guard the government buildings. The other half of the force was distributed among rural stations as they came into existence. Inspector Deen Mohammed was given charge of Kamunting, the Ghi Hin mining centre.

Speedy and his force were faced with many problems. The greater part of the population of Larut was settled in the four square miles of mining land round Taiping, but along the creeks and backwaters on the coast there was a scattered and lawless Chinese population of

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6. Gullick says that this unnamed brother was probably James Havelock Speedy, who later settled in New Zealand (JMBRAS, 26, (3): 61). See also JMBRAS, 24, (4), 1951:
7. S.S. Government Gazette 1875; Speedy’s Annual Report 1874, Appendix G.
8. JMBRAS, 26, (3): 41. ibid: 46.
9. S.S.Gov.Gaz. 1875. Speedy’s Annual Report for 1874, Appendix G. 1st Class constable $8.00, 2nd class $7.00, Chinese Police $10.000; whereas in Penang and Malacca the pay was 1st class $7.00 2nd class $6.00, 3rd class $5.00; and in Singapore 1st class $8.00, 2nd class $7.00 and 3rd class $6.00. (S.S.Des. 182, 24 April 1876). Malayan Police Magazine, 1, (1), 1928: 20. JMBRAS 26, (3): 30.

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Captain T.C.S. Speedy in Abyssinian dress.
Assistant Resident Larut

Photo Arkib Negara Malaysia
two attempts to found them but failed to uproot and destroy the old established secret societies.

In October 1874, J.W.W. Birch, the Colonial Secretary, visited Selama where Che Karim, who worked the mines, was being threatened by Raja Mat Seman and his freebooters from Krian. Speedy and his sepoys, who had been detailed to support Birch, attacked and captured sixty of the gang. The arrested men were later released by Sultan Abdullah, but the promptness and vigour with which Speedy’s force acted created a good impression locally, and the Selama district remained quiet. During 1874, the Larut Police Force also arrested 770 persons for various breaches of the peace. Of these, 186 persons were arrested for assault, and 97 for unlawful assembly. 14

In November, 1874, J.W.W. Birch was appointed British Resident in Perak. A detachment of sepoys was transferred from Larut to be his guard. In addition he had a force of Malay Police borrowed from Singapore, Penang and Province Wellesley. On 5 January, 1875, Sir Andrew Clark instructed Birch to ‘organise Guard of Police so as to cease to have any person belonging to the Colonial Force employed, retaining those willing to accept service in Perak, if desirable’. 15 Birch tried to carry out these instructions. In his first report, 16 he wrote, ‘The Resident’s Guard of forty Indians has been formed, and they are housed in temporary barracks close to the Sultan’s and my own beleis (sic?). He added that police stations had been built and manned at Kuala Kurau, Bruas, Kota Stia, Durian Sabatang and Gunong Pundoh. Sixty men had been enlisted and were ready to man the stations being built at Telok Batu, Kota Lumut, Bandar Bahru, Bidor, Batang Padang, Tanjong Piaandang, M’dring Lemboh and Kuala Kangsar. He planned to build more stations. The majority of these stations were in Malay villages and it is probable that some of Birch’s unpopularity was occasioned by clashes between the penghulu and the non-commissioned officers in charge of rural stations.

In 1875 Speedy, when not conducting operations against bandits, was busy organising the administration of Larut. Birch, on the other hand was trying to settle boundary disputes, raise revenue and, with less success, to win over the Malay chiefs. Neither had time to consider establishing a central training depot for recruits, standardising arms and clothing the force in uniforms. No effort was made to co-ordinate the police force and residency guards under the command of an officer who knew both Hindustani and Malay. The result was that neither the Indian nor the Malay recruits learnt how to handle their arms

properly. Furthermore lack of supervision resulted in a deterioration of discipline and efficiency, even among the trained members of the Residency Guard.\textsuperscript{17}

Birch's failure to win over the Malay chiefs resulted in a visit by Sir William Jervois, the new Governor, in September 1875. Jervois decided on a change of Policy.\textsuperscript{18} Then on 2 November Birch was killed at Pasir Salak, together with his interpreter, Mat Arshad, and one sepoy from the escort. The remaining sepoy seized a boat and escaped downstream to the Residency at Bandar Bahru. Lt. Abbott, R.N., who was shooting on the opposite bank, also made his way there, and taking command of the sepoy guard, amounting to about fifty men—'with one or two exceptions recruits...still far from perfect in the use of arms, and to a great extend wanting in discipline'—he prepared to defend the Residency.\textsuperscript{19} This force was subsequently strengthened by Captain Innes (Political Commissioner), Lt. Elliot and fifty men of the 10th Regiment, and the Hon. H. Plunkett and a detachment of police from Penang. On 7 November, an unsuccessful attack was made on Pasir Salak. Here, apparently, the sepoys were of little use: Lt. Abbott later wrote, 'The inefficiency of the sepoys may be partly attributed to want of discipline, and to no officer being acquainted with their language.'\textsuperscript{20}

On learning of Birch's murder, Speedy sent a detachment from Larut under Inspector Deen Mohammed to warn Swettenham. The latter, however, had reached Bandar Bahru on 3 November, and Deen Mohammed missed him. For a short time Speedy detained the Mentri in his house at Matang. He also placed a guard in the Berapit Pass to cut off communication with the Perak valley, and reinforced Kuala Kangsar.

A considerable military force from Hongkong, under Major-General Colborne, and from India, under Brigadier-General Ross, now arrived in Perak. Desultory fighting continued into 1876, and the police and resident's guard shared in the hardships of the jungle campaign. A small detachment formed part of Captain Dunlop's force which successfully attacked Pasir Salak on 17 November, 1875, while Speedy and forty sepoys took part in the skirmish at Kota Lama.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{17} JMBRAS, 24, (4), 1951 : 116. Under the date 26 October, 1875, Swettenham says that Sgt-Major Roda Singh who was in charge of the sepoys escorting Mr. Birch was drunk and impertinent. The sepoys were also drunk.

\textsuperscript{18} S.S.Des. 291 of 16 October, 1875. 'I propose to have two Queen's Commissioners who, with the Assistant Commissioner at Laroot, will together form a body, subject to my orders, for arranging and directing the affairs of the state...when arrangements for conducting the Government have matured one Commissioner will suffice'.

\textsuperscript{19} P.P.C. 1505 (1876) : 299-30. Lt. Abbott to Commander F. Stirling.

\textsuperscript{20} P.P.C. 1505 (1876) : 298, Lt. Abbott to Commander F. Stirling.

\textsuperscript{21} P.P.C. 1505 (1876) : 91. M.S.V.R., 32; December 1917. 'Notes on the Perak Expedition' by an officer of the Buffs (reprinted from the Dragon: 170).
Early in 1876 it became apparent that the military expedition would soon have to be withdrawn, and the Straits Government began to pay attention to providing suitable officers for the resident's guard and police. A Mr. Peterson was appointed Assistant Superintendent in Larut, probably in anticipation of Speedy going on leave, and Mr. Leach, Assistant Superintendent in Kuala Kangsar. Jervois considered that Inspectors should be 'steady non-commissioned officers of the army' who had learnt Malay while they had been quartered in the Straits Settlements. 22 Four men were appointed Messrs. Dicken, O'Connor, Bruce and Paterson. Barracks were built in Taiping to accommodate the Larut Police, 23 and in time they became the headquarters of the Perak Police. In August Lord Carnarvon directed the Governor to organise 'such a body of police as may with confidence be substituted for the additional troops at present stationed in the Peninsula. 24 Four months later Lt. P. Swinburne (80th Regiment) was appointed Superintendent of Police and Resident's Guard, and the organisation of the Perak Armed Police began in earnest.

2. The Perak Armed Police, 1877-1884

During the next seven years the Perak force achieved a high state of military efficiency. At the same time it was expanding rapidly to meet the ever increasing calls on its sources occasioned by the influx of Chinese immigrants. In these years also the first steps were taken towards separating the civil and military duties of the Force.

On taking over his duties in December 1876, Captain Swinburne began by organising a Resident's Guard of two hundred Sikhs from the men in the Larut Force. 25 Of necessity the guard had to have a decidedly military character, as it was performing duties normally entrusted to troops. A portion of it had to be trained in artillery drill to enable it to take charge of a battery of mountain guns. The police Force of five hundred men was scheduled to consist largely of Malays, so that it could communicate readily with the local people and thus procure information. The Malays were also to man the police boats, an essential unit as the rivers were the only means of transport. Swinburne also established a central training depot, in addition to arming, dressing and distributing the force to the best advantage. 26

22. S.S.Des. 370 of 18 October, 1876.
23. [Sir] Hugh Low’s Diary, 1, 1877 (see JMBRAS, 27, ( ), 1954). The barracks were built by W.E. Maxwell.
25. S.S.Des. 297, 19 August, 1876. The term 'Sikh' was used loosely to cover several close related non-Muslim peoples from north-western Indian, including Sikhs, Pathans and Punjabis.
26. Jervois to Carnarvon, 18 October 1876, in S.S.Des. 369: printed below as Appendix I.
The selection of Swinburne was fortunate, as in addition to speaking Malay and Hindustani, he had first hand knowledge of the existing Force, gained from his disciplining of the Resident’s Guard at Bandar Bahru after April 1876.\(^{27}\) His task was difficult. The Larut Police and Resident’s Guard consisted of only about two hundred men, while the Perak Police had a large number of untrained Malay recruits hastily enrolled by J.G. Davidson. These men had arms of ‘a miscellaneous character, rifles of all patterns and sizes being in use.’ The uniforms were of a mixed description, no two of them alike. Only a few of the men had signed on enlisting, and there were no records of dates of enlistments or terms of engagement. Indiscriminate recruiting had resulted in the inclusion of many diseased persons, opium smokers, bad characters and low caste Indians. Besides this, the Force was cut into small bodies posted at a number of scattered stations, which made it difficult to establish and maintain discipline.\(^{28}\)

Jervois had proposed Kuala Kangsar for the head-quarters of the Armed Police, but Swinburne established it at Taiping, where two new barracks were already in existence. In 1877, a guard-room, lock-up and police office were added in front of the barracks. A site for a hospital was cleared on an adjoining hill.\(^{29}\) Between 1876 and 1878, Swinburne weeded out the diseased men, opium smokers and bad-characters. In June of the latter year (1878) he reported\(^{30}\) that the force was at last properly dressed in new uniforms obtained from England; that the non-Malay portion was uniformly armed with long snider rifles; and that the sikhs had engaged for three years and the Malays for two. He complained, however, that he found it difficult to obtain experienced non-commissioned-officers or even promising recruits from among the Malays. Among the Sikhs he obtained some very good non-commissioned-officers mostly from those who had been in Perak and who had returned after their first leave. Indian recruits of a good class were also beginning to offer themselves for enlistment, and he hoped soon to replace the few Bengalis and men of low caste that he still had in the force. While this resulted in more and more Indians being recruited, the number of Malays remained small. This bias became more evident after 1879 when an even greater emphasis was placed on military training. Swinburne made all the men sign agreements and brought up to date all their records from the date of original enlistment.

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27. S.S.Des. 370, 18 October, 1876.
28. Malayan Police Magazine, 1, (1), 1928, Appendix IV. J.G. Davidson was the second of the two Queen’s Commissioners, appointed but owing to commitments in Selangor, he did not assume duty in Perak until several months after Birch’s death.
29. Details from Hugh Low’s Diary, 1, 1877 (Microfilm). For Jervois’s proposal see Appendix 1, below.
In his report for 1878 Swinburne urged that the two vacancies for expatriate inspectors should be filled immediately. To attract and retain the right type of men, he sought permission to introduce pensions, which could be commuted for a lump sum on the expiration of service. As a further inducement to Indians, he proposed that they should be given six months half-pay leave after three years and a free passage home if they were of good character. These proposals were considered, and in part adopted in the Pension Regulations of 1882.

In distributing the men among the various police posts, Swinburne had to consider not only the local pattern of population, but also the mixed composition of his force and the duties it would have to perform. As the mining area round Taiping was the most likely centre of unrest, as well as the most densely populated part of the state, he retained about half of the entire strength of the Force at Headquarters, the men being predominantly Sikhs. The Sikhs were also given charge of the stations in and around the mining area, while the Malays formed the water police and occupied coastal and riverine police stations. At the headquarters of the districts he posted mixed detachments of Sikhs and Malay Police for there was business with the Malay chiefs and officials to be conducted, in addition to mounting guard over public buildings.

The re-organisation of the Force had barely started, when in May 1877, it had to deal with a riot at Tanjong Piandang. Among the Chinese living there were men belonging to the Ho Seng kongsis in Penang. Because they had been long left to themselves, they resented government interference. While W.E. Maxwell, the Asst. Resident Larut, and a party of the Perak Police were executing a search warrant in an opium case, a mob of forty to fifty Chinese armed with spears, tridents and other weapons attacked them. After Maxwell had been knocked down and a police constable wounded and disarmed, the police opened fire killing two Chinese and wounding several others.  

In December 1878 a detachment of twenty armed policemen was rushed to Pulau Pangkor, where a gang of Chinese had murdered Mr. Lloyd the Superintendent of the Dindings and had attacked the Pangkor Police Station. The Pangkor Police had offered only a feeble resistance, and accordingly the armed police took over their duties until replacements came. Some members of the gang were arrested and later convicted in Penang.  

In January 1879, Lt. R.S.F. Walker was appointed Assistant Commissioner of the Armed Police. Shortly afterwards he became Acting Commissioner, as Major Swinburne fell ill and was forced to go on leave. Swinburne returned the following year (1880), but relapsed again after a few months; he finally left Perak in 1881. Early in 1882,  

32. S.S.Des. 61 & 62, 6 February, 1878. For a personal account see Emily Innes.
he retired and Lt. now Capt. Walker was appointed Commissioner.\textsuperscript{33} In 1879 the establishment for Inspectors was brought up to strength with the appointment of C. Taylor and W.J. Buswell. This made it easier to train the Force and maintain discipline. 1879 also saw the problem of accommodation greatly eased. Two barracks, each taking twenty families of the Armed Police were erected at Taiping and a single similar building at Kuala Kangsar. Several additional police stations were constructed and manned. Among these was one at Gopeng, an important mining centre, and another at Ipoh, the chief village of the Kinta District.

By 1879 the Chinese living in the swamps of Larut, who were chiefly engaged in cutting firewood for Penang, had increased considerably. As the Chinese in general had all too often an innate streak of lawlessness in them, Government decided on their registration. To facilitate this, and at the same time maintain some measure of control over the area, a Police Station was built at Pasir Hitam. During July every kongs ee in the swamps and jungles of south Larut was visited by the Commissioner of Police, their numbers taken and each supplied with a ticket at a cost to himself of one dollar for registration which it was intended to make renewable annually.\textsuperscript{34}

The young force was put to a severe test in October, when a serious riot broke out in Taiping.\textsuperscript{35} The smouldering discontent over the division of the mines laid down in 1874, now erupted. The riot was started by a few Chinese overseers employed at the Ghi Hin mines. They had themselves been coolies, but were now imposing on (recently imported) coolies who were ignorant of English law and customs.\textsuperscript{36} On 3 October large and angry crowds collected round the Residency and later moved into the town, tearing down sign-boards and spirit licence-boards. Two shots were fired at the Police concentrated in front of the gambling farm, wounding a sepoy and a Malay constable. As the crowd still refused to disperse, the Police opened fire, killing twenty-eight Chinese and wounding many others. The crowd fled. The conduct of the Police was excellent throughout the rioting, and vigilance exercised over the next few days restored order completely. Walker reported that ‘the men pressed steadily and unflinchingly against the mob and when called upon to fire, fired with the coolness and precision of the steadiest, best trained and most disciplined troops’.\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} S.S.Des. 442, 3 December, 1881.
\item \textsuperscript{35} S.S. Telegraphic Despatch 333, 5 October, 1879.
\item \textsuperscript{36} S.S.Des. 357, 18 October, 1879.
\end{itemize}
In 1880 James McKeon, who had served in the Royal Artillery joined the armed police as an inspector. He was given charge of the gunners manning half a battery of mountain guns. Three years later the strength of this section was increased by the addition of another battery. Firing practice was also instituted at Pasir Hitam.\(^{38}\)

In August 1880 Sir Frederick Weld, after inspecting the Force wrote.

I was especially pleased with the Sikh military Police, their skirmishing was magnificent, and the wrestling after parade gave me an opportunity of observing their fine physique and remarkable litheness and activity.

But although he found the police efficient he recommended that owing to ‘the immense immigration of Chinese into Perak’ an increase in strength was necessary.\(^{39}\)

The riot of 1879 had shown that within a few hours thousands of coolies could gather in Taiping and that the Force at headquarters was insufficient to guard all points, or to reinforce neighbouring stations. Work on Fort Carnarvon began in 1880. The fort was finally completed in 1885. Its gun emplacements commanded the entire mining area of Larut and also its southern coastal districts. They thus constituted a formidable deterrent to any large scale mob violence.\(^{40}\)

To meet the growing increase in the volume of work, at Taiping, the Central Police Station was constructed in 1881. In the same year additional quarters and barracks were erected to house the officers and men recruited to bring the force up to strength.\(^{41}\)

The growth of the Force from 1877 to 1881 had been slow but steady. Walker inherited from Swinburne a well trained, well disciplined and efficient force, 576 strong,\(^{42}\) but it had as yet not attained the target strength set by Jervois in 1876. Walker had the full support of Hugh Low (British Resident, Perak, 1877-89) and this enabled him to expand the force considerably. By the end of 1882 the strength was 627, and by the end of 1883, 768 of whom eight were Inspectors. In December 1883, Walker visited India, where he recruited 113 sepoys, and fifteen sowars from Fané’s Horse. He also bought horses. In 1882 Walker also raised and trained the Fire Brigade, and the following year it became part of the Armed Police. In 1883 an armoury was built and placed under the charge of an experienced armourer.\(^{43}\)

\(^{38}\) Malayan Police Magazine, 7, (3), 1928, p. 76.
\(^{39}\) S.S.Des. 123, 20 August, 1880, and 158, 11 September. Weld was Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1887.
\(^{41}\) S.S.G.G. 1882, Perak Annual Report for 1881.
\(^{42}\) Malayan Police Magazine, 1, (3), 1928, p. 76.

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