

# A Migrants' World from South Thailand to Kedah — A History of Inland Kedah

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## Abstract

Kedah is an old Islamic port-polity on the Malay Peninsula which had a history of tributary relations with Siam from the thirteenth century. As such, Kedah has been significantly influenced by Siam. The census of 1911 shows large numbers of Malay populations concentrating on the lowland-like twenty kilometer belt along the seashore. Sultans' capitals and old *pondoks* also gathered in this area. The inland "*bukit*" of Kedah is the less populated domain of Thai speakers; Thai-speaking Muslims (Samsam) and Siamese. Until the latter half of the twentieth century, they enjoyed solidarity as fellow Thai-speakers and the Government of Kedah could not control this area completely. There are many Thai temples in the inland area. These temples and large numbers of Siamese gather the River Muda basin in Pendang. Traditionally, Siamese migrated to Kedah from South Siam, which includes modern-day Phatthalung, present home to many Thai-speaking Muslims and Siamese. In pre-modern Kedah, the Sultan controlled the ports and lowlands surrounding the seashore, but had relatively little influence over the inland world of Thai-speaking migrants.

**Key words:** Kedah, Thai-speaker, Muslim, Samsam, Siamese, inland, migrants,

## Preface

Kedah was one of the Malay Peninsula's earliest Islamic kingdoms. Kedah bordered with Siam (Thailand), and until the Anglo-Siam Treaty of 1909, was a tributary state of Siam. By treaty in 1909, Kedah and Siam were formally demarcated, and Kedah acquired its current border.

Kedah later found difficulty maintaining border security. According to Cheah Boon Kheng, a considerable part of inland Kedah was recognized at the

time as Bandit territory (Cheah 1988: 12). Many thieves and robbers were rampant in the territory spanning the border until the 1950s, when the Kedah police and border guard were finally able to control the area<sup>1</sup>.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how the people of Kedah perceived their world from a geopolitical perspective.

In other words, I consider how the Sultan of Kedah governed and collected information about his realm, and how the ordinary people of Kedah grasped their world from a grassroots vantage point.

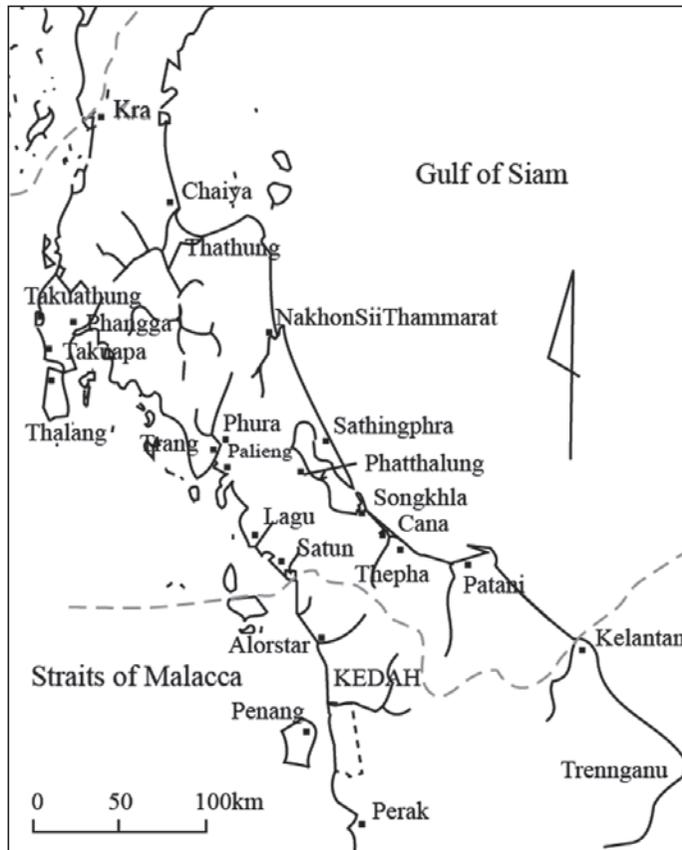
## **1 Kedah in history**

Kedah, a port polity between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, was a strategic point of the East-West trade. Although the narrow portion of the Malay Peninsula enables few intersections, Kedah is in a position to connect trade between India and China through overland and sea routes. In addition, the majority population of Kedah was and still is Malay Muslim. In contrast, the area of Southern Thailand that borders the north of Kedah count Buddhists as the majority and houses many Buddhist cities and temples like Nakhon Sii Thammarat. Kedah was in prime position for dialogue with these trade centers of Southern Thailand. Map 1 appears to show Kedah at an intersection of India and China along its east-west axis, and loosely dividing Buddhists and Muslims between north and south. Under the present nation-state system, Kedah and Southern Thailand are viewed as “frontier districts” by national capitals in Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok. However, it is less a cultural frontier district than an area where various culture elements exist simultaneously. That is, a corridor area.

Thus in this chapter, I will explore the idea of Kedah as such a corridor.

### **1.1 Historical setting**

Early rulers of Kedah were known as ‘*Rajas*’ until Islamization when they were subsequently titled ‘*Sultan*’. The capital of Kedah was based near the Muda River in south Kedah and ruins of South Indian dynastic origin dated between the



Map 1 Kedah and South Thailand

seventh and eleventh century have been discovered in the estuary. The rulers of Kedah have been recorded for posterity in historical books (Muhammad H 1968). Records have been found of Islam in the Malay Peninsula as early as the fourteenth century. According to a Malay language history book, the Raja of Kedah converted to Islam on recovering from illness by an Islamic wise man (Muhammad H 1968: 26). The exact date of the incident is not clear. However, since Sultans started ruling Kedah, the capital moved from the south to the north of Kedah.

This chapter will not deal with the royal family that succeeded the Rajas and Sultans, and is only concerned with the history of Kedah after moving the capital to the north.

## **1.2 Kedah as port city**

Kedah is a port city on one of the narrowest areas of the Malay Peninsula. Before the advent of sailing vessels with auxiliary engines in the nineteenth century, east-west trade was governed by the monsoon, and ships from the Indian Ocean waited for winds by the Thalang port city groups (Phuket etc.) of Kedah or South Thailand. Trade connected with the Gulf of Thailand using the overland route that crisscrossed the Malay Peninsula and the Kra Isthmus. Goods from Chinese Junk ships working the Gulf of Thailand also crossed the peninsula by these routes. Kedah exported not only entrepot trade between east and west but also local produce, including rice, tin, bird's nest, and saltpeter. These goods were also demanded by Siam as tribute. Alor Star became the base of Kedah shipping from around 1735. Ships from Kuala Kedah on the coast, reached Alor Star by river. Alor Star became the capital of Kedah as well as its first important base. The second base of Kedah was Satun (Setul) in present day South Thailand. Moreover, Langkawi Island in the Strait of Malacca was a base for Kedah's naval minister.

Kedah's influence spread along the West Coast. Kedah's power extended even to the southern part of Phuket temporarily in the eighteenth century. When Burma attacked South Thailand in 1809, the Sultan of Kedah was requested by Siam to send battle ships. Kedah also conscripted a group of Orang Laut seafarers from the West Coast into the army (Skinner 1985).

## **1.3 The Tributary Relation between Siam and Kedah**

It is not certain when Kedah became a tributary of Siam. Kedah is recorded as one of the twelve tributaries of Nakhon Sii Thammarat (Sinlapakon 1962). Moreover, it is unclear whether the tributary relation between Siam and Kedah was established after (or due to) Kedah's Islamization, or before. Perhaps future discovery of historical records will shed light on this. Historical records portraying Kedah as a southern tributary country, making processions to carry tribute to the Ayutthaya Kingdom, have been dated to the second half of the Ayutthaya

Era.

Malay Peninsular Kedah was one of four Siamese tributary states in the Malay Peninsula. Siam established tributary relations with these Islamic countries, including Kedah, to bolster the trade network centered on Ayutthaya. The three tributaries apart from Kedah were: Pattani, Kelantan, and Terengganu, and were located on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula. (Suwannathat-Pian 1989).

Siam regarded these countries as important points for trade with the South China Sea and Java. Siam also maintained two trade bases of its own on the West Coast. One is Thalang, a group of seven port cities, such as Phuket, under direct control of the Siamese capital. These cities fell under the jurisdiction of Nakhon Sii Thammarat. The Thalang port-cities were involved in the production of tin, bringing large profits to Siam.

The Thalang port-cities were constantly threatened by nearby Burma. The Burmese army invaded Thalang most recently in 1809, causing great loss to Siam.

Another such Siamese base on the West Coast of the Malay Peninsula was of course Kedah. The British established a base on Penang in the eighteenth century, after which Kedah became the most important southern trade base for Siam, especially since Thalang was destroyed. Nakhon Sii Thammarat and Songkhla - then the leading district countries of Siam - were opposed to each other, and fought politically over jurisdiction of Kedah (Kuroda 1991, 1999).

Under the tributary system, Siam bestowed aristocratic title to the Sultan of Kedah, and required two tributary duties. One duty was the courtesy by which an envoy brought tribute (represented by *Bunga Emas*) to the capital once every three years. Non-performance was considered rebellion, and attracted punitive military force<sup>2</sup>. Kedah's other duty as a Siamese tributary was wartime co-operation. In particular, against Burma, Siam's long-standing enemy at the time. When Burma attacked South Thailand in 1809, the Sultan dispatched troops to Phuket's southern sea, and also provided Siam with rice as food. When Pattani rebelled against Siam in 1842, Siam ordered Kedah to participate in hostilities.

Although Kedah dispatched troops, it also secretly sent aid to its fellow Pattani Muslims (Bonney 1971).

Since Siam did not rule Kedah directly - the Sultan governed Kedah - this tributary system is seen as “nominal” (Suwannathat-Pian 1989). It was certainly not two-way. When Kedah was attacked by Aceh in the seventeenth century, Siam refused military assistance. It is possible that Kedah recognized tributes of *Bunga Umas* as symbolic gifts of friendship.

Siam only ruled Kedah directly twice. The first time was in 1821–1842, following a dispute surrounding peninsular trade between Nakhon Sii Thammarat and Songkhla. When Nakhon Sii Thammarat invaded Kedah in 1821, the Sultan escaped to the British base of Penang. He explained the relation with Siam, “It is custom as a mark of friendship to present *Bunga Umas*,” to the East India Company of Britain, and asserted the independence of Kedah. The Sultan thought to rely on the military strength of Britain. Nakhon Sii Thammarat’s plan to also govern Perak was obstructed by Penang (Kuroda 1999).

By way of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty in 1909, Kedah became a part of British Malaya, and the modern border with Siam was established. This ended the tributary relationship between Siam and Kedah.

However, Japan’s army, which invaded the Malay Peninsula from 1939 to 1945, returned old Malay tributary areas such as Kedah to Thailand (Siam). The Thai army invaded Kedah as the Japanese pushed south.

Kedah’s occupation by Siam in the nineteenth century is known by locals as “Perang Musoh Bisik” (War of whispering enemy), and this incident endures in the tradition and memory of Kedah villagers.

#### **1.4 Influence of Siam in Kedah**

Although Pattani, Kelantan, and Terengganu share similar histories as tributaries of Siam, some unique influences are conspicuous in Kedah.

One such influence is language. Notable examples are Thai place names, like Jitra, Changlun, Naka, and Nami. Moreover, it is said that until the first half

of the twentieth century, about half of the Malay Muslim residents of Kedah understood Thai. In addition, the influence of Siam is also evident in the popularity of the Nakhon Sii Thammarat origin story in local entertainment, Mat Melung's Kedah origin tale, gastronomic culture, etc. Furthermore, Kedah has the largest number of Thai Theravada Buddhist temples in Malaysia, a topic this chapter will revisit.

There are notable differences between the tributary histories of Kedah and Pattani. As mentioned above, Pattani often resisted Siam since the seventeenth century. Pattani was absorbed into Thailand after the treaty of 1909. Subsequently however, the area of the ancient Pattani kingdom was dominated by a Malay Muslim population which spoke the Malay language, observed Islam, and refused Thai education. The history of twentieth century Pattani is one of resistance to assimilation by Thailand. To this day, no lasting solutions have been found to such problems in Thailand's deep south.

In contrast, anti-Siamese sentiment did not develop in Satun (Setul) prefecture, a part of old Kedah on the west coast. In Satun (Setul), many Muslims speak Thai, coexist with Buddhists, and occasionally intermarry (Nishii 1999).

What can explain the difference between Pattani on the east coast and Kedah on the west coast?

## **2 Sources**

Kedah historical sources for this article include Malay language data, Thai historical records, English data, and Chinese texts. Reports of Chinese merchants and the British East India Company describe Kedah from the viewpoint of outsiders. British data is an important source for information on the period after the nineteenth century.

Thai records contain chronicles of Kedah (known as Saiburi), as well as the nearby district country of South Thailand.

The Kedah Sultan's chronicles and warrior tales exist in Malay language data. The Sultan's official documents from the second half of the nineteenth

century are a primary data source.

However, most of the contents of these chronicles are about the politics of Siam and the Sultanate of Kedah, or negotiations with rulers of other Malay countries. Historical records written by or about the ordinary residents of Kedah hardly exist. These sources shed little light on Kedah's self-image and understanding of its own history. In 1909 the governmental structure and borders of modern Kedah were drawn. The question remains, how was pre-1909 Kedah viewed?

I build my answer on my experiences. At an international conference, a Malay scholar almost conclusively said, "Inland (*Bukit*) Kedah where Thai-speakers reside is separate to Kedah, domain of political power." Anderson, the British official who explored Kedah at the beginning of the nineteenth century described Kedah as, "... the country where is land long and slender to 20-km-wide north and south from the seashore, and north spread by Kulim from Lagu [present-day Trang prefecture in Thailand] in south." The accuracy of this description is unconfirmed.

Although the historical domain of Kedah is little researched, ordinary Kedah Malay farmers, when asked about the prominence of Thai Theravada Buddhist temples, will commonly answer, "Because Kedah was Siam once."

Was inland Kedah historically regarded as outside of the jurisdiction of the ruler of Kedah? How, if at all, does it overlap with the bandit area of the 1930s described by Cheah? From these utterances, we may be able to understand how difficult it was for state power to extend inland until Kedah was mapped in 1909. Assuming Kedah centered on the capital Alor Star, this chapter also proposes to describe how the inland residents of Kedah were living.

### **3 Method of Research**

The 1911 British Malaya census has been an invaluable source for investigating historical Kedah. The census is almost the only source of demographic – language, religion, race, birthplace, etc – data on Kedah residents at a county

(*mukim*) level. Data of equivalent detail has not been collected since.

Census data is the primary data source for this chapter. Secondary are analyses of fieldwork interviews, to balance and expand data at the grassroots level. Village investigations intermittently performed by the Kedah government from 1990 to 2009 are also drawn upon. That said, it is difficult to clearly describe circumstances prior to the eighteenth century from these information sources.

However, it should be possible to accurately infer the recognition of history and spatial awareness held by local residents about Kedah.

#### **4 The Conditions of Kedah residents**

Depictions of living conditions in Kedah are drawn from the 1911 census and fieldwork from the 1990s onwards.

The 1911 census was conducted almost immediately after Kedah joined British Malaya in 1909. The census captures Kedah before nation-statehood. One unique feature of this census is further classification of Malays into sub-races. Later censuses abandoned this practice. Sub-races included Samsam, Jawa, and Aceh. By analysis in my former paper, they are what British investigators in the nineteenth century called Thai-speaking Muslims. As for Samsam, it has become clear that they correspond with the contemporary Samsam people of the district. Samsam also existed in the 1990s as Thai-speakers. Marriages took place in Samsam villages almost until the 1960s (Kuroda 1992). Their village is at an important halfway point. The significance of Samsam existence is detailed later<sup>3</sup>.

Kedah's population in 1911 was 241,764 persons. The Malay population of 194,814 (including Samsam) comprised an 80% overwhelming majority. Secondary races were: Chinese, 13% and 33,501 persons, Siamese, 3% and 8,039 persons, and Indians were 2% for 5,410 persons.

When place of residence is correlated with population density and habitation distribution, an interesting result is revealed below.

#### 4.1 Malay Population Density and Habitation

Map 2 shows Malay population density and habitation distribution concentrating in Alor Star and its surroundings at altitudes of three to fifteen meters; seashore and partial flat bog. This lowland is mostly paddies, and spreads twenty kilometers from the seashore in the shape of a belt. This twenty kilometer beltlike zone spreads to the boundary of Wellesley province, Penang. The oldest village in this lowland area is aligned with the foot of a limestone hill rising high over flat bog. It is thought that the rice crop of this area grew in Malay-type rain-fed paddy fields (*sawa padi Melayu*) planted in flat bog (*paya*). The Sultanate of Kedah commissioned canals running parallel with the coast in the seventeenth to nineteenth century. (Kuchiba, Tsubouchi, Maeda (eds) 1976: 30) Newer villages are aligned with the canals<sup>4</sup>.

The concentration of Malay Muslims in the lowland areas indicates that the Sultan of Kedah's influence was strongest there. Former Sultanate capitals, such as Kota Siputih and Kota Naga, were also located in the lowland.

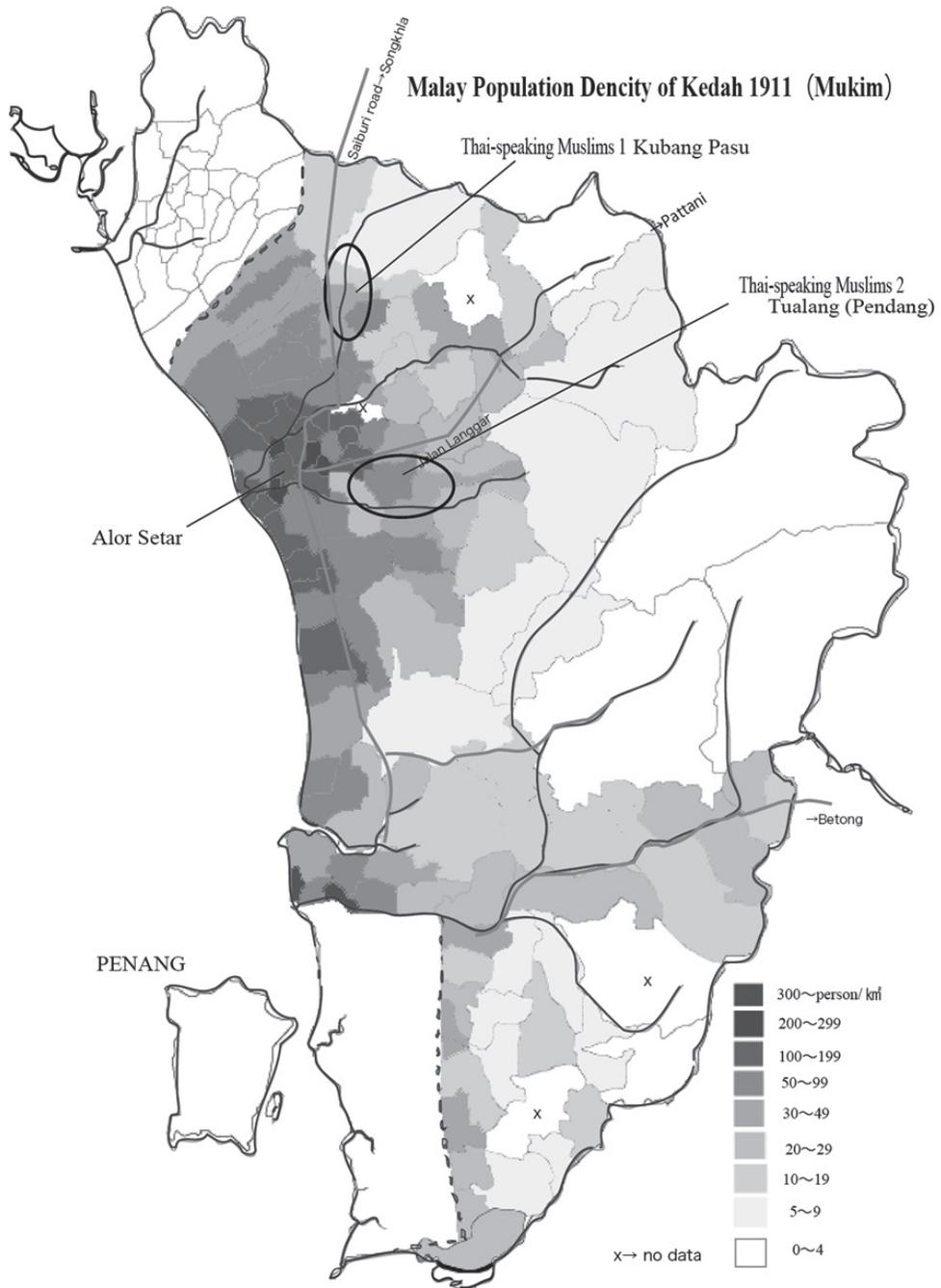
Furthermore, old *pondoks* also concentrate in this area. The *pondok* is the base of Islamic education. Kedah has produced a large number of Islamic intellectuals (*ulama*) and their books are still used in *pondoks*, even in Pattani. This coastal area is also dotted with *pondoks* in which prominent *ulamas* lived. Distribution of these *pondoks* also concentrated on this coastal area (Haji Sayed 1996: 199)

As mentioned above, it is thought that the lowlands surrounding Alor Star was the center of Kedah's politics, knowledge, and production. The description of Kedah by Anderson in 1824 is similar<sup>5</sup>.

#### 4.2 Thai-speakers

Thai speakers – who use Thai as their mother tongue – are few in number but historically significant in inland Kedah. Many Kedah locales bear names of Thai origin, indicating an ongoing Siamese influence.

The Thai-speakers of Kedah are known as the Samsam and the Siamese.



Map 2

The Samsam are Thai-speaking Muslims. The Siamese distinguishes themselves from residents in Thailand and do not call themselves Thais, instead calling themselves *Khon Siam* or *Orang Siam*. They are *Bumiputras* of Malaysia.

#### 4.2.1 Samsam: Thai-speaking Muslims

Thai-speaking Muslims, or Samsam, are described as such in censuses or Kedah annual reports. However, the census does not count them separately from other Malay Muslims and so neither the population density of the Samsam or their habitation distribution can be extracted from censuses. However, we can find some information in a 1930 Abdul Rahman essay (Rahman 1978: 24), and additional information on the Samsam in Archaimbault's work (Archaimbault 1957).

Before the 1950s, the Samsam image was one of impious Muslims. For example, a young Samsam would convert to Buddhism to take a Buddhist bride, with local Imams unable to dissuade him.

Samsam names are often found in offender records, listed as cattle rustlers or burglars. They were also trans-border people. Moreover, Samsams are known as Siam-friendly, and often participated in Buddhist events. They also enjoyed Thai entertainments like shadow picture plays (*wayang kulit*). Ason, famous for its *wayang kulit* performances, is a Kedah Samsam village.

In the 1990s, I conducted interviews in the search for such Thai-speaking Muslim villages (Kuroda 1991).

Generally, Thai-speaking Muslims converse daily in the South Thai dialect but are illiterate in Thai. By the 1990s, Thai as an everyday language was the only Siamese cultural element left. This seemed to result from their dislike of being labelled "impious Muslims." Exchange with neighboring Siamese had also ceased. The generation who received Malay language schooling after the 1960s are bilingual. However, younger generations are finding it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to maintain their Thai language.

It can be surmised that the Thai language was preserved in the older generation by frequent inter-marriage between Samsam and other Thai-speaking vil-

lages. There were about ten villages of Thai-speaking Muslims in this area in the 1990s.

My investigation revealed two areas in which Kedah Samsam live in concentrated communities. One is Kubang Pasu in northern Kedah, which has villages along the Saiburi road known as an important trade way from Alor Star to Songkhla in South Thailand. According to interviews, residents emigrated about 200 years ago from South Thailand. They made paddies by a riverside basin between thirty-five meter high mountains and rubber plantations. A historically significant local leader (*penfulu besar*), influential figure, and elephant owner called Tok Nai Sin is reported to have conveyed cargo between Kedah and Siam.

Another Samsam area is the inland of central Kedah. It is set by the riverside of a basin between mountains, beside an old highway which goes from Alor Star through Kuala Nerang to Pattani across hills and mountains. The Samsam of this area are also paddy farmers, but do not know the migration tradition of their villages, and I surmise from this that the villages were established so long ago that the knowledge was lost. About fifteen Samsam villages exist on a strata following the Kedah river at an altitude of thirty five meters. Many Siamese villages also exist in this area. An old Samsam *wayang* performer from Kg. Nawa reported that a Buddhist temple was located in the village in the 1930s, and that there was also exchange with neighboring Samsam and Siamese villages (interview of Awang bin Isa, 65 years of age in 1992 August, at Kg. Nawa.)

These two areas are located in inland Kedah, known by mainly coastal dwelling Kedah Muslims as “*bukit*”, which also carries the connotation of a remote district. Seen geographically, *bukit* is hinterland beyond twenty kilometers from the shoreline. At these higher altitudes, orchards and rubber forests appear in addition to paddy fields. Kuala Nerang and Baling are typical *bukit* towns. The eastern mountainous area is connected with the Thai border. The Samsam that dwell there are seen from the viewpoint of the coastal residents as inland people<sup>6</sup>.

#### 4.2.2 Siamese: Habitation Distribution of Thai Theravada Buddhist

The 1911 census also revealed a Siamese population of 2%, with 80% born in Kedah. However, their population density and habitation distribution is in direct contrast with their Malay neighbors. Map 3 shows concentrations of Siamese in a few counties (*mukim*) like Pdg. Peliang, Pdg. Kerbau, and Tekai. A high population density of Siamese is also seen in urban areas, such as Alor Star and Baling. Siamese areas include the inland swamp of the Pendang district, and along the Muda river. These villages are located in areas with an altitude of thirty-five to forty-seven meters; inland areas known to Kedah Malays as “*bukit*”. Kedah Siamese are mostly inland people except for the small number living in cities.

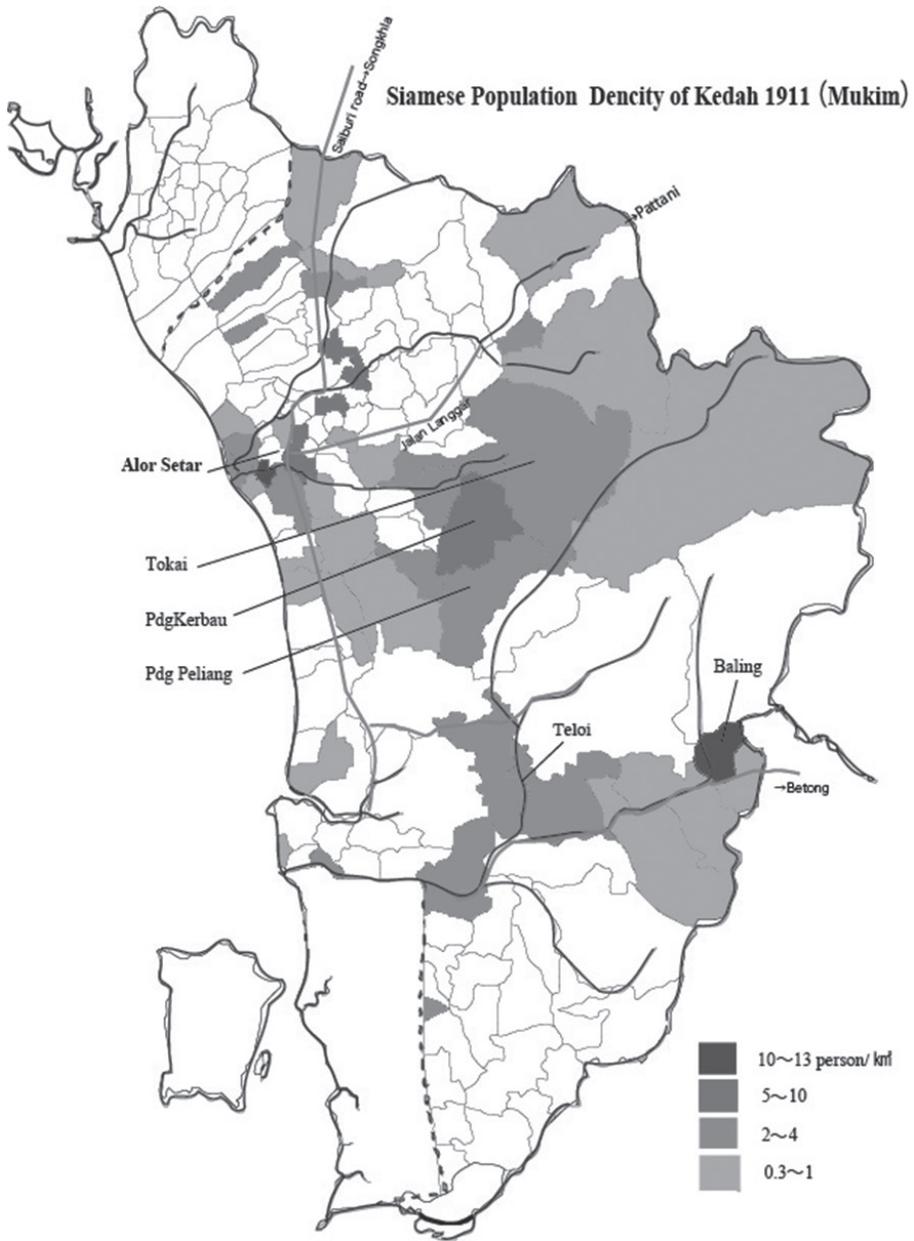
Records of Buddhist temples are also indicators of Siamese habitation distribution. Siamese who are Theravada Buddhists need a temple near the village since the temple is a mental ground for Buddhists. Moreover, Thai temple priests depend on their local Buddhist communities for daily commodities, such as food. Therefore, Thai temples are usually established near Siamese villages.

However, there are no records of Kedah temples in Thai or Malay chronicles. The oldest records date from 1890 and 1892 and are among the official documents of the then Sultan of Kedah<sup>7</sup>.

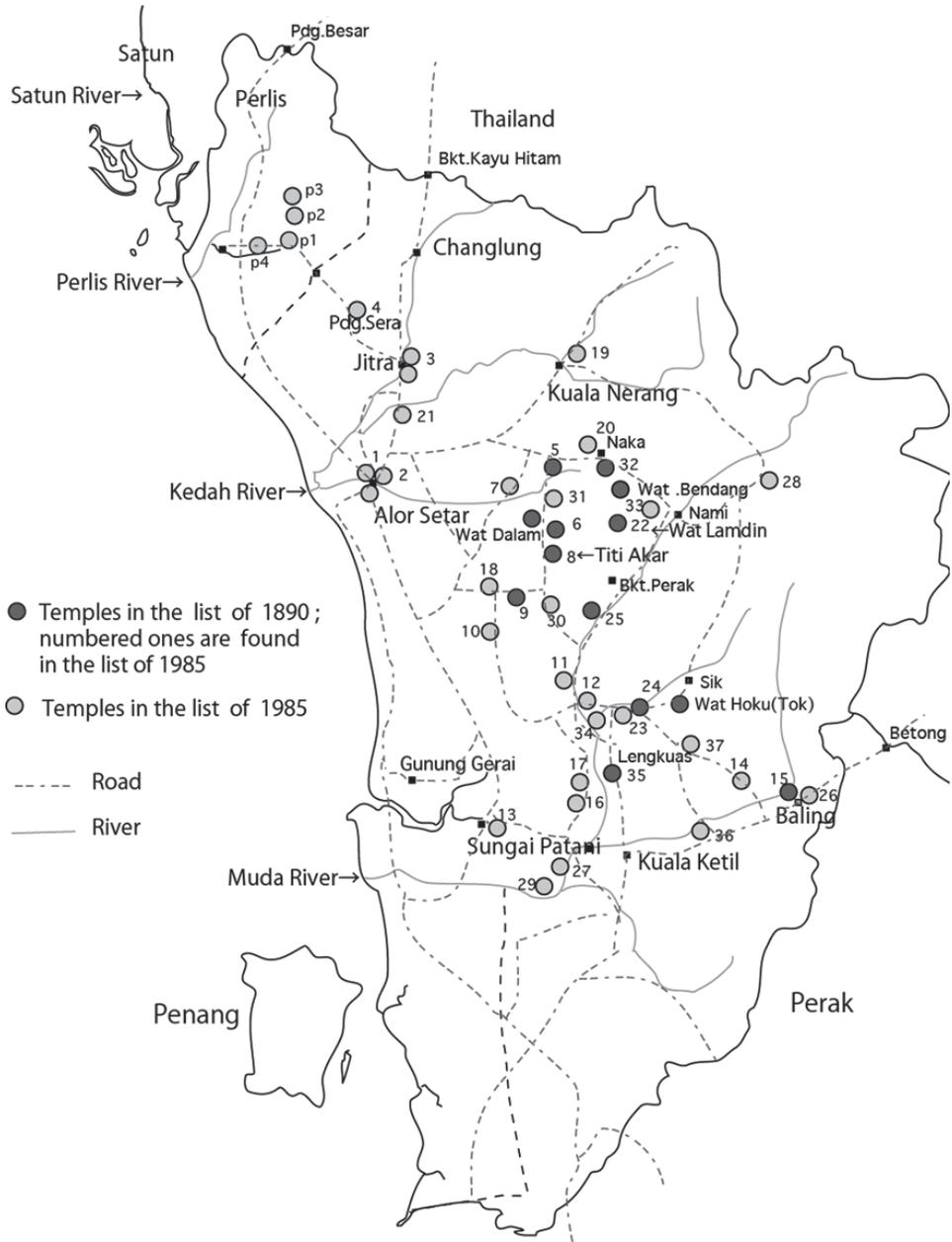
The documents stem from an investigation by the Siamese government and list thirteen temples and eighty-six priests. Although six temples are listed in Pdg. Kerbau, Pendang, the highest number of priests – twenty-two – are listed in Wat Lamdin temple, Tekai. Hence we can surmise that the largest Siamese communities were at Padang Peliang, Padang Kerbau in Pendang district, and Tekai in Padang Trap district (see Map 4) (National Archives of Kedah 1890)

Forty-two Thai temples are listed in 1985 records (Wat Bodhiyarram 1985), and the number had not changed by the time of the writer’s investigation in 2007 - 2009. The number of temples increased from 1890 to modern day because Thai villages without temples established them and invited priests. Additionally, some Thai temples have collected enough contributions to perform restoration.

In my 2007 – 2009 investigation, I checked the exact location of Kedah Thai



Map 3



Map 4 Thai Temples in Kedah and Perlis in 1890, 1985

temples and villages. I noted that Siamese settlements are largely found in the Muda River valley, flowing from the watershed with the Pattani River and the Muda. The Muda River meanders through southern Kedah before discharging into the Strait of Malacca. Siamese villages and their temples often face the river and are rumored to have used river traffic until the 1950s, with the Muda River being the main river traffic route to inland Kedah. The 1890 list also documents a temple lower down the Muda valley, in Baling district.

Wat Lamdin, the biggest temple in 1890, unfortunately burned down in 1952. It was rebuilt later, but all documents in connection with the temple's origin were lost in the fire.

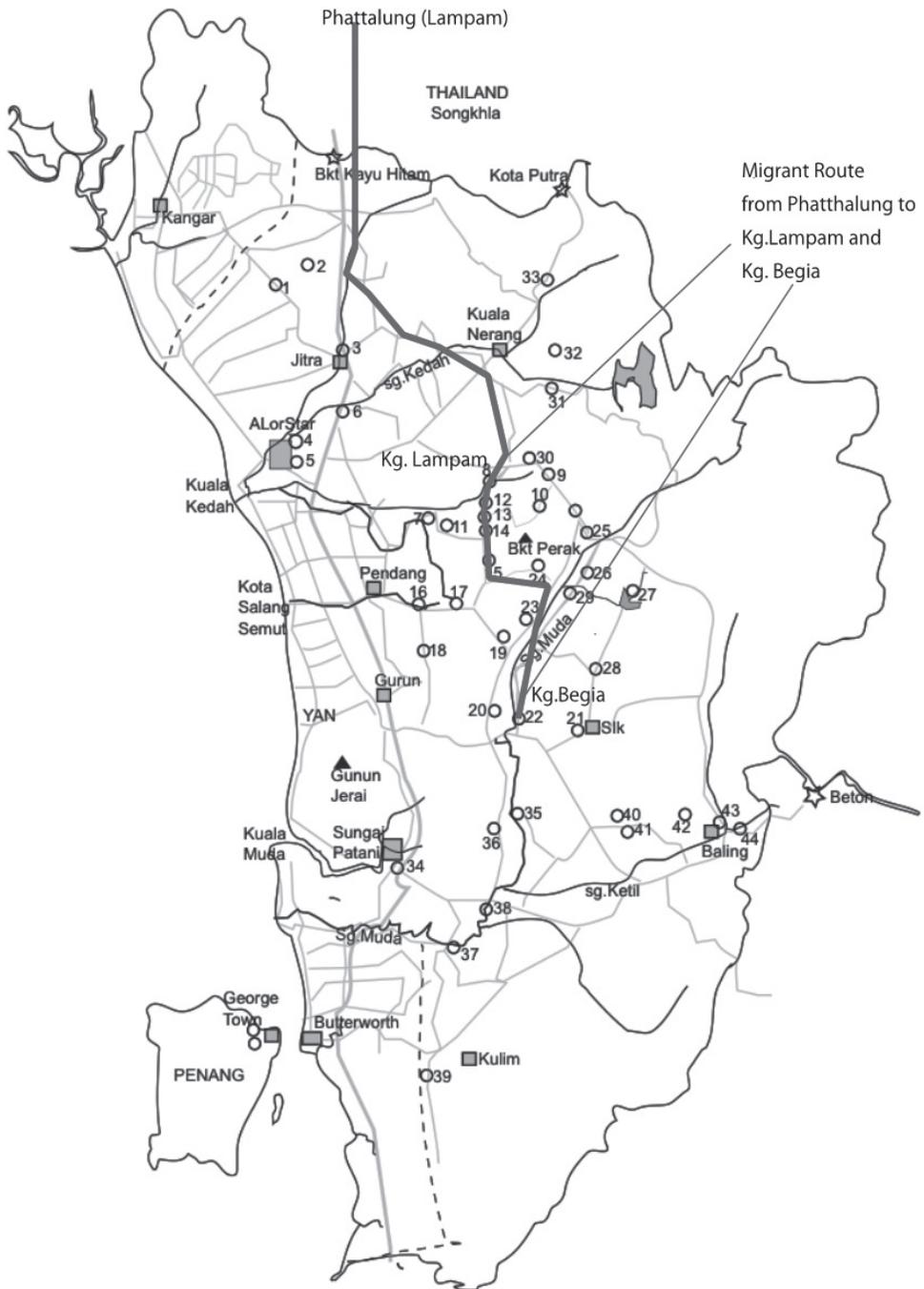
Wat Titi Akar temple has the largest supporting Siamese population, according to old records. The temple, and its traditions, are reported to be over 500 years old.

Moreover, in Wat Kura a monument was built in recent years to mark a 300 year old temple foundation. A Siamese temple and population concentrate in Pdg Peliang and Pdg Kerbau, a relatively large basin surrounded by hills at an altitude of thirty-seven meters. Answers to questions about the origins of area temples over 200 years old are unclear.

Palmyra Palm is a feature unique to Siamese villages. When I visited Titi Akar in 1988, I found Palmyra Palms installed with a bamboo pipe for extracting sap. The Palmyra Palm sap is boiled to be used as sugar, or fermented into a local alcoholic drink for private consumption, like coconut palms.

Paddy fields in this area use gravity irrigation<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, the waterways were built by local residents without government support. These paddies use a river terrace system often seen in Siam (Dr. Sakurai pointed this out in 2009 after observing it at Kg. Titi Akar).

Kedah Thai temples are not restricted by Sangha law, unlike those in Thailand, and so have unique characteristics. For instance, priests do not make journeys of religious mendicancy. Villagers bring foods or food is cooked in the temple, sometimes by roster. Chinese pilgrims often visit with rice, oil, and dishes for



Map 5 Kedah Thai Temples in 2009, migration routes, Kg. Lampam and Kg. Begia

**Table 1 List of Thai Temples in Map 5 (Daerah)**

1	Wat Padang Sera (Wat Lelee)	Kubang Pas	24	Wat Sungai Siput	Sik
2	Wat Gua Napai	Kubang Pas	25	Wat Sungai kap	Sik
3	Wat Sungai Bahru	Kubang Pas	26	Wat Kubang Kesom	Sik
4	Wat Bakar Bata	Kota Star	27	Wat Simpang Tiga	Sik
5	Wat Telok Wanja	Kota Star	28	Wat Kg Cong	Sik
6	Wat Bukit Pinang	Kota Star	29	Wat Kuala Beris	Sik
7	Wat Senara	Pendang	30	Wat Naka	Padang Trap
8	Wat Lampam	Pendang	31	Wat Pedu (Wat Tangjong)	Padang Trap
9	Wat Chang Deen	Pendang	32	Wat Tanah Merah	Padang Trap
10	Wat Lamdin	Pendang	33	Wat Baru Padang Senai	Padang Trap
11	Wat Nangka Siam	Pendang	34	Wat Kg Raja	Sungai Patani
12	Wat Nanai	Pendang	35	Wat Lengkas	Sungai Patani
13	Wat Kg Cina (Pdg Kerbau)	Pendang	36	Wat Bukit Selembau	Sungai Patani
14	Wat Tong Phru	Pendang	37	Wat Tramadu (Oramadu)	Sungai Patani
15	Wat Titi Akar (Palee lamai)	Pendang	38	Wat Tanah Lichin	Sungai Patani
16	Wat Pdg Pusing	Pendang	39	Wat Kulim	Kulim
17	Wat Pdg Peliang	Pendang	40	Wat Kg Tas	Baling
18	Wat Mak Inson (Maisong)	Pendang	41	Wat Pagang	Baling
19	Wat Bkt Perak	Pendang	42	Wat Sirako	Baling
20	Wat Kalai	Sik	43	Wat Baling Nok (Paleelai)	Baling
21	Wat Cherok Pdg	Sik	44	Wat Baling Nai (Simpang Umpat)	Baling
22	Wat Begia	Sik			
23	Wat Kura	Sik			

charity, a practice known as “Tham Bun”.

Where did the Siamese come from?

In the early nineteenth century, Topping reported that numerous refugees from Pattani fled from war and settled in the Muda River valley (Topping 1850).

In my paper of 2002, I speculated that these Siamese were offspring of the migrants from Pattani. However, evidence to the contrary was observed during my investigation in 2009. Siamese villagers of Kg. Lampan who attend the local temple, Wat Lampan, say that their ancestors originated from Lampan in Phatthalung, South Thailand, and named their new village 'Lampan'. The reason often given for migration is '*haa naa dii*' - looking for good paddy sites - and is common to villages formed by the migration of farmers from the Phatthalung and Songkhla areas of South Thailand. Furthermore, this is supported by Palmyra Palm being seen only around Siamese villages. Palmyra Palm, plentiful in Phatthalung, is thought to have been brought to Kedah by migrants.

Phatthalung, beside Songkhla lake, is in the current rice-growing belt of South Thailand. The north borders Nakhon Sii Thammarat, founded on Buddhism. Moreover, Sathingpura to the east of a lake contain many Ayutthaya era Buddhist temple ruins. In the eighteenth century, the Muslim ruler living to the west of the lake converted to Buddhism. In Phatthalung, Thai Muslim and Thai Buddhist villages mix and co-exist.

British officials in the 1820s report that farmers in Nakhon Sii Thammarat and Phatthalung seemed to have abandoned their land and emigrated south in the nineteenth century due to Burmese attack and disease (Kuroda 1999).

In the migration history of Kg. Begia, migrants to Kedah from various places in South Thailand reached Pdg Kerbau first. However, it is said that since there were already indigenous people in the area, e.g. Malay, they continued south and settled at higher altitudes in South Kedah in deference to their new Malay neighbors. They named their village 'Kg Bahagia' (Happiness), later changed to Kg Begia. The village was based not around paddy fields, but local trade (Ab Hassan, D. 1976).

As mentioned above, the Samsam Thai-speakers of Kedah are believed to be descendants of Siamese from Southern Thailand who have been migrating south for over 300 years. These migrants avoided the Malay Muslim areas along the Kedah shoreline and settled in the more mountainous inland. The inland

world of South Thai migrants is recognized differently to the world of the Malay Sultanate on the coast.

## 5 Conclusion

The center of Sultanate-controlled Kedah was a port-polity set on a river in coastal lowlands. Kedah traded rice from paddy fields in a flat bogs, and articles between the Indian Ocean, the Malacca Strait, and the Gulf of Thailand by ships and overland routes. Kedah also traded in sea products from among the islands off the west limestone coast between Satun and Trang. Penang became important for Kedah when the British East India Company built a base at Penang on what was once Kedah territory.

Malay Muslims, a majority in Kedah, were residents of this coastal area, and mainly rice farmers. The Kedah government focused on developing canals along the shore, with little concern for the inland. Public order in the hinterland (*bukit*) beyond twenty kilometers from the sea was not able to be maintained by Kedah's constabulary until the 1950s.

Malay Muslims residing in the inland (*bukit*) villages of Kedah are mixed with Samsam and Siamese Thai-speakers. It is difficult to date Siamese migration due to the paucity of historical data from before the nineteenth century. However, considering the traditions of some Thai temples, gradual migration of farmers from South Thailand likely occurred in the second half of the Ayutthaya kingdom around 300 years ago. In the nineteenth century, the primary reason for migrating was '*haa naa dii*', with war and disease among other reasons.

Migrant villages maintain traditions similar to those in Pattani and Phattalung. However, the Phatthalung area is a more likely source of migration than Pattani, because Pattani has a strong history of Malay speakers.

Thai speakers had difficulty communicating with Malays, and like Samsam, prized marriages to other Thai speakers. Such exchanges between Thai-speaking Muslims and Siamese Buddhists into first half of the twentieth century have been recorded.

From above, we see that Thai-speaking communities is a characteristic of migrants from South Thailand to inland Kedah. These scattered colonies of Thai speakers resembles present-day South Thailand between Phatthalung and Satun (Setul).

In conclusion, the central Malay Peninsula is a world where a Malay Sultan port city spread influence to the west coast along the shore, and Thai-speaking farmers (South Thai Muslim and Siamese) emigrated south over land to inland Kedah.

## Addendum

This section covers inland Kedah's Siamese villages in the present.

Many villages have depopulated over the last several years. Villagers report a lack of traffic to be the reason that many villagers have left.

Siamese residents now marry Chinese, their unions made possible through shared (Buddhist) religion. Siamese-Chinese descendants are especially conspicuous in larger cities. Politically, the Siamese have been dormant. In recent years their opinions have manifested in support of the UMNO party.

Finally, although the Kedah Thai temples are affiliated with Sangha Buddhism, as in Thailand, the same strict rules are not enforced. Maintenance of temples and priests are performed through relations with temples in Thailand.

## Notes

- 1 In this chapter, "Inland People" do not include Orang Asli (Semang); indigenous hill-top residents.
- 2 Pattani often refused demands from Siam, and was attacked repeatedly by Siam since the seventeenth century.
- 3 Although the classifications of localities in this census is almost identical to the present census, present-day Pendang includes Alor Star. In this analysis, Alor Star is separate, and Pendang is reconstituted at the *mukim* (county) level.
- 4 Traditional rice cropping techniques can no longer be seen in Kedah due to use of heavy cropping machines in paddy cultivation since the 1960s (Kuroda 1992).

- 5 The Chinese situation will not be detailed in this chapter. That said, Chinese and Malay areas mostly overlap. Chinese are most prominent in the rice-cleaning paddy areas, in merchants' townhouses in urban areas such as Alor Star and Sungai Petani, and in the areas near Penang state.
- 6 My impression during my 1990s investigation was that the Samsam are gradually becoming "serious Muslims." There was a tendency to prefer being referred to as 'Malay Muslim' instead of 'Samsam'. There was also social pressure to cease non-Islamic events and customs. The Samsam village also promoted greater exchange with Malay-speaking Muslim areas to the point where they have become indistinguishable in recent years. As of 2009, only the "old man" spoke Thai.
- 7 Lists of Siamese temples and monks in Kedah and Perlis in 1890 are a valuable source of information. The oldest official records I discovered for Thai-speaking Buddhists are lists of Siamese temples and registered monks in Kedah and Perlis in 1890, and 1892 (National Archives of Kedah 1992). These lists are included in the collected letters and documents of Sultan Abdul Hamid of Kedah. The original lists are written in the Malay language with Jawi script.
- 8 Gravity irrigation uses the vertical interval of geographical features and inclines in the land to distribute water by gravity. (Hoshikawa K. 2009 : 566)

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