The Native Policies of Sir Stamford Raffles in Java and Sumatra

An Economic Interpretation

JOHN BASTIN

THE NATIVE POLICIES OF SIR STAMFORD RAFFLES IN JAVA AND SUMATRA

An Economic Interpretation

BY

JOHN BASTIN

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
1957

THE NATIVE POLICIES OF SIR STAMFORD RAFFLES IN JAVA AND SUMATRA

Oxford University Press, Amen House, London E.C.4

GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON

BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS KARACHI

CAPE TOWN IBADAN NAIROBI ACCRA SINGAPORE

TO

MY WIFE

PREFACE

THIS study attempts to steer a path through the voluminous Dutch and English literature on Raffles by considering him not as an empire builder but as a colonial administrator.[1] It is not, however, a definitive account of his administrations, but simply an economic interpretation of the policies which he pursued towards the native peoples in Java and Sumatra.

The book owes much to the wise and patient guidance of Professor V. T. Harlow of Oxford University, and to the pertinent and friendly criticism of Sir Richard Winstedt and Professor C. H. Philips of London University. Professor Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas of Utrecht University, Dr. P. Voorhoeve of Leiden University, Dr. H. R. C. Wright of Witwatersrand University, and Dr. K. S. Inglis of Adelaide University have read the typescript in whole or in part, and have made a number of valuable suggestions which have been incorporated into the text. They are, of course, in no way responsible for any errors which may remain.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Harlow, Professor Coolhaas, and the late Professor Dr. J. H. Boeke, who warmly encouraged my excursions into the fields of British and Dutch colonial history, and to the late C. E. Wurtzburg, who with characteristic unselfishness gave me permission to use his Raffles material.

I also offer my thanks to the Trustees of the Australian Services Canteens Trust Fund; to the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Arts, and Sciences; and to the Oxford Beit Trustees, who made my study at Leiden and Oxford possible, and to the various officials in England and the Netherlands who facilitated my research in the libraries and archives.

[1] Personal details of Raffles' life can be found in the many English biographies: Lady S. Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* . . . (London, 1830); D. C. Boulger, *The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles* (London, 1899); H. E. Egerton, *Sir Stamford Raffles* (London, 1900); R. Coupland, *Raffles of Singapore* (London, 1946); E. Hahn, *Raffles of Singapore* (London, 1948); C. E. Wurtzburg, *Raffles of the Eastern Isles* (London, 1954).

In order to secure some consistency in the spelling of native titles and geographical places, I have adopted Dutch usage wherever this would not lead to unnecessary confusion. For convenience, however, a number of place-names in the Indonesian Archipelago have been left in their Anglicized form, and the plurals of native words have all been Anglicized; thus *bekels* instead of *bekel*'s, *sawahs* instead of *sawah*'s, and so on.

Several monetary terms other than sterling have been employed—Spanish dollars or dollars, Rijksdaalders or Rix dollars, Java rupees, and Madras rupees or rupees. Generally speaking, a Spanish dollar may be regarded as the equivalent of five English shillings, a Java rupee as half a crown, a Rix dollar as three shillings and eightpence, and a Madras rupee as two shillings.[1]

Weights and measures are more difficult to standardize. A *kati* was equal to about $1\frac{1}{4}$ avoirdupois pounds, and 100 *katis* made a *pikol* of 125 Dutch pounds, or $133\frac{1}{3}$ English pounds. The Dutch *koyan* was 3,400 pounds, and was considered equal to a *last*, or two tons. For further information on weights and measures in Java reference should be made to Raffles, *History of Java* (London, 1830), ii, App. M, and to the article 'Maten en Gewichten' in *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, ii, pp. 684–8. The weight most commonly employed on the West Coast of Sumatra was the *bahar*, which varied between 360 and 600 pounds. A *bambu* was a native measure equivalent to 3 pounds 10 ounces avoirdupois. For other weights and measures used on the West Coast of Sumatra the reader should consult W. Milburn, *Oriental Commerce* (London, 1825), pp. 356 ff.

J. B.

Department of Pacific History,
The Australian National University, Canberra

[1] See the article 'Muntwezen' in *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* (The Hague–Leiden, 1917–39), ii, pp. 793–811.

ABBREVIATIONS

Add. MSS.	Additional Manuscripts, British Museum, London.
Bengal Civil Col. Cons.	*Bengal Civil Colonial Consultations*, India Office Library, London.
Bengal Political Cons.	*Bengal Political Consultations*, India Office Library, London.
Bengal Public Cons.	*Bengal Public Consultations*, India Office Library, London.
Bijd. T.L.V.	*Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* (The Hague).
Ency. N.-I.	*Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* (The Hague–Leiden, 1895–1905), 4 vols. Second edition (The Hague–Leiden, 1917–39), 4 vols.+4 supplementary vols. All references are to the second edition unless otherwise indicated.
Gillespie Charges	An untitled volume of documents relating to the charges preferred by Major-General R. Gillespie against Raffles' administration in Java. The volume was printed privately at Batavia in 1815.
Java Military Cons.	*Java Military Consultations*, India Office Library, London.
Java Public Cons.	*Java Public Consultations*, India Office Library, London.
Java F.R.	*Java Factory Records*, India Office Library, London.
J.M.B.R.A.S.	*Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society* (Singapore).
Mack. Coll. (Pr.)	*Mackenzie Collection (Private)*, India Office Library, London.
Rijksarchief	Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague.
Sumatra F.R.	*Sumatra Factory Records*, India Office Library, London.
Tijd. Bat. Gen.	*Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde* (Batavia).
Tijd. N.I.	*Tijdschrift voor Neerland's (Nederlandsch)-Indië* (Batavia).
Verh. Bat. Gen.	*Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (Batavia).
Verh. T.L.V.	*Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* (The Hague).

INTRODUCTION

It is ironical that such a violent Holland-hater as Raffles should hold a more important place in Dutch than in British colonial history. In his own country he is thought of as the founder of Singapore, and his name tends to be lost amid the galaxy of other heroes of empire. In Dutch history, on the other hand, he is remembered as a colonial governor, who during five crucial years (1811–16) guided the fortunes of Java and its dependencies, and attempted a reform in the administration of the country which amounted to a revolution. Raffles was important in the development of Dutch colonial policy because he enunciated the principle of native welfare, because his land rent system laid the foundation for the introduction of money into the closed native economy, because he discovered that the Javanese village was a useful administrative unit, and because he pursued Daendels' ideal of incorporating the native chiefs into the machinery of government. But whereas Raffles favoured a system of direct rule, the Dutch both before and after his time have, in theory at least, aimed at indirect rule.

The essential difference between Raffles' and Dutch policies in this respect was largely determined by the economic situation in Europe. While Raffles regarded Java as a colony of revenue and a potential market for the consumption of British manufactures, the Dutch had nothing to sell, and therefore considered the island only as a producer of export crops. They simply bound the chiefs to deliver the requisite amounts of coffee, pepper, rice, and indigo, and left it to them to conduct the administration of the country. Indirect rule through native chieftains was the simplest and most economical way that the Dutch could achieve their ends. But Raffles, who wanted to create the circulation of money in Java, aimed at breaking down the whole indigenous 'feudal' structure and bringing the people into direct contact with the parental spring of western economic prosperity.

The economic factor is very important in considering the

evolution of a system of native administration, for the formulation of colonial policy depends not so much upon any philosophy of empire, as upon the economic and social conditions which exist in the colonial field, and upon the economic relationship between the colony and the metropolitan power.[1] For this reason it is necessary to go beyond Miss M. Perham's view that the system of indirect rule was the characteristic reaction of the British to the political problems of Africa, since it omits what was also characteristically Dutch.[2]

At the same time, the importance of the economic factor in determining Raffles' policies in Java and West Sumatra should not obscure the fact that many of his reforms were prompted by sincere humanitarian motives. However different were the systems of native government evolved during the course of his administrations the aim was essentially the same —that of improving the condition of the people committed to his charge. For above all Raffles was a product of the late-eighteenth-century humanitarian movement, which had found its inspiration in the writings of Rousseau and in the myth of the 'noble savage'. He grew to manhood during the period of the onslaught on the slave trade, and he entered the service of the East India Company in the same year that saw the close of the protracted trial of Warren Hastings, an event which was not only the high-water mark of the state's intervention in Indian affairs, but which was also responsible for familiarizing the British nation with the doctrine of trusteeship.[3]

The humanitarian movement owed much to Rousseau's teachings concerning the perfectibility of human nature and the brotherhood of man. So far as they affected colonial policy these beliefs favoured direct contact with the mass of the people, and provoked bitter criticism of the native aristocracy. But Raffles also lived in an authoritarian age, and the failure of representative institutions in America, together with the fact that many colonies of non-British stock were falling under

[1] J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 8–9, 276–7, 284.

[2] M. Perham, 'A Re-Statement of Indirect Rule', *Africa*, vii (1934), 332.

[3] G. R. Mellor, *British Imperial Trusteeship, 1783–1850* (London, 1951), p. 23.

British control, meant that in colonial practice a considerable stimulus was given to the concept of benevolent autocracy.

Raffles was deeply imbued with this idea. His aim was to rule in the interest of the peasantry, and he was firmly convinced that an enlightened western government dealing directly with the mass of the population could achieve rapid economic and social progress. He pursued this policy in Java where he attempted to introduce a money economy and a system of direct rule by reducing the powers of the chiefs in the administration of the country. On the West Coast of Sumatra, on the other hand, after a futile attempt to introduce similar reforms, he concluded that it was best to leave the people under the authority of their own rulers. Thus on the surface there appears a basic conflict in his policies between emancipating the peasantry from their traditional allegiances, and supporting the native aristocracy, or, in Raffles' words, between the doctrine of the 'individual rights of man' and 'despotism'.[1] It is fruitless attempting to explain this difference of policy in terms of a change in Raffles' basic humanitarian outlook. The reasons for the change must, in fact, be sought in the different social and economic conditions which he found in the two colonies.

Because Raffles did not dismiss the native chiefs in Java out of hand, but gave them minor posts in the administration, and because he increased the influence of the chiefs in West Sumatra and attempted to enlarge the powers of the independent chiefs in the Archipelago in order to prevent lawlessness and piracy, it has been possible for some observers to see in Raffles' policies ideas which were applied in British native administration in Fiji, Malaya, and Africa later in the century. But the use of native authorities in a colonial government, although it lies at the root of the theory of indirect rule, is not in itself a valid test for the theory as it was propounded later.[2] The real meaning of indirect rule cannot be explained in the phrase 'Find the chief'. 'It consists',

[1] Raffles to Murdoch, 22 July 1820, Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. 463.

[2] J. D. Legge, 'British Policy towards Fiji, 1858–80, with special reference to the evolution, under Sir Arthur Gordon, of Indirect Rule as a theory and technique for the government of a Native People', unpublished D.Phil. dissertation, 1953, Rhodes House Library, Oxford, p. 277.

writes Miss L. Mair, 'in an understanding of the structure of native society and the inter-relation of its parts, which precludes the possibility of assuming that it can be suddenly modernized from the outside'.[1] The essence of the theory is that it does not seek to impose western values upon a primitive society.[2]

If this is the fundamental criterion of indirect rule, then it is clear that Raffles' system of native administration was very different from the system as it evolved in Malaya and Africa. For although there were occasions when he realized that some of the indigenous societies in the Archipelago needed protection against harmful western influences,[3] he nevertheless laid plans for opening up the whole of Indonesia to European commercial enterprise. In Java, moreover, he went much further by undermining the powers of the chiefs, and by establishing favourable conditions for the penetration of western economic and political influence to the very core of Javanese society.

It is therefore curious that those who have seen Raffles as a pioneer in the evolution of the concept of indirect rule have come to their conclusions after studying his administration of Java. Men like Sir Frank Swettenham, Sir Hugh Low, and Sir Hugh Clifford, who helped to build up the system of native administration in the Malay States during the last decades of the nineteenth century, all believed that in pursuing a policy of indirect rule they were following along a path already blazed by Raffles in Java. The result has been that whereas in Malaya Raffles is thought of as the founder of the tradition of indirect rule,[4] in Java he is quite rightly regarded as an exponent of the principles of direct rule. The misconception that occurred in Malaya was due partly to an uncritical acceptance of Raffles' statements that he based his reforms on Javanese institutions, partly to a misunderstand-

[1] L. P. Mair, *Native Policies in Africa* (London, 1936), p. 15.

[2] Legge, op. cit., p. 225.

[3] Cf. his views on the subject of incorporating the principalities in Java under western rule. M. L. van Deventer, *Het Nederlandsch Gezag over Java en Onderhoorigheden sedert 1811* (The Hague, 1891), i, pp. 11–12.

[4] Sir Richard Winstedt in conversation agrees that the early Residents in Malaya misunderstood Raffles' native policy in Java.

ing of the reforms themselves, and partly to a mistaken view that Raffles' 'respect' for indigenous customs was something new in British native administration. The idea was, in fact, quite old.

From the first tentative interference in native affairs in India, the British had attempted to maintain intact as far as possible indigenous institutions. 'We have endeavoured', Warren Hastings wrote to the Directors in November 1772 after outlining the new revenue regulations for the protection of the *ryots* in Bengal, 'to adapt our Regulations to the Manners and Understanding of the People, and Exegencies [*sic*] of the Country, adhering, as closely as We were able, to their Antient Usages and Institutions'.[1] Two years later, he met the proposal to replace Indian laws by something new with the eloquent plea that it 'would be a grievance to deprive the people of the protection of their own laws, but it would be a wanton tyranny to require their obedience to others of which they are wholly ignorant, and of which they have no possible means of acquiring a knowledge'.[2]

This policy of non-interference with local institutions was adopted, as by Lord Lugard in Nigeria later, from motives of expediency, for it was impossible for a handful of English merchants to control the intricacies of the Mughal administration. But, as also in Lugard's case, expediency and principle soon became fused together, as a number of writers gave the policy a philosophical foundation. Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des Lois* (1748) demonstrated the fact that laws and institutions depended upon physical and climatic conditions, and this bred a feeling of tolerance towards alien customs which was reinforced by contemporary naturalistic beliefs, fostered by the writings of Rousseau and Raynal, that happiness was to be found only in non-western societies. As happiness was the goal of colonial policy at the end of the eighteenth century,[3] in much the same way as welfare is today, these

[1] G. W. Forrest, *Selections from the State Papers of . . . Warren Hastings* (London, 1910), ii, App. A, p. 277.

[2] Hastings to Mansfield, 21 March 1774, A. B. Keith, *Speeches & Documents on Indian Policy 1750–1921* (Oxford, 1922), i, p. 61.

[3] J. W. Kaye, *The Administration of the East India Company* (London, 1853), pp. 1–2; Raffles, *History of Java*, i, Dedication, p. iv.

ideas not only led to the conclusion that western institutions and values should not be imposed on indigenous societies, but they also came near to challenging the whole notion of imperial supremacy. The justification for this supremacy was not made any stronger by Burke's assertion that those subject to it in India '[did] not consist of an abject and barbarous populace; . . . but a people for ages civilized and cultivated',[1] nor by James Dunbar's argument that white superiority 'if brought to the standard of virtue and felicity . . . may appear very inconsiderable in respect to the populous Asiatic nations'.[2]

Imperial control was eventually justified by giving more content to the idea of happiness. In a negative sense it was asserted that the people of India were happier under British rule than they were under any other,[3] and in a positive manner it was contended that they would be happier if they were afforded the blessings of British laws and religion. Wilberforce was the main advocate of this policy,[4] which, although it implied a frank recognition that the Indians were fellow subjects of the Britons at home and were entitled to the same benefits of western civilization,[5] also implied, by advancing the superiority of British institutions and religion, that those of India were inferior. This represented a shift in ideas from those upon which the 'noble savage' myth had been built, and was the beginning of what Miss M. Perham has described as 'the equalitarian and assimilative policy' of the later Victorians, who saw in native societies everything that was bad, and wished to civilize them.[6] Secure in the increasing prosperity produced by the industrial revolution, and confident about the universality of the appeal of material riches, Englishmen of the early nineteenth century began to experience the pangs of imperial mission, to carry to the be-

[1] Speech on Fox's East India Bill, 1 December 1783, E. Burke, *The Works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke* (Boston, 1881), ii, p. 444.

[2] R. M. Kain, 'The Problem of Civilization in English Abolition Literature, 1772–1808', *Philological Quarterly*, xv (1936), 112.

[3] Lord Teignmouth, *Memoir of the Life and Correspondence of John Lord Teignmouth* (London, 1843), i, p. 285.

[4] K. E. Knorr, *British Colonial Theories 1570–1850* (Toronto, 1944), p. 380.

[5] R. Coupland, *Wilberforce: A Narrative* (Oxford, 1923), pp. 388–9.

[6] Perham, *Africa*, vii. 322.

nighted heathens the blessings of their own superior civilization. The evangelical missionaries found in native customs only 'the beastlie devices of the heathen',[1] and Mill was able to write that no people 'how rude or ignorant so ever, who have been so far advanced as to leave us memorials of their thoughts in writing, have ever drawn a more gross and disgusting picture of the universe than what is presented in the writings of the Hindus'.[2]

While theory was ripe for a frontal attack on native institutions, two factors blunted its edges. The first was a survival of the older ideas as exemplified by the Methodist missionaries in Tahiti, who were afraid of colonizing 'lest it should prove in time destructive to the liberty, or lives and property of the natives'.[3] The second was the realization, especially with regard to India, that in countries where there was a vast population any tampering with indigenous institutions was fraught with grave dangers to the imperial power. Thus the great debates which raged about Indian revenue affairs after the grant of the *diwani* in 1765 had forced the advocates and opponents of permanent *zamindari*, or of *zamindari* and *ryotwari*, settlements to base their arguments upon the criteria of local customs. This fostered a respect for indigenous institutions in India which utilitarian principles found difficult to undermine until much later in the nineteenth century. Moreover, in India the strongly entrenched commercial interests of the East India Company opposed the attempts made by Wilberforce and others to introduce Christianity, since they saw it as a means of breaking the barriers of their own trading monopoly. They, too, countered the evangelicals with the argument that Indian institutions were wholly suited to the people and the country. Only gradually did the idea of engrafting British forms on Indian institutions come to be accepted, and twenty years after it was first expressed the element of caution was still stressed.[4]

[1] E. A. Walker, *The British Empire: Its Structure and Spirit* (Oxford, 1943), p. 100.

[2] G. Wint, *The British in Asia* (London, 1954), p. 52.

[3] Knorr, op. cit., p. 384.

[4] W. K. Firminger, *The Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company . . . 1812* (Calcutta, 1917–18), i,

The respect which Raffles paid to native institutions should be seen against this general background. Whereas he would never have accepted the views either of the ill-fated Resident of the Malay States, J. W. W. Birch, who contended that native customs were of little concern to the European administrator,[1] or of the evangelical missionaries who saw in these customs nothing but the work of the devil, he was far from being the uncritical enthusiast for indigenous institutions that his writings often suggest. One cannot consider his attitude to the work of the Mackenzie Commission, which was set the difficult task of investigating native land tenure rights in Java, without realizing the doctrinaire and opportunist elements in many of his policies.[2] And although it would be wrong to exaggerate the difference between the ideas of Raffles and those of the later advocates of the system of indirect rule on the subject of indigenous institutions,[3] it is nevertheless clear that the former's desire to extend as far and as quickly as possible western political and economic influence establishes a gulf between him and the more recent 'anthropological' school of native administrators in Africa, who, however much they criticized native customs as such, realized the danger of pursuing any policy which aimed at suddenly overthrowing primitive forms on the plea of the superiority of European civilization. Thus while on the one hand an early pioneer of the concept of indirect rule argued that even 'an imperfect and tyrannical native African [judicial] administration, if its extreme excesses were controlled by European supervision, would be, in the early stages, productive of far less discomfort to its subjects than well-intentioned, but ill-directed efforts of European magis-

p. 1; Speech of T. B. Macaulay in the House of Commons, 10 July 1833, Keith, *Speeches & Documents on Indian Policy*, i, pp. 234–5.

[1] R. Winstedt, 'A History of Malaya', *J.M.B.R.A.S.* xiii (1935), 237. See also F. Swettenham, 'James Wheeler Woodford Birch', *Malay Sketches* (London, 1903), pp. 227–47.

[2] J. Bastin, 'Raffles' Ideas on the Land Rent System in Java and the Mackenzie Land Tenure Commission', *Verh. T.L.V.* xiv (1954), pp. 24–25.

[3] Lord Lugard (*The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh and London, 1922), p. 241) and Sir Hugh Clifford (*The Further Side of Silence* (London, 1916), p. x) were both critical of the abuses in the native systems of government.

trates',[1] Raffles on the other hand could contemplate the possibility in 1823 of overthrowing the whole system of native judicial administration at Benkulen:

> [The] period seems now to have arrived when we are called upon to decide whether a higher and more enlightened principle ought not to be acted upon, and whether instead of continuing as heretofore to mould our Government according to the vague and childish notions of an uncultivated people, we ought not to act at once on the broad and enlightened principles which are recognized by all civilized societies, and allow the judicial branch of our administration to emanate directly from British authority, with such considerations only for the usages and prejudices of the natives as an anxious solicitude for their gradual improvement, and a Christian charity for their weaknesses, will necessarily dictate.[2]

Such a statement, even with its qualification, hardly accords with the so-called 'Raffles tradition' which evolved in the Malay States during the last century, the great guiding principle of which, according to Sir Andrew Clarke, the founder of the Resident system, was 'to understand the native character, and to govern as far as possible by the agency of native institutions'.[3]

The man who was responsible for introducing what were thought to be Raffles' ideas on native administration into the Malay States was Sir Hugh Low, when he became Resident of Perak in 1877 after the murder of J. W. W. Birch.[4] Low served for many years under Sir James Brooke as Secretary and as Acting-Governor to the Labuan Government, and from him learned the lesson that governments, 'like clothes, will not fit everybody, and certainly, a people who gradually develope their government, though not a good one, are nearer happiness and stability, than a government of the

[1] Sir George Goldie cited Lord Hailey, *An African Survey* (Oxford, 1938), p. 417.

[2] Raffles to Presgrave and others, 15 October 1823, *Sumatra F.R.* 49. Cf. Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, App., pp. 67, 71.

[3] A. Clarke, 'Sir Stamford Raffles and the Malay States', *Proceedings of the Royal Institution of Great Britain*, xv (1898), 766.

[4] H. Clifford, *In Court & Kampong* (London, 1927), Preface, pp. 12–13; Clifford in Preface to Lady Alice Lovat, *The Life of Sir Frederick Weld: A Pioneer of Empire* (London, 1914), p. xiii.