

Sovereignty, Lord Grey is said to have 'accepted these *faits accomplis* with varying degrees of reluctance'; in fact he initiated the first and pointed that previous measures tended towards the second, so that it might 'fairly be inferred that this sovereignty should be openly and avowedly assumed.' Other instances might be cited. This book is rightly centred in South Africa; but at times it is too exclusively centred in South Africa.

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*The Origins of Malay Nationalism.* By W. R. Roff. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1967. xviii, 297 pp. U.K. price: 63s.

IT HAS INDEED been a pleasant task to review this book. It gives the reviewer ample scope to make a fair and genuinely critical review. Before we offer some critical comments it is best to present its favourable aspects. For those unfamiliar with the twentieth century history of the Malays in Malaya, the book is a good source of information. An attempt is made to go beyond the official points of view on different issues and in this the author has succeeded. It is written without a trace of naive and innocent prejudice or distortion of facts which have hitherto characterised works on the Malays. It has made use of a good number of Malay sources and cited a good number of references to Malay authors unlike many other works on the subject. It will remain useful for a long time as reference material.

Without hesitation we may welcome this book as a useful addition to the collection on the Malays. The criticisms to follow are more on methodology and conceptualisation rather than on the utility of the work. To begin with it is wrong to characterise the work as 'the first sociological history of modern Malay society' (H. J. Benda, p. xi). The fact that an author writes on society does not make his writing sociological. Roff has nowhere in his book undertaken any sociological analysis or even used a concept in the sociological sense. He did not clarify nationalism or its Malay version. He did not use the concepts 'intelligentsia' and 'elites' in the way sociologists do. The analytic and theoretical parts of the book did not go beyond general statements whereas a work on historical sociology would go to deeper levels of differentiation using clear cut analytic case illustrations. The following are some instances:

- (1) 'The fires of dispute between reformists and traditionalists tended to die as improved Islamic and secular education removed many of the coals of contention.' (p. 255)
- (2) 'The attempts of the reformists to posit a purified and revived Islam as the necessary dynamic of progress had, in making too direct a challenge to customary religious (and by implication secular) authority, foundered on the rock of traditionalism. In the long run, it was the metamorphosed traditional elite itself which alone was to prove capable of organising large-scale support for a "Malay rights" program, which however did little more than exaggerate existing British Malay policy.' (p. 127)
- (3) 'Throughout the period under review, therefore, there is evidenced among the Malays a strong persistence of traditional patterns of social and economic relationships in a context of rapid and far-reaching socioeconomic change affecting principally Malaya's non-Malay inhabitants.' (p. 253)

The above instances are general statements that do not go beyond the obvious. What were the items of disputes? Any study of religious reformism that purports to go beyond the obvious should at least draw up a list of issues around which the disputes between the traditionalists and modernists have been centred. It should not merely mention them but it should describe the nature of the conflict (p. 66 mentioned some subjects of controversy). Such terms as 'metamorphosed traditional elite' can be misleading if we do not clarify the metamorphosis. Roff did not attempt to set up a typology of traditional and non-traditional elites preceded by a justification of the criteria of typology, and illustrating it with concrete human personalities comparable to what Max Weber did. Hence Roff's general remarks on the whole do not go beyond surface phenomena. Terms like 'traditional patterns of social and economic relationship', 'rapid and far reaching socioeconomic change' and 'retention . . . of the state structure', are too general to serve as analytic conclusions. At a deeper level of analysis they are meaningless as descriptive tools or as analytic conclusions.

If we were to judge the book from the social scientific point of view it is far from adequate. If we were to judge the book as an account of certain historical themes it is good and useful particularly bearing in mind that published works on such subjects are scarce. Compared to other publications on the Malays written by British authors, Roff's work has an unmistakably superior quality. The present Malay scholars are engaged in other fields of enquiry and it is not likely that any will embark upon Roff's theme in the near future.

Hence the book will remain as the latest source of information on the subject for some time to come.

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*The Commonwealth Experience.* By Nicholas Mansergh. Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1969. 471 pp. U.K. price: 70s.

ONE OF THE stock topics taught in Commonwealth university history departments for many years has been what Americans call British Empire-Commonwealth history. In New Zealand few topics perhaps have proved less popular with students. Nor are our students unique. In one major English university in 1968 not one student chose this paper.

One reason for this disinterest has been what Professor Mansergh rightly calls the 'constitutional straitjacket' into which Commonwealth history has been 'for so long forced to fit'. Another, only partly a consequence of the first, was for a long time the almost unrelieved tedium of the textbooks. The spirit of Kipling was expressed in grey prose. It often seemed that the subject had been invented by bores and kept going by stuffed shirts to provide drudgery for pass students.

Now, at last Professor Mansergh has written a book always intelligent and usually lively. In a sense it is the first true history of the Commonwealth and its origins, as opposed to Empire-Commonwealth histories, or surveys of modern Commonwealth Affairs. It bears little resemblance to textbooks in the former category, though it owes much to Professor W. K. Hancock's pioneering *Survey* and Professor Mansergh's own successor volumes.