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STATE OF EDUCATION AMONGST THE MALAYS IN PENANG.

We have extracted, entire, the following interesting article from the fifteenth number of the Indo-Chinese Gleaner.

To the Editor.

Sir: In several numbers of your interesting publication, I observe that communications are requested on the State of Education among the natives of these countries; I have, in consequence, been induced to collect a few particulars on the state of education among the Malays in Penang, which, if you consider them worthy of a place in your Miscellany, are at your service. The plan I have adopted is somewhat similar to the one laid down by Sianu, in his communication on the State of Education in Malacca (see Gleaner, No. 10). I have left out several things which he has mentioned, and which are practised here, the same as in Malacca, and probably in all Mahometan countries. The Malays appear to have one general system on which they act, though in different places they may vary a little from it.

First. Number of Schools.—They are rather numerous, as you will perceive from the following statement; though the number of scholars in some of them is but small. There are probably other schools, concerning which I have not gained any information; but as I hope you will receive other communications, perhaps that deficiency will be made up: it can only be by different persons interesting themselves in the subject, that the real state of education among the natives can be fully made known.

1. Tuan Haji Abdulkadir,* the high priest among the Mahometans, instructs all Malays who choose to make application, to read the Koran, and to write their own language; in addition to which, he instructs them in the doctrines and duties of Islamism. He has about ten disciples.

2. Tuan Haji Kamarudin has six scholars, and teaches them to read the Koran, and the colloquial Malay.

3. Tuan Haji Yuief has eight learners, and teaches them to read the Koran only.

* Tuan Haji is a title of respect given to an Islam who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca.

4. A Kling master has thirty scholars, nine of which are learning to write. The Koran only is read in the school.

5. There are two Kling masters in one place, who teach the learners to read the Koran only; one has four scholars, the other has two.

6. Lebiganni teaches his disciples the Koran only.

7. Addul Kadir has at present only three scholars, who are taught the Koran.

8. A female teacher, who instructs her pupils to read the Koran.

9. Tuan Mahomet Salih, an Arabian, has four scholars, who are taught the Koran.

10. Inchi Lanang and Mahomet, teach in one place; and the Koran only is used. They have four scholars at present.

11 to 16. Are small schools, containing in all about forty scholars, who are taught to read the Koran.

17. Tuan Haji Amat, son of the high priest, teaches his scholars to read the Koran, and the colloquial Malay. He is the only teacher, at present, regularly employed in the largest Malay compound in the town, which I understand contains three or four hundred persons, many of whom are able to read the Koran and write Malay. He has about fifty scholars, all boys. The girls are taught at home; and as there are several learned natives in the compound, it is very probable that many boys are taught at home likewise. This is the case to a certain extent in different parts of the island. Sometimes a whole compound will join, and employ one teacher, and sometimes the father will instruct his own children; but if he have not abilities for doing that, he will (if his circumstances will admit) engage a teacher for that purpose, promising a certain sum when the education of the children is completed.

II. Age and Ceremonies on entering School.—There is no fixed standard as to age; all are admitted from six years old and upwards, just as circumstances may direct. The parents, at the time they deliver up a child to the master, offer a small present of plantains, sirih, tobacco, &c.; sometimes a few pice, and, when they can afford it, a rupee or a dollar. They then say to the master, "This child we entirely

surrender to you; he is not now ours, but yours; we only ask for his eyes and limbs, and that he may not be crippled, or severely wounded in chastisement. In every other respect he is solely at the disposal of the teacher." After these ceremonies, the child is regularly received by the master into the school, and entitled to all the advantages of the institution. There is an additional agreement which comes under the head.

III. *Of School Fees.*—In this particular also there is nothing definite as to the actual sum, unless the same be stated in a written or verbal agreement. When a boy has gone through the Koran, which is considered a kind of finish to his education, his parents give صدقة sedekah, or alms, which, in this instance, has a special reference to what is given exclusively for instruction. The parents reward the teacher according to their ability: the rich will give from twenty to seventy dollars, and upwards; and if they consider the master as having done his duty, frequently add a new turban, a gown, and a piece of white cloth. A feast sometimes follows, when a company of old men are invited, who are supposed to know the Koran well. The boy is called into the presence of these old men and his master, when, with an audible voice, he is ordered to read a chapter or two from the Koran, after which the judgment of the old men, which is mostly favourable, stamps dignity on the teacher as being very learned.

In many instances, however, the school-master does not succeed so well, and not unfrequently fails to obtain any emolument whatever, from parents whose children he has instructed. The custom of paying nothing till the education of the children is completed, often proves very injurious to the teacher, and has a tendency to bring into disuse the practice, as at present observed by the Mahometans. In case the father dies, or becomes very poor, the master either loses the expected reward, or has great difficulty in obtaining it; it being perfectly optional with the parents, whether they give any thing or not; and extreme poverty is always considered a sufficient excuse. An instance lately occurred, in which the teacher, after having taught four children to read the Koran, could not obtain a single rupee, though the father

had, in a verbal agreement, promised a hundred dollars for each boy. I have known several instances of this nature. To go to law in such cases is also a great disgrace to the master, who, by so doing, is considered as committing a great sin, and doing that which is forbidden in the Islam religion. Very poor people can take their children to a Mahometan teacher for instruction, and should he refuse, or ask for wages as the condition, he is liable to be disgraced: he is obliged to receive them. The Islams say, that all good teachers who fear God in truth, will not, dare not, ask for any recompence for instructing the ignorant; yet when we consider the labour of the teacher, and the time he devotes to his employment, on the principles of justice, he deserves some remuneration.

IV. *School Hours.*—It will appear that the poor school-master has plenty to do. The schools open in the morning at seven o'clock, and close at eleven, when the children go home to eat rice. At two o'clock the schools are re-opened, and the children read till five; when the master's ordinary work for the day is done. The time also of continuance in school is quite uncertain. Some boys, who are of a very bright intellect, will go through the Koran in one year; but many require a much longer space of time, and some even in ten years do not finish the book. It is not uncommon to extol the master as a very assiduous and laborious teacher, because he has the good fortune to have under his care some sharp boys, who give their minds to learning, and are, in fact, very little trouble; while, on the other hand some stupid boys, with whom far greater pains are taken, and who cause the teacher many an anxious hour, only in the end bring him into disgrace, and cause him to lose his character as a schoolmaster. This is at times very discouraging to the poor Mahometan teachers. The children receive no rewards whatever for making progress in learning; on the contrary, their

V. *Punishments* are very severe, if they do not learn. All the encouragement they receive is, *that punishment will not be inflicted if they behave well.*

For *Gambling* the boys are punished by having pieces of rattan placed between their fingers, and the fingers' ends bound tight together.

For playing *Truant*, a piece of wood, as heavy as the boy can lift, is fastened by a chain to his body, and which he must take with him wherever he goes. This punishment is continued till he appears sorry for what he has done. When several boys are guilty of this offence, they are chained together two and two, and the one not being able to go any where without the other makes it a very disagreeable punishment. Sometimes the boys are suspended from a pole by the hands only, which are clasped together, with the fingers inside, and in that position they rest entirely on the pole, their feet about an inch from the ground.

For *Fighting*, the offending party is beaten with a rattan by all the boys in the school, and if, in the judgment of the master, they are too mild, he himself corrects the offender very severely. Others are ordered to lay hold of the left ear with the right hand, and the right ear with the left hand, then to prostrate themselves at the feet of the master as often as he shall require. Should the boys, by accident, let go their hold, they are severely flogged.

For *Lying*, the boy is placed in a corner of the room, and remains there till the wrath of the master is appeased; if for any length of time, the boy's parents send him food.

For *calling Ill Names*, the boys are made to lay hold of each other by the ears, and rise and sit together as often as the master shall order. The boys find it difficult to rise and sit at the same moment of time; and he who is in the least tardy, receives a few strokes from the rattan for each offence.

There are some milder punishments; but other modes are adopted with great rigour, particularly so in Mahometan countries, where Islamism generally prevails.

VI. *Method of Teaching, and what is taught.*—The boys are first taught the Arabic alphabet, which is mostly written on a board for that purpose; when they know all the characters, the Koran is put into their hands, and they read a chapter which treats on prayer; but if the teacher does not explain the same to them, they are just as wise when they have read the chapter as they were before; and as the Koran is in the Arabic tongue, the teacher himself is frequently unable to explain it. Great numbers read the Koran who are not able to explain a single chapter. It is

the chief book which is read in the Mahometan schools, and nothing more is taught, unless the teacher is desired to do so by the parents. In some instances the children continue at school after they have read the Koran, when they proceed to *الكتاب* Alkitab, or the book, which explains the doctrines and ceremonies of Islamism, and is considered by some an explanation of the Koran. This may be viewed as one of the means employed for propagating Mahometanism. Five leading tenets are principally insisted upon, and care is taken to impress the minds of the children with the importance of them; and frequently these doctrines are interspersed with the regular lessons of the day. It is no uncommon thing, when passing the native schools among the Malays, to hear the children singing praises to all the prophets, and they are thus supposed to have made considerable progress in their learning.

Writing is also taught in the native schools, as soon as the boys can read with tolerable facility. They commence by writing the characters on boards, which, when full, are washed and used again; and so they proceed, by degrees, to the use of paper, and write what the master may order. On the whole, I am of opinion, that the plan of education, as at present adopted by the Malays, is, in many respects, very deficient; and considering the great disadvantages under which they labour, it is rather a wonder that so many know how to read. I trust the attempts which have been made, and which are now in contemplation, for improving the modes of education among the natives, will have the desired effect. The Protestant Missionaries, who have resided rather more than twelve months on the island, have two Malay schools, which are conducted on different principles from the native schools in general. The missionaries found it difficult to introduce any thing new among the Mahometans; and the only condition on which they would consent to allow their children to read books which they recommended was, that they should also read a lesson in Arabic. To this condition the Missionaries consented, and have not had any cause to repent for so doing. It probably had the effect of weakening prejudice, and of convincing them that the Missionaries did not wish them to relinquish their own plan without furnishing

them with a better. One of these schools was at first conducted in a small mosque, on the road leading to Pulau Tikus, which was offered by a Kling man; but several things proving inconvenient, and rather a hindrance to the scholars, the mosque was relinquished, and an attap-house, belonging to the owner of the mosque, was hired for the school. This school continued to flourish till about two months ago, when, in consequence of a false report in the neighbourhood, nearly one-half of the scholars withdrew, which caused great sorrow to the native teacher. At present, there are not more than twenty scholars who attend regularly: it is hoped, however, that by and bye the number will increase. The other school near the bazar, contains about fifty learners, including men, women, and children. The Scriptures and religious tracts are read in both schools, and no objection is now made to them. The children are also instructed in writing and arithmetic. Mahometan bigotry, we hope, is losing ground; and of this we are certain, that the Mahometan power has greatly diminished in many countries of late. "The defender of their faith is the word of the Sultan, and if that be wrested from his hands, weakness succeeds to strength." Happy will it be for the poor deluded followers of the false and subtle Prophet of Mecca, when his delusions shall be fully exposed to their view, and when, by the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit, they shall behold the glories of Immanuel, God in human nature. The Missionaries have also a native Chinese school under their care, which it is not necessary particularly to notice here. Towards the support of these schools, Government subscribes very liberally; and more schools might be readily commenced, if the funds would admit. As knowledge increases, superstition and ignorance will lose their ground; and in the fulness of time, the divine purposes will be accomplished, and the heathen be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

I remain, Mr. Editor, yours, &c.

Penang, Oct. 20, 1820.

SOHBAI.

(Note by the Editor of the Gleaner.)

We would particularly recommend this interesting paper to correspondents, as an excellent model for other papers on the

same subject. The minuteness of the account gives it point and interest. We sincerely trust that *Sohbat's* wishes, relative to the establishment of many Christian schools among the natives of Penang, will be fully realized. The very favourable disposition of the public authorities of that island to the promotion of education and useful objects, we have ourselves witnessed, and benefited by it; and we feel assured, that no well directed effort in so good a cause, by whomsoever made, will fail to obtain both their assistance, and that of the British residents of Penang, generally. We have been long of opinion, that to establish schools among the natives, on an extensive scale, their prejudices must, in some points, be followed a little. This appears to have been done with success in the instances above related.

Mahometans will not consent at first to send their children to schools, where Christianity is exclusively taught. By yielding to them a little in regard to the Koran, they will probably agree to allow the Holy Scriptures to be read also, and thus the word of truth may become known on the large scale; whereas, by making the banishment of the Koran, a *sine qua non* in the school (which few will consent to), the volume of inspiration may be shut up in a corner. These remarks refer only to places where prejudice against Christianity is very strong; where that is not the case, the sooner and the more entirely the schools be exclusively Christian the better.

Habits of application, formed in the acquisition of any language, are always to be considered useful to the human intellect; but it is a strange infatuation that has seized the minds of this people, that they should, in the education of their youth, almost entirely exclude their own language. On looking over these seventeen schools, there appear to be only three in which the Malay language forms a branch of the regular course, and it would seem but an unimportant one too. These schools do not altogether contain more than a hundred and forty scholars, seventy-five of whom only enjoy the benefit of instruction in their own language. Admitting that in the island of Penang there should be, among the Malays, males and females, to the number of five hundred instructed to read, and that the same proportion as

that above-mentioned, be observed in teaching Malay, there will not be found on the island three hundred persons among the youth so instructed, capable of reading books written in their own tongue. In a population so considerable as that of

the Malay youth of Penang, this would indeed be a small proportion. If this induction be fair, it shews very forcibly the necessity of making vigorous efforts to establish schools in which their own language shall be chiefly taught.

POLICY OF GREAT BRITAIN TOWARDS CHINA.

To the Editor of the Asiatic Journal.

Sir: One of the leading advantages of your very useful miscellany, arises from a concentration of important subjects, bearing reference to the welfare of our Oriental Possessions, so highly material to the stability of the British Empire. If subjects brought forward produce discussion, so much the better; as this collision of ideas will tend to elicit and establish, ultimately, truths which may at first appear dubious, or requiring the confirmation resulting from facts and arguments. Such, for instance, is the present controversy on the most eligible mode of terminating the cremation of Hindoo widows. Your correspondent, Mr. Kendall, has furnished, at least, a well-written paper on this very interesting subject, and has hinted at a farther communication. Your well-informed and intelligent contributor, under the signature of B. W., has viewed this distressing practice in a manner which may be serviceable to Mr. Kendall, in enabling him to view the case under other aspects, in his future communications. For my own part, being referred to *so pointedly* by Mr. Kendall, I have only to remark, without animadverting on his misconstructions, that I do not see it necessary to alter any one of my opinions, in consequence of that gentleman's statements.

From this brief notice of a subject exciting the deepest sympathies of our nature, and laying a strong hold on moral feelings, I pass on to a sort of profit and loss and stock-exchange-business, claiming immediate atten-

tion, however, as intimately connected with our comfort and happiness, at any rate, in the present state of existence.

If recent intelligence is to be relied on, we appear to have been expelled from China by an arbitrary mandate, unsanctioned by any known law of nations, and not founded on any practice hitherto prevalent among civilized states. If the pseudo-Celestial Empire is not to be reckoned of this description, the procedure for procuring satisfaction for this, and former insults, becomes still more justifiable, to teach cunning and half-informed barbarians the legitimate conduct regulating the intercourse of enlightened states. The Chinese are a selfish, jealous, and a cruel, unfeeling people; equally devoid of generosity of sentiment, and liberality of conduct. They were long deemed to be scientific; but the reverse is made out clearly to be the fact, as fully ascertained by the competent observers who accompanied our insulted embassies. In their own estimation, they are in every excellence, the first, if not the only nation worthy of mention, on the face of the earth. No principle of honour is prevalent among them, as the bamboo and the whip are applied from the highest to the lowest in the scale of society. Of British superiority they have, at length, become convinced; and hate us in proportion to the strength of their conviction. With a painfully forbearing and a distressing precaution, we have been under the necessity of submitting to the injustice