



Hinterland of Brunei Town about 1904. Selected place names. (after McArthur's Report)

REPORT ON BRUNEI IN 1904

by

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PART FOUR

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GENERAL

1. All that is now left under the sovereignty of the Sultan of Brunei is a wedge of territory on the north-west coast of Borneo with an approximate area of 4,000 square miles and a probable population of 30,000 individuals. There is, as far as I know, no absolutely reliable map of the country; that published by Edward Stanford for the British North Borneo Company gives little or no information regarding Brunei except its position. The country is shown with greater detail and accuracy in a "Map of the Baram District" compiled by Dr. Hose, Resident of Baram, and published by the Royal Geographical Society. A glance at the accompanying schedules--Appendix I (a), (b) and (c)--will show how much of the State has been alienated, for how little consideration, and how comparatively small an extent of territory remains.* Brunei lies in latitude 4°36' - 5°5' N and in longitude 114°4' - 115°22' east. It is practically surrounded by Sarawak territory. It comprises a coastline of about 100 miles, and lies between Lubok Pulai, the eastern boundary of Baram district, and Tanjong Puan, at the mouth of the River Trusan. The main districts in this territory are Belait, Tutong, Brunei, Temburong and Laboh. The very important River Limbang also lies within the limits I have given. It is under Sarawak control, but as it was seized by force and is occupied in the face of continued protests of the Brunei Government, who refuse to relinquish their claim to it, I do not know under that category it should come. On the further side of Trusan lies the territory now known as Province Clarke. The Sultan's sovereign rights over this tract of country have been recently sold to the British North Borneo Company, and the country can therefore no longer be considered part of his State.¹

* The six appendices which accompany McArthur's Report are not included in the present volume.

2. It is an open secret that the Rajah of Sarawak is anxious to absorb the rest of Brunei. It is equally well known that the British North Borneo Company view his aspirations with disfavour and that both Governments have been for years endeavouring to increase their possessions at the expense of Brunei.² Appendix I shows what measure of success has so far attended their efforts.

3. As long ago as 1885 the Rajah of Sarawak obtained a perpetual lease of the River Trusan, the tulin or hereditary private property of the present Sultan, at the time Pengiran Temenggong, thus making the remainder of Brunei his "sphere of influence."³ This view of the country is set out in Mr. Consul Hewett's dispatch, No. 9, Confidential, of the 10th May 1902. I cannot see what other object His Highness can have had in the acquisition of a district over 100 miles from the boundary of Sarawak proper. I understand that the revenues obtained from the river barely suffice to meet the expenses of its administration. Its isolation from the rest of Sarawak probably accounts for the disproportionate expense of governing it, for it has a rich and extensive ulu. The alienation of the outlying districts east of Trusan has been hastened by the establishment of Sarawak Government here. Brunei people, whose views are of course biased, state that the disturbances on the Limbang would never have reached sufficient proportions to afford a pretext for foreign intervention if the disaffected had not found encouragement from the presence of Sarawak officers on their borders. However this may be, the Rajah would certainly have found greater difficulty in defending his seizure of the Limbang if he had not acquired interests in the adjoining district. On the ground, I understand, that those interests were menaced by the disturbances on the Limbang, he obtained possession of that important district, "the life of Brunei," to quote a common native statement, which he could never have hoped to gain by negotiation.

CLIMATE

4. The climate of Brunei is similar to that of Sarawak or Labuan. Except for a certain amount of fever, only to be expected in a tropical country, it seems healthy for Europeans. The manager and assistants of the Island Trading Syndicate's cutch



Brunei Town about 1904. (Courtesy Public Record Office, Kew, United Kingdom)

factory, who live under rather adverse conditions in close proximity to the malodorous, if picturesque, town of Brunei, have always enjoyed immunity from sickness.⁴ The country possesses two great recommendations, in that there are steady winds throughout the day which help to temper the heat of the sun, and that the nights are cool, the temperature falling sometimes as low as 68° Fahrenheit.

SOIL

5. The soil is fertile, except in places where the hills are precipitous or where salt water impregnates the ground, and, judging by the condition of the few plantations that exist, is well-adapted for the cultivation of rice, cocoa-nuts, fruit trees, gambier, pepper, and similar native products.⁵ In the interior, there are almost unimpaired stores of jungle produce, such as getah, damar, rotan, sago and timber.

MINERALS

6. The country has never been systematically explored, but it is reported to be rich in minerals.⁶ Coal is found in many places, more particularly throughout the length of the Brunei River, as is mineral oil. Antimony is said to be plentiful. I am told that traces of iron are also to be found, and that gold has been won by natives in the interior of Tamburong district. Various concessions for minerals have been from time to time obtained, but no success has as yet attended the efforts of concessionaires. I believe the explanation to lie in the weakness of the Government, which makes the investment of capital risky, and in the undeveloped state of the country, which makes the expense of winning minerals or bringing them on the market prohibitive. All the mineral concessions, except those held by the Rajah of Sarawak, are said to have lapsed.⁷

COMMUNICATIONS

7. The country possesses no roads, only rough tracks used chiefly by the Kadayans, an agricultural race, in bringing their goods to native markets, held periodically at convenient pengkalans, or

landing-places, near the centres of population. All travelling is in consequence done by water.⁸ Fortunately there are numerous waterways and tributary streams which make access to most parts of Brunei fairly easy if time is no object. Brunei, the capital of the State, is distant 42 miles from Labuan. A local ship the steamship Taganac, 67 tons, calls twice a month, bringing in cargoes of sundries and taking out exports, chiefly catch. Goods for the principal traders of Brunei, Belait and Tutong are also carried in their own tongkangs, which ply between the ports of the State and Labuan. The nature of the intervening country and the loss of the main waterway, the Limbang, make communication between the capital and the outlying districts tedious and difficult. As a result, their trade is independent of Brunei and is carried on directly with Labuan, which is the natural trading centre for the whole State.

CONSTITUTION

8. The Government of Brunei is despotic in theory, the Sultan being the sovereign of the whole territory.⁹ As, however, the State is divided up into negri and hamba kerajaan, or Crown property, negri and hamba kuripan, or official property, and negri and hamba tulin, or hereditary private property, it would, I think, be more accurate to describe the country as an aggregation of small and semi-independent fiefs acknowledging one head. The explanation of the terms given above is to be found in a document known as the will of Sultan Abdulmohmin, a duplicate of which, in the keeping of the Pengiran Bendahara, I have seen. It may perhaps be a convenience if I quote here the passages bearing on this system of tenure. They run as follows:

Tulin. When a Chief inherits property from his ancestors, whether rivers or men, such property is called sungei tulin or hamba tulin. The Sultan collects no revenue from such property. The owner collects the revenue, and is at liberty to bequeath the property to his heirs.

Kerajaan. Those portions of Brunei, whether rivers or men, which are Crown property are called negri kerajaan or

hamba kerajaan. The Sultan collects revenue therefrom, but he cannot bequeath them to his heirs. They must go to his successor on the throne.

Kuripan. Rivers or men belonging to a Minister in right of his office are called sungei kuripan or hamba kuripan. The Minister collects revenue therefrom, and if he dies the property reverts to the Crown until a successor in the office is appointed. The Minister cannot bequeath such property to his heirs.

As regards sungei tulin, the owners can do as they please. The Sultan can impress his wishes on the owner, and it is for him to give effect among his followers to the Royal commands.

Since we became Sultan we have observed the custom of former rulers. After our death those who succeed us should also follow these customs, so that no confusion may arise.

9. It will be seen from this that in many districts the Sultan possesses the shadow of power conferred by his so-called sovereign rights. The document also explains the present vacancies in the offices of the Pengirans di Gadong and Temenggong.¹⁰ His Highness, to whom the revenues have reverted, is too poor to forego them.

10. The Sultan should, according to the ancient constitution of Brunei, be assisted by four Ministers of State, the Pengirans Bendahara, di Gadong, Pemancha and Temenggong. These offices are usually held by members of the Royal family as will be seen on reference to the attached Appendix II. It is from among them also that the Sultan's successor is usually chosen, it being left to them, and to the spokesmen of the people to nominate one of their number. Theoretically, each of these Ministers has separate functions to perform. In any matter affecting the State the Sultan is supposed to consult them, and their chops are necessary on any important State document.

11. The Pengiran Bendahara holds the highest position in the State next to the Sultan, and is supposed to be more or less responsible for the internal administration of the country. He acts as

Regent when necessary, keeps, or should keep, the State Archives, and forms a Court of Appeal from the decisions, in their respective spheres, of the other Ministers.

The Pengiran di Gadong is the Treasurer and tax-collector. The idea of taxation being apparently inherently connected in Brunei minds with the agricultural population, he is also in general charge of the Kedayans and Bisayas.

The Pengiran Pemancha seems to be little more than a deputy of the Pengiran di Gadong.¹¹

The Pengiran Temenggong is in charge of the forces of the State, leads expeditions, and carries out executions.

There is another Minister, the Pengiran Shahbandar, who is, I believe, a comparatively recent innovation.¹² He deals, theoretically, with all questions of commerce, port dues, and the like, and is supposed to exercise a general control over foreign traders.

12. The existing Ministers are the Pengirans Bendahara, Pemancha and Shahbandar. Pengiran may be translated "chief." Both the Bendahara and Pemancha are now old men and take no interest in their duties.¹³ The Shahbandar lives at Brooketon, professes, I understand to have left Brunei in disgust at Brunei methods, and makes a point of being very friendly with Europeans.¹⁴ I understand that he performs some ill-defined local functions in Brooketon, the site of the Rajah of Sarawak's coal mine, and that he is in receipt of a salary from the Sarawak Government.

13. In all my interviews with the Sultan, of which he has always had previous notice, it has been the exception to meet any of these Ministers. The excuse given is invariably that they are sick. It is true that the Bendahara and Pemancha are always ailing, but they seem well enough to attend the mosque on Fridays. The real reason seems to be that they are all working against the Sultan and each other and only keep up a superficial show of cordiality.¹⁵ The result is unfortunate. His Highness is surrounded by lesser chiefs and by relations, all of whom have private interests to serve in every matter that comes before him. The advice he receives from them is generally against the best interests of himself and of Brunei.¹⁶

14. The official revenues of the Ministers are

derived from their kuripan properties. These districts for annual payments are detailed in Appendix I. They are all, except the Tutong and the Limbang, either leased in perpetuity to Sarawak or British North Borneo or mortgaged for years to come to private speculators. The question whether the present holders of the offices have the power to dispose of the salaries attached thereto beyond the period of their own incumbency is not likely to occur to a Brunei Malay, but it seems open to argument. There would, of course, be no objection to the cession of these districts which would go to the holders of office, but in many cases these annual payments have been capitalized, and even where that has not been done cash advances have been obtained from private speculators who hold documents entitling them to draw the cession money annually as it falls due. The hamba kuripan, of course, remain in the districts not yet ceded, but even the right to collect taxes from these has in many cases been mortgaged to Chinese traders for cash for many years to come.

DISTRICTS

15. I have already given all the information at my disposal about the Belait and Tutong districts in the Report forwarded under cover of my letter No. 24 Confidential of 14th July last. [see above, Section II]. The other main districts which make up the present State of Brunei, are the Rivers Brunei, Tamburong, and Laboh, with their tributaries.

16. Tamburong. The Tamburong is a small and practically unexplored river inhabited chiefly by Muruts. It extends about five days' journey inland. I understand that it was at one time populous, but that it suffered severely in the cholera epidemic which swept over Brunei two years ago, and that the Murut population is now very sparse. The river is the official property or 'negri kerajaan' of the Sultan. Its revenues from trade have been leased for ten years to a Chinese trader named Cheok Yu. The district is said to be rich in jungle produce, and Pengiran Tajudin, a son-in-law of the Sultan, tells me that gold has been won by native methods in the ulu.¹⁷

17. The Laboh, which joins the Tamburong at its mouth, is of about the same size and is the

private property or negri tulin of a relative of the Sultan, named Pengiran Muda Binjai Mohamed Tajudin, who is considered by his immediate adherents to be the rightful heir to the throne.¹⁸ (He is an agreeable Chief, but weak and vain. He keeps up a pitiable travesty of State, and seems to hope that his pretensions to the throne will ultimately be supported by the Sarawak Government. I am unable to find any sound basis for his claims. A reference to Appendix II will show that he is a member of the younger branch of the Royal Family.) He has made an Agreement with a Company, represented by a Mr. Abrahamson, to let out the land on the Laboh for gambier cultivation for a period of ninety-nine years.¹⁹ The soil is said to be well-suited for the purpose. No planting has yet been undertaken, but the rent, 500 dollars per annum, is paid regularly. The lease has been running for about eighteen years. I believe the company is connected with the Island Trading Syndicate.

18. The River Brunei has been often and fully described, but it is perhaps as well that I should make my Report as complete as I can by recording my own impressions of it. It seems to me that an erroneous idea is conveyed by describing it as a river. It is little more than a creek forming, in conjunction with the mouth of Limbang, an estuary broken up by a number of islands. It is, I think, the presence of these which has made its intimate connection with the important River Limbang less obvious; and this has been, for the Government of Brunei, a misfortune. The waters of the so-called River Brunei are salt throughout their entire length. They are connected by a number of terusans, or channels, with the Limbang and the main part of the town of Brunei itself is situated on an island thus formed. The direct mouth of the Limbang is spoilt by reefs and sand banks, and the channel is a long and devious one. In consequence of this, small boats, such as the launch kept for the use of the Resident at Pengkalan Tarap, find it convenient, as a rule, to enter and leave the river on the Brunei side of Pulau Berembang.²⁰ I cannot help thinking that, had the intimate connection of Brunei and Limbang been more fully appreciated in the past, the acquiescence of the British Government in the Rajah's seizure of the latter river would have been given with greater hesitation.²¹

19. The entrance to the Brunei River is most

picturesque, steep though low hills running down to the water on each side, fringed at their bases with narrow belts of mangrove. It possesses one great advantage over the other rivers of Brunei, or even of Brunei Bay, in that it has no bar. Unfortunately, however, a former Sultan, to secure himself and his country, as he hoped, for invasion, had a long and solid stone breakwater built across the channel in the neighbourhood of the small island of Pulau Chermin.²² The top of the wall is almost awash at low tide, and is only covered by about seven feet of water at high tide. One end of it is now broken down, and there remains for those who know the natural bearings an easy channel past the obstruction. I have given the common account, but I do not know how far it is true. I believe that the greater part of this breakwater must be a natural reef, for the labour involved in its erection would otherwise have been enormous, in addition to which there is a lack of any stone, except a friable kind of sandstone, anywhere in the vicinity of Brunei and I have found no one able to explain whence the materials were obtained. Except for this obstruction, which is made more formidable by the absence of beacons and buoys, the channel is deep enough for any vessel which is ever likely to call at Brunei. His Majesty's Ship Phoenix and His Majesty's Ship Rosario have both been up to the town of recent years. It would, I imagine, be an easy matter to blow up the remains of this barrier, if it were considered necessary to do so, but it would present no difficulties to navigation were it properly buoyed.

20. Brooketon. At the end of the spit of land outside this breakwater and on the western side of the river is Muara Damit or Brooketon, the site of the only coal mine which is being worked in Brunei territory.²³ This was Mr. Cowie's original concession, purchased by the Rajah of Sarawak.²⁴ I have been unable to find in the archives of the Consulate any complete record of the concessions on which the Rajah's claims in Brunei are based; but I believe that these concessions (for coal only) were purchased by His Highness in a private capacity and not as Rajah of Sarawak and that he has since acquired rights of jurisdiction at Brooketon. Such rights are, at any rate, exercised, as are those of excise farming.²⁵ The place gives every appearance of prosperity, possessing good wharves and sheds, a stone sea-wall, a line of light railway running to

the mine about a mile inland, and heaps of coal. I am told, however, that these appearances are deceptive and that the place does not pay. Even the store of coal is said to give a misleading impression, for the greater part of it has been lying there for months, or even years, unsold. The net loss on the year's working is set down in the 1903 Report of the Treasurer of Sarawak as 108,747 dollars, an increase of 34,532 dollars over the deficit of 1902.²⁶

21. Buang Tawar. Above Pulau Chermin the river opens out to a width of over half a mile, its eastern bank for eight miles of its course being formed by Palau Berembang, the island on which a private speculator opened a coal mine about five years ago. This incident was fully discussed in official correspondence at the time,²⁷ and I need only state here that, as a result of the decided attitude of the Rajah, Mr. Crane was dispossessed, the Rajah proceeding to Brunei in the Zahora²⁸ and threatening to uphold his claim by force of arms unless they were acceded to. In this case, again, it appears that His Highness the Rajah fell into the natural mistake of confusing his private rights as a British subject in Brunei with his public rights as Sovereign of a neighbouring State. On this island is His Highness' settlement of Buang Tawar, ostensibly another coal mine. I have already described this place in my Confidential letter to the 2nd of June last.²⁹ Owing to the discovery of oil in the process of running a lead for coal, all efforts to extract the latter mineral have been discontinued, and a fresh concession to work oil, the terms of which are set out in the same letter, has been obtained from the Sultan.³⁰ I may here add that the works undertaken by His Highness the Rajah, and referred to in my letter, were suddenly stopped at the end of July. I am unable to say what led to this decision.

22. Kota Batu.³¹ Opposite the Island of Berembang is Kota Batu, the so-called estate of Inche Mohamed, at one time Consular Agent in Brunei. This estate was recently purchased by the Sarawak government. The transaction has formed the subject of separate correspondence.³²

23. Brunei Town.³³ Above the Island of Berembang the river takes a sharp bend to the west, and on rounding the point the first view is obtained of the city of Brunei. It is distant about 12 miles

from the mouth of the river, and lies in the center of an amphitheatre of hills, the river--about half a mile wide at this point--having all the appearance of a lake. The town, which contains on a rough computation 1,000 houses, is built entirely over the water wherever mud banks make it possible to erect a dwelling. It is very picturesque--at a reasonable distance--and has been called the Venice of the East.³⁴ At low tide, the mud smells abominably, probably owing to the refuse it receives from the houses. It says much for the stamina of the Brunei people that they live and thrive under such conditions; but the rapid spread of cholera two years ago, and of the smallpox epidemic during my stay in Brunei, shows how really insanitary the place is.³⁵ The Sultan's house--for it is impossible to describe such a collection of hovels as a palace--lies at the junction of a tributary creek (the Sungei Kadayan) with the main river. Like all the houses of his subjects, it is in a shocking state of disrepair.³⁶ At the back of his house is an extensive tract of flat land, which would make an excellent site for a properly laid out town.³⁷ It has on it ruins of old brick shophouses, but they are only relics of former prosperity; and the trade, which is in the hands of Chinese, centres now round a small island in the middle of the town, on which are a number of disreputable-looking plank, tin and atap shops.

24. Cutch factory. Some way below the Sultan's house is an inlet called Subok, the site of the Island Trading Syndicate's cutch factory.³⁸ It is interesting to note that this was in the eighteenth century the site of an East India Company trading station. The remembrance still lingers in the name "Prigi Factor" by which the stream of water running down the hillside is known.

25. Consulates. Below Subok is the Consulate land, originally granted to Sir Spenser St. John, on which can still be traced the ruins of his house.³⁹ It is an excellent site for a European dwelling. On the opposite bank is the land granted to Mr. Lee Moses still known as the American Consulate site.⁴⁰

26. Limau Manis.⁴¹ The river extends inland about ten miles beyond the town of Brunei. The district at its head is called Limau Manis. Here, and at other places at the end of narrow and shallow tributaries, are various pengkalans, which are the common meeting ground of traders from Brunei and

Kadayans from surrounding settlements, and at which markets are periodically held. The trade revenues of Limau Manis have been recently leased for three years by their heirs of Pengiran di Gadong--whose tulin property it was--to a Chinaman named Chua Cheng Hee.

POPULATION

27. The inhabitants of the State are:

1. Brunei Malays
2. Kadayans
3. Bisayas, or Orang Bukit
4. Muruts and
5. Chinese

28. Muruts. The Muruts may be dismissed in very few words. They are mere savages, and few in number in Brunei itself. They are serfs, and have by Brunei custom no more rights than domestic animals would have. They are to be found in the ulu of the Limbang, the Trusan, the Tamburong and Laboh. There are also a few in a district called Kargo, on the Belait, and these latter I tried to meet on my visit to that river. They seem very shy of strangers and some whom I met on the stream paddled away as soon as they caught sight of my boat. This is possibly the result of oppression. I had hoped to make the acquaintance of the race on the Tamburong, but they have retired far into the jungle in fear of small-pox, leaving their usual haunts deserted. They are, on the rivers where they live, the chief collectors of jungle produce, which they barter away in trade with Chinese, Bisayas or Malays. They are not Mahommedans, and are said to be an extremely dirty and depraved race, whose partiality to gin is rapidly destroying them. They are a more or less nomad race, and live too far off in the jungle to be the victims of any regular system of oppression.

29. Bisayas. I have already referred to the Bisayas in my notes on the Rivers Belait and Tutong. In these districts, like the Kadayans throughout the State, they form the agricultural element of the population, for the trifling amount of planting done by Malays is not worthy of serious mention. The Bisayas are "Kafirs" and serfs. They are allowed to plant as they please on the land of their owners--tulin, kuripan or kerajaan--and it is they who

provide the ordinary revenues of the districts in which they live. Originally their payments were made in kind--so many bushels of rice and so many fowls being due every season. In most places their payments have now been commuted into a poll-tax. They claim that this should be only two dollars a household, which is, I understand, the amount charged them in Sarawak. It is hardly necessary to say that in Brunei it is anything their owners like to make it. Nor is this all. They are the victims of numerous other demands: pertolongan or benevolences on the occasion of a birth, death or marriage in the family of their Over-lord; lapis kaki on the occasion of a Chief's or underling's visit; dagang serah or forced trade, when their master is energetic enough to adopt that method; and, in fact, any contribution which can, reasonably or otherwise, be squeezed out of them.⁴² In consequence of all these exactions they complain bitterly of poverty and distress. I have already stated in my notes on the Belait and Tutong, the chief homes in Brunei of these people, that the conditions under which they live do not seem to me to support their statements, and that they seem no worse off than the average Brunei Malay. I trust, however, that my remarks will not lead to the erroneous conclusion that these people are not the victims of very great extortion. Their houses are comfortable; they have cattle and ample stores of rice, and seem able to indulge in small luxuries beyond the reach of many Brunei Malays; and they are left very much to themselves under Headmen of their own race who are responsible for the collection of taxes. But a comparison with Brunei Malays is, perhaps, hardly fair. The Brunei Malay suffers from no direct oppression, and the apparent comfort of a Bisaya's house is no doubt chiefly due to his greater industry. The decrease in the population of the Tutong owing to emigration shows that the people have much to complain of, for they do not willingly leave their houses, and it is obvious that, with irresponsible power in the hands of their owners, they may suffer all the injustice that slaves on distant plantations would suffer in any country at the hands of agents of absent masters. There is every reason to fear that they will suffer more severely in the near future, for their labours represent the only available asset left to their impoverished masters, and they will doubtless be the first to feel the pinch of the absolute poverty into which the whole State is rapidly drifting. Their treatment varies, of

course, with the personal character of their owners, and, scandalous as are the exactions from which many of them suffer, they seem to me to have been the subject of some exaggeration in the past. It might certainly be urged, in answer to the accusations of wanton cruelty so often made against the Sultan in respect of these people, that the River Tutong was admittedly in revolt four years ago; that the revolt was quelled--or, rather, died a natural death--after disorganizing the whole district for a year; and that the fine imposed by the Government is only now being paid. A wantonly cruel and rapacious Ruler would surely have been less complaisant. Some of the complaints made to me were that innocent and guilty alike have to pay the fine. This is a breach of abstract justice, but I believe it has been found a useful expedient, even by His Majesty's Government, in dealing with recalcitrant native races elsewhere.

30. That the Bisayas are averse to Brunei Government, and that they are only kept peaceable by the idea which prevails among them that the country is soon to be merged in Sarawak, is patent. I am inclined to attribute their avowed anxiety for Sarawak rule to their ignorance of any other Governments, and to various influences which have been from time to time brought to bear on them. They are an industrious and peaceful race, and would, I think prove tractable and valuable subjects if governed reasonably. Their honesty is proverbial. Personally they are pleasant people to meet, hospitable and respectful, and free from that assumption of superiority which generally seems to accompany a mixture of Mahomedanism and ignorance, and which makes it difficult to more than tolerate a Brunei Malay or a Kadayan.

31. The Kadayans.⁴³ The Kadayans, who are apparently of Javanese origin, are frequently described as the most deserving race in Brunei. I am unable to say on what grounds. They are undoubtedly an industrious and thrifty race, and they seem to be successful, if wasteful, agriculturists. Their usual method is to burn down the jungle on a hillside, build some huts to live in, plant their padi, reap it, and then move off elsewhere and repeat the operation. The lalang-covered hillsides throughout the length of the Brunei River are examples of their method. I mention these because I have sometimes heard it asserted that they have been

deserted for places further afield owing to the exactions of the Brunei Government. It is true that numbers of Kadayans have left Brunei of late years and have settled in Labuan, Sarawak and, in a few instances, in British North Borneo. As they are, like the Bisayas and Muruts, either tulin, kuripan or kerajaan serfs, their treatment varies with the character of their owners. Some of the Pengirans who own such property are notoriously harsh and cruel, but it seems hardly fair to make every instance of private cruelty a direct accusation against the really powerless Government of Brunei, as is sometimes done. Nor would it be fair to attribute all the emigration to actual cruelty or oppression. It must be remembered that settlement outside the boundaries of Brunei means to Kadayans and Bisayas freedom from the obligations of slavery--in itself a great gain--and that the Kadayans are by nature a wandering tribe, who make no long stay in any place. Besides this the Rajah of Sarawak has been at some pains of late years to induce Kadayans to move into Sarawak territory, free passages and monetary assistance being frequently given to this end. Many of the emigrants have, however, returned to Brunei after a short experience of life in Sarawak, finding probably, their surroundings too strange in a new country peopled by different races from those to which they are accustomed.

32. In some places--notably at Lugus, between the Rivers Brunei and Tutong, where there are, I should say, quite 1,000 Kadayans--permanent crops have been planted; but these are the exception. In the country districts of Labuan, where the Kadayans are at least free from the extortions of a native Government, their plantations are badly and carelessly kept.

33. They are Mahomedans of a sort, but their prevailing characteristics appear to be stupidity and petty avarice. Some of their Headmen are even well enough off to adopt the role of money-lender. The floating capital of the Headman of Lugus, invested in this way among the Brunei pengirans, is said to amount to thousands of dollars. An unusually large number of them have made the pilgrimage to Mecca, which argues a certain amount of wealth. They are suspicious of strangers, and show a singular lack of manners. They are, with it all, honest workmen within their own limitations, and make useful and energetic coolies or guides when

once they are satisfied that they will be fully paid. Those whom I have been able to engage in conversation have made no complaints of marked oppression. Those who are hamba kerajaan inform me that their yearly payments are two gantangs of rice and two fowls an adult.⁴⁴ This would not represent more than 1 dol. 50c per annum, and does not seem excessive. It must be remembered, however, that any Brunei Malay considers himself at liberty to steal from them, or abuse any power over them which circumstances may give them, and that, like the Bisayas, they have, theoretically, no rights. Their comparative freedom from gross oppression--for I do not think that as a race they suffer severely--is probably due to their solidarity. Instances are on record which show that injustice to individuals has often been the signal for a rising of the whole tribe and a consequent shortage of supplies. An instance of their independence and disregard of the orders of the Government came under my own notice during the small-pox epidemic. They were ordered to submit to vaccination, but they all refused to do so. The Sultan informed me that he had hesitated for some time to issue the order, fearing that it would be disregarded. His failure to take any steps to enforce it may fairly be attributed to his lack of interest in the well-being of his subjects, but I do not consider the Kadayans as a race intelligent enough to be able to judge when they may disregard orders without offence. From this and similar instances I conclude that they enjoy a considerable measure of independence.

34. Malays. The bulk of the population of the country is Malay, though they form a very small minority in some of the districts. Their numbers have been variously estimated, but in the absence of any reliable data it is impossible to make even a guess at their numbers throughout the State. I think, however, it would be no exaggeration to compute the population of Brunei town alone at about 12,000, including children.⁴⁵ This would give an adult male population of about 4,000. The first impression of absolute destitution conveyed by the squalor of the town and ruinous condition of the houses is considerably modified by further intimacy. I think that too much stress can be laid on these features, which might more fairly be taken as examples of the casual and shiftless way in which Malays seem to prefer to live.⁴⁶ The bulk of the people are undoubtedly poor. The large families

that they rear, the average household being well over twelve, must be taken into account in any consideration of their condition. Their poverty has generally been attributed to the cruelty and oppression of the Government. I do not know what may have been the case in the past; I can only say that the Sultan appears to exercise little or no real power in Brunei at the present time. His attempts to deal with individuals generally fail; the intended victim generally carries favour with some powerful Chief and defies the Sultan's authority. The kampongs into which the town is divided have Headmen of their own, who settle matters without much reference to him. The only direct control which His Highness and members of his so-called Government exercise is over their own uluns, or household slaves, many of whom have been turned off owing to the poverty of their masters and left to fend for themselves.⁴⁷ One cause of the poverty that exists is, in my opinion, the Malay aversion to regular work of any kind, even when it means regular wages. The majority of people prefer to live an independent life, earning their living by fishing and petty trading. The loss of the Limbang, with all its opportunities for trade (and, doubtless, rascality) has pressed severely on these. But the principal cause is undoubtedly the heavy indirect taxation from which the whole population suffers. A reference to Appendices III and IV, which are not exhaustive, will serve to show how real a grievance this is. With all the necessaries of life, except rice, imported either as monopolies or under import duties amounting to 12 per cent. ad valorem, and with no real trade competition to keep down prices, distress is assured. Last year the import duties were, on most articles, 7 per cent; but it will be seen from Appendix III that the Sultan has recently raised a few hundred dollars by selling the 5% duties twice over. He gets personally a mere fraction of the proceeds, the real profits going to the Chinese traders; but he is, I understand, the originator of the system in Brunei, and its existence and steady growth show, I fear, how little he cares for the welfare of his people. If it were not for the establishment of the cutch factory in their midst the condition of the people would be worse. It employs, either directly as workmen, or indirectly as bark collectors and boatmen under contractors, upwards of 400 Malays, and pays locally in wages about 4,000 dollars a month. What the people did before this factory was started

four years ago I do not know. There was one sago factory at work then which no doubt gave employment to some; but I have been frequently told, in answer to enquiries on this point, that the population of the town decreased considerably on the loss of Limbang, and that it is only recently, since the opening of the cutch works, that the people have begun to return to their homes from Sandakan, Labuan and other places along the coast.⁴⁸

35. The Brunei Malays are usually described as a hopelessly dishonest and lazy race. The accusation has been supported in one Report which I have had the advantage of perusing by instancing the case of the Brunei Malay who cut down a cocoa-nut tree to get a cocoa-nut. Considering the labour this would involve, the evidence of laziness seems to me inconclusive. Mr. Birch, in his Report for 1902 on British North Borneo, gives a similar description of their character.⁴⁹ I think on consideration he would admit that this is a libel on the Brunei Malays settled in Sandakan and in other places round the coast. It is well known that all Malays are averse to the irksome obligations of regular employment, but I do not think a general charge of laziness can be supported in the case of Bruneis in the face of the work which they cheerfully perform in day and night shifts in the cutch factory and in their daily avocations, such as sea-fishing. Their pakarangans are heavy sea-boats, cumbered with nets and poles. The usual crew is four men. It is a point of honour to be first in the market, and it is a common sight to see them spurting up the last reach of the river after a 12-miles pull against a strong current.

36. I have no desire to dispute the charge of dishonesty. The petty thefts and pilferings that go on in Brunei are so frequent that they are looked upon as a matter of course, and I think they would probably rival those of any European sea-port town of the same size. Murder--generally the result of jealousy--is said to be common. During my stay in Brunei I have heard rumours of two such cases. The only wonder is that offences against person and property are not more frequent, when it is remembered that there is no police system, and that the public peace is allowed to look after itself.⁵⁰

37. Pengirans. The Pengirans, or aristocracy of Brunei, deserve special mention, not for their

engaging qualities, but because they are largely responsible for the present hopeless condition of the country, and for most of the cruelty and rapine usually attributed to the Sultan. It is no exaggeration to describe them as a class as incorrigibly idle and constitutionally dishonest. Most of them were at one time the possessors of large estates of tulin property. Some of them possibly still have them, but I personally know of none of them, except Pengiran Muda Binjai and Pengiran Pemancha, who have not leased all their property to Sarawak or British North Borneo, or pawned it beyond the possibility of redemption by themselves to private speculators for cash. They have been living with increasing difficulty for years on the proceeds of this gradual disintegration of the State, being too lazy or too incompetent to do an honest stroke of work. They are now on the verge of destitution, and are eking out an unjustifiable existence by what they can extort from Kadayans or Bisayas subject to them, and by what they can raise from the sale of odds and ends of personal property and household goods. What they will do when these means are exhausted is merely a matter of surmise. They form the dangerous and discontented element in the population, and are always scheming and intriguing, being in the happy position of having now no stake in the country and nothing to lose whatever may happen. A very small minority of them seem anxious for Sarawak rule. The majority express anxiety for British control. All are probably insincere, but I think they have enough intelligence to realize that Brunei cannot remain independent much longer. With the exception of those who lost all their private property when Limbang was seized I cannot find that they have any grievances except poverty, and for that they have only themselves to blame.⁵¹

38. Border Raids. Complaints are frequently made by the Sarawak authorities as to the prevalence of cattle-lifting and raids on the Limbang. These cases are invariably attributed to Brunei Malays, probably with justice, but I am not sure that the accusations have ever been inquired into with marked impartiality, and I think that too much stress may easily be laid on such occurrences if they are used to prove the Sultan's encouragement or misrule.

39. A brief account of a case which came to my notice during my stay in Brunei may prove of interest in this connection. After the collapse of

the so-called Tutong rebellion in 1900,⁵² three of the instigators, Dato Kalam, Sahat and Merudin, fled to the Limbang to avoid the vengeance of the Sultan, who was anxious to put them to death; of these Dato Kalam is, I believe, a Bisaya, while Sahat and Merudin are Brunei Malays, hereditary uluns, or vassals, of the Pengiran Bendahara. The Sultan persuaded Mr. Roberts,⁵³ the Manager of the catch factory, to apply on his behalf to Mr. Ricketts, the Resident of Limbang, for their rendition.⁵⁴ This was refused, and they were allowed to settle at a place called Awang up the Limbang River. The Sarawak authorities soon found these men a menace to the peace of the district, and, as a result of continual robberies and acts of violence which kept the people of Awang in a state of ferment, Dato Kalam, a man named Sipak, Sahat and Merudin were arrested and tried for a theft of buffaloes. They were all convicted and punished, Dato Kalam and Sipak being transported to Kuching. On leaving gaol Sahat moved back into Brunei territory and settled at Limau Manis, having obtained promise of protection from Pengiran Bendahara, whom he keeps supplied with occasional buffaloes, raiding the upper waters of the Limbang whenever opportunity offers. On 18 October last a man named Munggol, an ulun of the Pengiran Bendahara, who had thrown off his Brunei allegiance and settled in Limbang six years ago, came to me and reported that three nights previously Sahat had raided his farm in conjunction with one Sahid and stolen two buffaloes, that he had traced them to Brunei, and desired my help in recovering his property. I at once took him before the Sultan. The moment His Highness heard that Sahat was implicated he expressed great pleasure at having at last an excuse for punishing him, asking me whether I thought that he deserved death. I, of course, replied that the crime of cattle stealing was not sufficiently heinous to demand such a penalty, and I only report the conversation in view of the ultimate result of the case, as I think it shows that the Sultan was not anxious, whatever his motives may have been, to screen Sahat. His Highness at once sent messengers to find the two buffaloes and to arrest Sahat. It was found that one of the beasts had already been slaughtered, but Sahat and the other buffalo were brought before the Sultan on the evening of the same day. After a brief inquiry, His Highness ordered the restitution of the buffalo to Munggol and then asked Sahat and Sahid what defence they had to offer. They both stated that they had

bought the buffaloes at Limau Manis. Pressed to say who sold them, they gave the name of one Si Untong, also a runaway ulun of Pengiran Bendahara now settled in the Limbang. The case was postponed, and I undertook to procure the presence of Si Untong as a witness. The Sultan ordered Sahat to be taken to the house of Pengiran Bendahara, and warned him that he would be put to death if he attempted to escape. On application to him, the Resident of Limbang sent Si Untong to Brunei, but at the same time requested me to apply to the Sultan for the rendition of Sahat. Though I had some doubt as to the wisdom of preferring such a request, seeing that the Sultan has consistently refused to recognize Sarawak rule in the Limbang, and that in any case Sahat is not actually a Sarawak subject, I applied accordingly to the Sultan. The Sultan refused to grant the request, stating that he alone had the right to try Brunei subjects, and that the Resident need not fear that Sahat would be allowed to escape. Meantime, however, the Pengiran Bendahara had been bestirring himself in the interests of his follower, and insisted on having the case tried by the five hakim or judges of Brunei. When the case was heard these hakim, two of whom by common repute receive part of the proceeds of all Sahat's raids, inquired whether Sahat and Sahid were willing to swear on the Koran to the truth of their allegation against Si Untong. This they agreed to do, and in spite of my pointing out that Si Untong was there ready to be cross-examined, or, if necessary to himself, swear a denial, the oath was administered. The hakim then reported to the Sultan that the oath must be accepted as a final answer to the accusation of theft. The Sultan told me he could do no more, but he insisted that Sahat and Sahid should pay to Munggol in my presence the price of the buffalo slaughtered. It is interesting to note that Sahid, who was not so case-hardened as Sahat, fell sick of diarrhoea two days after taking the oath, and died within five days, and that since this case the Sultan has issued a Proclamation warning all Brunei subjects that they buy or receive buffaloes from Sahat at their peril, thus making him practically an outlaw.⁵⁵ I have gone into this case in detail, because it seems to me to be a perfect epitome of the conditions now prevailing in Brunei and the Limbang. I have always found the Sultan perfectly willing to investigate any complaints which it has been my duty to bring before him but, as I have already explained, his efforts are generally nulli-

fied by the disloyalty of his leading Chiefs where their own followers are concerned, and, though the Sarawak authorities are very insistent in their complaints against his subject when offences are committed in Limbang, they make no allowances for the difficulties of the Sultan's position, while they allow the Limbang to be made an asylum by those whom he desires to punish for offences committed under his jurisdiction.

40. That settlement in the Limbang should be sufficient to divest a Brunei Malay of his Brunei nationality is, perhaps, a technically legitimate result of the decision of His Majesty's Government to approve the Rajah's occupation of the district, but it is obvious that the Sultan's authority is much weakened in consequence, and it is unfortunate that cases should frequently occur which can only intensify the resentment felt by him on account of that decision. The murder of Si Ajak and Burok, which formed the subject of official correspondence in 1899, and, in respect of which the Sultan was mulcted of an indemnity, are cases in point. His Highness insists to this day, and common report in Brunei confirms his contention, that the murdered men were Brunei subjects born in Brunei and subsequently settled in Limbang, and he resents being forced to pay an indemnity to a usurping government for them.⁵⁶

41. Chinese. There are probably 500 Chinese in the State.⁵⁷ Most of them are registered as British subjects. Their claim to this status is generally based on the payment of naturalization fees in Labuan. Their numbers would hardly justify their separate mention in this Report if it were not for the fact that almost all the trade and practically all the revenues of the country are in their hands, and will be, apparently, for years to come. Great credit is doubtless due to them for their thrift and industry, but their cupidity is, I consider, one of the main causes of the distress and poverty prevalent in Brunei.

42. The remarks which I offer in some later paragraphs of this Report on the trade of the State will show how cheaply they have won the power they hold. I must admit that I have little sympathy with their methods, though they seem unimpeachable from a business point of view. It seems regrettable that all the resources of the British Consul, including

in some cases the summoning of a man-of-war, should have had to be so frequently put at their disposal to extract, invariably from the Sultan, who is admittedly powerless to recover from his Ministers, the last farthing owed them. In one instance the Sultan was constrained by these means to pay, under protest, the balance of debts alleged to be due by his predecessor to a Malacca baba [Chinese born in Malaya] named Soh Eng Gin, in spite of the fact that he is not the late Sultan's heir, and has no hand in the disposal of the cession money, on the security of which the loan was said to have been given. In yet another instance a portion of the cession money due to His Highness by the Sarawak Government was deducted in a similar way to satisfy the claims of two Chinese traders against the Pengiran Pemancha for some rascality of his in regard to the lease of certain revenues in the Belait.⁵⁸ As far as I can understand the records of the case, the Chinese had been undoubtedly defrauded. The point, however, to which I invite attention is that the Sultan was made to pay because he failed to compel the Pengiran Pemancha to do so. The curious constitution of the country makes the Sultan only supreme in name, and his position is so much a matter of accommodation with Ministers as strong as himself that it seems unfair to expect him to risk, an open breach with them. The consequence was that in these cases the so-called British subjects obtained restitution at his expense, and not at that of the real culprits. Such cases only furnish him with a grievance, and serve to make him intractable in other matters. It seems to me that it would be better to warn British subjects, which would mean Chinese traders, that they advance money under the present regime entirely at their own risk, and that their transactions are of no interest to His Majesty's Government. They would probably refuse to lend on these terms, and the Sultan and his Ministers would find it less easy to anticipate their revenues. Many of the Chinese traders now hold documents giving them the right to collect cession-money and revenues for years to come. Such an arrangement seems unfair to the successors of the present holders of office, and should not, I think, be countenanced by the British Government.⁵⁹

43. As far as I have been able to ascertain, the Chinese traders are averse to any change of Government in Brunei. This is only to be expected, for their profits are made out of the incompetency

and extravagance of the present titular Rulers, and though they would have greater security for trade investments under a settled Government they would also lose their monopolies. Moreover, trading is only the ostensible occupation of the more prosperous, who are really money-lenders, and a change of Government would deprive them of the large profits which they make on cash advances on the security of cession money paid annually. Their experience in regard to the Limbang makes them dread the cession of Brunei to Sarawak. They state that such of them as held monopolies in that district were ignored on the taking over the reorganization of affairs there. I do not suppose that they suffered any substantial losses, for, at the prices they pay, the holding of a monopoly for even a few months ought to recoup them. The information given in Appendix III may possibly be of interest in this connection. There are, no doubt, many similar documents which I have had no opportunity of perusing. I must add in fairness to them that they all express a great admiration for British methods of administration and a fervent desire to see Brunei taken under British control. The explanation of their attitude is, in my opinion, to be sought in the limited experience they have had. Their admiration of the British Government is largely due to the fact that their trust in it as the ultimate means of recovering their numerous claims against the Brunei Government has never yet been disappointed.

TRADE

44. No reliable data are available for the present trade of Brunei, and I have had to depend on the traders themselves for such figures as I can offer. Appendices III and IV give a certain amount of information regarding some of the imports. They are obviously not exhaustive, and I only include them in this Report because they held to show the method of indirect taxation in vogue. The principal traders of Brunei are two Chinamen named Chua Cheng Hee and Cheok Yu. Appendix IV is in the main the result of conversations with them, checked, where possible, by personal enquiries among their rivals. Appendix III is a summary of documents produced by them from time to time for registration. The item "sundries" in Appendix IV will serve to explain the methods by which I have obtained my totals and their

probable worthlessness as trade statistics. Chua Cheng Hee admits having received from others import duties amounting to 3,230 dollars. At 5 per cent, this represents 64,600 dollars. He states his shop sold "sundries" to the value of 13,000 dollars. The total on his showing is then 77,600 dollars. Brunei town and district produces practically nothing at present, and the people are dependent on the shops for their food and clothing. As the population must be at least 12,000, the figures given seem to me too low. Besides the goods mentioned in the Schedule, there is a considerable import trade in planks, timber, hardware, nails, cutlery and crockery--the latter chiefly of German manufacture. As Appendix IV gives a total of 120,000 dollars, the total trade of Brunei town must be worth, when sold at present prices, very nearly 300,000 dollars annually. The real value, if the goods were sold at reasonable prices, would be far less; but I think the imports might safely be put at 200,000 at fair prices. The exports in 1903, reached nearly 200,000 dollars also, made up as follows:

Cutch, 144,000 dollars; sago 50,000 dollars; hides 1,500 dollars; getah 1,000 dollars.⁶⁰

45. Taking these figures and those given elsewhere for the Belait and Tutong, which are open to the same charge of inaccuracy, the following results are obtained:

Region	Imports	Exports (dollars)
Brunei	200,000	196,500
Belait	20,000	30,000
Tutong	11,000	20,000
Totals	236,000	246,500

46. I am much disappointed at my failure to obtain a reliable estimate, but it is impossible to do so in a country where all trade is in the hands of irresponsible monopolists, whose statements cannot be checked, and who have every interest in concealing the real extent of their profits. Except for the side light they throw on the condition of Brunei, I must admit that the figures I offer are

not worth the time and trouble wasted in obtaining them. I had hoped to be able to check them by the help of the statistics of Labuan trade, but I have had to give up that intention on finding that, in the Returns for that Colony of recent years, the trade of Western Borneo and Brunei is all classed together.

47. The Brunei figures for 1884 and 1885 are, however, available, and they seem of sufficient interest to be recorded here.⁶¹ There are as follows:

Year	Imports	Exports	Total Trade (Straits dollars)
1884	131,054	158,311	294,365
1885	59,373	65,214	124,587

These are the actual amounts imported into, and exported from, the Brunei River in those two years. The decrease in 1885 was at the time attributed to disturbances on the Limbang. The main export was sago, which came to Brunei from the Limbang. The total imports into the Limbang in 1903 amounted to 183,726 dollars and the exports to 199,397 dollars. The establishment of a settled Government has probably doubled the trade of the district, but a comparison of these figures seems to me to show conclusively that the loss of the Limbang has meant the loss to Brunei, and also to Labuan, of imports and exports of an annual value of at least 200,000 dollars. I mention Labuan because it is the distributing centre for all Brunei trade, and the trade of the Limbang is now carried on by Sarawak streamers directly with Kuching.

48. The value of the sago exported from Brunei in 1903 was given me by Chua Cheng Hee, the owner of the last sago factory there. He states that of late years the works failed to pay their way, and that he could not get sago from Limbang at a cost, when export duties were paid at Pengkalan Tarap, which would enable him to compete successfully with the Sarawak traders. He has therefore closed down his factory, and this item must be omitted in any calculation of the trade of Brunei for the future.

49. I do not think it would serve any useful purpose to discuss the present trade in detail. Any conclusion drawn from the import figures would be vitiated by the fact that they are almost certainly inaccurate, and that the prices ruling in Brunei are fictitious owing to the monopolies held. In many cases the documents granting these are so loosely drawn up that there are no restrictions on price except the greed of the seller and the means of the purchaser.

50. At first sight an import duty of 5%, or even of 12% as in the case of "sundries," does not seem excessive for a native State, nor would it be if the goods were brought in under conditions of free competition, merely paying these charges to the Government or the Government's Representative. This, unfortunately for the people, is not the case. The transactions of the Sultan and his Chinese financiers in regard to sugar, kerosine and salt, shown in Appendix III, will serve as illustrations of the way in which the cost of living is increased. A trader obtains a monopoly for a cash payment. He sub-lets to other traders. Another financier then buys the right to charge a duty on their importations. In many cases the amount of duty to be charged is left to his discretion. The Sultan does not make much out of the transaction. The original monopolist possibly only makes a fair profit. The collector of import duties would claim that he only charges enough to recoup himself for his outlay with all its risks. By the time, however, that the goods are retailed these successive stages have enormously increased their price, and the customer has to pay enough to cover the profits of everyone concerned. The result is that all goods are of an inferior quality, and cost more than double what better kinds would fetch in Singapore. The monopoly ought theoretically to enable the holder to undersell others, but the conditions prevailing in Brunei do away with all incentives to free competition. It is to the interest of the original monopolist to sub-let the monopoly and so receive a fixed income from other traders, rather than go to the trouble and expense of maintaining a private preventive staff. He therefore sells at the same price as others, the cost of maintaining such a staff being shared by all, and the difference between his rivals' expenses and his own representing additional profit.⁶²

51. I have taken no account in my figures of

the coal exported from Brooketon because that place is to all intents and purposes part of Sarawak territory.⁶³ I understand that about 14,000 tons are exported annually, at an average price of 8 dollars a ton. The other items of export from Brunei calls for little comment. Sago, as already explained, may now be disregarded. So, strictly speaking, might the cutch.⁶⁴ The presence of a large native population is, I believe, the explanation of the choice of Brunei town as the site of the factory. The greater part of the mangrove bark from which the cutch is extracted now comes from the Pandaruan, which is claimed as Sarawak territory and from other creeks lying within the limits claimed by Sarawak.⁶⁵ The Pandaruan is referred to in Appendix I. The export duty is in consequence nearly all paid to the Sarawak Government, and it is questionable whether this item should appear as a Return of Brunei trade.⁶⁶

52. It is obvious that in a town like Brunei, with a large native population dependent on outside sources for all the necessaries of life, except a certain amount of rice supplied by Kadayan and Bisaya labour, the import trade must always be considerable. In the case of the Belait and Tutong the circumstances are different. The inhabitants grow enough to supply themselves with necessaries. There is an extensive ulu from which to draw jungle produce, and the consequence is that the exports more than balance the imports.

53. I have made no separate mention of the Tamburong, because its trade is so small that, in a rough computation, which is all that I can offer, it may safely be disregarded. It is, moreover, entirely in the hands of Brunei traders, and is probably covered by their accounts.⁶⁷

THE GOVERNMENT

54. Frequent complaints have been made of the shameful misgovernment of the country. It would, I think, be more accurate, in view of the conditions prevailing, to say that there is no government in the usual acceptance of the term--only ownership. The Sultan has no real power except over his own districts and people. Some of these he exploits or oppresses by virtue of his tulin rights--which he would possess if he were merely one Pengiran among

many--others by virtue of his kerajaan rights. With the internal administration of other districts and people, whether kuripan or tulin, he is unable by the Constitution or custom of Brunei to interfere. Were it only the power to check abuses that he lacked it would be possible to defend him from many of the charges brought against him as the Head of the so-called Government. Unfortunately, however, he shows no signs of a will to do so, and his treatment of his own subjects, though generally admitted to be free from gross personal tyranny or cruelty, shows how lightly he bears his responsibilities and how much he is imbued with the ideas of the class of which he is a member. Nominally he is supreme throughout Brunei. In practice tulin or kuripan holders do as they like in their own districts. They collect the revenues or farm them out as they please; they also sell or lease them wholesale when opportunity offers. The only thing to be said in favour of His Highness in this respect is that he seems more patriotic than others, for he has not sold or leased kerajaan territory during his tenure of power, and has not even carried the alienation of kuripan property to the extent that others have. The Pengiran Bendahara is the chief offender against the State in this respect. By his actions he has no doubt furthered the cause of humanity, but the legality of these transfers of official appanages seems open to question. The only control which the Sultan has over kuripan or tulin owners lies in their relations with foreign Powers. These are theoretically subject to his sanction. That it is rarely withheld seems due to the fact that the alienation of these rights causes him no monetary loss, but, on the contrary, a gain. He is entitled to charge a fee for his "chops" in such transactions; I believe the customary sum is 2,000 dollars. Owing to the admitted poverty of would-be sellers and his own insatiable need of ready money, he has of late years considerably reduced his tariff; he now takes what he can get.

55. With no public expenditure and with a disreputable ruling class scrambling for cash advances from foreign Governments or private speculators, seizing all they dare from their luckless subjects, and valuing their position solely as a means of self-indulgence and extravagance, to talk of a Government seems ridiculous. There are no salaried officers--unless the Pengirans Bendahara and Pemancha can be so described--no forces, no

police, no public institutions, no coinage, no roads, no public buildings--except a wooden mosque, and--most crying need of all--no gaol.⁶⁸ There is the semblance of a Judicature, but little justice. Cases are sometimes tried before the Sultan or Pengiran Bendahara, but it is not often that the Brunei people have recourse to these Tribunals, for the fees--not so much for a hearing as for a verdict--are, in the Bendahara's Court at least, prohibitive; and, as a rule, cases are settled by a system of arbitration among the recognized, if unauthorized, Headmen of kampungs. British subjects are more fortunately situated, since by Treaty the Consul can claim the right to be present at trials before the Sultan.⁶⁹

56. One such occasion presented itself during my stay in Brunei, a Chinese shopkeeper claiming sums amounting in the aggregate to some 400 dollars from a number of Brunei Malays. Here judgment was given for the plaintiff in each instance, after a somewhat irregular but apparently equitable trial, and the defendants were ordered to pay fixed sums every month until the debts were liquidated. This was done regularly during my stay in Brunei, the money being collected by the Sultan every month and handed over to me for distribution. I do not insist on this case as an instance of abstract justice, for the Chinaman had made previous unsuccessful attempts to get his cases settled. The judgment was the result of a certain amount of moral pressure, and may, perhaps, be attributed to the Sultan's fear that he would himself be held responsible for the debts.

57. Though I am anxious not to make my Report unduly long, it is, I think, only fair to the Sultan to record another case in which I had occasion to seek his assistance. Some seven years ago a Chinese-British subject, Teoh Ah Gau, leased the import and export duties of Bukit Sawat, on the Belait River, from Pengiran Bendahara. This Chinaman is, in my opinion, the most deserving of his class in Brunei, but his character quite unfits him for a successful career there, as he is too mild and timid to hold his own among his more pushing rivals. He is universally respected, and the Sultan has given him a seat at his council-table and the title Bendari (which means a "headman" in Brunei, and not, as in the Straits, a "sea-cook"). At the end of his lease, this man found himself devoid of

cash profits, but rich in book debts run up by traders who took advantage of his lack of business instincts to postpone payment of their dues. He has managed since then to recover some proportion of the debts, but he found it impossible to persuade a Brunei Malay, named Si Radin, to pay anything on account. He accordingly brought the matter before the Pengiran Bendahara's Court five years ago, claiming from Si Radin the sum of 177 dol. 88c. Si Radin admitted that debt, paid 26 dollars on account, and asked for three days' grace in which to collect the balance. This was granted, and Si Radin promptly retired to Singapore. Teoh Ah Gau then obtained a copy of the judgment from the Pengiran Bendahara, and a written request from him to Mr. Little, at the time Resident of Labuan, asking him to have Si Radin arrested on his return, as it was rumoured that he intended to settle in Limbang. It was, I suppose, quite impossible to accede to such a request, and on his return Si Radin went unmolested to Pengkalan Tarap, where he bought a row of shophouses and began trading. His native kampong is Burong Pingai, at the head of Brunei Town.⁷⁰ The people of this kampong are very independent, and the Government of Brunei seems afraid to deal with offenders there. As soon as Teoh Ah Gau heard that Si Radin had settled in the Limbang he interviewed Mr. Consul Keyser and obtained a letter to the Resident of Limbang.⁷¹ The Resident refused to go into his case, saying he could have nothing to do with cases preferred against the inhabitants of Limbang by inhabitants of Brunei. Teoh Ah Gau returned and informed Mr. Keyser, and no further action was taken for the time [sic]. During the smallpox epidemic Si Radin committed some offence in the Limbang and returned to Burong Pingai. Teoh Ah Gau then brought his complaint to me. I laid it before the Sultan, who said he remembered the facts and that he would "persuade" Si Radin to pay his debt. I asked him to insist on payment, but all he would say was that it was a matter that required patience, and that I must leave him to settle the matter by arrangement with the Headmen of Burong Pingai. Knowing how difficult the Sultan found it to impress his wishes on the inhabitants of this kampong, and being anxious to study Brunei methods, I did not press for immediate action. The Sultan sent continually for Si Radin, but he excused himself from personal attendance on the plea of sickness, and denied the debt, saying that the Pengiran Bendahara's decision had been given ex

parte and demanding a fresh trial. This the Sultan refused, and at last Si Radin was ordered to pay the balance of his debt within three days. He promptly ran away to Brooketon. The Sultan found he had left behind him a set of brass gongs, worth about 60 dollars, and at once impounded them, paying their value to Teoh Ah Gau in part settlement of his claim. A few days before I left Brunei Si Radin returned. On hearing of his return I again went to the Sultan, and asked him to insist on the payment of the balance due. The Sultan said he would do his best, but pointed out that Si Radin lived in his boat on which he flew the Sarawak flag, and that in consequence he did not dare touch him. Up to the date of my departure nothing more had been done in the matter. This use--or, more correctly, abuse--of the Sarawak flag is very common. People who have run away from Brunei and settled in Limbang obtain Sarawak flags, and return under their protection when business or pleasure recall them to Brunei.

THE RULING CLASS

58. In the absence of any real Government it only remains to attempt to explain the present situation in Brunei by describing those who are in power. Space would not permit of a separate account of each tulin district and its owner, and I think these may fairly be treated in general terms. The irresponsible power possessed by the owners naturally lends itself to the gross acts of cruelty and oppression, and the only wonder is that the scandal is not greater. The explanation probably is that the owners are not only unscrupulous, they are also weak, inefficient and indolent, and leave all they can to local headmen, who, being of the same race as the rest of the serfs, are not invariably cruel. The real sufferings of the people occur when the chief or a follower takes a personal interest in the property. The extent of distress then depends on personal character, and the picture conjured up by my acquaintance with a number of Brunei Pengirans is not a pleasant one.

59. The Sultan. Sultan Hashim Jalil-ul-Alam Akamadin, the 25th Ruler of Brunei, is now an old man with all the failings that usually accompany extreme old age.⁷² He claims to be 80. This would be an exceptional age for a Malay, but I believe him to be about 70.⁷³ As a result of a fall through the

rotten flooring of his Astana last year he is now very decrepit. His lapses into what I can only describe as senility, whether assumed or real, are frequent, and I sometimes doubt whether he understands the full import of all that is said to him.⁷⁴ In spite of this, his bearing is dignified and courteous and sometimes leads one to forget the squalor of his surroundings. He is said to have been at one time an able and intelligent chief, and to have enjoyed the friendship of Sir Spenser St. John, whose tenure of office as Consul is still remembered as the Golden Age of Brunei, and whose name is always mentioned with affection.

60. His Highness seems now to have lost any power of initiative or decision he may once have possessed and to have substituted for it a double measure of obstinacy, at least in his relations with the British Government. His character has so often formed the subject in recent years of the most uncomplimentary reports that I feel bound in common justice to him to point out how much his alleged contumacy and disregard of his Treaty obligations is the result of the unsympathetic way in which, in my opinion, he has often been treated.⁷⁵ His attitude is, in the main, the result of the Limbang episode, the decision in regard to which has impoverished his country, weakened his prestige among his subjects, and destroyed his faith in His Majesty's Government. The establishment of the Consulate in Labuan, 42 miles away across a stormy bay, has done much to widen the breach. There is no direct or regular means of communication between the two places and, as a result, Consular visits have been few and far between. The Consul has had to depend on interested persons for his knowledge of what is going on in the State in which his work ought principally to lie, and his visits, made either in a man-of-war or in a Sarawak steamer, have been undertaken as a rule either to coerce the Brunei Government or to demand the immediate payment of an indemnity or claim. It does not seem to me possible that any satisfactory relations with a Malay ruler can be maintained on such lines, and it seems inevitable that the Sultan should in such circumstances look upon the Consul as his enemy.⁷⁶ I can only add that my personal experience on the spot has led me to form a much less unfavourable opinion of His Highness' character than that recorded by my predecessors.

61. His chief fault as a ruler is that he is

too weak and too prone to treat offenders, even against his own laws, leniently. Nor is this clemency extended only to his Malay subjects. Foreign traders or settlers are similarly treated. His treatment of his subject serfs in the matter of taxation is of course indefensible, but it must be remembered that by Brunei custom a serf has no rights.

62. In the absence of any effort on his part to assert his theoretical supremacy, his actual power in the State is small; but I am sure that his subjects generally would welcome a more energetic attitude which would put a stop to the present conflict of powers in Brunei. He is surrounded by greedy descendants and unscrupulous parasites and depends on them for the advice which ought to be given by his Ministers. It is no credit to him, I am afraid, that his administration has not caused more widespread misery and distress, for, though he bears a reputation for lenity among Brunei Malays, he leaves everything to his followers and hangers-on, and they are as disreputable as the system is vicious. I have already described what I was able in a brief visit to ascertain about his methods in Tutong. Except that the people of Brunei are not directly taxed very much the same system is pursued there. It is kerajaan. Anything obtained from it is the perquisite of the reigning Sultan. With such an example before them it is not surprising that other Pengirans adopt the same system in their own districts, the evils being then intensified by the fact that they are dealing with serfs and kafirs and not with comparatively independent Malays. His Highness' accession is stated to have been the result of the popular choice, the Kadayans being particularly insistent.⁷⁷ This seems to show that his rule was considered comparatively lenient. It is not, perhaps, a very great recommendation, for the choice can only have been one of evils. I cannot find that he has ever done anything to justify his selection according to European ideas, but it appears that in Malay eyes he has only lived the natural life of a Rajah. Whatever he may have been, he is now a weak man, trusting, indulgent to those surrounding him, and only too willing to evade responsibility and shelve unpleasant questions. I must add that he is as proud as he is ignorant. He rarely leaves the precincts of his Astana, and all his knowledge of the world is derived from hearsay. He seems unable to understand why he is not accorded

the same position in the estimation of the world as that to which ancient Sultans of the once powerful State of Brunei might perhaps have aspired.⁷⁸ His people sympathize with this attitude of mind, and the current explanation of the Sultan of Turkey's failure to accede to his request for assistance against the infidels is that his titles are greater than those of the Turkish Sovereign, who is popularly reported to have been amazed at finding he had so mighty a rival in the Far East.⁷⁹

63. As far as I am able to ascertain, His Highness is most unwilling to part with the remainder of his territory, but I gather from hints which he has dropped from time to time that he would not be averse to a large measure of British protection so long as he was left nominally in supreme control. In the case of Sarawak his objections are strengthened by personal considerations and by resentment for the past. The records of the Consulate show that he has been deceitful and untrustworthy, but it must be remembered that throughout his reign the Limbang question has marred his relations with His Majesty's Government and left him distrustful and weakly hostile, and that he had not been very sympathetically treated by His Majesty's recent representatives in Brunei.⁸⁰

64. He has frequently been accused of extravagance. It is hard to explain his continual penury considering what large sums have passed through his hands. I believe that all he gets is squandered by his followers, who trade on the supineness caused by his great age. He has apparently never spent much on himself. His Astana is a mere collection of ruinous hovels, his clothes are always poor and threadbare, and the furniture of his house is sordid and mean. He is said to have squandered thousands of dollars on the marriage of his favourite grandson, Pengiran Muda Tajudin, with the daughter of the Bendahara three years ago.⁸¹ His excuse might be that it was a political alliance designed to do away with the long-standing estrangement between the Bendahara and himself, and that all his subjects benefited by a year of free feasting. The smallpox epidemic has made his waste of money in this respect futile, for husband, wife, and infant child all died within ten days of each other, and it is commonly asserted that "the rope between the two houses has been snapped."

65. However he may spend his money it is certain that he is now hopelessly poor. He has been dragging on for months on small advances from his creditors, but each successive one has been obtained with greater difficulty, and at greater sacrifice of the future, and he has little more to hope from them. He has just obtained a loan from the Rajah of Sarawak of 10,000 dollars, which ought to keep him in funds for a month or so, unless his creditors compel him to disgorge it immediately in payment of their claims. It is impossible to insist too strongly on the fact that no amount of money is of the slightest use to him. It goes as fast as it comes, and no one seems to know with any certainty where it goes.⁸² The accounts I have received of his "necessary" expenditure vary between 300 dollars and 2,000 dollars a month. He maintains a household of 172 persons, and would probably require at least 1,500 dollars a month to support himself and them. Lately he has been dismissing uluns owing to his inability to feed them. Before his household was even larger.

66. Mr. Consul Hewett's energy and zeal in settling all outstanding complaints against the Sultan before proceeding on leave have left me little opportunity of judging of His Highness' character by an investigation of charges against him.⁸³ The only case during my stay in Brunei was a complaint by a Singhalese clerk at Brooketon colliery, who stated that he had been engaged as confidential clerk by the Sultan at 40 dollars a month, and after working for three months had been dismissed without ever receiving any pay. His Highness absolutely denied the allegation, saying that the man had lived for two months in the house of a Bengali in Brunei, and had frequently applied for the post and been refused. I therefore requested the complainant to give me some evidence in support of his claim. He was apparently unable to do so, and I had to allow the matter to drop. No other complaint against His Highness has been brought to my notice. The Chinese traders of Brunei stated that everything went smoothly in Brunei during my stay because the Sultan and his people were afraid to misbehave when there was a Consul on the spot to watch them.⁸⁴ Mr. Roberts, the Manager of the catch factory, made the same statement. It appears, therefore, that the interests of British subjects in Brunei could be more successfully watched by a Consul permanently stationed in Brunei

than by one residing in Labuan with no regular means of communication with the State. Whether, however, their rights or wrongs are sufficiently important in themselves to justify the existence of a Consul at all appears to me doubtful. If it had not been for the special duties intrusted to me I should not have found enough to occupy my time.⁸⁵ The majority of the "British subjects" in Brunei are Chinese. They thrive on existing conditions, and too much importance can I think be attached to their occasional losses.

67. Pengiran Pemancha.⁸⁶ Owing to their continual illnesses I have not been honoured with more than a slight degree of intimacy with the Pengirans Bendahara and Pemancha, and have therefore been unable to make a close study of their characters. The Pemancha is by general reputation the Gallio of Brunei. He takes no interest in affairs of State and has little influence. He seems to be a moderately fair ruler of the Belait district, leaving everything to local headmen. Its distance from headquarters probably saves it from gross oppression. He is not so poor as his colleagues, because he has been less reckless or more miserly, and still has the remains of an assured income. Being a Brunei Pengiran his main aims are the begging, stealing or borrowing of money, but he seems as inefficient in these pursuits as in others. His manners and bearing are pleasant, and create a favourable impression. He has frequently been proved guilty of acts of chicanery and dishonesty.

68. Pengiran Bendahara.⁸⁷ Of the Bendahara it is difficult to find anything complimentary to say. He seems greedy, cunning, unscrupulous and cruel. He is also devoid of personal dignity. He was, with Pengiran di Gadong deceased, an adopted son and heir of the late Sultan Abdul Mohmin, and must have been at one time the richest Pengiran in the State.⁸⁸ He is now probably the poorest. He has sold, pawned or mortgaged all that he can get people to take, and is at present living on the proceeds of the sale of the brass cannon which used to ornament his official landing-stage, and of other household property. He is continually scheming to sell the remains of his territories to the British, Sarawak or British North Borneo Governments. Any value they might possess is discounted by the fact that their revenues are mortgaged or otherwise anticipated for years to come, and that his demands have impoverished all his sub-

jects. His exactions in Bukit Sawat, a portion of the Belait River, made his kuripan subjects there unmanageable, and he found it wise to transfer his rights to Pengiran Pemancha. His methods of taxation were the proximate cause, I am informed, of the Tutong disturbances, and are also said to have been one of the chief reasons for disaffection on the Limbang. He seems to take no interest in his duties except in so far as they offer means of raising money, and he shows no loyalty to the Sultan. During my stay in Brunei he offered to surrender all his remaining territories in Brunei to the British Government for 15,000 dollars. In forwarding his letter he stated he had the Sultan's approval. Thinking this improbable, I referred the matter to His Highness, who disapproved of the proposal. It appears that all the Sultan had approved was the attempt, so congenial to the sympathies of all Brunei chiefs, to borrow money. The rest of the proposal was an inspiration of the Bendahara alone. This instance serves to show the amount of loyalty on which the Sultan can count, and also the amount of confidence that can be reposed in the Bendahara's word.

THE SUCCESSION

69. It has been suggested that he should naturally be the next ruler of Brunei. Apart from his age--he is about as old as the Sultan--I consider from what I have seen of him that his selection would be a calamity. He has himself every hope of succeeding to the throne, and has a sufficiently strong following, his house being the centre for all intrigues in Brunei, to seriously inconvenience any successful rival. It is to be hoped that he may pre-decease the present Sultan. Should he do so, the question of the succession, if it should ever arise, will be made easier, and possibly the Sultan's nominated heir would meet with little opposition.

70. The nominated successor. Pengiran Muda Omar Ali Saifudin, the Sultan's eldest son and nominated successor, is generally said to be an imbecile. He is kept very much in the background by the Sultan, and certainly seems to be of weak intellect. His son, Pengiran Muda Tajudin, showed remarkable intelligence, and it seems probable therefore that the father's mental failings have

been somewhat exaggerated. He has no power and no following. He flies a yellow silk flag, and is generally treated with the outward respect due to his position as heir to the throne, but it seems to be the general impression in Brunei that the Bendahara will never allow him to succeed, and is only waiting for the death of Sultan Hashim to have himself declared Sultan. His nomination by the Sultan was the result of pressure from the British Government, and it may be that the facts stated by Sir Charles Mitchell, in explanation of His Highness' reluctance to name a successor, disclose the reasons for the selection of the least capable of all possible aspirants. Pengiran Omar Ali has, at any rate, been given no opportunities of fitting himself for his destined position. The succeeding Sultan should be chosen from among the four principal Ministers of State. There have been for years two vacancies, to either of which he might have been appointed. This would, however, have reduced his father's income, and would also probably have made his incapacity too patent. The consequence is that he is a nonentity in Brunei politics, and his nomination seems, in the circumstances, to have been a mere farce. Should it, however, be the intention of His Majesty's Government to assume a greater control over Brunei affairs in the future, the Sultan's action in nominating so weak an heir merits approval for other reasons than those which probably prompted His Highness.⁸⁹

71. Similar conditions might also have justified the selection of Pengiran Muda Binjai* Mohamed Tajudin, the owner of Laboh. He would be too weak to make a satisfactory independent ruler, but it is due to him to state that, unlike all other aspirants to the throne, he is of royal descent on both sides, and that, unlike the majority of Brunei chiefs, his treatment of his tulin subjects is marked by great forbearance and generosity. He is, however, an old man and very infirm. His followers are few and unimportant, and by his assumption of sovereign dignity he has made himself for years the butt of local wits. It says much for the Sultan's generosity that he has always refused to allow his pretensions to be interfered with, his comment always being that "Pengiran Muda Binjai is a good man and does no harm to any one." His selection

* "Binjai" is a nickname meaning "the idiot."

would, I fear, annoy all the influential chiefs in Brunei, and he is so extremely nebulous in character, that he would soon become a mere tool in the hands of petty intriguers.

THE LIMBANG QUESTION

72. When I took up my duties in Brunei I was already aware that various attempts had been made from time to time to reopen the Limbang question, and that in every instance the Sultan had been informed that the decision of His Majesty's Government was final, and that the question did not admit of further discussion. I have had frequent occasion to insist on this in my interviews with the Sultan and Pengirans of Brunei, for such policy as exists among them hinges on this subject. No interview seems complete without some reference to it, and I have heard every possible argument ad nauseam. In the circumstances I had hoped to avoid all reference to the question in this Report. I have, however, become so convinced of the importance of the district to Brunei, and so persuaded of the damage that its loss has caused to the inhabitants of the country, not all of whom are undeserving, that I find it impossible to deal with the present situation honestly without taking it into consideration, more especially as I am unable to agree with the remarkable statement recently made, in a letter from the Rajah of Sarawak to the Foreign Office, to the effect that the occupation of the district has conferred a benefit on the population of Brunei.

73. A reference to any map of Brunei will show how much of the hinterland this river drains, and how large a portion of the country the district comprises. Brunei itself is built on what may fairly be termed a delta at its mouth. The river Brunei has practically no ulu, and is shut in almost throughout its length by low but steep hills, the soil of which is poor.⁹⁰ In such circumstances, the resources of the fertile Limbang valley are of importance to a native community like that of Brunei, and its control by a foreign, even of professedly friendly, Government cannot fail to have adversely affected the population of the capital of Brunei, numbering at least 12,000 persons. Sarawak offices claim that the Limbang is open to all, and that all traders are welcome. I do not of course wish to imply that special pains are taken to

exclude Brunei trade, I am only concerned to point out that various restrictions and taxes, petty in themselves, but in combination important, have tended to destroy that trade with the Limbang and to accentuate the injury caused to Brunei by the alienation of the district.

74. There were at one time a number of sago factories in Brunei. They have all been abandoned, the last having been closed, after barely paying its way for years, during 1904.⁹¹ The reason given by the owners, Chinese traders, is that they cannot work sago at a profit now that the only source of supply, the Limbang, is practically closed to them. Sago won in the Limbang has now to pay an export duty on leaving Pengkalan Tarap for Brunei.⁹² When it is remembered that Sarawak steamers call at Pengkalan Tarap and carry produce free of tax to Kuching, it will be seen that the Brunei sago trade has naturally been unable to withstand the competition of Sarawak traders.

75. In the past it was the practice for Brunei Malays to take goods up the Limbang for barter with the native races there, and dispose of the proceeds, jungle produce or sago, to the Chinese traders of Brunei. There were also a number of Brunei Malays living for months at a time in the district, working sago, rotans and nibongs, and floating them downstream to Brunei. Sago workers from Brunei have now to report their arrival and to pay a tax of 1 dollar-a-head, or 2 dollars if they work for more than six months. Nibongs, bamboo, and rotans, which are extensively--almost, in fact, exclusively--used for house-building, fishing etc., in Brunei, are all obtained from the Limbang. Nibongs pay an export tax equal to about 15 per cent ad valorem, and bamboos and rotans one of 10 per cent. The result is that Brunei people find it does not pay them to live in Brunei and trade with the Limbang. They have therefore either to remain in Brunei and trust to wholesale traders to supply what they would in former years have obtained themselves from the Limbang, or to cut themselves adrift from Brunei and make their permanent homes in the Limbang. In the case of most of them--for, as a race, they are not less loyal to their Sultan than other Malays--sentiment prevents their adopting the latter alternative. There are, of course, a number of Brunei Malays settled now on the Limbang. Some of them are working permanently for Chinese traders at Pengkalan

Tarap, but most of them are men "wanted" for some offence or debt in Brunei.

76. The Limbang is also sometimes a convenient refuge from oppression or outrage, but the refugees are not always satisfied with the change, and it sometimes happens that a Brunei Malay, after a short experience of Sarawak rule, prefers to return to Brunei. In his monthly Report for April last the Resident of Limbang laid some stress on the emigration of forty blacksmiths, uluns of the Bendahara.⁹³ It appears that they ran away from Brunei in consequence of a rumour that the Bendahara intended to make the daughter of their Headman a concubine. On hearing of the matter the Sultan sent to recall them, promising them his protection, and they returned to Brunei and have not been molested. I have tried, unsuccessfully, to get from them definite reasons for their return. All they will say is that Sarawak rule is not easy for Malays, and that they prefer Brunei. It seems, therefore, that the only Brunei Malays who welcome Sarawak rule in the Limbang are the disaffected.

77. It is, of course, impossible now to form any true conception of the cruelty and extortion which were at one time considered sufficient justification for the Rajah's occupation of the Limbang: but for the reasons given above I venture to submit that His Highness'* intervention has punished innocent as well as guilty, and that the loss of the Limbang is a real loss to all Brunei, and not only to its unworthy owners.

78. As far as I know the Brunei side of the question has never yet been put before His Majesty's Government.⁹⁴ Mr. Trevenen, when making his inquiries on the Limbang, was accompanied by the Sarawak Resident, and even made his trip in the Sarawak launch.⁹⁵ In the circumstances it was hardly likely that he would hear anything except professions of admiration and gratitude for Sarawak intervention. The amount of cession money to be paid was fixed apparently without any reference to the Sultan, or to the numerous tulin owners whose rights were so summarily abrogated.⁹⁶ The account of the seizure of the river as given by the people of Brunei presents some points of interest, and

* Meaning the Rajah.

perhaps deserves, even at this late date, to be placed on record. According to native gossip, the Rajah entered Brunei in 1884 to depose the late Sultan Abdul Mohmin, and to put the present Sultan, then Pengiran Temenggong, on the throne. The intrigue was opposed by Pengirans Bendahara and di Gadong, and civil war would have resulted had it not been for the intervention of Sir W.H. Treacher, at the time Consul-General in Labuan. Hearing of the Rajah's action he hastened to Brunei, prevailed on the Rajah to retire, and pacified the rival Pengirans. It is stated--with what truth I cannot say--that the lease of the Trusan district in perpetuity, for 4,500 dollars per annum, was the price of the Rajah's attempted assistance. The Bisayas on the lower reaches of the Limbang River were at the time in rebellion against the exactions of the Orang Kaya Burok--himself a Bisaya--and other local agents of Brunei Pengirans; and I have been told that in this fact lies the explanation of a special clause in the Trusan lease promising to Pengiran Temenggong Hashim, the present Sultan, the assistance of Sarawak if he were ever in difficulties. On the death of Sultan Abdul Mohmin in 1885 the Pengiran Temenggong, the most popular chief in Brunei at the time, was elected Sultan. Disturbances continued to break out in a spasmodic way on the Limbang, chiefly, apparently, because the Brunei Chiefs responsible for the government of the country were too busily engaged in intrigues among themselves to pay any attention to the matter; and ultimately, in 1890, the Rajah of Sarawak occupied the river, being persuaded to do so by Pengiran di Gadong, who was jealous of the Sultan, and only too willing to assist in any scheme which would humiliate him. The negotiations for the seizure of the river were commenced in Tutong, whither the Pengiran di Gadong proceeded to meet the Rajah, and were completed in Labuan. Mr. Everett, a concession hunter who had just joined the service of the Sarawak Government after transferring his lease of the River Pandaruan (cf. Appendix *) to the Rajah, was selected for the duty, and proceeded to Pengkalan Tarap with a force of Dayaks and hoisted the Sarawak flag.⁹⁷ On hearing of this Sultan Hashim at once sent a small force to demand his withdrawal. Mr. Everett pointed to the guns he had brought with him and to his hastily improvised fort, and dared the messengers to enforce their demands, stating that the Limbang was not Sarawak territory.⁹⁸

79. The above is, of course, only the Brunei account of the transaction, and may possibly be considered unworthy of credence. I only mention it because I cannot find from such records as are available in the Consulate archives that the Brunei side of the question has ever been considered. The story, as current in Brunei, at any rate helps to explain the animosity evinced by the Brunei people as a whole against the Sarawak Government.

80. The Sultan claims that the facts of the disaffection in the Limbang were much exaggerated, and that if no interference had taken place the district would have settled down in the same way that Tutong has. In connection with this I may point out that the disturbances first commenced when the late Sultan Abdul Mohmin was on his death-bed; that the present Sultan's accession roused the enmity of all the other Wazirs; that he has never loyally been served by them; and that, at least during the first few years of his reign, intrigues in Brunei were sufficient to absorb all his attention. The Batang Lupar expedition this year--various, and doubtless garbled, reports of which have reached him from native sources--has given him an opportunity of pointing out that disaffection is not unknown in Sarawak; and he asks with inconvenient insistence why, if rebellions are a proof of misrule, the rivers in Sarawak on which they occur are not forcibly taken from His Highness' control.⁹⁹ His attitude with regard to the Limbang has hitherto been remarkably consistent and dignified. From the first he has obstinately refused to listen to any terms, insisting that "Limbang is Brunei, and Brunei Limbang," and that he could never agree to the cession of the one, knowing how much the prosperity of the other depends on its retention. When it is remembered that he has been living for years on his capital and his credit, that both have long been exhausted, and that the cession money offered him had grown to a considerable amount when he finally refused it, his attitude is all the more striking.¹⁰⁰ The Bendahara and other Pengirans, who lost private property in the district when the Rajah seized it, have been exerting pressure on him for years to induce him to agree to the surrender, and so enable them to claim their shares. They are becoming more insistent as their poverty increases, and his resistance seems to be weakening owing to his realization of the absolute destitution into which he is drifting. It seems quite possible,

therefore, that in the end circumstances will prove too strong for his self-respect, and that he will ultimately allow himself to sink to their level and merely interest himself in obtaining compensation for his personal loss. It will be in many ways regrettable if his chief claim to respect should be thus abandoned. Hitherto the main effects on him of the Rajah's action have been to embitter his relations with the British Government and with Sarawak, and the question has overshadowed and ruined the whole of his reign.

81. The Brunei aristocracy are as vehement in their complaints on the subject as His Highness, but the insincerity of their lamentations over the consequent distress of the Brunei population is apparent when the invariable conclusion of their remarks is reached, and they proceed, with characteristic selfishness, to suggest that they would have no objections to offer to the Rajah's action if he would pay them for their personal right in the district. It is impossible to sympathize with them as a class, but it is generally admitted--even I believe, by the Sarawak authorities--that in the case of some of them (notably Pengiran Muda Binjai) their relations with their serfs in the district were not marred by any excesses on the one hand or disaffection on the other.

82. The boundary. Owing to the Sultan's refusal to admit that the Limbang is no longer Brunei territory the question of the boundary of Sarawak and Brunei administration is a constant source of friction, and it appears to me that, whatever is to be the future of Brunei, this at least is a question towards the settlement of which some effort should be made.¹⁰¹ The Resident of Limbang has this year commenced collecting taxes from the inhabitants of two hamlets called Lisang and Batung, situated about five miles from the Limbang River and scarcely two from the town of Brunei. I have already reported this incident in my letter of 9th October last.¹⁰² The reason given is that these places lie within the watershed of the Limbang, and this seems to be true. Unfortunately, however, for Brunei the contour of the country is such that the watershed of the Limbang comprises almost all the land between its banks and those of the Brunei, and all the Sultan's old resentment is aroused by this technically legitimate action of the Sarawak Government.

83. I have felt bound to record my opinion that for the reasons given above the loss of the Limbang has been the final step towards the ruin of Brunei. It has made life harder for the inhabitants of the capital, and by impoverishing a number of Pengirans has caused poverty and distress among the other inhabitants of the State; for, even granting that the exactions suffered by the people of the Limbang were sufficient reason for its seizure, it seems obvious that when the area of oppression is reduced its intensity over what remains must be increased, and most of the wrongs of which the people of Belait and Tutong complain may fairly be attributed to the increased poverty of their owners. At the same time it seems impossible, in view of the attitude hitherto adopted in regard to this question, to hope that the Limbang, or any part of it, can ever be handed back to Brunei rule.

THE LAWAS DISTRICT

84. I have already in a previous paragraph referred to the acquisition of Province Clarke by the British North Borneo Company, but the transaction has led to such a curious state of affairs in the territory taken over that some reference to it seems advisable in a report purporting to describe the present situation in Brunei. The rivers included in Province Clarke, the Marintaman, Mengalong, Lawas, Punong, Pelait, Siang Siang and Bumbun were the tulin property of various Brunei Pengirans. The sovereign rights over the territory were acquired first. As soon as they had been purchased negotiations were opened with the tulin owners for the cession of their rights. All have now been bought except those of Lawas and Merapok (the latter a tributary of the former). The question of the ownership of merapok has already been clearly explained by Mr. Consul Hewett, and it is only necessary here to record briefly more recent developments of the general situation created by the decision given in that matter by His Majesty's Government. When Pengiran Abubakar of the Lawas found that a rival claimant was supported by the Government of Brunei he invoked the assistance of the Rajah of Sarawak; the latter explained that he was unable to intervene on his behalf and refused his offer to hand over the country to him for 60,000 dollars. Failing to obtain the Rajah's protection, Pengiran Abubakar made overtures to Mr. H.C. Brooke

Johnson, a nephew of His Highness the Rajah, who was at one time in the service of the Sarawak Government, and who resigned owing to a disagreement with the Rajah and entered into partnership with a Chinese trader named, I believe, Ban Hok.¹⁰³ Pengiran Abubakar is now dead, but his heirs have shown me the Agreement made between him and Mr. Brooke Johnson, a translation of which I append to this Report (Appendix VI). Mr. Brooke Johnson has now been at work in the Lawas district for about seven months, and great credit is, I think, due to him and to the Pengirans on whom the government has devolved for the flourishing condition of the district. Monopolies, except for opium and spirits, have been abolished, their place being taken by the collection of import and export duties on a lower scale than that in force at Sarawak, roads are being made, special facilities are being offered to induce Chinese traders and planters to go into the country and open it up; Court is held regularly on more or less European lines, and the revenue for the year, only seven months of which have been under the new regime, already exceeds 7,000 dollars. The district is a rich one, and the revenue will probably be more than doubled next year.

85. In view of the excellent result achieved by Mr. Brooke Johnson, whose position in Lawas is practically that of adviser to the Government, and in the hope, no doubt, that he would assist them in overcoming the obstinacy of the Lawas Pengirans, the British North Borneo Company have this year appointed him Resident of Province Clarke. When he first went to Lawas he engaged in trade there in the name of his firm. His partner is still trading there, but I understand from what he has told me that Mr. Brooke Johnson is gradually divesting himself of all interest in the firm, as he admits that as a British subject trading in the country it is inadvisable that he should also have a voice in the Government. It was Mr. Brooke Johnson's curious position as a private trader, a Lawas officer and a British North Borneo officer which led Mr. Hewett to write his letter of 20 February last, as he had ascertained that Mr. Brooke Johnson was exercising rights of jurisdiction in Lawas. In consequence of Mr. Hewett's representations the principal representative of the British North Borneo Company undertook to instruct Mr. Brooke Johnson to desist from exercising jurisdiction in this district.¹⁰⁴ Since then, however, various efforts have been made by the

Company to persuade the Lawas Pengirans to authorize Mr. Brooke Johnson to hold Court and exercise jurisdiction there, as he does, naturally, in the rest of Province Clarke. The heirs of Pengiran Abubakar, who are jointly carrying on the Government, have twice consulted me on the subject and so has Mr. Brooke Johnson. At their request I visited Lawas and discussed the whole question with them. They are greatly alarmed lest the Company's attempts to obtain rights of jurisdiction may be supported by the British Government and I ventured to assure them that, as far as I knew, His Majesty's Government would not countenance this except with their full concurrence.

86. At the same time, the position is an anomalous one which satisfies none of the parties concerned. The presence of an independent State (which is what the decision of His Majesty's Government has to all intents and purposes made Lawas) in the midst of their territory is unwelcome to the British North Borneo Company. Taxation in Province Clarke, as in the rest of their possessions, is inordinately high, whereas in Lawas the people are more lightly taxed than in Brunei or Sarawak. The consequence is that a steady stream of emigration is being kept up from Province Clarke to Lawas, while numerous opportunities are offered for smuggling. Moreover, the Lawas district is the largest and most valuable in Province Clarke, and its exclusion from the control of the Company renders their acquisition of the rest of the province almost nugatory. The Pengirans of Lawas are as little satisfied as the Company. It is true that their scruples have hitherto been respected, but they live in continual dread of some pretext being found by the Company to force acceptance of their terms. They refuse to recognize any sovereign rights of the Company except those usually exercised in the past by the Sultan of Brunei. Whatever the sovereign rights may be theoretically it appears that none have been exercised for decades in Lawas, and were the Company now to endeavour to exercise any, great friction would undoubtedly arise. Mr. Brooke Johnson's position is still more awkward, as he is endeavouring to serve two masters, whose aims are diametrically opposed, and, incidentally, to look after his own interests as a private trader. It is only due to his great tact and ability that matters have not yet reached an impasse, but his acceptance of office under the British North Borneo

Company has aroused the suspicions of the tulin owners and rulers of the Lawas district, and I fear that he will very shortly find his position an impossible one.

In the meantime it is difficult, in their conflict of authorities, to ascertain what rights or powers the British Consul has in Lawas, or how the changes which have taken place affect the Treaty rights of the British Government.¹⁰⁵

RESOURCES

87. As I have already stated, Brunei is said to be rich in minerals, but as the country has never been systematically explored its wealth in this respect is only a matter of surmise and native report. The presence of coal, at any rate, has been proved, and its existence is a valuable asset of the country. The only coal mine at present being worked is that at Brooketon.¹⁰⁶ His Highness apparently claims the sole monopoly of working coal throughout Brunei territory on the strength of his purchase of Mr. Cowie's concessions. I have been unable to find any complete record of them, but I gather from a copy of the Memorandum, which formed an inclosure to Sir Charles Mitchell's despatch of the 13th October 1899, that all that His Highness possesses is the sole right of exporting coal from the coast between Tanjong Nosong and the Tutong River up to the year 1922, and the first option merely on opening coal works in other localities up to the year 1962. This appears to fall very far short of a monopoly for it would be open to anyone with sufficient capital to force his hand by prospecting throughout the country and expressing the intention of mining in various places. His Highness would then have either to exercise his right of option in each instance or relinquish it. If this interpretation is the correct one, it seems to me to have an important bearing on the terms offered by His Highness for the total surrender of Brunei.¹⁰⁷

88. Coal. I have stated in a previous paragraph that the Brooketon mine does not pay. I understand that the coal obtained in Brunei is as good as, if not better than, Labuan coal. The various factors which have militated against the sale of Labuan coal, such as difficulties of approach to the port and absence of all facilities for loading, have operated still more strongly

against the Brooketon colliery. The coal won there has to be taken across the bay to find a market; it then comes into competition with Labuan coal carried to the wharf at less expense and with less handling, and, as few steamers care to attempt to make a regular call at Labuan with all its difficulties of access caused by the absence of lights, buoys, or land marks, it is obvious that the Labuan output is more than sufficient to meet outside demands. The Brooketon coal then lies on the wharf, either at Labuan or Brooketon, for months, and naturally deteriorates from exposure. Then, when it is tried, it is condemned as of inferior quality. The Rajah of Sarawak has commenced a new venture this year, having arranged for a ship called the Dagmar to run on a regular charter with coal from Brooketon to Singapore. It will be interesting to learn what measure of success attends this new departure.¹⁰⁸

89. Mineral Oil. The discovery of mineral oil at the Rajah's aborted coal mine at Buang Tawar has already been reported by Mr. Consul Hewett.¹⁰⁹ So far, the sanguine hopes expressed of the profits to be obtained from it have not been realized. From all that I have been able to learn on the subject the oil is of a kind hitherto unknown, and its usefulness or commercial value, is still apparently a matter of conjecture. I am informed that, after analysis of a sample, London experts have offered a good price if they can be supplied with 1,000,000 gallons. It is estimated that at its present rate of flow it will take two years to obtain this amount, and it appears that any attempt to hasten the output, which oozes out just as it was first tapped by an accidental blow of a pick, would be attended with considerable danger or at least great expense, the gas from the oil being highly inflammable and its fumes very dangerous. It seems, therefore, that this oil cannot at present be described as a valuable resource, and I believe that the Rajah and his officers consider it a matter for regret that its discovery should have interfered with the working of coal on Pulau Berembang.¹¹⁰

90. According to native reports there are elsewhere in the country, notably at a place called Kelakas in the Tutong district, large supplies of first-class mineral oil fit for illuminating purposes. Various concessions have been obtained or sought for the right to work this, but nothing has yet been done, and the Sultan states that they have

all lapsed. This being so it is impossible to say how much or how little truth there is in the native reports.

91. Antimony and jungle produce. There is said to be plenty of antimony on the Sungei Mangaris, one of the two rivers which unite to form the Belait, and it is certain that both the Belait and Tutong districts possess at present hardly impaired stores of jungle produce of their ulu. The soil of the country, abundantly watered by rivulets of very good water and almost universally fertile, is itself a valuable asset, and should produce a substantial revenue with a settled Government and an effective system of land administration.¹¹¹ I am informed that the Island Trading Syndicate are only prevented by the present hopeless state of the country from investing a very large sum in the planting of gambier for their tanning works in suitable localities in the neighbourhood of Brunei town.

92. Population. No enumeration of the resources of the country would be complete if it omitted all reference to the population. I know of no other Malay country which could boast, before European intrusion, a town of 12,000 native inhabitants. It was the presence of this large supply of raw labour which, I believe, determined the choice of Brunei as the site of the catch factory, and it is evident that the population would be equally valuable if any real attempt were made to open up coal mines on the Brunei river. The agricultural element of the population would be an equally valuable asset in other parts of the country.

REVENUE

93. The circumstances being such as I have tried to explain, it is difficult to differentiate between personal perquisites, the results of ownership, and revenues which would, in a properly governed country, accrue to the Government. There is, for instance, no land administration or revenue. Land is occupied or cultivated by official or private hamba (serfs). But their contributions are not based on any consideration of the amount or even ownership of the land they occupy. The adult members of the Bisaya and Kadayan races pay an annual poll-tax to their owners, but it is a purely

personal form of revenue. The place of customs and licences is taken, throughout the country, by monopolies of trade. These afford no criterion of revenue, for they are sold, to satisfy temporary needs, at whatever they will fetch. The profits derived from them are equally misleading owing to the absence of restrictions as to price etc. There are no rates and taxes except the poll-tax. This should be two dollars for every adult hamba. In practice that is merely the irreducible minimum, and a convenient basis for every other kind of exaction that the ingenuity of the owners can conceive. There are no port or harbour dues, no fines or fees of office, except bribes, and, in fact, none of the items which generally go to make up a revenue to Government.

94. Sultan's receipts. If he had not sold or anticipated all his rights, the Sultan's annual revenue, other than that from poll-tax, would apparently amount under the present system to about 21,000 dollars, made up as follows:

	Dollars
Cession money from British North Borneo: (a) <u>tulin</u>	2,950
(b) <u>kuripan</u>	2,827*
Cession money from Sarawak: <u>tulin</u>	4,500
Coal revenue, Brooketon and Buang Tawar	3,200*
Approximate annual value of capitalized trade monopolies:	8,000*

To this must be added his receipts from poll-tax levied on official or private serfs. The Tutong district is kuripan di Gadong, though the river contains also small tracts of land held by others under tulin rights. The Bisaya population there is probably about 2,000.¹¹² Of these probably 1,500 would be hamba kuripan. About one-third of them would be adults. This would give a minimum Tutong poll-tax of 1,000 dollars. This goes to the Sultan, owing to the vacancy in the office of (Pengiran) di Gadong. The total number of Kadayans throughout the country is probably 8,000.¹¹³ Possibly one-quarter of these are the property of the Sultan, but probably the hamba kerajaan or kuripan would not exceed 1,000. Allowing one-third of them to be adult, the Sultan's receipts from Kadayan poll-tax

* See reference in text.

would amount to about 1,500 dollars, of which about 750 dollars would be official. His Highness' annual revenue may then be set out as follows:

	Dollars
Cession Money, etc., as above	21,477
Poll-tax, Tutong (<u>kuripan</u>)	1,000*
Poll-tax, Kadayan (<u>kuripan</u>)	750*
Poll-tax, Kadayan (<u>tulin</u>)	750
(Total)	23,977

But His Highness has various other casual and uncertain sources of revenue, as, for instance, receipts from fines, fees for affixing his "chop" to concessions, and also presents offered in advance by concession hunters. It may be said, therefore, that he can, theoretically, count upon a minimum annual revenue of about 25,000 dollars, and, that, if he chooses to extract more from his subjects in the way of poll-tax, his receipts might easily be swelled to 30,000 dollars per annum. As a matter of fact, his actual personal receipts are now a very small fraction of this. He had obtained cash advances from money-lenders in exchange for the right to collect the cession moneys for varying terms of years. The coal revenue due to him has been similarly disposed of, the trade monopolies are capitalized, and practically no fixed income remains to him except that derived from poll-tax. He has never yet had to live within these limits, for, hitherto, hardly a year has passed unmarked by the cession of an outlying district to one or other of his neighbours, and this year, when he was already beginning to feel the pinch of poverty, he obtained a loan of 10,000 dollars from the Rajah of Sarawak. Most of this has already been spent in redeeming cannon, jewellery and odds and ends of personal property which his straitened circumstances had forced him to pawn for ready money. From the figures given above it will be seen that the present official revenue of the Sultan should amount to about 15,500 dollars, made up of the items which I have marked with an asterisk.

95. Bendahara's receipts. Any estimate of the present revenue of Brunei must also include the receipts of the two surviving Ministers, Bendahara and Pemancha. There is no kuripan Shahbandar.

* See reference in text.

Omitting, for the present, poll-tax, which may be anything above 2 dollars an adult, the Bendahara's receipts appear to be:

	Dollars
Cession Money for the Baram (<u>kuripan</u>)	2,000*
Cession Money, British North Borneo (<u>kuripan</u>)	1,277*
Cession Money, Sarawak (<u>tulin</u>)	500
Cession Money British North Borneo (<u>tulin</u>)	1,250
(Total)	5,027

His kuripan slaves at Bukit Sawat on the Belait, now transferred to Pengiran Pemancha, apparently brought him in 800 dollars (*) per annum. He is the largest owner of tulin property in Brunei. His Kadayan hamba tulin probably number 4,000. Allowing one-third of these to be adult, his minimum receipts from them would be about 3,000 dollars. This would give him a total income of about 9,000 dollars per annum, of which 4,077 dollars, made up of the items marked with an asterisk, would be official. I do not think it is any exaggeration to say that he has forestalled all this for years to come, and that he has now nothing to live on except what he can extort as "presents" from his Kadayan serfs.

96. Pemancha's receipts. As far as I am able to ascertain, the Pengiran Pemancha's cession moneys are as follows:

	Dollars
Sarawak cession money (<u>tulin</u>)	500
British North Borneo cession money:	
(a) <u>tulin</u>	2,805
(b) <u>kuripan</u>	350

He is in possession of the Belait River, which he claims as his tulin property. There is another claimant, a nephew, but possession is ten points of the law in Brunei. The import and export duties bring him in 900 dollars per annum. He has probably at least 1,500 adult Bisaya hamba tulin, whose poll-tax would bring him in 3,000 dollars per annum, in addition to what he can get, probably 1,000 dollars per annum, from the hamba kuripan in Bukit Sawat, who are really the official property of the

* See reference in text.

Bendahara. His total income may thus be said to be about 8,000 dollars, of which only 350 dollars seems to be actually due to his office.

97. I much regret that I am unable to give any absolutely accurate statistics of Brunei, but it will I hope be understood that what figures I have been able to obtain are the result of very round-about inquiries, and that the nature of my mission, the necessity for secrecy, and the fact that the Consul is not supposed to take any interest in the internal affairs of the country, have made it impossible for me to apply directly to the persons interested. I cannot, therefore claim more than approximate accuracy for any of the figures which I offer, but I hope that they are sufficiently reliable to make them of use in considering the future of Brunei.¹¹⁴

GENERAL SUMMARY

98. I have endeavoured in the preceding pages to carry out the duty entrusted to me by making a full report upon the present condition of Brunei. I fear that my report is inordinately long, and possibly in many respects trivial. My excuse must be that nearly all my preconceived ideas of Brunei have been upset during my residence in the State, that the different conditions in each district and among each class of the population appear to require separate descriptions, that many of the reports submitted in the past appear to me to have been somewhat misleading, and that, though a residence of six months gives ample opportunity for collecting an inconvenient amount of detail about a strange country, it is hardly sufficient to enable one to sift the reliable from the inaccurate or the important from the trivial.

99. It is scarcely possible without the power of redress to win the complete confidence of a native race, and I fear that my description of the conditions under which the lower classes live must be to a large extent based on imperfect knowledge. The Bisayas and Kedayans, for instance, have been invariably described by others, whose experience perhaps exceeds mine, as the helpless victims of pitiless oppression. In the same way the Chinese become honest and thrifty subjects of His Majesty, whose lives and petty savings are in continual

jeopardy from the violence and rapine of a powerful and cruel tyrant, and the Brunei Malays become a worthless and lazy race whose extermination would be a matter for congratulation. I have explained that I have not found the universal signs of misery and distress which I expected. All the real inhabitants, for the Chinese are alien traders, are poor, some through their own criminal folly, others through oppression and in their own despite. All the cruelty to be expected from irresponsible owners is no doubt frequently practised; but the same conditions could probably be equalled in the records of other independent Malay countries.

100. At the same time I must express the hope that, in my endeavour to avoid the exaggerations which seem to me to characterize some of the accounts I have read, I have not fallen into the opposite error of minimizing the grave evils which undoubtedly exist. It must be remembered that, even if the actual condition of the country is not as bad as has sometimes been stated, there is nothing to prevent the possibility of the most ruthless cruelty and extortion becoming at any moment a fact. The state of affairs which I have tried to depict temperately in the preceding pages appears to me to be sufficiently hopeless to make all exaggeration unnecessary. When it is remembered that these evils flourish under nominal British protection, and that it is that protection alone which keeps Brunei in existence as a separate State, it seems obligatory on His Majesty's Government to take some steps to ameliorate them, either by insisting on internal reform or by withdrawing all semblance of suzerainty, when Brunei would rapidly be absorbed, piecemeal, by its neighbours.

101. However unfitted Malays may be as a race for the responsibilities of Government, and however exceptional the depravity of the Brunei aristocracy in this respect may be considered, it is only fair to them to remember that the decay of Brunei may be in great part attributed to purely natural causes. The opening of surrounding territories to European enterprise by the establishment of more or less civilized Governments in Labuan, Sarawak and British North Borneo has brought Brunei, a country in a condition somewhat analogous to that of England in the feudal age, into close contact with a shrewder and more energetic race, and the inevitable result has been to encourage the Malay's natural tendency

to live for the present only, taking no heed for the future. The consequence has been that the ruling classes have been living for years on the brink of bankruptcy, and that every year reduces the country to a more hopeless condition. The end of Brunei as an independent State is now in sight.¹¹⁵ If no outside influences are brought to bear on it, its internal decay will be sufficient to destroy it. But it seems a pity that it was not finally disposed of years ago. Such a course would have obviated many of the difficulties of the situation, which time has only accentuated.

102. As a ruler, the Sultan has probably more means of finding money, at a pinch, than others, but it is certain that the majority of his Pengirans are at the end of their resources, and that they are not the kind of people to quietly await death by starvation. The Sultan refuses to allow any more of Brunei to be alienated, but it is to be feared that unless some means can be devised to assist the impoverished owners of tulin and kuripan property they will in the end disregard His Highness' displeasure and dispose of all that they have left for cash. Hitherto some surviving ideas of patriotism and pride have restrained them, but it is unfortunately impossible to credit them with sufficient strength of mind or loyalty to the wishes of their nominal ruler to withstand indefinitely the temptation to do so, and so delay for a few more years starvation or, what has apparently equal terrors for them, retrenchment and work.

THE FUTURE

103. If the present state of affairs is not considered sufficient to justify any intervention, the question of the immediate future of Brunei is a simple one. Things can of course be left as they are for the present. Unfortunately there would be nothing final about such a decision, and I do not think it could delay for more than a few years the final loss of Brunei independence, while the natural trend of circumstances might perhaps end in depriving His Majesty's Government of the opportunity now offered of moulding the ultimate future of this part of Borneo in accordance with their wishes or interests. The difficulties of the situation are certainly sufficient to daunt any would-be reformer, and in view of them it is not perhaps surprising

that matters should have been so long left to take their course. At the same time, it can hardly be said that the policy of laissez-faire has proved a signal success, and matters seem now to have reached such a pass that strong remedies are required to arrest the decay of the country. The only result of inaction now will be to increase all the evils which are at present the subject of grave concern. Those who hold power in Brunei have been living for years on their capital and credit. Neither are inexhaustible. The first result of their poverty must, if they remain in power, be increased taxation and oppression. When the patience of their victims has been exhausted (and its limits in the case of the Bisayas are already almost reached), either the people will revolt and throw off their allegiance, or the rulers, realizing the hopelessness of their position, will come to terms with some other Government. To attempt to leave matters as they are is, therefore, only to postpone for a short time the final loss of Brunei independence, and in the meantime to increase the sufferings of the inhabitants of the State while encouraging the squandering of all its resources. The longer the delay the more difficult will be the ultimate task of evolving order out of chaos. It seems, therefore, that the time has arrived when some definite policy must be adopted with regard to the future, and the only possible alternatives seem to be the following:

(i) to support the present regime, trusting to the personal influence of a Consul on the spot to prevent or check abuses.

(ii) to encourage the British North Borneo Company to acquire what remains of Brunei.

(iii) to consent to the absorption of Brunei by Sarawak.

(iv) to establish British protection.¹¹⁶

104. The first alternative. I fear that such a proposal in such a country as Brunei must necessarily be foredoomed to failure. Even were it possible always to influence the Sultan, it is impossible for him, under the present regime, to exercise efficient control over districts where he has no real rights, and it would, I am sure, be equally impossible to evolve a consistent or efficient Government out of the material available under present conditions in Brunei. In any difference of opinion--and such differences would be frequent, owing to petty intrigues--the Consul's efforts would be nullified by the provisions of the

Treaty, which forbid interference in internal administration, and he would continually find himself in the unenviable position of having to withdraw his recommendations where they met with opposition, or to insist on them without any rights and in the absence of any recognized authority. The result would then merely depend on the personal character of the Consul, and matters would either continue as at present, or present something difficult to distinguish from "protection" would come into effect, in the face of the Sultan's Treaty rights and without any definite basis. Complete reorganization of some sort seems necessary if any satisfactory result is to be obtained. The right of oppression is a necessary corollary of the present system, and, while that system continues, there is no revenue available for public purposes. The virtual independence of the influential Chiefs increases the difficulties of the situation. They depend on oppression for their livelihood, and unless some compensation is offered them it would be merely Utopian to expect them to forego the only source of revenue which lies ready to their hands. In my opinion, therefore, this alternative may be dismissed as impracticable.

105. Control by British North Borneo. Though they have never, as far as I know, received any encouragement from His Majesty's Government the Chartered Company appear to be ambitious of acquiring further territory at the expense of Brunei, and their taking over of the whole country requires consideration as a possible alternative. I have not made a study of the administration of British North Borneo, all my energies having been devoted to the endeavour to discover the truth about Brunei. I doubt whether a residence of a few months in the country is sufficient even for this one purpose, and I am fully conscious of the limitations of my knowledge, but I can at least state that I have found the Brunei Chiefs on the whole favourably disposed towards British North Borneo. The Company has invariably treated them with fairness and has not found it necessary to invoke the assistance of the Consul to conduct its negotiations with them. Seeing how often the Company's administration has been made the subject of adverse comment, it is only fair to place this view on record. The Government being frankly commercial in its aims, taxation is naturally heavier than it would be in a British Colony, but taxation in Brunei is also heavy, and it

is possible that in this respect the change would not seriously trouble the inhabitants of the State. At the same time I must record the fact that on the rivers of Province Clarke which I have visited I have found far greater poverty and distress than in Brunei, that the people complain bitterly of the oppressive taxation introduced by the Chartered Company, and are full of regrets for the "happy-go-lucky" times of Brunei rule, when as they explain, though they might in some years have heavy calls made upon them, in others they were hardly molested at all. The Company would no doubt be willing to offer as good terms to the Government of Brunei as Sarawak, and they would have the advantage in their negotiations of having no rooted aversion to combat.

106. The misery of the subject races in Brunei has always been put forward as the main argument in favour of handing the country over to Sarawak. Presumably this argument would have equal force in favour of the Chartered Company, for though taxation is heavy in their territories, their rule is not cruel. The possession of Labuan--which, excepting the Limbang, is the only convenient centre for communicating with the outlying districts of Brunei--would make it easier for the Company to exercise efficient control over those districts than it is for the Brunei Government. Whether, however, they have sufficient capital to successfully develop and administer the country is another question.¹¹⁷ Judging by the neglect everywhere apparent in Labuan, it would appear that they have not. They have yet to consolidate and open up the territories they already hold, and all the capital they can spare for years to come will hardly suffice for that purpose. Considering, also, how everything in the past, including the cession of Trusan and the occupation of the Limbang, has tended to earmark Brunei as the sphere of influence of Sarawak, and how fully the actions of the Rajah have been acquiesced in by Her Majesty's Government, it appears to me that it would require very much more forcible recommendations than any that I can think of to oust Sarawak in favour of the Chartered Company.

107. It seems, therefore, that if any action is to be taken with regard to the future of Brunei, the choice must lie between absorption by Sarawak and British protection somewhat on the lines of that which has proved so successful in the Federated

Malay States.

108. Absorption by Sarawak. The final absorption of Brunei by Sarawak seems to be generally looked upon as a foregone conclusion. There can be no doubt that His Highness the Rajah is anxious to make it a fact. This ambition must have prompted the purchase of Cowie's coal concessions, the acquisition of the Trusan and the seizure of the Limbang. The works undertaken at Buang Tawar and the purchase of the Kota Batu estate on the opposite side of the river have strengthened his hold on Brunei.¹¹⁸ He has derived tacit encouragement from the attitude of His Majesty's Government and very active assistance from Consuls on the spot, and he would, I imagine, consider any change of policy a breach of faith.

109. The advantages which would accrue to His Highness [the Rajah] from the acquisition of all Brunei are many. His territories would be consolidated and increased by the cession of some 4,000 square miles of country, lying like a wedge between some of his districts, and he would gain an extra population of over 30,000 people.¹¹⁹ His hold on the Limbang would be legalized.¹²⁰ He would obtain control over the trade of Brunei and the revenue to be derived from it. The trade must amount to about half a million dollars annually, even under present conditions. With a strong and settled Government these figures would probably be doubled in a few years.¹²¹ He would gain a real instead of a limited monopoly of coal.¹²² The Belait could be amalgamated with the Baram district at a very little extra expense, and I understand that it has already been settled that the administration of Brunei should be combined with that of the Limbang. The extra work would not demand any permanent strengthening of the European staff in either of these districts, and it is plain that, as far as expense goes, His Highness would be in a better position than others to undertake the administration of Brunei. Moreover, his occupation of the Limbang gives him easy access to all parts of the territory to be absorbed.

110. With all these inducements there is little wonder that His Highness should have made such continual attempts to realize his aims. In 1897-98 various negotiations were opened for the transfer to him of Belait and Tutong. His relations with the Sultan were, however, so strained that the proposals

came to nothing. The disturbances on the Tutong in 1900 gave him another opportunity.¹²³ From various admissions made to me by the people of that district, I believe that those disturbances were largely due to intrigue, and that the chief object of the rebels was to force a settlement which peaceful negotiations had failed to bring about. As a result of the revolt, Mr. Hewett endeavoured, with the consent of His Majesty's Government, to arrange for the surrender of Belait, Tutong and Muara (Brooketon) for an annual payment of 4,000 dollars. This scheme failed for the same reasons as before. (It is, perhaps, advisable to point out that the Secretary of State's letter of the 26th February, 1903 to the Sultan of Brunei appears to have been written under a misapprehension as to the nature of the Sultan's complaint against actions of the Consul. The Sultan referred in his complaint to the proposals for the cession of the whole of Brunei to the Rajah of Sarawak, and not to the already aborted negotiations for the transfer of Belait and Tutong.)¹²⁴

111. The latest attempt has been the offer of 12,000 dollars per annum to the Sultan and 6,000 dollars each per annum to the Pengirans Bendahara and Pemancha for the surrender of all Brunei. It was to this proposal that the Sultan took such grave exception in his letter to His Majesty's Government.¹²⁵

112. To the last Mr. Hewett seems to have hoped that his efforts would in the end be crowned with success, but I cannot believe from what I have learnt during my stay in Brunei that the Brunei Government has ever had the faintest intention of accepting the terms offered. They are influenced by many considerations apart from any question of the generosity of those terms. I fear that it is no exaggeration to say that His Highness the Rajah is generally disliked and distrusted in Brunei.¹²⁶ He has always been generous in lending money to the ruling class, but, unfortunately, the relations between lender and borrower, in other places than Brunei even, do not always make for real friendship. Brunei Pengirans will borrow from any one, and in the case of the Rajah they seem to look upon loans as a right.¹²⁷ They and the Sultan are never tired of pointing out that the first Rajah of Sarawak was a vassal of Brunei and, in their opinion, the present Ruler has won his position at the expense of

his Sovereign. It is most distasteful to have to repeat any opinion the reverse of complimentary regarding a Ruler so universally respected and admired as His Highness the Rajah of Sarawak, but it seems necessary, for a correct estimate of the Brunei point of view, to record as briefly as possible the grounds on which I find it upheld by my acquaintances in Brunei. Oppressors and oppressed combine, though from different standpoints, in bearing witness to His Highness' various attempts to obtain a predominant influence in Brunei affairs. Any sign of activity is, of course, welcomed by the oppressed, but it is resented by the oppressors, and it is with their sentiments that I am here concerned. They hold that since the seizure of the Limbang, His Highness has become their avowed enemy. They cannot be expected to realize how repugnant all their methods are to civilized minds, and they look upon the Rajah's interference as wanton aggression in the face of the rights of internal independence which they imagined they had secured by the Treaty of the 18th September, 1888.¹²⁸

113. They also insist that of late years the Rajah has broken all his pledges. Their principal grievance is, of course, the occupation of the Limbang. I have already shown how greatly, in my opinion, this has damaged the owners of Brunei. In answer to their complaints that it would ruin Brunei trade and impoverish the people, His Highness authorized Mr. Consul Trevenen to assure them that no differential taxes or duties would ever be imposed there to the detriment of Brunei. This promise has not been kept. I am told that on acquiring Brooketon His Highness promised to treat the place as a mere private speculation. Jurisdiction is now exercised there by the Resident of Limbang and even the excise farms are leased out by the Sarawak Government. For this year they fetched 5,760 dollars. Since leaving Brunei I have been told that these excise rights were definitely ceded to His Highness years ago.¹²⁹ A similar promise was made with regard to Buang Tawar, His Highness' coal mine and oil concession on Pulau Berembang. It was agreed that the mine should be a purely commercial undertaking and that the Rajah's officers should have nothing to do with it. The Resident of Limbang visits the place periodically. Until I made representations to him the Brunei owners of cocoanut plantations on the island had even been forbidden to collect their crops. All the improvements made

there, roads, wharves, fort etc., have been carried out under his personal supervision, and the place is, like Brooketon, to all intents and purposes an outlying district of the Limbang. The last outrage (I am voicing Brunei sentiments) has been the purchase of the Kota Batu estate.¹³⁰ I have found it impossible to impress on Brunei minds the subtle distinction whereby His Highness is, in relation to Brunei, not only Rajah of a neighbouring country, but also a private British subject, and my failure to do so is not perhaps surprising considering how little the distinction seems to have been recognized in Sarawak and by His Majesty's Representatives in Brunei. The rancour of the Brunei people may perhaps be considered baseless and unreasonable, but it would be idle to deny that it exists and that it is an obstacle to any real friendship.

114. Mr. Hewett reported the refusal of the Brunei Government to entertain the Rajah's proposals in his dispatch No. 15 Confidential of the 10th July, 1902.¹³¹ The letter from which he quotes is so uncompromising in tone that I think it advisable to append what is, I hope, a literal translation of it to this Report (Appendix V). This letter was the result of the deliberations of the whole Government of Brunei. I forwarded a similar communication from the Sultan personally, under cover of my letter of the 15th July last.¹³² These letters seem to me to admit of no doubt as to the real nature of the sentiments of the ruling class in Brunei as regards the proposed transfer.

115. I believe that Mr. Consul Hewett was under the impression that the reluctance of the Brunei Chiefs to accede to the proposals which he so energetically pressed upon them was only simulated, and that they were standing out for higher terms. I can only report that frequent conversations with the leading men in Brunei have convinced me that this idea is quite erroneous. There might, perhaps, be room for doubt as to the real sentiments of the Pengiran Bendahara, for he is frankly venal, and has never, so far as I know, shown any but the most ignoble qualities. Even he has never discussed the amount offered him, and Mr. Consul Hewett's hope that he would assist in pressing the proposal on the Sultan and the other members of the Brunei Government was apparently based on his remark that he would agree if the Sultan would. Too much stress must not be laid on the fact that the Bendahara has

been for some time endeavouring to obtain money for his lost property on the Limbang. He has been told that the decision as to its occupation is irrevocable, and his point of view is that if he cannot get his property, he wants its value. He has persuaded other tulin owners to adopt the same line. Their willingness, if only the Sultan would allow them, to accept the Limbang cession money does not in any way argue a love of Sarawak or a desire to barter away the remainder of their possessions and powers to the Rajah. It is only the result of their increased poverty and their desire to obtain some compensation for what has forcibly been taken from them.

116. There is another consideration which I omitted to mention in dealing with the suggestion that Brunei should be handed over to the Chartered Company. It applies with equal force to that alternative or to the one now under discussion, and is that in either case, disguise it as one may, the Brunei Government would cease to exist, and the territory would become a mere district either of Sarawak or British North Borneo. In spite of his lamentable failure to live up to the dignity of his position, the Sultan is intensely proud of the past history of Brunei and so, apparently, are his people. They have sufficient acumen to realize that either change must mean the blotting out of an ancient dynasty; and this sentiment, however ridiculous it may appear to others in the present circumstances of Brunei, is sufficiently strong to mould their policy.

117. When I first took up my duties in Brunei it was with a great admiration for all that I had ever heard of the methods of government in force in Sarawak, and it has been an unpleasant surprise to find my preconceived notions in no way shared by the people of a race whose devoted friend I had always understood His Highness the Rajah to be. My ideas have become somewhat modified during my stay in Brunei, and it now seems to me that the very prevalent belief that His Highness has had great experience in the Government of Malays is based on insufficient premises. As far as I can learn the Rajah has never yet had an opportunity of controlling a really Malay population. His subjects seem to be mainly Dayaks, Kayans, Kenyahs, Bisayas, Muruts, and similar aboriginal tribes whose various religions, customs, and even language are widely

diverse from those of Malays.¹³³ It is a mere accident that all, or nearly all, speak Malay. It is the lingua franca of the Eastern Archipelago.

118. The Malay population of Brunei, at any rate, seem as averse to Sarawak rule, as their Government is. They say the Sarawak Government is benevolent to Dayaks and similar races on whose support the Rajah depends, but that little or no consideration is shown to Malays. The free hand which is apparently given to Dayaks in the suppression of disturbances certainly seems a great blemish on the otherwise high reputation enjoyed by the Sarawak Government. No one could claim for them that they are a civilized race. To turn such a people loose, without European control, to harry and destroy in a disaffected district seems contrary to European ideals, and must, one would imagine, inevitably lead to much cruelty. I can only hope that some of the accounts which I have heard, not only from the natives but also from Europeans, of the actions of Dayaks on His Highness' punitive expeditions are exaggerated. That they are given a great deal of licence is, however, plain from the official account of the Batang Lupar expedition published in the Sarawak Gazette of the 2nd August last. I am aware that European officers accompany such expeditions, but I am informed that bands of undisciplined Dayaks are sent on ahead of the main force and that their actions are not controlled.¹³⁴

119. Brunei Malays are, I am afraid, not particularly courageous, and they seem to have a great terror of Dayaks, and do not relish the idea of being under an administration dependent on such support. From the erection of a fort at Buang Tawar and his avowed intention of making that place, rather than Brunei town, his centre of Government, I gather that the Rajah himself does not expect to occupy Brunei without some opposition.¹³⁵ It would no doubt be futile, and the presence of a force of Dayaks would be sufficient to overawe resistance, but it seems plain that the contingency has been anticipated and provided for.

120. I have already stated that the Chinese traders seem averse to the surrender of Brunei to Sarawak. They seem unable to view with equanimity the almost inevitable substitution of Kuching for Labuan as the centre for Brunei trade. They are connected, either by personal or monetary ties, with

the Chinese traders of Labuan and such a change would disorganize their business. I do not lay much stress on their views, for they seem to me to have little claim to consideration in any case. They are aliens, only kept in Brunei by self-interest, and it is probable that their presence, or at least their cupidity, has caused much of the poverty from which the lower classes of the country are now suffering. The probable effect of the change on the trade, and, therefore, the prosperity of Labuan is, however, a point which seems to deserve consideration.

121. The dependence of the Colony on Brunei, at least as far as trade is concerned is, perhaps, too obvious to require comment. The Chartered Company are evidently anxious to open a port in their own territory to serve their western districts, and if their efforts are successful Labuan will lose all but the Brunei trade. The bulk of the Limbang and Baram trade already goes direct to Kuching in Sarawak steamers. Similarly, most of the imports into Muara (Brooketon) come from Sarawak. Labuan is, under present conditions, the collecting and distributing centre for the trade of Brunei, Belait, Tutong, Tamburong and Lawas. Were Brunei and Labuan both placed under the administration of the British Government or of the Chartered Company no disturbance of trade channels would ensue. If, however, Brunei is to be absorbed by Sarawak, it seems probable that Brunei trade, with whatever advantages it may bring, would, on the analogy of the Baram and Limbang, be transferred from Labuan to Kuching.

122. The Sarawak Offer. My knowledge of the exact nature of the terms offered by the Rajah of Sarawak is so vague that I find any estimate of their generosity difficult. All that I know definitely of the Rajah's proposal is derived from Mr. Hewett's dispatch, No. 12, Confidential of the 19th June 1902.¹³⁶ It appears that the Rajah offers 12,000 dollars per annum to the Sultan and 6,000 dollars each per annum to the Pengirans Bendahara and Pemancha. Half these annuities are to be paid to the "heirs" of the present holders of these offices. If this means their families and not their (problematical) successors, this proposal certainly makes provision for the families which they would lack, for the offices are not hereditary. It is all the more surprising that the terms should have been refused, and that refusal seems to show that even self-interest is not enough to induce the ruling

class to welcome the total destruction of the Brunei constitution.

123. These Chiefs are to retain certain empty honours and to exercise jurisdiction over their own following. This does not include rights of taxation. Apparently, therefore, even if the Sultan only collected 2 dollars an adult head, he would lose poll-tax amounting to at least 2,500 dollars per annum and the value of trade monopolies worth perhaps 8,000 dollars per annum. I have already stated that the payments for these monopolies have all been capitalized and that His Highness no longer draws a regular yearly income from them. So long, however, as he remains in power he has the expectation of repeating his previous transactions at the close of each monopoly term, and the power to do so represents an asset of his present position. His gain on paper would not, therefore, be very obvious. His theoretical revenue would be as follows:

	Dollars
Cession Money: British North Borneo, <u>tulin</u>	2,950
Cession Money: British North Borneo, <u>kuripan</u>	2,827
Cession Money: Sarawak, <u>tulin</u>	4,500
Cession Money: Sarawak, for remainder of Brunei:	12,000
Coal and oil revenue (till 1922)	3,200
(Total)	25,477

It may of course be urged that, as he has capitalized his income for years to come and has already spent the proceeds, he would gain an immediate benefit by accepting the terms offered. This is no doubt true, but the transaction, even as a matter of business, does not offer any permanent advantages over his present position. It must be remembered that, hopelessly mis-managed as the country is, the sources of revenue he is asked to forego bring him in about as much, when calculated on a yearly basis, as the compensation offered him, and that, instead of provision being made to increase that compensation as the country develops under a more enlightened Government, the very reverse is the case.¹³⁷

124. The figures which I have given in previous paragraphs for the equally theoretical annual incomes of the Sultan's Ministers will enable a

similar calculation to be made in their cases. Apparently the Pengiran Bendahara would stand to gain about 2,000 dollars per annum, while the Pengiran Pemancha's receipts would remain about the same.

125. One point appears to have been overlooked or disregarded in the draft agreement offered for the Sultan's acceptance, and that is the existence of tulin rights, carrying with them a large measure of local government and power of taxation, throughout the country. If it is proposed that the Sultan and his two surviving Ministers should settle for these out of the annuities offered to them, their share of the price of Brunei will be considerably reduced. If this is not contemplated, injustice will be done to the holders, unless arrangements are made with them separately. Hitherto, in taking over a district, the Rajah has merely arranged to pay a lump sum, leaving it to the various owners to apportion the shares among themselves, and, I imagine, from the absence of any separate mention of these rights, that this is the intention in this instance. The tulin rights in question have already been anticipated, in most cases, for cash payments covering years to come. It may be argued that the original owners have thus little claim for consideration, but it seems that the purchasers deserve some compensation. I do not suggest that the expectations of profit which may have led to the various transactions should be the measure of compensation to be paid, but it is plain that the rights have a money value and ought to be taken into account.¹³⁸

126. From these remarks it will be gathered that I find myself unable to agree with Mr. Consul Hewett's reports on the extraordinary generosity of the terms offered by the Rajah of Sarawak. Setting aside the question of tulin rights, they appear to me to deprive the present Rulers of Brunei of as much in money, while no account is taken of the loss of even nominal power which acceptance of them must inevitably involve. Nor do I think that the suggested settlement offers as satisfactory a safeguard against the future penury of the three families to be benefited as Mr. Hewett suggests. They would become mere pensioners with a crowd of relations and dependents to support, and the number of their descendants, coupled with the fact that the annuities will ultimately be reduced by half, would soon

make the provision inadequate, even if means could be devised to prevent them from anticipating it. From a monetary point of view, therefore, there seems little to induce the Sultan and his Ministers to accede to the terms pressed on them.

127. But even if the terms were more generous I am convinced that their reply would be exactly the same. Their absolute refusal to discuss the terms seems to me to show that they are sometimes actuated by less ignoble sentiments than mere greed and avarice. Though I should be prepared from what I know of him for any meanness or disloyalty on the part of the Pengiran Bendahara, the fact remains that even he has repudiated the Sarawak terms, and that he has recently preferred to offer to hand over the administration of all his private property to the British Government. These facts hardly seem to me to support the statement sometimes made that he is in favour of the Sarawak settlement.¹³⁹

128. I understand that His Highness the Rajah considers the terms which he has offered more than generous and that he does not see his way to increasing them.¹⁴⁰ I regret that my own opinion of them does not coincide with that expressed by His Highness and Mr. Consul Hewett. The offer of ready money is no doubt a great temptation to a Brunei Chief, but to thus take advantage of their necessities or shortcomings need not necessarily be described as generous. Nor does it seem possible to resist the conclusion that Brunei, under a settled administration, would show a very substantial profit over the suggested cost, more especially as the additional expenses of that administration would not be heavy in the case of Sarawak.¹⁴¹ Considering the advantages which would accrue to that Government from the absorption of Brunei and how easily the country can be amalgamated with existing districts, I am of opinion that His Highness might well have offered higher terms, even as a business investment. I am, in fact, inclined to think that the present necessities of the Rulers rather than the future prospects of the country have been the basis on which the price has been computed, and that many claims have been overlooked or disregarded. If the people were willing to treat on their terms proposed no exception could of course be taken to them, but if any compulsion has to be resorted to I consider that better terms should be given.

129. I do not, however, believe (and I have spent six months on terms of intimacy with Brunei Pengirans on purpose to learn their real views) that any offer of the Rajah would ever be welcomed by the Brunei Government. The past is against any such possibility. It would, of course, be easy to ignore the wishes of objections of the Rulers of Brunei in this case as in the case of the Limbang; they are not in a position to offer any effective resistance, and, though I believe some disturbances would result from the forcible introduction of Sarawak rule, there is no doubt that the Rajah is sufficiently strong to quell them in a very short time. The Brunei Chiefs fully recognize this and I have often heard it admitted that the Rajah would only have to send one ship to Brunei to enforce the acceptance of any terms he chose to offer, unless His Majesty's Government intervened to stop his action. As far as I have been able to learn the only inducement which led the Brunei Government to enter into the Treaty of 1888 was the hope of thus saving their country from the aggression of Sarawak. Although the Treaty has never yet fulfilled their expectations, its existence, perhaps, justifies them in claiming sympathetic consideration of their views as to the future of their country.¹⁴²

130. The arguments in favour of handing Brunei over to Sarawak would seem to be that His Majesty's Government would be relieved, without expense, of their present responsibility in the matter, that circumstances in the past have led His Highness the Rajah, whether rightly or wrongly, to count on the acquiescence of the British Government in his claims, that his rule would do away with the abuses that now exist and would be generally welcome to those who suffer most from them, that is to say, the Bisayas and many of the Kadayans, that His Highness is the only person who has shown any marked disposition to undertake the control of the country, and that he is financially, owing to its geographical situation, in a better position to do so than others. Against these arguments can only, apparently, be put the fact that this is the only solution of the question of which it can be said with certainty that it would not meet with the approval of the Rulers of Brunei. I do not think that much account need be taken of the unwillingness of the common people. It undoubtedly exists, but some of it is probably due to the influence of their Chiefs, and it is quite possible that as much is due

to the fact that they would not welcome any Government which would be unlikely to treat evil-doers with the leniency at present shown in Brunei.

131. From the Brunei point of view the position may perhaps be summed up by saying that surrender to either Sarawak or British North Borneo would be distasteful to the upper classes, since it must mean the loss of all their dignities, that they would dislike Sarawak rule more than that of British North Borneo, that the bulk of the Malay population would be more or less passive, acquiescing in anything that met the wishes of their Chiefs; that, though they do not seem to think it, they would probably find taxation easier under the rule of Sarawak than under the Chartered Company, and that the serfs, Kadayans, Bisayas, and Muruts, would certainly find themselves better off under Sarawak. It must not, however, be forgotten that these people are merely chattels without theoretical rights, that people in such a position are likely to welcome any change, and that, though the sympathies of at least the Bisayas are with Sarawak, any Government conducted on enlightened lines would relieve them from the distress which, they allege, the cruelty and heartlessness of their present owners impose upon them.

132. It is perhaps not irrelevant in this connection to invite attention to the fact that the Government of Sarawak is a personal despotism. That it has hitherto been exercised in such a way as to win universal admiration is no guarantee of its permanency, and the present Rajah has now reached an age when his retirement from active participation in the government of a tropical country cannot be indefinitely postponed. On leaving Sarawak a few months ago His Highness by Proclamation handed over the Government of the country to his son and heir, the Rajah Muda.¹⁴³ The general impression, though there is nothing official to support it, is that this act is by way of an experiment, and that if it succeeds His Highness will gradually withdraw from active control of the State. The task of establishing Sarawak rule in Brunei would be one of great delicacy, and it seems likely that His Highness' experience and reputation would be most necessary for its successful accomplishment.

133. Objects of Interference. The main desiderata to be sought in any arrangement for the future of Brunei appear to be the maximum of justice

to the oppressed with the minimum of interference with the rights and susceptibilities of those in power. I have tried to show how far in my opinion, the alternatives which I have already discussed meet those requirements. They have each of them the great recommendation of involving no extra expense to His Majesty's Government, while offering a fair prospect of the redress of the wrongs so long endured by the subject races of Brunei. In so far, however, as Sarawak or British North Borneo control is not compatible with any real continuance, even in name, of the present dynasty and constitution of Brunei, it cannot be said that either of the alternatives meet the second requirement. It has sometimes been urged that the Sultan and his Chiefs will agree to anything for money. In many instances this has, unfortunately, proved true; but it appears that, up to the present at least, they place a higher value on the remnants of their power than the price that others are disposed to offer, and that the question of the future of their country is complicated to their minds and to those of many of their subjects by considerations of sentiment as well.

134. British Protection. I do not know that Brunei people have ever seriously considered the advantages or disadvantages to them of such a measure of protection as is extended to the Rulers of the Federated Malay States. The proposal has never, so far as I know, been definitely been put before them and I have, of course, by the nature of my instructions, been precluded from ascertaining with any certainty their views on the subject.¹⁴⁴ It seems certain, however, that British protection would meet the case of the oppressed as fully as Sarawak or British North Borneo control, and as far as that requirement is concerned the question is only one of expediency and expense. I have been approached on two or three occasions during my stay in Brunei with tentative suggestions from members of the Sultan's and Bendahara's entourage to the effect that a joint control, whereby His Highness and his Ministers received half the revenue, the other half going to meet the expenses of administration, would be welcome.¹⁴⁵ It is always made the basis of this suggestion that the Government should be carried on entirely in the name of the Sultan, British officers being appointed to do the work only. I cannot say how far these suggestions were authoritative or sincere, or how far they were mere attempts to

ascertain the intentions of His Majesty's Government with regard to Brunei.

135. My personal opinion is that the Sultan is not averse to British protection in its wider sense, and that he would infinitely prefer it to any other change, while I am convinced that Brunei people in general fully realize that matters have reached a crisis and that some change is inevitable. It is obvious to all of them that such a country cannot long retain its independence when the maximum of taxation has been reached without satisfying the wants of the ruling class. The Sultan and his Chiefs would undoubtedly prefer that the future should be a mere repetition of the past, but I believe from the many hints that I have received that British protection would be less obnoxious to them than loss of identity as a mere part of Sarawak or British North Borneo. The curiosity which has been evinced by the leading members of Brunei society in their inquiries of my followers as to the condition of Pahang and of the circumstances of its whilom rulers seems to me to show that, whether they desire or only fear a similar fate, at least they anticipate it as not improbable.

136. If, therefore, it were only Brunei that had to be considered I am of opinion that British protection has most to recommend it. There are, however, other considerations, involving questions of policy, into which it would be presumptuous of me to enter. I propose, therefore, only to offer a few remarks on certain aspects of the question which seem to fall more or less within the limitations of this Report.

137. Labuan and Brunei. It seems evident that were British protection to be established in Brunei, the administration of the State should be carried on conjointly with that of Labuan. Not only does Labuan depend to a large extent on Brunei for its trade, but communication also with the outlying districts of Brunei is easier from Labuan. Since the loss of the Limbang, the Government of Brunei has been greatly handicapped in exercising control over those districts. The configuration of the country is such that Brunei may be likened to a hand, the outstretched fingers of which represent more or less parallel ranges of hills, the spaces between them forming the basins of the rivers Belait, Tutong and Brunei. Travelling across

country from one river to another necessitates the crossing of these hills and the traversing of the swamps at their feet. In dry weather these present no great difficulties, but in wet weather the swamps are almost impassable the recourse is had to boat-shaped sledges drawn by buffaloes, and used by the Kadayans and Bisayas for the collection and removal of their padi crops. Communication by sea, at least in small boats, from Brunei is equally unsatisfactory. The hundred or so miles of coast between Brunei and Lubok Pulai are most exposed. There is no shelter except the rivers, and in a squall their boats render them impassable. Were the Limbang, or even one bank of it, still under Brunei control it would be easy, as in the past to go by boat up that river, cross a very narrow range of hills, and drop down at once upon the headwaters of the Tutong or the Belait. Failing this, the most convenient way is by ship from Labuan.

138. It appears, therefore, that the Government of Brunei, to be in any way satisfactory, should have control of Labuan or of the Limbang. The Limbang being apparently out of the question, it seems clear that if any Government except that of Sarawak undertakes the future administration of Brunei it should also have control over Labuan.

139. As far as I am able to judge from official reports of the Chartered Company and from my brief visits to Labuan, the island is looked upon as a mere burden upon the resources of the Company. Neglect and decay are everywhere apparent, and the people are full of complaints against the Administration under which they have been placed. Their grievances have been fully aired in Petitions to His Majesty's Government, and it is unnecessary to deal with them in detail here. A certain amount of "animus" seems inseparable from all petitions. Those from the inhabitants of Labuan have been marred by an excess of it, and it is a matter for regret that their case should have been thus weakened. That grievances do exist has been admitted by Mr. Birch in his Administration Report for 1901. The Colony has certainly a most neglected appearance. It is a frequent complaint that a larger staff is charged to the island than its Administration, as at present carried on, requires, that the time of officers stationed there is much occupied with business connected with the mainland, and that the excise farms, revenue apportioned to

Labuan, out of the total received for all the territories under the Company, is too small. I have not spent sufficient time in Labuan to venture to discuss the conditions prevailing there, but I can truthfully say that most of the officials seem, from what I have seen of them, either to have very little to do or to leave a great deal undone. Attendance in office is very lax, and I have myself found the transaction of business rendered difficult by apparent slackness and disregard of the interests of the public.

140. It seems that the island has never yet justified the expectations formed on its acquisition, yet it is difficult too see what it lacks to make it a valuable naval base. It has a good harbour, coal--not, perhaps, fit for war purposes, but presumably of good enough quality for use in time of peace--ample supplies of good water, a submarine cable, room for rifle ranges and manoeuvring grounds, and a soil fertile enough, were it only cultivated, to supply fresh fruit and vegetables to a fleet. With all these natural and potential advantages the neglect from which the Colony suffers is very regrettable. The harbour is, by all accounts, disgracefully lighted and buoyed, the country outside Victoria is a wilderness, the roads have become so over-grown with jungle that they are impassable, the people outside the limits of the town are mere savages, allowed to live and die as they please, there is hardly a pretence at education, and, by the accounts of the Chartered Company, no revenue available to carry out necessary improvements. It seems, therefore, that in the interests of Labuan itself there is much to be said in favour of relieving the Chartered Company of this charge on their resources and energies.¹⁴⁶

141. In any case, if British protection is decided upon as the most desirable end of Brunei, the resumption of Labuan by the Crown would eventually be the most reasonable arrangement possible and one the prospective advantages of which to both places should far outweigh any fear of injuring the amour propre of the Chartered Company, or, possibly, the value of its shares.¹⁴⁷

142. Moreover, it seems impossible to resist the conclusion that the administration of the Chartered Company in British North Borneo has not hitherto been successful even from the point of view

of the shareholders of the Company, and this in spite of, or possibly, as some people say, because of the fact that everything is highly taxed. Signs are not wanting to show that before long the question of the future of British North Borneo will demand the serious consideration of His Majesty's Government.¹⁴⁸ It would, of course, be possible ultimately to hand the whole country over to the Sarawak Government for administration. If this is, by any chance, the intended end of British North Borneo, it is not to be expected that the very strong reluctance of the rulers of Brunei will be allowed to stand in the way of their prior assimilation. At the same time, seeing that the future of Labuan, a Crown Colony, is also involved, that the people of British North Borneo are of different races, customs, religions and languages from the majority of the present subjects of Sarawak, and that Brunei itself cannot be said to be willing to come under the sway of Sarawak, there are many objections to such a policy. The only alternative is for the British Government, if or when the occasion arises, to take over the territories of the British North Borneo Company. If this is to be done, the amalgamation of Labuan and Brunei under British administration would form a convenient nucleus for the future Colony or dependency.¹⁴⁹

143. Expense. The undoubtedly heavy initial expense of establishing British protection in Brunei requires consideration. As the proposal has never yet, so far as I know, taken definite shape, it is impossible for me to deal with this aspect of the question in detail. The very apparent desire of Sarawak and British North Borneo to absorb the State would seem to show that the two Governments most competent, from previous experience of similar cases, to form an opinion have little fear of the result.¹⁵⁰ The cost of administration would, of course, depend on the arrangements made, but I have already stated that I do not consider the amount of compensation offered by His Highness the Rajah sufficient. It is, of course, easy to find reasons for the meagre offers made. It is no doubt true that all the possible revenues of Brunei have been recklessly anticipated and the proceeds spent. This has, of course, greatly reduced the present value of the country. It is also true that the original owners of the country, whether kerajaan, kuripan, or tulin would have to be bought out before any process or reorganization could be commenced, and this would

certainly require heavy initial expenditure. Similarly their various creditors and the financiers or money-lenders, who have acquired rights of taxation or the collection of revenue for years to come as security for loans advanced, would require some compensation, as also would the holders of trade monopolies. Having had no opportunities of seeing the documents on which the majority of these claims would be based, I am unable to say how large a sum of money would be involved, but in the case, at least, of official appanages it seems plain that the security depends mainly on the lives of the present holders of office, and that the creditors could not equitably claim from a successor yearly repayment of loans made for the benefit of his predecessor in office. No one presumably has the right to mortgage the salary of his post beyond the period of his own incumbency.

144. From the data available in Appendices III and IV it would appear that the buying out of the monopolists whose transactions are there shown would require at least 50,000 dollars, to which must be added reasonable interest. I have been unable to collect reliable data to enable an estimate to be formed of the amount which would be required to buy up tulin rights of taxation etc., but as financiers have been found willing to advance cash on the security of them, and as they are not likely to do so without the prospect of substantial profits, it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that it would ultimately pay any Government to buy them up.¹⁵¹

145. It would be purely a matter of arrangement how much of their present theoretical receipts should be left to the Sultan and his Ministers, but it is evident that rights of taxation and trade monopolies would have to be taken from them. The place of the latter would be taken, presumably, by moderate import and export duties, a system of taxation to which the people of Borneo are accustomed and one which, even if the present volume of trade were not enormously increased by a better system of Government, ought to produce about 15,000 dollars annually; while the poll-tax taken over from the Sultan and his Ministers ought to reach almost as much. The poll-tax may seem to be a barbarous system of collecting revenue, but it seems indigenous in Borneo, and, as worked in Sarawak and British North Borneo, it appears to suit the people better than a system of taxation based on land

tenure.¹⁵²

146. These rough calculations are enough to show that it could not be hoped that the country would prove self-supporting at first, but it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that with a large and on the whole peaceably inclined population, a substantial volume of trade, a fertile soil, and natural and mineral resources hitherto hardly tapped, its future would ultimately be one of prosperity were present abuses abolished. Whether duty of expediency demand that the task of reformation should be undertaken by His Majesty's Government it is not for me to decide.

Singapore, 5 December 1904

[Signed] S.McArthur