



Organised by  
WINTRAC (WWB/MALAYSIA) SDN. BHD.,  
Malaysian Affillate, Women's World Banking  
**ROYAL BANQUET AND SEMINAR**  
16th & 17th November 1990.

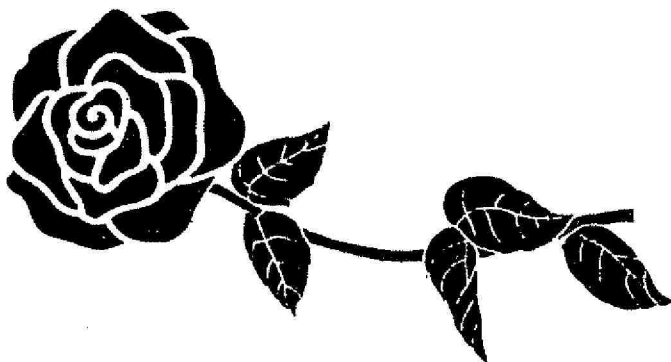
*Under the Royal Patronage of*  
**DYMM Tuanku Yang Dipertuan Besar and**  
**Tuanku Ampuan of Negeri Sembilan Darul Khusus.**



# Thank You

*Hundreds of Good Wishes  
Thousands of Thanks  
Millions of Smiles  
for our Illustrious and Esteemed Sponsors,*

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## PENDAHULUAN / FOREWORD.

Adat Perpatih is a unique Matrilineal System being practised in five districts of the state of Negeri Sembilan with the exception of the district of Port Dickson. Wintrac is taking the initiative to organise this Seminar which will not only cater to the interest of historians and academicians but also lead foreign visitors as well as the locals on a Discovery Trail of the fascinating world in which community, only females inherit property, a male moves to the household of his wife upon marriage and there is neither arrogance nor resentment on either side, because decisions are very fairly made by mutual discussions and consensus of the elders of the clans. The highest qualities of Adat Perpatih are its humanity and its extreme simplicity that brought its provisions within the knowledge of everyone in its society. It embodies law, tradition and proverbial philosophy. In recent years much foreign interest has been shown on this Adat, which attracted sponsors and researchers from Japan, USA, France and Australia.

Wintrac's objectives to organise this Seminar are :

- a) to promote tourism in Malaysia by expounding on this very unique and historical Adat; and
- b) to raise funds for our Women's Credit Fund which assists needy women in Small Businesses.

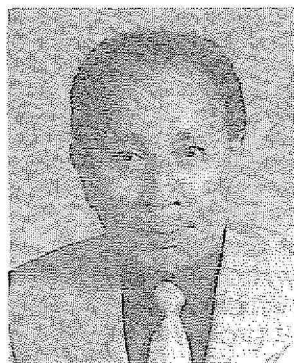
We are deeply honoured and humbled that Their Royal Highnesses, DYMM Tuanku Yang Dipertuan Besar, N.S. and DYMM Tuanku Ampuan, N.S. have graciously consented to be the Royal Patrons for our Royal Banquet and Seminar. It is truly an added honour to us that YTM Dato Undang Luak Jelebu, YTM Dato Undang Luak Johol, YTM Dato Undang Luak Rembau and YTM Tuanku Besar Tampin and their Consorts have given us their distinguished encouragement by accepting our invitation to the Royal Banquet.

On behalf of the Wintrac board, I extend our sincerest appreciation to Y.B. Dato Napsiah Omar, Minister for National Unity and Community Development, Malaysia, our illustrious and esteemed Sponsors, various Contributors, to all Speakers and Officials of the various Sessions, to our Planning Team members, Banquet and Seminar participants, TV, the Press and media, the P.J. Hilton and all those who have helped in one way or another - in particular, Encik Abas Raah, our Co-ordinator and Encik Norhalim Haji Ibrahim, our Advisor.

**“A DISCOVERY OF ADAT PERPATIH”  
(ROYAL BANQUET CUM SEMINAR)**

**PLANNING TEAM**

Dr. Nellie S. L. Tan-Wong – *Chairperson*  
Encik Abas bin Raoh – *Co-ordinator*  
Encik Norhalim bin Haji Ibrahim – *Advisor*  
Miss Surin Leong  
Drs. Ahmad Fadzil bin Yassin  
Tuan Haji Muhamad bin Tainu  
Mrs. Dorothy Bailey  
Dr. Azizah Kassim



**ENCIK ABAS BIN RAOH, PJK.**

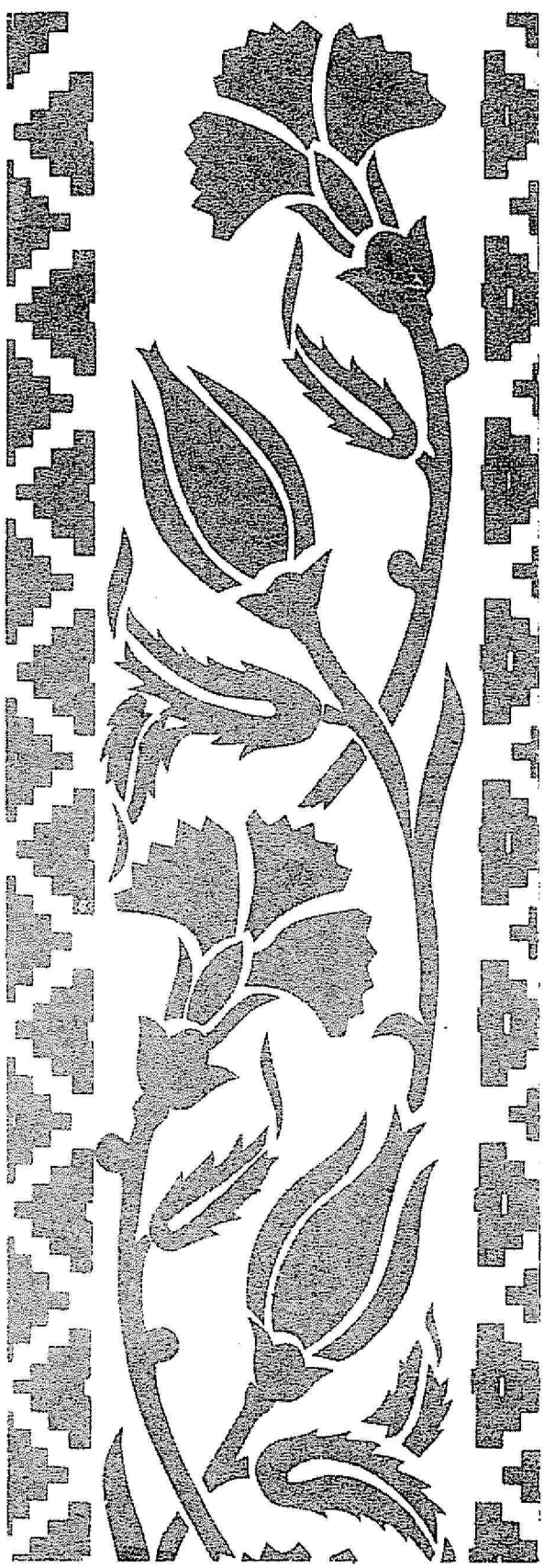
**PUBLICATION ON ADAT PERPATIH**

WINTRAC will be producing upon completion of this Seminar, a Publication on Adat Perpatih, which will contain all Papers presented at the Seminar. All Sponsors and registered participants will be entitled to one free copy of this Book. Any enquiries may be directed to :

**WINTRAC (WWB / MALAYSIA) SDN. BHD.**  
140, JALAN CHOO CHEENG KHAY,  
50460 KUALA LUMPUR.  
TEL : 03-2484759 / 2424861.

**OR**





*With the Greatest Respect  
the Chairperson and Directors  
of*

**WINTRAC (WWB / MALAYSIA) SDN. BHD.**

*humbly extend their  
Deepest Appreciation and Grateful Thanks*

to

**DYMM TUANKU YANG DIPERTUAN BESAR,  
NEGERI SEMBILAN DARUL KHUSUS**

**AND**

**DYMM TUANKU AMPUAN  
NEGERI SEMBILAN DARUL KHUSUS**

**YTM DATO' UNDANG LUAK JELEBU  
AND TOK PUAN**

**YTM DATO' UNDANG LUAK JOHOL  
AND TOK PUAN**

**YTM DATO' UNDANG LUAK REMBAU  
AND TOK PUAN**

**YTM TUNKU BESAR TAMPIN  
AND TUNKU ISTERI**



**Duli Yang Maha Mulia**  
**Tuanku Ja'afar ibni Almarhum Tuanku Abdul Rahman,**  
DK., DMN., DKMB. (Brunei), DK. (Kelantan), DK. (Kedah),  
DK. (Selangor), DK. (Perlis), DK. (Johor),  
DK. (Pahang), DK. (Terengganu), DK. (Perak).  
**YANG DIPERTUAN BESAR, NEGERI SEMBILAN DARUL KHUSUS.**



Duli Yang Maha Mulia  
Tuanku Najihah binti Al-Marhum Tunku Besar Burhanuddin, D.K., S.P.T.J.  
TUANKU AMPUAN, NEGERI SEMBILAN DARUL KHUSUS.





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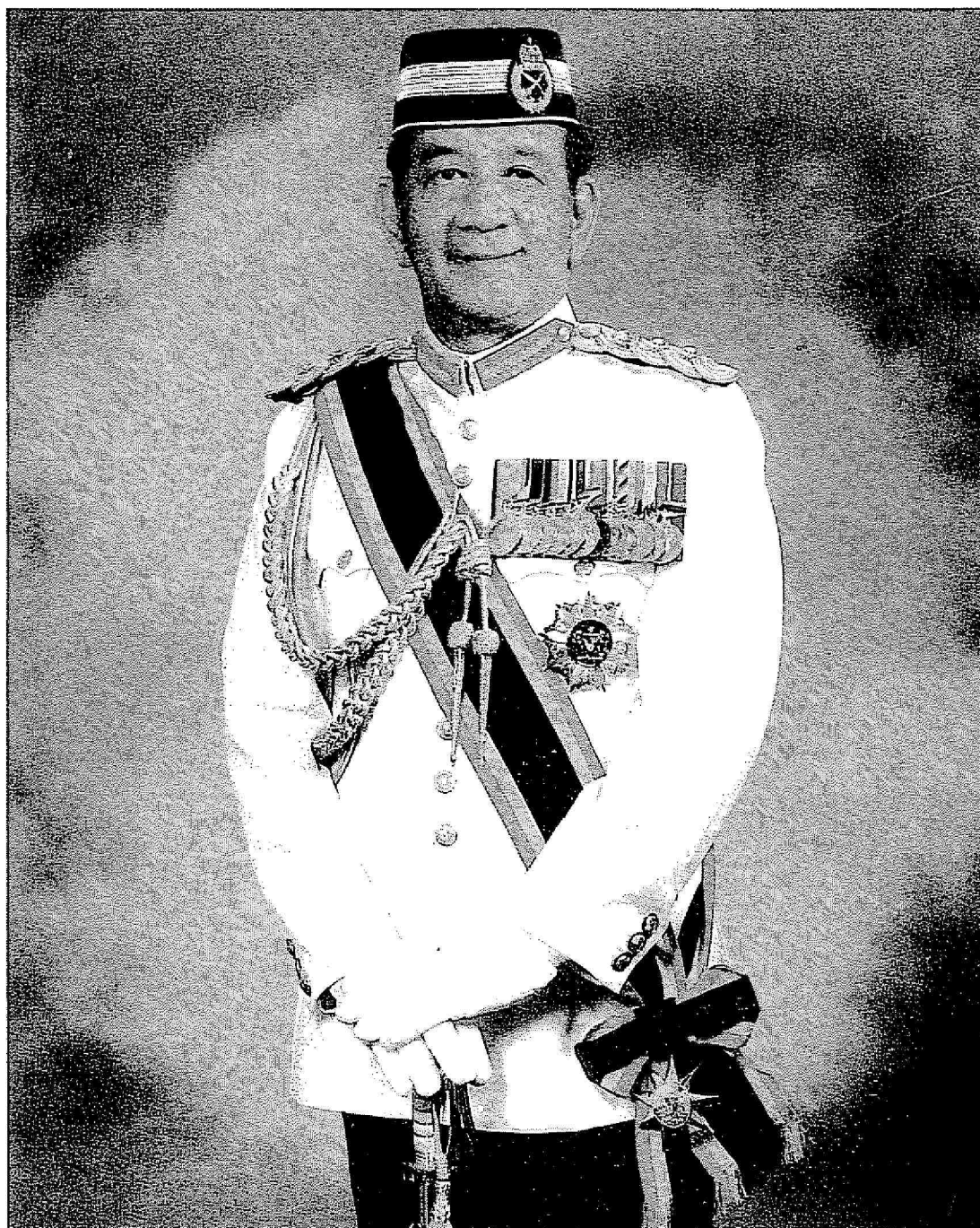


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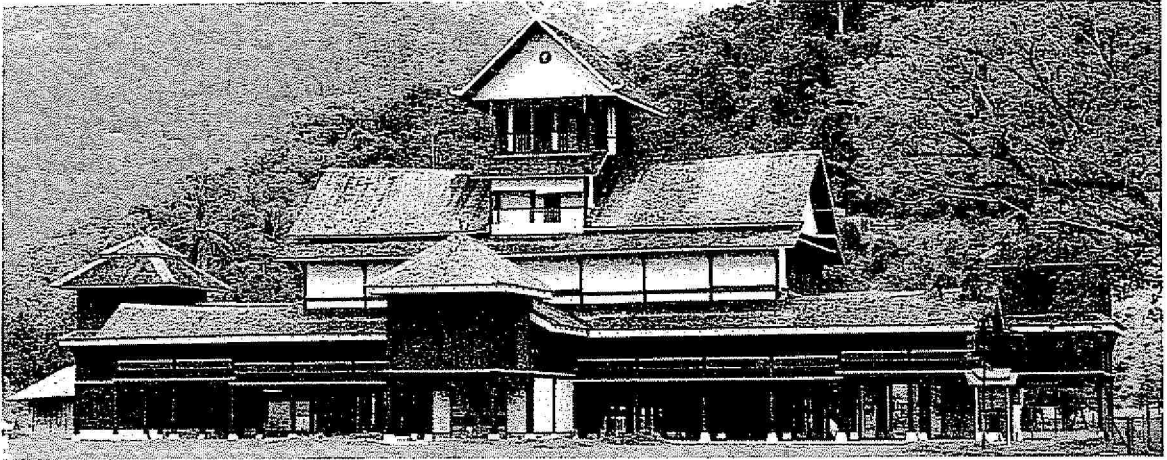


**YANG TERAMAT MULIA TUNKU SYED IDRUS BIN TUNKU SYED MOHAMAD, DTNS.  
TUNKU BESAR TAMPIN**



# *Magnificent Minangkabau*

**Architectural Designs of the Past Magnifies the Culture of Negeri Sembilan.**



**Top:** The Old Palace of Seri Menanti, the royal town of Negeri Sembilan, was completed in 1908, and is four storeys tall, with fine and intricate carvings on the front and back wall panels, verandah and pillars supporting the verandah. The second floor was allocated to the family, whereas His Highness occupied the third floor. The royal treasures were housed on the fourth floor. One remarkable fact about this palace is that it was built entirely out of wood without using a single metal nail.

**Right :** The Teratak Perpatih is the main building of the Taman Seni Budaya, which is situated one km from Seremban on a four hectare site at the junction of Jalan Sungai Ujong and the Kuala Lumpur - Seremban expressway. The Teratak Perpatih houses displays of handicraft products and historical artifacts. Adjacent to this main building are two smaller houses of Minangkabau design. These buildings were reassembled plank by plank, slab by slab, to this present location and not a single nail was used; this is what one would term as typical Minangkabau houses, with various compartments designed to suit the various need of a family.



**“MAJLIS SANTAPAN DI RAJA”**  
*(THE ROYAL BANQUET)*

**FRIDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER 1990**  
*(THE SOCIAL EXPERIENCE)*

- 8.00 p. m. – Arrival of Guests and Participants.
- 8.15 p. m. – Arrival of:  
YTM Tunku Besar Tampin dan Tunku Isteri  
YTM Dato' Undang Luak Rembau and Tok Puan  
YTM Dato' Undang Luak Johol and Tok Puan  
YTM Dato' Undang Luak Jelebu and Tok Puan
- 8.25 p. m. — Arrival of Their Royal Highnesses, DYMM Tuanku Yang Di Pertuan Besar, Negeri Sembilan Darul Khusus and DYMM Tuanku Ampuan, Negeri Sembilan Darul Khusus.
- NEGERI SEMBILAN STATE ANTHEM*
- 8.30 p. m. – Welcome Speech by Dr. Nellie S. L. Tan-Wong, KMN., PMC., PJK, Managing Director, Wintrac (*WWB / Malaysia*) Sdn. Bhd.
- 8.35 p. m. – Royal Address by DYMM Tuanku Yang Di Pertuan Besar, N. S.
- 8.40 p. m. – Negeri Sembilan Dinner is served.
- 9.15 p. m. – Presentation on “The Philosophy of Adat Perpatih” by Lt. Col. Prof. Dato' Dr. Kamarudin bin Haji Kachar, DSNS., JSM., DSN., PPT.
- 9.30 p. m. – Presentation of Cheques to Royal Patron, DYMM Tuanku Yang Di Pertuan Besar, Negeri Sembilan Darul Khusus by Sponsors.  
Group Photograph of DYMM Royal Patron with Sponsors.
- 9.45 p. m. – *CULTURAL CUM FASHION SHOW* – Kumpulan Putrasari.  
*KATA ADAT* – Customary Introduction  
*ADAT BERARAK PENGANTIN* – Presentation of Bridal Entourage  
*BERSANDING* – Bridal Couple on Matrimonial Dais  
*TARIAN PIRING* – Plate Dance (with Rebana)  
*TARIAN LILIN* – Candle Dance (with Rebana)  
*TARIAN RAMPALAN* – A Variety of Dances (with Taklempong and Tumbok Kalang)  
*PERTUNJUKAN PAKAIAN TRADISIONAL N. SEMBILAN* – Fashion Show of Traditional Costumes from the six districts of Negeri Sembilan.  
*TEPUNG TAWAR* – Blessing of Bridal Couple.
- 11.15 p. m. – *NEGERI SEMBILAN STATE ANTHEM*  
Departure of DYMM Their Royal Highnesses and YTM-YTM Dato'-Dato' Undang and YTM Tunku Besar Tampin and their Consorts.  
End of Royal Banquet.

*Juruacara / Master of Ceremony: Encik Haron Awal*

# **“A DISCOVERY OF ADAT PERPATIH”**

## **(THE SEMINAR)**

**SATURDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER 1990**  
**(THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE)**

- 8.15 - 9.00 a. m. Registration
- 9.00 - 10.00 a. m. Opening Ceremony by Y. B. Dato' Napsiah Omar, Minister of National Unity and Community Development.
- 10.00 - 11.00 a. m. **“Historical Developments of the Matrilineal States of Negeri Sembilan”**  
Encik Abdullah Azmi bin Abdul Khalid, Lecturer, Economics History, Universiti Malaya and Grandson of the late Dato' Sedia Raja Abdullah bin Haji Dahan, a former Dato' Undang Luak Rembau.  
**QUESTION TIME**  
**Chairperson :** Dato' Dr. Azizan bte Aiyub Ghazali, Deputy Director, Ministry of Health & Member, NACIWID.
- 11.00 - 12.00 noon **“Political Systems of Adat Perpatih” – Dato' Professor Zainal Kling,**  
Department of Anthropology & Sociology, University Malaya.  
**QUESTION TIME**  
**Chairperson :** Ms. Rosalind Yau Shuk Meng, Managing Director, Professional Arts Centre (M) Sdn. Bhd. and Chairperson, Women's Section, Malaysian Chinese Association, Selangor.
- 12.00 - 1.00 p. m. **“Economic Structure and Property Inheritance of Adat Perpatih”**  
Dr. Norazit Selat, Associate Professor, Malay Studies Department, Universiti Malaya.  
**QUESTION TIME**  
**Chairperson :** Miss P. G. Lim, Advocate & Solicitor, Director, Regional Centre for International Commercial Arbitration and former Malaysian Ambassador to the United Nations and European Communities.
- 1.00 - 2.00 p. m. LUNCH – During Lunch at about 1.20 p. m. there will be a Video Presentation on :  
**“Traditional Matrilineal Marriage in Rembau”.**
- 2.00 - 3.30 p. m. **FORUM : “Women in the Adat Perpatih Society : Continuity and Change”**  
**Speaker :** Dr. Azizah Kassim, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, Universiti Malaya.  
**Member of Panel :**  
YAM Tunku Dara Naquiah ibni Tuanku Jaafar, President, Speakers' Club eldest daughter of HRH the Yang Dipertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan, Mrs. Cheng Yin Mooi, Executive Director, Federation of Family Planning Associations of Malaysia, Mrs. Myra Conway, wife of the Acting Canadian High Commissioner and Miss Rita Reddy, Federation of Women Lawyers Association.  
**Chairperson :** Dr. Nellie Tan-Wong, Regional Co-ordinator, Women's World Banking, Asia & Pacific and Managing Director, Wintrac (WWB / Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.
- 3.30 - 4.00 p. m. TEA.
- 4.00 - 5.30 p. m. **FORUM : “Vanishing Culture of the Adat Perpatih”**  
**Speaker :** Encik Norhalim bin Haji Ibrahim, Chairman, Historical Society of Rembau and Lecturer, Department of Social Science, Universiti Pertanian, Malaysia.  
**Members of Panel :**  
Mrs. Ramani Gurusamy, Secretary-General, National Council of Women's Organisations, Malaysia, Puan Sri Dato' Professor Fatimah Hamid Don, Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya, Hajah Marzidah Hj. Mahmud, Assistant Director, National Productivity Centre, Ministry of Trade & Industry, and Hon'ble Senator Law Jack Yoon, Member, NACIWID.  
**Chairperson :** Miss Surin Leong, Managing Director, Brainpower Management Consultants Sdn. Bhd.
- 5.30 p. m. END OF SEMINAR.  
**ANNOUNCER : MR. VIPIN PATEL, PJK.**

# SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF NEGERI SEMBILAN MALAYS

## 1. Introduction

The old Negeri Sembilan was made up of the present five districts of Rembau, Seremban (traditionally known as Sungai Ujong), Jelebu, Kuala Pilah (part of the traditional 'states' of Johor and Jempol) and Tampin (once part of Rembau). The district of Port Dickson, that is the coastal areas and the sub-district of Lukut were recent acquisitions from the State of Selangor in 1883 in exchange for Semenyih (once part of Sungai Ujong – See Map I). The people of the former six districts were believed to be descendants of Sumatran immigrants, either from Siak or Minangkabau (factual evidence has yet to be proven). They practised a social system and cultural convention known collectively as **Adat Perpatih**. The majority of Port Dickson Malays living in **kampungs** along the coastal areas and those surrounding the towns of Linggi and Lukut were of Bugis origin, and **non-Adat Perpatih**. **Kampung** communities living along the Seremban district boundary also practised the **Adat**.

Basing its subsistence primarily on wet-rice farming, traditional Negeri Sembilan society and culture or the **Adat** was built around a communal kin-based socio-economic system. This system is centred on the principle of matrilineal descent. At the social structure level, the **Adat** involves an array of relationships and social and economic processes that are characteristic of many matrilineal kin-based societies. These include membership in named matrilineal descent groups, matrilocal residence and thus day-to-day life in matrilineally extended families and households; kin group ownership of lands (rice lands and house plots), with the rights passed from mothers to daughters; obligatory economic and social co-operation within the extended family and beyond the larger kin group involving sharing of work, resources, responsibility for children, etc. and dispersed political power based on an accepted hierarchical ranking of social authority.

**Adat Perpatih** is also a complex and consciously-articulated conceptual and ideological system, a worldview that guides the people's perception and choices. As a conceptual system, **Adat Perpatih** includes both specific rules (sometimes in the form of actual legal prescriptions) that reflects and generates the behaviours as outlined above—where to live, who has right to what property, who is responsible

for whose children etc., and also a natural and supernatural world and man's place in it. The conceptual and ideological components tend to reinforce each other and each deals with many inter-relating themes. Thus, **Adat Perpatih**, through the dialectical interaction of such values with the economic, social and political relations people experiences "on the ground", produces a way of life which can be best characterised as communal, fairly equalitarian and democratic.

## 2. Adat Category

The **Adat** was based on the precept : **baik dipakai dek muafakat, buruk dibuang dek rundingan** (if **Adat** is good it will be used / practised through consensus, and if it is bad it will be discarded after consultation). As a whole, the system can be categorised into four types : **Adat nan sebenar adat** (the real **adat**), **Adat yang teradat** (that which has become **adat** over the ages more of common practice than due to the conscious decision or decree on the part of ancestral culture, heros or traditional leaders), **Adat yang diadatkan** (that which was made **adat** in the specific past), and **Adat Istiadat** (tradition or habitual customs).

These four **adat** categories are the basic and principle foundation of the **Adat** system and organisation, either socially, economically, politically or culturally. All of them are based on two basic codes of ethic, namely : the concept of **muafakat** (unanimous consent and agreement) which was very democratic in nature; and the concept of **menyeraya, bekerjasama,** and **gotong-royong** (co-operation or corporate). These two concepts are closely interrelated to one another).

### 2.1. Adat Nan Sebenar Adat

The **Adat** of the first category are the laws of nature which are immutable. These are the laws for which is valid the maxim : "**Nan tak lapuk dek hujan, nan tak lekang dek panas**" (will never decay by the rain, will never burst with the heat of the sun). Some examples of these laws are : **Adat tajam melukai, Adat air membasahi, Adat api membakar** (the nature of sharp things is to wound, the nature of water is to wet, the nature of fire is to burn).

## 2.2. Adat Yang Teradat

This category of **Adat** refers to rule, values and beliefs that had accumulated since men lived in a society. This forms the social charter for the Negeri Sembilan Malays. As they were societal with a collective way of life, they can be added or be disregarded, or even be replaced; as the maxim says: "**Patah tumbuh hilang berganti**" (broken, it will grow again, disappeared, it will be replaced) as long as things/changes or replacement are done through "**muafakat**" (consultation) and with consensus approval.

## 2.3. Adat Yang Diadatkan

The third category of **Adat** refers to local customs and principle that, since it is beneficial and generally accepted by society, it has been institutionalised through **muafakat**.

**Nan elok dipakai yo muafakat  
Nan buruk dibuang yo ketongan :  
Adat habis dek kerelaan.**

(If it is good it will be used through consensus,  
if it is bad it will be discarded after consultations;  
**Adat** will not be practised after voluntary consensus and consultation).

This type of **Adat** will if pulled out, die and if re-located, wither (jika dicabut, mati; jika dipindahkan, layu).

## 2.4. Adat Istiadat

The last category of **Adat**, **Adat Istiadat** refers to cultural realisation that supports, legitimises and stabilises **adat** institutions of the other categories stated earlier. They are manifested in elaborate rituals and ceremonies complete with artifacts and procedures in celebrating an event. This **Adat** however can be adjusted to circumstances and conditions of life. For example, the abolition of certain usages due to the scarcity of the necessary resources. In some instances, the whole **Adat**, such as **Adat berpuar** (a ritual ceremony in connection with rice-planting, conducted before the padi season) was abolished completely from the system. The changes or abolition are usually accepted after consultations and agreement with the **Adat** chiefs, elders and prominent individuals representing the communities.

## 2.5. Adat and Change

The whole **Adat** system was based on the above stated categories. From the short description given of the four categories, most probably the first category – **Adat nan sebenar adat** – is unlikely to change. This is due to the fact that it is based on nature. Thus the belief is that it will not change as long as the law of nature does not change. As to the other **Adat** categories, they are dynamic in nature, only their flexibility and elasticity differs from one to the other. Philosophically, the **Adat** itself ascribes to change. This can be readily seen from many of its sayings. As an example :

**Sekali air bah, sekali pasir berubah  
Sekali raja mangkat, sekali adat  
Berallih,  
Sekali tahun beredar, sekali musim  
bertukar.**

(When there is a flood, the soil formation will change,  
When one king dies, the **Adat** will change,  
When a new year comes, the season will alter).

The above saying indicates that it **Adat** is outdated, it has to change to suit with time, space and environment. However, change, if it is, must go through the **muafakat** procedure, as stated by the **Adat** maxim :

**Ibu adat muafakat,  
Adat menimbulkan yang baik,  
Menghilang yang buruk;  
Bulat air kerana pembetung,  
Bulat manusia kerana muafakat,  
Hilang adat kerana muafakat.**

(The mother of **Adat** is consensual agreement,  
**Adat** only retains the best,  
The outmoded will be discarded,  
The water is round due to the bamboo pipe,  
Man's unanimity due to consensual agreement;  
an **Adat** is lost due to consensual agreement).

Thus, the **Adat Perpatih** is not a static system. It can, it has and it will change to suit the contemporary values of its society without deviating from its norms and values.



### 3. Social Structure and Organisation

The population of Negeri Sembilan according to the **Adat Perpatih** system is based on **sukus** (clan; lit: quarter) – (See Table 1). Each **suku** is made up of a number of **perut** (sub-clan; lit: stomach, abdomen or womb). Each of the **perut** is divided into a number of **ruang** (lineage; lit: room or space), which in turn is subdivided into **rumpun** (sub-lineage; lit: clump or cluster).

Table 1

#### Name of Suku In Negeri Sembilan

1) Biduanda	7) Seri Lemak
2) Batu Hampar	(Selemak)
3) Paya Kumbuh	8) Batu Belang
(Pekumbuh)	9) Tanah Datar
4) Mungkai	(Tedatar)
5) Tiga Nenek	10) Anah Acheh
6) Seri Melenggang	11) Anak Melaka
(Semelenggang)	12) Tiga Batu

#### 3.1. Suku

Although theoretically the population of each **luak** (traditional 'state' or district) in Negeri Sembilan can be grouped into twelve **sukus**, but the number varies from one **luak** to the other. In Rembau for example, at least there are 24 **sukus** (see Table 2) whilst in Jelebu, Johol, Inas and Gunung Pasir, there are 7 **sukus** each, and in Ulu Muar 18, Jempol 12, Tampin 10 and Terachi 9. As to the number of **perut** in a **suku**, it differs from one **suku** to the other; so also the number of **ruang** and **rumpun**.

People belonging to the same **suku** were believed to have a common ancestress. As such unity amongst them is strong. The communal and corporate rate of life amongst members of the same **suku** was reflected in a famous **Adat** aphorism: "**Sesusun bak sirih, sirumpun bak serai, sehartu-sebenda, sepandam-seperkuburan; sehina-semulia, malu seorang malu semua**" (Folded neatly like sirih leaves, one shrub like fragrant grass [*Andropogon nardus*], sharing the same property and tools, sharing burial sites, sharing graveyards, sharing the same dishonour and honour, when one feels ashamed, all feel ashamed too). This had to be strictly followed because what a member does, good or bad, would directly affect the whole **suku**. **Suku** membership remained unchanged throughout one's life. Even when a man receives protection from a person of another

**suku**, called **Induk semang** (having an employer), he keeps his **suku** allegiance and cannot renounce it for favours done by others to him.

The **suku** is the basic resident, kinship and property-owning unit in the society, and is best regarded as a division of the society comprising several distinct groups, each having its own identity.

#### 3.2 Perut

A **suku** is made up of several **peruts**, which is a group of individuals who trace their descent from a common ancestress in the sixth generation. On the question of the number of generations comprising a **perut**, different scholars reporting on matrilineal societies in Negeri Sembilan vary, such as in Jempol, it appears to comprise nine to ten generations, and in Inas it is traceable to five generations. This is an excellent illustration of the flexibility of usage of descent group terms and possibly of the strength and importance of descent group in various areas and periods in Negeri Sembilan's matrilineal society.

The kinship ties between members of a **perut** are slightly stronger than those of a **suku**. The co-operation of members of a **perut** would be necessary for major rituals, namely marriages and funerals; and they would be called together in **berkampung** (gathering / assembly) for political activities and, on occasion, for work in the rice fields.

#### 3.3. Ruang

Several **ruang** makes up a **perut**. This group is a close-knit group. For all social events, every **ruang** member has to attend. In cases where a member is away working (**merantau**) then the chief of the **ruang** has to invite him to come home and if he could not return, then he has to send an apology stating that he agrees to all solutions reached during the **berkampung**.

#### 3.4. Rumpun

The **rumpun** was the smallest descent-based group in Negeri Sembilan's social system. This is an extended family in which ascendants are traced to the mother's mother.

##### 3.4.1. The Rumpun Composition

The nucleus members of a **rumpun**, **ruang**, **perut** and **suku** are a woman and her

daughters, each of the married daughters occupying a separate dwelling. The houses of the woman and her married daughters tend to be clustered together facing the stretch of rice fields which they framed.

### 3.4.2. The Basic Property Ownership

The unilocal group is the basic unit property ownership. Although a married daughter has well-defined rights of usufruct in the fields she works and of possession of that part of her mother's homestead land where her dwelling is situated, the property of the unilocal group is made up of a woman and her unmarried offsprings. It often happens that the senior females live to an old age and there may be two or three generations of adult descendants, married daughters, grand-daughters and great grand-daughters working their shares of the undivided holdings.

Traditionally if the mother's holding was saturated, then the **rumpun** with the consent and sanction of the **ruang**, **perut** and **suku** will clear a new farm. This new farm will be part of the already existing **suku** property, whereupon the unitary kin group is fragmented along the descent lines and new unilocal group (**rumpun**) is formed. The youngest daughter usually stays with the mother. She will inherit the mother's homestead upon her death.

### 3.4.3. The Basic Social Organisation

The **rumpun** forms the effective unit of descent within that **suku**, for it is within this group that the individual's right to support and to property is crystallised. Children belong not to the nuclear family made up of a married couple and their offsprings, but rather to the mother's **rumpun**. Upon the mother's divorce or death, children remain with the **rumpun**, and, if orphaned, they are raised by their mother's sisters. According to the **Adat** a man has no claim whatsoever to his offsprings, whilst nowadays, upon divorce or on the death of his wife, he is expected to contribute something to their support and often enjoys a strong bond of mutual affection with them. He is usually not allowed to take them to live with him, even when it would seem to their advantage to do so.

In all cases, the maternal kin would exercise immediately their claims to the children who are orphaned or whose mother died, regardless of the circumstances. Clan rights to the offsprings of its female members are of crucial importance to the unilocal groups and are

therefore zealously guarded by the **rumpun**. For, it is through children, in particular, daughters, that the **rumpun** maintains its claims to important ancestral **suku** property. Without them, group property rights pass on to collaterals or to other **rumpun** or **perut** with the **suku**. As such, the matrilineal society of Negeri Sembilan encourages the man to marry his sister-in-law (**ganti tikar**) upon the death of his wife.

## 3.5 Marriage

Marriage according to the **Adat** of Negeri Sembilan is an institution in which rules and rituals not only brought together a man and a woman into a lawful union, but also established and maintained links between lineal groups. These affinities are important in building the **suku** organisation into a cohesive whole.

### 3.5.1. Marriage Regulations

The **Adat** regulating marriage had both prescriptive and preferential norms. The fundamental prescriptive norm is that marriage within the **perut** is forbidden; in other words, the **perut** is the minimal exogamous unit, though ideally marriage is outside the **suku**. This had the effect of prohibiting marriage to certain parallel cousins, i.e. mother's sister's daughter, who are members of one's own **perut**. The preferential norm is for cross-cousin marriage to the true mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter, who though just as closely related biologically as parallel cousins, because of the matrilineal descent system belonged to a different **perut**. Cross-cousin marriage kept close ties between lineal groups, if repeated, generation after generation. These ties are also maintained by marriage between classificatory cross-cousins. Such marriages are known as **kahwin tarek-menarek** (exchange marriage).

### 3.5.2. Endogamy Marriage Prohibited

Ideally marriage within **suku**, also known as **sumbang sewaris** (lit: 'incest with distant kin'), is forbidden. But due to increased **suku** members, the rule is now relaxed and such marriages are allowed. Marriage regulations continue to prohibit marriage with the **perut** – **sumbang sekadim** (lit: 'incest with nearest kin'). Any offender is outlawed and banished from the **luak**, known as **hukum kahar** (lit: 'powerful law'). At the same time, the whole **perut** is penalised. It would be excluded from electing one of its members to office in the **lembaga** (Board) for one whole rotation.



### 3.5.3 Exogamy Marriage

The rule of **perut** exogamy meant that marriage between parallel cousins who are children of sisters (true or classificatory) is prohibited. But the marriage of parallel cousins who are children of brothers is only prohibited when two brothers had married into the same **perut**.

### 3.5.4. Polygamy (Polygyny)

Polygyny is permitted, though it seems to be rare. Even when a man had more than one wife, they should not be from the same **perut**. In rare cases where this type of polygyny did occur it is termed **cuau sebatang dua sigai** (putting two ladders against the same palm trees). During one's spouse's lifetime, a liaison with a member of her **perut** is incestuous, whilst a marriage with a member of her **perut** is forbidden, unless a penalty (**Kalang batang** – 'crossed tree trunk') of about \$7.20 is paid by the man to the relatives of the girl in the presence of the girl's **suku** head.

### 3.5.5. Ganti Tikar

Marriage to a woman of the same class of a divorced wife is also prohibited, but marriage to the sister, either younger or older, of a deceased wife, is allowed. Marriage to an older sister is called **ganti atap** (replacing the tiles) and to a younger sister, **ganti tikar**. In this situation, it is necessary only to pay the **mas kahwin** (marriage fee) to the new bride, the other gifts between the families involved are accepted as already having been paid. In **Adat**, this course is desirable, especially in cases where there are small children, but it is not obligatory.

### 3.5.7 Types of Marriages

There are two types of marriages amongst the **Adat** people of Negeri Sembilan – the regular and the irregular marriages.

#### 3.5.7.1. Regular Marriage

This is the normal form of marriage which followed the stages of : **pandang memandang** (look and see), **Jarum menjarum** (ask and negotiate), **pinang meminang** (engagement), **Hari Beralat** (the Wedding Day). The normal types of wedding in Negeri Sembilan are very complex. There are three types of marriages that could take place : **Kerja Buapak** (marriage with the consent of the **buapak**, – a two days

and two nights wedding ceremony); **Kerja Lembaga** (marriage with the consent of the **lembaga** – lasting over three days); and **Kerja Undang** (marriage with the consent of the **Undang** – lasting for five days and five nights, the most lavish type of wedding). All procedures connected with them had to be carefully observed. If not, the family concerned would be subject to gossip and sanctioned by the society or the **buapak** and **kadim**, the **besar**, **lembaga** and even the **Dato' Undang**.

#### 3.5.7.2. Irregular Marriages

Besides the normal and regular marriage, there are other types of marriages which are as equally binding as any normal marriage, but which employed different procedures. In fact, they are speedier means of concluding a marriage. There are four types : **menyerah** (marriage by surrender), **merumah** (taking the house), **kahwin lari** (runaway marriage or elopment) and **Terkurung** (caught in the house). None of these are widely practised, but of the four, **menyerah** and **merumah** are the most common.

### 3.6. Rule of Residence

The rule of residence after marriage in the **Adat** society is uxorilocal: that after marriage a husband would reside in the girl's dwelling, regardless of whether she is an adult or a minor, and even though sometimes when the groom comes from the same **kampung**. Once the man is married, he had to stay with the wife's family. He would occasionally visit his mother's house when he would usually bring along his wife and children.

### 3.7. The Position of Man in his Wife's House

There are several misconceptions regarding the position of men (**orang semenda** – in marrying, a man is the wife's **suku**) in a **suku**. They are referred to as **abu atas tunggul** (ash on a tree stump) which, quoted in a vacuum, suggests a most precarious existence. The notion that **orang semenda** is subservient to his wife is entirely wrong. The **Adat** rules that **orang semenda** has authority over his wife : **Kunci bini**, **laki** (the wife obeys the husband). As far as **Adat** is concerned, in a clash between husband and wife it is always the wife who must apologise : **salah bini kepada laki** (the wife must apologise to the husband). Besides that, **orang tempat semenda** (relatives of the wife) cannot interfere in **orang semenda's** personal relationships with

his wife and children or in other domestic affairs. The **Adat** rules that **orang semenda** "holds complete sway within the four walls of his house" (**lingkungan benda yang empat, orang semenda yang punya**).

### 3.8. Family Relationship

The relationship between a man and his offspring, especially his daughters is very formal. Father and daughters seldom communicate with each other and in extreme cases the relationship is marked by avoidance. On the other hand, relations between father and son are easier, but there is still little communication between them. The same applies to that between father and daughter-in-law, although here avoidance is more distinct. The relationship between mother and son-in-law is also one of avoidance.

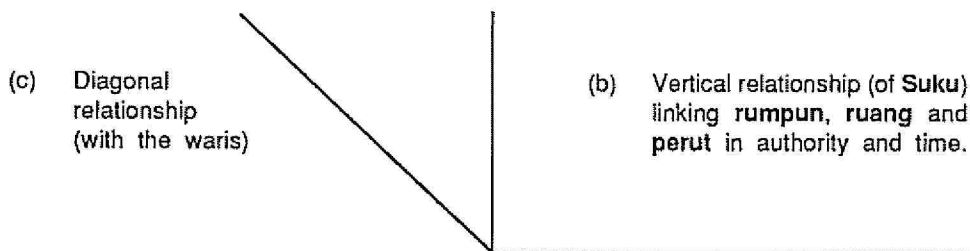
The relationship of a man's offspring, whether male or female with his own maternal kin is more distant than that with his wife's kin. On the other hand, relationships with the mother's sister's children are very intimate because they are born in the same **kampung** and most are in fact born in the same house. The children are also more intimate with their mother's parents than their father's parents, although in case of the latter, they are closer to them than to their father's other adult relatives.

### 3.9. Clanship

Beyond the relationships set by the family and marriage there are ties of clanship. This can be seen to have three aspects as set out in Figure 2 below :

Figure 2

### Types of Relationships amongst Suku Members of Negeri Sembilan



Notes : *Waris* here indicates relationships with the father's *matri-clan*.

### 3.10. Adoption

There were three major reasons for the institution of adoption in Negeri Sembilan. First, a permanent resident in Negeri Sembilan had to come under the protection of a **lambaga**. In other words he had to become a member of a **suku**. Secondly, outsiders who wished to marry in Negeri Sembilan had to be adopted into a **suku** other than that of their prospective spouse. This was to safeguard his spouse's family interests in case of divorce or death. Thirdly, when a woman had no daughter to continue her line, someone had to look after her and her husband in their old age, and inherit her property. Then it was always open to her to adopt a girl for all or any of these purposes. The adopted girl would preferably and usually come from the same **rumpun** or **ruang**, or failing that from the **perut** or **suku**. In rare cases, a girl was even taken from another **suku**.

#### 3.10.1. Types of Adoption

There are two classes of adoption : **kadim adat dan pusaka** (full adoption) and **kadim adat** (partial adoption). Full adoption meant that the relationship established between the parties is complete in all respects – all the rights and liabilities – equal to that between a natural mother and child, both direct and collaterals, and entitlement to inherit all property of whatever kind, to which a natural child would inherit.

On the other hand, partial adoption only created a relationship; the right of inheritance **if conferred at all**, is restricted. The adoptee and her descendants in the female line

would not be eligible for the inheritance of **tanah pusaka** of the adoptive family/**suku**, nor would the male of the line be eligible to succeed to any office held by the lineage.

The **kadim adat** is necessary before marriage of any foreigner to a Negeri Sembilan man or woman. This is also the adoption used to integrate outsiders into the **Adat** society.

### 3.10.2. The Adoption Ceremony

In a full adoption, the approval of the **waris (rumpun's members)** and the consent of the **lembaga** are necessary before the ceremony takes place. A feast is held for which a goat will be slaughtered. The feast is attended by the **Lembaga, Buapak Besar and Kadim**. A **bercecah darah** (dipping blood) ceremony is performed followed by the sprinkling of the **tepung tawar**. The child is then proclaimed as having been adopted into the **suku**.

### 3.10.3 Adoption within Family Circle

Adoption within the family circle (**rumpun**) or **perut** is called **tarik** (pull), and the **adat** enjoins :

**Ayam ditambat diberi makan,  
Orang ditarik diberi harta.**

Adoption of this kind must also be proclaimed or publicised. A family feast is held; the **lembaga** need not be present himself, but it would be preferable for the **buapak**, or the **besar** and the **kadim** to be present in case of a possible dispute later regarding the validity of the ceremony.

A person properly **ditarik** is eligible to the **Adat** estate of the foster-mother; but it is doubtful if she could also receive a share from the estate of her natural mother. Opinions and practices on this issue in the various **luak** of Negeri Sembilan are not unanimous.

### 3.10.4. The Abolishment of Adoption Ceremony

**Kadim** rites are a survival of pagan practice. It was anathema to Islam. The practice of dipping one's fingers into a bowl containing blood as a means of forging a blood relationship is most objectionable from the Islamic point of view: for blood is an unclean thing. Its continued practice is deplored by certain sections of the people.

In Rembau, adoption was abolished in 1940. Its abolition was sanctioned by the **kebulatan** (unanimous) of all the **lembaga** and the four **Orang Besar Undang**. The motivation for its abolition was because of religious conviction, and also was motivated by a desire to exclude outsiders from inheriting and enjoying the same rights and privileges which would normally be conferred on their admission (especially **kadim adat dan lembaga**). In other words, one of the reasons for change was dictated by economic necessity. The **suku** no longer wanted their limited **tanah pusaka** (see Sections 7.7, 7.9 and 7.10 below) to be given to others by way of admission or adoption into the **suku**.

### 3.11. Divorce and Division of Property

There are two ways in which marriage in this society is dissolved, i.e. **cerai hidup** (divorce while both parties are alive) and **cerai mati** (dissolved upon either the husband's or the wife's death). In the latter case, the next of kin (**waris dekat**) of the deceased managed the deceased property until the head of the **perut** settled everything. In all cases of dissolution of marriages, all the property of both parties, moveable or immoveable, had to be taken into account, irrespective of its origin and of the name under which the land was registered.

Amongst the Malays of Negeri Sembilan, three types of property are considered upon marriage: **harta carian** (joint earning or acquired property), **harta dapatan** (the estate of the wife upon marriage) and **harta bawaan** (the estate of the husband upon marriage).

#### 3.11.1. Harta Carian

In the event of **cerai hidup** this would be divided equally between both spouses because the property, especially the land, belonged to both the man's and wife's **suku**. In the case of **cerai mati**, the acquired property would be given to the living spouse. When both husband and wife died, their joint earnings would be divided among the children.

#### 3.11.2. Harta Dapatan

**Harta dapatan** included ancestral property which belong to the **suku**, and a woman's own acquisition before the marriage, either as a spinster, divorcee or widow, and all the property which the wife obtained from her own family by gift or inheritance during the marriage. In case of divorce, this property would be given to the wife's family.

### 3.11.3. Harta Bawaan

This included all the personal property, either moveable or immoveable, of a woman's husband before marriage. On the dissolution of the marriage, this would be returned to the husband and was subject to any claim of **untung** [**Untung** means gain or profit.] If **pembawaan** property increases in value during marriage, the increase (**untung**) ranks as acquired property (**carian laki-bini**), and would therefore be divided equally between the husband and wife or the wife's kin in the event of her death.] by the wife if divorced or by her **suku** in the event of the wife's death, leaving children behind. If the husband died, this property is reverted to his next of kin and is distributed according to the rules of ancestral property.

The traditional political structure and organisation of Negeri Sembilan was embodied and summarised in the following maxim :

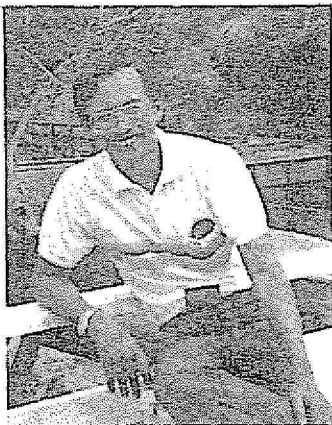
**Alam beraja  
Luak berpenghulu  
Suku berlembaga  
Anak buah berbuapak**

(The universe has a ruler  
The **luak** has a territorial chief  
The **suku** has a clan chief  
The **perut** has a leader).

So continues the matri-clans of Negeri Sembilan .....

By :

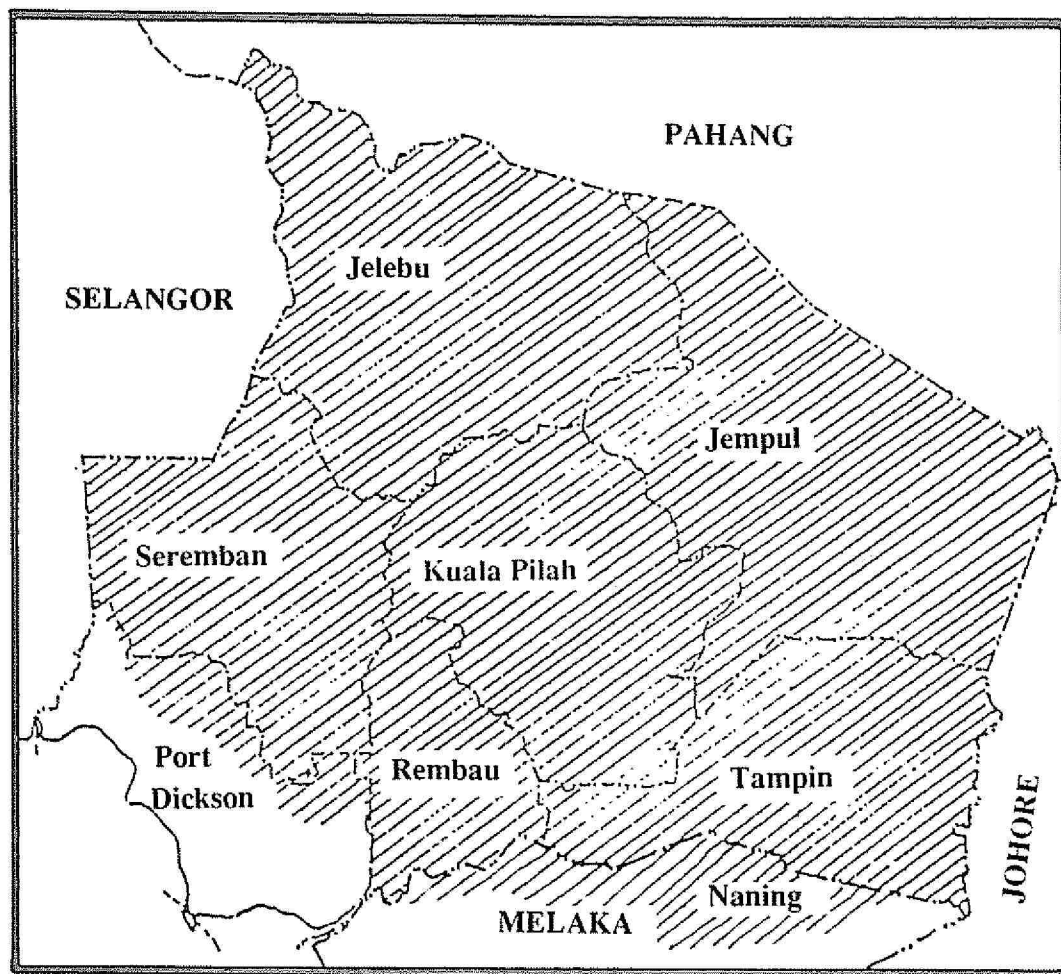
**NORHALIM HAJI IBRAHIM**  
Jabatan Sains Kemasyarakatan,  
Universiti Pertanian Malaysia.





#### **Biodata of Writer :**

**NORHALIM HAJI IBRAHIM** was born in Rembau, Negeri Sembilan on 12th February 1945. He had his early education at the Sekolah Melayu Terentang and furthered his studies at the Language Institute, Kuala Lumpur. In 1971 he graduated from the University of Malaya in the field of Social Science. He obtained his Master of Arts (History) from the University of Hull, England in 1976. Presently he lectures at the University Pertanian Malaysia (Faculty of Educational Studies). He has great interest in collecting writings on Historical Customs and Culture of Negeri Sembilan and up to date has a collection of not less than 1,000 volumes of manuscripts. His hobbies include reading and excursions. He is Chairman of the Malaysian Historical Society – Rembau Branch, Committee Member of same society at state level, Editor and Committee Member of the N. S. State Library Unit for Publications.

## STATE OF NEGERI SEMBILAN SHOWING ADAT AND NON-ADAT TERRITORY



### LEGEND

- · · · · — State Boundary
- · · · · — District Boundry
-  Adat Territory
-  Non-Adat Territory

**Note :** *Naning in Melaka also practises the Adat Perpatih. Naning was formerly part of Negeri Sembilan.*



**TABLE 2**

**THE ACTUAL SUKU OF REMBAU**

I.	1.	<b>Biduanda</b> Jakun Baruh	13.	Seri Melenggang Baruh
	2.	Biduanda Jawa Baruh	14.	Seri Melenggang Minangkabau
	3.	Biduanda Jakun Darat	15.	Seri Melenggang Miku
II.	4.	<b>Batu Hampar</b> Baruh	16.	Seri Melenggang Empat Ibu
	5.	Batu Hampar Darat	VII.	17. <b>Seri Lemak</b> (Darat)
	6.	Batu Hampar Petani	VIII.	18. <b>Batu Belang</b> (Darat)
III.	7.	<b>Paya Kumbuh</b> Baruh	IX.	19. <b>Tanah Datar</b> Baruh
	8.	Paya Kumbuh Darat		20. Tanah Datar Darat
IV.	9.	<b>Mungkal</b> Baruh	X.	21. <b>Anak Aceh</b> (Baruh)
	10.	Mungkal Darat	XI.	22. <b>Anak Melaka</b> (Baruh)
V.	11.	<b>Tiga Nenek</b> (Baruh)	XII.	23. <b>Tiga Batu</b> Baruh
VI.	12.	<b>Seri Melenggang</b> Kendung		24. Tiga Batu Darat

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**NOTES:** Rembau, traditionally was split into two political divisions:

(a) Rembau Baruh (low-country or Lower Rembau) and (b) Rembau Darat (up-country or Upper Rembau. (See Map II). The Suku in both regions, although having the same name, were not genealogically related to one another.



## *Women's World Banking*

is a global, not-for-profit financial institution. With its 50 affiliates in forty countries, WWB offers credit and other services geared to giving women in small and micro businesses access to finance, know how and markets. During its first decade, WWB has built a decentralized global organisation, local and global capital bases, a strong micro enterprise loan portfolio and effective training programs. WWB affiliates – operating on five continents – have been involved in 70,000 loans averaging 200 per loans – with defaults of under 2%. WWB launches its second decade with a new management team. It plans to deepen and expand affiliate capabilities and microenterprise programmes – and to provide venture capital, exports, communication and other services to small businesses owned and managed by women.

### *Objectives :*

- to help create an environment in which women have equal access to the benefits of the formal economy, particularly access to credit.
- to build local, self sufficient affiliates within communities that can continue to identify and respond to the specific needs of women entrepreneurs and women's national organisations.
- to establish an international network of women in finance and business that enables them to share experience and knowledge with each other and with women entrepreneurs.

### *Wintrac's Objectives :*

- to enlist the support and services of leaders in the banking and commercial sectors, professional, social action and women's organisations to share their business and professional knowledge and experience to Malaysian women in businesses especially those in small businesses, who lack access to such advice and assistance, that could enable them to obtain access to credit.
- to gather the participation and capital of Malaysian women to go into profit-making business activities which will pave ways for Malaysian women (a) to get access to a share of the benefits of the formal economy, (b) to provide opportunity for Malaysian women to obtain training and experience in all levels of employment within a business organisation, (c) to create openings for support lines of businesses for women to have their own source of income and become self reliant, (d) to create links with women's national organisations for a mutual sharing of resources and (e) to establish a Women's Credit Fund out of profits of its profit-making activities, which would provide financial backing for WWB loan guarantee programmes to Malaysian business-women.
- to establish linkage with WWB affiliates all over the world for mutual sharing of resources in training, trading, marketing and general advancement of women in business and finance.

## THE WINTRAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS



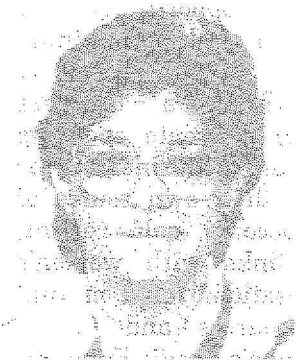
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Wintrac Board Chairperson.  
Company Director and Entrepreneur.  
Former National President,  
Malaysian Women's Hockey Association.  
Wife of Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah,  
former Minister of Trade & Commerce, Malaysia and  
Sister of late YAB Tun Abdul Razak,  
former Prime Minister of Malaysia.



**DR. NELLIE S. L. TAN-WONG, KMN., PMC., PJK., Ph. D.**

Wintrac Managing Director.  
Managing Director of several private limited companies.  
Heads her own firm of Certified Public Accountants.  
Hon. Regional Co-ordinator, Women's World Banking, Asia & Pacific.  
Advisory Council Member, The Global Fund for Women, USA.  
Advisory Council Member NACIWID, by appointment of  
YAB the Prime Minister.  
Awarded "Outstanding Young Person of Negeri Sembilan by Seremban  
Junior Chambers of Commerce International in 1976.  
Wife of Ir. Wong Chiang Choy, Consulting Civil Engineer.



**MRS. DOROTHY BAILEY, AMN., PJK.**

Wintrac Director.  
National Executive Secretary, Malaysian Women's Hockey Association.  
Hon. Treasurer, Kelab Kart Selangor and Federal Territory.  
Wife of late Ir. Ronald Bailey, Consulting Civil Engineer.



**PUAN SRI ROSALIND FOO, KMN., AMP.**

Wintrac Director.  
National Vice-President, Federation of Family Planning Associations.  
Chairperson, FFPA Task Force for the Status of Women.  
Presented Public Service Award by Rotary Club of Ipoh-Kinta in 1986.  
Recipient of Tun Fatimah Award, 1989.  
Wife of late Tan Sri Y. C. Foo, former Chairman of MIDFL.

## THE WINTRAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Wintrac Director.

Company Director.

Former State Chairman, Negeri Sembilan Girl Guides Association.

Recently awarded "Toko Wanita Negeri Sembilan 1990" by women's organisations in Negeri Sembilan.

Wife of late Dato' B. H. Tan, Politician and Social Worker.



**MRS. MIKI HOALIM**

Wintrac Director.

Company Director.

Partner of longstanding firm of Advocates & Solicitors in Penang.

Former-President, Federation of Women Lawyers, North Malaya

Country Vice-President, International Federation of Women Lawyers.

Former President, YWCA of Penang.

Wife of Mr. Philip Hoalim, Advocate & Solicitor.

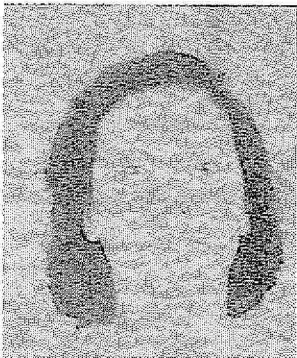


**MRS. JOSEPHINE TAN**

Wintrac Director.

Retired Lecturer.

Wife of Mr. Keith Tan Kok Hong, retired Acting Managing Director of Castrol (M) Sdn. Bhd.



**DATIN LUCY ARULANANDOM**

Wintrac Director.

Entrepreneur.

Wife of late Justice Dato' Fred Arulanandom, former High Court Judge of Penang.

## ADAT PERPATIH

*Adat Perpatih,  
A System which provides a way  
For Woman, the earth to plough  
Her Children, a Clan to care, and how .....  
No written law for legislation  
Solved by mutual consultation.*

*Adat Perpatih,  
A Custom to abide, come what may  
A Proverbial Law, so simple  
Generation to generation, to unfurl  
A Philosophy, firm and fair,  
A responsibility to bear and care.*

*Adat Perpatih,  
In Negeri Sembilan as they say  
Provides security for the Female  
Maintains respect for the Male  
Amendable by consensus  
To challenge would be serious.*

*Adat Perpatih,  
A communal practice, day by day  
Accepted and understood  
Go against it, no one would  
For Judgement comes in silence strong  
All will come to know before long.*

*Adat Perpatih,  
Unique in Malaysia today  
Fascinates scholars, near and far  
Survived through history and through war  
Let us take this Trail of Discovery  
Lest Culture becomes mere Memory.*