

## Muhammad Yusof bin Ahmad: The Silver Wolf of Malaya

*Muhammad Yusof bin Ahmad: Serigala Perak Malaya*

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### ABSTRACT

*This article reconstructs the development of the Scout Movement of Malaya since it was established in 1908 by Frank C. Sands, a British explorer who became the first Chief Commissioner of Scout in 1910. The movement began in Penang as an experimental group aiming to bring together boys of all classes and diverse creeds and races to participate in activities of 'backwoodsmen, explorers and frontiersmen,' modeled on men with an adventurous spirit. Those selected were boys who became men of action, displaying qualities of pluck, endurance, and resourcefulness. By the time Muhammad Yusof bin Ahmad became the first Chief Commissioner of Scouts for the Federation of Malaya in 1957, the movement had gained traction in other Malayan states and had been transformed into a "character development factory" that inculcated the values of obedience, loyalty, and self-reliance. For services of the most exceptional character in Malaya for 27 years, he received the Silver Wolf Award that has since remained the "unrestricted gift of the Chief Scout of the British Commonwealth." This article will make use of the Qualitative Method of Analysis to scrutinize data kept in various national archives, libraries, scout associations, and Muhammad Yusof's private collection. The aim is to examine the development and growth of the Scout Movement in Malaya, discuss the reasons why Muhammad Yusof joined the movement in 1926, the role he played since his training days in Singapore and England, and his contribution to the development of boys' scouts in Malaya until his retirement in 1960. The main finding of this study is the significant role of Muhammad Yusof.*

*Keywords: Malaya; Scout Movement; Chief Commissioner of Scout; Silver Wolf; Muhammad Yusof*

### ABSTRAK

*Artikel ini mengkonstruksi Pergerakan Pengakap Malaya semenjak ia ditubuhkan pada 1908 oleh Frank C. Sands, seorang penjelajah British yang telah menjawat jawatan Ketua Pesuruhjaya Pengakap pada tahun 1910. Pergerakan Pengakap Malaya bermula di Pulau Pinang sebagai sebuah kumpulan percubaan dengan matlamat untuk mengumpulkan remaja-remaja dari segenap bangsa, agama dan latar-belakang untuk melibatkan diri di dalam aktiviti-aktiviti "backwoodsmen, explorers and frontiersmen" yang berlandaskan aktiviti lasak kaum lelaki. Remaja-remaja yang dipilih telah menjadi golongan lelaki-lelaki yang berwibawa, cekal dan bijaksana. Ketika Muhammad Yusof bin Ahmad menjawat jawatan Ketua Pesuruhjaya Pengakap Malaya yang pertama pada tahun 1957, pergerakan berkenaan telah berupaya menjadi sebuah pusat pengukuhan jati diri di mana nilai-nilai murni, kesetiaan dan kewibawaan dapat dihasilkan. Sebagai penghargaan kepada 27 tahun perkhidmatan di dalam pergerakan pengakap di Malaya, beliau telah dikurniakan pingat "Silver Wolf" sebagai tanda perkhidmatan cemerlang oleh Kerajaan Komanwel British. Artikel ini akan mengguna-pakai kaedah analisis kualitatif dalam menyelaras segala data dan maklumat yang disimpan di pelbagai arkib, perpustakaan, persatuan pengakap serta juga koleksi peribadi Muhammad Yusof. Tujuan utama adalah untuk menyemak pembangunan dan kemajuan pergerakan pengakap di Malaya, dan tujuan, peranan serta kejayaan beliau yang menyertai pergerakan berkenaan pada tahun 1926, serta juga sumbangan Muhammad Yusof kepada pergerakan pengakap Malaya, sehingga beliau bersara pada tahun 1960. Penemuan utama dari Kajian ini ialah peranan Muhammad Yusof yang ketara.*

*Kata kunci: Malaya; Pergerakan Pengakap; Ketua Pesuruhjaya Pengakap; Silver Wolf; Muhammad Yusof*

## INTRODUCTION

The Scout Movement in Malaya owed its early beginnings to British explorers and educators. After F.C. Sands started an experimental group in Penang in 1908, the first Selangor Troup at the Victoria Institution was set up by its headmaster, B.E. Shaw, in 1909, shortly before Sands left for Singapore to organize two Scout Troops in 1910. Progress was slow, but from 1920, there were Scout Troops in every English school in Singapore, and one was in a Malay school in 1928 due to the work of B. Purdy, M.H. Duncan, Captain N.M. Hashim, and Dato' A.M. Alsagoff. In 1912, G.M. Laidlaw formed a movement in Pekan, Pahang, but his death rendered the branch inactive until it was revived years later by H.P. Hertslet in 1927. In Sabah and Sarawak, the movement was established by Rev. T.C. Alexander in 1913, and Sarawak became active only from 1930 onwards. And then there was H.R. Cheeseman, who organized the Penang Free School Scout troop in 1915, which stirred great interest in scouting when the troop toured the Malay Peninsula in 1918. Surprisingly, Perak did not take off until 1920 owing to the efforts of L.R. Wheeler at the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) and Stalwarts such as H.R. Hertslet to guide its destinies. Kedah was next in 1922, led by E.C. Hicks at the Sultan Abdul Hamid College in Alor Setar. As for Negeri Sembilan, Scouting was started in 1925 by D. Bird, who attributed its ascendancy to Captain Mohd. Salleh bin Hj Suleiman, while R. Brunton started in Malacca and expanded under B.F. Richards. In Terengganu, it was by A.J. Gracie in 1926, and Kelantan in 1928 by Tengku Ahmad Temenggong, an old boy of MCKK. Johor remained among the last two states that properly organized its troops, but only after H.R. Cheeseman arrived in 1928. Finally, in Perlis, the Movement was popularized by D. Bird and R. Smith in 1931 (Sands 1930: 1-48; Sands 1950).

Before 1957, the Scout Movement in Malaya had been a branch of the Scout Association of Great Britain and was led by Scouts often referred to as Pathfinders. These Scouts were pioneers who did much to develop, organize, and promote Scouting in Malaya. Amongst them were seven outstanding men who received the **Silver Wolf**, recognized as the highest award given to a Scout in the British Commonwealth "for services of the most exceptional character." They are Frank C. Sands (1920), L.R. Wheeler (1925), H.R. Cheeseman (1927), H.R. Hertslet (1929), Markus Dukes (1934), E.M.F. Payne (1953) (Morais 1965: 74), and Muhammad Yusof bin Ahmad (1955) (Morais 1965: 74; The Boy Scouts Association 1955: 18).<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad Yusof was born in Kampong Bukit Kerdas in Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan on 17 September, 1900. He went to Batu Kikir Malay School (1907-1912) and Linggi Malay School (1913) before becoming a Pupil Teacher at Jempol Malay School at 13. He then enrolled in Malay College Malacca in 1914 but was not satisfied with the level of education he received and applied to MCKK in 1916. Upon completing his English education, he joined the Malay Educational Service (MES) in 1919. He was trained under the tutelage of R.O. Winstedt in Kuala Lumpur and, right after, began a career as a Malay Assistant Inspector of Schools (MAIS), Selangor (1920-1940). He was subsequently promoted to the post of Malay Assistant Principal



Figure 1: Muhammad Yusof bin Ahmad, Chief Commissioner of Scout for the Federation of Malaya (1957-1960). (Source: Muhammad Yusof's Private Collection)

(MAP) at SITC in 1940. However, work was disrupted due to the outbreak of World War II in 1941 and his deployment to teach the Malay language at the School of Foreign Languages in Tenri, Japan. He miraculously survived the war to return to Malaya and resumed work at SITC from 1946 until his early retirement from the MES in 1950. He continued to serve the Government as a member of the Federal Legislative Council (1951-1955) and the Negeri Sembilan State Legislative Council (1952-1955). His final post was as Civilian Aide-De-Camp (1957-1960) to His Royal Highness Tuanku Abdul Rahman ibni Almarhum Tuanku Muhammad, the Federation of Malaya's first King, in 1957.

Muhammad Yusof retired in 1960 and lived a quiet life with his family in Linggi. He devoted much of his remaining years to the Rural Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) activities, various government committees, and education development in the village (Ahmad Husni & Mahani Musa 2022: 110; Ahmad Husni 2022: 123-125). Referring to his days in Tenri, Japan, during World War Two, his experiences at SITC, and after he retired in Linggi, he said:

*It is the Spirit of Scouting that has kept me alive and happy to go back to the kampung, where peace and serenity reign to do whatever good I can for my fellowmen.*

(Muhammad Yusof 1965: 83)

Muhammad Yusof died in 1980.

Henceforth, the use of a Biographical Approach and Qualitative Analysis as a Methodology to meet the objectives: (1) To examine the development and growth of the Scout Movement of Malaya; (2) To discuss the role played by Muhammad Yusof and his contribution to the development of Boy Scouts in Malaya from 1926 to 1960.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Pertinent to this study is a book entitled *The Boy Scout Jubilee* written by E.E. Reynolds (Reynolds 1957). The book describes how the Scout Movement began in 1902, what it is all about, its growth and expansion, scout training, and its pioneering projects. In addition, is the impact of the First and Second World Wars, the movement's recovery, and the spread of its activities in five continents. Thereafter, its coming of age an inevitability. As for the development and progress made in Malaya, the article by Frank Sands (Sands 1930) is also useful for this study.

Another interesting piece is called *Baden-Powell*, a biography of the Scout Movement's Founder. The first part of the book written by E.E. Reynolds (Reynolds 1947) chronologically refers to the early years of the protagonist, and the second is about the development of the movement itself, whose methods and principles apply equally to the Girl Guide Movement. The main take from this review is Baden-Powell's motivation and drive to develop the Scout Movement that is drawn parallel to Muhammad Yusof's, whose early times growing up in his village (*kampung*) were similar to the activities of a Scout that Baden-Powell envisioned. Later, the "teething problems" Muhammad Yusof had to overcome and the challenges he faced, although not in the same terms as Baden-Powell's, were certainly the commonalities they shared.

Indeed, a distinct commonality is in the training of Scouters. This study stands to benefit from the use of a booklet on *The Training of Scouters* published by The Boy Scouts Association at Gilwell Park, London, *Training in Observation and Tracking* by Gilcraft (Gilcraft 1946), and *Pioneering Projects* by J. Thurman (Thurman 1950). However, the latter is not meant for its

readers to sit and read through from cover to cover. Unlike the book *Scouting for Boys* (Baden-Powell 1908), which tells a Scouter what to do, this book elucidates the various methods of how he could do it with his imagination. Verily Muhammad Yusof was a Scouter who benefited from training courses held in Malaya, Singapore, and England. He was prepared for the eventualities thereafter and capable of training other Scouts, assisting in the development of the Scout Movement of Malaya, and leading by example as its Chief Commissioner. A point authors Wan Meng Hao and Kevin Tan made in their publication *Scouting in Singapore* (Hao and Tan 2002: 36, 59) since Muhammad Yusof was trained at Purdy Camp, Singapore.

This brings us to Muhammad Yusof's article entitled *The Reminiscences of a Distinguished Scouter* (Morais, 1965: 82-83), which provides a glimpse of his inclination toward joining the movement and how it was later used as a medium not only to train Scouters the Wood Badge Courses but as a "moral and character training factory" for boys regardless of their race and religion. The article also highlights his role in developing scouts in Malaya and his efforts to Malayanize the movement. Verily, a noteworthy effort encapsulated in J.V. Morais's publication *The Law and Promise* (Morais 1965), a forerunner for many similar publications in Malaysia which records the experiences and impressions of Scouters and Scouts and the lessons they offered the present and future generations. It is, without a doubt, a publication of immense value and a source of inspiration to Scouts and Scouters today and in the years to come.

In summary, the above literature aims firstly at tracing the origins of the Scout Movement in Malaya, how it derived from the vision of its founder, Lord Baden-Powell, the emergence of Pathfinders, and the movement's growth and expansion. Secondly, it adds value and reinforces the study of Muhammad Yusof's role, his contribution to the Malaysian chapter, and the legacy he left behind for other Scouters to build upon.

## SCOUT TRAINING

Muhammad Yusof's journey began when he joined the Scout Movement in 1926. During this time, the Scout Association of Selangor was set up and inaugurated by H.W. Thompson, Resident, Selangor (Sel. Sec. 2510 1926). Before its establishment, scouting in the state had been slow to pick up despite having a Scout Troop in 1909, and the first Cub Pack formed in 1918. This time, it was different since the Resident acting as the President had the support of a strong Executive Committee and officer bearers.

After Muhammad Yusof officially became a Scout, the first order of business was to undergo Scout training. This was a series of courses that he attended in 1926 under the guidance of Amin Akbar, the Assistant District Commissioner (ADC). Muhammad Yusof was amongst a batch of 21 Malay teachers trained at the Victoria Institution, Kuala Lumpur. (*Scouting in Malaya* 1929:22).

The second stint was at Purdy Camp in Singapore, organized by F.C. Sands and H.R. Cheeseman in 1929 (Tan & Hao 2002: 49; *Scouting in Malaya* 1929: 19-28).<sup>2</sup> This 4-day training course was carried out by Zainal Abidin SM from Penang and Captain Md. Salleh from Negeri Sembilan (*Scouting in Malaya* 1929:19). Those who attended were Malay teachers from Penang, Perak, Johore, and Singapore (Muhammad Yusof 1965: 82); a total number of 47 teachers. Briefings, tutorials, games, and competitions were held in the first two days. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, Markus Dukes taught them how to tie knots to build a bridge (*titi*) and a house (*Rumah*). He was assisted by Muhammad Yusof, who described in Malay the names and types of wood used. On the

4<sup>th</sup> and final day, Muhammad Yusof was asked to give a speech by H.R. Cheeseman and did so to stress the ideals of Scouting. More Malays must find a way to join the movement, he said, and not lag behind others in embracing the goodness of becoming a Scout (Scouting in Malaya 1929: 21). More courses were given right after before the day ended. Of his training in Singapore, Muhammad Yusof had this to say:

*At Purdy Camp, I was rather surprised to see an Englishman hard at work, chopping firewood and preparing tea for us. A white man chopping wood? I said to myself. For what we generally used to see before that was the white men always conducted themselves as masters. Later at the camp, we saw a middle-aged Chinese wearing a singlet and white shorts, sweeping the drain. We took him to be just a sweeper. In the evening, when we were relaxing around the campfire, we noticed he too was there sitting at the back and mixing freely with everyone. Several days after that he invited several of us to his house. A shock was in store for us. The house looked like an istana (palace). Then only did we know that he was a millionaire, well-known in Singapore, and was a member of the Singapore Scout Council. The white man who chopped the firewood and prepared tea for us was an Assistant Manager in a printing company and the chief book sales agent in Singapore at that time.<sup>3</sup>*

(Muhammad Yusof 1965: 82; Scouting in Malaya 1929: 22-23)

Before long, Muhammad Yusof would devote much of his time to the cause of Scouting, knowing there was no distinction of race or creed in Boy Scouts, just a variety of peoples united by a common purpose and common ideal, summed up in the Scout Promise that all Scouts have taken as follows:

*On my honour I promise that I will do my best: To do my duty to God, the King, and the Ruler; To help other people at all times; To obey the Scout Law.*

(Reynolds 1947: 159)

Since returning from Purdy Camp, Muhammad Yusof was often seen during week-ends at the campsite in Jalan Gurney, Kuala Lumpur, a site situated at the heart of Selangor, nestled in the lushest of Malaya's tropical foliage, thick under groves, bushes, and shrubs in what was to become a perfect location for training Boy Scouts. There, Muhammad Yusof was responsible for organizing Scout games, interacting with Scout teachers, and training young Scouts, primarily aimed at developing their character through the Patrol System, the Badge System, and Woodcraft. From this point onwards, his life as a Scout began to ascent. As an explorer, Muhammad Yusof gradually developed his love for adventure, taking him to Indonesia in 1930, Hong Kong, China (Shanghai), and Japan in 1933.

By 1936, Muhammad Yusof had risen to the position of ADC in Selangor and was recommended by F.C. Sands to undergo Scout leadership training at Gilwell, England (Sel. Sec. G. (1) 142 1936.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, the Application for a Supplementary Vote for a grant towards the passage expense for Scout training was unanimously passed by Members of the State Finance Committee, and a Supplementary Warrant for the Grant was approved (Sel. Sec. G.142 1936; F.S.888 1936). For his trip, Muhammad Yusof was given a leave of absence by the Education Department, and the cost of travel, training, boarding, and incidental expenses was borne by the Scouts Association of Malaya (Sel. Sec. G. 142 1936).<sup>5</sup> Under the approval made by T.S. Adams, the British Resident of Selangor, he was:

*... satisfied that this course will make Che Yusof a more valuable officer and better able to deal not only with the Scouting activities of the Malay schools but also with the general educational administration.<sup>6</sup>*

(Sel. Sec. G. 142 1936)

At the time, there were already 23 troops in Selangor, made up of 49 officers and over 600 scouts in Malay schools (Sel. Sec. G. (3) 142 1936). Malay Officers and Scouts were acting as a medium for the introduction of new ideas of discipline, sanitation, physical fitness, and cooperation in all matters, and the Resident saw the importance of the influence they were exerting on the rural population. Of the Resident's view on the matter, the Secretary to the Resident said:

*He feels that while the Englishman can initiate and set on its feet a movement such as this, it is essential to have properly trained officers of the same race as the boys if full success is to be gained. He is confident that Enche Yusof is the right type to benefit by the course and to pass on what he learns both to officers and boys.*

(Sel. Sec. G. (3) 142 1936)

It was, therefore, not surprising for the Resident to find the unequivocal support of His Highness the Sultan of Selangor, who wanted to meet Muhammad Yusof before the latter departed on 14 May 1936 (Sel. Sec. G. (7) 142 1936; Sel. Edn. 168 1936). Together with Syed Esa bin Alwee, the ADC of Scout in Johor selected for the course, he boarded the S.S. Hakusan Maru in Singapore and, on the way to England, visited Ceylon, Eden, Egypt, and Gibraltar.<sup>7</sup>

At Gilwell Park, all Scouts had to undergo the rigorous 25<sup>th</sup> Rover Scout Course, which conveniently grouped them under Introductory, Preliminary, Wood Badge, and General Training. However, being Scouters, Muhammad Yusof and Syed Esa was allowed to skip the Introductory Course and went directly to the Wood Badge Training Part I (Theoretical) Course that both completed successfully on 1 July 1936 (The Straits Times 1936).<sup>8</sup> Next was the Wood Badge Part II (Practical) Course, which involved a fair bit of physical activity. Under the direction of the Camp Chief or his deputy, much of Muhammad Yusof's training was briskly performed through the medium of games, competitions, and practices between Patrols. This was completed successfully on 25 July 1936 (The Straits Times 1936). Besides the Rover Scout Course, Muhammad Yusof attended the 5-day 57th Cub Course earlier. Right after, he and Syed Esa were propitiously granted the Warrant of Deputy Camp Chief, Malaya (The Straits Times 1936), and went on to train other Scouters. Indeed, Muhammad Yusof's collectivization of Scouts and Scouters, the adoption of sound practices, the indigenization of knowledge, and his exemplary leadership by example attracted others to join the movement, which led to its spread and growth in the coming years.

Before returning from England, Muhammad Yusof, Syed Esa, and a friend by the name of Suleiman bin Abdul Rahman<sup>9</sup> took the wheels to visit Scotland, after which Muhammad Yusof and Syed Esa toured France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy at their own expense. Upon returning to Malaya, they were feted at a tea party in the house of AM Alsagoff, the Honorary Secretary of the Arab Peranakan Association of Singapore, who was also the ADC of the Malay Vernacular Boys Scouts (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser 1936). The function was a picturesque affair, with guests connected to the scouting movement coming in full Scout uniforms, while guests from Muar and Batu Pahat wore Malay costumes. The training stint at Gilwell represented another major milestone achievement for Scouting in Malaya, and as at Purdy Camp, there was clear evidence that Scouts were of different races and religions who came from all parts of the world.

**Purdy Camp, Singapore, 1929**



FIGURE 2. Muhammad Yusof seated 2<sup>nd</sup> from right  
*Source: Tan & Hao 2002: 39*

**Gilwell Park, England, 1936**



FIGURE 3. 25<sup>th</sup> Rover Course. Muhammad Yusof in a middle row standing 2<sup>nd</sup> from right  
*Source: Scout Adventures, Gilwell Park, 2023 and Muhammad Yusof's Private Collection*

## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The aims of Scouting in Malaya were not clear in the beginning as the idea General Sir Robert Baden Powell<sup>10</sup> conceived in 1907 had not found its feet until his book *Scouting for Boys* was published in 1908 and rapidly sold (Reynolds 1957: 7). So great was the response to the book that the Boy Scouts Association of Great Britain was formed to include boys from eight years upwards in either the Wolf Cubs, the Boy Scouts or Rover Scouts, and later, the Girl Guides as a separate movement. Not long after, scouting spread to countries outside of Britain, and the Patrol System led by Scout Leaders was adopted as an educational method for training six to eight Boy Scouts in each patrol. This system gained much of its strength when boys from the age of 11 to 15 grouped themselves into gangs. Games and competitions used in the army were then incorporated and modified to benefit Scouting for Boys. To add value, standards were maintained with badges awarded for efficiency in all-around Scouting and proficiency in subjects appealing to the inclinations and abilities of each boy. Some of these were for specialized outdoor skills and others for individual hobbies and interests that gave a sense of purpose, giving meaning and direction to Scouting activities. It was essentially training in character that Baden-Powell had in mind to include:

*Education in high ideals, in self-reliance, in sense of duty, in fortitude, in self-respect, and regard for others – in one word, in those attributes that go to make up Character.*

(Reynolds 1947: 13)

He believed Scouting is about encouraging young people's physical, mental, social, and spiritual development so they can contribute constructively to society and become responsible citizens (Sinclair 2009: 9).

In Malaya, Pathfinders paved the way. Led by F.C. Sands, Malaya's first Commissioner of Scout, he found a way to overcome the general feeling that the Scout Movement was trying to make soldiers out of boys. To this end, he inculcated the aims of scouting and used proven methods to train Scouts to edit and publish Scout booklets as a way to publicize Scouting. Another Scout worthy of praise was L.R. Wheeler, who started the first troop in Perak. He was a science teacher at MCKK before he was transferred to the Sultan Idris Training College (SITC) in Tanjong Malim. He properly organized work and started Troops in every important part of the state. While working as an acting inspector of schools in Penang, he was conferred a Doctor of Philosophy degree. Then there was H.R. Cheeseman, who made his most valuable contribution in Penang over 22 years. He introduced several innovations ranging from carpentry to ju-jitsu and other activities suitable for the Malayan Scout. He started the first Scout Troop in a Malay school in the Island State. After he was transferred to Johor in 1928, he started two groups of Scouts from the English College, Johore Bahru, and this spurred others to start in various districts of Johor. Meanwhile, H.R. Herslet had been an inspiring Scouter who kept the Scout Flag flying in Perak. He was a state District Commissioner (DC) who organized scout camps. He became a household name and remained an outstanding officer who led by example for many years. The name Marcus Dukes is seldom heard outside the Scout Movement, but he was a man who sacrificed much to the development of Scouting in Selangor and the campsite that he appropriately named Castle Camp (Scouting 1952).<sup>11</sup> Soon, the site became the Headquarters for the Federation Training Team, where the Scout Woodbadge (Part II) and Cub Courses were conducted. The Wood Badge Part II Course was even conducted in Chinese dialects and was specially designed to train men who were working with Groups in the new villages (Scouting 1952). It was also at Castle Camp that large scout gatherings

were subsequently held. E.M.F. Payne then took over from F.C. Sands as Chief Commissioner of Scout for the Federation of Malaya in 1948 and devoted much time to creating an organization of great strength and high standing when Communism was rampant in Malaya. It was a disease the Government had to combat if Malaya was to become a fit place to live.

As for Muhammad Yusof, he took it upon himself as an educator to multi-task and, through Scouting, adopted its practical ways of nurturing children from the time they were growing up to adolescence, turning them into healthy, active, well-mannered, and useful citizens. He found the ways of a Scout similar to the life he led in the *kampung*, where his father taught him at home the tenets of Islam and about the religion through precepts, examples, and deeds. Out of doors in an environment and atmosphere conducive to shaping one's character and personality, he was free to romp about with his friends in padi fields, rivers, bushes, and the hills or follow his elders into the deep recesses of the jungles of Kuala Pilah. It was with them that Muhammad Yusof learned how to swim, climb trees, and identify the names of plants or various types of grass, herbs, creepers, wood, roots, and a variety of fishes, birds, and wild animals. They taught him to recognize the sights, sounds, and scents of the wilderness and the peculiarities of wild animals, overcoming difficulties when confronted with them, and, ultimately, the art of surviving in the jungle. To Muhammad Yusof, they were the "original scouters" whose characters were similar to Scout Leaders.<sup>12</sup>

During padi harvesting seasons, much fun and joy was living in huts by a campfire, all in a milieu Scouts find themselves in and with the same spirit Lord Baden-Powell had promulgated to shape the character of boys.<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Yusof found great semblance in outdoor games played by Scouts to his boyhood fun and frolics except in Scouting; it was well organized and channeled to embrace a wider interest and purpose. Muhammad Yusof described his thoughts as follows:

*Training, as far as possible, is given through games, competitions, and camping, which enable the children to be out of doors, in the fields, in the bushes, by the sea and rivers, on the farms, in the hills, etc. The environment and the atmosphere during these activities are conducive to forming good character and personality.*

(Muhammad Yusof 1965: 130)

By 1922, there were more than a million Scouts in 32 countries, and by 1939, over 3.3 million. Scouting had flourished beyond Baden-Powell's dreams (Reynolds 1957: 112). In Malaya alone, numbers had risen to 16,000 by the time Muhammad Yusof received the Scout Medal of Merit in 1940. However, World War Two, which broke out in 1941, disrupted any progress made thus far when Scouting was banned by the Japanese regime. Yet many Scout groups carried on with their activities. F.C. Sands recalls vividly how:

*Nothing was too much trouble, no danger too great for them to face, in order to bring help to his fellowmen.*

(Sands 1946)

Many Scouts up-country had worked their way down to Singapore as volunteers, ambulance workers, and other kinds of services. They were on duty day and night, putting their Scout training to practical use, and very often were without food or sleep for long periods when bombing and shelling were the heaviest. In Singapore Internment Camps at Changi Prison and later at the Sime Road Camp, Scouting and Cubbing were "camouflaged" under "recreational games," and no uniforms were worn. They flourished despite the upheavals (CO 1045/100).

Not long after the Japanese army surrendered in 1945, Scout Leaders got together to devise a scheme for the future of Scouting in Malaya (Sands 1946).<sup>14</sup> The main program discussed was to have: (1) A suitable Headquarters for every large center; (2) A suitable Camp Site in every large center; (3) A definite effort to create many more “open” Troops (i.e., Troops not attached to Schools). This was to encourage interest in Scouting among the general public since hundreds of boys wanted to become Scouts but did not attend Schools that had Troops (Sands 1946). Following his return from Japan to resume work at SITC in 1946, Muhammad Yusof was confined to helping rebuild the College; however, he could not spare much time other than organizing and conducting Scout Woodbadge Training for students at the College. But he could take comfort in the work Abdul Kuddus bin Muhammad performed at Tanjong Malim, the ADC who received the Medal of Merit in 1948 (Cenderamata 1948).

By this time, the Scout Movement for the Federation of Malaya and Singapore had formed separate branches, each managing its affairs. For Malaya, a policy of decentralization was quickly implemented. Large districts were divided into more easily workable units, and State/Settlement Associations were formed to administer in the districts (The Boy Scouts Association 1954: 2-3). Thus, by having men on the spot to take the lead, local associations could serve in the *kampong* and new villages as soon as they were formed. With this system in place, the number of trained Scouters, Rover Scouts, Senior Scouts, Boy Scouts, Sea Scouts, and Wolf Cubs that stood at 21,245 in 1948 (The Boy Scouts Association 1955: 6) was expected to grow further. Four more Scouts were selected to undergo training at Gilwell to achieve this aim. They were O.E. Fernandez, ADC Negeri Sembilan, Zainal Abidin Ali, ADC Pahang, James William, Assistant Rover Scout Leader, Penang, and Michael Chong, District Cubmaster, Singapore (Malayan Scouting News 1948).

After Muhammad Yusof’s early retirement from the MES in 1950, he could devote more time to helping run the Boy Scout Association in Kuala Lumpur. He was made Assistant Commissioner of Scout in 1951 to assist Payne, who, by this time, had taken over as Chief Commissioner of Scout. The main focus then was to bring the three programs discussed in 1945 to fruition. Therefore, it was important to recruit more leaders before there was any great inflow of boys. One way to do this was to organize special weekends at Scout camping grounds for those wishing to be in leadership positions and receive scouting experience. Another way was to send Scouts to the Outward-Bound School in Lumut. Already, the numerous business firms, plantations, Mining Companies, the Boys’ Company of the Federation of Military College, and the Education Department had sponsored their candidates. This was to test and develop young men's character, initiative, and spirit by having them confront challenges that required leadership, determination, and resourcefulness. Sponsors sent them to the school to find out if they were the stuff leaders and administrators were made of. Since the course cost \$250 per head, they selected candidates they thought would prove their worth (Scouting 1955). It was a great tribute to the Scout Movement, given that those selected were either active Rover Scouts or have been Scouts.

The threat of communism to the Scout ideals was another huge challenge for Muhammad Yusof as a Scout Leader as it was not enough to make Scouts feel Scouting and Communism were diametrically opposed to each other; they must know why they were so opposed (Scouting 1952). Scouts must be as fervent in their worship of God as were the first followers of various faiths and the proofs of its truth. Scouting was an adventure of living under the guidance of God. For Muslims, it was their faith in Allah, whereas, in Communism, God simply did not exist. Knowing this in itself and strengthening one’s faith was a way to circumvent the infiltration of communist influence and a way to stop the seeds of communism from growing.

Overcoming prejudices among the *Kampong* people was another big challenge. In evidence was when Muhammad Yusof became Acting Chief Commissioner of Scout in 1953, and not long after, had formed a Scout Troop in Linggi (Scouting 1954). Being in the District of Port Dickson, the 11<sup>th</sup> Port Dickson Scout Troop could then serve the Linggi community and act as a stimulant for scouting to flourish in other villages. Although not new in the United Kingdom, this initiative was the first of its kind in Negeri Sembilan, if not the first few to have been introduced in Malaya. One of its many activities was a scavenging excursion around the *balai raya* (community hall), but what was to be an act of good deed, boys became objects of ridicule by *kampong* people with utterances made to the effect that Muhammad Yusof was turning boys into slaves. Such was the depth of indifference and apathy when they regarded Scouting as only about games boys play and doing useless work (Muhammad Yusof 1965: 83).

In another instance, the derision of *Pengakap curi ayam* (Scouts stealing chickens) was often heard (Scouting 1950).<sup>15</sup> There were other kinds of wisecracks and cat-calls, and from grown-ups who should know better, were critical. Ridiculing Boy Scouts happened many years ago in Britain when Baden-Powell started the Scout Movement (Patterson 1957). In Malaya, it was no different. Instead of reacting obtrusively, Muhammad Yusof encouraged his scouts to face the challenge in the manner Scouts have been trained for and went on to establish a Scout Headquarters in Linggi, so Scout training and investiture ceremonies could be held. The goal then was to create a standard of excellence by which Scout Troops elsewhere may be measured (Scouting 1954). Indeed, it was an effort that was aligned with scouting practices in the United Kingdom and other countries. For his efforts, Muhammad Yusof was awarded the Silver Acorn in 1953 (The Boy Scouts Association 1953: 14).<sup>16</sup>

In 1955, Lord Rowallan, the Chief Scout of the British Commonwealth (1945-1959), made a tour to Malaya and, for the first time, witnessed the pioneering work of Malayan Scouts, which, according to him, was magnificent (Scouting 1955). The work on bamboo with its endless possibilities, for instance, could not have been as splendid if the exact measure of the quality of training was not given to Scouts for Tenderfoot, Second-Class, and First-Class to the degree of imagination with which these tests were taken. Ultimately, it was the simple knots and lashings that provided the basis to build anything no matter where Scouts were situated and in any weather conditions they found themselves in (Thurman 1961: 4). As such, Scout training in every state was imperative, and training teams who ran efficiently the Preliminary and Wood Badge Training courses on the lines laid down by Gilwell would continue to ensure standards remained high. Whether courses were held at campsites, "New Villages," or rubber estates, Scout Troops and



FIGURE 4. The 11<sup>th</sup> Port Dickson (Linggi) Scout Troop  
 Source: Scouting 1954: 2

Packs were already doing a fine job helping a community of different races and languages work together in unison.

In a good many instances, Scouting was about the only thing that brought people together, and the loss of Scouts after they left school was ironic unless the Rover Scout Group, established in 1918, was reorganized. Considering this, Payne and Muhammad Yusof took immediate steps by forming two sections – Rover Scouts and Senior Scouts. Given that the wide difference in age between the two was considered not suitable, especially when the way of thinking of those in the upper age bracket had differed considerably after World War Two, this would be a way forward. Thereafter, L.R. Shori was appointed as the first Head Commissioner of Rover Scouts in 1956 to bolster efforts and help spread the interest in Rover Scouting throughout the country (Morais 1965: 95). However, despite the Movement's successes, it did not hide the problem of managing strained relationships between Scouters, as most Scouting in Malaya was carried out in schools where the headmaster was the sponsoring authority and a proportion of Scout Troops under his purview ran on school lines as class subjects. Much goodwill and public relations with Scouts were required, and the cooperation with the Girl Guides was strengthened. Payne gradually made progress with a steady increase in the number of Scouts from 1948 after he took over from F.C. Sands. The following Census as of 30 September 1955 showed this was the case:

TABLE 1. The Annual Census for 1955

	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
Scouters	1494	1878	2365	2333	2742	3147	3981	4043
Rovers	1428	1333	1495	1493	1612	1430	1675	1685
Senior Scouts		6416	8462	7362	7627	8837	9118	8046
Boy Scouts	14783	11286	11700	11772	14046	15751	17018	16659
Wolf Cubs	3540	5280	6654	7565	9509	10717	12690	12953
<b>Total</b>	<b>21245</b>	<b>26121</b>	<b>30679</b>	<b>30525</b>	<b>35436</b>	<b>39832</b>	<b>44482</b>	<b>43386</b>

Note: Senior Scouts are Scouts from ages 15-18 who are trained in separate Troops.  
 The census does not include Commissioners, District Scoutmasters, or Group Scoutmasters  
 (Source: The Boy Scouts Association 1955: 6)

Under Payne's able leadership and guidance, Muhammad Yusof drafted a new Scout Constitution with input from other Scout Leaders. This Constitution was for the Federation of Malaya and was to be made effective on 31 August 1957. The Scout team also began planning for the opening of BP House, the Scout Association of Malaya's Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. After months of hard work, since its foundation stone was laid in 1954, this 4-story building was opened on 5 January 1957, the day the Global Scout Movement celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary (The Scout Association of Malaysia 2017: 47). The building housed offices, hostels and a Scout shop, and its successful completion, a tribute to Payne for his selfless service to the Scout Movement. Sir Donald McGillivray, the British High Commissioner to Malaya, praised Payne for creating a Scout organization in the Federation that ranked among the largest and best in the world. In its headquarters



FIGURE 5. E.M.F Payne, Chief Commissioner of Scout (1948-1957).  
 Source: Scouting January, 1954:1)

at BP House, there was now a support staff to administer the Scout Association of Malaya. Payne was also responsible for the completion of another scout camp in Cheras, Selangor, called Camp Semangat, the name being a reflection of his quiet and effective emphasis on the Malayan character of Scouting even before the word “Malayanization” became significant in Malayan life (The Sunday Times 1957). He had built up its Malayan leadership in Muhammad Yusof, who became Assistant Commissioner of Scout (1951), Acting Chief Commissioner of Scout (1953), and the recipient of the Silver Wolf Award (1955). In the Annual Report for 1955, Payne congratulated Muhammad Yusof and expressed his happiness at seeing the latter’s work recognized (The Boy Scouts Association 1955: 4).

By the time Muhammad Yusof was appointed Chief Commissioner of Scouts in 1957, more than 42,000 Boy Scouts and Leaders in the Federation of Malaya were nurtured in the spirit of brotherhood and as “one big happy family.” Muhammad Yusof fostered this spirit not only to bridge the racial divide among members but also as a way to encourage the cultivation of goodwill and cooperation among the general public. This was the basis for the Scout Movement to build upon during the post-war reconstruction and nation-building period, as it would not have been possible had the character of Scouts and Scouters not been shaped and their virtues instilled. As a means to an end, this was a proactive effort without which the policy to decentralize, recruit, and train Scout leaders at the state and district levels could not be implemented effectively, the Movement’s programs brought to fruition, the threat of communism strategically dealt with, and the potential for pioneering work realized. For his eminent work, Sir Donald McGillivray described Muhammad Yusof on the day of his appointment as Chief Commissioner of Scout in 1957:

*A man of great experience and high ideals, with faith in God and the humanity of a man who at all times does his best and wishes for no reward.*

(The Sunday Times 1957)

Muhammad Yusof’s services to the youth of Malaya had earned him a job well done, but the past, said the High Commissioner, was only the beginning. Muhammad Yusof accepted the challenge for the future, which called for greater demands upon effort, goodwill, and a fine spirit of service among the boys and leaders. Indeed, the realization of active service of “love and duty to God and neighbor” was the ultimate purpose of the Scout Movement and would be carried out by Muhammad Yusof through various Malayanization initiatives. At this time, the Boy Scouts Association of Malaysia had been on an even keel and found its place as a full member of the Worldwide Scouts Conference on 1 September 1957. However, Muhammad Yusof stressed that it must not rest on its laurels as the new age presents a huge challenge. There must be a “positive and creative action” of the leaders and people of goodwill as young men have been struggling against the old ways and were desperately seeking new standards of life (The Straits Times 1958).

In 1958, Muhammad Yusof attended the first Asia Pacific Regional Scouts Conference in Baguio City, Philippines, and was made a committee member for the regional conference until 1959 (The Scout Association of Malaysia 2017: 107). The aim of the Conference was to promote cooperation, unity of purpose, and a common understanding of the fundamental principles of Scouting as founded by the first Chief Scout of the World, Lord Baden-Powell. Other delegates who attended were from Australia, Burma, Ceylon, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, and the United States of America. (Morais 1965: 32). The World Scout Jamboree was also held in the Philippines that same year, and from there, Muhammad Yusof traveled to Hong Kong, Bangkok, and Rangoon on his way to attend

another World Scout Conference in New Delhi, India. Indeed, a strong foundation for the future had been laid when the Scout Association of Malaya became a separate organization from the Association of Scouts of Britain in 1957. More Scouts were sent to Gilwell. Upon returning, they helped build further the Scout Movement of Malaya and a “character development factory” that Muhammad Yusof had envisioned;

*I pray to God that Scouts will always be civic-minded, even if it be in the nature of removing a banana skin from the five-foot path.  
A Scout will be judged by his actions.*

(Muhammad Yusof 1965: 83).

Muhammad Yusof's proposal for the introduction of Semangat Padi and Semangat Rimba to replace the Silver Wolf and Silver Oak awards was also well received, with Lady Olave Baden-Powell made the first recipient of the Semangat Padi for her contribution to the development of the Girl Guides Movement in Malaya (Morais 1965: 72); followed by Muhammad Yusof in 1958 as the second recipient.<sup>17</sup> The introduction of these awards was one of his efforts to further Malayanize the Scouts Movement and help form a Malayan identity the nation could be proud of. Meanwhile, Dato' Suleiman Abdul Rahman was appointed as the first Chief Scout (1957-1961), and Zainal Abidin bin Ali the Assistant Commissioner of Scout. It was through the latter's hard work that the book *Scouting for Boys* by Lord Baden-Powell was translated into Malay. Following Muhammad Yusof's retirement in 1960, Zainal Abidin took over as Chief Commissioner of Scout from 1960 to 1963. Thus, Muhammad Yusof remains the only Malayan Scout to have received the Silver Wolf and is henceforth referred to in this article as the Silver Wolf of Malaya.



FIGURE 6. Lady Olave Baden-Powell received the Semangat Padi Award from Muhammad Yusof in 1958

*Source: Muhammad Yusof's Collection)*

## CONCLUSION

The Scout Movement of Malaya had its early beginnings in 1908. Growth initially was slow as it appealed only to Scouts in English schools, but due to the persistent efforts of Pathfinders, more Malays in the mid-1920s began to find Scout adventures uplifting. Muhammad Yusof was one such individual who embraced the spirit of Scouting as it was very similar to the life he led in the *kampung*. Although a “late bloomer” when he joined the Scout Movement of Selangor at the age of 26, he quickly rose through the ranks as a Scouter after his training stint at Purdy Camp, Singapore, in 1929 and Gilwell Park, England, in 1936. His passion for Scouting grew with each passing day ever since, and he found the impetus to visit countries in Asia and Europe before World War Two broke out.

After the war, he regrouped with his fellow Scouts to help overcome many challenges and became Assistant Commissioner of Scouts in 1951. It was under the guidance of E.M.F Payne, the Chief Commissioner of Scout, that Muhammad Yusof played another important role during a transition period when Malaya stood on the cusp of independence in 1957. The number of Scouts had increased to more than 42,000 by the time Muhammad Yusof succeeded Payne to become the first Asian Chief Commissioner of Scout for the Federation of Malaya. His most significant contribution to the Scout Movement then was in his efforts to establish goodwill and cooperation among Scouts and Scouters to enhance the Movement's credibility, all made in the spirit of brotherhood. This was a way to bridge the racial divide that may very well have a resultant effect on the general public. For Muhammad Yusof's dedication, he received Scout achievement awards, the highest being the Silver Wolf in 1955 for "services of the most exceptional character in Malaya over a period of 27 years."

After Malaya's independence on 31 August 1957, the Scout Association of Malaya became a separate entity from that of the Boy Scouts Association of Great Britain, and the Silver Wolf was replaced with the Semangat Padi as the highest award given to a Scout. Thus, Muhammad Yusof was the final recipient of the Silver Wolf, which remains to this day an unrestricted gift from Lord Rowallan, the Chief Scout of the British Commonwealth.<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Yusof retired in 1960, but not before he laid the foundation for which the Scout Movement could build in the years to come. Hence, his legacy as the Silver Wolf of Malaya.

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#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Datuk Simon Yew from Sabah received the Silver Wolf Award in 1963 when the State was still part of British North Borneo and not yet a member of the Federation of Malaya. This notwithstanding, he was an important figure in the development of Scouting in Sabah. Born in Fuzhou, China, in 1898, he joined the First Sandakan Scout Troop as a Scout Leader. He formed the first Wolf Cub Pack in Sandakan in 1930 when the Lok Kawi Scout Camping Ground was opened in 1935. He was made West Coast District Commissioner of Scout in 1950. He published *Scouting in Picture* magazine and introduced the Scouting Job Week. Awarded the Medal of Merit (1939) and Silver Acorn (1953). Conferred with the Member of British Empire (MBE) in 1955. He died in 1983 (Scout Association of Malaysia Sabah Branch 2020).
- 2 Purdy camp was located in Changi on Singapore's east coast and stood in a vast rubber estate belonging to its benefactor Ng Sen Choy, whose services to the Scout Movement had been unequalled in kindness and generosity. The camp was named in honor of his friend, Benjamin Purdy, Singapore's second District Commissioner of Scouts (The Boy Scouts Association of Great Britain. 1934).
- 3 In his article, Muhammad Yusof referred to Mr. Ng Seng Choy alias Towkay Wing Loong, sweeping at Purdy Camp (Scouting in Malaya 1929: 22).
- 4 Gilwell Park was and still is a campsite in Chingford, outside of London, that Lord Baden-Powell turned into a parkland for training scout leaders in 1919 and the coming-of-age Jamboree in 1929. The 109-acre site is owned by The Scout Association of Britain and used by Scouting and Guiding groups. Since 2016, the activity center at

- Gilwell Park has been run and managed by Scout Adventures (Sally Webb, Heritage Scouts Organization, UK to Ahmad Husni, 8 December 2022).
- 5 Muhammad Yusof to Hj Nordin Abdul Rahman, 2 Nov. 1977 and F.C. Sands to T.S. Adams, 2 January 1936 (Sel. Sec. G. 142 1936).
  - 6 J.J. Sheenan, Secretary to Resident, Selangor to Under Secretary to Government, FMS (Sel. G. 142 1936, 5 March 1936).
  - 7 Muhmmad Yusof to Yusof Harun, 2 November, 1977.
  - 8 The object of the course was to determine if he could put his mind to scouting by reading suitable literature, thinking out any problems that arose, and knowing where to seek help to solve them. Muhammad Yusof was required to put his ideas in writing as this tended to clarify and satisfy himself that he was working on definite lines and if the work was worth doing. Study circles were then held where past and present questions were discussed with other Scouters. Members took turns introducing themselves and answering each question. At this time, no notes were taken as the individual's thought was required and not the second or third-hand ideas of others (The Boys Scouts Association of Great Britain 1952: 1-12).
  - 9 Dato' Suleiman bin Abdul Rahman was Born in Johor in 1912. He was appointed as the first Asian Chief Scout of Malaya on 31 August 1957. He studied Law at Cambridge University, United Kingdom, and became a member of the Malayan Cabinet (1957-1959). He was posted to Canberra as Malaya's High Commissioner to Australia in 1961 and died while serving in 1963 (Morais 1965: 69).
  - 10 Lord Baden Powell of Gilwell founded the International Scouting Movement. He was born in Kenya in 1857 and made his way to become a General in the British army. He was also a writer and an artist. In 1934, Muhammad Yusof joined the Scouts Guard of Honour to welcome him to Malaya. Baden-Powell was touring the Mediterranean, Ceylon, and Malaya while attending a Jamboree in Melbourne, Australia. This visit to Malaya with his wife, Olave St. Claire Soames, was his first and was part of his convalescence to regain his health and strength after an illness that immobilized him for five months. Baden-Powell died at the age of 83 in 1941 (Morais 1965: 16).
  - 11 The existing buildings that became part of Castle Camp were once a small portion of an abandoned hospital project. In 1928, Markus Dukes, the District Commissioner of Kuala Lumpur, went Campsite hunting. With the aid of a few enthusiastic Scouts, including Muhammad Yusof, he cleared up much of the "belukar" (under grove) and commandeered the site for the Boy Scouts Association. Castle Camp was not gazetted as a "play-ground to be administered by the District Commissioner of Scouts, Selangor" until 1937 when Dukes had been "called to Higher Service" in 1936. On his way to the Australian Jamboree in 1934, Lord Baden-Powell visited Castle Camp, opened a B-P Hut, left his footprint, and planted a tree.
  - 12 The values of observation and deduction are integral to the practice of Tracking that Lord Baden-Powell has expounded. (Gilcraft 1946: 9-10).
  - 13 Muhammad Yusof to Mohd. Nordin Abdul Rahman, 2 November 1977.
  - 14 F.C. Sands headed the conference. Messrs Cheeseman, Hertslet, Westrop, Hodgkin, Payne, Dant, Steven, Gurney, Harker, and Adams were in attendance.
  - 15 One plausible origin of the taunt was when a Patrol of Scouts went hiking in preparation for their First Class Journey. On the way, they came across a woman giving chase to a chicken that broke loose from its coup. Keeping true to the doctrine of Scouting and eager to do a good turn for the day, the boys gave the woman a hand. However, passers-by mistook their intentions and thought the Scouts were attempting to steal the chicken, so they shouted "*Curi Ayam.*" The boys recovered the chicken, but the phrase has stayed with them ever since.
  - 16 E.M.F Payne to Muhammad Yusof, 15 October 1953.
  - 17 *Semangat Padi* denotes the characteristics of the rice plant – the more rice grains there are, the more it will droop to the ground. No matter how wealthy and exalted one may be, one imbued with the spirit of Scouting should take upon all types of work, no matter how lowly they may be, with honor and respect as long as such work is noble and for good purpose. The *Semangat Rimba* refers to those endowed with the Spirit of the Forest. They are brave adventurers and explorers who know and value the richness of the woods, forests, and the world around them. They are confident and courageous to face their enemies and difficulties (Muhammad Yusof 1965: 83).
  - 18 Lord T. Rowallan to Muhammad Yusof, 17 December 1955.

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