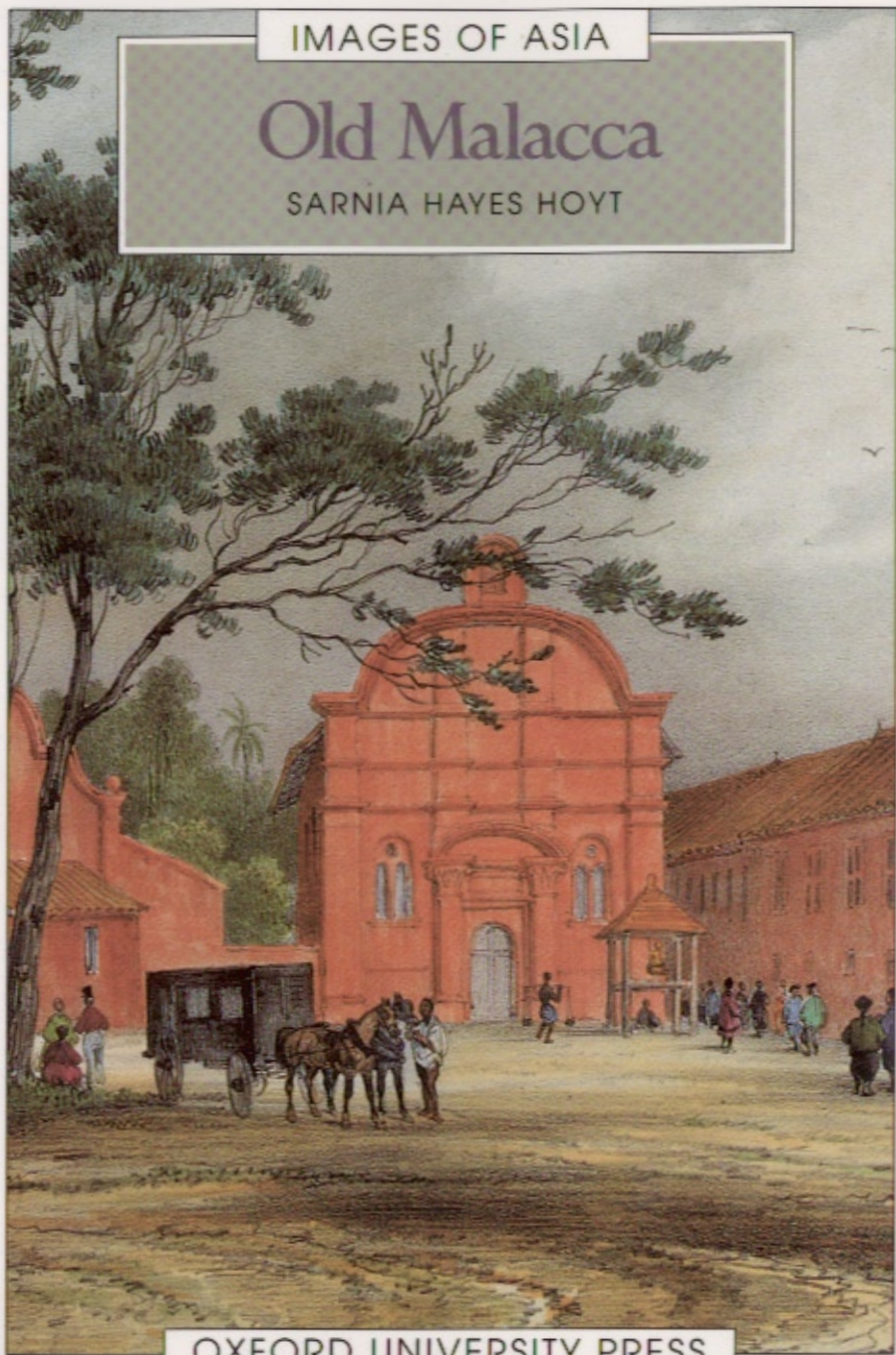


IMAGES OF ASIA

Old Malacca

SARNIA HAYES HOYT



OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Contents

| | | |
|---|---------------------|-----|
| | <i>Preface</i> | vii |
| 1 | Introduction | 1 |
| 2 | Malay Capital | 8 |
| 3 | Chinese Destination | 22 |
| 4 | Portuguese Prize | 30 |
| 5 | Dutch Outpost | 43 |
| 6 | British Colony | 57 |
| 7 | Melaka | 70 |
| | <i>Appendix</i> | 76 |
| | <i>Bibliography</i> | 77 |
| | <i>Index</i> | 81 |



1. 'India Extrema Nova Tabula', by Sebastian Münster, c.1552. (Antiques of the Orient)

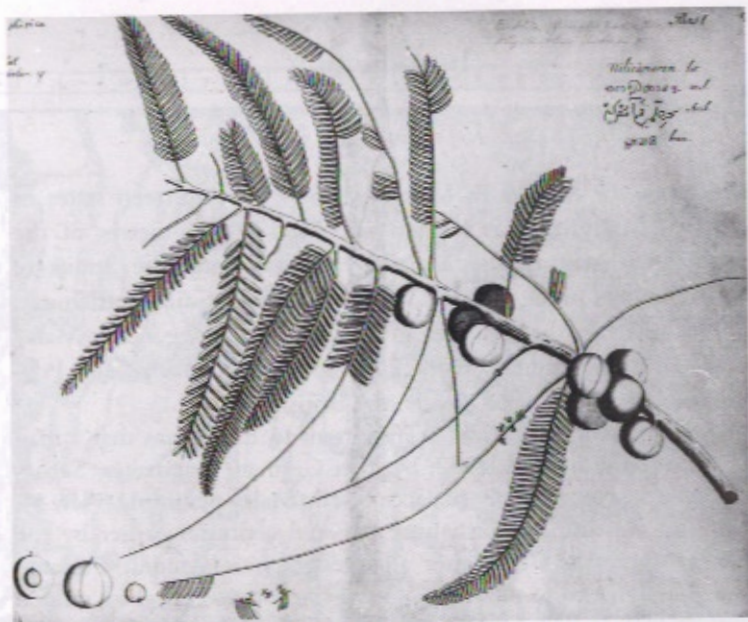
1 Introduction

MALACCA, or Melaka in Malay, is one of the thirteen states of modern Malaysia. It is located on about 70 kilometres of the south-west coast of the Malay peninsula, along the Straits of Malacca, 2° N of the equator. It began as a small fishing settlement, one of many in the area, but grew to become a legendary Malay emporium and capital before it fell into the hands of the Portuguese, the Dutch, and, finally, the British.

At its peak Malacca was so important to Europeans that a map of Asia published in 1552 by the German mapmaker Sebastian Münster locates only Malacca on the Malay peninsula (Plate 1). Münster was using information gathered centuries earlier by the Graeco-Egyptian astronomer and geographer Claudius Ptolemy who had referred to the region as the *Chersonesus Aurea*, or 'golden peninsula', because ancient legends and biblical references suggested that the area around Malacca may have been the source of King Solomon's wealth. Münster also used newer information from Marco Polo after his thirteenth-century journey through the region.

The origin of Malacca's name has been debated by historians and etymologists, but most accept a derivation from the tree commonly called *pokok Melaka* in Malay because Malays traditionally named a place for its geographic or botanic features (Plate 2). Emanuel Godinho de Eredia, a Portuguese-Eurasian who wrote about Malacca in 1613, and the unknown author of the *Sejarah Melayu (Malay Annals)* both agreed that the name Melaka comes from the fruit of a tree native to the area.

Eredia (quoted in Mills) wrote, "'Malaca" means Myrobalans, the fruit of a tree growing along the banks of a river ... which flows down from its source on the hill of Buquet China to the sea, on the coast of the mainland.' Because the Sanskrit word *amlaka* or *amalaka* means 'sour taste', and because the dried fruits of this tree



2. *Phyllanthus emblica*, commonly known as the Melaka tree, has juicy fruits located at the base of the leafy twigs. Photograph by Judith Balmer, from *Hortus Malabaricus* (Rheede), Parts I-V, 1678-1703. (National Parks Board, Singapore)

have an astringent flavour, the association between the fruit and the name becomes clear.

Of the two species of trees that produce this fruit one, the *Phyllanthus emblica* (see Plate 2), is widely planted for its large, juicy fruits used in cooking, but it was probably the Malayan native *Phyllanthus pectinata* that shaded the founder of Malacca, Parameswarā.

Malacca's location, at a narrow point in the Straits, has been its destiny. Historically, the Malay world, a loose term that includes the peoples of the Malay archipelago as well as the peninsula, valued location more than natural resources in determining sites for its kingdoms. Protected harbours and navigable rivers were