

THE MALAYS

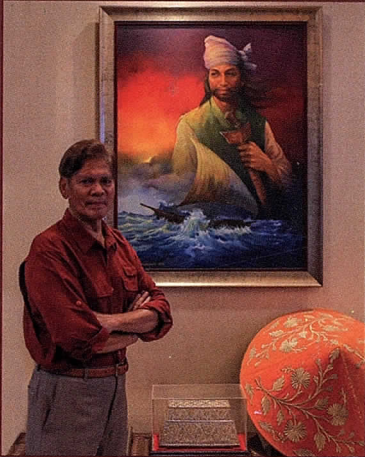
PATHFINDERS AND TRAILBLAZERS



RAMLI BIN NGAH TALIB

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The main point of interest is, of course, the Malays – a people of contention, whose character has often been questioned, their achievements doubted and disputed, but as is shown by the writer, in his essays, are often enough judged with the prejudice of colonialists or merely local detractors (including the Malays themselves). However, the book also highlights the many special qualities of the people, their states, systems of administration and justice. And not to forget, and refined features of the people, as is often referred to by colonial administrators who have lived close to the heat of their dynamic courtesy, civility and grace. Through the many centuries of their history and development, they have invented a most sensitive language, that may

speak with gentle emotions to the beloved, as well as the respected elder, teacher or ruler. This language is spoken throughout Southeast Asia and beyond, and is now the sixth biggest in the world. And through this language has been composed an oeuvre of many thousand poems, stories, ideas and proverbs – all in all producing one of the most beautiful literatures.

Ramli's chapters span a long and large terrain, across a wide expanse of interests, many centuries of history – from their origins in Africa 60,000 years ago, through the settling of Sundaland, the rise of the native ports and trading posts, to the establishment of important kingdoms and empires. He traces their successes, justice and impartiality, but also when these were no longer present, their downfall. The greed and aggression of European traders and seekers of Eastern wealth were among the worst of their enemies, which had used modern cannons and muskets, and not least their desire to terminate the legacy of Islam, that was the reigning belief and way of life in the Archipelago.

(Muhammad Haji Salleh, Malaysian National Laureate)

The author, Ramli Ngah Talib, has written several books, including on his tenure as Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives) of the Malaysian Parliament, as well as one on his journey of growing up in a rural village before proceeding to read law in United Kingdom.

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