

A HISTORY OF  
MALAYA  
AND HER NEIGHBOURS

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VOLUME ONE

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## PREFACE

THIS book is intended primarily as an introduction to the history of Malaya. Its concern with the history of her neighbours is confined to the part they have played in influencing her development. The term "Neighbours" has been taken in a wide sense to include not only certain South East Asian countries like Sumatra, Java or Siam; but also those greater "neighbours" India, China and Europe whose cultural and economic effects on her fortunes have been profound.

In the present volume, however, more space has been given to the history of these neighbours than to that of Malaya itself. This is due partly, of course, to the meagreness of the sources for early Malayan history; and partly to the fact that Malaya did not begin to exist as a separate entity until the fifteenth century. But the essential reason is that Malaya derived what importance she had during the previous centuries—and indeed for long after—from her proximity to the Straits of Malacca (a vital link in the sea route between east and west), and from the strategic and economic significance this gave her in the eyes of her neighbours. To these factors she owed the rise of her entrepôt trade in ports like Kedah and Malacca; her domination by successive sea powers; and a considerable part of her cultural heritage. I have therefore tried to show Malaya in her context of South East Asian and World history, because it seems to me that only thus can she be understood.

I should like to acknowledge the great debt I owe in the writing of this book to the works of Professor G. Coedes, Sir Richard Winstedt, K.B.E., Dato Sir Roland Braddell, Professor D. G. E. Hall and other scholars. For a select list of these works, the reader is referred to the bibliography.

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