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THE STRAITS SETTLEMENTS

1826-67

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# The Straits Settlements

1826-67

Indian Presidency to Crown Colony

*by*

C. M. TURNBULL

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## PREFACE

THIS book deals with the period from 1826, when the Straits Settlements were united to form the fourth presidency of India, to 1867, when they were separated from the Indian administration to become a crown colony. While my interest in these years first began with a study of the constitutional movement for transfer, which was submitted to the University of London as a Ph.D. thesis, the present work is not only a study of British administration in the Straits Settlements. It aims rather to trace the development of Straits society as a whole, viewed not from London nor from Calcutta, but from the settlements themselves, and particularly from the capital in Singapore.

Inevitably the Straits-based European minority play a role in this story out of proportion to their numbers. In part this is because British officials held all but the most subordinate government posts, and the movements for constitutional reform and control over economic policy were almost exclusively the domain of private European residents, while the Asian population, and particularly the Chinese, maintained its own separate organization of society. In part it is because the absence of vernacular newspapers in this period and the dearth of documentary material in local languages has forced Asian scholars to rely heavily on western sources. While anthropological, sociological and historical studies of Asian communities in neighbouring areas and at later periods reflect light on Asian society in the Straits Settlements and will probably provide greater indirect illumination in future, unless hitherto unsuspected sources of information in the vernacular come to light, it appears that historians will be compelled to continue to view the Asian majority at that time through the eyes of western contemporaries.

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