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A Portrait of Malaysia and Singapore

TAN DING EING



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*To Soo Hai, David and
Ronald with love*

Preface

The aim of this book is to bring about a new understanding of the history of Malaysia and Singapore not only for secondary school students but also for the general reader who is interested in the complex interacting local and external forces which have influenced the political, economic and social development of these two territories.

Ever since I started teaching the history of Malaysia and Singapore in the secondary school more than thirteen years ago and more recently at the University of Malaya as part-time tutor, I have been reading and researching into those aspects of Malaysian and Singapore history which have been neglected or inadequately treated in the existing textbooks. One such example concerns the founding of Penang. Why the British wanted the Settlement is always well explained, but the inside story of how the Kedah Sultan felt about it is never told. Another neglected aspect concerns the origin and nature of the Malay States before British intervention. Similarly, much of Singapore's interesting history has been glossed over or left unexplained.

The above are but few of the many examples of gaps and inadequacies one finds in the treatment of the history of Malaysia and Singapore in school textbooks. I have been very fortunate in that while working out the remedy in this book, I was able to draw upon the latest researches of local and foreign scholars. The list is long but I would like to mention a few whose work helped me most in the preparation of this book. They are Khoo Kay Kim, R. Bonney, E. Thio, E. Sadka, Kernal Sandhu, C.M. Turnbull and W. Blythe. I also did extensive reading of relevant articles in the Journals of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society and the Journals of Southeast Asian History for information on past events as well as for the most recent interpretation of particular aspects of Malaysian and Singapore history. Oxford University Press's historical reprints such as *The Golden Chersonese* by I.L. Bird and *The Malay Annals* translated by C.C. Brown provided me with interesting anecdotes and touches of local history often ignored in textbooks.

My method of presentation is analysis followed by detailed description of events. The analysis enables students in the upper secondary to grasp the essentials for the passing of examinations, while the comprehensive treatment of all the topics provides enough material for discussion at pre-university level.

June 1974

TAN DING EING

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Contents

Preface	<i>iv</i>	Dutch Policy at Malacca, 29	
Acknowledgements	<i>iv</i>	Dutch-Bugis Relations in Johore, 29	
Illustrations	<i>ix</i>	Dutch Attempt to Control Rhio, 29	
Tables	<i>x</i>		
Maps	<i>viii</i>		
1. THE MALACCA SULTANATE	1	4. KEDAH AND THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF PENANG	31
Its Origin, 1		Western Factors: Trade Reasons, 31	
The Personality And Resourcefulness of Parameswara, 1		Western Factors: Strategic Motives, 32	
Malacca—Geographical Advantages, 1		Local Factors, 32	
The System of Administration, 1		External Factors Linked to Local Conditions:	
Relations with Ming China, 2		The Search for a Commercial Base, 34	
The Coming of Islam, 4		Events Leading to the 1791 Treaty, 36	
The Trade of Malacca, 5		The Cession of Province Wellesley, 37	
The Expansion of Malacca, 6		The Development of Penang, 38	
The Decline and Fall of Malacca, 8		Penang Fails as a Naval Base, 38	
		The Administration, 39	
2. THE MALAY POWERS AND THE PORTUGUESE	12	5. THE JOHORE EMPIRE AND THE FOUNDING OF SINGAPORE	43
Why the Portuguese Came to South-East Asia, 12		The Ancient City of Singapura, 43	
The Need to Maintain Portuguese Superiority in the Indian Ocean, 13		The Circumstances Leading to the Founding of Singapore, 43	
The Need to Capture Malacca, 13		The Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, 48	
How the Portuguese Ruled Malacca, 14			
Results of Portuguese Rule, 17		6. THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SINGAPORE	52
		Clearing the Jungle, 52	
3. THE JOHORE EMPIRE AND FOREIGN POWERS: MALAY AND EUROPEAN	22	Population Increase, 52	
The Johore Empire—A Brief Revival, 22		Planning the Town, 52	
War with Jambi, 22		The Administration of Justice, 55	
The End of the Malacca Royal Line, 22		Piracy in the Straits Settlements, 56	
Civil War in Johore, 23		Chinese Secret Societies, 57	
Bugis Domination in Johore, 24		Increase of Trade in Singapore, 60	
The Rise of the Bugis, 24		The Trade of Singapore, 62	
The Bugis in Selangor, 25		The Nature of Singapore's Trade, 62	
Bugis-Minangkabau Rivalry, 25		Countries Trading at Singapore, 62	
Power Struggle in Johore, 26		Goods Traded at Singapore, 62	
The Coming of the Europeans, 26		The Entrepôt Trade, 62	
The Dutch in South-East Asia, 26		Singapore's Trade with China, 67	
Anglo-Dutch Rivalry, 27		Constitutional Development of the Straits Settlements, 67	
The English in South-East Asia, 27		Administrative Authority of the Governor Before 1867, 68	
Reasons for Anglo-Dutch Rivalry, 28		Agitation for Constitutional Changes, 68	
The English Withdrawal, 28		Factors Leading to the Transfer, 68	
The Dutch in the Malay Peninsula, 28		The Straits Settlements After the Transfer, 72	
The Capture of Malacca, 28			