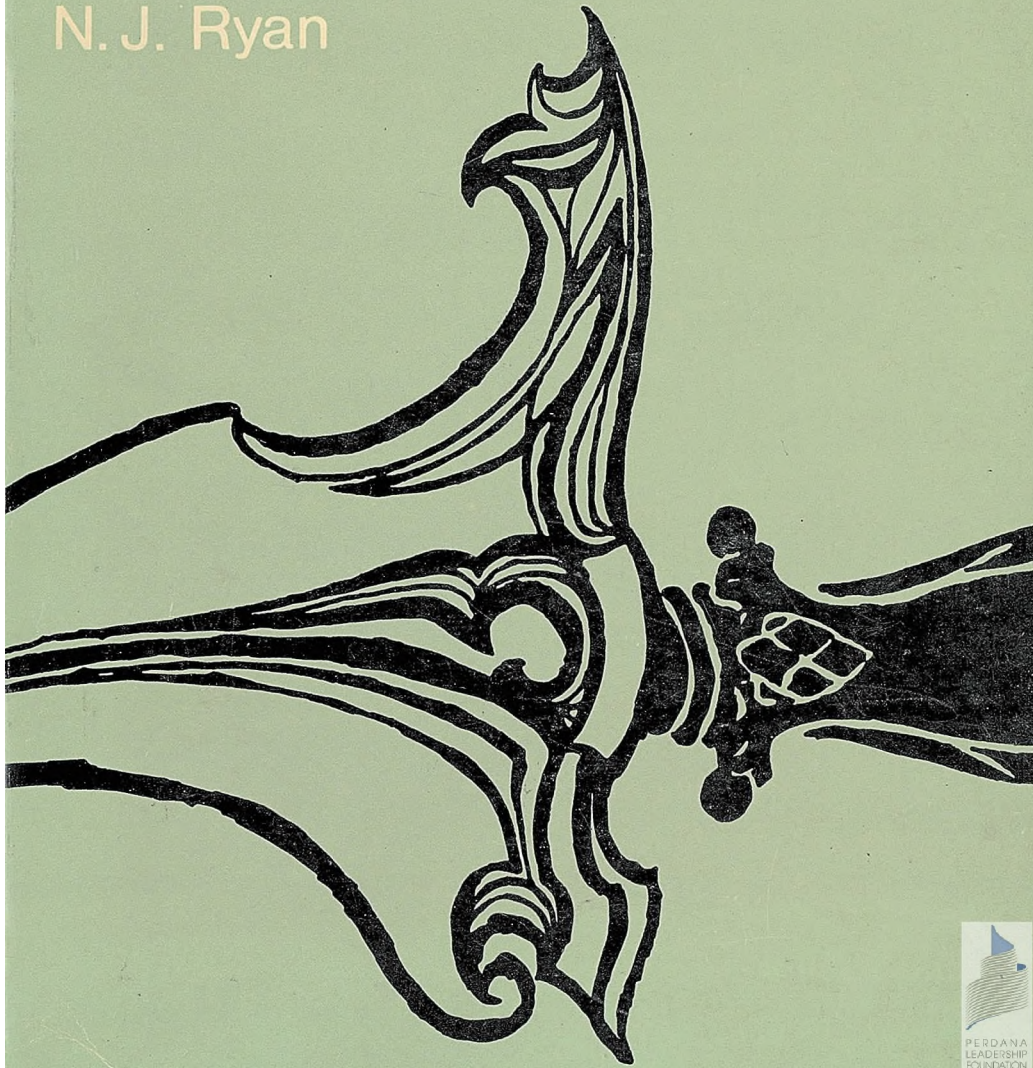


OXFORD IN ASIA COLLEGE TEXTS

THE MAKING OF
MODERN MALAYSIA
AND SINGAPORE

N. J. Ryan





PERDANA
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P E R D A N A

THE MAKING OF MODERN MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE

**A HISTORY FROM
EARLIEST TIMES TO 1966**

N. J. RYAN, o.b.e., p.m.p.
formerly Malayan Education Service

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PREFACE

The formation of the state of Malaysia in 1963 has necessitated the reshaping of the existing histories of Malaya. Malaysia is a much larger entity than the former Federation of Malaya for it includes the territories of Sabah and Sarawak in north-western Borneo. This has meant that the history of Malaysia must be presented with a much wider coverage than a history of Malaya. It must include not only the events in Sabah, Brunei and Sarawak leading up to the formation of Malaysia but also the earlier history of these states from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century.

A considerable part of this book is based upon the author's *The Making of Modern Malaya* but many sections have been recast and much new material has been added. This new material relates particularly to the history of Sabah and Sarawak in the nineteenth century and also to events in South-East Asia between 1957 and 1966. There are also many more illustrations and maps and it is hoped that these will enhance the usefulness of the book.

Nevertheless the general layout of the contents of the book is based on the experience gained in teaching in the upper forms of Malaysian secondary schools. The book is primarily intended for teachers and pupils but it should also meet the needs of the general reader who requires a short, up-to-date history of Malaysia. It has been the intention of the author to present the history of Malaysia in a South-East Asian context rather than as an adjunct to European politics; for it is now realized, for example, that the Malay Peninsula in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was affected more by the Achinese and the Bugis than by the Dutch. In recent years a new approach to Malaysian history has been developed; this is an approach which places less reliance on uncritical acceptance of the works of earlier writers. In following this fresh outlook the author would like to acknowledge his indebtedness to the work of Dr. C.D. Cowan, Dr. D.K. Bassett and Dr. A. Lamb.

Since the publication of the last edition of this book Singapore's attainment of independence in 1965 and its subsequent activities as an independent nation have required a fresh approach to its history. Accordingly, in this new edition an attempt has been made to provide a proper perspective for an understanding of its history by examining comprehensively Singapore's growth in the last one hundred and fifty years. The picture supplements have

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been adapted to provide an adequate visual parallel to the historical record. In order to tailor the book more closely to student requirements exercises have been added and a consolidated bibliography provided to encourage further reading.

Hong Kong, 1969

N. J. R.



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- 1906 British Adviser appointed to Brunei
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- 1914 British General Adviser in Johore
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- 1923 Causeway linking Johore and Singapore built
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INTRODUCTION: MALAYSIA IN HISTORY

THROUGHOUT history Malaysia has been influenced by both India and China, the two ancient centres of civilization lying to the west and to the east. This influence has in some periods been very strong, especially from India, from where Malaysia received much of her early culture and her religions. Chinese influence was always less direct but at certain times, as we shall see, the Chinese Empire took a very keen interest in the events of South-East Asia.

Thus Malaysia's importance in early history was governed by her geographical position. Not only did it so happen that on the earth's surface Malaysia was placed between India and China, but other geographical factors helped to increase the importance of this position. There were many other places which were half-way between India and China, but few of them had Malaysia's special advantages.

West Malaysia is part of a peninsula pointing southward from the Asian land mass; it is almost entirely surrounded by the sea. If people wanted to sail from China to India they had to sail close to both East and West Malaysia, and even if they did not want to sail all the way, the Peninsula being narrow in the north offered the easiest place for the transshipment of goods from the China Sea to the Indian Ocean. But whether men sailed all the way or only did half the journey, the Malay Peninsula and the North-Western coast of Borneo played an important part in their plans. This was because of another important geographical and climatic factor, the monsoons. It is now commonplace to say that Malaysia is a place where the monsoons meet; in the days of sailing this geographical factor was vital. The monsoons are winds which blow from two directions at different times of the year. There is the south-west monsoon, blowing across the Indian Ocean from the Equator between the months of May and August. Then there is the north-east monsoon blowing down the China coast and across the China Sea from November to April. They could be said to meet at the Malay Peninsula or more generally in the region of the Malaysian Archipelago. Ships sailing from China would travel southward on the north-

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east monsoon while from India ships would come east with the south-west winds. When the monsoon changed, the ships would then be able to make the return journey. Thus the Malay Peninsula and the north-west coast of Borneo were in advantageous positions to provide landing places for those who were either making the complete journey from India to China and who were waiting for the monsoon to change, or those who were only doing half the journey but were meeting fellow traders at this 'half-way house'. Chinese traders, for example, could come south between November and April, complete their business, and return home between May and August.

In this way, because of the geographical advantages which she possessed, Malaysia was drawn into world history; in fact, Malaysia's geographical position is the most important factor to take into account if one is to understand her past and even her present and future. Geography introduced Malaysia to the stage of World history; so also did geography keep her there. Because of her open position, because she is not landlocked but is wide open to the outside world, Malaysia has come into contact with many civilizations and many peoples. In her early history these peoples brought her the beginnings of culture and civilization, they brought her trade and commerce, and they brought her many different religions and political systems. Later came settlers from the lands of India and China, at first in small numbers, but very much later in the nineteenth century, when Malaysia's mineral and agricultural resources were properly exploited, they came in large numbers. Malaysia's geographical position also brought her into early contact with nineteenth-century technology and applied science, and these have enabled her to attain today one of the highest standards of living in Asia. Malaysia's position near the East-West trade routes meant that she was quickly introduced to the inventions of nineteenth-century Europe. Thus geography has brought Malaysia into history, has brought her a cosmopolitan population, and has brought her one of the most developed economies in Asia.

We shall see later how important have been the geographical and economic factors in influencing the cycle of Malaysian history. The stress that has been placed on geography in this introductory section merely illustrates what can be seen by glancing at any map. It is the results of this geographical position which are important; when we discuss Malaysian political and economic history we shall see how trade routes and voyages of exploration have influenced her position in the world. We shall see how Malaya and Brunei were prosperous

and important during the days of the Malacca Sultanate when East-West trade was channelled through the Straits of Malacca, and Malacca itself was the entrepot for this trade and for the whole Archipelago. Later when the commerce of the region was under the control of the Dutch, the main trade routes between East and West passed through the Sunda Straits, and Batavia (Djakarta) prospered and Malacca and Brunei declined. A further change was to come when Malaya again became involved in international politics, when the British renewed their interest in Malaysia at the end of the eighteenth century. The establishment of settlements in Penang and Singapore brought much trade back to the Straits of Malacca and led eventually to the development of modern Malaysia's mineral wealth. And at about the same time British subjects began to take an interest in Sarawak and Sabah leading to the establishment of British influence there. Malaysia's place in history therefore has fluctuated with the interest the rest of the world has shown in the area and what she has been able to offer to the economic intercourse of Asia and to the world generally.

Political events in Malaysia have also been affected by the interest which other countries have shown in the region—whether it be the introduction of Islam leading to the establishment of sultanates, or the industrial revolution in England leading to the establishment of the Straits Settlements and British protection over the Malay States. Thus Malaysia in many ways has a cosmopolitan history. Although this book will naturally concentrate on the internal history of the country, it will also attempt to relate Malaysian events to their wider setting in Asian and world history.

MALAYSIA'S EARLIEST HISTORY

WE have said that Malaysia owes her historical importance to her geographical position. Because of this position she has long had contact with India and China, contact both political and cultural, which has continued into the present century. It would have been natural in any case for Malaysia to have been in touch with these countries, but the immigration of large numbers of people from China and India who have become part of Malaysia's permanent population has established definite ties.

Chinese influence on Malaysia had been fairly slight in comparison with that of India, at least until the nineteenth century. And although Malaysia does lie half-way between China and India, during the centuries before the nineteenth it was India much more than China that affected the Peninsula and the Malaysian Archipelago as a whole.

Why was this so? In part, the answer lies in the self-sufficiency of the Chinese Empire. The Chinese were disinclined to undertake long sea voyages of exploration except on certain rare occasions. There were occasional exceptions to this general practice: the voyages during the Sung dynasty (a.d. 960-1127), the voyages of the Ming dynasty in the early 1400's, and the earlier travels of individual Chinese like Fah Hsien in the early fifth century and I Tsing in the seventh century. There is no doubt that from the time of the Han dynasty in China (206 b.c. to a.d. 221) Chinese traders were looking for a sea route to India, and in the course of their search they sailed to the Malay Peninsula and the north-west coast of Borneo. They made use of the facilities which they found but unlike the Indians who also used these facilities, Chinese culture seems to have had little permanent effect on the population in general. China was politically a powerful state—more powerful than any in India—but it was India which provided Malaysia with her first contacts with civilization during the first century, and Indian civilization was to have a great effect on the Peninsula's early history.



The earliest Malaysians

The earliest evidence of human habitation in Malaysia has been found in Borneo, which itself is a European misspelling of Brunei, the most powerful state on the island at the time of the first European contacts. Archaeological excavations in the Niah caves in Sarawak have uncovered a human skull which is estimated to be 35,000 years old. This evidence is much older than that found in the Malay Peninsula where the material which has been excavated is about 10,000 years old; so that we can say that the earliest humans in Malaysia lived in Borneo.

The inhabitants of the Peninsula whom the early Indian traders and voyagers encountered had originally entered Malaya from the north—it is thought about 2500 B.C. These people were Proto-Malays, who, spreading south from Yunnan in a long drawn-out series of migrations, forced the original Negrito inhabitants (today known as Semang and Jakun) back into the hills and jungles. The latter now live mainly in the northern part of the Peninsula. But many thousands of years ago their ancestors were probably the only inhabitants. They lived in the period known as the Middle Stone Age (about 8000-2000 B.C.) inhabiting rock shelters and caves in the limestone hills of Malaya. They used some stone implements for cutting and grinding, and they were able to hunt and kill wild animals. These Negritos may possibly be descendants of the same people as the aborigines of Australia, for during the Ice Age (about 200,000 B.C.) Australia may have been joined to South-East Asia. The newly-arrived Proto-Malays had their origin in southern China and between 2500 and 1500 B.C. forced their way southward through the Peninsula and on to the islands beyond. It is from these Proto-Malays that the Dyaks in Borneo are descended. Much later in history these peoples spread north-eastwards from the Kapuas river area of Borneo so that to-day the Dyaks are the most numerous group in Sarawak. The Proto-Malays were also a stone-age people, that is, they had not learnt the use of metals, and they used stones for their implements and tools; but because their stone implements were better made than those of the Negritos, this period is called the Neolithic or New Stone Age.

Evidence of their habitation, which has been found in Malaysia in places like Gua Cha, Kelantan, shows that they could make pottery and ornaments quite skilfully. They were not only hunters but also cultivators and sailors. As they were able; to use better-made stone axes, they built wooden houses and boats and their culture

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was as far developed as stone implements would allow. Their culture was therefore of a higher standard than that of their predecessors and largely because of their better skills they could live a more settled existence. They could cultivate the land, and they could begin farming by means of shifting cultivation.

But these people were in their turn to be dispossessed in the Malay Peninsula by others with superior material techniques, just as they themselves had dispossessed the Negritos. From about 300 B.C., new immigrants from the Yunnan area of China entered the Peninsula. Known as Deutero-Malays they over-came the Proto-Malays and pushed them inland where they remained mainly in southern Malaya, and are known today as Jakuns.

The Deutero-Malays were basically Mongoloid, the same race as the first immigrants from Yunnan, but they had acquired the knowledge of metals, using iron weapons and tools. They used other metals also; bronze drums and bells found in Klang, Selangor, are evidences from this period. Like the earlier settlers, these metal-age people spread out to the islands of the Archipelago. Thus the final wave of immigrants, who together with the Deutero-Malays later formed the Malay population of Malaysia, came to the Peninsula and Borneo from the islands of Java and Sumatra in the centuries that followed, especially when the area was part of the island-Empire of Srivijaya.

Deutero-Malay settlers, the ancestors of the Malays today, had a reasonably high standard of material culture; they were not nomadic but lived in villages which were the main units of society. Controlled by a headman and elders and situated on the banks of rivers or on coasts these village units were generally self-sufficient in food and other necessities. But by the end of the last century B.C. trade started to develop between the coastal villages. Social customs were based on communal ownership, that is, the land belonged to the village, and the produce was shared among the inhabitants of the village. Such a system continued until quite modern times in Indonesia.

In religion these original inhabitants were animists; that is, they believed in the widespread existence of spirits which dwelt in trees, stones, animals and other objects. These spirits affected their everyday lives, and the people believed they had to ensure that the spirits were not displeased or disturbed. Thus the spirit of the forests would be placated before a hunter set off on his trapping, or the spirit of the sea would be pacified before the fisherman sailed away on a fishing expedition.

Trade and the influence of India

But the early Malaysians were very soon to be brought into touch with older and stronger civilizations. The beginnings and importance of trade with India have been mentioned. However, although Indian influences were to predominate at this time in western Malaysia, Chinese trading contacts still continued, and many fragments of Chinese pottery have been found in Malaysia, some of which have been dated from the Han dynasty, indicating that Chinese trade had begun very early. There is quite a lot of evidence of early Chinese contact with north-west Borneo; for example, coins earlier than the first century a.d. have been found at the mouth of the Sarawak river and there are probable references to Brunei in the Chinese Annals of the seventh century. At this time the Chinese were trading with Kota Batu in Brunei and there is evidence of a trading settlement at Santubong at the mouth of the river near Kuching. However these contacts were probably not connected with east-west trade but were rather a means by which the Chinese obtained specialized produce, like birds' nests, which they wanted from Borneo.

The Peninsula's geographical position meant that Indian traders on their way further east soon discovered the advantages of a central landing point between the seasons of the north-east and south-west monsoons. Crossing the Bay of Bengal from the Coromandel coast of south India the traders would make first landfall on the Peninsula somewhere between Trang and Kedah. Here they waited for the monsoon to change before proceeding on their journey. They also discovered later that goods could be transferred and carried across the isthmus to be picked up by other ships on the eastern side to do this would mean avoiding the pirate-infested Malacca Straits. During the early centuries A.D., Indian contact with the Peninsula was largely confined to trade visits, but it soon became obvious that certain areas were suitable for permanent trading settlements. One of them was Kedah. It was in this way that fourth-century north Malaya was drawn into the complex of 'Indian-type' kingdoms established in South-East Asia.

Kedah had certain important advantages and distinctions which made it a most suitable place to select for such settlements. As has been said it was in the area of first landfall for the voyagers, but it also has a distinctive high mountain, Kedah Peak (3,987 feet), which can be seen thirty miles out to sea. To the Indians it was both a landmark and a home of the gods whom they believed dwelt in

OXFORD IN ASIA COLLEGE TEXTS

The formation of Malaysia in 1963 and the independence of Singapore in 1965 have meant the reshaping of the existing histories of Malaya. Malaysia includes the territories of Sabah and Sarawak, which means that the new histories must be presented with a much wider coverage.

They must include not only the events leading up to the formation of Malaysia and the independence of Singapore, but also the earlier history of the component states.

A large portion of this book consists of material relating to the history of Sabah and Sarawak in the nineteenth century and also to recent events in South-East Asia.

The book is based upon the author's experience in teaching in the upper forms of Malaysian secondary schools. Though primarily intended for students preparing for the School Certificate Examination, it should also be of use to the general reader who requires a short and up-to-date history of Malaysia and Singapore presented in a South-East Asian context rather than as an adjunct to European politics.



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