

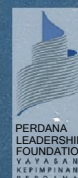
# THE MAKING OF MODERN MALAYA

a history from  
early times  
to the present

N. J. Ryan



Oxford University Press



Since the achievement of independence in 1957 considerable research has been made into the history of Malaya. Recent books, such as this, reflect the wider knowledge of earlier times so obtained and emphasize the changes in aspect that have occurred during this latest period. Readers are encouraged to look upon history in a local context rather than as an adjunct to European politics.

The author has been teaching history in Malaya for some ten years, a great part of which has been spent at the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar, and he is therefore unusually well qualified to write of these developments with accurate first-hand knowledge. As a result, his book is likely to become a standard work.

It is well illustrated with 25 plates and six maps, most of them original.

W.E.A. BOOKROOM,  
University,  
Adelaide.



P. COLLIER

30/7/86



FRONTISPIECE

The Head of State of the Federation of  
Malaya, Seri Paduka Baginda Yang  
Di-Pertuan Agung, Tuanku Syed **Putra**  
Jamalullail receives the Honorary  
Degree of Doctor of Letters from the  
Chancellor of the University of Malaya,  
Tengku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-haj.



# THE MAKING OF MODERN MALAYA

A HISTORY FROM EARLIEST  
TIMES TO THE PRESENT

BY

N. J. RYAN

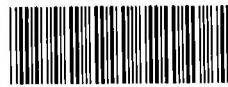
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## PREFACE

THE achievement of Malayan independence in 1957 has stimulated considerable research into the history of Malaya, and in recent years publications have widened our knowledge of many periods of Malayan history, as well as introducing readers to look at this history in a Malayan context rather than as an adjunct to European politics. Thus to-day it is recognised that the Peninsula was possibly affected less by the Dutch than by the Achinese and Bugis in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The author has been fortunate in being able to take advantage of these new publications and of this new emphasis. And while the bibliographies at the end of each chapter recognise the sources of the information used, he would particularly like to acknowledge his debt to Dr. C. D. Cowan, Dr. D.K. Basset and Dr. A. Lamb. This book does not pretend to any originality of material but rather to a synthesis of present-day views on Malayan history.

The author would also like to thank Donald Davies, Esq., for his assistance in collecting photographs and J.R. North, Esq., who in reading the manuscript made many useful suggestions.

The general layout of the book is based on experience gained in teaching in upper forms in Malayan schools. It is hoped that others teaching at this level will find the book useful for their pupils and that it will also appeal to the general reader who requires a short, up-to-date account of Malaya's development.

N. J. R.

**MALAY COLLEGE  
KUALA KANGSAR**

*December 1962*



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*frontispiece*

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- 955 First Federal Elections—Tengku Abdul Rahman, Chief Minister

*Note:* The list of 'Further Reading' shown after the Introduction belongs to Chapter One, and all subsequent lists refer to the chapter following the one where they appear, except for Chapter Eight which refers to Chapter Ten, and Chapter Nine which is correctly placed.

## INTRODUCTION: MALAYA IN HISTORY

THROUGHOUT history Malaya 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, whence Malaya 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 Malaya's importance in early history was governed by her geographical position. Not only did it so happen that on the earth's surface Malaya 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 Malaya's special advantages.

Malaya 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 Malaya, 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 transhipment 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 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 Malaya 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 Indonesian Archipelago. Ships sailing from China would travel south-

ward on the north-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 was in an advantageous position to provide a landing place 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 thus 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, Malaya was drawn into world history; in fact, Malaya's geographical position is the most important factor to take into account if one is to understand Malaya's past and even her present and her future. We have seen that geography introduced Malaya 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, Malaya has come into contact with many civilizations and many peoples. As we shall see, 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 Malaya's mineral resources were properly exploited, they came in large numbers. Malaya's geographical position also brought her into early contact with nineteenth-century technology and applied science, which have enabled her to attain today one of the highest standards of living in Asia. Malaya'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 Malaya into history, has brought her a cosmopolitan population, and has brought her one of the most developed economies in Asia.

We shall see below how important have been the geographical and economic factors in influencing the cycle of Malayan 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 Malayan political and economic history we shall see how trade routes and voyages of exploration have influenced Malaya's position in the world. We shall see how Malaya was 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. We shall see that later when the trade 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 declined. A further change was to come when Malaya again became involved in international politics, when the British renewed their interest in the Peninsula 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 in modern Malaya of its mineral wealth. Malaya's place in history therefore has fluctuated with the interest the rest of the world has shown in the Peninsula and what the Peninsula can offer to the economic intercourse of Asia and to the world generally.

We shall see how political events in Malaya 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 Malaya in many ways has a cosmopolitan history. Though in this book we will naturally concentrate on the internal history of the country, we will also attempt to relate Malayan events to their wider setting in Asian and world history.

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Some other books

**Malaya Through Four Centuries:  
An anthology 1500-1900**  
N.J. RYAN

**British Intervention in Malaya 1867-77**  
C. NORTHCOTE PARKINSON  
*University of Malaya Press*

**The Golden Khersonese: the Historical Geography  
of Malaya to 1500 A.D.**  
PAUL WHEATLEY  
*University of Malaya Press*

**Nineteenth Century Malaya: the Origins  
of British Political Control**  
C.D. COWAN  
*School of Oriental and African Studies*

Oxford University Press

