

The Protected  
Malay States  
1874-1895

Emily Sadka

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TO MY FATHER  
AND MOTHER

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E.S.

*Kuala Lumpur*  
*October 1966*

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*Perth*  
*May 1968*

E.S.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ANM	Arkib Negara Malaysia
AR	<i>Annual Report</i>
CO	Colonial Office
CS	Colonial Secretary
EPO	<i>Enquiry as to the Complicity of Chiefs in the Perak Outrages</i>
FMS	Federated Malay States
JIA	<i>Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia</i>
JMBRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malayan Branch</i>
JSBRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Straits Branch</i>
PCM	<i>Perak Council Minutes</i>
PGG	<i>Perak Government Gazette</i>
PRO	Public Record Office, London
SCM	Selangor Council Minutes (Unpublished)
SGG	<i>Selangor Government Gazette</i>
Sel/Sec.	Selangor Secretariat Papers
SS	Straits Settlements
SSGG	<i>Straits Settlements Government Gazette</i>

## INTRODUCTION

IN 1879 a Victorian woman traveller braved the dangers and discomfort of the west coast of Malaya in order to make a journey into the Malay states. On the first stage of her journey, from Malacca to Seremban in the state of Sungei Ujong, she took thirty hours to cover sixty miles, travelling continuously by launch, *prahu*, and on foot. At long intervals her party came upon signs of habitation; there is one description, which might be written today, of 'a very large Malayan-Chinese village' with 'a lane of much decorated shops, exclusively Chinese, succeeded by a lane of detached Malay houses, each standing in its own fenced and neatly-sanded compound under the shade of coco-palms and bananas'. There was a brief hint of the security and order of the outside world when the party halted for a few hours at a lonely police station, its walls hung with rifles, *krises* and handcuffs, 'with which a "Sam Slick" clock, an engraving from the *Graphic*, and some curious Turkish pictures of Stamboul, are oddly mixed up'. But for the most part the journey lay along a silent river bordered by jungle, profoundly still, empty of human life except for an infrequent paddler in a dug-out canoe.<sup>1</sup>

Today the journey from Malacca to Seremban may be accomplished in two hours by bus over a smooth road, and the noises are of motor traffic, or Malayan dance tunes from somebody's transistor. The road goes through settled country all the way, the traditional delicate green checker-work of rice fields, Malay villages hidden among palms and fruit-trees, orderly acres of plantation rubber. The bus finally enters a small, busy town, and comes to a halt in a terminus of concrete and brick, lined with coffee-stalls, provision shops and advertisements. The jungle has been pushed to the foothills and is now a distant indigo haze on the horizon; to busy, incurious town minds, it scarcely exists.

Between the two journeys there lie many years of administrative planning, designed to bring about just such a material development. British rule—the 'Residential system' as it was known to contem-

<sup>1</sup> Isabella Bird [Mrs. Bishop], *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*, London, 1883, pp. 162-83, *passim*.



poraries—was introduced between 1874 and 1895 into the west coast states, Perak, Selangor and Negri Sembilan, and the east coast state of Pahang. Reasons of imperial policy and strategy played their part in the assertion of British control over these states; but it was the local administrators who moved most strongly for intervention, and their motives were economic. The western Malay states already had an industry—tin-mining—and a mining labour force of Chinese, and from the 1840's onwards the tin output of these states began to boom. The administrations in the Straits Settlements hoped, by judicious government, not only to encourage existing mining enterprise but to intensify it by attracting European capital, management and machinery, and to establish a large plantation agriculture. Between 1874, the year in which British Residents were first introduced, and 1895, when the four states were federated, the first of these aims was accomplished and the second was on the way to realization. An administrative system was developed, a communications system laid down, immigration, labour and land policies formulated and put into practice; in short, the basic institutions of modern Malaya were established. The population structure changed as a result of large-scale immigration of Chinese and Malays and the beginnings of indentured Indian immigration; and with the development of new lines of communication, settlement patterns changed also.

This study deals with the formation of British policy and the development of the structure of government in the protected Malay states. The term 'British rule' used of the form of administration of these states during the period, is itself a challenge to conventional interpretations, which represent the British officers as advisers to the Malay Rulers, through whom the government of the country was carried on. The interpretations break down on investigation, but the theory of government, the way in which it developed, and the realities which it covered remain to be discussed. The study describes the accommodation reached between fact and fiction, the manner in which it was established, the way in which the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Governor of the Straits Settlements and the Residents exercised authority in the states nominally under advice, and the part played by Malay Rulers and chiefs and local authorities in the government of the states. Finally, it considers the policies evolved to carry out programmes of economic development and social change.

The Residential system was first established in Perak and Selangor

and the minor state of Sungei Ujong) and had developed there for the greater part of the period before its extension to Negri Sembilan and Pahang. The great bulk of the material, also, comes from Perak and Selangor. The study therefore deals largely with the system of government as it was established in these two states. But while there are important differences in economic conditions and development between Perak and Selangor on the one hand, and Negri Sembilan and Pahang on the other, the generalizations about basic policy and the structure of government are applicable to all the states.

# CONTENTS

*The Malay States, 1895*

Frontispiece

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

Introduction

I THE MALAY STATES UP TO INTERVENTION	1
II THE INTRODUCTION OF RESIDENTS	38
III THE FIRST RESIDENTS	65
IV DEVELOPMENT OF A POLICY	98
V GOVERNMENT IN PRACTICE	119
VI INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT: SULTAN AND STATE COUNCIL	156
VII INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT: THE STATE ADMINISTRATIONS	196
VIII LAW AND ORDER	237
IX DUAL GOVERNMENT: MALAYS AND CHINESE	274
X THE ECONOMY: POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT	324
XI FEDERATION	364
APPENDIXES	382
1 The Perak Constitution and Revenue System	382
2 Biographical Notes on Residents	387
3a Instructions to Resident of Selangor, 1875	392
3b Instructions to Residents, 1895	395
3c Minute for the Guidance of District Officers, 1890	398
3d Penghulu Commission, Perak, 1894	406
TABLES	
1 Return of Revenue and Expenditure, Malay States, 1875-96	410
2 Detailed Returns of Revenue, 1875-96	411
3 Return of Imports and Exports, 1875-96	413

4	Census of Protected States, 1891: Abstract of Population	414
	Note on Sources	415
	List of Sources	418
	Index	

# I

## THE MALAY STATES UP TO INTERVENTION

### THE STATES AND THEIR POPULATIONS: THE MALAYS

OF the states with which this study is concerned, Perak, Selangor and Negri Sembilan lie to the west of the main mountain range which runs down the centre of Malaya from the Siam border to Malacca. The northern-most state is Perak, lying between latitudes  $6^{\circ}$  and  $3^{\circ}40'$  north. In 1874 the Krian river to the north provided a common boundary with the Malay state of Kedah and the British settlement of Province Wellesley;<sup>1</sup> the Bernam river to the south marked the boundary between Perak and Selangor. Selangor, lying between latitudes  $3^{\circ}40'$  and  $2^{\circ}30'$  north, extended in 1874 from the Bernam river in the north to the Langat in the south-east; in the south-west it extended southwards along the coast to include the Lukut and Sungei Raya valleys, but after British intervention these valleys, and the whole coastline south of the Sepang river, were given to Sungei Ujong, and Selangor received in exchange the whole Langat valley to its southern watershed.<sup>2</sup>

The Negri Sembilan (literally, 'Nine States'), a confederation of petty states which at one time included Sungei Ujong and was to include it again by an agreement reached under British auspices, comprised the hinterland of Malacca as far as the Pahang border on the north, Johore on the east, and Selangor on the west. It was drained by the southern-most tributaries of the Pahang river in the north, by the upper reaches of the Muar in the east and centre, and by the Linggi in the west. The state of Sungei Ujong, which had independent relations with the British and was separately administered during the period under study, lay between Selangor and the rest of the Negri Sembilan. The delineation of its western boundary has already been described. On the north it was separated from the

<sup>1</sup> By the Pangkor Engagement of 1874, the Perak-Province Wellesley boundary was redrawn a few miles south of the Krian river.

<sup>2</sup> Boundary Agreement between Selangor and Sungei Ujong, 10 February 1878, W. G. Maxwell and W. S. Gibson, *Treaties and Engagements affecting the Malay States and Borneo*, London, 1924, pp. 212-13.

confederate state of Jelebu by the Jelebu range, between the upper Linggi and the upper Klawang; on the east it was separated from the confederate state of Sri Menanti by the Linggi-Terachi watershed, and from the confederate state of Rembau by the Linggi-Pedas watershed.

Pahang, the only east coast state to come under British control during the period, embraced most of east-central Malaya, between latitudes 4°45' and 2°30' north, and between the central mountain range and the China sea. In the Endau river to the south she had a common boundary with Johore; in the central watershed, she had a common boundary with the Negri Sembilan, Selangor and Perak; in the north she had a common boundary with the Siamese-dominated states of Kelantan and Trengganu. Pahang is the largest state in the Peninsula, with 13,873 square miles compared with 7,890 for Perak, 3,166 for Selangor, 2,550 for Negri Sembilan including Sungei Ujong, and 660 for Sungei Ujong.<sup>1</sup>

The west coast states are in close proximity to the territories which then constituted the Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements. The north-west of Perak was contiguous with Province Wellesley and was about eight hours by coastal steamer from Penang. The steaming distance between Klang, in central Selangor, and Malacca Town, about 100 miles southward in the British settlement of that name, was about twelve hours. Further south, the Linggi river for six miles from its mouth constituted a common boundary between Sungei Ujong and Malacca, and the Linggi estuary was some twenty-five miles distant from Malacca town; and Malacca itself was 150 miles and twelve hours' steaming distance from Singapore. By contrast the chief township of Pahang (Pekan), was 250 miles distant from Singapore, and isolated from it for five months in the year by the north-west monsoon, which closed the east coast between October and February.

In the nineteenth century the ranges and valleys of Malaya were still covered by equatorial rain forest, intersected by rivers which were the natural highways and obvious lines of settlement. Each state

<sup>1</sup> The figures give the modern areas of the states, and have been taken from M. V. del Tufo, *Malaya: A Report on the 1947 Census of Population*, Kuala Lumpur, 1949. The area of Perak has been slightly increased in modern times by the return of a small enclave on the west coast known as the Dindings, transferred by Perak to the Straits Settlements in 1886 and returned in 1935; but the area involved was less than 200 square miles. The Sungei Ujong figure is taken from Dickson to Knutsford, of 10 July 1890, forwarding *AR States*, 1889, C. 6222, no. 1.

consisted essentially of one or more river systems. The Perak river, flowing 200 miles from its source near the Siam-Perak border to its mouth in the extreme south of the state, formed with its eastern tributaries the main thread of settlement; the Pahang river system, the largest in the Peninsula, formed the main settlement area of that state; Selangor comprised the settled valleys of the Bernam, Selangor, Klang, Langat and Lukut rivers; the centre of Sungei Ujong lay in the upper reaches of the Linggi, and settlement in Negri Sembilan followed the upper Muar and its tributaries. The estimates of Malay population advanced before British intervention are pure guesses and are reproduced here only because they indicate the kind of information available to Straits officials on this question. Newbold, writing in the 1830's, estimated the (largely Malay) population of Perak at 35,000; in 1861, Governor Cavanagh estimated it at 50,000; in 1879, a census taken by *penghulus* (Malay village headmen) numbered the Malays at 59,682, including slaves and bondmen, and the first official census, taken in 1891 after twelve years of peace and steady immigration, placed it at 96,719.<sup>1</sup> In 1824, Anderson estimated the population of Selangor at about 6,000, of whom the great majority must have been Malays;<sup>2</sup> in 1875, after eight years of fighting, the estimate by Swettenham (the Assistant Resident) was of the same order.<sup>3</sup> In 1884, a census taken by *penghulus* placed it at 17,097, and in 1891 the official census placed it at 26,546.<sup>4</sup> The Malay population of Sungei Ujong (excluding Lukut and Sungei Raya) was estimated

<sup>1</sup> T. J. Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca*, London, 1839, vol. i, p. 418; speech by Clarke, Straits Settlements Legislative Council Proceedings, 15 September 1874, C. 1111, enclosure in no. 72; *Census of the State of Perak, 1891*.

<sup>2</sup> J. Anderson, *Political and Commercial Considerations Relative to the Malayan Peninsula*, Prince of Wales Island, 1824, pp. 190-202. Anderson's figures include 1,000 for Lukut, which became part of Sungei Ujong after 1878.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Assistant Resident, Selangor, 8 April 1875, C. 1320, enclosure 2 in no. 28. Between August 1874 and April 1875, Swettenham went up the Bernam, Selangor, Klang, Langat and Lukut rivers, visiting 'every town and village in the Sultan's country, except Ulu Bernam'. He estimated the total population of the coast districts (excluding Kuala Selangor) at 2,500, and these may be taken as largely Malay. He also gave 700 as the figure of the Malay population of Kuala Lumpur, and 400 as the combined Malay and Chinese population of Ulu Selangor. The Malay population of the Kuala Lumpur suburbs, Kuala Selangor and Ulu Langat would probably not have been less than 2,000, so that according to Swettenham's estimate, 5,000 would probably be the figure for the Malay population in 1875. It should be remembered however that his estimates were impressionistic and were made after several years of war and depopulation.

<sup>4</sup> *AR* Selangor, 1884; Census of Selangor for 1891, *SGG*, 11 December 1891.

by Swettenham at about 2,000 in 1878; the 1891 census placed it at 9,341.<sup>1</sup> The same census placed the Malay population of Negri Sembilan at 35,377, and that of Pahang at 50,527. The following table shows the approximate density of the Malay population of each state for various years, on the basis of figures given above.

*Density of Malay population to the square mile*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Perak</i>	<i>Selangor</i>	<i>Sungei Ujong</i>	<i>Negri Sembilan</i>	<i>Pahang</i>
1879	7.4	—	—	—	—
1884	—	5.4	—	—	—
1891	12.6	7.5	14	17.5	3.5

In 1891, after many years of British rule, during which there had been a considerable Malay immigration, the density of Malay population in Perak, Selangor and Sungei Ujong was only a little over eleven to the square mile; the figure for 1874 was certainly much less. The population was unstable; it was extremely sensitive to political events, and a common response to oppression, invasion or civil war was flight,<sup>2</sup> so that for political or other reasons there were internal shifts of population, and there was also a constant inflow of settlers from Indonesia (mainly Sumatra) and from the Siamese-dominated Malay states to the north. New districts were opened up; in North Perak about the middle of the country, the lower Krian and Kurau, later to be a rich rice-producing area, was brought under cultivation by Malays infiltrating from Province Wellesley, Kedah and Patani; in Selangor the settlements at Cheras, Semenyih and Beranang were established in the third quarter of the century, the last two being settled initially from Sungei Ujong.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assistant CS for Native States, Audit Report on Native States for 1877, C. 2410, enclosure in no. 6, Anson to Hicks Beach, 6 March 1879; *AR* Sungei Ujong, 1893. The 1891 census figure is exclusive of Jelebu. Swettenham's estimate is almost certainly an understatement, based probably on the Malay population near the mines.

<sup>2</sup> In 1874, the Colonial Secretary, then visiting Selangor, described the desolation on the Selangor river, and the rapid reversion to jungle of an area which had been populous and cultivated three years before. The people had fled during the wars for possession of the valley, 1871-3. Most of them had gone to Bernam, the next valley to the north. Birch, *Journal of a Visit to the Native States of Selangor and Perak* in March and April 1874, Swettenham Papers, ANM item 72.

<sup>3</sup> 'W.S.', 'Traditions of Ulu Langat', *Selangor Journal*, vol. v, no. 19 (28 May 1897), pp. 305-9.



In addition to this internal immigration, there was a large inflow from the islands of the Indonesian archipelago. In Perak the foreign immigrants—the Bugis particularly—were the principal traders in the state; a Bugis trader, Nakhoda Trong, was a partner in the syndicate which leased the farm of the Perak river customs duties in 1874. There were settlements of Rawas and Mandelings from north-east Sumatra; a Rawa, Che Abdul Karim bin Ibrahim went with a Sumatran following to open up Selama in the 1870's, and during the British occupation of Perak in 1875–6, Rawas, Mandelings and Bugis helped the British in their military operations in the north. Much of North Perak was settled by Malays from across the border; Krian by settlers from Province Wellesley and Kedah, Ulu Selama and Ulu Perak by settlers from Patani.<sup>1</sup> In 1879, a census of the Malay population of Perak gave the number of foreign Malays as 9,274 out of a total free Malay population of 56,632.<sup>2</sup> In Selangor the population was even more mixed. Part of Selangor had once been tributary to the kingdom of Malacca, and there had probably been settlements of Malacca Malays between the Klang and Selangor rivers from the middle of the fifteenth century. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the Bugis settled on the Klang and Selangor, and in the middle of the eighteenth century a Bugis prince became the first Sultan of Selangor and established the present dynasty. There were important Bugis and Sumatran trading communities in Kuala Lumpur and Klang;<sup>3</sup> it was a quarrel between them that precipitated the Selangor wars of 1866–73. In Kuala Selangor there were also foreign Malay communities; in 1875 the Resident of Selangor described the population as consisting of Menangkabaus, Mandelings, Rawas, Bugis and Chinese.<sup>4</sup> There was a *Dato' Dagang* (chief of foreigners) in Langat, and in Ulu Langat, according to the accounts of British officers from the earliest years of intervention, the

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Maxwell, 'A Journey on Foot to the Patani Frontier in 1876', *JSBRAS*, no. 9 (June 1882), pp. 8–20; W. E. Maxwell, 'The Law and Customs of the Malays with reference to the Tenure of Land', *JSBRAS*, no. 13 (June 1884), p. 98; E. Sadka, 'The Journal of Sir Hugh Low, Perak 1877', *JMBRAS*, vol. xxvii, part 4 (November 1954), pp. 56, 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Census of Perak, 1891*. The unfree numbered 3,050.

<sup>3</sup> A Malay traveller has described the population of Klang in 1872 as a heterogeneous collection of Malays, Arabs, English, Chinese, Eurasian, Klings, Bengalis, Hindus, and native-born (*peranakan*) of Penang, Malacca, Singapore and Kedah—about 3,000 in all. See Mohammed Ibrahim b. Abdullah, *Kesah Pelayaran [Account of Travels]*, Johore, 1956, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Report of Resident at Selangor, 16 March 1875, C. 1320, enclosure in no. 27, Clarke to Carnarvon, 27 April 1875.