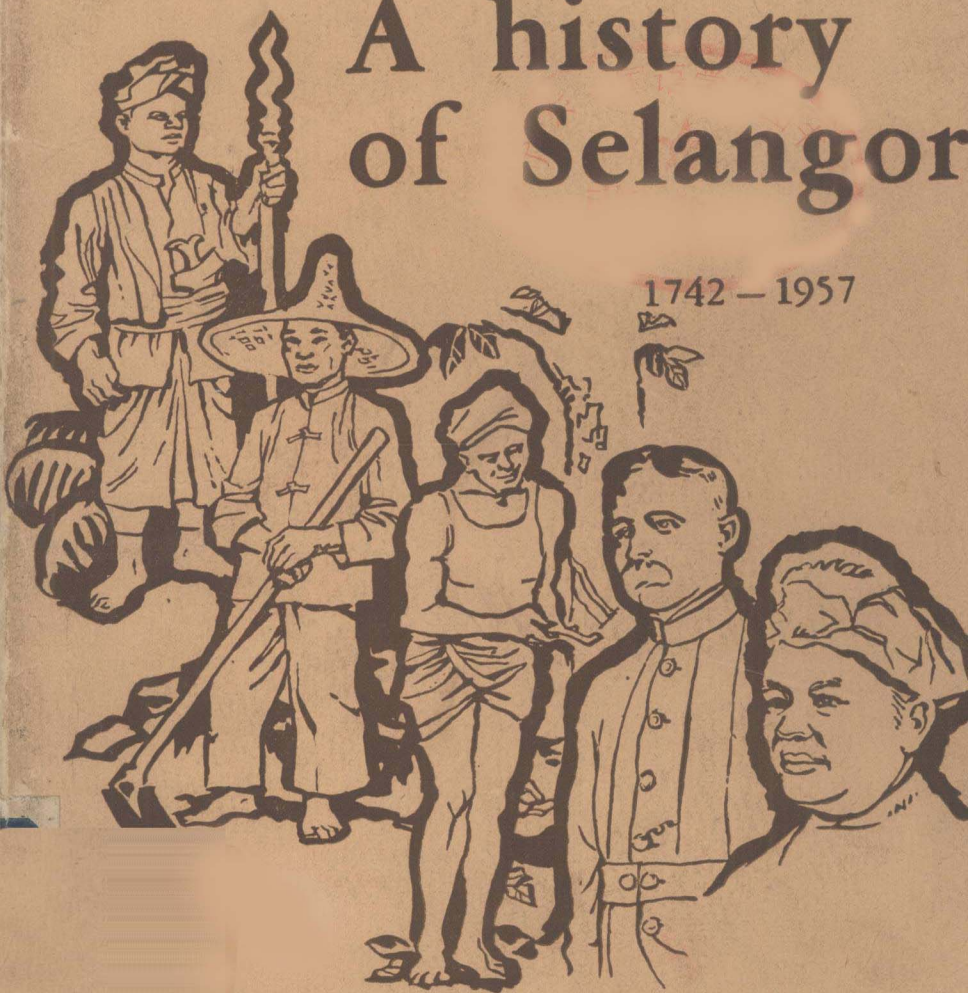


MALAYAN HISTORICAL SERIES

J. M. GULLICK

A history of Selangor

1742 — 1957



TERN UNIVERSITIES PRESS

MALAYAN HISTORICAL SERIES

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A HISTORY OF SELANGOR
1742 - 1957

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P R E F A C E

The history of Selangor down to 1957 falls naturally into three parts. First there was the period when Bugis warriors established and extended a new Malay State on the Selangor coast. This period ended with the death of Sultan Ibrahim in 1826. Then there was half a century during which the immigration of Chinese to work as tin-miners imposed an increasing strain on the Malay government leading to the final catastrophe of the Selangor civil war of 1866 — 1873. The third period saw a British protectorate regime governing in the Sultan's name while rapid economic development and an immense flow of immigration from Indonesia, China and India produced a new Selangor within the constitutional framework of the old.

In my account of the first two periods I have drawn on Sir Richard Winstedt's "History of Selangor" and on S. M. Middlebrook's "Yap Ah Loy" (both published in the Journal of the Malayan Branch, Royal Asiatic Society). It is a debt which I acknowledge with gratitude. But this history is, so far as I know, the first to carry on the story through the third period to the present day. There is a growing interest in the past which after all fathered the present.

This is a short and general account of the history of Selangor designed for the general reader

rather than the specialist. There is need of much more research by professional historians into the history of the Malay States. Meanwhile it may also be of some use to make more accessible the gist of what has already been discovered.

It only remains for me to express my thanks for the help which I have received. Mr. Gerald Hawkins, O.B.E. made some valuable suggestions when the plan of this book was being worked out though he bears no responsibility for what has been written. A Chinese gentleman, who prefers to remain anonymous, has allowed me to read and make use of his unpublished memoirs, covering among other things the course of public life between the wars. Mr. J. M. H. O'Reilly, Senior Inspector of Mines in Selangor, provided the twentieth century statistics of tin output which have been used in the diagram facing page 96. Sir George Maxwell, K.B.E., C.M.G., allowed me to copy a photograph of his father which he considers to be the best likeness ever taken. To Mr. R. L. Akers, Director of Drainage and Irrigation, to Miss M. Regan and Enche Mohamed Salleh of the Unilever Organisation and to Dr. C. A. Gibson-Hill of Raffles Museum I am also indebted for photographs used as illustrations of this book.

J. M. G.

April 1958

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The pictures of H.M.S. *Rinaldo*, of the rubber estate and tin-mine, and of the Stock Exchange scene are reproduced by permission of the proprietors of *The Illustrated London News*; the Merdeka photograph by permission of the proprietors of *The Straits Annual*. The bullock cart photograph and the portrait of Sir Frank Swettenham were originally published in the Bulletin of the Rubber Growers' Association. The Tanjong Karang photographs were supplied by the Director, Drainage and Irrigation, and the soap factory photograph by Unilever Ltd. The portrait of Yap Ah Loy is a copy of the one belonging to the Yap Clan Association. The portrait of Sir William Maxwell was provided by Sir George Maxwell.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BUGIS

Selangor is a land of five rivers — Bernam, Selangor, Klang, Langat and Lukut.* These are not great rivers as Malayan rivers go but, in the days when there were no roads and railways, the rivers were the only means by which travellers and goods could move in and out of the country. Hence the districts assigned to chiefs to govern were river valleys, controlled and taxed from a stockade at the river mouth.

Selangor was unusual in having several small river valleys instead of the usual configuration of a Malay State which is a major river with several tributaries. There was in Selangor no single river mouth at which the Sultan could tax the trade of the whole State. On the other hand the interior of Selangor,

* Lukut, historically part of Selangor, was ceded to Negri Sembilan in 1880 in exchange for Semenyeh.

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where the tin deposits were to be found, was nearer the coast and so more accessible by one or other of the rivers than the inland region of, say, Perak. These peculiarities of Selangor geography affected the course of its history.

Until seventy years ago Selangor was an almost empty country, covered with an unbroken canopy of jungle from the inland edge of the coastal mangrove swamps to the top of the mountains which divide Selangor from Pahang. There was but one thing which drew men to it. They came in search of tin.

Settlers, or at least prospectors for tin, there have been in Selangor for most of two thousand years past. Implements of iron and bronze have been found in the Klang valley which are made in the style of products of the kingdom of Funan. Funan flourished in what is now Vietnam fifteen hundred years ago and more. The literature of other and later kingdoms mention Klang among the conquests of the Indian king, Raja Chulan, in the eleventh century A.D., and then as a dependency first of Majapahit, a kingdom of eastern Java, and later of Malacca in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively. Later still Klang and the Selangor coast were known to the Portuguese and to the Dutch at Malacca as important centres of tin-mining.

The *State* of Selangor however in only two hundred years old. By "State" we mean Selangor as a political unit with its own ruler, the Sultan, resident in the State. We shall pass over the period, of which in any case little is known, during which Selangor was an unimportant appendage of other kingdoms and relate its history since it became a State in the course of the Bugis wars.

The Bugis wars were a struggle between the Bugis on the one side and the Malays, with their Sumatran allies, and the Dutch on the other. The Malay stronghold was Johore whose Sultan claimed to be heir to the Sultans of Malacca and overlord of all southern Malaya. But at this time Johore, weakened by war, invasion and intrigue was a mere shadow of the past.

The Dutch had ousted the Portuguese from Malacca in A.D. 1641 and had since then been the leading European power in the Straits of Malacca. They held Malacca to assure the passage of their ships on the lucrative trade route to the East Indies. To hold Malacca they had to station troops there. Dutch policy at Malacca was to control the trade of the Straits in order to obtain revenues with which to meet the cost of their military establishment. This trade consisted in the collection and export to Europe and China of tin, pepper and other "Straits produce" and the import and distribution in the

region of trade goods, among which textiles manufactured in India were the most important. A two-way trade of this kind requires a collecting and distribution centre — what in modern times is called an “entrepot port”. The Dutch tried to make Malacca the entrepot port of the Straits. They bullied the rulers of small states in western Malaya and eastern Sumatra into making trade treaties by which they promised to sell all their tin, pepper and other export produce at fixed prices to the Dutch. The import trade in textiles etc., was likewise to be canalised through Malacca.

The Dutch offered a low price for tin and charged a high price for trade goods. Malay chiefs and traders had every inducement for evading Dutch controls in order to buy and sell at some other trade port than Malacca, where the prices were more favourable. The Bugis wars were in part trade wars arising out of resistance to Dutch economic policy.

The third power in the struggle, the Bugis themselves, were traders appropriately enough. They were also famous sailors and fighting men. Their home was a district in the southwest of the Celebes. From this base they journeyed far and wide. In their small sailing ships — square-rigged, two-masted, with high poop and overhanging stern — they were at sea for up to nine months of the year. They set out eastwards from the Celebes with the

last of the southwest monsoon and picked up cargo as far away as New Guinea. When the wind changed with the coming of the northeast monsoon they voyaged westwards and traded in the ports of Java, Borneo, Malaya and Sumatra. The first winds of the next southwest monsoon carried them home again to the Celebes.

In the course of this well-established trade some Bugis merchants settled in the ports of western Indonesia, especially Borneo, and of Malaya. These Bugis colonies usually held themselves aloof from the local people among whom they lived. They rarely intermarried with them. In time of trouble they looked to each other for mutual assistance. They had their own leaders in men of rank who gathered the commoners under their protection. Bugis in one port had ties with a Bugis colony elsewhere. It was a far-flung brotherhood of the sea-ports.

Francis Light had Bugis among his people in the early days of Penang. He describes them thus:—*

“They are Mahomedans, a proud, warlike, independent people, easily irritated and prone to revenge. Their vessels are always well provided with arms, which they use with dexterity and vigour. They are the best merchants among the Eastern

* Quoted in H. P. Clodd's *Malaya's First British Pioneer* at p. 100.

Islands. They are better governed by patient and mild exhortation than by force. If they commit a trespass they are easily made sensible, and may be persuaded to render satisfaction; but they reluctantly yield to stern authority. They require to be carefully watched and cautiously ruled. The great value of their cargoes, either in bullion or goods, with quantities of opium and piecegoods they export, make their arrival much wished for by all mercantile people."

Bugis settlers became numerous in western Malaya towards the end of the seventeenth century A.D. because Dutch military action in their native Celebes had destroyed much of its former prosperity. So they migrated westwards in considerable numbers and made new homes for themselves, engaging in the local trade of the Straits of Malacca. As early as 1681 there were large and wealthy Bugis settlements at the mouths of the Klang and Selangor rivers. Bugis traders, sailors and mercenary soldiers were to be found as far north in the Straits as Kedah and Acheh.

As they became more numerous, wealthy and powerful, the Bugis began to play a leading part in the political and economic struggle in the Straits. In Johore there was a power vacuum. The last Sultan of Johore of the Malacca royal line had been assassinated in 1699 and his successor was insecure