PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN MALAYA

by

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# CONTENTS

**Preface** vii

I. **The East India Company and the Transfer to the Colonial Office**
   - The East India Company 5
   - The Transfer to the Colonial Office in 1867 14

II. **Entry into the Malay States**
   - The Malay States under the Residential System 24

III. **Federation of the Malay States**
     - After Federation 42

IV. **Administrative Development**
    - Health 46
    - Education 52
    - Agriculture 60
    - Co-operative Societies 63
    - Labour 66
    - Forestry 74
    - Mining 76

V. **Constitutional History**
   - The Straits Settlements 78
   - Federated Malay States 83
   - Unfederated Malay States 84
   - Constitutional Changes 86
   - Contrasts between the Federated and Unfederated States 91

VI. **The Administration of the Law** 97

VII. **Emergence of Political Problems**
     - A Plural Society 99
     - Dual Mandate 112
     - Decline of District Administration 114
     - A Constitutional Weakness in the Federation 116
     - Economic Policies and a Favoured Position 118
     - On the Eve of the Second World War 122
Contents

VIII. CONQUEST AND RE-CONQUEST OF MALAYA 127
  Return to Malaya 133

IX. REHABILITATION 147
  Medical Department 149
  Education 152
  Social Welfare 163
  Housing 165
  Police 168
  Other Departments 172
  Labour and Trade Unions 173

X. CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT 180
  Singapore 180
  The Federation of Malaya 183
  The Commissioner-General for South Eastern Asia 192
  Federal Citizenship 193

XI. THE PLANNING OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT 214

INDEX 225
PREFACE

This account of the administrative system in the territories of Malaya is a contribution towards a study of the requirements of efficient public administration in the countries of Eastern Asia which has been projected in the international research programme of the Institute of Pacific Relations, and in which Chatham House is collaborating.

The study owes so much to the following books that acknowledgement by the insertion of notes in the text upon every occasion of use would become a disfigurement and a compendious recognition of the debt seems preferable. The books are standard works from which borrowings on a large scale are inevitable. The books are:


Preface


The information relating to the post-war rehabilitation of Malaya has been gathered from the annual reports for the years 1946–49 of the Governments of Singapore, the Malayan Union and its successor, the Federation of Malaya.

Acknowledgement to all these sources is most gratefully made. Thanks are due also to Mr W. A. Ward, C.M.G., M.C., the Agent for Malaya, who has greatly helped with the loan of official records and extracts therefrom, to Messrs Gerald Hawkins, O.B.E., N. R. Jarrett, C.M.G., and B. R. Pearn, who have very kindly read the study in typescript and made many suggestions for its improvement, and to Miss Margaret Cleeve, O.B.E., for most valuable advice and guidance.

December, 1951.

S. W. J.
CHAPTER I

The East India Company and the Transfer to the Colonial Office

In recent times Malaya has been regarded as including the Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Penang, and Malacca, together with the island of Labuan, Christmas Island, and the Cocos-Keeling Islands; the Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang; the Unfederated Malay States of Johore, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, and Perlis; and the Protected State of Brunei in Borneo. The Straits Settlements were a Crown Colony; the others were Protected States. The Japanese, after their conquest of Malaya in 1942 transferred the States of Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, and Perlis to Siam which had until 1909, when they became British Protectorates, claimed an overlordship over them. On the return of the British after the defeat of Japan in 1945 those four States were again joined to Malaya. In 1946 the British Government reshaped the constitutional arrangements of Malaya, and the four Federated Malay States and the four Unfederated Malay States together with the Settlements of Penang and Malacca became, first, the Malayan Union and then, after disputation, the Federation of Malaya in 1948. Singapore remained a Crown Colony but lost Labuan to the new Crown Colony of North Borneo to which it was adjacent. In 1948 Brunei, while retaining its status of a protected State, passed under the administration of the new Crown Colony of Sarawak. On 22 June 1951 it was announced in the House of Commons that the British Government, after consultation with the Government of Singapore, had accepted a proposal from the Australian Government for the transfer of the Cocos-Keeling Islands to Australia for the development for civil aviation purposes of the airstrip on West Island constructed during the Second World War.
Public Administration in Malaya

Malaya lies between latitude 7° N. and 1½° N. and, as a mainland, carries the continent of Asia furthest south in a narrow peninsula, some 200 miles at its widest. Singapore and Penang are islands, the former 217 square miles, the latter 108 square miles in extent. The whole area of Malaya is approximately 52,500 square miles, a little larger, therefore, than England without Wales. The Peninsula has one land neighbour, Siam, which lies on its northern frontiers, touching Perlis, Kedah, Perak, and Kelantan. To the west the Straits of Malacca narrow down to an insignificant gap to separate Malaya from the great island of Sumatra. Batavia (now called Jakarta), the capital of Java, lies more than 500 miles from Singapore but Singapore looks out on the last stragglers of a string of Indonesian islands.

Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and west Johore have access to the Straits of Malacca, the waters of which provide for ocean-going steamers the three ports of Singapore, Penang, and Port Swettenham and, for coasting vessels, the ports of Teluk Anson, Port Dickson, and Malacca. On the east, Kelantan, Trengganu, Pahang, and east Johore lie on the shores of the South China Sea but sand-bars reduce their harbours to an accommodation for nothing bigger than coasting vessels.

The average daily temperature seldom rises above 98° Fahrenheit and is generally below 80°, but excessive humidity makes the climate difficult. For very many years malaria was a scourge but health measures expelled it from the towns and many villages and large estates; the other plagues of the East were more easily brought under control.

The mountain ranges running mainly north and south divide the country and occupy much of its centre. Rather more than three-quarters of Malaya remains undeveloped as jungle, mountain, or swamp. Of the cultivated area rubber claims approximately 14 per cent, rice 2·4 per cent, and coconuts and oil-palms 2·1 per cent.

The total population of Malaya in 1947 was 5·8 millions; 4·9 millions in the Federation, 0·9 millions in Singapore.
Singapore was overwhelmingly Chinese but the distribution in the Federation was: Malays 49.46 per cent; Chinese 38.4 per cent; Indians 10.81 per cent; and Europeans, Eurasians, and others 1.33 per cent. At the time the East India Company established itself in Penang at the end of the eighteenth century, Malaya was the country of the Malays. They had had predecessors, the aboriginals, but these, the Semang, Sakai, and Jakun, avoided the haunts of other men. So long as there had been trade there had been Chinese and Indian traders, the latter of whom established a cultural and economic dominance which lasted from the first century A.D. until the fifteenth century, when Islam displaced it with the help, later, of the Portuguese control of trade. The Portuguese ruled Malacca from 1511 to 1641 when the Dutch drove them out, themselves to withdraw in favour of the British in 1824. But Malacca had had great days under Malay rulers in the fifteenth century when it thrived exceedingly as a port and had established its power as far north as Patani in Siam and west over some of the coastal regions of Sumatra; by the end of the century, it had become the centre of Islam in the Malay Archipelago and the headquarters of its missionary activity.

The Malays had wandered down the Peninsula and into Sumatra and Java from Yunnan between 2500 and 1500 B.C., and had settled as rice planters in Kedah and Kelantan and as hunters and fishermen, living in villages among cultivation. Malays from Sumatra, the Minangkabaus, moved into Malacca and Negri Sembilan, and Bugis from the Celebes into Selangor. Through the centuries foreign strains, Chinese, Indian, Arab, Siamese, had wrought their influence, but marriage with the infidel faded away before the growing acceptance of Islam. The Babas of Malacca originated in the marriage of Chinese with Balinese or Batak slaves, the Jawi Pekan of Penang are descendants of Indians and Malays, the Eurasians are mainly of Portuguese or Dutch extraction and their origins lie in Malacca.

The Malays have remained small holders during the rapid