
by:

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EASTERN GEOGRAPHY.

A GEOGRAPHY

OF

THE MALAY PENINSULA, INDO-CHINA,
THE EASTERN ARCHIPELAGO, THE PHILIPPINES,
AND NEW GUINEA.

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PART I.

THE MALAY PENINSULA.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL SURVEY—PHYSICAL FEATURES—MOUNTAIN AND RIVER SYSTEMS—SEABOARD—ISLANDS—THE Isthmus of KRA.

Position—Extent.—The Malay Peninsula, the Tānah Malāyū, or "Malay Land" of the natives, forms the southernmost extension of the great peninsular region of Indo-China, with which it is connected by the Isthmus of Kra (Kraw). At the narrowest point of this isthmus the river Pakshan marks the natural and political boundary towards British Burma on the west side; but on the east the frontier towards Siam is indicated by no physical or conventional line. South of Kra the Peninsula projects for about 600 miles first south, then south-east nearly parallel with Sumatra, terminating at Cape Tanjong Būlus in 1° 16' 12" N. latitude. Here is the southernmost extremity of the Asiatic continent, which, however, is geologically continued to the island of Billiton (Billitong), and includes the neighbouring archipelagoes of Bentan, Lingga, and Banka, all now severed from the mainland. The Peninsula, which is washed by the Bay of Bengal and Strait of Malacca on the west, by the Gulf of Siam and China Sea on the east, gradually widens from about 40 miles at Kra to about 200 miles between the Dindings and Tring-gānu, again contracting further south to a mean breadth of under 100 miles in Johor. The total area is somewhat over 75,000 square miles, with an estimated population of at least 1,200,000, or about 15 inhabitants to the square mile.

Mountain Systems.—Malay land forms geologically a southern extension of the mountain system, which separates the Salwin and Menam river basins. It consists mainly of continuous ranges running
in a line with the continental axis and forming a distinct water-parting between the streams flowing east and west to the surrounding seas. The western range continues unbroken from the interior of Kedah (6° N.) to the interior of Malacca (2° N.), reappearing at intervals further south in Johor and even in the insular peaks beyond. The central upland region is skirted on either side by low-lying coastlands of varying breadth and of recent formation, which alone are cultivated and inhabited by settled populations.

The height of the main central range increases towards the wider parts of the Peninsula, culminating in Kedah and Perak, where several peaks are known to range from 5000 to 8000 feet and upwards. The principal summits, some of which have been ascended in recent years, are Mount Robinson or Riam (about 8000 feet) in south Perak; Titi Wangsa (6840) between Kedah and Perak; Ulu Temeling (6435) and Bubo (5650) near the right and left banks of the Perak river respectively; the Slim range (6000 to 7000) in south-east Perak; Chimmeras (5650) in Selângor; Berembun (about 4000) in Sungei Ujong; Lédang, or Ophir (4200) in Johor, until recently supposed to be the highest point in the Peninsula; Blümut (3200) in south Johor, at the source of the river Johor.

East of the central range, and many miles inland from Perak, on the east side of the river Pahang, near the west frontier of Tringgânu and Kelantan, stretches the still unexplored Tahan chain, which was described in 1875 by the traveller Miklukho-Maclay as the loftiest crest in the whole Peninsula. Recent information tends to confirm this view, and it now seems probable that the highest of the peaks exceeds 10,000 feet.

Apart from the low-lying coastlands, which vary in breadth from 10 to 25 miles, the whole peninsula is broken and hilly, and everywhere covered with dense forests. The formation is mainly granitic, traversed by veins of stanniferous quartz, and overlaid by sandstone, unfossilised clay slates, laterite or ironstone, and in a few places, principally towards the north, by limestone. Although no trace has been found of recent volcanic action, there are several isolated and unstratified limestone masses from 500 to 2000 feet high of a highly crystallised character with no fossils of any kind.

**Mineral Wealth.**—The most remarkable geological feature is the prevalence of tin, in some places associated with gold and galena. The tin occurs throughout the Peninsula, reaching as far north as Tavoi (14° N.) in British Burma, and as far south as the Carimons (Kerimun) and Lingga on the equator, and after a break of about 140 miles reappearing in Banka and Billiton islands (3° S.). Where it has been observed *in situ*, the bed of the ore, which occurs nowhere else in the Eastern Archipelago, is the quartz, which is found penetrating
the granite at every elevation. The whole country has been described as "a vast magazine" of this metal, and is now admitted to be the most extensive tin-producing region in the world. But mining operations have hitherto been confined to the deposits near the foot of the hills, in the alluvial ground formed by the decomposition of the encasing rocks. Mines are worked at present in about twenty different localities on both sides, and throughout the length of the Peninsula. The most productive are those of the Siamese provinces in the north-west, Intan, Selâma, Lârut, Kinta, Kwâla, Lumpor, Sungei, Ujong, Pahang, Kelantan, and Patâni.

Gold occurs in several of these districts, but especially in Chendras, Taong (near Mount Ophir), Kelantan, and Jelei in the interior of Pahang, the produce of the last-mentioned place commanding a higher price by 3 per cent. than the best Australian gold. Rich galena ore occurs in Patani. Silver also, the presence of which had been doubted, although the Perak river is named from the Malay word perak, "silver," has recently been found in Lârut associated with the tin ores of that district. Rich galena ore occurs in Patâni, while iron is more abundant even than tin, especially in the southern provinces. Coal is stated to have been recently found to the south of Kra, in Perak, and a few other places. But neither coal nor iron has hitherto been worked in any part of the Peninsula.

River Systems:—Owing to the formation of the land and the somewhat central disposition of the main water-parting, the rivers although numerous are necessarily of short length, and as their mouths are generally obstructed by bars and coral reefs, they are on the whole more useful for irrigation than as highways of communication. Nevertheless some are navigable by light craft for considerable distances, and small steamers have ascended the Bernam between Perak and Selângor for a distance of about 80 miles from the coast. But by far the largest river basins are the Perak on the west and the Pahang on the east slope, each of which comprises an area of drainage over 5000 square miles in extent. The Perak with its chief tributaries, the Plus, Kinta, and Batang Padang, presents a total navigable waterway of perhaps 2000 miles.

The other chief streams, following the coast from north to south, are the Pakshan on the northern frontier; the Mûda, flowing between Kedah and the province of Wellesley; the Krâan and Lârut in Perak; the Selângor, Klang, Langat, Linggi, and Moar, all on the west coast; the Johor, whose estuary faces Singapore; the Patâni, the Kelantan, with its large tributary the Lebih, the Kemâman, Cherâting, Rumpen, and Endau, all on the east coast.

Most of these rivers have their course, not east and west, but more or less synclinal with the mountain-ranges from north-east to south-west on
the west side, and from south-west to north-east on the opposite side of
the Peninsula. A consequence of this disposition of the river basins is,
that at some of the principal points of the system the streams flowing from
the same water-parting north to the China Sea and south to the Bay of
Bengal have their upper waters almost contiguous. Such is the case, for
instance, with the rivers Pahang and Slim in 5° North, and the rivers
Serting and Moar in 3° North.

Seaboard—Islands.—The coast on both sides, but particularly
on the west, is almost invariably marshy and alluvial. The flat,
unbroken seaboard, scarcely raised above sea level, is generally over-
grown with mangroves for some four or five miles inland. In some
parts these low-lying plains expand to a breadth of 25 or 30 miles,
but they are usually much more contracted. On the east coast the
hills approach at several points close to the shore, a disposition
partly due perhaps to the influence of the north-east monsoon. Here
the chief headlands are Capes Carnom, Patâni, Tringano, and Romania,
to which correspond on the opposite side the promontories of Sâlang;
Kalang, Rachado, and Bolus (Bâlus).

In the extreme North both sides of the Peninsula are fringed by
clusters of innumerable reefs and islets lying close to the shore.
Further seawards is a second barrier of larger islands in the Gulf of
Siam, of which the chief are Taw, Carnam (Samai), and Quin. In
the Bay of Bengal there also runs a second chain, forming a southern
extension of the Mergui Archipelago. But beyond this insular
region the coast is generally free from islands, except at the southern
extremity of the Peninsula, where are clustered the Singapore.
Bintang (Bentan), Bûlang, and Carimons (Kerimon) groups. Else-
where the largest islands are Junk Ceylon (Ujông Sâlang), Lengkâwi,
and Penang (Pînang) on the west side; Tantalam, the Great and
Little Redangs, Tioman, and Tinggi on the east side. Their
geological formation and general disposition parallel with the
seaboard show that all these groups are mere fragments of the
mainland, with which some of the largest, such as Sâlang, Singapore,
and Tantalam, are almost contiguous. The Strait of Singapore
presents the aspect rather of a river than of a marine channel, running
for over 30 miles transversely with the main peninsular axis,
with a mean breadth of little over 1500 yards.

Isthmus of Kra.—These islands thus bear somewhat the same
relation to the whole Peninsula that this region will present to the
Asiatic mainland whenever the projected canalisation of the Isthmus
of Kra is effected. By a ship canal at this point the voyage from
Calcutta to China would be shortened by 660 miles, and that between
Burma and Bangkok by 1300 miles. The original scheme, proposed