A History of Pahang

W. LINEHAN

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by

W. LINEHAN

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Photo Arkib Negara.
H.H. Sultan Ahmad and his personal staff at Pekan in about 1885.
Photo Arkib Negara.
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PREFACE

In the 1930s, the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malayan Branch* published a series on Malay state histories. R. O. Winstedt made prolific contributions to the project and his reputation as a scholar was hence further enhanced. Except for the more serious students of Malaysian history, few, possibly, have heard of the name W. Linehan. Yet, he produced a very fine piece of writing for the same series. "A History of Pahang" which was written in 1936 remains to-day an authoritative work and, in fact, the only substantial writing on the historical development of the Peninsula's largest state.

W. A. Linehan, C.M.G. (1947), M.A., D. Litt., was born on 6th August 1892 at Whitechurch, County Cork. He was the son of Senator Thomas Linehan and received his early education at the Christian Brothers College from where he proceeded to University College, County Cork. He married Mary O'Sullivan of Limerick and had three sons. It was in 1916 that he first became a Cadet in the Malayan Civil Service and rose to prominence in the 1930s. In 1931, he was Assistant Adviser in Kelantan and in 1934, Assistant Adviser, Johore. In 1937, he was Secretary to the British Resident of Perak and in 1938 was appointed Director of Education, Straits Settlements and Adviser on Education, Malay States. In the same year, he was President of the International Conference of Pre-Historians of the Far East.

During the Japanese Occupation, Linehan was interned in the Changi Gaol as well as the Sime Road Internment Camp, both in Singapore. After the war, when the controversial Malayan Union was introduced, he was given the responsible post of Constitutional Adviser. He retired from the Civil Service in 1948 and, on 19th January 1949, was re-employed as the Director of Museums, Federation of Malaya, which post he held until 1951. In 1955, he became Assistant Director of Research in Oriental Languages in the University of Cambridge but died on 19th October the same year.

"A History of Pahang" covers a very broad period, from prehistoric times to the 1890s. Despite this, it is not too much to say that this work has been meticulously written. The first five chapters are particularly valuable for the simple reason that the early history of the Peninsula, in fact up to the 18th century, is as yet not generally well known. Many travellers had written on the Peninsula since very early times but such records as they had left behind are widely scattered and not easily obtainable. Linehan has made references to a number of these sources which contain some information on Pahang. Linehan, of course, was keenly interested in the early history of the Malay Peninsula and his contributions in this field have been very impressive. The greater proportion of his writings appear in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic

Society, Malayan Branch. Among these may be mentioned the following:

Langkasuka, the island of Asoka. Vol. 21, Pt. 1, 1948.
Notes on some further archaeological discoveries in Pahang. Vol. 8, Pt. 2, 1930.
Notes on the remains of some ancient brick structures in Pekan district. Vol. 6, Pt. 4, 1928.
Some discoveries of the Tembeling. Vol. 6, Pt. 4, 1928.

In view of the large amount of work which Linehan has done on the early history of the Peninsula, it is clear that the first five chapters of “A History of Pahang” were written with some authority. Admittedly, Linehan has not been able to give a truly definitive account of the subject. But, he has certainly pioneered the way for more intensive research. He has made the task of future scholars so much lighter by listing down the very dispersed references to Pahang and it remains for someone as conscientious to continue the hard work of piecing together the many useful fragments, several perhaps not yet discovered, into a coherent whole. Also, as a result of Linehan’s effort, it appears probable that a more careful and painstaking search into the Portuguese and Dutch archives might prove very rewarding, at least for the period covering the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

The last seven chapters of “A History of Pahang” which deal with the comparatively narrower period of one hundred years (about 1800s to 1890s) are, by comparison, less important for the serious students of Malaysian history. The greater proportion of Chapter VI, for example, is based on two sources — (i) C. Gray’s journal of his overland journey from Malacca to Pahang, and (ii) Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah. Both these sources can be read in their entirety by those with an interest in the subject and Abdullah’s book is easily available.

2 For a more complete list of Linehan’s writings in JMBRAS, see Index Malaya (published by the Royal Asiatic Society, Malaysian Branch).
3 For a full text of the journal, see “Journal of a Route Overland from Malacca to Pahang, across the Malayan Peninsula” Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia, Vol. 6, 1852.
In the next chapter, the Civil War (1857-1863) of Pahang has been very ably summarised by Linehan for the events of the time were extremely complex and the personalities involved, numerous. It was not a war confined to the boundaries of Pahang as it affected Johore, Trengganu, the remnants of the Riau-Lingga Empire and even Siam as well as the British. There is an abundance of official records on the war. Linehan’s account, however, is based largely on the Hikayat Pahang, an extremely valuable indigenous source. This work is available in both the University of Malaya Library and the Malaysian National Archives. Chapter VIII of "A History of Pahang" which is concerned with Pahang’s involvement in the Selangor War (more correctly known as Perang Kelang or the Klang War) is also based on the Hikayat Pahang.

The value of Chapters IX to XI which sketch the beginnings of British intervention in Pahang has been superseded since by more academic writings based on sources which Linehan then had no access to, namely, the Colonial Office Records, Series 273. But, Linehan had one distinct advantage over modern scholars who have a similar interest in the history of Pahang; he had before him the private papers of Maharaja Perba of Jelai, Wan Muhammad. From Linehan’s own description of the papers, it is clear that they contain extremely valuable information on the internal affairs of Pahang. Present attempts to locate these papers have not borne fruit.

In the last chapter of his work which discusses the uprising in Pahang in the 1890s led by Dato’ Bahaman or Orang Kay Semantan, Linehan has been able to cite interesting letters from the Maharaja Perba collection, but otherwise a far more detailed account of the disturbances can be written by using the Colonial Office Records. It is important to mention here that Linehan’s version of Dato’ Bahaman’s antecedents is disputed by Dato’ Sallehuddin bin Mat Lela, the grandson of Dato’ Bahaman. Linehan writes:

The personal name of the Semantan Chief was ‘Abdu’l­Rahman, Rahman, or Bahman. He was of humble, partly Jakun origin, and in his youth had been a menial servant attached to the Sultan’s household.

According to Dato’ Sallehuddin, Dato’ Bahaman’s father, who was called Dato’ Imam Noh, originated from Kampung Kampar Kanan, Mangkinang, Minangkabau. He migrated from Sumatra to Pahang during his youth, travelling overland from Pedas, in Negri Sembilan, via Kuala Pilah and by river to Semantan. He and his followers then cleared the jungle and founded a settlement at a place

5 The original version of Hikayat Pahang is in Jawi. The author is unknown. In the National Archives, a Rumi version is available in typescript.


7 See Appendix IV.

8 In fact, an M.A. dissertation on the subject was successfully completed in the Dept. of History, University of Malaya, in 1971 by a student from Universitas Gadjah Mada — Jang Asjah Mutalib.

9 v. p. 139.
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