The Straits of Malacca. (*Illustrated London News*, 1874)


110
120
130
20
10
Kang tse Kiang
CHINA
NINGPO
Chusan
EAST CHINA SEA
LOO CHOO Is.
FU-CHOO
AMOY
CANTON
FORMOSA
TAIWAN
STR. OF FORMOSA
NAN QUANG Kiang
Hong Kong
KESHO
BALINTANG CHANNEL
PACIFIC OCEAN
TONQUIN
HAINAN
COCHIN CHINA
ANNAM
CAMBODIA
SAIGON
LOWER COCHIN
C. Cambodia
SPANISH SETTLEMENTS
CHINA SEA
MANILA
LUZON
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS
MINDORO
SAMAR
PANAY
LEYTE
PALAWAN
SULU SEA
SULU ARCH.
MINDANAO
CELEBES SEA
Labuan
Brimi
Natuna Is.
Sarawak
Borneo Prop.
SINGAPORE
ISLT. TOWN & STR
Linga
Pontianak
BORNEO
Manodo
MOLUCCA PASS
GILOLO
PAPUA
Tomini G.
Banca
Billiton
Palembang
Sumatra
Flat
Banjermassin
MACASSAR STR.
CELEBES
Xulla I.
Buro
CERAM
BATAVIA
JAVA SEA
MACASSAR
BANDA SEA
Bouton
SETTLEMENTS
Samarang
FLORES SEA
Djokjakarta
JAVA
Bali
Lombok
SUMBAWA
FLORES
SUMBA
TIMOR
DUTCH ISLANDS
110°
120
130
JOHN DOWER DEL.

Titles in the series

Balinese Paintings (2nd edn.)
A. A. M. DJELANTIK

Bamboo and Rattan:
Traditional Uses and Beliefs
JACQUELINE M. PIPER

Betel Chewing Traditions
in South-East Asia
DAWN F. ROONEY

The Birds of Java and Bali
DEREK HOLMES and
STEPHEN NASH

The Birds of Singapore
CLIVE BRIFFETT and
SUTARI BIN SUPARI

The Birds of Sumatra and
Kalimantan
DEREK HOLMES and
STEPHEN NASH

Borobudur (2nd edn.)
JACQUES DUMARÇAY

Burmese Puppets
NOEL F. SINGER

Early Maps of South-East Asia
(2nd edn.)
R. T. FELL

Folk Pottery in South-East Asia
DAWN F. ROONEY

Fruits of South-East Asia: Facts
and Folklore
JACQUELINE M. PIPER

A Garden of Eden: Plant Life in
South-East Asia
WENDY VEEVERS-CARTER

Gardens and Parks of Singapore
VÉRONIQUE SANSON

The House in South-East Asia
JACQUES DUMARÇAY

Images of the Buddha in Thailand
DOROTHY H. FICKLE

Indonesian Batik: Processes,
Patterns and Places
SYLVIA FRASER-LU

Javanese Gamelan (2nd edn.)
JENNIFER LINDSAY

Javanese Shadow Puppets
WARD KEELER

The Kris: Mystic Weapon of the
Malay World (2nd edn.)
EDWARD FREY

Life in the Javanese Kraton
AART VAN BEEK

Mammals of South-East Asia
(2nd edn.)
EARL OF CRANBROOK

Musical Instruments of
South-East Asia
ERIC TAYLOR

Old Bangkok
MICHAEL SMITHIES

Old Jakarta
MAYA JAYAPAL

Old Malacca
SARNIA HAYES HOYT

Old Manila
RAMÓN MA. ZARAGOZA

Old Penang
SARNIA HAYES HOYT

Old Singapore
MAYA JAYAPAL

Sarawak Crafts: Methods,
Materials, and Motifs
HEIDI MUNAN

Silverware of South-East Asia
SYLVIA FRASER-LU

Songbirds in Singapore:
The Growth of a Pastime
LESLEY LAYTON

Afonso de Albuquerque by an anonymous artist, Goa, sixteenth century, 182 × 108 cm. (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon)

Old Malacca

SARNIA HAYES HOYT

KUALA LUMPUR
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
OXFORD SINGAPORE NEW YORK
1993

Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford New York Toronto
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo
Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town
Melbourne Auckland Madrid
and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

Oxford is a trade mark of Oxford University Press

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press, New York

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hoyt, Sarnia Hayes, 1938–
Old Malacca/Sarnia Hayes Hoyt.
p. cm.—(Images of Asia)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0–19–588619–4:
1. Malacca (State)—History. I. Title. II. Series.
DS598.M34H69 1993
959.5'1—dc20
93–14633
CIP

Typeset by Indah Photosetting Centre Sdn. Bhd., Malaysia
Printed by Kyodo Printing Co. (S) Pte. Ltd., Singapore
Published by Oxford University Press,
19–25, Jalan Kuchai Lama, 58200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

For Eddy, Ned, and Jonathan

Preface

THE road from my home in Singapore to Malacca took a roundabout route through Penang, for it was during my work on colonial Penang that I discovered the pleasures of exploring a city while reading and writing about its past. It is therefore a privilege to have had the opportunity to investigate Malacca in the same way because Malacca, as they like to say in Malaysia, is where it all began.

In this little introduction I have tried to bring old Malacca to life while remaining faithful to the record of its past. I have written the book I would like to read and refer to if I were a first time visitor to Malacca, a frequent visitor, a resident, or even a curious armchair traveller.

Any selection process implies omissions, and readers will note that I have not digressed often into Malay history. To keep the focus on Malacca, I have referred to the neighbouring Malay kingdoms of Johore, Kedah, Pahang, Perak, and Siak and Acheh in Sumatra only as they relate to Malacca.

I have attempted, however, to emphasize the cultural and intellectual context in which the history of Malacca unfolds: Malay ideas of kingship, Islam, Christianity, and Chinese ancestor worship, as well as European mercantilism, racism, and colonialism. I have tried, too, to highlight basic trends in Malacca's physical development and, concurrently, the social and economic changes within its many ethnic communities and their architectural settings.

During my research I incurred many debts all of which would be impossible to list here, but Michael J. Sweet, of Antiques of the Orient in Singapore, has been so much a part of the project from the beginning that it is hard to imagine what this book would have been like without his advice, enthusiasm, and generous donation of time and research materials. He has made valuable suggestions

for the text and provided rare books, maps, academic research papers, and relevant excerpts from travellers' tales. He has also, of course, supplied many illustrations.

Other people, too, have contributed in various ways to the final look and 'feel' of the book: in Malacca, Wee Hock Chye, Chin Thian Soo, Donald Tan, Humfrey Ball, Father M. J. Pintado, John Gifford, Chan Kim Lay, Lai Poon Ken, and Baba, the trishaw driver; in Singapore, Maura Rinaldi, Peter Wee, Robert Marx, and the librarians at the South-East Asia Room, National Library, and the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies; in London, Susan Gillotti and Peter de Roos; in Amsterdam, Karin Kiwull; and in New York, Inge Dupont.

I wish to express my appreciation to the following for granting permission to use other illustrations: Major David Ng, Kuala Lumpur; Ruud Spruit, Westfries Museum in Hoorn, The Netherlands; Dr Yasumasa Oka, Kobe City Museum, Japan; Dr Isaú Santos, Arquivo Histórico de Macau; Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon; National Library and National Museum, Singapore; Longman Malaysia Sdn. Bhd.; National Library of Australia; Victoria & Albert Museum; the British Library; National Parks Board, Singapore; Mrs Alice Scott-Ross; Bank Negara Malaysia; Encik Adi Haji Taha, Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Tourism, Malaysia; and Radin Mohd. Noh.

I am also grateful to the following people who, despite busy schedules, graciously agreed to read and comment on portions of the manuscript so that the text gained accuracy and historical perspective, although I alone am responsible for any errors: Dr Yusof A. Talib, Department of Malay Studies, and Dr John N. Miksic, Department of History at the National University of Singapore; Kenneth Cheo, Singapore; Michael Young, Malacca; Father Manuel Teixeira, St Joseph's Seminary, Macau; Syed Nadzri, New Straits Times in Malacca; Carolyn Irvine, formerly of Malacca; P. Lim Pui Huen and Dr Chandran Jeshurun, Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore; and Michael J. Sweet.

Some of the travellers' tales were first printed in Dutch, Portuguese, French, and German. I am grateful, therefore, to Richard Pflederer in Tokyo, Dr Acácio Sousa, Instituto Cultural

de Macau, and Father Manuel Teixeira in Macau for the Portuguese translations; to Laura Vermeer for converting the old Dutch of van der Aa into English; and to Jill Easthope for her translation of Touanne.

On a more personal note, I wish to record here my appreciation to Judith Balmer for her photographic work; to Clifford E. Richeson for his computer wizardry; to Marianita G. Fumar for her competent help; and once again to my husband Edward L. Hoyt for his loyal support.

Singapore
October 1992

SARNIA HAYES HOYT

Contents

1. 'India Extrema XXIII Nova Tabula', by Sebastian Münster, *c.*1552. (Antiques of the Orient)

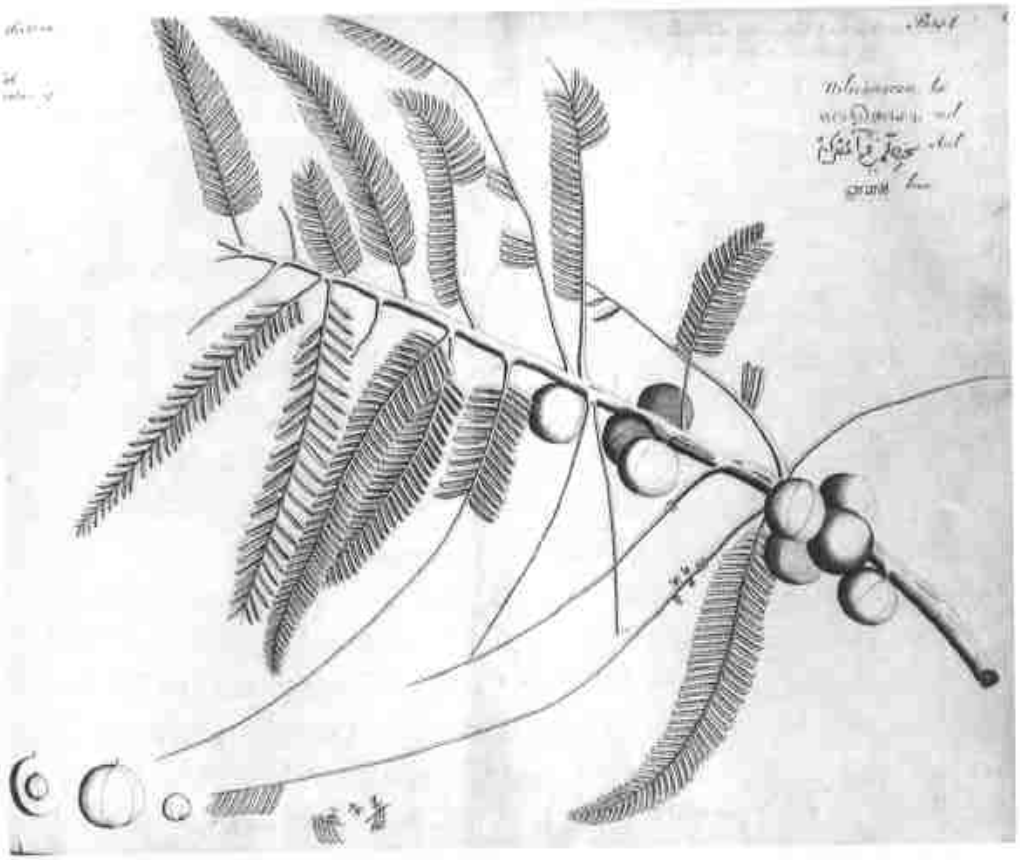
1
Introduction

MALACCA, or Melaka in Malay, is one of the thirteen states of modern Malaysia. It is located on about 70 kilometres of the south-west coast of the Malay peninsula, along the Straits of Malacca, 2° N of the equator. It began as a small fishing settlement, one of many in the area, but grew to become a legendary Malay emporium and capital before it fell into the hands of the Portuguese, the Dutch, and, finally, the British.

At its peak Malacca was so important to Europeans that a map of Asia published in 1552 by the German mapmaker Sebastian Münster locates only Malacca on the Malay peninsula (Plate 1). Münster was using information gathered centuries earlier by the Graeco-Egyptian astronomer and geographer Claudius Ptolemy who had referred to the region as the *Chersonesus Aurea*, or 'golden peninsula', because ancient legends and biblical references suggested that the area around Malacca may have been the source of King Solomon's wealth. Münster also used newer information from Marco Polo after his thirteenth-century journey through the region.

The origin of Malacca's name has been debated by historians and etymologists, but most accept a derivation from the tree commonly called *pokok Melaka* in Malay because Malays traditionally named a place for its geographic or botanic features (Plate 2). Emanuel Godinho de Eredia, a Portuguese-Eurasian who wrote about Malacca in 1613, and the unknown author of the *Sejarah Melayu* (*Malay Annals*) both agreed that the name Melaka comes from the fruit of a tree native to the area.

Eredia (quoted in Mills) wrote, '"Malaca" means Myrobalans, the fruit of a tree growing along the banks of a river ... which flows down from its source on the hill of Buquet China to the sea, on the coast of the mainland.' Because the Sanskrit word *amlaka* or *amalaka* means 'sour taste', and because the dried fruits of this tree



2. *Phyllanthus emblica*, commonly known as the Melaka tree, has juicy fruits located at the base of the leafy twigs. Photograph by Judith Balmer, from *Hortus Malabaricus* (Rheede), Parts I–V, 1678–1703. (National Parks Board, Singapore)

have an astringent flavour, the association between the fruit and the name becomes clear.

Of the two species of trees that produce this fruit one, the *Phyllanthus emblica* (see Plate 2), is widely planted for its large, juicy fruits used in cooking, but it was probably the Malayan native *Phyllanthus pectinata* that shaded the founder of Malacca, Parameswara.

Malacca's location, at a narrow point in the Straits, has been its destiny. Historically, the Malay world, a loose term that includes the peoples of the Malay archipelago as well as the peninsula, valued location more than natural resources in determining sites for its kingdoms. Protected harbours and navigable rivers were

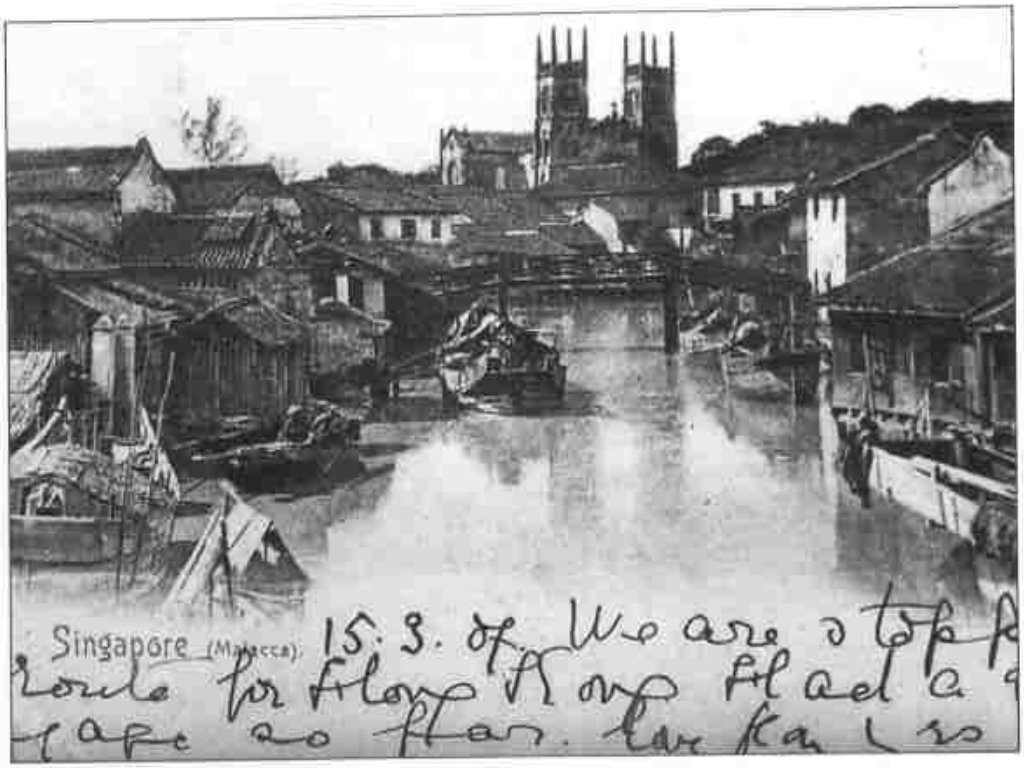
important, but even more critical was Malacca's position in relation to seasonal winds, or monsoons. Seafaring traders found Malacca ideally situated on the waterway that connects the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea, half-way between India and China, on the peninsula where the two monsoons meet.

For centuries sailors relied on the prevailing seasonal winds, which usually coincided with a rainy season, to push them along, as it was difficult to sail in ancient ships against the wind. Ships from China sailed south in the north-east monsoon, between November and March, and merchants from India sailed with the south-west monsoon toward the Straits during April to October. The harbours of the peninsula, especially those on the west coast, sheltered shipping regulated by the monsoons, so that traders could unload their cargoes at Malacca's warehouses, then wait in safety to begin the return voyage on the next monsoon.

Malacca offered other advantages as well. Unlike much of the coastline in the region, it had beaches, not mangrove swamps. The Straits are navigable all year round and for centuries the harbour at Malacca was deep enough to allow large ocean-going vessels to anchor close to shore because the river made a deep channel on the northern side of the estuary. Since the mid-nineteenth century, however, the harbour has silted up so much from overbuilding on the river embankments and the dumping of wastes that modern ships with greater draughts must anchor about 2 kilometres offshore.

Equally important to sailors was the Malacca River and its tributaries which served as a source of fresh water (Plate 3). Dividing the town into two parts, the river gave access to the safety of the interior, connecting with an inland waterway, and provided the means to bring forest produce—rattans, canes, gums, and resins—to market. Moreover, the hill which overlooks the estuary offered a natural defensive position where the Portuguese built a fortress in the sixteenth century.

For hundreds of years, the sea voyage to and from Malacca was hazardous and uncomfortable, as it could take up to a month to sail from one end of the Straits to the other, a distance of about 1 000 kilometres. A seventeenth-century Jesuit, Father Premare



3. Malacca River, with the towers of St Francis Xavier's Church in the background. (Major David Ng)

(quoted in Lockman) described his experience: 'No passage is so difficult and troublesome as that of the Streights of Malacca. We had like to have suffered shipwreck twice in it. We entered these Streights the 23rd of August, and did not get quite clear of them till the 20th of September; so that we were 29 Days making 220 Leagues; which is much longer time than it would have taken up by Land. We were for ever employed in casting and weighing Anchor, and to add to our Misfortune we had only a wretched Portuguese pilot, who being very dimsighted, did not know where he was, the instant we had lost Sight of Land.' This experience, he went on to rationalize, 'gives a new Missionary an Opportunity of suffering for Christ'.

Two centuries later, with improved charts, compasses, and other navigational equipment, passage was still hazardous. When Comte Edmond Bigot de la Touanne arrived in Malacca on board the frigate *La Thétis* in 1828, navigation in the Straits demanded

continual attention to avoid rocks and shoals, and frequent storms made progress slow. Before a storm, he wrote, the sea's surface 'wrinkles and breaks into foam', and clouds take on a succession of brilliant colours. 'The strong winds are shortlived', however, and 'the squall passes, and the sky clears before another squall which is already forming in the distance'.

Over the centuries, travellers have recorded different reactions to Malacca's climate, where temperatures range between about 26 °C and 28 °C. In 1598 Jan van Linschoten wrote about Malacca's 'evil ayre', a comment prompted, perhaps, by a swampy area south of the town. On the other hand, Eredia (Plate 4), who was born in the region, compared Malacca to Paradise: 'The air in this district of Malaca is very fresh and healthy, quite the reverse of what was imagined by the ancient writers Aristotle and Ptolemy, who maintained that the part of the world which lay between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn was very hot and fiery.'

By the early nineteenth century, under the British administration, most people had come to regard Malacca as a health resort—'the most healthy and the finest spot in the Straits, independent of its historical interest', wrote F. L. Baumgarten. It had 'not the humidity of Singapore nor the arid atmosphere of Penang'. The rest-cure Malacca offered may have had something to do with its charm and its languid pace, not just with temperature and onshore breezes (Colour Plate 1). As J. R. Logan put it in 1845: 'I cannot conceive any place better fitted than Malacca to soothe and tranquillize the mind when it has been fretted and worn by the toil and strife of Singapur.' Other travellers described Malacca as a place that 'does nothing towards make contemporary history', as a 'picturesque backwater', 'attractive to the imagination', and 'the natural growth of the country'—not a brand-new place like Singapore. They enjoyed the red laterite roads that led toward misty blue hills on the horizon, the fishing stakes, the bullock carts, the wildlife, and the palm-shaded kampongs (Malay villages) with their mosques.

Sir Frank Swettenham, Resident-General of the Federated Malay States, found Malacca enchanting. He wrote in 1906 that if a visitor has 'eyes to see and appreciate the colours, the movement,

4. Emanuel Godinho de Eredia, one of the earliest writers about the Malay peninsula, who was commissioned by the Portuguese to organize the work of mapping and prospecting the region, reproduced from Mons. Manuel Teixeira, *The Portuguese Missions in Malacca and Singapore*, Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1987.

the strange people and their strangely beautiful surroundings, the scene will live in his memory for all time'.

Many, less acclimatized than he, however, found Malacca's heat oppressive. Lt.-Col. David Campbell, the British commandant at Malacca in 1798 (quoted in Harrison) asked to be relieved of his duties, saying, 'I find the climate very inimical to my health,' while Isabella Bird, an intrepid Victorian globe-trotter, liked Malacca but complained about the mosquitoes—'big spotted fellows, with a greed for blood'. Except for the 'aggressive hum of mosquitoes', she wrote, 'the nights are very still' and 'the days are a tepid dream'.

The approach to Malacca made a vivid impression on Swettenham. He crossed the shallows between his ship and land in a launch and disembarked at the steep steps at the mouth of the river. Seeing Malacca, Swettenham wrote, 'the visitor will first be struck by the curious spectacle of a town with its legs in the sea. The reason is that the houses which face the main street of Malacca have their backs to the shore, and the space between road and sea is so narrow that the Chinese, who love deep narrow houses, have built out over the water.... The effect is strange but picturesque, and from the Malacca River ... to the northern end of town, every house on the sea side of the long main street has one foot on land and one in the sea.'

This amphibious sea front has disappeared with the modern reclamation of land on both sides of the river's mouth, but the land approach to Malacca from Muar has not changed much since Swettenham's time. 'Drive along any road in Malacca', he wrote, 'and you can feast your eyes on a picture that is typical of cultivated Malaya at its best.... But of all roads the most lovely is that which runs along the very edge of the coast, passing through palm groves and villages, with vistas of rice fields and blue hills on one side, and on the other spaces of water, green or blue, grey or blood-red, molten silver or black, under varying conditions of sunlight and shadow, of eastern day or eastern night.'

2
Malay Capital

Background

THE Malay world that saw the rise of Malacca in the early fifteenth century was in a state of flux. The political stability of the peninsula and archipelago provided by the Sumatran kingdom of Srivijaya, at its capital Palembang, was beginning to decline. For about a thousand years the maritime supremacy of Srivijaya had allowed trade through the Straits to flourish, suppressing piracy. The strict adherence that its monopolistic trading practices demanded, however, gave rise to many enemies, eventually causing Srivijaya's decline.

After the thirteenth century, the Buddhist Siamese kingdom centred at Ayuthaya in the north and the Hindu Majapahit empire to the south, in Java, moved into the vacuum caused by Srivijaya's decline. So completely did Siam and Java divide regional power that when Marco Polo visited South-East Asia in 1292 he found no trace of Srivijaya.

Nevertheless, Srivijaya's successful domination of the Straits served as a historical example to Malacca. A Palembang-born prince, Parameswara, looked to the Sumatran model when he established the new entrepôt in the Straits around 1400. Both culturally and commercially, Malacca became Srivijaya's heir. Traders came to Malacca for the same reasons that they had gone to Srivijaya: the variety of goods, the stable government, the well-planned facilities, and the refined culture.

Founding of Malacca

According to legend, Parameswara chose Malacca because here, near the hill and along the river bank, a small but aggressive white mousedeer (chevrotain) caught his attention. The mousedeer so intimidated his hunting dogs that they turned and fell into the

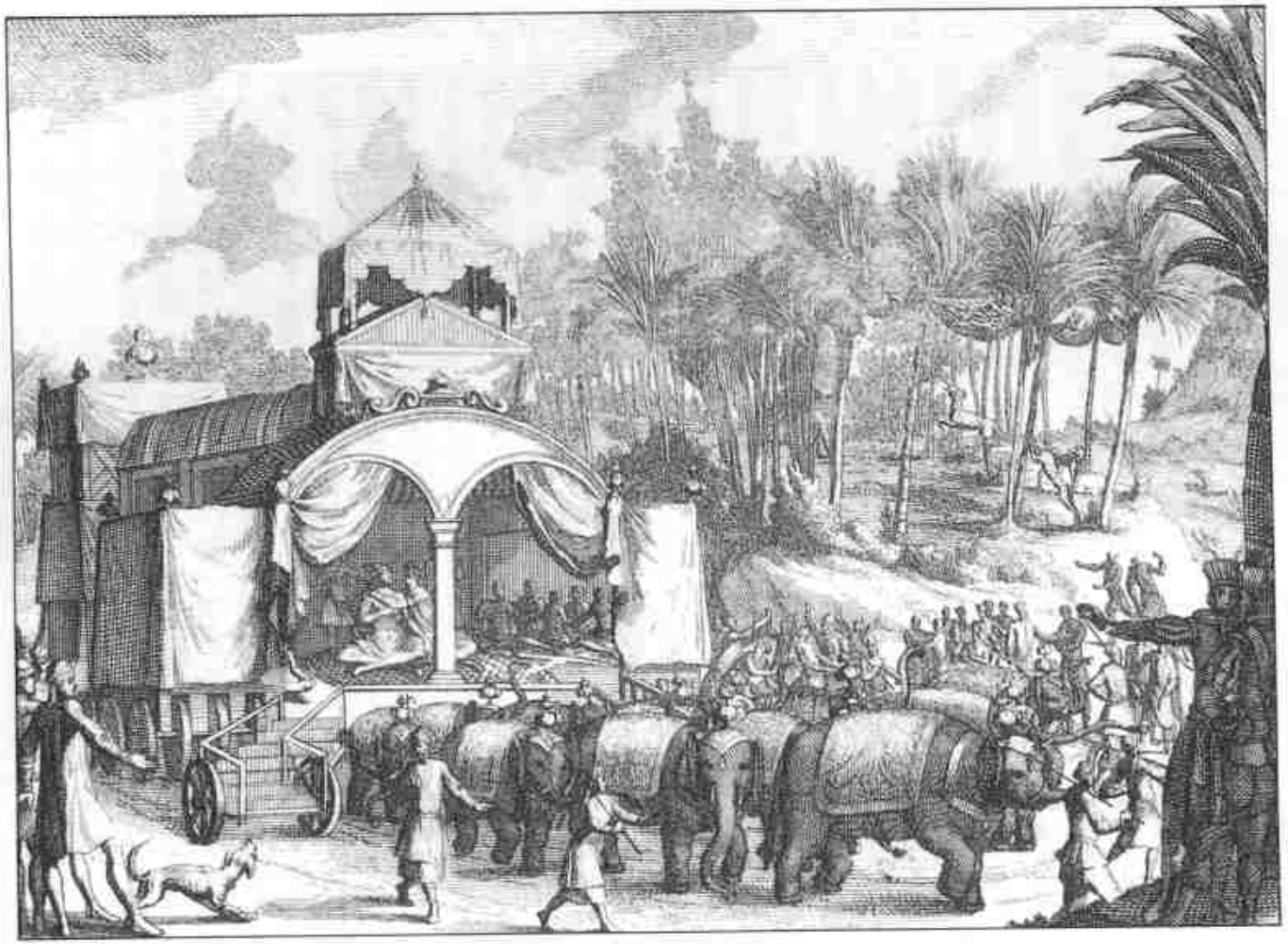
water. The place where the weak can triumph over the strong, Parameswara decided, would be a good location for a settlement.

Expelled from Sumatra, Parameswara had established himself, together with his followers, at what was then called Temasek (Singapore) in the late fourteenth century. The powerful Siamese kingdom, or one of its vassal states, had ousted him after he had killed Temasek's ruler, and on his flight up the west coast of the peninsula he had stopped at Muar before finally settling near the mouth of the Malacca River.

The original inhabitants of Malacca were fishermen who, according to Eredia, were so skilled they could 'transfix' fish at the bottom of the sea with pointed darts. Fishing and hunting continued under Parameswara's leadership, but he also gave the settlement a new sense of direction. Convinced that trade in forest products and other goods with coastal traders would be more profitable than piracy, he offered safe passage to traders and a market for their goods. He also encouraged people to clear trees and plant crops, especially sugar cane, bananas, jackfruit, and sago.

Parameswara, however, made his most astute moves in foreign policy. Malacca's need for protection from its Siamese neighbour coincided with a cycle of Chinese interest in the world beyond its borders. Between 1403 and 1433 the Ming emperor Chu Ti sent seven imperial voyages, with a fleet of sixty vessels, to develop trade in the Nanyang (Southern Ocean), to extend Chinese prestige abroad, and to offer protection to vassal states. When the Chinese Admiral Cheng Ho visited Malacca in 1403 he proclaimed Parameswara its king. In return, Parameswara acknowledged his responsibilities to China, sending gifts to the Ming emperor in 1405, and asking him to make Malacca a part of the Chinese empire in order to protect it from Siam. This alliance gave Malacca time to build up its defences so that when the Chinese withdrew from the region after 1433, Malacca was prepared for two Siamese attacks during the reign of Sultan Mudzaffar Shah.

At the same time, however, Malacca needed to maintain good relations with its powerful neighbours, since it depended on them for food, especially rice, to feed its growing population. When Malacca was not at war with the Siamese, it became a vassal state of



5. A Malay royal wedding, as imagined in a copper engraving, from Pieter van der Aa, *Zee-en Land-Reysen*, Amsterdam, 1707. The royal coach with thirty wheels is pulled by twelve elephants. (Antiques of the Orient)

Siam and of the Majapahit in Java as a defensive measure. Sultans also used dynastic marriages with daughters of Siam's neighbouring vassal states to forge strategic alliances (Plate 5).

Just as important as this defensive posture to Malacca's success was the pro-trade policy adopted by Parameswara and his heirs. This meant keeping sea lanes open, eliminating pirates that forced shipping into competing ports, absorbing competing trading centres through conquest, settling disputes fairly, and establishing the appropriate legal and administrative institutions to encourage trade.

Malacca became the most famous entrepôt in the world because it was located at a safe harbour that traders from the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean could reach in a single monsoon. Here they could gather in an atmosphere of confidence, honing their bargaining skills to razor sharpness. Malacca sought to minimize their risks, providing them with warehouses secure against fire and theft, a consistent system of taxation (non-Malays paid more than Malays), and a reliable standard of weights and measures.

The Sultans

Parameswara and his successors are the subjects of the *Sejarah Melayu*, a court history and literary masterpiece probably begun from a fifteenth-century core of material that expanded as it was recopied and edited again and again. It records Malacca's development from a small fishing village to a place where (as quoted in Brown) 'from below the wind to above the wind Malacca became famous as a very great city'.

The *Sejarah Melayu* gives accounts of memorable events and tells dramatic tales of the royal family and its close advisers, revealing strengths and weaknesses. Sri Maharaja Mohammed Shah, for instance, had a strong sense of fairness; he heard grievances and administered justice personally. Sultan Mudzaffar Shah was a noble character with many wives, all daughters of neighbouring kings. Sultan Mansur Shah is praised for his sense of justice, humaneness, and good looks. The last sultan, Mahmud, was remarkable for his well-built body, and his brother Raja Zainal Abidin (as quoted in

Brown) 'was so handsome that he had no rival in those days. His looks were flawless and his every movement a miracle of beauty and grace.' The latter would take any woman he liked, 'and great was the debauchery in Melaka in those days'.

The Malacca sultans were hereditary rulers who derived their absolute power over their subjects from several sources. One was the legendary conqueror Alexander the Great, said to be the ancestor of the ruling family. Another was a new belief that the ruler was the shadow of God on earth, for the Malay tradition placed the ruler above his society, so that his subjects owed him unquestioned obedience. Treason in this context was the worst crime, punishable by death.

Islam provided yet another source of power. Islam had come to South-East Asia peacefully during the thirteenth century, brought directly by Arab traders and missionaries and indirectly through Indian Muslim traders. While many local rulers embraced Islam for its spiritual nourishment, others taking a practical view saw its potential for profit. Indian Muslim traders would be more inclined to come to a place where they could expect to worship at the mosque.

Islam spread through the Malay language which, during the process of Islamization, acquired the syntax, vocabulary, and modified script of an Arabic language. In this Arabized form Malay was the language that facilitated the spread of Islam, which in turn provided a unifying principle for the whole region.

As prosperous Indian Muslims gradually gained power and influence in Malacca, the royal family also converted to Islam through intermarriage. Islam attracted Malaccan converts not so much for ideological reasons but because its values and way of life were compatible with their own.

Malay tradition reinforced the superior status of the ruler, impressing neighbouring rulers as well. Special language was used for addressing and speaking about royalty. The sultans, for example, did not eat (*makan*) as commoners did; they feasted (*santap*). The sultan had to have the symbols of his power—a special kris (sword), spear, and crown or seal. Sumptuary rules required that a white umbrella cover him wherever he went; gold and the colour

yellow could only be worn or used by members of the royal family.

The sultans depended on an administrative hierarchy modelled on that of Srivijaya, for according to the *Sejarah Melayu* (quoted in Andaya and Andaya) 'rulers are like fire and their ministers are like firewood and fire needs wood to produce a flame'. The most important part of this figurative woodpile was the *bendahara*, or prime minister, who arbitrated disputes between Malays and foreigners, and whose family intermarried with the sultan's. The *bendahara*'s power was matched by his wealth, much of it acquired from traders bringing him gifts.

After the *bendahara* came the *penghulu bendahari*, the treasurer or minister of finance. He was in charge of the several *shahbandar*, or harbour-masters—one for each ethnic community—who supervised the anchorage, collected taxes from traders, and assigned warehouses along the river. The *temenggung*, the chief of police, was responsible for state security, and the *laksamana*, or admiral, led the military both on land and at sea.

Perhaps the most poignant tale in the *Sejarah Melayu* tells about Sri Maharaja (Tun Mutahir), the grandest and wealthiest of the Malay *bendahara*. He is described as just and humane, clever at handling foreigners, skilled 'in conciliating the good will of the populace', and vain enough to change his clothes seven times a day in front of a full-length looking glass.

Despite his influence, Sri Maharaja's days were numbered. He had betrothed his beautiful daughter Tun Fatimah to the Raja of Pahang, not to the Sultan. For this crime Sultan Mahmud Shah ordered him put to death. When the *bendahara*'s son wanted to resist this order, the prime minister said, 'What, Hasan, would you be disloyal to your Raja and spoil the good name of your forebears? It is the custom of Malays that they shall never be disloyal to their Raja.' On hearing this, his kinsmen and retainers threw away their weapons and watched him die by the Sultan's kris.

The policy of conquest and empire-building begun in 1445 by Mudzaffar Shah, and continued by Mansur Shah, has been criticized as too ambitious and costly for a small trading emporium like Malacca (Plate 6). Nevertheless, Malacca was rich enough to pay

6. Extent of the Malacca Sultanate, *c.*1500, from N. J. Ryan, *A History of Malaysia and Singapore*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1976.

for it. The sultanate expanded during the second half of the fifteenth century to include the southern half of the Malay peninsula, much of eastern Sumatra, and the Riau and Lingga Islands. Malacca became the overlord of states rich in gold and spices, gaining control over the Straits of Singapore. Sultan Mansur Shah's rule can be considered Malacca's 'Golden Age'.

Although the sultanate lasted for just over a century, it provided a lasting symbol of Malay power. Malacca was the crucible where Malay-ness got defined: speaking the Malay language, observing Malay *adat* (custom), and worshipping God according to Islam. As a result, Malacca has had a profound effect on Malayan government and culture, then and now. As the Andayas have pointed out, Malacca's reputation as a commercial and religious centre during

the fifteenth century established it as a standard to which other Muslim kingdoms in the region were compared. They imitated its style of government, literature, music, dance, dress, games, and titles. Today, Professor Zainal believes (as quoted in Sandhu and Wheatley), 'the Melaka Sultanate occupies a special position in Malaysian history, because it is considered to be the origin and the basis of the present sultanates in Malaysia, excepting that of Negeri Sembilan . . .'.

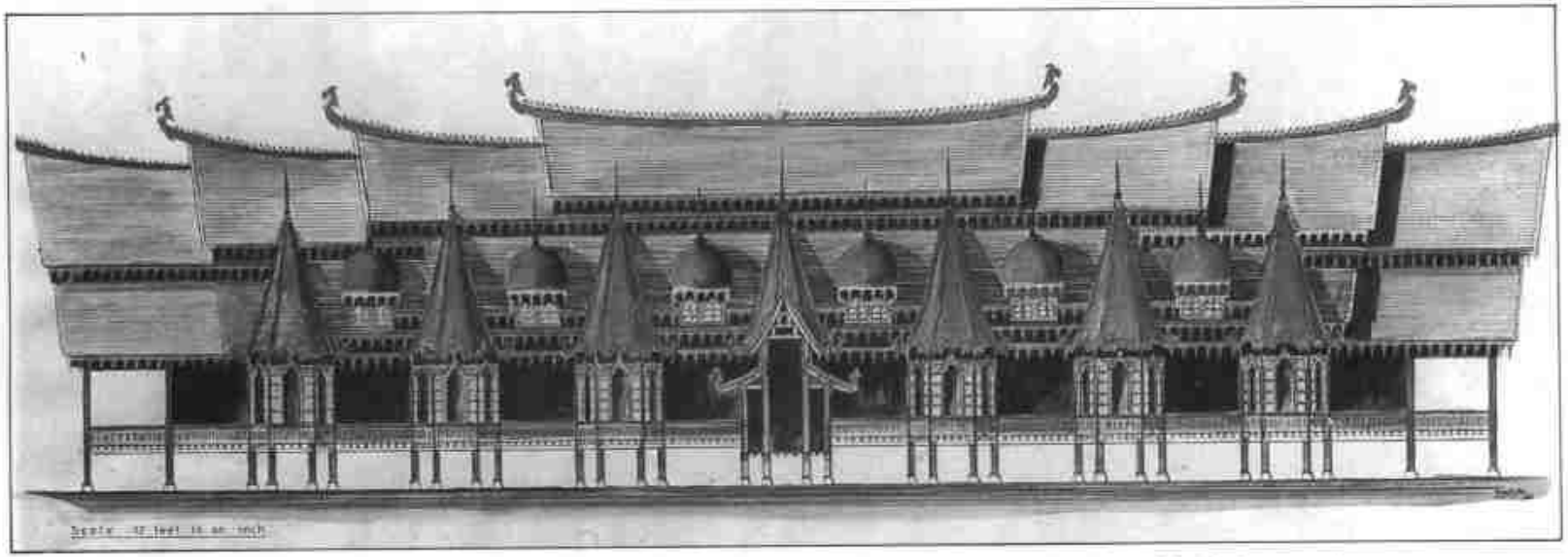
Society

Written in a sparsely populated region in the fifteenth century, the *Sejarah Melayu* emphasizes the importance of the ruler's subjects: 'The subjects are like roots and the ruler is like a tree; without roots the tree cannot stand upright; so is it with rulers and their subjects.' If Malacca's subjects enjoyed any wealth and freedom they did so at the discretion of a patriarchal ruler. The sultan regarded all profits—generated by taxes and tribute, not market forces—as his own personal business, blurring the line between public and private affairs.

Contemporary sources, both Asian and European, have written about the sultanate, providing glimpses of daily life and culture. Among the first recorded visitors was Ma Huan, an Arabic-speaking Chinese Muslim who sailed with Admiral Cheng Ho in the early fifteenth century. His account (quoted in Groeneveldt) is preserved in the *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan*, or 'General Account of the Shores of the Ocean'.

Ma Huan found a city surrounded by a palisade with four gates and watch-towers, and patrolled at night by watchmen ringing bells. Inside the city walls was a second fortress where godowns (warehouses), money, and provisions were kept. A city plan dividing the town into two parts separated by the river had been established, a pattern that endures today. The hill on the south side was maintained as a royal and aristocratic preserve where the sultan, his court, and bodyguards lived (Plate 7). Here also was the main mosque.

A bridge spanned the river, connecting the north and south



7. An artist's impression of the palace of Sultan Mansur Shah, *c.*1455. (Muzium Negara, Kuala Lumpur)

banks with a market-place of twenty pavilions where commodities of all kinds were sold. North of the river lived the merchants, organized into separate ethnic communities—and trading centres—according to country of origin. These heterogeneous communities enjoyed considerable autonomy over their own affairs. Both Kampong Upeh (Tranquerah) and Bandar Hilir began as settlements of the Javanese, who controlled the rice trade. Especially numerous were the Klings (Hindus) and Bengalis from the east coast of India, the Tamils from south India, the Gujaratis (Muslims), the Chinese, and Japanese, but there were also Moors, Arabs, Jews, Filipinos, Burmese, Siamese, and Borneans.

Ma Huan reports that the king and his subjects revered the laws of Islam, observing its fasts and penances. The men got up at dawn and turned their faces toward heaven, invoking the name of Allah. Business deals were sealed with a handshake and a glance at heaven.

The Chinese visitor also took note of local fashions. Most men wore sarongs while the more distinguished wore short silk coats that hid their weapons. 'The king wore a white turban of fine local cloth, a long floral robe of fine green calico, and leather shoes....' Ordinary men also covered their heads in a square piece of cloth. Olive-skinned, dark-haired women wore their hair knotted at the back, but the wives of important people were never seen.

Well-to-do merchants were favoured by the trading system which required the stockpiling of a large inventory over several months. Rich traders did not hesitate to show off their wealth—besides offices in town they owned residences staffed with slaves and servants among orchards outside the town wall, and wore 'robes of honour' for prestige.

Hwang Chung, author of the *Hai-Yu* ('Words About the Sea'), published in 1537 (quoted in Groeneveldt), commented that people in Malacca were well-mannered: 'When people meet each other, they put their hands on each other's heart as a sign of politeness.' They enjoyed music, ballads, and poetry. The men cultivated the arts of war, taking pride in their ability with the kris; even a boy of two was allowed to carry a small dagger. People also took

offence easily, reacting with fierce tempers, especially when someone put a hand on another's head or shoulder.

Hunting, fishing, and washing tin were important occupations among the lower classes. Malay *orang laut* (sea people) lived along the sea-shores or river banks. Their houses were built on piles about a metre off the ground, with floors made of split coconut trees fastened with rattan where people spread their mats. They sat, slept, and cooked in the same space.

Tomé Pires, a Portuguese apothecary, accountant, scholar, and diplomat came to Malacca in 1512, just after the Portuguese conquest, stayed for two years, and found 100,000 people speaking eighty-four languages living there. His *Suma Oriental*, intended as a reference for the Portuguese rulers, has been widely quoted even though Pires is biased and his praises sound fulsome. As quoted in Cortesâo, he reported, for example, that Malacca was 'a land of such freshness, of such fertility and of such good living ... for it is certainly one of the outstanding things of the world, with beautiful orchards of trees and shades, many fruits, abundant fresh waters which come from the enchanted hills'.

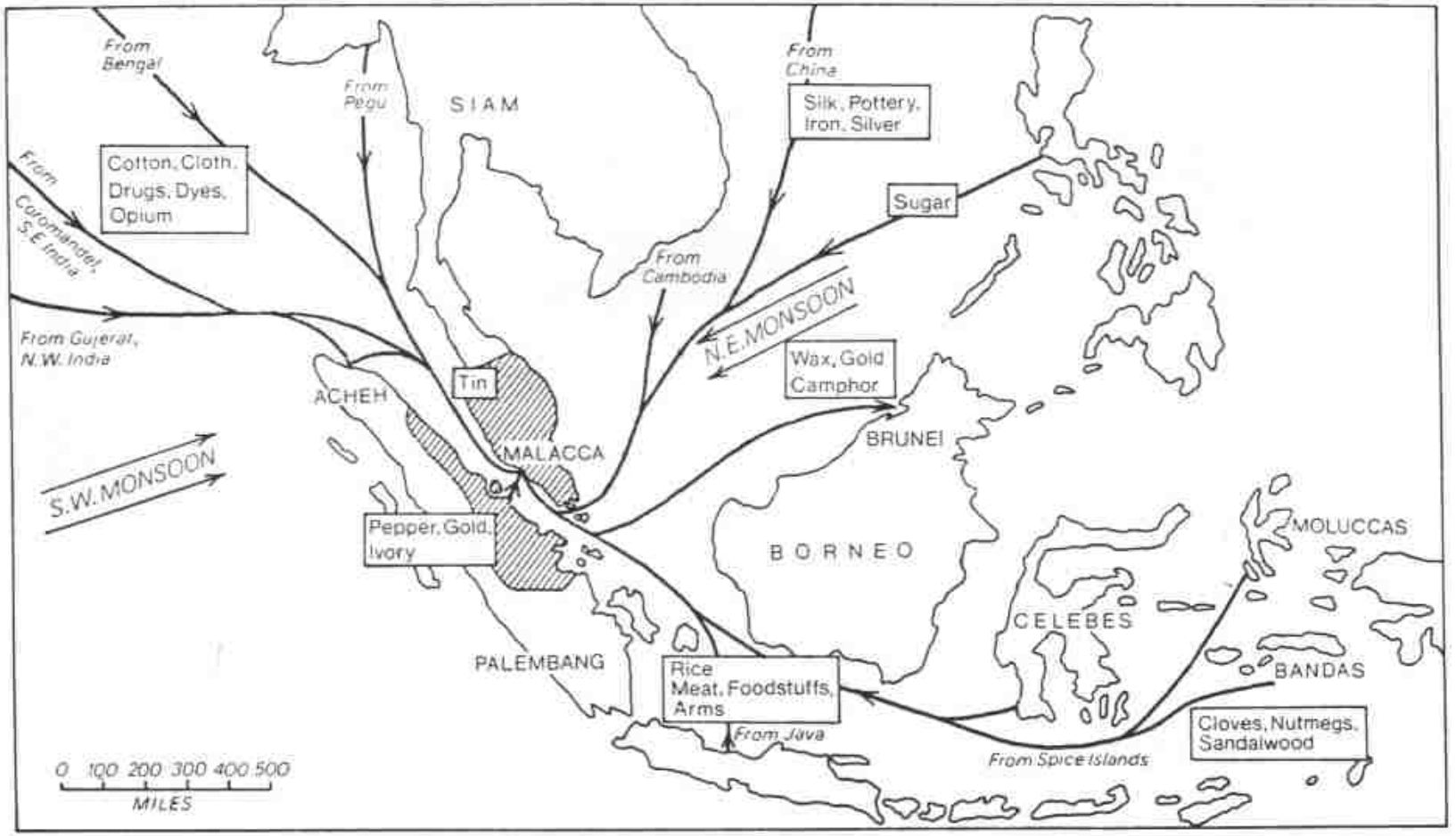
Trade

Malacca was an international market-place, a capital, in Pires' words, 'made for merchandise'. He wrote that 'no trading port as large as Malacca is known, nor any where they deal in such fine and highly prized merchandise. Goods from all over the east are found here; goods from all over the west are sold here.' He goes on, 'There is no doubt that the affairs of Malacca are of great importance, and of much profit and great honour. It is a land [that] cannot depreciate, on account of its position, but must always grow.'

Today, spices are taken for granted, but in medieval Europe curries and peppers were in great demand to preserve and flavour meats, for it was too expensive to feed animals through the long winters. Pepper, for instance, was so scarce and so prized in England in 1607 that a single peppercorn could pay a nominal rent (Plate 8).

8. Pepper (*Piper nigrum*), from William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, 1811. It is a climbing shrub that was probably introduced to the East Indies from India before AD 600.

Malacca's location made it the most convenient place to receive goods like silk, camphor, and pottery from China, sugar from the Philippines, and cloves, nutmeg, and sandalwood from the Moluccas. April, the busiest trading month, was the time when Chinese traders departed after warehousing their goods in Malacca, leaving behind an agent to sell them to the Indians and Arabs.



9. Malacca's trade in the fifteenth century, from N. J. Ryan, *A History of Malaysia and Singapore*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1976.

These Western traders would soon arrive on the south-west monsoon, bringing with them many kinds of printed cottons, copper weapons, seeds, grains, incense, tapestries, dyes, and opium.

Malacca's trade was complex. Traders had to know where to get the best spices at the best prices, how to get there, and what to barter in exchange for the greatest profits (Plate 9). Wooden ships had to be loaded with a small volume of high-value items, with the bulk of the cargo as ballast, for it would have ruined the richest merchant to lose a ship laden only with luxury goods. Most lucrative was the 'blue water trade', collecting and distributing spices, silks, porcelain, and tea destined for Europe through the Middle East and Venice. Thus, Pires was able to write that 'whoever is lord of Malacca has his hand on the throat of Venice'.

China wanted little from Europe except silver bullion in exchange for its porcelain and silks, but it was still part of the 'blue water trade'. Certain products from South-East Asia, such as spices, birds' nests, and woods became highly prized.

Malacca also played a key role in the local distributive trade, bringing in goods such as pottery, arrack (liquor), pepper, rice, gold, musk, and tin from regional centres (Colour Plate 2). As the sultanate expanded, Malacca offered goods in both the luxury and bulk trade, goods destined for distant ports as well as for local and regional consumption.

Despite the variety of its goods, Malacca's market-place still had curious anomalies. Gold was so ordinary that children played with it, but garlic and onions were valued, according to Pires, 'more than musk, benzoin, and other precious things'.

3
Chinese Destination

No One knows exactly when the Chinese community was established at Malacca, but the first arrivals must have come during the early fifteenth century. At this time the Ming dynasty's naval supremacy sent seven imperial voyages under Admiral Cheng Ho, between 1404 and 1433, to offer protection to vassal states like Malacca. These overseas missions ended almost as abruptly as they began when the renewed threat of Mongol invasions from the north shifted the emperor's attention away from the Nanyang, but members of Cheng Ho's expeditions probably stayed on at Malacca. Reports from Fei-Hsin, a Chinese Muslim (quoted in Wheatley) stated that in 1436 fair-skinned Chinese people were already living at Malacca among the people with skin like 'black lacquer'. The *Hai-Yu* (quoted in Groeneveldt) mentions the native prohibition against eating pork, confirming that Chinese tastes were already known to Malays: 'When the Chinese who live here eat it, the others are indignant and say it is filthy.' The *Sejarah Melayu* also mentions that the excellent well, now known as Hang Li Poh's Well at Bukit China, had been dug by Chinese, possibly as early as the fifteenth century.

This was just the beginning of an enormous migration from mainland China to the Nanyang. Centuries later, after many generations of Chinese had married local women and settled in Malacca, they transformed it so much that Malacca became Chinese. By 1879 Isabella Bird could write, 'Malacca is to most intents and purposes a Chinese city.'

A good Chinese son would never leave his ancestral home. Confucius taught the importance of filial piety—the revering of one's parents during their lifetime and the worship of their spirits after death. It is an heir's imperative duty to tend his ancestors' graves, maintaining an altar with tablets inscribed with the names of male ancestors, where rites can be performed to appease and

pacify their souls. Conditions in China became intolerable, however, after the Manchus brought down the Ming dynasty in 1644, and new political and economic reasons to emigrate overcame cultural and religious taboos. Fearing that Ming sympathizers would go abroad to establish centres of opposition to their rule, the Manchus, who were orthodox Confucians, made emigration an offence and forced the seafaring peoples of the coastal areas of Fukien to move inland. These repressive measures simply stimulated emigration.

Fleeing famines, population pressures, crop failures, poverty, and political unrest, the people from the southern provinces of Fukien, Kwangtung (Canton), and Kwangsi provinces left their homelands to seek a better life in the Nanyang. They went to Java, Borneo, Indo-China, Formosa, the Philippines, Siam, and the Malay peninsula, following the colonial flags that promised peace and security.

In Malaya the pioneer Hokkien community settled in the outskirts of the towns, becoming the most numerous Chinese dialect group in Malacca. Later arrivals included Cantonese, Hakkas, Teochews, and Hainanese. Most immigrants came from country peasant stock, but a minority of town merchants came, too.

Each group was bound together by a common temperament as well as language—a solidarity based partly on dialect, pronunciation, and local idiomatic expressions that increased friction with other groups. The Hakkas, in particular, were a tough clan; their feuding, often the result of overcrowding on the mainland, further encouraged emigration.

There was little incentive for the Chinese to come to Malacca during Portuguese rule (1511–1641). They were allowed to do business there, but not to own land. Even business was not so good, according to the Ming history (quoted in Groeneveldt). Since the arrival of the Portuguese, it says, 'things have become worse, and merchant-vessels seldom go there any more, mostly proceeding direct to Sumatra; when, however, ships have to go near this country, they are generally plundered.' In 1546 there was a 10 per cent duty on all Chinese goods, compared to 8 per cent on goods from Bengal.

The Dutch, on the other hand, welcomed Chinese immigration to Malacca. Having established the Dutch East India Company after 1600 in what is now Indonesia, the Dutch imported Chinese workers from Batavia (Jakarta) to rebuild the vegetable gardens that had been damaged during the siege of 1641. The Dutch saw the Chinese as the secret to the success of any Asian settlement: they worked hard as masons and carpenters; they opened shops and tea houses; and they provided government revenues through the taxes they paid on gambling, or on the right to slaughter pigs, or wear a queue. So successful were the Chinese that they slowly forced European craftsmen out of business.

During the Dutch period most Chinese artisans and craftsmen lived just outside the town and made their temple the centre of community life. The Cheng Hoon Teng Temple in Jalan To'kong, the oldest functioning Chinese temple in Malaysia, dates from 1645 (Colour Plate 3). The central altar is dedicated to Kwan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy, a favourite deity in southern China. Two Taoist altars and a Buddhist altar flank it, and in the courtyard on the right side is a Confucian altar.

The temple was founded by the Kapitan China, Lee Wei King, the second headman of the Chinese community. He also bought the Bukit China (Hill of the Chinese) Cemetery in the seventeenth century and donated it to the Chinese community. Today the temple continues to care for the cemetery.

Another temple near Bukit China honours the memory of the Muslim Admiral Cheng Ho (Colour Plate 4). At the imperial court he was ranked high as a three-jewelled eunuch for his skills as a navigator, but he is revered now in South-East Asia as the deity Sam-po-kong.

According to the Dutch Governor Balthasar Bort's detailed report (1678) on Malacca (quoted in Purcell), there were 4,884 people living in the town, of whom 852 were Chinese. Led by their Kapitan China, who settled disputes within the community, the Chinese then owned eighty-one brick houses and fifty-one *atap* (marsh palm) houses. By 1750 the total number of Chinese in Malacca had grown to 2,161, but toward the end of Dutch rule the

numbers declined when many migrated to Penang and Singapore.

During the British colonial era, after 1825, this trickle of Chinese emigrants to Malacca swelled, with British encouragement, to a tidal wave. In 1827, for instance, there were only about 4,000 Chinese in Malacca, but by 1931 there were 85,342, or about 40 per cent of the population.

The British, like the Dutch before them, looked favourably on Chinese immigration, for they saw in Chinese industry something like the Protestant ethic. During the early years of British rule, the Chinese provided government revenues by bidding generously for the farms—the annual franchise to provide certain services or to sell opium and arrack. In the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the demand for labour, in connection with British and Chinese capital investment to exploit the Malayan hinterland, brought Chinese (Hakka) workers to the tin mines through Malacca as the port of entry. Later the Hainanese and Teochews came in to work on Malacca's new tapioca plantations. In 1895 a Malacca Chinese, Tan Chay Yan, pioneered the rubber business.

Everywhere they went the Chinese became the merchants and shopkeepers that colonial masters and native populations depended on, gaining control of much of the wholesale and retail trade. The Chinese middleman became 'the filling in the colonial sandwich', playing a key role in the British colonial system by insulating the rulers from the other ethnic groups they ruled in the Straits. As J. D. Vaughan, a colonial administrator in Penang put it in 1879, 'The Chinese are everything', and then he went on to list more than a hundred occupations. They were not much help in the jungle, however, as ornithologist John Whitehead learned to his regret in the 1880s: 'I always found that a Chinaman required a native to wait upon him, and another to carry his baggage when on the march, so I cannot recommend them to any traveller who expects to rough it.'

As sea transport improved, European scientists, photographers, missionaries, civil servants, artists, and travellers visited Malacca, recording their impressions of the Chinese in their journals. Seeing

the Chinese in many occupations, Europeans often commented on their sheer numbers, their well-stocked shops, and their air of opulence and independence. These observers, of course, were often judgemental and unsympathetic, letting their Western and Christian point of view become so intrusive that they confused religious with cultural values. Vaughan lists many good qualities of the Chinese ('sober, industrious, domesticated, methodical, ingenious, honest and persevering in business') before he condemns them as 'crafty, superstitious, proud, conceited, treacherous, cruel, and revengeful'. The anonymous author of *Far Off or Asia Described* wrote in 1873: 'The Chinese come over by thousands to get rich in Malacca.... But though the Chinese set an example of *industry*, they do not set an example of *goodness*: for they gamble, and so lose their *money*; they smoke opium, and so lose their *health*; and they commit many kinds of wickedness, by which they lose their *souls*.'

On a visit in 1841 to the Missionary College at Malacca, the Revd Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet saw classrooms where Chinese boys were learning to read and memorize catechisms (Plate 10). They reported (as quoted in Montgomery) no trace of

10. The Anglo-Chinese College, founded in 1816 by the missionary Revd Robert Morrison, introduced secular education at Malacca. Aquatint from Peter James Begbie, *The Malayan Peninsula*, 1834. (Antiques of the Orient)

'idolatry' except for the 6-inch curved nails growing 'like talons' on the fingers of one of the Chinese school masters, who was simply showing in the Chinese way that he did not live by a menial occupation.

Chinese men obtained passage abroad by bribing officials because emigration was not officially sanctioned. Many were desperate, willing to sell themselves into indentured servitude to pay off gambling debts and feed their families. Those men fortunate enough to survive the rough journey in dangerously overcrowded ships, and work their way to freedom, found support and protection from local clan associations, or *kongsi*. These peculiarly Chinese frontier institutions got newcomers started in business with loans, helped the sick, buried the dead, and provided educational and other social services. The Hokkien *kongsi*, built in 1837, is located in Jonker Street, along with the Tan, Chan, and Lee clan houses.

Most Chinese came to Malacca with the intention of staying, making a permanent home there. They became small shopkeepers or artisans in both rural and urban areas. The well-to-do, who derived their wealth from plantations, tin, shipping, or real estate, built handsome terrace houses and shophouses in town (Heeren Street became known as Millionaires' Row) and bungalows surrounded by coconut groves and fruit trees in the country.

Isabella Bird describes the wealthy Chinese at Malacca in 1879: 'Every afternoon their carriages roll out into the country, conveying them to their substantial bungalows to smoke and gamble. They have fabulous riches in diamonds, pearls, sapphires, rubies, and emeralds. They love Malacca, and take pride in beautifying it. They have fashioned their dwellings upon the model of those in Canton, but whereas cogent reasons compel the rich Chinaman at home to conceal the evidence of his wealth, he glories in displaying it under the security of British rule. The upper class of the Chinese merchants live in immense houses within walled gardens. The wives of all are secluded, and inhabit the back regions and have no share in the remarkably "good time" which the men seem to have.'

After the founding of the free port at Singapore in 1819, and the

transfer there of Malacca's respected Governor Farquhar, many adventurous young Chinese followed him and made their fortunes. Nevertheless, they always maintained ties to Malacca, sometimes setting up Malaccan branches of Singapore businesses, and usually returning there in retirement.

The fact that no Chinese women migrated to Malaya until the twentieth century had interesting implications. The earliest arrivals married Indonesian women—Bugis, Batak, Javanese, or slave girls from Sumatra. These intermarriages resulted in a small but influential population of Malay-speaking Chinese who thrived both socially and economically under the stability of British colonial rule, when they played an important intermediate role between Europeans and Asians. They were, and still are, known as Peranakans ('locally born'), as Straits Chinese, and as Babas (men) and Nonyas (women). Their ethnic Chinese identity was constantly strengthened as promising new Chinese immigrants married Peranakan daughters.

Ambrose Rathborne, a tin prospector, wrote in 1898: 'No description of Malacca would be complete without mention being made of the Malacca Babas, who are Malacca-born Chinamen, and form a considerable community, many of them being ignorant of the language of their forefathers, and only speaking Malay.'

The Babas reflected their Chinese roots by wearing long jackets, loose drawers, and black skull caps or conical hats, and by sporting queues. Like most Chinese they enjoyed gambling and playing cards, but unlike the Chinese who ridiculed physical exertion, they learned to enjoy English games like billiards and bowls. They also sent their children to English universities to further their careers in the colonial service or as compradors in European firms. Their social clubs admitted no China-born members and they had nothing to do with dialect associations.

At the same time, the Straits Chinese adopted many Malay customs (Colour Plate 5). Nonyas developed the decorative embroidery and beadwork tradition of the Malays and used typically Malay ingredients such as chillies, coconut milk, and lemon grass in their cooking. Their jewellery and colourful porcelain have become collectors' items. In religion, however, they remained Chinese,

continuing to worship their ancestors, although many who moved to Singapore converted to Christianity under British influence.

In the nineteenth century, prosperous Straits Chinese bought or built terrace houses on Heeren and Jonker Streets. Other areas north of the Malacca River acquired the characteristic shophouse appearance it has today. Chinese neighbourhoods, typically urban and uniform, with numbered houses and a street address, contrast sharply with the traditional Malay kampongs. There, in a different geometry of thought, the 'street' meanders around detached houses shaded by coconut palms.

The family profile of Tun Tan Cheng Lock (1883–1960), for whom Heeren Street was renamed, offers one of many success stories of the overseas Chinese in the Straits (Colour Plate 6). In this case, an ancestor's wealth enabled later generations to take an active role in public life. The forefather Tan Hay Kwan arrived in Malacca in 1770. His grandson Tan Choon Bock helped found the Straits Steamship Company with three ships. *His* grandson, Tun ('Baron', in Malay) Tan Cheng Lock, founded the Malayan Chinese Association in 1949, fought against racial discrimination, and prepared the way for Malayan independence.

The house at 111 Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock, built in 1701, was purchased by Tan Choon Bock in 1875. Like most terrace houses in Malacca, it has a narrow street façade but stretches about 60 metres deep. Heavy front doors are painted black and over them hangs a black lacquered wooden plaque with the Tan family crest coloured in gold-painted Chinese characters. Inside, a series of public rooms alternates with open courtyards so that natural light penetrates the interior. The walls are covered with old Chinese scrolls, family memorabilia, and a portrait of the English royal family.

Deep inside the house, where the light dims, stands the family altar, the most important part of the house. On it stands a fine old bronze urn for incensed joss-sticks, two tall candlesticks, and a small frame listing the dates of death of each male ancestor. To this altar come family members on festival and anniversary days to venerate the deceased ancestor.

4
Portuguese Prize

WHEN the first Europeans—Portuguese men under Diogo Lopes de Sequeira—landed at Malacca in 1509, crowds of Malays clustered around them, twisted their beards, removed their hats, and grasped their hands. According to the *Sejarah Melayu*, the Malays remarked with wonder, 'These are white Bengalis.'

It was indeed remarkable that Portugal, a maritime nation with limited economic and demographic resources, arrived at Malacca and acquired control early in the sixteenth century of the Arab-dominated spice trade, becoming one of the richest and most powerful countries in Europe by the middle of the sixteenth century.

Located on the main sea route between the Mediterranean and northern Europe and cut off from the rest of Europe by the Moorish occupation of the Iberian peninsula, Portugal had naturally looked seaward. Prince Henry the Navigator had encouraged mariners like Bartolomeu Dias, who dispelled the myth that beyond the Cape of Good Hope lay an abyss with monsters, and Vasco da Gama, who sailed around Africa to India in 1497–9. Da Gama's successors helped Lisbon develop a bold strategy: Portugal would gain the riches of the East by breaking the Muslim monopoly of the maritime spice trade. To do this Portugal would have to capture strategic ports like Goa in India and Malacca as fortified land bases to support its sea power.

Although the drive to control the spice trade was an important reason behind Portuguese colonial expansion, it was not the only one. After centuries of Moorish domination, Portugal had defeated the Moors in the thirteenth century, and Spain had finally pushed the occupiers out of the Iberian peninsula in 1492. The fanatical Christian zeal born of this long subjugation developed into a crusade against Islam.

Rather than acting as a restraining influence, religion in the

sixteenth century incited believers to excesses. Christian missionaries had to bring salvation to the heathen even if it meant taking slaves, destroying 'idols', or shedding blood. Populations were divided into two categories: Christians and 'infidels'. Missionaries followed merchants to Portuguese settlements in Asia and America, for Christian converts counted as much as gold and spices. Despite the appalling conditions of ocean travel—stale food, putrid water, leaky ships, uncharted seas, and primitive navigation equipment—the promise of fame and adventure guaranteed volunteers to man Portuguese galleons.

Afonso de Albuquerque (1453–1515) (Frontispiece), the aristocratic Portuguese Viceroy of India, was chosen to carry out the king's plan. In Malacca, Albuquerque's sources told him, up to 2,000 trading vessels from all over the East anchored in the harbour at any one time. Although Malacca was said to have about 100,000 fighting men, and a number of tribute-paying states, it was not defended by strong ocean-going ships like the Portuguese carracks, which were built with iron hulls and mounted with guns.

The Portuguese timed their approach to Malacca well. The sultanate was politically divided, without effective leadership, when Sequeira arrived in 1509. Palace factionalism, an ethnically heterogeneous population, and rivalries within the Malay world prevented a united stand against the Europeans, who came armed with a strong sense of purpose as well as superior weapons.

The Sultan, according to a partial observer like Pires, was cruel, fickle, arrogant, and proud. To a Muslim, Mahmud Shah declared, Malacca was just as important as Mecca. He listened to the rich and powerful Gujarati merchants living in Malacca, who already had suspicions about Portuguese motives because they had heard about Portuguese pillage in India.

Accounts of this crucial encounter vary, but most agree that the Portuguese arrived unprepared for Malay etiquette. Sequeira sent an officer ashore to present gifts to the Sultan and a letter from the Portuguese king. The officer fastened a necklace around the *bendahara*'s neck, a rude gesture that frightened onlookers. The *bendahara* (quoted in Winstedt) told his people, 'Take no notice! For he is a person of no manners.'

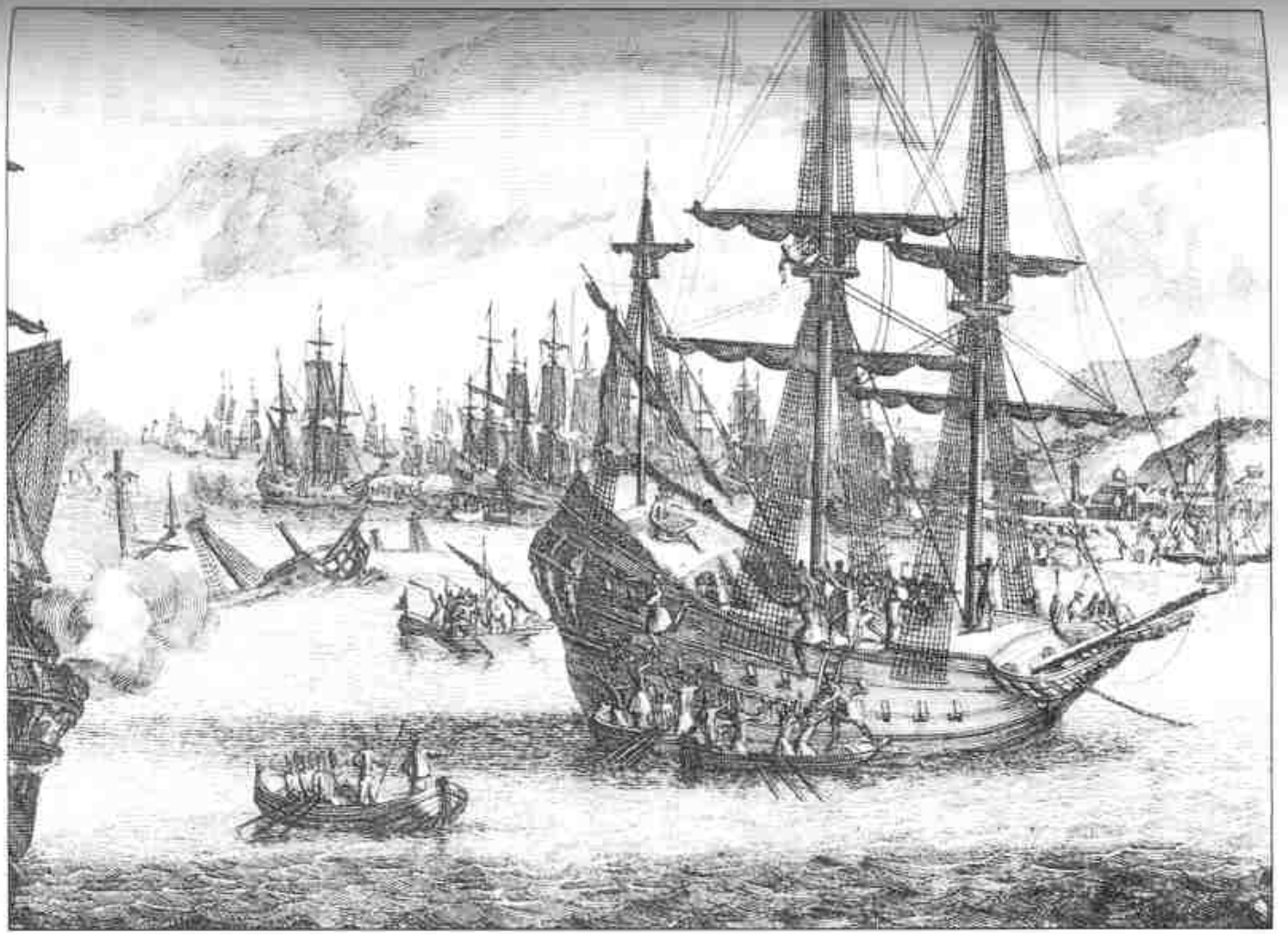
The Sultan reciprocated with a banquet invitation which Sequeira accepted, but when a Javanese girl, who had fallen in love with a Portuguese sailor, warned him that this was a Malay trap, he declined the invitation, feigning illness. The Portuguese grew alarmed when a number of Malays gathered on their ships pretending to trade, but actually waiting for a signal to attack. Fighting broke out and before it was over many men on both sides and two Portuguese ships were lost (Plate 11). Fifteen or twenty Portuguese, who were left ashore when Sequeira sailed back to Goa, were taken prisoner.

Into this temporary lull in hostilities stepped the enigmatic figure of Nina Chatu, a wealthy Tamil-speaking Hindu merchant from the Chettiar trading caste. The Chettiars lived in the Kampong Kling suburb of Malacca and controlled the lucrative nutmeg, mace, and cloves trade with the Molucca and Banda Islands. Nina Chatu befriended the Portuguese prisoners, easing their harsh treatment.

It was only a matter of time before the Portuguese returned to rescue the prisoners. Albuquerque arrived with the entire army and navy of Portuguese India—nineteen ships, 800 European troops, and 600 native Sepoys—with trumpets sounding, banners waving, and guns firing.

Observing this historic scene was Giovanni da Empoli (1483–1517), a young Italian who accompanied Albuquerque on his voyage from India to serve as the Portuguese king's commercial representative in Sumatra. Empoli offers another perspective of Albuquerque, still regarded as a hero in Portugal, that is coloured, no doubt, by the dangerous hardships he suffered in the service of the Portuguese. Albuquerque, Empoli wrote, 'is one of those men desirous of earning fame by cruelty'.

Albuquerque informed the Sultan of his demands: reimbursement for the cost of the second Portuguese voyage to Malacca, the prisoners' freedom, and the construction of a fortress. Without acquiescing to these demands, the Sultan appeared to want to settle their differences peacefully. Albuquerque, however, had decided to attack. The Portuguese floated a large junk near the river bridge, and loaded it with heavy cannons. The ship was ordered to fire day



11. Fighting between the Malays and the Portuguese broke out, in 1509, on the Portuguese galleons anchored in the harbour as shown in a copper engraving by Pieter van der Aa, 1707. Note the differences between the Malay and Portuguese ships. (Antiques of the Orient)

and night on both sides of the river. To deter these attacks, the Sultan had three large ships set ablaze near the junk.

Finally, after a month of indecisive battles, Albuquerque decided to mount a massive offensive. The *Sejarah Melayu* records that Portuguese fire-power overwhelmed the Malays, with cannon-balls 'that came like rain'. Some people had their heads, arms, or legs shot off; others were bewildered.

'What sound is this like thunder?' the Malays asked. 'What may be this round weapon that ... is sharp enough to kill us?'

Within a few days the Portuguese controlled Malacca, and the Sultan and his son fled to the interior. Eventually, when they realized the Portuguese would not leave, the Malays reconstituted the hereditary Malaccan dynasty at Johore and continued to attack the Portuguese by land and sea for over a hundred years.

It is hard to exaggerate the significance of this turning-point in history—the introduction of European power, with its soldiers, missionaries, traders, and sailors into South-East Asia. In the process of trying to impose some kind of maritime trading organization on the region, the Portuguese, and later, the Dutch and the English, fought devastating wars which broke up existing webs of commerce and culture, divided kingdoms, and disrupted local politics. In the end it would mean the eclipse of Malacca as an emporium—first by Penang, then by Singapore.

While the Europeans came to South-East Asia primarily to gain a stake in the lucrative spice trade, Albuquerque also had more immediate gains to secure. Against the advice of his pilots he set sail in December 1511 for India with gold, silver, precious stones, bronzes, and porcelain treasure looted from Malacca. Much of it, including the wooden howdah the Sultan had mounted on his riding elephant, was laden on his flagship, the *Flor de la Mar*. At the northern end of the Straits, just off the Sumatran coast, a storm blew up and the *Flor de la Mar* struck a reef, broke up, and sank. Today the ship lies in 37 metres of water, buried under about 15 metres of mud as hard as concrete.

After the Portuguese conquest, Nina Chatu was rewarded for his services and appointed *bendahara*, and also *shahbandar* for the Tamil trading community. In these positions he was able to give

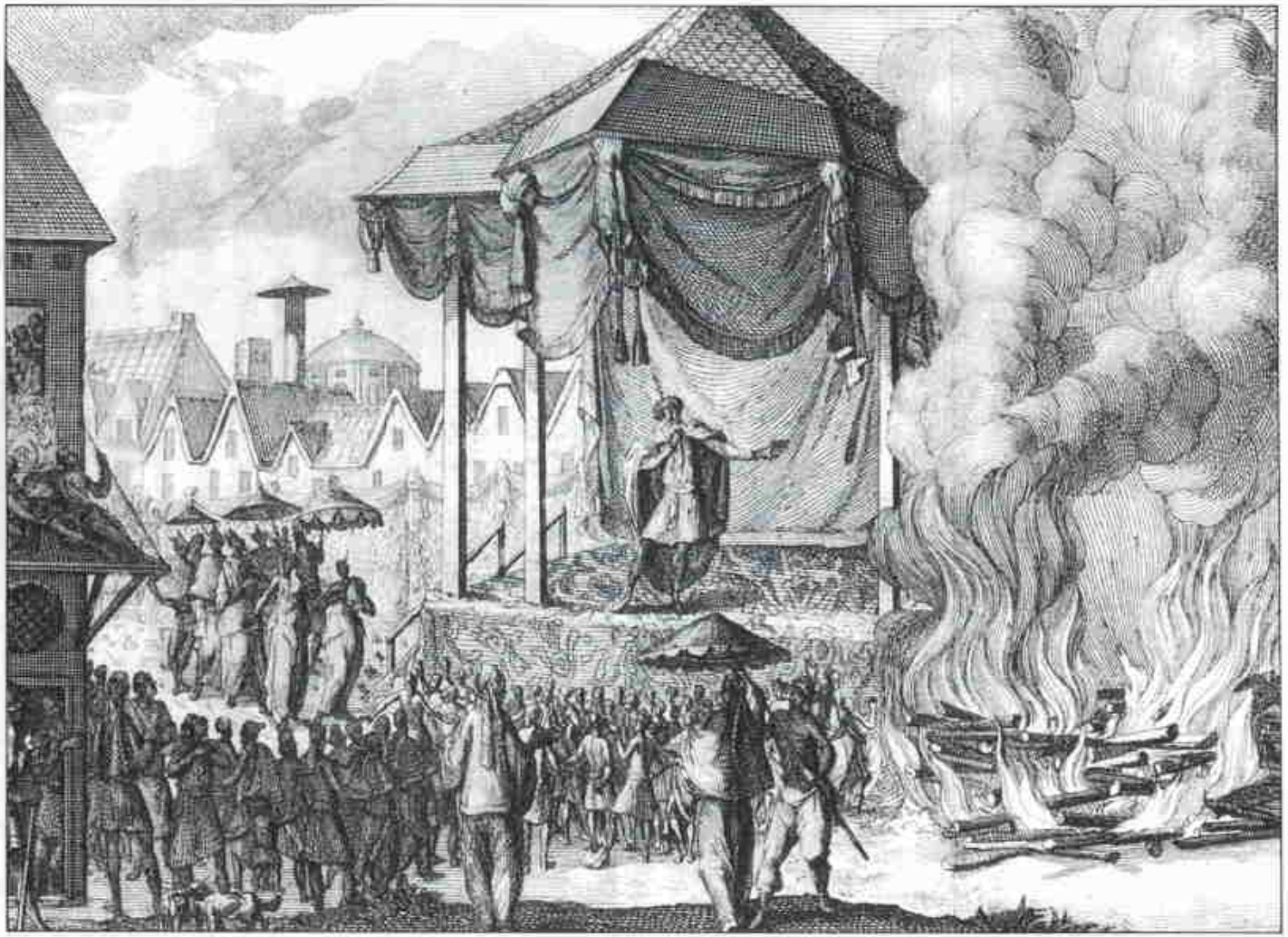
the Portuguese the benefit of his experience, for success in the spice trade required a knowledge of routes, shoals, and reefs, an understanding of navigation in constantly shifting winds, language proficiency, and a familiarity with the barter system.

Indirect routes, which took almost a year, could be more lucrative than the direct one from Malacca to the Moluccas. A trader left Malacca with Indian cotton for Java, where it could be exchanged for Chinese copper *caxas* (coins); from there he went to Sumbawa to exchange the *caxas* for rice and cotton cloth. Finally, the trader could sail from Sumbawa to the Bandas and Moluccas to obtain the valuable nutmeg, mace, and cloves in exchange for rice and cotton.

By 1523 the Portuguese, with Nina Chatu's help, were in control of the spice trade between Malacca and the Arabian Sea. In their eagerness to placate the Muslim community at Malacca, however, the Portuguese decided to replace Nina Chatu with a Muslim *bendahara*; some said he had abused his position of power, enriching himself at others' expense. The death of Nina Chatu in 1514 was a suicide, but it is not certain whether he took poison, or burned himself on a funeral pyre (Plate 12). In Pires' words, his death meant the loss of a man worth about 200 fighting men to Portugal.

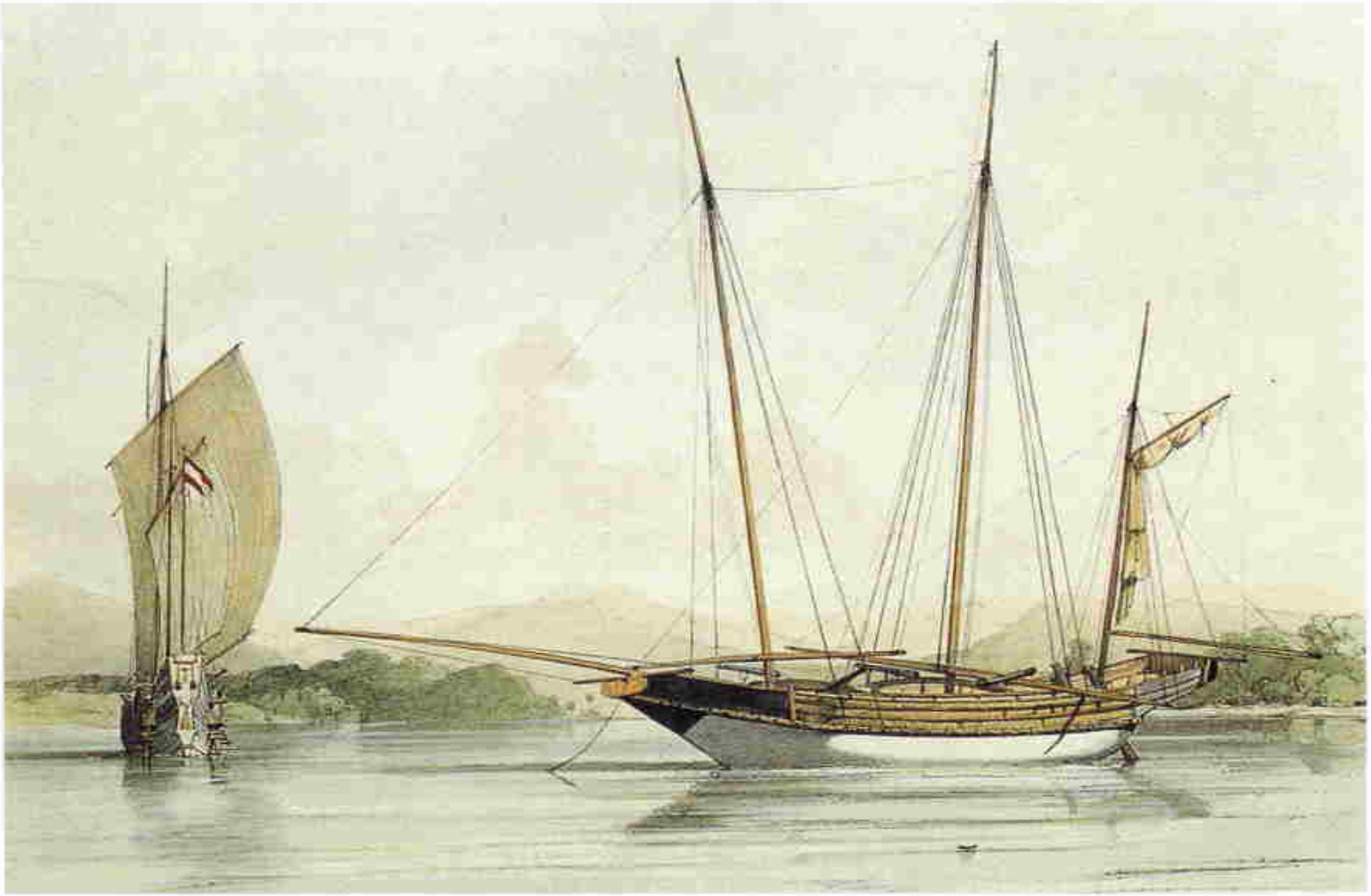
The Portuguese, of course, could not depend only on fighting men to defend Malacca. Immediately after the town fell they built a temporary fort for protection against Malay counter-attacks, buying time for the construction of the main fortress, nicknamed 'A Famosa', which took another five months. Working in the tropical heat, on a thin diet of rice, with men falling sick and dying all around him, Empoli wrote to his father: 'We erected it with great hardship bearing the stones on our backs; and each one of us was day labourer, mason, and stone cutter.'

These stones, obtained by dismantling Malay graves, mosques, and other buildings, were used together with laterite blocks and bricks to build the quadrilateral fortress around St Paul's Hill, with four towers, or bastions, and walls 2.4 metres thick. The towers were given Christian names, like 'The Virgins', or 'St Peter's'. One side flanked the river so that the garrison could be easily resupplied



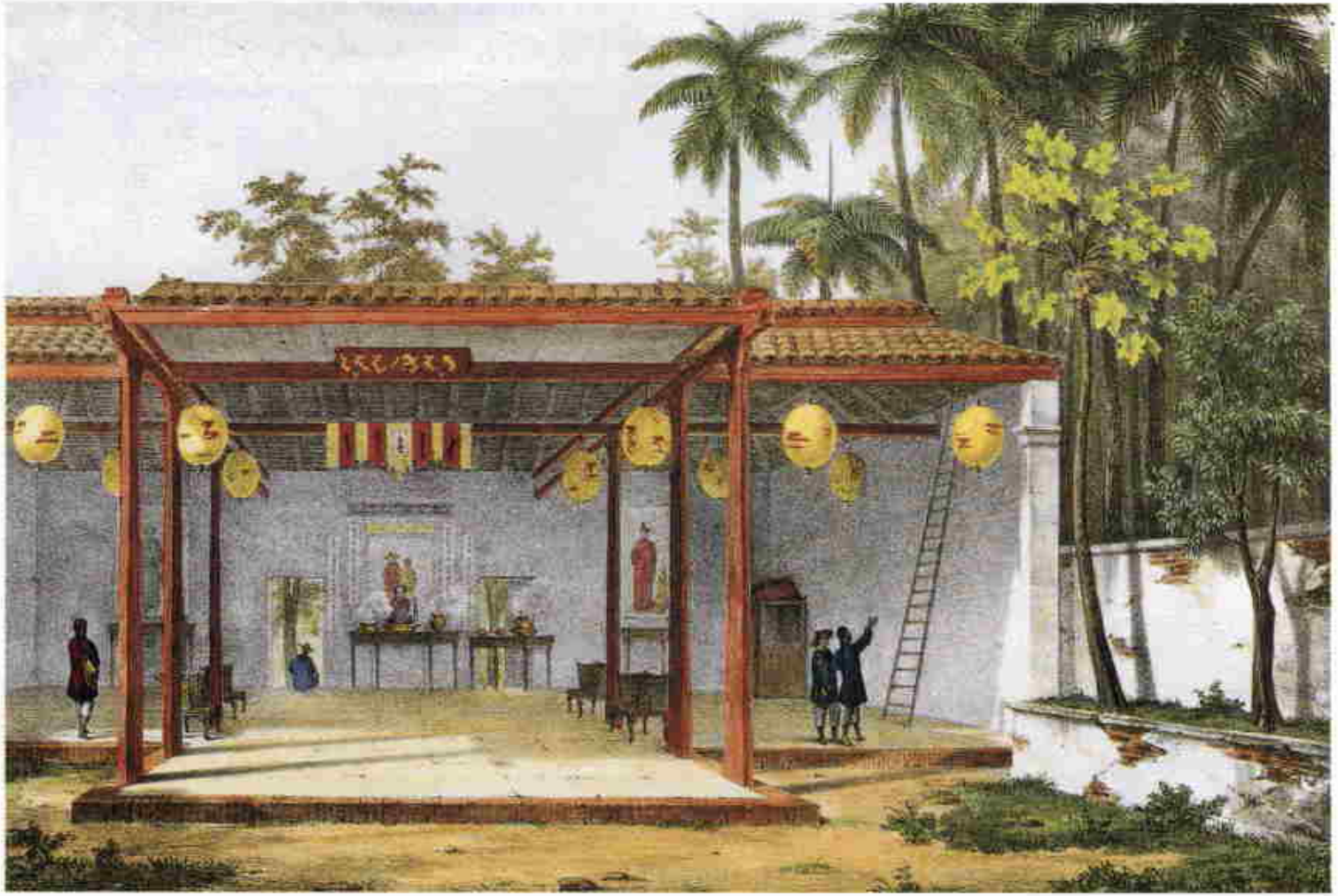
12. The death of Nina Chatu, according to Pieter van der Aa, 1707. Dressed in his finest clothes, Nina Chatu climbed on a platform, gave a speech, then threw himself into the flames. (Antiques of the Orient)

1. Augustus Earle (1793–1838), an American-born travel artist who visited Malacca in 1828, captured its humidity and languor in this pastoral scene. Water-colour, 19.7 × 34.0 cm. (Rex Nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia)



2. Malay coastal ship, hand-coloured lithograph from Admiral Pâris, *Native Boats of Asia and the Pacific*, 1841. Seaworthy and capable of carrying large cargoes, they were no threat because the guns they carried, probably Portuguese in origin, were 'red with rust and in poor condition'. (Antiques of the Orient)

3. Cheng Hoon Teng Temple, 'Green Clouds Temple', the religious centre for most of Malacca's ethnic Chinese, was built and decorated by Chinese craftsmen. (Radin Mohd. Noh)



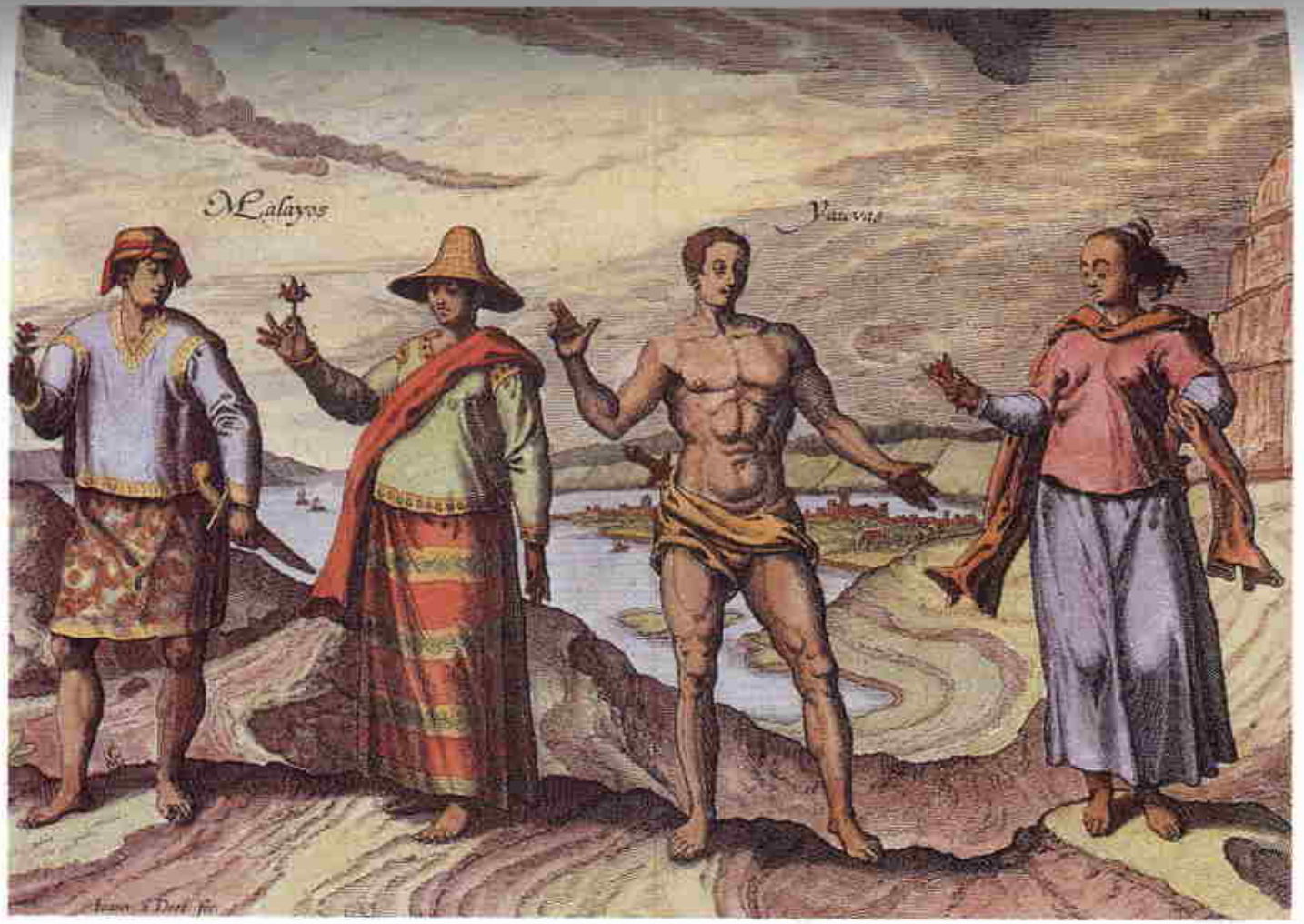
4. 'Interior of a Pagoda in the Chinese Quarter at Malacca', hand-coloured lithograph, from Comte Edmond Bigot de la Touanne, *Album Pittoresque de la Frégate La Thétis et de la Corvette L'Espérance*, Paris, 1828. This temple, near Bukit China, is dedicated to Admiral Cheng Ho. (Antiques of the Orient)

5. In this late nineteenth-century portrait of Mrs Tan Beng Wan, she wears a Malay-style batik *baju*, pinned with three *kerosang*, over a sarong, and velvet *kasut blidong* on her feet. Although she was a Singapore Nonya, Malacca was her ancestral home. (National Museum, Singapore)

6. Tun Tan Cheng Lock, 1953. (Courtesy of Mrs Alice Scott-Ross)

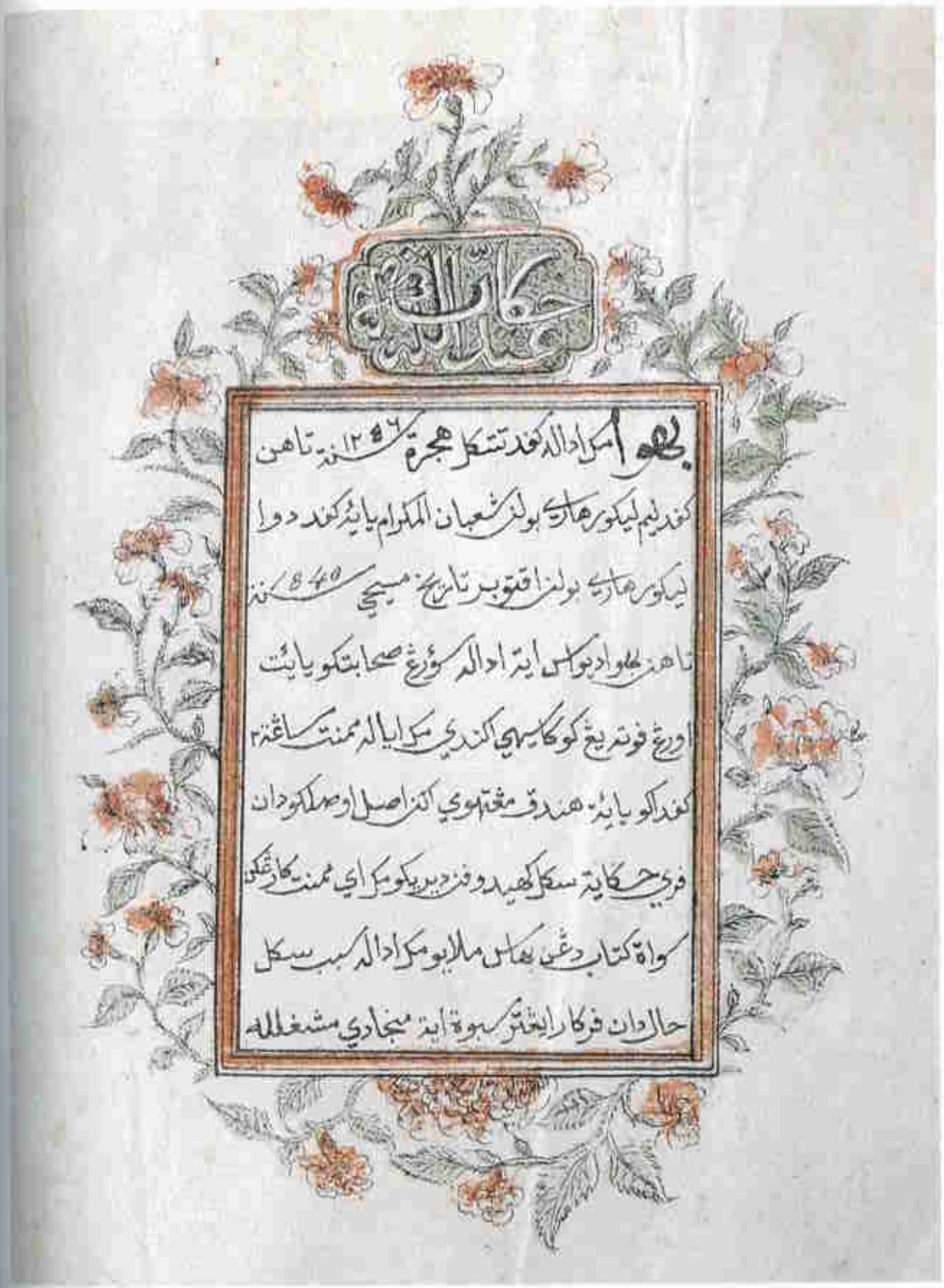
7. Malacca at the time of the Achehnese siege, 1629, showing the wooden palisade surrounding the whole town, from Antonio Bocarro, *Livro das Plantas de Tôdas As Fortalezas, Cidades, e Povoaçoes do Estado da India Oriental*. (Sloane ms. 197, ff. 381–2, British Library, London)

8. St Francis Xavier in an early seventeenth-century panel, 61.0 × 48.7 cm. (Kobe City Museum, Japan)



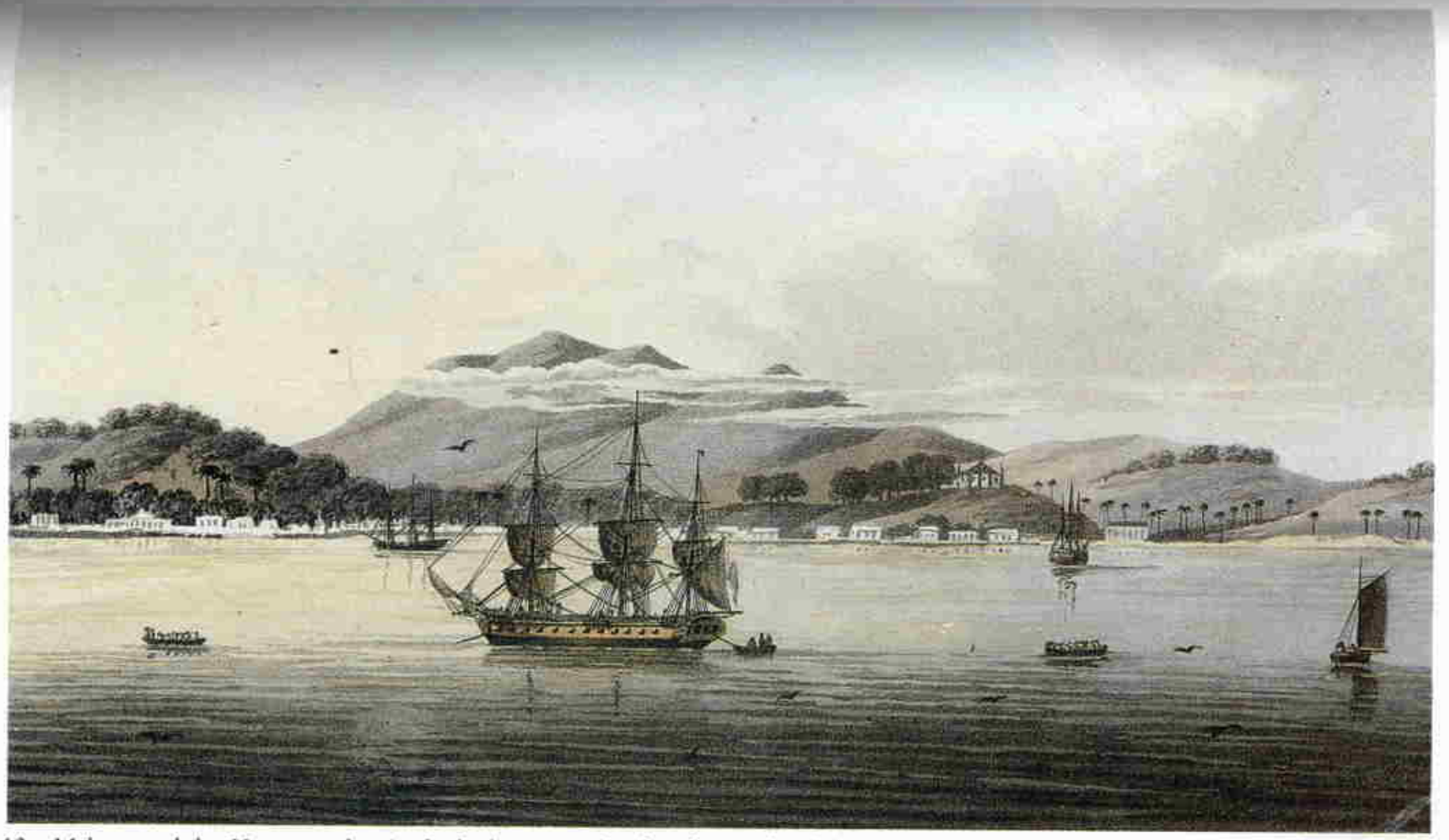
9. The Malays and the Javanese, hand-coloured copper engraving from Jan van Linschoten, *Itinerario*, 1596. The legend reads 'Inhabitants of Malacca, the best speakers, the most polite and the most amorous of the East Indians. Inhabitants of Java, who are hard-headed and obstinate.' (Antiques of the Orient)

10. Jan van Riebeeck founded the Dutch settlement at the Cape of Good Hope before he became commander at Malacca. A copy of this portrait hangs in the Stadthuys Museum, Melaka, while the original hangs in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. (Westfries Museum, Hoorn, The Netherlands)



11. Title-page from the *Hikayat Abdullah* by Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, Mission Press, Singapore, 1849. (National Library, Singapore)

12. Malacca in 1807, hand-coloured engraving from a drawing by E. H. Locker showing a Dutch-style drawbridge, riverside houses supported on piers, and a cannon on the grass in the foreground. (*Antiques of the Orient*)

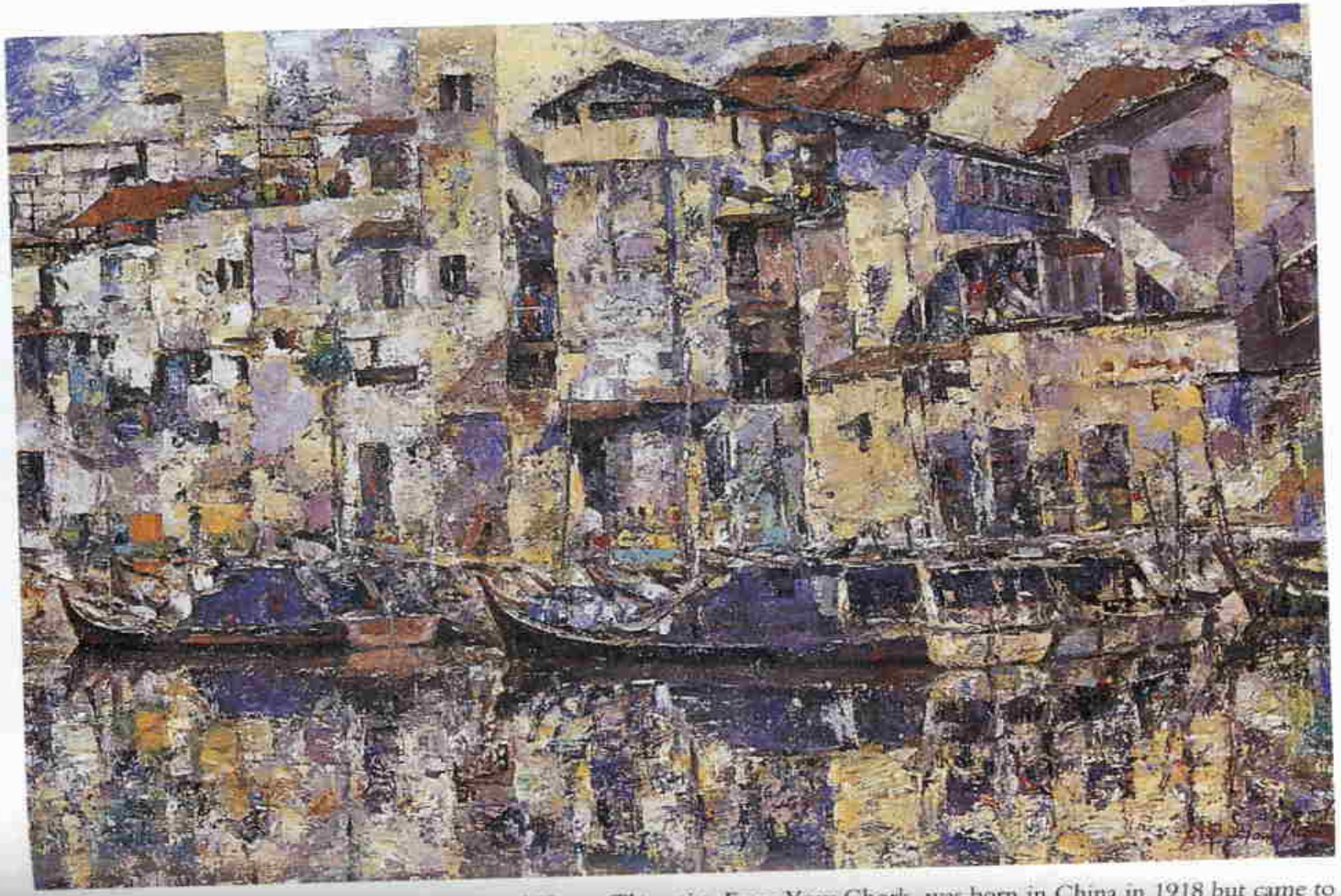


13. Malacca and the *Hope* at anchor in the harbour, aquatint based on a sketch by James Wathen from his *Journal of a Voyage in 1811 and 1812 to Madras and China*, London, J. Nichols & Son, 1814. (Antiques of the Orient)

Portuguese crown, the Dutch United East Indies Com-
st India Company are symbols of Malacca's four centuries
s of the Orient and Victoria & Albert Museum)

15. Tiles decorate the steps of the local headman's house in Merlimau, south-east of Melaka. (Radin Mohd. Noh)

51



16. Malacca River, 1986, oil on canvas, 70 × 100 cm. The artist, Fung Yow Chork, was born in China in 1918 but came to Malacca in his youth and grew to love the river. (Bank Negara Malaysia)

during a siege. From a distance its most prominent feature was the keep tower, about 36 metres high (Plate 13).

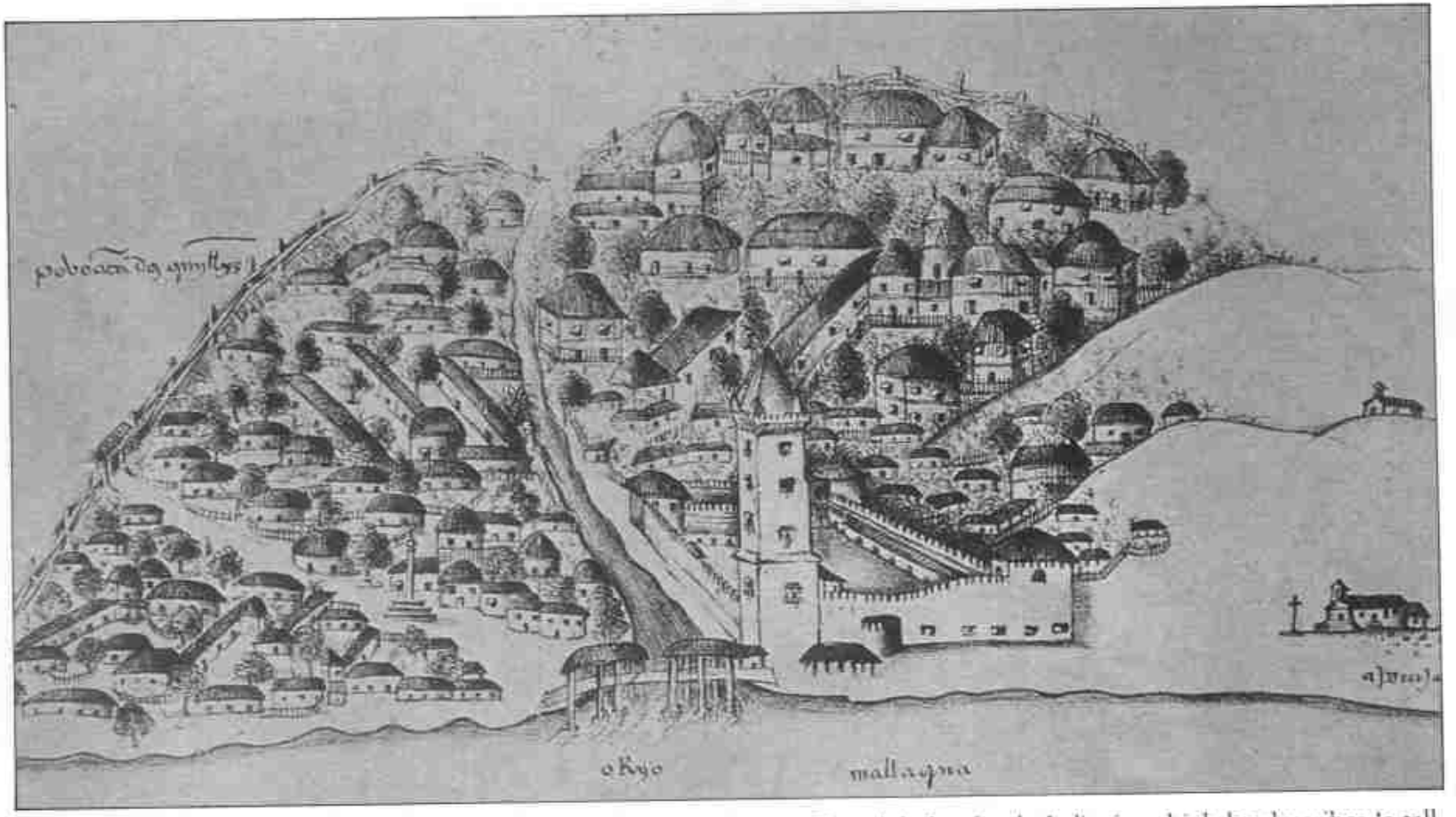
By 1583 Malacca had become a walled city protected by a battery of seventy cannons and fifty smaller guns. Within this seaside fortress stood a governor's palace, a bishop's palace, five churches including a cathedral, administration buildings, a prison, two wells, two hospitals, a school, and convents of religious orders. Of this vast architectural complex only the Porta de Santiago, on Jalan Kota (Fort Road), survives (Plate 14). At the top of the arch is a Dutch coat of arms, added in 1669 after the Dutch conquest.

The fort's location on the narrow Straits provided the Portuguese with both defensive and offensive postures. Under its guns fleets could assemble and lie safely at anchor. Portuguese ships could also attack rival ships passing through the Straits. Although Malacca was besieged twenty-four times in 130 years of Portuguese rule, its fortifications were breached only once, when Malacca fell to the Dutch (Colour Plate 7).

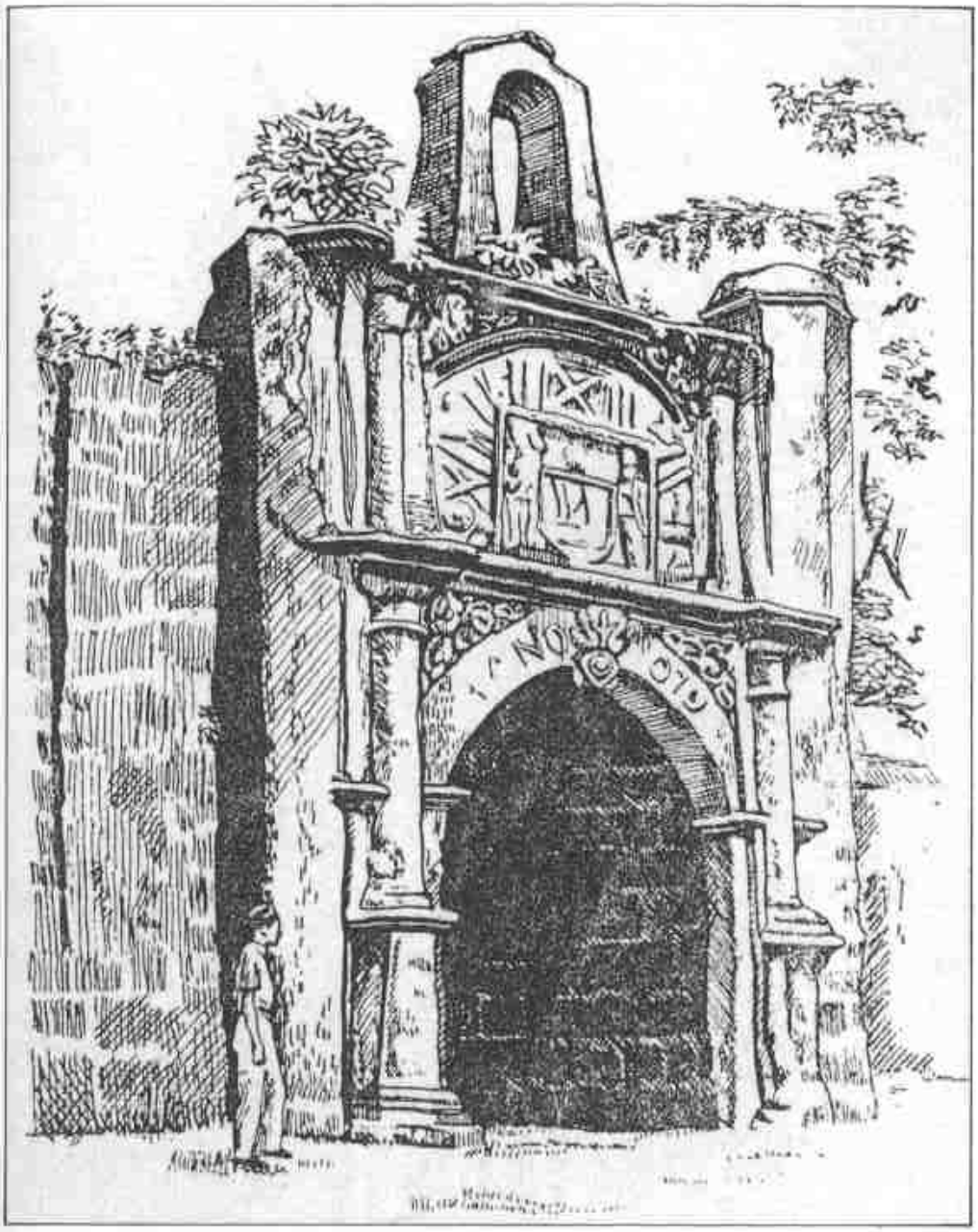
Under the Portuguese, Malacca took on a medieval Catholic as well as military character. It became a stopover for thousands of missionary priests travelling from India to Siam, China, Japan, and what is now Indo-China and Indonesia.

The greatest of these priests was St Francis Xavier (1506–52) (Colour Plate 8), a Basque-born Jesuit whose statue stands today near the ruins of St Paul's Church. As a frequent visitor to Malacca on his way to and from China and Japan, he criticized the materialism of the Portuguese traders in Malacca and elsewhere. He said (as quoted in Woodcock): 'There is a very rich merchandise which the traders regard of little account. It is called a man's conscience, and so little esteemed is it in these parts, that all the merchants believe they would go bankrupt if they invest in it.'

While the Jesuits and others were establishing a reputation for discipline and high standards, the tyrannical exactions of customs officials and other Portuguese administrators drove traders away from Malacca to other emporia. A feudal bureaucracy 5,000 miles from Lisbon allocated its limited resources inefficiently and unfairly so that a few officials profited enormously and corruption flourished. At the same time, the cost of maintaining ships and



13. This 1540s sketch of Portuguese Malacca is taken from Gaspar Correia's *Lendas da India*, in which he describes 'a tall donjon overlooking the hill that is fortified with many pieces of artillery aimed in all directions'. (Instituto Cultural de Macau)



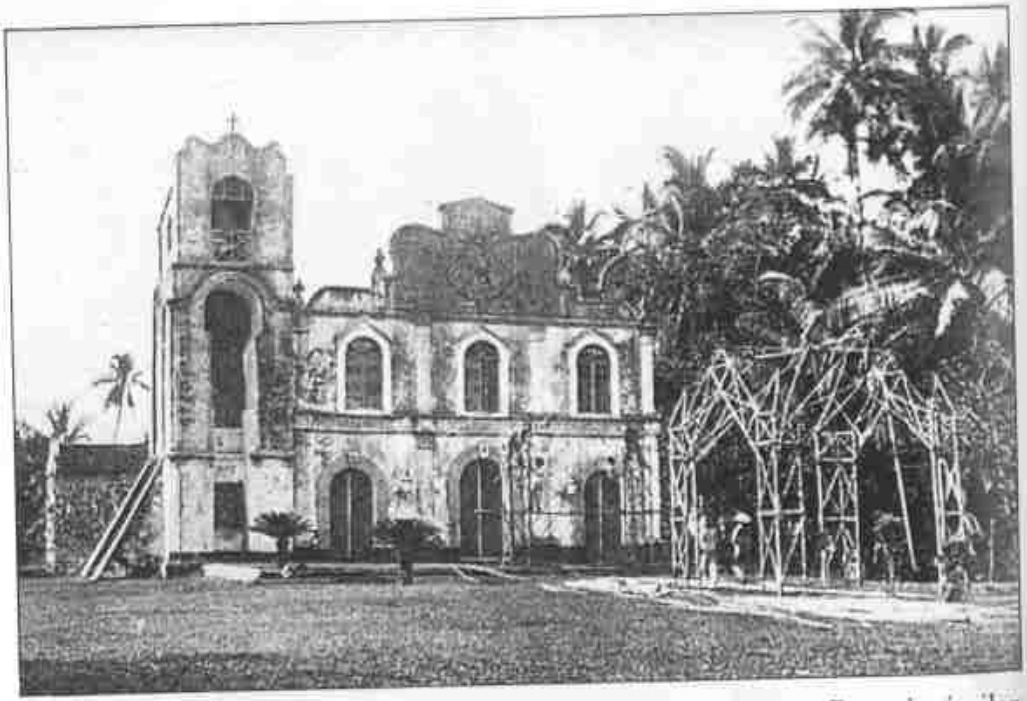
14. The Porta de Santiago is all that remains of the Portuguese fortress, built in 1512 and modified later by the Dutch. (Longman Malaysia)

patrolling such a large expanse of ocean, the growing manpower shortage, and the inadequate protection received by Portuguese colonies after Portugal's union with Spain (1580) all contributed to the gradual weakening of Portugal's position in the East.

Despite this, Portuguese influence in Malacca has endured for more than 350 years. A 900-member Eurasian community centred today at Malacca's Portuguese Settlement speaks a creole form of Portuguese. Although they enjoy certain economic privileges granted to Malays, they still identify themselves proudly as *gente Kristang*, or Christian people.

They worship at Catholic churches such as St Peter's (Plate 15), built in 1710, or St Francis Xavier's. They send their children to Catholic schools such as the Convent of the Sacred Heart or the Convent of Holy Infant Jesus. In June the annual celebration of the Feast of San Pedro, patron of fishermen, takes place. This is an all-night fiesta of songs, dances, games, and typically ethnic foods.

The linguistic exchange between Portuguese and Malay provides an interesting example of the cross-cultural influences at work. Many Portuguese words, such as *nanas* (pineapple), *bendera* (flag), and *gereja* (church), have entered the Malay language. Similarly, creole Portuguese, or Cristao, has been modified by the Malay language.



15. The eclectic architecture of St Peter's Church in Bunga Raya is similar to Portuguese architecture at Goa. (Major David Ng)

16. This 1595 portrait of Jan van Linschoten shows him wearing wedding garments in the year of his marriage. (Kobe City Museum, Japan)

Beyond these tangible reminders of the Portuguese in language, religious practices, and syncretic customs of the Eurasian community, the Portuguese presence in the region had another important effect. By opening up South-East Asia to Western influence and involvement, the Portuguese introduced Europeans to new flora and fauna in the tropics. It made them aware of other

peoples and cultures, stimulating their curiosity and imagination about life in the region.

One source of information was Emanuel Godinho de Eredia (see Plate 4), who was born at Malacca in 1563, the son of a Portuguese *fidalgo* (nobleman) and a Bugis princess. Although Eredia trained for the priesthood at Goa, his real interests lay in geography and exploration. His *Malaca, Meridional India, and Cathay*, published in 1613, included a description of Malacca and several maps of the Malay peninsula.

Another source was Jan van Linschoten (1563–1611), a Dutchman who left Holland in 1576 in search of adventure (Plate 16). His reports on Portuguese Asia, published in several languages in the last decade of the sixteenth century, told Europeans that Malacca might be successfully attacked.

5
Dutch Outpost

As secretary to the Portuguese archbishop at Goa, the Dutchman Linschoten found himself in a good position to study Portuguese Asia. His *Itinerario* (1596) consists of maps, drawings, navigation instructions, geographical information, and trade routes—all unknown in Europe before this time. In addition to his comments on Malacca, it provides a description of the 'dress, customs, temples, idols, houses, trees, fruits, spices, herbs and such as well for their manner of Idolatrous religion and worshipping of images ...' in the East (Colour Plate 9). To a wide European audience it revealed valuable information about the religious conflicts, restrictive trading practices, and the corruption of the Portuguese administration.

Despite their assimilation into Eastern cultures through intermarriage, the Portuguese had become unpopular for their greed and cruelty, and by the 1590s, after the 1580 union with Spain, their power to control an empire had weakened. From this time on, Portugual improved Malacca's defences to thwart Dutch attacks because Holland was Spain's mortal enemy. That Portugal remained in control of Malacca until 1641 is the result of continuing rivalries among Malay states and the formidable reputation of the fortress at Malacca.

As the power of European monarchies consolidated during the seventeenth century, they sought to secure their nations' economic position. They wanted a favourable balance of trade—exports exceeding imports—in order to increase national wealth. Real wealth, according to this mercantilist view, also consisted of bullion (gold or silver) and economic self-sufficiency. Independence could be achieved, the theory went, if government restricted imports through tariffs, stimulated manufacturing, protected merchants, and controlled sources of raw materials in overseas

colonies. If a nation could use its own ships to transport goods, the value of its exports increased.

Holland, like Portugal, had turned to the sea for survival. Aided by skilled sailors and cartographers, the Dutch had developed a cargo ship that could carry more goods at lower cost than other nations. When the Dutch were denied entry into Portuguese and Spanish ports after 1580, and were thus excluded from the lucrative distribution of spices in northern Europe, they decided to break the Portuguese monopoly.

Dutch traders had been active in South-East Asia since 1590, expanding from the Mediterranean and the South Atlantic. Throughout the early years of the seventeenth century Dutch ships attacked Portuguese shipping between the Persian Gulf and Japan (Plate 17). Having conquered a few Portuguese settlements in coastal Ceylon by the 1630s, the Dutch were able to enforce a blockade of the Straits. Finally, with Linschoten's information and secret documents seized from a Portuguese ship, the Dutch formed the United East Indies Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or VOC) in 1602, with headquarters at Batavia, now called Jakarta. Its charter gave it a monopoly over Dutch trade in Malay waters.

Some historians see the end of Portuguese power in the East in the formation of the VOC. Others cite the Dutch Admiral Cornelis Matelieff's victory (1606) over the Portuguese fleet in the Straits (Plate 18). For although a powerful armada arrived from Goa to foil the first Dutch attempt to seize Malacca, Matelieff and the Dutch won the admiration of the Malay rulers, especially the Sultan of Johore.

Benefiting from the hatred of the Portuguese in the East, the Dutch were received at first with enthusiasm. The Sultan of Johore expected the Dutch to deliver the Malays from Portuguese rule; the powerful regional kingdoms at Johore and Acheh (in Sumatra) entered into alliances and trading agreements with the future conquerors—agreements that would later be difficult for the Dutch to enforce. Matelieff signed an agreement with Johore committing the VOC to take Malacca, with the Sultan's help.

Even before the Dutch had acquired Malacca, however, there

17. Dutch ships attack a Portuguese carrack. Portuguese ships loaded with goods from China were easy prey to the Dutch in South-East Asian waters. Engraving from Spilbergen's *Historiael Journael*. (Library of Congress)

18. Admiral Cornelis Matelieff's 1606 siege of Malacca, shown in an illustration on the title-page of a book published in Rotterdam, 1608. (Westfries Museum, Hoorn, The Netherlands)

were signs of trouble. In a letter to his superiors Matelieff complained that it was difficult to trade and make war at the same time. The trade-strangling Dutch monopolies would eventually cause the same opposition in the East that the Portuguese had encountered.

The five-month Dutch siege of Malacca (1640–1) inflicted tremendous damage not only to the walls and bastions of the fortress but also to the suburbs. Most Portuguese architecture was destroyed. Finally, on 14 January 1641, the Dutch stormed the fort through Santo Domingo gate, and when it was over, more than 7,000 people had died from famine, disease, or gunfire.

After the Portuguese surrender a special Dutch commissioner,

Justus Schouten, arrived from Batavia to survey the damage. He found churches and monasteries irreparably damaged, orchards and rice-fields laid bare. He recommended that Nossa Senhora da Annunciada, on top of the hill, be repaired, reconsecrated as a Dutch Reformed Church, and renamed St Paul's.

In the aftermath of the siege, Malacca lost much Portuguese wealth. Its richest citizens, best slaves, young people, and cash left on a ship bound for Portuguese Ceylon. A wealthy Portuguese lady tossed her jewellery into a deep well.

It was not just wealth that had drained away as the Dutch took over. The population of Malacca after the Portuguese surrender was 2,150, down from about 20,000. The departure of many Indian Hindus partly accounts for this decline; having collaborated with the Portuguese since the time of Nina Chatu, and competed against the VOC, they were not trusted by the Dutch. Many resettled in Acheh or in Kedah. Gradually, though, the local populations returned to their kampongs after the fighting, so that by 1678, when Governor Balthasar Bort produced his report on Malacca, there were about 5,000 people living there. Toward the end of Dutch tenure this figure had climbed to 14,000 composed of Malays, Chinese, Indians, Chettys, Javanese, Arabs, Eurasians, and several hundred Dutch officials, soldiers, and civilians.

Schouten sounded optimistic about Malacca's future. Its conquest, he wrote in 1641 (as quoted in Hoffman), had laid 'the second foundation for the domination of the south'. The term 'Netherlands India' was used in official VOC correspondence between Malacca and Batavia, but Malacca under the Dutch was never a royal apanage as it was under the Portuguese. It was owned, rather, by a national trading company, part of a vast commercial network, and its administrators were not the direct servants of the crown, but the mediators of VOC policies formulated in Amsterdam, where numbers and balance sheets mattered.

Schouten wanted Malacca to have conscientious government officials, sober citizens, and flourishing orchards and rice-fields. Officials, he said, should bathe twice a day, refrain from excessive drinking, and avoid the sun and local women. But given the small numbers of European women, the last stricture proved difficult to

observe. In practice many VOC officials married Portuguese-Eurasians, described by visitors as 'sweet young ladies'. Despite strong Calvinist traditions in Holland, the Catholic faith of these women was no bar to marriage with a Dutchman; most Dutch officials and soldiers had a Portuguese mistress, servant, or wife.

Nevertheless, the religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in Europe followed the Dutch to South-East Asia. In 1666 Governor Bort, a zealous church man, ordered Portuguese Catholics to give up their faith, but they refused. A Jesuit traveller, Father Premare (quoted in Lockman), writes that 'the publick Exercise of all Religions is allowed here, except that of the Roman Catholicks, who are forced to fly into the deepest Solitudes to perform their Devotions'.

Eventually, in 1702, religious freedom was proclaimed and Malacca became a more tolerant place than it had been under the Portuguese. St Peter's Church, the first permanent Roman Catholic church established after the Dutch conquest, was built in 1710. More than a century later, a French priest, Father Farvé, had St Francis Xavier's Church built on the site of an old Portuguese church.

During the early years of the VOC administration, Malacca extended north-west to the Linggi River and to the Kesang River on the south-east, with a coastline of about 64 kilometres. Inland it was supposed to reach the foothills of the peninsular highlands, about 40 kilometres away, but the Dutch never controlled more than about 14 kilometres of the coastline and up to 10 kilometres of the interior. On the land side Malacca was surrounded by flat marshy ground and impenetrable jungle inhabited by wild animals and poisonous snakes (Plate 19). By the mid-eighteenth century only three roads had been built between the coastal villages and inland estates.

According to Father Premare, who had approached Malacca by sea, the many coconut palm trees along the shoreline hid the city. 'The Citadel', he wrote, 'appears black. Several Centinels (white Men) stand on the Ramparts; and within is an Eminence and the Ruins of a Steeple.' Contrasting Malacca to Acheh, he wrote that

19. People sought refuge from wild animals in the forest by hanging sleeping hammocks high in palm trees (detail from Plate 5). (Antiques of the Orient)

'a greater concourse of Strangers is seen in Malacca, a more considerable Trade is carried on there, and 'tis visited by a much greater Number of Europeans'.

Life for senior Dutch officials in Malacca was pleasant. Although they had town houses, they preferred their country houses surrounded by orchards and coconut palms. They worked 7 hours a day, and according to the *shahbandar* van Papendrecht (1780–6) his most arduous task was to receive money and sign his name. He wrote (as quoted in Andaya and Andaya), 'I live in the finest house

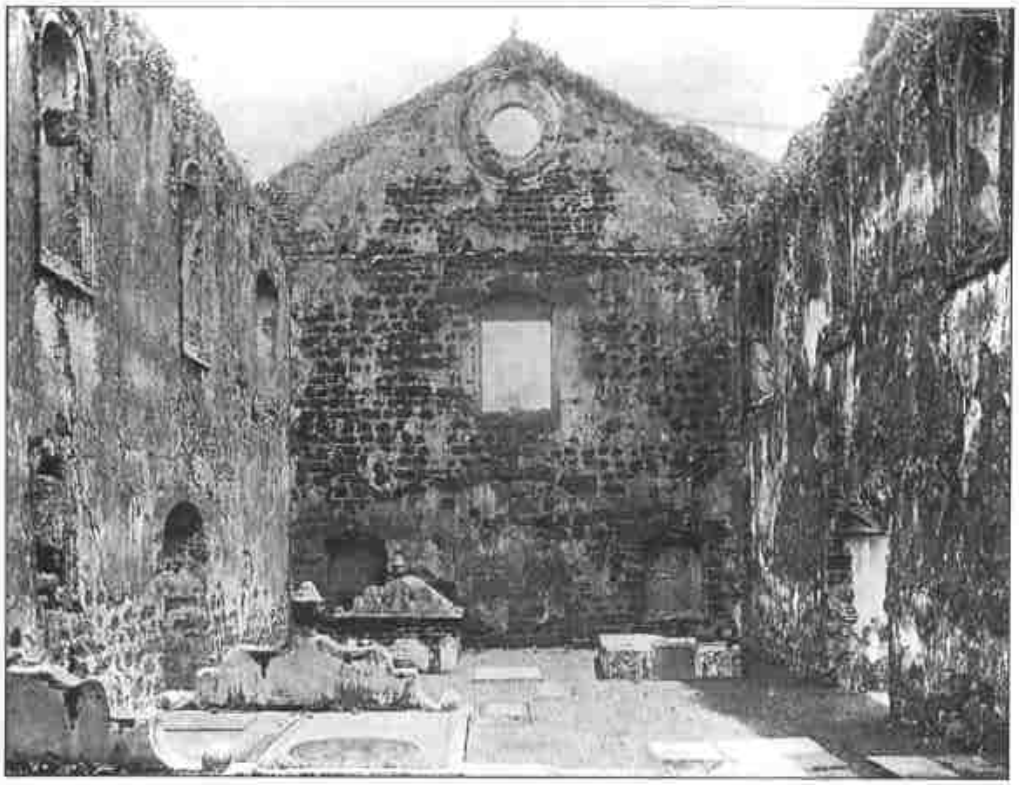
of the town, which is also the best and most modernly furnished; I have a nice country-place which I occupy when shipping is slack; I further have a splendid property ... on which four villages are situated.... I cannot tell you the exact number of my slaves, but it is over sixty.'

Lower-ranking employees of the VOC, however, found Malacca a hardship post, for unlike their superiors they could not trade privately. Pay was low, promotions to remote trading posts in Perak or Siak offered little incentive for advancement, debts mounted up, and many suffered low morale. Some inevitably found distractions in arrack and Chinese gambling houses.

Malacca residents faced many problems during this period, although van Papendrecht and other Dutch *shahbandar*—harbour-masters who collected duties and received gifts and bribes from traders—were insulated from most of them. Contemporary sources mention how much food other than fish and fruit had to be imported from Java and Kedah, while storms, shipwrecks, or pirates caused shortages in basic supplies. Attempts to develop agriculture were mostly unsuccessful because of an unworkable land tenure policy. Few people were willing to work outside the town's protective walls because of the danger of attacks not only from wild animals but also from the Minangkabau people from Sumatra who had settled north of Malacca.

Gravestones on St Paul's Hill, in Christ Church, or the fort cemetery suggest that tropical diseases like malaria claimed many lives during this period (Plate 20). Inside the ruins of St Paul's Church is the gravestone of Johanna du Moulin, the wife of Governor Balthasar Bort, who died in 1676 just before her twenty-third birthday. Compared to Batavia, however, Malacca was a relatively healthy place because it got fresh water from a closely guarded well at Bukit China.

Although he never went to Malacca, François Valentijn (1666–1727) became the best known writer of his time about the Dutch East Indies. He first came to South-East Asia in 1684 as a young minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, but he is remembered for his monumental work, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien* (*Old and New East Indies*), first published in 1726 in Amsterdam, in



20. Interior of St Paul's Church, photograph by G. R. Lambert, *c.*1890. Today, the Dutch gravestones are placed upright against the walls of the church. (Antiques of the Orient)

which he provided information about Malacca's past and present from other travellers, VOC documents, and friends.

Encouraged by the VOC, Valentijn learned the Malay language that is spoken throughout the South-East Asian archipelago and translated the Bible into Low Malay. He wrote (as quoted in Hervey) that Malay is spoken nowhere so correctly and so purely as in Malacca, and that 'if you don't understand this language you are considered a very badly educated man in the East'.

During his nineteen years in the Indies, Valentijn learned to appreciate the Malay people and their culture. They are, he says, 'the most cunning, the most ingenious and the politest people of the whole East'. Compared to others, he says, their skin is paler, they are neater in their manner of living, and so charming 'that no other people can be compared to them'. The men are witty, unreliable, and have a lively nature, while the women are 'of a more

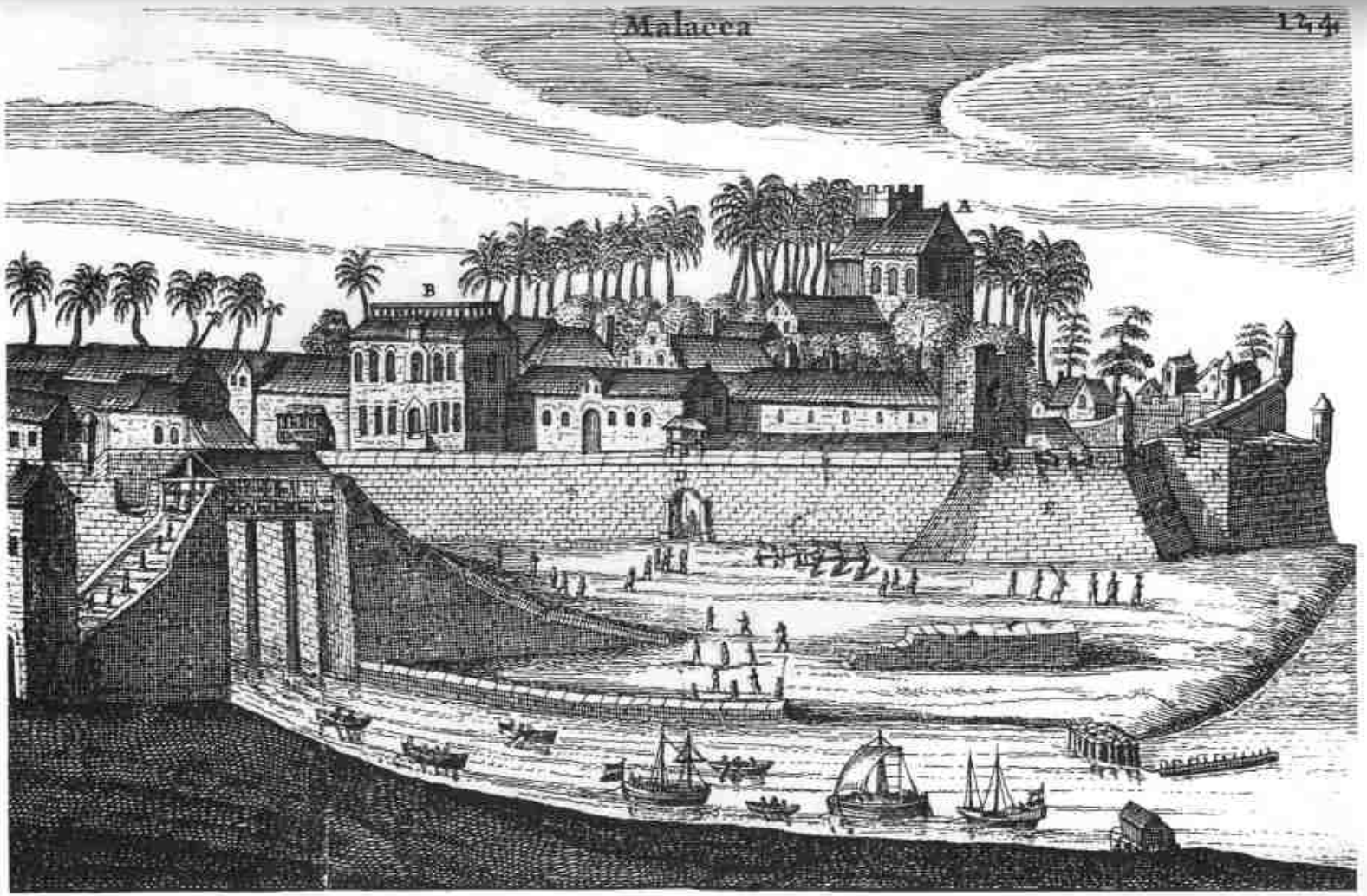
exalted mind than other women of India' and excel 'in loveliness and wit far above others'.

Despite his talents and initiatives, Valentijn suffered shabby treatment from his VOC employers. They promoted a Bible translation that rivalled his, assigned him to remote areas with primitive living conditions which he loathed, and postponed the repatriation he had requested. The VOC also harassed and persecuted him for his complaints about the Dutch administration in Amboina (Moluccas).

The VOC was run by a Governor-General, assisted by a Council of India, in Holland, which gave orders to Batavia. To other nations, however, the VOC appeared, in the words of Sir William Temple (quoted in Hoffman), 'like a sovereign state, making War and Peace with their greatest Kings'. Sir William, an English diplomat who served as ambassador to The Hague, was also impressed by the Dutch ability to bring to sea forty or fifty men of war and 30,000 men on land.

In Asia, however, the VOC's acquisition of Malacca was a failure. For one thing, Malacca was unprofitable; for another, it could not dominate the Straits commercially or militarily. Some circumstances behind this failure, of course, were beyond the VOC's control. Acheh, which had inherited Malacca's role as leader of the Malay Muslim world, had become a formidable trading rival. The Ming rebellion disrupted the China trade, so that there were fewer ships trading in the Straits. Indian traders took their vast business network elsewhere; tin, for example, could be found in Perak and Kedah as well as in Malacca. Besides these shifts in trading patterns, the VOC found the Malacca garrison expensive to repair, staff, and maintain since at least 400 men were needed to do the job (Plate 21).

The policies of the VOC, however, were self-defeating. The low prices the Dutch offered for tin and spices prompted the Malay princes to take advantage of opportunities to sell to higher bidders. The Dutch aim of neutrality in order to pursue commercial goals was an alien concept in the Malay world, where one is either a friend or an enemy. Despite Dutch–Malay alliances, and trade agreements usually made under duress, the Dutch would not



21. A view of Malacca, 1679, which appeared in *Borts Voyage*. The legend shows (a) St Paul's Church, (b) governor's house, (c) Misericordia bastion, (d) city gate, (e) Middelburgh vantage point, (f) Frederick Hendrick bastion. (Universiteitsbibliotheek, Amsterdam)

use their superior naval power to help their local allies, which the Malays found hard to understand.

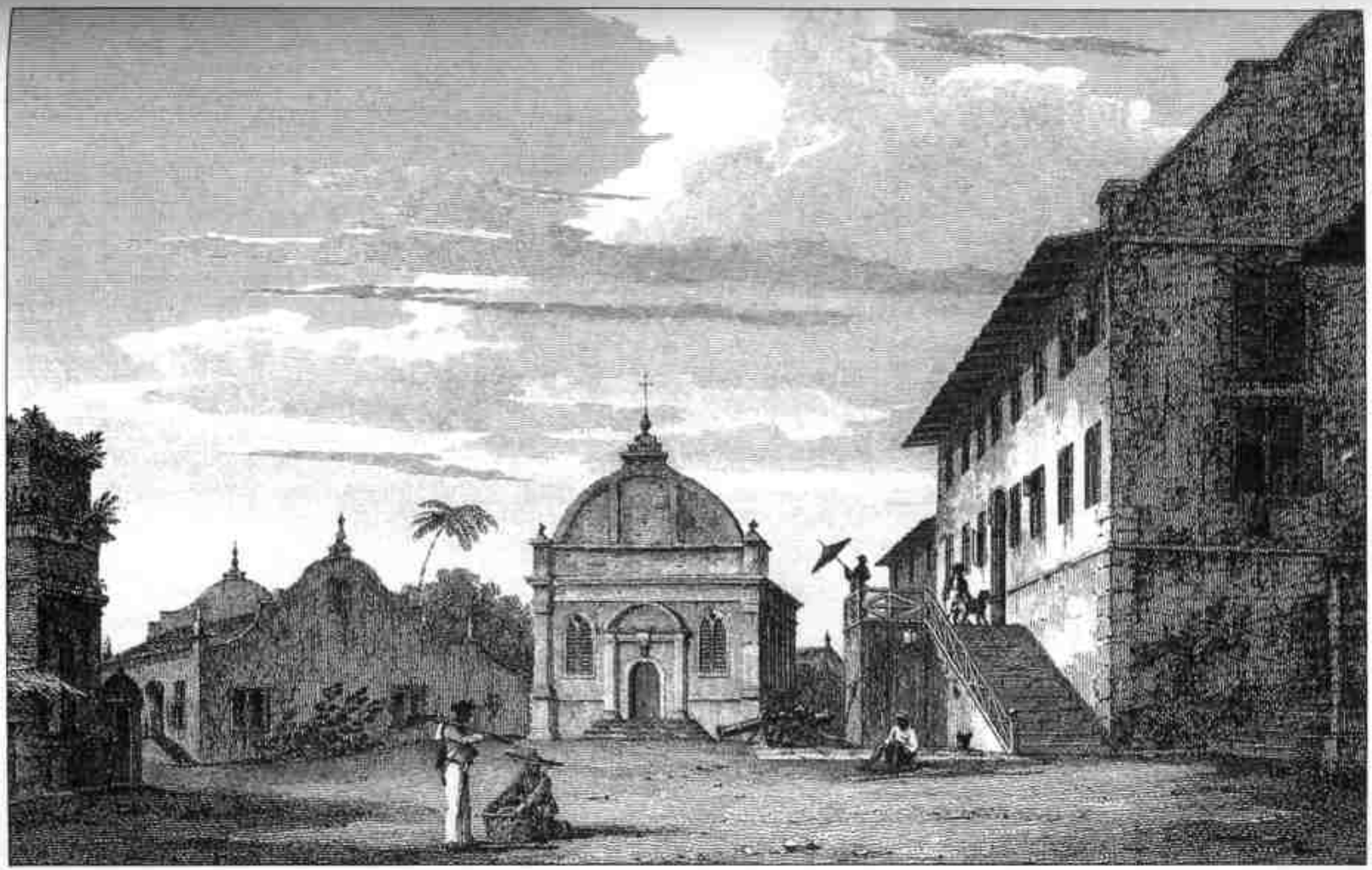
Dutch administration in the East was complicated, too, by long lines of communication and internal politics. Amsterdam did not understand the local situation in Batavia and Malacca. Even decisions made at Batavia were not always in Malacca's best interest, for Malacca governors complained that Batavia favoured Johore at Malacca's expense. When Jan van Riebeeck, Malacca's commander (1662–5), proposed improvements to the fortress that would have reduced the number of soldiers required to man it, his predecessor at Malacca, now promoted to Batavia, vetoed the idea (Colour Plate 10).

Eventually the difficulties of carrying on trade and war at the same time began to tell. Competition from the British 'country traders' like Francis Light, founder of the British East India Company's settlement at Penang, and the Buginese sieges of Malacca in 1756–7 and 1784 revealed Holland's vulnerability in the Straits. The decline of the Dutch position became a *fait accompli* when the British, as a consequence of events in Europe, took over Malacca in 1795 without firing a shot.

Nevertheless, the Dutch imprint on the town is still visible, especially in the Stadthuys (Town Hall) architectural complex, the modern focal point of historic Malacca (Cover Plate and Plate 22). Built between 1660 and 1700, it was once inside the fortress walls. Entering at the Great Gate along the river, the Stadthuys, directly opposite, housed the VOC's offices. It has a simple, robust design, with high windows and wide staircases reminiscent of municipal buildings in Holland.

The original buildings were probably faced with brick; brickworks, like roof and floor tiles, became a Dutch monopoly in Malacca after 1677. When the brick façades were found to leak in tropical rains, they were probably sealed in a plaster and whitewashed. Later, possibly in the 1920s, the British painted the buildings a salmon red. In recent years Malaccan authorities have darkened the colour of Dutch Square.

Another Dutch legacy is Christ Church, the oldest Protestant church in Malaysia. It was built in 1753, with its porch and vestry



22. Government House at Malacca, 1807, engraving based on a drawing by Edward H. Locker, from Pinkerton's *General Collection of Voyages*, 1811. Part of the fortress walls, overgrown with weeds, is visible on the left. (Antiques of the Orient)

added in the mid-nineteenth century. Besides the church, many houses—the ones set back further from the street—on Jonker and Heeren Streets were built during the Dutch colonial period.

Tracing their ancestry through diaries and the family Bible, a few Dutch-Eurasians, with names like Westerhout and de Vries, still live in Malacca. They have lost their community identity, however, and consider themselves Malaysians.

6
British Colony

THE Dutch had won Malacca from the Portuguese after a costly 5-month siege, but when the British took it over from the Dutch in August 1795, the ceremonial transfer appeared amicable despite three days of tense negotiations. Just a few months later, English officials dined with the Dutch governor Abraham Couperus, whose Malacca-born wife played the harp after dinner and chewed betel.

There were reasons for the Dutch surrender without any bloodshed that had as much to do with events in Europe as with the growth of British power and influence in the region. Eager to participate in the competition for trade and markets, Britain had founded the East India Company in 1600. Like the Dutch VOC, its charter gave it a monopoly of all British trade in the Indies, but for a long time the Dutch had almost a stranglehold on this trade, excluding the British. A balance of power prevailed, with the British in India while the Dutch controlled the East Indies.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, the British were beginning a new commercial drive into South-East Asia. They had learned about the region through English 'country traders' who, operating independently of the East India Company, spoke Malay, cultivated the friendship of local rulers, and offered better prices for spices and tin than the Dutch. Unlike the VOC, the British East India Company also sold weapons, gunpowder, and opium. To the Malays, the British were a new power whose friendship seemed desirable.

The British needed a protected harbour in South-East Asia and the East India Company found one at Penang. They wanted a naval station to service the East Indiamen ships in the China opium and tea trade, but they also needed a base to help defend its navy against new French attacks on shipping in the Bay of Bengal.

Indeed, after the founding of Penang in 1786, events in Europe—the French Revolution followed by the rise of Napoleon—extended the old rivalry between Britain and France by bringing it to South-East Asia. The armies of revolutionary France overran Holland in 1795, and forced the Dutch Stadtholder Prince William of Orange to flee to London. From Kew Palace he called upon all commanders of overseas Dutch settlements to admit British troops to provide protection against the French until the end of hostilities.

The British did not want French troops and ships to use Dutch forts in the East Indies. In particular, they did not want the French to occupy Malacca, only 400 kilometres south-east of Penang. They saw that Malacca in the wrong hands could seriously damage British trade with China.

Although the British expected to occupy Malacca temporarily, their arrival was an important turning-point in Malayan history. Malacca introduced Britain to the complex relations among the Malay states and the administration of a multiracial society. By the end of the nineteenth century, the British would be involved as a colonial power throughout the peninsula to protect tin mining and other interests.

In an even broader context, the British occupation of Malacca led directly to the founding of Singapore to compensate Britain for the return—short-lived, as it turned out—of Malacca to the Dutch at the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1818). It also led to the 1824 London agreement which, in redefining British and Dutch spheres of influence in South-East Asia, formed the basis for the emergence of three modern nations, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia.

On that morning of 15 August 1795, however, the British found Malacca a tranquil place. There were only 200 men defending the fort, many unfit for service. From the harbour the British commanders, Major Brown and Captain Newcome, and their force of 2,000 regular Indian and British troops could see that the town spread out on both sides of a narrow river spanned by a wooden bridge near its mouth. Waves lapped against the dark walls of the ancient fortress and its bastions on the right, a church crowned the

top of the hill, and on the left a row of tile-roofed houses hugged the shoreline.

At this time an estimated 20,000 people lived in Malacca. In the town there were Chinese merchants, contractors, shopkeepers, and craftsmen, among them the descendants of the earliest settlers who had been assimilated through marriage with local women. Other town residents included the Indian population—Gujaratis, Bengalis, Tamils, Malabaris—and Arabs, Armenians, Bugis, and Siamese. Eurasian Christians, both Portuguese and Dutch, also lived in town. Suburban areas—Bandar Hilir to the south-east along the coast, Bukit China and Bunga Raya inland, and Tranquerah along the north-west coast—were owned by Dutch officials, Dutch-Eurasians, Malays, some Chinese, and Arabs.

In this period of uncertainty in Malacca's history, the British inherited financial problems from the Dutch. Not knowing how long they would occupy the town, they could not make long-range plans. Above all, they had to economize, spending only what was necessary to defend Malacca, meet payrolls, and buy tin for export from local mines. Income was provided by revenue farms—the annual sale of monopolies to provide a basic service, such as slaughtering, or to deal in a commodity, like rice. The exclusive right to sell rice, for example, would be auctioned off to the highest bidder, usually a Chinese.

Besides these nagging economic problems, Malacca's entrepôt trade was shrinking under the pressure of competition from the open market at Penang. In the absence of Dutch patrols, the town was also vulnerable to attacks from the hinterland, and piracy in the Straits was increasing.

In 1803, as Britain was declaring war on Napoleon, William Farquhar was appointed governor of Malacca. He provided continuity to the British caretaker regime until he retired in 1818, the year Malacca reverted to the Dutch for another seven years. During his tenure, however, he had to stand by as the Company debated its future, watching Malacca sink further from neglect.

The governor of Penang proposed the destruction of the fortress as a way of reducing the garrison required to defend Malacca, but he wished to do even more than that. He wanted to erase Malacca

from the map—abandon the town and resettle the population, after minimal compensation, at Penang.

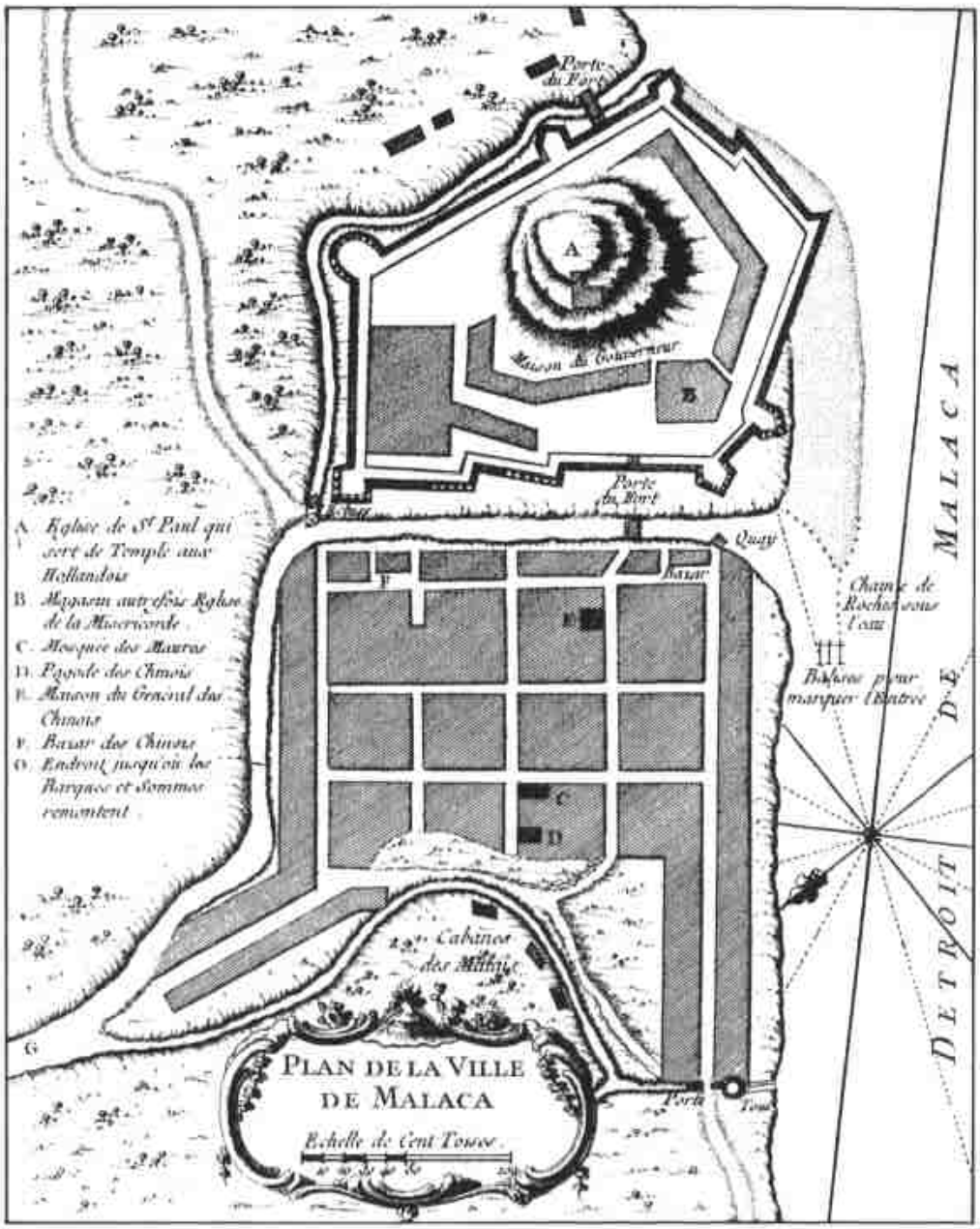
Fortunately, the higher authorities of the Company at Calcutta considered this question about Malacca's future too important to be decided without consultations in London. Meanwhile, work on the destruction of the fortress went ahead (Plate 23). Dutch renovations over the years had added a moat along the eastern and southern curtain walls, making an island out of the 300-year-old structure. Despite these repairs, it was in poor condition; one bastion was so badly cracked that it was unsafe to fire from it.

Writing the *Hikayat* as a man in his forties, the Malacca-born Malay writer Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir (1797–1854), also known as 'Munshi' (language teacher) Abdullah, looked back on the fortress of his boyhood (Colour Plate 11). It was, he said, 'the pride of Malacca', revered by the Malays. People thought it would never be demolished by the English, 'because it was so strong and because so many ghosts inhabited it'.

Governor Farquhar had ordered convict workers to dismantle it manually, with spades, pickaxes, and crowbars. The walls, however, were 4.5 metres thick and 18 metres high, and when this work proved too arduous, he decided to use explosives. He had boxes of gunpowder buried almost 2 metres deep on the sea side of the fortress. Then a gong sounded, warning people that at eight o'clock the following morning, no one should cross the river, and those people living in houses close by were told to move further away.

'The next morning,' Abdullah goes on, 'Mr Farquhar appeared on horseback holding a slow match in his hand. He sent men to clear out everyone on the Fort side, and they ran away in all directions. Then he touched off the fuse and at once spurred his horse away. After about ten minutes the gunpowder exploded with noise like thunder, and pieces of the Fort as large as elephants and even some as large as houses, were blown into the air and cascaded into the sea.'

Decades later, in 1852, the Portuguese traveller Carlos José Caldeira could write that at low tide he found pieces of the fort in the seaweed. 'This was an act of vandalism inappropriate for



23. Town plan of Malacca, 1764, copper-engraved map by N. Bellin. The moat built by the Dutch surrounds the fortress, making it an island. The legend reads (a) St Paul's Church, (b) munitions magazine, (c) mosque, (d) Chinese pagoda, (e) Kapitan China's house, (f) Chinese bazaar, and (g) Malacca River shallows. (Antiques of the Orient)

an illustrious nation,' he judged. Even the British Lord Minto, who led the 1811 Java expedition from Malacca, concurred (as quoted in Wurtzburg): 'A most useless piece of gratuitous mischief,' he wrote.

The demolition of the fort was well advanced late in 1807 when an ambitious civil servant in Penang came to Malacca for the first time on sick leave (Colour Plate 12). Thomas Stamford Raffles, a dark-haired, good-looking young man, had come East in 1805 at the age of twenty-four. Having been promoted to the post of government secretary at Penang in 1807, Raffles would have been close to the debate about Malacca's future. Six months later, when his health broke down again, he returned to Malacca and after this second visit Raffles wrote a report arguing persuasively in favour of keeping it.

Both Raffles and Farquhar understood that Malacca differed from Penang. Malacca's residents could trace their local roots back several centuries, while the settlement at Penang was, in Raffles' words (quoted in Harrison), 'still an island of transitory adventurers'. With considerable optimism Raffles wrote that despite past experience, Malacca could grow most of its own food, getting the balance of its rice needs from Java. It could produce chocolate, pepper, indigo, coffee, and cotton. Raffles pointed out further that possession of Malacca carries more prestige in the opinion of the natives than any new settlement. Besides this, he said, Britain was honour bound to protect the people attached to the soil. Anyone who knows the difficulty of clearing and settling a Malay land, he emphasized, knows the value of a cleared place in the tropics. Finally, with compelling simplicity, he asked, 'We have now the command; why give it up unless we are forced?'

Raffles' report challenging official Company policy was followed up by conversations with his superiors at Penang. As a result, the East India Company decided to keep Malacca, and Raffles, having now made a name for himself in the Company, was promoted to an important role in the British invasion of Java, another Dutch possession threatened by the French. For logistical reasons Malacca was chosen as the rendezvous for the 1811 Java expedition. British troops, under their commander Lord Minto,

lived and trained at Malacca for six months, stretching the 'much reduced' town to its limits.

Again, Abdullah, aged fourteen at the time, was a close observer of this excitement because Raffles had hired him as a copyist. He noticed that British officers wore different types of uniforms—tiger skins, trousers of animal skins, or tunics made of cloth striped like tiger skin. They also wore hats with cock feathers dyed pink and black. Such irregular clothing was matched at times by equally irregular behaviour; the troops, he said, were loud and aggressive, and when drunk they followed women around on the street, damaged gardens, and smashed house doors which people had shut in self-defence.

Just as Lord Minto's frigate approached Malacca, returning from the successful Java campaign, a British amateur artist, James Wathen, was busy making a pencil drawing of the town from his ship (Colour Plate 13). Later Wathen climbed St Paul's Hill where he admired the view over the town, the ships in the harbour, and 'numerous verdant isles'. This was, he said, 'one of the most interesting pictures of tropical scenery I had yet seen'.

While Malacca was still in British hands, the London Missionary Society acquired, in 1816, a sea front site outside the Tranquerah gate to establish the Anglo-Chinese College (see Plate 10). As conceived by its founder, Robert Morrison, the institution taught both English and Chinese culture and literature to students, and prepared missionaries for work in China. Several famous missionaries and educators, including William Milne, were associated with the Malacca college until 1842, the year Hong Kong's cession to Britain made it possible to move the college closer to China.

After Malacca reverted to the Dutch, between 1818 and 1825, Raffles (quoted in Harrison) founded Singapore to protect British commerce, for he believed it necessary to 'secure the free passage of the Straits of Malacca, the only channel left to us since the restitution of Java [and the Sunda Straits] and the other Dutch possessions'. Raffles recommended Governor Farquhar, now relieved of his duties at Malacca, to head the new settlement.

Farquhar's appointment and the founding of the new port of

Singapore drained off some of Malacca's entrepreneurial talent, for a number of Malaccan Chinese emigrated to Singapore to make their fortunes. They were attracted by good wages and higher prices in a freer market than Dutch Malacca. Baba Chinese, who had experience working with Europeans, could put their English skills to use there as compradors while maintaining their strong ties with Malacca.

Meanwhile, in London, Malacca's future was once again on the agenda for the directors of the East India Company. In the Treaty of London (1824) the Malay world was partitioned into Dutch and British spheres of influence: to the north was the British sphere, which included Singapore, Malacca, and Penang on the western edge of the Malay peninsula; to the south was the Dutch sphere, with Java and Sumatra. As a consequence of these arrangements, the British trading station at Bencoolen (Sumatra) became Dutch while Dutch Malacca went to the British.

When the British returned to Malacca in 1825 they came not as caretakers but as true colonial masters. Malacca, Penang, and Singapore were joined together in an awkward administrative and political unit called the Straits Settlements, with headquarters at Penang. The following year British law was introduced and Malacca became an official penal colony. Convicts, mostly Indians, provided cheap labour for public works projects.

The financial strains that Malacca had imposed on the Dutch continued in London. From 1826 until the beginning of the rubber boom early in the twentieth century, and especially after the East India Company lost its monopoly of the China trade (1833), Malacca was a problem for the British. References to what was once the great Malay emporium would now include terms like 'decay', 'decline', 'useless', and 'backwater', for although individual proprietors and tax collectors prospered, treasury revenues could not cover government expenses, and Malacca required financial help from both Singapore and Penang.

John Crawfurd, an army doctor and Malay linguist who headed an embassy to Siam in 1822, visited all three settlements and commented: 'The symptoms of decay are too striking to escape observation, and the traveller who has quitted either of these settlements

cannot fail to contrast their industry and activity with the lifeless dulness which reigns at Malacca.'

Two decades later, J. R. Logan, a lawyer and editor, wrote about Malacca: 'The most striking characteristic of the inhabitants is that they have apparently nothing to do. I really saw nobody at work all the time I was in Malacca, except Mr L. There were not many persons in the streets and those few were lounging about their own doors.'

Despite the lethargy of the place, the charms of Malacca's women usually elicited comment. Charles Coffin refers, in 1885, to their 'soft lustrous eyes, drooping lashes and countenances indicative of kind dispositions'. John Thomson even cautions bachelors not to stay long in Malacca 'if indisposed to marry'.

Most colonial administrators did not understand the differences between equatorial and temperate zone agriculture. At a time when Europeans tended to romanticize 'Nature', they puzzled over the fact that Malacca could grow only about two-thirds of its rice when vegetation in the heat and humidity appeared so vigorous; 'it reigns everywhere, even on rocks which ought to be sterile, and in the sands of the coast,' wrote Touanne in 1828. Europeans judged soil by its ability to grow single cereal crops, not by its lush orchards and gardens. Only a few observers, like Eredia and Carletti, seemed to appreciate the splendid tropical fruits of Malacca. Most did not realize that the tropical rain forest retains nutrients in the variety of plants and their decomposing leaf litter on the forest floor, not deep in the soil. Their frustrations were exacerbated by Malacca's declining revenues from the international maritime trade and the urgent need to generate revenue in other ways, and the hinterland always seemed the most promising alternative.

The Dutch had blamed Malacca's agricultural problems on the 'indolence' of the Malays. The British now blamed the Dutch regime for having discouraged Malaccan agriculture in order to keep it dependent on Java. They wondered whether poor drainage and irrigation caused the problems, or whether social and legal factors were at work. They also criticized Dutch slavery and land tenure arrangements for creating too many absentee landlords who

ignored their obligations to maintain bridges, roads, and canals.

The British, of course, did not give up easily. With land reform legislation, land surveys, as well as cash, they continued throughout the nineteenth century to try to make the Malaccan hinterland productive. First, however, they had to establish control over the rebellious population in Naning, a 647 square-kilometre area north of the town. Here were settled Sumatran immigrant farmers (Minangkabau) nominally under Dutch, then British, rule but who were in fact ruled by their own chieftain. Two military expeditions sent to Naning in 1831–2 brought the Minangkabau under British control, giving the rulers a taste of political involvement in Malaya. Two young British soldiers who fell at Naning are buried in the fort cemetery.

Once British authority had been established at Naning, efforts to exploit this region could proceed. When new tin deposits were discovered in the 1840s, 1,200 miners were sent to Naning, but by 1862 most Malacca mines were depleted and abandoned, and the port became a sales outlet and supplier for the tin mines elsewhere in the peninsula. Cultivated acreage around Malacca increased five times between 1828 and 1856, so that rice imports could be reduced. In 1867, however, when the Colonial Office in London reluctantly took over the burden of the Straits Settlements, the Malacca treasury showed its largest deficit ever. Besides the revenue farms (opium and arrack) the government still had few reliable sources of income.

Enterprising Hokkien planters financed tapioca, which did well enough in poor soil while depleting it further, required little labour, and produced returns on investment after two years. They found, however, that tapioca prices were volatile: up in 1881, down three years later, up again by 1890. Similarly, pepper and gambier (for tanning and dyeing) looked promising in the 1870s, but gambier fell in 1885.

It was not until a tapioca planter, Tan Chay Yan, put 17.4 hectares into rubber trees in 1895 that Malacca found a commercially successful crop. The first 450 kilograms of rubber were exported from Malacca in 1904. Demand for rubber tyres from the new automobile industry expanded throughout the early years of

the century, and brought prosperity to Malacca. During the early part of the twentieth century, 400 square kilometres were planted in tapioca and 136 in rubber.

As a labour-intensive business, the growth of rubber plantations demanded a labour force as rubber tappers. Between 1911 and 1921 the Indian population of Malacca grew 151 per cent, dramatically changing the racial mix. By 1931 the combined Chinese and Indian communities were larger than the number of Malays in Malacca.

British colonial administrators—a minority of 496 Europeans in 1931—kept their distance, ruling by prestige, not force. The colonial system depended upon the socially mobile Chinese intermediary who, while insulating the white ruling classes from the indigenous peoples, reinforced the Europeans' sense of racial superiority and perpetuated their thinking in stereotypes. In that context Malays are always 'half naked' and 'treacherous', the Portuguese-Eurasians are 'degenerate half-castes', and the Chinese are 'industrious'.

Crawfurd characterized the Malays as 'wild people' who 'exist principally in the hunter state'. Major Enriquez described them as 'passionate, indulgent, and indolent' people who watch the twentieth century in wonder 'as they wait for coconuts and durians to ripen and drop with a thud to the shaded ground'. Unable to appreciate Malacca's deep Islamic roots or its vibrant merchant community, experienced travellers like Isabella Bird, who enjoyed Malacca, described it simply as 'a fragrant tropic dream'.

At the physical heart of the British colonial system, developed in India and extended to South-East Asia, was the *padang*, a large closely trimmed lawn alien to pre-colonial, equatorial Malaya. Near it in most colonial centres were located government buildings and traditional institutions such as the bank (Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank's Malacca branch was constructed on Fort Road in 1909), the Anglican Church, and the sports club. It was the setting for ceremonies and rituals that legitimized British rule. On its green turf English games like tennis, cricket, and football were encouraged as a way of draining off energies that might otherwise have found less desirable outlets.

24. The Malacca Club looked out on the *padang* on one side and on the esplanade created by dredging the river, in 1912, on the other. (Major David Ng)

Malacca's *padang* was located on the eastern side of the Malacca Club, built in 1912 (Plate 24). In a symbolic change, the club building has now become the Declaration of Independence Memorial, and the old *padang* has been planted as a flower garden in front of the Muzium Budaya. The *padang* was also the setting for the ceremony in 1956 that proclaimed the future independence of Malaya.

The 162-year British colonial rule, when the population grew tenfold, gave Malacca what its administrators considered best for the local people, but almost always without their advice and consent. They brought improvements in transportation by land and sea. The railroad spur, for example, was constructed in 1905 to connect Malacca with the main peninsular system at Tampin. The iron jetty, replacing a wooden one, was built in the 1880s for P & O steamers (Plate 25). By 1900 a public works department had constructed about 200 miles of roads in and around Malacca.

In a laudable effort to combat typhoid and cholera epidemics, the British improved water services in the 1890s. Eventually they

25. Malacca jetty, 1907, photographed by the German photographer, Charles J. Kleingrothe. (Antiques of the Orient)

installed modern telephone and telegraph communications, but Malacca always remained a picturesque old town. Despite these expenditures and improvements, however, the British could not protect Malacca, or the rest of Malaya, from the brutal Japanese occupation (1942–5), and this fact, perhaps more than any other, sparked the Malayan movement for independence.

7
Melaka

OVER 500 years after Parameswara and his followers settled in Malacca, the port city, together with its suburban areas, became the state of Melaka, part of independent Malaya. Appropriately, the successful conclusion to negotiations with Britain for independence was first announced not at the capital at Kuala Lumpur, but to a crowd of 50,000 assembled at the *padang* at Melaka.

The new state, one of thirteen in today's Malaysian federation, adopted an emblem that tells a familiar story. It bears two mousedeer, the Melaka tree, and five kris of famous Malay warriors. It also shows the star and crescent to emphasize Melaka's role in introducing the national religion of Islam.

There are no symbolic reminders in this emblem of the over 400 years of colonial rule (Colour Plate 14). That past is seen not only as the time when Melaka lost its pre-eminence as an entrepôt but also when foreign rulers, in the words of one leader, 'stunted' Malay civilization and 'oppressed' its people (*Straits Times*, 26 August 1992).

As a new nation, Malaysia's view of its own history has acquired prominence: Melaka is seen as the national birthplace, where the movement for independence began. The Naning War (1831–2), which predates independence by more than a century, is interpreted as the first struggle against colonial oppressors, who kept the Malays in their kampongs and encouraged their traditional agrarian way of life.

Through its social and economic policies, therefore, the federal government at Kuala Lumpur has adopted affirmative action to correct the 'imbalances' inherited from the past and to help Malays progress economically. In Melaka, Malays today number more than half (56 per cent) of a multiethnic population of about 600,000, and if present trends continue, that proportion will grow.

While Melaka is once again a Malay state, where the Malay

language—not English—is the medium of instruction in all the schools, it is no longer ruled in the ancient Malay way. The loyalty pact between ruler and subject, once the basis for the unquestioned authority of the sultan, has been replaced by a modern democratic political system. It is governed by an elected chief minister, his nine-member executive council, and a state legislative assembly of twenty members that meets in a new building on St Paul's Hill. A governor with largely ceremonial tasks lives there in what was once the British resident's bungalow. Other government offices have moved to new buildings in the suburbs.

The ethnic Chinese minority, a larger group in 1990 than in 1980, nevertheless constitutes a declining proportion, with 33.6 per cent, of the state's population. Indians comprise just over 10 per cent while Eurasian-Portuguese and others number only 2,900. Although inter-ethnic rivalries and the unequal distribution of political power between the Malays and the Chinese became more obvious throughout the country after independence, observers have speculated that Melaka's tolerant atmosphere developed out of its historical experience. Having learned over many centuries to adapt to foreign influences, Melaka felt less tension during the 1969 race riots than other parts of Malaysia.

In the heart of the city and its environs today, Muslim calls to prayer at several mosques can be heard at regular intervals during the day, such as the Kampong Hulu Mosque and the Tranquerah Mosque. The fragrance of burning joss-sticks permeates the warm air near Chinese temples. Melakans point proudly to 'Harmony Street', a combination of Goldsmith, Blacksmith, and Temple Streets. Here, the Sri Poyatha Vinayagar Moorthi Temple of the Chettiar and Chetty communities, the Cheng Hoon Teng Temple, a smaller Chinese temple, and the Kampong Kling Mosque have stood together for centuries.

Melaka bears only a skeletal resemblance to the many old Malaccas that have been described here. The city has fleshed out, expanding into the suburban areas that also bear its name. The economic retrenchments of colonial Malacca have been replaced by signs of new prosperity and full employment. In fact, change has come so fast that the affectionate term 'Sleepy Hollow' used

during the British colonial era no longer applies. Melaka has reawakened.

The government has accelerated the pace of social and economic transformation in three main areas—industry, agriculture, and tourism. To profit from the world economy, the government has attracted domestic investors and foreign capital from Asia, America, and Europe. Jungle and rice-fields have been cleared for new housing, industrial estates, agricultural development, an oil refinery, a steel plant, golf courses, theme parks, and hotels. So far, over 200 factories in electronics, plastics, and food packaging have been established, and more are planned. Many Malay families have left the kampongs and moved into new urban housing, sending their young women to work shifts in air-conditioned electronics factories. Indeed, job opportunities have multiplied so fast that Melaka has had trouble meeting the demand for labour, and employers have had to recruit workers in secondary schools and in other states.

Even though more than three-quarters of the state's land has been set aside for agriculture, farming has never been the most successful sector in Melaka's economic life. Today, it ranks third after industry and tourism in providing revenue for the state. Ever since 1895, when rubber was introduced, and then in the 1960s, when oil-palm trees replaced some of the rubber acreage to produce palm oil, one of Malaysia's chief exports, most of the land has been devoted to these cash crops.

As the city with the longest history and most of the oldest monuments in Malaysia, Melaka is a natural magnet for tourists. In 1991, 3 million visitors came to the state. Although most of the monuments are relics of the colonial periods—an ambiguous legacy at best—Melaka is in the fortunate position of being able to build a future by reclaiming its past.

In one of history's ironies, the birthplace of the hereditary sultanate is one of only four Malaysian states that no longer has its own sultan. Melaka's past greatness remains in the hearts of Malaysians, however, prompting occasional claims to the Melaka throne based on the possession of ancient symbols of the sultan's

authority—a mace, pendant, buckle, and traditional weapon. Its memory lingers on in Melaka street names designated since independence as Jalan Bendahara, Jalan Laksamana, and many others. It is also preserved in fifteenth-century monuments such as the mausoleum and well of Hang Tuah, one of the famous warriors.

Melaka has developed a historic conservation strategy, concentrating on certain areas of the town. One of these is St Paul's Hill where the maintenance of the ruins of St Paul's Church, for example, has posed some interesting challenges. A modern replica of Sultan Mansur Shah's palace was opened as a cultural museum in 1984 (see Plate 7). The Stadthuys building was renovated and reopened as an ethnographic museum in 1992. An Islamic museum, a maritime museum, and a museum dedicated to the martial arts are planned for other buildings on Jalan Kota (Fort Road).

Another focus for tourism is the old town north of the river where solid old Dutch and Chinese houses survive. Antique shops selling furniture, Nonyaware, porcelain, tiles, and brassware have opened in Jalan Hang Jebat (Jonker Street). New restaurants serving traditional Nonya foods and international dishes have been established in old homes of Straits Chinese families. A Baba–Nonya museum combines two old houses on Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock (Heeren Street).

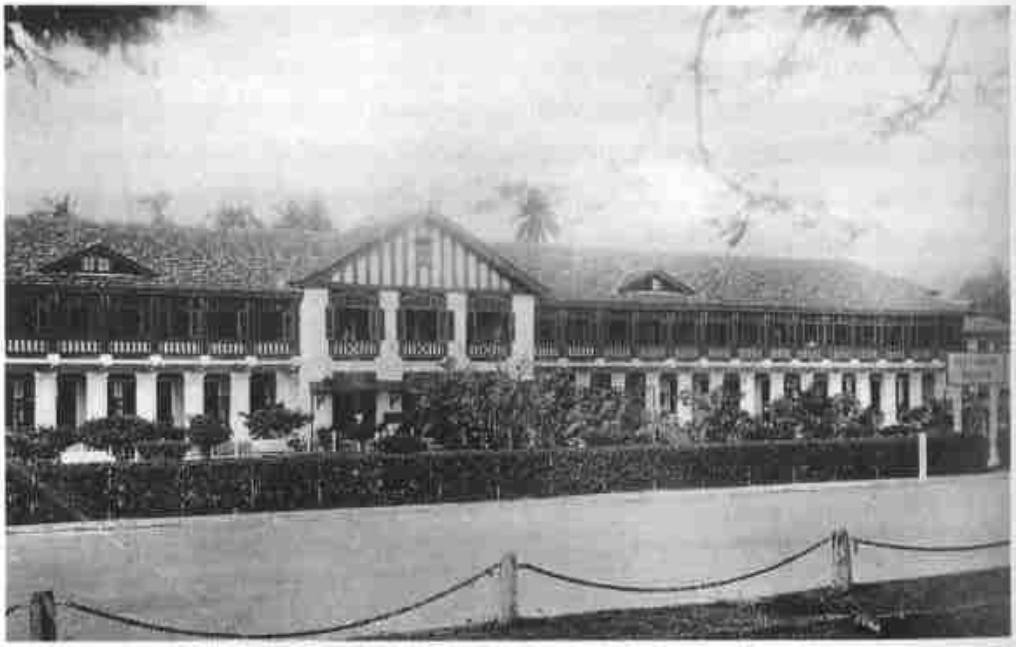
To accommodate the increasing flow of traffic that tourism and development bring to the downtown area, Melaka's town planners have had to consider ways to relieve the congestion on the narrow streets of the historic district. Land reclamation in several stages over the past fifty years has created space for development, and more reclamation is planned north of the estuary. This radical alteration of Melaka's coastline has already cost the seaside houses on Heeren Street their views of the Straits and given the St Paul's Hill landmark an urban rather than a blue water prospect.

Many Melakans, traditionally receptive to new ideas, seem to welcome the proposals that will bring more seaside condominiums, shopping complexes, a theme park, hotels, a marina, and parking facilities to the new downtown waterfront. The new land will permit the construction of a coastal road and river bridge to

bypass the historic area, relieving Heeren Street, for example, of its traffic burden and allowing the modern city to live more gracefully with its past.

Others, however, are more sceptical. They speak nostalgically of the loss of familiar landmarks, such as the gracious old Rest House on the *padang* that dated from the British colonial period (1912) (Plate 26), the Malacca Club (see Plate 24), now converted into a museum, or more recently, the 1989 demolition of the old central market along the river bank. They also worry whether the present infrastructure of roads, sewage treatment plants, and water supplies can keep up with the fast pace of development. They look, too, for a new environmental awareness to avoid a recurrence of the serious 1991 water shortage when, for the greater part of the year, the people of Melaka experienced dreadful hardships. It was a science-fiction situation, an episode in modern Melaka history that highlighted the need for guarding against water pollution and for dependable water management.

For the time being, though, the modernization of Melaka is accompanied by the survival of a few traditional ways. Malay



26. The Malacca Rest House was built by the British in 1912. (Antiques of the Orient)

wooden houses, with their colourful pastel curtains and tile steps, dot the countryside, though their roofs are usually made of corrugated metal now instead of the old *atap* thatch (Colour Plate 15). Water buffaloes help farmers plough green rice-fields.

Although the river has been a sewer for many riverside dwellings—and is now a target for clean-up—it is still an artery of the city pulsing with life. Fishermen, their boats painted purple for Melaka, live in shacks on stilts along the river bank, just as their forefathers did, and dry their salted fish in the sun. Lighters delivering charcoal for cooking, and cereals for chicken feed are tied up further downstream (Colour Plate 16).

Trishaws—up-to-date variants with chrome and radios—continue to roam the streets downtown looking for business. Petition writers, adept at filling out government forms, offer their linguistic skills in English and Malay for citizens who speak and write only Tamil or Chinese dialects; they await clients under the shade trees in Dutch Square, not in modern offices, and work with manual typewriters. A friendly, small town atmosphere prevails in the restaurants, shops, and new hotels. Melaka is no longer a 'Sleepy Hollow' but it is still a sanctuary.

Appendix

Rulers and Sultans of Malacca

Parameswara (1400–14)
Megat Iskandar Shah (1414–24)
Sri Maharaja/Sultan Mohammed Shah (1424–44)
Parameswara Dewa Shah/Sultan Abu Shahid (1444–5)
Sultan Mudzaffar Shah (1446–56)
Sultan Mansur Shah (1456–77)
Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah (1477–88)
Sultan Mahmud Shah (1488–1528)

Bibliography

Abdullah bin Kadir, *The Hikayat Abdullah: The Autobiography of Abdullah bin Kadir (1797–1854)* (trans. A. H. Hill), Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1969.

Andaya, Barbara Watson and Andaya, Leonard, *A History of Malaysia*, London, Macmillan, 1982.

Anonymous, 'Peep of Day', *Far Off or Asia Described*, London, Hatchards, 1873.

Arasaratnam, Sinnappah (ed.), *François Valentijn's Description of Ceylon*, London, Hakluyt Society, 1978.

Bastin, John and Winks, Robin W., *Malaysia: Selected Historical Readings*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1966.

Baumgarten, F. L., 'Agriculture in Malacca', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, 1849, Vol. 3, pp. 707–21.

Bird, Isabella L., *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*, London, John Murray, 1883; reprinted Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1967 and 1989.

Boxer, Charles R., *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415–1825*, London, Hutchinson & Co., 1969.

Brown, C. C. (trans.), *Sejarah Melayu (Malay Annals)*, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 5, Pts. 2 and 3, 1952, pp. 7–204.

Caldeira, Carlos José, *Apontamentos d'Una Viagem de Lisboa A' China e da China a Lisboa* (trans. Richard Pflederer), 1852.

Carletti, Francesco, *My Voyage Around the World*, New York, Random House, 1964.

Chaudhuri, K. N., 'Indonesia in the Early Seaborne Trade of the Indian Ocean', *Indonesia Circle*, Vol. 33, March 1984, pp. 3–13.

Coffin, Charles Carleton, *Our New Way Round the World*, Boston, Estes & Lauriat, 1885.

Coolhaas, W. Ph., 'Malacca under Jan van Riebeeck', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 38, Pt. 2, 1965, pp. 173–82.

Cortesão, Armando (trans.), *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, London, Hakluyt Society, 1944.

Crawfurd, John, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China*, London, Henry Colburn, 1828; reprinted Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1967 and 1987.

Daus, Ronald, *Portuguese Eurasian Communities in Southeast Asia*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989.

Empoli Giovanni da, *Lettera di Giovanni da Empoli* (ed. A. Bausani), Roma, Arti Grafiche Scalia, 1970.

Enriquez, Major C. M., *Malaya: An Account of Its People, Flora, and Fauna*, London, Hurst & Blackett Ltd., 1927.

Gibson-Hill, C. A., 'The Fortification of Bukit China, Malacca', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 30, Pt. 3, 1956, pp. 156–79.

Groeneveldt, W. P., *Historical Notes on Indonesia and Malaya Compiled from Chinese Sources* (including the *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan* and the *Hai-Yu*), Djakarta, Bhratara, 1960.

Harfield, Alan, *Christian Cemeteries and Memorials in Malacca*, London, British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia, 1984.

Harrison, Brian, *Holding the Fort: Malacca Under Two Flags 1795–1845*, Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Kuala Lumpur, 1985.

_____, 'Malacca in the Eighteenth Century: Two Dutch Governors' Reports', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 27, Pt. 1, 1954, pp. 24–34.

Hervey, D. F. A. (ed.), 'Valentijn's Account of Malacca' (abstract from *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*), *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vols. 13, 15, 16, and 22, 1884–90.

Hoffman, J. E., 'Early Policies in the Malacca Jurisdiction of the United East India Company: The Malay Peninsula and the Netherlands East Indies Attachment', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 1972, pp. 1–38.

Irwin, Graham, 'Malacca Fort', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 3, Pt. 2, 1962, pp. 19–44.

Lach, Donald F., *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Vol. 1, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1965.

Leupe, P. A., 'The Siege and Capture of Malacca from the Portuguese in 1640–41' (including Commissary Justus Schouten's Report of His Visit to Malacca) (trans. Mac Hacobian), *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 14, Pt. 1, 1936, pp. 11–178.

Linschoten, Jan van, *His Discours of Voyages into ye Easte and West Indies* (English edition of *Itinerario*), London, 1598.

Lockman, John, *Travels of the Jesuits into Various Parts of the World: Compiled from Their Letters*, Vol. 1, London, 1743.

Logan, J. R., 'Journal of an Excursion from Singapur to Malacca and Pinang', *Journal of the Royal Geographic Society*, Vol. 16, pp. 1–20.

McRoberts, Robert W., 'A Study in Growth: An Economic History of Melaka 1400–1510', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 64, Pt. 2, 1991, pp. 47–78.

Marx, Robert F., 'The Search for the *Flor de la Mar*', *Silver Kris*, Vol. 19, No. 5, 1992, pp. 41–4.

Mills, J. V. (ed., trans.), 'Eredia's Description of Malaca, Meridional India, and Cathay', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 8, Pt. 1, 1930, pp. 15–58.

Montgomery, James (ed.), *Voyages and Travels Round the World 1821–1829 by the Reverend Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet Esq.*, London, John Snow, 1841.

Pan, Lynn, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*, London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1990.

Parr, Charles McKew, *Jan van Linschoten: The Dutch Marco Polo*, New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1964.

Purcell, Victor, 'Chinese Settlement in Malacca', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 20, Pt. 1, 1947, pp. 115–25.

Rathborne, Ambrose B., *Camping and Tramping in Malaya*, London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1898; reprinted Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1984.

Reis Thomaz, Luis Filipe F., *Nina Chatu and the Portuguese Trade in Malacca* (trans. M. J. Pintado), Melaka, Luso-Malaysian Books, 1991.

Ryan, N. J., *A History of Malaysia and Singapore*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1976.

Sandhu, Kernial Singh and Wheatley, Paul, *Melaka: The Transformation of a Malay Capital c.1400–1980*, 2 vols., Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1983.

Savage, Victor R., *Western Impressions of Nature and Landscape in Southeast Asia*, Singapore, Singapore University Press, 1984.

Scott-Ross, Alice, *Tun Dato Sir Cheng Lock Tan*, Singapore, privately published, 1990.

Sheehan, J. J., 'Seventeenth Century Visitors to the Malay Peninsula', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 12, Pt. 2, 1934, pp. 71–107.

Swettenham, Sir Frank, *British Malaya*, London, Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1906.

Tan Chee Beng, *The Baba of Melaka: Culture and Identity of a Chinese Peranakan Community in Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Pelanduk, 1988.

Tan, Robert, *Historic Malacca Pot-Pourri*, Melaka, Robert Tan Sin Nyen, 1990.

Thomson, John, *The Straits of Malacca, Indo-China, and China*, London, Sampson Low, 1875; reprinted Singapore and Hong Kong, Oxford University Press, 1993.

Thomson, John Turnbull, *Glimpses Into Life in the Far East*, London, Richardson & Co., 1865; reprinted Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1984.

Touanne, Comte Edmond Bigot de la, *Album Pittoresque de la Frégate La Thétis et de la Corvette l'Espérance*, Paris, 1828.

Turnbull, C. Mary, *A History of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1989.

_____, *The Straits Settlements 1826–1867*, London, Athlone Press, 1972.

Vaughan, Jonas Daniel, *The Manners and Customs of the Chinese of the Straits Settlements*, Singapore, Mission Press, 1879; reprinted Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1971 and 1991.

Wake, Christopher, 'Malacca's Early Kings and the Reception of Islam', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 5, Pt. 2, 1964, pp. 104–28.

Wallace, Alfred Russel, *The Malay Archipelago*, London, Macmillan & Co., 1869; reprinted Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1986.

Wathen, James, *Journal of a Voyage in 1811 and 1812 to Madras and China*, London, J. Nichols & Son, 1814.

Wheatley, Paul, *The Golden Chersonese*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 1961.

Wilkinson, R. J., *Papers on Malay Subjects*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1971.

Whitehead, John, *Exploration of Mount Kina Balu, North Borneo*, London, Gurney & Jackson, 1893.

Winstedt, R. O., *A History of Malaya*, London, Luzac & Co., 1935.

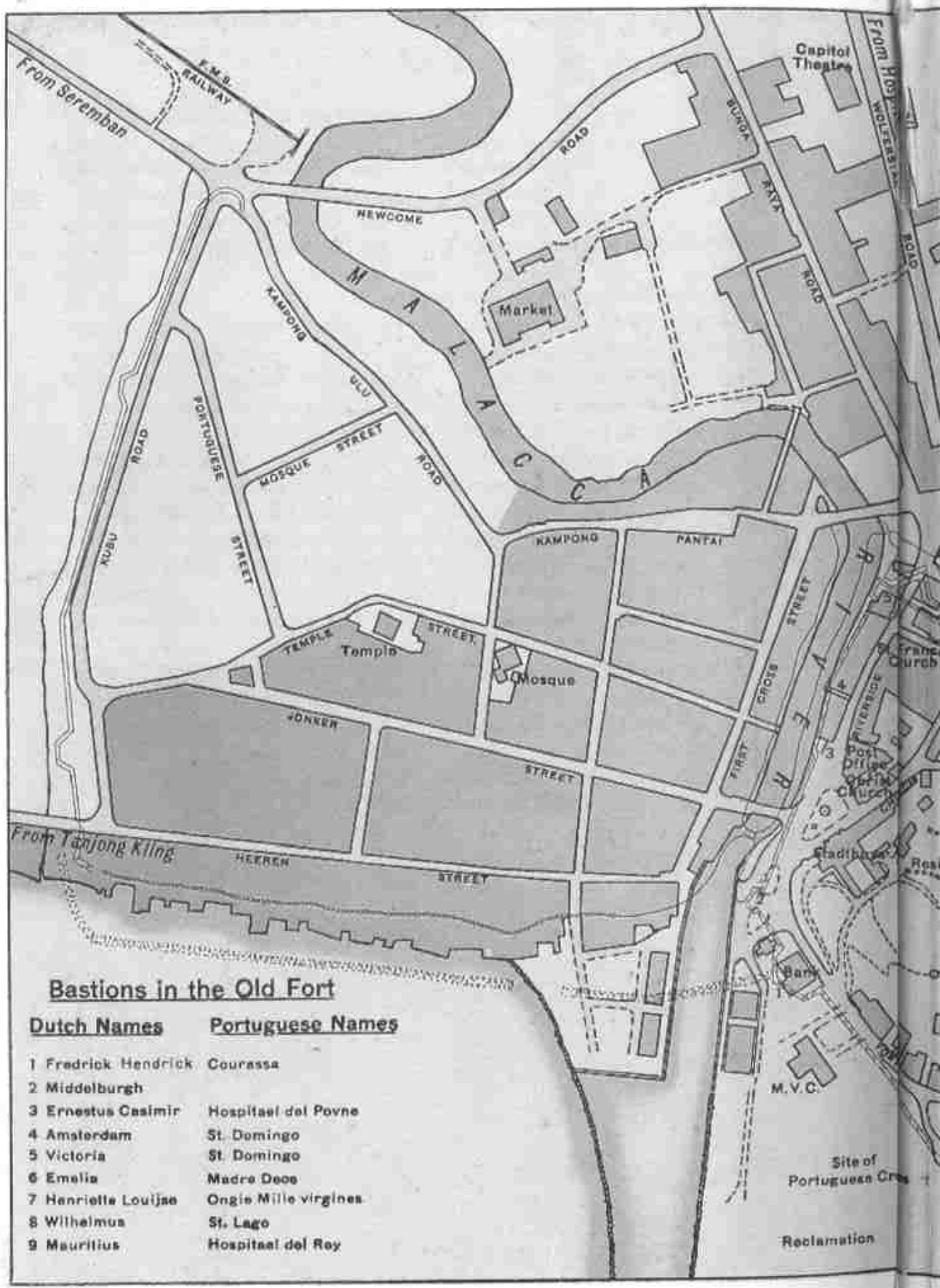
Woodcock, George, *Asia, Gods, and Cities*, London, Faber & Faber, 1966.

Wright, Louis B., *Gold, Glory and the Gospel*, New York, Atheneum, 1970.

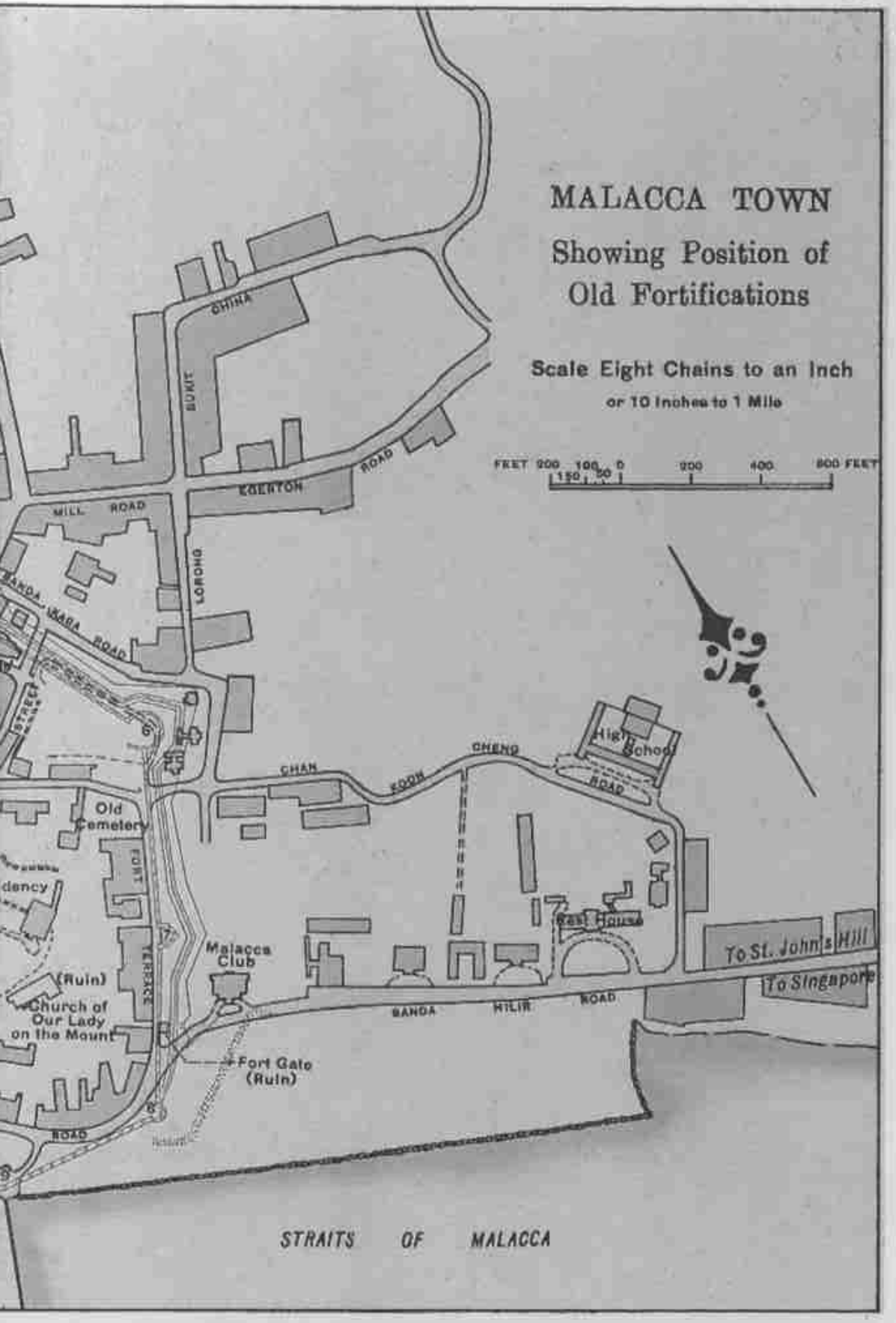
Wurtzburg, C. E., *Raffles of the Eastern Isles*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1954; reprinted Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1984.

Index

References in brackets refer to Plate numbers; those in brackets and italics to Colour Plate numbers.



Malacca Town, showing the position of the old fortifications, from *Historical Guide of Malacca*, Malacca Historical Society, 1936. (Antiques of the Orient)


MALACCA TOWN
Showing Position of
Old Fortifications
Scale Eight Chains to an Inch
or 10 Inches to 1 Mile
FEET 200 100 0 200 400 800 FEET
150 50
CHINA
BUKIT
ROAD
EGERTON
MILL ROAD
LORONG
BANDA KABA ROAD
STREET
CHAN
KOON
CHENG
ROAD
High School
Old Cemetery
FORT
dency
(Ruin)
Church of Our Lady on the Mount
TERRACE
Malacca Club
Fort Gate (Ruin)
ROAD
BANDA
HILIR
ROAD
To St. John's Hill
To Singapore
STRAITS OF MALACCA