"Baker's thrilling book profits from his refusal to separate Singapore's history from Malaysia's. What we get is a broad story filled with surprising details drawn from his own experiences and other scholarly works, and told in an easy and captivating style." **— Dr. Ooi Kee Beng, ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute**

"A must-read for those puzzled about what's behind recent headlines from Southeast Asia." **— Ken Whiting, former Associated Press Singapore Bureau Chief**

From Srivijaya to British Malaya to modern nation-states, **Crossroads** traces the complex currents of history and politics in Malaysia and Singapore – neighbors with a common past hurtling along different paths – and the challenges facing each country in the twenty-first century.

"Jim Baker has written and recounted a history of Malaysia and Singapore for everyone with great zest, charm and interpretive skill." **— Prof. Cheah Boon Kheng, author of *Malaysia: The Making of a Nation***

"Informative and entertaining... Baker is bold in his approach, not mincing his words nor attempting to soften the blow of cold hard facts." ***— The Sun***

visit our website at:
www.marshallcavendish.com/genref

Marshall Cavendish Editions

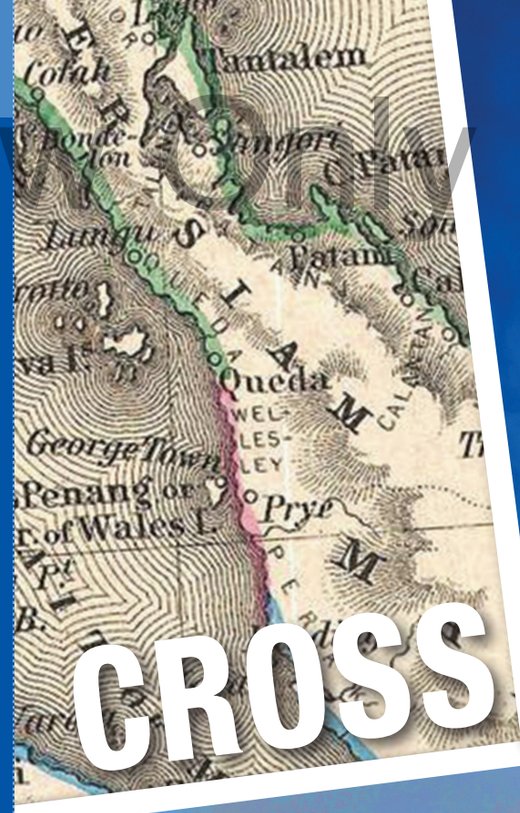
HISTORY
ISBN 978-981-4841-90-0
9 789814 841900

Jim Baker

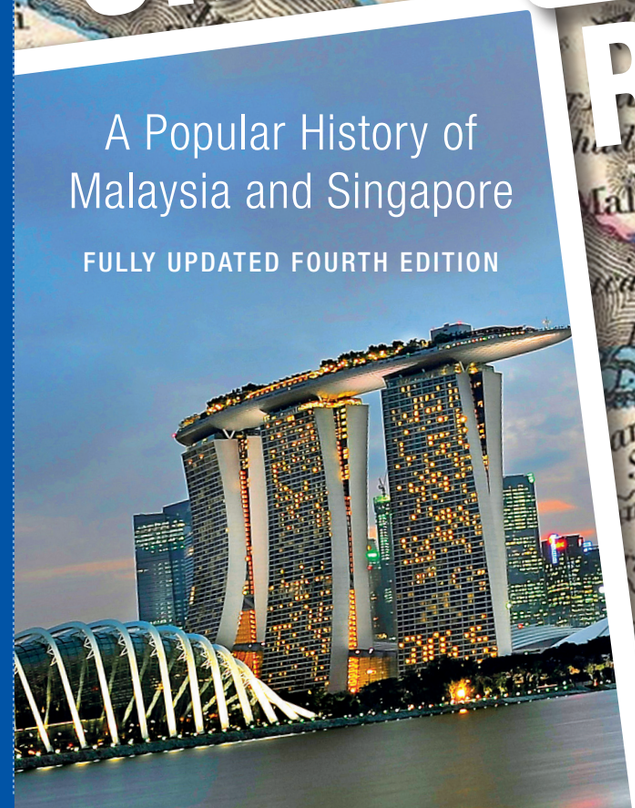
CROSSROADS

A Popular History of Malaysia and Singapore

Marshall Cavendish Editions



"History without tears."
— New Straits Times



A Popular History of Malaysia and Singapore

FULLY UPDATED FOURTH EDITION

Jim Baker

CROSSROADS

A Popular History of Malaysia and Singapore

FULLY UPDATED FOURTH EDITION

Jim Baker

Marshall Cavendish Editions

First published in 1999
Fourth edition published in 2020 by Marshall Cavendish Editions
An imprint of Marshall Cavendish International

A member of the Times Publishing Group

Other Marshall Cavendish Offices:
Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 99 White Plains Road, Tarrytown NY 10591-9001, USA • Marshall Cavendish International (Thailand) Co Ltd, 253 Asoke, 12th Flr, Sukhumvit 21 Road, Klongtoey Nua, Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Thailand • Marshall Cavendish (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, Times Subang, Lot 46, Subang Hi-Tech Industrial Park, Batu Tiga, 40000 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

Marshall Cavendish is a registered trademark of Times Publishing Limited

National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Name(s): Baker, Jim (James Michael), 1948–.
Title: Crossroads: A popular history of Malaysia and Singapore / Jim Baker.
Description: Fully updated fourth edition. | Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, [2020]. | First published: 1999. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifier(s): OCN 1127058722 | ISBN 978-981-4841-90-0 (paperback)
Subject(s): LCSH: Singapore–History. | Malaysia–History. | Malaya–History. | Singapore–Politics and government. | Malaysia–Politics and government.
Classification: DDC 959.5–dc23

Printed in Singapore

CONTENTS

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, there has been much focus on what appears to be a shift in the world's economic and political power from North America and Europe to Asia. This is underscored by the increasingly prominent roles played by Asia both economically and politically, which impact not only on the region but on the world at large. The change began with Japan's tremendous economic growth after World War II and was followed by economic booms in Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a third wave of growing economies in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. The final act in this economic renaissance of Asia will be the rise of two of the potentially largest world economies – India and China.

The economic downturn in the area in the late 1990s was no more than a temporary setback. Most economists believe Asia will emerge from the crisis to be just as important a player in the world economy as it was before the crisis.

There is a wealth of opinion and commentary about Asia's growth and its ramifications. A running theme is that the underpinnings of Asia's economic success are rooted in culture and values, that the rise of the East is driven by "Asian values," which create the climate necessary for these societies to compete successfully with the West. Evidence of this view is contained in popular commentaries on the economic conflict between Japan and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. It is seen in the stated attempts by many Asian leaders to protect their societies from the influences of popular Western culture lest they corrupt the foundations of their success. And this view has been further advanced by cultural critics in the West who warn of economic decline because of current social conditions in Western societies.

The problem is that to define "Asian" values is virtually impossible, and for politicians to portray economic competition in today's world as one between geographic areas is a gross oversimplification. To see Asia as

a monolithic cultural entity defies imagination. Who really believes that an Uzbeki Afghan shares common values with a Japanese in Yokohama, that the Malay living in a village in Kelantan views the world the same way as a factory worker in Seoul, or that a Chinese peasant farmer could share a similar value system with a Dani tribesman in Irian Jaya? Perhaps a reason why Asians were deeply shocked by their economic crises in the late 1990s was the overemphasis by their leaders on the uniqueness of their success. These leaders had indicated that growth was a result of strong Asian values, which blurred true economic realities and offered a false sense of never-ending growth.

Malaysia and Singapore are fascinating cases of the strengths and weaknesses of this ongoing debate. The Malay Peninsula is an area where not only has the East met the West but also where the East has met the East – a true crossroads.

This study of the history of Malaysia and Singapore offers a look at an area that contains cultural elements of many countries – the indigenous influences of archipelago Southeast Asia; the impact of Asia's cultural giants, China and India; the coming of Islam from western Asia by way of India; the contributions made by the West through European colonization and economic exploitation; and finally, the impact of the process of globalization on the two countries.

The history of Malaysia and Singapore is more than two thousand years of cultural interaction, largely determined by the geographic positions of these countries. In the last sixty years, it is a history of three distinct groups of Asians – the Chinese, Indians and indigenous Malays – all trying to find a common destiny. For in this sixty-year period, all three accepted the reality that they were going to live together permanently. The conflict, accommodation and promise of this reality are vital elements of life in the area today.

This book, then, has two themes. One is the movement of culture, products and people throughout the area, and the other is the people who stayed to create the modern nations. Economically, Malaysia and Singapore are rapidly developing, and perhaps by identifying the reasons for their success, these unique societies may give useful insight into some of the generalizations made about Asia today.

As political entities, Malaysia and Singapore are twentieth-century phenomena. As a result, looking at them historically must be in the context of the history of archipelago Southeast Asia. The two countries were part of a community of Malayan people and culture until the nineteenth century, and modern Singapore's history in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was as part of a Malaya created by forces from outside the archipelago.

In the course of reading this book, there will be vocabulary and references to terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Most of these are defined in the context of their usage, but Malays, Malaya, Malayans, Malaysia and Malaysians are used frequently and do have different meanings. The Malays are a racial group, and Malay is their language. The Malays make up the majority of the population of the present-day Federation of Malaysia and a minority in the Republic of Singapore. Generally, the term includes a race of people who make up a significant portion of the population of southern Thailand and most of the populations of Indonesia and Brunei, as well as a minority in the southern Philippines. Collectively, they are the Malay people but only referred to in that way by the governments of Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and Thailand.

The Malay language is spoken throughout the area but with significant differences in dialect. For example, Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malaysia are quite similar.

Malaya was a British creation and refers to the states formerly controlled by the British on the Malay Peninsula. The formal use of the term came into being after World War II, when the Federation of Malaya was created and became an independent country in 1957. Prior to this, the area was often referred to as British Malaya and included Singapore for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this book, Malaya refers to the area on the Malay Peninsula that eventually became British Malaya.

"Malayans" refers to the inhabitants of the peninsula and later citizens of the federation, whether they be Malay, Chinese, Indian or Eurasian.

Malaysia was created in 1963 with the merger of the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah (formerly known as British North Borneo). Singapore left the federation in 1965, and today Malaysia consists of the states of Penang, Perlis, Kedah, Melaka, Negri Sembilan, Johor,

Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan, Perak, Selangor and the federal districts of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya in the peninsula, as well as the states of Sarawak, Sabah and the federal territory of Labuan on the island of Borneo. Malaysians are citizens of this country, regardless of race. When the term "Malaysia" is used in this book, it refers to this area collectively.

There are developments that have taken place in the 1990s that may place some observations in this book in a different light – the economic crisis, former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's fall from power, the policies of the third generation People's Action Party leaders, etc. These events are currently playing out, and to comment on them would move the realm of this book from history to current affairs. Before they are judged from a historical perspective, there needs to be a distance, perhaps in a revision five years hence.

(1999)

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of *Crossroads* covered the historical narrative of Malaysia and Singapore to the early 1990s. In the decade and a half since then, both countries have experienced events and forces that place some of their post-independence histories in a new light. This second edition includes two new chapters that bring Malaysia and Singapore into the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

In both countries, the economic crisis of 1997 and 1998 shook confidence and previous orthodoxy. The causes had come from within the region and could not be blamed on outside forces – although Prime Minister Mahathir tried. Many of the assumptions about why the economies of Southeast Asia had prospered up to that time came under attack, including the "Asian values" thesis. The actions taken and lessons learned said much about their national priorities and leadership.

The attacks on the World Trade Center in the United States, bombings in Indonesia and subsequent Western reaction to these events had a great impact on both countries. The neighborhood is decidedly Islamic, and many in the area resent current American policies in some Muslim countries and the power of the Western cultural juggernaut.

Both countries have had to deal with the challenges of economic success. As they have prospered, the justifications for their initial success have become less relevant to future growth. Both countries must find new economic initiatives because they face new and different competitors, especially in China and India.

Because of their affluence, both countries grapple with the influence of global culture and communication. The relationship between government and citizens is in the process of being redefined as a consequence.

The broadcast and print media in both countries have long been under government influence. Control of the sources of information has been an important tool both in governing and maintaining the power of the ruling parties. These mediums have also been key vehicles in molding the national

identity. New sources of information on the Internet challenge the governments' monopolies on information and communication, especially when this technology is essential to their ability to compete against affluent and open societies.

Recent events have also changed the focus of the debate over Asian versus Western values. The perceived clash between these broad categories has been overshadowed by events in the East and the West.

In addition to updating the narrative, this edition includes some revision of the original text. As the history of a country evolves, it is inevitable that what was important in the past be reevaluated in the context of an expanded history.

Writing a general history of a country presents a number of challenges. One is choosing what events, people and trends to emphasize. This is especially true when connected to a related dilemma – how do we make history relevant? How do we connect it with today's world? Some of the revision in this edition reflects my belief that modern Singapore has two historical themes that are important today.

The first is its immigrant heritage, which began with the immigrants who built the city alongside the British and continued throughout its history, with especially large numbers that arrived in the mid-twentieth century. As Singapore opens its doors to a new wave of immigrants in the twenty-first century, they can be connected to its past by the common experience of the immigrant.

A second theme that warrants reconsideration is Singapore's role in the world, especially in the twentieth century. A popular view of pre-World War II Singapore was as a "colonial" port. This was true socially and in the fact that the city of London benefited immensely from its trade, but Singapore was more than a simple port. A child of free trade, it was a global port for much of its modern history. Singapore's connectedness with the world historically is of relevance to twenty-first-century Singapore.

In this edition, two other historical questions are examined more closely. One is the British and Western "war on piracy" and its importance to the free flow of trade in the nineteenth century. Connected with this is the question of the primary motivation for British intervention in the daily affairs of the Malay sultanates. Both were tied closely to Britain's

dependence on and the income from trade services and investment to balance its chronic trade deficit.

Constructing an evolving narrative for Malaysia is more problematic. Much more than Singapore, it is caught up in the battle between the traditional and the modern, especially within the majority Malay community. Government-directed policies to promote the socio-economic position of the Malays from traditional to modern economies have had serious social consequences. In a more homogeneous society the transition would be easier to weather, but in Malaysia it is taking place in the context of a multicultural society with significant racial divisions.

The demographic and economic changes that have taken place since the government embarked on the New Economic Policy in 1971 have been dramatic. Many would question whether the underlying assumptions that led to the government's policy of affirmative action for Malays remain relevant more than 35 years later. The road to national identity is still strewn with the barriers of racial identity.

The title of this book is probably more apt than at any time in the history of the two nations. Both nations are inextricably positioned at the crossroads of the world and tied to the world with all the costs and benefits that come with that reality.

(2008)

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

This edition of *Crossroads* takes the history of Malaysia and Singapore through their most recent elections, 2013 in Malaysia and 2011 in Singapore. In both countries, these elections were more than markers in political history. They represented the public manifestations of profound changes that were taking place in the demographics of the countries.

For Singapore, there have been significant changes in the size and makeup of the population. In just over 30 years, the population has doubled and the percentage of local-born has fallen from about 90 percent to 60 percent. This has posed serious questions about what it means to be Singaporean and how the benefits of the country's economic success should be distributed.

For Malaysia, the changes have been in the movement of Malays from rural to urban sectors and the creation of a large urban/suburban middle class. Seventy percent of Malaysians live in urban areas and a majority of Malays are now city dwellers. This move from the traditional to the modern has social, political and economic ramifications. Important questions about national priorities cannot be avoided. These changes also call into question the role of race and religion in the public square.

In the previous editions, I introduced the Malay people in Chapter One and emphasized their rural and village (*kampung*) roots. These traditional values and influences no doubt had a great impact on twentieth-century Malays. I still believe that, but am convinced that kampung-dominated culture should be placed in its historical context. Thus it should be seen as a result of the global changes that took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which transformed the Malay world.

For history to have meaning and relevance, it must connect with the present. As societies change, what is important from the past takes on different priorities. There is no fixed narrative of history. It changes as we learn more about the past, and it changes as our present changes. It has been said that history tells us as much about the present as it does about the past. For example, the "Asian Values" narrative had a following in the 1980s and 1990s but failed in the light of twenty-first-century realities. It was not a clash between the East and West but a more mundane clash between the traditional and the modern.

The title of this history reflects a view that what connects Malaysia and Singapore's past to the present was their participation in the economies of the archipelago and the world. More than most countries, they have been molded by global events as much as by what took place in their geographical area. For Malaysia and Singapore, globalization has a much deeper meaning than the term implies today. Historically speaking, there have been three great eras of economic globalization (some would argue more). The first was the commercial revolution during the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. The Malay world was at the heart of this era of globalization. Historian Tony Reid points out that the area had significant urban centers and enjoyed one of the highest standards of living in the world. (In Europe, only Paris was a larger city than Melaka.)

The second era of globalization was between 1870 and 1920. It was caused by new industrialization in the United States, Germany and Japan and the expansion of European imperialism to its high-tide mark. By this time in history, British Malaya did not fit the traditional definition of a colony, i.e., a relationship in which the colony produced raw materials for the mother country to turn into manufactured goods. Britain had embraced free trade, the antithesis of the traditional view of colonialism. Free trade had created large trade deficits in merchandise for Britain. Other countries were producing cheap food and manufactured goods. The British compensated for this through income from trade and financial services, and British Malaya fit this need well.

Malaya was a source of raw materials, not to the mother country but rather as a source of trade goods and services that were key parts of a global trading system. Tin and rubber were not a cause of British rule, but rather an effect of it.

During the colonial era, America was Malaya's most important trading partner. No doubt the British benefited from it with income from trade services and investment in producing trade goods, but it tied British Malaya to a global economy. Historian Pamela Sodhy describes the interaction as a modern triangular trade between America, Britain and Malaya.

We are experiencing the third great era of globalization today. It is the result of freer trade, freer capital movement and technology. As previously in history, Malaysia and Singapore are major beneficiaries of global economic and cultural connections. As previously in history, these two societies are being transformed by forces from outside the archipelago.

(2014)

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

Since the publication of the third edition of *Crossroads* in 2014, there have been two events of particular significance in the histories of Malaysia and Singapore. In Malaysia the victory of the Mahatir-led Pakatan Harapan and the democratic and peaceful transfer of power from Barisan Nasional to the opposition in the 2018 elections were milestones in history. In Singapore the passing of its first prime minister was a key event as well.

Usually historians use such events as opportunities to reevaluate their narratives. However, it is an iffy proposition to measure events that are relatively current because historians may be accused of bias when all the evidence becomes available. This could blur the lines between journalism and the writing of history.

That being said, both events are too tempting not to try to place them in the ongoing narratives of both nations.

This edition also contains some new material on the 1950s. Most narratives tend to emphasize two themes about the 1950s: the discontent of lower-income Singaporeans and the battle to determine who would lead Singapore after it became self-governing. These themes are important but tend to exclude civil society and the bureaucracy that worked to create a better place to live and build the blocks of Singapore's identity. A case in point is the ten-year education plan from 1950 to 1960.

The People's Action Party and the government it leads made tremendous contributions to Singapore's success, but they should not be presented in a way that excludes other key components of the Singapore story.

Jim Baker
February 2020

WEST MEETS EAST IN THE ARCHIPELAGO

In the sixteenth century, the archipelago faced a challenge that was vastly different from its previous contacts with civilizations beyond the Malay world – Europe. India had come to the region to trade and had brought its culture as well as the tools Southeast Asians needed to be partners in the world's economy. The Indians, however, did not make any serious attempts to translate trade into political dominance.

The archipelago's experience with China was even less dramatic. Between 1403 and 1430, the Chinese sent seven maritime expeditions into Southeast Asia. Each carried 27,000 men, but there was no attempt at conquest, except occasional altercations at sea, nor any attempt to influence the culture of the area. Chinese culture was not easily exportable. Its philosophy/religion was deeply embedded in race and tradition. The mixture of Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and ancestor veneration was hard to graft onto another culture without a revolutionary change in the social system. The Chinese also felt that China was the center of the world, and other nations could not possibly attain its sophisticated culture.

The Europeans, on the other hand, did not just want to trade with Southeast Asia – they wanted to control that trade and later, the people and their lands. Over a period of about three centuries, the people of the Malay world were to feel the impact of Western culture, science and religion. Their social structures were shaken, their economies revolutionized and their trading power lost.

There were three main stages of European expansion of power and influence. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Europeans gained footholds on a few coastal areas and islands in the strategic sea lanes. These were basically fortified trading posts. In the eighteenth century, the Dutch in Sumatra and the Spaniards in the Philippines expanded their bases to control the hinterlands.

In this second stage, local rulers and traders continued to be significant players in the commerce of the area. While the Europeans were able to establish naval superiority, influence trading patterns and meddle in their politics, the process of cultural and racial exchange among Southeast Asians in the period 1500–1700 continued as it had for the previous 1,500 years. The Acehnese in Perak, the Bugis in almost all areas; the Minangkabau in Negri Sembilan, Melaka and Pahang, the Cham in Terengganu and Pahang and the Orang Laut along the coasts of Johor had all intermingled and left cultural imprints. A new people had emerged, representing an amalgamation of these groups from across the archipelago.

By the end of the nineteenth century, virtually all Southeast Asia, except Siam, was divided among European powers. The trading roles of the indigenous people virtually ceased, except in coastal shipping and in the provision of labor to produce or extract goods for the Europeans. Prior to this time, the history of the Malays and Malaya could not be divorced from the history of the greater archipelago. The sultanates were not modern states with fixed borders but river and coastal royal courts that came and went with the fortunes of trade and manpower. The domination of the European powers changed the history of the Malay world to a history of the peninsula.

Many forces at work in Europe shaped the motivation for and the nature of European expansion. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was the rise of the nation state in Europe. Portugal, Spain, England, the Netherlands and France were solving domestic problems and creating strong central governments, governments that could marshal significant economic and military power to achieve national goals outside the home countries. Increasing nationalism also meant that political and economic rivalries were manifest in the dominant European economic system of the time – mercantilism. The system was based on the premise that nation states were in competition for their share of the world's wealth.

Each nation protected its economy by controlling trade and restricting it to its own country and colonies. The concept of "my gain is your loss" and vice versa was bound to lead to conflict.

Another economic force that contributed to Europe's outward expansion was the commercial revolution. New products created the need for new markets and new sources of wealth. Tea, spices, silk, cotton, tobacco and coffee were increasingly in demand, and fortunes could be made by supplying these goods. At the same time, new forms of business organizations, such as the joint stock company, offered avenues for men in commerce to pool their wealth and embark on large business ventures. Access to these new products was controlled by a pipeline of Malay, Indian, Middle Eastern and eastern Mediterranean merchants. If the European nations could circumvent these middlemen, there would be unlimited opportunities for their businessmen and monarchs.

For Gold, Glory and God

Portugal, a relatively small country of a little over a million people (most of whom were farmers and fishermen), had a great impact on the world in general and Asia in particular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Portugal's goal was to monopolize the trade in spices from the archipelago and luxury goods from China and India.

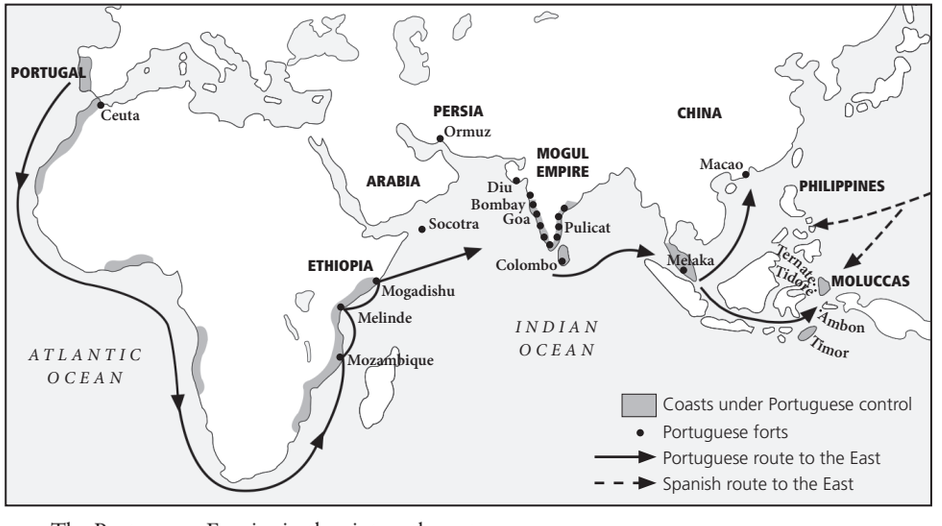
Its motivation was also aimed at those who controlled the trade – the Muslims. The Portuguese were tough, nationalistic and used to adversity. The last of the Islamic invaders had only been expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492. These battles, coupled with memories of the crusades, fueled their desire to punish the Muslims and convert the people of the East to Christianity.

The Portuguese possessed the means as well as the motivation to embark on this endeavor. In their voyages to trade with the East, they had made dramatic strides in naval technology. As a result of new shipbuilding methods and sail design, they could sail closer to the wind, and their ships had more speed and maneuverability than those of their European competitors. New navigational techniques also freed their dependence on the prevailing winds, and advances in naval gunnery provided deck-mounted cannons that had a longer range and better accuracy than those of the Indians and Malays.

Much of this advancement in maritime prowess can be attributed to the vision of Prince Henry the Navigator. Through his efforts, Bartolomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, and Vasco da Gama reached India in 1498. These voyages paved the way for the development of the Portuguese trading empire in the sixteenth century.

The Portuguese wanted to establish a series of naval fortresses from Lisbon to the Spice Islands in the archipelago in order to dominate the sea lanes, control the East-West trade and deny alternative routes to those trying to avoid their system. They established ports of call in the Cape Verde Islands, Angola and Mozambique along the coast of Africa, a fortress at Socotra to dominate the entrance to the Red Sea and a base at Ormuz to guard access to the Persian Gulf. On the western coast of India, they seized Goa, which became the headquarters of their trading empire in the East as well as a source of Indian goods, mainly cotton textiles, to trade with Southeast Asia.

The capture of Goa in 1510 was a gruesome example of the religious dimension of Portuguese expansionism. Admiral Albuquerque put its entire Muslim population to the sword, butchering thousands of people. He then created a Christian population by marrying non-Muslim Indian women to Portuguese sailors from his fleet. As a result, most Arab traders fled the western coast of India.



The Portuguese Empire in the sixteenth century.

Portuguese Take Melaka

Portuguese ships first called on Melaka in 1509, asking for trading privileges and the right to build a fort. The Malays attacked the Portuguese fleet and seized some twenty sailors. The Portuguese responded two years later when Alfonso de Albuquerque returned with a much larger fleet and a thirst for vengeance. Although the Portuguese were outnumbered 25 to 1, they won because of their superior artillery and the impermanence of Melaka's residents. Albuquerque's guns destroyed all the Muslim shipping

The Fall of Melaka

"Here now is the story of Fongso d'Albuquerque of Pertugal [Portugal]. When he reached Melaka, there was great excitement and word was brought to Sultan Ahmad, 'The Franks are come to attack us! They have seven carracks, eight galleasses, ten long galleys, fifteen sloops and five foysts.' Thereupon Ahmad assembled all his forces and ordered them to make ready their equipment. The Franks fired from their ships and the cannon balls came like rain. The noise of the cannon was as the noise of thunder in the heavens and the flashes of fire of their guns were like flashes of lightning in the sky; and the noise of their matchlocks was like that of groundnuts popping in the frying-pan. So heavy was the gunfire that the men of Melaka could not maintain their position on the shore. The Franks then bore down upon the bridge with their galleys and foysts.

"When day dawned, the Franks landed and attacked. And Sultan Ahmad mounted his elephant, Juru Demang, The Franks fiercely engaged the men of Melaka in battle and so vehement was their onslaught that the Melaka line was broken, leaving the sultan isolated. He fought with the Franks pike to pike and was wounded in the palm of the hand. And he showed the palm of his hand, saying, 'See this, Malays!' and when they saw that he was wounded, the chiefs and men returned to the attack and fought the Franks.

"Tun Salehuddin called upon the Orang Kaya (nobles) to fight with the Franks pike to pike. And Tun Salehuddin was struck in the chest and killed, and twenty of the leading war chiefs were killed. And Melaka fell."

— From the *Malay Annals* (paraphrased)

in the harbor. The ruling family of Melaka fled east to Pahang and eventually established a new Malay kingdom in Johor and Riau.

The Portuguese established outposts in the Spice Islands – at Ternate, Tidore, Ambon and Timor – and at Macao in China. Thus, by the middle of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese trading empire stretched from China and the Celebes through Melaka, Ceylon, India and around Africa to Lisbon, which became the distribution point in western Europe for much of the Eastern produce. This great empire brought much wealth to Portugal. To give an example, $45 worth of spices bought in the Celebes could be sold for $1,800 in Lisbon.

However, the Portuguese never fully achieved their original objectives to control the straits, amass wealth and convert Muslims. Portugal was a small country and its trading empire was too far-flung. It was never able to control the straits completely because its navy did not have enough ships. As a result, Portuguese Melaka spent most of its history fighting off attacks by the Javanese, the Acehnese and the Johor Malays – in 1513, 1537, 1539, 1547, 1551, 1568, 1573, 1574, 1575, 1586, 1587, 1606, 1616, and 1639. They were fortunate that the Acehnese and the people of Johor disliked each other and so did not join forces against Portugal. Each time, the Portuguese fortress, A Famosa ("The Famous"), with its eight-foot-thick walls, made it possible to hold off the attacks until help arrived from Goa or the Spice Islands.

Furthermore, while the Portuguese had originally intended to recreate the system and services provided by the former sultanate, Melaka did not attract Portugal's best and brightest administrators. Most of them were in the military or soldiers of fortune. The result was a system run by barely literate men and rife with corruption. Much of the revenue that was supposed to go to the crown and to run the port was mismanaged. As time went on, it became a liability to the government. Added to this was the inability of the Portuguese to control the Sunda Straits, which meant traders could conduct business in western Java and avoid Melaka altogether.

Given the crusading Christian reputation of the Portuguese, Muslims from India traded with Aceh, Pasai, Riau and Java. Corruption, inadequate facilities and poor services in Melaka deterred many non-Muslims as well. Melaka became more of a garrison town than a trading center. It was of use to the Portuguese trading system as a port of call and a naval base – ships going west from Macao in China with tea and silk stopped there, while Portuguese captains carrying silver from Japan and spices from the archipelago had a safe haven on their way to Goa and Portugal – but Melaka was not the emporium and entrepôt that it had once been.

Finally, Portugal failed to convert people to Christianity; in fact, its efforts were counterproductive. Its ruthless treatment of Muslims drove them away from Christianity. Islam became a rallying call for those

A Malay was First to Circle the Globe

Sailors in the Spanish expedition (1519–22) led by Ferdinand Magellan are usually credited with being the first to circumnavigate the world. In actual fact, the first man to circumnavigate the world was a Malay.

Magellan was originally from Portugal, and his early seafaring career was in service to the Portuguese crown. While in Portuguese Melaka, he purchased a Malay slave from the southern Philippines, whom he called Enrique.

Enrique accompanied him back to Europe, where shortly after his return, he switched allegiance to Spain and renounced his Portuguese citizenship. In Spain, Magellan convinced the crown to back an expedition to the Spice Islands by sailing west from Spain, thus circumventing the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, which declared that lands to the east belonged to Portugal and those to the west to Spain.

When Magellan and Enrique disembarked in the Philippines, Enrique became the first person to circumnavigate the world. Magellan was ecstatic because arriving at Enrique's homeland was proof that the world was indeed round.

Enrique was invaluable to Magellan's efforts in converting the people to Christianity and conquering the area because he could converse with the natives. After Magellan's death at the hands of enraged islanders, who were retaliating against the mass rape of their women, the remainder of the Spanish crew escaped. Of the 60 men who had fought the islanders, only Enrique and two others survived.

Magellan had promised Enrique liberty after his death, but the new captain refused to free him. He jumped ship and remained in the Philippines.

opposed to European intervention, and the faith grew as a result. Great missionaries, such as Francis Xavier, did their best in Melaka but left in frustration. The only converts were the wives and children of the locals who married Portuguese sailors and soldiers. The descendants of these people and a few Portuguese words in the Malay language are the only lasting heritage of the Portuguese presence in Melaka.

The impact of the Malay world's first encounter with a European power was essentially negative. Portugal ended the Melaka Sultanate and its efforts to create greater political and cultural Malay unity. Although Johor inherited the royal lineage of Melaka, the Malay political world was moving toward political fragmentation, which made the area vulnerable to further European expansionism. The presence of aggressive outside powers such as the Portuguese disrupted and dissipated the wealth that the peninsula derived from its strategic position in the East-West trade. Portuguese rule in the area was an omen of things to come.

By the last decade of the sixteenth century, the tenuousness of Portugal's hold over its Asian trading empire was increasingly apparent to other European trading nations. The Dutch and the English began to challenge its routes and sources, determined to take over the lucrative trade in the East.

Rise of Aceh

Until the coming of the Portuguese, Aceh was a relatively minor state at the northern tip of Sumatra, which survived off preying on ships and the sale of pepper. This Muslim state was one of the main benefactors of the exodus of Muslim traders from the Christian Portuguese takeover of Melaka in 1511. The increase in trade and wealth generated by these traders made Aceh the dominant Malay power in the western archipelago in the century following the fall of Melaka.

Under the leadership of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah Al-Kahar, who ruled from 1537 to 1568, Aceh combined religious fervor and a formidable military machine to achieve success. Aceh had accepted Islam in the fourteenth century and in the sixteenth century used the religion to unite the Islamic areas of Sumatra. Missionary zeal and the sword converted non-Muslim groups as well, such as the Minangkabau. Aceh had the most modern non-European military force in the area, with Turkish mercenaries

providing advanced gunnery skills. The artillery capabilities of the Turks (who also hated the Portuguese), coupled with fiercely loyal Acehnese, gave Alauddin an awesome military force.

Aceh conquered much of the western coast of Sumatra and controlled the Sunda Straits for a while, offering an alternative route to those who wanted to avoid Portuguese Melaka. It fought the Portuguese for a century, trying to take control of the Straits of Melaka. In the end, the Acehnese failed to defeat the foreigners, primarily because of the more advanced Portuguese navy and the impregnable fortress at Melaka. Aceh did capture the sultanate of Perak and its tin deposits and dominated Perak for almost a century, thus introducing a new group into the Malay cultural mix on the peninsula.

Aceh reached the height of its power under the rule of Sultan Iskandar Muda, who reigned from 1607 to 1636. During this time, it extended its control over most of the Malay peninsula, capturing Pahang in 1617 and sending one thousand of its inhabitants to Aceh as slaves. The Acehnese seized Kedah in 1619 and created refugees of the royal family of Johor

The Acehnese Empire in the early seventeenth century.

by repeated sackings of its capital. All that stood in the way of Sultan Iskandar and the recreation of an empire on the scale of Srivijaya and Melaka was the Portuguese garrison.

In 1629, Aceh assembled an army of 20,000 men and 200 ships to conquer Melaka. This was an incredibly large force for a trading empire, and Iskandar threw a large portion of his resources into this battle. His troops fought almost to the heart of the city, but reinforcements arrived from Goa in time to tip the scales. In the Portuguese counter-attack, the Acehnese suffered huge losses. Estimates by historians on the number killed vary from 10,000 to 19,000 – devastating numbers.

This debacle and the wars that preceded it decimated a generation of young Acehnese and forced Aceh's withdrawal from many of its conquered lands. Although their power was checked, the Acehnese had built a reputation as a strong and self-sufficient people, devout in their religion and fearless in battle. In the nineteenth century, when the Netherlands extended its control over what is known as Indonesia today, Aceh was the last to be subjugated. The Dutch fought a 25-year war with Aceh (1873–98) and never really established effective control over these people. To this very day, the Acehnese remain a fiercely independent people and continue to resist domination by the Indonesian government.

Johor and the Royal Family

Although Aceh was the heir to Melaka in terms of power and trade, Johor, in the eyes of many Malays, was the legitimate heir to the lineage of Srivijaya, Parameswara and Melaka. The story of this royal family resumes with the last days of Melaka.

After the Portuguese captured Melaka, Sultan Ahmad and his father beat a hasty retreat to Pahang. Mahmud, having observed his son's ineptitude in crises with the Portuguese and upset with Ahmad's deviant and toadying entourage, eventually had him murdered and reclaimed the throne, not trusting the future of the Melaka royal family in Ahmad's hands.

Mahmud settled in Riau on the island of Bentan. Like his forefather, Parameswara, he turned to the local community, the Orang Laut, for support and manpower. Initially, his plan was to raise an army and retake Melaka. Virtually all the peninsular states had ties through marriage with the Melaka royal family, and there was hope that an alliance among the states and with the Orang Laut from Riau and the remaining few from the old empire could defeat the Portuguese. Johor would pay a heavy price for this belief.

In the three-way competition for control of the straits and trade in the western archipelago among Aceh, Johor and Portugal, Johor was constantly on the losing end. It has been said that Johor's capital was burned down so often that the followers of the sultan became construction experts by rebuilding it.

In 1526, the Portuguese burned Bentan in retaliation for an attack by followers of the sultan. The royal court then moved to a site up the Johor River. In 1535, the Portuguese destroyed the new capital. By the 1540s, because of its inability to fight off the Portuguese and Acehnese, Johor ceased to be the heir to Melaka in the eyes of some of the other royal families, particularly in Sumatra. However, its sovereignty continued to be recognized in many parts of the peninsula.

Riau and Johor spent the rest of the century on the defensive as Aceh grew in power and became increasingly hostile. At one point, Johor made an alliance with the Portuguese, who also wanted to check the power of Aceh. The sultan made a state visit to Melaka – the first member of the royal family to set foot in Melaka since 1511 – to consummate the alliance. However, a successful campaign against Aceh fueled Johor's ambition, and it attacked Melaka while Portugal was sidetracked by Aceh. In 1587, the Portuguese retaliated, and the royal court moved farther up the river to Batu Sawar.

Aceh occupied the Johor capital in 1613 and took the royal family prisoner. It put the sultan's half-brother on the throne, but Sultan Hammat Shah proved to be no puppet and removed the royal court into the Orang Laut heartland in the Riau and Lingga archipelagos. In retaliation against his perceived treachery, Aceh pillaged and burned the capital at Lingga. The sultan went into hiding, and the Johor royal family faced political and economic obscurity.

Johor's fortunes changed with the arrival of the Dutch because both Aceh and the Portuguese were enemies of the Dutch. Aceh controlled the Sunda Straits, and the Portuguese stood in the way of Dutch trading ambitions. Thus, in 1639, the Dutch joined forces with Johor to attack

Johor River and the Riau and Lingga Archipelagos (1500–1700).

Melaka. As a result of the fighting spirit of their soldiers and the strength of A Famosa, the Portuguese held out for almost two years until they finally surrendered in 1641.

The people of Johor had planned to reoccupy Melaka after the Portuguese defeat and reestablish the Malay Empire. The Dutch wanted control of the straits and were not interested in Johor's plans. It began to dawn on the local powers that the Dutch objective was to monopolize trade, and anyone who interfered was bound to feel the wrath of their sea power.

However, the Dutch had little interest in the political affairs of the peninsula other than in Melaka, and as Johor expanded its influence northward, they did not interfere. Friendly relations with Johor were in the interests of the Dutch because of the havoc Johor's sailors and the Orang Laut could wreak on Dutch shipping.

As a result of Dutch victory over the Portuguese and the check they placed on the weakening Acehnese, the people of Johor were able to move their capital back to the mainland and reestablish their kingdom along the Johor River under the leadership of Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah III (1623–77).

Over the next fifty years, Johor was once again the strongest power on the peninsula. It reestablished influence over much of what had been Melaka's territory and made alliances with sultanates in Sumatra. The Johor River and Riau once again became important entrepôts. Although much of the trade was with the Dutch, there are numerous accounts of a bustling, successful trading economy that was the outlet for pepper, hardwood, camphor, rattan and tin. That Johor could achieve this after its losses to Aceh and Portugal was because of the system of government inherited from Melaka.

If Johor had not become involved in a disastrous war with Jambi in Sumatra in 1673, it might have remained a prosperous kingdom with economic and political independence. The war was a result of royal marriage politics. The sultan of Jambi pledged his daughter to the crown prince of Johor. The laksamana of Johor, Abdul Jamil, feared that both his and Johor's power would be diluted by this alliance and preferred that his own daughter marry the prince. The sultan of Jambi took this as a personal slight and an insult to his people and proceeded to raze the capital. Johor

eventually won the war but in the process, lost political control over its government. Weakened by the destruction of the capital and in the face of superior forces, the Johor laksamana had enlisted the help of Bugis mercenaries from the eastern archipelago. The Bugis had tipped the scales in favor of Johor, but at the end of the war they refused to go home. Not having the military power to force them to leave, Johor was compelled to invite into its midst a tough, cohesive people who would dictate the future of the sultanate. Another result of this war was Johor's loss of control over the Sumatran Minangkabau, who no longer feared Johor's power.

Johor's loss of independence occurred during the reign of Sultan Mahmud (1685–99). A seven-year-old at the time of his ascension to the throne, he was dominated by the family of Laksamana Abdul Jamil, who for all practical purposes ran the country. When Mahmud came of age, it

Aceh, Johor and the Dutch in the late seventeenth century.

became apparent that he had some serious personality flaws and was not suitable to be a Malay sultan. He was a sadist and a pervert, as well as a homosexual. It was said that he once used members of his court for target practice when he was trying out a new set of guns. Another time, he was said to have ruthlessly punished the pregnant wife of one of Johor's leading citizens for stealing fruit from his orchard by having her disemboweled in public.

The sultan posed a problem for the merchants and officials of Johor. They wanted him dead, but Malays believed that the sultan was God's representative on earth. For commoners to kill the sultan was a threat to the legitimacy of the crown. If they could overthrow the crown, where was the *daulat* of the sultans? In spite of the dilemma, leaders in the merchant community stabbed the sultan to death in the marketplace.

Although Johor prospered for a short while under Sultan Abdul Jalil Riayat Shah IV, who as bendahara had been one of the conspirators, the murder of Sultan Mahmud ended a royal line that stretched back to the divine creation of the Palembang monarchy. His murder weakened the loyalties of many of the people in the area, especially the Orang Laut. Questions were also raised over the divine legitimacy of a ruler. Inevitably other powers began to compete for the power vacuum that existed.

Dutch Challenge Portuguese Trade

Two of the largest ports in the world today are Singapore and Rotterdam. By collecting and selling the goods of other countries, both have used their geographical locations to become centers of trade. Rotterdam sits at the mouth of the Rhine River, which flows from the North Sea through the heart of western Europe. The Dutch made their living on the trade that flowed up and down this river. They also worked as coastal traders and fishermen in the Baltic Sea and the English Channel. The sea and trade were vital aspects of their economy.

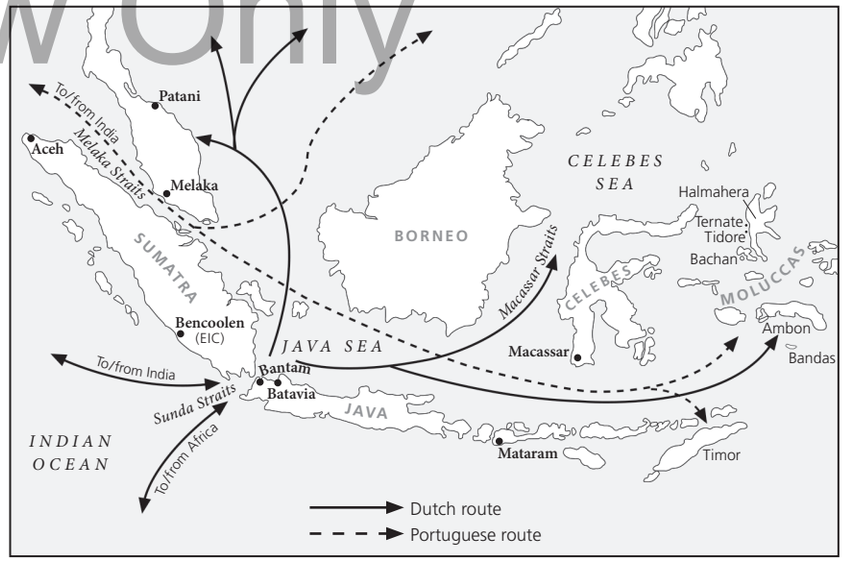
In the sixteenth century, the Netherlands was part of the Catholic Spanish Empire. When the Protestant Reformation took place in Europe, many Dutch left the Catholic Church and became Protestant, which in turn led to a Dutch rebellion against Spain. In 1580, the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal merged, and the Spanish crown, in an attempt to bring the rebellious Dutch in line, closed the port at Lisbon to Dutch traders and

shipping. This threatened the economic lifeblood of the Netherlands. While the Portuguese were the source of products from the East, the Dutch were the distributors of these products in western Europe. The ban on access to some of their most lucrative trade became a primary motivation in the Dutch desire to cut out the middleman and seize control of the commerce from the East, especially that of the archipelago.

Many Dutch sailors had traveled with the Portuguese to the East and had learned Portuguese navigational and sailing methods. During these voyages, the Dutch had also observed that Portuguese control over their trading empire was weak. The secret was out – Portugal was vulnerable and unable to defend its far-flung empire. This knowledge and Dutch advances in naval technology gave them the tools to challenge Portuguese trade between Europe and Asia. Thus, by the end of the sixteenth century, a mixture of nationalism, economic necessity and maritime knowledge created a new player in the trade of the archipelago – one far more formidable than the Portuguese.

The vehicle for the creation of Dutch trading dominance was a joint stock company called the Dutch East India Company (VOC). The Dutch movement to the East was thus financed and controlled by private investment, although the Dutch government granted it a monopoly on the trade with the East and the virtual powers of a government. The company had the power to make laws, appoint judges, set up courts and police forces and administer any territories it seized. The VOC also had the authority to establish an army and navy. By the second half of the seventeenth century, it had an army of 10,000 men and an armed fleet of hundreds of merchant and naval vessels and was virtually a law unto itself. In today's world, a comparison would be to give a major oil company total control over all the oil coming out of the Persian Gulf.

The VOC realized that the key to profitable trade meant controlling the supply of produce at its source – not just controlling the distribution but also the amount placed on the market. The Dutch wanted to make money, not save souls or punish Muslims. By avoiding the mistakes of the Portuguese, the Dutch were able to make deals with local rulers and interfere in local battles over thrones without the Muslim/Christian issue, and Dutch military support became important in tipping the scales in favor of local competitors.



Portuguese and Dutch trade routes in the seventeenth century.

However, it did not take long for the locals to realize that the Dutch monopoly on trade was detrimental to the archipelago's economic health. As the seventeenth century progressed, Dutch policy became increasingly ruthless. Local leaders and populations in the Celebes and Moluccas who did not cooperate with Dutch demands faced fearsome consequences. On Lontor, the entire population was wiped out because of its defiance of the Dutch; on Run, the local population was sold into slavery. In Ternate in 1650, Bachan in 1656 and Timor in 1667, native spice crops were burned because too much had been grown and the surplus could not be absorbed by the Dutch. As demand for coffee and sugar increased, local populations were forced to grow them in lieu of traditional crops or, in some cases, in lieu of food crops.

Control of the sea lanes was a necessary ingredient in the VOC's ambitions. To this end, the Straits of Melaka posed a problem because Aceh was at the northern entrance, Johor was in the south, and the Portuguese were in Melaka. The Dutch sidestepped the problem by utilizing the Sunda Straits as a shipping route and avoiding the Portuguese navy. They established a trading center in the western part of Java – Batavia – in 1619, creating a commercial collection point close to the source of the product they

were most interested in – spices. Batavia was built on a Dutch model, a bit of Europe in Southeast Asia, and was meant to be the new Melaka.

The Portuguese and the local powers, especially the Javanese, fought tenaciously throughout the archipelago, but the Dutch slowly established their supremacy in Ambon and the Banda Islands (1621), Macassar (1667), Ternate (1677), Mataram (1682) and Bantam (1684). However, as long as the Portuguese held Melaka, Dutch control of the spice trade was under threat. With the help of Johor, Melaka was taken in 1641.

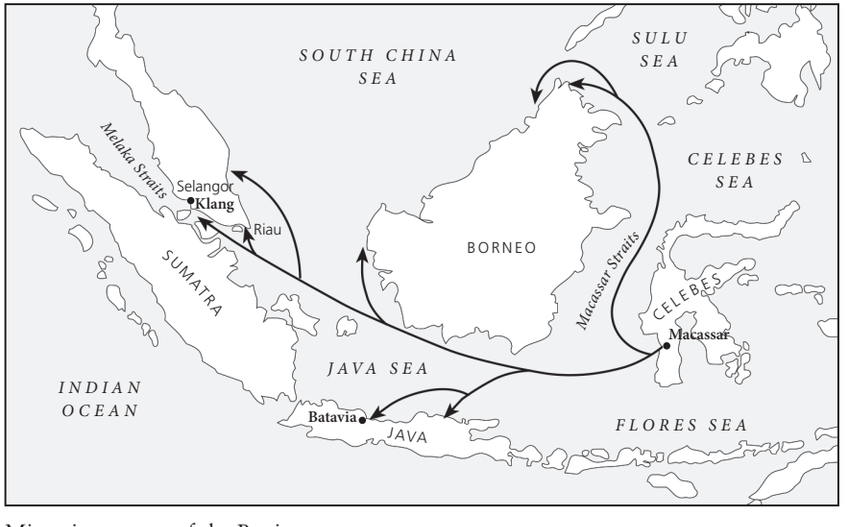
As a result of Dutch occupation, Melaka's role became negative – to deny its use as a port to anyone and to force trade south to Batavia. In lesser roles, Melaka was used as a collection point for tin and to enforce the Dutch monopoly on the produce coming out of Perak, which was not very successful. Although the Dutch still had to fight the local powers for control of the Melaka Straits, they had negated its importance as a major highway of trade. It is ironic that the only non-Dutch power to use Melaka after its fall was Portugal, which continued to need a port of call between Macao in China and Goa in India. Thus the Melaka of Parameswara, Mansur Shah and A Famosa became a secondary naval base in the VOC trading empire, a colonial backwater.

In many ways, the seventeenth century was a Dutch century in the East Indies. The VOC made fabulous profits, and the people who worked for them in the East led luxurious lives, with slaves, beautiful homes and standards of living far beyond what they would have enjoyed in the Netherlands. But except for a few buildings in Melaka today, there is little evidence that the Dutch spent 150 years there. The true Dutch legacy in the history of Malaysia was its impact on the Malay Mediterranean as a whole. As a result of Dutch interference in the economy, the lives of large numbers of people in the Malay cultural world changed. There were serious reductions in living standards as a result of Dutch policies and profits. Others, such as the Bugis, were excluded from their traditional trading patterns, and there were large-scale migrations throughout the archipelago caused by the Dutch. The Malay peninsula and Borneo were the recipients of many of these displaced people. The Dutch also began a process which over the next couple of centuries forced many in the archipelago away from traditional seafaring occupations and into agricultural pursuits. Outgunned and outmaneuvered, farming became an attractive option.

The Bugis Dominate in the Eighteenth Century

In the eighteenth century, the political life of the peninsula was dominated by the Bugis. This group of people had traditionally played a key role in the spice trade of the eastern archipelago. Skilled sailors, boat builders and traders, they were adversely affected by European domination of trade and by the political problems caused by interference from these outside powers. As the Dutch increased their power and influence, many Bugis migrated west, and their participation in trade declined. Political refugees were also forced to flee west because of civil wars that erupted as a result of Dutch manipulations of local rivalries.

In the seventeenth century, many displaced Bugis began to sell their mercenary skills. As ruthless fighters in the employ of the Portuguese, the Dutch and later the kingdoms of the western archipelago, the Bugis were feared by all. Their prowess as fighters was partially due to their knowledge of modern weaponry, but more importantly because they operated as organized military and social units that had clear lines of leadership and group loyalty. They literally brought their government with them as they migrated, and each group was a part of a larger Bugis culture from which it could draw assistance. It is estimated that, if necessary, the Bugis could mobilize over twenty thousand men from their bases in Selangor, Riau, Borneo and the Celebes.



Migration routes of the Bugis.

A final reason for their success was that they were willing to work within existing political institutions. For example, in Johor, they operated as powers behind the scenes and maintained the traditional structure of the sultanate and its symbolic position in the eyes of the local inhabitants.

In the eighteenth century, a well-connected series of Bugis settlements stretched from the Celebes to the Straits of Melaka. In the Malayan area of the archipelago, Bugis settled in uninhabited areas of Selangor and Linggi. Others signed on as soldiers in Johor and set up in the Riau and Lingga archipelagos. It is from these bases that they rose to power in the Malay sultanates.

By this time, the battle for control of Johor had passed from internal competing factions to outsiders. The decade and a half of peace and prosperity after the assassination of Sultan Mahmud ended with a battle between the Bugis and the Minangkabau for control of the Malay kingdom.

In 1716, a Minangkabau prince from Siak in Sumatra, Raja Kecil, claimed the Johor throne, saying that he was the son of the last legitimate sultan – Mahmud. His somewhat far-fetched story was that his mother smuggled him out of Johor, and he was born after his father's murder. His claim was backed by his origins in Minangkabau and the support of its religious leaders, who traced his legitimacy back to the three legendary princes who were the heirs to Malay royalty. Raja Kecil rallied the support of many Orang Laut and Johor subjects who felt that Sultan Abdul Jalil's claim was illegitimate. Raja Kecil invited the Bugis from Riau to join him in restoring his family to the throne, but then staged a preemptive strike on Johor's capital. The Bugis felt that the coup was an act of treachery, and a five-year war ensued. The Bugis gained control and put the son of Abdul Jalil on the throne, which was meant to give the government a veneer of legitimacy while the Bugis filled the key positions of power. An eighteenth-century Bugis chronicle observed, "The sultan is to occupy the position of a woman only; he is to be fed when we choose to feed him; but [the Bugis] is to be in the position of a husband; his will is always to prevail."

How much the Bugis cared about the day-to-day affairs of government in the peninsula is questionable. What they really wanted was a base in Riau free from interference from Johor so as to extend their power and influence throughout the region. They gained power by intervening in the competition for the thrones of the sultanates, which by then had taken on

epidemic proportions. In Kedah and Perak, the Bugis and Minangkabau sided with competing factions for control of the governments, and in the ensuing warfare, the Bugis came out on top.

Selangor was an exception to the Bugis practice of ruling through puppet sultans. In the eighteenth century, the interior of Selangor was virtually uninhabited, and many Bugis had settled there. During the period of conflict between the Minangkabau and the Bugis, Raja Kecil invaded Selangor. When the Bugis drove the Minangkabau out in 1742, they realized that they needed to establish solid governments in these settlements. To that end they set up the sultanate of Selangor, only this time a Bugis family held the title. Prince Raja Salehuddin began a dynasty that has passed down directly to the present sultan of Selangor.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Bugis had established an impressive area of control that included Johor, the allegiance of Pahang and the strategic Riau islands, Kedah (the largest rice growing area), Perak (the largest source of tin), Selangor (a base on the Straits of Melaka) and the Bugis homeland in the Celebes. The only local threat was the Minangkabau, but they had become somewhat docile after being defeated so often by the Bugis.

The Bugis-Dutch Conflict

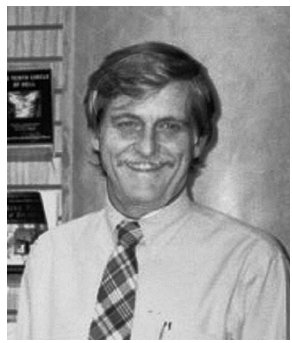
Eventually, the Bugis came into conflict with the Dutch because their goals were the same – to dominate the trade and commerce of the archipelago. As long as the Bugis stuck to the political infighting of the peninsular sultanates, the Dutch had little interest in clipping their wings, but by the middle of the eighteenth century, the two powers were on a collision course.

Demand for tin in Europe and China had risen rapidly, and Bugis control over most of the tin-producing areas in the peninsula threatened Dutch access to and control of this lucrative commodity. In addition, the Bugis/Malay entrepôt in Riau was a thriving concern, which drained trade away from Batavia. And last, what the Dutch saw as Bugis piracy contributed to increased confrontations. At heart, most of the Bugis were warriors, and the Dutch ships were too tempting to ignore.

The combination of commercial competition and mayhem on the high seas drew the Dutch into armed conflict with the Bugis. In the 1750s

and 1780s, actual warfare took place, culminating with a Bugis attack on Melaka in 1784. The Dutch victory and the ensuing counterattack seriously curtailed Bugis power and influence. Caught between the Dutch fleet and the walls of A Famosa, the Bugis incurred heavy losses. The Dutch then attacked Selangor and forced the Bugis sultan to flee temporarily to the eastern coast. They then attacked and occupied Riau, taking over the administration of the government. With the end of Bugis power in the peninsula, there was no longer a dominant local power. It is ironic that although the Dutch successfully destroyed Bugis power in the area, it was the British who ultimately benefited from it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jim Baker is a history and economics teacher at the Singapore American School. He is an American who has lived in Singapore for most of his life. He first wrote *Crossroads* in 1999, and subsequently wrote *The Eagle in the Lion City* (2005), an academic history of the American presence in Singapore, and *Singapore's Eagles* (2006), a fiftieth-anniversary publication of the Singapore American School.