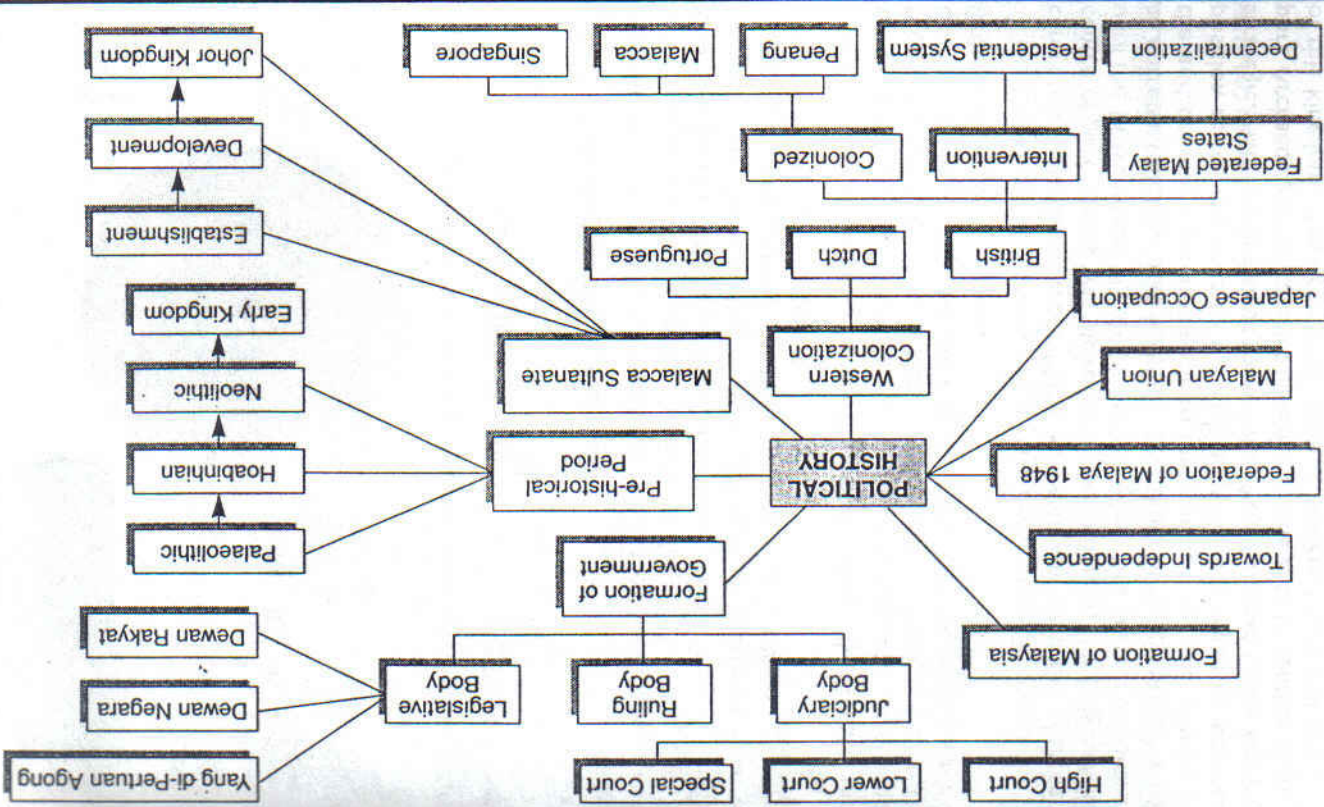


MALAYSIA'S POLITICAL HISTORY - A GRAPHIC SURVEY



1.1 EARLY HISTORY

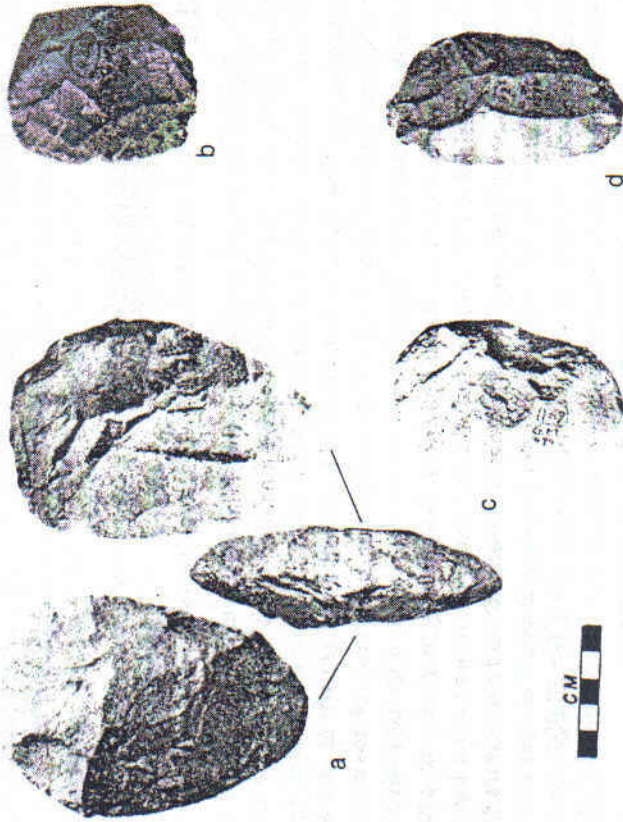
1.1.1 The Prehistorical Period in Malaysia

Archaeological evidences uncovered in the Niah Caves, Sarawak and Kota Tampan, Perak show that human beings have inhabited this country since 35 000 years ago. Human culture at that period is known as the Early Stone Age or Palaeolithic Age. The human inhabitants of this period are known as stone age people not because they lived in stone caves but because of their use of technology at that time. They used stone as the main material for their tools. Stone tools were used to eke out a living, like hunting, and also to protect themselves. Besides this, they also used tools made from wood and bamboo. They lived in limestone caves. Their settlements were located near rivers, like in Kota Tampan, Perak, and beside lakes, like in Tingkayu, Sabah. The Palaeolithic Age man did not experience much change in their way of life for 20 000 years. The stone tools they used remained roughly shaped. However, from 15 000 to 12 000 years ago, their culture began to show signs of change.

This change at the end of the Palaeolithic Age marks the beginning of the Mesolithic Age in this country. This was about 11 000 years ago. At this time too the Sunda Platform which was connected to mainland Southeast Asia began to sink. In Southeast Asia, the Mesolithic Age culture is called the Hoabinhian culture after Hoabinh, a place in Vietnam. The Mesolithic culture is equated with the Hoabinhian culture because tools used by these two cultures resembled each other's. This mainland culture is said to have spread to the Southeast Asian archipelago. Nevertheless, there are some historians who consider that the similarity of the Mesolithic Age culture in this country with the Hoabinhian culture does not necessarily imply influence from the Hoabinhian culture. They point out that the technique for making the axe, one of the tools used in the above comparison, was the same; hence the axes that were produced would also be the same too.

Mesolithic Age settlements in this country have been discovered in 50 limestone cave areas like in Bukit Chuping (Perlis), Gua Debu (Kedah),

Gua Kerbau (Perak), Gua Cha and Gunung Musang (Kelantan), Kota Tingkat, Gunung Senyum and Gua Kecil (Pahang), Niah Caves (Sarawak) and Gua Madai and Gua Tengkorak (Sabah). In open areas, settlements of the Mesolithic Age have been found in Guar Kepah (Kedah) and Jenderam Hilir (Selangor). The tools found here show an improvement from those of the Palaeolithic Age.



Hoabinhian Age tools found at excavation sites in this country, (a) in Gua Musang, Kelantan, (b), (c) and (d) in Gua Madu, Kelantan

Source: M.W.F. Tweedie (1953)

The Neolithic Age began about 5000 years ago. The types of tools in this period were better and more refined. Among the artifacts of this period found are the axe, adze and knife. These tools were used for cutting, digging, peeling and the like. Settlements of Neolithic people were found in Gua Cha, Gua Kecil, Guar Kepah, Jenderam Hilir, Gua Madai, Gua Tengkorak and Gua Niah. These people lived near sources of water, areas rich in jungle produce or game animals and also in flat as well as coastal areas. They could make boats and they also engaged in trading. About 2500 years ago, the Metal Age began. This is so named because the tools used during this period were made of metal, like iron and bronze. Settlements of this period have been found beside Sungai Lang (Selangor) and in Batu Buruk (Terengganu).



Neolithic Age tools found in this country, (a) in Tui, Pahang, and (b) in Gua Musang, Kelantan

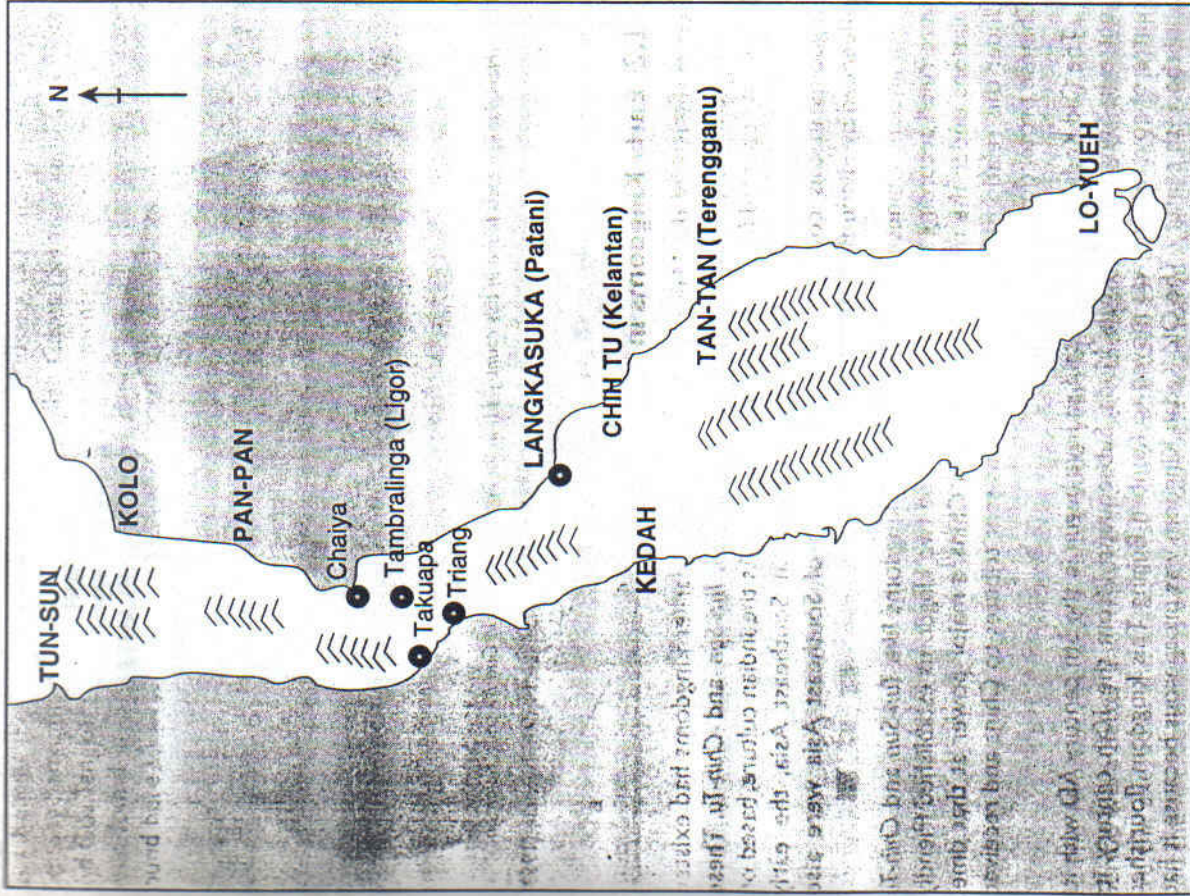
Source: M.W.F. Tweedie (1953)

1.1.2 Early Kingdoms in Malaysia

Before the rise of the Malay kingdom of Malacca, earlier kingdoms had existed in the country, like *Langkasuka*, *Pan-Pan*, *Tan-Tan*, *Tun-Sun* and *Chih-Tu*. These kingdoms appeared from the early Christian era. As the Indian culture, based on Hinduism, and later Buddhism was dominant in Southeast Asia, the early kingdoms in this country and in other parts of Southeast Asia were also influenced by Hindu-Buddhist elements.

An ancient Chinese source records that kingdoms like *Tun-Sun* and *Chih-Tu* were ruled according to Indian traditions. The two kingdoms established friendly relations under the tributary system with China, a major power at that time. Under this relationship, the two kingdoms sent tributes to China and received Chinese protection in return.

The Old Kedah Kingdom is said to have begun in the 5th century AD with its centre in Sungai Emas, Kuala Muda. Subsequently, from the 10th century, its centre of government was moved to Lembah Bujang. This kingdom flourished until the 14th century. The Old Kedah Kingdom was prosperous because it had an entreport harbour well-known at that time. Gunung Jerai, rising high above the land, became a direction guide to ships sailing through the Indian Ocean. Its position at the entrance to the Straits of Malacca made its port extremely strategic. Many trading ships from India, West Asia and China stopped at the port. Archaeological discoveries have been made at both centres of government of this kingdom. These comprise ceramic objects, beads and related articles, proving that the kingdom was well-known at that time.



Early Kingdoms in Malaya

Source: Rahman Yunus, Azizah Abu Chik (1994)

1.1.3 The Malay Sultanate of Malacca

► Formation

MALACCA was founded in 1400 by Parameswara, a prince from Palembang descended from Sailendra. According to the record of Tom Pires in *Suma Oriental*, Parameswara fled from Palembang which was attacked by Majapahit when Palembang declared its independence from the declining Majapahit Empire. In Singapore, Parameswara had killed Temagi, the representative of the Kingdom of Ayuthia (Siam) which ruled over Singapore. Five years later, Parameswara was forced to flee Singapore when Ayuthia attacked to avenge the killing of its representative. In Muar, Parameswara attempted to build a base, but abandoned the project because the place was not suitable. Finally, Parameswara found a suitable site at Bertam and established a settlement there. According to the *Malay Annals*, during a hunting trip, an unusual event happened when a mouse-deer kicked Parameswara's hunting dog. Seeing the bravery of the mouse-deer, Parameswara decided that the place was a suitable site for his base. He named the place 'Melaka' after the name of the tree he was leaning against when he witnessed the unusual event. Nevertheless, there is a view that the word 'Melaka' originated from the Arab word *malakat*. (According to this view, Arab traders named the port of Malacca *malakat*, which means 'market', because many people stopped over to trade here. The *Suma Oriental* mentions that at the early stage, the settlers of Malacca planted padi, fruits and spices.)

► The Development of Malacca

History tells us that Malacca was an important port and a great empire in the Malay Archipelago during the 15th century. This development of Malacca was closely related to Parameswara's role and wisdom during the early stage of Malacca's existence. Historians have pointed out this factor. Parameswara never forgot the threat posed by Ayuthia which bore him a grudge. At any time the Ayuthia Kingdom could destroy the new state that he had founded. He therefore turned to China, which was a major power at that time, for protection. Coincidentally, China at that time was implementing a policy of expanding its influence in the South China Sea regions. This opportunity was fully utilized by Parameswara. When Admiral Yin Ching visited Malacca in 1403 and offered friendship, Parameswara quickly accepted the offer and was prepared to come under the patronage of China. A return visit to China was made in 1405, headed by Tun Perpatih Putih. Later, in 1411 and 1414 Parameswara himself visited China. Before this, China sent Admiral Cheng Ho to Malacca to reinforce China's recognition of Malacca. This relationship with China definitely benefited Malacca. Threats from Siam and Majapahit were kept at bay. Consequently, Parameswara was able to devote his attention to developing Malacca. Historians are also of the opinion that Parameswara acted wisely when he embraced Islam in 1414 and assumed the name Iskandar Syah. His

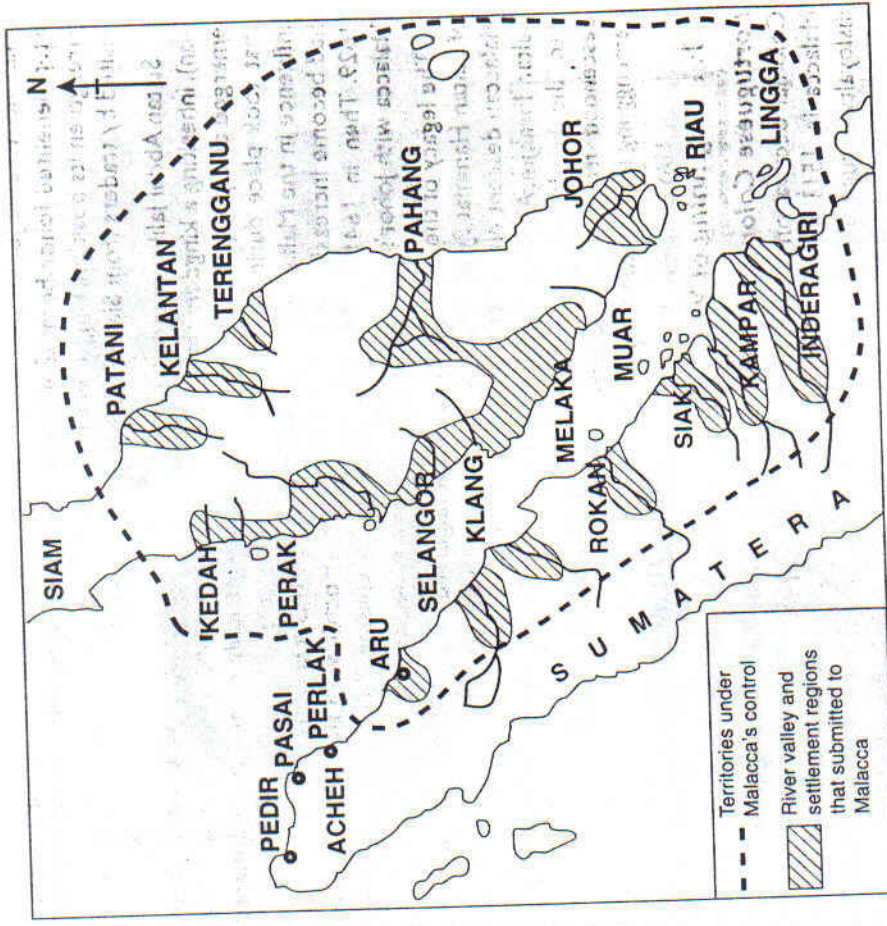
conversion drew many Muslim traders from Arabia as well as India to stop over at Malacca. His marriage with a princess from Pasai strengthened his relationship with Pasai. Pasai at that time was a thriving port, a centre for the development of knowledge and a hub for the dissemination of Islam. This greatly contributed to the progress of Malacca as a port.

From the strong foundation built by Parameswara, Malacca continued to develop during the reigns of Raja Kecil, Paduka Sri Maharaja who assumed the title of Sultan Muhammad Syah (1424–1444) and Raja Ibrahim (1444–1446). When Sultan Muzaffar Syah took over the reins of power in 1446, Malacca was already a successful port and an established kingdom. It was able to defend itself from external threats. For instance, Siam attacked Malacca in 1456 when Malacca's relations with China began to slacken, following the latter's decision to cease expanding its influence, but the attack was successfully repelled. Prior to this, in 1445, Siam had also launched an unsuccessful attempt to attack Malacca. In view of Malacca's capability to protect itself, Sultan Muzaffar Syah began to take a new approach in politics. With the help of the advice and wisdom of his bendahara Tun Perak, Muzaffar Syah began to expand his power to encompass the Dindings, Selangor, Muar, Singapore, Bentan and Pahang. With the subsequent control of Inderagiri and Kampar on the eastern coast of Sumatera, Malacca became a major power around the Straits of Malacca. Its control of regions on both sides of the Straits enabled Malacca to control economic resources important to Malacca's commerce, such as spices. Islam was spread to the subjugated territories. Consequently, Malacca became a major dissemination centre of knowledge and of the Islamic religion in the Malay Archipelago at that time. This further enhanced Malacca's prestige.

Malacca's progress and greatness were inherited by Raja Abdullah who took the title of Sultan Mansur Syah and ruled from 1456–1477. Sultan Mansur Syah was fortunate to enjoy the continued services of Bendahara Tun Perak. With Tun Perak's help and advice, the Sultan was able to bring further progress to Malacca's economy as well as its role in knowledge development and Islamic propagation. Sultan Mansur Syah became a patron for the development of Islam. At this time, the posts of *kadi* and *fakih* were introduced. Sultan Mansur Syah's government also converted many people of Champa to Islam.

Raja Husin came to the throne in 1477, succeeding his father Sultan Mansur Syah. Raja Husin used the title Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah. He was extremely firm and brave. Historians compare his 'action-oriented' rule to that of Sayyidina Umar Al-Khattab. Islamic laws were implemented seriously. However, after Raja Muhammad came to the throne as Sultan Mahmud Syah (1488–1511), Malacca began to decline.

Disintegration within the country became evident. Foreign influences gained strength in the palace. Finally, Malacca was defeated by the Portuguese in 1511.



The Empire of Malacca at the height of its glory

Source: G.P. Dartford (1967)

▶ The Johor Sultanate

After the fall of Malacca, its legacy passed on to the Johor Sultanate. The Johor Sultanate was founded by Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah, son of Malacca's Sultan Mahmud Syah, in 1528. Under the rule of Sultan Alauddin, Johor made several attempts to reclaim Malacca but all the attempts failed, and Sultan Alauddin died without achieving his mission. His son Raja Abdullah who succeeded him as Sultan Hammat Syah failed to continue his father's mission because he was busy repelling threats from Aceh. Although the Dutch, who arrived at Batu Sawar in 1602, had offered to help attack Malacca, the offer came too late because Johor was attacked by Aceh. Sultan Hammat Syah tried to obtain Dutch aid to restore Johor's sovereignty, but the Dutch were unwilling to help. Since Johor also faced threat from the Portuguese in Malacca, there was no way for Sultan

Hammat to save Johor but to establish friendly ties with the Portuguese. This step benefited Johor because it could build up its economy and consequently strengthen its position. Lingga, which was the administrative centre of Johor, was visited by traders from Siam, Patani, Java and Makasar.

Sultan Abdul Jalil succeeded his uncle Sultan Hammat Syah (who left an infant son), inheriting a kingdom that was thriving. Subsequently, during his reign Johor emerged as a prosperous trading centre. Coincidentally, several developments that took place during this time enabled Johor to strengthen its power and influence in the Malay Archipelago. Acheh, which was a serious threat to Johor had become increasingly weak following a major battle with the Portuguese in 1629. Then in 1641, the Dutch succeeded in chasing the Portuguese from Malacca with Johor's help.

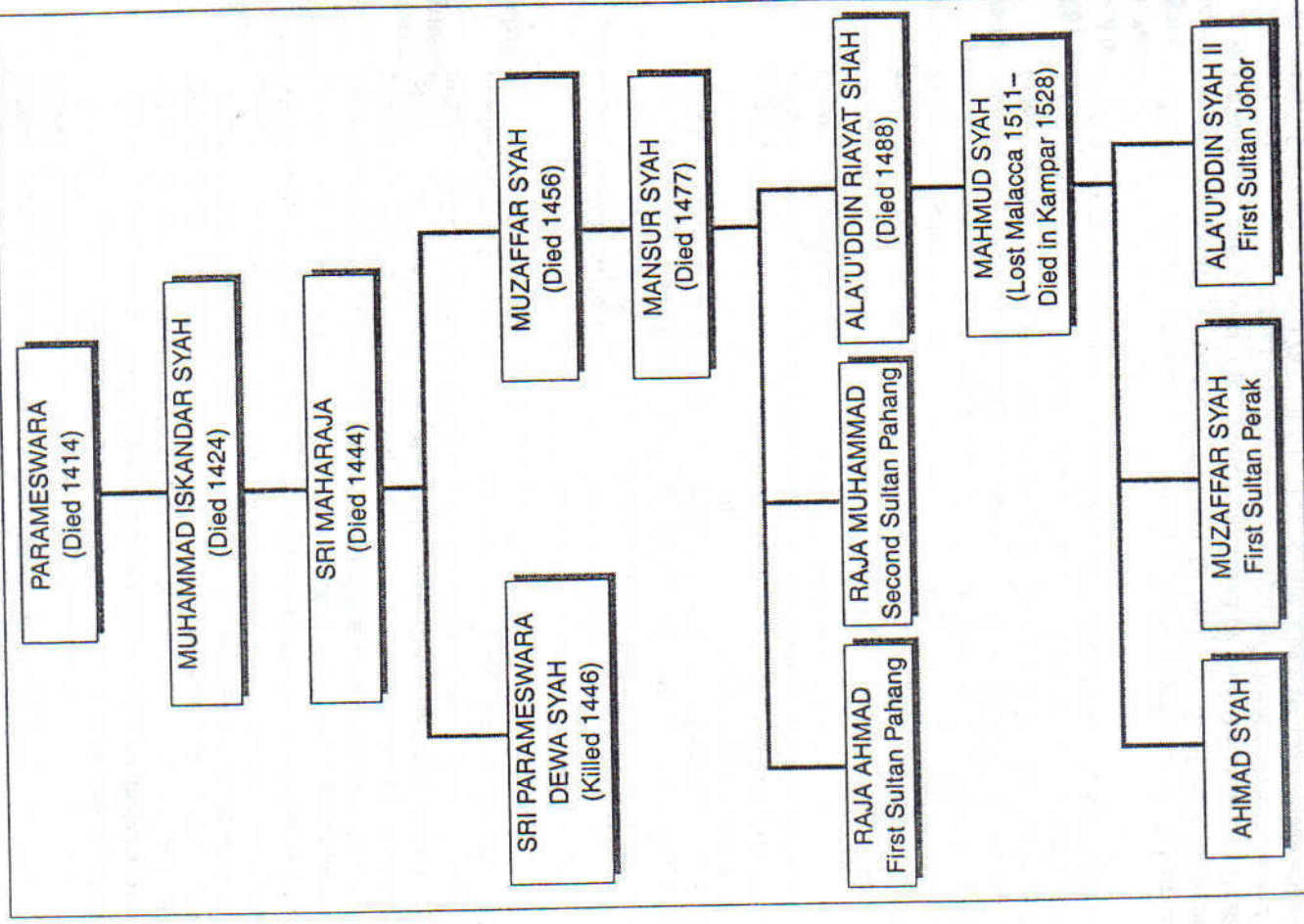
The legacy of the descendants of Malacca passed on to Raja Ibrahim, the son of Sultan Hammat Syah, who succeeded Sultan Abdul Jalil. The Johor Sultanate of Malaccan descent ended with the death of Sultan Mahmud Syah who succeeded Sultan Ibrahim. As Sultan Mahmud did not have a male heir, the succession fell into the hands of Bendahara Tun Abdul Jalil. Thus began a line of rulers descended from the Bendahara, and from 1885 the descendants of the Temenggung became the rulers of Johor.

1.1.4 Beginning of Western Colonization

► Portuguese Colonization

Colonial occupation in this country began when the Portuguese conquered Malacca in 1511. The fall of Malacca brought home the fact that disunity, disloyalty, struggle for power and influence and administrative inefficiency render a country weak and helpless.

In Malacca, the Portuguese introduced their own system to strengthen their political and economic position in the East. Malacca was placed under the administration of an officer with the rank of Captain, and from 1571 the post was changed to that of Southern Governor. This officer was trained by the King of Portugal for a period of three or four years. The Southern Governor was responsible to his superior, the Viceroy in Goa, India. To facilitate the smooth running of Malacca, the Portuguese appointed a Chief Justice to take care of the judicial system and a Captain General responsible for defence. In their administration, the Portuguese chose to retain the posts of Bendahara, Temenggung and Syahbandar. Nevertheless, it is clear that these officials did not have much influence in the administration. The Bendahara was only given the role of managing the various communities in Malacca town. He no longer acted as adviser to the government. The Temenggung too was only given the job of looking after the Malay community in the interior, and was no longer the government's security chief. Meanwhile, the Syahbandar, who previously took



The Sultans of Malacca

tin to them, and for favouring the English East India Company, launched an attack on the Dutch in Malacca. Sultan Ibrahim was helped by Rembau as well as the Yamtuan Muda of Johor, Raja Haji, in this operation. However, the attack failed. Raja Haji was later killed in 1784 in a battle at Teluk Ketapang. The military conflict between Selangor and the Dutch dragged on until 1786.

The Dutch tried its best to stifle Johor's power. Under the 1784 agreement they forced Sultan Mahmud III to surrender the port of Riau to them. Johor was in fact placed under Dutch influence although Sultan Mahmud III was acknowledged as the ruler of Johor. The Sultan's disenchantment was intensified when the Dutch sent a Resident to Riau. Consequently, in 1787 Johor launched a military attack on the Dutch settlement in Riau. The Dutch, however, recaptured Riau in the same year.

► **British Colonization of Penang, Singapore and Malacca**

Britain's colonization of Penang was achieved through deception and aggressiveness perpetrated by Francis Light. Towards the end of the 18th century, Britain sought to establish its influence in the Malay Archipelago. Since Penang was considered strategically located to serve as a military as well as a commercial base, the British too established a base there. Penang was a part of the territory of Kedah. Kedah, at that time, was facing military threats from Siam and Burma. So its ruler, Sultan Muhammad Jiwa, offered the British to set up a settlement there if the British were prepared to help him face the Siamese threat. Initially, this offer was not taken. Later, Sultan Abdullah renewed the offer to the British. Apart from the threats from Siam and Burma, Sultan Abdullah, this time, had also to contend with the Bugis and with opposition from nobles in his palace. Sultan Abdullah laid out several conditions in his offer: that the British would protect the waters of Kedah, that the enemies of the Sultan would be considered enemies of Britain, that expenses incurred in war would be borne by the East India Company, that all ships could trade freely in Kedah or Penang, that a compensation of \$30 000 (Spanish currency) would be paid to the Sultan and that the British would protect Kedah from enemy attacks. Without obtaining permission from his superiors in India, Francis Light agreed to these conditions in 1785. When the East India Company's authorities in India turned down Kedah's conditions to safeguard their commercial and political interests with Siam and Selangor, Sultan Abdullah ordered the British to leave Penang.

The situation became tense when the British refused to leave. But before Kedah could take any action, the British attacked Seberang Perai inflicting a serious defeat on Kedah. Being on the side of the vanquished, the Sultan had to accept the conditions imposed by the British in 1791, including acknowledging Britain's right to occupy Penang for an annual payment of Spanish \$6000 as compensation. With this agreement, British colonial rule of Penang began.

charge of all aspects concerning the port, was now made to assist the Bendahara, besides supervising non-Portuguese ships and escorting emissaries to meet the Governor.

The Portuguese mercantile policy displayed an element of covetousness quite unlike that practised by the Malacca Sultanate. Ships using the Malacca Straits had to pay a tax of between 6 to 10 percent of their total cargo value. Traders were required to obtain trading permits before they could carry out business transactions in Malacca. Those who flouted this regulation would have their goods confiscated or even their ships burnt. Portuguese officials would demand a share of the profits before issuing trading permits. Traders were also forced to sell their goods to the Portuguese at low prices and buy Portuguese goods at marked-up rates. In their ambitions to control the spice trade, the Portuguese treated the Muslim traders poorly. This caused traders to turn to the ports of Johor, Aceh and Demak. At the same time too, Johor and Aceh were threatening Malacca's security. As a result, the Malacca port and the Portuguese position there became unstable. This situation finally led to the fall of the Portuguese at the hands of the Dutch in 1641.

► **Dutch Colonization**

When the 130-year Portuguese colonial occupation of Malacca ended in 1641, the Dutch colonial era began. The Dutch defeated the Portuguese with the help of Johor. Johor at that time was under the rule of Sultan Abdul Jalil, the successor of Sultan Hammat Syah. Naturally at the beginning, the Dutch were grateful to Johor for helping them. In 1639, they had signed a Treaty with Johor which granted the nobles of Johor free access to trade in the Malacca Straits as a mark of friendship.

The Dutch tried to expand its influence in the trade of the region by extending their activities beyond the borders of Malacca. In 1650 they attempted to monopolize the tin trade in Perak by reaching an agreement with the Perak government. But their intention was foiled by opposition from the local people. Finally, the Dutch had to give up their desire for tin monopoly following an attack on their settlement in Pangkor Island launched by Panglima Kulup Ali in 1690. In that attack, many Dutch citizens were killed. In Selangor, the Dutch had also attempted to monopolize the tin trade by forcing Sultan Ibrahim to sell tin to them.

The Johor-Holland friendship established after the defeat of the Portuguese in Malacca was severely tested by commercial rivalry between the two parties. Holland was uneasy with the competition posed by Johor because it frustrated their objective for monopoly. The situation came to a head towards the end of the 18th century. In 1782 Dutch troops laid siege to Riau. Meanwhile in Selangor, Sultan Ibrahim, whom the Dutch had accused for not wanting to sell

In Sarawak, colonization began when James Brooke was appointed the Governor of Sarawak in 1841 by the Sultan of Brunei when he succeeded in quelling a rebellion in that state. A year later, the Sultan was forced to surrender the whole of Sarawak to him. When this was done, Brooke continued to expand his power and territory by attacking local villages.

► Direct Intervention

Direct and official British intervention at the end of the 19th century marked the starting point of widespread British colonial expansion in the Malay States. Although the British had already intervened in the Malay States from the middle of the 18th century, such interventions were unofficial and indirect. They were carried out by the East India Company or by private individuals. However, a change of government policy in London and rivalry from other Western powers opened the door for the British to expand their colonial influence by exploiting local situations.

Various excuses were put forward to justify their intervention in the Malay States. These included political unrest caused by succession disputes between rival claimants and secret societies. The unstable conditions were claimed to have disturbed British commerce in the Malay States as well as the Straits Settlements. Nevertheless, it seems clear that their intervention and colonial expansion were largely motivated by economic considerations. This country was rich in natural resources required by the factories in Britain. It was also a potential market for British manufactured goods. The change of the British government's non-intervention policy was also connected with economics. At that time, the European nations were competing among themselves to expand their imperialist activities throughout the world. The objective of imperialism was to dominate as many territories as possible. The more territories a nation could control, the greater would be the supply of raw materials for its factories in Europe. Consequently, national trade would grow, and government revenue increase. A nation's wealth is its source of power. Power is the source of a nation's pride. Therefore, all this revolved around one main objective, namely, economic development.

The British direct intervention in the country began in Perak. The 1874 Pangkor Treaty enabled the British to appoint an officer with the rank of Resident in the administration of Perak. This began the Resident System of administration in the country. In the same year, the British intervened in Sungai Ujong through a treaty with Datuk Kelana. Sungai Ujong received an Assistant Resident. Later, the British took the opportunity to intervene in the affairs of other districts like Terachi through a treaty with Yamtuan Tengku Antah in 1887,

However, the British in Penang had difficulty in obtaining food supplies. Kedah, on which Penang depended for the supply of food, was unhappy with the 1791 agreement, and tried to obstruct the supply of food to the island. Nevertheless, being weak, Kedah was in no position to resist Britain's pressure to surrender Seberang Perai to the Company in 1800. Under this agreement, the Kedah Sultan would receive an annual compensation of Spanish \$10 000 for the surrender of Seberang Perai. No mention whatsoever was made about the question of protection for Kedah.

Eventually, the British realized that Penang's geographical position was too far to the north, and so they began to look for a new base elsewhere in the region close to the Straits of Malacca. Stamford Raffles, who was given the task of looking for a new base, considered Singapore extremely suitable. The island was moreover not yet occupied by any European power. Raffles found out that there was a succession dispute between two sons of the Johor ruler, Sultan Mahmud III. Raffles recognized the elder son Tengku Husin as the Sultan of Johor. In gratitude for Raffles's support, Tengku Husin allowed the British to set up a settlement in Singapore through an agreement signed in 1819. Under this agreement, the British undertook to protect Tengku Husin and pay him an annual compensation of Spanish \$3000. It was also stipulated that the ruler of Johor or his successors would not enter into a relationship with any other Western power. With this formalized, the British had control over two important regions in the Malay Peninsula. Later, in 1824, an agreement was signed between the British and the Dutch. This Anglo-Dutch Agreement fixed the respective spheres of influence of the two powers to prevent conflict which might lead to war. Territories to the north and east of the Straits of Malacca were given to the British, while those to the west and south of the Straits came under Dutch influence. The two parties would refrain from expanding their influence in each other's sphere. Consequently, the Dutch who had occupied Malacca since 1641, surrendered the territory to the British, while the British who controlled Bencoolen in Sumatra released it to the Dutch. With this exchange, three important ports in the Malay Peninsula – Penang, Singapore and Malacca – were now under the control of the British. In 1826, these three territories became known as the Straits Settlements.

The colonization of Sabah began when Brunei surrendered its sovereign rights over western Sabah to a private company jointly owned by an Austrian, Baron Von Overbeck, and a Briton, Alfred Dent. Subsequently, the Sulu Sultanate surrendered its sovereignty over eastern Sabah to the same company. Later, through Alfred Dent, the company obtained approval of the British government to form a North Borneo chartered company to administer its affairs in Sabah. The Company ran Sabah as a privately-owned venture.

followed by Jelebu, Seri Menanti, Rembau, Tampin and Johol. By 1896, all these territories were united under British administration. In Selangor, intervention began with a treaty between Sultan Abdul Samad and the British in 1874 and Selangor had to accept a Resident. In Pahang, Sultan Ahmad was forced to sign a treaty with the British in 1888 and receive a Resident. With this, four states came under British control.

In these four states, the British instituted the Resident System. Under this system, the Resident was to advise the Sultan in all aspects of administration except those concerning religion and Malay customs. The Sultan was obligated to accept the Resident's advice. Nevertheless, the Residents were not given clear guidelines about their duties. They relied largely on their own judgement and discretion in carrying out their work. As a result, some Residents did not get the cooperation of local chiefs and officials. J.W.V. Birch in Perak, for instance, was not liked by the Sultan and was opposed by the Perak chiefs until he was killed in Pasir Salak. This demonstrated the consequence of tactless behaviour and ignorance of local values and sensibilities. Birch acted in the extreme when he cancelled a loan the Sultan had granted to a trader. In Malay society, the Sultan was the head of state honoured by the people. Birch's action was therefore tantamount to have brought disgrace to the Sultan. Furthermore, Birch had also threatened to remove the Sultan from the throne if the latter refused to carry out his advice.

Some Residents acted in a high-handed manner in administering the states. Birch was impatient in developing Perak for his own glory and prestige. J.P. Rodger in Pahang was no different. Abolition of slavery was carried out immediately. The right of district chiefs to collect taxes and administer their districts was hastily abolished. Consequently, these two Residents received opposition in their respective states. This was not the case with J.G. Davidson and Frank Swettenham. These two won favour with the chiefs. Slavery, in their states, was abolished gradually according to a well-planned schedule that did not offend the chiefs. In Selangor, for instance, Swettenham implemented a scheme requiring slave-owners to pay for the services of their slaves. In this way, over a course of time, slaves could save up sufficient money to free themselves. The issue of slavery had to be handled with tact and understanding because in Malay society, slavery was a customary practice, not an administrative issue as the British had considered. Administering districts and collecting taxes by district chiefs were also a customary practice in the Malay society. So if conflicting values like these were not approached with tact and wisdom, tension was bound to arise.

Although the Resident System had its share of weaknesses, it brought about progress in many aspects, such as the construction of roads, land administration, the justice system, railway transport and education.

► The Federated Malay States

In view of the weaknesses of the Resident System, the British decided in 1895 to unite the states to form the Federated Malay States. Under this federation, the four states with Residents, i.e. Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang, came under a uniform administration headed by a Resident-General based in Kuala Lumpur. In each of these states, the Resident no longer acted as the Sultan's adviser. That duty was transferred to the Resident-General. The Resident only acted as the chief administrator of the state government departments. The Resident-General was responsible to the High Commissioner who was at the same time the Governor of the Straits Settlements headquartered in Singapore.

At the federal level, which was centred in Kuala Lumpur, several government bodies were formed, such as the Federal Council which functioned like a Cabinet, the Attorney-General's office, the Commission of Justice and the Police Commission. A *Durbar* or meeting of the four Rulers from time to time was created. The first *Durbar* took place in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, in 1897 to discuss problems relating to customary practices, the Islamic religion and the welfare of the Malays. As the powers of the Malay Rulers had not improved, at the second *Durbar* held in Kuala Lumpur the Malay Rulers urged that their original powers be reinstated, and that the administration of the states be placed under the control of the sultans and officials of the respective states. The Malay Rulers had valid reasons for their demands because with the implementation of the Federal Council, powers were centred upon the High Commissioner. This relegated the Malay Rulers to the position of ordinary members in the Council. Furthermore, the State councils were left with a diminished role because powers were placed in the hands of the Resident-General.

► Decentralization

Partly as a result of the demands of the Malay Rulers and partly influenced by their desire to attract the unfederated Malay states to join the Federation, the British carried out *decentralization* or distribution of power. The British had no intention to restore powers to the Sultans; they only wanted to distribute powers from the Federal Government to the state governments. The *Decentralization* policy was carried out in 1909 with the formation of the Federal Legislative Council. This Council comprised the four Malay Rulers, the Resident-General, the four Residents, four unofficial members appointed by the High Commissioner, and the High Commissioner himself who acted as Council President. The Resident-General was now only a member of the Council and no longer empowered to change laws. Furthermore, he had to obtain the consent of the Malay Rulers before he could put forward a proposal to the Council for discussion. In 1910 this post of Resident-General was abolished and replaced by