

MALAY PENINSULA.

Extract of

*Outline of Political and Commercial Relations with the Native States on the Eastern and Western Coasts, Malay Peninsula**. By T. J. NEWBOLD Lieut., A. D. C. to Brigadier General WILSON, C. B.

[FROM THE JOURNAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, QCT. 1836.]

Present condition of the Malay States.—Having thus traversed both the eastern and western coast of the Peninsula, I will briefly advert to the political condition of the Malay States as it existed at the time of my quitting the Straits in 1835. The Siamese retained, in spite of their struggles, firm hold of *Quedah* and *Patani*, which are still groaning under the yoke. The rightful Raja of *Patani* remained a close prisoner in *Siam*, and his country in a state of depopulation and distress under a Siamese governor. *Tringanu* and *Calantan*, being less under the withering influence of the monarch of the White Elephant, are in a more prosperous condition, carrying on a considerable trade with *Singapore* under their own princes. Both *Tringanu* and *Calantan* have been lately menaced by *Siam*, in violation of their treaty with the British, by which they are interdicted from interfering with these States.—*Kemamang* is a small state, lying between *Tringanu* and *Pahang*: of the former it is nominally a tributary, but bears a *mala fama* on the score of piracy,—a practice said to be countenanced by its chiefs. The pirates are chiefly tempted by the prows trading from *Patani*, *Calantan* and *Tringanu* to the port of *Singapore*. *Pahang* was in a peaceable and flourishing state under its *Bandahara*, carrying on a profitable trade with *Singapore* chiefly in gold-dust. The shores of *Johore*, though nominally the possessions of our stipendiary the Sultan, are miserably neglected; the creeks, bays, islets, and rivers of this extensive tract affording safe shelter to the hordes of pirates that threaten to extirpate the native commerce of *Singapore*. The states in the interior of *Malacca* were, by the last accounts, still in anarchy and confusion, arising from the fierce feuds and broils which have for some years past been raging among the native chiefs. *Salangore* was labouring under serious apprehensions of an attack from *Siam* on the opposite coast of *Sumatra*, the chief of which was said to be collecting a fleet of *prahus* for that purpose. The Raja of *Salangore* was employed in repairing his fort, and remounting the numerous guns that lay scattered on and around the hill on which the fort stands. *Perak* was quiet, and occupied in agriculture and the tin trade. Our old ally, the ex-king of *Quedah*, and the Sultan of *Johore* were living on their handsome pensions at *Malacca*. The latter has since died (September 2nd, 1835). Near the close of 1835 no steps had been taken with regard to the succession. According to treaty, the pension was to expire with the Sultan; but out of consideration to his widow and children, an allowance of 100 Spanish dollars per mensem has been granted her by the Straits Government, pending a reference to Bengal.

The late Sultan first married with the present *Bandahara* of *Pahang's* daughter; by whom he had no issue. By his second wife, the present *Tumangong* of *Singapore's* sister, he had a son, surnamed *Tunku besar*, who married one of the *Tumangong's* daughters, but died without issue. His third wife was a woman of low birth, by whom he has a son now living at *Singapore*, named *ABDAL JALIL*. He is about 21 years of age. Not being of noble blood by his mother's side, his claims to the succession are not considered good by the Malays. By the fourth and present wife, who is of royal extraction, he has two sons, five lads,—and two girls: they reside with their mother at *Malacca*. The eldest of the boys is considered the late Sultan's heir.

The ex-king of *Quedah*, I believe, left *Malacca* towards the end of 1835 for *Delli* in *Sumatra*. He had, in 1833, expressed to me his determination of doing so, being disgusted at the answers given to his earnest and repeated applications for redress against the Siamese, and to his request for permission to reside at *Pinang*, which had then been recently refused by Lord WILLIAM BENTINCK. He said that he had many friends at *Delli*, and hinted at the possibility of his making a final attempt to expel, with their assistance, the Siamese from his dominions. *Perak* and the whole Malay population of *Quedah* and probably that of *Patani*, are greatly under his influence; and it would require but little persuasion to excite the whole of the neighbouring Malayan States to take up arms against their haughty oppressors.

With regard to British influence over the Malay States, it might unquestionably be much greater than it is; & indeed we might possess almost sovereign power over the whole peninsula, were we only to exert the political means already under our control. Of later days the fashion has been to treat with them as independent powers; while the chiefs themselves, from a combination of circumstances too long for detail here, are for the most part with difficulty and unwillingly brought to consider themselves so.

Experience has shewn the necessity of the existence of a predominating power, capable and willing to afford effectual mediation, to which these divided States may look up in their frequent disputes.

The Dutch during their ascendancy were fully alive to, and took every advantage of the influence their commanding position gave them; as the numberless treat-

ties concluded with almost every petty chief on the peninsula and in the Archipelago fully evince: but by a series of tyrannical and impolitic acts, more particularly the disgraceful system of forced labour, they alienated the affections of a generous race of men, and lost, as a natural consequence, the fruits of their able, though selfish negotiations and political alliances. *Siam* now occupies a prouder situation with regard to these Eastern States than Holland ever did. Two princes, representatives of the two most noble dynasties, *Quedah* and *Johore*, derive a handsome subsistence from British bounty. British colonies occupy, and carry on an extensive commerce from the site of those two ancient seats of Malayan empire, *Malacca* and *Singapore*; while British ships retain undisputed possession of the seas. It alone remains for a wise and liberal Government to consolidate and uphold the moral influence of public opinion,—that extraordinary talisman by which is held together the greatest of colonial empires. In the face of such considerations, deterred by the fallacious theories of non-intervention and non-territorial extension, we are incurring the heavy moral responsibility of permitting so great an extent of power, delegated, no doubt, for philanthropic and humane purposes to lie inert,—a power which, if wielded with discretion, would not only strengthen our political and commercial relations in this part of the globe, but effect the decided amelioration, and, eventually, the radical extirpation of the evils under which these oppressed States now groan.

The absence of the strong hand of power, guided by the dictates of humanity and common sense, to settle the endless feuds of the native chiefs, which are too often excited and supported by the criminal cupidity of native merchants and others residing under our authority (as in the case of the late massacre at *Lakut*, and the disturbances still prevailing at *Lingie*); the morbid dread of intervention, exemplified in our late treaties, and in our systematical non-support of the native established sovereigns in just authority over their rebellious vassals; the worse than uselessness of British law, applied to a state of society for which it was never framed, are, it is my firm conviction, the remote causes of the present system of piracy now prevailing; of the numerous unpunished murders and outrages which disgrace not only the territories of Malayan chiefs, but also territories lying nominally under the protection of the British flag; and of the impoverished and disorganized condition of the Malays in general.

The resources of the soil have been almost hermetically sealed to the occupier by the frequent and protracted feuds already alluded to. Hence the peasant, driven from his village and lawful means of subsistence, and tempted by the smooth seas, the favorable navigation and shelter from pursuit afforded by the unexplored rivers, creeks, and numerous islets of the Straits, and by the charms of a life so congenial to the free and restless spirit of a Malay, is induced to scour the water for a precarious subsistence by fishing or plunder, or by both, as opportunity chance to present.

I conclude with a few suggestions touching the suppression of piracy now existing to so alarming an extent in the Straits. Its remote causes, I have already remarked, are alone to be removed by the adoption of a more enlightened policy towards the native powers; and, it may be added, by the gradual spread of civilization and diffusion of useful knowledge.

1st. The employment of one or more small armed steamers, together with eight or ten large boats, of the fastest possible construction, (particularly for rowing;) manned fully with Europeans, and well armed for both close and distant fight.

2nd. A discreet surveillance over the conduct of the present *Tumangong* of *Johore*; who is more than suspected of being the main-spring of the daring system of piracy which has so long been an opprobrium to the eastern extremity of the Straits. A threat of withdrawing the stipend he enjoys gratuitously from the British Government might be useful.

3rd. A careful survey of both coasts of the peninsula, the unexplored rivers, creeks and islets. This, in addition to other obvious advantages, will afford opportunities of observing the character and pursuits of the natives inhabiting the sea-shores and banks of rivers, who are always more or less in league with the pirates, and of collecting information of piratical haunts and places of rendezvous.

4th. The suspected native chiefs should be pre-emptorily called upon to lend their assistance and information: particularly the chiefs of *Kemamang*, *Salangore*, *Perak*, and *Calantan*. And lastly, the cooperation of the Dutch Government should be secured.

* The *prahus* used by Malay pirates are from eight to ten tons burthen, extremely well manned and remarkably fast, particularly with the paddles commonly used. They are generally armed with swivels on their bows, centre, and stern, of small calibre, but long range. When preparing to attack, strong bulwarks of wood called *Apilans* are erected, behind which the crew ensconce themselves, fighting with long guns until their prey is disabled; or till the *gong* sound the signal for boarding. But what they mainly depend upon for safety and success is their skill in paddling, (Malay pirates scarcely ever attack except during the lull between the land and sea breeze, or in a calm,) the swiftness of their boats, and their knowledge of the intricate channels between the island, or over the bars of the rivers into which they generally contrive to escape, baffling their pursuers, and often leaving them aground on one of the numerous shoals or mud-banks which their own superior knowledge enables them to avoid.

The *prahus* of the *Sulu* and *Ilanun* pirates are much larger and better equipped than those which commonly infest the Straits. The Malay pirates make their attacks and move in small fleets of from six to twenty *prahus*.

During the months of October, November, December and January, they will be found cruising up and down the west coast of the peninsula and the opposite shore of *Sumatra*. From June to the end of September, they are often to be seen among the islets south of *Singapore*, and in the creeks and rivers of the *Johore* coast. February, March and April are spent in fishing, collecting sea weed, and preparing for future piratical expeditions.

The crews are armed with boarding spears (some of very great length), *kris*es, Malay hatchets and swords (the *parang* and *kleywang*), muskets, blunderbusses, and a variety of missiles, such as sticks pointed and burnt at the end, stones, &c.

The most noted haunts for pirates on the western coast of the peninsula (according to information derived from a Malay of *Salangore*, who had in his youth exercised the profession himself) are the *Bunting*, *Aroe*, *Cocob*, *Pisang*, *Dinding* and *Sambalang* isles; those on the *Salangore* coast, and the islets between Cape *Rachado* and the *Lingie* river. The rivers *Mirbowe*, *Birman*, *Perak*, *Puteh*, *Koroo*, *Muar*, *Rio Formosa*, or the *Rattu Pahat* river, and formerly the *Lingie* river: the Straits of *Calang* and *Dryon*, *Point Romania* and its vicinity, and the *Carimon* isles to the south.

On the eastern coast are the creeks and small rivers of *Johore* up to *Pahang*; the *Kemamang* river; those of *Tringanu* and *Calantan*, also the islands of *Timbang*, *pulo Tingie*, *Rehang* and *Aor*.