Estanho, borracha e o Straits dollar: resumo

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A descoberta do estanho em Larut em 1848 atraiu mineiros chineses e capital dos Estreitos para os Estados malaios ocidentais, cujas desordens levaram ao Tratado de Pangkor de 1874, ao sistema de Residentes e, em 1896, aos Estados Malaios Federados, que por volta de 1900 produziam pouco mais da metade do estanho mundial. A borracha, introduzida em Singapura em 1877 sob a forma de mudas vindas de Kew e tornada comercialmente viável pelos métodos de sangria de Henry Ridley, espalhou-se pela Malaia depois de 1896, até que por volta de 1920 a península fornecia cerca de metade da produção mundial. Singapura obteve sua parte fundindo estanho em Pulau Brani a partir de 1890, classificando, beneficiando e leiloando borracha a partir de 1911 e financiando, segurando e transportando ambas as commodities por meio de suas Agency Houses (casas comerciais agenciadoras) e de seus bancos. Auges e colapsos nos anos 1870, em 1910, em 1920–1922 e em 1929–1932 expuseram a colônia a ciclos de preços violentos. Os dois últimos levaram a esquemas de restrição para a borracha e o estanho, cuja lógica terminou na crise do estanho de 1985. O Straits dollar, emitido a partir de 1899 por um Board of Commissioners of Currency e fixado em dois xelins e quatro pence em 1906, deu à

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economia das commodities uma moeda estável lastreada em reservas em libras esterlinas, um princípio de lastro externo integral que o dólar de Singapura mantém até hoje.

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