

University of Alberta

The Chaos of Dainties: Singapore and the Confections of Empire, 1819 - 1930

by

Yoke-Sum Wong



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 2003

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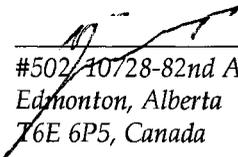
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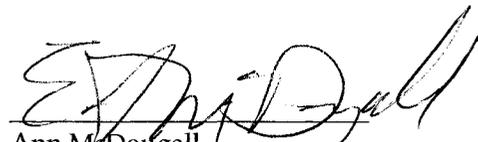
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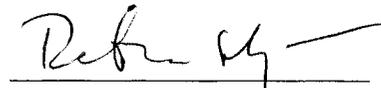
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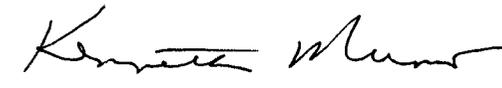
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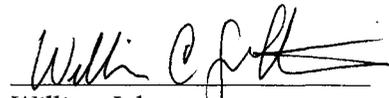
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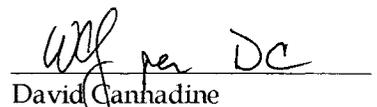
  
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For the women who gave me my Singapore

My mother, Ng Siok Eng  
and  
my late grandmother, Tan Shek Hui  
(September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1916 – September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1996)

## Abstract

### **The Chaos of Dainties: Singapore and the Confections of Empire, 1819 – 1930.**

Tom Stoppard once described his play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* as being about Hamlet as seen by two people driving past Elsinore. My research engages with the inconstant and polymorphous landscape of nineteenth-century Singapore and the confectionary nature of empire. It deals with how Singapore as merely a lump of land prior to January 1819, became transformed, through imperial expansion, into *Singapore*, a strategically located port and cosmopolitan settlement. The frenzied migratory, shipping and trading activities of the nineteenth-century, particularly post Suez Canal, attracted a large number of immigrants and diasporic groups, and produced a rich, polyglot material life. The pre-dominant point of view here is British but the intention here is to show that even if Singapore emerged out of British ambition, it did not necessarily mean it had a monolithic identity. According to the founder of modern Singapore, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, each ethnic group should be self-regulated as long as their headman reported to the British Resident-Councillor. Each ethnic group, thus, created in some ways, their own material reality and knowledge of Singapore. Travel writers, administrators and merchants often found Singapore crowded and bewildering -- for example, the same street had multiple names according to different ethnic groups. The architecture has been described as “wedding-cake”, and despite the best intentions of colonial town planning, things took on a life of their own and the inhabitants often

ignored municipal bylaws and regulations. Through travel writing, literature, anecdotal instances, event-scenes, archival and non-archival sources -- and visual material such as landscape art, architecture, postcards, advertisements and maps, I show that the nineteenth-century Singaporean landscape -- in particular, the harbour and townsite -- was, to borrow Jan Morris's description for the British Empire, a ramshackle one. Certainly, Empire as manifested through Singapore was anything but coherent and singular. Through a multi-layered narrative, one that breaks from a chronological structure, I *show* that Singapore is impossible to know and cannot be reduced to a monolithic discourse. The thesis is also informed by post-structuralist arguments of linguistic irreducibilities and furthers the post-colonial argument by arguing that the messy, shifting Singaporean landscape provided for a dynamic and protean society and exceeded the meta-narrative of Colonialism -- in so far as Colonialism is characterized by the dichotomous colonizer-colonized discourse and imperial conquest.

# The Chaos of Dainties: Singapore and the Confections of Empire, 1819 – 1930.

For who on earth would dream of Chinamen?.... Joseph Conrad, *The Shadow-Line*



Singapur. Figure 1. View of Keppel Harbour by R. Hellgrewe circa 1900 as appeared in Dr. A. Wumsche *Land and Life Series III*, published by Leutert & Schneidewinde, Dresden. [letter card]

## Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking the academy.....

I want to begin by thanking the institutions which have had enough faith to fund my research from Singapore to Britain and back to Canada, particularly Victoria, BC. I am grateful to the *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Asia Pacific Foundation/ASEAN/CIDA, Izaak Walton Killam Foundation, Andrew Stewart Memorial Fund* and the *Sociology Department's Dissertation Research Award*. I am also grateful to the various travel grants and scholarships provided by the University of Alberta. Every little bit counted here.

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I must also acknowledge that some portions of an article entitled "Beyond (and Below) Incommensurability: The Aesthetics of the Postcard," *Common Knowledge*, Volume 8, Issue 2, Spring 2002, 333-356 have been inserted (with slight changes) into the dissertation. I am sorry Jeffrey, I still think the abstract was unnecessary.

And now the people. I have so many people to thank. This entire experience has been like Yoshimi battling the Pink Robots.

It is customary to thank my agent and my lawyer. But I have none. So here goes.

How shall I start? Lynn Van Reede has been indispensable, patient, tolerant and phenomenal. No graduate student can absolutely do without her expertise in the field of graduate life. Carol Dimitriou has given me hugs and well-wishes whenever I needed them most and she often gave them more than generously – all this while running the Chair's office. Keith Spencer has been my biggest fan in the cheering section. I could not have written the dissertation without his sharp eye for ephemera. He is after all the head honcho of the philatelic world in Canada – and an athletic one at that. He prodded me on to the right directions and provided me with a wealth of information. He also understood what I was trying to do. Darryl Hughes is unaware of this but he prompted me towards more Joseph Conrad. Thank you Janine Brodie and Malinda Smith for your time and support even while you were on holidays....

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## RUMOURS

We can always count on something else happening, another glancing experience, another half-witnessed event. Clifford Geertz, *After the Fact*<sup>1</sup>

A beautiful sentence may contain more love than a mind full of -isms. Ihab Hassan, *Globalisms and its Discontents: Notes of a Wandering Scholar*<sup>2</sup>

When complications increase, the desire for essentials increases too. Saul Bellow, *It All Adds Up: From the Dim Past to the Uncertain Future*<sup>3</sup>

Imagine if you can, Joseph Conrad in Singapore, and what he could have drawn from conversations in the bars, the tiffin-rooms, the hotels, the billiard rooms, the Marine Office, the streets, the harbours, the docks, the quays, the shipping firms, and the brigs and vessels he sailed and worked on. There was the shore-talk, the scattered gossip, hearsay, the fragments of a life caught over wispy cigar smoke and drink, the drifts of lost loves and dashed hopes, swapping yarns concerning events and people. The old sea-dogs and the Captain Whalleys of the world, with their rise and fall of fortunes must have gathered there or at least were talked about. Despite his claims that he had little time “to form social connections... whenever in harbour” because it was not “very practicable for a seaman,” Joseph Conrad knew Singapore as a sailor knew any shore-leave. He knew enough to write of Singapore within the limits of his haunts, and these haunts included the chatter of the society he was plunged into. A Captain whom Conrad had sailed with was astonished to find, “on reading the books, how completely Conrad had penetrated the spirit of these places and how thoroughly he had understood the characters of the men he had met. He had been there a very short time sailing around the region between 1883 and 1888, yet he had reproduced places and men with amazing accuracy and vividness.”<sup>4</sup> Conrad makes Singapore central to his stories set in the region, and there is an uncanny coherence and mastery of the places he talks about including the people he quite convinces the reader, he *could have known* – or not. His characters and places, which recur across his stories, are composites – there is something familiar in them, a sensation of recognition and affiliation but if there is a particular truth – it remains ultimately, evasive.

---

1. Clifford Geertz (1995) *After the Fact*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 19.

2. Ihab Hassan (1999) *Professions*, 99.

3. Saul Bellow (1994). *It All Adds Up: From the Dim Past to the Uncertain Future*. New York: Viking-Penguin, 93.

4. G. Jean-Aubry (1927) *Joseph Conrad Life and Letters* London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 96.

I am not writing a history of Singapore but I am writing *of* Singapore. Writing of colonial Singapore feels like writing the chatter of history, and that I continue to stand outside the doorway eavesdropping, or sitting at the end of the bar listening but straining to hear more through the din. The details are infinite, and scattered -- and even if as someone said, a plurality of anecdotes does not make for good data, they make for interesting ideas and provide a window into what is the rather messy world we live in. Anecdotes belong in our social and material realities, and so do rumour and gossip. They inform us of things that are, were -- and what is to come. It was the rumour of pork lard used to grease the cartridges which sparked off one of the most significant turning points of Empire, The Indian Mutiny in 1857.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes, the most inaudible and fragmented of whispers create the greatest waves.

Walter Benjamin grasped his nineteenth-century “dream world,” his *Arcades Project* through the detritus of history, the “half-concealed, variegated traces” of daily life, choosing instead to be the “ragpicker” of history.<sup>6</sup> He says, in “Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” that he is expressing the vertigo of nineteenth-century history in which the “the world is an endless series of facts congealed in the form of things.”<sup>7</sup> And Benjamin proceeds to address the “things” in a writing structure which comes across as vertiginous, scattered observations and a mass of diary entries that a flaneur-like subject could have made. In his notes “Materials for Arcades”, he makes a list and among the items of interest: 'Street vending', 'Old signs', 'The Bridges', 'Doors and windows', 'Hotel', 'Dance hall', 'Small side alley' -- and 'America and Asia in Paris'. Benjamin does not attempt to give us a more seamless picture of things, nor offer us concepts to abstract from.<sup>8</sup> Clifford Geertz echoes that when he writes:

It is necessary then to be satisfied with swirls, confluxions, and inconstant connections; clouds collecting, clouds dispersing. There is no general story to be told, no synoptic picture to be had. Or if there is, no one, certainly no one wandering into the middle like Fabrice at Waterloo, is in a position to construct them neither at the time nor later. What we can construct, if we keep notes and survive, are hindsight accounts of the

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5. See Homi Bhabha (1995) "In A Spirit of Calm Violence", *After Colonialism*, ed. Gyan Prakash, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

6. Walter Benjamin (1999) *The Arcades Project* translated and with an introduction by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, i.

7. *Ibid*, 14.

8. *Ibid*, xi. The translators in the introduction argue that the *Arcades Project* is not about an unfinished work. “did he leave behind anything more than a large-scale plan or prospectus? No, it is argued, *The Arcades Project* is just that.” It is a realized work.

connectedness of things that seem to have happened: pieced-together patternings after the fact.<sup>9</sup>

If we take Geertz seriously, then Joseph Conrad's snatches of bar-gossips, yarn-spinning and shore-talk offer an equally valid, if not more honest account of Singapore in the 1880s.

Conceptual guides, no matter how post-structuralist or post-colonial in spirit, tend towards meta-narratives. The discourse of colonialism, imperialism and empire can somehow never seem to exceed the tropes of domination, especially capitalist domination -- where living, breathing people of different cultural make-ups, and their lives are invariably abstracted as objects for imperialist exploitation -- their lands, carved up as objects of conquest and natural resources. Capitalism and racism are usually brought to the foreground as universals -- and little else. The English-speaking, commonwealth Third-Worlder today is reduced to a passive victim of cultural imperialism.<sup>10</sup> Ihab Hassan says it more eloquently:<sup>11</sup>

I find something abject, ignominious, in the eagerness of so many people nowadays to claim the status of victims. In the case of colonialism, I find self-exculpations craven. These narratives of self-absolution debase the colonized even more than the colonizer. Ironically, just as the discourse of orientalists once embalmed "natives" in derogatory images, so does a certain emancipatory discourse embalm them in images more disparaging still.

And Hassan, Egyptian-American literary critic and author of the magisterial *The Postmodern Turn* does not stop there. He continues in the same essay:

Sentimentality corrupts, self serving and mendacious. Yet sentimentality prevails in postcolonial studies and locates all virtues in the colonized, all vices in the colonizer. Not all the stereotypes of orientalist discourse are false, nor are occidentals alone given to stereotyping. I understand, therefore, a Bangladeshi friend, a poet and critic clear of mind, when he challenges the condescensions of Western liberals by saying "The best thing that ever happened to India was British colonialism."

In 1997, on my way to the Singapore National Archives, I happened to engage in a superficial discussion with the taxi-driver over the handover of Hong Kong to China. Our conversation had revolved mainly around the spectacle of the ceremonies. When I

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9. Geertz, 2.

10. A recent essay published in *History and Theory* tackles the term. See Ryan Dunch, "Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity." *History and Theory* October, 2002: 277-300.

11. Ihab Hassan (1995) "Envoy: Without Exile: A Postcolonial Intellectual Abroad" in *Rumors of Change: Essays of Five Decades* Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 248-249.

reached my destination, and as he returned my change, the taxi-driver said “I wish we can hand over Singapore back to the British.”

It was not the first time I have heard of such wishes. My mother, her siblings, my grandparents – all Singaporeans descended from Chinese immigrants in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century -- often waxed nostalgic over the ‘good old days’. They have never considered themselves ‘colonized’ and they saw no contradiction in their affiliations as Chinese under British rule. They were part of empire and they mourned the passing of empire while embracing the new Singapore in 1965 under the leadership of Lee Kwan Yew and the People’s Action Party.<sup>12</sup> I do not pretend to know what my mother’s or my grandparents’ colonial Singapore was like, but there was certainly little ill-feeling conveyed to the grandchildren -- all fluent in English, and all armed with ‘A’ levels and university degrees. I remember, not too long ago, I was at a dinner party in Oxford, UK, surrounded by guests from England, South Africa, India and Canada. The conversation turned to Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* and there was instant and enthusiastic recognition around the table as if an old friend had walked in. The mutuality of *Kim* should tell us something about the colonial subject – and how it extends far beyond oppressed or oppressors’ subjectivities.

I am not denying the darker forces of colonialism nor the horrors wrought in the name of racial superiority and capitalist expropriation. But what happened in Africa was not the same as in Malaya or Singapore. Nor can the West Indies and Egypt offer similar experiences and models. The colonial cannot simply be gathered around an –ism, *after the fact*, though we find shared legacies in education, sports and material life -- for example, tea-drinking and cricket. If one were to sift through the patriotic tropes of imperialism, one would find that so often the tensions of empire lay more within the colonizers themselves, if of course they had any notion of being a ‘colonizer’ lording over a neatly divided portion of society who was usually not white or European, deemed as ‘the colonized’. Imperialism was a far more fractured and complicated project -- often sustained by layers and layers of rule and also conflict. The forms and institutions of governance, and the Empire-builders varied across place and time. The structure of rule ought not always to be confused with the content of rule. Charles Allen, for example, introduces us to Captain Hubert Berkeley, the magistrate who dressed in Malay garb; the “uncrowned king of Upper Perak” whose judicial practices flouted every rulebook and criminal code laid down by the colonial government.<sup>13</sup> Berkeley’s independence of rule and his popularity with the locals made it impossible for the colonial government to remove him. When Alan Morkill relieved Berkeley in 1925, Berkeley was 62 years old, and 7 years past the retirement age. Berkeley’s advice to Morkill was, “here we dispense justice but not law.” In Singapore, the merchants, the rulers, and administrators as well as the “Old Singaporeans” were always battling John Company, the Colonial Office or Empire -- or some new ordinance or new building. As late as 1905, the *Straits Times*

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12. But not without the turbulence of the Chinese riots in the 1950s.

13. Charles Allen (1983) *Tales from the South China Sea* Great Britain: Futura, 55-58.

editorial complained bitterly that while Singapore was the richest colony in the Empire, the Empire was sucking Singapore “dry as a bone.”<sup>14</sup>

Much has been lost in the perpetuation of the colonizer-colonized formulation for even if there were scandalous eruptions, and alternative narratives -- it meant they could only take place in the middle, in the "inter-stitial spaces" – and not outside or beyond the discourse.<sup>15</sup> I do not accept that there is only one tale to tell and one story to share. As David Cannadine explains in the preface to his book, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*:<sup>16</sup>

Accordingly, this book is concerned with recovering the world-view and social presuppositions of those who dominated and ruled the empire, also of those followers and supporters who went along with it in Britain and overseas, as well as with the imperial mechanisms and structures through which they dominated, ruled, supported and went along with it. This is not because I consider the victims and critics of empire to be unimportant, but because of the outlook for the dominators and rulers and fellow travelers – their sense of how this empire they dominated and ruled and supported, and went along with actually *worked*, and what it *looked like* – is one major element of the British imperial experience that has been relatively neglected, by historians and by critics and admirers alike.

And in the Appendix, entitled “An Imperial Childhood”, Cannadine cites James Morris who concluded his three-part history of the British Empire by asking if that was how it all unfolded and if it were the truth. Morris’s own answer was: “It is my truth.”<sup>17</sup> But one wonders, echoing Ihab Hassan’s discontentment with post-colonial sentimentality, if these truths are denied rather than neglected in such discourses.

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14. “Singapore” *Straits Times Annual*, 1905, 105.

15. Gyan Prakash talks about the "reinscriptive aftermath, which arises neither inside nor outside colonial norms but in the interstitial space cracked open by the uncertain process of their normalization." In "Introduction" *After Colonialism*, ed. Gyan Prakash, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 16. I do not disagree with Prakash but certainly social relations under colonialism were far more complicated and varied, and beyond the Manichean formulation.

16. David Cannadine (2001) *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, preface, xx.

17. The James Morris books are: *Pax Britannica: the climax of an empire* (1968/1980); *Heaven's command: an imperial progress* (1973/1978); and *Farewell the Trumpets: an imperial retreat* (1980). All the books I cite here are published by New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich.

What then could have been the multitudes of truths felt by the 27,102,498 persons who flocked to Wembley, England in 1924 and 1925 for the British Empire Exhibition?<sup>18</sup> What were they wanting to see or experience? ‘Wembling’ was *instant* empire brought home. The colonies of the empire were rearranged, and reconstituted as miniature mosques, churches and pagodas, as a huge theme park where New Zealand stands unproblematically next to Malaya flanked by a cool English stream. The exhibition clearly provided great amusement to all. Imagine seeing the British Empire laid out in the 220 acres of pavilion, 15 miles of streets and the Never-Stop Railway, with its fleet of 88 cars, each carrying 18 seated passengers (20,000 passengers an hour), which chugged on endlessly around the exhibition. Wembley was where, as the advertisement in *The Times* declared, “visitors may lunch in South Africa, take tea in India, and dine in New Zealand, Australia, or Canada,” and where “the ancient civilization of the east, the primitive life of the African villages will be seen side by side with the latest scientific wonders that British skill and genius have devised for the comfort and enrichment of mankind.”<sup>19</sup> And for the rest of the world, Wembley and the British Empire Exhibition was constituted in the homely Landseer-like<sup>20</sup> lion standing on a rolling hillside which appeared on stamps and overprints on letters sent and received.

Here I want to return to Joseph Conrad and his short story *Karain: A Memory*.<sup>21</sup> Karain, a Malay Raja, was a powerful monarch and murderous warrior to his people, whom Conrad describes as summing “up his race,<sup>22</sup> his country, the elemental force of ardent life, of tropical nature. He had its luxuriant strength, its fascination; and like it, he carried the seed of peril within.” One night, having not been heard or seen for a few days, Karain suddenly swims up to the traders’ schooner, looking bedraggled and distraught. His face “showed another kind of fatigue, the tormented weariness, the anger and fear of a struggle against a thought, an idea—against something that cannot be grappled, that never

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18. Declared opened by King George V on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1924, the first time the speech of a monarch was broadcasted on the radio. For more details see D. R. Knight & A. D. Sabey (1984) *The Lion Roars at Wembley: British Empire Exhibition 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1924-1925*. London: Barnard & Westwood.

19. *The Times*, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1924, 13.

20. Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-1873) well known for his depiction of animal subjects, and a favourite painter of Queen Victoria. His best known sculptures are the lions at the base of Nelson’s column in Trafalgar Square.

21. It is V.S. Naipaul’s (2002) essay, “Our Universal Civilization” in *The Writer and his World* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 503-518, which reminded me of Conrad’s story.

22. Rather than use the more politically correct term of ‘ethnicity’, I choose to use ‘race’ for that was the term deployed in those days, and still is today in Malaysia and Singapore. It has none of the conceptual baggage which marks so much of the politics in North America and Europe.

rests—a shadow, a nothing, unconquerable and immortal, that preys upon life.”<sup>23</sup> Karain’s sword-bearer, protector and wiseman has died, and with the death, Karain has lost “the power of his words and charms.” The wise-man was Karain’s certainty and faith in a savage world, “the old man has died and I am again the slave of the dead.” Karain is now left exposed to the invisible voices which threaten and stalk him. He decides to seek the strength of the unbelievers – the European traders. He feels safe with them – his trouble fades as he enters their presence. It is then that he begs a charm from them, a charm which encompasses the unbelievers’ strength to protect him. And the traders comply – out of pity but more importantly, out of empathy. Hollis, one of the European traders, implores the rest, “I am going to do something for him....Can’t you lie a little.....for a friend.” It is here that play becomes magic -- ritual becomes power and objects take on meaning, “potent things that procure dreams of joy, thoughts of regret.” Hollis presents Karain with a coin, a Jubilee sixpence, “the thing itself is great power – money, you know.” What is more significant for Karain is the image of the “Great Queen”, on the coin, “the most powerful thing the white men know” for she “commands a spirit, the spirit of her nation.” It is Hollis who most deeply understands the situation, “help me to make him believe....everything’s in that.”<sup>24</sup>

Everything is in that -- and Karain leaves, and returns to his people, a happier more confident Raja with his powers reaffirmed. What takes place in the story is not tomfoolery or the mockery of natives. Joseph Conrad was too astute an observer and too careful a writer. Karain *chooses* to draw power from a foreign object that he identifies with strength – he assumes it for himself. The jubilee sixpence was found in a box of trinkets – and it is Karain who invests meaning in the image of the queen while Hollis equates the “charm” and its power with money – we are not far from Karl Marx and how social power jingle-jangles in our pockets. But it is not unreasonable for the Malay Raja to believe that the power of the image on the sixpence is transferable. It is after all, meaning-making. This is cultural production. What happens to Karain thereafter is speculation. Conrad, as V.S. Naipaul asserts, “loaded [the story] with philosophical implications for both sides.”<sup>25</sup> Cultures are not impermeable and in their constitution and reconstitution, there are the giving and the taking. So much more happens in the giving away and acquisition of simple charms – if they can be charms – “difficult things come with it as well: ambition, endeavour, individuality.”<sup>26</sup>

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23. Joseph Conrad (1923) “Karain: A Memory” in *Tales of Unrest* London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 23.

24. *Ibid*, 50.

25. Naipaul, 516.

26. *Ibid*.

In the summer of 2002, I went away from an exhibition at the British Library with a certain dissatisfaction. The exhibition, *Trading Places: The East India Company and Asia, 1600-1834* was actually, on the whole, timely and not entirely unhelpful. It brought to attention the impact of such cultural exchanges and trading practices on our taken-for-granted worlds, especially in light of current globalization discourses. Consider the blurb on the exhibition website: “Imagine an England without tea in china cups, without pepper, chintz or chutney; imagine an India without cricket or gin and tonic, a world without Bombay or Singapore.” Yet at the actual exhibition, there was little Bombay or Singapore. In any case, there was too much teleology for a process that seemed scattered and unwieldy -- beginning with: ‘World in 1600’, ‘Getting there’, ‘Bantam’, ‘Expansion’, ‘India’, ‘China’, ‘Impacts.’ Sections of the exhibition intended upon systematic arrangements of the origins of trade, as if they were self-contained factories with catalytic moments. Other sections attempted to dissolve the barriers in order to convey the fluid, inter-cultural borrowings and lendings through the trading enterprise. These sections resonated an “all-over-the-place” feeling of ambiguity. I was not sure of what I had seen or experienced. Perhaps, more telling was the tensions and the difficulty in trying to convey a simultaneous wholeness and fragmentation in the enterprise. And so, the impact was measured as such: Asia in Britain and Britain in Asia – as if there was indeed a distinctive line demarcating Britain and Asia. But was it necessarily so dichotomous?

The playwright, Tom Stoppard’s formative years of Englishness began when he arrived in Singapore on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1939, a young Czech boy of two. Plunged into the polyglot society that was essentially colonial Britain, he left three years later, speaking ‘Singlish’, a colloquial English with a blend of Chinese, Malay, Tamil, which he picked up at an English Convent school.<sup>27</sup> Though he was talking about his Palestinian-American subjectivity, I find Edward Said helpful here to articulate Tom Stoppard’s Singaporean years -- that is, as a “cluster of flowing currents...always in motion, in time, in place, in the form of all kinds of strange combinations moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally yet without one central theme.”<sup>28</sup> That Tom Stoppard left Singapore speaking ‘Singlish’ should force us to look harder at the nature of colonial Singaporean society then, its very cosmopolitan character – and how it got there.

A travel-writer (and he described himself so), Richard Curle had this to say in the early 1920s when he arrived in Singapore:

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27. It was only in Darjeeling, India, where Tom Stoppard’s (then Straüssler) family sought refuge when Malaya and Singapore fell to the Japanese that he acquired a more formal English -- albeit taught by American Methodists and among classmates from all over the world, brought together by the circumstances of war. Stoppard’s mother, having lost her husband in 1942, remarried an Englishman, Major Kenneth Stoppard in 1945. Ira Nadel (2002) *Tom Stoppard: A Life* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 17-39.

28. Edward Said (1999) *Out of Place*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 295.

To an even greater extent than Colombo or Hong Kong, Singapore is the focus-point of the East. From Australia, from the Dutch Indies, from China, from India, from Europe, and from the African coast a perpetual stream of vessels comes and goes. It's the kind of place where you may constantly see dubious-looking people getting hurriedly off ships and simply disappear into thin air. What schemes must have been hatched in Singapore, what ruffians and dreamers must have started thence carrying shabby bags and with their heads full of plots! There really is something romantic about the great spaces of the East. You can breathe there, you can scheme there, you can disappear there.<sup>29</sup>

The passing occasion, the coincident view,<sup>30</sup> -- and the vanishing subject. Tom Stoppard once described his play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* as being about Hamlet as seen by two people driving past Elsinore. Perhaps that is Singapore's fate as a port-city – it cannot be contained. Despite the eleventh-century legend of the leonine-type creature which was sighted by the Sri Vijayan Prince, Sang Nila Utama while he sought refuge on the island, the *Hobson-Jobson* informs us that Singapore or Singapura does not quite refer to the popular definition 'Lion' (Singa)-'City' (Pura). The name is however, linked to the island's Indian past, and derivative of Singalese etymology which means to 'tarry' (singa) and to 'pretend' (pura) referring to the ancient kings who founded it and moved on to Malacca – or 'a place of call' (singha) and 'city' (pura).<sup>31</sup> And call they did; the Chinese from Malacca, Java and Sumatra and various parts of China, the Bugis, the Javanese, the natives of Coromandel and Malabar, Chuliahs (natives of Madras), Natives of Bengal and Hindustan, the European merchants in Calcutta and in Europe, all flocked to the newly established free port.

For Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, it was never the intention to acquire and extend British possessions in the Far East. Instead, to establish and maintain good relations with the native states depended "upon the respect with which the national character is perceived in those states."<sup>32</sup> Raffles's town plan was to ensure two objectives, to protect the colony and to ensure that there was enough government to enable trade to carry on unfettered. The planning instructions that Raffles laid out for Singapore with its various native 'kampungs' (villages or even towns) in 1819, and again to the Land Allotment

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29. Richard Curle (1923) *Into the East* with a preface by Joseph Conrad London: Macmillan and Co., 128.

30. These lines, reinscribed here, belong to Clifford Geertz.

31. Yule, H. and Burnell, A.C. (1969/1886) *Hobson Johnson: A Glossary of Anglo Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical, and Discursive* Chatham: Wordworth Editions, 839

32. Letter dated October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1817. Official Correspondences. To Lord Amherst – Statement of Trade since 1770 in the Eastern Archipelago, IOR MSS F 140/49 (a).

Committee in 1822 was not intended as a form of racial segregation.<sup>33</sup> Raffles created a plan which was not unreasonable -- intending for government buildings to be near the river, and closer to Government Hill, where he anticipated much administration and commercial business would take place. He also assumed the Europeans would prefer a beachside area for their town, and placed the various ethnic groups in areas according, as he read it, to their cultural propensities. The Chinese occupied the south bank of the river being more enterprising in trade, and the Malay village was located near the River Rochore further to the north of the Singapore River, being fisher-folk who seemed to erect stilt-like houses on marshy or swampy grounds. Raffles also provided for self-governance through elected chiefs of the various racial groups to report to the Resident Councillor. From the beginning, despite the spirit of the plan, things fell apart with the various groups spilling over and making up their own minds as to what was more conducive to long-term living arrangements. Ultimately, trading needs and opportunities ruled the day. But such capricious actions produced favorable results. The 1822 Land Allotment Plan was an improvised one which made allowances for the area that became the Esplanade or the Padang. It is doubtful that Raffles ever envisaged that his original land divisions and place designations would stay as they were intended.

The landscape is always shifting, always in abeyance. You cannot hold the landscape together for too long in Singapore before the impatience for change beckons. The last fifty years of the nineteenth-century in Singapore was a constant shaping and reshaping as the island's physical mass expanded through reclamation project after reclamation project. Singapore refused to stay still – particularly after the Suez Canal became navigable. More telling was the changing street names and places: Church Street became Waterloo Street, Commercial Square became Raffles Place, The Esplanade became The Padang, Johnston Pier was replaced by Clifford Pier, and Dalhousie Pier became Empress Place. But it never meant at any time there was a monolithic cultural reality.

In nineteenth-century Singapore, you can know of a street – and never know it at all. For the same street encompassed different names, different landscapes, different ways of knowing – and other streets. If according to Michel de Certeau, we narrate a city through language, then in Singapore, there were multiple spatial narratives. In 1887, Section 143 of the Municipal Ordinance had proclaimed that the Commissioners affix at the corner of every street in the town of Singapore, a board on which it is inscribed, “The name by which such street shall be known.”<sup>34</sup> Sensitive to the different racial groupings in

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33. See Appendix II and the map.

34. All discussion on streetnames and the various translations, cultural versions are derived from two sources. They are: H. W. Firmstone (1904) “Chinese Names of Streets and Places in Singapore and the Malay Peninsula” *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* #42, 54-288; and H.T. Haughton (1891) “Native Names of Streets in Singapore” *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* June, 49-65. Also see "An Index in Romanized Hokkien and Cantonese to 'The Chinese Names of Streets and Places in Singapore'" compiled by Tan Kee Soon and revised by A.W. Bailey and F. M. Baddeley, *JSBRAS* #46, 195-213.

Singapore, and their respective enclaves, street names were selected to reflect their cultural orientations and languages (even dialects), for example in the Chinese part of town, we have Hong Kong Street and Hokkien Street, and in the Malay part of town, Jalan Sultan, meaning Sultan Road. However, despite the good intentions, the official streetnames were used mainly by the European population and visitors, and ignored by most non-Europeans like the Chinese, the Tamils and the Malays, who possessed and preferred their own naming practices.

The complications were immense. Each group mapped the areas according to different spatial orientations. European streetnames tended towards proper nouns such as the memorialization of places, individuals and events, though there were instances of mundane descriptors such as High Street, Hill Street, and even Tavern Street. Chinese and Tamil names were mainly descriptive, based on landmarks or direct translations from the Malay, or even a Malay word pronounced in a Chinese way, for example, 'selat' became 'sit-lat'. The Malays, however placed little emphasis on streetnames but on the wider place, meaning they navigated the streets according to 'kampungs' or villages – or geographical features such as the river. They also identified places with infrastructural essentials such as transportation or water pumps.

The cultural maps, however were not completely unique or distinct, and sometimes, the Chinese, the Tamils, and the Malays agreed on the most distinctive landmark or the nature of the street or the place for example, 'Kreta Ayer'<sup>35</sup> or 'Gu Chia Chwi' and its variations such as 'Gu Chia Chwi ma-ta chu.' 'Kreta Ayer' and 'Gu Chia Chwi' both refer to the bullock carts which hauled water when there was no piped water to certain areas. However, the variation 'Gu Chia Chwi ma-ta chu' is significant for added to the bullock hauling water-cart motif is the 'mata-chu' which means Police Station. 'Mata' is Malay for the eye, and 'mata-mata' refers to the police. What is revealing here is the nature of cultural encounters in such racial dissonance, and the insinuation of one language into another when one language fails to provide the adequate tools for comprehending an institution such as the police.<sup>36</sup>

When the 1887 street name ordinance was declared, there were 112 streets with formalized names. Imagine if we multiplied one linguistic reality with three or four more. How many Singapores do we know of then? Consider North and South Boat Quay where the godowns and coaling stations once flanked the Singapore River until the shipping demands became impossible. Getting to Boat Quay meant encountering the complexities of Southern Chinese dialects, and at the end of the day, Boat Quay was everywhere but in Boat Quay. Boat Quay was in Cantonese, 'Tiam Pang Lo Thau' the place to get sampans (the Malay word sampan pronounced as tiam-pang a kind of little boat). In the Hokkien

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35. Also Almeida Street after the Portuguese doctor and planter, Jose d'Almeida.

36. The term 'mata' continues to be used by dialect groups in Singapore and Malaysia today.

dialect, the place was also 'Chap Sa Hang' or 13 shops, as well as 'Chap Poet Keng' or 18 houses.<sup>37</sup> The quay was also known as 'Chwi Chui Boi' which meant bathing house at the end of the street, 'Kek S'ng Cheng' or the front of the ice-factory, and the more practical 'Khok Ki' or stream bank. There is also Pagoda Street, where there are no pagodas nor Chinese temples. There is, however, the Sri Mariamman Temple, established by Naraina Pillai, a clerk who accompanied Stamford Raffles to Singapore in 1819. The temple was the first Hindu temple in Singapore built sometime between 1842-1844, and refaced on many occasions. The pagoda-like structure would refer to the 'gopuram' with six levels, shaped like a pyramid, and covered by a profusion of statues. It could have been possible that the municipal government was not aware of its architectural term and chose the most appropriate concept. In the Hokkien dialect, Pagoda Street is simply 'Kek Leng Kia Loi Pai Au' or the back of the Kling place of worship whereas in Tamil, the road was sensibly known as the side street by the temple of Mariamman -- the side street being South Bridge Road which is actually the main address for the temple.<sup>38</sup> But Pagoda Street was also once known to be the centre for slave traffic and thus, to the Chinese, it was also known as 'Kwong Hup Yuen Lo' or 'Kong Hup Yuen Street', named after the slave trader who lived in house number 37.

How would the traveler or the visitor know if he or she was on Pagoda Street when there were no pagodas in sight? The closest looking edifice might suffice such as the Indian temple's 'gopuram'. But each group had its own spatial cosmology and street signs and their alphabets were valueless, and meaningless to those who possessed different spatial conceptualizations. Despite the official use of street names on the maps, it did not mean that the formal names erased other cultural realities and material practices. In fact, I would argue that the various racial groups continued with their descriptors which on the one hand, were detached from the official street names, but on the other hand, interwoven as individual threads into the intricate fabric that was cosmopolitan Singapore. The multiplicity of names did not present any anxiety to the Singaporean who would have expected the spatial palimpsest. The traveler, the visitor, any newly-arrived person, however, would have faced greater ambiguities, if not plain confusion. More than one European traveler had complained that rickshaw pullers, usually Chinese and Indian, were notorious for carting people to the wrong addresses – or quite possibly in fact, the right ones.

It was the benign face of Empire which created the Singapore 'Chinese Post-Office'. Assuming there was exploitation, the municipal government sought to remove the monopoly of a few Chinese merchants to handle the letters and remittances of the overseas Chinese coolies who dutifully sent their money home to China. The 'Chinese Post Office' was established at 81, Market Street, Singapore on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1876,

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37. Hokkien itself contained several linguistic variations, (depending on the area of the Hokkien province one was from).

38. The Chinese had a tendency to lump all the natives of India together as 'kek ling', that is kling.

after considerable negotiations with the various authorities in Pekin and Hong Kong to entrust the mail to the Postmaster-General to Swatow or Amoy, China for conveyance to the respective places. A law was passed to make compulsory the handling of *all mail* through the post office. The result was chaotic as the Chinese letter collectors, who collected a percentage of the remittances, conveyed a different picture to the coolies. In large placards and public announcements, they denounced the new Chinese Post Office as a conspiracy dreamed up by a few Chinese “red rats” to destroy the honest living of many Chinese, their wives and daughters -- and the generations to come. On the opening day of the Post Office, the place was wrecked, the Royal Arms smashed, some Chinese were killed, and the police were attacked including R. W. Maxwell, the Superintendent of Police who was stoned and brutally assaulted.<sup>39</sup> Eventually the problem was dealt with and the Post Office re-opened three days after. In 1877 the office was moved to the General Post Office at Fullerton Square.

If we follow Raffles’s vision of self-governance, then the Chinese merchants who made money out of letter collecting and conveyance, had every right to exist. It was not merely a matter of the loss of business – it was the loss of identity. There was the matter of trust for the Chinese coolies. The condition of sending, relaying and arriving and possibly, never arriving perhaps marked the riots. The ‘never-arriving’ constituted heightened anxiety that connections could be lost with the homeland, the villages, the family, the ancestral graves. To accept the services of the Municipal Chinese sub-post office marked the transition of one subjectivity to another. To place trust in the Municipal post-office to deliver their letters and money was to place trust in another realm, an alien culture which might or might not deliver news from abroad and filial piety to aging parents. To carry out such a mundane act as sending mail via the British Post Office also meant an acceptance of the barbarian institution, and in some ways, rule. That is the risk one takes in such places – nothing is ever certain. The tensions are inevitable but to argue ideas of resistance and subversion is tricky because as much as the Chinese recognized the ‘English Barbarians’ and their governing presence, the English remained ultimately, ‘Barbarians’. The view towards the British from the Sinkeh Chinese, who must not be confused with the Straits Chinese, was one of paternalistic guidance such as the ensuring of laws and public conveniences -- in so far as it benefited the Sinkeh Chinese community. And there was a certain indifference towards Empire,<sup>40</sup> for their loyalty, at the end of the day, was to China.

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39. W. Makepeace, et. al (1921) *One Hundred Years of Singapore* 2 Vols. London: John Murray, V. II, 133-139.

40. The Straits Chinese have been in the Malay Peninsula for a longer time, having adopted a hybrid culture of Malay and Chinese elements. There was also inter-marriage between Chinese men and local women. The Straits Chinese (also known as ‘Peranakan’) considered themselves superior to the later immigrants, the *Sinkehs*. The Straits Chinese also perceived themselves as British subjects. See Pan, L. (ed.) (1999) *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas*. Cambridge, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 202. "There are

Singapore in fact seems hurriedly put together – by insubordination, by desperation, by ambition, by good intentions, and by accident. It was the slapdash, ‘far-flung’ quality of Empire which made possible Singapore’s success even as it fought, kicked, spit and bungled its way through the nineteenth-century. It was the plucky little colony that could. There was hardly a dominant administration – the municipal government, made up of an assortment of races, did the best they could -- and every move Calcutta and London made, was not always supported or enthusiastically received. The old Singaporeans were the merchant men of all races who gave generously, their time and money, to the island, and guarded their island-settlement zealously against, in some ways, being ‘colonized’ by the Colonial Office. Public works were too often started and abandoned, only to assume another character such as Collyer Quay which became a commercial area rather than the military defense it was supposed to be. Buildings were erected, sometimes without attention to engineering codes and regulations,<sup>41</sup> only to be pulled down -- or reconstituted as government offices and concert halls even as statues and monuments got moved around depending on the whims of an official or the next land reclamation project. From a riot of architectural styles to the riot of opinions which characterised everything in Singapore, it is a wonder that Singapore held itself together.

"Singapore is of the Orient, yet not of it."<sup>42</sup> As early as 1827, there was a realization that Singapore was unlike many Eastern settlements, with its potpourri of cultural peculiarities merging into an “English port appearance,” and a place “[where] it is possible to assimilate the Asiatic and the European, very closely in the pursuit of commerce.”<sup>43</sup> Ultimately, Singapore’s stability is in the acknowledgement of its own heterogeneities. Even if there was a certain clarity of vision in Raffles’s town plan, what actually went on within the neatly laid out divisions is infinite activity -- a proliferation of desires and endless negotiation of cultures and spaces that escape all-encompassing narratives.

What I have attempted here is akin to a multi-tier jewellery box full of dainties, that one sifts through with great curiosity, and carefully -- because you never know what you

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English-speaking, Straits-born Chinamen -- a class by themselves -- who have never seen the land of their forefathers; and who do not speak any other language but English, Tamil or Malay. There are also genuine immigrants from China who know no other language but that of their native land. Is it surprising that the racial heterogeneity of Malaya is regarded as unique?" in W. Robert Foran (1935) *Malayan Symphony* London: Hutchinson.

41. *Straits Settlements Government Gazette* Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, 1896, 2518.

42. W. Robert Foran (1935) *Malayan Symphony* London: Hutchinson & Co., 29.

43. Written by the Calcutta John Bull and republished in *The Singapore Chronicle*, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1827. NL 3219 (microfilm).

might find. I do not deny that the viewpoints I provide in this project are predominantly British but Singapore in many ways, was their making – even if the making slipped into a life of its own. If there is any undermining here, it would be that the British administrators were never really quite certain what was going on since they were hardly the pith-helmet authoritative types who swooshed their rattan canes or whips around, and delegated work to the shuddering natives. Sometimes, it was the other way round as is evident in the building of Singapore’s first lighthouse in 1851 and the frustrations of the English architect-engineer who supervised it.<sup>44</sup> The material practices involved in making Singapore, *Singapore* were a multicultural affair.

Colonial Singapore is a multi-layered text, and even here, I am only offering one version.<sup>45</sup> To provide coherence to what was apparently incoherent and always slippery is a betrayal of the nature of colonial Singapore. The writing reflects this chaos of dainties - - and characters and places emerge as recurring motifs in the swirl of narratives. I end this dissertation with the founding of Singapore to show that as polymorphous as the landscape was, there was purpose and vision. It was also one man’s vision. There is, finally, a postscript, the story of the Stamford Raffles’s statue which stands today outside Victoria Memorial Hall, looking seaward, looking elsewhere.

He is also looking awry.<sup>46</sup>

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44. See the section entitled *Dainties* and the essay, “To The Lighthouse, and Back Again.”

45. The dissertation is also inspired by Greg Denning’s *Mr Bligh’s Bad Language* where chapter after chapter is a variation of the story of the Bounty.

46. With apologies to Slavoj Zizek for borrowing his book title *Looking Awry*. The phrase has always fascinated me.

## ADMIRAL KEPPEL'S HARBOUR

Peter Floris departed from Gravesend, England on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1611.<sup>1</sup> He was to return from Bantam four and a half years later in August, 1615 – only to die less than two months after and be buried on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1615 in London.

Both Dutchmen,<sup>2</sup> Peter Floris and his partner, Lucas Antheunis had sailed for the English East India Company on an English vessel christened *The Globe*. It was the seventh voyage for the company and the first English vessel to trade in the Bay of Bengal and the Gulf of Siam. On the journey outwards, the ship rounded the “Iland of Ceylon, falling juste within the Punta de Galle”<sup>3</sup> and sailed up the Coromandel Coast to Masulipatam and across the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean to Bantam (arriving April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1612). From Bantam, *The Globe* voyaged northwards to the Gulf of Siam (arriving at Patani on 22<sup>nd</sup>, June, 1612) where it would remain for more than a year engaging in the China and Japan trade before sailing back on 13<sup>th</sup>, October, 1613 to Masulipatam, and again southeastward to Bantam -- and eventually, setting home for England sometime around March, 1615.

And while the voyage proved a commercial success,<sup>4</sup> it also established English presence in the Bay of Bengal and the South China Seas, and added to the growing hostility between the Dutch and the English East India Companies. The decision to establish a permanent factory at Masulipatam in 1615 would help lay the foundations of British India. And Stamford Raffles, if he had been ignorant of this particular voyage, ironically owes much to Floris, a Dutchman -- and his journal, recorded as Marine Logs XII in the India Office – which many navigators prior to 1819, would have consulted.<sup>5</sup>

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1. See footnote #1, pp. 1 of *Peter Floris: His Voyage to the East Indies in the Globe, 1611-1615* ed. W.H. Moreland, C.S.I., C.I.E. (1934) London: Hakluyt Society for an explanation of dating in terms of “Old Style” and “New Style”. For our conventional understanding of dating, Moreland has translated the dates in New Style.

2. Moreland provides an extensive argument in his introductory section as to why private Dutch merchants were sailing for the English East India Company (EIC). See subsection #7, liii - lxii. Moreland also provides considerable information on the life of Peter Floris in the introduction.

3. Ibid, 7.

4. Ibid, xxx.

5. The year marks the founding of Singapore, the date being January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1819.

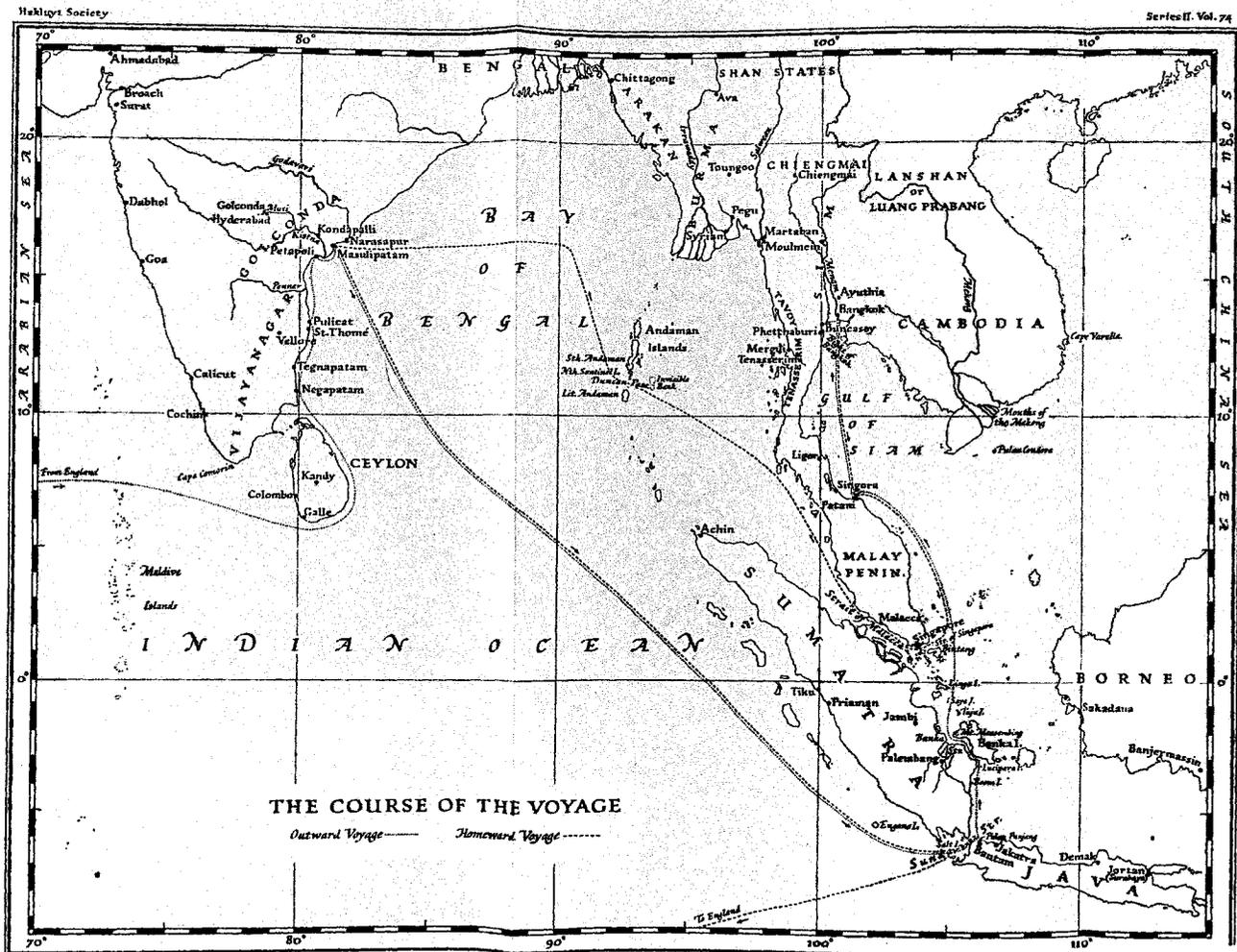


Figure 2. The Voyage of Peter Floris, reprinted from Peter Floris *His Voyage to the East Indies in the Globe 1611 – 1615* edited by W. H. Moreland, 1934 London: Hakluyt Society

16a

The voyage back to Masulipatam after the time spent in Siamese waters is significant. *The Globe*, as the editor of Floris's text, W.H. Moreland, claims, would be the first English vessel to navigate through the Straits of Singapore – modern Singapore's Keppel Harbour. As always, there is refutation – *The Globe* would be the first English vessel to sail past the Straits of Singapore.<sup>6</sup> The landmarks described by Floris are ambiguous on contemporary maps, and disturb the order of things. But what do you, or rather, can you see – or want to see from the bow of a ship even if on a clear day, you can see forever? As often history leaves room for doubt but it is hard to see seventeenth-century vistas from the present.

And if Peter Floris had been aware of the “Straighte of Sincapura” and its most navigable route along the southwest coast of Singapore Island (Second Strait or Sembilan Strait),<sup>7</sup> it would most likely be due to John Huyghen Van Linschoten's *Itinerario*<sup>8</sup> or as it is most

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6. See C. A. Gibson-Hill's “Singapore Old Strait & New Harbour 1300-1870.” #3, Dec. 1956, Singapore: Memoirs of the Raffles Museum. The monograph is a necessary read for its extensive details of Keppel Harbour's history. Also for this discussion please refer to below, endnote 6.

7. This is complicated. For a comprehensive explanation of the route and the confusion over the names of the Straits, see Moreland's note in pages 100-101. The Second Strait or The Sembilan Strait is so named as the waters are flanked by Singapore Island and the chain of nine (*Sembilan* is the Malay for nine) little islands. As Floris approached the Straits of Singapore (between Singapore and Blakang Mati Island or deadback island known for its unhealthy soil), his choice was to navigate through two lesser straits separated by the small island of Brani Island. Having employed a “Saletter” or “sea-Gypsy” (“pilott” according to Floris, see page 102) to guide him through the Straits of Singapore, *The Globe*, perils aside, was taken through the northern passage (“New Straits”). Floris actually provides a very detailed account of the journey through the Straits, see pages 101-104. Gibson-Hill, however contests this arguing that actually Floris had sailed past the straits of Singapore and was guided by a sea gypsy (“Selatter” – quite likely denoting one who lives in the Straits. *Selat* is Malay for Straits) to sail through the channel between Blakang Mati Island and Tekukor island, only then to sail north-west towards the Sembilan Strait or off modern Singapore's Pasir Panjang, see pages 55-57. The bone of contention here is simply which strait or waterway did Floris actually take?

8. John Huyghen Van Linschoten, *The Voyage of John Huyghen Van Linschoten to the East Indies (from the old English Translation of 1598), The First Book containing his description of the East in Two Volumes*. ed. A.C. Burnell (first volume) and P.A. Tiele (second volume), New York: Burt Franklin. The edited volumes were published in the mid 1880s. Some sources list the Burnell and Tiele edition as 1884, but there is no publication year given for the reprint from the Hakluyt Society by Burt Franklin, New York. The Burt Franklin edition also contains an introduction concerning the life of A.C. Burnell by the president of the Hakluyt Society dated 1885. Also see page 11, footnote

well-known, the *Reys-Gheschrift*: “This passage is so well described in the 20(th) chapter of the *Deroutes* of John Hugens van Lainschoten that it cannot be mended, for we have founde all juste as hee hath described it, so that a man needth no other judge or pilote butt him.”<sup>9</sup> In Floris’s mind, that was exactly the case.

Linschoten was not the first European pilot to chart that part of the world. Perhaps, Marco Polo did – but most certainly, the Portuguese.<sup>10</sup> The Hakluyt Society offers many more similar voyages and ambiguous references to the ‘Cape of Singapore’, ‘The Gate of Singapore’, the ‘Old Straits’ and the ‘Straits of Singapore’. The Chinese, if one were to trace this waterway back further, had made note of it in 1349.<sup>11</sup> They referred to it as ‘Dragon’s Teeth (Lung-ya men)’, the Western entrance of the waterway being marked by two pillar rocks; an area inhabited by the rather unproductive ‘Tan-ma-hsi’ barbarians who were addicted to piracy and looting. In August 1848, one of the dragon’s teeth, ‘Batu Berlayar’ or ‘Lot’s Wife’ would be extracted by J.T. Thompson, the Settlement Surveyor who blew the stone up to widen the western entrance to the harbour.<sup>12</sup>

Linschoten sailed for India (from Lisbon) on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April, 1583, eighty-three years after Vasco Da Gama reached India, seventy-two years after the Portuguese conquered Malacca, and six years after Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the known world. He

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#2 in C. A. Gibson-Hill for discussion of Linschoten’s navigation accounts comprising Spanish and Portuguese pilots’ manuscripts and interviews (in Goa with Portuguese merchants) rather than a personal log. Gibson-Hill’s monograph, though providing some comprehensive detailed historical data, is punctuated with moralistic observations and denunciations of other sources, particularly Charles Burton Buckley’s (1902/1965) *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore: Two Volumes*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press -- quite forgetting the “anecdotal” in the title.

9. Floris, 104.

10. Notably Alfonso de Albuquerque, who conquered Malacca. See Afonso de Albuquerque, 1500-1580. *The commentaries of the great Alfonso Dalbuquerque, second viceroy of India*. Tr. from the Portuguese edition of 1774, with notes and an introduction. Works issued by the Hakluyt Society. 1st ser., 53, 55, 62, 69. New York, B. Franklin [n.d.].

11. Gibson-Hill, 35-36. The author of the *Tao i chih lio* is Wang Ta-yuan, who sailed during the open-doors period of the Yuan Dynasty (1341-1367). Gibson-Hill traces Chinese navigation in the waters, including those of the great Admiral Cheng-Ho (1405-1433) with considerable detail. Cheng Ho was the first admiral to sail through Keppel Harbour.

12. The introductory essays by Kwa Chong Guan contained in a compilation entitled *Tanjong Pagar: Singapore’s Cradle of Development* which is sponsored and published by the Singapore Tanjong Pagar Citizens Consultative Committee in 1989 is worth reading for added sources. There are however, some factual ambiguities.

returned to Lisbon on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1592 with a Nautical Directory which drew the attention of the Dutch to Java, its eventual choice as a trading head-quarters – and which aided the rise of Dutch power in the Indies. In 1598, Linschoten’s *Itinerario* was published in both English and German, a revelation with respect to the declining power of the Portuguese in the Far East, and in the English publisher John Wolfe’s words, “not onely delightfull, but also very commodious for our *English Nation*.”<sup>13</sup>

In the dedication “To the Reader”,<sup>14</sup> Wolfe writes contritely, brimming with hyperbolic references to great travels, mythical and virtual, and the enlightenment of knowledge:

I doo not doubt, but yet I doo most hartely pray and wish, that this poore Translation may worke in our *English Nation* a further desire and increase of Honour ouer all *Coutreys* of the *World*, and as it hath hitherto mightily aduance the Credite of the realme by defending the same with our *Wodden Walles* (as *Themistocles* called the Ships of *Athens*): So it would employ the same in forraine partes, as well for the dispersing and planting true Religion and Ciuill Conuersation therein: As also for the further benefite and commodity of this Land by exportation of such things wherein we doe abound, and importation of those *Necessities* whereof we stand in Neede: as *Hercules* did, when hee fetched away the Golden Apples out of the Garden of the *Hesperides*; and *Iason*, when with his lustie troupe of courageous *Argonautes* hee atchieued the *Golden Fleece* in *Colchos*.<sup>15</sup>

The language of destiny and national good abounds in the dedication. It is also a language of sacrifice and admiration to those who went before, braving “intollerable paines, and infinite diseases” to chart unexplored seas and territories, and bring home treasures and rich merchandise. There is divine teleology, no matter the gods worshiped – first the Portingales whose navigational skills have dispersed and communicated sundry commodities, fruits and spices to all “Nations vnder the *Sunne*”, and then “came the *English* (a *People* that in the *Art of Navigation* giueth place to none other).”<sup>16</sup> Linschoten’s *Itinerario* is published in so far it advances the English – the Dutch, naturally, do not figure except as instruments of destiny. Wolfe’s dedication telescopes into English history, Greek mythology and its fantastic voyages; the fantastic is now realized – or at least, can be realized. The world with sails unfurled.

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13. *Ibid*, xlv. This is the dedication to “Dr. Julius Caesar”. It actually reads “To the Right Vvorshipfull IVLIVS CAESER, Doctor of the Lawes, Judge of the High Court of Admiralty, Master of requests to the Queened Maiesty, and Master of Saint Katherines.”

14. *Ibid*, xlvii-iii.

15. Van Linschoten, lii.

16. *Ibid*, 1.

Arnold Wright, Editor-in-Chief of *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* begins his introduction of the Singapore Harbour with the following paraphrase, ‘If “Egypt is the Nile and the Nile is Egypt,” as Lord Rosebery declared in one of his famous speeches, it may with equal justice be said that “Singapore is the harbour and the harbour is Singapore.”<sup>17</sup> In his monograph, *Singapore Old Straits and New Harbour* (1956), C. A. Gibson-Hill questions the appropriateness of renaming the harbour after Sir Henry Keppel, Commander of the China Station.<sup>18</sup> Keppel, Gibson-Hill concedes, was a prominent figure and a great Admiral, but he had very little to do with the straits itself – short of the serendipitous discovery of a shoal with the keel of his ship, *The Meander*. Many more worthy others had gone before him – though the straits then had very little to do with Modern Singapore and its harbour. Sometime between 1613 and 1819, the straits disappeared into a mess of islets and unruly channels – each new voyage recorded after *The Globe*, each new map re-imagined – confounding the landscape even further – and then, erasing it – but only to begin anew. In 1819, William Farquhar, the first Resident of Singapore, would *discover* the straits but as ‘New Harbour’. It is odd that landmarks should ever be connected to originary moments.

Keppel’s first encounter with New Harbour was on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1848, having sailed in with James Brooke, The White Rajah of Sarawak<sup>19</sup> and newly appointed Governor of

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17. Arnold Wright (ed.) (1908) *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya*. London, et.al: Lloyds Greater Britain Publishing, 220. Unfortunately Wright also goes on to say that it was the sheltered and commanding position which attracted Sir. Stamford Raffles. Raffles was in fact unaware of the harbour at that time. This could also lend credibility to the argument that Raffles landed near the Rochore River, which would be some way off the harbour area.

18. The renaming was actually proposed as early as September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1857, the *Singapore Free Press* when Keppel had suggested that a naval dock should be built in the vicinity. Buckley, 657. It might also be noted that George Drumgoole Coleman, the first Surveyor and Architect of Singapore, also played a significant part in identifying the usability of New Harbour. On March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1829, Coleman wrote to Kenneth Murchison, the Resident Councillor, with a request to fund the completion of a survey on the capabilities of New Harbour, the Singapore shore and its immediate vicinity. See letter in Singapore National Archives (NS) #N.5, 220-223.

19. James Brooke was made the Governor of Sarawak, with the fullest powers, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 1841 and was declared Rajah on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1842. The Brooke family would continue ruling Sarawak until 1946. The following is extracted from his journal, parts of which are published in The Hon. Captn. Henry Keppel, (1847) *The Expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. Dido for the Suppression of Piracy with Extracts from the Journal of James Brooke, esq. Of Sarawak*. (Third Edition) 2 Vols., Vol.1, London: Chapman and Hall, 252.

Nov.3d. – I have a country; but, oh, how beset with difficulties, how ravaged by war, torn by dissensions, and ruined by duplicity, weakness

Labuan, on the *H.M.S. Meander*, a 44-gun frigate, ten days earlier on the 20<sup>th</sup> after a passage of three months and five days with stoppages at Madeira and Rio. Pulling into the harbour for what is considered the first repairs carried out in New Harbour:<sup>20</sup>

The *Meander* refitted in the snug and picturesque New Harbour, which appears to have been overlooked in selecting the first points of settlement; the only objection to it as a harbour is the intricacy of the eastern entrance; a difficulty which, by the introduction of steam, has become of little consequence. No place could be better adapted for a coal depot; and, as a harbour for a man-of-war to refit, it is most convenient. The forge can be landed, boats repaired, and the artificers employed under commodious sheds, and all under the immediate eye of the officers on board. It has another great advantage over Sincapore roads; in the latter anchorage a ship's bottom becomes more foul than in any other I know of, – perhaps from the near proximity to the bottom; this is not the case in New Harbour, through which there is always a tide running. Although it has the appearance of being hot and confined, surrounded as it is by high land, we did not find it so in reality; generally there is a current of air inside, while the ships in the stagnant and crowded roads are often becalmed.<sup>21</sup>

The western entrance of the harbour was no easy matter either. A steamer such as *The Mississippi* as commandeered by the illustrious Commodore M.C. Perry in 1853 was able to negotiate the numerous islands, and the various and intricate passages as long as there was a strict observance of James Horsburgh's<sup>22</sup> directions "together with proper

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and intrigue!

James Brooke was appointed as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the new British Colony of Labuan in 1848, and eventually knighted in Singapore on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1848.

20. Buckley, 493.

21. Henry Keppel, Capt. The Hon., (1853) *A Visit to the Indian Archipelago in H.M. Ship Meander with portions of the private journal of Sir. James Brooke, K.C.B.* (2 volumes) London: Richard Bentley. Chapter fourteen of Volume I is a long treatise against piracy in Singapore, 16-17.

22. James Horsburgh, FRS – Hydrographer to the Court of Directors. See James Horsburgh, *The India directory, or, Directions for sailing to and from the East Indies, China, Australia, and the interjacent ports of Africa and South America: originally compiled from journals of the Honourable company's ships, and from observations and remarks, resulting from the experience of twenty-one years in the navigation of those seas.* 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, London, W. H. Allen, 1852, 259-283. I am relying on Horsburgh's 1842 directory. Horsburgh's directions are remarkably detailed having sailed through the harbour and out again. The directions to enter the harbour are on page 265. Horsburgh writes, presciently, of Singapore in 1842 as:

a place of great importance, and is rapidly advancing in population and

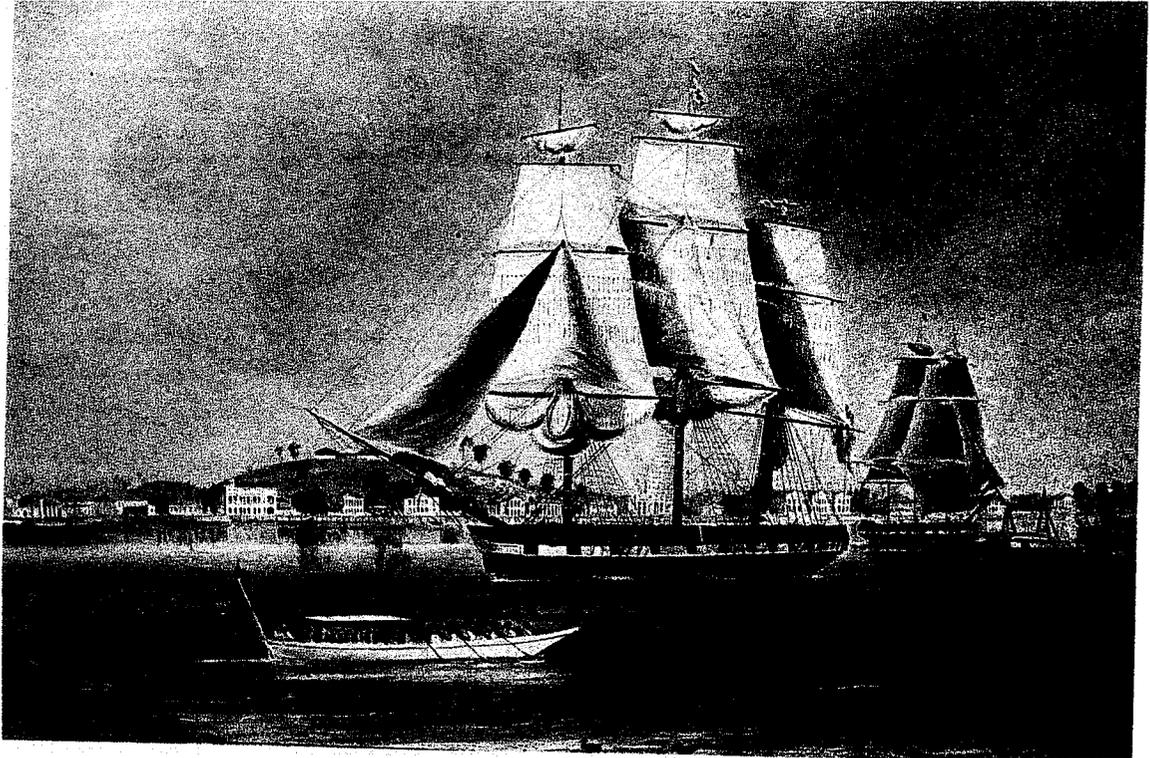


Figure 3. Singapore Waterfront, John Thomson, 1840s, John Hall-Jones (1983) *The Thomson Paintings Singapore*: Oxford University Press, 34.



Figure 4. Singapore Godowns and River, 1880s, National Archives of Singapore

vigilance and judgement, the lead being kept in constant use and the anchor always in readiness, there is no great danger of touching.”<sup>23</sup>

It is not accurate, as Buckley reports,<sup>24</sup> that Keppel was the first to sail through New Harbour or observe its potential. It is more likely that Keppel, as a respected Naval officer, and simply because he was *Henry Keppel*, was integral to its development by alerting the Admiralty and the P. & O. Company to its strategic uses as shelter for the H.M. Navy in times of war, and for wharves and docks – though the admiralty did not act until 1853. Several surveys and observations of New Harbour’s possibilities, some for fortifying purposes, had been conducted prior to 1848 as early as 1827,<sup>25</sup> and applications to lease land for dock construction were approved since 1835, though none were built till 1859.<sup>26</sup> What Keppel possibly saw in – and ambitioned for New Harbour was similar to Raffles’s vision of Singapore as a fulcrum for trade and civilization; “By no act,” Keppel writes in his diary/autobiography, “did Sir Stamford Raffles manifest greater discernment and foresight than by founding this settlement; steam then not dreamed of.”<sup>27</sup> Keppel proposed that the harbour could be supremely fitted as a naval center and major port of call – as well as the principal residence of the Naval Commander-in-Chief of the region.

We are a long way from Linschoten’s voyages. The port of Singapore in 1820, according to Munshi Abdullah, the native scholar and language teacher to many Europeans, was “crammed full of shipping, ketches, sloops, frigates, two-and-a half masters, schooners,

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commercial prosperity. It is advantageous both as a central depot, for trade, and as a naval station for the protection of commerce in the event of a war, the harbour being secure for numerous ships of any size and its proximity to the China and Java Seas enhances its value.

23. Francis L. Hawks (1856) *Narrative of the expedition of an American squadron to the China seas and Japan, performed in the years 1852, 1853, and 1854, under the command of Commodore M. C. Perry, United States Navy. Compiled from the original notes and journals of Commodore Perry and his officers, at his request and under his supervision.* New York: D. Appleton, 148.

24. Buckley, 493.

25. In 1827, Edward Lake, the Inspector General wrote a “Report on the Best Means of Fortifying Singapore” identifying “roads in the harbour containing water sufficient for vessels of the largest burthen, formed by the island of Singapore on one side, and that of Blakang Mati or St. George’s Island on the other. In the middle of the entrance from the roadstead is a small island called Pulo Ayer Brani or Gage island...”(facsimile of unsorted private papers found in the Asean Collection, National Library of Singapore)

26. Gibson-Hill, 95.

27. The Hon. Sir Henry Keppel, (1899) *A Sailor’s Life under Four Sovereigns.* 3 Vols. London: Macmillan and Co., Vol. II, 76.

junks from China, Annam and Siam, and boats from Borneo.”<sup>28</sup> By June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1839, when James Brooke first arrived in Singapore on *The Royalist*, we are in a different world: off the town lie the shipping of various countries, presenting a most picturesque and striking appearance. The man-of-war, the steamer, and the merchant-vessels of the civilised world, contrast with the huge misshapen, and bedizened arks of China! The awkward prahus of the Bugis are surrounded by the light boats of the island. The semi-civilised Cochin Chinese, with their vessels of antiquated European construction,<sup>29</sup> deserve attention from this important step towards improvement; and the rude prahus of some parts of Borneo claim it from their exhibiting the early dawn of maritime adventure.<sup>30</sup>

By 1840, the Singapore census would register two *sexes* and fifteen *races*:<sup>31</sup> Europeans, Indo-Britons, Native Christians, Armenians, Jews, Arabs, Malays, Chinese<sup>32</sup>, Natives of Coromandel and Malabar Coasts, Natives of Hindostan and Bengal, Javanese, Bugis-Balinese, etc., Caffres, Parsees, and Siamese – a grand total of 35,389, an increase of 5405 inhabitants since the last census was conducted in 1836.<sup>33</sup> In 1849, the Cochin-

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28. Munshi Abdullah, (1970) *The Hikayat Abdullah*. An annotated translation by A.H. Hill, New York: Oxford University, 159. For a full account of Abdullah, see the chapter entitled, *Malay Lessons* in the conclusion section. The date is disputable. It is not clear when Abdullah actually arrived in Singapore and the dates could be a confusion. See C. A. Gibson-Hill (1955) "The Date of Munshi Abdullah's first Visit to Singapore." *JMBRAS*, XXVII, Part 1:191-195.

29. See page 484 of John Crawfurd (1828/1987) *Journal of an embassy to the courts of Siam and Cochin China* with an introduction by David K. Watt, Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints, Singapore: Oxford University Press. Also see G. W. Earl (1837/1971) *The Eastern Seas* with an introduction by C. M. Turnbull, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 198. Earl talks of the liveliness and vivacity of the Cochin-Chinese and compares them to the French.

30. Keppel, 1847, 11. This is an extract from Brooke's diary. Also refer to James Brooke, (1848) *Narrative of events in Borneo and Celebes: down to the occupation of Labuan: from the journals of James Brooke, esq., Rajah of Sarawak, and governor of Labuan. Together with a narrative of the operations of H. M. S. Iris by Captain Rodney Mundy, R. N.* London: J. Murray, 6-13. The same extract is not covered in James Brooke's narrative, quite likely because of it being published in Keppel's book.

31. Politically inappropriate or not, I choose to use the terminology of the times.

32. They formed the largest population.

33. T. J. Newbold (1839/1971) *Political and statistical account of the British settlements in the Straits of Malacca*. With an introduction by C. M. Turnbull. Reprint of the 1839 ed, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 283. Newbold's overall account of Singapore,

Chinese, described by John Crawford as “cheerful”, “mild” and “docile”,<sup>34</sup> for the first – and *only* time, would be counted at 27; 11 males, and surprisingly, 16 females. When the next census was taken in 1860, quite inadequately by the local police who appeared to have only recognized eight racial categories, France had already occupied Saigon, the capital of Cochin-China. Eventually, Annam<sup>35</sup> would cede both East Cochin-China (1862) and West Cochin-China (1867) to the French. In the nineteenth-century world of restless cartography – nationality, ethnicity, and identity balanced precariously over the ink-well.

Charles Wilkes,<sup>36</sup> the articulate Commander of the United States Exploring Expedition of

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despite the statistics given, are quite inaccurate and questionable. A more reliable analysis of population change and reprints of all census taken till 1911 by Hayes Marriott, Acting Colonial Secretary, Straits Settlements, may be found in Walter Makepeace, Dr. Gilbert E. Brooke and Roland St. J. Braddell, General Editors (1921) *One Hundred Years of Singapore*. 2 Vols. London: John Murray, V.1, 355-362. It should be noted that the figures given above for the year 1840 *excludes* the floating population, the military and the Indian convicts – and when included, the grand total would be 39,681.

34. See pages 481-501 of Crawford for the imitation skills of the Cochin-Chinese in naval construction. There had been European contact since the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

35. Cochin-China, though an independent state, was predominantly ruled by the Annamese who constituted the mercantile classes.

36. Charles Wilkes (1845) *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition during the years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842*. 5 vols. London: Wiley and Putnam. The expedition was authorized by the Navy Department on behalf of the Congress of the United States in August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1838 in order to explore and survey the sea, “as well as to determine the existence of doubtful islands and shoals, as to discover and accurately fix the position of those which lie in or near the track of [vessels] in that quarter, and may have escaped the observation of scientific navigators,” vol. 1, xxv. But more so, the “primary object of the Expedition is the promotion of the great interests of commerce and navigation ...[and] extend the bounds of science, and promote the acquisition of knowledge,” vol I, xxix.

The “Instructions” (vol I, xxv-xxx) handed out to Wilkes also included routes to be taken and quite interestingly, codes of behaviour when encountering “savages”. It was admitted that certain situations could not be prevented due to cultural gaps thus all the more the participants of the expedition had to behave ethically and to make the most gentlemanly of impressions in lands “beyond the sphere of social life, and the restraints of law.” What comes across here is the language of reciprocity, that benefits had to be conferred on both sides – and the discourse of the noble savage.

These were the following dos and don'ts laid out. Theft had to be avoided at all cost due

1838-1842 realized that he was approaching “some great mart” when “the number of native as well as foreign vessels” passed *The Vincennes*, a seven hundred and eighty tons sloop of war.<sup>37</sup> Originally slotted to arrive on April 1841 to meet up with a store ship from the United States – instead, on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1842 at 5 pm, a little under a year later, and fifty-six days from the Sandwich Islands, the ship dropped anchor in Singapore Roads along with the three other expedition ships, *The Porpoise*, *Oregon* and *Flying Fish* which had arrived earlier between the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January and the 16<sup>th</sup> of February. “Unlike other ports,” Wilkes wrote, “the water presents at first so many objects to attract the attention, that the land and town remain unnoticed until the curiosity in relation to those which are afloat is satisfied.”<sup>38</sup> Wilkes was not prepared for the din of cultures he was plunged into – the “great variety both of costume and of race” and “the variety of religious sects” – from “the eclectic collection of shipping of all nations to the concourse of various races and their trades, [the] carpenters, blacksmiths, tanners, butchers, bakers, tailors, barbers, crockery and opium sellers, and coffin-makers, are to be met in

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to savage nations entertaining vague notions of property rights. No trade should be carried out in any country, civilized or savage, except for necessaries or curiosities. There should be no “wanton interference with the customs, habits, manners, or prejudices, of the natives of such countries or islands as you may visit; nor take part in their disputes, except as a mediator; nor commit any act of hostility, unless in self defence, or to protect or secure the property of those under your command, or whom circumstances may have placed within reach of your protection”. Ethnocentrism manifested as arrogance or contempt was bad form. All officers and men should display courtesy and kindness towards the natives because this was a universal feeling, and to appeal to the goodwill of natives rather than their fears. Since treachery was invariably a savage or barbarian characteristic, unnecessary contact with natives should be avoided since “fatal disasters which have fallen preceding navigators, have arisen from too great a reliance on savage professions of friendship, or overweening confidence in themselves.” Favourable initial impressions were important since “the nature of the savage” remembers benefits and never forgets injuries. “The Expedition is not for conquest, but discovery. Its objects are all peaceful; they are to extend the empire of commerce and science; they diminish the hazards of the ocean, and point out to future navigators a course by which they may avoid dangers and find safety.” It was also specifically pointed out in the “Instructions” that the expedition should endeavour to seek the shortest and safest route to China.

See also W. Stanton (1975) *The Great United States Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. Stanton, described the scientific expedition as a unique squadron, “the last of the overseas exploring expeditions to rely solely on sail and the first in a good many years to be dispatched on polar exploration with ships unadapted for the peculiar hazards of such service,” 73. It should also be noted that the US Navy had in its possession only one steam vessel built in 1837.

37. Wilkes, vol. I, xv.

38. Wilkes, vol. V, 372.

succession.”<sup>39</sup> He was more than visibly impressed with the apparent self-regulated space and trading community that Singapore, in all its cultural dissonance presented – one that was primarily based on and united by opportunism and the principle of gain:

The number of spoken languages is such as to recall the idea of Babel, and to excite a desire to learn the cause of such a collection of nations. This is partly to be found in the favourable commercial site of Singapore, on the great highway between the Eastern and Western nations, and in the protection afforded to all by it being a under a European power, but chiefly in the fact of its being a free port, in every sense of the word. All are allowed to visit it without any question being asked; pirates of any nation may refit here, and no doubt frequently do, without any molestation, so long as they keep the peace.<sup>40</sup>

It is the character of free trade which Wilkes returns to frequently in his sometime grudgingly admiring and acute description of Singapore – despite remaining on the island for only a week. Trade is what constitutes Singapore – it is that which provides permanence and stability to its transient character where merchants come and go, and goods and merchandise are distributed promptly and efficiently in the exchange of capital. Singapore is flux. Trade is also what governs the destiny of Singapore, and its supremacy as a major port-of-call would eventuate its society receiving the arts and civilization of Europe. Ironically, one of the expedition ships, *Flying Fish* with its weakened frame, would be sold off in Singapore, spending its remaining days as *The Spec* in the Asian opium trade. In 1842, the place of Singapore in the world was already quite significant – Wilkes raves about receiving letters from the United States in seventy-two days, so much so, that he re-calibrates time and space, “This places the East in such close proximity to Europe, that instead of looking for yearly or month accounts, as was formerly the case, they are now on the watch for daily news.” The future lay in steam navigation. Where once the monsoons had regulated the India-China routes, steam would overcome the elements – all that was needed was “capital to set it in motion.”<sup>41</sup>

The growing demands of steam shipping from the 1840s onwards, with its need for coal portorage and storage, necessitated corresponding facilities. The open roads were cumbersome in terms of transporting the coal to its depot – which was located quite likely, near or at the already congested mouth of the Singapore river – as it had to be lifted onto a smaller vessel or lighters to be carried over and simultaneously kept dry lest it should combust.<sup>42</sup> Three years after the much celebrated and luxurious five hundred and twenty horsepower liner *The Hindostan* inaugurated the ‘Oriental’ in the Peninsular

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39. Ibid, 374.

40. Ibid, 375.

41. Ibid, 408.

42. See introductory pages of George Bogaars (1956) “The Tanjong Pagar Dock Company.” *Memoirs of the Raffles Museum*, no. 3, December.

and Oriental's (P. & O.) service to Calcutta, India, the *Lady Mary Wood*<sup>43</sup> and its regular monthly mail service arrived in Singapore on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1845 – on a new service which extended to Penang, Singapore, and China<sup>44</sup> – only 41 days out of London. On her return voyage, the ship carried 4000 pieces of mail bound for Europe and 757 for Penang, India, and Aden.<sup>45</sup> The passage-money was £160.00, including transit through Egypt and stewards' fees.<sup>46</sup> The *Singapore Free Press* was enthusiastic, hailing the dawn of a new era of communication in the region:

The arrival of the first direct Overland Mail for the Straits and China is an event of some importance, and deserving of special notice at our hands. It is a further addition to the great lines of steam packets by which Great Britain is brought into such close contact with her distant Colonial possessions.....

It seems almost certain that Singapore will be the station where the junction of the Australian line with the Indian one will take place, so that with the Dutch monthly steamer and perhaps the Manila in addition. Singapore bids to become a steam-packet station of considerable importance.<sup>47</sup>

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43. Lady Mary Wood was the wife of Charles Wood, secretary to the Admiralty, later Lord Halifax.

44. See Boyd Cable (1937) *A Hundred Year History of the P. & O. Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company 1837-1937*. London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 101-108.

45. In 1844, the P. & O. submitted a tender for an extended service from Ceylon to Penang, Singapore and China. This became the first contract to convey the China Mail. The China Mail was to be transhipped at Point de Galle, Ceylon by a monthly steamer, and then on to Penang in 140 hours, then another 45 hours to Singapore (remaining there for 48 hours) and 170 hours to Hong Kong. The second P. & O. ship to reach Singapore carrying the China mail, the *Braganza* (built 1836) carried 1,500 mail packets from Europe. The *Braganza* was a fuel saver – “securing greater economy in coal by the introduction of side-lever engines” (Cable, 261). In 1850, The P. & O. built the *Singapore* (1190 tons). Boyd Cable provides more details in his history of the P. & O. For an informative look at the shipping traffic and shipping lines to Singapore from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century, read the introduction of J. Bastin (1994) *Travellers' Singapore*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

45. Makepeace, V.2, 174. Charles Spottiswoode and Connolly were the first agents. Makepeace provides information on all P. & O. agents until 1921.

47. Buckley, 427. It should be noted that Buckley has compiled the history from the original papers and interleaved them chronologically. In his own words, “The book is certainly made up largely of scraps,” ii. The *Singapore Free Press* was a weekly press. Buckley never claimed that what he reported was entirely reliable – as much as he tried to

When Henry Keppel once again arrived in 1848, he was impressed by the frequency of the mail ships, “twice in every month, the steam-vessels of the Dutch from Batavia, of the Spanish from Manila, and our own from China, to meet the European mail” and estimated the number of “square-rigged vessels that anchor annually in the roads”<sup>48</sup> to exceed a thousand. Many travelers would resonate similar views, including Commodore M. C. Perry<sup>49</sup> who commanded the expedition of the American Squadron to the China seas and Japan.

Singapore is in the course of the regular mail route between India, China, Australia, and Europe. There is a constant postal communication, by means of the English and one or more Dutch steamers, with Hong Kong, Penang, Batavia, Shanghai, Calcutta, Madras, Bengal, Bombay, Ceylon, the Mauritius, Cape of Good Hope, and by the Red Sea, with Europe and America.<sup>50</sup>

Perry arrived on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1853 on board *The Mississippi*, fortuitously in time to utilize the new P. & O. anchorage with its bunkering piers and godowns at Sibet Bay and near St. James – “a magnificent depot, comprising wharves, coal-sheds, storehouses, workshops, and other buildings, such as would do credit to any English colonial establishment.”<sup>51</sup> Located two and half miles from the townsite, it was, according to the Commodore, erected by the “wealthy and enterprising” Oriental Steam Navigation Company. Eventually, firms like Jardine, Matheson and Company, John Purvis and Son, and the Borneo Company would build wharves in the same area. By 1869, the P. & O. was operating eighteen vessels between Suez, Bombay and Hong Kong, a further five more ships on the China Coast and four ships working between Ceylon and Western Australia.

On November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1859, the *London Illustrated News* reported the completion of the submarine cable laid by Messrs. Newall and Co. for the Dutch Government between Singapore and Batavia, a distance of nearly 600 miles. The Singaporean merchants sent a message of congratulations to Batavia to which the Batavia merchants replied. The second telegraph exchange was between the Governor-General of Netherlands-India and Governor Orfeur Cavenagh -- and then the line went mute, the cable believed to be snapped by a ship’s anchor. The line, having communicated a few more times, was so

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check up the sources and verified them.

48. Keppel, 1853, 7-8.

49. Hawks/Perry, 149-155.

50. Ibid, 153.

51. Ibid, 152-153. The profitable shipping activity in the 1850s is also supported by Merchant Navy Midshipman, John Allan in his letter, dated April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1856 to his sister Joanna Allan in Edinburgh: “There are a great number of vessels here. We are getting £4.10 and £5 per ton for freight and we will be able to take 1000 tons.” IOR MSS EUR C716.

impossibly damaged that it was never repaired.<sup>52</sup> October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1864, the Illustrated London News, provided the following report:

The Indian telegraphs, which connect together Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Delhi and all the principle towns in India, are advanced eastwards as far as Rangoon, and the routes thence to China and to Australia, by way of Singapore, Java and Timor, are almost comparatively in shallow water so far as the submarine part of the line is concerned, and “and do not otherwise”, writes Sir Charles Bright, “offer any difficulty which should prevent out having daily telegrams from Hong Kong, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, and Brisbane within three years from this day.

By 1870, the submarine telegraph cable would extend to India, and subsequently to Singapore, Hongkong and South-East Australia, and eventually girdle the earth. Opened to the public in January 1871, the Telegraph Office was located at Prince’s street, in a house leased from the Sultan of Johor, “thus placing Singapore in direct communication with India, Europe, Great Britain, and America.”<sup>53</sup> The first message from England transmitted by submarine cable, land line, and horse express, was received in Melbourne on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1872. In 1881, the Telegraph Office would operate its first telephone, five years after its invention.<sup>54</sup> Bennett Pell had ordered 50 lines in 1879 as a private venture before having his company bought over by The Oriental Telephone Company which was a multinational company registered on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1881. By 1882, with Pell as the first Manager of The Oriental Telephone Company, there were 43 exchange lines and 16 private lines. The subscribers included Borneo Co, Ltd., The Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, Messageries Maritimes Cie., the P. & O., Tanjong Pagar Dock Company, The New Harbour Dock Company and the Maharaja of Johor.<sup>55</sup>

Long before the opening of the Suez Canal in late 1869, Singapore came into being

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52. See Buckley, 674-75. Also see The London Illustrated News dated January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1860 in D. J. M. Tate's (1988) *Rajah Brooke's Borneo: The Nineteenth Century World of Pirates and Head-hunters, Orang Utan and Hornbills, and Other Such Rarities as Seen through the Illustrated London News and Other Contemporary Sources* Hong Kong: John Nicholson Ltd., 21. By March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1860, the ILN reports that there are no less than five submarine cables now out of order – namely the Channel islands, Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Red Sea cables, and the one between Singapore and Batavia.

53. Makepeace, V.II, 167. Makepeace also informs us that on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1872, the result of the University Boat Race (Oxbridge) was telegraphed out in four minutes to Bombay.

54. Makepeace, V.II, 168. This was actually a private venture ran by a Mr. Bennett Pell under the name of Oriental Telephone Company.

55. Lee Kip Lin (1988) provides a very brief history of the telephone in Singapore in his book, *The Singapore House 1819-1942*, Singapore: Times Books, 75. For more detailed information of *The Oriental Telephone Company Ltd.*, see Makepeace, V.II, 170-171. The Maharaja of Johor is Sultan Abu Bakar, who was later recognized as Sultan.

during the age of steam especially with the P. & O.'s Southampton – Singapore route. The necessity of a coaling station had superseded the ambition of constructing Singapore's first dry dock – and despite the attractiveness of the site (eventually occupied by the Tanjung Pagar Dock Company) of which Admiral Keppel had alerted the P. & O. company,<sup>56</sup> the increasing presence of mail ships and renewable contacts prioritized the need for refilling and storage.<sup>57</sup> On the 26<sup>th</sup> of October, 1852, Captain H. T. Marshall, the P.& O. agent held a grand celebration at the newly constructed P. & O. coal bunkering pier, wharves and offices at Tebing Tinggi, east of Tanjung Aur (St. James) located slightly opposite Pulau Brani – and toasted the new Singapore-Australia line, with its 700-ton vessel *The Chusan* all illuminated. The wharves are known to have held at least 20,000 tons of coal and the wharves frontage measured 1,200 feet. In 1853, the monthly P. & O. mail steamers changed into a twice-monthly affair, alternately via Point de Galle and Calcutta and stopping in Singapore on the way to Hong Kong.<sup>58</sup> Traveling on the P. & O. however, was less satisfying – and the reality of a monopoly soon dawned on the hapless Singaporeans. On September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1848, an article in the *Singapore Free Press* protested:

the monopoly which [the P. & O.] acquired between England and her Eastern possessions has not in anyway quickened their desire to meet the public convenience. On the contrary it has the usual effect of monopoly, an exclusive concern for their own interests, and a complete disregard for that of others. The passengers from China and the Straits especially suffer from the conduct of the Company, which having secured their money,

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56. Keppel, (1899), Vol. II,128.

55. Earlier steamship technology was cumbersome and suffered from heavy fuel consumption. For example, one steamship, *The P.S. America* burnt sixty tons of coal a day to reach an average speed of ten and a quarter knots. Coal supplies and bunkering facilities then, were a necessity and imperative at any major port of call.

58. Makepeace, V.II, 174. The P. & O. mail packets left London on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of each month. The ships reached Singapore on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of each month, then sailing on the return voyage on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, one via Bombay and the other, via Calcutta, both reaching Marseille in 44 days before reaching Southampton. The dates were just a guide and the schedule was not always reliable. In a letter dated December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1859, Franklin R. Kendall writes:

The *Pekin* arrived on the 1<sup>st</sup>, bringing your welcome letter of October 17<sup>th</sup>. By the bye while I think of it, you wrote that via Marseilles, and the Marseilles mail did not leave till the 26<sup>th</sup>, 9 days, so that it would have gone by the Southampton steamer of 20<sup>th</sup>. At Singapore we have mails on alternate weeks to Bombay, so that instead of writing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, for the Marseilles Mail, you need not post letters till the 9<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> or via Southampton 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup>, the same as you used to dear Mary. [referring to the *Lady Mary Wood*]

gives itself no further trouble about them.<sup>59</sup>

In 1852, a bitter letter was reprinted in a local paper concerning the conduct of the P. & O company towards passengers which was “neglect and indifference.”<sup>60</sup> Unsecured reservations, substandard accommodations, lack of comfort, even on a first class passage, perfunctory surcharges, overcharging and inconsistent fares (\$50 for a passage from Singapore to Penang but \$25 for the other way round) were leveled at the company. In 1849, and advertised as a considerable reduction, first class passage for a gentleman from Singapore to Southampton in a general cabin was \$590.40, and for a lady, \$628.80 (around £150.00). There was yet another reduction in 1853 but on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1854, due to the rising costs of coal, the gentleman’s fare leaped to \$600.00 (payable in Spanish, Mexican and Peruvian dollars). In 1856, the rates fell from £125 to £110 but excess luggage had to be paid for at the rate of \$14.40 per cwt. By January 1861, when steamers were already common-place, the first class fare to Southampton was advertised at \$552 with \$33.60 for the transit through Egypt – considered a rise in prices, despite continuing hostile fares and overcrowded ships.<sup>61</sup> Such were the capricious benefits of monopoly. Or so it seemed.

But as Franklin R. Kendall, who worked on the P. & O. mail contracts, explained to his mother, in his letter from Singapore of February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1861:

People may call the P. & O what they like, but no one in England has any idea of the expenses of steamers in this part of the world. They compare our rates with Cunard’s and say “look at the difference”, so say I, “Look at the difference”. Cunard is paid about 13/- per mile for running the Mails (Royal Mails are 9/10) and P & O 4/6. Cunard coals cost him on average 12/- per ton, P & O coals in the East average £3.00 to £3.50 hams and cheeses jams wines beer etc, etc, and all kinds of Pursur’s stores are not bought out in the East, or sent out to the East for what they cost at home. Wages are higher, repairs are higher, and everything is higher, very considerable, so that I believe, taking all in all, as compared with other steamer lines, the P. & O. will be found as cheap as if not cheaper than any other. As regards the treatment on board, you will never find people on board ship who do not growl, at something whether they have occasion to or not, they have nothing else to do. 999 complaints out of every 1000

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59. Buckley, pp. 494.

60. Ibid, 562. Rudyard Kipling in 1889, continued to rail at the P. & O, their prices (“prices of a palace”) and their treatment (“comforts of a coolie-ship”), complaining of their “chain gang” mentality despite competition. “The P. & O. want healthy competition. They call their captains commanders and act as though ‘twere a favour to allow you to embark.” Rudyard Kipling (1912) *From Sea to Sea* London: Macmillan, 261.

61. Buckley, 507 and 568 and see advertisement from Gibson-Hill, 108 with reference back to Buckley, 685. It is important to note that fares would have reduced eventually since by 1869, six other trans-ocean steamship companies were stopping in Singapore as well as the four companies operating in local waters.

are frivolous and not worth answering, the remaining one is generally an unavoidable one, from some accidental cause which the company could not control.<sup>62</sup>

Kendall's loyalty to the company was always unflagging. He was after all assigned to "the Company's best station in the East", a "beautiful place" with "fives ground and cricket club."<sup>63</sup> Singapore then was indeed one of the most desired assignments even if the standard of living was not particularly affordable. Life for the Englishman in Singapore, as John Cameron observed during the same period, was anything but inhospitable. Daily activities included work which ended at 4:30 to 5 pm, and consisted of breakfasts of "coffee or tea, with biscuit or bread and butter and fruit", tiffin of "curry and rice and some fruit...with a glass of beer or claret," morning walks with *ayahs* and *amahs* tending the children, races, gossip, band-nights (Tuesdays and Fridays) at the esplanade, fives-grounds and cricket which "is of course precisely the same game in Singapore as it is at home."<sup>64</sup> Singapore, as Cameron warns, was a place where opportunities did not readily present themselves to any European stepping off the boat and warns: "[to] adventurers of all sorts Singapore is a most unlikely field; and unless with some distinct appointment in view, or armed with a profession, or with the means and the ready-formed connections necessary to start an independent business, I should recommend no one to emigrate there."<sup>65</sup>

Kendall was one of those who received such a favoured appointment -- and a significant portion of his letters concerned his social life, cavorting with the wives of government officers and merchants such as Mrs. Collyer, "the wife of Col. Collyer, the Governor's Secretary, ...one of the nicest little women [he] ever met anywhere" and "a thorough

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62. The Franklin Richardson Kendall letters are catalogued in the OIOC British Library as Eur/Mss Photo EUR 60/1 and 60/2. This is cited as letter #32. These are typescript letters as well as xeroxed copies dating from February 1858 to January 1866. F. R. Kendall (born 1839), an employee of the P. & O. Steam Navigation Company to his mother in England. There is a brief introduction to the letters by Kendall's son (found in the green folio) "my father's letters to his mother after he headed out East in 1858 – to Bombay via Egypt before the Canal was opened – then for Suez to Australia via Mauritius – then to Singapore and Hong Kong where he worked under Sir Thomas Sutherland, the chairman of the P. & O."

63. Ibid. Letter #26, dated Sept. 27<sup>th</sup>, 1859. Kendall has just been assigned to the Singapore Offices.

64. John Cameron, (1865/1965) *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India* Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 297-299. Cameron would have been writing around and of the same time as Kendall's Singapore stint. Bandnights were the nights when the whole European community would gather at the esplanade.

65. Cameron, 284. Cameron goes on to say that most European houses would have made all their engagement at home.

lady ...more intellectual than most,”<sup>66</sup> or having tiffin with Mrs Jose D’ Almeida, ‘the wife of a Portuguese, (Pucka, not Indian) Millionaire,” an Englishwoman whom Kendall liked very much but who “has the peculiar failing which most ladies in a small community seem to indulge in, of dearly loving a little gossip.”<sup>67</sup> For all the luxuries of his station, Kendall however, questioned the management’s decisions at times, for example the proposed closing of the more central P. & O Battery Road office in favour of the one at the harbour which alienated (in terms of distance) and angered the mercantile community in Singapore who would have to make the journey out there.<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile, digging away doggedly at Teluk Saga since February 1849 on Pulau Brani, the islet situated between the main island and Pulau Belakang Mati, was Jacob Clunis, originally of Teluk Ayer via the Shetlands – part-time blacksmith and a part-time pilot.<sup>69</sup> Jacob Clunis was a well known pilot who did much to promote the use of New Harbour. Clunis, the first official Singaporean P. & O. pilot in 1852, submitted the detailed proposal for the Pulau Brani dry dock measuring 300 feet long and 68 feet wide in January 1846. Clunis’s dock was never finished – and Pulau Brani along with the surrounding islands were requisitioned by the H.M. Navy in 1853 for imperial and public purposes. Compensation to Clunis never materialized but he squatted on Brani long enough (1846-1854) to erect a brickworks and a small ship-repairing yard, living rent-free for many years. When Clunis died suddenly on June 12<sup>th</sup> 1866 in no. 3, Coleman Street -- then a boarding house<sup>70</sup> -- he was hailed by the *Free Press* as a pioneer of docks who was heartlessly ejected by the Naval Authorities and was told to “whistle ‘jigs to the milestones’” if he even wanted a cent back.<sup>71</sup> It was also Jacob Clunis who apparently suggested a novel way for using the gambier plant<sup>72</sup> in 1849 – for ridding ships of

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66. Kendall, letter #28 dated November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1859, and letter #30 dated December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1859 respectively.

67. Kendall, letter #27 dated November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1859. Running through the Kendall letters, one can assume that his social life in Singapore was an active one and he was quite popular with the ladies there.

68. Ibid, letter #37, dated June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1861. This would coincide with the economic downturn in that region since the closing was to save P. & O. operation costs.

69. Makepeace, V.II, 591.

70. T. H. H. Hancock and C. A. Gibson-Hill, (1954) *Architecture in Singapore* Singapore: Singapore Art Society/Institute of Architects of Malaya, 25. (This is actually a catalogue of a collection of photographs exhibited in the British Council Hall, between 26<sup>th</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1954).

71. Buckley, 732.

barnacles by dissolving them in water. After some experimentation, Clunis even came up with a concoction of gambier, lime and damar oil to protect boat bottoms and immersed timber.<sup>73</sup> It is doubtful, despite speculations, that Singapore's Cluny Road, a major artery running from Napier Road to Bukit Timah Road is named after Jacob Clunis, but more likely after Cluny, a place in Scotland.<sup>74</sup> Clunis's son, John, a Civil Engineer, perhaps had the last laugh on behalf of his father.

A little digression now from the business of harbours and docks.

John Clunis was a building supervisor for the P. & O. at Teluk Blangah and was subsequently appointed to superintend the construction of the new Town Hall, and the selection of building materials between 1855 and 1861. The Town Hall was to replace the Assembly Rooms, erected in 1848 and originally situated at the foot of Fort Canning and junction of Hill Street and River Valley Road – an “objectionable” location in terms of commercial access. The Assembly Rooms, with its attap roof, was a structure so woefully inadequate to the needs of a thriving settlement that finally, after ten years, it was “condemned by a professional builder as unsafe and not fit to be repaired.” The new Town Hall, located near Dalhousie Pier (now Empress Place) was designed by Municipal Engineer John Bennet in the spirit of such “high architectural pretensions” but actually reflected the more hybrid Victorian Revivalism and Eclecticism, especially with the minaret-like ornaments in the corner blocks.<sup>75</sup> The plan was selected with great relief and confidence, *after* another plan, with a similar design, had been sent from London by a James Fergusson who was not only then the manager of Crystal Palace but the author of a

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72. The tropical plant is used for medicinal purposes but also for staining and tanning. It is also an astringent.

73. Makepeace, V.II, 71-72.

74. S. Durai. (1939) “Malayan Street Names.” taken from *In the Land of My Birth* foreword by W. Linehan and introduction by Victor Purcell, Ipoh: The Mercantile Press, 92.

75. Lee, 58-60. For Lee Kip Lin, the Town Hall signaled the arrival of a grand form of architecture to the colony but one which also marked the turn towards the eclectic and historical accuracy became less important. Also see Gretchen Lim who provides a similar architectural viewpoint:

The Town Hall was an architectural milestone for Singapore as it marked the arrival of Victorian Revivalism, its design reflecting the British mid-century fascination with Italian Renaissance architecture....A Photograph of the building in its pristine state shows a profusion of stylistic elements – rusticated columns and loggias on the first storey, Italianate windows, and the finials atop the four prominent corner pavilions – in stark contrast to the neoclassical simplicity of earlier official structure. Though not large, the building had a sculptural quality that was quite monumental.(45)

popular book, 'Handbook of Architecture'. On 17<sup>th</sup> of March, 1855, during an elaborate ceremony attended by the public, the foundation stone was laid by Governor Colonel W.J. Butterworth who was proud to be:

associated with a building which is to be devoted, not only to the grave deliberations of your Civic Senators, but also to the Graces, as well as to the Muses. [And] trust that all may lead, under Divine Providence, to the continued prosperity of this highly favoured island, and tend still further to cement the unity of feeling at present existing in this happy community.<sup>76</sup>

In hindsight, the infinitive "to cement" is well chosen. From its inception, the Town Hall was a doomed project – a high drama of financial miscalculation, recalcitrant labourers, disappearing acts, petty bickering, and unwieldy architectural spaces.

Some statistical accounting here is necessary. The new Town Hall was seven years in the making. The Indian Government had contributed \$3,000 to the building with local subscriptions initially expected to reach \$6,000. On 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1858, a letter addressed to the Municipal Commissioners by Messrs. H.T. Marshall, Charles Spottiswoode, and T.O. Crane provided a detailed building report. The subscription by the community -- among the subscribers wealthy Chinese and Arab merchants like the Al Junied family -- in fact added up to \$5,923.75 and the Municipal Commissioners had contributed an extra \$3,000. Altogether the building fund of \$13,207.62 including a five percent interest was secured in the Oriental Bank for a construction estimated by Captain Macpherson, the Government Superintendent of Works in 1855, at \$12,565.50 – but if it adopted iron girders and a slate roof, would amount to \$15,315.50. Given the necessity of a more enduring and prominent edifice reflective of a bustling emporium – the financial shortfall, the Town Hall Trustees felt, was not insurmountable. Macpherson's estimate however, was unreliable and John Bennett submitted a total of \$16,926.96 including the instalment pay of \$800 to John Clunis who was overseeing the entire construction. In the meantime, no contractor would accept work for the entire building and so parts had to be tendered out separately. The first contractor for timber absconded with the advance, and bricklayers were reluctant to provide guarantees or if they did, demanded ludicrous amounts. Nevertheless, Clunis was able to engage the services needed to complete the job but by the time of the report above, \$13,129.62 was already spent, thus leaving a grand sum of \$78 in the bank. To make matters worse, Clunis had concluded that a sum of \$12,371.93 was required to finish the building – basically, another \$12,293.93 had to be raised if Singapore were to possess a Town Hall. On 17<sup>th</sup>, June 1858, Charles Spottiswoode, Town Hall advocate, subscriber – and one of Singapore's oldest and most respected merchants, died at the age of 46. Up until December 1861 despite the building finally assuming some credible appearance, work was halted on account of the emptied treasury, which was by then already straining under an advance of a further \$5,000 – far exceeding the initial estimates. Twenty-five years later, James Guthrie provides a rather cheerful triumph-over-adversity type explanation:

The ground was given by the Government – a free gift. The whole of the money was subscribed by the European and other residents, all of whom

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76. Speech by Col. Butterworth is printed in Buckley, 612-613.

gave liberally, but, as often happens, the building cost a good deal more than estimated, so the movers in the good work had rather a troublesome time of it, but, I am happy to say, were again and again most kindly received, when appearing with an empty bag – never in my remembrance being refused a further subscription to the good work, in which all were interested. The building was at last completed, and an arrangement was made with the municipal Commissioners, to take over the responsibility and management of the Town Hall, in consideration of which they were to occupy *one* or *two* of the rooms behind the dining room for offices – the dining-room being available for theatrical performances, &c., the large rooms upstairs being intended for balls, &c., &c., and convenient there than at the Institution. In those days, the Municipal Commissioners had a room for their Secretary in the Police Office, and held their meetings in the old Court-house.<sup>77</sup>

James Guthrie's letter was a response to questions concerning the purposes of the Town Hall and why it was built. The unreliable budget was not the only cause of aggravation – there was also the matter of disproportionate interiors.

F. J. Hallifax, the former President of the Singapore Municipal Commissioners, writes that there were quarrels about the Town Hall at various times, *as long as it remained a Town Hall*.<sup>78</sup> It was used as assembly rooms, municipal offices, a theatre and in September 1862, the Singapore Library was removed from the Raffles Institution to two rooms located downstairs on the south side of the Town Hall. According to John Cameron, who called the building “modern” with a “mixed style” of architecture, the lower hall was fitted up as a theatre by the Amateur Corps Dramatique while the upper hall was employed for public purposes.<sup>79</sup> It was the Amateur Corps Dramatique who staged a few shows in aid of the completion of the Town Hall on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1860. Aply, though perhaps deliberately selected, the plays performed were comedies named *The Folies of a Night*, *A Storm in a Teapot*, and *Bombastes Furioso*.<sup>80</sup> In 1864, when Mr. James Davidson resigned as Bank Manager of The Chartered Mercantile Bank of India, London and China (and subsequently took up brokerage), the mercantile community gave a large ball, believed to be the first one held in the Town Hall.

The Town Hall, it appeared, was anything but a Town Hall – and although public meetings were held there occasionally, the litany of complaints concerning the size of the upper room never ceased. The upper room, according to C. B. Buckley, was seventy-three feet long by forty feet wide -- an “accurately proportioned room” with “proper

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77. Letter by Guthrie printed in Buckley, 687.

78. Makepeace, 334-335.

79. Cameron, 71.

80. Buckley, 681, 749-750.

proportions” – more than adequate for its purposes, being in actual fact, only two inches longer and five feet narrower than the British House of Commons. More significantly, it was a room suitable for the purposes of being heard, if one wishes to convey one’s opinion aloud without having to shout. Always the enthusiastic Singaporean, Buckley’s indignant defense is unusual and interesting – his contempt for the ungenerous provincialism displayed is unrestrained:

It has been usual to speak of the Town Hall upper room as being too small, some people being under the impression, apparently, that it is possible to build a room in a town, large enough to hold all those who may wish to come into it. It is needless to say that the largest buildings in London, or the world, would only hold a very small proportion of the population.<sup>81</sup>

T.J. Keaughran, former journalist for *The Straits Times*, was revisiting his old haunts in Singapore. In his 1887 booklet, *Picturesque and Busy Singapore*, Keaughran, provides a detailed description of the Town Hall:

Grouped together on the left or east bank of the Singapore river on an area of about three acres stand the City Hall, Supreme Court and Public Offices. The former is a two story building having an oriental cast and is embellished with mixed carvings of the Ionic and Doric orders of architecture. It is set off with parapet wall and ornamental turrets which impart a handsome and graceful outline to its otherwise imposing looking exterior. Internally the upper hall, including the verandahs, lobby and side rooms, is 147 in length by 72 feet wide and is 33 feet in height. The basement hall is 20 feet in high. This part of the building is used for theatrical purposes, the upper part as assembly rooms for concerts, balls and the like entertainments. Little actual city business ever calls into requisition the use of the hall, all the routine office work of the Municipality being transacted in the side rooms. Rarely are public meetings of ratepayers held to discuss any question relating to the city—even the election of a municipal Commissioner, which takes place once a year, is not attended with that congregate interest and animation which mark such occurrences in our extra-tropical colonies of the Southern Hemisphere. A monumental structure in the form of an elephant, erected in commemoration of the landing at Singapore of Somdech Phra Paramundr Maha Chulalonkorn, King of Siam, on the 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1871, being the first foreign land ever visited by the monarch of that realm, occupies the centre of a small area in front of the hall, which is decorated with flowers and shrubs of variegated tints. The remainder of the surrounding area and also the space around the court is covered with a beautiful green sward that relieves the eye from the glare thrown off by reflection from the walls of these buildings under the fierce rays of our tropical sun.<sup>82</sup>

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81. Buckley, 732.

82. T. J. Keaughran (1887) *Picturesque and Busy Singapore*. Singapore: Lat Pau Press,

In 1902, the Town Hall became Victoria Theatre when it was decided that a new Memorial Hall to commemorate Queen Victoria would be added to it so that the two buildings may appear as a singular edifice to form the Victoria Theatre and Memorial Hall.

With the death of Queen Victoria on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1901, the Singaporean community debated on the most suitable form of commemoration. The Memorial Hall proposal, of course, did not pass without protest or agitation from the community. One suggestion was a college for all “classes and nationalities” and the other a large statue. According to Gretchen Liu, the statue idea was dismissed on the grounds that “unless it was designed by a world-famous artist, it would have no appeal” and the ironies of exposing the statue of such a well-loved figure to the elements. The Victoria Theatre and Memorial Hall, designed by R.A.J. Bidwell of Swan and Maclaren, was eventually completed in 1905 for a sum of \$357,388<sup>83</sup> – and considered now an elegant example of Victorian neo-classical architecture in the colonial world. The foundation stone was laid by Sir Frank A. Swettenham on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1902 and formerly opened by Sir John Anderson on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1905 in an ostentatious ceremony which ended with the ‘Hallelujah Chorus’.<sup>84</sup> The donated 178-foot clock tower was completed in 1906. On February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1909, the first performance took place at the theatre with the amateur production of *Pirates of Penzance*.<sup>85</sup>

John Clunis spent the rest of his years in Siam working for the Government and King Chulalongkorn, who presented the aforementioned bronze elephant erected outside the Town Hall with inscriptions commemorating the gift in English, Chinese, Siamese, and Malay. The elephant, called the “Wandering Jew of memorials” was eventually moved to the Parliament House. Sometime before the relocation, boisterous cricketers had painted the elephant pink and green as a nocturnal prank. The Town Hall, once described as “Singapore’s Black Hole”, passed into pliant, unencumbered history.

But we must return to the harbour. The first site William Cloughton selected for his dry dock was abandoned – leaving a gaping pit which became known as ‘Cloughton’s Hole’ – home eventually to shipbuilding sheds. Eventually, Singapore’s first dry dock, measuring four hundred feet with fifteen feet and six inches depth of water, was finally opened in March, 1859 on the north side of New Harbour opposite Pulau Hantu by

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11-12. Keaughran compiled the “hastily written papers” which appeared in *The Straits Times* earlier in the same year into book form. See “Preface” dated August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1887.

83. Makepeace, V.I, 354-355. Also see Majorie S. Doggett. (1957/1984) *Characters of Light*. Singapore: Times Books, 10-12.

84. “Victoria Memorial Hall” in *The Straits Times Annual 1906-1907*, 105-106.

85. See Gretchen Liu (1996) *In Granite and Chunam*. Singapore: Landmark Books, 44-55.

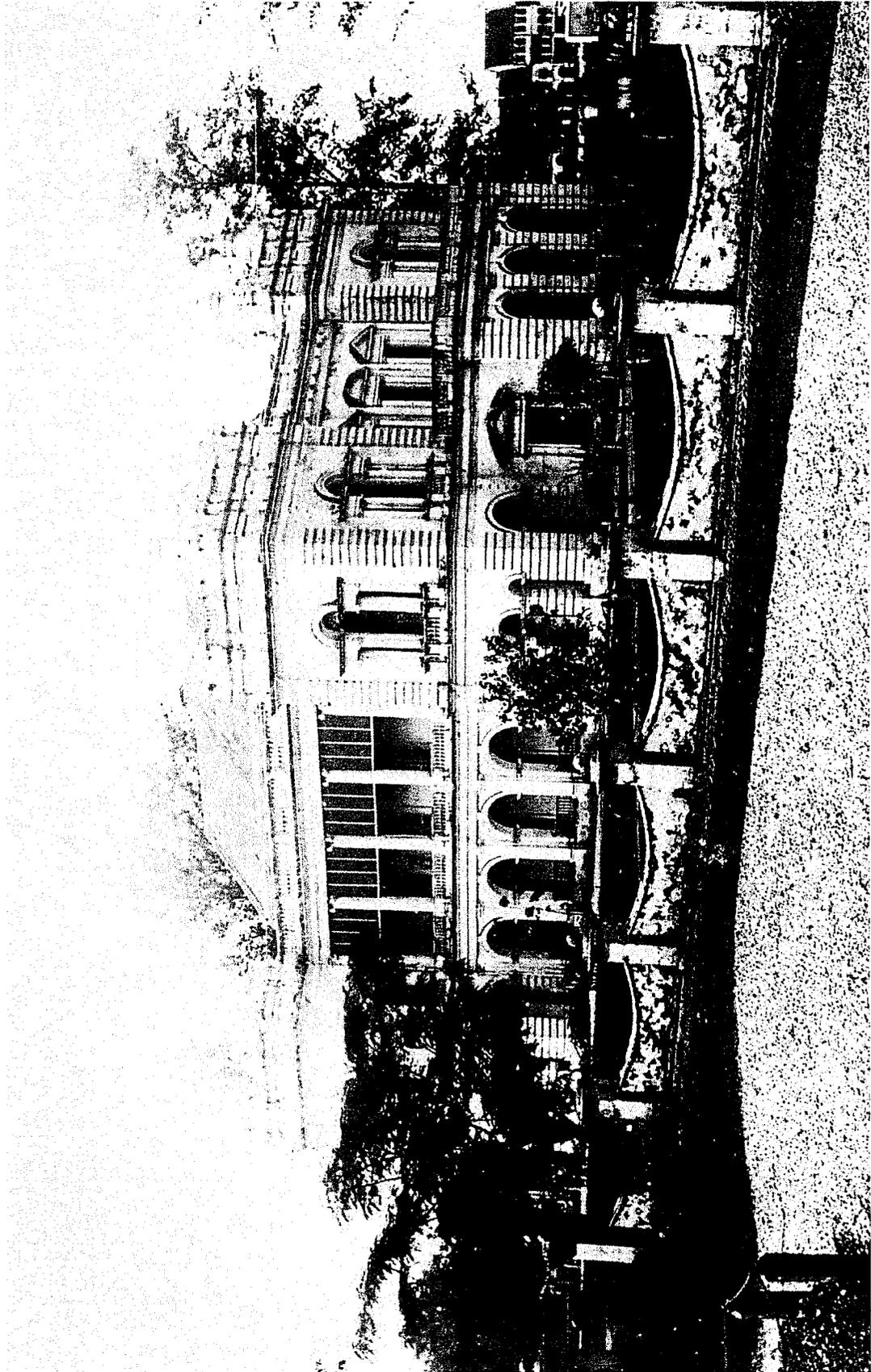


Figure 5. The Singapore Town Hall circa 1880, Gretchen Liu (1996) *In Granite and Chunan Singapore*: Landmark Books, 46.

William Cloughton, who together with William Patterson and William Wemyss Ker,<sup>86</sup> purchased the property from the Temenggung of Johor. The ninety-nine year lease for the land was originally dated April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1855. All three men, in partnership<sup>87</sup> with Henry Melville Simons, Joseph Burleigh (of Calcutta), William Mactaggart, Joaquim d'Almeida, José d'Almeida and Syed Abdullah bin Omar al Junied<sup>88</sup> would form the motley crew who inaugurated The Patent Slip and Dock Company on 24<sup>th</sup>, December, 1861, later renamed The New Harbour Dock Company. In 1865, the dock would house such vessels as the first steamer purchased by the Temenggung of Johor, named appropriately *The Johore*.<sup>89</sup> William Cloughton, who held the directorship of the company until his retirement in 1872, led the colourful adventurer's and romantic mariner's life. Born in Hull in 1811, he ran away to sea when he was fourteen, never to return home for over fifty years.<sup>90</sup> He was also the subject of many an entertaining story among the old Singaporeans, European and non-Europeans alike:

There was much to be admired in the character of Cloughton; he had all the good qualities of the old sea salt, and without some of the bad he could not have been the perfect type he was of the class who won for Britannia the rule of the waves. There was nothing mean about the man: his warm heart, love of truth, desire for honesty ever shone through all the bad language, love of harsh discipline and eccentricities of manner, proclaiming the natural goodness of one who must ever take a high place among the builders of Singapore.<sup>91</sup>

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86. Who owned the property on Bukit Cermin (Mirror Hill) which is along Cermin Bay.

87. The partnership agreement lasted seven years.

88. Syed Omar bin Ali Al Junied, an Arab from Palembang, arrived in Singapore sometime in 1821 and became a highly respected merchant who carried out an extensive trade in the region. He bought pieces of significant land on High Street, North Bridge Road, and Arab Street -- and he and his descendents contributed much to the Muslim community, and the society at large. His son, Syed Allie bin Mohamed Al Junied donated the piece of land in Victoria and Arab streets, i.e. Moulmein Street to the present Tan Tock Seng hospital. Buckley provides a detailed account of the Aljunieds, 563-564.

89. This was a 75 tons ship built at West Hartlepool. See Buckley, 719.

90. Cloughton died in a nursing home in Sydenham on March 1874, and was buried in Norwood cemetery.

91. Though the passage is extracted from Walter Makepeace, Dr. Gilbert E. Brooke and Roland St. J. Braddell, General Editors (1921) *One Hundred Years of Singapore. 2 Vols.* London: John Murray, Volume 2, pp. 584-590, the biography is taken from a manuscript in Charles Buckley's handwriting, among number of other sketches written by a W. G. Gulland, whom Buckley had intended to publish under the title *Some Singaporeans Worthies: Tales of Old Times, written by Old Singaporeans some years ago and now*

Cloughton was trading between Calcutta and China in the opium brigs of an Armenian House, Apar and Co., when he settled in Singapore sometime in 1854, selecting the strip of land known as *Pantai Cermin* (Mirror Beach), west of the Peninsular and Oriental wharves, for his dock. By 1863, a little shed measuring twelve square feet, located in the center of the south side of Commercial Square contained the first active telegraph line within Singapore; the line ran to the New Harbour Dock Company<sup>92</sup> and the P. & O. wharf and was in considerable use until 1873, when it was recorded as disabled by a thunderstorm.<sup>93</sup>

William Cloughton did not oppose competition in the most generous of senses, although he felt rather shortsightedly or selfishly, that Singapore had little need for another dock as there was not enough business in the harbour to begin with.<sup>94</sup> Trade was also sluggish in the early 1860s and several mercantile firms folded including John Purvis and Sons with a deficit of \$500,000.<sup>95</sup> If the harbour seemed fully utilized nevertheless, it was for want of employment due to the economic stagnation. When the less ambitious Bon Accord Dock Company opened in August 1866<sup>96</sup> on the west side of Pulau Brani, Cloughton tolerated its presence with gentlemanly grace. The Tanjong Pagar Dock Company was however, a very different sort of company.

The inauguration of Victoria Dock, the third and largest dock to be built in New Harbour, on 17<sup>th</sup>, October 1868 was significant enough to warrant the attention of the

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*committed to print for the first time.* The date was 1912, but the manuscript was never published.

92. The Old Patent Slip & Dock Company had been reformed into a limited liability company called The New Harbour Dock Company, in 1867.

93. Makepeace, V.II, 167.

94. See Makepeace, V.II,589 and Gibson-Hill, 107. Cloughton also maintained that the increased use of iron hulls would reduce the need of docking facilities. Again, he did not foresee the requirements of deep-water shipping although he might have anticipated the Suez's opening.

95. It should be noted that Chinese firms also suffered severe losses. The *Singapore Free Press* reports that trade in Singapore had never suffered such a shock before. There was also a panic among the Chinese concerning bank notes, and the rush to the banks to cash them for silver and dollars. See Buckley, 711.

96. Or October, 1866 according to George Bogaars, 119. The Bon Accord Dock Company comprised Teluk Ayer shipwrights, J.C. Buyers and Daniel Robb. Cloughton had the advantage of one hundred feet of dock space over the Bon Accord company and direct access to town. The dock measured "300 feet long, 75 feet wide and at spring tides capable of admitting a vessel with a draught of 18 feet," see Gibson-Hill, 109.

*Illustrated London News* on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1869<sup>97</sup> – particularly when the Suez Canal was about to be opened for business as well. Victoria Dock opened with great flourish. The day was declared a public holiday and the Governor, Sir Harry Ord, K.C.B. and his party entered the dock in two of the government steamers, the *Peiho* and *Rainbow* (which were docked together) and were received on landing by the directors of The Tanjong Pagar Dock Company. The dock was faced with granite and measured 450 feet long on the blocks, 65 feet wide at the entrance and about 20 feet deep in the sill – taking into account the requirements for steam-ships passing through the Suez Canal. On the very same day William Cloughton's carriage was espied proceeding towards the office of the Straits Times to place a notice informing the shipping community that the New Harbour Dock Company would henceforth dock vessels free of charge.<sup>98</sup> This competitive gesture would change the face of New Harbour. Eventually one dock company would remain.

It began with an informal meeting on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1863 called by James Guthrie in the offices of Guthrie and Co. There was the matter of the Tanjong Pagar lands,<sup>99</sup> fortuitously situated at the eastern entrance of New Harbour, owned by G.A. Bain and James Guthrie. It was decided, by all present, that a joint stock company would be formed in order to construct a patent slip and a dry dock on Guthrie's land which was acquired in 1864. Merchants had always felt that Cloughton's dock was too far west for ships approaching from the east, and to reach the dock or the P. & O. wharves, vessels had to maneuver through the heavy traffic westward. The capital was estimated at \$200,000 and would be raised by public subscription – the subscription list being circulated in England, India and China as well. Seven members were appointed to act as directors, each agreeing to take up twenty or more shares, including a Parsee, C.P. Lalla and a Chinese merchant, Tan Kim Cheng (the son of Tan Tock Seng, Philanthropist and the first Chinese Justice of Peace, and who was one of the first Chinese planters in Tanjong Pagar with a 14 acre fruit plantation). Eventually the patent slip was abandoned and a dock originally measuring 520 feet long, 65 feet wide and 23 feet deep was to be constructed, using wood with a granite entrance and divided by gates in the middle. Victoria Dock of course, was eventually built with 100 feet less in length and 3 feet less in depth. The smaller measurements were based on the advice of William J. Du Port (or du Port) who arrived in Singapore in September 1865 after what appeared to be a sea-wall construction

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97. D. J. M. Tate, compiled by (1989) *Straits Affairs: The Malay World and Singapore—Being Glimpses of the Straits Settlements and the Malay Peninsular in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as seen through the Illustrated London News and Other Contemporary Sources*. Hong Kong: John Nicholson, Ltd., 8.

98. Makepeace, V.II., 589.

99. *Tanjong Pagar* literally means cape of stakes – drawn from an old Malay legend when the Singapore coast was attacked by rampaging swordfish. To kill these bloodthirsty fish, stakes were built and a trap was set to lure them into the stakes.

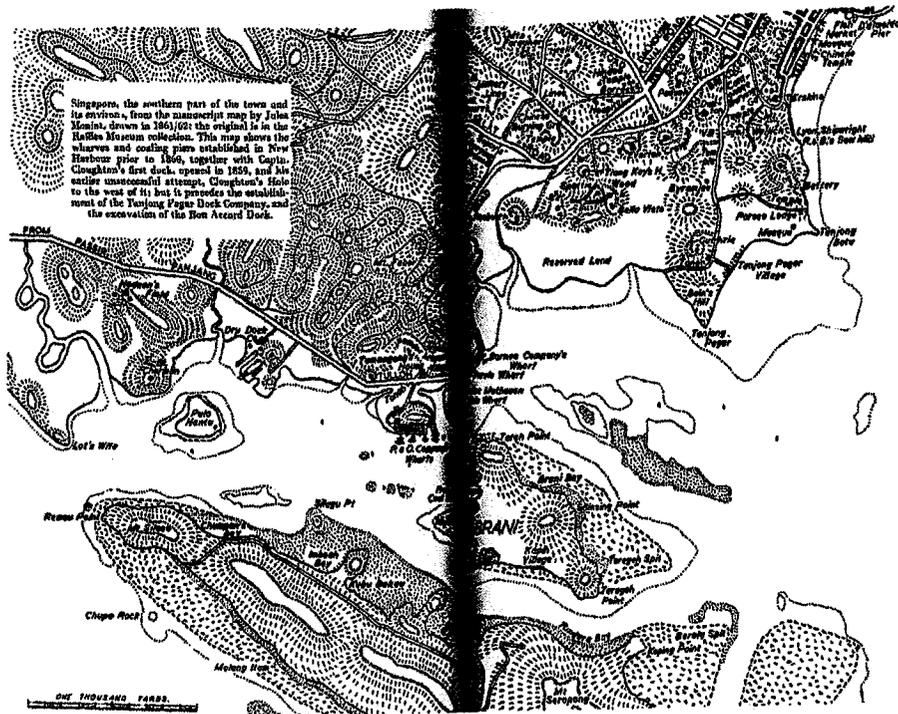
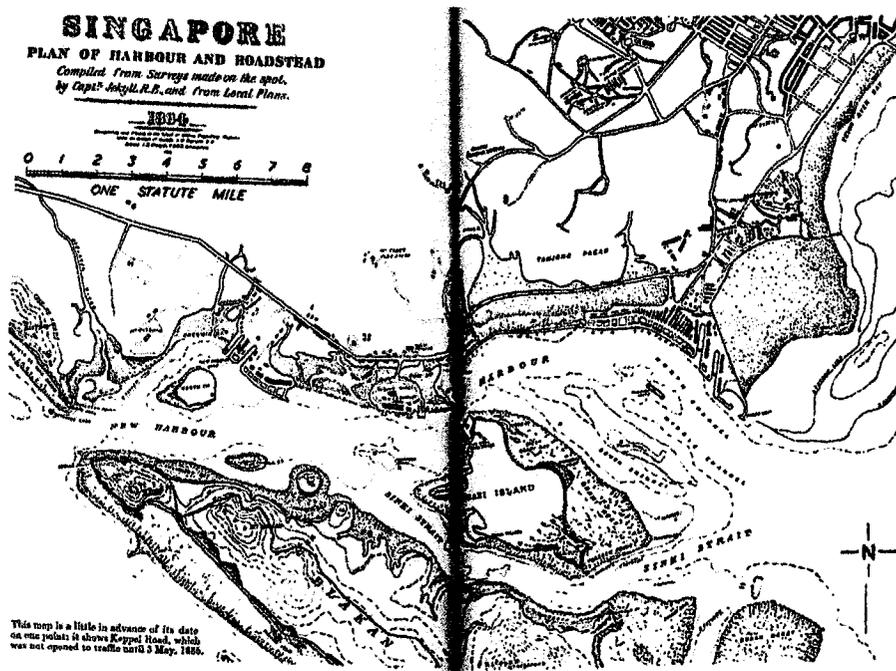


Figure 6.



Figures 7.

Figures 6 & 7. Maps of New Harbour. C. A. Gibson Hill "Singapore Old Strait & New Harbour 1300 - 1870." #3, Dec, Singapore: Memoirs of the Raffles Museum, 78-79 & 110 - 111.

fiasco in the hands of a local engineer George Lyons.<sup>100</sup> Though he remained for a mere three years in Singapore, Du Port also drew up plans in 1866 for a railway line (which never materialized) running through all the wharves connecting the town to William Cloughton's docks. In the meantime, proposals to build wharves adjoining the dry dock were put forward and accepted. Conveniently located, the Tanjong Pagar wharves were situated over a mile from the center of town, Commercial Square, which was renamed Raffles Place in 1858. The first line of wharves completed in August 1866, measured 750 feet long and could hold 4 ships at a time. This was extended to 1450 feet<sup>101</sup> on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1868. That same year witnessed 33 steamers and 28 sailing ships berthed alongside the wharves. By 1884, the wharves were handling 20 ships at a time in comparison to twelve ships in 1868. In 1905, the wharves totaled 6,659 feet in length.<sup>102</sup>

On September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1864, the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company was registered with a capital of \$300,000, the increased capital coming as a result of the competition over the acquisition of the Tanjong Pagar lands.<sup>103</sup> In 1870, the Bon Accord Dock Company was leased by The New Harbour Dock Company and the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company, and in 1881, the lease expired enabling the option of purchase. Both companies cooperated to buy the Bon Accord property but only as a defensive measure to keep out competition. The land was never worked upon. By 1883, the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company had acquired 63 acres of freehold ground and 157 acres of leasehold (999 years) of mostly submerged land. In 1884, The Tanjong Pagar Land Company, a joint stock company was started with a capital of \$1,000,000. Against shareholders' disgruntlement towards the land acquisition policy of the Directors, by 1901 -- company lands were valued at \$3,000,000. Wharves, godowns, shophouses, housing for engineers, pilots and coolies, shipping facilities filled the lands backwards from the wharves' front.<sup>104</sup> From July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1899, the New Harbour Dock Company ceased to exist -- swallowed up instead by the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company. It was not long before the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company itself fell prey to accusations of incompetence, internal arguments, and a teeming harbour front competing with the port of Hong Kong. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1905, the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company was no more. having been expropriated -- after some drama -- by the

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100. A vague mention of this sea-wall collapsing is found in Buckley, 704 though the year of the incident is unreported. The cause of the disintegration was the monsoon.

101. This measurement depends on either Gibson-Hill or Makepeace.

102. This was achieved through expansion of the wharves east and westwards as well as buying over existing wharves such as Borneo Company in 1885. See Bogaars, 131.

103. This was doubled to \$600,000 on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1866 when an extraordinary meeting was called by the company. Buckley, 729.

104. For details and the history of the land acquisition, see George Bogaars (1956) "The Tanjong Pagar Dock Company." *Memoirs of the Raffles Museum*, no. 3, December.

Government Dock Board.

One of the most scenic descriptions of New Harbour in the mid-1860s must come from John Cameron,<sup>105</sup> who was editor of *The Straits Times* between 1861 and 1867. A thirty-year resident of Singapore, John Cameron was a master mariner for Australian trading ships. In Singapore, Cameron not only eventually edited and took over ownership of *The Straits Times* but also co-managed a trading firm which specialized in the Australian trade. Cameron died on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1881 at the age of 46 in Bukit Timah. His book, *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India* was published in 1864 and was comprehensive enough to make London aware of the value of the Straits Settlements during negotiations concerning the transfer from the Indian Government to the Crown.<sup>106</sup> Though Cameron was an unreliable historian, his description of the landscape and day-to-day Singaporean society provided invaluable information, especially to those foreign to those parts of the world. Still, reading *Our Tropical Possessions* might raise an eyebrow or two since Cameron was notorious for producing matter-of-fact lines such as “on the average one man per diem falls a victim to tigers.”

The description of New Harbour begins from the Western entrance which offers “the greatest measure of beauty” and “the side from which Singapore is approached by those who come from home to take up their sojourn there”. The eastern approach, however, is “comparatively tame” with coconut plantations and a fishing village or two. But, from the west:

The steamer enters between the large island and a cluster of little islets, standing high out of the water with rocky banks, and covered to their summits by rich green jungle, with here and there a few forest trees stretching their tall trunks high into the air, and crowned at their tops by small compact clumps of leaves and branches. On several of the most lovely points of this entrance, residences, or rather watering-places have been built by some of the merchants, which add to, rather than detract from, the beauty of the scene, their snow-white walls and porticoes peering from the rich foliage which surrounds them, or looking boldly down from some chaste eminence which they surmount. One of the most beautifully situated of these is Bukit Chermin – (Mirror Hill). It stand on a conical promontory overlooking the entrance to New Harbour, and in sailing past it the image which is reflected from the glassy water beneath is but little less perfect than the original above.

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105. Cameron, 27-48.

106. The process of the transfer – which is to “place the whole of British India under the sole government of the Imperial Parliament” (as proposed during a public meeting of the European inhabitants in Singapore on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1857) lasted nearly a decade. The process culminated with the transfer ceremony on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1867. John Cameron was one of those actively involved in the discussions. Buckley, 754-780.

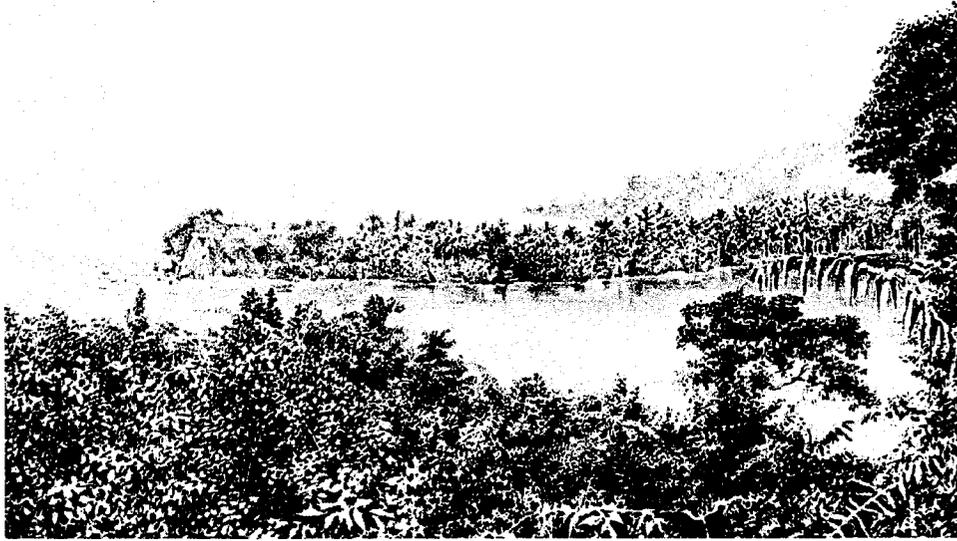


Figure 8. Keppel Harbour, 1830s, National Archives of Singapore



Figure 9. Tanjung Pagar, 1870s, National Archives of Singapore

One of the mansions perched at least eighty feet above on Bukit Chermin would have belonged to William Wemyss Ker,<sup>107</sup> founder of one of the earliest trading firms in Singapore, Ker, Rawson & Co., and part-owner of the Patent Slip and Dock Company, who was a significant member of the community, and known to have entertained royally.<sup>108</sup> Moving on westward, Cameron notes, a vessel would pass slowly over shoaler patches, coral reefs, more islets and observe Mount Faber coming into view, with a flagstaff, and fortifications. The vessel will then come to the P & O wharves, enthusiastically endorsed by Commodore Perry for their brick storage and coal bunkering facilities which are “situated at the head of a small bay” which is “completely shut in on all sides from the view of the straits, and is distant from town by water or by road about 2 miles.” It is here, that Cameron tells us, that passengers and cargo are landed at the wharves, and entertainment is in the form of Malay coin-divers who gather around the waiting ships beckoning passengers in transit to hurl a coin or two into the deep waters.<sup>109</sup> There were then no Tanjong Pagar docks nor a line of wharves near the Eastern entrance, but the multivariate shipping of all nations was impressive:

It is truly a noble sight the shipping that rides throughout the years in the roadstead of Singapore; for the box-shaped, heavy-rigged East Indiamen that thirty years ago carried the then moderate freight of the island, have been exchanged for the beautifully modeled clipper or frigate-built ships of the finest building yards in Great Britain and America; their tall, slim, raking spars reaching in the view from seaward high above the hilly background of the island.

Added to the clippers, the P.& O. mail steamers, war-vessels from Britain, France, Russia, America, Spain, Holland as well as Confederate and Chinese, opium steamers belonging to Jardine’s of China, ornamental Chinese junks with eyes painted on each side of the headboards, native vessels:

The prahus, pukats and tongkangs, beside some completely illegitimate ships in the shape of old European hulls, which their Chinese owners, with

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107. William Wemyss Ker arrived in Singapore in 1828. He became a partner in the firm Holdsworth, Smithson and Co. on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1830. On March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1835, Holdsworth and Smithson both retired and the firm became Ker, Rawson and Co. Mr. W.W. Ker also owned a fashionable house along Beach Road, was an active member of the community, and served on the Committee to gather objects for the Great Exhibition of 1857. Ker left the East for good in 1857 though his sons returned to the East to serve in private firms for several years. (Makepeace, VII, 449-450). Ker’s house at Bukit Chermin, one of the most stunningly situated, like two other prominent houses of that time, was a two storey rectangular building with enclosed verandah, projected carriage porch and louvred windows. It was basically the architectural style selected for those time which best managed the heat. See Lee, 33.

108. See Buckley, 233, Makepeace V.I, 590, and V.II, 449-450.

109. See the *Illustrated London News* December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1872 for article and illustration of these boys who beckon passengers to throw in a sixpence into the waters so that they will dive in to recover them.

a strange persistency in their national distinctions, have had cut down, patched and rigged to look as near the junk genus as possible.

Cameron's picturesque narrative guide, viewed from seaward, then draws us to the panorama of the roadsteads near the mouth of the Singapore river, the "noble pile of St. Andrew's Church" (completed 1855), emerging from low-rise residences of pillared porticoes and balconies with "green-painted latticed doors and windows," the Raffles Institution which was just across the river, a clump of buildings, plantations, native villages, and the flagstaff perched on top of Fort Canning, once Government Hill.

The American zoologist William Temple Hornaday, while collecting specimens for American museums, provided a different picture on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1878<sup>110</sup> when he arrived at Singapore, "the great central ganglion of the Malay Archipelago" during a downpour. The ocean steamer Hornaday was on, the *Yengtse* made a perfect fish hook on the chart, and entered a little strait that "is so completely shut in by green hills and banks of reddish brown shale" except for "the large ocean steamers and ships, wharves dry docks and coal sheds." The *Yengtse* docked at Borneo Wharf, usually the docking place for the French and German mail-ships, having negotiated what resembles a route that went around Pulau Brani and the Sinki Strait. To Hornaday,

Entering Singapore by way of New Harbour is like getting into a house through a scullery window. One's first impressions of the town are associated with coal dust, mud stagnant water, and mean buildings, and I found it required quite an effort to shake them off. The back-door entrance is by no means fair to Singapore, for under its baleful influence the traveler is apt to go away (by the next steamer usually) with a low estimate of the city, every way considered.

For Hornaday, the first stage out from New Harbor was a "muddy and dismal mangrove swamp," with groups of Malay stilt houses perched in water or mud. "Monkeys," Hornaday declares, "would choose much better." The next stage was more pleasing. Chinatown was odd and colourful, with the Chinese Joss House, dwellings and the "huge red lanterns, wonderful signs and flaming inscriptions in Blackmon red paper pasted on the door-posts." From there Hornaday makes his way near the Singapore River where he alights and finds himself in the townsite, near Fort Canning, the European establishments, and the hotels (which Hornaday declares as low quality) around the esplanade. There is little that he praises during his visit and departs contemptuous of Europeans, especially the British class system in general,<sup>111</sup> and thanking god for America.

If a steamer were to approach Singapore in the 1870s from the western entrance of New Harbour, having been guided by the Raffles Lighthouse, it would first encounter on its

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110. William Temple Hornaday (1904) *Two Years in the Jungle: the experience of a hunter and naturalist in India, Ceylon the Malay Peninsula and Borneo*. NY: Scribners, 291-300. Hornaday, was only 23 years old when he arrived at Singapore.

110. The hierarchy of merchants offended Hornaday who asked why should the general merchant and his clerk be considered superior over the retail merchant and his clerk.

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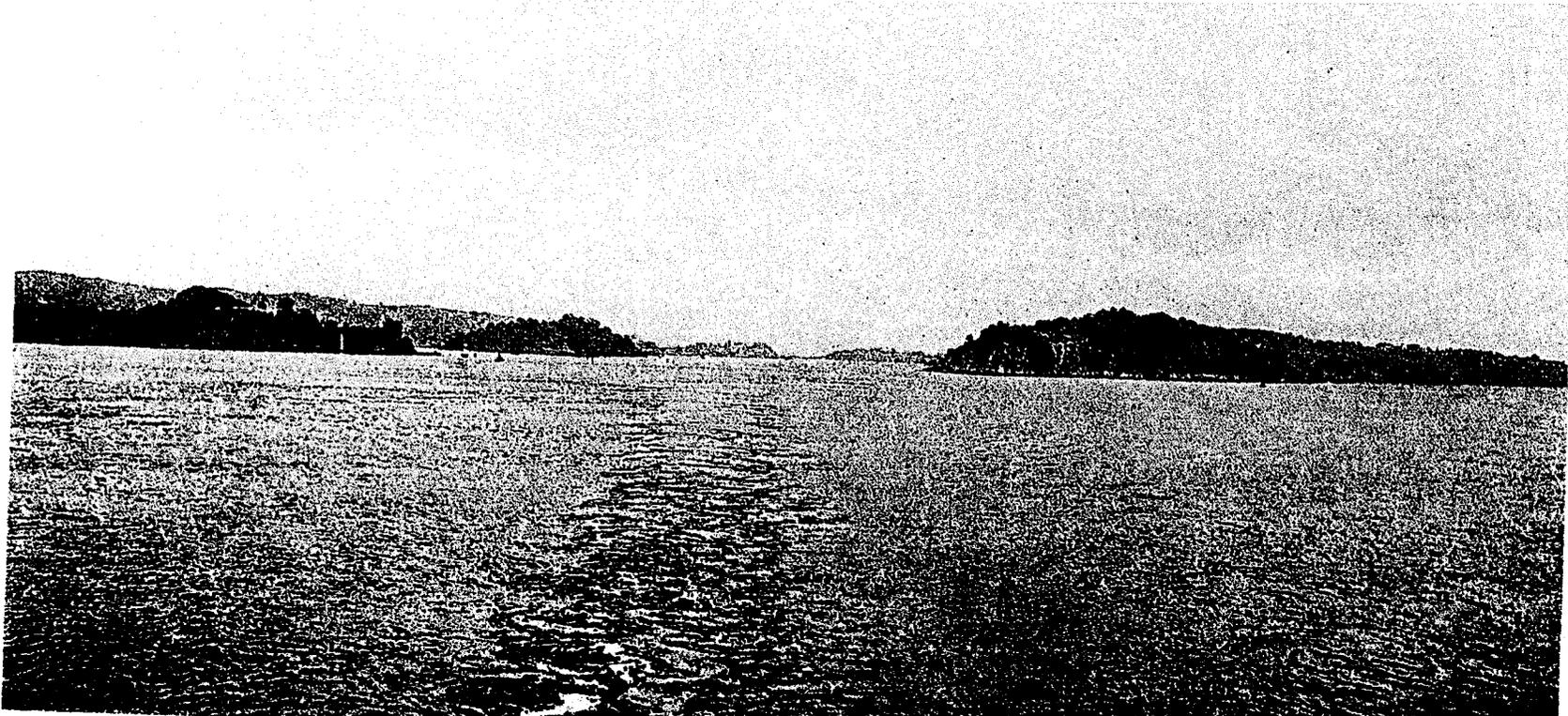


Figure 10. Approaching the harbour, 1890s, published in Reena Singh (1995) *A Journey Through Singapore* Singapore: Landmark Books, 16.

left, Cermin Bay and across from the islet of Pulau Hantu, the two docks belonging to the New Harbour Dock Company. If docking there was not an option, the steamer would follow the coastline, sail past a Malay village, and the P & O wharves in Tebing Tinggi. The same steamer would then negotiate past a bigger islet on the right, that is Pulau Brani, home of the bunkering piers of the H.M. Navy<sup>112</sup> as well as the lesser Bon Accord Dock Company, bought over by The Tanjong Pagar Dock Company in 1880, decommissioned -- and converted into a storage tank. There would be as well, on the west end of Pulau Brani, the coal sheds and piers for the Compagnie des Services Maritimes Messageries Imperiales. The first of their French steamers, *Impératrice* had arrived from Suez on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1862 bringing mail from London, dated October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1862<sup>113</sup> while the *Alphée* sailed homewards around the same time. As our steamer approaches the eastern entrance of the harbour, it will pass the line of wharves stretching at least two kilometers, one of them belonging to Jardine and Matheson. The extent of

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112. This was completed in 1865 on behalf of the Admiralty. They consisted of two coal sheds, to hold eight thousand tons of coal, a small house for the Superintendent, and a quay wall and short wooden pier having twenty seven feet of water alongside at low tide. Buckley reports that the site was ill chosen due to its vigorous tidal activity and created problems for mooring transports. Buckley, pp. 704.

113. The Compagnie des Services Maritimes Messageries Imperiales opened up in Singapore in March 1862 with offices in Flint Street (actually Princep Street, renamed on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1858). Charles Robert Princep, after whom the street was named, was a household name who owned a vast nutmeg estate and came to Singapore as part of the Brooke Commission although the estate was quite likely purchased before.).

Initially Messageries Imperiales was managed by a Belgian firm, Hinnekindt Freres (opened in 1849, see Buckley, 695), then was taken over by the French agent Mr. Paul Brasier who arrived on that very same steamer, The *Impératrice Eugénie* in 1862. Mr. Paul Brasier not only served as agent to The Messageries Impériales for 25 years, but was much beloved and respected by the Singaporean community -- raising his family (his children eventually directly or indirectly involved with the shipping business) in Singapore at St. James, New Harbour, the former residence of the Guthries. Braisier died on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1887 in Singapore. The Messageries Impériales provided a monthly service a few years after Cochin-China was ceded to the French and the Port of Saigon opened. Their coal shed were built on Pulau Brani, to the west of Teluk Saga, late in 1861 and opened for service on March 1862, anticipating scheduled sailings. The first of the French steamers were built at La Ciotat near Marseille by Scotsmen from the Clyde. The *Impératrice*, at the fall of the Emperor Louis Napoleon was renamed *The Provence*. On November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1864, the French mail steamer *Hydaspe* left Singapore for Batavia, inaugurating the regular service between the two ports in conjunction with the mail steamer from Europe. The ship was wrecked in the Straits of Rhio. By the end of the century, there were fortnightly services between Marseilles and Yokohama, "with outwards and homeward bound ships generally arriving on the same day." (Bastin, 1994, xv) For more information on the company, see Makepeace, V. II, pp. 209-210.

William Jardine's influence across East Asia, and among the Chinese merchants was such that New Harbour was also known as 'Chha Tin Mah Thau' or Jardine's Wharf. The next line of wharves would be the Borneo Company<sup>114</sup> which was utilized by the French and German mails<sup>115</sup>, before coming upon the impressive structures (godowns, wharves, foundry, sawmill, timber yard, offices and housing) of the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company, inching out from the mainland – including Victoria Dock. Emerging from the East end of the harbour and sailing on – the ship might take note of, even at a distance, the Horsburgh lighthouse standing on Pedra Banca, the first structure of its kind in those seas, and a significant landmark.

But it did begin with Victoria Dock – the competition was furious even if the shipping figures seemed dismal. William Cloughton and the New Harbour Dock Company had offered minimum fees and charged below cost. The Tanjong Pagar Dock Company responded with minimum docking fees which stayed above cost but were dependent on profits from the wharves. Up to the end of 1868, Victoria Dock entertained only three steamers and seven sailing vessels, and in 1869, altogether twenty-six vessels. Nevertheless, Singapore provided for “a safe anchorage, convenient wharves and excellent docks.” Despite the flailing shipping activity, Cloughton, for all his protestations began building another dock which was completed in 1870 – quite aware of the consequences of the opening of the Suez Canal. In 1870, the tonnage of all merchant vessels entering Singapore increased by 250,000 tons (from 600,000 to 850,000), and

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114. Purvis Wharf, built by John Purvis and Co. is sandwiched between the wharves of Jardine Matheson and Borneo co. All the wharves were built sometime in the 1850s. John Purvis and Co. was an old established company (began in 1822 and closed in 1864). John Purvis arrived in Singapore in 1822 having worked for James Matheson and felt Singapore was a potential trading post. A prominent and much respected old Singaporean, Purvis played an indispensable role in the establishment of Singapore as a port and the forging of the community. Purvis and Co. originally acted as agents for Jardine Matheson, and after John Purvis left the firm on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1862, went out of business around in 1864. Purvis wharf, which retained its name till the late 1880s was then taken over by Borneo Co. which was purchased by The Tanjong Pagar Dock Company from 1<sup>st</sup>, July 1885 for a million dollars. A new wharf connecting both properties (Borneo and Co, and Tanjong Pagar) was completed in November 1885.

115. See George Bogaars (1954) “The Effect of the Opening of the Suez Canal on the Trade and Development of Singapore.” *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* Vol. XVIII, Pt.I, 111-114 on increased German trading houses before and after 1869. The first German trading firm in Singapore was August Behn and V. Lorenz Meyer which opened in November, 1840. Bogaars informs us that fifteen new firms were started between 1867 and 1878, while an increase of German ships entered Singapore using the Suez in 1873. One of the primary reasons for Germany's increased trading presence in the region in the early 1870s was due to Otto Van Bismarck's unification of Germany and his colonial policy rather than the Suez but the canal certainly aided Germany's cause.

shipping figures between 1869 and 1872 showed a considerable difference: the rise in total tonnage of vessels entering the harbour, particularly steamers, jumped from 600,000 tons to at least 1,075,000 tons. In 1872, 1,061,340 tonnage of vessels, including 919 sailing vessels and 862 steamers arrived at Singapore – 439,954 tons more than the total in 1869.<sup>116</sup> By 1874, steam winches and cranes danced across the Tanjong Pagar skyline, handling an average of 500 to 800 tons of cargo per day, an increase from the usual 200-300 tons. By 1878, the dockforce including coolies, wharfingers, stevedores, and blacksmiths totaled 2,450 persons. Coaling, usually handled by Chinese coolies,<sup>117</sup> was determined by the frequency of ships docking and went on all night with fires lit around the wharf. Coaling by night appeared a fascinating event and was captured by artists of *The London Illustrated News* and *The Graphic* who were captivated by the shadowy figures with their Manchu pigtailed toiling away. The work is described in *The Graphic* dated November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1876:

[Coaling] is entirely carried out by the Chinese population of the port and is most efficiently performed. A Chinese contractor is seated on a barrel by the line of coolies, having beside him a tray of small coins and a weighing machine. The first man of each group as he approaches the contractor receives from him one cent and a quarter; at which rate 160 basketfuls of have to be carried on board before each coolie earns a dollar. About one in every dozen loads is weighed to ensure the proper amount of coal being carried in each basket. The rapidity with which a ship is coaled is wonderful; the coolies work with unflagging energy without cessation all day, in spite of the blazing sun, against which the sole protection they have is a straw hat...At night fires are lit on the wharf, to enable the coaling to be continued; the effect of the scene is heightened, weird-like forms hurry noiselessly to and fro, now standing out in bold relief against the light, now disappearing in gloom.<sup>118</sup>

Considered one of the best coaling stations in the region, Singapore's main supply of coal came via Wales and Australia. With profits peaking at near \$54,000, and ships crowding

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116. Bogaars, Appendix #1, 139.

117. Chinese dialect groups specialized in different tasks – and the Hokkien group were the predominant coal handlers, and later rickshaw pullers. Wharf coolies were managed by a coolie contractor, one of whom was Gan Eng Seng, a land-owner and philanthropist, and who had a workforce of 400 coolies at one time. The various port authorities were highly aware of the dialect groups' tensions and used them well to their advantage. In 1898, the Cantonese stevedores went on strike only to be quickly replaced by Hokkiens. Tanjong Pagar, in some ways, was the nursery for new immigrants. See successive articles by Tan Choon Kiat and Dr. Daniel Chew in *Tanjong Pagar: Singapore's Cradle of Development*, 13-29.

118. Tate, 12. Coaling at night was more preferable as it was cooler – however, when coaling was carried out was highly dependent on the ships' schedules.

the harbour front, another graving dock was eventually built by the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company. Albert Dock opened on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1879, with less pomp and ceremony, inaugurated by Colonel Anson, an Officer of the Administering Government. Albert Dock lay adjacent eastwards of Victoria Dock -- measuring 420 feet on the blocks, 60 feet wide and 21 feet deep -- and was fitted with centrifugal pumps to empty out ships quickly. Victoria Dock was eventually fitted with similar devices.

In September 1874, the secretary to the P. & O. had written to the Secretary of State for the Colonies warning of the congested harbour and storage capacities. Increased shipping, overcrowded wharves and an inefficient transportation system made the construction of a railway line more urgent:

Your Lordship is aware that Singapore is an emporium of Eastern commerce as well as a coaling center both for British and foreign vessels proceeding to the China Seas and that the opening of the Suez Canal has not only increased the traffic in that direction but has also led to a more general employment of steam vessels of a larger class requiring much greater wharfage room than sailing vessels. It is not going too far to say that if the shores of New Harbour from end to end formed a continuous line of wharves, it would not more than suffice to meet the exigencies of the rapidly increasing traffic; and for the conveyance of the merchandise and other commodities going to and from the town and New Harbour a line of railway is in reality becoming indispensable.<sup>119</sup>

The exigencies were met -- but not by a railway line. Transportation needs were instead met by a combination of new roads, trams, and bullock carts. However, what really dominated the conveyance of passengers and at a cheaper rate were rickshaws introduced in the early 1880s. The fares for jinrickshaws in 1892, according to Reverend G. M. Reith's *Handbook to Singapore* were 5 cents for half a mile by first class, and 3 cents for second class -- or alternately 40 cents for the first hour by first class and 20 cents by second class. For example if your ship landed at the P. & O. wharf, which was two and three quarter miles from Raffles Place, the passenger barely paid 25 cents.<sup>120</sup> By 1897, the harbour has a different face -- with the introduction of electricity to the harbour front and doubling the working hours, a major land reclamation of Teluk Ayer Beach<sup>121</sup> north of the Tanjong Pagar docks was completed, and three major arteries linking the town to the harbour were built: Anson Road, Cecil Street and Keppel Road. Tramlines were also introduced between 1884 and 1886 (and closed in 1894), with trams running from the harbour along Keppel Road to the Tanjong Pagar Docks, and along Anson Road and

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119. Ibid, 133. Quoted as footnote #90.

120. G. M. Reith (1892 & 1907) *Handbook to Singapore*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 90-91.

121. The Teluk Ayer land reclamation project started in 1879. The work was completed in 1887. Eighteen acres were added to the townsite and in 1920, land was being sold for \$9.50 per foot. Makepeace, V.II, 39.

Cecil Street to Collyer Quay and the townsite.<sup>122</sup>

New Harbour and her docks are immortalized by Joseph Conrad<sup>123</sup> -- but in typical

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122. C. A. Gibson-Hill (1956) "Short Notes: Communication by land between new Harbour and the center of the town." *Memoirs of the Raffles Museum*, #3, 245-252. Gibson-Hill's notes on the development of communication and transportation here are comprehensive. A railway line was originally proposed by W. J. Du Port to link up Cloughton's dock to the old Telok Ayer (Teluk Air) Market at Cross Street in 1865 to provide a direct connection between all the wharves on the north side of New Harbour and the town center. This proposal did not materialize as the late 1860s was governed by sluggish trade. Nonetheless the Suez Canal and the increased trade in the 1870s resulted in an improvement of road communication, mainly the laying of Anson and Keppel Roads. Keppel Road was not opened for public use until May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1886. As early as 1865, there were plans to reclaim the lands at Teluk Ayer and around the early 1870s, the directors of the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company started buying up the Teluk Ayer lands for land reclamation. In 1880, Anson Road was completed, stretching from the Tanjong Pagar Company's main wharf and Victoria Dock and eventually merged into Robinson Road (1881-1884?) which led straight to Raffles Place. When enough land was reclaimed, Cecil Street was laid out in 1885, providing yet another route to the town center. At the same time Keppel Road was built across the mudflats and swamps lying between Tanjong Pagar and Teluk Blangah, joining up with Anson Road. Between 1885 and 1887, steam tram lines were laid down from the brickworks on the Pasir Panjang Road (in the West) through Teluk Blangah, then on Keppel Road to the Tanjong Pagar Docks, then to Anson Road, Cecil Street and finally Collyer Quay. A branch line crossed the river from Anson Road to South Bridge Road, then Elgin Bridge and finished in Rochore. The steam trams were not successful and the service ended in 1894, having commenced in 1886. Rickshaws of course were the main competition. A few years later, electric lines were laid down again. The Singapore Electric Tramway Company ran from the Raffles Hotel (on Beach Road) to Serangoon in July 1905. There were two other lines. One ran from Keppel Harbour past Tanjong Pagar to Johnston Pier, across the river to High Street to the Railway Station and on to Orchard Road. Yet another line ran from Tanjong Pagar through to Rochore and Gaylang. The power station was in Mackenzie Road. (see Reith, 86). The fare was 3 cents a section. The same company also installed electric lighting in the town March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1906. (Makepeace, V.I, 329).

123. Joseph Conrad was in Singapore at least eight times between 1883 and 1888. He sailed out in 1888 to Australia. The text here is from Joseph Conrad (1903) *Youth and The End of the Tether*. NY: Doubleday. In the author's notes, Conrad talks of the *The End of the Tether* as a "story of sea life in a rather special way," xi. The edition of the book must be a later edition since the author's note is listed as 1917. Both *Youth* and *The End of Tether* were published in 1902. All quotes in this paragraph are taken from pages 192-196.

Conrad fashion, the details are shuffled.<sup>124</sup> In *The End of the Tether* the sixty-seven year old and financially troubled protagonist, Captain Whalley reflects on the changing circumstances of the harbour, “the piercing of the Isthmus of Suez, like the breaking of a dam, had let in upon the East, a flood of new ships, new men, new methods of trade. It had changed the face of the Eastern seas and the very spirit of their life; so that his early experiences meant nothing whatever to the new generation of seamen.”<sup>125</sup> This is Singapore in the 1880s, and “there had been a time when men counted...the things once important, the effort of small men, the growth of a great place...” So the march of progress goes. Whalley’s contemplations turn to the state of the harbour of the past, barely over three decades before:

He remembered muddy shores, a harbour without quays, the one solitary wooden pier (but that was a public work) jutting out crookedly, the first coal shed erected in Monkey Point, that caught fire mysteriously and smouldered for days so that amazed ships came into a roadstead full of sulphurous fog, and the sun hung blood-red at midday.<sup>126</sup> He remembered

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124. A letter from Conrad to a literary fan, “I need not point out that I had to *make* material from my own life’s incidents arranged, combined, coloured for artistic purposes. I don’t think there’s anything reprehensible in that.” Norman Sherry, (1966) *Conrad’s Eastern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 13. The Governor that is mentioned here, Governor Denham, is supposedly Governor Samuel George Bonham who was the very popular Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1837-1843 who entertained civilians and officers alike. Before he became Governor, he was Resident Councillor. He was well-loved by both Europeans and Natives. According to Buckley, he was distinguished by liberal hospitality, and was honest, upright, just and generous, possessing a high sense of honour along with gentleman qualities. See Buckley, 383. Conrad must have also done his homework with regards to the Government house prior to 1859 when the building was taken down. Here he rightly refers to Governor Denham’s residence as the Coleman designed Government Bungalow, a “low-roofed structure.’ Also mentioned and described in the *The End of the Tether* as “heavy-lidded, distinguished and sallow” is Sir Frederick – which is Frederick A. Weld, Governor from 1880-1887. Conrad would have been present in Singapore when Sir Frederick Weld was governor Conrad takes further liberties – he mentions a Master Attendent, Captain Elliot who was actually Captain Henry Ellis who gave Conrad his first command (see Sherry, 195, Makepeace V.I, 505). Conrad also provides Governor Denham with an official frigate, the *Dido* which of course, is associated with Henry Keppel’s ship, who himself was a close friend of Governor Bonham. Also see John Turnbull Thomson (1864/1991) *Glimpses into Life in Malayan Lands*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 187-193. Thomson is full of praise for Bonham’s rule, as well as his plum puddings and champagne.

125. Conrad, (1903), 168.

126. There was an actual fire – but not at ‘Monkey Point’. The fire broke out on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1877 at the Tanjung Pagar Docks in the upper storey of the blacksmiths’ lines and rapidly spread through other coolie lines to the coal sheds. The blaze was so powerful

the things, the faces, and something more besides – like the faint flavour of a cup quaffed to the bottom, like a subtle sparkle of the air that was not to be found in the atmosphere of to-day.

It is over thirty-five years of nostalgic returns – “a big slice of time” -- that Whalley recalls. These were the good years when men like himself had the favour of the Governor and dining at Government Hill was expected. The others were like “poor Evans” who had “ended by dying at home deucedly hard up....red face, his coal-black whiskers, and his restless eyes, who had set up the first patent slip for repairing small ships on the edge of the forest, in a lonely bay three miles up the coast.” Evans, is of course inspired by William Cloughton and the Patent Slip and Dock Company but Evan’s unhappy fate also echoes that of Jacob Clunis – and he could be a composite character. Conrad goes on to write that:

it was from that patent slip in a lonely wooded bay that had sprung the workshops of the Consolidated Docks Company, with its three graving basins carved out of solid rock, its wharves, its jetties, its electric-light plant, its steam-powered houses – with its gigantic sheer-legs fit to lift the heaviest weight ever carried afloat, and whose head could be seen peeping over bushy points of land and sandy promontories, as you approached the New Harbour from the west.

Here the geography is reversed. The imposing Consolidated Docks Company described above is quite similar to the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company *but* is located at the western point of the harbour, instead of the east -- its starting point, the original slip that Evans/Cloughton supposedly built. By 1902, Cloughton’s company had already been absorbed by the Tanjong Pagar Dock company, and certainly, electricity had been installed along the harbour. Writing at the turn of the century, Conrad, who had left Singapore for good in 1888, would have depended on other sources to determine the status of the harbour. He had, however, no way of knowing then that even the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company would be taken over, such as it was in 1905 by the government.

The opening of Suez on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1869 had created a palpable change in Singaporean society. For Roland St. John Braddell, it turned Singapore into little England:

The introduction of steam and telegraphy and the completion of the Canal entirely altered the social life of the place by bringing it nearer home. When Singapore was far away from England it had its own ways and customs; it was a family where all knew each other, took an interest in each other, and stood by each other. In the ‘Seventies there became a complete change; coteries and cliques became the order of the day, new social barriers were raised, and life here began to approximate more and more to English life, until to-day Singapore resembles nothing so much as an English provincial town where commerce is the principal interest.

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that the fire was not under control until April 23<sup>rd</sup> and cost near \$55,000. Part of the problem was that there was no direct water supply to the harbour. See Sir John Rumney Nicholson in Makepeace, V.II, 5-6.

Indeed we actually have *thés dansant* twice a week at the Europe Hotel.<sup>127</sup> The canal had abbreviated the world, providing a synoptic cartography. It was now just a matter of getting there as quickly as possible, surpassing the competition and moving mail, goods and people round the world. The dawn of the indomitable iron hull steamers with their improved marine engines also signaled the end of the magnificent tea clippers, which could not compete with the speed and size of the steamships prowling and dominating the waterways of the world from the 1870s onwards.<sup>128</sup> The *S.S. Shantung* accomplished the trip from Glasgow to Singapore via the Suez with stops at Port Said, Suez and Penang in only forty-two days as compared to the hundred and sixteen days achieved by the sailing vessel, *Eileen Radford* in 1867.<sup>129</sup> It is significant to note that this produced, roughly, a reduction of the time goods were in transit by ten weeks -- thus enabling the goods to be distributed more rapidly rather than being stored without capital earned.<sup>130</sup> In just one year in 1870, Singapore trade figures showed imports rose by seven million Spanish dollars and exports by five million -- the same amount as the total values of import/export figures between 1860 and 1869. The Editor of *The Straits Times* (Overland Edition) of January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1870 wrote:

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127. Roland St. John Braddell in *Makepeace* V.II., 516.

128. Up to 1869, tea clippers were still being built, including the famous *Cutty Sark*, now a popular tourist attraction in Greenwich, England. The *Cutty Sark* was launched on Monday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1869, weighing 963 tons, from Scott and Linton's shipyard at Dumbarton, on the Clyde. The name precedes the vessel's fame -- it is also the name of a popular whisky (founded March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1923). See Bogaars for a brief discussion of the death of the clippers, 102 -- 104. Also, the transportation of tea required speed due to the preservation of its aroma -- the longer a ship was in transit and on sea, the weaker the quality of tea.

129. *Singapore Times*, Overland Edn. 15<sup>th</sup>, March, 1870. Also see Bogaars (1954), 106.

130. Bogaars (1954), 106. Bogaars provides detailed trade figures and description of goods. One interesting note is the reduction of wheat flour imports from Europe in the 1870s. This was the result of the trans-continental railway built across North America -- whereas once flour had to be shipped from European ports, it was now a matter of transporting the wheat from the American mid-west to Californian ports (San Francisco) and thence to the Far East, particularly Hong Kong. The US Congressional acts of 1862 and 1864 approved the construction of the first transcontinental railroad. It was completed on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1869 when the Union Pacific running westward from Nebraska, and the Central Pacific coming eastward from California met at Promontory Point, Utah for the Golden Spike ceremony. The Trans-Continental railway line also encouraged American trade and contact with the China Market. Singapore, in the 1870s, began importing flour from the US via Hong Kong. In Canada, Vancouver received the first ship from the Orient in 1887, carrying tea, silk and mail bound for England by utilizing the Trans-Pacific and Trans-Continental railways. If anything, the Pacific Rim, as we comprehend it today, is a geographical concept forged on land, by the railway lines, and has its roots in the Eastern United States seaboard.

The events of our little Colony pale into significance besides two others which of themselves, will fill important pages in the world's history and will mark the year 1869 as the beginning of a new era in the lives of the great commercial and maritime nations. These two events: are the completion and opening of the Pacific railroads and the Suez Canal, two vast enterprises destined to exert a mighty influence upon the trade of the world, and to revolutionize that of the entire East.....it is to the Suez Canal however that we look as the agency which is to quicken trade, and to increase the importance of Singapore as a commercial center and a port of call.

The little colony, lying directly on the shortest sea-route between Europe and the Far East, would herald a new era of cosmopolitanism and prosperity. The continents had folded into each other – and India, and the Far East, it appeared, were not very mysterious or far away anymore.

To grasp a sense of collapsible distances, even symbolically -- there is The Peninsular & Oriental Company which Boyd Cable claims as “essentially the history of steam navigation to the East.”<sup>131</sup> The company or house flag of the P. & O. deserves full

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131. Boyd Cable's (1837) *A Hundred Year History of the P. & O.* London: Ivor, Nicholson and Watson Ltd. provides a thorough history of the first one hundred years of the company. In brief, the company was started by Brodie McGhie Wilcox and Arthur Anderson. Wilcox had opened an office in Lime Street, London, and commenced business as a shipbroker and commission agent. The same year he engaged Arthur Anderson and by 1822, both were in partnership, managing a promising business in running small vessels up and down the Spanish or Iberian Peninsular. Undaunted by the insurrection problems afflicting the Portuguese monarchy between 1824-26, Wilcox and Andersen began sailing their own ships and by 1835 was a successful operation handling their own and other ships. In 1837, after some agitation, Wilcox and Anderson won the contract to carry mail from England to the Spanish/Iberian Peninsular. Up to 1837, the company's name was undecided – steamers ran under the name Peninsular Steam Navigation Company (which were the regular steamer services between London, Spain and Portugal), the Peninsular Mediterranean Steam Packets or just simply, Wilcox and Anderson. On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1840, the company was incorporated by Royal Charter as the Peninsular and Oriental Company with a capital of one million pounds or twenty thousand shares at fifty pounds each. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1840, the P. & O. commenced their mail service to Egypt, having won the contract the very same year. The extension to India in 1842 would involve a revolutionary and complicated if not difficult overland route across Egypt as part of their system – and later on with lines to Italy, Greece, the Black Sea and regular routes to Ceylon, Madras, Calcutta, and China. The overland route demanded that passengers went on a canal boats from Alexandria to the Nile, a river steamer up to Cairo, then a horse drawn carriage to Suez across 84 miles of desert. The mail, was delivered by more sure-footed and speedy vehicles – camels. It wasn't until the mid-1850s that the three-step transit process was replaced by the rail to Suez. Today, the P.&O. claims expertise as a Major International Logistics and Transport Company.

description. Hoisted in the early days of the P. & O when it was still Wilcox and Anderson – the flag is diagonally quartered and bears the colours of the company’s Peninsular roots when it rendered services to Portugal and Spain. The left and top quarters are blue and white respectively, representing the Royal House of Portugal while Spain is represented by the red and yellow on the right and bottom quarters. The term ‘the Quartered Flag’ would eventually be synonymous with ships belonging to the P. & O. But what is of interest is the Armorial bearings that the P. & O. adopted in 1840 when the company was incorporated by Royal Charter. The motto is ‘Quis Nos Separabit’ or ‘who/what, then, can separate us’, a biblical reference taken from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.<sup>132</sup> The P. & O. coat of arms is once again diagonally quartered with the colours of Portugal and Spain, but this time instead of yellow, the bottom quarter is gold. On each quarter, an animal -- and here the “Oriental” makes its presence felt. On the left quarter, a kangaroo -- and on the right, an Asiatic elephant with a turret-like sedan chair affixed to its back. The top quarter contains the British lion, painted red with its characteristic trident tail, and a blue tongue sticking out in a valiant roar. In the quarter below, a blue dragon. There are no immediate ambiguities associated with the elephant and the kangaroo motifs – in the next twelve years which follow the incorporation, the P. & O would arrive in India (1842), Singapore (1845) and Australia (1852). The lion and the dragon, however, are not monolithic in their British and Chinese designations. The red lion exceeds its British symbolism, with all legs firmly planted down -- instead of the threatening upraised right paw with protracted claws -- in a show-dog pose, a pattern of friendly British lions which would culminate with the noble and gentle Landseer lions, seated at the base of Nelson’s column at Trafalgar Square – and the Lassie-like pose of the Wembley British Empire Exhibition Lion in 1924.<sup>133</sup> Quite likely a coincidence, the red lion would presage the company’s expansion to Singapore, known too as Lion-City,<sup>134</sup> whose present symbol of the lion is in red. The dragon here is an East-West concoction and perhaps deliberately so: blue in colour, with a horse-like head and the ears of an ox, a snake-like wingless, scaleless body, four claws on each talon leg with fur.<sup>135</sup> To continue with the East-West melding and reconfigured global geographies, on

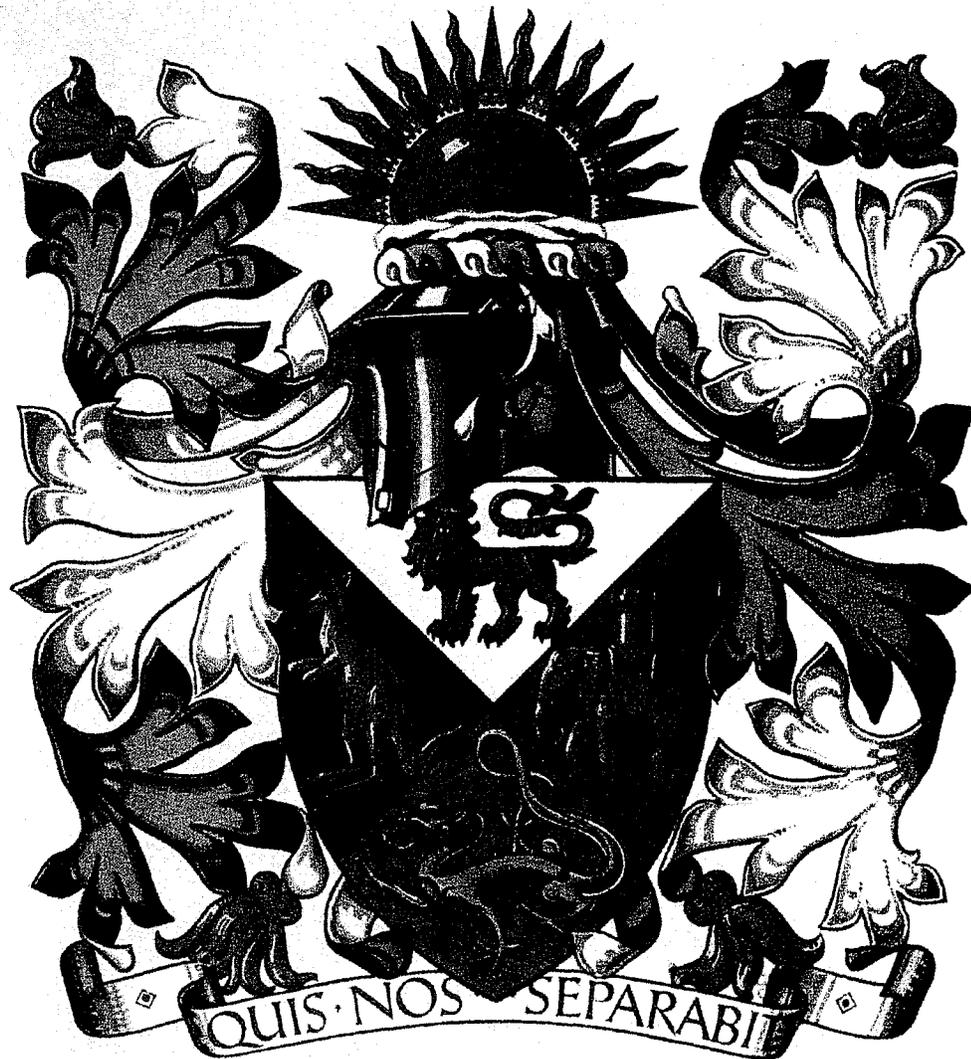
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Cruise ships include the famous Princess Line, popularized in the 70s TV Series, *The Love Boat*. Also see David and Stephen Howarth (1986) *The Story of P. & O. The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

132. New Testament (King James version), Romans Chapter 8 verse 35. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”

133. See D. R. Knight & A. D. Sabey (1984) *The Lion Roars at Wembley: British Empire Exhibition 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1924-1925*. London: Barnard & Westwood. The exhibition was re-opened in 1925 between May and October as well.

134. Oddly enough the Singapore Lion, even to the present, is often depicted in red on flags.



The Armorial Bearings of  
• THE • PENINSULAR • AND • ORIENTAL •  
• STEAM • NAVIGATION • COMPANY •  
Incorporated by Royal Charter, 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1840.  
As recorded in the College of Arms.

Figure 11. Armorial Bearings as reprinted in Boyd Cable (1937) *A Hundred Year History of the P. & O. Peninsular and Oriental Steam Company 1837 – 1937*. London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson. Frontispiece

the P. & O. crest, above the armor, slightly covering the lion's head is a steamship funnel reminiscent of a knight's helmet, wearing what appears to be an Arab head-dress shaped by clouds, waves and heraldic leaves -- and above it, the rising sun. The sun – it appears - - also rises in the East.

In 1840, William Mulready (1786-1863), a narrative painter whose use of brilliant colours inspired the Pre-Raphaelites,<sup>136</sup> produced a picture envelope, predecessor to the postcard, hinting of overseas communication with the illustration of Britannia seated on a throne, the lion at her feet, and from her island extending her benevolent rule to distant shores where emigrants, merchants, people of all races and ethnicities, and those at home await the “winged messengers carrying letters over the intervening seas.”<sup>137</sup> The public had, for some reason or other, disliked the pictorial envelope, and soon caricatures of it began to appear along with references to “Mulled-it-Already”, or “Mullheaded”. Eventually, the envelope “was ridiculed out of existence.”<sup>138</sup> Such winged messengers carrying missives to “exiles....waiting for letters from home” would be immortalized as indefatigable mail dispatchers braving inhospitable jungles, tigers, bandits, hills and torrential rivers in Rudyard Kipling's poem *The Overland Mail* (c.1886).<sup>139</sup> Winged messengers or wild horses and speedy camels – the mail *had* to arrive.

Certainly nothing could separate the Peninsular from the Oriental. There was no stopping the ambitions of Wilcox and Anderson to traverse the entire globe even if it meant

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135. The distinctive mark of difference between the Eastern and Western dragon are the wings. Western dragons have bat-like wings where the Eastern ones are usually wingless. Also the Eastern dragon is a mixture of many animals and the Western dragon sometimes not only is very scaly but has fur and feathers.

136. William Mulready (1786-1863) was born in County Clare, Ireland, the son of a leather breeches maker. Mulready entered the Royal Academy at age fourteen. He was familiar with historical and landscape painting but concentrated on painting anecdotal scenes that drew on seventeenth century Dutch genre pictures. He became highly influential in the Victorian narrative picture in terms of both subject and technique – he asserted that the most important elements in a painting were “story, character and expression.” His use of brilliant colours was inspirational to the Pre-Raphaelites – he painted on a white ground in order to emphasize colour. See Julia Thomas (2000) *Victorian Narrative Painting*. London: Tate Publishing, 16-18, 101.

137. See Howard Robinson (1964), *Carrying British Mail Overseas*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 253 and Frank Staff (1966) *The Picture Postcard and its Origins*. London: Lutterworth Press, 23-24.

138. Staff, 1964, 93.

139. R. Kipling (1994) *The Works of Rudyard Kipling*. Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 33.

conquering the Egyptian deserts by canal boats, horses and camels – at least prior to 1858 when, finally, the railway and telegraph lines stretching from Alexandria to the Suez were completed. Even in 1837, while the East India Company was belabouring its objections to private companies and steamships,<sup>140</sup> it is quite telling that there were *no* sailing vessels in the P. & O. fleet. There is no need to rehearse the feats of the *Hindustan* or the *Lady Mary Wood*, but we have come a long way since May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1837 when the first private mail steamer, the *Iberia* sailed between England and the Spanish/Iberian Peninsular (Falmouth to Oporto) in 66 hours, arriving on May 25<sup>th</sup>. The fact remains that it took merely ten years (1842-1852) for the P. & O. to expand their Imperial routes to India, the Far East and Australia. Passengers were considered of secondary importance on the mail steamers and it was the necessity to “join hands across the seas” (and the penalties for mail delays) which drove the steamship competition,<sup>141</sup> and sometimes even sail without her human cargo especially those traveling on the Overland Route. If the P. & O. today prides itself as an expert in logistics, one only has to look at the complexities of planning the famed overland route. By the time the magnificent *Hindustan*<sup>142</sup> sailed for Calcutta in 1842, the overland route across Egypt was firmly established (with the help of the Pascha of Egypt), and it became a matter of

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140. The East India Company had maintained a monopoly on the mail contracts as well as the Egypt-Bombay line -- the gateway to India. They were the chief opponents to tendering out private contracts as well as encouraging the building and use of steamships. The East Indiamen provided the romance of the high seas with their sailing vessels for some time until they became less viable due to the speed of global trade and commerce. See David Howarth (1974) *Sovereign of the Seas*. St. James Place, London: Collins, 305-322. Also see pages 169-183 on the East Indiamen.

141. In 1898, an imperial penny postage was realized -- pictorial envelopes would announce slogans such as “Hands across the sea -- A penny all the way” or “From thee (Britain) the world expects an ocean penny postage. See Robinson, 258-263

142. The *Hindustan* was built with the expansion of the mail contract to India in mind. The East India Company which had monopolized the India mail contracts had opposed and fought bitterly against such private contracts. By the time the *Hindustan* sailed on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1842, the contract had just been approved, to the fears of the EIC which saw their own steamers losing to the more powerful P. & O. ships – so much so that P. & O. ships arrived so far ahead of EIC ships which arrived in Bombay -- that letters could be answered in time to catch an outward mail which saved a month in return transit times. Before 1842, “four, five, and even six months was no abnormal time for dispatches to take between England and India, which meant anything up to a year for a reply to be received.” (Cable, 46) The shortening of sea-routes were imperative if anything for commerce. The *Hindustan*, took 91 days, via Gibraltar, St. Vincent (Cape Verde Islands), Ascension, Cape Town, Mauritius, Point de Galle (Ceylon) with 28 days spent in port. This compared with the first attempt to sail an experimental steamship (The *Enterprize*) to Calcutta on August 16<sup>th</sup> 1825, which took 113 days. The ship was made up a total of 150 berths at about £40 each – for ninety days of travel in comfortable lodgings. Cable, 74-79.

calculating the most convenient and quickest points of coordinating the transshipment of mail, goods and people.

And then there were the nude slave girls -- the African, Circassian and Georgian beauties meant for the harems, to add to the perils, health and moral concerns -- or tourist attractions (if not the ancient ruins of Luxor) which marked the P. & O. overland route.<sup>143</sup> The European traveler in the antique land around the 1830s was terrified of the plague which was believed to afflict Egypt at regular periods – added to that, the miserable travel and sleeping conditions. Harrowing tales abound. Only the adventure-minded and the hardest traveler survived the trek across the deserts – better to be onboard the longer and luxurious East Indiamen instead. That however did not prevent Thomas Fletcher Waghorn, Lieutenant in the Royal Navy,<sup>144</sup> once an EIC employee, then a sub-agent for

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143. Billed for years as an attraction and to which many P. & O. passengers visited and wrote about. Also described in the P. & O *Hand Book for Egypt and India* but “more fitted for wild beasts than human beings”. See Cable, 57. I am also concentrating here on the Alexandria-Suez route. Travelers heading west used to disembark at Cosseir (rather than Suez which was beset by adverse winds), cross the desert and travel to the Nile enabling them to stop by at Luxor to view the famed ruins before sailing down to Cairo and then to Alexandria. The reverse journey was quicker if one took the Cairo-Suez route.

144. Thomas Fletcher Waghorn was born at Chatham in 1800, joined the navy at 12 and served four and half years. His exploits included serving on gunboats, piloting the EIC’s first experimental steamer to India, *The Enterprize* and of course, developing the overland route. Although he signed a contract to convey P. & O. passengers, the alliance did not last long and animosity grew between Waghorn and the company. The P. & O. felt Waghorn was not doing enough to improve the conditions of travel (Waghorn was always surprised that his routes were not always well received by passengers) and Waghorn in turn thought the P. & O. was too interfering and questioning of his tactics. He incurred many financial debts during his lifetime, while seeking the most effective of routes and died in 1850. He is buried in Snodland, a little village in Kent (Cable, 53-64; Howarth & Howarth, 42). Waghorn’s Memorial, addressed to Lord Palmerston and the EIC Court of Directors in 1848 (for which he eventually received a modest pension of £200, raised from £100), in the third Person, is most telling (parts of which are reproduced in Pudney, 17-18):

He [Waghorn] has received the thanks of three-quarters of the Globe namely Europe, Asia and Africa, besides numerous letters of thanks and commendations from mercantile Communities at everywhere Eastern Trade is concerned.....

Every fraction of his money was spent by him in getting more and more facilities, and had the saving of money been one of the characteristics of his nature, the Overland Route would not be as useful as it is now – and this is acknowledge by all. Mr. Waghorn claims for himself the merit of his work; he claims it without fear of denial, and states, upon his honour,

the P. & O., from attempting to find the quickest and most amenable route from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, and eventually attempting more hospitable and tourist-friendly travel conditions – even before the construction of the Suez railway and Canal. In 1828, Waghorn went to Calcutta proposing an England-Calcutta mail communication in 72 days via Cairo using vessels carrying mail alone. Having received permission to act as courier for Lord Ellenborough's dispatches to India in 1829, Waghorn decided to test out the route across the desert, from Alexandria to the Suez in order to ascertain the time taken in an overland route, meeting the steamer at Suez which would carry him off to Bombay. Unfortunately, the steamer never materialized due to an engine failure – but if it did, Waghorn's estimation was that it would take 55 days from England to Bombay. Waghorn would make several more trips expediting private mail, each time with some changes in aid of speed. It was during these crossings that he struck up a friendship with the enigmatic Pasha of Egypt, Mehemet Ali (or Mohammed Ali), once considered hostile to foreigners, and builder of the slave-dug Mahmudiyah canal (completed 1819) which linked Alexandria to the Nile.<sup>145</sup>

Between 1829 and 1842, Thomas Fletcher Waghorn became notorious in his courier business worldwide. In 1838 the merchant community of Singapore received a visionary letter (sent also to merchants in China) from Waghorn which outlined a proposed steam expansion to China using the overland route and connections at Canton and Point de Galle.<sup>146</sup>

The time then is come for you to establish a chain of steam communication between Canton and Galle, and thus identify and connect

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that no money or means were ever received by him either Her Majesty's Government or the East India Company to aid it.....

After the passing over of a whole generation of one uniform systematic line of conduct without regard to the *slightest selfish consideration* it is not too much for him in order to expect the gratitude of his country, by a good pecuniary grant in order to enable him to pay his debts....

145. Mohammed Ali, the charismatic Pasha of Egypt (1769-1848), ruled between 1805 and 1848 (his dynasty lasted till 1898) -- and was the great modernizer of Egypt, having defeated the British at Rosetta in 1807. He built canals, railways and roads, established shipping facilities, schools and factories. Mahmudiyah Canal was said to be a remarkable feat of engineering employing at least 200,000 slaves to dig a canal forty-eight miles long, eighteen feet deep in parts and nine feet wide to connect Alexandria (which Mohammed Ali had wished to develop as a port city) to the Nile. It became the first link for those traveling on the Red Sea route. See John Pudney (1970) *Suez: De Lesseps' Canal* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) New York & Washington: Praeger

146. Waghorn's letter is reprinted in Buckley, 331-332. The same letter includes Waghorn's boundless faith in steam navigation "added, as much, perhaps more, to England's greatness than any other science, except education" and his qualifications, a paragraph including how he showed up the EIC Directors with his plans to unmask their backwardness.

China with the Calcutta line at that place. There are many advantages attendant upon such an establishment, not only to your own commercial pursuits but also to every relation connected between Europe and China... One vessel is sufficient to begin with, making quarterly trips between Galle and Canton, in dates suited to meet the Calcutta steamer at Galle. Such a vessel should be about 800 tons, with engines of 220 horse power and space for 100 tons of valuable freight, touching both ways at Singapore for fuel, letters, passengers &c.,&c. Raise £50,000 in shares to pay for this first vessel, and for a year's coal at Galle, Singapore and Canton.

Waghorn's wish was that he would be entrusted with the placing of such a vessel at Galle and bringing the mail via the Red Sea. The letter had preceded and quite likely inspired the eventual appearance of the P. & O.'s mail steamer *The Lady Mary Wood* in 1842. Waghorn's letter however, excited enough responses to set up a committee to "establishing a steamer between Ceylon, the Straits, and China, in connection with steamers to be established between India and Suez."<sup>147</sup> Certainly his ability to be almost ubiquitous provoked gossip which revolved around him being in two places at the same time. William Makepeace Thackeray<sup>148</sup> in the *Irish Sketchbooks: From Cornhill to Cairo* could not have said it any better:

Lieut. Waghorn is bouncing in and out of the courtyard full of business. He only left Bombay yesterday morning, was seen in the Red Sea on Tuesday, is engaged to dinner this afternoon in Regent's Park, and (as it is about two minutes since I saw him in the courtyard) I make no doubt he is by this time at Alexandria, or at Malta say, or perhaps both.

Sometime around 1840, Waghorn was contracted by the P. & O. to convey passengers and luggage through Egypt. By the time he left Egypt in 1841, he and his partners had "built the eight halting places in the Desert, between Cairo and Suez; also the three Hotels established above them", installed "[i]ron tanks with good water", "had established English carriages, vans and horses, for the passengers' conveyance across the Desert (instead of camels)", "placed small steamers (from England) on the Nile and the canal of Alexandria" and converted "wandering robbers" into "faithful guides."<sup>149</sup> By

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147. A Public Meeting was held on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1838 whereupon five resolutions were unanimously carried – to ensure that such communication would be possible soon enough between Point De Galle, the Straits and China, Buckley, 332-333.

148. William Makepeace Thackeray (1900) *The Paris Sketch Book Irish Sketchbooks and Notes of a Journey From Cornhill to Cairo*. London, Edinburgh, and New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 146.

149. See John Pudney (1970) *Suez: De Lesseps' Canal* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) New York & Washington: Praeger, 16. So claimed by Waghorn in his Memorial written to the EIC Court of Directors and addressed to Lord Palmerston in 1848. He also argues that during his involvement, not a single English individual has come to harm or infected with the plague while passing over the isthmus. The first steamer which plied the Nile waters to

1846, The P. & O. with the initial aid of Waghorn and the Pasha of Egypt, had a three-step transit programme in place for travel over two hundred and fifty miles on land involving 2,500 camels, 450 horses and uncounted donkeys to move people mail and goods.<sup>150</sup> For refueling purposes, coal had to be carried across the desert and the dump of 6000 tons at Suez would have taken 18,000 camel journeys. What Waghorn pioneered, the P. & O. improved.

The traveler in 1843 on a P. & O. vessel heading for the East would find himself and his luggage getting off at Alexandria and transferred onto native horse-towed “track boats” down the Mahmoudiyah Canal to the Nile. There would be relays of tracking horses stationed at seven points along the canal over 48 miles – making the journey in 8 to 10 hours. The second leg of the journey was on river steamers, suitably built to fit the climate complete with food, wine and refreshments all the way to Cairo, taking 18 hours with 12 hours of sightseeing. But the adventure really began across the desert: high-spirited Arab horses, unused to the harness, pulling a claustrophobic carriage holding six people, racing across the deserts -- the journey taking 36 hours, with 12 hours for rest and refreshments. The entire journey, from sea to sea, was estimated at 78 hours, with a 10 hour margin before the steamer sailed. The mails took around 64 hours, going by donkey and camel relays. By 1845 or so, conditions for travel and cartage had improved tremendously – the horse drawn barges up the Mahmudiyah Canal were replaced by a specially built iron tug to pull the barges,<sup>151</sup> the Nile route to Cairo had faster boats and the construction of connecting locks at a new jetty enabled the more efficient shifting of goods and passengers. More spacious and comfortable resthouses with clean bedrooms, competent cooks and servants were built along the desert route with more changing stations for horses (every five or six miles) and refreshments for travelers. In 1847, there were 3,000 passengers crossing the isthmus, and the company employed 3,500 camels, 440 horses, 46 carriages in the desert, and 4 steamers plying between Cairo and Alexandria.<sup>152</sup> Eventually, with improved conditions, travel to Egypt for leisure and pleasure increased and the P. & O. built hotels and other amenities in Cairo and Suez for passengers, embarrassed by the inferior lodgings provided for those who stayed weeks and months having escaped the English winter. Certainly tours and “cruising” were by then advertised as leisure pursuits in ships that were on normal commercial voyages.

In 1844, William Makepeace Thackeray, popular author of his day, was given a free ticket on the P. & O. Mediterranean “cruise” with which he visited Gibraltar, Greece,

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Cairo was the *Jack o' Lantern* considered the world's smallest passenger steamer. When Waghorn was handling the overland route, he charged £13 for the entire trip.

150. It was impossible to bring coal on sailing ships up the Red Sea. See Howarth & Howarth, 43.

151. Built in England and shipped to Egypt for assembly Howarth & Howarth, 42.

152. Pudney, 18.

Constantinople, the Holy Land and Egypt.<sup>153</sup> Thackeray, despite his immediate awe of the pyramids expressed: “My sensation with regard to the Pyramids was, that I had seen them before” -- but nonetheless also wrote “I confess, for my part, that the Pyramids are very big.”<sup>154</sup> Thackeray was less taken by Cairo which by then exhibited a lack of magicians, harems and dancing girls, and seemed more *familiar* prompting him to write, “It is England in Egypt. I like to see her there with her pluck, enterprise, manliness, bitter ale, and Harvey sauce.”<sup>155</sup> In 1854, the mails were delivered from London to Singapore in thirty-four days and the *Singapore Free Press* predicted a three-day reduction when the railways were completed. In 1858, the railways were finally built, under the supervision of the renowned engineer Robert Stephenson, though the initial traveling costs were quite exorbitant at £15, then £12, then £10 (lowered due to passenger complaints) for a train traveling at ten miles per hour. When the Canal opened, the fares dropped to £3.<sup>156</sup> By the 1870s, the organized tours of Thomas Cook had Egypt down pat – for a hundred and fifty guineas, the traveler would travel by rail to Brindisi where a steamer would then leave for Port Said.<sup>157</sup> The same tours, including trips to the Holy

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153. Thackeray, William Makepeace (1900) *The Paris Sketch Book Irish Sketchbooks and Notes of a Journey From Cornhill to Cairo* London, Edinburgh, and New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons. Originally published under the pseudonym of Mr. M. A. Titmarsh as *Notes of a Journey* from Cornhill to Grand Cairo. Incidentally, the ship was *The Lady Mary Wood*.

154. *Ibid*, 145. The pyramids had loomed just as breakfast was served on the canal steamers which then distracted the guests. For his part, Thackeray was ashamed of his own attitude which he thought was disrespectful towards one of the greatest wonders of the world.

155. *Ibid*, 148.

156. Cable, 153-154. When the railways were completed, there was great approval of the carriages, claimed to have second class travel equal to first class in England. Five years later, travelers would remark on the state of disrepair and unkempt conditions. The railway belonged to the Pasha of Egypt, and was under his management.

157. Edmund Swinglehurst (1982) *Cook's Tours: the Story of Popular Travel* Poole & Dorset: Blandford Press, 88-106. See page 70 for a facsimile of the advertisement for Cook's round the world tour in Cook's Excursionist magazine. Cook's Desert Tours were very popular trips even if there were discomforts – some were organized as luxurious army camps. Consider Lady Isabel Burton's observation in 1875: “Mr. Cook is obliged, with a large caravan, to make certain rules which must be kept with military precision” (in Jane Robinson's (2001) *Unsuitable for Ladies* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 135). The Desert Tours generally included a tour of the Holy Land, which was close to Cook's religious orientations (he was an enthusiastic temperance advocate and preached on the subject if the opportunity arose). Cook did not only organized tours for his countrymen and women but also for Mecca Pilgrims, armies and basically whoever required travel arrangements.

Lands would be included in Cook's round-the-world tours.

It is not that Waghorn was solely responsible for the singular turn of events in global shipping and postal communications but certainly his efforts to secure the most expedient of overland routes from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea reconstituted British interests, economic, military, and otherwise, in the Egyptian lands and beyond. If anything, as Thackeray writes, "Wag has conquered the Pyramids themselves – dragged the unwieldy structures a month nearer England than they were, and brought the country along with them."<sup>158</sup> Egypt became more accessible and mysterious at the same time, while the Oriental East was now a mere canal away. For many travelers on the Suez route, the East began at Port Said. When Ferdinand De Lesseps completed the Suez, he erected a bust of Waghorn in respectful commemoration:

In homage to the memory of a generous though unfortunate man, who alone without any help, by a long series of labours and heroic efforts, practically demonstrated and determined the adoption of the postal route through Egypt, and the communication between the East and the West of the world; and this was the originator and pioneer of the great Egyptian maritime commerce completed by the canal of two seas.<sup>159</sup>

Perceived as an obsessive personality back in England, Waghorn assumed a more visionary stature among those he worked with or encountered in Egypt and abroad. Waghorn's endeavours secured steamship services, which in turn necessitated the organization of steamer to steamer mail exchanges, the construction of communication and rail lines, and a corresponding infrastructure in Egypt (thus supporting the Pasha's own modernizing policies), and certainly roused more scholarly interest in that part of the world – especially, 'Egyptology'. Waghorn had anticipated Ferdinand De Lesseps' and the latter had considered Waghorn inspirational to his own ambitions – for it was the overland route which created a more urgent climate for a waterway – one which for De Lesseps would "break down the barriers which still divide men, races and nations."<sup>160</sup>

What changes things – and one's location in the world or the sense of place and belonging -- is the possibility that distant places are reachable; that these places communicate, that time and space can be standardized, that letters, postcards and

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158. Thackeray, 148.

159. Pudney, 6. Talk of building a canal, and there might have already been one in ancient times preceded de Lesseps. It was a matter of finally acting on it. Also see Tom F. Peters' *Building the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 179-202. In Peters' discussion, the Suez was not just a catalytic turn in the reconfiguration of world geography but also the Canal's construction cultivated the idea of process, in which tools and technology had to be invented as one went along the building of the canal.

160. In a circular penned by De Lesseps to all interested parties including MPs, members of the bank of England, and the founding directors of the P. & O., Pudney, 64.

telegraphic messages arrive,<sup>161</sup> that coming home is expected, that Indian Princes appear on your shores,<sup>162</sup> that words like “kowtow” and “pukka/pukkah” and “amok” slip into everyday language, that newspapers *always* carry news from the settlements and colonies, that the Indo-Saracenic architecture of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton is part of a lovely seaside holiday -- and exotic goods find themselves in the marketplaces only to become daily necessities, like tea, nutmeg and pepper. No P. & O. passenger, traveling anywhere in the world, would be bereft of the ships’ essential and famous curry meals complete with chutney, papadums and rice-pilau.<sup>163</sup> What Suez made viable was not India or Singapore or China itself but that the very idea of travel to these places, if one chooses, was a matter of fact and not prohibitively cumbersome. More importantly, one could always return. Most times, all that was required was a visit to the agents for the P. & O., Thomas Cook and Sons, and other shipping lines.

And travel did become mundane, at least according to Rudyard Kipling in his poem “The Exiles’ Line” (1890) – where the traffic to and fro from India and the Far East made up the “gypsies of the east”:

Bound in the wheel of Empire, one by one,  
The chain-gangs of the East from sire to son,  
The Exiles’ Line takes out the exiles’ line  
And ships them homeward when their work is done.

How runs the old indictment? “Dear and slow,”  
So much and twice so much. We gird, but go.  
For all the soul of our sad East is there,  
Beneath the house – flag of the P. and O.

At least two-thirds of the ships bound for India and eastwards (and back) teemed with officers, civil servants or senior administrators, diplomats, bankers, industrialists, world travelers, wealthy planters -- and the help: mainly nannies, servants, governesses, housekeepers who usually occupied the second-class cabins along with the assortment of lower-ranked soldiers and missionaries. The first-class occupants made up the ‘Port-Out, Starboard Home’ (‘POSH’) club.<sup>164</sup> There was also the famed “fishing fleet”, usually the

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161. This perception of shrinking distances via the experience of sound is discussed in Peters, 14-19. The same book also considers railways in reorganizing networks of time and space.

162. Thomas Cook and Sons, at the request of the Viceroy of India in the mid-1880s, arranged special tours for the Indian royalty to London, especially for the Colonial and India exhibition of 1886. They even created a special department called ‘Indian Princes’ to handle the demands of such clients. Swinglehurst, 82.

163. Cable, 109-111.

164. Howarth and Howarth, 64-69. Some claim that this is the origins of the word posh, the snobbery of first class passengers who pre-selected rooms based on the direction of the sun and where the coolest and most comfortable cabins were located, thereby Port

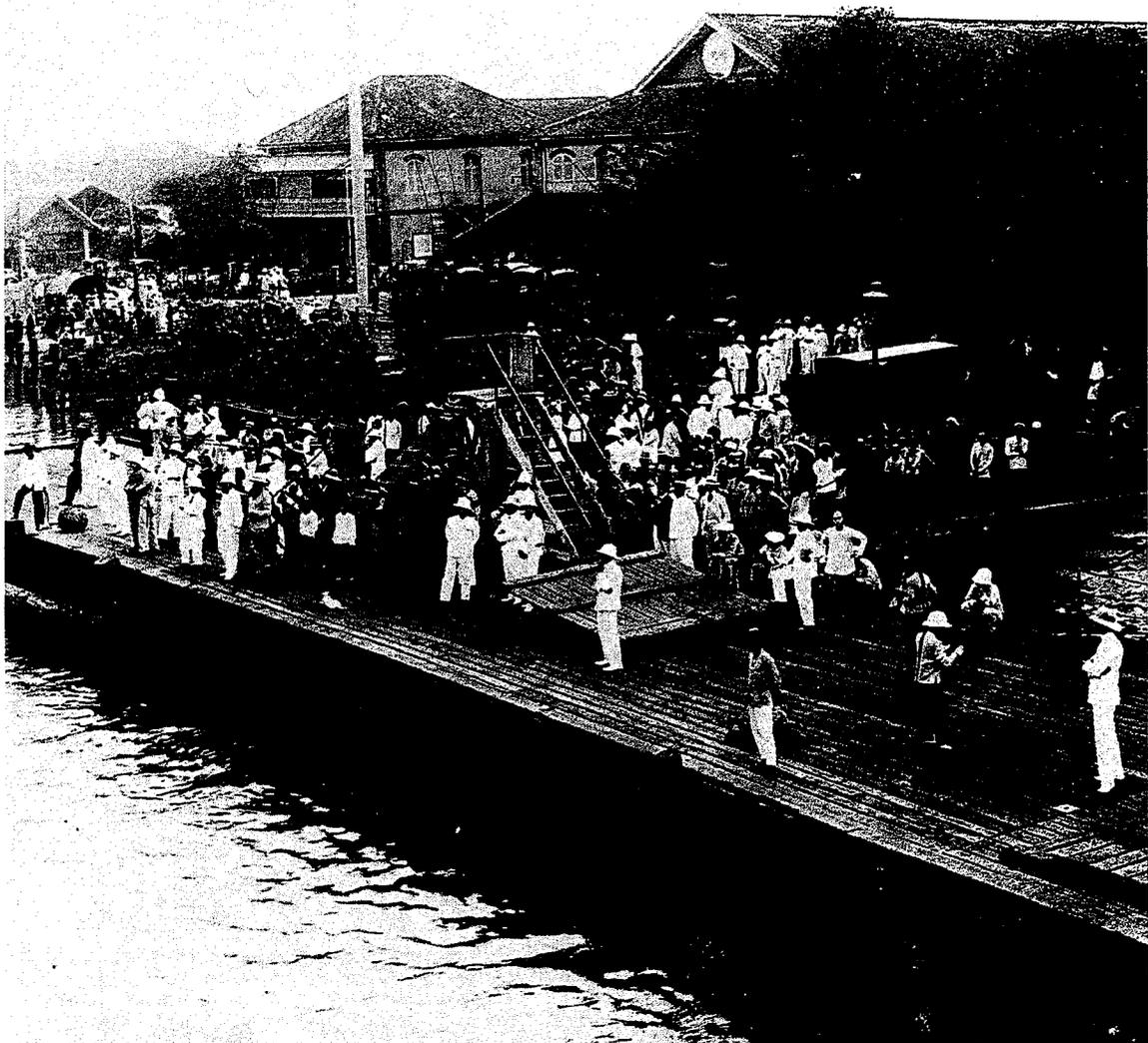


Figure 12. At the wharves, arrivals and departures, circa 1910 published in Reena Singh (1995) *A Journey Through Singapore* Singapore: Landmark Books, 25

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ship's entertainment -- single young women, usually "highly, eligible beautiful daughters of wealthy people living in India"<sup>165</sup> or older unmarried ones "of limited charms and beauty" who were going East to net husbands -- the bane of the older ladies who watched with despair at their flirtations with admiring young men and sometimes, even older gentlemen. Those who returned without husbands were called 'the returned empties'.<sup>166</sup> One of the earlier participants of the fishing fleet would be Olivia Raffles, the first wife of Stamford Raffles, who in 1793, was sent out to India find a husband at age twenty-two, though not for lack of beauty but purportedly a lack of proper birthplace (Madras) and Anglo blood.<sup>167</sup> In the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Empire was a good deal more

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cabins, going East, Starboard cabins, on the return journey. However the word was first recorded as a slang in 1918. The heat on shipboard was a factor and it is said that many passengers resorted to sleeping on the decks. Also see Charles Allen *Plain Tales from the Raj*. London & Sydney: Futura, 46-56 (the chapter is titled 'Posh').

165. Allen, 46-49.

166. Allen, 46-49. See Anthony Wild (2000) *The East India Company, Trade and Conquest from 1600* London: HarperCollins, 129. The "Fishing Fleet" had more notorious roots and there were more than enough scandalous caricatures of English beauties for sale. Fear of miscegenation among E.I.C. servants had encouraged assisted passage for women as early as the seventeenth century. Such arrangements eventually gained some respectability but it is also clear that the nature of the fleet changed overtime as we can see from Charles Allen's remarks.

167. Olivia Mariamne Raffles, born February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1771, was in fact considered a great beauty who inspired lyric poetry and "amatory" elegies from her admirers, both English (John Leyden, Lord Minto "great lady with dark eyes, lively manner, accomplished and clever"), and Native (i.e. Munshi Abdullah who saw her as "not an ordinary woman" and priced "above rubies"). There was indeed gossip in Penang and London when she married the much younger Raffles as to her affairs and background which was shrouded in mystery. According to Wurtzburgh, 1954, 744-746, she was born Olivia Mariamne Devernish, and most likely in Madras to a Circassian mother to whom she owed her 'large expressive eyes, her high nose, her colouring and charm". Scandalous affairs surrounded Olivia when she was shipped out in 1773 by relatives to India, from affairs with the ship's Captain to purportedly, being the mistress of William Ramsay who was Secretary of the EIC when Raffles began his clerkship. This is disputed in Raffles's letter to his cousin, the Rev. Thomas Raffles, dated at sea, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1819 in which he writes, "My first wife was in no manner connected with Mr. Ramsay,"(MSS Eur F 202/6). Olivia was first married off to the assistant surgeon, Mr. Jacob Cassive-Fancourt in India and was subsequently widowed in May 1800 when Fancourt died in the Punjab. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1805, Raffles, ten years younger was married to Olivia, age 34, quite likely smitten by her to announce that in fact, by marrying her, he inherited her debts. If Munshi Abdullah is correct in his assessment of Olivia as an unusual woman who was Raffles's equal, and advisor -- and possessed the same curiosity and thirst for knowledge, Olivia would have been considered "different" from her fellow women and would have

homegrown, a shipping line like the P. & O. was more than just mere transportation ferrying classes of people across the Empire – it was a “microcosm of the privileged, esoteric life of British India,” a significant part of the British Raj, life in the Far East and the “romantic link with home” whenever the quartered flag was spotted, in the high seas or resting in ports.<sup>168</sup> It is as H.M. Mackenzie writes for *The Straits Times Annual 1904-1905*, that among the English – “have we not all as infants at the maternal knee learn to lisp the moral” that –

“Lines may come and lines may go  
but the oldest line is the P. & O.”

and he continues:

For over half a century these boats have been bringing out Britons, young and old – callow griffins and calloused *taipans* and intermittently it has been bringing out girls to marry them. For the same period it has been taking them home again.... And so for the same time it has been bringing out the mails from home, generally a day or two ahead of schedule time – has also carried the mails homeward. Naturally, it is the line best identified with the English in the East, and is therefore, a chief favourite with the traveling Englishman.<sup>169</sup>

There is thus, a certain amount of poignancy when Kipling writes:

The Tragedy of all our East is laid  
On those white decks beneath the awning shade—  
Birth, absence, longing, laughter, love and tears,  
And death unmaking ere the land is made<sup>170</sup>

If anything, the substance of Empire is fleeting -- constituted by the departures and arrivals of those in the Imperial service – made up of the sensations of what gets left behind and the expectant, of nostalgia and imagination, of duty and circumstance, and of the relationship between home and abroad. The sense of loss works both ways. In

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quite possibly incited jealousy from the small and narrow society abroad given her beauty and her cleverness. It certainly did not help that Olivia was born in Madras and of mixed heritage for even in the 1860s John Cameron was disturbed by and wrote of the small-mindedness of Europeans in Singapore having an “over-sensitive objection taken to all who are descended in any way from the people of India, no matter how remote the descent” (Cameron 1865/1965: 287) and that oftentimes, there would be objections to those having a darker skin in the same ballroom. Olivia died suddenly on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1814 in Java, beloved by Javanese society (European and native or all classes) and is buried beside John Leyden.

168. Howarth and Howarth, 64-69.

169. H.M. Mackenzie “Steamers of the Straits” *The Straits Times Annual*, 107-108.

170. *The Exiles’ Line*.

Kipling's words, after he left -- and was pining for India in March 1889:<sup>171</sup>

How the world is made for each of us  
How all we perceive and know in it  
Tends to some moment's product—thus  
When a soul declares itself -- to wit  
By its fruit, the thing it does

For most -- after September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1858, when India was handed over to British rule -- the colonial service would have been a brief or prolonged if not luxurious excursion abroad.<sup>172</sup> For it would be the desire for a little bit of England, a slice of home that manifested itself on foreign landscapes whether it was in cricket pavilions or a spoonful of Bovril. And all the little bits of the colonies would just as well be knitted into the everyday English life of rattans, Worcestershire sauce, and curry – for that is what comes in the making of Empire.

The British Empire, was, as Benjamin Disraeli observed, “the most peculiar of Empires” -- too scattered, geographically and culturally, for centralized administration, spanning myriad landscapes -- and at most times, a ramshackle, muddled enterprise with a bewildering confection of governing methods and cultural productions, with the best and worst of all intentions, practical and effective -- or not. The “tragedy of all our East” is an ambivalent line, at least for Kipling, who comprehended the difference perhaps more poignantly than most -- between those who went to India and the other colonies and settlements out of duty, for God, Queen or King, and Country – and those who remained, or simply wanted to be there, and sometimes, called India, or Malaya or New Zealand, home. Rudyard Kipling, whose Indian birthright would have nurtured a rather different relationship with India than the “heaven-born” -- that is, those who qualified for the prestigious India Civil Service.<sup>173</sup>

Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1865.<sup>174</sup> In 1878, he was sent

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171. Rudyard Kipling (1908) *From Sea to Sea and other Sketches*. London: Macmillan Pocket Series, 250.

172. Emily Hahn's 1948 biography of Raffles contains personal remarks on the fortunate British bride who starts out for India under privilege circumstances. See Emily Hahn(1948) *Raffles of Singapore*. London: Francis Aldor Ltd., 34.

173. Wild, 169. Kipling, had vacillating opinions of those who served in the ICS – his position as a reporter and being Indian-born forged an ambivalent relationship with the ICS especially in the private clubs. Kipling though came to regard the ICS officers with respect for their dedication to the work and the administering of India and the preservation of Empire. See David Gilmour's (2002) admirable *The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling* London: John Murray.

174. Lockwood Kipling, the father if Rudyard, arrived that year in Bombay with John Griffiths, considered the finest and Victorian artist of his time. Griffiths, whose artistic renditions of India impacted on artists of that school and period, became the director of

back to England to attend school only to return to India four years after in 1882. At age nineteen, Kipling was admitted into a lodge, "I was made a Freemason by dispensation (Lodge Hope and Perseverance 782 E. C.), being under age, because the Lodge hoped for a good Secretary...Here I met Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, members of the Araya and Bramo Samaj, and a Jew tyler, who was priest and butcher to his little community in the city. So yet another world opened for me which I needed."<sup>175</sup> Defying all manner of race, class and caste, the freemasons promoted a unique brotherhood for Kipling, one that would have impacted on his Anglo-Indian identity. In 1886, while toiling away under a slavish editor in Lahore reporting the building of bridges, festivals, communal riots, and the like, for a small English-language newspaper (*The Civil and Military Gazette or CMG*), and gaining considerable reputation as a witty writer, Kipling published what he proudly regarded as his first book, *Departmental Ditties and Other Verses*: "a collection of newspaper verses on Anglo-Indian life...which dealing with things known and suffered by many people, were well received."<sup>176</sup> Rudyard Kipling's first book was actually *Schoolboy Lyrics* (Lahore, 1881) printed by his parents without his knowledge; his second, *Echoes* (Lahore, 1884), a collection of parodies, was collaborated with his sister, and his third book, *Quartette* (Lahore, 1885), was a family production. *Departmental Ditties*, from its conception to its publication, distribution, and sales, was Kipling's child, written as amusing and unmannered digressions from office work.<sup>177</sup> An 1885 diary left behind in the office of the *CMG* when Kipling was transferred to a bigger newspaper, *The*

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the Bombay School of Arts while Lockwood Kipling would move on, in 1875, to Lahore. See P. Pal and V. Dehejia (1986) *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists and India, 1757-1930* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

175. In Rudyard Kipling (1991) *Something of Myself and Other Autobiographical Writings*. ed. T. Pinney, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 32. There were twenty-six members of the Lodge Hope and Perseverance and at least six were Indians. On how Englishmen and Indians met 'upon the Level', see Dr. M. Enamul Karim, "Rudyard Kipling and Lodge Hope and Perseverance" *The Kipling Journal* March 1974, Vol. XLI No. 189, 4-12.

176. Kipling (1991), 41. See also Kipling's 1885 diary which illuminates his experiences working for *The Civil and Military Gazette (CMG)*, and details his own literary production -- including the verses for *Departmental Ditties*. The diary is one of many welcome appendices appearing in the *Something of Myself* edition edited by Thomas Pinney.

177. Kipling (1991), 174. Some of the verses initially appeared in the *CMG* and Kipling was encouraged by all quarters ("Men in the Army, and the Civil Service, and The Railway") to have them collected into a book. Most of the information concerning Kipling's "First Book" is taken from an article (entitled "My First Book") included in Pinney's edited version, and which was part of a series of articles written by Rudyard Kipling published in *The Idler*, a magazine edited by his friend Jerome K. Jerome. It provides a loving account of *Departmental Ditties*, though he does not identify his "first book".

*Pioneer* in Allahabad, would record the daily preoccupations of journalistic scraps<sup>178</sup> -- if not the trials and tribulations -- of a young reporter in British India. Tucked among perfunctory lines concerning prickly heat, having reported the Bombay cholera, and dining at the club, is Kipling's mention of completing such verses as "To an Unknown Goddess", "The Bungalow Ballads", and "My Rival" which appeared in *Departmental Ditties*.

*Departmental Ditties* was of humble origins. It was not a "real book" -- and what emerged was a "lean oblong docket, wire-stitched, to imitate a D.O. Government envelope, printed on one side only, bound in brown paper, and secured with red tape" and described maternally as "a little brown baby with a pink string round its stomach; a child's child...."<sup>179</sup> Clumsily packaged as it was with wire stitchings having ripped the pages and covers, Kipling's endeavors to sell it across the empire were very productive, if not rather deceptively clever. The form of the "book" as government correspondence enabled Kipling to publicize -- without proper advertising, and costs -- his early verses in civil service offices across the Empire. Using reply-postcards,<sup>180</sup> he printed the "news of the birth of the book on one side, the blank order-form on the other, and posted them up and down the Empire from Aden to Singapore, and from Quetta to Colombo." Every copy was purportedly sold within a few weeks and "honest rupees" were directed to the author from "the left-hand pocket" to the "right-hand pocket." The verses were eventually given a proper fitting by Thacker, Spink and Co. in Calcutta (1886) and the second edition, with an imprint on the title page, traveled as far as Hong Kong. Eventually, the first English edition was published in London in 1890 by W. Thacker and Co. with a "gilt top and a stiff back." The eventual successful plottings of a young author who "lay awake of nights in India" wishing to write something that would 'take' with the English public.

Rudyard Kipling arrived in Singapore sometime in March, 1889 on a scorching day,<sup>181</sup>

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178. The term "scraps" is used by Kipling to described his newspapers writings.

179. Kipling (1991), 176. All references thereafter, unless stated, in the same paragraph are from "My First Book", 171-177.

180. Reply postcards were first issued on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1882. They were less popular -- their use, less extensive, although it was helpful -- commercial-wise. From 1909-1910, only 1,657,425 were issued for British inland use. The information in this paragraph is taken from Frank Staff (1964) *The Penny Post 1680-1918*. London: Lutterworth Press, 88-91. The statistic here is cited from Appendix XII, an extract from *The Post Office -- An Historical Summary*. published by H.M. Stationery Office, 1911.

181. The discussion of Kipling in Singapore is drawn entirely from Rudyard Kipling (1912) *From Sea to Sea*. London: Macmillan and Co., 250-260. Kipling was not traveling alone. He had as traveling companions Professor and Mrs Hill. Mrs Edmonia Hill was an American woman whom Kipling was enamoured of, and supposedly formed the third

“this is the heat of an orchid-house, a clinging remorseless, steam-sweat that knows no variation between night and day. Singapur is another Calcutta, but much more so.” To Kipling who was in the region for the very first time, the proximity to China was one delineated by smells<sup>182</sup> as he found himself surrounded by the Chinese and their habits:

They are all Chinese, except where they are French or Dutch or German. England is by the uninformed supposed to own the island. The rest belongs to China and the Continent.<sup>183</sup> But chiefly China. I knew I had touched the borders of the Celestial Empire when I was thoroughly impregnated with the reek of Chinese tobacco, a fine-cut, greasy glossy weed...

Having newly disembarked, Kipling then followed a course towards his hotel, and writes a paragraph that has now etched itself into Singapore’s heritage and tourist guides, especially with regard to the famed Raffles Hotel, then opened for less than two years -- one of its first customers being Joseph Conrad:

Providence conducted me along a beach, in full view of five miles of shipping -- five solid miles masts and funnels -- to a place called Raffles Hotel, where the food is as excellent as the rooms are bad. Let the traveler take note, feed at Raffles and sleep at the Hotel de l’Europe.

Kipling in Singapore is oddly surprising for it appears that this is the first time he is plunged into a more cosmopolitan society without a dominant Indian presence. He is, for the first time, experiencing Empire outside India and England -- and it is an ambivalent reaction. He is caustic of the colonies, and their dependent attitudes: “there is something very pathetic in the trustful, clinging attitude of the Colonies, who ought to have been soured and mistrustful long ago.” The Englishmen are lazy and languid, while the “swarming Chinamen” fill the coolie void. Kipling, himself a son of India, even at age 23, was under no illusion about the future of Empire -- as he finds himself among audacious talk that has no limits of ambition. If Kipling reacts with skepticism towards

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most important female presence in his life. Kipling strangely got himself engaged to Edmonia Hill’s sister -- prompting Thomas Pinney who edited the 1991 *Something of Myself* to speculate that the engagement was compensation for what he could not have. The Hills do not figure at all in the memoirs, which, it should be noted was also edited posthumously by Kipling’s wife Carrie. See page xii.

182. In his autobiography of Kipling, Gilmour talks of Kipling as a writer who was very sensitive to smells and this was conveyed in his poetry and prose. See Gilmour's chapter entitled “A Sense of Empire”, 70-84. Smells were very much part of the East and most travel-writing in the area addressed the scents and smells.. Ambrose Pratt, a traveler wrote of “the queer perfume of the East, made up of a thousand smells, some evil, some delectable.” Ambrose Pratt (1931) *Magical Malaya*. Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens Ltd., 15.

183. In 1891, the Chinese population was 121,908 while the entire island population was 184,554 -- whereas in 1881 it was 86,766 in a total population 139, 208. Marriot in Makepeace, V.1, 358-359.

the English, or enthusiasm by the sight of the bustling natives, it is as one “who has been accustomed to [seeing] things through Indian eyes.” While India seems bounded and coherent, the consciousness of building and progress is one that has become endlessly possible here in these parts -- but the lessons that are learnt in administrating India have not been made apparent enough. But there is much to do – and the vision of a wider Empire – its possibilities as “a great iron band girdling the earth” began to take shape in Kipling’s mind.<sup>184</sup>

Kipling’s stay in Singapore was a miserable and homesick one. He did not feel he belonged to the English society there, nor proceeded to mix with them preferring “to consort with the Chinese” and “eat six different fresh chutnies with one curry.” When he did choose to show up among the Englishmen, it was on a Sunday at the Singapore Botanical Gardens, which had been a Raffles legacy<sup>185</sup> -- and was described in one traveller’s postcard as not “Eastern enough. It certainly might be the Riviera.” For Kipling, it was not pleasant company, “nobody would speak to[him] in the gardens” – nor did he appreciate the “secular music” played.<sup>186</sup> He complained of the “perspiring

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184. Gilmour, 75.

185. Stamford Raffles’s zoological interests had of course manifested themselves in his overall plan for Singapore. He had put aside a considerable amount of land, 48 choice acres on government hill for his friend, the Naturalist, Nathaniel Wallich whom he appointed as member of the Land Allotment Committee and Superintendent of the Gardens. See Buckley, 74. The grant for the land was given on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1822 but the gardens were discontinued in 1829. The horticultural efforts were resuscitated by a public effort (though there were no clear land demarcations) between 1836-1846 which involved prominent Singaporeans such as Jose d’Almeida and Dr. T. Oxley. Nevertheless, the botanical gardens had three lifetimes and the third and final effort stands today. In October 1859, land was allotted for a new botanical gardens but the ground on Fort Canning was deemed inadequate. In December 1859, land was found and the eligible site was sixty acres in Tanglin, obtained by the government which exchanged lands with Whampoa (Hoo Ah Kay), the most prominent Chinese merchant in Singapore, and a close friend of Henry Keppel, famed for his wealth, his entertainment, and most of all his home and garden. Whampoa received swampy lands in return -- on the banks of the Singapore River. See Dr. Gilbert E. Brooke in *Makepeace*, V.II, 63-78. Whether the return was adequate compensation, it would not have been surprising if the act was merely a formality and a gesture of goodwill on the part of a man who loved flora and fauna. John Thomson whose admiration of Whampoa was unceasing, described Whampoa’s garden as “a tasteful bel-retro, with its avenues, fruit orchards, hanging gardens, Dutch walks, dwarf bamboos, and orange trees – its shrubs, stags, and peacocks – its aviary and menagerie, all of which displayed the fine taste, a healthy, robust love of the beautiful in nature, and of the artificial curiosities of horticulture”. Thomson goes on to speak of Whampoa as having a mind “of the old school—on whom a Vandyke, a Poussin, or a Gainsborough would have loved, admired, and sympathized with in his pursuits.” Thomson, (1864/1991) 307-308.

plants” and the “tree-fern that sweated audibly,” preferring instead a Punjab dust-storm. But there was a wandering British band, and familiar types gathered around a “mess-house that suggested long and cooling drinks” to make polite conversation. It is in the accustomed company of the English abroad that Kipling makes his most acute observation concerning his own dislocated identity: “it is an awful thing to sit in a hired carriage and watch one’s own people, and know that though you know their life, you have neither part nor lot in it.” Of Singapore, there is perhaps too much perfection, too much security and most irksome of all, too much sameness among the English society who are “large as life and twice as pale,” and that “people in Singapur are dead-white” – and nobody talks of unhealthiness. At the end of his stay, Kipling cries “I want to go Home! I want to go back to India!” as he boards the P. & O. for Hong Kong and eventually, San Francisco.

By 1880, the P. & O. company had renewed its contract with The General Post Office<sup>187</sup> to carry mail to India and the Far East. The contract of 1879 directed mail from London to France and Italy, via the Italian port of Brindisi and across Egypt by railway to India, using the port of Bombay (instead of Calcutta) and beyond. The service to Bombay, which now had railway connections to the east coast, was weekly, and fortnightly to Shanghai by way of Ceylon (Point De Galle at the southern tip of Ceylon was replaced by Colombo), Singapore and Hong Kong. In 1886, a P. & O. vessel had the distinction of being the “first steamer with an electric apparatus for the purpose of navigating the canal at night time.”<sup>188</sup> The rate of speed then, between Brindisi and Bombay was to be maintained at 12½ knots. Comparing the transport times of 1873, and those of 1887, the Bombay mail time was reduced from 23 to 16½ days, Shanghai from 45½ to 37½ days and Melbourne from 48 to 35 days.<sup>189</sup> Yet another mail contract was renewed by 1888, this time fully utilizing the Suez Canal, previously considered slower than railways, for all through mail to India. In 1888, all through mail (to India, China, Australia) from Britain would be carried across Egypt by ship. With H. W. Geiger at the helm (as pilot) of the Singapore office from 1882 to 1890, the Gravesend to Singapore passage was

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186. Brooke in Makepeace reports that the planner of the botanical garden had intentions to create a pleasure garden which would compete with the evening promenades and other activities on the Esplanade (see footnote #63). Terraces were laid out and a bandstand were erected in the garden. Certainly by Kipling’s time, the botanical gardens were very popular for Sunday gatherings. Gretchen Liu’s *In Granite and Chunam* includes a fascinating 1903 cartoon (found in a London sporting magazine) depicting the catching of an usually monstrous python at the Raffles Hotel which ended up at the Botanical Gardens, 234.

187. The General Post Office of Britain.

188. See Robinson, 238.

189. Cable, 183. Also see Appendix II, 272, for the description of two smaller but faster ships (aptly named the “Peninsular” and “Oriental”) designed to run at 15 knots, specially for the Bombay service.

merely £68, including all canal dues with the passenger Suez Canal transit going by rail.<sup>190</sup> In 1894, the P. & O. mail steamer, *The Caledonia*, broke the London-Bombay record with a run of 12½ days.<sup>191</sup> In 1904, a Mail Service Committee recommended that P. & O. vessels on route to India, due to a “general desire for acceleration,” maintain speeds between 16 and 22 knots.<sup>192</sup>

There is a magical quality to the statistical enterprise. In 1871, the census counted the population of Singapore at 97,111. Included in the section entitled ‘Others’ (among many more) are 3 ‘Abyssinians’, 4 ‘Africans’, 64 ‘Armenians’, 1 ‘Japanese’<sup>193</sup>, 5 ‘Persians’. There are, as well, the categories of Convicts, Military and Floating. There are 21 prisoners<sup>194</sup> recognized under the heading of Europeans and Americans -- and who must not be lumped together as the 856 Convicts who are most likely from India. There are 2,164 Eurasians and 54,572 Chinese. Under the Malay Races, are 11 sub-groups including Phillipinos, and under the Indian races are 5 sub-groups including ‘Burmese’, ‘Indian military’ and ‘Bengalis and other ‘Indians not particularized’. There were 15 nationalities included in the European and American category including 1 ‘Pole’, 1 ‘Russian’, 1 ‘Finlander’ -- and 2 ‘West Indians’. For the Chinese population, 7 dialect groups were listed including the sub-category of ‘not-stated’. The numbers of course, do not make much sense as they are but comparatively, they might offer a better view of a cosmopolitan Singapore -- and a picture of floating worlds. Between 1871 and 1891, the American and European floating population more than quadrupled, from 407 to 1,782 only to plunge to 468 again in 1901, not surprisingly with the reverberations of the Boxer Rebellion in China, and the fears of travelers to any part of the world where there were large pockets of Chinese immigrants. American and European residents did more than double between 1871 and 1901, from 922 to 2861. By 1911, the total European and American population, exclusive of the ‘Floating’ category was 5,711 in contrast to the 1,946 in 1871 (which incidentally, was inclusive of the category ‘Floating’ population). The Chinese population also tripled by 1911, given one unstable political condition after

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190. Thomas Cook was by then offering trips to India via Brindisi on the P. & O at £74.2s.10d for first class and £40.0s.11d for second class. Swinglehurst, 73-80.

191. Cable, 273.

192. A contemporary analogy -- on land -- would be a car traveling at approximately 50 to 75 miles per hour.

193. By 1911, there were 1,409 Japanese. No Abyssinians were recorded after the 1871 census and this must be related to the histories of Ethiopia and Eritrea. See Straits Settlements Blue Books, Annual Gazette, from 1871 -- 1911. The census after 1871 were conducted every ten years in the same fashion, whereas before the 1860 census was taken by the police in a certain haphazard fashion.

194. Quite likely once listed as ‘Continental Convicts’ in the 1849 and 1860 census.

another in China, culminating with the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty. Basically Singapore tripled her population between 1871 to 1911, from 97,111 to 303,321. By 1911, there were 21 nationalities or ethnicities listed under the European population including Americans and Turks (who also showed up in the category of *Others* as a separate group called 'Turks (Asiatic)'). That the census could delineate a 'Floating Population' meant that there were enough to make a distinction and count for a stable population of residents, particularly Europeans and Americans. The numbers listed here are not merely formality and chart not only a world of -- literally -- shifting subjectivities -- that is, we do not count 'Native Christians' anymore as they did between 1821 and 1840 (there were no categorical headings utilized then). But they do provide for a sense of speed and increased mobility -- and the coagulating identities of regional clusters and nation-states. In 1849 groups were demarcated under the heading of 'Nations' -- and by 1871, the term employed -- in keeping with the discursive turn towards nationalism and nationality -- was 'Nationalities'.<sup>195</sup> In 1897, Singapore contained twenty-eight or more nationalities, and in 1911, there were no less than fifty-four languages spoken among forty-eight races (including the categories of Chinese and Indian counted as a single category).<sup>196</sup>

It is worth revisiting William Hornaday's *Two Years in the Jungle* for he provides an incisive description of the Singapore townsite in 1878, just before the Teluk Ayer reclamation took place.<sup>197</sup> Hornaday who found New Harbour muddy, narrow and inconvenient took a different, and more enthusiastic view of the town. "The streets are wide, the ships are trim and orderly, and ...filled to overflowing with their respective wares. What fine times we shall have loafing about these queer streets, and poking our nose into everything that is new!" Hornaday also astutely observes that Singapore is:

...well-planned and carefully executed as though built entirely by one man. It is like a big desk, full of drawers and pigeon holes, where everything has its place, and can always be found in it. For instance, around the Esplanade you find the European hotels...;around Commercial Square, packed closely together, are all the shipping offices, warehouses,

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195. See Straits Settlements Blue Books and Census Reports from 1871-1921. The 1849 reference is also available in Logan's *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* Vol IV, Singapore: 1850 (page number unavailable -- these were pullout sections). The 1881 list of nationalities, included along with the Instruction to Enumerators (who were of all races) were: Achinese, Africans, Anamese, Arabs, Armenians, Bengalis and other Natives of India not particularized, Boyanese, Bugis, Burmese, Chinese, Dyaks, Eurasians, Europeans and Americans, Japanese, Javanese, Jawi-Pekan, Jews, Malays, Manilamen, Parsees, Persians, Siamese, Singhalese and Tamils. In 1901, the list included Aborigines of the Peninsula, Portuguese, Sam-Sam (Malay-Siamese) in place of Siamese, and Turks. It is of course interesting to ask what nationalities on the list are today still considered as *nationalities*.

196. Marriott in Makepeace, V. I, 341.

197. The discussion of this paragraph is drawn entirely from Hornaday, 294.

and shops of the European merchants; and along Boat Quay are all the ship chandlers. Nearby, you will find a dozen large Chinese medicine shops, a dozen cloth shops, a dozen tin shops, and similar clusters of shops kept by blacksmiths, tailors, and carpenters, others for the sale of fruit, vegetables, grain, "notions," and so on to the end of the chapter. All the washerwomen congregate on a five-acre lawn called Dhobi-Green, at one side of which runs a stream of water...

It is an interesting observation that Hornaday makes. He detects the spirit of Stamford Raffles's town plan coming to fruition – the placement of the European settlement, Chinatown, mercantile areas -- though not exactly in the original order. More importantly, it is what the spatial arrangement does for the port that ensures its vigorous trade. "Owing to this peculiar grouping of the different trades," Hornaday observes, "one can do more business in less time in Singapore than in any other town in the world."

These were some of the international shipping lines operating in Singapore or with services to Singapore in the late nineteenth and at the turn of the twentieth century. In no particular order: the 'Peninsular and Oriental', the 'Compagnie des Services Maritimes Messageries Imperiales', the 'Hamburg-America Line', the 'North German Lloyd Company', the 'Nederland Steamship Company', the 'Rotterdam Lloyd Line', 'the China Company of Liverpool', the 'Japanese Mail Steamship Company (Nippon Yusen Kaisha)', 'East Asiatic Co. Ltd', the 'Italian Compania Transatlantic Line', the 'Austrian Lloyd Line', 'Wee Bin Line of Steamers', 'Heap Eng Moh Line of Steamers', 'Island Line', 'Nippon Yusen Kaisha', 'Stoomvaart-Maatschappij', 'the 'Glen, Ben and Shire Lines', the 'British India Steamship Company', the 'Royal Dutch Packet Company', the 'Pacific Mail Steamship Company', the 'Straits Steamship Company' -- and the Canadian Pacific Railway operated *Empress* steamers which arranged a transcontinental rail crossing for travelers wanting to visit the Orient, who then boarded the fortnightly steamer service in Vancouver to sail for Yokohama, Kobe, Nagasaki, Shanghai and Hong Kong. North American passengers wanting to go to Singapore would then arrange to board a steamer from those points, usually, by P. & O. or Messageries Imperiales.<sup>198</sup>

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198. The information here is mostly taken from Bastin, 1994, xv-xvi and might not necessarily be complete. More local companies are most likely omitted for some reason or another. The Hamburg-America line began operating a monthly service to China and Japan by way of Singapore. The North German Lloyd Company started a monthly service from Europe to Singapore which became fortnightly. The Nederland Steamship company had a fortnightly service from Southampton to Surabaya, via Singapore and had an arrangement with the Rotterdam Lloyd line to provide an alternate weekly service after 1892. The Japanese line had a fortnightly service between Yokohama and London by way of Singapore and Marseilles. The Italian company had a monthly service between Liverpool and Manila, via Singapore. The British India Steamship Company merged with the P. & O. in 1914 to form a formidable company. It had fortnightly services to Calcutta with transshipment facilities from there and Madras for Singapore and eventually provided weekly services.

Written for Lloyds, Arnold Wright's 1908 *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya*<sup>199</sup> spoke of the kaleidoscope procession of nationalities and tongues in the streets night and day. Singapore was rapidly forging ahead.

A curious combination of Orientalism and Occidentalism is to be observed on every side. From the midst of tawdry-looking native shops rise modern European establishments of commanding appearance; hand-drawn rickshas and lumbering ox-waggon move side by side with electric tramways, swift automobiles and smart equipages; and the free and unfettered native goes on his way regardless of the conventionalities which are so strictly observed by the European. East and West meet, and the old is fast giving way to the new, but there is nevertheless, a broad line of demarcation between them.

It is unclear what Wright hopes to convey in the last line but cosmopolitanism did not necessarily promote easy mixtures nor aid the dissolution of races and classes. More so, travel as a means towards enlightenment also augmented such demarcations -- and the reconfiguration and hardening of identities. Sometimes, the British became more British -- and the Chinese, more Chinese.

In his address to the Royal Colonial Institute, dated June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1884, Sir Frederick A. Weld, the Governor of the Straits Settlements (1880-1887),<sup>200</sup> whose administration may be characterized by the consolidation of the Malay States, provided the following description:

[w]hen the traveler or mariner enters Singapore, and passing by green islets covered with tropical foliage and luxuriant verdure down to the water's edge, anchors in a spacious harbour, where the flags of all nationalities are floating, where the most magnificent creation of architectural skill, and the quaintest specimens of junks and tongkans, and native craft of all descriptions crowd the surface of the waters; and spread before him lies a city which, with its surroundings, numbers, some 150,000 souls; which has unrivalled facilities for coaling, crowded and busy streets, spacious places for recreation, and fine buildings rising on every side amidst ever-green trees; and when he learns that he is in the center of commercial, telegraphic,<sup>201</sup> and naval communication between

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199. Wright, 235.

200. Makepeace, V.1, 106-108.

201. Even in 1872, the Postmaster-General had detailed the centrality of Singapore in the mail routes in the Proceedings of the Legislative Council (June 4<sup>th</sup>, appendix 4, paragraph 34):

At present there is weekly communication by contact steamers between the Settlements and Europe and the west on one side; China, America and the east on the other. In addition to this, all the mails for Manila from Europe now pass through this office as well as those for Java, Borneo,



Junction of High Street & North Bridge Road, Singapore.

Figure 13. High Street and North Bridge Road, 1910 (postcard, National Archives of Singapore)



Figure 14. South Bridge Road, 1930s (postcard, National Archives of Singapore)



Figure 15. No date given. Traffic on the road (postcard, National Archives of Singapore)

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Europe, India, Siam, Netherlands-India, China, and Western and Northern and North-eastern Australia.

Weld's speech<sup>202</sup> was an all encompassing and optimistic one for the Straits Settlements but one which resonated Stamford Raffles and many others who went before him, and who perceived Singapore as radiating a positive influence on the surrounding areas. Singapore offered more than centrality but acted as a compass to apprehending the region.<sup>203</sup> And Weld continues:

The city covers a large area, with a frontage of about six miles to the sea from New Harbour, the docks and coaling station lying landlocked between Blakan Mati Island and the town, to the Rochore and Kallang suburbs, in which direction the anchorage is good, but more of the nature of a roadsted. The facilities of coaling with dispatch at new Harbour are almost unequalled; fully 300,000 tons are usually stored there, and labour is plentiful. The famous steamer *Stirling Castle*, racing homewards with tea from China, had 1,600 tons of coal put on board her in four hours, and her rival *Glenogle*, the same day, 1,800 tons at the same rate. There are facilities for docking all but the very largest ships, numberless ships of war coal and dock there, and I hope to bring about an arrangement between the Admiralty and the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company, by which Singapore will have the largest dock in Asia, capable of docking any of Her Majesty's ships of war.<sup>204</sup>

The docks, in times of military exigencies, would be put to the test in 1900. But now we must return to Henry Keppel.

Who knows when Sir Henry Keppel first disembarked in Singapore? The date, September 5<sup>th</sup> is generally agreed. It is the year which puzzles: 1831, 1832, 1833 – or

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Sarawak, Labuan, Siam and mails outward by P. & O. steamers for Saigon. Besides these the average number of private steamers bringing mails from, this office is fifty a month, a number which will probably be augmented as the trade between Europe and China is more and more carried by means of steamers through the Suez.

202. Sir Frederick A. Weld (1884) "The Straits Settlements and British Malaya" in Paul H. Kratoska (ed) (1983) *Honourable Intentions: Talks on the British Empire in South-East Asia delivered at the Royal Colonial Institute 1874-1928*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 43-90.

203. Weld, 44. "A circle, I may add, drawn round Singapore with a radius of 3,000 miles, is believed to contain more than half the population of the globe, and her Majesty's possessions within this range are stated to have a sea-going trade of £251,000,000, against £86,000,000 in all other British dependencies."

204. Ibid, 49-50.

1834 though the Admiral claims it was 1833<sup>205</sup> when he first visited the island. The Naning War,<sup>206</sup> which strained British coffers, and brought Keppel for the first time to the Malay Peninsular, lasted between 1831 and 1832. C.B. Buckley's *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*<sup>207</sup> chronicles the first visit in 1832, and another trip to Singapore in April, 1833 but makes no mention of any visit by Keppel in 1831. Born in June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1809, and appointed to command of the Straits station as captain of the *H.M.S. Dido*, Henry Keppel, third son of the Earl of Albemarle, joined the navy as a young lieutenant in *The Magicienne* and eventually ended up Admiral of the Fleet. Keppel's claim to posterity was the suppression of piracy in the waters around Singapore and Borneo, and the protection of trade.<sup>208</sup> He was also enormously entertaining:

Captain Keppel and the officers and crew of the *Dido* were the life of the place whenever she came to port. Regattas and picnics were held, and from the Captain downwards they seemed to vie with each other in making their stay as jolly as possible, and the arrival of the vessel in the harbour was in those days of no telegrams.<sup>209</sup>

Years later, on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1867, when Singapore and the rest of the Straits Settlements ceased to be part of India, and were placed under the Government of the Queen as part of the Colonial Possessions of the Crown, Keppel would take centerstage again. At the Town Hall celebrations to introduce the new Governor of the Settlements, Harry St. George Ord, C.B. presented a boorish and disinterested figure who, without removing his hat to acknowledge the audience, sat down on a chair on the dais. Keppel bounded in after the "haughty" Ord, with a flamboyant performance, taking off his hat and bowing to

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205. Ibid, 7.

206. Based on the agreement between the Dutch VOC and the local chief or *Penghulu* of Naning, a yearly tribute was presented to the Dutch company and later on, the Dutch government (in 1799 when the company folded). In 1824, according to the Anglo-Dutch Treaty, Dutch controlled areas on the Malay Peninsular including Naning, were ceded over to the English who continued to exact the yearly tribute. Dissatisfaction over the continuation of the tribute coupled with another local incident over some seizure of land by the *Penghulu* along with new forms of administration and the removal of tax collection from the hands of the local chiefs sparked off the Naning war.

207. Buckley, 219 and 388. There are some inconsistencies of datelines here as well because Buckley suggests that Keppel's first visit was in 1831 on page 219 and dates the second visit in April, 1832. On pages 19 and 388, Buckley claims September 1832 and April 1833 for the first two visits.

208. See Keppel, Henry Captn. The Hon., (1847) *The Expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. Dido for the Suppression of Piracy with Extracts from the Journal of James Brooke, esq. Of Sarawak*. (Third Edition) 2 Vols., Vol.1, London: Chapman and Hall.

209. See Buckley, 388, concerning the early years of Keppel in Singapore.

the enthusiastic guests, now on their feet, and proceeded to shake the hands of the ladies present. Beckoned by Ord to join him on the dais, Keppel declined, and took a chair on the floor among the guests – and those whose acquaintances he had cultivated over three decades. He was, in a manner of speaking, home.

Indeed he was. And his old friend Whampoa or Hoo Ah Kay once again put up the good Admiral (then Commander-in-Chief) but this time in the new extension of his residence, a large brick house in the garden with a large dining room to celebrate the Admiral's visit in 1867 – a rest after the tedium of the transfer ceremonies.<sup>210</sup> Theirs was an old friendship, and Keppel had described Whampoa as a “fine specimen of his country...his generosity and honesty had long made him a favourite.” Hoo Ah Kay, also known as Tau Ah Kee<sup>211</sup> (*Towkay* or boss), was born in Whampoa, near Canton sometime in 1816 and came to Singapore in 1830 to help out in the family business -- “a large shop in China town...supplying the shipping with beef, bread and vegetables.” He spoke English fluently, to his advantage in his trade and became a central figure in the mercantile establishment. A leading businessman of his day, Whampoa was also an active Singaporean, and highly involved in community pursuits such as being on the Committee of Management at the Tan Tock Seng Hospital – and eventually was made a C.M.G. (*Commander of St. Michael and St. George*) in 1876 and appointed as the consul in Singapore for Russia, China and Japan. Beloved by all, European and Native, Mercantile and Navy, an evening at Whampoa's was the hottest ticket in town for the hospitality was boundless, and the goodwill, overflowing<sup>212</sup> -- even if sometimes the host sat slightly apart from the table. The Serangoon area mansion and estate was an enviable one, near the European racetrack, Farrer Park (first opened in 1843), and situated in one of Singapore's most multicultural areas, later especially in the nineteenth century. Serangoon, also known in Hokkien as 'au-kang' or back of creek, was where the Chinese,

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210. The instances when Keppel stayed with Whampoa are found in Keppel's *A Sailor's Life under Four Sovereigns*, eg. the diary insert for October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1857 “put up at Whampoa's, and how comfortable the good fellow made me,” 185.

211. John Turnbull Thomson who gently teased Whampoa of his inability to differentiate the pronunciation of 'sketch' and 'scratch', himself could not figure out the word for “merchant-boss” ‘Towkay’ and thought it referred to a name, ‘Tau-Ah-Kee’. But Thomson, who was given to pontificating on the hierarchies of races and cultures, admired Whampoa as a cultured, intelligent individual of the world and warns the reader from stereotyping him as a typical Chinaman – “there was not a whit of difference.” Thomson (1864/1991), 308-311.

212. “Many a happy party I have met at Whampoa's hospitable table, at both of his country houses. The company was generally European, Chinese friends were occasional, nor did I ever meet more joyous company, more truly pleasant entertainment.” Thomson, 308.

Hindus, Europeans and Eurasians all made their homes and businesses there.<sup>213</sup> What was most remarkable, and the center of attention, was Whampoa's garden or 'Nam-Sung Fa-Un', famed for its exquisite horticultural display, ornate landscaping, an aviary and aquarium – and a pet orang-utan with a liking for cognac. Opened to the public, there were hawkers and street vendors nearby hoping to sell their wares to the throngs of people flocking to the gardens to enjoy the “beautiful works of nature and art.” It was, a “democratic” gathering of the Chinese, according to Song Ong Siang, where “all classes would mix freely without distinction.”<sup>214</sup> Of Whampoa's garden, Keppel wrote in 1848:

He had a country house and of course a garden: also a circular pond in which was a magnificent lotus, the *Victoria Regia*, a present from the Regent of Siam, who sent it to him by W.H. read. The huge lily grew splendidly and bore leaves over eleven feet in diameter. When in bloom, Whampoa gave sumptuous entertainment to naval officers.<sup>215</sup>

Henry Keppel survived Whampoa by twenty-four years but not before Whampoa presented some pigs in 1869 to establish a breed in Keppel's home village of Bishopstoke in Hampshire, England. Whampoa died on March 27<sup>th</sup> 1880 and his remains were taken to China where he was buried on Danes Island, near Canton.<sup>216</sup> It was another prominent Chinese, Seah Leng Seah, who bought over Whampoa's vast estate and garden, only to rename it *Bendemeer*.

One is not quite sure why. Gibson-Hill, whose association with Admiral Keppel is non-existent beyond the Historian's role, is annoyed by the naming of the harbour after Keppel – which, he feels, should have been Farquhar Harbour<sup>217</sup> – enough to nitpick over the slightest inconsistency of detail, and writes:

There is an intriguing puckish look about the portraits of Keppel in youth and middle age. There is no doubt that he was a charming man: sometimes

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213. With housing plans submitted by Chinese, European, Eurasian, and Hindu/Muslim names. Serangoon's polyglot legacy is reflected in the street names around the area such as: Syed Alwi Road, Birch Road, Kitchener Road, Veerasamy Road, Hindu Road, Baboo Lane and Dunlop Street. See Sharon Siddique and Nirmala Puru Shotam (1982) *Singapore's Little India: Past, Present and Future* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

214. Song Ong Siang, 53-54.

215. Ibid, 54.

216. Song, 55. In fact a carnival-like atmosphere was found in the vicinity around Whampoa's home, with shops and hawkers hoping to take advantage of the curious and admiring visitors.

217. Or so according to Gibson-Hill. Here we have to try and distinguish the waterway or channel, and the modern harbour and it is Farquhar who envisaged the early potentialities of the harbour, according to Gibson-Hill, see pages 7 and 76. Therefore the harbour should rightly be named after Col. William Farquhar.

one almost feels that he must have been to have been retained in H.M. Navy.<sup>218</sup>

Charming indeed – and fiercely loyal. Keppel steadfastly defended James Brooke throughout the entire Batang Marau affair in 1849; a labyrinthine feud involving a bloody battle to end piracy, a conspiracy by aspiring Scottish and English entrepreneurs and newspaper editors to defame Brooke, and fictional letters of protest by prominent merchants in Singapore.<sup>219</sup> Stories abound of the puckish admiral who sank more ships than sailed them,<sup>220</sup> the most well known concerning the *Raleigh*, a “magnificent frigate of 50 guns”, nicknamed *The House of Lords* due to the legacy of officers who became illustrious men. Only Keppel, in 1857, could have commandeered the *Raleigh* into a sunken and uncharted rock near Macau – and as she sank, the admiral was the last man up the ladder from the main deck when the last shot of the salute was fired while a French man-of-war hovered nearby, “..[with] the French Admiral’s exclamation, ‘*C’est magnifique!* A British frigate saluting the French flag while sinking!’”<sup>221</sup> The same year in early October, Keppel was promoted to Rear Admiral – and made a K.C.B or Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath. And quite appropriately so since the K.C.B, conferred as a reward for military service or for exemplary civilian merit, held religious connotations of bathing as a purification ritual – even if in Keppel’s case, it was a sinking. In 1866, Rear Admiral Henry Keppel was given command of the China Station –

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218. Gibson-Hill, 95.

219. James Brooke’s anti-trade policies in Sarawak provoked outrage in some quarters which culminated in a series of attacks which twisted and turned a battle (Batang Marau, 31<sup>st</sup>, 1849) to suppress piracy into a massacre of innocent natives (approximately a thousand lives). Brooke was condemned across Britain and the colonies, and it took over five years to clear his name. See also chapter 19 in Donald and Joanna Moore (1969) *The First 150 Years of Singapore*. Singapore: Donald Moore Press in association with the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce, for the *Batang Marau* affair and the anti-James Brooke propaganda. For Brooke’s extracts of his diary and some of the letters concerning the battle/massacre and the subsequent controversy, see chapters eleven to thirteen in Volume I, and the appendix (in Volume II) of Keppel, Henry Captn. The Hon., (1853) *A Visit to the Indian Archipelago in H.M. Ship Meander with portions of the private journal of Sir. James Brooke, K.C.B.* (2 volumes) London: Richard Bentley. Chapter fourteen of Volume I is a long treatise against piracy in Singapore. Also some interesting observations in General Sir Orfeur Cavenagh, K.C.S.I. (1884) *Reminiscences of an Indian Official* London: W.H. Allen & Co.

220. See H.F. Pearson (1961) *Singapore: A Popular History*. Singapore: Eastern Universities Press Ltd. “[Keppel appeared] in a different ship almost every visit, possibly because he put so many of them on unknown rocks and reefs.....[he] popped in and out of London, Singapore and Hong Kong, still searching for shoals on which to wreck his latest man-of-war and steadily rising in ranks...” 40, 65.

221. Buckley, 651.

and was eventually appointed Admiral of the Fleet.

1900. Amidst allegations of nationalistic favoritism in dispensing critically limited wharf space for berthing ships in the harbour and the disinterest of ships calling at Singapore – an unprecedented number of warships clustered and docked in Singapore. In Britain, the Naval Bill of 1889 had earlier sanctioned the addition of 70 ships to the Royal Navy – and by 1900, the Naval Estimates had more than doubled for Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Japan.<sup>222</sup> Meantime in China, the Middle Kingdom was disintegrating. Xenophobia in the form of the Society of “Righteous and Harmonious Fists” or the “Boxers”, made up of dispossessed farmers and workers in northwest China affected by floods and droughts, had spilled into the towns and cities. It was the foreigners who had cursed them by their very presence on the land – committing among other atrocities, constructing railway tracks over ancestral graves, thereby plaguing generations to come -- causing nature to turn back on her progeny. On November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1900, Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) addressed a Meeting of the Berkeley Lyceum, sponsored by the Public Education Association:<sup>223</sup>

China never wanted foreigners any more than foreigners wanted Chinamen, and on this question I am with the Boxers every time. The Boxer is a patriot. He loves his country better than he does the countries of other people. I wish him success. The Boxer believes in driving us out of his country. I am a Boxer too, for I believe in driving him out of our country.

Ever the devastating critic of imperialism, Twain’s speech was actually directed at the state of American education and the diversion of funds into the military machine. On December 10<sup>th</sup> 1898, the outcome of the Spanish-American war, as decided by the Paris Treaty, witnessed the handing over of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam – and The Philippines which was “purchased” for 20 million dollars. America was also one of eight “most favoured nations” (along with Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan and Russia) maintaining a foreign legation in China, and the Boxer uprising more than threatened that lucrative status. Despite the critical shortage of wharf space, Singapore found itself in a more chaotic condition, having to cope very suddenly in August 1900, with one arriving warship and transports after another. In the year 1900, figures showing the number and tonnage of warships and yachts indicated a rise of 101 vessels from 1899. British vessels rose from 30 to 79 in number; the French, from 16 to 33; the Germans, from 13 to 45; the Russians 49 to 58. Interestingly, there was a reduction in American vessels (19 to 10) – quite likely due to the convenience of

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222. Bogaars (1954), page 203, see also footnotes #341 and #342 for estimates and tonnage of ships entering Singapore.

223. Mark Twain (1910), *Mark Twain’s Speeches*. NY: Harper and Brothers, 1910, 34. Twain was also a member of the American Anti-Imperialist League (June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1898) which admitted among its members, William James and Andrew Carnegie. The first Liberty Tract published by the Central Anti-Imperialist League, 1899 Chicago: Tacoma Building featured a report of the Chicago Liberty Meeting held on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1899.

geography (they merely had to cross the Pacific), and that the Americans more than had their hands full with the Philippines. Strained to the limit, the wharf system at Singapore had broken down even as the harbour bulged with all manner of vessels from across the world.

Earlier that year, on April 19<sup>th</sup>, the Honourable Admiral Sir Henry Keppel, GCB, at nearly the age of 91, returned to Singapore on board the H.M.S. *Linnet* to witness an historic event. He never stepped ashore. For Scotsman Arnot Reid, respected editor and managing proprietor of the daily newspaper, *The Straits Times*, the very same day would be particularly annoying, if not downright ludicrous.<sup>224</sup> Sir James Alexander Swettenham, the Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements and acting Governor had issued a Straits Settlements *Government Gazette Extraordinary* the very same afternoon – New Harbour would cease to be New Harbour:

“In order to perpetuate remembrance of the fact that the capabilities of the New Harbour at Singapore as a passage for ships of the deepest draught and an excellent harbour were first demonstrated by Hon. Capt. Keppel, R.N. of H.M.S. *Dido*, now Admiral of the Fleet Sir H. Keppel, G.C.B., D.C.L.:

It is hereby notified for public information that the New Harbour will in future be called and known by the name of “Keppel Harbour” Singapore.

A brief christening ceremony, comprising of a small procession of ships, would take place:

H.M.S. *Linnet* having arrived this morning from Sandakan and having on board Admiral of the Fleet the Hon. Sir H. Keppel, G.C.B., D.C.I., will start from her moorings precisely at 3:30 pm and proceed through Keppel Harbour, passing through the Western Entrance and then turning round before returning through the harbour. H.M.S. *Linnet* will be followed by H.M.S. *Rattler* and the Colonial Government steamer *Sea Belle*. The mast-heads of all the vessels will be dressed. After turning round when again passing through the Western entrance three cheers will be given by signal

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224. This account of the harbour’s renaming is taken primarily from “His Honour’s Folly.” (May, 1900) reprinted from *The Straits Times*, Singapore: Straits Times Press by Arnot Reid, comprising of the five days of *Straits Times* reporting devoted to the subject of renaming new Harbour and the governor’s incompetence. “The Booklet will probably be published in about a week hence and the edition will not exceed five hundred copies, so that it will become scarce and of value” from *The Straits Times*, Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1900, 41 or Chapter V - A Record in Book Form. Reid’s pomposity is exhibited in the following statement: “The price of liberty is eternal vigilance, and that in the rising generosity and growing patriotism of the Colonies respect for their public opinion should be enforced” and likening his journalism to the prophetic spirit of “the books of Moses and of Mohamet, on the lines of the Shorter Catechism – the later theories of distinguished modern philosophers” as well as arguing that the booklet was pre-ordained and pre-destined due to the circumstances inflicted by the two individuals he attacks: mainly Sir J. A. Swettenham and C.B. Buckley.

for the Admiral. The Governor's guests will meet on board the *Sea Belle* before 3:30 pm. They will be joined by the Admiral after the conclusions of the ceremony. Steam launches will be ready at Johnston Pier from 3:10 to 3:20 pm.<sup>225</sup>

Reid's concerns were not without reasonable justifications. The post-prandial ceremony was all too hastily put together without much consideration for the mid-day heat and work-a-day schedules of the local shipping and mercantile community. The decision to rename the harbour appeared to be unconsulted and the singular initiative of the Acting Governor, Sir James Alexander Swettenham who probably wanted to leave a lasting impression – and did so, though in a not so graceful manner. The ceremony itself was not well-attended, or at least according to Reid, who thought the entire affair embarrassing and proof of the mis-nomenclature. Although Reid counted a “a very large number of naval and military officers and of civil servants,” he was appalled by the lack of British subjects identifying two or three merchants, of whom one was British -- and five Chinamen, all of whom Reid failed to mention were themselves significant businessmen in the local community – including the distinguished Dr. Lim Boon Keng, JP, OBE,<sup>226</sup> and Seah Liang Seah, former member of the Legislative Council appointed by Sir Frederick Weld himself.<sup>227</sup> However Reid's civic concerns were also directed towards the

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225. Reid, 13.

226. Reid excludes in his count of the “Chinamen”, Dr. Lim Boon Keng, JP, OBE, first Chinese medical practitioner and writer to be educated in Britain, English-educated leader of the Straits Chinese, scholar, Justice of Peace, and prominent Singaporean. The “Chinamen” were: Chin Fuk, Seah Liang Seah, Lee Cheng Yan, Lim Ah Sam, Ng Kai Po – all local planters and merchants, philanthropists and key players in the Chinese community and local government. Unfortunately, the Chinese presence was not impressive enough for Reid, who seemed above all, contemptuous of the locals, Chinese or Europeans – and this is most evident in the treatment of Buckley's “legal qualifications”. See pages 3-4.

227. Born in 1850, Seah Liang Seah was typically Straits Chinese. He was bilingual, speaking both Chinese and English. He was active on the Municipal Council and was the first Chinese since Whampoa (Hoo Ah Kay) to serve on the Legislative Council and was appointed in 1883. The most remarkable portrait of Seah Liang Seah is drawn by Mrs. Florence Caddy (1889) in her book *To Siam and Malaya in the Duke of Sutherland's yacht, Sans Peur*. Mrs Candy was invited to tea by Mr. Seah. Song, 213-214.

He spoke English perfectly, but he was thoroughly a Chinese, although, curiously enough, he had never yet been to China. He knew Europe well. He smiled as we sat by the table, with the smile that was childlike and bland, to see us enjoy our tea – a very pale-coloured liquid – it was a ‘dream’. There were dishes of curious confectionery, and all the fruits of the country arranged with flowers, ferns, and above all roses. Singapore is too hot for roses to bloom well, but as Sia Liang Sia said, a Chinaman cannot exist without roses, so he send to the Flowery Land for fresh rose-

apparent global cartographical disaster and commercial disruption effected by the sudden name-change:

The Point is that New Harbour Channel is marked upon thousands of charts scattered all over the globe, and retained in all mercantile offices for the guidance of shipmasters who may undoubtedly be called upon at any time, to perform a voyage to this part of the world. Of Keppel Channel, of which these people will now hear as they approach via Ceylon or the Dutch territories, they know nothing and will understand nothing.<sup>228</sup>

But the primary victim of Reid's journalistic diatribe was C. B. Buckley, editor and compiler of *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*, and described by Reid as a man "who knows a little of everything and usually knows it wrong." Suspecting that the Acting Governor was "influenced,"<sup>229</sup> Reid could not contain his vituperatives:

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bushes every year. Chinamen cannot exist without fish ponds either, and tiny ornamental bridges and general willow pattern landscape gardening; so he has all of these, and open worked traceried screens painted in white and pale porcelain colours all over his house as partitions to the rooms, with the few solid wall spaces hung with the Japanese pictures called Kakemonos, making the whole house one veiled aerial perspective set with flowers about the open courts and pathways. Here he sits in azure silk raiment, and amuses himself and his friends with fishing for fat carp from his windows, and feeding them with dozens of slices of bread.

Seah Leng Seah had bought the property that had once belonged to Whampoa (Hoo Ah Kay) which was located in Serangoon Road. It is uncertain whether the description above fits Whampoa's old residence since it is difficult to ascertain when the purchase was made. Roland Braddell, Marjorie Doggett and a few other authors claim it was bought after Whampoa's death in 1880 but Lee Kip Lin states the transfer was made in 1894. Certainly the description of the garden bears some resemblance to Whampoa's famous garden. Whampoa's house was demolished and the Governor Charles Mitchel (1894-1898) performed the unlocking ceremony with a golden key. Lee, 150.

228. Reid, 11.

229. Charles Burton Buckley was a highly respected Singaporean. He was born on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1844 and came to Singapore in 1864, sponsored by W. H. Read who gave him a post with A. L. Johnson and Co. He took up law and worked with a local firm, Rodyk and Davidson. He became a confidential advisor to the Sultans of Johor, and also honorary advisor to the Johor Government. He resuscitated the *Singapore Free Press* in 1884 four others, including Mr. John Fraser and Mr. David Neave whose names, Fraser & Neave are synonymous with popular soft drinks. Among his notable achievements was his ownership of the first automobile – or his 'coffee machine'. His *Anecdotal History of Singapore* was a labour of love and his gift to Singapore. The collection of *Singapore Free Press* reports is today an indispensable text for any study of Singapore's history. He died in London on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1912. He is described as: "A most unselfish man, whose sole aim in life was to do his duty, he absolutely refused any public recognition.

It is implied that the proposal was “probably the invention of one Mr. C.B. Buckley, who is not, it is contended, a person whose advice the Governor should have gravely considered. It is admitted in the articles that Mr. Buckley is a gentleman of some genius, of much public spirit, and of honourable character. It is argued, however, that he has been successively a merchant’s clerk, a mining superintendent, a lawyer with a strictly local qualification that would be useless outside of the Colony, an amiable but idle projector of an impossible railway scheme, and generally a person who had not proved by his career that he has a useful judgement in weighty matters, albeit that career has been entirely honourable and in many cases benevolent and self-sacrificing.”<sup>230</sup>

It is uncertain why Arnot Reid dislikes Buckley besides the charges of failed dilettantism or why the harbour’s re-naming so incensed the editor. He is even ambivalent towards Keppel whom he praises on the one hand as a “distinguish sailor” but mocks Keppel Harbour as a “nonsensical compliment,” and ventures the occasional churlish remark concerning Admiral Keppel’s sailing ability or geriatric condition.<sup>231</sup> Reid relinquished his editorship of *The Straits Times* on June 13<sup>th</sup> 1900, and left Singapore for good two days later. His editorial attacks, including the Keppel Harbour affair was one of many bizarre incidents which created enemies all over. Reid died in 1901, having fought and lost a parliamentary election to Keir Hardie<sup>232</sup> in October 1900 – the cause being, according to Mrs. Reid, an acute brain disorder.<sup>233</sup>

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Eccentric perhaps he was, but although people smiled, no one ever heard an unkind word spoken of him.” Makepeace, V. II, 453-457.

230. Reid, 3-4.

231. There are numerous sarcastic references to Keppel, see pages 1, 9, 13,18, and 44. Reid betrays his own ignorance of Singapore’s history when he describes how Keppel “discovered” New Harbour on page18.

232. 1856-1915, prominent Scottish unionist and first Labour party leader. Well-remembered for his pacifism and support of women’s suffrage.

233. Arnot Reid was born in Glasgow in 1863. Reid combined an interest in both journalism and politics and ran for the Tories at age 22. He moved to London to work for the *Morning Advertiser* and at only age 25, was appointed editor of the *Straits Times*, the first Fleet Street journalist in Singapore. He was known as a hard worker and strove to promote the Straits Times as the leading newspaper in the Far East. He also saw the stint in Singapore as a stepping stone to a political career. What is odd here of course is that Reid was an editor who never interfered with the writing activity and left it to more junior reporters but threw his energies into management and promotion. He became highly respected for his cautious and astute advice concerning the relationship between the public and the press especially in matters of colonial exigencies, traveled widely and gained a reputation, even in his own native Glasgow, as an ambitious young man. If there was any abnormal behaviour, it started around March of 1900 when he ventured to

There are times when history comes to us in a patina of lightness – the intervening details often get lost in the eternal returns or Nietzsche’s “eternal recurrences of the ever-same,” when continuities are denied, the pregnancy of events lost in their infinite narratives – and the past gives way to the weightlessness of the present. Warren D. Barnes, writing in 1911, on the “Singapore Old Straits and New Harbour” admits Keppel Harbour is a good and honourable name but also concludes his paper that “the new legend that Admiral Keppel was the first person to take a good sized ship through Keppel Harbour has got so short a start that it should be possible to overtake it.”<sup>234</sup> To the Chinese then, Keppel Harbour remained either ‘Chha Tin Mah Thau’ or Jardine’s Wharf -- or ‘Sit-Lat Mng/Shek Lak Mun,’<sup>235</sup> ‘Sit-Lat’ and ‘Shek-Lak’ being the Chinese dialects’ enunciation for the Malay word Selat (Straits of Singapore and vicinity) and may be translated as Singapore’s Gate. Jubilation or disgrace, the name of Keppel Harbour – a fundamental affirmation – exceeds the ceremony and its consequences. The name survives and *already survives*.<sup>236</sup> We do not read maps for grudges. Perhaps we are better off not knowing – or forgetting that Keppel Harbour was born out of dissent and displeasure.

What matters here is that the bumbling, pint-sized, and much beloved Admiral of the Fleet who has become larger than life, is immortalized – and in quite enduring ways. Keppel returned to Singapore for the very last time in 1903 and died on Jan 17<sup>th</sup>, 1904, age 94. Beyond the re-naming of the harbour, which was despite Arnot Reid’s observations, or if we trust C.B. Buckley’s account, a boisterous celebration on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1900 – Keppel, like Raffles, is everywhere – from streetnames<sup>237</sup> and viaducts to

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write articles himself, ignoring his own practices and argued “that rules are things to be broken upon emergency”, 57. It was certainly inconsistent with his attitude towards responsible editorship. Even if Reid thought Buckley and cohort were the hacks behind the *Singapore Free Press*, he never said anything until that fateful year of 1900. See C. M. Turnbull, (1995) *Dateline Singapore 150 years of the Straits Times*. Singapore: Times Edition, 52-61. Also see Makepeace, Vol. II, 289-290 for more of Reid’s bizarre behaviour. It is interesting that Makepeace only reports on Reid’s later abnormalities and ignores the earlier and more significant contribution to the *Straits Times*. Perhaps it is due to the fact that next to Buckley, Reid did not think very much of Makepeace either.

234. Warren Barnes “Singapore Old Straits and New Harbour.” *JSBRAS*, 1911, 59-61.

235. ‘Mah Thau’ is in Cantonese and is translated literally as horse’s head. ‘Sit-Lat Mng/Shek Lak Mun’ are in two dialects, first Hokkien then Cantonese. Mng or Mun means gate. I have discussed the word *Selat* with reference to Singapore in my essay *Malay Lessons* found in the conclusion section.

236. Jacques Derrida, (1986) *Memoires for Paul de Man*. New York: Columbia University Press, 49. This is paraphrased.

237. Keppel Road, which was the road to New Harbour was inaugurated in 1885.

waterfront condominiums and conference rooms in luxurious hotels.<sup>238</sup> Keppel Harbour is now Keppel Bay with its gentrified historic docks turned exclusive homes (reminiscent of London's Docklands) and a resort-like environment while the main shipping operations have moved north-west towards Tuas. A far humbler memorial is found in the village of Bishopstoke where Keppel resided in a neo-gothic mansion along the River Itchen, affectionately referred to as *The Cottage*, and where he bred trout which found their way to Tasmania, Australia.<sup>239</sup> There are four portraits of the Admiral in the National Portrait Gallery, the last one being a watercolour, pencil and bodycolour likeness known as "Little Harry" published in *Vanity Fair*, 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1876. A print of the same portrait can be purchased for 45 US dollars today.

The nautical directions that James Horsburgh<sup>240</sup> provides are impeccably detailed but perhaps what is more interesting is the cacophony of names accompanying the description of rocks, shoals, banks, islets, and waterways which guides us to Singapore. Consider some of the following: Singapore Straits or Governor Strait or New Strait; Tree Island; Red Island; The Kent Rocks; The Sultan Shoal; Alligator Island; Barn Island; The Rabbit and Coney; Middle Island; the Sisters; Freshwater Island; St. John; Pulo Salook;<sup>241</sup> The Dangers (a reef of rocks): Buffalo Rock; The Tides; The Channel; Singapore Harbour; Signal Island; New Harbour; Boolang Bay; Pulo Ubin; Point Francklin; Snake Island; Johore River; Pulo Tokum; Johore Shoal; Johore Hill; Berbucit Hill; Point Romania;<sup>242</sup> The Romania Islands; Little Inner Channel; Great Inner Channel; Romania Outer Reef; Pedra Banca; Bintang; Bintang Hill; The Eastern Bank; The Soundings; North Channel; South Channel; Diana Shoal; The Postilion Rock; Straits of Durian; Pulo Cocub; Pulo Pisang; Formosa River. The names here defy singularity – instead, they are traces of other lands, other worlds – *others*. There are no clear or consistent indices of naming – be it practical, associative or descriptive – as European and Malay names exist in unproblematic juxtapositions, sometimes in translation, sometimes as they are – when pronounceable and convenient.

The act of naming is a polysemous gesture. There are no suitable naming practices – nor

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238. The Grand Hyatt in Singapore has three conference rooms named after Keppel (Sir Henry Keppel I, II, and III).

239. Keppel,(1899), see Vol. III, 82.

240. Horsburgh, 259-279.

241. Pulo is Pulau (contemporary spelling), meaning Island.

242. This actually refers to a native vegetation called Rumania. The linguistic leap is the Europeanization of the name with its reference to the Eastern European country of Romania, and thus the cultural translation from local plant to Eastern European country to grace the Eastern seas.

appropriate ones, for that matter. Landscapes are always swathed by the folds of languages – hills, forests, watersheds are constantly written over, constituted by the chattering of tongues. The adventurous botanist who chances upon an unknown species of fauna baptizes it – the unjungling of nature in the service of clarity and knowledge. Each tongue possesses its own linguistic topography; its way of comprehending the world. Names identify and make intelligible – signposts of civilization, Baedeker's guides, postcards -- monuments to forgetting.

Even the landscape requires a naming of parts.<sup>243</sup>

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243. With apologies to Henry Reed's famous poem.

## DAINTIES

### 1. To the Lighthouse, and Back Again

There are two lighthouses guiding sailing vessels into Singapore's harbour.<sup>1</sup> Ships emerging out of the Eastern entrance of the harbour and heading eastwards will most likely observe the Horsburgh lighthouse – and on the western approach, the Raffles Lighthouse. The former edifice was named after James Horsburgh, and the latter's namesake is quite obvious.

James Horsburgh, F.R.S., 'The Nautical Oracle of the World', was born in Fife, Scotland in 1762 and died in 1836. Horsburgh made numerous voyages to India and China and was perhaps the most influential pilot and navigator of his time.<sup>2</sup> Fortuitously appointed Hydrographer to the East India Company in 1819, it was his hydrographical report to the East India Company Court of Directors,<sup>3</sup> endorsing Raffles's actions, which sealed the fate of Singapore:

The settlement of Singapore, late established by Sir Stamford Raffles being, in my opinion, of the utmost importance both in a political and commercial point of view to the British empire, particularly in the event of a war with France, Holland, or America, the Dutch Government, will no doubt remonstrate against that measure, and endeavour to make us relinquish it; but I think every possible argument founded on truth and experience, should be brought forward in order to secure to us that valuable settlement.

The Bugguese prows from Celebes and other parts of the Eastern Islands will resort to the settlement of Singapore with their goods, and barter them for our manufacturers, in preference to going to Malacca or Batavia, and it will soon become a depot for the Eastern Traders.

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1. The sources for discussion in this section are mostly drawn from Charles Burton Buckley, (1902) *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*. 2 Vols. (1965 reprint) Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 510-526 and J.T. Thomson's personal journal and appendices published in J. R. Logan (ed) *The Journal of The Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*. Vol. 6, 1852, printed in Singapore, 376 - 498.

2. His navigational charts were indispensable to sailors and merchants, including Commodore Perry who cites his reliance on Horsburgh's directions quite frequently. See James Horsburgh (1852) *The India directory, or, Directions for sailing to and from the East Indies, China, Australia, and the interjacent ports of Africa and South America: originally compiled from journals of the Honourable company's ships, and from observations and remarks, resulting from the experience of twenty-one years in the navigation of those seas*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, London, W. H. Allen, 253-292.

3. Quoted in Buckley, 61.

The Straits of Sunda and Malacca are the two gates or barriers leading into the China Sea for all the commerce of British India, Europe, and the Eastern coasts of North and South America, which gates the Dutch fully command if we do not retain the settlement of Singapore; for our settlement of Prince of Wales Island being situated far to the northward and on the coast of an open sea it affords no protection to our China Trade, nor to ships passing through the Malacca Straits, whereas the possession of Malacca and Rhiuo by the Dutch, also of Java and Banca, gives them the complete command of the Straits of Sunda, Banca and Malacca.

If we retain the settlement of Singapore, great security will be afforded to our China Trade in the event of war; for by possessing a naval station at the entrance of the China sea, no enemy's cruisers will ever dare to wait off Pulo Oar to intercept our ships from China, which Admiral Linois did with the Marengo line-of-battle ship and two frigates, when he attacked the valuable fleet under the command of Captain Dance; and it was fortunate for the Company and the commerce of British India, that Linois had not a larger force.

It was only appropriate to honour James Horsburgh for his contributions to commerce and navigation, and whose precise directions and maps had guided innumerable sailing vessels into the Singapore Harbour. What more suitable than a lasting beacon to guide wayward ships landwards?

Pedra Banca, Portuguese for White Rock (or Batu Putih in Malay), a small solitary rock described as "hard, grey granite" was not the original choice for the lighthouse.<sup>4</sup> Named for its perfect whiteness – according to John Turnbull Thomson (citing Linschoten), Architect of the lighthouse and Government Surveyor for Singapore<sup>5</sup> – due to the toiletry

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4. The choice was for Peak Rock which the Admiralty found was too far within the Straits and posed a navigation risk with its out-lying rocks while Pedra Banca was the first object vessels ran for and could be passed closely. This was confirmed on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1847 by Thomas Church, then Resident Councillor at Singapore.

5. John Turnbull Thomson (1821-1884), a Scotsman was but seventeen when he arrived in the Malay Peninsular and a mere twenty years old -- inexperienced and naïve -- when he first arrived in Singapore as the Government Surveyor in November 1841. He was only twenty-five when he designed the Horsburgh Lighthouse. A Surveyor's job in Singapore then demanded jack-of-all-trades' capabilities – after all, what renowned engineer would up and leave for the farthest reaches of the earth. In 1853, he left Singapore to convalesce in England after having taken ill. In 1856, John Turnbull Thomson landed in Otago, New Zealand to become Chief Surveyor. While in Singapore, he conducted the first land assessment, designed the European Hospital at Kandang Kerbau (literally translated as ox-cradle) and the original Tan Tock Seng hospital (a

habits of sea-birds. Located at the eastern extremity of the Straits of Singapore, Pedra Banca was nine English miles from the nearest promontory of land and thirty-seven English miles from Singapore. Pedra Banca had marked many a sailor's journey whether as beacon or blight. In James Horsburgh's own description:

Pedra Banca or White Rock, lying in the middle of the entrance of Singapore Strait, is in lat. 1° 20' N., long. 104° 25½' E., or 2°10½' E from Malacca, and 9 miles West from Pulo Aor (Pulau Aur)... It is small, of white appearance, by bird's dung, and not much elevated at high tide, but may be seen 9 or 10 miles from the quarter-deck of a large ship. ...On the North and N.W. sides, Pedra Banca is steep too, having soundings of 17 fathoms to the northward, close to the edge of Romania Reef. To the southward it is dangerous to approach, on account of two ledges of rocks, called the S. E. Rocks, lying near to each other, about a mile or more to the S.S. eastward off it, and which are very little above the surface at high water. But the S.W. Rocks are the principal dangers when proceeding through the South Channel: the waters consist of three pointed rocks very little detached from each other...<sup>6</sup>

It was the landmark upon which ships charted their course through the narrow Straits heading – if for the West – New Harbour, Malacca the Karimon Islands and beyond -- and the leading mark for the China-bound vessels. It was also the rock upon which “the shippes that come and goe to and from China does oftentimes passe in great danger and some are left upon it.”<sup>7</sup>

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pauper hospital) on Pearl's Hill, constructed the first bridge across the Kallang river, added the spire to St. Andrew's Church, built shophouses on Boat Quay, North Bridge Road and Ellenborough Street – and designed the often misunderstood and criticized Dalhousie Memorial. By the time he left Singapore, he had extended Singapore's road network into the interior through twenty- three miles of roads. He also wrote several books and translated some of Munshi Abdullah's works, at Abdullah's request. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1876, he was appointed Surveyor-General of New Zealand but resigned in 1879 out of ill-health. Thomson died of pneumonia on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1884 at the age of 63. Engineer, Architect, Writer, and Artist, Thomson charted great expanses of land in both Singapore and New Zealand. Thomson Road in Singapore is named after him. John Turnbull Thomson (1864/1991) *Glimpses into Life in Malayan Lands*. Singapore: Oxford University Press. Also see John Hall-Jones and Christopher Hooi (1979) *An Early Surveyor in Singapore*. reprinted 1983, Singapore: National Museum of Singapore.

6. Horsburgh, 272.

7. Van Linschoten, “Pedra Banca, that is white stone, which is an iland of white stone rocks and cliffes, on the south side thereof on which side likewise lyeth the iland of Bintan, which is verie long, in the middle whreof there is high houel, whereupon there is deep ground, but not good to anker for such as come from China; round about Pedra Banaca and close by it there are six fadome deep good ground, but you must take heed of the cliffes and riffes lying by it.” Quoted in Logan, 380. Thomson also reports within a

There was little of the nationalistic character in the construction of the lighthouse – Horsburgh was a name which served many a lost pilot. The idea was first proposed on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1836 by Mr. William Jardine at Markwick’s hotel in Canton, and received enthusiastically by merchants, and seamen alike. Subscriptions were made at Canton, Bombay and Penang.<sup>8</sup> By 1847, the funds with compound interest provided by the firm of Jardine Matheson, had accumulated to \$7,411.13. And though there were delays of at least nine years, the tribute to Horsburgh – with the Johor Sultanate’s permission in granting the land,<sup>9</sup> British Engineering and technology, Dutch protection, Convict and Native labour, Chinese craftsmen – began to take form and shape. On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1845, the Singapore Chamber of Commerce passed the following Resolution:

That the East India and China Association in London, the Calcutta and Bombay Chambers of Commerce, Captain Bedin of Madras, the subscribers in America (through J.Balastier, Esq. U.S.C.), and the subscribers in France (through the French Consul) be addressed with a copy of the report read this day, and be requested to make the funds subscribed available for the erection of a lighthouse as a Memorial to the late hydrographer, James Horsburgh.<sup>10</sup>

And on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1849, The Court of Directors of the East India Company sanctioned the plans to erect the Horsburgh lighthouse, the first of its kind in that part of the world to be set in granite masonry.<sup>11</sup>

Monsoons, squalls, limited space, opium stupor, dysentery, mosquitoes, linguistic difficulties, fights, cowardly boat crews,<sup>12</sup> a bricolage of primitive native tools and

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compass of two nautical miles, sunken rocks that posed unseen dangers to passing ships.

8. “The Subscription list was headed by W. Jardine, Esquire whose personal contribution amounted to 500 Spanish dollars, and the rest of the Subscribers were principally Merchants, Commanders and Officers of Mercantile ships and other British subjects of Europe and Asia. The only considerable exception to this rule was in the Chinese Security Merchants who contributed liberally.” The memo is reprinted and discussed in detail by Thomson in Logan, 497-498.

9. There are land contentions (between Singapore and Malaysia) today over Pedra Banca as to whom the lighthouse really belongs given its location. The dispute remains unresolved.

10. Buckley, 511.

11. Or granite set in hydraulic cement. Thomson had built brick pillars on the rock in 1847 to test the hardiness of the material against the waves. When he next checked the site, the pillars were washed away. The decision to build in granite was the best option.

12. There were supposed to be two gun-boats assigned to the project. The second gun-

inadequate resources, an absconding Chinese contractor, and murderous pirates<sup>13</sup> besieged the construction of the lighthouse. Nonetheless, the foundation stone for the “Lighthouse For All Nations” was laid on Queen Victoria’s birthday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1850 in a solemn ceremony attended by the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Lieutenant-Colonel Butterworth, J. T. Thomson, commanding officials, foreign consuls and Singaporean merchants – and blessed according to the ancient craft of the Freemasons, in this case, by the then newly formed Brethren of the Lodge ‘Zetland in the East’<sup>14</sup> – who had been previously disappointed in 1844 when they were unable to perform a Masonic ceremony for the Tan Tock Seng Pauper’s hospital due to inadequate arrangements.<sup>15</sup>

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boat was the “Nancy” manned by a reluctant Indo-Portuguese/Malay crew who mutinied given the conditions of the squalls. Eventually, a Dutch gun-boat sent from Rhio by the Resident there, Mr. Baumgardt was assigned. Thomson in Logan, 423-424.

13. Three Chinese stone-cutters on Pulau Ubin were attacked and killed by pirates, see Thomson, 401 and Appendix II, 479-487.

14. See Buckley, 435-437. Lodge Zetland in the East, No. 748 was established in Singapore, on Monday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1845. There have been various lodges in Penang since 1809 or so (the first one was formally recognized in 1809 although it has been practicing three or four years before).

15. Buckley writes, “It was the wish of several brethren of the Mystic craft that the ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the building, which was to be appropriated to those purposes of charity and benevolence which are recognized by Masons as among the fundamental articles of their constitution, should be performed with Masonic honours, but it was unfortunately found to be too late to make the necessary arrangements.” Buckley, 410.

Also designed by John Thomson, the Malaccan Philanthropist, Tan Tock Seng donated \$5000 to a pauper’s hospital to be built on Pearl’s Hill and the foundation stone was laid on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1844 and completed in 1846. After his death in 1850, Tan Kim Cheng, son of Tan Tock Seng, continued to add to the accommodations and the government provided the medical supplies. The hospital was also run by an all-Chinese financial committee comprising of highly respected Chinese merchants, Whampoa or Hoo Ah Kay and Seah Eu Chin. The conditions deteriorated. In 1857, during the Indian Mutiny, the building along with the European Seamen’s Hospital (which stood adjacent) were taken over for military purposes and converted into Ordnance and Commissariat Offices, and the Tan Tock Seng Hospital was removed to Balestier Plain, facing Serangoon Road in February 1859. It was a temporary wooden building. A new three-storey building at the corner of Balestier Road and Serangoon Roads was built in May 1869 and enlarged in 1879 by Tan Beng Swee, grandson of Tan Tock Seng, and once again due to a need for more space, the hospital was removed to its present location, Moulmein Road and completed in 1909 at the cost of \$481,210. The benefactors were mostly Chinese but the land was given by

The ceremony began with the Masonic body marching in procession to the summit of the rock:

The Band  
Tyler with drawn sword  
Brethren not member of the Lodge  
two and two  
Cornucopia with Corn  
borne by the Wor. Past Master Bro. J.B. Cumming  
Two cups with Wine and Oil  
The Wine borne by Bro. T. O. Crane and the Oil  
by  
Bro. Greenshields.  
The Organist, Bro. G. H. Brown.  
The Inner Guard, Brother Thomas Hewetson  
bearing the Inscription Plate.  
The Secretary, Brother T.H. Campbell  
bearing the Book of Constitution on a silk cushion  
The Treasurer, Bro. J. C. Smith  
bearing the purse containing Coins to be deposited in  
the Stone.  
The Corinthian Light  
borne by Brother H. Minchin Simons.  
Brother W. Paterson, bearing the Mallet.  
The Junior Warden, Brother R. Baim  
bearing the Plumb Rule.  
The Banner of the Lodge.  
The Senior Warden, Brother J. Jarvie  
bearing the Level  
The Chaplain, Bro. The Reverend F. W. Linstedt  
bearing the Sacred Law on a cushion.<sup>16</sup>

The foundation stone was laid at 1 pm and the following articles were placed under it in an “aperture cut into the solid rock”: a copper plate with a commemorative inscription, silver and copper money,<sup>17</sup> Statements of the trade of the Straits Settlements, Statements of the Revenue and Charges, a copy of Horsburgh’s Directory, copies of *The Free Press*

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an Arab merchant, Syed Ali Bin Mohamed Aljunid in 1857. Gilbert E. Brooks in Walter Makepeace, et. al., (eds) (1921) *One Hundred Years of Singapore*. 2 Vols. London: John Murray, V.I, 496-497. See also Song Ong Siang (1967) *One Hundred Years of the Chinese in Singapore*. Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 60-62.

16. Buckley, 513.

17. These consist of a crown, half crown, shilling, six-pence, penny, halfpenny, farthing, a rupee, half and quarter rupee, besides copper coins which consisted of a penny, half penny, farthing, eight and sixteenth of a penny; an anna, half and a quarter, a cent, half and quarter cent. Logan, 428.

and *Straits Times* newspapers, the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* and the town plan of Singapore.<sup>18</sup> The necessity of a reliable strategic lighthouse in that part of the world perhaps demanded such an intense ritual that called for “the Architect of the Universe” to protect the work, from “the ravages of time” and “the billows of destruction” and to guide the “semi-barbarous nations of Eastern Asia” whose lack of skills in the navigation arts had made them “prey to the mysteries of the mighty deep and tends so materially to restrict their advancement.”<sup>19</sup>

According to the detailed report of shipwrecks near or caused by reefs around Pedra Banca recorded between 1824 and 1851 by J.T. Thomson found in J. R. Logan’s *The Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*,<sup>20</sup> out of twenty-five recorded incidents, only six were Siamese and Chinese. The rest were European ships, including fourteen British registered vessels. On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1850, the Temenggung<sup>21</sup> of Johor visited the island with thirty of his followers, in a fast beautiful sailing sampan “famed over the world for its fleetness in either pulling or sailing” manned by the ‘orang laut’ (men of the sea).<sup>22</sup> Piracy also abounded in the surrounding waters, untrammelled by indignant waves, and truculent rock and cliff formations.

The same Orientalist language found in the Masonic blessing somewhat dominates Thomson’s report in Logan’s journal especially concerning the native workers he had hired to construct the lighthouse.

Compared with the classes of Asiatics in Singapore, they [the Chinese] are of more independent bearing, and their superiority to them induces a self-sufficiency which in coming under the guidance of Europeans begets a stubbornness not easily at all times to be overcome.

Their monosyllabic language, so greatly at variance to the genius of those of Europe, makes it difficult of acquisition. The various dialects also differ so much, as to be perfectly unintelligible to the separate tribes frequenting Singapore. This circumstance renders their study a discouraging task, for on mastering one you’ll find that it will only be understood by a small body out of the whole Chinese population. As the Chinese themselves pick

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18. Thomson in Logan, 428.

19. Buckley, 515.

20. Edited by J. R. Logan. This pertains to *The Journal of The Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*. Vol. 6, 1852, printed in Singapore, 376 - 498 with illustrations.

21. Territorial Chief of Johor who resided in Singapore as well. He was considered an enlightened man who sent his sons to missionary schools.

22. Logan, 430.

up a little of the language of these parts, viz., the Malayan, it becomes scarcely worth the trouble for Europeans to endeavour to acquire any of the Chinese dialects, as the little intercourse that takes place between the two races can thus be carried on through the Malayan tongue. Under these circumstances, the habits and ways of Chinese are little understood by Europeans, and consequently they are less easily subjected to controul. For a work which would engage 100-150 of them at a time, 40 to 50 would require to place themselves under European guidance, confined for months to a small rock, situated at a distance from land, I consider that it would be more beneficial to the Government and of less difficulty to all parties, could the work be contracted for by a Chinese, who having a full knowledge of the habits of his countrymen and possessing their confidence, would the more easily procure them for this unusual undertaking, and who would also in cases of difficulty or misunderstanding with the workmen themselves, have that influence over them, which a foreigner could not expect to possess.<sup>23</sup>

The Chinese contractor, Choa-ah-Lam who had worked with and under Thomson's superintendence on several other government buildings, had eventually abandoned his contract, taking with him back to China, materials procured for the job. If there had been labour problems in the beginning, indeed it could have been deliberate, and strategic on the part of the contractor. Thomson argues perhaps, a little defensively, and with some face-saving embarrassment, that the loss was not significant nor was the decision to hire the contractor then, a lack of foresight. No foreigner, Thomson initially argued in his journal, could have exerted any influence over the Chinese worker; only a Chinaman could manage his own people. Yet, by the end of the project Thomson had managed quite well, even for an Englishman of thirty years of age, without a Chinese contractor. The respect was mutual. Workers who once begged to be sent back to Singapore, requested to return to the rock, drawn by the reputation of good wages and fair-play.

So how did they get to Pedra Banca: men, tools, materials, granite and all? John Thomson had requested two gun-boats, a steamer, and lighters (or tongkangs) for the conveyance of all concerned. It was also necessary to be armed – piratical sea tribes who lurk around the narrow inlets in the vicinity were known to kill for the smallest booty – which they did with frequency.<sup>24</sup> The gunboat "Charlotte" sailed first with Mr. John Bennett, the foreman, eleven convicts (who were going as quarrymen), and three Chinese blacksmiths on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1850. The steamer "Hooghly" would bear Thomson and a larger group of workers, and serve as the vessel that would run resources between the rock and Singapore. Thomson and his party set sail on April 1<sup>st</sup> at 3 am, after some delay, with two lighters in tow filled with materials for erecting shelters, ten Chinese stone-cutters and carpenters. Thomson had proposed to quarry and dress the granite from Pulau

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23. Thomson, in Logan, 395-401.

24. Thomson in Logan provides much details to the pirate attacks in Appendix II, 480-487.

Ubin,<sup>25</sup> a small island situated fifteen miles from Singapore, and load the stones onto lighters for transportation to Pedra Banca. The original intention was to quarry from Pedra Banca itself but Thomson was told that the forty stone cutters would not tolerate being “cooped up like ducks and fowl” nor exposed to the unbearable scorching heat and surrounded by wild waters.<sup>26</sup> They arrived in Pulau Ubin the same day and took aboard another fifteen Chinese stone-cutters, after two hours of what appeared to Thomson as an acrimonious exchange between the contractor and the workers. They arrived in Point Romania, nine miles from Pedra Banca, the same evening where they made rendezvous with Mr. Bennett and the gun boat crew who had by then landed thrice with some difficulty at the rock, and dispensed the eleven convicts and three Chinese workers on land with provisions and materials to set up shelter or “temporary wigwams.” The landing on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, this time by Thomson on “The Hooghly” was no more successful due to the rough winds and uncompromising breakers to the point that the men previously left behind on the rocks by Bennett had to be rescued (as their food and water supplies were depleted) and returned to the steamer. Even then, getting them onto the boats became a production, especially the Chinese who betrayed their cowardice. Thomson writes:

I will scarcely ever forget the looks of terror depicted in the countenances of the Chinese at the moment of their throwing themselves into the surf. The clothes of the poor men taken off, were necessarily left behind, and few of them when taken on board had more than a rag on their loins. We made shift to cover their nakedness but the Chinese were unconsolable and lamented their condition in a most unmanly manner, by giving full vent to their lacrymose propensities.

Lacrymose a character or not – their fears were not unwarranted. It would take another ten days, and friendlier weather to manage an effective landing. During that time, Thomson had to keep a close vigil on disgruntled and miserable Chinese stowaways on the gunboat or the steamer which returned to Singapore for supplies, including purchasing opium for the workers. It was imperative that the Chinese workers were not allowed back to Singapore for fear of spreading news of their hardships on the rock to fellow stone-cutters and masons who might otherwise be procured later for the project. On the morning of April 12<sup>th</sup>, the landing of all forty-six men, including Thomson and the practical engineer/foreman John Bennett, was achieved.

Surely one could understand the reluctance of many workers, despite the pecuniary gains, to want to camp out on a claustrophobic inhospitable rock in the middle of the ocean for the next two years. Still, the Chinese workers, despite their miseries, did not fare too badly either. James Horsburg had described in his Directory, the species of marine life to be found around the island – including oysters. Seven days after the landing, Thomson

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25. I have contemporized the spelling of Pulau Ubin which in Thomson’s journal appears as Pulo Ubin.

26. Note the ruckus by Thomson on pages 420-422.

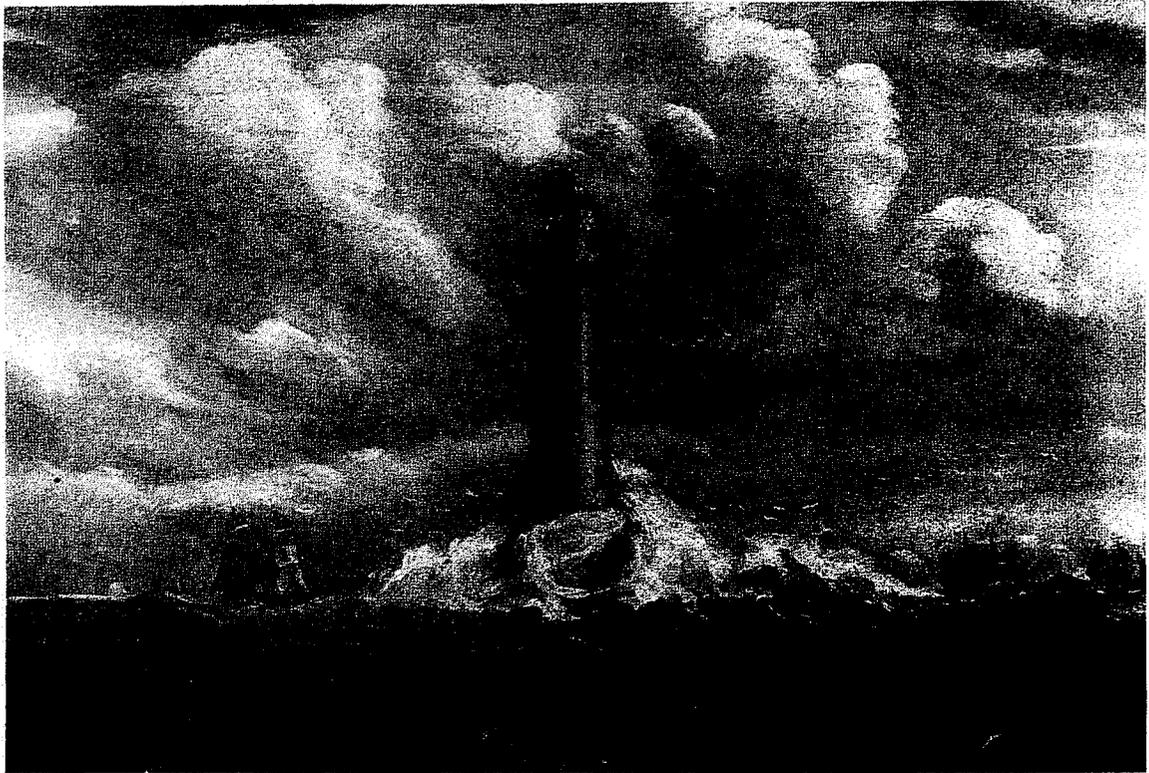


Figure 16. The Horsburgh Lighthouse by John Thomson, John Hall-Jones (1993) *The Thomson Paintings* Singapore: Oxford University Press, 80.

who had previously noted the oysters as well, found the population in and around Pedra Banca decimated. “The Chinese,” Thomson observed “made an early finish of them.”<sup>27</sup>

Stereotypes do not emerge out of pure invention. The contents of Thomson’s journal are *not* what we are accustomed to as “racism” which dyes the orientalist fabric in academic discourse – but a peculiar grudging admiration mixed with rationalized hierarchism based on work ethic, skills, linguistic system, status,<sup>28</sup> education, and technological status formed within a framework of epistemological assumptions – to set apart one from the other – though not quite.<sup>29</sup> The view here is consistent with various chapters in Thomson’s memoirs, written and published in 1864. In *Glimpses into Life in Malayan Lands*, Thomson was always justifying the superiority of the culture of Western enlightenment but he conceded equal, if not superior, status to the Chinese merchant, Whampoa or Hoo Ah Kay whom, in fact, Thomson gushes over. Whampoa is recognized as upright and civilized for “he has seen too much of the world to understand that every nation has its customs, every people its peculiar notions.” Warning what is most likely his English readers not to caricaturize the pig-tailed Chinaman, he writes that Whampoa “was a man *whose actions, motives, loves, joys and griefs were all hinged on the same great principles as your own*.... The first of Christian principles – that all are equal in the sight of our maker – was conspicuously proved.”<sup>30</sup> That Whampoa, despite being a Celestial, possessed the disposition, manners, and conduct most familiar to Thomson and his compatriots, raises the role of education and bearing as primary consideration of social differences, rather than race.

And the conceptual language of differentiation employed here, with regard to the Horsburgh lighthouse workers, is *class* not race.<sup>31</sup> Consider Thomson’s observation of his workers:

The principal artificers employed were Stone-cutters, Carpenters, Bricklayers, Blacksmiths, Plumbers and Brassfounders; they were all

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27. Thomson in Logan, 439. See Horsburgh, 272: “Captain Keith Forbes landed on the S.E. part of Pedra Banca, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1813, and had 17 fathoms close to it; it was covered with oysters at the water’s edge, from whence a small boat might be filled in an hour.”

28. In this case, consider freedom, and the category of Convict.

29. It is significant to note that even in the choice of lighthouse keepers, Thomson’s pragmatism is ever-present. That the Malays had little fear of the sea unlike the Chinese and natives of India, made them prime candidates as assistant lighthouse keepers. Since Europeans were a rare breed, Thomson judged that “respectable Indo-Europeans” will be equally suitable for their education and linguistic abilities.

30. Thomson (1864/1991), 307-311. The italics are Thomson’s.

31. Thomson, in Logan, elaborates on the skills and instruments that the natives use on pages 395-400.

Chinese, excepting the last who were Javanese and Malays. It may with truth be said of the whole of these, that they are in no way equal to the artizans of Europe, but the Chinese under tuition and training may be quite equal to the less educated of their western brethren. To describe them as we find them, it may be observed generally of them, that while they will finish smoothly and neatly, in a manner to satisfy the unpractised eye, yet their work will not bear the test of the plummet, level or straight edge, and until well drilled, the Chinese have a great distaste to the use of these instruments.

It is the “absence of correctness,” the lack of mathematical precision, and the refusal to be mediated by an instrument for rational calculation, which sets the Chinese on a more inferior class but with room for self-improvement. What then frustrates John Thomson is the cultural and educational gap. But he admits he must adjust his own Eurocentric preoccupations (“I have never been able to make a Chinese understand a section drawn on paper”) to the Chinese workers “the only class of natives capable of carrying out an undertaking” and “who are almost the only artificers in the Straits.” Thomson attempts to “make do” with his circumstances, and tries not only to comprehend the non-Europeans around him but *subjects* himself to their cultural habits in order to attain his objectives:

notwithstanding the hard exposure and many annoyances, I could not help contemplating with considerable curiosity the personal appearance of those who were to be such close companions for two years, and whose behaviour would so intimately affect for better or for worst the undertaking to which I was bound.<sup>32</sup>

The close companions were made up of the “motley assemblage” of forty-six persons: they included Thomson’s foreman, Bennett, two Chinese stone breakers, eleven Chinese stone cutters, five Chinese carpenters, three Chinese coolies, three Chinese blacksmiths, one Chinese cook, eleven quarrymen (Hindoo and Mussulman Convicts from India),<sup>33</sup> six

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32. Ibid, 414.

33. Roland St. John Braddell is right to say that no history of Singapore can ignore the remarkable contribution of Indian convicts to the growth and prosperity of Singapore. While it was George Drumgoole Coleman, the first Surveyor, Architect and Town-Planner of Singapore who put convicts to work, the idea of turning rehabilitating criminals for useful work must belong to Stamford Raffles. Raffles had improved conditions for convicts in Bencoolen, and turned them into useful labourers. When Bencoolen was given up as a result of the Dutch-Anglo Treaty in 1824, the convicts and Raffles’s system removed to Singapore. Coleman was made Superintendent of Convicts in 1833 and Head of Public Works. There were at least 200 convicts from India which were transferred to Singapore. Despite the opposition and fears of such characters, as Braddell explains

Labour was scarce and expensive, with the result that the convicts were soon employed to reclaim swamps, make roads, and erect buildings and bridges, so that for years, the history of the convicts is the history of the

lascars (sailors from the gun-boat *Charlotte*), one Hindoo cook and one Musselman table-servant. There were two Englishmen, Chinamen from three dialect groups, Malays, Javanese, Indo-Portuguese, Boyans, Klings, Bengalese, Papuans from New Guinea and Rawas from the Sumatran interior, and altogether – including English – twelve languages spoken on the rock itself. The Chinese workers, having landed, green and sickly from the trip immediately looked to the convalescing powers of opium, to the disgust of Thomson who attempted to rouse them from their torpor. Once revived, however, the Chinese went around propitiating the spirits on the rock, burning “pieces of gilt paper on the rocks” and joss sticks, bowing reverently to whatever gods or ancestors might protect them. Little did the Lodge Zetland freemasons know that they had some help prior to their Masonic ceremony over a month later.

John Thomson called Pedra Banca the “little settlement.” To maintain their authority, Thomson and John Bennett looked to the Malays whose support earned them the responsibility of regulating the most precious of resources on the rock, freshwater – as well as care of the arms. The Malays also occupied a room in the house built for Thomson and Bennett on the east side of the main rock. Beyond but still on the east were

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Public Works Department. They filled in the swamps to the east, and made Commercial Square (Raffles Place); they built St. Andrews Cathedral and Government House; they made South and North Bridge Road; and it is impossible to walk anywhere in the town and environs of Singapore without continually being reminded how the place was once a convict station. Braddell, 284.

Eventually the removals of convicts to the “Sydney of the East” was stopped in 1867. Until then, a certain Foucauldian system of self-regulation and promotions began to take place in the rehabilitation of convicts into respectable society. The Singaporean system was perhaps way ahead of its time. This is best conceived of in Major McNair’s book, *Prisoners their Own Warders*. Warders were discharged, some convicts were promoted to supervise other convicts, pay as incentive was initiated and convicts were given great latitude. The report on the convicts for the year 1861-62 is brief, reconfirming the positive results, i.e. “many of them are employed in positions of trust and responsibility, and all are apparently earning an honest livelihood.” *Straits Settlement Annual Report 1861-1862*. They were allowed to shop in town and work unguarded. They were employed in both public and private work eg. domestic servants and some saved enough money to own considerable property. Apparently one convict died in 1865 leaving behind \$50,000 to his heirs. Braddell identifies the three principles of success: the personal influence of Superintendents, the system of promotion and the provision of congenial occupations such as handicraft, brickworkers, carpentry, blacksmiths. The long lounge cane or rattan chair was supposedly invented in the Singapore gaols. After 1867, the prison system became more formalized and disciplined. In 1872, a Prison Commissions report had declared that the idea of reform, deterrence and punishment was non-existent, and “penal labour should not be sacrificed for profit”. Some convicts were removed to the Andamans and trained warders were brought in to effect a tighter legal system. Braddell in Makepeace, V.I, 282-290.

the Convicts' housing while the Chinese were set apart on the Western portion due to their disagreeable nature as their constant quarrels and "rude gestures" called for interference, "and the fumes of opium, salt-fish and half-decayed preserved vegetables created an unpleasant smell in their vicinity."<sup>34</sup> Thus the principles of housing segregation were based on, it appeared, the necessity of well-being, culinary differences, and synesthetic civility – and even then, the conditions of the rock, with its inclement climate forged closer living arrangements. By April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1851, when work on the lighthouse was much further along, there were, excluding Thomson and Bennett, forty-two workers on the rock: two Chinese Bricklayers, seven Chinese stone-cutters, two Chinese carpenters, one Chinese blacksmith, fourteen Chinese coolies, six Malay sailors and ten Convicts.

Whether the authorities received divine intervention from the spirits of the rock or the Architect of the Universe, the Horsburgh Lighthouse was operating regularly from October 15<sup>th</sup> onwards while work was still going on. Despite the construction being stopped from October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1850 to April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1851 due to the North-east Monsoon, the lighthouse was actually first illuminated on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1851 from 7 to 10 pm to mark the visit of Colonel William John Butterworth, Governor of the Straits Settlements (1843-1855), formerly of the Madras army.<sup>35</sup> By the time the accounting was done, we

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34. Ibid, 415. The Chinese were later moved to the eastern side as their housing became too crowded. Eventually the groups on the east and west moved a little closer to each other and further into the rock due to the waves.

35. Butterworth's rule was marked by disagreement, stormy arguments and bitter wrangles among the merchants and the argument . He was nicknamed "Butterpot the Great" as gleaned from the letters of James Brooke. Also see C. M. Turnbull (1977) *A History of Singapore 1819-1975*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 67-68. John Thomson himself wrote a blistering critique of Butterworth in his own memoirs *Glimpses into Life in Malayan Lands* – attributing the Governor's faults to being "like all pompous men of plebian origins", 269-279. Ironically, Munshi Abdullah, who was Thomson's Malay teacher, translator and friend provides a different view of the man. See Munshi Abdullah(1970) *The Hikayat Abdullah*. An annotated translation by A.H. Hill, New York: Oxford University Press, 298-302. The Governor was considered pompous by the European merchants but Abdullah saw him as a worthy successor to Raffles and Farquhar. Abdullah described him as popular, knowing how to win the confidence of the people, courteous, effective as he went around improving the townsite. Governor Butterworth also paid attention to ridding the waters of piracy. For Abdullah, Butterworth was not only friendly to the people, but was especially well-disposed towards the Malays. One particular incident stood out for Abdullah:

I had personal experience of his fine sense of duty when, on the occasion of the great fire in Kampong Glam, he himself seized a water-pump and ran hither and thither, his clothes smothered in dirt, to find water to

are a long way from the \$7000 or so in the initial subscriptions, and the final costs totaled up to \$23,665.87 including the lights which cost £1324.96 or in Spanish dollars \$5,886.51.<sup>36</sup> The “first Pharos of the Eastern seas” or “the Lion of the Straits”, when completed, stood 109.5 feet from base to the top of the funnel, with a lantern shipped from England to Singapore that was designed by Alan Stevenson, Esq. Engineer to the Northern Lighthouse Board and uncle of the author Robert Louise Stevenson. The flash, though short in duration radiates up to seventeen English miles (around fifteen nautical miles), and the lamps, arranged in three groups of three on a frame, revolve horizontally once in three minutes.<sup>37</sup> The lighthouse, mindful of the cosmopolitan spirit, also included a separate room for the native lighthouse keeper, called a *serang*,<sup>38</sup> a room for the lascars, and is designed to store food and provisions for up to five months for at least thirteen people. It was then the only lighthouse located on a solitary rock far out to sea in that region. When Ida Pfeiffer, the hardy Viennese female traveller returned to Singapore on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1851, she wrote:

In Singapore itself I found nothing altered; but a magnificent light-house had been built during that time, about twenty miles off the island, on a rock in the sea where there is so tremendous a surf that the guardians of the light-house are kept furnished with fresh water and provisions for six months.<sup>39</sup>

The *Free Press* presented the following panegyric:

The granite blocks which form the walls were quarried and shaped at Pulo Ubin; the timber used in the building is the growth of our island; the brass rails of the stair-case were moulded and turned in this Settlement; and last not least the Architect and Engineer, Mr. J.T. Thomson, acquired the skill and experience, which enabled him to erect so rapidly this chaste and stately building, during a long and useful career as Government Surveyor of Singapore. The cast-iron dome and lantern are the only outside productions. For those we are indebted to Messrs. Stevenson of

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quench the fire..... I have lived a long time in Singapore but seldom have I seen other governors who did the things he did. *Hikayat Abdullah*, 299.

36. The original funds were sanctioned at \$24,626.50. This means that Thomson came in under-budget by \$960.63. These are in Spanish dollars and the exchange rate at that time is approximately 4.44 against the English pound.

37. Thomson provides a detail account of the lights in pages 454-457.

38. Or as used by Joseph Conrad in novels, ‘serang’ refers to navigator or Malay sailor.

39. Ida Pfeiffer (1797-1858) was in Singapore sometime in 1847 or 1848. Pfeiffer, I. (1856) *A lady's second journey round the world : from London to the Cape of Good Hope, Borneo, Java, Sumatra, Celebes, Ceram, the Moluccas, etc., California, Panama, Peru, Ecuador, and the United States*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 40-41.

SECTION OF HORSBURGH LIGHTHOUSE NE&SW.

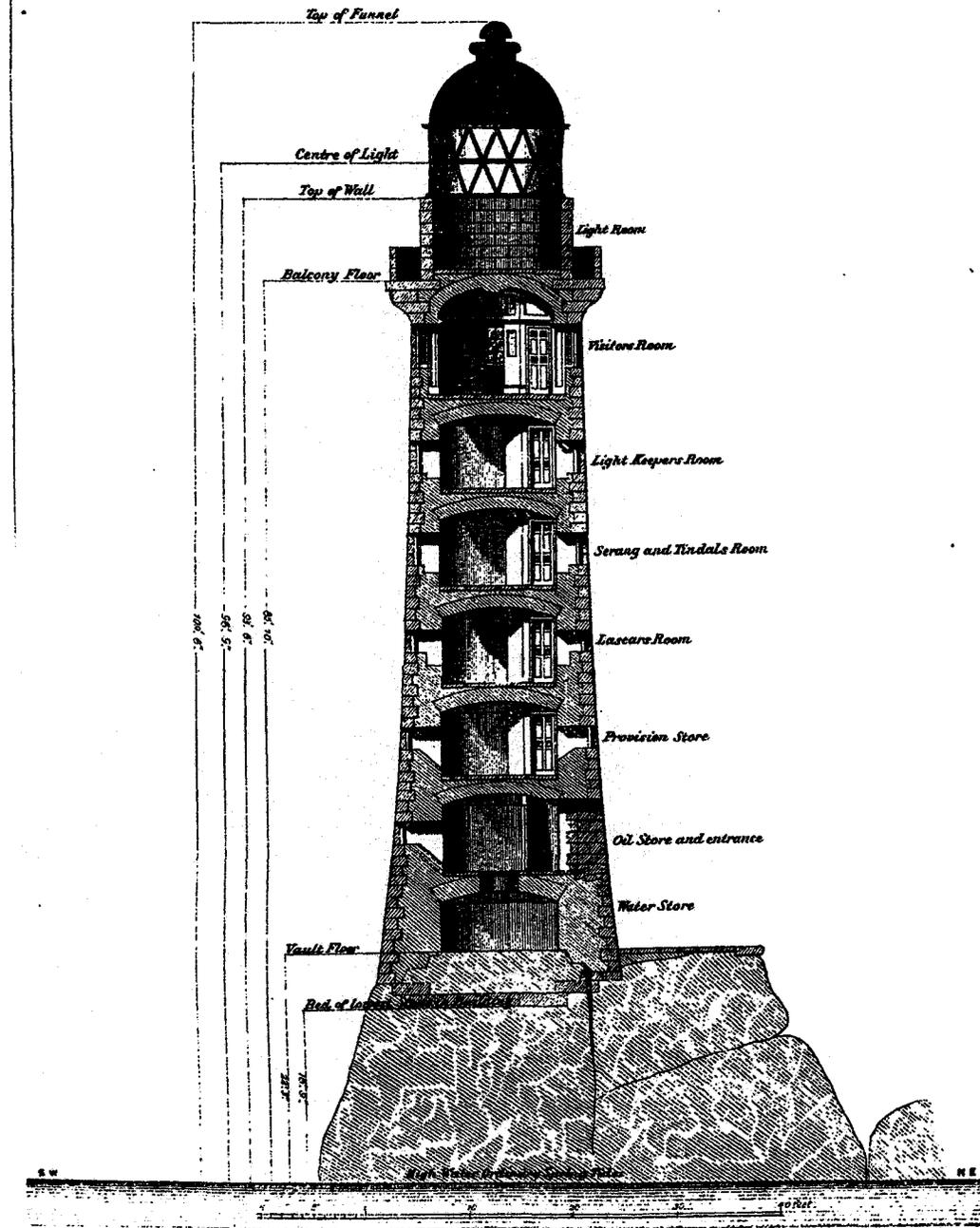


Figure 17. Cross-section plans of the Horsburgh Lighthouse in J. T. Thomson (1852) "personal journal and appendices" in J. R. Logan (ed) *The Journal of the Indian Archeipelago and Eastern Asia* Vol. 6, 376 – 498. Appendices.

Edinburgh, the Engineers of the Northern lighthouses....<sup>40</sup>

We might also add that much of the labour was drawn from the emigrant population and convicts from Singapore, the Malayan Peninsular, Sumatra, Java, India, and Papua New Guinea. The gunboat protection came from the Dutch authorities from Rhio. Thomson acknowledges the multinational effort in his journal however, as with all eventual claims to success, there are always omissions. The following is part of the tablet's dedication ordered to be placed in a panel of the wall of the visitors room:

A.D. 1851

THE HORSBURGH LIGHTHOUSE

us raised by the enterprise of British Merchants,  
and by the liberal aid of the East India Company,  
to lessen the dangers of Navigation,  
and likewise to Hand down,  
so long as it shall last,  
in the scene of his useful labours,

The memory of the great Hydrographer, whose name it bears.

It should be noted that the Chinese Security Merchants also contributed liberally.<sup>41</sup>

On September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1851, W.J. Butterworth, Governor of Prince of Wales Island,<sup>42</sup> Singapore and Malacca issued a notice to all Mariners concerning the Horsburgh Lighthouse, its detailed location according to the Admiralty charts, the manner of lighting employed, and the operation date of the lighthouse. The Pharos is described as standing "on a rock which measures 150 feet long and 100 feet broad and is 24 feet high at its highest point above the level of high water spring tides. The lighthouse is a pillar of dressed granite and the lantern is covered by a spherical dome which is painted white." Over time, electricity replaced oil, and the Horsburgh lighthouse to this day, continues to be in active operation. The Maritime Port Authority of Singapore continues to report on sailing vessels running into shoals around Pedra Banca -- and one can conjecture that the ongoing threat of piracy must be greatly aided by the lighthouse itself.

There is less adventure or theatre (depending how one views it) connected to the Raffles Lighthouse located on the south-western entrance to the Straits of Singapore. The plans were proposed as early as 1838 and the location was as usual, debated, this time around the cluster of islands known as Barn, Alligator, Rabbit and Coney Islands. Coney Island<sup>43</sup>

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40. Buckley, 518.

41. This liberal contribution is noted by Thomson but not given in precise numbers.

42. Also known as Penang today.

43. G. D. Coleman, the first surveyor of Singapore was skeptical of Coney Island due to its size which was a superficial area of seventy feet by twenty-two and thirty feet above sea-level.

was eventually chosen for its location marking the outer and south channel round St. John's Island to the Singapore roads.<sup>44</sup> The plans were only executed in 1854, but compared to the multicultural skirmishes, limited space and rocky travails of Pedra Banca, the Raffles Lighthouse posed little problem. The laying of the foundation stone was once again, on Queen Victoria's birthday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1854 and conducted with the same masonic rituals by the Lodge Zetland Freemasons, with the attendance of the Governor and his party transported on the *Hooghly* to Coney Island. This time however, the ceremony was marked with British Raj grandeur. As the plate bearing the written tribute to Raffles was lowered into the cement, the military band played "Rule Britannia". A homage was then paid by W. H. Read<sup>45</sup> to Stamford Raffles and his enlightened policy, detailing his visions and works. A dinner was held in celebration of the event the same night with numerous toasts being made to the Queen and her Empire, and the French Consul, M. Gautier, surfeit with drink and goodwill, proposed the unity of the two armies and navies.

The light was lit on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1855, radiating as far as twelve nautical miles or fourteen English miles. The Raffles Lighthouse, like all monuments to Raffles, continues to endure today. It is still an active aid to navigation, and a popular spot for scuba-divers who are attracted to the marine life in the coral reefs – and the remains of shipwrecks.

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44. Also noted by Horsburgh who felt a lighthouse would prevent the confusion of mistaking lights from the town as guiding beacons. Horsburgh, 265.

45. The same Read who witch-hunted James Brooke. William Henry Read, a Scotsman, and prominent Singaporean was born in February 1819, within a few days of Singapore's founding. He died in 1901. See C. M. Turnbull (1977) *A History of Singapore 1819-1975* Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 68.

## 2. So Small a Community

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1822, the naturalist Nathaniel Wallich,<sup>1</sup> asked by his friend Sir Stamford Raffles to choose an eligible site for Singapore's first Botanic Gardens, staked out a forty eight acre site which included a slope of *Bukit Larangan* (Forbidden Hill) or Government Hill -- later renamed Fort Canning in 1859.<sup>2</sup> On the same day, a land grant was issued for the purpose of establishing "a Botanic and Experimental Garden on this Island". Wallich, who was already serving on Raffles's Land Allotment Committee, was appointed Superintendent of the Botanic Gardens – a job he previously held in Calcutta. Wallich left Singapore in January 1823 and the job fell to Dr. William Montgomerie (the assistant surgeon, later Government Surgeon from 1819-1843), who cleared the land and planted spices such as nutmeg and clove trees. The first Botanic gardens had a short lifetime, and came to an end on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1829. Mount Wallich, a striking landmark between the town and Tanjong Pagar was named after Nathaniel Wallich but the area was

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1. Nathaniel Wallich, MD, PhD, FRS was born in Copenhagen, Denmark on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1786. He had joined the Medical Service of the Danish Settlement in Serampore in 1807. Serampore was occupied by the EIC in 1813 whereupon Wallich joined the English service. Wallich retired in 1847 and died in Gower Street, Bloomsbury on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1854. See Gilbert E. Brook in W. Makepeace, et. al, General Editors (1921) *One Hundred Years of Singapore*. (2 Vols) London: John Murray Makepeace, V.II, 65. See letters of Nathaniel Wallich as compiled by Dr. R. Hanitsch (1913) "Letters of Nathaniel Wallich relating to the Establishment of Botanical Gardens in Singapore." *JSBRAS* #65: 40-48.

2. In 1859, the Governor's residence was taken down to be replaced with extensive fortifications to be named after Lord Canning, the Governor-General and First Viceroy of India. Seven acres at the top of the hill was leveled and by May 1859, there were seven 68 pounder guns facing the Straits. See Col. L.T. Firbank O.B.E. (1963) *A History of Fort Canning*, 11 (unsorted private papers, National Library of Singapore). According to Buckley, "The top of the hill was raised several feet to afford sufficient level surface, and when finished was to enclosed an area of about seven acres. By the middle of May seven 68 pounders were in position facing the sea. The work was carried out with 400 Chinese coolies. After it was completed, it was noticed that Pearl's Hill [today, People's Park] was higher, so the Government Military Engineer proceeded to cut down the top of the Hill!" Firbank, 675. Fort Canning was completed in 1861. The Governor left Fort Canning and took up permanent residence at the Pavilion on Oxley Estate. The Government house was then moved to Leonie Hill, Grange Road before land was acquired at its present site which was once part of a nutmeg estate of Charles Robert Prinsep after whom Prinsep Road was named. The present Government House is the Istana (Castle/Royal Dwelling), designed and built with convict labour by the Colonial Engineer Major J.F.A. McNair, R.A. and was ready for occupation in October, 1869.

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Figure 18. John Thomson, View from Government Hill, 1846, National Museum of Singapore (1990) *Nineteenth Century Prints of Singapore* Singapore: National Museum, plate 24, page 46.

soon flattened for purposes of reclaiming land from Teluk Ayer Bay sometime in 1879 -- and Robinson and Anson Roads were eventually laid out.

The forty-eight acre site that Wallich selected includes today the old Fort Canning cemetery, Dhoby Ghaut, Bras Basah Road, the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd (Singapore's first Catholic Church), Victoria Street, Hill Street and the Armenian Church. The land grant for the Botanic Garden was terminated in July 1834, and the site was absorbed by convict lines and a hospital. Part of the land was also handed over to the Rev. F. J. Darrah who had complained of the neglected state of children's education in Singapore, and the need for a school.<sup>3</sup> A school was opened on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1834, with 46 students of different ethnic backgrounds and social standing. Another part of the land was allotted to the Armenians for a church.

The first formal census of Singapore was conducted in 1824 -- though there was an earlier one in 1821 which counted 4,727 inhabitants. There were then three Armenian firms trading in Singapore but no Armenians were acknowledged in the census. In 1824, there were eleven racial categories, some regionally grouped and some by ethnicity, including the Armenians which numbered a community of 16. By 1828 there were 17 Armenian males and 8 females making a total of 25<sup>4</sup> -- and in 1834, there were 44 Armenians in Singapore: 32 males, and 12 females. What impresses most is that so small a community could have initiated the building of what is now the oldest standing church in Singapore. The first church services for the Armenians were held as early as 1821 led by the priest Rev. Eleazar Ingergolie who died in Singapore in 1826, and was replaced by Rev. Gregory ter Johannes in 1827. The early services were held in rented rooms, dressed with the requisite ecclesiastical vessels and ornaments. In March 1833, an appeal to the European community and the Resident, Mr. George Bonham was made for a piece of land, preferably facing the Esplanade, to build a church with subscriptions from Armenians in Calcutta, Java and Singapore.<sup>5</sup> The request was denied and on April 23<sup>rd</sup>,

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3. It was the Reverend F. J. Darrah who planted the seeds of the first St. Andrews Church. It is not clear when Rev. Darrah arrived in Singapore but he was an active educator and made education available for all, even for those who could not pay. He died in Madras on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1837. For more on Darrah, and the school which was situated near the foot of Fort Canning, see C. B. Buckley (1902/1965). *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819 - 1867*. 2 Vols. Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 128.

4. See Hayes Marriot, "The People of Singapore." in Makepeace, V. I, 355-362. I have drawn the 1828 figures from the Singapore Resident's diary dated January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1828 and signed by then Superintendent of Police, S. G. Bonham (later Governor Bonham). See National University of Singapore microfilm, NL #63, p. 75.

5. The subscriptions amounted to \$3,224.52: \$466 by European residents, 573.22 from Calcutta; \$402.88 from Java, \$173 from Armenians in transit, and the rest from Armenian residents in Singapore. Buckley, 283.

another letter appealed for land “lying at the Botanical Gardens facing the public road called the Hill Street” – which was granted. This is where the church was built and continues to preside today.

The Armenian Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator<sup>6</sup> was completed on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1836 and consecrated on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1836. The ceremony of consecration, lasting three and a half hours, was attended by members of the English community though it was conducted in Armenian. The construction of the church had been carried out by an Indian (Kling) construction crew for a sum of \$3500.00 who started work immediately following the signing of the contract on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1834. The architect was G. D. Coleman, who received a sum of \$400 for his architect’s fees and who based his design on the Armenian mother church, the Holy Etchmiadzin or *where the Begotten descended* -- though it is uncertain if Coleman had the original plan or if it was described to him by the twelve Armenian Elders present in Singapore. Whatever the original architectural intentions, the Armenian Church is subtle elegance, celebrating the simplicity of a tropicalized Palladian classicism though at that time, the March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1836 issue of the *Singapore Free Press* declared it to be one of the most “ornate and best finished pieces of architecture of which this Settlement can boast.” The *Free Press* goes on to give a description of the architecture:

This small but elegant building does great credit to the public spirit and religious feeling of the Armenians of this Settlement; we believe that few instances could be shewn where so small a community have contributed funds sufficient for the erection of a similar edifice. The interior of this church is a complete circle of thirty-six feet diameter, with a semi-circular chancel of eighteen feet wide on the east front; four small chambers, two of which are intended for staircases, and two for vestries, are designed, so that the body of the Church forms an equilateral square; from these project three porticos of six columns each, which shade the windows and entrances, and afford convenient shelter for carriages in rainy weather. The principal order is Doric, surmounted by a balustrade, the top of which is twenty-three feet high; the roofs of the porticos, vestries, and chancel are flat, and that of the body of the Church is a truncated cone rising ten feet with a flat space of twelve feet diameter on which is erected a bell-turret, with eight arches, and as many Ionic pilasters, the height of these

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6. St. Gregory the Illuminator was born a nobleman who converted Armenia’s King Tiridates III who once persecuted Christians. The Armenian Church, also known now as the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church. was supposedly founded sometime in the 1st century by two of the original Apostles of Jesus Christ: St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew. It was fully recognized in 301 AD and consequently, Armenia became the first nation in the world to declare Christianity as its state religion. The mother church is the Holy Etchmiadzin (built 301-303 AD), during the reign of King Trdat the III, and is located in northern Armenia, or more precisely, Yerevan. Robert H. Hewson (2001) *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

pilasters with their entablatures, is eleven, and that by the dome which they support six feet, the whole being surmounted by ball and cross, the top of which is fifty feet above the floor of the Church.

The interior of the church is unfussy, with recessed windows and the interval of solid timber doors in the circular room.<sup>7</sup> There is a sense that the sanctuary was once lit by a centrally placed cupola in the domed ceiling. The use of the Tuscan Doric -- rather than the more ornamental Ionic or even Corinthian -- with its unfluted columns and simplified base, capital and entablature for the three projecting square porticos (on the north, south and west fronts), and the pilasters on the east section is an interesting choice whether for lack of money or climatic considerations. The original building was renovated twice. Once in 1847 when the bell turret was replaced, and in 1853, when an architect named Maddock declared the domed roof unsafe, and replaced it with a tower and spire on top of the pitched octagonal roof covered with Chinese tiles. The bowed apse in the east front was walled in to create another portico with a triangular pediment above in order to fit the spire. A bungalow-style parsonage was added in 1905, built by Tomlinson and Lermitt with donated funds by Nanajan Sarkies, and consecrated to the memory of her husband, John Shanazar Sarkies who died in 1904, on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1905. In 1909, electricity was added, and the Armenian Church became the first church in Singapore to be installed with such conveniences.<sup>8</sup>

The building stands today, restored and maintained by the Singapore Urban Redevelopment Authority and declared a national monument in 1973.<sup>9</sup> G. M. Reith in his 1892 handbook for visitors gave it passing mention, a brief six-line paragraph with times and dates of the services.<sup>10</sup> There are no Armenian services conducted any more, and the church has since been employed for multi-denominational functions.

To experience the Armenian Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator is to invoke anachronistically, Mies Van Der Rohe's celebration of the essence of modernist architecture: *lightness, airness and clarity*. There is a restrained elegance in the economical use of space, with its attention to natural light and ventilation rather than decoration. As remarked, "the building, although small in scale, has a monumental quality, and ...a freshness of execution."<sup>11</sup> There is little of the physical proportions of

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7. Jane Beamish and Jane Ferguson (1989) *A History of Singapore Architecture: The Making of a City*. Singapore: Graham Brash, 39-43.

8. Makepeace, V.I, 259-260.

9. Gretchen Liu (1996) *In Granite and Chunam*. Singapore: Landmark Books, 8-160.

10. G. M. Reith (1892/1985) *Handbook to Singapore*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 74.

11. Beamish and Ferguson, 43.

the Armenian Mother Church, the *Holy Etchmiadzin* in it, and if one intends on finding antecedents, we must look instead to Thomas de Havilland<sup>12</sup> of the Bengal Engineers and his St. Andrews Scottish Church in Madras (1820), and more significantly, James Gibbs's St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London.<sup>13</sup>

When James Gibbs (1682-1754), the architect of St. Mary-Le-Strand (1714-1717), St. Martin-in-the-Fields (1721 or 1722-1726), and The Radcliffe Camera (1739-49) in Oxford, wrote *The Book of Architecture* in 1728, the influence of Inigo Jones (1573-1652), and the writings and buildings of Andrea Palladio (1508-80)<sup>14</sup> had re-surfaced in England. The early 18<sup>th</sup> century to the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed some of the most dignified and confident Georgian architecture in the city of London. Not surprisingly, Gibbs, a Roman Catholic Scotsman, having turned away from his intentions of joining the priesthood, had trained in Rome under Carlo Fontana (1638-1714), the Italian Baroque master. Sponsored by his mentor Sir Christopher Wren, Gibbs was one of two surveyors appointed in 1713<sup>15</sup> to the Commissioners for Building Fifty New Churches in London – but only ten were built. St. Martin-in-the-Fields as designed by James Gibbs is the third church to be rebuilt on the same site. The first church was built in 1222 when apparently, it did stand in the fields, and the second church was rebuilt in 1544. The language of description for Gibbs's St. Martin is often a balance between grandeur and restraint; words and phrases used are “chaste proportions”, “calm tastefulness”, “simple

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12. Supposedly the most interesting church of the Gibbs theme, the St. Andrews Church in Madras (1818-1820) is also designed after the unexecuted scheme for a circular church found in Gibbs's *Book of Architecture* published in 1728. See Gavin Stamp “Church Architecture.” in Robert Fernor-Hesketh, General Editor (1986) *Architecture of the British Empire*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 164.

13. There is also the claim that the church was based on one Coleman had seen in Batavia. See T.H.H. Hancock (1986) “Coleman's Singapore.” Monograph #15 *The Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* Singapore: Pelanduk Press.

14. See James Stevens Curl (1999) *A Dictionary of Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 476-478. Andrea Palladio (1508-80) was born in Padua, Italy and his work has had a lasting influence on western architecture, in various forms from classicism to modernism. Drawing from the work of Vitruvius, Palladio explored the potential of symmetry, harmonic proportions, and geometric forms that recalled Romanesque classical orders. Inigo Jones, seventeenth-century surveyor to James I and Charles I, was the first English architect to have adapted Palladianism to English architecture. The finest example of Palladianism in America is of course, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello.

15. Gibbs was dismissed from the Commissioners by George I (1714-27) since he was a Papist, a Scot, and a Tory sympathizer. This was a matter of the wrong time, and the wrong place.

grandeur”, and often, “monumental”. Much has been discussed of St. Martin’s portico and its resemblance to the Pantheon with the use of Corinthian columns and a triangular pediment. Where the latter has eight columns, the former has six. What is original is Gibbs’s use of the tower and the steeple, placed immediately behind the portico as they rise above the main building, providing elevation and monumentality in the midst of what was to become the bustling Trafalgar Square. And it is a similar wonder how the ecumenical landscape of the Empire is etched with variations of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

It is not that the Armenian Church in Singapore bears a direct resemblance to St. Martin-in-the-Fields, nor De Havilland’s St. Andrews in Madras – and certainly the tower and steeple came twenty years after the original construction. Rather the structural spirit is present. There are similar principles of form and adaptation here at work. Gibbs’s *The Book Of Architecture* (1728) has been influential in the use of semi-circular and circular spaces, the arrangement of windows,<sup>16</sup> pilasters, the placement of classical orders, the reserved use of ornamentation and the attention to proportion and balance. The Armenian Church’s semi-circular chancel which intersects with the circular sanctuary, could of course be inspired by Gibbs’s first circular plan for St. Martin<sup>17</sup> but there are also hybrid elements which draw as much from Palladio himself as they do from the local. As for the plans being based on the Mother Church in Yerevan, the *Holy Etchmiadzin* – the nearest element in resemblance would be the original bell turret, with the ball and cross perched on top. There was no justification for its complete removal since if indeed the domed roof was unsafe, they could have rebuilt it with some care. The added spire, however, would have been more consistent with the ecumenical architecture of the Empire.<sup>18</sup> The porticos perhaps echo the projected wings of the Mother Church but those of the Armenian Church are proportioned in line with Palladian instructions by its balanced projections.<sup>19</sup> The tropical elements are of course found in the familiar use of louvred windows and timber doors to ensure maximum filtered light and ventilation. The careful attention to the climate is illustrated in the building of the porticos as carriage porches which would have enabled carriages to park with shelter from the equatorial weather. What recalls Palladio, and his plan of the Villa Capra in Vicenza (1566-70) are the circular interiors of the Armenian church (both the sanctuary and the chancel) placed within a rectangular frame. The Villa Capra had a circle imposed on a square plan with hexa-style Ionic

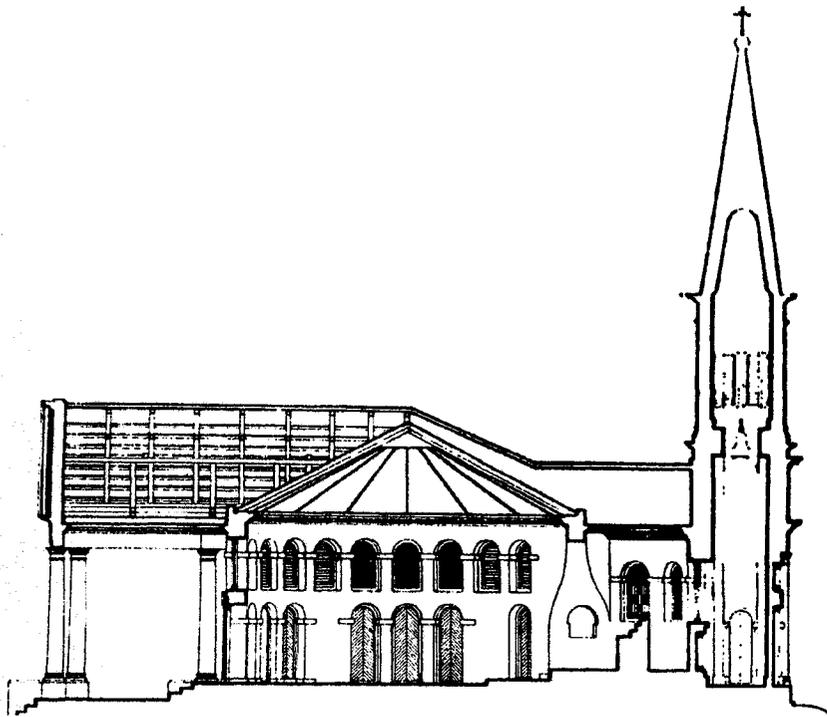
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16. The long oval-topped louvred windows on the ground floor and the arched-rectangular windows above are supposedly the same arrangement as St. Andrews Scottish Church in Madras.

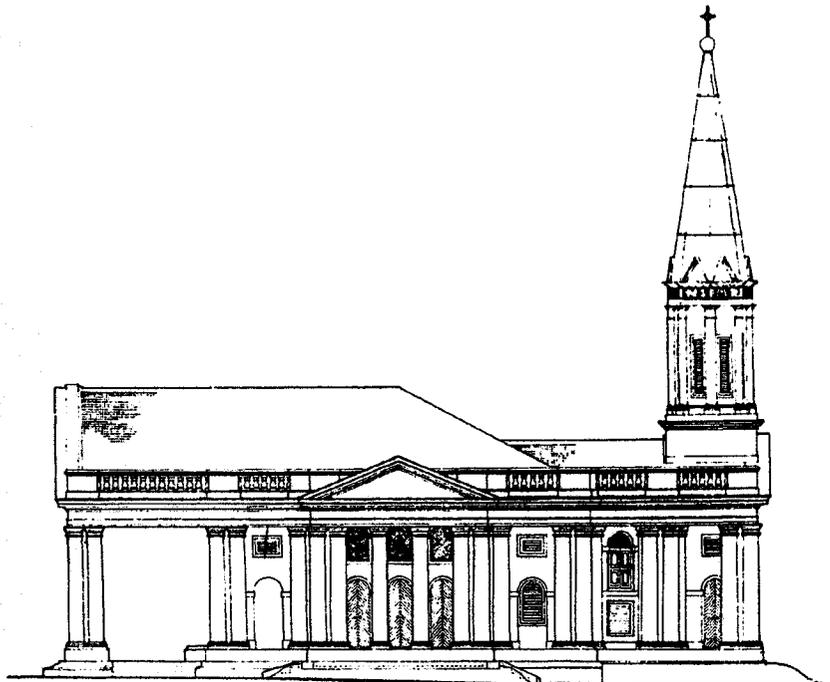
17. Norman Edwards and Peter Keys (1988) *Singapore: A Guide to Buildings, Streets, Places* Singapore: Times Books, 366.

18. See Bishop Wilson’s circular in footnote #36.

19. The three porticos which arms off the centralized space is supposedly a traditional Armenian structure. See Stamp, 166.



*The Armenian Church. Longitudinal section through the centre of the Church, from the western porch to the tower and spire, added at the eastern end. For the scale refer to the Plan.*



*The Armenian Church. The elevation to the south. Measured drawing by Chan Hong Kan and Lionel St. Joseph de Rosario. 1951.*

Figure 19. Reproduced from T.H.H. Hancock (1986) *Coleman's Singapore Kuala Lumpur: Times Edition*, 73.

porticos on each side based on Palladio's erroneous belief that all domestic Roman buildings had porticos. No matter the interpretations, Palladian porticos were employed in eighteenth- and early nineteenth- century England, and replicated throughout British India. It is of course also quite possible that Palladio insisted on the porticos to preserve the geometric proportions and harmonic forms of the composition. And such harmony is clearly manifested in the Armenian Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator.

By the time George Drumgoole<sup>20</sup> Coleman (1795-1844) designed the Armenian Church, he was forty years of age, having resided thirteen years in Singapore, and by then, been appointed the first Government Superintendent of Public Works in October 1833. Coleman was born to a Protestant Irish family in Drogheda, County Louth, in Ireland, only thirty miles from Dublin. There are no records of any formal training but he could have apprenticed with a firm to gain an architectural education. He was influenced by James Gibbs's *A Book of Architecture* and he possessed the architectural manuals of William Pain, the eighteenth-century equivalent of 'Dummies' and do-it-yourself guidebooks, and pocket books such as *Palladio delineated and explained*, *Practical Builder*, and *Practical House Carpenter*. Coleman might also have studied first hand the work of the Irish architect Francis Johnston (1760-1829) whose classical country house, Townley Hall in County Louth (1794) was near Drogheda, and which followed the elegant proportions and grand simplicity of most Georgian architecture. According to T. H. H. Hancock, Coleman would also be familiar with Ballymakenny Church (1793), in County Louth, designed as well by Johnston in the Gothic Revival style, with its determined spire perched on a pitched square roof with four smaller spires on each corner. Beyond the training he might have received in an architect's office, Coleman was apparently self-taught in architectural styles, and the desire to experiment and create on foreign settlements or colonies would have been irresistible to an ambitious young man. Like Stamford Raffles, a new settlement must have encouraged the spirit of innovation and experimenting with all manner of building forms without precedents and traditions, and suited to climactic considerations. It was after all, an opportunity to build from scratch.

How Coleman got to Calcutta, and then Batavia and Singapore, as a promising young architect is a mystery but not impossible. T.H.H. Hancock suggests that family connections, a testimonial from the firm which Coleman apprenticed with, and contacts might have secured the passage to India. George Coleman left Ireland for Calcutta in 1815 at age 19 despite not having permission from the East India Company. He somehow started practicing as an architect at Fort William and in the Calcutta town itself, and designed many private homes and their interiors for merchants. In 1818, he gained the patronage of John Palmer,<sup>21</sup> also known as 'The Prince of Merchants' whose political and

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20. There are several forms to this name, it is either Drumgolde or Drumgoole. The biographical information here is mainly drawn from T. H. H. Hancock's book.

21. John Palmer was born in India in 1766 or according to another source, 1767, and lived till 1836. He was the second son of General William Palmer, confidential secretary

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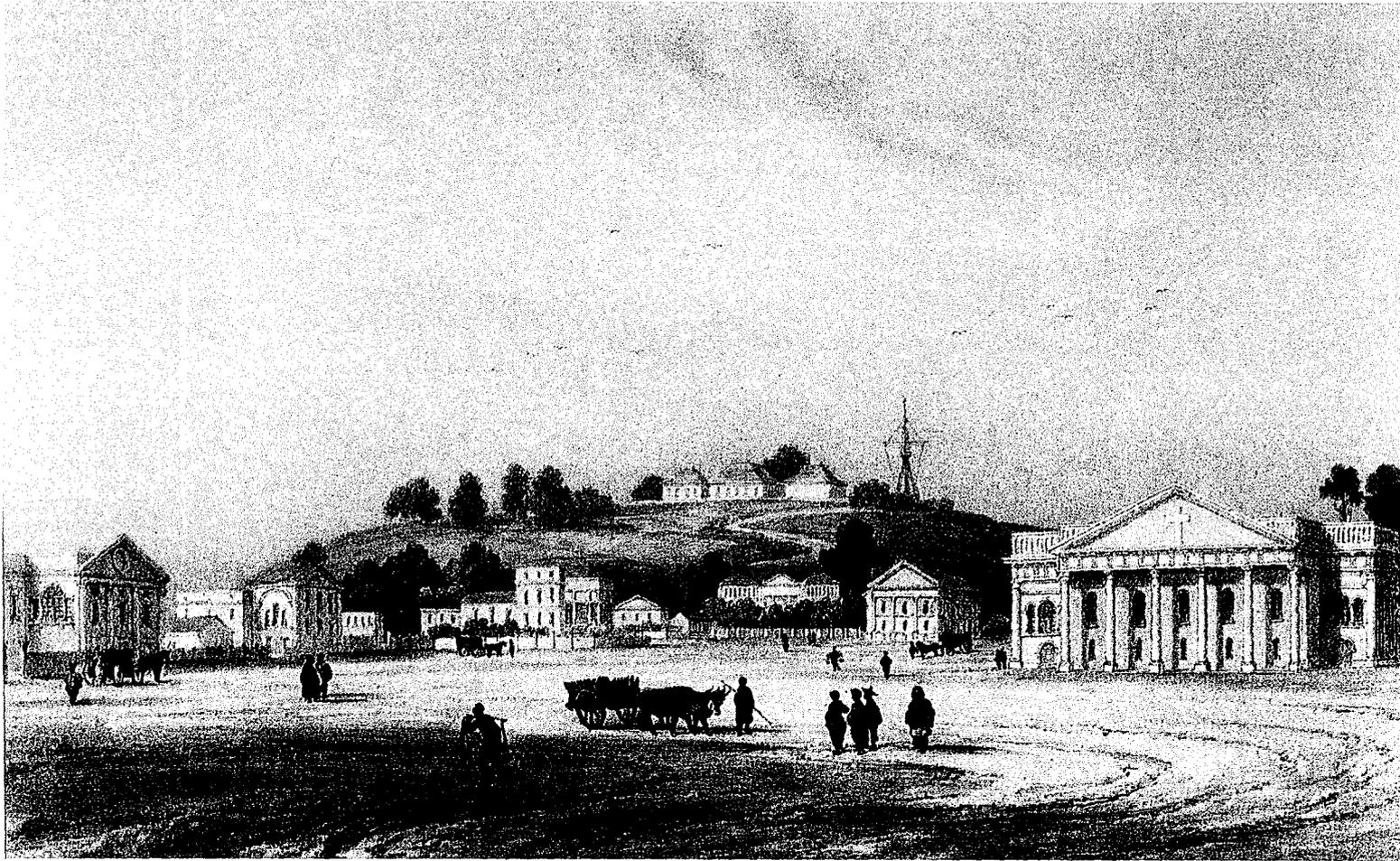


Figure 20. First St. Andrew's Church and Government Hill, 1837. This lithograph is actually entitled "Vue de Temple Protestant à Sincapour". This is drawn by Barthélemy Lauvergne and engraved by Louise Pierre Alphonse Bichebois with figures by Victor Adam. From *Voyage du Monde exécuté pendant les années 1836 et 1837 sur la covette La Bonite* by Auguste-Nicholas Vaillant, Paris, 1852. Reprinted by Antiques of the Orient pte ltd, Singapore.

economic networks extended far and wide. Palmer recommended Coleman to the Dutch in Batavia who, having repossessed their former colonies, planned for a cathedral and a Scotch Kirk to be built. In a letter dated December 1819, Palmer wrote of Coleman as “an ingenious young artist” and enclosed plans of churches as an example of Coleman’s “beautiful specimen of his talent.” Coleman sailed for Batavia on one of John Palmer’s ships (*The Baroness van der Cappelen*), in March 1820, was nearly shipwrecked, returned to Calcutta and went back to Java in late May the very same year. The church was never built and Coleman remained in Java for two years surveying plantations, designing and building private dwellings and sugar mills. There he would have observed the Dutch Church in Batavia with its circular plan and domed structure – quite possibly another inspiring source for the Armenian Church.<sup>22</sup>

Coleman arrived in Singapore in 1822, hoping to gain employment with a letter of introduction from John Palmer whom Stamford Raffles disliked. Nevertheless Raffles was taken by the young architect’s design of a Residency house, and very soon, Coleman was working actively with Raffles to plan and construct a town. The Residency house was built at the top of *Bukit Larangan* or Government Hill and completed on January 1823 though in a humble manner with timber and a nipa palm thatched roof. The Residency was a bungalow “100 feet in frontage, and 50 feet deep, with rough plank walls, venetian windows and an attap roof. Coleman’s plan comprised two parallel halls with front and back verandahs terminated by two square wings to provide sleeping apartments.”<sup>23</sup> The residency became Government House and was later expanded and reconstructed with a Neo-Classical motif in brick and tile, with stucco pediments before being taken down in 1859 in order to build Fort Canning. Coleman would have also depended on Naraina Pillai, who arrived with Stamford Raffles in 1819 as an

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to William Hastings who coined the ‘The Prince of Merchants’ title for Palmer. Palmer had such powerful connections and networks that he often acted as mediator for administrators, merchants and officials -- Dutch, and English -- in the settlements and in the Indian government. His agency house, Palmer and Co. extended as far as Penang, Singapore, Java, Bencoolen, Pegu, Canton. (Hill, 163; Hancock, 8). He disliked Raffles because he felt that Raffles’s policy in the region was threatening his business and took Farquhar’s side during the quarrels between Raffles and Farquhar. Raffles made no secret of his disdain for Palmer when he wrote to Calcutta (see Raffles’s letter dated June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1823 reprinted in Buckley, 104):

It is impossible not to respect Mr. Palmer as an individual, but it is to be recollected that he is now the avowed agent of the Netherlands Government in these seas, and that it is very possible his mercantile interests may frequently be at variance with the principles which an enlightened government may wish to adopt in its dependencies.

22. Hancock, 31.

23. Hancock, 14.

administrative clerk, and set up the first construction company and the island's first brick-kiln in Tanjong Pagar.<sup>24</sup> But it was here in Government House – supposedly -- on the long front verandah of Government House -- or so a famous story goes -- that India, and the Indian Empire was saved.

The Right Honorable Lord Elgin, the 8<sup>th</sup> Earl, distinguished Viceroy of India had been appointed British High Commissioner and Plenipotentiary in China. His Excellency left England for China on the P. & O. steamer, the *Singapore* on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1857. He arrived at Point de Galle in Ceylon on May 26<sup>th</sup> and in Penang on May 31<sup>st</sup>, and it was in Ceylon that he heard of (and initially thought insignificant) the outbreak of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bengal Cavalry and other native troops at Meerut in Punjab on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1857. Lord Elgin arrived in Singapore on Wednesday June 3<sup>rd</sup>, intending to wait for the H.M.S. *Shannon* which would convey him to China. Lord Elgin's visit was met with great pomp and circumstance, and particularly so from the Chinese merchants headed by Tan Kim Seng, who apparently was one of the very few who spoke English. The *Illustrated London News* reports that his Lordship held a levee (on June 6<sup>th</sup>) attended by all Europeans, and non-Europeans -- and even met -- through translations of Chinese, English and Malay -- with a deputation of Chinese merchants who formed one of the most significant parts of the Singaporean community.<sup>25</sup> While waiting for Captain William Peel<sup>26</sup> and The H.M.S. *Shannon* to arrive, and in between ceremonies, visits and social occasions, Lord Elgin conducted the interviews and discussions with officers which sealed the fate of the Indian Mutiny.

This was the turning point. Though much disputed, and contradicted, and the usual claims to credit of quick action and 'who-got-there-first' abound, the story goes that Lord Elgin had paced sleeplessly up and down the long verandah of Government House in Singapore throughout the night, discoursing with his advisors on the viability of sending the troops

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24. Pillai was among the first of 120 natives of India who accompanied Raffles to Singapore, and who were not convicts. Pillai attracted many other immigrants from India and was responsible for initiating a 'Little India' in Singapore. In 1822, he became the community headman and was entrusted with powers to settle disputes among the various Indian peoples. The Indian community in Singapore had at one time demanded that the Dalhousie Obelisk be renamed the Naraina Pillai Obelisk.

25. See the *Illustrated London News*, August 8<sup>th</sup> 1857 or the article reprinted in D.J.M. Tate, compiled by (1989) *Straits Affairs: The Malay World and Singapore—Being Glimpses of the Straits Settlements and the Malay Peninsular in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as seen through the Illustrated London News and Other Contemporary Sources*. Hong Kong: John Nicholson, Ltd. 41-43.

26. Afterwards Sir William Peel who was wounded in battle at Lucknow. See Frederick Sleight Roberts, Earl (1897) *Forty-One Years in India*. London: R. Bentley, chapter xxix.

to India.<sup>27</sup> In a letter to W. H. Read, Major McNair, then Private Secretary to Governor Blundell of the Straits Settlements, confirms he was present at the meeting with Lord Elgin, Lord Loch<sup>28</sup> and Governor Blundell. When Lord Elgin asked the Governor, given his experience with India, if he thought the revolt would spread, Blundell had replied in the affirmative. By the early hours of dawn, Lord Elgin gave the famous orders. McNair also claims that the ships from the Straits were the first to arrive which resulted in the saving of Calcutta.<sup>29</sup> Lord Elgin visited Singapore three more times and died in

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27. There are two contradictory stories. It must be noted that there are NO exact dates given for Lord Elgin's night discussions or when exactly the order took place. The dispute emanates from Sir George Grey, then Governor of the Cape who claimed credit for diverting the troops and that Lord Elgin had no knowledge of the diversion at all. This led in October 1892, to a letter in the *London Times* by Sir Henry Loch, private secretary to Lord Elgin, who confirms that information received in Singapore led to Elgin's decision. The other reference is from Field Marshall Lord Roberts of Kandahar's or Frederick Sleigh Roberts, Earl (1897) *Forty-One Years in India*. London: R. Bentley. Below is from chapter xvi on the siege of Delhi, V.1, 204-205:

It was cheering to learn that Allahabad was safe, that Lucknow was still holding out, that troops from Madras, Ceylon, and the Mauritius had reached Calcutta, and that Lord Elgin, taking a statesmanlike view of the situation, had diverted to India the force intended for the China expedition, and we fondly hoped that some of the six British regiments reported by one messenger to have arrived at Cawnpore would be sent to the assistance of the Delhi Force.

Note: Since writing the above it has been brought to my notice that the promptitude with which the troops were diverted to India was due in a great measure to the foresight of Sir George Grey, the Governor of the Cape, who, on hearing of the serious state of affairs in India, immediately ordered all transports which touched at the Cape on their way to take part in the China Expeditionary Force, to proceed direct to Calcutta instead of to Singapore. He also despatched as many of the Cape garrison as he could spare, with stores, etc., to India. It is right, therefore, that he should share with Lord Elgin the credit of having so quickly grasped the magnitude of the crisis through which India was passing.

Lord Roberts is perhaps right to credit both men but Buckley argues that there were more steam communications between Calcutta and Singapore (especially through the opium steamers) than Calcutta and the Cape (and then, if any at all) and that the news had reached Singapore only three days before Lord Elgin's arrival. Furthermore, the transports that George Grey mentioned were already past the Cape and heading towards Singapore. The facts remain, ambiguous.

28. Sir Henry Loch, Private Secretary to Lord Elgin, later Governor of the Cape and Lord Loch, the Baron. He died in 1900. Buckley, 652.

29. Buckley, 651-654; Cameron, 24.

November 1863 as Governor General of India, having succeeded Lord Canning.<sup>30</sup> It is Lord Canning's name which graces Bukit Larangan or Government Hill today, that is Fort Canning -- and the verandah is no more. The bridge across the Singapore River, linking "the Chinese Community on the south side of the river to the Indian merchants of High Street in the north side" bears Lord Elgin's name,<sup>31</sup> and Singapore pays tribute to the heroes of the Mutiny by the renaming of roads in 1858, namely -- Outram, Havelock and Neil roads.

In the 1851 painting by J. T. Thomson, the 'Esplanade from Scandal Point', most viewers would immediately observe the colorful foreground which celebrates cosmopolitan Singapore, the "conglomeration of divers tongues, creeds, and nations" -- even if some figures appear disproportionate and as racial caricatures to present-day eyes. Scandal Point<sup>32</sup> was a knoll on the old seafront by the esplanade where according to Thomson, at 6 pm:

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30. The very same year, the *Free Press* reports that Lord Elgin returned to Singapore on July 28<sup>th</sup> on the *Shannon* from Hong Kong and heading to Calcutta, part of the vessels that formed the famous naval brigade to go up country during the Mutiny. Buckley, 654.

31. It was John Turnbull Thomson, the Surveyor who designed and constructed Elgin Bridge, which connects South Bridge road to North Bridge Road or rather, across the Singapore River and which has had many incarnations. Elgin Bridge was Thomson Bridge which was once Coleman Bridge, and which before was Presentment Bridge. This is complicated because this is the fifth replacement bridge across the river, the second one bearing Lord Elgin's name. The bridge that one sees today in Singapore is not the same Elgin Bridge of 1862, an iron bridge which replaced Thomson bridge and many bridges before. The 1862 bridge which was the fourth bridge was widened in the 1870s and demolished in the late 1920s. The present bridge is the fifth bridge, "a concrete double bridge structure, with high arches and slender hanging columns to support the deck." There remains the old-cast lamps, with roundels of the Singapore lion. See Keys and Edwards, 495.

32. Roland St. John Braddell "The Merry Past." in *Makepeace*, talking about the 1840s, 486:

The beach side of the Esplanade was retained by piles of wood, and the margin for the whole length was fringed with wild trees; it was about seventy yards deep, much narrower than the present Esplanade, which has been extended by reclamation. About midway, but nearer the Bras Basah Canal (now the Stamford Canal) there was a turn in the road, where had been erected a small battery near the site of the convict jetty which was made later, and which has now, of course, disappeared. This battery was saluting till the guns were removed to Fort Fullerton in 1844. Disused by the military, its low wall supplied sitting accommodations to those who

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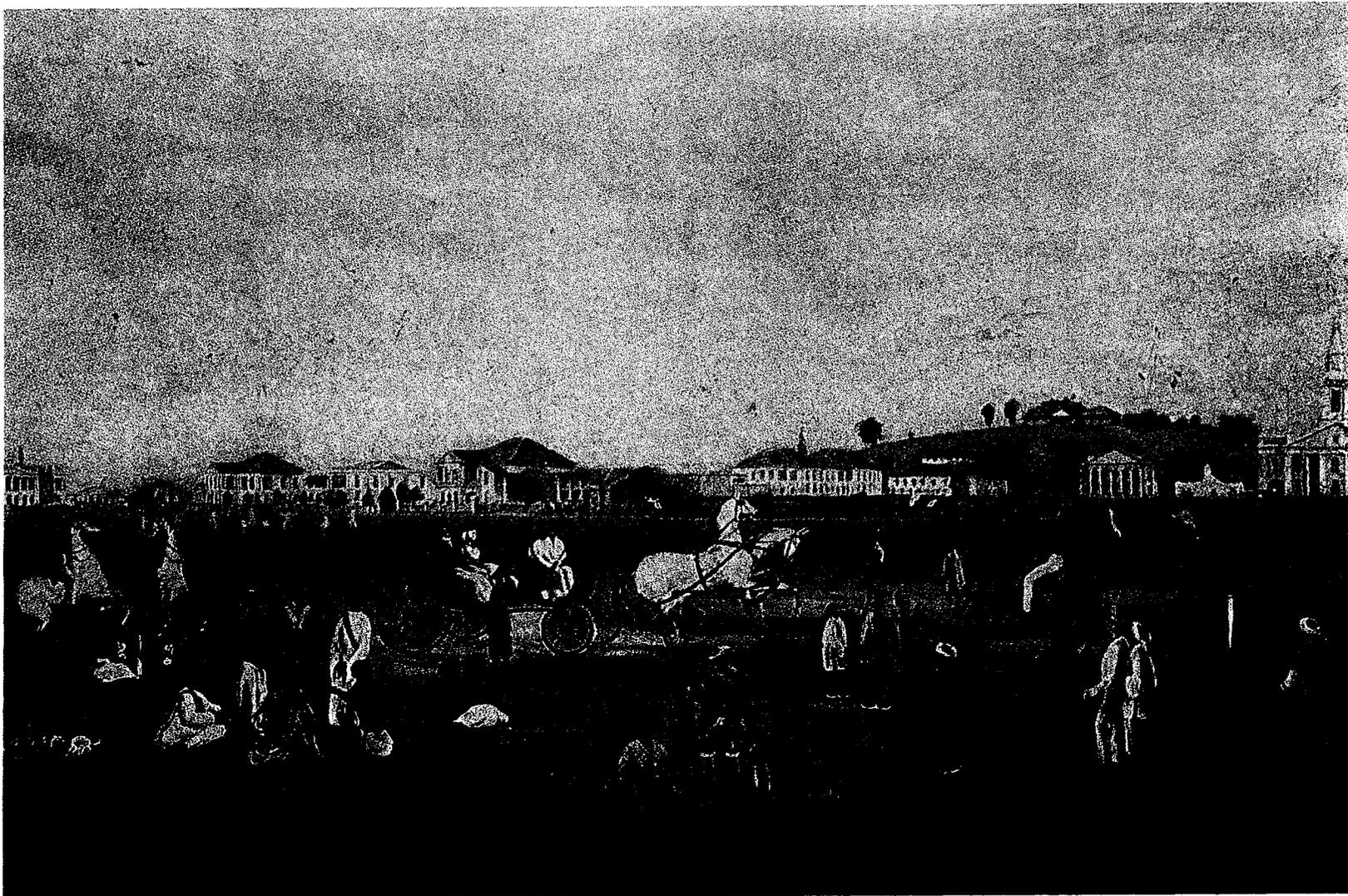


Figure 21. Esplanade at Scandal Point, 1851 by John Thomson as reprinted in John Hall-Jones and Christopher Hooi (1979) *An early Surveyor in Singapore* Singapore: National Museums, 126 or plate 47 and cover.

a general rendezvous was held...where the news was rattled over, and affairs of interest discussed. The various married couples would pass and re-pass the assembled group in their conveyances, and at times they would speak to acquaintances. All were known to each other, and on the whole, society kept on good terms.<sup>33</sup>

Charles Walter Kinloch, a Bengal civilian who, on his way to Java on a convalescence trip stopped in Singapore sometime in 1852. Scandal Point, he observed was an enclosed place between the Esplanade and the beach which was livened up by a regimental band twice a week but also where “beauty and fashion promenade daily” and “old women gather together to talk scandal, and their daughters to indulge in a little innocent flirtation.”<sup>34</sup> But gossiping bored European women were not the only dominant presence. According to Roland Braddell:

In the forties, the ordinary dinner hour was still from four to five, and the fashionable hour for exercise was from five till dusk. The ride or drive was invariably finished off by a few turns on the esplanade. Two select bodies of local politicians used to foregather every evening at Scandal Point and ‘heard much argument’. Their inquisitive eyes used to turn towards Tanjung Tangkap<sup>35</sup> to see who was going to or coming from that center of hospitality. Singapore has always dearly loved its gossip.<sup>36</sup>

Of the multicultural Esplanade, George Milmay Dare wrote in 1856 of pariah dogs chasing down the horses and “Chinese and Tamil processions”:

Imagine an immense procession of priests ‘togged’ to the nines in silk tights and satin jackets, armed with huge fans, accompanied by innumerable coolies and others carrying gigantic banners of silk and large paper lanterns, the musical (?) part of the procession consisting of men hammering away at large gongs, whilst others nearly spit themselves blowing an inconceivable variety of droning reed instruments and horns.<sup>37</sup>

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came to the Esplanade for gossip or fresh air, and from this cause the place came to be called ‘Scandal Point’.

33. Thomson (1864/1991), 202-203.

34. Charles Walter Kinloch (1852) *The Singapore Chapter of Zieke Reiziger; or Rambles in Java and the Straits in 1852 by a Bengal Civilian*. London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co. republished 1984 by Antiques of the Orient, Singapore, 2.

35. Interestingly the direct translation for *Tanjong Tangkap* is Catch Cape, *Tanjung*, being Cape and *Tangkap*, being catch.

36. Braddell “The Merry Past” in *Makepeace*, V.II, 486.

37. *Makepeace*, V. II, 545. This section is written by a Mrs G.P. Owen and is entitled “A Mid-Century Diary.”

The painting does convey what Kinloch and Dare describe, from the dogs to the mingling clusters of Europeans, Chinese, Malays, Arabs, and Klings<sup>38</sup> of all classes and status, in dress befitting custom and religion engaged in various pursuits – all in the same space. On the far left are two Kling women -- “unveiled Kling beauties”, one of them balancing a pitcher on her head, and considered by intrepid female traveler Isabella Bird as:

Tall and straight as arrows; their limbs are long and rounded; their appearance is timid—one might say modest—and their walk is poetry of movement. A tall graceful Kling woman, draped as I have described, gliding along the pavement, her statuesque figure the perfection of graceful ease, a dark pitcher on her head, just touched by the beautiful hand, showing the finely-moulded arm, is a beautiful object, classical in form, exquisite in movement, and artistic in colouring, a child of the tropic sun.<sup>39</sup>

A European and an Arab-type figure to the right of the painting are walking together, perhaps conducting business affairs, and to the distant left of the picture, a cricket game is being played. The figures in the stately carriage drawn by white horses, set in the

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38. Part of the Indian races. The group is as confusing as the Chinese plus the added complexity of the caste system as well as the category of convicts. See Sharon Siddique and Nirmala Puru Shotam (1982) *Singapore's Little India: Past, Present and Future*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. However, natives of India include here immigrants from Coromandel Coast, Malabar and Bengal. So the main immigration from India happened to be Chuliahs, Tamils, and Bengalis. Northern Indians were referred to as 'Bengalis' while the 'Klings' were the natives of the Coromandel coast of India. There is some confusion here. The term Kling is considered 'derogatory' referring to the Kingdom of Kalinga in Southern India. The Northern Indians referred to them as 'Chuliahs'. The 'Kling' term was used because the convict population was mainly from Southern India. The Chuliahs were however one of the more enterprising groups in early Singapore, and Raffles's placement of their 'town' in the Chinatown vicinity was planned along the lines of 'commercial' considerations. Immigrant Chuliahs were mostly businessmen, merchants and administrators. Naraina Pillai who started the first brick-kiln business on the island, and who became the Indian community leader, worked in the treasury initially. The Chuliahs usually tackled what the Chinese would not do. Cuthbert Collingwood, Physician and Natural Scientist, wrote of the Klings and Chinese as rival races in commerce in 1866 and 1867 – both races active and industrious as merchants and traders. Isabella Bird however saw them as less quicksighted. Isabella Bird (1879/1967) *The Golden Chersonese* Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 115. Klings were also carriage drivers, grooms, and washer-folk. The laundry business was monopolized by the Singapore Dhobies, mostly Kling men. Collingwood, like Isabella Bird saw Kling women as “dark beauties.” Cuthbert Collingwood (1868) *Rambles of a Naturalist on the Shores and Waters of the China Sea*. London: John Murray, 243-7.

39. Bird, 117.

middle of the esplanade, are presumed to be Governor Butterworth and his wife. Hardly a masterpiece in the age of J. M.W. Turner, and if we can forgive the clumsy amateurish brushstrokes, Thomson's picture offers more in its subject than in its aesthetic qualities.

While Thomson's painting provides a valuable glimpse into the social life of mid-nineteenth century Singaporean, what is of interest here are the buildings flanking the esplanade. The background includes no less than six buildings designed by Coleman, among them, Government House presiding over the hustle and bustle below, and the first St. Andrews Church (1835-1837),<sup>40</sup> which was demolished in 1856. An elegant classical

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40. Through no fault of Coleman. Rather it was John Thomson who put a steeple on the original design to please the Bishop of Calcutta in 1842 during Coleman's absence (he was convalescing in England). Bishop Wilson had visited Singapore in October 1842 for the third time. On his first visit, subscriptions were raised for the building of the church, the second time, he consecrated the church and the third time, perhaps moved by Christopher Wren's city of spires, he sent out the following circular dated October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1842:

The Bishop of Calcutta [Daniel Wilson] takes the liberty of circulating the paper with the view of ascertaining how far it may be agreeable to the gentry of this station to complete the beautiful and commodious body of their church by the addition of a small but appropriate tower and spire, such as shall distinguish the sacred edifice from secular buildings in a manner usual in all parts of India, as well as at home. At present the church may be mistaken for a Town Hall, a College or an Assembly Room. The strangers resorting to this great emporium of commerce have no means of knowing for what it is destined. By the erection of a tower and a spire, rising about 50 feet above the balustrade of the roof, its sacred design will be manifested, and the surrounding heathen will see the honour we put upon our religion, and the care we take to mark the reverence for the solemn worship of Almighty God by the appropriate distinctions of its outward appearance.....The new Cathedral at Calcutta will have a tower and spire 200 feet high. The Scotch churches at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay have noble spires. Nor is there any station in the territories of the East India Company so likely to rise into distinguished importance as Singapore; the vicinity of which to China and the accessions of commerce which may be expected from the blessings of peace, just established in that Empire, render such an Act of piety as the due completion of their Church peculiarly appropriate. (Buckley, 290)

The addition of the steeple created much grief and rancor, especially from Governor Butterworth which could have been the cause of Thomson's dislike of Butterworth. The church was twice struck by lightning as a result of lightning conductors being omitted from the construction and the services were discontinued in 1854 as the building became structurally dangerous. Hancock, 31. A new cathedral was designed by Lt. Col. Ronald MacPherson, Executive Engineer and Superintendent of Convicts in Singapore from 1855-57, with the aid of convicts, and completed in 1861. The new design is modeled

Doric building adapted to the climate and made of stucco, Coleman's design for the first St. Andrews Church at -- appropriately, Coleman Street -- included the use of twenty-foot wide porticos enclosing carriage roads. The building, with its subsequent additions -- and omissions, mainly lightning conductors, could not survive the equatorial storms. On March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1856, Bishop Wilson laid the foundation stone for a new St. Andrews Church that was built in the English Gothic style and again attention was paid to the climate. The *porte-cochere* was placed under the steeple and ventilation was improved, to a point that sometime in 1889, a writer, Florence Caddy, remarked that the cooling method in the interior, which consisted of "thirty-two punkahs tugged by different strings by thirty-two Moorman, waving out of time...had a bewildering effect" thus making some people seasick.<sup>41</sup> Eurasian writer, Han Suyin, author of *A Many-Splendored Thing* and biographies of Chairman Mao<sup>42</sup> commented on the aloofness of the present St. Andrews but also described the cathedral as "a petrified wedding cake" adding a touch of "decorum and glacial dignity" to the tropical surroundings.<sup>43</sup>

Placed next to the original St. Andrews and the miniscule Armenian Church, there is the Ionic pillared mansion built between 1836-1837, for Coleman's Dutch-Javanese Eurasian mistress, Nyai Takoye Manuk, and their daughter, Meda Elizabeth.<sup>44</sup> Meda Elizabeth was born on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1829 and there is no record of her mother's name at the christening which was conducted at St. Andrews. Beyond the christening, Meda Elizabeth herself leaves no trace of her life. Across from Nyai Takoye Manuk's home is Coleman's own abode, famously known as Number 3, Coleman Street.

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1828, a 999-year lease was granted to Coleman for a site to build his own residence near the Esplanade. The expansive home was finished in May, 1829 and Coleman lived in it until he left Singapore in 1841. Number 3, Coleman Street was unusual—it had none of the extended-portico and Roman Doric columns Palladian framework but was more of a large piazza style two-storey home with airy verandahs and stables:

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after Netley Abbey, in Hampshire and called "pedestrian". Stamp, 166. Buckley provides an extensive account of the drama of St. Andrews, 286-300.

41. In Liu, 174.

42. *The Morning Deluge* and *Wind in the Tower*. Han Suyin stayed in Singapore – possibly between 1950-1960 where she was married for a time to a British Police officer. My mother's own memory of her – Han Suyin had lived a few houses down – was of her distant and reclusive nature.

43. In Liu, 180.

44. This was remodeled by Coleman in 1840 in the Regency manner, with a semi-circular projecting bay.

It was a large two-storeyed brick house, seven bays wide, with a depth of eight bays, in simple classical design, and with a double bay for the porch and porte-cochere. Tall, flat stuccoed pilasters are carried round the whole building supported on a deep plinth. The ground floor had a piazza treatment with round-headed openings.

Beautifully symmetrical with well-proportioned rooms, the interiors of deep coved ceilings are executed in the Georgian style along with decorations in the dining room of a frieze showing harps and shamrock leaves in low relief. It is despite the Georgian theme, a thoroughly Singaporean house, with its careful attention to coolness and shade, the uses of natural lighting through clerestories, venetian shutters instead of glass, Malacca tiles on the ground floor, Chinese bricks, and lime, granite and timber from Singapore itself. In 1841, Number 3, Coleman Street was leased by the enterprising Frenchman George Dutronquoy who turned it into the London Hotel which housed many travelers and residents, and also established the Theatre Royal on the ground floor of the hotel. Dutronquoy eventually moved his London Hotel to the former home of James Scott Clark, a merchant who worked with Alexander Guthrie, and Edward Boustead. William Farquahar had originally erected his residency there as well. It was better situated being the corner of High Street and the Esplanade.<sup>45</sup> Sometime in the 1880s, gambier and pepper trader, Tan Yeok Nee (1827-1902) moved into 3, Coleman Street until his magnificent but ill-fated Chinese-style house in Tank Road (today Clemenceau Avenue) house was built.<sup>46</sup> To the Chinese, Coleman Street was then called *Hiok-ni sin chiu au* (in

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45. After Dutronquay's mysterious disappearance in Muar, Johor, around 1845 his wife and son continued to run the hotel for several years. From 1857-1864, the proprietor was Madame Esperanza de Thune, and the hotel became known as Hotel L'Esperance. In 1865, a Frenchman named Casteleyans bought over the hotel, and moved his own hotel, the Hotel de l'Europe from Beach Road to the High Street address, buying over the adjacent house built by Dr. William Montgomerie, the government surgeon (who practiced between 1819 and 1843).

46. Song, 335. How Tank Road became Clemenceau Avenue was due to a need for a railway line up from Kranji and Pasir Panjang to Johor on the peninsular. The line ran along Tank Road, behind Orchard Road, to Cuppage Road and up to Bukit Timah Road until it reached the Johore Straits. Given the techniques of Feng Shui, railway lines would have been a bad omen, and this drove Tan Yeok Nee from his house. Nonetheless, the house became a home to the station master, and then, the St. Mary's House and School for Eurasian Girls, and in 1938, having been sold to the Church of England, it was leased to the Salvation Army as their Headquarters (which relocated to Bishan in 1991). In 1991, the adjacent Cockpit Hotel bought over the house. The house is remarkable for its use of traditional building methods, with unglazed roof-tiles, terracotta tiles, timber doors with elaborate panels depicting scenes from Chinese history and myths. See Lee, 79-81. There are European features as well such as Tuscan pilasters and French windows. When the tracks were taken up, the section from the end of Cuppage Road to Newton Circus became Clemenceau Avenue in the 1930s. See Marjorie Doggett (1955) *Characters of*

hokkien) or the 'at the back of Tan Yeok Nee's new house'.<sup>47</sup> At the corner of Coleman Street and the Esplanade was yet another Coleman production, the home of Thomas Church, Resident Councillor from 1837 to 1856. Thomas Church, who had a close working relationship with the Surveyor John Turnbull Thomson, was known to be the stalwart of Singaporean politics and a tireless civil worker but his ambition to the Governorship was shortlived due to rumours in Calcutta that he did not give good dinners.<sup>48</sup> It was Thomas Church who presented the first St. Andrew's Church with a clock but when the church was pulled down, the clock was relocated to the Court House (Maxwell's House) where it remained until 1901 when renovations were carried out. Thomas Church's home was eventually taken over by the Freemasons until about 1880 when the Masonic Lodge (known to the locals as *Rumah Hantu* or Ghost House) was relocated to the upper end of Coleman Street and Canning Rise. Church's house became part of the Hotel de l'Europe and was eventually bought up as municipality lands in 1899. Church Street in Chinatown is named after Thomas Church.

The houses gracing the esplanade and along Beach Road -- or in Cantonese, *Yi Shap Kan* (twenty houses road) -- eventually made way for other enterprises such as hotels and civic buildings in the 1880s. The last of the twenty compound houses belonged to the Portuguese Surgeon and Planter, Dr. Jose d'Almeida<sup>49</sup> in 1825 which was located near

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*Light Singapore: Times Books*, 67 and C. Gibson-Hill's "Short Notes." in *Memoirs of the Raffles Museum* #3, 1956, 251. See also Liu, 214.

47. Before Tan Yeok Nee moved in, the Chinese had referred to Coleman Street as *Chan Seng tai-ok fong pin* (Cantonese) or "Besides Chin Seng's pleasant big house" -- Chin Seng being the chop or stamp of prominent Singaporean Tan Kim Seng.

48. Thomas Church had actually served in the East -- Bencoolen, Penang and Malacca until 1835 when he retired and went back to England. He came out of retirement in 1837 to become Resident Councillor of Singapore under Governor Bonham who ironically was more junior in rank when Church was in Penang and acting as Police Magistrate and Assistant Resident. Known for his devotion to public duty and conscientious administration, Church however, was also dogged by accusations of illiberality and social incompetence. The reference to the dinner anecdote is a well-known one in which when Governor Bonham was asked about a bottle of fluid magnesia and his health, the Governor replied that he was going to Tom Church's for dinner. Church was competent and hardworking but there was a limited vision. Thomas Church resigned after nineteenth years of service in August 1856 and died in London at St. John's Wood on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1860. His widow returned to Singapore, where she died on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1884, and was known to the general public for her eccentric and miserly character. See Buckley, 325-329. Makepeace, V.I, 86.

49. Jose d'Almeida (November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1784 - October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1850) was a surgeon on a Portuguese ship. He resigned in 1824 and settled in Singapore in 1825 as a medical practitioner. His dispensary opened in Commercial Square and while he did practise his

Middle Road towards Kampong Glam, or more precisely, Lot 207.<sup>50</sup> The d'Almeida residence was known as the center of Singapore's social life, surfeit with music and goodwill. Broken by the noble pile of St. Andrews, the succession of grand old beach residences, kept snowy white with "pillared porticoes and balconies, and green-painted latticed doors and windows" with individual compounds and gardens, gave Singapore a pretty appearance viewed from the harbour. To John Cameron, writing around the mid-1860s, and for the purpose of selling Singapore to London in the event of the transfer from Indian rule – the scene is akin to the Arabian Nights:

It is a very fine sight from the beach to see these houses lit up at night, the brilliant argand lamps in use shedding a flood of light round the lofty white pillars and colonnades of the upper stories, while the lower parts of the buildings are hid by the shrubbery of the gardens in front. Every door and window is thrown open to admit the cool night breeze, and gathered round their tables, or lolling about in their easy chairs, may be seen the wearied travelers or residents, with the strange and often grotesque figures of their native servants flitting about with refreshments.

We have William Farquhar to thank for enabling such a view through his insubordination. Despite Raffles's original plans for the townsite, Farquhar had agreed with the merchants that godowns and warehouses would be ill-served on this part of the beach, and instead allowed them to build on the left bank of the river. The result was a quick re-visiting of the plans by Raffles and his advisors in 1822 -- and future provisions for an open public space running parallel to the beach and the sea, namely The Esplanade.<sup>51</sup>

A succession of residential establishments occupied the Coleman House and in 1865, the Hotel De La Paix opened. In an advertisement for the Reverend G. M. Reith's 1892 travelers' *Handbook to Singapore*, the Hotel De La Paix boasts of being a first class hotel

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other economic pursuits took precedent. Jose d'Almeida was a planter and experimented with planting vanilla, cotton and gamboges as well as sugar, and coconuts. In 1842, he was knighted by the Queen of Portugal and was appointed consul-general. Buckley provides extensive details of d'Almeida, 184-188.

50. Kampung Glam was once an extremely fashionable address with many of the main European merchants living there. See Makepeace, V.I, 526.

51. Land Allotment Committee #3 sub section #5. Reprinted in Buckley, 82. See Appendix # II.

Along this line of sea-face it will be expedient to preserve for the public all the space between the road which runs parallel to the beach and the sea, and generally deemed advisable in the neighbourhood of the Settlement to reserve an open space along the beach, excepting where it may be required by individuals for special purposes. With this view the Chinese artificers and others who have settled on the beach near Tulloh Ayer and Campong Glam will be required to remove from thence without delay.

**Hotel de Paix,**  
 3, Coleman Street, SINGAPORE.

**Large Cool Rooms. Comfortably Furnished.**  
 Close to Telegraph, Post and other offices. Runners meet all Steamers.



English, German, French and Dutch spoken.

**BEST WINES, BEERS & SPIRITS.**

Terms by Day, Week or Month

Proprietress Mrs. KAHLCKE.      Manager H. KAHLCKE.

Figure 22. Hotel de la Paix, 1930s (?) National Archives of Singapore

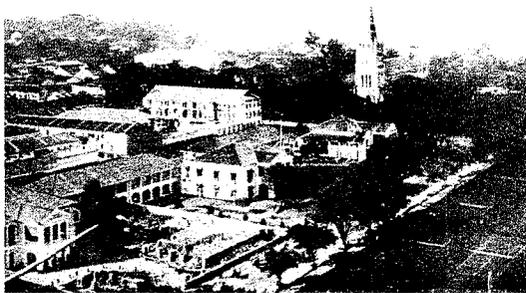


Figure 23. Hotel de l'Europe under construction, 1890 National Archives of Singapore

with comfortable amenities including telephonic communication throughout the city, unrivalled cuisine and first-class wines and spirits. It was supposedly in the Hotel 'taproom' that Captain William Lingard entertained Joseph Conrad in the 1880s with many a lively tale -- and was made immortal.<sup>52</sup> Number 3, Coleman Street was demolished in December 1965, occupied then by about a thousand squatters. In its place, in 1971, the twenty-one storey Peninsula Hotel, a rather prosaic concrete building incorporating a shopping complex on the first three floors was built.

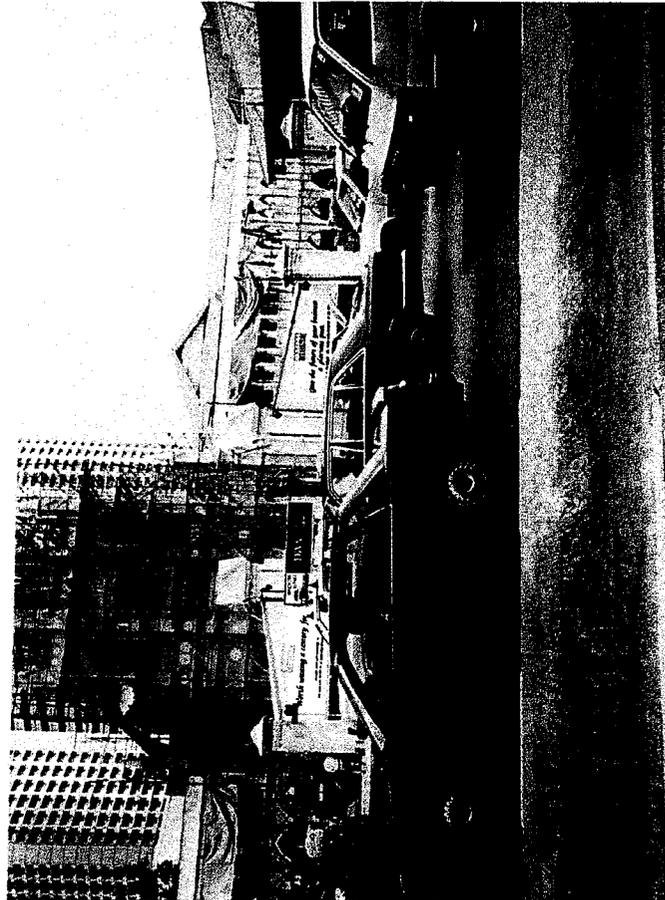
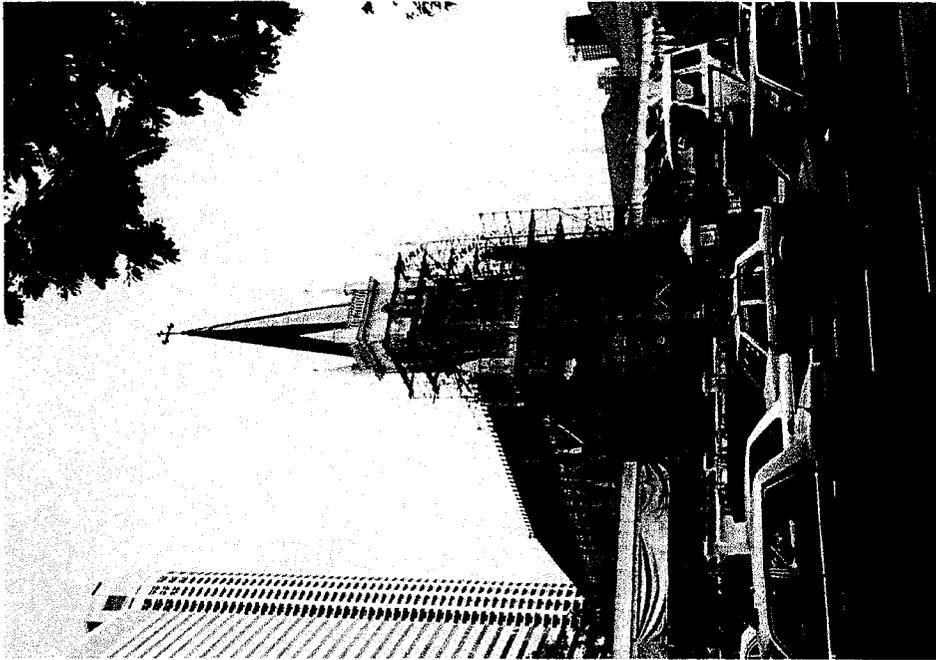
Several of Coleman's buildings remain in Singapore today. The original Raffles Institution located at Beach Road, facing the sea on five acres of ground was initiated by Lt. Philip Jackson under Raffles's instruction in 1823. The building was never completed, and even in 1832, was in a ruinous state. In 1836, and with donations from Siamese noblemen, the building was restored, with additional wings and completed by Coleman in 1841.<sup>53</sup> Raffles's original plans for the building as a center for the study of Asian civilizations were never fulfilled and it instead became a prestigious boys school, aimed at preparing young men of all races and nationalities for higher education in Britain. Among the school's finest graduates were Straits Chinese community leader Dr. Lim Boon Keng who in 1887,<sup>54</sup> was the first recipient of *The Queen's Scholarship*, and went

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52. As Captain Tom Lingard and also in Malay, *Rajah Laut* (king of the sea) in Conrad's *Outcast of the Sea* (1896), *Almayer's Folly* (1895), in the short story *The End of the Tether*. There is no clear evidence that William Lingard ever met Conrad, let alone at number #3 Coleman Street. Norman Sherry argues that the two men never met since by the time Conrad first set foot in Singapore in 1883, Lingard was already in his last year as Master of a ship. See Norman Sherry, (1966) *Conrad's Eastern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 116-118. While Conrad might have known Lingard's nephews Jim and Joshua, the wealth of information he had collected regarding the *Rajah Laut* must have been second-hand narratives for Lingard was a legend in those seas. Jim Lingard, at the end of the day, is possibly a composite character. Certainly *Lord Jim* is a composite character based on James Brooke, A. P. Williams (a Captain), and William Lingard.

53. A three-storey block on the right was added sometime in 1875-6 -- an architectural disruption to the harmonious two-storey building with Coleman's signature carriage porches and mixed orders.

54. The Queen's/King's Scholarship was awarded to the student with the highest grades. In 1887, that student was actually Song Ong Siang who went on to write his 1967 *One Hundred Years of Chinese in Singapore*. (Singapore: University of Malaya Press.) Song did not qualify because he was under age, and too young to be admitted into university. Lim Boon Keng received the next highest marks and went on to become one of the most distinguished members of the community, both Chinese and European, but really quintessentially Singaporean. Song, 235. He was a powerful advocate of both the British Empire and Straits Chinese identity and saw no contradiction in such a stance. He saw the Straits Chinese as one of the many groups constituting the fabric of Empire.



Figures 24 and 25. CHIJMES, during construction in 1996 (Personal Photograph)

on to win First Class Honours in medicine at Edinburgh. Another prominent graduate was Lee Kwan Yew who studied law at Cambridge and became the first Prime Minister of Singapore. When the Raffles Institution was moved to its present location, Coleman's building was demolished in 1972, making way for the concrete, steel and glass Raffles City Complex project designed by I. M. Pei. Some buildings like the Armenian Church have been restored. Among the standing buildings are supposedly, the Istana (palace) at Kampung Glam (1836-1843), where the Malay royal family once resided,<sup>55</sup> and the Caldwell House (1841/2?) which became part of the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus,<sup>56</sup> and is today restored as part of CHIJMES,<sup>57</sup> a commercial complex comprising expensive boutique shops and restaurants. Beyond the usual attention to proportions and ventilations, the most distinctive features of Caldwell House was an elegant loggia and the semi-circular projection which faces Victoria Street. When Caldwell House was sold to Father Beurel, the place became a school and residence for girls, managed by four intrepid nuns of the French Catholic Mission. The upstairs bay became the sisters' lounge and on the upper frieze, the motto: *Marche en ma presence et sois parfait* (walk along with me and be perfect) still remains. Eventually, an orphanage and a magnificent stained-glass gothic style chapel (now CHIJMES hall) was added.<sup>58</sup>

Lost in endless reconstruction and additions, is Coleman's original design for the controversial private dwelling (1826-1827) of the merchant John Argyll Maxwell<sup>59</sup>

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55. Most books I have consulted have not verified that this is a Coleman design although the familiar touches are there. In his book, *The Singapore House*, Lee Kip Lin contends that there are attributes that are similar to other Coleman designs but otherwise the edifice is a simple three-bay bungalow and its origins are questionable.

56. The Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus girls school was relocated in 1983. In 1984, a portion of the school was demolished for state purposes, and CHIJMES was tendered off as a commercial complex.

57. H.C, Caldwell was Senior Sworn Clerk to the Magistrates of Singapore. The house remained in Caldwell's hands until 1852 when it was sold to Father Jean-Marie Beurel for \$4,000 Spanish dollars. Caldwell absconded with 150,000 from the settlement which he later paid back. It is today part of CHIJMES and restored,

58. The rest of the school buildings were built around these Caldwell House, the orphanage and the Chapel.

59. John Argyll Maxwell was a successful merchant who had done well in Java. He arrived in Singapore sometime as early as 1822 to establish a branch office of G. Maclaine & Co. of Batavia (he was a partner) and applied to build on land on or near the north-east bank of the Singapore River (or North Boat Quay) as allotted by Raffles's town plan. This took place when Raffles was back in Bencoolen and William Farquhar was left in charge. The problem was that this was land actually allotted for Government

originally built on land allotted by Raffles's Town Plan of 1822.<sup>60</sup> The elegant Palladian mansion finished in Madras Chunam stucco with the obvious Coleman touches of loggias, porticos, Doric pilasters and columns, bamboo and rattan blinds is today the Parliament House, the oldest government building on the island located on number 1, High Street. According to John Cameron in the early 1860s, the then thirty-five year old building was "not a bit worse for its age."

It is a large graceful building with a fine display of pillars and porticoes, and by its size and elegance shows that as far back as the date of its foundation the old Company had foreshadowed the greatness to which Singapore would arise. It is now used as the treasury, the land-office, and the resident councillor's office.

Having numerous incarnations, the building was never occupied by Maxwell but was appropriated for the judiciary as a Court House and as government offices at various times. It was leased to the government as a Court House and other purposes as early as 1827 at 500 rupees a month. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1829, it was sold to two merchants, John Cockerell and George Gerard Larpent. Thirteen years later in 1841, Guthrie and Co. placed it on auction and Mr. Thomas Church, on behalf of the Government, purchased the building for \$15,600. On October 10<sup>th</sup> 1842, the building was transferred to Governor Bonham on account of the East India Company.<sup>61</sup> The renovations began in 1875 when an extension was added by Major McNair, and subsequent additions and remodeling followed in 1901, 1909 and 1954-55.

More significantly, the renovations to Maxwell's house and the Parliament House traced not only the rise of the settlement but the intersections of cultural influences as Singapore found its way in the world. From the Palladian/Classical revival at the turn of the nineteenth century, Maxwell's House was transformed in the 1870s into a building that was eclectic and described as "modern French classical" as inspired by the Ecole des

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use but William Farquhar, had previously acceded to merchants who thought the original land designated for commercial uses at the north beach (near the esplanade) was inconvenient due to the surf. Farquhar allowed the merchants to build on the north bank of the river but with a warning to move if necessary. Maxwell had hoped that Crawford, the new Resident after Farquhar would reverse the government decision. Nonetheless, despite the bureaucratic tussle and the uncertainty -- the house, under Coleman's supervision, was built. Maxwell never settled in Singapore, quite likely frustrated by the process of setting up his home and business, and was in Singapore intermittently till September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1828. Fearing that the government might appropriate his house, Maxwell offered his home for government uses. Maxwell left for Europe in 1828 and in 1831, sold all his holdings in Java and retired in Scotland. The details of Maxwell's house and the bureaucratic exchange are reconstructed from EIC correspondence by Lee Kip Lin (1988) *The Singapore House 1819-1942*. Singapore: Times Books, 144-147.

60. The entire town plan is reprinted in detail in Buckley, 79-87. See also Appendix II.

61. Buckley, 341. Also see Buckley, 199.

Beaux Arts.<sup>62</sup> By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the building integrated Edwardian utility into its spaces – mainly two lofty and well-ventilated unfussy court rooms. It began to take on its modern administrative identity as a public building. As Lee Kip Lin points out after the 1860s, most architects took the liberty to play with, and combine various architectural styles from different spaces and times.<sup>63</sup> Taking its cue from the Picturesque Movement circa 1750 to 1830s, the building was seen as a picturesque element that was integrated into the landscape. A form of early postmodern architecture, asymmetries and irregularities were natural and expected. Across the Empire, the picturesque or hybridized versions of the classical form took on the description of vernacular architecture -- a montage of styles and homegrown – a rich imperial idiom shaped by the lay of the land.

George Drumgoole Coleman remained long enough in Singapore to have built up half the landscape of early Singapore, and set the versatile architectural tone of Colonial eclecticism – quite naturally in line with the rest of the Empire. As Jan Morris writes, Singapore had grown up in the image of Calcutta. Coleman’s hybrid Palladian and Georgian architecture involved spacious verandahs, louvred windows, bamboo blinds and venetian shutters, Malacca bricks and tiles, local timber, and stuccoed brick plastered with glistening white Madras Chunam which was:

Shell lime without sand; but with this lime...had whites of eggs and coarse sugar, or ‘jaggery’ beaten together to form a sort of paste, and mixed with water in which the husks of coconuts had been steeped. The walls were plastered with this composition, and after a certain period for drying, were rubbed with rock crystal or rounded stone until they took a beautiful polish, being occasionally dusted with fine soapstone powder and so leaving a remarkably smooth and glossy surface.<sup>64</sup>

Coleman’s versatility and ability to improvise his designs reflected the needs of a young settlement, and his buildings ranged from tasteful godowns with roman columns and pilasters, and shophouses to private homes and churches. He worked with Raffles on the planning of the town, the laying out of roads, and on the most enduring legacy across the Malay lands: the five-foot covered walkway. Raffles’s original instructions on the frontage of brick and tiled houses was that each house’s verandah must be of a certain depth, be open at all times as continued and covered passage on each side of the street to provide shelter from the elements.<sup>65</sup> Certainly when Coleman built the first row of brick shophouses, he incorporated the five-foot walkway that has become the main

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62. Liu, 4.

63. Lee, 57-59.

64. Buckley, 294. Madras Chunam apparently set so hard that it was impossible to drive a nail through it.

65. Set out as clause 18 in the 1822 Town Plan. See Appendix II.

architectural motif of shophouses across Singapore and Malaysia. However, as in many spaces allotted for 'public use', the five-foot walkway became a much contested space and the locus for cultural clashes.<sup>66</sup> It was Coleman who first utilized convict labour, and laid out North Bridge Road and South Bridge Road (1833-1835) when he was Superintendent of Public Works and carried out a comprehensive topographical survey of Singapore in 1829. Coleman, along with the lawyer William Napier and Edward Boustead also formed the *Singapore Free Press* and *Mercantile Advertiser*, which started its first print run on October 1835.

Essentially, early Singapore was Coleman's Singapore. He had built and laid out an extensive and viable city space with civic buildings grouped around a large plain, known in Malay as the *Padang*. Despite further land reclamations, the widening of roads, the addition of Connaught Drive, a cricket pavilion on the lush esplanade and the verdant Queen Elizabeth Walk with the statue of the Merlion standing vigilant over the harbour, the original structure of Coleman's town planning vision still remains.

In 1841, Coleman fell ill and on the advice of his doctor, he left Singapore on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1841 on the barque *Midlothian* for more temperate climes after fifteen years in Singapore and twenty-five years in the East. He traveled on the continent and then went to London where he met and married Maria Frances Vernon on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1842. Coleman was 46 years old and she was 21. For one reason or another, Coleman returned to Singapore in November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1843 with his pregnant wife. Coleman had with him, when he returned to Singapore in 1843, plans for an extensive Italianate villa, based on the mansions he had seen in Belgravia Square, London – designed with tropical adaptations in mind to combat the heat. A son was born December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1843 -- and exactly three months after, on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1844, George Drumgoole Coleman, after a brief period of illness, died at age 48 and was buried in the old Christian cemetery at Fort Canning where his rather imposing gravesite remains today.<sup>67</sup> Maria Frances, the grieving widow, remarried six

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66. Not all good intentions are understood nor are climatic considerations universal. The covered passage was a locus of cultural grievances, contested by those who saw the five-foot walkway as anything but shelter and public flow. A letter to the *Singapore Free Press* in 1843 sums up the problem: "Why are the verandahs in Kling Street, and in fact in almost every streets, allowed to be choked up with the wares of Klings and Chinese, thereby preventing people form walking under them?" See Buckley, 387. The issue was revisited constantly by the governing authorities. It was not merely storage of goods that created obstruction but verandahs provided vendor space for small stalls and small shops. Any forced removal without compensation or relocation to equally profitable spaces could create problems. On February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1888, the Verandah Riots broke out when Municipal inspectors moved in to clear the verandahs in Arab Street, Rochore Road and Clyde Terrace Market. The disturbance, led by the coolie class, or *samsengs* as Song Ong Siang carefully points out, spread across town and the damage was considerable including physical harm directed at Europeans. Song, 239-240.

67. H.A. Stallwood (1912) "The Old Cemetary on Fort Canning, Singapore." JSBRAS #61, 77-126.

and half months later on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1844 to Coleman's friend William Napier, the successful and amiable conveyance lawyer, who was nicknamed 'Royal Billy' due to his swagger.<sup>68</sup> Napier adopted Coleman's infant son, George Vernon Coleman Napier, who went on to a distinguished career in the army, dying in an accident in India in 1890. William Napier retired from the East in 1857 after a distinguished career. Napier Road is named after him and the road led to his house and his estate, Tyersall, which was built in 1854 and later replaced by New Tyersall (or Istana Tyersall), the Sultan Abu Bakar of Johor's (1831-1895)<sup>69</sup> palatial Singapore residence.

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68. William Napier, though a merchant by profession, was Singapore's first law agent and admitted in 1833. He was also the first Freemason to be initiated at Singapore's Lodge Zetland in 1845. It was at Napier's residence that Admiral Keppel first met James Brooke in 1843. William Napier named his first born (to his first wife) James Brooke but tragedy struck the family and the boy was found dead at the age of five months sometime in early 1848. The wedding ceremony of Napier and Coleman's widow Maria Frances was probably quite understated. Keppel must have been present since he wrote about how it rained, and that the well-matched pair had tiffin at Joseph Balestier's residence. Napier's eldest daughter, Catherine, by his first wife, married Hugh Low, later Sir Hugh Low -- who became the British Resident in Perak, Malaya. Napier became Lieutenant-Governor of Labuan in 1848 and the first Chairman of the Straits Settlements Association founded on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1868.

69. The politics of succession is very complicated and bound up with the politics of the times. Sultan Abu Bakar (1835-1895) was the eldest son Temenggung Ibrahim, the second son of Temenggung Abdul Rahman. Ibrahim was a mere fifteen years of age when he ascended the throne in 1825. Abu Bakar had succeeded his father in 1862. He was not Sultan then. Because the British and the Dutch recognized two different titular holders, both Sultans being half-brothers. In actual fact the Malays of Singapore and Johor looked to the Temenggung and his family for leadership. The Temenggung was a territorial chief. In the 1840s, Raja Ali, the son of Sultan Hussein of Johor, and whom the British recognized as the titular holder, petitioned to be formally recognized but this divided the merchant community in Singapore, since half of the merchants were supportive of the Temenggung and his claim to Johor. In 1855, through British arbitration, Raja Ali was granted the fief of Muar and the Temenggung, Johor proper. When Abu Bakar became Temenggung in 1862, he impressed the British with his open and liberal style and was recognized as 'Maharaja' in 1868. Eventually, Sultan Ali of Muar died and the title lapsed. Thus in 1885, having renegotiated Johore's autonomy, Abu Bakar was recognized as Sultan. Highly Westernized, and a generous figure, Sultan Abu Bakar was an active player in the Singapore social scene, and was well loved by both the European population and his native subjects. The *Illustrated London News* even carried two articles on the good Sultan on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1866 and February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1891. He also received a host of foreign orders, including the K.C.S.I. (Knight Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India) and the G.C.M.G. (Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George). He was known to have kept a splendid stud of horses, played cricket and

The first meeting of the Singapore Automobile Club took place at New Tyersall estate in June 1907<sup>70</sup> -- quite possibly under the patronage of the Sultan of Johor. Among the cars displayed there were the H. H. Sultan of Johor's speedy 70 h.p. "Mercedes" and Charles Buckley's 5 h.p. 'coffee machine', the first automobile or 'motor volocipede' introduced in 1896 to Singapore's thoroughfares.<sup>71</sup> Mrs. G. M. Dare (later, Mrs. G. P. Owen),<sup>72</sup> the first lady motorist (her first car was a 12 h.p. two cylinder Star) would have been present, and quite likely as well, her Malay Chauffeur, Hassan bin Mohammed, the first Malay driver -- trained by Mrs. Dare herself. By 1907, New Tyersall was unoccupied, having suffered a fire which razed a significant portion of the mansion.

In March 1857, Boustead and Co. advertised for sale, Tyersall, William Napier's estate and house in the Tanglin area which covered sixty-seven acres of land. Sometime in 1860, the property was purchased by Sultan Abu Bakar of Johor, grandson of Temenggung Abdul Rahman who had negotiated with Raffles the Singapore in 1819. Napier's house was demolished to make way for the construction of New Tyersall in 1890. The house was completed in 1892, and the Sultan held such a grand housewarming reception that the *Singapore Free Press* provided details of the architecture and fittings of the house. The rectangular building measured 210 feet long by 174 feet deep, was in the "Corinthian style of architecture... with a red tiled roof"<sup>73</sup> and a seventy-foot high tower in the center topped by the Sultan's symbolic star and crescent. Among its key features were a spacious projected carriage porch, a grand staircase with ornamental iron balustrades, a grand reception room, a ball room, a billiard room -- and it was fitted with

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billiards -- and was a good sportsman. He died in London in 1895 and was succeeded by his son Ibrahim, considered equally enlightened and popular. Braddell, in *Makepeace*, V.II, 522.

70. *Makepeace*, V.II, 362. The association was formed in 1907 with H. E. Sir John Anderson, K.C.M.G., Governor of the Straits Settlements, as President. The membership was 56.

71. Consider the progress of transportation -- the last horse auctions were held in Raffles Square in 1886. In 1917, 2067 motor-cars crossed Anderson Bridge in twelve hours. But in 1917, 1,006 bullock carts crossed Institution Bridge near Raffles Hotel in twelve hours, compared to 563 in 1910. The ordinance to regulate motors came in 1911.

72. G. P. Owen was the president of the Singapore Cricket Club and an avid tiger hunter. Mrs Dare married G.P. Owen after George M. Dare (born 1840) died in December 1907 in Foochow. Both men held the post of Secretary of the Cricket Club. Mr. Dare joined the Singapore Cricket Club in 1858. Mrs. G.P. Owen's tribute to her late first husband is found in *Makepeace*, V.II, 542-559.

73. As quoted from *The Singapore Free Press* in Lee, 174-175.

electric light. The installation of electricity was hailed by the *Free Press* as indicative of an improvement of “domestic civilization, and a marked step in the industrial progress of the Colony.” Interior-wise, the fanlights were Arabsque in design, the wood used was teak and ironwood and the building had altogether 420 doors. New Tyersall, according to Lee Kip Lin, architect and author of *The Singapore House*, was one of the grandest homes built in the Victorian Eclectic idiom, combining not only gothic and classical motifs, but also some Indo-Saracenic elements into the design. In his welcoming speech, Sultan Abu Bakar announced the plans for the house had been approved by his late wife, the Sultana, and executed by the Malay architect, Datoh Yayah. Typically Singaporean, New Tyersall had a cosmopolitan character. The iron-work had been carried out mainly by the local engineering firm of Howarth Erskine,<sup>74</sup> and some portion of it by H.C. Hogan, the contractor was Mr. Wong Ah Fook from Johore, and the upholstery was provided by John Little and Co., the “finest Store East of Suez.”<sup>75</sup> Once home to drag hunts until the sultry weather outdid the imported English hounds, New Tyersall was

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74. Howarth, Erskine and Co. was an engineering firm located somewhere in River Valley Road, and established sometime in the 1870s and was originally Howarth, Lyon and Erskine until Mr. J.M. Lyon left and started a business for himself in 1878. Its main rivals was Riley, Hargreaves and Co., eventually, Singapore’s first ice-makers Makepeace, V.II, 199 and 538-539.

75. Advertised as such, John Little and Co. has a rich history in Singapore. They are perhaps, the most Singaporean of firms and remain today as a popular department store in Orchard Road. John Little was part of four Littles originally, Dr. Robert, John Martin, Matthew and Robert Little. Dr Robert Little and D. Oxley were both responsible for calling attention to Gutta Percha in 1845 although it was supposedly Dr. Montgomerie, the Assistant Surgeon who ‘discovered’ it. They were all in some ways very involved in Singaporean town administration, especially Dr. Robert Little who sat on the committee for the New Town Hall, and approved the Dalhousie Obelisk as designed by John Thomson in 1850. It is now located on the patch of green, obscured by trees in Empress Place, near Anderson Bridge, its third site after removals in 1886 and 1891. It is interesting to note here as well that the Dalhousie Obelisk is inspired by Cleopatra’s Needle on the Thames Embankment, and was built to commemorate the Marquis of Dalhousie’s (then Governor General of India) second visit to Singapore in February 1850. It was also built to remind merchants of the benefits of free trade. Unfortunately, the obelisk has suffered criticisms over the years as to its purpose and aesthetic qualities, i.e. Roland Braddell’s “masterpiece of ugliness.”

John Little and Co, was established in 1853 after John Martin Little dissolved his partnership with the Parsee merchant Cursetjee Fromerzee, and was joined by Matthew Little. The Limited company was formed in 1900, and their store, which had a spacious tearoom and was a popular meeting place, was located in Raffles Place (once Commercial Square). Makepeace, V. II, 203-204, 215.



Figure 26. John Little, late 19<sup>th</sup> C. (National Archives of Singapore)



Figure 27. John Little, 1910s (National Archives of Singapore)

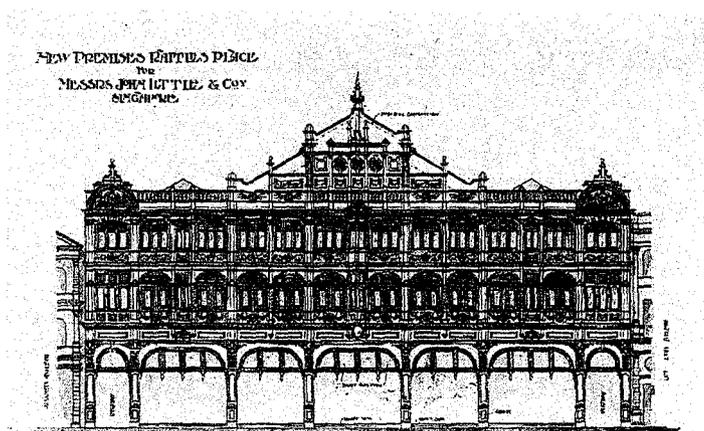


Figure 28. John Little, 1910 (National Archives of Singapore)

destroyed by a fire reported at 2:45 am on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1905. The cause of the fire was faulty electrical wiring.

Beyond the simple and useful provision for shade and protection -- or even "messaging around,"<sup>76</sup> verandahs can be inspiring. Noel Coward did not write *Mad Dogs and Englishmen* when he was in Singapore but he must have put the finishing touches to the song on the cast iron verandah with the view of the sea at the Raffles Hotel in 1930 while his companion Jeffrey Amherst was recovering from dysentery.

During that holiday, I think my spirits reached their lowest ebb on the first evening spent in Singapore. I sat on the verandah of the hotel slipping a gin-sling and staring at the muddy sea. There was a thunderstorm brewing and the airless heat pressed down on my head. I felt as though I were inside a hot cardboard box which was growing rapidly smaller and smaller, until soon I should have to give up all hope of breathing and die of suffocation.<sup>77</sup>

He might have even conceived of how *Private Lives* should be directed from that spot, handing out advice to Gertrude Lawrence in letters and telegraphs.<sup>78</sup> Certainly Noel

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76. Jan Morris (1994) *Stones of Empire*. London: Penguin, 36.

77. See Noel Coward (1986) *The Autobiography of Noel Coward*. London: Methuen, pp. 222-226. By the time Noel Coward arrived in Singapore sometime in the early 1930s, he was already quite fraught by his Far Eastern journey. 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen' was conceived during the horrendous car ride along the coasts of Saigon, without pen and paper, and sang triumphantly to Jeffrey Amherst to a chorus of tree frogs. His companion Jeffrey Amherst was stricken by an amoebic dysentery in Vietnam and was quite emaciated when they both arrived in Singapore. Amherst had taken ill again and was placed in the Hospital immediately in Singapore. Coward, quite likely over-concerned, feared the worst for his friend. Fortunately, Amherst recovered but was hospitalized for a month, and Coward decided to explore Singaporean society. He met up with an English theatrical touring company called 'The Quaints' and made lifelong friends and colleagues. Persuaded to play the moody and sensitive Stanhorpe in R. C. Sheriff's World War One drama, *Journey's End* for three performances at the Victoria Theatre, Singaporean society was ablaze with excitement by that prospect. Unfortunately, Noel Coward's debut was disastrous and in his own words, he took a "fine part in a fine play and [threw] it down the alley". Naturally, he did not receive positive reviews, and according to him, Singapore treated him badly. From Singapore, Coward and Amherst traveled north via Kuala Lumpur and Penang, and from Penang they took a ship to Ceylon, meeting up not only with Noel's brother, but Linda and Cole Porter, and were subjected to Cole Porter's home movies which sent Amherst to sleep. Also see Philip Hoare (1995) *Noel Coward, a Biography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 215-216.

78. Coward, 226.

Postcards from the Raffles Hotel

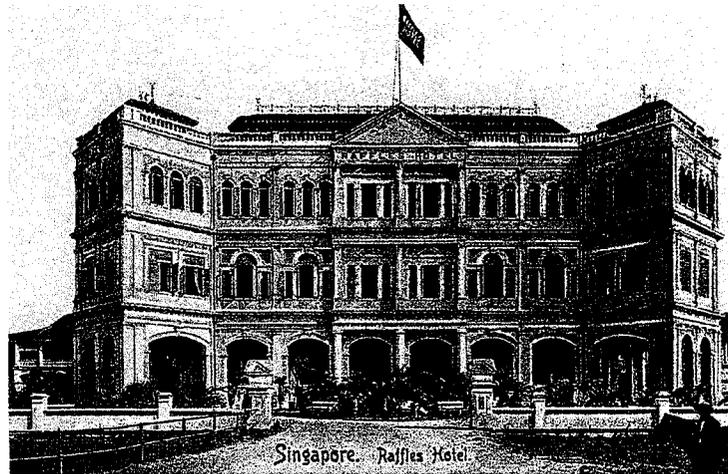


Figure 29. Raffles Hotel 1900 (Raffles Hotel Collection)

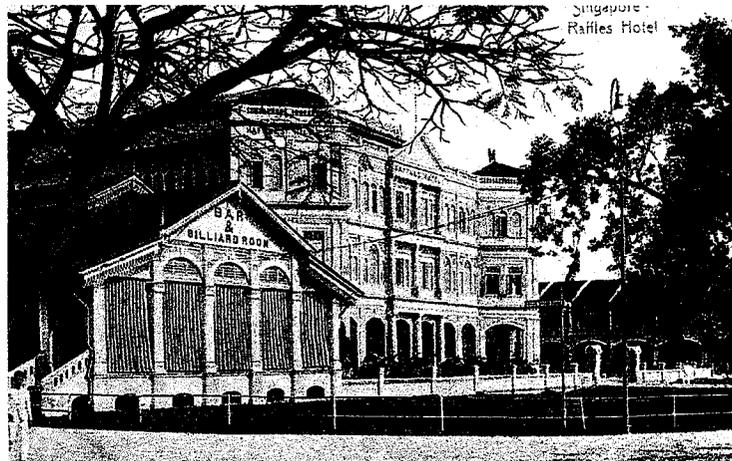


Figure 30. Raffles Hotel, 1907 (Raffles Hotel Collection)

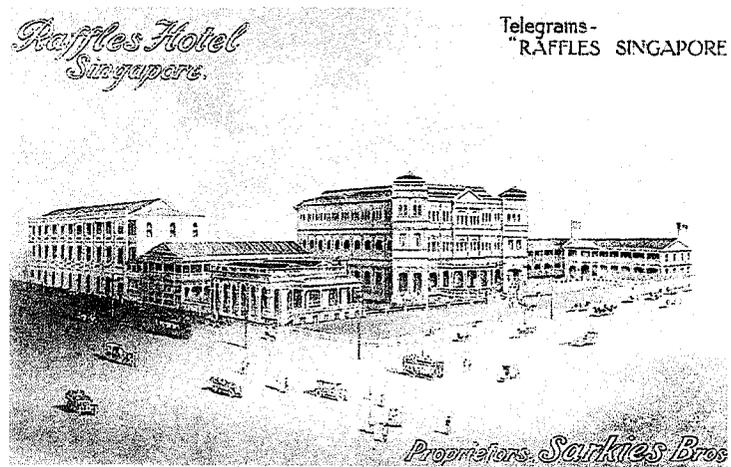


Figure 31. Raffles Hotel, 1915 (Raffles Hotel Collection)

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Coward's presence in Singapore excited and bristled the local society especially the puritan Lady Clementi (the wife of Sir Cecil Clementi, the Governor of the Straits Settlements),<sup>79</sup> who had recently demanded that all Somerset Maugham books be removed from the shelves on account of their immorality. Coward in turn honoured Lady Clementi with the following tune, to an enthusiastic audience, usually grander elderly ladies of society:

Oh, Lady Clementi, you've read a lot of S.G. Henty  
You've not read Bertrand Russell and you've not read Dr Freud,  
Which perhaps is the reason you look so unenjoyed.  
You're anti-sex in any form, or so I've heard it said  
You're just the sort who would prefer a cup of tea instead  
You must have been a riot in the matrimonial bed  
Whoops – Lady Clementi<sup>80</sup>

From Joseph Conrad, who was tired of staying in a sailor's home and decided he was going to stay in a hotel -- and Rudyard Kipling to Somerset Maugham, Noel Coward and later, Ava Gardner and Michael Jackson – and the invention of the Singapore Sling at the Long Bar, the Raffles Hotel has earned its place in many books, travelers' tales and anecdotal histories.

The Raffles opened on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1887 at the corner of Bras Basah Road and Beach Road. Once a ten-room bungalow belonging to Jose d'Almeida, with the Raffles Girls School originally situated on the upper level (1878), the hotel had spacious grounds, a lush garden, and a glorious view of the sea.<sup>81</sup> It was once called Beach House. The Armenian owners anticipated its future in the first advertisement which claimed "that the hotel would meet a great want long felt in Singapore". These original owners were the

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79. Sir Cecil Clementi was Governor of the Straits Settlements between 1929-1934. He was proficient in Cantonese and Mandarin, and armed with a reputation for tact and sympathy when dealing with the Chinese population. However in an attempt to stem anti-colonial propaganda mainly from China, his rule was marked by censorship and suppression of the Kuomintang Party in Singapore, the ban on the Vernacular press, strict regulations on immigration and withdrawal of grants from Chinese education. If anything, his rule increased the gulf between the Colonial Government and the Chinese. For the first time, during Clementi's rule, racial tensions became very palpable, including from the Straits Chinese who had been loyal supporters of the Empire. The anti-Chinese sentiments forced the Straits Chinese to question their place in Singapore and Malaya, as well as their support to the British. C. M. Turnbull (1977) *A History of Singapore 1819-1975*. Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 136-138.

80. Hoare, 216.

81. Supposedly, the owner and popular Singaporean George Dare ran a lunchtime tiffin enterprise in the billiard room which was annexed to the bungalow.

Sarkies brothers, Martin, Tigran and Aviet,<sup>82</sup> who arrived in Singapore in 1885 to add to their 'hotel chain', The Strand in Rangoon and the Eastern and Oriental Hotel in Penang. Tigran Sarkies, who was in charge of the Raffles until his death in 1912 initiated a series of improvements which culminated with a new opening of the Main Building in November 1899. The first extension had been in 1889, followed by the Palm Court Wings in 1892, followed by the Main Building, in 1899, and the Bras Basah Wing in 1904 -- the last two additions designed by R. A. J. Bidwell of Swan and Maclaren.<sup>83</sup> The Bar and Billiards Room were built circa 1907. Looking unlike the bungalow that it was, the 1904 hotel was described as "Renaissance in appearance" and built according to a hybrid classical motif combining Palladian elements with Coleman-inspired ventilation, and climactic considerations.<sup>84</sup> The old bungalow was eventually flanked by two commodious wings and boasted the modern conveniences of electricity, powered ceiling fan, service bells and electric lights. The tiffin room in the original house had at one time been the first atrium in Singapore. The architectural hallmarks associated with Bidwell have been described as "deeply coursed pilaster work, rusticated pilasters, arches and 'nut and bolt' or 'cheese and butterbox' columns."<sup>85</sup>

What is most distinctive about the Main Building, is the ascending Orders -- Ionic, Doric and Corinthian pilasters -- from the first to the third floor. The main wing housed only 23 bedrooms but the space was devoted to leisure with public verandahs, and the Main Dining Room which could seat 500 guests, boasts to be the largest marble room in the

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82. The Sarkies were Armenians from Persia and they also owned the Tanjong Katong Sea-View Hotel which was a popular resort from the 1920s to the 1960s. By 1921, it was managed by Aviet and Arshak Sarkies, and M.S. Arathoon.

83. If Coleman had an early hand in laying out the architectural temper of Singapore's buildings in the early nineteenth century, Swan and MacLaren was responsible for the later buildings of the late nineteenth and turn of the century. Among their achievements were Victoria Memorial Hall; the Chartered Bank, The Hong Kong Bank; John Little and Co; innumerable stores, houses, hotels across the countryside, Commercial square and Finlayson Green. The founders of the firm of architects and engineers were Mr. A. A. Swan and Mr. J.W. B. MacLaren in 1885. R. A. J. Bidwell became a partner in 1895 having worked as assistant to the Superintending Architect of the London County Council. He was originally stationed in the Malay state of Selangor where under Mr. C. E. Spooner designed the public buildings in Kuala Lumpur.

84. The Sarkies themselves had a home in the Tanglin area designed in the Victorian Eclectic style circa 1908. The architects were Williams, Draper and Steadman. The upper half of the house was done in Mock Tudor, the lower half had Classical style arches.

85. Edwards and Keys, 280.

East.<sup>86</sup> On the upper two levels, above the *porte-cochere* were the Reading Rooms, “a hotel where you can sit and watch the ships go by...for the sea swims off blue through all the wide doors and openings.”<sup>87</sup> The open-ballroom faced the sea and the hotel was surrounded by palms and trees.<sup>88</sup> As British novelist and biographer, Horace Bleakley described in 1925:

[Raffles Hotel] has been celebrated by Kipling, and is the chief resort of the American tourist. Abutting on to the garden and facing the sea is a spacious pavilion – open on three sides, and adjoining the dining-hall— where dances take place in the evening three times a week. The bedrooms in the various annexes communicating with the main building are cool and airy.<sup>89</sup>

Renowned for its modern comforts and its distinguished patrons, the Raffles, at the turn of the twentieth century, claimed to be the largest and ‘best appointed hotel facing the harbour’. *The Sphere*, a London paper called it the Savoy of Singapore.<sup>90</sup> The Armenian owners, and their managers such as M.S. Arathoon were pioneers in the hotel industry in Singapore, setting standards in accommodations, dining and even hotel activities, including at one time, indoor rollerskating.

Anglophiles, and known to have described Singaporean society as “Chinks, stinks and drinks,” the Sarkies, being Armenians, were apparently never given membership in the Singapore Cricket Club.

In 1893, a 39 year old Armenian lady, Miss Ashghen Joaquim had brought to H.N. Ridley’s (famed for the cultivation of rubber) attention, an orchid found in her family home off Tanjong Pagar Road. Ridley, then director of the Botanical Gardens registered the orchid, a pretty mauve flower, as the ‘Vanda Miss Joaquim’. It was a natural hybrid, the result of pollination, of two different orchids -- one a local plant (Vanda Hookerana) and the other, from Burma (Vanda Teres). Brought over to Hawaii in 1925 by Dr. Harold Lyon, the director of the Foster Botanical Gardens, the flower became known as ‘Aloha Princess Orchid’, and woven into lush exotic garlands (the lei) to welcome visitors to Hawaii.

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86. The same dining space is now the lobby. The suites today start at near \$450 US a night.

87. Mrs. E.W.H. Wright, in Liu, 235.

88. Charlotte Cameron (1924) “Wanderings in South-Eastern Seas.” in Michael Wise (1996) *Traveller’s Tales of Old Singapore*. Brighton: In Print Publishing, 187-190.

89. Horace Bleackley in Bastin, 204.

90. Straits Times Annual, advertisement, 1906.

On the grounds of the Armenian Church, there is a gravestone bearing the name of Ashghen Joaquim, born April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1854 and dying on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1899, and buried alongside the other Joaquim family members. The words “let her own works praise her” are inscribed on her tombstone.<sup>91</sup> In 1981, the Vanda Miss Joaquim was selected as Singapore’s national flower.

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91. “Singapore Days of Old.” *The Singapore Tatler Illustrated Magazine* (1992) Hong Kong, 142. The magazine introduces us to the Martins, a successful Armenian family – particularly Sakooly Martin who introduced the film projector to Singapore in 1904-5. His cinema was a tent with a few rows of benches. The Tatler also reports that Armenian community has dwindled to around 20 members, 143

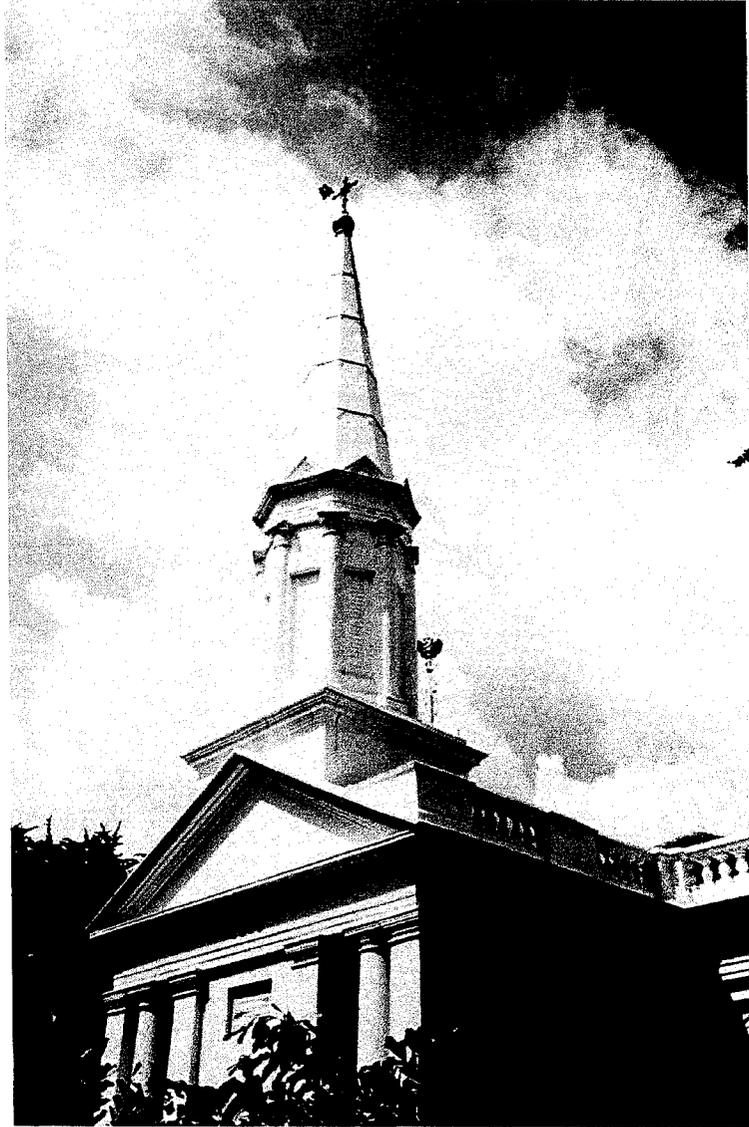


Figure 33. The Armenian Church, 1996 (Personal Photograph)

### 3. Captain Whalley's Walk

And there was so much to plunder for the imagination. What it must have been like for Joseph Conrad in the Singapore of the 1880s to have written lines such as those found in *Almayer's Folly*:

Whether they traded in brick godowns or on the muddy river bank; whether they reached after much or little; whether they made love under the shadows of great trees or in the shadow of the cathedral in the Singapore promenade; whether they plotted for their own ends under the protection of laws and according to the rules of Christian conduct....<sup>1</sup>

Captured in those brief lines are two worlds, East and West, Singapore and its surrounding regions, the savage and civilized, bound up in natural affiliations – unquestionable ones. It is Nina, the beautiful half-caste daughter of Kaspar Almayer and a nameless native woman<sup>2</sup> who reflects on the penumbric nature of her world. Caught between the dreams of her father for her to attain the status of a civilized Western lady, and her “savage” nature which culminates in her love for Dain Maroola, a Brahmin from Bali -- Nina is the product of her time and place, of restless human desires in a protean world -- and sometimes impossible fulfillment. Almayer, who was compelled to wed Nina's mother, cannot contain Nina. That world is ultimately, not his for the taking. It exceeds apprehension.

Almayer was based on the character of half-caste Dutchman Charles Olmeijer who worked for the charismatic William Lingard -- and ruled the trading post in the River Berau in north-east Borneo.<sup>3</sup> Both men were married to Malay women. Conrad had first

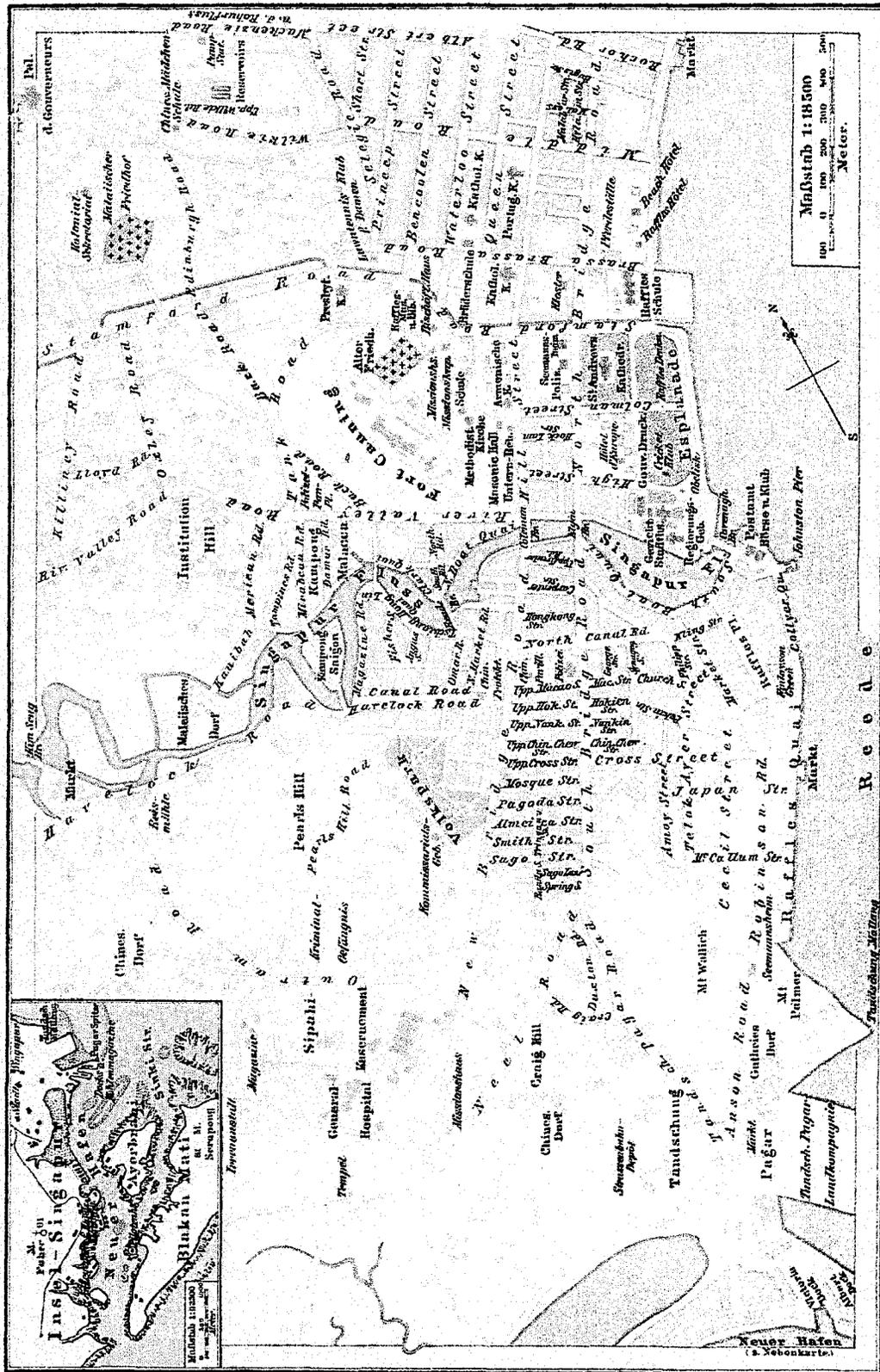
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1. Joseph Conrad (1923) *Almayer's Folly*. London & Toronto: J.M. Dent, 43.

2. Except known as Mrs. Almayer.

3. See G. Jean-Aubry (1927) *Joseph Conrad Life and Letters. Vol. 1*. London: Heinemann, 48-98. See also Norman Sherry (1966) *Conrad's Eastern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 89-138. Sherry provides immense details of Conrad's world, and the sources for his characters. The information regarding William Lingard here is indispensable. Sherry also argues that the last year between July 1887 to March 1888 was the most fertile year for Conrad in terms of his experiences in Singapore and surrounding regions.

# SINGAPUR.



F.A. Bruchhaus' Geograph. Institut, Stuttgart, Leipzig.  
 Reichhaus Konvulsionen: Laxikon, 14. Aufl.  
 Tauschung, Waiung

Figure 32. Map, circa 1900. No information

visited Berau in 1887 on a trading ship, the *S.S. Vidar*<sup>4</sup> but had heard much of Olmeijer before from various sources.<sup>5</sup> *Nina* was the name of one of Lingard's ships but supposedly the wife of a William Olmeijer, possibly the brother of Charles Olmeijer. 'They' are Roland St. J. Braddell's "bold men" and "venturesome trading captains" who had reaped enormous profits, lost their lives to profligacy and piracy, and did much to open up the trade of the port. 'They' are the traders and sailors who thronged the various tiffin rooms and taprooms of Singapore – and whose lives – or at least snatches of their lives, Conrad wove together for his stories.

Just behind St. Andrew's Cathedral was the Sailors' Home where Conrad sometimes lodged while in Singapore. Described in *The Shadow Line* as the Officers' Home,<sup>6</sup> it was a spacious bungalow with generous verandahs once belonging to Joseph Balestier, the first American Consul in Singapore. Joseph Balestier had arrived in Singapore in 1834 as a businessman who started a sugar plantation, and was recognized as Consul by the Court of Directors in London in November 1836 – and officially appointed in June 1837. The immediate result was that American ships were given equal advantages to trade in Singapore, and American trade indeed increased by 8000 tons by the end of June 1837. Joseph Balestier was also actively involved in the early Singaporean community, and his

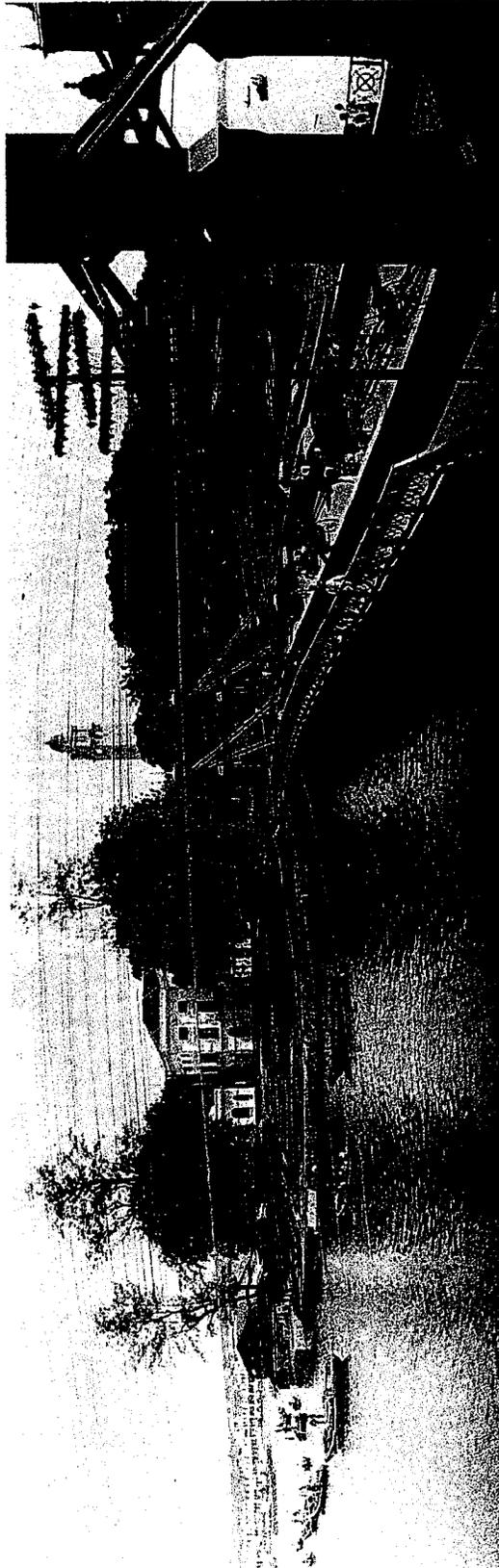
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4. The nature of shipping and trading in those parts of the world and at that time is pretty much captured in the composition of the ship. The *Vidar* which became a Dutch ship, had belonged to a rich Arab, Syed Massin bin al Jaffree -- and was then sold to a Dutch captain. When Conrad served as second mate on the *Vidar*, he made at least six voyages between August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1887 and January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1888, between Singapore to Bulungan in Borneo. The crew consisted of at least 4 Europeans, 12 Malays (from various regions), and 82 Chinese, employed for loading and unloading of rubber, cane, gutta percha, gum and resin. See Jean-Aubry, 95.

5. Conrad had said that "If I had not got to know Olmeijer/Almayer pretty well, it is almost certain there would never have been a line of mine in print." Joseph Conrad (1925) "A Personal Record" in *The Mirror of the Sea, Memories and Impressions*. London: Gresham, 87.

I had seen him for the first time, some four years before from the bridge of a steamer moored to a rickety little wharf forty miles up....a Bornean river..... He was clad simply in flapping pyjamas of cretonne pattern (enormous flowers with yellow petals on a disagreeable blue ground) and a thin cotton singlet with short sleeves. His arms, bare to the elbows, were crossed on his chest. His black hair looked as if it had not been cut for a very long time....I had heard of him at Singapore...I had heard of him in a place called Pulo Laut...in a place called Dongola, in the Island of Celebes.... (74-75)

6. See page 618 in Conrad, J. (1953) "The Shadow-Line." *Tales of Land and Sea USA*: Hanover House, 611-695.



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Figure 34. Cavenagh Bridge, 1900s, published in Reena Singh (1995) *A Journey Through Singapore* Singapore: Landmark Books, frontispiece

wife was Maria Revere Balestier, the daughter of legendary American Patriot, Paul Revere who had warned of the advancing British troops in Massachusetts on April 18<sup>th</sup> 1775.<sup>7</sup> Cast by the Revere family's successful foundry in Boston, Maria Balestier presented a large and heavy bell, 32 inches in diameter and 26 inches high, to the first St. Andrew's Church in 1843. The bell is today on display at the Singapore National Museum.

In April 1848, Joseph Balestier's estate, Balestier Plain was placed on the market. The sugar plantation, and its operation had been a failure. Lying two miles from the town center, the estate measured one thousand acres of ground. At the time of sale, there were two hundred and twenty acres of cane planted, irrigation facilities, water wheels, a large two-storey dwelling with outhouses, a boiling house, a godown, distilleries, stables, other facilities for the processing of raw sugar – and a garden of fruit trees, rare plants and flowers. On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1851, a Sailors' Home was proposed. Originally located at High Street, the premises became too small and by 1857, the Government had bought over Balestier's home and extensive lands for 12, 000 Rupees or ten years annual subscription. The second Tan Tock Seng Pauper's Hospital was also built on Balestier's Plain in 1869. In 1877, the Sailors' Home was enlarged by extending the two ends. However accurate or questionable his experiences, Joseph Conrad's stay at the Sailors' home from January 4<sup>th</sup> to January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1888, found its way into his stories, from *The End of the Tether* and *The Shadow-Line* to *Lord Jim*.<sup>8</sup> In *Lord Jim*,<sup>8</sup> Jim paid a Spanish dollar a day for his lodgings at the home, and Norman Sherry corroborates this with the information found in the 1877 Singapore and Straits Directory. In *The Shadow-Line* Conrad describes the manager of the Sailors' Home as moralistic, self-important, and a strict disciplinarian.<sup>9</sup> Sherry also identifies the 1888 Superintendent of the Home as a self-righteous character called C. Philips who had been an 'Inspector of Brothels' and a zealous temperance worker who held regular meetings at the Sailors' Home. One is not certain how the Sailors' Home was managed but certainly, as Sherry hints in his book *Conrad's Eastern World*, merry-making was not to be found there.<sup>10</sup>

Instead the *joie de vivre* was in the tiffin rooms:

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7. Maria Revere Balestier was the daughter of Paul Revere's second wife, Rachel Walker. Mrs. Balestier died on August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1847, after 13 years in Singapore. C. B. Buckley (1902/1965). *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819 - 1867*. Vols. Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 290.

8. Conrad, J. (1957) *Lord Jim* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.

9. Conrad, (1953), 619.

10. Sherry, 182-183.

On the site of Whiteaway's Building<sup>11</sup> there stood in olden times a long rambling building – the home of old-established firms such as Motion and Co., Hammer and Co., Hartwig and Co., McAlister and Co., C. Gaggino and Co., and the then famous restaurant and tiffin-rooms which were a regular haunt of all and sundry, from the Tuan Besar<sup>12</sup> down to the seafaring class. In those old times there was more of the “hail fellow well met” feeling throughout the community of Singapore, and when the captain-owners of the pioneer trading vessels, such as Ross and Lingard, met, there was quite an air of joviality, and conversation all round became of a more rollicking nature than one can find in John Little's tiffin room at present.<sup>13</sup>

The rollicking tiffin rooms described above were the Emmerson Tiffin Rooms located next to Cavanagh Bridge.<sup>14</sup> Frederick William Burbidge, having been commissioned by the Chelsea horticultural firm of James Veitch and Sons to collect ornamental plants from Borneo in 1877 wrote in his accounts on Singapore, which he described as “the Liverpool of the East”. For food, Burbidge recommended one to:

look in at Emmersons for tiffin, and a glance at the home papers and telegrams. Tiffin is much like breakfast, only nearly all the dishes are cold.

The curries here are excellent; and a well-made salad of fresh green vegetables is a treat, when the temperature is 92 degrees in the shade.<sup>15</sup>

The Tiffin Rooms were extremely popular for many years, especially on Saturday afternoons. The owner was an American, Mr. Charles Emmerson, known fondly among locals, as ‘The Colonel’ who arrived in Singapore on October, 1860. He was the first practicing Veterinary Surgeon in Singapore but was clearly more successful as an entertainer and proprietor of Singapore's more convivial premises. Emmerson's Tiffin

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11. These buildings were once known as Flint's Building which was located next to the riverbank. Flint's building was eventually taken down and replaced by the imposing Chartered Bank on the corner of Raffles Square. See the chapter entitled ‘Wish you were here’.

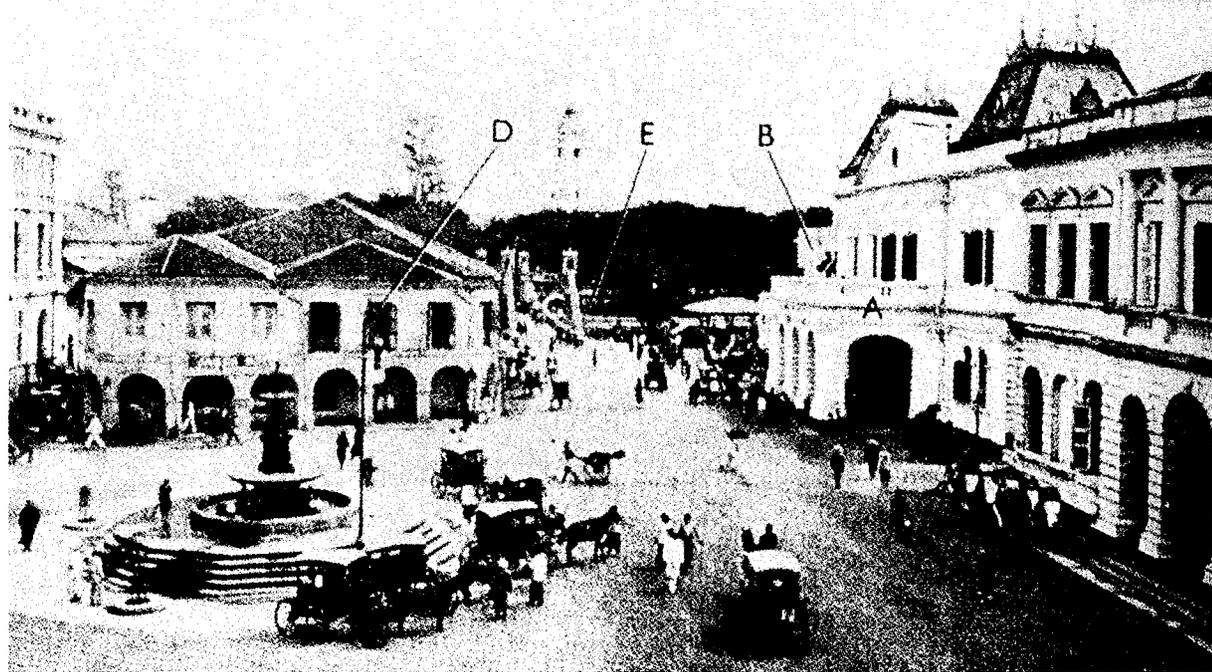
12. Malay for the Big Man – could also be connoted negatively to mean swaggering businessman. The Chinese equivalent in those times would have been Taukay.

13. J. H. Drysdale “Awakening Old Memories” in W. Makepeace, et. al (eds.)(1921). *One Hundred Years of Singapore*. 2 Vols. London, John Murray, V. II, 540.

14. Built 1868/69. Named after Orfeur Cavenagh, Straits Governor (1861-1867). Governor Ord had requested it to be called Edinburgh Bridge because it was first used during the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh.

15. F. W. Burbidge (1880) *The Gardens of the Sun: or a Naturalist's Journal on the Mountains and in the Forests and Swamps of Borneo and the Sulu Archipelago*. London: John Murray, 19.

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A. Post Office, B. Harbour Office, C. Cavenagh Bridge, D. Emmerson's Tiffin-Rooms, E. Esplanade in the distance.

Figure 35. The picture-diagram is adapted from Norman Sherry's (1976) *Conrad's Eastern World* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (illustration 14 a)

Rooms were then the equivalent of the friendly neighbourhood pubs and Charles Emmerson was the “typical barman” who “always greeted every customer as he came in, and was full of stories and jokes suitable to all tastes, from a parson to a skipper.”<sup>16</sup> Emmerson kept a cash box full of unpaid chits amounting to hundreds of dollars, marked ‘for sale’. His first tiffin-room was located on Battery Road and was relocated when it became a hotel. The Clarendon Hotel had a pavilion for bachelors and a bar and billiard room -- and was located in two large houses at the right hand corner of Middle Road and Beach Road<sup>17</sup> – or so one remembers. Certainly the hotel was somewhere on Beach Road but J. H. Drysdale, recalling fifty years after he first arrived in Singapore as a young engineer in 1872 remembers the Clarendon at the site of the Raffles Hotel which was at the corner of Bras Basah Road and Beach Road. Wherever the hotel could have been, Emmerson nonetheless kept a lively house. A popular amateur actor who did much to promote theatre and cultural activities in Singapore, Charles Emmerson died in 1883 having added much to the life of Singapore during his twenty three years of residence.

The first hotel was opened by a Mr. John Francis in 1832 at the north end of Commercial Square.<sup>18</sup> It had the requisite billiard room and restaurant. George Dutronquy’s London Hotel at the corner of Coleman Street and the Esplanade was equipped with a “long tiled building called a bowling alley” and as Charles Walter Kinloch once complained:

This pandemonium is lit up every night, and is filled with townspeople and others, who play at bowls and drink brandy and water until a late hour of the night. The alley, as it is called, is very profitable to the proprietor; but it is a great nuisance to the inmates of the hotel.<sup>19</sup>

By the late 1880s, hotels, restaurants and bars thronged the area near and around the esplanade, once a fashionable residential district. The Hotel de l’Europe and the Raffles Hotel shared top honours boasting sea views along with first class cuisines, porters and other creature comforts. The Hotel Europe, opened in 1857 as Hotel de l’Europe,<sup>20</sup> and was the Raffles Hotel’s greatest rival, being better located as the only hotel to face the

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16. Roland St. J. Braddell “The Merry Past, The Good Old Days.” in *Makepeace*, V.II, 465-538, 505.

17. This probably included the house of John Henry Velge, a close friend of Jose d’Almeida. He owned one of the biggest houses on Beach Road. Buckley, 185.

18. Who went on to open a Butcher’s Shop in 1840 at Telok Ayer street.

19. Charles Walter Kinloch (1852) *The Singapore Chapter of Zieke Reiziger; or Rambles in Java and the Straits in 1852 by a Bengal Civilian*. London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co. republished 1984 by Antiques of the Orient, Singapore, 1. We must remember that by 1852, George Dutronquay had already disappeared and the hotel was being run by his wife and son.

20. The building was erected in 1855.

Esplanade. In 1871, Frank Vincent, a young American traveler had this to say about the hotel:

We engaged a Malay prow to take us ashore, and are landed near the *Hotel d'Europe*, to which our good captain has recommended us. This hotel we find to be very large and comfortable, situated in the midst of beautiful gardens, facing "the green," and commanding a fine view of the straits, the large island of Bintang in the distance, and the Chinese junks and foreign shipping in the harbour. Attached to the establishment, which is kept by a German is that "peculiar institution" an American bar-room, where California mixed drinks are served, and there is besides a "regular down east Boston Arctic soda-water fountain;" and a reading-room, where one will find papers and journals, in four or five languages, from New York, London, Bombay, Calcutta, Batavia, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Yokohama, and San Francisco....<sup>21</sup>

The buildings in the old Hotel de l'Europe were divided between bachelor quarters and family blocks until a grand Edwardian-Baroque building, with lifts, replaced it in 1907 whereupon it simply became the *Hotel Europe*. Horace Bleackley, visiting in 1925 praised the hotel's manager Arthur Odell as a genius for having made the Hotel Europe a household name and creating the best hotel in Asia in such an uncompromising environment.

The Hotel Europe ... faces the sea and is divided from the Padang merely by a road. Its reception-rooms have been made adequate after elaborate alteration, and there is a restaurant and a lounge and a large dining-hall, which, unlike that at the Raffles Hotel, has to serve also as a ballroom. But the rest of the building is old-fashioned and ill-suited to the tropics. It is wonderful that a first-class hotel can be conducted under such circumstances.<sup>22</sup>

The Hotel Europe did not survive the competition<sup>23</sup> – and closed in 1932, forced into bankruptcy.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1860s, there were eight hotels, six billiard rooms and three bowling alleys.<sup>25</sup> Two

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21. Frank Vincent in Micheal Wise (1996) *Travellers' Tales of Old Singapore*. Brighton, UK: In Print Publishing, 87.

22. Bleackley in Bastin, 205.

23. Rooms were thirty shillings a day in 1924 which was no small fee.

24. The government bought the land in 1934 and the Supreme Court was constructed between 1937-1939. See Gretchen Liu (1996) *In Granite and Chunam*. Singapore: Landmark Books, 71-81.

25. This refers to the game of skittle bowling.

notable hotels were located along Coleman Street. The Adelphi Hotel and the Hotel de La Paix stood adjacent to each other, numbering 1 and 2, and 3 Coleman Street respectively. The Adelphi was established in 1863 and was popular among German and Dutch visitors. By 1906, The Adelphi was rebuilt on the site of its former neighbour Hotel de La Paix, and managed by Johannes Sarkies and Co. with “service-de-luxe” and promising “magnificent marble effects and sumptuous apartments.”<sup>26</sup> At the corner of Coleman Street and North Bridge Road was a concert and dancing hall, the original Tingel-tangel (or Tingle-Tangle). The Tingel-Tangel was then moved to New Bridge Road where it was managed by an Austrian proprietor who employed attractive East European hostesses, and had a “very decent string band, the lady-performers being allowed to dance with visitors. Sometimes rather rowdy scenes occurred, but the Tingel-tangel was on the whole very well conducted.”<sup>27</sup> T. J. Keaughran, making a return visit to Singapore in 1887, noted the dissolving ethnic divisions as originally laid out in Stamford Raffles’s town plan. Buildings with “picturesque lines” were being cramped in, melding into the hustle and bustle of the crowded streets. High Street,<sup>28</sup> probably the first street formed in Singapore with its original eight compound houses leading towards Government Hill and its so very European identity, had given way to a host of European and Asiatic trades such as tailors, silk vendors, jewellers and street trades. On High Street was also the notorious Kugelman’s bar, hotel and restaurant that had entertained many a guest in the 1860s and ‘70s. Kugelman, horsebreaker and barman, known for his strength was the first to employ Australian barmaids in Singapore. More importantly, Kugelman’s offered late night suppers of cold cuts and grill along with The Egg Club. And not to forget, there was the Moses Pavilion, located at Hock Lam Street (two blocks down from the Sailors’ Home on North Bridge Road), if one wished for more recreation such as billiards and bowling. At the end of High Street was yet another boisterous hotel, The Union. Complete with bar, billiards and skittle-bowling, The Union Hotel was popular with the sailors who desired longer stays.

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26. *The Straits Time Annual* advertisement, 1905. The new Adelphi was designed by Swan and Maclaren. The Adelphi became The Burlington Hotel. There is some confusion regarding the hotels and their exact location at Coleman Street. As a plea towards restoration and conservation, ‘The Friends of Singapore’ tried to prevent 3, Coleman Street from destruction. However, the booklet they put out had some questionable data, including the assumed meeting of Joseph Conrad and the fictional ‘Tom Lingard’. If the ‘Friends of Singapore’ did their homework, perhaps they would have been more successful since Tom Lingard’s character was based on *William* Lingard. See The Friends of Singapore (1964) *The House in Coleman Street*. Singapore.

27. Makepeace, V.II, 183.

28. Laid out by a Lieutenant Ralfe in 1819. It became the trading ground of Northern Indian settlers such as Sikhs and Sindhis. The Chinese of course give it a different name *Siang Che Lo* or two-wells street being some two wells at the foot of Fort Canning once upon a time. Keys and Edwards, 283.

By the 1880s, Beach Road stretched from the river to the Clyde Terrace Market which was built in 1872 before it swerved left into Crawford Street near the Rochore River.<sup>29</sup> The Chinese had more than one name for Beach Road. It was no longer simply known as *Yi-Shap Kan* or Twenty Houses Road since the older European residences had been converted into hotels and other purposes -- but as *Thit Pa-Sat Hau* or iron market referring to Clyde Terrace Market and its iron-work.<sup>30</sup> Beach Road was also *Kampung Hoi Pin* (Cantonese) or *Sio-Po hai-ki* (Hokkien) meaning small town or village by the sea shore referring to Kampong Glam. Kampong Glam was a small village originally where the Bugis and Arabs settled and according to Raffles's town plan was located near the mouth of the Rochor River. In 1823, the Sultan, his family, the Temenggung and the court were allotted estate in Kampong Glam, then near a mangrove swamp with impossible access. Beach Road was laid out soon after that, particularly when the European merchants were choosing to settle near and towards Kampong Glam. Near the end of Beach Road is a mosque, with spire-like minaret tower, built around 1845-1846.<sup>31</sup>

The Hajjah Fatimah Mosque was built by a wealthy businesswoman, Hajjah Fatimah from Malacca, in gratitude for her many fortunate escapes from robbery and fires.<sup>32</sup> In fact she lived till 98 years of age. Hajjah Fatimah was a prominent Malay lady in Singapore and was well-connected with various royal families in the Malay states. She had married a Bugis prince from the Celebes and ran a successful fleet of vessels and prows. Her daughter, Raja Siti married Syed Ahmad bin Abdulrahman Alsagoff, the son of a well-known Arab businessman from Palembang, Abdulrahman Alsagoff. The Mosque is unusual, for as Dr. Seow Eu Jin states:

The Fatimah Mosque represents an example of virtual architectural syncretism where the Classical theme is apparently used by a British architect for a Singapore mosque built by a Malacca Malay lady, married to a Bugis Sultan whose daughter married the scion of an Arab family from Palembang, who employed Chinese architects to reconstruct the main building using French contractors and Malay artisans.<sup>33</sup>

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29. A small land reclamation project took place in 1870 around the Rochore River.

30. The Tamil name for Beach Road was quite similar, *Kadal karei sadakku* or 'road by the seaside'. Clyde Terrace does not exist anymore and is now the site for the Plaza Hotel (work started 1972).

31. The Hajjah Fatimah Mosque was built at Java Road but the area had changed considerably. Java Road no longer exists and has become part of Beach Road.

32. Buckley, 565.

33. See Norman Edwards and Peter Keys, (1988) *A Guide to Buildings, Streets, Places*. Singapore: Times Books, 269.

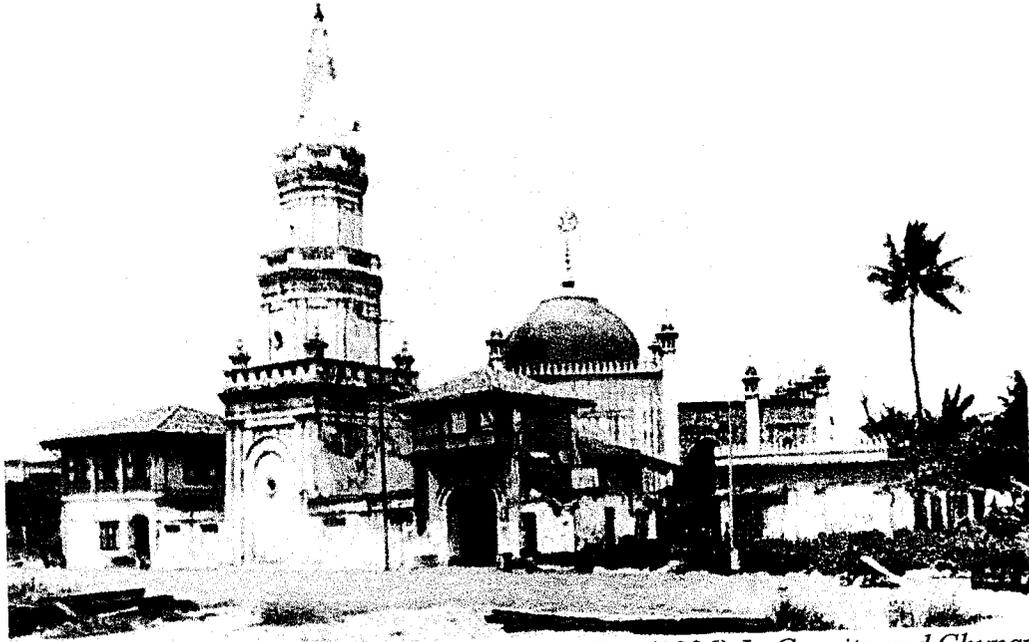


Figure 36. Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, Gretchen Liu (1996) *In Granite and Chunam*  
Singapore: Landmark Books, 96

The most distinctive feature of the mosque, which could be attributed to John Turnbull Thomson is the spire – or the minaret tower which appears to replicate the tower spire of the first St. Andrew’s Church. The architect was an unknown European but the tower bears the classical elements such as “pilasters with Tuscan capitals, an arched recess panel, an entablature complete with dental frieze and a parapet inset with glazed green Chinese porcelain tiles.”<sup>34</sup> Consisting of four levels, and leaning slightly, each octagonal level diminishes in size. Sometime in 1932, the Alsagoff family contracted the architectural firm of Chung and Wong to rebuild the main prayer hall in the Saracenic style while the contractor was a French firm, Brossard and Mopin, specialists in reinforced concrete, who employed Malay artisans to work on the project. Whatever the architectural orientations, the mosque stands today as a national monument with its tower still slightly lurching.<sup>35</sup>

By 1880, the Esplanade or *The Padang* was still a popular public resort. From cricket to evening drives, the Esplanade was also popular with “corpulent Dutch visitors from Java, staying at a neighbouring hotel.” These visitors would stroll:

in bunches and of half a dozen, bare headed and hat in hand, accompanied by buxom and bouncing Dutch ladies, whose shrill laughs occasionally rent the air with their merry glee; while parties of tall Germans brimful of pride and elated with their recent successes in the Franco-Prussian war, strode along with military gait and enveloped in clouds of cigar smoke.<sup>36</sup>

The original open space along the beach, as envisioned by Raffles, and the 1840s world of Scandal Point had also changed considerably. In 1887, the Esplanade was:

enclosed by a lime of stone pillars and chain and the edge encircled the trees: it is covered with a beautiful green sward which relieves the eye from the reflection thrown off from hard dusty metal roads surrounding it. Taken together with the roads that embrace the enclosure and a stripe of foreshore, the whole perhaps comprises about ten acres.<sup>37</sup>

If Joseph Conrad had to walk from the Sailors’ Home to Emerson’s Tiffin Rooms which were just across Cavenagh Bridge, he could have walked diagonally towards St.

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34. Liu, 93

35. Gazetted in 1973.

36. Keaughran, 19. On May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1881, Donald Campbell McNabb on his Grand Tour of the East arrived in Singapore. He found it a “delightful place” and “saw a lot of Germans here,” “talking the trade out of the hands of our merchants who are chiefly Scotsmen.” See McNabb Letters IOR MSS Eur F 206/140. In 1881, there were 125 Germans in Singapore, the second largest European population after the British who counted in at 865, while the French were a close 64 with the Austrians numbering 40. Marriott in Makepeace, V.I, 361.

37. Ibid.

Andrews Church then across the Esplanade, passing the Cricket grounds and the Cricket Pavillion, and eventually, the Dalhousie Obelisk and then make his way across Cavenagh Bridge. He could of course, have desired a longer or more busy route, walking west along North Bridge Road, passing Coleman Street then turning left along High Street where he might partake in some souvenir shopping before he crosses the river to the tiffin rooms and down to the harbour where the Tanjong Pagar Docks were. The tiffin rooms would have been on his right and if he made a left, he would find himself heading for the General Post Office, an elegant Classical building with Mansard Roofs located at Fort Fullerton<sup>38</sup> -- and the Harbour Office, built on land reclaimed in the early 1820s and late 1850s. He could have also taken a rickshaw or a tram to the Western side of the harbour depending on his pocket.

This is the route that the half-blind and penniless Captain Whalley could have taken in *The End of the Tether*<sup>39</sup> when he makes his way to the harbour.<sup>40</sup> There are some geographical vagaries here. Whalley is staying at the hotel which Norman Sherry suggests is the old Hotel de l'Europe – a hotel that emerges in *Lord Jim* and *The Shadow-Line*. The description of the side verandahs and lofty ceiling resembles pictures of the hotel in the 1880s. If Whalley had stayed in the Sailor's Home as in *The Shadow Line*, Conrad must have had his protagonist stroll down along North Bridge Road, and the equivalent of either Stamford Road, Coleman Street or High Street and quite possibly walk across the Esplanade -- or before, turn right onto what is now St. Andrew's Road and down towards the shorefront. These were the "avenues [which] ended at the sea." If Whalley was indeed staying at the Hotel de l'Europe which was located at the corner of High Street and the Esplanade (or St. Andrew's Road), then it would have been a shorter walk either across the green, or down High Street or Coleman Street to the shorefront, depending on one's mood. But there is mentioned of coming slowly "to the end of the

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38. Built in 1874 and between the Exchange Building and the Master's Attendant Office to form Change Alley. It was first a one-storey building and in 1883, a second-storey was added. The GPO was described by Conrad in *The End of the Tether* as the 'most important post-office in the East', 180. The building was demolished in the mid-1920s to make way for the more eclectic Fullerton Building, also the General Post Office -- and now a luxurious hotel.

39. All references to *The End of the Tether* are cited from Joseph Conrad (1903) *Youth and the End of The Tether*. New York: Doubleday.

40. I am unashamedly postmodernist here. This is a reconstruction of a reconstructed walk. The walk here is not exactly described in the story. But if Whalley was indeed staying at the hotel, it would be quite likely the route discussed here if he wanted to make his way to the harbour. I have pieced together the route from the various landmarks given in *The End of the Tether*. There is a near similar walk in Conrad's *The Shadow Line*. Captain Whalley there walks from the Harbour Office to the Sailors' home – thus taking the opposite direction.

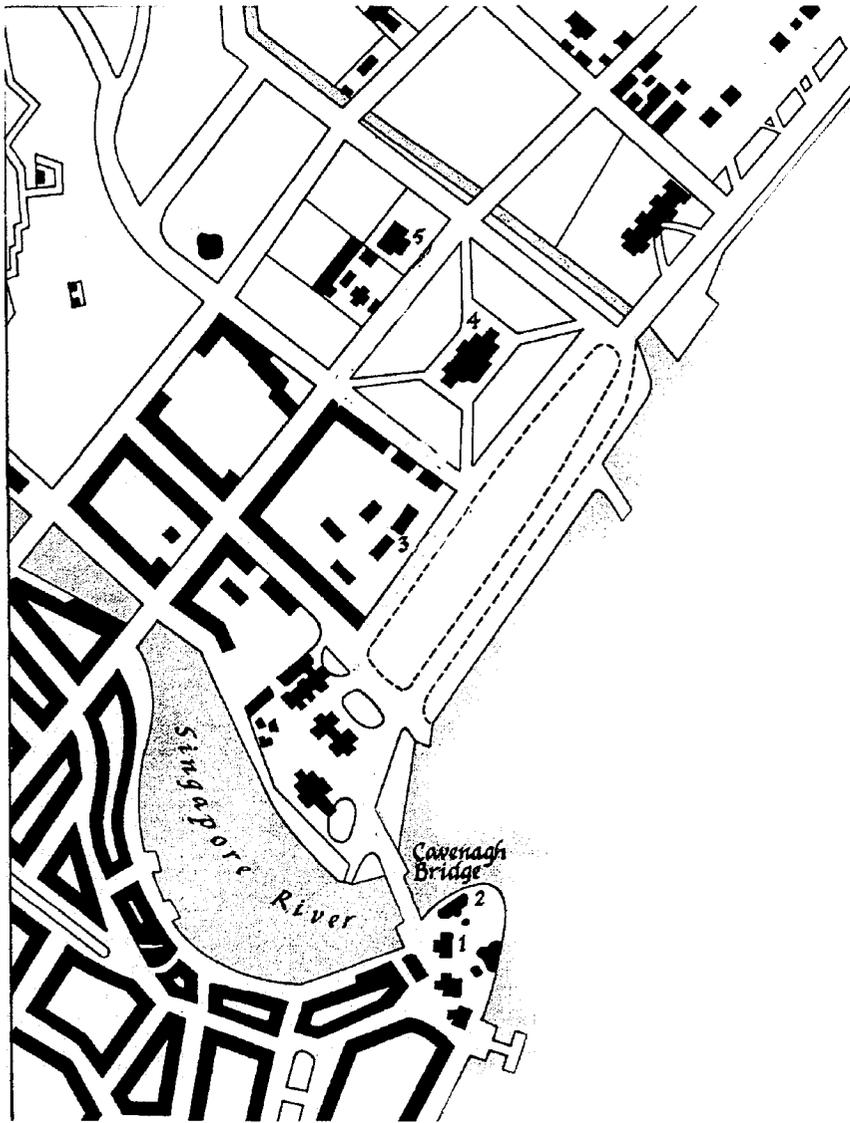


Figure 37. Captain Whalley's [possible] route in *The End of the Tether*

1. Post Office
2. Harbour Office
3. Hotel de l'Europe
4. St. Andrew's Cathedral
5. Sailors Home

The map is adapted from Norman Sherry's (1976) *Conrad's Eastern World* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 177.

avenue before the cathedral,” and this resembles St. Andrew’s Road where the Hotel de l’Europe was. Nonetheless, Whalley must have been near or at Beach Road to observe “it was a terraced shore.” Captain Whalley, having looked at the roadstead with its distant sails must have turned right and walked down “the avenues of big trees” which ran “straight over the Esplanade, cutting each other at diverse angles, columnar above and luxuriant above.” Whalley heads down what is or might be Beach Road with the “reedy cast-iron lamp-posts in a long perspective” while a “succession of open carriages” bowls along the newly opened sea-road. In 1884, the portion of the Esplanade lying between the road and the sea, from the old Raffles Institution to Cavenagh Bridge had been leveled, sloping seawards and laid with turf with garden benches placed in shady areas.<sup>41</sup> Whalley reaches Cavenagh Bridge, that is, the “little bridge” and continues walking down to the harbour to the mammoth Consolidated Docks Company. The walk is not particularly pleasant, since this would have taken place during or near the end of the major Teluk Ayer land reclamation project. Joseph Conrad has Whalley negotiate a:

recently opened and untidy thoroughfare with rudimentary sidewalks and a soft layer of dust cushioning the whole width of the road. One end touched the slummy street of Chinese Shops near the harbour, the other drove straight on without houses for a couple of miles, through patches of jungle like vegetation, to the yard gates of the new Consolidated Docks Company.

The trams were already running then since Whalley hears the “toot—toot—toot of the cable car beginning to roll before the empty peristyle of the Public Library on its three-mile journey to the New Harbour Docks.”<sup>42</sup> Conrad had made enough stops at Singapore between 1883 and 1888 to have followed the progress and pitfalls of the Teluk Ayer reclamation project. He might have drawn artistic license from the construction of Anson Road and Robinson Road. Anson Road forked near the foot of Mount Palmer; to the left was Teluk Ayer Street<sup>43</sup> – hence “the slummy street of Chinese Shops” -- and to the

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41. “Annual Report on the Forest Department for the year 1884.” *Straits Settlements Report* #28, 1885.

42. Conrad pulled the name from William Cloughton’s docks which was The New Harbour Dock Company.

43. One of the oldest streets in Singapore. Teluk Ayer Street originally fronted the sea and was recognizable to all travelers making their way from or towards New Harbour by the ‘Chinese Joss House’ or the Thian Hock Keng Temple, the oldest surviving temple in Singapore, built in 1839-1842 with materials brought from China, dedicated to Ma Zu Po (Mother of Heavenly Sages), to guide and protect sailors. Bound up with the history of the Fukien Community, the funds to build the temple were largely donated by the philanthropist, Tan Tock Seng (1798-1850), father of Tan Kim Seng, who also donated funds for the Tan Tock Seng Pauper’s Hospital. Teluk Ayer street became the gathering point for all Chinese immigrants, all manner of trades, clan associations, secret societies, religious buildings – and slavery. By the late 1870s, it became highly congested and

right, Robinson Road, which ended at Raffles Place, Kling Street,<sup>44</sup> Battery Road and South Boat Quay.

The plan was to build a seawall extending from Collyer Quay to Tanjong Pagar, and fill

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polluted. After the Teluk Ayer reclamation in 1879, Teluk Ayer Street was pushed five blocks back from the sea. See Edwards and Keys, 457.

44. Kling Street or Chulia Street is where Market Street ends in a 'T-junction'. It is the area where Raffles had hoped to allot space for the Chulia town depending on the number of immigrants from the Coromandel Coast. In 1822, supposedly Chulia immigration had increased to the point that the community demanded a headman as per Raffles's instructions that each native group appoint their own community leader who will report to the Resident Councillor. In 1824, various Indian groups counted together as 746 persons. By 1911, the 'Indian races' numbered 27,770. In 1911, as well, all the Chinese counted in at 219,577 persons. See Marriott in Makepeace, V. II, 344-345. Little India is today situated at Serangoon Road which is near the Rochor Canal, stretching from junction of Bukit Timah road to the junction of Balestier and Lavender Roads. The reason for the move to the Rochor area was due to several reasons, among them: the building of the racecourse in the early 1840s, Farrar Park (first race was run in 1843) for the Europeans who settled in the area; and most significantly cattle-rearing started by several merchants including a Venetian Jew from Calcutta by the name of I. R. Belilios who arrived in 1887. See Sharon Siddique and Nirmala Puru Shotam (1982) *Singapore's Little India: Past, Present and Future*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

up the tidal-swamps.<sup>45</sup> Eventually, the same would be done from the north side of the Singapore River towards Beach Road in order to widen the Esplanade. In order to facilitate the reclamation, enough earth had to be dredged up to fill up the beach along Teluk Ayer. The government had to cut through Mount Wallich, and the land at the foot of Mount Palmer. Mount Palmer presented some difficulty since the land belonged to James Guthrie and the road had to pass through that property including a sixty feet passage through a Malay village.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless Anson Road was laid out in 1880 and Robinson Road, perhaps between 1882-1884. Robinson Road could have been opened for public use only a few years later. By 1886 the average price for land in Teluk Ayer was \$1.17 per square foot in comparison with \$8.68 for an acre in the country.<sup>47</sup> According to James Rennie in 1900, Cecil Street and Robinson Road “were hardly built upon.”<sup>48</sup> The

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45. For a comparative description, there is the journalist, T.J. Keaughran’s (1887) *Picturesque and Busy Singapore*. written in 1887, 32.

Collyer Quay extends from the spit on which old Fort Fullerton formerly stood at the mouth of the river, in the direction of Tanjong Pagar for the distance of the third of a mile in a semi-elliptical form ; and along the whole line of the Quay is backed by an imposing block of buildings, of two lofty stories. A reclamation system carried out during the past eight years has converted the bay that was known as Teluk Ayer and which was formed by the curve in the shore between Collyer Quay and Mount Wallich\*, by cutting a gap through between Mount Wallich and Mount Palmer and filling in the bay with the earth – into dry land; and now a magnificent broad road has been made extending from Collyer Quay to Tanjong Pagar almost in a straight line, bringing the distance within a little more than a mile, and at the same time saving three quarters of a mile of a circuit round by the old road. The first portion of the road from Collyer Quay to Mount Palmer is Robinson Road, in compliment to Governor Sir William Robinson, during whose administrations the work was commenced, and beyond to Tanjong Pagar it is named Anson Road as a similar memorial to Colonel Anson’s government. The distance bridged over by the latter is five-eighths of a mile. It has opened the way across a marsh, to which the reclamation system has been applied by...the Tanjong Pagar Land Company.

\*I have taken the liberty of correcting Keaughran’s spelling of Mount Wallick to Mount Wallich.

46. George Bogaars (1956) “The Tanjong Pagar Dock Company.” *Memoirs of the Raffles Museum*, no. 3, December, 1956, 184-185.

47. *Annual Report on the Land Department of the Straits Settlements, for the year 1886*

48. James Rennie (1933) *Musings of JSMR, Mostly Malayan*. Singapore: Malaya Publishing House, 172.

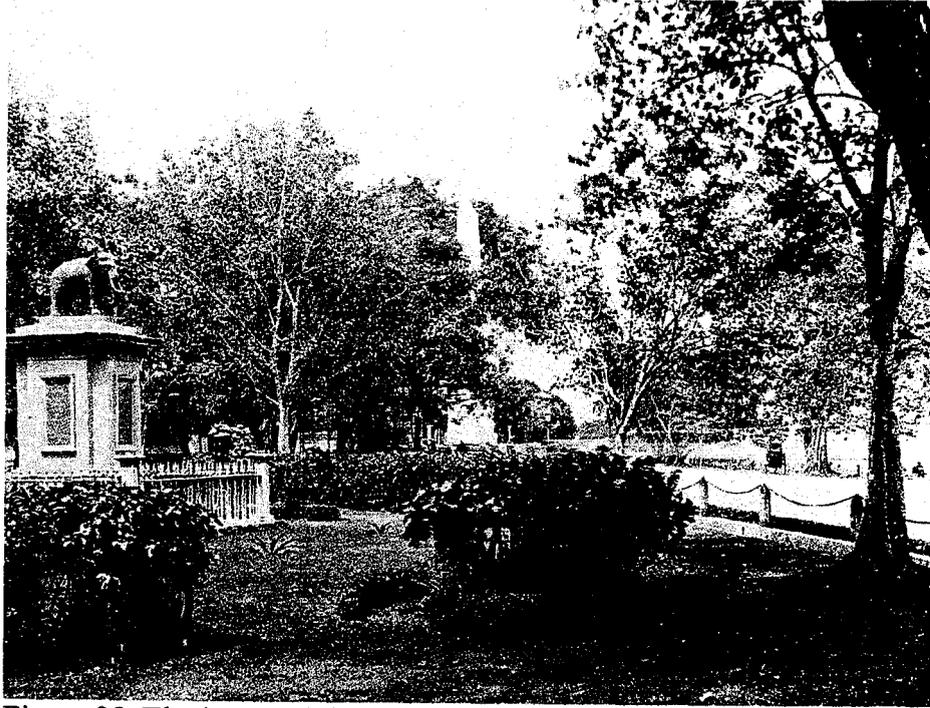


Figure 38. Elephant and Obelisk, 1890 (National Archives of Singapore)

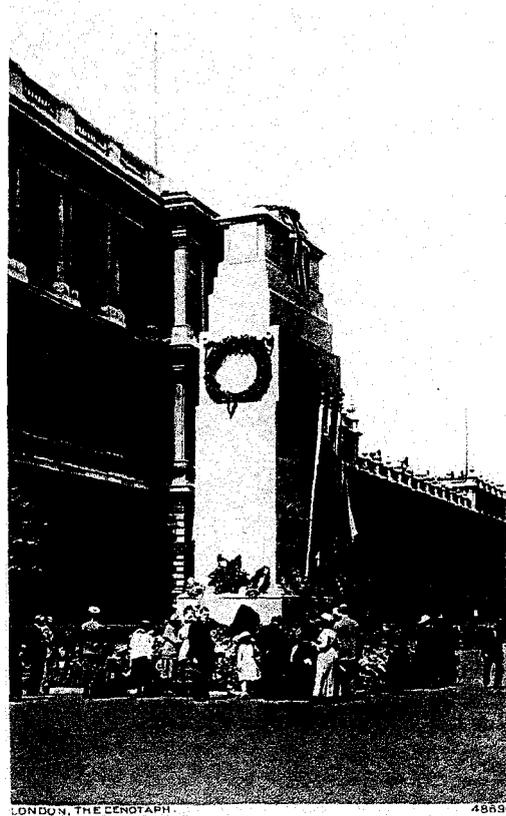


Figure 39. Cenotaph, Whitehall (personal postcard collection)

149a

description concerning the patches of jungle-like vegetation in *The End of the Tether* would be consistent with the Guthrie lands since at that time, despite the size of the Tanjong Pagar Dock company, some parts in the north (Tanjong Malang or Malang Spit) were still not developed. Conrad of course not only shuffled his characters and places but played with chronology as well to preserve the realm of the fictional landscape. Conrad's Singapore was a particular location which led from New Harbour to North Boat Quay and the area around the Esplanade – quite possibly as far as the Sailors' home at the corner of North Bridge and Stamford Roads. But it was still Singapore.

Yet another reclamation project took place in 1890. The Esplanade was widened (fifteen and half acres) and the road that went around it was initially called New Esplanade Road, only to be renamed Connaught Drive, in commemoration of the Duke of Connaught's visit in 1906. In the same year, the Esplanade became known as the Padang and Esplanade Road which was where the Hotel Europe was, became St. Andrew's Road. In 1890, a line of new Angsana trees was planted on the side of the Esplanade which faced the sea. These replaced the older Angsana trees which were planted near the river end of the Esplanade and were originally brought over from Malacca by a Rajah Hadjee and planted sometime around 1820. The trees had flourished long enough before they died of decay. The new trees -- feared by many residents to block the seaview -- grew gracefully and quickly, the leafy boughs -- their branches high enough to afford a generous seascape. However in 1916, the trees were attacked and destroyed by fungus.<sup>49</sup> In 1943, more land was reclaimed and the results were the Esplanade Park and Queen Elizabeth Walk. The new space was laid out to include existing memorials such as the Tan Kim Seng fountain (1882) which was moved from Fullerton Square in 1925 and The Cenotaph (1922), as well as accommodate new memorials such as the Lim Bo Seng memorial (1954) for a World War II martyr and resistance fighter who was tortured and killed by the Japanese -- and the Merlion fountain (1972), which is located at the end of Queen Elizabeth Walk at the mouth of the river. The Raffles statue of 1887 which stood in the center of the Padang was moved to the front of the Town Hall (presently the Victoria Theatre and Memorial Hall) in 1919. The granite with bronze Cenotaph built to commemorate the 124 Singaporeans who gave their lives in World War I was designed by Denis Santry for Swan and Maclaren based on Sir Edwin Lutyens's Whitehall

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49. James Rennie confirms this, 152.

Cenotaph (1920).<sup>50</sup> From cricket to football (soccer), from the British surrender to the Japanese surrender at the beginning and end of World War 2, from pomp and circumstance to leisurely walks, the Padang has sustained and entertained the social life of Singapore since its inception in 1822.

But none more sustaining than the game of cricket – and such are the legacies of Empire. Sometime, on a Sunday afternoon in 1837, some Europeans played cricket at the Esplanade. Some objection was made against the activity as violating the “Fourth Commandment” on the Esplanade and the game ceased for a while.<sup>51</sup> In 1843 when Henry Keppel showed up in Singapore on board the *Dido*, he initiated a game of cricket between his officers and local Singaporeans. The Singaporean Free Press gave a glowing report of the game:

We have lately been much gratified by seeing the manly game of Cricket resumed in this Settlement. A very interesting match is now being played between the officers of H.M.S Dido and Singaporeans. We observed among the players several excellent bowlers.

We know that cricket at the Esplanade became a regular activity given J.T. Thomson’s painting of the Esplanade in 1851. In 1865, John Cameron was careful to inform foreign readers that cricket played in Singapore was one and the very same game played in

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50. The foundation stone for The Cenotaph was laid on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1920 by Sir Lawrence Nunns Guillemard, Governor of the Straits Settlements in the presence of Georges Clemenceau, Premier of France and Minister of War (1917-1919), also known as ‘The Tiger of France’ and Major General Sir D.H. Ridout. It was unveiled on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1922 by the Prince of Wales accompanied by the later Earl Mountbatten of Burma. The WWII dead were added on the reverse side of the Monument. Such is the power of the art of mechanical reproduction, there are similar cenotaphs the world over—if one wished to purchase the plans from Sir Edwin Lutyens. The original Cenotaph is Sir Edwin Lutyen’s Whitehall Cenotaph in London near 10, Downing Street. The cenotaph was originally build of wood and plaster in 1919 and the 1920 version is made of Portland Stone. A similar cenotaph is found in London, Ontario (built 1929) and the plans were purchased from Sir Edwin Lutyens. Today, the Singaporean Cenotaph has suffered some wear and tear -- the latest culprits, being skateboarders.

51. Ilsa Sharp (1985) *The Singapore Cricket Club*. Singapore: Singapore Cricket Club Publications. A letter was sent to the Singapore Free Press under the pseudonym ‘Z’ outraged by such behaviour on a Sunday. Sharp suggests the presence of fundamentalist Scots who were pillars of the business and municipal communities on the island as a reason. The lack of recorded games apparently were due to the politics of the Opium War and if games were played, they were carried under the auspices of special visits and important occasions, such as when Henry Keppel visited.

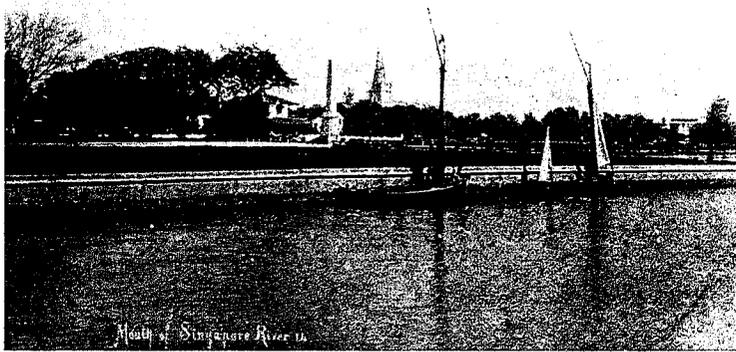


Figure 40. Mouth of Singapore River with Dalhousie Obelisk, 1900 (National Archives of Singapore)

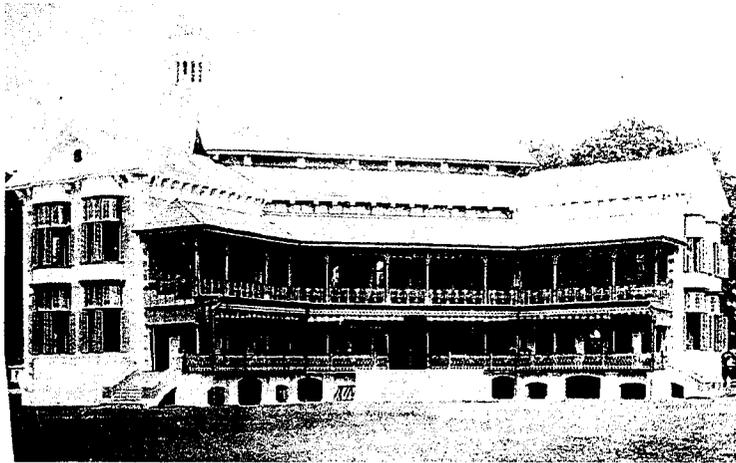


Figure 41. Singapore Cricket Club, 1905 (National Archives of Singapore)



Figure 42. The tree-lined Esplanade (National Archives of Singapore)

England.<sup>52</sup> In 1852, a meeting was held to establish a Singapore Cricket Club (SCC) and there were twenty-eight initial members.<sup>53</sup> The first *recorded* cricket game was played on October 14<sup>th</sup> 1852 under the title 'A Picked Eleven against the Club'. Actually, according to G. P. Owen,<sup>54</sup> member of the SCC in 1920, "there were six on one side and nine on the other. The picked lot made 11 in the first innings and 1 in the second; and the Club making 14 and 12, won easily". The second match, played a week later, was called 'A Scratch Match between Sixteen Gentleman'. Nearly six months later on March 1853, the first eleven-a-side match was played, and the score book ceased recording matches until 1860 when the Club played against members of the 40<sup>th</sup> Madras Native Infantry and the 11<sup>th</sup> Punjab Infantry with the Club winning by 76 runs. In April 1865, the match against The Royal Artillery saw one hundred runs made for the first time as the total of one innings. It was only in the 1890s that the SCC played inter-colonial matches pitting against not only the states in the Malay peninsular like Perak, Penang and Selangor but Hong Kong, Shanghai, Colombo and Batavia as well. In 1896, the SCC did not lose a single match. Eventually, the team toured as far as Burma, Siam and Australia. In 1937, Sir Julian Cahn's XI played a three-day match and was the first English team to visit Malaya and the SCC.

And it was about camaraderie, sociality, belonging and self-discipline. In 1836, there were altogether 141 Europeans on the island; with 105 males and 36 females. There was an improvement to the gender balance in the 1849 census with 243 males and 117 females. In comparison, the 1849 census recorded the Chinese population (all the dialect groups) as 27, 988.<sup>55</sup> Life for some of these Europeans, on the island before the Suez opened -- beyond the activity of trade and governance -- was rather dull, listless, insular, gossipy and marked with ennui and conservatism. By turning religion to its advantage, the justification for the establishment of the Singapore Cricket Club took the discourse of

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52. John Cameron, (1865/1965) *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 299.

53. Some confusion occurs here. Owen says that the 1861 Directory of the SCC indicates that the SCC was actually established in 1859. We must remember that the first game establishes the team as a Club. G. M. Dare writes in his journal that in July 1856, that although there was a cricket club, it was too hot to play. Dare, in Makepeace V.II, 545.

54. An active Singaporean, his wife who was also the first female motor driver in Singapore, was formerly married to the former secretary of the SCC, G.M.Dare. Owen has been described as "the popular and energetic Secretary of the Cricket and Sporting Clubs, and an intrepid tiger-hunter [who has] recently shot another tiger, and that makes his fourth or fifth. He is very plucky, a man of steady nerve, and an excellent shot." As told to J.T. Lloyd by a Mr. Bailey in the Singapore Club. *The Straits Times Annual* 1906-1907, 131.

55. Marriott in Makepeace, V. I, 357.

muscular Christianity. That sports would provide the proverbial cold shower to the temptations of the flesh and a healthy body ensured a healthy mind. It was character forming in keeping with gentlemanly ideals. The 1852 Straits Times reported that “cricket is beyond all doubt a powerful agent in keeping away that dreaded disease, cholera.”

But no cricket club is without a cricket pavilion. If there are eternal signifiers of Empire, the cricket pavilion is a notable one, and the game itself went beyond the colonizing influence – if not one which the English themselves might have regretted ever passing on to the natives. Consider the recent Bollywood movie, *Lagaan* (2001) with its imperial inter-racial love triangle, and the cricket match between the draconian British officers and the poor Indian villagers. Guess who won? If anything it is in the gentlemanly game of cricket that colonialism and its darker allusions, mainly the capacious concept of “cultural imperialism”, is contestable in light of contemporary following for the game and the test rankings.<sup>56</sup> In Singapore, the once all-exclusive European membership of the Singapore Cricket Club was not simply a matter of racism or prejudice. Clubs and clans offered a sense of belonging and created business networks in distant shores and foreign societies. If the Chinese had their clubs, clan halls and secret associations, why not the

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56. I say this in full knowledge of the multitudes of papers regarding colonialism and cricket. No field is uncontested and C.L.R. James’s *Beyond a Boundary* is an eloquent memoir-study of cricket, racism, colonialism and West Indies self-determination. However, arguments concerning re-inscription within the colonial field, and cultural imperialist arguments are arguments for non-participation of any sport or activity outside one’s “pure culture” and even then, the search for origins and authenticity is a tricky one. James’s own memoir examines the cricket arena as the locus of political tensions colliding with his own fanatical passion for the sport. The January 2003 test cricket rankings are: South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, England, India, West Indies, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, and Bangladesh. If anything, today ‘White’ simply ends at the uniform (and even then, things have changed in that department). The current Captain of England’s cricket team is of Asian descent, Nasser Hussein was born in Chennai, India. Consider Nasser Hussein’s uncle, R. Abid Hussein who has been quoted on the internet Indian Weekly, *The Week* (July 11, 1999): “my nephew is now the captain of England, people ask me, ‘If India and England clash, whom will you support?’ My answer is India. My nephew might be the rival captain, but how can an Indian support any other team? But that doesn’t lessen my pride in my nephew.”

bored Englishman residing in faraway lands?<sup>57</sup> If anything, such clubs and associations were necessary to the life of the community, the preservation of identity, and contributed to the protean landscape of Singapore. The genius of Colonial Singapore was -- beyond matters of governance and municipal administration -- allowing the races to regulate their own affairs.<sup>58</sup> Multi-culturalism in fact never had it *so good*.

The first sports club in Singapore was the Billiard's Club formed on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1829 which met for a brief while in one of the bungalows facing the Esplanade.<sup>59</sup> The other games or recreational pursuits were Fives and the court was located in Empress Place as well as in Armenian Street. The other sporting pursuits were Horse-Racing, Regattas, Swimming, Gymnastics and later on, Lawn Tennis, Rugby, Football (Association), Field Hockey, Golf and Shikar (game-hunting). There had been certain inconveniences for the cricketers prior to the pavilion such as having to store their gear in the Masonic Hall which was located at the corner of Coleman Street. The absence of a bar in the Masonic

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57. This is not to say that racism did not set in eventually -- to re-cast an old saying, if one may be excused -- *familiarity after all, breeds, contempt -- but for the not-like-us*. But consider a port such as Singapore -- a newly arrived person in 1850s Singapore, whether European, Jewish, Arab or Chinese would have first encountered the bewildering array of tongues and cultures -- and would have sought familiarity in one's own kind. For details on various Chinese societies or clubs (good or bad), see Abdullah Bin Abdul Kadir's notes on the Thian Tai Huey secret society, the work of William Alexander Pickering, Protector of Chinese in Makepeace, V. I., 275-282 -- and Song Ong Siang's *One Hundred Years History of the Chinese in Singapore*. Also see R. N. Jackson (1965) *Pickering: Protector of Chinese*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press. Travelers such as Isabella Bird made the same observations regarding the Chinese and their club houses in 1879. Yet Ms Bird would have also known by then of other clubs such as the elite Singapore Club at Fullerton Square (1861) which actually occupied the second floor of the Exchange Building and had remarkable views of the harbour, the German Teutonia Club (1856) which admitted both sexes, and the British Tanglin Club (1865) which excluded Jews and other races.

58. There are two relevant measures here which Raffles laid out in the early years between 1819-1822. One was the instruction to William Farquhar in June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1819 that "The Chinese, Bugguese and other Foreign settlers are to be placed under the immediate superintendence of chiefs of their own tribes to be appointed by you, and those chiefs will be responsible to you for the police within their respective jurisdiction." The other is found in the 1822 instructions for a Town Committee which states that "the committee will consist of three European Gentlemen and of a Representative from each of the principal classes of Arabs, Malays, Bugis, Javanese, and Chinese."

59. This was actually the house of Edward Boustead. Six persons attended however the rules were oddly draconian, penalizing those who did not attend with a fine of \$2 Spanish dollars. Not surprisingly, there were tensions and the club did not last. See Buckley, 206-207.

Hall also presented a difficulty. Later, a make-shift tent would be pitched at the south-western corner of the Esplanade with a 'boy' running to the hotel (quite likely the Hotel de l'Europe) to fetch the drinks. Sometime in the 1860s, a wooden pavilion was built under the large trees. In 1877, another pavilion was built this time in the middle of the south end of the Esplanade; a single storey structure but slightly more elegant with a wrought-iron verandah. By then, the Young Men's Cricket Club was formed, but consisting of Eurasians who eventually started, and built their own club exactly cross the other end of the Esplanade. The third pavilion, built in 1884, was a two-storey building designed by Swan and Maclaren and the SCC had grown to a club of 378 members. By 1911, the membership rose to 762 and the SCC added a new façade to their old pavilion. The work was started in 1907 and some of the most distinctive features were the truncated wings, a raised floor and expansion to the verandah. While the new building reflected the pavilion architecture of the times, the architecture of the Royal Selangor Cricket Club in Kuala Lumpur (founded in 1884 and affectionately called The Spotted Dog or The Dog) adopted a Tudor theme surpassing the SCC in character.

Nonetheless the SCC spawned off more clubs and associations including the Ladies Lawn Tennis Club in 1884. With the widening of the Esplanade in 1890, the SCC also sponsored two Lawn Tennis Championships a year. With the pavilion of the Singapore Cricket Club gracing the Esplanade in the south end, the Singapore Recreation Club (SRC), formed by the Eurasian Community in 1884 would grace the north end.<sup>60</sup> Non-Eurasians were only allowed membership in 1955 and membership was opened to all in 1963. By 1920, the SCC and the SRC controlled and managed the Esplanade since they had leased the ground from the municipality for various sporting events throughout the year. Not to be outdone, yet another recreation club was formed on January 14<sup>th</sup> 1885 by the Straits Chinese. The Straits Chinese Recreational Club was located on the other side of the river in Hong Lim Green<sup>61</sup>, off South Canal Road where the old Jewish Quarter,<sup>62</sup>

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60. The Eurasian community numbered 3,094 (1,509 males and 1,585 females) in 1881 and 3589 in 1891 (1,764 males and 1,825 females). In both cases it is interesting to note that there were more females than males. A detailed report of the Eurasian community in Singapore is given by A.H. Carlos in *Makepeace*, V. I, 363-374. Eurasian is of course mixed-race, usually Portuguese and Indian -- and Eurasian here is in keeping with the Domiciled Community in India and the Burghers in Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

and the first Jewish synagogue were located. The Club adopted such European outdoor

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61. Originally Dunman's Green named after the Police superintendent, Thomas Dunman who retired in 1871. The land was actually donated by a Chan Hong Lim who had bought the land in 1876 and donated it to the Colonial government who in turn gave the land to the Straits Chinese community. It was developed into a park and recreation area for the Straits Chinese Recreation Club.

62. There were nine Jewish traders recorded in the 1830 census. One of the earliest merchants in Singapore (arrived in 1842) was the Oriental Jew, Abraham Solomon, who was born in Baghdad. He lived on the riverside, in Boat Quay and died on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1884 – and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Orchard Road. The Jewish community looked to him for leadership and wisdom. He was hospitable but was careful not to dine too much with Christians, having suffered some brutality at the hands of English officers elsewhere. See J.T. Thomson (1864/1991) *Glimpses into Life in Malayan Lands*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 252-249. By 1881, there were 204 Jewish residents in Singapore, and by 1930, 877. The first Jewish Synagogue was actually erected in the forties in Synagogue Street. It became too small and a second one was built at Waterloo Street (the Maghain Aboth Synagogue) and opened for services on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1878. Eventually yet another synagogue was constructed in Oxley Rise (Chesed El Synagogue). The building of the synagogues was often the initiative of the merchant, Mr Manasseh Meyer (Meyer Brothers, established 1873). See Makepeace, V.II, 274-275. A good introduction to the Jewish community in Singapore is through Eze Nathan's (1986) *The History of Jews in Singapore 1830-1945*. Singapore: Singapore Herbilu Editorial and Marketing Services. On the old synagogue off South Canal Road, Nathan writes:

For about 30 years, it served the little community as a place for divine worship. Then, it was sold as a shophouse. I visited the premises in 1938 and was most courteously welcomed by the Chinese occupants who showed me around. They told me how happy they were to live in a house that had once been a house of prayer for the *Orang Jaudee* (Jewish People). They felt it was a house of good omen and revered it, especially the *Ahel* (Ark room) which they had left untouched. They considered it an altar and respected it. (See pages 2-3)

The house was demolished after World War II making way for a power transformer. Mostly Sephardi Jews, the community today of 300 Jewish people continue to thrive, worship at both synagogues in Waterloo Street and Oxley Rise, and be involved in education and community work. One of Singapore's most fiery and eloquent political leaders prior to Independence was the Sephardi Jew David Marshall (March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1908 - December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1995) who was appointed as Singapore's first Chief Minister, "I am both a Jew and an Asian". Despite the tensions of Post-Independence politics (he was the opposition), he became the Ambassador to France, Spain, Portugal and Switzerland from 1978 to 1993. His political flamboyance was matched by his fashion sense – he always wore an orchid in his lapel and was known as the 'Ambassador with an Orchid'. See Chan Heng Chee (1984) *A Sensation of Independence: A Political Biography of David Marshall*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

sports as cricket, lawn tennis and association football. The club's pavilion was also constructed in the same year and shows up in maps as the Chinese Pavilion. The first cricket match was played against the Sepoy Lines Cricket Club. Interest in cricket waned, and eventually the members turned to tennis and football, and indoor games such as chess and billiards. Perhaps a more successful club was the Chinese Swimming Club at Tanjong Katong, founded in 1905 with the object of promoting the "useful art of swimming" among the Singapore Chinese, and "life-saving and physical culture." Certainly more liberal in its admissions of members and guests, the club is not only patronized by the Straits Chinese but Chinese merchants of all clans. Members' wives and children, are of course welcomed guests.<sup>63</sup> There were no European members.

When John Turnbull Thomson, the Government Surveyor of Singapore (1841-1853) started his career in Penang (1838-1841), he was barely eighteen. After twelve months in the settlement, he had familiarize himself to the Malayan language, the lingua franca of all the merchants and races in the region. And so for Thomson, "a soft flowing language issued out of the apparent chaos of words". In Penang, he became close friends with a prominent Chinese merchant called Kockchai whom he shared many discussions with – in Malay -- over politics, agriculture, the East India Company, and religion. Kockchai for example, was puzzled over how a company of merchants could hold the greatest empire in the East when empires were usually led by Emperors and Sultans. The discussions were mostly instructive for Thomson, "practical, amusing, scientific. The little secrets of culture, the times of bearing, and the profits, were all thoroughly sifted by this intelligent Indo-Chinese." Yet Thomson, in his ever enlightened state and man of science, was critical of the superstitions and faith of the Chinese – claiming that though they might be critical of their own ways sometimes, they were still unaware of *the* higher faith, i.e. Christianity. Yet what clearly troubles Thomson here in his relationship with Kockchai, is quite possibly, Thomson's painful awareness of his own foreignness. In his accounts of Kockchai, Thomson has never stepped into Kockchai's domestic realm, "the interior economy of his house was a sealed book to me." More puzzling was the fact that, despite the close friendship, he never saw Kockchai's wife or daughters: "To have exposed these to the gaze of his friend the white man, would have been a cause of shame to him – to have asked their acquaintance an insult not to be forgiven." And while Thomson tries to rationalize such arrangements as consistent with the eccentric habits of the natives, he might have also suspected that friendship with Kockchai had its limitations. Friendship stopped at the gates of Kockchai's private realm -- John Thomson could never have entered that world.<sup>64</sup> It was inscrutable. One wonders then, did Kockchai ever consider Thomson a friend as Thomson understood a 'friend' or friendship to be – or just a convenient English informant?

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63. Song, 380.

64. The discussion in this section is drawn from J.T. Thomson (1864/1991) *Glimpses into Life in Malayan Lands*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 60-65.

To return to *The End of the Tether*. Captain Whalley had not realized he had walked so far, from his hotel to the harbour docks. “The earth is big” he muses, and from that point, he is suddenly aware that “the Esplanade was very quiet; only from afar, from very far, a long way from the seashore, across the stretches of grass, through the long ranges of trees.”<sup>65</sup>

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65. Conrad, 209.

#### 4. *Wish you were here!*

It began, after all, as a matter of economy. There was consideration for brevity -- the simplest of forms, the most succinct of messages, the clarity of address, the lightest of materials, and the cheapest of rates. The conventional letter was irksome, both to sender and receiver -- the selection and folding of the paper, the choice of the envelope, and finally, affixing the stamp. "How very troublesome, for instance, it is at present for anyone on a journey who wishes to write to his relatives telling them of his safe arrival or asking for some article that may have been forgotten." In 1865, Dr. Heinrich von Stephan, eventually Postmaster General of the Imperial German Empire in 1876, would propose an "open post-sheet" (*offenes Postblatt*) of a uniform shape, sold at all Post Offices, and by all postmen with a fixed, pre-paid postage irrespective of the distance conveyed.

On the face of the card there might appear at the top the name of the district, and perhaps a small device (the arms of the country, etc). On the left hand a space could be left for the date stamp of the receiving office, on the right the postage stamp already impressed on the form. There would be a space for the address....<sup>1</sup>

On October 1st, 1869, the first official postcard would make its plain appearance in Austria.

Economical and efficient the postcard may have been but the pomposity of earlier epistolary styles prevailed in more refined circles. An etiquette book of 1890 would question the courtesy of a response if a postcard were sent. By March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1901, the average number of postcards delivered in the United Kingdom alone for a five year period was 379 million.<sup>2</sup> In 1903, 600 million postcards were sent annually in Britain.<sup>3</sup> James Douglas, a prominent London journalist would express the massive popularity of postcards quite succinctly in 1907: "The Picture Postcard carries rudeness to the fullest extremity. There is no room for anything polite. Now and then one can write on a blue sky or a white road, but as a rule there is no space for more than a gasp..."<sup>4</sup>

International postcards were first introduced in Singapore in September 1879 at three cents but were sold slightly above face value, that is one paid extra for the card itself.

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1. Frank Staff (1966) *The Picture Postcard and its Origins*. London: Lutterworth Press, 45.

2. J. C. Hemmeon (1912), *The History of the British Post Office*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 70.

3. E. J. Evans & J. Richards (1980) *A Social History of Britain in Postcards 1870-1930*. London & New York: Longman, 3

4. *Ibid*, pp. 81.

This was rectified in May 1883, and the next year, on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1884, local postcards were issued at 1 cent for use in the Straits, the Malay States and Johor -- and sold at face-value. Reply-postcards were distributed in 1882 for local and foreign use.<sup>5</sup> In 1890, postcards were reduced to 2 cents, increased to 3 cents in 1894, and by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918, the cards were worth 4 cents. However it was also only in 1918 that the rates for local postcards were raised to two 2 cents. Depending on the mail ships, postcards sent between Singapore and Penang cost more if conveyed by the P. & O. In 1912, the British Postmaster General would announce that the “penny postage [embraced] the whole of the British Empire save Pitcairn Island.”<sup>6</sup>

By the late 1880s, postal services were so well-regulated that the Postmaster General’s reports in the Straits Settlements Annual Gazettes included prosecution details of dishonest postmen for crimes such as “wrongful taxation for a parcel,” therefore cheating, and “removing a defaced stamp from an undelivered letter.” The first crime received a year’s rigorous imprisonment, and the second, a month. By 1888, the Strait Settlements, which included Singapore, Malacca and Penang, received 17,978 postcards and dispatched 18,420.<sup>7</sup> On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1894, privately printed postcards were approved by the British Postal Authorities for circulation at a cheaper rate, triggering off the massive production -- and consumption -- of every conceivable pictorial postcard across Britain. In Singapore, privately produced postcards were accepted for transmission only in 1896, with certain stipulations such as material, size, distance, and pre-paid postage.<sup>8</sup>

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5. T.A. Melville “The Post Office and its History” in Walter Makepeace, et. al. (1921) *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, Vol. 2, London: John Murray, pp. 102-165.

6. Howard Robinson (1964), *Carrying British Mail Overseas*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., Robinson, 265.

7. This was an increase of 4,072 cards received and 2,753 dispatched in 1887. See the “Annual Report on the Postal Department for the Year 1888.” in the Straits Settlements Report, 1888.

8. See *Straits Settlements Government Gazette* December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1896, 2436. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1894, the British General Post Office announced that private cards bearing half-penny adhesive stamps were approved for circulation. One of the first pictorial postcards bearing local views were produced by George Stewart and Co. of Edinburgh. See Staff, 89. By 1898, privately issued picture postcards appeared on the market and were soon doing an extensive trade. By January 1902, with the permission of the British Post office, the back of the card would be reserved purely for writing and the picture on the front could be enlarged to fill up the card. However, such cards could not be sent abroad until member countries of the Universal Postal Union took similar steps -- and that was only possible in June, 1906 at a meeting of the 6<sup>th</sup> Postal Union Congress in Rome (Staff, 66). Also see National Archives (3<sup>rd</sup> Reprint, 1995) *Singapore Historical Postcards*. Singapore: Times Books.

The traveler who sent the postcard must have been irate, or puzzled -- or merely passing an informative observation to the intended recipient. The picture is Battery Road<sup>9</sup> and Commercial Square, or Raffles Place,<sup>10</sup> Singapore; the written date is 25<sup>th</sup> of August, 1906, and the photographer of the pictorial postcard is Singapore's first photographic firm, G. R. Lambert and Co. Established in 1867, G. R. Lambert and Co.'s studio was relocated to Battery Road in 1877 from No. 1, High Street. The 1898 Straits Settlements Annual Report had described such picture postcards as "artistically got up with characteristic local views."<sup>11</sup> The scribble on the postcard says: "In this road there are a few French hairdressers."<sup>12</sup>

At the turn of the century, the traveler if arriving in Singapore on a French or German mail-ship, and who wishes to tour the bustling town site will most usually disembark at Borneo Wharf. Then following the route of the electric tramways, our traveler will go along Anson Road, pass through open space and native bazaars until he reaches Cecil Street where he will note the initial presence of important European commercial houses,

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9. Also known sensibly by the Hokkien community as 'Tho Kho Au' or 'at the back of the godowns'. Which also referred to Collyer Quay. 'Tho Kho' literally means 'earth treasury' in "Native Names of Streets in Singapore" *JMBRAS* June 1891, 49-65. The name, Battery Road, is also derived from the area when it used to be Fort Fullerton, named of course after Robert Fullerton, who was Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1826-1829.

10. Commercial Square was officially renamed Raffles Place in 1858, but the use of the former was still very much a conventional practice. C. B. Buckley (1902/1965) *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*. Singapore: Fraser and Neave, 667. John Cameron would offer his own impressions in 1864: "Commercial Square, which, ever since the settlement rose into importance has been the principal locality for the European Houses of Business, is about 200 yards from the landing, but completely shut in from the view of the sea." J. Cameron, (1865/1965) *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford, 52.

11. See *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>, 1896, 2436.

12. The 1901 census returns of Singapore cites 99 persons of French nationality: 58 males, 41 females. This particular postcard of Battery Road/Commercial Square was on display at the Singapore Philatelic Museum. The picture was originally taken in 1900 by G. R. Lambert. In December 1995, The Singapore Philatelic Museum opened its doors to the public with a few minor exhibitions, one of them being "The Travellers View of Singapore, 1810-1939" through postcards. Though a small scale exhibition, the collection was sufficiently significant. The organizing principle behind the exhibition was an attempt to reproduce the actual travellers' experience through the window display of postcards.



Figure 43. Collyer Quay, 1930s (Postcard, National Archives of Singapore)



Figure 44. Robinson Road, 1920s (Postcard, National Archives of Singapore)

as well as the offices of the Straits Steamship Company Limited, established on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1890 – a wholly Malayan shipping enterprise with seven Chinese and European directors.<sup>13</sup> He will pass the Netherlands India Commercial Bank, and the Netherlands Trading Society building; then proceed along Collyer Quay (1861-1864)<sup>14</sup> -- built once for military fortifications but instead, fortified commercial purposes. Collyer Quay is flanked by the godowns of international and local shipping firms such as the British India Steam Navigation Co., the Canadian Pacific Steam Ship Co., and the Indo-China Steam Navigation Co. – which, among others, are all conveniently housed in the same building, Boustead and Co.<sup>15</sup> Our traveler will also then pass the consulates of Norway and Siam.

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13. The company began with five ships, three of them supplied by Tan Kim Seng and Company. See K.G. Tregonning,(1967) *Home Port Singapore: A History of the Straits Steamship Company Ltd. 1890-1965*. Singapore: Oxford University Press., 16-17.

14. Governor Edmund A. Blundell (term lasting 1855-1859) called upon Captain George C. Collyer of the Madras Engineers to fortify Singapore in 1858, letter dated July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1858: “Against a foreign maritime power, Singapore is and always has been perfectly helpless.” (OIOC, L/P5/5/249 enclosures to the Governor General, Military Secret Letters from India and E. A. Blundell, Governor General of the Straits Settlements). While the sea wall was designed by Collyer, the work was not finished and he left in 1858 – hoping to direct the construction from India. Unfortunately the results were quite useless and the fortifications became known as “Collyer’s Folly” as it didn’t come to anything. However, the sea wall, extending from Fort Fullerton to Teluk Ayer with the space filled in (work done by convict labour) to allow godowns to be built improved the townsite tremendously and created more crucial communication and transportation lines which enabled further town improvement, and the establishment of the Tanjung Pagar Dock Company. In February 1862, Collyer returned to Europe. See Buckley, 686-689.

15. Edward Boustead arrived in Singapore from Liverpool on *The Hindustan* on March 13<sup>th</sup> 1828. Mr Boustead who had been in China as well, came to Singapore as the Manager of the firm Robert Wise & Co. whose godown was on the river near Battery Road. Eventually, Boustead started his own firm. When the firm was established is confusing (1827 is one answer) but records quite are consistent with the registration of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1834 date for Boustead, Schwabe and Co. The firm moved down near Elgin Bridge and was known to be located in the “seven and twenty pillar house,” Buckley, 208. The firm grew and by 1846, there were four partners scattered around China, Singapore, Manila and Liverpool. Edward Boustead returned to England in 1850 for the Great Exhibition of 1851, and never to return, dying on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 1888. But Makepeace informs us that Edward Boustead died in 1891. See Makepeace, V. II, 307-308 for the history of the Boustead Institute. Nonetheless, Boustead left behind a charitable legacy of £9,000 which went to the building of the Boustead Institute (July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1892), a hostel for merchant seamen, seafaring men and dock employees at Tanjong Pagar, and a thousand pounds went to the building of a St. Andrew’s house in Armenian Street. Boustead and Co. continued as a successful company despite Edward Boustead’s death. Makepeace, V. II, 189-191.



Figure 45. Jiriksha housing area (National Archives of Singapore)

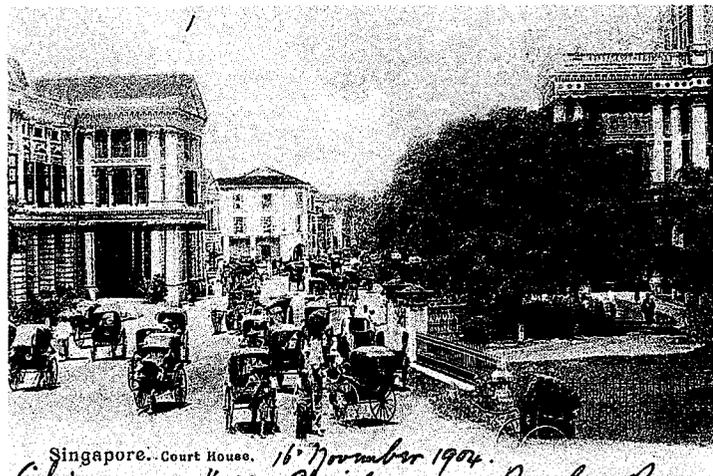


Figure 46. Court House and Police Station, 1904 (postcard, National Archives of Singapore)



Figure 47. Thian Hock Keng Temple, Teluk Ayer (National Archives of Singapore)

Once he reaches Johnston Pier, the tram will make a sudden left into Battery Road,<sup>16</sup> and head towards Raffles Place with its congested traffic and energetic concentration of offices and shops.

Or let us say, our same traveler lands at the P. & O. Company wharf which is further west of Borneo Wharf, and is located at least two and three-quarters mile from Raffles Place. If he is not booked with a hotel like the Raffles Hotel or the Hotel Europe, and runners are not there to make any transportation arrangement, he will have several choices at landing which he certainly cannot ignore:

And it hardly assists [the traveler] to recover [his] poise to hear the discordant clamour of a thousand voices making shrill outcry in many tongues; nor to see the welter of mixed humanity that waits in evidently nervous anxiety to take possession of [the traveler] and devour [the traveler]. Malays, Chinese, Tamils, Bengalis, Klings, these and many other races swarm about the landing stages, screaming the excellence of their cars and rickshaws and protesting their anxiety to serve...<sup>17</sup>

The cheapest way to travel and explore would be by jinricksha, introduced in 1881, and which by 1920, numbered 9000 for daily hire. If the traveler chooses to stay at the Raffles Hotel at Beach Road, the journey will be at least three and a half miles, costing only 35 cents to 40 cents, as compared to a Hackney Carriage which would be twice the price. An interesting route perhaps would be along Keppel Road heading northwards towards Tanjong Pagar Road to link up with South Bridge Road. At the junction of Tanjong Pagar Road and Neil Road,<sup>18</sup> the traveler might pass the Jinricksha Building,<sup>19</sup> an imposing building with a large clock, built on a triangular corner site in 1903, and quite impossible to miss. Moving on -- to and along South Bridge Road, the traveler will encounter the hustle and bustle of Chinatown, pass the Central Police Station and the Police Courts,<sup>20</sup>

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16. See A. Wright, Editor-in-Chief, (1908) *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries, and Resources*. Abridged Edition. London: Lloyds, pp. 231-237.

17. This is from Ambrose Pratt (1931) *Magical Malaya*. Melbourne: Robertson & Mullens Ltd., 17. I have substituted 'you' and 'us' to suit the text.

18. Originally Salat Road, renamed in 1858.

19. The jinricksha building is now an arts and crafts center. There were so many rickshaws at the turn of the century that it got to a point where there were some serious strikes and disturbances. In January 1903, there was a strike which lasted seven days. In 1888, regulation of jinrickshas were handed over to the Municipality and a special department was established in 1892 (ordinance V of 1892). See F.J. Hallifax's "Municipal Government" in *Makepeace V.I.*, 331-332. Rickshaws were replaced by trishaw in 1946-1947.

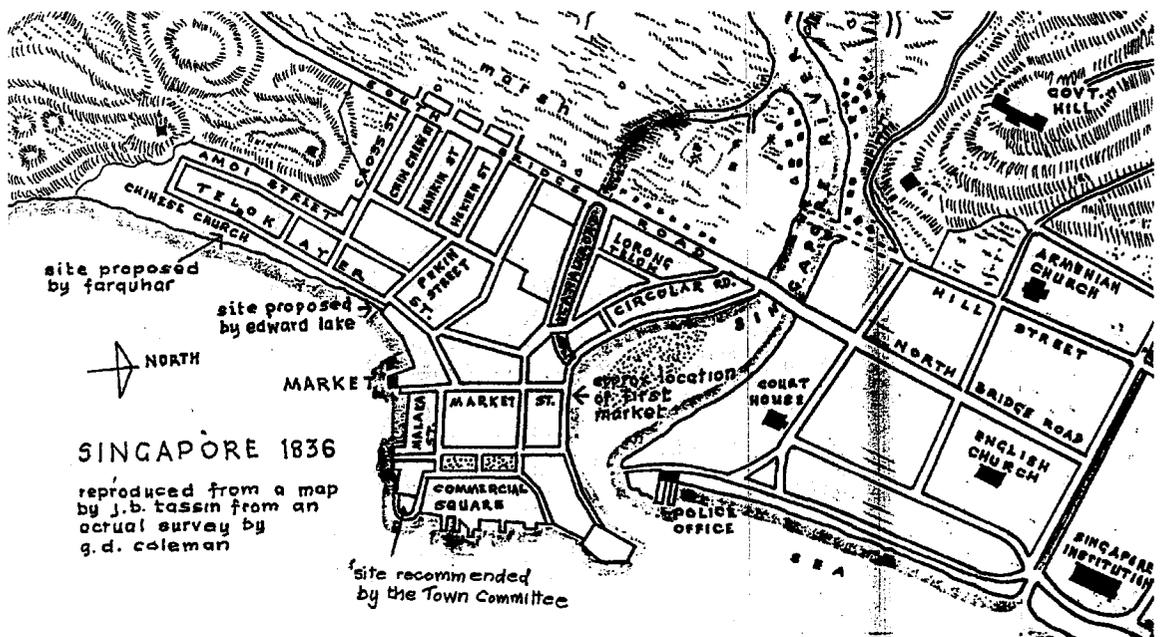


Figure 48.

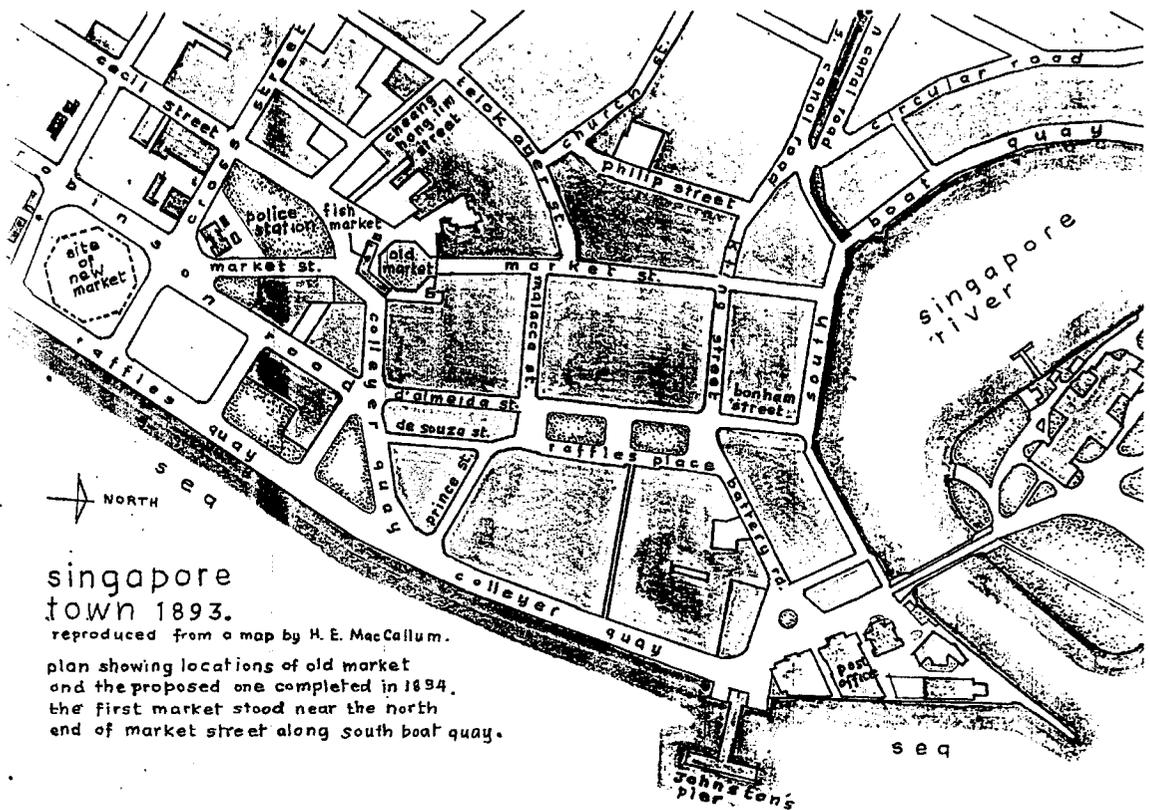


Figure 49.

Figures 48 and 49. Republished in Lee Kip Lin (1989) *Teluk Ayer Market Singapore*: National Archives and Oral History Department.

then cross Elgin Bridge and the Singapore River on to North Bridge Road, before turning right into High Street with its native jewelers and silk sellers, as well as the shopping hub for curios. Then, heading down until the Dalhousie Obelisk is in sight, our traveler's rickshaw should turn left for a pleasant tree-lined ride along Connaught Drive and the Esplanade before making a left again up Stamford Road and a right to Beach Road and finally, the Raffles Hotel.

However, the ride along the quays can be equally, if not more fascinating. The Anson Road-Robinson Road route to the very busy Raffles and Collyer Quays are usually congested with rickshaws and the line-up of open air markets selling every imaginable merchandise. The quays are also where trade is conducted among the "maelstrom of humanity." If the rickshaw coolies were not attracting customers, they were sometimes found in the cinema enjoying the silent antics of Charlie Chaplin.<sup>21</sup> Located on Raffles Quay are also the consulates of Italy, Netherlands and Portugal as well as the Telegraph Office. Moving along Raffles Quay, the traveler will pass the elegant Victorian Pavilion-like Teluk Ayer fresh market.

Originally built in 1822 near the river, it was removed to Telok Ayer, and rebuilt in 1825, 1838 and in 1894.<sup>22</sup> The 1894 market, designed by James MacRitchie, the Municipal Engineer, resonated the 1833 design by G. D. Coleman. Taking the form of an octagonal cast-iron structure reminiscent of English seaside pavilions, the cast iron (for decorative and structural purposes) was supplied by P. & W. MacLellan of Glasgow, which also supplied the iron for Cavenagh Bridge in 1868. The building was erected locally by Riley and Hargreaves and the foundation was laid out by Chea Keow, a popular Chinese contractor involved in many public works at that time.<sup>23</sup>

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20. Both were public works built in the 1880s. The courts in 1885 and the police station in 1886. Both were built in the same Victorian Eclectic spirit, with Corinthian pilasters and columns, and more ornamented than the Post Office. The police station came with an Indo-Saracenic onion dome, very John Nash and Brighton's Royal Pavilion, and the court also had a Mansard roof. Both were consistent with the buildings constructed post-Suez Canal. Both buildings were demolished in the mid -1970s.

21. H. Norden in John Bastin, *Travellers' Singapore: An Anthology* Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 198.

22. See Raffles's letter to J. Bernard Esq. dated January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1823. NA/NL 58.

23. Originally the market stood by the south-west bank of the river (while Raffles was in Bencoolen) and removed eventually by Raffles's order since a new Chinatown was going to be built. There was some resistance, especially from the Chinese who had to be relocated. The structure that was built in 1825 was originally timber structure over water on timber piles. The structure was found woefully inadequate but efforts to build yet another new market never materialized until 1837 when after some bureaucratic haggling, Singapore received a new market. Originally designed by G. D. Coleman it was a

Moving on, the traveler will see Finlayson Green, named after John Finlayson, Chairman of the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company in the 1880s and come up to Collyer Quay. Linking Collyer Quay and Raffles Place<sup>24</sup> is Change Alley. Concealed by a wooden archway opposite Johnston Pier, Change Alley contains a hotbed of activity, with “dense crowds of Jew, Arabs, Chinese, Japanese and Indian, bartering and selling.” According to R. N. Walling:

The noise of the hawkers of fountain pens from Germany, socks and silks from Japan, ice-water, toffee sticks, fruits, shirts, pants, scissors, pencils, nails, curios, and the thousand and one necessities of Asiatic life and existence; the shuffling of many feet, the panting, the breathing, the spitting: the “shop” of Chinese produce dealers, commission agents, unguaranteed brokers, and comparadors to European firms... It is amazing how much activity is packed into this confined space. There must surely be more business per square foot in this alley than anywhere else in Singapore.

Walling was however, writing in 1931, re-visiting Change Alley which was once known to traders in New York and London, but is now, as he declares, reduced to a “second-rate” business life -- from Mincing Lane to an eastern Petticoat Lane with a bazaar-like atmosphere.<sup>25</sup> Naturally, if the European tourist is reluctant to dive into din of local trade, there is Raffles Square, where the European community gather, shop, or bank. But as James Rennie warns the rickshaw traveller, “we can only go one way round the Square,

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building, with columns forming the only ornament, measuring 125 feet in diameter, formed by two concentric rings of brick piers octagonally arranged with three arches forming the drum of the main roofs for ventilation and lighting. The roofing and flooring was of clay tiles. Barely three months after its completion, a survey discovered some structural defects caused by the ground swell and surf. There had been reports by Farquhar in 1822 and the Military Board in 1834 warning of the surf in the area. Coleman’s solution was to build yet another fish market nearby but for a cheap price to break the surf. The new market was completed in 1841. Coleman’s building stood long enough until the Teluk Ayer reclamations necessitated the construction of the new building opened March 1<sup>st</sup> 1894. The market was let out to the highest bidder but the Municipal assumed control in 1909. In 1973, the building was gazetted as a national monument, and architecturally conserved. It is now a popular food centre. Lee Kip Lin (1989) *Telok Ayer Market* Singapore National Archives and Oral History Department. Also see N. Edwards and P. Keys (1988) *Singapore: A Guide to Buildings, Streets, Places*. Singapore: Times Books, 429-430.

24. Replaced by Clifford Pier in 1933, named after Sir Hugh Clifford who was Governor of the Straits Settlements between 3<sup>rd</sup>, June 1927 to February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1930.

25. R.N. Walling in Micheal Wise (1996) *Travellers’ Tales of Old Singapore* Brighton: In Print Publications, 223-224.



Figure 50. Raffles Place circa 1920 (Postcard, National Archives of Singapore)

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and if your ricksha overruns Littles as far as the Dispensary you can jolly well just travel all round the Square again.”<sup>26</sup> For some reason or other, perhaps it alludes to Finlayson Green, the Chinese called Raffles Place ‘Tho-fu fa-yun’ or ‘the flower garden by the godowns’.<sup>27</sup>

And how would a Chinese traveller on a Chinese-pulled ricksha navigate his way to Raffles Place?<sup>28</sup> Our traveller would disembark at ‘Chha-tin ma-thau’ (Jardine’s Wharf) or ‘Sit-lat Mng’ (Singapore’s Gate).<sup>29</sup> Following the same route of the trams, he will go along ‘lau toa-peh-kon hit-tiau’ (old idol street) or ‘ti ku pa sat khi Tanjong Pa-kat hai ki hit-tiun’ (that road from the old market going to Tanjong Pagar along the shore).<sup>30</sup> Then he might proceed along ‘Heng-Lung Kai’ (the street belonging to Lok Yu, the towkay and his business stamp, ‘Heng-Lung’) or ‘Lo-man-san kai’ (Robinson Road),<sup>31</sup> and reach ‘Tho-Ko-Au’ (at the back of the godowns)<sup>32</sup> or Tho-Kho Au hai-ki’ (at the back of the godowns by the seaside) before turning into ‘Tho-fu fa-yun’ (flower garden by the godowns).<sup>33</sup> There are also other routes, for example through ‘Si-Shu Kai’ (Cecil Road) or ‘A-pien Kongsi’ (opium headquarters).<sup>34</sup> Or the Chinese who wishes to be in more

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26. James Rennie (1933) *Musings of J.S.M.R. Mostly Malayan Singapore*: Malaya Publishing House, 27.

27. Or another more strategic reference, ‘mouth of the godowns’.

28. All Chinese names here are either in Hokkien or Cantonese. Discussion of streetnames and the various translations, cultural versions are derived from two sources. They are: H. W. Firmstone (1904) “Chinese Names of Streets and Places in Singapore and the Malay Peninsula.” *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* #42, 54-288; and H.T. Haughton (1891) “Native Names of Streets in Singapore.” *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* June, 49-65. See as well, "An Index in Romanized Hokkien and Cantonese to The Chinese Names of Streets and Places in Singapore." compiled by Tan Kee Soon and revised by A.W. Bailey and F. M. Baddeley, *JSBRAS* #46, 195-213.

29. Keppel Harbour.

30. Both refer to Anson road. Old market refers to Teluk Ayer Market. There was little built on the road and so landmarks were scarce for the Chinese.

31. Robinson as pronounced in Chinese, ‘Lo-man-san’.

32. Collyer Quay and also Battery Road.

33. Raffles Place.

34. Cecil Road

familiar surroundings will head for 'Guan sun koi' ('Guan sun' street)<sup>35</sup> or 'Tai pak kong miu kai' (temple idol street).<sup>36</sup> Naturally travelers from all over the world had different interests<sup>37</sup> and according to the Shanghainese visitor, Li Chung Chu who<sup>38</sup> was visiting a friend in Singapore sometime in 1887, he noted the scarcity of Cantonese restaurants and hotels, the cluster of theatres and brothels in Kreta Ayer (in Chinatown), the high price of opium, and the impoverished ricksha coolie. And while he spoke of the non-impressive building forms of the Chinese clan associations, the eclectic range of architecture found on the landscape was hardly an attraction..

The most distinctive landmark at the corner of Collyer Quay and Battery Road is the imposing Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, ascribed to the Swan and MacLaren firm,<sup>39</sup> furnished by Powell & Co.<sup>40</sup> and John Little & Co.<sup>41</sup> and opened on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1894.<sup>42</sup>

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35. 'Guan sun' is one of the five divisions of the Hokkien community who take part in a Chinese procession

36. Teluk Ayer Street which leads to the center of Chinatown.

37. Europeans would note the hustle and bustle, the native bazaars, the trading houses, and decent shopping.

38. Li Chung Chu (1895) in Micheal Wise (1996) *Travellers' Tales of Old Singapore*. Brighton: In Print Publishing, 133-136.

39. Swan and Maclaren was the pre-eminent architectural and engineering firm in Singapore. The founders were Mr. A. A. Swan and Mr. J. W. B. Maclaren in 1885. Their most prominent architect is R. A. J. Bidwell (designer of the Raffles Hotel) who became a partner in 1899. For further details of the firm, see W. Makepeace, et. al (eds.) (1921). *One Hundred Years of Singapore Vol. 2*. 2 Vols. London, John Murray. For more on Bidwell and his legacy, see K. L. Lee (1995) *The Singapore House* Singapore, Times Edition.

40. Auctioneers and Valuers. Firm established in 1863 by Mr. H.T. Powell. Their advertisement reads as "Mortgages arranged. Rents collected. Suppliers of Billiard tables." See G. M. Reith (1985) *1907 Handbook to Singapore*. [1907] Singapore: Oxford, 8.

41. Still a major department store in Singapore, now situated in Orchard Road opposite Centrepoint and Robinsons Dept. Store. As discussed in the chapter, 'So Small a Community', John Little & Co. is akin to a modern department store although it started life as a general trading firm in 1845.

42. J. Falconer (reprinted 1995) *A Vision of the Past: A History of Early Photography in Singapore and Malaya, The Photographs of G. R. Lambert & Co, 1880-1910*. Singapore: Times, 53-55. See also information on plates in pages 171 - 172.

The building is situated across from Johnston's Pier, ensuring its prominence so much that it would be signified as the gateway to Singapore. The November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1894 *Straits Times* notes, "it seems scarcely possible that any building can have a finer site....No person can come into Singapore by any ordinary route without knowing that the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank is there." Here, though clearly an impressive structure, is excessive architectural liberty taken.

Aptly described as a "wedding cake", the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank displayed the sort of extravagance reminiscent of the Regency style with its "grand mass of details, a multiplicity of gables soaring over the polychrome stonework of the facade"<sup>43</sup> and Moorish turrets. As ever, the contrite prettiness of Queen Anne architecture<sup>44</sup> is present in the syncretic attention to the gables on the second floor while temperate considerations are indicated by the verandah-type shutter doors and jalousies,<sup>45</sup> and adapted five-foot walkways, unique to the nineteenth century structures in Singapore and Malaya, ensuring the building's natural ventilation, particularly if it is situated across from the pier. The November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1894 *Straits Times* continues:

The total length of the building is 175 feet and the depth is 75 feet....The Battery Road entrance is through a handsome portico, supported by columns with ornamental capitals...The roof is so contrived that, if it should be so desired, long chairs can be taken up and the staff may enjoy the full benefit of a cool breeze from the harbour, along with an excellent view to the westward....

Across from the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, and at the corner of Flint Street and Battery Road, is the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, built in 1895, illustrating the Edwardian Baroque movement which exerted a significant influence on

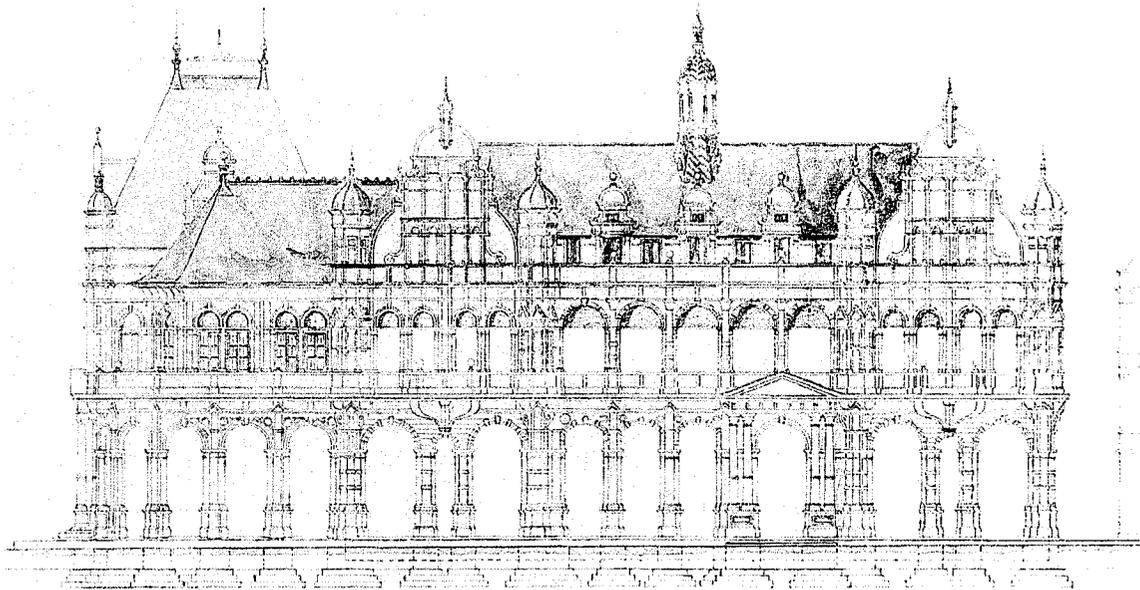
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43. J. Beamish and J. Ferguson (1995 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) *A History of Singapore Architecture: The Making of a City*. Singapore: Graham Brash, 82.

44. The architectural style during the reign of Queen Anne (1702-1714) was well known for its plain brick domesticity and dignified restraint across Britain and the American colonies, and associated with Christopher Wren. The Queen Anne Revival came about between the 1860s and 1890s, deriving its details from 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> English and Flemish architecture, this time combining eclecticism with the freedom of asymmetrical and informal planning influenced by A. Pugin's Gothic Revival (1769-1832). See J. S. Curl (1999) *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 529-530. Also very helpful here is Mark Girouard, (1977) *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen Anne' Movement 1860-1900* Oxford: Clarendon.

45. Literally, French for *jealousy*. Here the term denotes a blind or shutter with fixed or movable slats which slope upwards from the outside so as to exclude sun and rain but giving shade, ventilation and visual privacy. See the helpful glossary in Norman Edwards and Peter Keys (1988) *Singapore: A Guide to Buildings, Streets, Places*. Singapore: Times Books, 528.

HONGKONG & SHANGHAI BANKING CORPORATION  
NEW BANK SINGAPORE



Elevation to Battery Road

Figure 51. Plans, 1892 (Postcard, National Archives of Singapore)



Plate 13 Commercial Square, ca. 1900

Figure 52. Johnston Pier and Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, circa 1900 (Postcard, National Archives of Singapore)

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the domestic Coarsened Classical style. The building is an elegant, balanced contrast with its “rusticating podium and alternating pilasters and columns on the facade, rounded off by an entablature and balustrade on which stood a series of urns.”<sup>46</sup> It was pulled down in the 1930s. The “most commanding building” in Singapore, the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank was demolished in 1919 to make way for a larger and more architecturally subdued successor.

Beside the Hongkong and Shanghai bank along Battery Road is the rather austere, brick-structured Medical Hall, founded by chemists Dr. Koehn and Mr. Wiespaaur in 1882. The Medical Hall’s advertisement in Reverend G. M. Reith’s 1892 *Handbook to Singapore* offers “prescriptions carefully executed. Patent medicines: English, French, German & American, Invalid Requisites, Surgical Instruments. Spectacles, Prince-Nez in Nickel, Gold and Double Electro-Plate, Toilet Soaps and Perfumeries.”<sup>47</sup> The advertisement in a 1958 travel guide would list “Your requirement of everything Pharmaceutical, Cosmetics, Perfumery and Toilet Requisites.”<sup>48</sup> The Medical Hall building would be the last of the surviving nineteenth-century structures in the area, demolished only in the 1970s and replaced by the quasi-postmodern twenty-one storey Straits Trading Building of brown mirror glass and concrete. Winding into the bustling Raffles Place -- with its retail stores like Whiteway-Laidlaws, Robinsons, John Little and Co. which is modeled on “Harrods”, and legal offices -- on the right portion of the postcard is Gresham Place housing the long-standing trading firm of McAlister and Co.<sup>49</sup> (which moved into the building in 1893), and on the upper floor, the G. R. Lambert studio. In the foreground of the postcard, littered with jinrickshas and hackney-carriages is a triangular open space at the junction of Collyer Quay, Battery Road and Flint Street, and on the left, ringed by trees and in front of the Battery Road section of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank is the Tan Kim Seng fountain.

The report by John Turnbull Thompson in 1852 had proposed a scheme for the supply of water to the town from the ‘Singapore Creek’. The financial estimate for the project was £28,000, involving two peons and ten convicts under the supervision of an officer. It was to provide 546 million gallons of water a year. The proposal did not materialize. In 1857, Mr. Tan Kim Seng, a Straits Chinese philanthropist who was popular with the European community, offered the princely sum of \$13,000 to the government to channel water into town from Bukit Timah with the stipulation that the whole of the sum should

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46. Beamish & Ferguson, 81 - 82.

47. Reith, 3.

48. Papineau, Aristide J. G. (ed.) (1958) *Guide to Singapore and Spotlight on Malaya*. Singapore: Papineau, 81-82.

49. This trading firm was founded as McAlister and Company in 1857 by Alexander McAlister and James Parker Niven. It is one of the oldest Singapore business houses. For a more detailed history see volume Makepeace, V.II, 208-209.

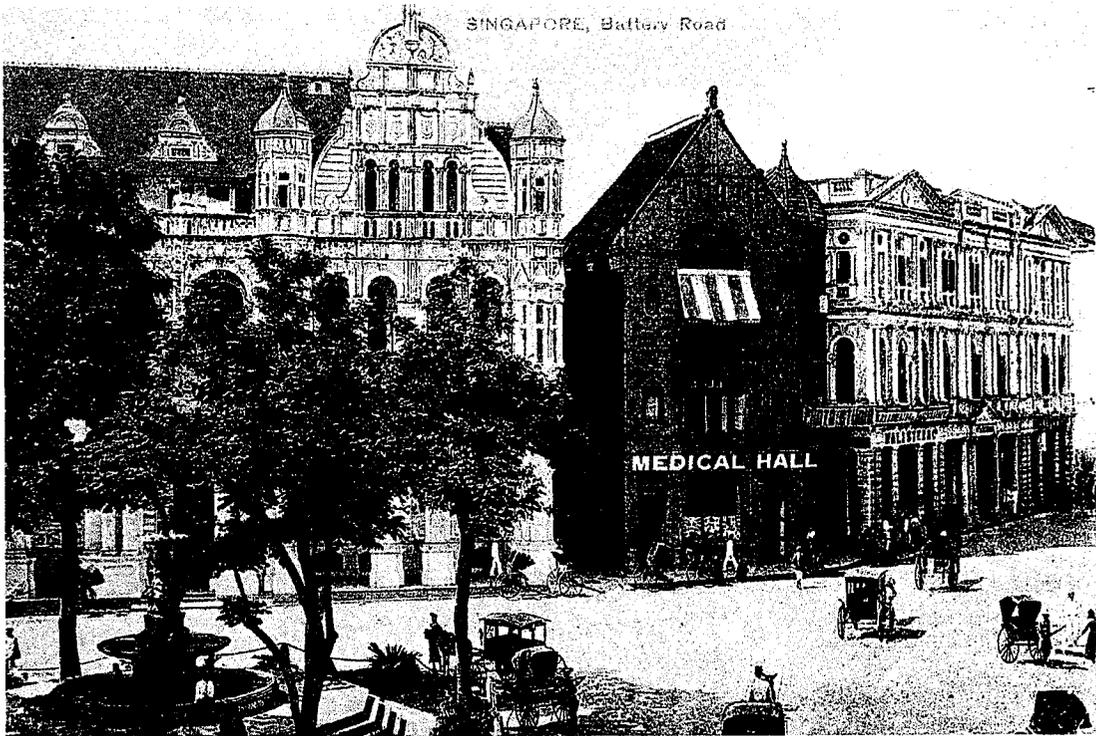


Figure 53. Battery Road, circa 1900. (Postcard, National Archives of Singapore)

be devoted to the purpose specified and that the works, when completed, should be well-maintained by the government or municipality.

Born in 1805 in Malacca, in the Malay Peninsula, and the son of the Malacca philanthropist Tan Tock Seng, Tan Kim Seng had moved to Singapore and become a successful trader, acquiring a large fortune, and was eventually made a Justice of the Peace in 1850. Patron and benefactor to the betterment of Singaporean society, particularly the Chinese community, and the development of the town, he was also a member of the committee appointed to arrange for sending exhibits to the Great Exhibition of 1851 at the Crystal Palace in London. His balls and dinners were well-known, particularly the Chinese Ball which took place on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1852:

Kim Seng, a merchant well known as an Antonio on the Rialto of Singapore, conceived a few weeks ago the intrepid design of giving the first Chinese Ball ever beheld in this part of the world. Having recently erected a spacious godown or suite of chambers and warehouses, he resolved to convert one of these into a magnificent banquet hall and dancing room.....To observe fitly the supper which followed, I ought to have studied for three years under some Parisian gastronome. It was a chaos of dainties, each more tempting than the other. All the fruits of the Indian Archipelago, of India, China and the West, -- some in their natural state, others exquisitely preserved, were piled around us. There were bird's-nest soups, puppy ragouts, pillaus of kangaroo tails, fish of all kinds, and pastry in profusion. And then for the wines, -- all the wines that France, Germany and Hungary could produce....<sup>50</sup>

Another recorded ball had been one given in the Masonic Lodge during race week in 1861 for all the Europeans. Tan Kim Seng died on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1864. Nothing came of his donation of \$13,000<sup>51</sup> -- the money was either squandered or spent and wasted on a series of futile schemes.<sup>52</sup> For example, earthenware drain pipes were purchased by the municipality and rendered useless, and instead were abandoned at Kandang Kerbau<sup>53</sup> in

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50. Extract from "Household Words", June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1852 in Song Ong Siang (1967) *One Hundred Years History of the Chinese in Singapore*. Singapore: University Malaya Press, 46-47.

51. In Spanish dollars. The exchange in 1845 had been 400 Spanish dollars to 100 pounds. I have no exchange statistics for the 1850s. See T. H. H. Hancock, (1986) *Coleman's Singapore* (Monograph No. 15) Kuala Lumpur: The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in association with Pelanduk Publications, 37.

52. Ramachandra, S.(1961) *Singapore Landmarks Past and Present*. Singapore: Eastern University Press, 32.

53. Literally translated as ox pen from the Malay. Or known in Chinese as 'Tek Kia Kha' or foot of the small bamboos, referring to the clump of bamboo growth. Kandang Kerbau is located near Serangoon Road and Rochore River.

the hopes that some enterprising person might salvage them. Instead, an impounding reservoir had been built which was to be the main water source till 1900.

Thomson Road, named after John Turnbull Thomson – one of Singapore’s major arteries today – stretches from Cavenagh Road where it begins, to Braddell Road, where it ends.<sup>54</sup> It was Thomson who laid out the twenty-three miles of roads from the river mouth into the Singapore interior, including Thomson Road itself. Thomson Road was also known by several names including in Malay, Seletar Road; in Tamil, ‘Thanir Pilei Saddaku’ (Water-pipe Street); in Chinese or the Hokkien Dialect – ‘Chia Chwi Kang’ (Fresh water Stream), or the Kallang River,<sup>55</sup> or *Ang Kio-thau* -- or in the Cantonese dialect, *Hung khiu thau* which meant at the Head of the Red Bridge, which in those days connected

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54. Edwards and Keys, 91.

55. H. T. Haughton “Native Names of Streets in Singapore.” *JMBRAS* June 1891, 49-65. Also see *JMBRAS* 45, 1906 which is an index of “Chinese Names of Streets and Places in Singapore” as compiled by Mr. Tan Kee Soon of the Chinese Protectorate as well as Also see "An Index in Romanized Hokkien and Cantonese to 'The Chinese Names of Streets and Places in Singapore'" compiled by Tan Kee Soon and revised by A.W. Bailey and F. M. Baddeley, *JSBRAS* #46, 195-213. The most comprehensive list of Chinese street names and explanations are found in *JMBRAS* 42, 1904 as compiled by H. W. Firmstone, 54-208. A less comprehensive but helpful source is S. Durai Singam’s (1939) *Malayan Street Names*. Ipoh: The Mercantile Press. Kallang River is located west of the trading hub of the Singapore River, branching out to the Rochor River, and flows from the Kallang River source which is in the north-central area of Singapore and what is now known as Pierce Reservoir, in Upper Thomson Road, named after the Municipal Engineer Robert Pierce who proposed the plan in 1902. The Reservoir was completed in 1910 and was known as the Kallang River Reservoir until 1922 when it was renamed Pierce Reservoir (see F. J. Hallifax in Makepeace, V.1., 327, Edwards and Keys: 499). For more on the water supply of Singapore, see F.J. Hallifax in Makepeace, V.I., 326-329. The river mouth where Rochor and Kallang flows out is the vicinity of the historic site of the Malay Royalty who moved from Johore as laid out by Raffles’s original town plan which allocated the land to the Muslim communities, including Bugis, Javanese, Arabs and Boyanese Merchants whose trade consisted of spices, tortoiseshell -- and slaves, to the horror of Raffles who was an Abolitionist and who had lashed out at William Farquhar, the first resident of Singapore for allowing such inhumane trade to flourish while Raffles was in Bencoolen during the early 1820s. Kampung Glam measured 57 acres “to the east of the European Town and lying between Rochor River and the sea, measuring in front along Beach Road 731 feet, at back of Kampung Chulia and along Rochor River about 1,200 feet, in depth from Beach Road to Rochor River about 2,100 feet” (Edwards and Keys, 267). The other Malay villages located here in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century were Kampung Kallang, Kampung Bugis and Kampung Laut (usually fishing communities) as well as the mangrove marshes.

Thomson Road and Kampung Java Road but also marked the commencement of Thomson Road. There are several other appellations: 'Mi kua keng' (vermicelli buildings), *Hailam-sua* (Hailam Hill/cemetery or Hainan Hill/cemetery),<sup>56</sup> 'Pek Shan theng' (cemetery). One is not quite certain as to the use of landmarks here but there were certainly three cemeteries nearby or around the area. They comprised two dialect groups, Hailam or Hainanese and Cantonese.<sup>57</sup> If there was a bridge, it might have been the wooden Kallang Bridge, which then connected the Malay villages near the river mouth, and was thrown across by John Thomson himself. Thomson had surveyed the region himself stating that *Sungai Kallang* (River Kallang) was "the largest rivulet in Singapore" and that "the interior of Singapore had something exciting to the young imagination; and the Sungai Kallang, at that time, was said to lead far into it.

In G. M. Reith's *Handbook to Singapore*, the visitor is advised to take a drive from the wharves to the impounding reservoir via Singapore Town. It is four miles to the north of the city – and where Thomson Road begins is marked by a red-bridge. The road is lush, well-shaded and takes the visitor or traveler to one of the prettiest spots in Singapore for a stroll or a picnic. It has a small lake, and the water is retained at the lowest end by an extensive dam. G. M. Reith advises the traveler that the best viewing times are at sunset or by moonlight. It is pretty enough to have one visitor scrawl on the back of a post card in 1903, that the reservoir "is really a most lovely place."<sup>58</sup> However, the Reith's *Handbook* also warns of tiger tracks having been occasionally seen in the vicinity.

On 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1882, the Municipal Commissioners erected a fountain at the entrance to Battery Road near Johnston's Pier to commemorate the magnanimous gesture of Tan Kim Seng "without whose generous gift...water supply would have been a thing of the future, instead of an accomplished fact."<sup>59</sup> The fountain was cast at a cost of £940 by Andrew Handyside's Britannia Ironworks at Derby and shipped out for assembly in Singapore. The inscription around the outer wall of the basin reads in large letters of iron:

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56. This is a matter of pronunciation. The Cantonese would use 'Hailam' for the Hainanese.

57. The 'Lao Yi Shan' was a public Hainanese cemetery which opened in 1862 was on Thomson Road. It measured 29 acres, 3 roods. The 'Pek Shan Teng' is Cantonese and was opened in 1870 near Kampung San Teng, which was located off Thomson Road. Another Hainanese public cemetery opened in 1891 measuring over 33 acres, also on Thomson Road. There was also a Teochew cemetery somewhere near Thomson and Balastier Roads. See Brenda Yeoh (1991) "The Control of 'Sacred' Space: Conflicts Over the Chinese Burial Grounds in Colonial Singapore, 1880-1930" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 22,2: 282-311.

58. Personal visit, exhibition at the Singapore Philatelic Museum, *The Travellers View of Singapore, 1810-1939* (December 1995)

59. *ibid.*

The fountain is erected by the Municipal Commissioners in commemoration of Mr. Tan Kim Seng's donation towards the cost of the Singapore Water Works.

Eventually transferred to a site near the esplanade, off Connaught Drive, during the construction of Fullerton Building<sup>60</sup> (1925-1928), the fountain stood there for years, neglected. It was not in full working order until the coronation celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II, when it was repainted in bright colours, floodlit and restored as the curtain raiser for Coronation Week, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1953.<sup>61</sup> Once, and not very long ago, the presence of the Victorian-style fountain near Johnston Pier, with its classical figurines and delicate ornamentation, had been greeted by the local press as an "artistic addition" to the look of the town which was woefully devoid of aesthetic monuments.

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60. Fullerton Building was erected between 1925-1928. It is named after Robert Fullerton, governor of Singapore from 1826-1829. The building now houses the General Post Office and other government offices.

61. Ramachandra, 31

## AND IN THE BEGINNING...

### 1. English lessons<sup>1</sup>

The acquisition of Great Britain in the East has not been made in the spirit of conquest. A concurrence of circumstances not to be controlled, *and the energies of her sons*, have carried her forward on the tide whose impulse has been irresistible. Other nations may have pursued the same course of conquest and success, but they have not, like her, paused in their career and by moderation and justice consolidated what they had gained. This is the rock on which her Indian Empire is placed. Our influence must continue to extend; the tide has received its impetus, and it would be in vain to stem the current; but let the same principles be kept in view, let our minds and policies extend with our Empire, and it will not only be the greatest, but the firmest and most enduring, that has yet been held forth to the view and admiration of the world.<sup>2</sup>

The founding of modern Singapore on 29th January 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles is very much the act of an individual. Nations are not objective givens, naturally out-there; they are ideational constructs which in the case of Singapore emerged out of the topographical consciousness of exploration and colonization tied to British geo-political and economic interests in the Far East. Singapore is more than a geographical entity forged by objective forces. Rather, it is a creation of specific historical processes tied to human activity rooted in knowledge, interest, and power. Its creation was necessary to the strategic interests of British commerce in the Indian Archipelago as well as being the countervailing influence to the monopolizing ambitions of the Dutch in the same region. In the words of Raffles, the "acquisition" of Singapore was not *made* out of conquest, but out of providence -- "a concurrence of circumstances not to be controlled." This willing of Singapore is literally a creation of British commercial interests framed within the imagination of one of Britain's more remarkable sons. Singapore emerged like Athena, from the head of a Colonial 'Zeus'; its desired form and substance -- a cornucopia of cultures, the product of migration drawn to the animating opportunities of trade; all engaging in the civilizing activity of commerce.

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1. The following biographies are used here to discuss Stamford Raffles: D. C. Boulger (1897). *The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles*. London, Horace Marshall & Sons; Hahn, Emily (1948) *Raffles of Singapore* London: Francis Aldor; Harry J. Marks (1959). *The First Contest for Singapore 1819- 1824*. 'S-Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff; C. E. Wurtzburg, (1954) *Raffles of the Eastern Isles*. ed. by C. Witting. London, Hodder and Stoughton. A valuable source is Munshi Abdullah Bin Abdul Kadir (1970) *The Hikayat Abdullah*. An Annotated Translation by A. H. Hill Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

2. Excerpt of speech by Raffles quoted in Charles Burton Buckley, (1902) *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore, 2 Vols*. (1965 reprint) Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965, 789-790.

The environment in which Singapore emerged on the trading maps was an instance where no blood was shed, nor were supine villagers overrun by a colonial juggernaut, but was the creation of an individual who saw in Singapore, the materialization of his vision of a great commercial emporium in the Indian Archipelago that would check the monopoly of the Dutch, and at the same time, be the very apotheosis of free trade. Singapore was founded not because of providence, but by the *Creation-Gaze* of an individual, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, an "unruly subordinate" of the East India Company (EIC), who by his actions, turned the tide of British imperial expansion in the Far East.

How then, did Sir Stamford Raffles, the Founder of Singapore, gaze upon the island-settlement, and decide upon its future as the great commercial emporium? He had once written: "But for my Malay studies I should hardly have known that such a place existed; not only the European but the Indian world also was ignorant of it."<sup>3</sup> The cognitive dimension here transcends immediate physical objectivity -- far from the landscape unfolding through travel and exploration, the gaze here is discursive, the conjoining of Western knowledge and power. Maps are nothing more than squiggly lines if they are not mediated by a corpus of scientific epistemology, the product of Reason which identifies and demarcate landmasses and seas. The imaging of Singapore, and its commercial possibilities, occurred far away from the island itself. Mediated by the political and economic imperatives of Raffles's day, Singapore took shape in books, on maps, and in conversations. One must not conceive this in terms of Singapore the landmass, but Singapore as an idea -- as the nucleus of trade, and the keystone of the British empire in the Indian Archipelago. Singapore could have easily very well been Batavia, Rhio or the Carimon islands. Such is the representation which constitutes what I term as the *Creation-Gaze* of Empire.

Edmundo O' Gorman argues that historical events should be approached in the light of an ontological perspective. In *The Invention of America*, he writes (though with regard to Columbus's blunders in the "discovery" of America) that one must pay attention to:

the way in which an unforeseen and unforeseeable historical entity is born within the womb of a narrow, highly particular and archaic given image of the world, an entity which, as it slowly develops, acts as a solvent on the old structure, and at the same time is the catalytic for a new dynamic and more generous concept of the world.<sup>4</sup>

The character of Singapore as an entrepot and strategic post, is not logically *a priori* or an objective given independent of agents but is based upon a specific representation of geo-physical space situated within a historical context.

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3. Raffles, T. S. (1919/1878). "The Founding of Singapore." *JSBRAS* (2): 175-182. This is a letter to Col. Addenbrooke, 177.

4. Edmundo O'Gorman (1961) *The Invention of America*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 6.

Why do I say creation, and not the current vogue of invention or construction, which is promoted by the poststructuralist rendering of the world as multiple fictions? In his discussion of the Americas as a conceptual invention, O'Gorman settled for *invention* because he argued that creation would only be significant within the sphere of religious faith. Furthermore, creation implied the production of something *ex nihilo*. But it is precisely the religious significance which is necessary to the colonial context of the creation-gaze, for the gaze here assumes a deified objectivity when exercised over the East. Modern "Singapore" was summoned to existence *ex nihilo*; it did not *conceptually* exist until geo-political interest *conjured* it up. One does not simply create -- there must be a prior intention to create a specific object, and endow it with the desired characteristics. Creation cannot, in this case, be possible without the tools which enable it to *become*, or come into *being* -- be it a type of knowledge, a process of reasoning, or/and an object to be signified. Moreover, creation implies the production of animate objects, as distinct from invention or construction within the associations of the mechanical production of inanimate objects. Significantly, the Latin roots of invention, *in-ventum*, denote a coming into being, while creation, *creator*, is maker, founder or parent. Such was the "creator" *mentalité* of Sir Stamford Raffles who claimed parentage over Singapore, and who repeatedly referred to it as his child. The creation-gaze is, therefore, the representation and mapping of the world rooted in hubris, and God-like creative forces emanating from the West, and constituted by power and knowledge, manifesting itself through imperial expansion. The creation-gaze is also a work of imagination -- it proceeds to breathe life into its creations -- and it textualizes and historicizes them. It is representation as a form of *magic* in which through the incantation of knowledge, one evokes a presence of that which was once absent, and non-existent. There is another reason as to why *creation* is a more appropriate term in this context. The act of creation implies an initiating moment but not necessarily the continuous and effective exercise of an omnipotent power thereafter. There is a point in which the creation *becomes*, and takes on a life of its own.

The creation-gaze presupposes an origin, but creation is also a heterogeneous process of being and becoming, involving the negotiation and contestation of multiple subjectivities. Just as Singapore could not have drawn the merchants without its strategic Free Port status and enterprising environment, it could equally not be Singapore without the deluge of merchants, and migrants who poured in to work and trade. The creation of Singapore was far from an omnipotent activity -- once Raffles's *Idea* was in place, *creation* assumed a life of its own -- or specifically, *lives of their own*.<sup>5</sup>

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5. See Raffles, S. (Lady) ed. (1837). *Memoirs of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles*. 2 Vols. London, John Duncan. Any reference to this text will be written out as "Raffles 1837, V.2." The letters from 1819 to 1822 all chart a rapid growth of commercial activity in Singapore.

The active spirit of enterprise which prevails among all classes is truly astonishing, and for its extent..[I] may safely say that no part of the world exhibits

The world in which the *Empire* occurred was very much the rationalized, calibrated world of quantification emerging from the Enlightenment, which accounted for much of Max Weber's later pessimism. The world ripe for plucking had to be qualified, and quantified to contain its excesses and uncertainties -- and then measured for its utility, and certainty of possession. It had to be uncovered, and historied -- made visible and displayed on large sheets of paper which delineated territories explored and unexplored, for trade and imperial expansion. This was how the colonial government imagined and gazed upon its dominions -- a logic encrusted in scientific validation. Such a rationalized ordering of the world also was intended to facilitated a more efficient administration of the colonies -- innumerable records scrupulously kept by the Crown and the East India Company testify to the conscientious and dexterous enterprise of British imperialism. Although the point is made with reference to nationalism in India, Sudipta Kaviraj writes that in Europe, there was a clear connection between the nationalist doctrine's urgency of enumeration and the rationalist theoretical enterprise. A world, "securely distributed into tables" was the result of the transformation of cognition into "social technology."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, to create a nation or a colony, the project of enumeration was truly indispensable, "the endless counting of its citizens, territories, resources, minorities, institutions, activities, imports, exports, incomes, projects, births, deaths, diseases. It counts, it appears, every conceivable quantifiable thing."<sup>7</sup> The early founding years of Singapore were no different. Once created, it existed, but its justification for existence lay in an immigrant population growth and the trade numbers, i.e., property sales, imports/exports, outlay/revenues, the number and identification of types of ships, warehouses, merchant houses according to ethnic composition. By 1822, three years after

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a busier scene than the town and environs of Singapore. (letter to William Marsden, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1822, Raffles 1837,V.2: 244)

The mercantile community themselves took steps in maintaining the spirit of free trade (Buckley, 64). On March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1819, Farquhar had informed Raffles that merchants were gathering so quickly that the only complaint was insufficient ground to build (ibid, 65). In letters to the Duke of Somerset and Thomas Murdoch, Raffles reported that the population numbered 10,000; the total tonnage arrived in 22 years, upwards of 161, 000 tons; estimated value of imports and exports was 2 million; 2889 vessels entered and exited the port (213-219). However, growth of population slowed down (considering that in the first 5 months after the founding, Raffles talked of "5000 souls" to govern in his letter to Addenbrooke, see Raffles, (1819/1878) and the 1824 census (See page 34 in H. Marriot (1912). "Population of the Straits Settlement and Malay Peninsula during the last Century." *JSBRAS* (62): 31 - 42. Marriot indicated a total of 10,683 people fitted into ethnic slots such as Chinese, Eurasians, Europeans, Indians, Malays, and Others.

6. Sudipta Kaviraj (1992). "The Imaginary Institution of India." *Subaltern Studies vii* ed. by P. Chatterjee and G. Pandey. Delhi, Oxford University Press, 30.

7. Ibid, 30-31.

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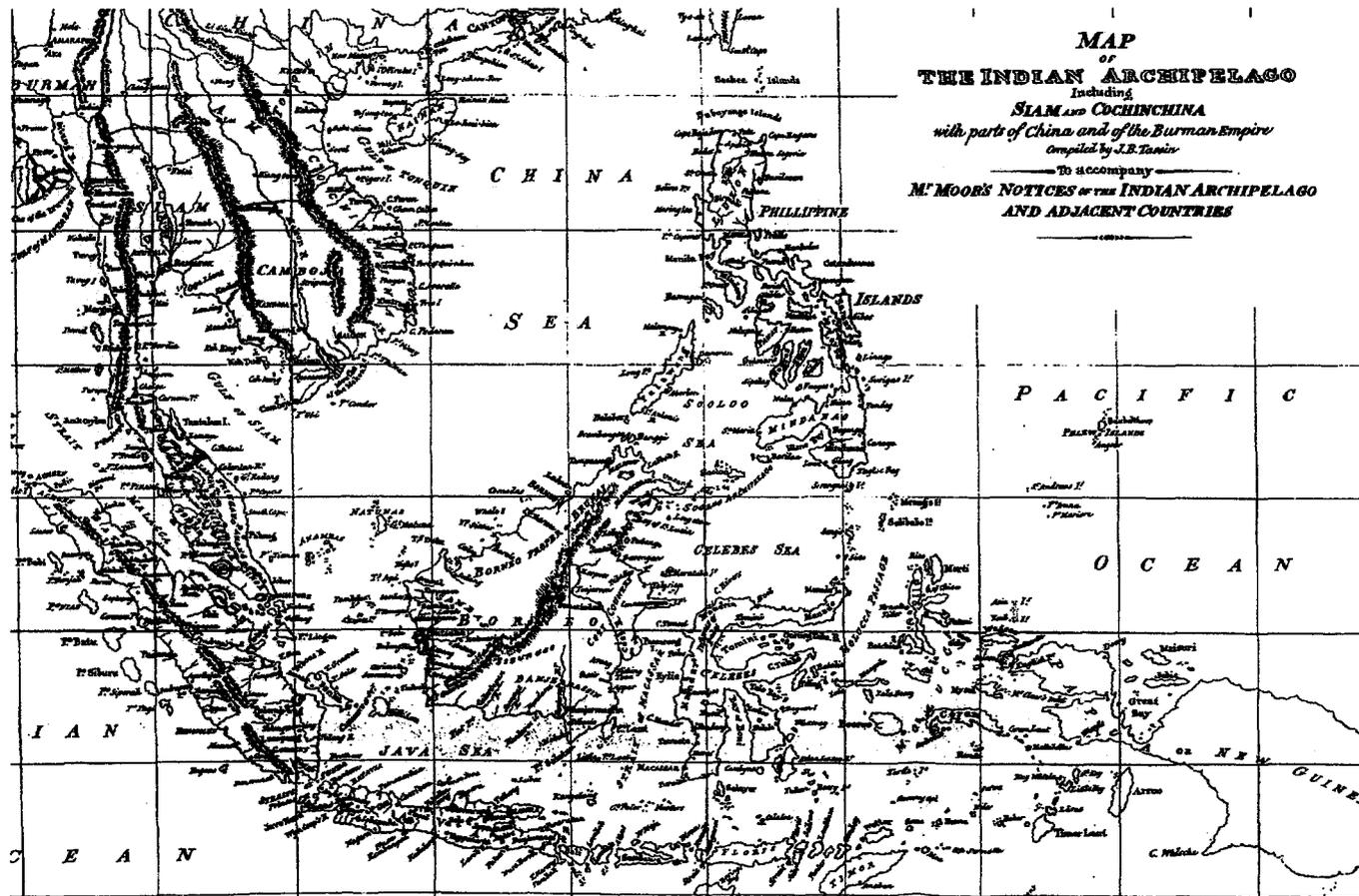


Figure 54. Map of the Indian Archipelago from J.H. Moor (1837/1968) *Notices of the Indian Archipelago etc.* London: Cass. Fold out map.

he raised the Union Jack, Raffles wrote of legislating upwards of 10,000 souls,<sup>8</sup> the selling of prime estate (several lots of 60 square feet) for \$50 000,<sup>9</sup> 2889 vessels entering and being cleared from the port, and over \$8.5 million in value of imports/exports. Despite the Colonial Office's exasperation with Raffles and his stirring up of Anglo-Dutch tensions, such positive enumerations convinced Calcutta (under the Marquess of Hastings) and the Colonial home office to strengthen their grip on Singapore. Numbers mattered.

The language of the creation-gaze is representation in its highest rational, calculated form for it structures the manner in which we view nations as mappable spaces, and as territorial segmentations. Geography and Empire were coterminous. Complimenting the Mercatorian map was John Harrison's 1761 invention of the chronometer which enabled the careful calculation of geometrical grids, thus, squaring off "empty seas and unexplored regions."<sup>10</sup> It is not therefore surprising that most early historical literature concerning the location of Singapore includes precise directions based on the Mercatorian map, such as: "Latitude N. 1E: 17'. 13.7" and Longitude E. 103E: 51': 15.7', or about 77 geographical miles north of the Equator, and in time 6 hours 55 min. 25.05 seconds east of Greenwich."<sup>11</sup>

Map-making is itself a discursive process, an epistemic landscaping linked to a perspective of the world dependant upon the discourses which constitute the cartographical operations of a particular historical epoch. In Moor's *Map of the Indian Archipelago*, Hong Kong is not *acknowledged* to exist because in 1837, it was still part of China. Hong Kong thus, only *became* Hong Kong in 1842, when it was ceded to the British as part of the booty gained from the first Opium War. Maps therefore, chart the *becoming* of places, and eventually, nations – clarifying the world according to those who construct them, and for those who employ them. No doubt, the Cartesian cartography of spatial science and of geometric precision demanded phenomenal description and endless measurement. Initial geographical and hydrographical surveys of the region delineated not only the boundaries and characteristics of physical landmasses (mountains, jungles, lakes, rivers) but sought to identify suitable areas for townships, landing sites, ports, harbours, naval bases, waterways, freshwater sources, climatic characteristics, soil and rock composition, vegetation, animal life, marine life, natural resources and mineral

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8. Raffles 1837, V. 2, 251.

9. These are in Spanish Dollars. (100 pounds=366.97 Spanish dollars: Exchange Average in 1815, 1826 & 1822. For an explanation of currencies used in the area, see Appendix 2. See C. D. Cowan (1950). "Introduction - Early Penang and the Rise of Singapore 1805 -1832." *JMBRAS* XXIII (2): 3 - 210.

10. Benedict Anderson (1994) *Imagined Communities* London: Verso, 173.

11. See Buckley, 48.

deposits.<sup>12</sup> In short, validated existence for any landmass, sea, or region is only possible through an epistemological process of scientific inquiry which fixes bounded "space" on a map and grants it toponymical recognition. Geographical knowledge was shaped by and through the heroes of the colonial landscape -- "the explorer, the hunter, the soldier, the missionary, the administrator, the gentleman" who all provided the "moral models for a generation of Empire builders."<sup>13</sup>

The existence of Singapore was *consecrated* by the ocular identification of the British imperialists – or more precisely, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles himself -- even if the initial sighting occurred on a map. To discuss a retinal image is insufficient for what is referred here is also Marx's *Darstellung* which is representation as a semiological act – as *signification* and *staging or enactment*. The cognitive ordering of the world into bounded segments is also bound up with the production of spatial meaning. The signification of Singapore was propelled by very clear political and economic imperatives – the gaze which surveyed the region around the Straits of Sunda and the Straits of Malacca was intended on a strategic settlement. Until Raffles projected a "colony" there; until geopolitical exigencies and personal ambition summoned it to existence – Singapore, which Raffles himself described as an ancient maritime capital,<sup>14</sup> was an inert lump of land on cartographical illustrations. Islands which littered the surrounding seas had no prior existence until they were *made* to exist – either through their political and commercial viability or their historical connections to Singapore. The twist in the Orientalist discourse here lies in the rupture of the Occident/Oriental bipolarization and the

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12. See Lady Sophia Raffles's Memoirs, as well as the Abdullah Bin Abdul Kadir, Munshi (1908) *Hikayat Abdullah*. 2 Vols. Singapore, Methodist Publishing House, and most of the early *JSBRAS/JMBRAS* editions for references to geographical exploration. With Sophia Raffles's edited memoirs, there were criticisms of omissions for example, with reference to Olivia Raffles, the enigmatic first wife of Raffles who was considered one of the most remarkable women in that region. However, most of the significant letters pertaining to the politics and policies are included.

13. Felix Driver (1992). "Geography's Empire: Histories of Geographical Knowledge." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10, (2): 23 - 40, 27.

14. Raffles (1819/1878). Letter dated June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1819 by Raffles to Col. Addenbrooke. Also see Buckley (1967) and both volumes of the *Hikayat Abdullah* (1908). The founding of Singapore is the founding of Modern Singapore. According to the orientalist conception of history, the history of the East is long over, fallen to ruins and denied a past. The new world is the world of the European conquerors who proceed to remould the world in its own image. Though aware of the historicity of Singapore, Raffles did not resurrect old Singapore - but invested it with a new character.

expansion of a *Centre* [England], by creating relatively autonomous *pockets of concentric Centres* or sub-Centres. Singapore being one such centre in the Far East – or rather, a sphere of influence albeit derivative of Raffles's gaze, its birthrights and growth success valorized and claimed by the proud *Pater*, Raffles himself:

I shall say nothing of the importance which I attach to the permanence of the position I have taken up at Singapore; it is a child of my own. But for my Malay studies I should hardly have known that such a place existed; not only the European but the Indian world also was ignorant of it. It is impossible to conceive a place combining more advantages; it is within a week's sail to China, still closer to Siam, Cochin-China, &c. in the *very heart of the Archipelago*, or as the Malays call it, it is "*the Navel of the Malay countries*"; already a population of above five thousand souls has collected under our flag,<sup>15</sup> the number is daily increasing, the harbour, in every way superior, is filled with shipping from all quarters; and although our Settlement has not been established more than four months every one comfortably housed, provisions are in abundance, the Troops healthy, and everything bears the *appearance of content and abundance*,....it is my intention to make this my principal residence in the East, to the advancement of a Colony which in every way in which it can be viewed bids fair to one of the most important, and at the same time one of the least

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15. Munshi Abdullah chronicles the migration to Singapore (V.1,149-153). Upon hearing of the "hoisting of the flag" by the British on Jan 29<sup>th</sup>, 1819 (the hoisting here is not a formalized event but could have been just a camp flag, see Hill, 1970; Buckley, 1965), and the opportunities in Singapore -- despite the dangers of piracy and Dutch displeasure (until March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1824, Malacca was a Dutch possession), many still braved the danger-ridden journey to Singapore:

Despite the dangers, hundreds of Malaccans went to Singapore [Selat is literally translated as Straits but here Abdullah refers to Singapore and its surrounding territory] to earn their living due to the non-existent employment opportunities in Malacca, along with the Dutch oppression I have talked about. Many thus, brought their fates to Singapore - some engaged in clearing forests,..construction of buildings,..setting up shops, trade,.. indulge in wrongdoings (Bin Abdul Kadir, 151)

The growing population of Singapore was thus attributed mainly to migration from the mainland (the Malay peninsula) and the surrounding areas. However the numbers are disputable, according to a private traders, the population was upwards of 2000 (Marks, 147). At the time of the founding, according to W. Bartley, W. (1933). "Population of Singapore in 1819." *JMBRAS*. XI, (2): 177. Captain Newbold writes of 150 fishermen and pirates of whom about 30 were Chinese. In 1824 when the first census was conducted, the population of Singapore is identified at 10,683–3,317 Chinese, 6431 Malays, 830 Indians, 74 Europeans, and 31 "Others."

troublesome,<sup>16</sup> that we possess. Our object is not *territory but trade, a great commercial Emporium*, and a *fulcrum* whence we may extend our influence politically, as circumstances may hereafter require. By taking immediate possession, we put a negative to the Dutch claim of exclusion,<sup>17</sup> and at the same time revive the drooping confidence of our allies and friends; one Free Port in these Seas must eventually destroy the *spell* of Dutch monopoly; and what Malta is in the West, that may

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16. This is an oversight on Raffles's part although one supposes that he is referring to the financial situation. However, for the next few years leading up to the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of March 17th, 1824, Anglo-Dutch relations suffered, and experienced tense moments. The contest over Singapore is rooted in a series of complicated events, and there is not enough space to provide the details (for a full account see Harry J. Marks's *The First Contest for Singapore*, Wurtzburg (1954) as well as L. A. Mills (1925). "British Malaya 1824-1867." Appendix by C.O. Blagden. *JMBRAS* I, (2):1 - 338. In Mills, see pages 56-58. Singapore essentially belonged to the Johor Empire which extended up to Lingga and Rhio (Riau). In 1785, the Dutch signed a Treaty of Vassalage which was declared null in 1795 (due to the Napoleonic Wars). In 1814 (after the defeat of Napoleon in 1813), the former Dutch possessions in the Malay Archipelago were reinstated (the possessions had been under the "care" of the British). In 1818, this treaty was re-invoked -- the Dutch taking advantage of the ongoing web of royal intrigues and deceit within the Johor Sultanate, claimed Rhio. The feud between the two princes was based on their father's division of territory. By primogeniture, the eldest, Hussein Shah was the heir to the throne, and ruled over Johor, Singapore and the adjacent islands including Rhio. The second son, Abdul Rahman was given the territory of Lingga. Without having to provide the customs and traditions of the Sultanate. See R. O. Winstead (1920) "The Founder of Old Singapore." *JSBRAS* #82: 127), the Sultans were merely figureheads and real power lay in the hands of the nominal ministers, the Temenggung, the Bendahara and the Raja Mudas, or governors of the various territories under the Johor Empire. In Hussein Shah's absence, Abdul Rahman was persuaded to ascend the throne by the Raja Muda of Rhio (the ascension to the Throne cannot be validated except by the Bendahara of Pahang and the Temenggung of Johor). It was with this de facto sultan which the Dutch signed a treaty, and whom they acknowledged as "ruler" of Johor and all its adjacent territories. Raffles's "possession" of Singapore on 29<sup>th</sup>, January 1819 was based on having studied the terms and conditions of this treaty, and a clear recognition that the Dutch only laid claims to Rhio, and by royal mandate, Hussein Shah was the de jure sovereign whom Raffles publicly declared as Sultan. The Anglo-Dutch "paper war" over the territorial possession of Singapore which ensued was based upon these premises.

17. A similar opinion and strong support for Raffles' actions came from the eminent Hydrographer James Horsburgh in 1819 (Buckley, 60-61).

Singapore become in the East.<sup>18</sup>

The organic references in the letter to "heart" and "navel" reinforce the notion of Creation, and its personal significance to Raffles. Flushed with post-partum "birth-pride" ("it is a child of my own"), Raffles informs us that the Malays referred to Singapore as "the Navel of the Malay countries" – its umbilical location in the Golden Chersonese confirming its vital link and market potential.<sup>19</sup> The success of Singapore even animates the surrounding region, for Raffles writes in July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1820, "Singapore goes on progressively, and even Bencoolen<sup>20</sup> is assuming a new and interesting character."<sup>21</sup> Singapore is Eden-like – its appearance all "content" and "abundance", and therefore, life-giving. Raffles's letter to Addenbrooke is also textured with plenitude and fatherly pride. On October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1822, after the tragic deaths of his children in a languishing Bencoolen, Raffles arrived in Singapore and wrote "The coolest and most disinterested

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18. Raffles (1819/1878), 178-179, italics mine.

19. Other than the quantifiable growth of commercial activity in Singapore, this is also evidenced by J. Dalton's notices published in the *Singapore Chronicle*, and compiled in *Moor's Notices of the Indian Archipelago* (1837) which points to the impact of Singapore on the native populations in the surrounding areas. Dalton writes of how the founding of Singapore had created "an unusual sensation among all ranks of people." (Moor, 1837: 15)

For example, the Diaks (Dayaks -- a seafaring indigenous peoples on the islands of Borneo and Celebes) are now actively engaged in trading for clothing, salt and tobacco. Also another notice concerning the establishment of Makassar as a free port, Dalton points out that Singapore has "caused a revolution of opinion...the state of trade has changed" -- and how the Bugis people, "could not shut their eyes" to the advantages held out at Singapore, thus forcing them to embark upon a long journey to Singapore.

20. After his disastrous rule in Java (during which he incurred a heavy debt in his attempt at land reforms), Bencoolen was a "demotion". Originally, renamed Fort Marlborough in 1714 and considered once as a "germ of all subsequent growth" see page 270 in A. M. Skinner (1882) "Outline History of the British Connection with Malaya" *JSBRAS* #10, December: 269-280. After the Treaty of 1763, Fort Marlborough/Bencoolen was formed into an independent Residency which lasted till 1802. By the time Raffles arrived, Bencoolen was akin to a backwater hellhole, and "a wretched place," whose only regular trade was pepper. After the earthquakes, Bencoolen was nearly written off by the EIC. Although named Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen in 1818, Raffles was no better than a 'Resident'. Yet, Raffles maintained an incredible sense of optimism during this period.

21. Raffles 1837, V.2, 126. These were the happiest times of Raffles's life. When he had first arrived in Bencoolen in November 1817, Bencoolen was in great disorder after a series of earthquakes. In late 1821 to 1822, tragedy befell the Raffles family. Within 6 months, 3 of his eldest children died from a tropical disease.

could not quit Bencoolen, and land at Singapore, without surprise and emotion"; and to the Duchess of Somerset<sup>22</sup> on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1822:

*here all is life and activity...*10, 000 inhabitants of all nations, actively engaged in commercial pursuits, which afford to each and all a handsome livelihood, and abundant profit. There are no complaints here of want of employment, no deficiency of rents, or dissatisfaction at taxes. Land is rapidly rising in value, and instead of the present number of inhabitants, we have reason to expect that we shall have at least ten times as many before many years have passed

The leitmotif of Singapore is free trade, and the idea of free trade, nurtured in Raffles's mind was translated into reality with the founding of Singapore, the "great commercial emporium" which he declared as a free port. In his correspondence of 1819 to 1823, brimming with anticipation and pride, Raffles expressed the importance of a commanding geographical position, at the southern entrance of the Straits of Malacca which should track the China and other Country trades.<sup>23</sup> "It is to the Straits of Singapore" that Siamese and other Native traders are always bound, and as Raffles had recognized, should they find a ready market, would have no inducement to proceed to the "unhealthy" and more expensive port of Dutch-owned Batavia. Furthermore, the location should also be capable of defence, protection (of trade), infrastructural supplies as well as supporting and defending the commercial intercourse with the Malay States -- and surveying and counteracting Dutch movement and policy in the same region. Consider the following:

This place possesses an excellent harbour, and everything that can be desired for a British port in the island of St. Johns, which forms the South-Western point of the harbour. We have commanded an intercourse with all the ships passing through the Straits of Singapore. We are within a week's sail to China, close to Siam, and in the very seat of the Malayan empire.<sup>24</sup>

It was clear that the object of the Dutch was not only to command for themselves all the trade of the Eastern Islands, but to possess the power in the event of future war of preventing our regular intercourse with China. By possessing the only passes to this Empire, namely the Straits of Sunda

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22. Ibid, 240 - 242, italics mine. The Duchess of Somerset, was a patroness whom Raffles met in England between 1816-1817.

23. Country trades are named for private ships from India, licensed by the East India Company which monopolized the China trade, to conduct trade in China. See I. C. Y. Hsu (1983). *The Rise of Modern China*. New York, Oxford University Press, 143. Between 1764 to 1800, the country trade accounted for 30% of trade conducted by the EIC.

24. Letter to Marsden, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1819. Raffles 1837, V.2, 14.

and Malacca, they had it in their power at all times to impede that trade; and of their disposition to exert this power, even in time of peace, there was no doubt. It was therefore determined that we should lose no time in securing, if practicable, the command of one of these Straits; and the Straits of Malacca on account of their proximity to our other Settlements appeared the most eligible.<sup>25</sup>

For England's prosperous colony at the southern end of the Malay Peninsula, the gate-house to the Straits of Malacca and the China Sea, the watch-tower looking southward, past clustering islets, down the sunny waters between Sumatra and Borneo, towards the lost Java, is but a tiny island of twenty-seven miles in length from east to west, and an extreme breadth of fourteen miles.<sup>26</sup>

[If], with Singapore as a centre, you describe a circle [which] will cut, or include, Siam, Borneo, the edge of the Philippine group, the French possessions in Cochin-China, and the Dutch possessions in Java Sumatra, and the Malay Archipelago...though Singapore is a very small island, it has the Malay Peninsular for hinterland; it is the central market, or port of trans-shipment, for all the countries I have named, except the first two (Ceylon and Hong Kong), which are themselves British possessions; it is a great distributing centre; it possesses immense stores of coal, and docking facilities of a kind unrivalled in the farther east, except in our own colony of Hong Kong.<sup>27</sup>

The language is the language of cartography. Location, proximity, size, mass i.e. "equidistance," "circle" guide our cognitive ordering of the region -- as well as the language of centrism, such as "seat", "watchtower", and "fulcrum." Swettenham proceeds to explain the geographical significance of Singapore stressing its "convenience" in its "equidistance between Ceylon and Hongkong" and the necessity for command of the sea-route in the age of expanded imperialism which is crucial to the dominance of foreign trade.<sup>28</sup> In Singapore's case, the island-colony commanded the entrance to the China Sea by the route of the Straits of Malacca. In the colonial mapping of the region, the language of telescoping and magnifying sets up contrasting juxtapositions, by charting an expanding radius to set up a sphere of influence while narrowing the focus to Singapore. Size is therefore, a central motif -- only by stressing Singapore's physical smallness, the

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25. Raffles, (1819/1878), 177-178.

26. Sir Frederick Weld in Boulger, 338-339.

27. Frank Swettenham (1907) *The Real Malay: Pen Pictures*. London and New York, John Lane, 3-4.

28. Ibid, 5-6.

ideological representation of its strategic significance becomes so much more prominent. Simultaneously, the emphasis on the minuscule physicality of Singapore elevates the keen geo-political acumen of Raffles, and his ability to identify such an obscure place (which most would surely by-pass as it is merely a dot on the map), and transcend the limitations of physical space. The spatial representation of Singapore here is calculated in terms of economic and political influence and power – we envision only frontiers marked by colonial interests rather than by natural terrain (mountains, seas, watersheds). Even Swettenham's vignette of the Malay peoples locates itself with reference to Singapore; Singapore is the core acquisition of the Empire – its position as the regional centre or core produces an inversion of topographical delineation as well as derivative effects. The Malay Peninsular, once Ptolemy's Golden Chersonese and a focus of Portuguese imperial expansion, is reduced to a mere hinterland.<sup>29</sup>

The circumference of any strategic region is certainly not a fixture, nor is it a ready-made, *a priori* conception. It is also not a random construction whereupon a geographical region suddenly emerges, boundaries all included, and assumes a strategic character. The area itself is not invested by an intrinsic Beingness, it does not as John Crawford, the second Resident of Singapore, claims,<sup>30</sup> *present* its advantages and superiority of its position, neither is its “natural geographical claim” “predestined” to be the supreme trading depot of the region).<sup>31</sup> It is as Arif Dirlik argues, “an abstract representation” that seeks “to contain within physical categories the spatial and temporal motions of the human activity – including the activity of conceptualization – that constitutes its reality.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, as the activity changes, as the interests shift in response to political and economic exigencies, so does the ideational constitution of a region, in this context, the Indian Archipelago.<sup>33</sup> An example lies in the later diminished profile of India which, due to the British victory in the Opium Wars (1840-1842 and 1856-1858), and the Transfer of

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29. See Marks, 143-156 for letters of support in retaining Singapore as the trading centre of the British Empire in the Far East.

30. John Crawford, (1856/1971) *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands and Adjacent Countries*. Kuala Lumpur, Oxford, 304.

31. Makepeace, W. et. al (eds.) (1921). *One Hundred Years of Singapore*. 2 Vols. London, John Murray. C. O. Blagden in Makepeace, 5

32. Arif Dirlik, (1992). “The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of Regional Structure.” *Journal of World History* 3, (1): 55 - 79. See page 58.

33. Usually the region stretching from India to China

the Straits Settlement<sup>34</sup> to the Colonial office in 1867, was cut off from the nucleus of commercial activity centering around Singapore, Labuan (in northern Borneo) and Hong Kong.<sup>35</sup> Interrelated events and their effects play a crucial role -- in the context of the Indian Archipelago and East Asia, political and economic interests, and most significantly, distant events such as the Napoleonic Wars influenced British policy. The creation-gaze shifted the centre of the British Empire in the Far East south-eastward to Singapore, in response to the threatening encroachment of the Dutch after the Castlereagh Convention in 1814, and the necessity to secure a trading centre in the Archipelago with command over the two most important trade-routes to Japan and China, thus paralyzing Dutch plans to exclude British commerce, and breaking the "spell" of a Dutch Monopoly.

A digression here is necessary to address the significance of the China trade and the strategic location of Singapore. It is not surprising that the first page of Swettenham's book *The Real Malay: Pen Pictures*, directs us to the opening of China's doors to trade --

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34. Singapore, Malacca and Penang were transferred to and administered by the Indian Office in 1826.

35. India was considered too distant a province, and even then the Government of India had little interest or support for the settlement of Singapore or the other two settlements of Malacca and Penang (declared the British Straits Settlement in 1826). Measures adopted by the Indian Government were incompatible with the type of trade and administration which were carried out in Singapore. See Mills, 263-275 Furthermore, the Indian Government totally neglected Raffles's advice to extend the sphere of influence in Malaya while the Dutch, the French and Spaniards were carrying out an aggressive policy of seizing territory, thus limiting Britain's interests. The Indian Government, to the protests of the merchants, also used Singapore as a dumping ground for Indian convicts (although Singapore benefited from this free labour). To make matters worse, the Indian Government wanted to impose port levies in 1856 on Singapore (among other measures), to the resentment of the "old Singaporeans" like John Crawfurd who launched a series of counteractions to preserve the spirit of free trade in that region (in 1857, the annual trade value of Singapore was 10 million Spanish dollars). This incited a furious debate in England which eventually saw the Transfer of all three Settlements to the Colonial Office in London on 1st April 1867. See Buckley, 754-780, Mills, 262-275. It is the *London Times* (23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1858 and also quoted in Mills: 263. which says it best:

The leading idea of the speakers who took part in the discussion seemed to be that the authority over Singapore should be entirely taken away from the Government of India, and that it should be brought directly under the authority of the Colonial Office. What has Singapore to do with India? It carries on a larger trade with China than with India. The true idea of the settlement, colony,...is as the centre and citadel of British power in the Eastern Seas and the great houses of call between Britain and China...with the Straits of Malacca and the North-Western coast of Borneo in our possession, as long as we retain our naval supremacy, we could be secure of our communication with China.

this "momentous event" of "forcing China from that position of exclusiveness which she has maintained inviolate throughout the ages." China's vulnerability plays an integral role in the British colonies in the South China Seas for it immediately situates Singapore as a strategic geographical location and the "keystone to British commercial supremacy", as a distributing centre, docking bay and naval outpost; the gateway to the Japan and Chinese trade -- "that vast territory, with all its known and unknown resources, and the possibly greater value of a prepondering influence in a country inhabited by 400 million of the hardest working, most easily governed race on earth."<sup>36</sup> In 1819, China was still the celestial Middle Kingdom, supreme in its confidence that it had no need for the goods of the Foreign Devils. Yet, the walls were already crumbling. Prior to the "persuasive" action of the gunboats, there was the Opium trade.

English trade with China had begun in 1689 when the first EIC ship bearing woolen goods was subjected to exorbitant custom duties. Trade was officially conducted at Canton, and what is known as the Canton Trade System was monopolized by thirteen Chinese commercial firms known as the Hong Merchants. No direct trade with the interior of China was possible except through the Hong. In 1640, tea was brought into Europe and by the 18th century, the civilizing fetish of tea drinking became a part of English life. No other part of the world then produced tea, and consequently, by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, tea exports to England amounted to 90% - 95% of total trade.<sup>37</sup> In 1800, the EIC shipped 23.3 million pounds of tea.<sup>38</sup> The Canton trade was heavily lopsided in favour of the Chinese who received 26 million taels<sup>39</sup> of silver between 1800-1810. The

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36. Swettenham, 37. Never mind if China's "openness" was forced by the uneven trade in opium which culminated in the Opium Wars (1842 and 1856) and the greedy demand for indemnities, concessions and the "Most Favoured Nation" trading status by the English, Russians, Americans, Germans and the French (among others). As for the Chinese immigrants in the Indian Archipelago, the British though admiring of their industriousness also perceived them as unscrupulous and cunning. The British played a divide and rule policy which favoured the "native races" who were "simple" and "naive" peoples. To Frank Swettenham, The Chinese were infidels, but self governing, and the Hindus, a smelly race. Of the Chinese in Java, Raffles remarked that they were pernicious and obsequious, a "pest." (Raffles 1837, V.2, 82) Yet the Chinese were a necessary presence in Singapore, and were indispensable agents of economic progress. See L. A. Mills, 1925: 199-213. Nevertheless, the Chinese preferred British rule because they had some autonomy to conduct their trade and activities.

37. Which also included silk, porcelain, lacquered goods.

38. Hsu, 1983, 148-149.

39. 1 tael = 37.783 grams or 1.33 oz.

balance of payments reached an equilibrium in the mid-1820s and after 1826, saw a rapid outflow of gold and silver from China. The British answer to their financial deficit in the China trade was primarily opium, as well as cotton. In 1773, the British, under the EIC, having taken over the lead in opium importation from the Portuguese, had monopolized opium cultivation from seedling to the sale of finished product. The Chinese had prohibited the sale of opium because of its morally and physically debilitating effects but that did not deter the EIC who had a monopoly of the China trade. While publicly, and piously adhering to the prohibition, the EIC left the opium distribution to the country traders, who under license from the EIC, were required to fulfil the hidden clause of carrying opium. As Marks recognized, "it was trade between India and China, the *Country Trade*, which moved up and down the Strait of Malacca past Singapore, that made possible the Englishman's cup of tea, the EIC's profits and its dividends to its shareholders."<sup>40</sup> Between 1800 and 1820, over 10,000 chests were annually imported into China.<sup>41</sup> Recognizing the importance of opium, Raffles was not one who interfered with the "most perfect Freedom of Trade", and while limiting the trade of opium, he did not prohibit it in Singapore.

As for cotton, Hobsbawm phrases it very succinctly when he writes that "whoever says Industrial Revolution, says cotton."<sup>42</sup> Cotton was the "typical by-product of that accelerating current of international and...colonial commerce without which...the Industrial Revolution cannot be explained". Through a combination of technological innovations such as steam power, Hargreaves's Spinning Jenny [1764-1767], Compton's Mule Jenny [1779] (Birdwood, 1891 [1879]:225) and import prohibitions, Great Britain captured and monopolized the cotton market in the colonial markets. Ever bullish, Raffles had anticipated the future role of English cotton mills, citing that between 1820-21, 10 000 to 20 000 tons of raw cotton were sent to China from the Indian territories:

Why should we send our raw produce to encourage the industry of a foreign nation [India], at the expense of our own manufacturers? If India cannot manufacture sufficiently cheap, England can...England should trade directly with China - not via India - England can undersell India...Let the commercial interest for the present drop every idea of a direct trade to China, and let them concentrate their influence in supporting Singapore, and they will do ten times better. As a free port, it is as much to them as the possession of Macao; and it is here their voyages should finish. The Chinese themselves coming to Singapore and purchasing...they have the means of importing into different ports of Canton without the restraints and peculations of the Hong Merchants...Singapore, may as a free port,

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40. Marks, 145-147.

41. Depending on the type of Opium, each chest contained 133.33 lbs to 160 lbs of opium.

42 . Hobsbawm, E. J. (1969). *Industry and Empire*. Middlesex, Penguin., 56.

thus become the connecting link and grand entrepot between Europe, Asia, and China; it is, in fact, fast becoming so. Vessels come from China to Singapore in five days.<sup>43</sup>

Since the EIC had a monopoly of direct trade between Europe and China, Singapore's value lay in the private trader, who sought to undercut that profitable traffic. Private traders such as Jardine Matheson were the most vigorous supporters of Singapore – "a delightful [settlement] being within 4 miles of the direct tract for China."<sup>44</sup> As an entrepot, the China goods could be brought to Singapore and transhipped to another vessel bound for England. Between 1814 and 1823, British export of cotton piece goods to the Eastern Archipelago and China had increased from 818 000 yards to 23 million yards. From 1820 to 1821, when the Select Committee of the House of Lords met to decide the role of Singapore on British foreign trade, amidst Dutch protestations, the recommendations were that

the Maintenance of the Establishment at Sincapore,<sup>45</sup> to which vessels frequently come down from China in Five Days,...might considering the Readiness of the Chinese to engage actively by every means in Trade, prove highly advantageous to the Interests of British Commerce, if permitted to engage in the Tea Trade within the limits of the East India Company's Charter, exclusive of the Ports of the Chinese Empire.<sup>46</sup>

In the greater scheme of things, Singapore not only epitomized the centre but the future of British trade in the Eastern isles.

In 1907, Sir Frank Swettenham declared in his book on the Malay native, "British expansion in the East at all events, is a record of the doings of courageous, capable and masterful men."<sup>47</sup> England was never made by her politicians, but by her adventurers. Such remarkable, adventurous men no doubt included Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, an "unruly subordinate,"<sup>48</sup> who by his far-reaching if not audacious political vision, shifted the balance of power in the Malay Archipelago away from the Dutch, and consolidated British superiority in that region. To Swettenham, Raffles appeared a "man of courage, determination, and action, inspired by the fire of patriotism" who made "opportunities for

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43. Letter dated July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1820, Raffles 1837, V2, 134-5.

44. Marks, 147.

45. In 1822, Singapore was accepted as a British settlement, but only in 1824 with the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty was this formalized.

46. Quoted in Marks, 144-5.

47. Swettenham, 9.

48. Marks, 19.

himself, to the profits of his country."<sup>49</sup> To speak of Singapore is to speak of Raffles, as Wurtzburg observes, "it would be difficult to imagine that, had there been no Raffles, there would have been any Singapore."<sup>50</sup>

If ever there was the apotheosis of the Enlightenment Spirit, it was Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles whose life and career reflected the ultimate self-made man who against all the disadvantages and constraints associated with his station in life, liberated and developed his capacities to the fullest. Raffles, as Demetrius Boulger writes in the opening pages of his book *The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles*, "owed nothing to favour or fortune; he was the architect of his own position and reputation". He was born at sea off the harbour of Port Morant in the island of Jamaica on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1781, and due to poverty, was removed at 14 years old from an academy at Hammersmith to work as a clerk in the East India House:

[The] deficiency of my education has never been fully supplied; and I have never ceased to deplore the necessity which withdrew me so early from school. I had hardly been two years at a boarding school when I was withdrawn, and forced to enter on the busy scenes of public life, then a mere boy....with the little aid my allowances afforded, I contrived to make myself master of the French language.<sup>51</sup>

Yet these were "liberating" times – the post-American and French revolutionary spirit of humanitarianism was gaining ground. The ideas of Adam Smith and Tom Paine along with the utilitarians, Hume and Condorcet were taking root – and so was the romance of the Noble Savage. The battle to end slavery was just beginning, and Raffles would himself engage in this battle in Java, Sumatra and Singapore. Embodying the tenets of the Protestant work ethic, most of Raffles's annual clerk's salary of 70 pounds went to support his mother and siblings, while he studied during "stolen moments, either before the office hours in the morning, or after them in the evening,"<sup>52</sup> to improve his knowledge in science and literature. This work ethos and indefatigable energy would remain with him for the rest of his life, manifesting itself especially in his Naturalist pursuits, and the administration of his settlements. During Raffles's convalescent trip to Malacca in 1808, Abdullah the Munshi (who was then eleven years old) made the following observations:

Whatever he found to do, he adopted no half-measures, but saw it through to the finish. When he was occupied in his studies or in conversation, he would be unwilling to meet with anyone until he had finished; he kept conscientiously to his time table, so that he did not confuse one thing with another. As for his habits at night, after having tea with his friends, there was ready an inkstand, with a pen and paper on his large desk, with two lit

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49. Swettenham, 9

50. Wurtzburg (1954), 501.

51. Raffles 1837, V1, 3.

52. Boulger, 3.

candles. After he had walked to and fro for long enough, he would lie down on the table staring upwards, closing his eyes as if he were asleep. Two or three times, I thought he was asleep; but a moment later, he would jump up quickly and write, and after that, would lie down again. He would act like this until eleven or twelve before he went to bed.<sup>53</sup>

Raffles had, as he told a friend in 1811 "an insatiable ambition" although he was "meek as a maiden."<sup>54</sup> Eventually, Raffles's "vigour of mind", his facility for languages, and his prodigious talent secured him the position of deputy secretary to the new government of Penang in 1805.<sup>55</sup> In the journal of a Captain Travers stationed in Penang at that time, Raffles was said to possess "great quickness and facility in conducting and arranging the forms of a new government as well as drawing up and keeping the records."<sup>56</sup> Abdullah the Munshi, who had described Raffles as a man who "spoke in smiles", had himself concluded that Raffles was "a great and clever man, with high ambitions."<sup>57</sup> Having studied Malay on the passage to Penang, Raffles's fluency in the local language along with his approachable nature endeared him to the local peoples.<sup>58</sup> But there was more to Raffles than the young ambitious East India Company employee wanting to make his mark in the East.

Raffles embodied the scientific man of his age, whose spirit of inquiry also grew out of the desire to build, create and "make better" the less-advanced half of the world. Raffles had once written that "if [he] had any merit, it [had] rather been as the patron of Science, than in any other capacity."<sup>59</sup> More than just "an amateur naturalist and collector,"<sup>60</sup> Raffles's legacy in natural history was considerable having identified innumerable forms

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53. Bin Abdul Kadir, 59-60.

54. Wurtzburg (1959), 19.

55. Demetrius Boulger the consummate Victorian biographer believes that it was the salary of £1500 per annum which led Raffles to the job as it would alleviate the poverty of his family. Boulger's biography tends to indulge in Raffles as protector of his family, the symbol of responsibility, filial piety and generosity.

56. In Raffles 1837, V.1.

57. Bin Abdul Kadir, 63.

58. "As to his character, he seemed to be always thoughtful. He paid due respect to people in a friendly manner. He used polite forms of address, using the proper title when he spoke. He was extremely tactful when he needed to end a conversation. He treated people very kindly, and open-handed with the poor. He spoke in smiles, and was interested in things of the past" (Bin Abdul Kadir, 56)

59. Raffles 1837, V.1, 5.

60. Marks, 19.

of animal and plant life in the Indian Archipelago. His letters are replete with narratives of nature excursions, botanical and zoological "discoveries", and in his personal life, he was surrounded by a host of naturalists such as Thomas Horsfield and Nathaniel Wallich. Yet, unlike Frank Swettenham's warm accounts of the Malayan peoples, Raffles's study of the "races", despite his cultivating personal friendships with them, was often an objective categorical description of their origins, physiognomy and habits. The Malay was generally indolent, the Chinese, industrious but greedy, and a "superior race" encountered on the island of Sumatra was "tall, stout with clean, clear skins."<sup>61</sup> It is not merely Raffles waxing poetic when he constantly refers to Singapore as his "child", developing under his "cultivation", and writes "I am *making* a country and a garden out of a wilderness, and I trust I am laying the foundation of the future civilization of Sumatra: the independence of the Eastern commerce I have already established."<sup>62</sup> The world of the natural sciences spilled into his political vision which often took on a "horticultural" quality. Raffles was thus, never content in just reaping the profits of empire, his vision lay in creating and cultivating in the Indian Archipelago – where the extension of British rule and principles would work not only towards mutual advantage in trade, but the moral and intellectual improvement of the native races.

There is no need to over-romanticize the image of Raffles here. Though "speculative" and "visionary" a friend to the natives, and an anti-slavery advocate,<sup>63</sup> he was still the English colonizer who was confident in his deified superiority and the justification of his interventions in the affairs of *ignorant nations*. He advanced and championed territorial acquisition under the British flag for the sake of domestic interests, and alleviating the plight of the natives with "justice, humanity and moderation."<sup>64</sup> Epitomizing the European enlightened mind, Raffles's policies of administration and economic principles encoded the logic reflecting the political discourses and economic *Zeitgeist* of his time. It was the responsibility of the advanced nations to teach the ignorant nations of the East, to guide and mould them in the image of the enlightened West or at least, to construct a

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61. Raffles 1837, V.2, 359.

62. Letter to William Marsden, dated 23rd Sept. 1820, Raffles 1837, V.2, 156. William Marsden was one of the leading British Orientalists of his time especially in Malay language and history. The long friendship between Raffles and him began when a letter from Marsden, dated 6th July 1806 was directed to Raffles, who in Penang, was actively pursuing his Malay studies. Wurtzburg (1954): 42.

63. See Raffles 1837, V.2, 166. Also Raffles managed to abolish slavery in Sumatra by 1821, and the disintegration of the friendship between him and William Farquhar, first Resident of Singapore was owing to the inability of Farquhar to curb the slave trade in Singapore.

64. *Ibid*, 108.

subaltern duplicate. The development of the unbounded resources of Asia, he asserted, depended on the ascendancy of the British character. He expressed his political philosophy<sup>65</sup> in a letter to Thomas Murdoch, dated October 1820:

The acquisition of power is necessary to unite them and to organize society...the most rapid advances have probably been made, when great power has fallen into enlightened and able hands; in such circumstances, nations become wealthy and powerful, refinement and knowledge are diffused, and the seeds of internal freedom are sown in due time, to rise and set limits to that power whenever it may engender abuse. Freedom thus founded on knowledge and a consideration of reciprocal rights, is the only species that deserves the name, and it would be folly to conceive the careless independence of the savage as deserving of equal respect. In order to render an uncivilized people capable of enjoying true liberty, they must first feel the weight of authority, and must become acquainted with the mutual relations of society....Whether the power to which they bow be the despotism of force, or the despotism of superior intellect, it is a step in their progress which cannot be passed over. Knowledge is power, and in the intercourse between enlightened and ignorant natives, the former must and will be the rulers - [and so instead of non-interference in the customs and cultures of the savages], ought it not rather to be our study to direct to the advancement and improvement of the people, that power and influence with which our situation and character necessarily invests us?<sup>66</sup>

As much as Raffles indicates his alliances with the principles of John Locke and Adam Smith, he also appeared very much the Hobbesian man who believed in a *Leviathan*-type governing authority. The freedom of individuals, "mutual relations" and "reciprocal rights" had to be mediated, not only by knowledge but by the weight of authority. The concept of liberty assumed many forms but not all, as Raffles plainly states above, were *true liberty*. True liberty and equality were not intrinsic values but acquired through the accumulation of knowledge and reasoning, such that enlightened nations like England could endow to the less advanced world through education. Yet in a minute by Raffles dated June 1823 attending to the principles of ruling Singapore, he stresses that the judicial authority must be acquainted with the various laws and customs of the diverse ethnic population and warns:

To apply the law of Europe direct, with whom more than nine-tenths will

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65. This is the only time in the two-volume memoirs where Raffles explicitly expresses his political views. It may be of course due to the selections of Sophia Raffles who edited the collection. It is however, very important to note that at this time, Raffles was undergoing tremendous stress and a test of character. The Dutch, angered at the founding of Singapore, had protested to the Colonial government in London, which incited a whole new round of hostilities and geo-political tension. Naturally, blame was laid upon Raffles, and Lord Hastings (Gov. Gen. of India) who had initially "supported" Raffles himself, was bowing under the pressure from both the government and the East India Company.

66. Raffles 1837, V.2, 162.

probably be natives of China and the Malay Archipelago, would be as repugnant to universal and natural justice as it would be inconsistent with the benevolence and liberality which has ever marked the British rule in India.<sup>67</sup>

Raffles's objective for an institute of higher learning in Singapore (the embodiment of the vision today being the prestigious Raffles Institution), was therefore to ensure the growth of knowledge and "moral principles throughout the archipelago". "Meshing ideals and pragmatics,"<sup>68</sup> in what appeared to be the convergence of the utilitarian and humanitarian spirit of that period in Western history education liberated and developed human capacities but only in keeping pace with commerce, and Singapore, Raffles had declared ceaselessly was founded on free trade and free trade alone:

While we raise those in a scale of civilization, over whom our influence is extended, we shall lay the foundations of our dominion on the firm basis of justice and mutual advantage, instead of on uncertain and unsubstantial tenure of force and intrigue.....Commerce is the principle on which our connections with the Eastern States is formed...it creates wants and introduces luxuries; but if there exists no principle for the regulation of these, and if there be nothing to check their interests, sensuality, vice and corruption will be the necessary results.... Education must keep pace with commerce in order that its benefits may be ensured and its evils avoided; *and in our connection with these countries it should be our care that, while with one hand we carry to their shores the capital of our merchants, the other shall be stretched forth to offer them the means of intellectual improvement.*<sup>69</sup>

For all the evil temptations of commerce, Raffles was a firm believer in its civilizing effects and the practice of *laissez-faire*. "Constant and friendly intercourse" established in trading activity had advanced the civilizations of the States throughout the Archipelago,

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67. See page 3 in Stamford Raffles (1892/1823) "An Old Minute by Sir Stamford Raffles" *JSBRAS* #24, Dec. 1891, 1-12.

68. Edwin Thumboo, (1990) "Self-Images: Contexts for Transformations." *Management of Success* ed. by K. S. Sandhu and P. Wheatley. Boulder, Co., Westview, 749.

69. Raffles, quoted in Buckley, 1967: 789-790. See G. G. Hough (1933) "Notes on the Educational Policy of Sir Stamford Raffles." *JMBRAS*. XI, 2: 166 -170. Opening address to the Founding of the Singapore Institute. As G. G. Hough points out, Raffles's concept of education was expounded before McCauley's famous minute which affected English education in the East. The type of education which informed Raffles was top-down -- the higher classes would effectually promote progressive ideas to the lower orders. But Raffles was not concerned with promoting the English language and literatures alone -- Asian languages and histories were his primary focus. The Singapore institution would serve as a center for such studies, as well as a collection and distribution center of such knowledge.

and "as their knowledge increased so did their wants; and their advancement in civilization might be estimated in the ration of their commerce."<sup>70</sup> The role of the British, Raffles believed, was to "assist the wheel as it turns round."<sup>71</sup>

There are also murky and contested details which cast shadows on the integrity of Raffles's character, especially with regard to his involvement in the Palembang Massacre (1811)<sup>72</sup> where an entire Dutch settlement was annihilated by the local Sultan who claimed to have acted on an ambiguous correspondence from Raffles. Raffles's hatred of the Dutch was no secret;<sup>73</sup> but the extent of which this antagonism [un]intentionally provoked the massacre at Palembang remains contestable. Dutch history in the Indian Archipelago, as Coolhaas<sup>74</sup> states was so interwoven with Raffles that the two could not be separated. Raffles was the constant, irritating sore on the backs of Dutch ambition. The Dutch respected Raffles but did not like him; calling him a *Praler* – a swaggering, strutting peacock who appropriated the feathers of others. Certainly, one could conceive

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70. Letter to Col. Addenbrooke dated June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1819. Raffles (1819/1878), 176.

71. Raffles 1837, V.2, 225.

72. This is a contested historical event, divided usually between two obvious camps: Dutch-reading English and English-reading Dutch Historians. See Syed Hussein Alatas (1971) *Thomas Stamford Raffles: Schemer or Reformer?* UK: Angus and Robertson provides the most critical analysis of the event among other damning indictment of Raffles as a humanitarian reformer. Prior to the Java Expedition, Raffles had corresponded with the ruler of Palembang, Sultan Badr'uddin. The controversy is over the contents of the letter Raffles sent to the Sultan. In it Raffles wrote in "execrable Malay", "boeng abieskan sekalie-kalie segala orang olanda and Residentja," See pages 118-119 in W. Ph. Coolhaas (1951). "Baud on Raffles." *JMBRAS*. XXIV,(1): 109 -120. The contention lies in the words "boeng abieskan" either meaning "completely expel the Dutch (olanda)" or "finish everyone off". Badr'uddin apparently acted upon the letter and the result was a blood bath. Dutch historians have argued that it was not in Badr'uddin's nature to act in a murderous manner, and Raffles's letter was deliberately ambiguous in the phrasing. Furthermore, the Dutch argued if Raffles were such an authority on Malay studies, he would have realized how the Sultan would interpret the phrase. The issue remains unresolved.

73. See Boulger's (1897) biography. However the biography should also be scrutinized carefully -- it was as Wurtzburg (1954) contends, a "rather stilted and very Victorian biography," 7. Coolhaas also reminds us that Boulger was writing just before and after the Boer War, and is therefore, "anti-Dutch to a high degree".

74. Coolhaas, 109 -120.

as the majority of Dutch did, that Raffles was a *Praler*, but he was no less arrogant and conceited than most European officers in the East whose duties were to administer and "improve" subaltern lives – and who firmly believed in the rightness of their actions. If, as Mills implies, it was audacity and gall which secured the Indian colonies for Britain, then Raffles, who clearly had immense ambitions,<sup>75</sup> and possessed the temerity to carry them out, would have posed as a threat to many equally ambitious individuals situated in that part of the world. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Indian Archipelago was an extremely strategic region, possessing the most lucrative routes between India and China (which at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was displaying signs of internal weakness). A monopoly by any one imperialist nation could have produced unfortunate political and economic consequences not only in that region, but possibly in Europe as well. It was an extremely delicate balancing game which the Dutch and the English played out in South-East Asia, which was eventually settled (not without ensuing problems) on March 17th, 1824 in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty.

If the Dutch had fair reason to despise Raffles, it should also come as no surprise that there were many of Raffles's English colleagues who for various reasons disliked him. In what was a theatre of many players in the founding of modern Singapore, Raffles was the key character, and it is his name which commemorates Singapore today. Among the other players was John Crawfurd, appointed Resident of Singapore between June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1823 and August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1826 after Raffles's departure, and noted scholar of the Indian Archipelago. If Raffles was the parent-founder, and W. Farquhar<sup>76</sup>, for a short period, his Aide-De-Camp and nurse to an infant settlement, then Crawfurd was the authoritarian-schoolmaster who had to discipline a settlement. A brilliant and capable administrator

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75. See letters to Thomas Murdoch in Raffles 1837, V.2, 166.

76. William Farquhar (1770-1839) had served as the Resident of Malacca until 1818 when the Dutch repossessed the settlement. Munshi Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir testifies to his popularity with the Malays; Farquhar was a "quiet man...patient with people's faults,...rich and poor were alike to him. If even a poor and humble man wished to make a complaint, he would see him immediately, and hear and advise him..."(V.1, 53-54). Farquhar's eventual bitter feud with Raffles had concerned the governing of Singapore. Turnbull argues that Farquhar had to deal with an unruly colony while coping with little resources and poor communication between Raffles who had returned to Bencoolen, and himself. Farquhar is correct when he argued that he was left to his own devices most of the time and improvisation was necessary especially when the circumstances were beyond control. See C. M. Turnbull (1977) *A History of Singapore 1819-1975*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 12-19. While displaying a certain initiative, Farquhar, who was eleven years older than Raffles, and more of the EIC man in his administration style, never quite matched up to the visionary policies and energy of Raffles (see Buckley, 1965,63; Nunn, in Makepeace, V.1, 77; Darbshire in Makepeace, V.2., 26. Also please see John Bastin (1990) "Sir Stamford Raffles and the Study of Natural History in Penang, Singapore, and Indonesia." *JMBRAS* 63, (2): 1 - 25.

and prominent Malay scholar, Crawfurd was not well-liked, and there was clearly rivalry between him and Raffles.<sup>77</sup> Abdullah described Crawfurd as highly capable and an intellectual, but he was also a tight-fisted and conceited man whose impatience frequently surfaced when dealing with native concerns. To be fair, Crawfurd inherited a difficult job of administering a relatively infant settlement. As Mills writes, "he fostered agriculture, combated piracy so far as his scanty means allowed, and grappled with the prevailing lawlessness which arose from the absence of legally constituted courts."<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, Crawfurd played a seminal role in consolidating British rule in Singapore,<sup>79</sup> and solidified what was a weak treaty settlement that Raffles drew up in February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1819 with the rulers of Johor.

John Crawfurd held a contemptuous view of Raffles, and could not contain his personal opinions in his 1856 *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands & Adjacent Countries*. Echoing the *Praler* characterization, Crawfurd's descriptive entry on Raffles in his dictionary, though full of praiseworthy description, "like activity, industry, and political courage were the most remarkable endowments of his character,"<sup>80</sup> ends with

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77. See Bin Abdul Kadir, V.2, 244-252; Buckley, 144-166; Mills, 64-67. Also, John Bastin (ed.) (1981). *The Letters of Sir Stamford Raffles to Nathaniel Wallich 1819-1824*. Kuala Lumpur, MBRAS. When Raffles returned to Singapore on the 10th of October, 1822, a conflict of interest occurred between him and his friend, Col. Farquhar (who was very popular with the native peoples), appointed by Raffles himself as the first Resident of Singapore. Events had occurred which placed doubt in Raffles concerning the administrative ability of his friend -- one being the discovery that slave trade had occurred (Raffles was vehemently opposed to slavery), and the other concerning construction of private warehouses and offices on land allotted to public buildings (Buckley, 71-76; Bastin, 1981: 30 & 53-54, footnote 146). After much protest and controversy from the latter, Raffles dismissed Farquhar and appointed John Crawfurd (See Bastin, 1981: 53, footnote 142), then a noted Malay scholar as the new Resident. Raffles respected Crawfurd as a scholar and felt he was the most suitable man for the job as Resident of Singapore, but did not like him personally. In a letter to Nathaniel Wallich, dated 1st November, 1823 (Bastin, 1981: 30), he writes that Crawfurd and him parted "the best friends" with Crawfurd promising to uphold all the Raffles's arrangements. Unfortunately, Raffles received numerous complaints concerning Crawfurd's behaviour which led Raffles to describe him as "hollow as a drum and false as the Devil" (ibid, 59, footnote 166).

78. Mills, 64.

79. Crawfurd also played a central role in drawing up the Anglo-Dutch Treaty (17th March, 1824) which ceded Singapore and other territories to Great Britain.

80. John Crawfurd, 364.

these parting shots; "he was not, perhaps, an original thinker, but readily adopted the notions of others – not always with adequate discrimination."<sup>81</sup> Other less favourable allusions to Raffles's character by Crawfurd are found under the entry on Singapore pertaining to the founding. Raffles, according to Crawfurd, was ignorant of Singapore despite an earlier reference to it by Alexander Hamilton in 1703, and "had to grope for a suitable locality,"<sup>82</sup> after Rhio, and the Carimon Islands (where Raffles "tarried" for three days before declaring the place unsuitable), finally touching at Singapore where "the advantages and superiority of its locality presented themselves". Again, juxtapositions are employed quite skilfully by Crawfurd who talks of the courage and promptitude of Raffles only to imply that by sheer providence, Raffles and his expedition, having *groped* blindly along the Straits of Malacca, came upon Singapore which presented itself, immanently, as a strategic area. As Abdullah keenly observes, Crawfurd tended towards self-aggrandizement [*membesarkan diri*],<sup>83</sup> which explains the self-reference in his descriptive piece on Singapore:

The inconvenient state of things, which, with the exception of the patch on which the town was to stand, left the sovereignty of the whole island, with its adjacent islets to the Malay princes, were quickly experienced, and obviated by a treaty which *I drew up in 1824* under the direction of the Earl of Amherst...and this convention continues to be the tenure on which we hold the main island...<sup>84</sup>

The founding of Singapore, according to Crawfurd, was therefore a serendipitous event since Singapore was supposedly unknown to Raffles and his retinue.<sup>85</sup> Crawfurd's self-

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81. An example given here is Raffles's controversial land-reform system in Java which produced great financial burdens on the EIC. There were many other reasons why the system failed, among them, an inheritance of pre-existing Javanese and Dutch agrarian systems and administration which was not easily eradicable. Raffles himself felt that if he had been given more time, the system would have worked. Curiously, after the restitution of Java to the Dutch in 1816, the Dutch retained Raffles's land system with modifications overtime. Crawfurd, noted scholar of the Malay world that he was, would have been aware of the Dutch retention of Raffles's system.

82. Crawfurd, 403.

83. Bin Abdul Kadir, V.2, 244.

84. Crawfurd, 403. (italics mine)

85. One has to question Crawfurd here for if his dictionary was published in 1856, he would have had access to Lady Sophia Raffle's Memoirs, published in 1837. The letters and remarks in Memoirs do clearly indicate that the founding of Singapore was not a "chance" event (Raffles 1837, V.2, 6).

reference also implied that Raffles left behind a shoddily administered settlement with an inchoate treaty which threatened the sovereignty of British rule in Singapore.<sup>86</sup> It is here that we must address the "founding" event itself, and the role which Raffles played.

Despite European trading activity in the Indian Archipelago since the dawn of the 16th century, and except for navigable routes through the various straits between the Malay Peninsular, Sumatra and Java, the significance of Singapore lay oblivious to the British for over two centuries while the main competition took place further south over the Spice Islands; mainly, Java, The Celebes and The Moluccas.<sup>87</sup> In the 17th century, when the China tea trade was initiated, the EIC only had a latent interest in the Malay-Sumatra-Java archipelago, concentrating instead on the supply of tea to a rapidly growing tea-drinking English society. However, in 1703, a Captain Alexander Hamilton stopped at Johore on the way to China:

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86. Singapore was actually part of the Johore Empire, and was known as a pirate's nest (see Bin Abdul Kadir, V.1, 163; Raffles in Buckley, 119). The treaty (concluded and signed on 6th February, 1819) which Raffles had drawn up with the Sultan (Hussein Shah or "Tengku Long" to the locals) and the Temenggung of Johor is relatively short, comprising of only 9 brief and general articles (Buckley, 35-47). What is clear is, in exchange for establishing a settlement, factory and port in Singapore is 5,000 spanish dollars paid annually to the Sultan, and 3,000 to the Temenggung (Article 2 & 3). The physical nature of the negotiated territory is defined in an interesting language, "The boundaries of the lands under the control of the English are as follows: from Tanjong Malang on the west, to Tanjong Katong on the east, and on the land side, as far as the range of cannon shot, all round from the factory" (Article 1). Furthermore, the Temenggung who by local customs, is generally recognized as the chief of Singapore and its dependencies, (the Sultan acts as a figurehead) is entitled to half of the levies on native vessels (Article 9). The local rulers were also not allowed to enter into any other treaty with any nation. In vague language, the British would also offer some protection as long as it did not "interfere" with local affairs. Thus, Crawfurd was correct to say in 1828, that the treaty amounted "to little more than a permission for the formation of a British factory and establishment....no territorial cession giving a legal right of legislation" (Buckley, 40; Mills, 65; Bin Abdul Kadir, V.1, 236-241). During the period between 1819-1824, police arrangements and judicial regulation were very haphazard. Raffles did revise the treaty on June 7, 1823; the Sultan was to receive \$1,500 (spanish dollars) and the Temenggung \$800 per month for life in exchange for giving up the levies and the right to act as judges (Mills, 65). Yet there were still many loose ends, especially pertaining to the sovereignty of British rule. What Crawfurd wanted was Singapore with the adjacent seas, straits, islets within 10 miles off the coast to be ceded permanently to the British. This was obtained by the treaty on 2nd August 1824. See Buckley, 40 & 168-170.

87. After the conquest by the Portuguese in 1511, Malacca's importance as a trading centre diminished.

I called at Johore on my way to China, and he [the Sultan] treated me very kindly, and made me a Present of the island of *Sincapure*, but I told him it could be of no Use to a private Person, tho' a proper place for a Company to settle a Colony on, lying in the Center of Trade, and being accomodated with good Rivers and safe Harbours, so conveniently situated, that all Winds served Shipping both to go out and come into those Rivers. The Soil is black and thick: And the Woods abound in good Masts for Shipping, and Timber for building.<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps it was the EIC's lack of interest in the trade and territory of the archipelago in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, for despite Hamilton's acute observations and opportunity, Singapore remained insignificant to, and ignored by both the Dutch and the British.<sup>89</sup> In his letter to Col. Addenbrooke, Raffles wrote, "I shall say nothing of the importance which I attach to the permanence of the position I have taken up at Singapore; it is a child of my own. But for my Malay studies I should hardly have known that such a place existed; not only the European but the Indian world also was ignorant of it."<sup>90</sup> Yet I would argue that it was less a matter of the European world being ignorant of Singapore's existence, but rather, owing to the political circumstances prior to the Dutch re-possession of Java and Malacca in 1816 and 1818 respectively, that Singapore was rendered unimportant to British interests, and therefore, non-existent. Contrary then, to Crawford's entry in the dictionary, one must infer from the letter to Addenbrooke, that Raffles had a prior awareness of Singapore. What then was the extent of his knowledge of this "ancient maritime capital", and when could Raffles have come across it?

There was no doubt that Raffles's Malay studies had acquainted him with Singapore, but it was geo-political necessities which directed him to gaze upon it. Singapore was not discovered by Captain Hamilton -- it was an ancient maritime capital known as Temasek, and part of the former Sri Vijayan empire. According to legend, it was renamed by a Sumatran prince who, after sighting a leonine-type animal, named it lion-city, hence the Sanskrit, *Singa*(lion) and *pura*(city). The name and its direct translation are also disputable since *Singapura* according to Hobson-Johnson<sup>91</sup> also meant "to tarry", "halt"

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88. W. Foster, W. (ed.) (1930). *A New Account of the East Indies*. 2 Vols. London. See Foster, V.2, 52-53.

89. The Dutch had been aware of Singapore since they had many dealings with the Johore Sultanate, and had as early as 1609 considered making their chief settlement there. In 1808, Abraham Couperus, former Dutch Governor of Malacca had expressed his preference for Singapore over Malacca. The non-initiative of the Dutch authorities is puzzling.

90. Raffles, (1819/1878), 178-179

or “lodge”. Other than the Orientalists who were engaged in the historical studies of the Malay archipelago, or the early Dutch and EIC traders who scouted for trading posts in the region, Singapore was virtually an *insula incognita* to most of the Western world.

As early as 1809, Raffles, having recognized that Penang (1786) lay too far in the West of the Archipelago to counteract the Dutch monopoly of the trade routes to China, had expressed the need for a more suitable location. His Malay studies could have therefore, also involved the quest for a suitable location, and before Singapore, there had been many possible favourable locations, for example, Banka (off southern Sumatra). But Wurtzburg asserts that it was Hamilton's diary extract which drew Raffles to Singapore. Hamilton's written accounts had been compiled in a two volume work by William Milburn entitled *Oriental Commerce* that was published in 1813 complete with maps which identified the island of Singapore. Considering the nature of its contents, Wurtzburg (1925) suggests that it is not unreasonable that copies were sent to the principal stations of the EIC, and read by Raffles. Since Raffles had been working on his three volume *History of Java* around 1816 when he was back in England,<sup>92</sup> Raffles could have picked up Milburn's book which devotes a chapter to Java. Yet, he does not mention Milburn in his work, and Harry Marks argues instead, that Raffles came upon Singapore in his friend, and noted Malay scholar, William Marsden's *The History of Sumatra* (1783). In Marsden's book, Singapore is misidentified as the island of Panjang on a map, but the third edition of the work (1811) corrects that mistake on the cartographic frontispiece. Furthermore, Marsden also provides a cursory account of the island's history, and it is very possible that Raffles could have drawn his knowledge of Singapore from that work.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, Lady Raffles's memoirs indicate that Raffles had fixed upon Singapore as a favourable location to check Dutch ambition in the archipelago *even* before he left England on November

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91. H. Yule and A. C. Burnell (1969/1886) *Hobson Johnson: A Glossary of Anglo Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical, and Discursive* Chatham: Wordworth Editions, 839.

92. After being relieved from his duties in Java, Raffles was back in England from 16th July, 1816 to 19th November, 1817.

93. See Marsden, (1811/1966), 327. Marsden's account is rather geographically vague for it draws Singapore into part of the Malay Peninsular, “they emigrated ... (about the year 1160) to the south-eastern extremity of the opposite peninsula, named Ujong Tanah, where they were at first distinguished by the appellation of orang di-bawah angin or the Leeward people, but in time the coast became generally known by that of Tanah Melayo or the Melayan land. In this situation they built their first city, which they called Singapur (vulgarly Sincapore), and their rising consequence excited the jealousy of the kings of Maja-pahit....” William Marsden, (1811/1966) *History of Sumatra Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press*, 327. ‘Orang di bawah angin’ can also be literally translated as people below the wind. The 1966 Oxford University edition has an introduction by John Bastin and is a reprint of the third edition with the corrected map.

19<sup>th</sup>, 1817.<sup>94</sup> Singapore was also the objective in Raffles's discussions with Lord Hastings, although both at that point eventually decided upon Rhio.<sup>95</sup> In the later disputes over "parentage" of the Singapore initiative, this would be the earliest reference to Singapore's potential as a strategic station.

It is not necessary to detail the complicated, if not frantic events that led up to the founding of modern Singapore on 29th January, 1819, but it is crucial to address some of the more significant aspects. The terms laid out in the Castlereagh Convention of 1814 had provided for the restitution by Britain of all the former Dutch possessions conquered since 1803, except for Ceylon and Cape Colony. But the aggression of the Dutch in reinstating their presence in the archipelago and extending their suzerainty, did not only cover their former settlements, but also posts to which they had no previous claim. To add insult to injury, British ships were barred from any ports in the archipelago except Batavia, and native boats were instructed to sail only to the Dutch settlements. Raffles, writing from London and Bencoolen, had foreseen the "boundless aggrandizement and rapacity" of the Dutch, and had bombarded the Indian government with his letters to safeguard British interests. In 1818, with the Dutch repossession of Java and Malacca, and the subsequent monopoly of the two Straits, the Indian government was finally awakened to the dangerous consequences of a Dutch monopoly. On 26th November, 1818, Raffles was appointed by Lord Hastings<sup>96</sup> (the Governor-General of India) to secure the free passage of the Straits of Malacca and form a British base at the southern end of the Straits of Malacca. While Raffles was most likely aware of Singapore's potential,

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94. See Raffles1837, V.2, 6. In a letter to Lord Amherst dated October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1817 on the importance of establishing a trading presence in the Eastern archipelago, Raffles does not mention Singapore as a possible factory although he provides a list of possible places including Samba nd Pontiana on the Western coast of Borneo, Malacca, Banca Island, and Bintang Island. Bintang (also spelled Bintan, or Bentan) was his preferred choice. However, in locating Bintang Island, Raffles points to the Straits of Singapore. If Lady Sophia Raffles is correct, we must assume that Raffles had shortly after that date of October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1817, fixed his sights on Singapore. See IOR MSS F 140/49 (a).

95. In a memorandum dated September 1818, to Lord Amherst from C. Assey on the advantage of establishing a navel station on the route between India and China, Assey had proposed a naval station to check Dutch supremacy and proposed Rhio. Assey also suggested that such a move would "furnish an opening to the Eastern trade." IOR MSS EUR F 140/49 (b). Earlier in October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1817, Raffles, in the statement of trade, had himself conveyed the warning of Dutch ambition in the region and how it was in Britain's interest to secure the Eastern trade. IOR MSS F 140/49 (a).

96. Raffles, as the agent of Hastings, was allowed a measure of autonomy in his decisions, answerable only to Hastings. Furthermore, it was agreed that the new settlement (eventually, Singapore) would be solely under the authority of Raffles.

Rhio was the preferred choice of his superiors. Rhio was already an important native port on an island not far from Singapore – the "principal station of the Arab and Bugis traders on the Western side of the Archipelago."<sup>97</sup> Already an established port, Rhio was a more expedient choice, and in early 1818 – as far as the British were aware,<sup>98</sup> the Dutch had no claims on the islands along the Rhio-Lingga Archipelago. Furnished with his instructions dated, November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1818,<sup>99</sup> Raffles quickly acted upon them, *though not accordingly*, being aware of the fickle nature of the Indian government. A convergence of events and circumstances, including the occupation of Rhio by the Dutch,<sup>100</sup> Raffles's delayed mission to Acheen/Acheh<sup>101</sup> and his insubordination and perhaps, even the hand of

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97. quoted in Mills, 54.

98. See Cowan, 81. Rhio is also more financially favourable -- the expense of forming a settlement on an uninhabited island, like Singapore would be regarded as enormous. Governor Bannerman of Penang, the later arch-enemy of Raffles who went as far as refusing to Raffles's request for naval defence in Singapore, also was aware of the Dutch encroachment. He displayed foresight by sending William Farquhar as early as June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1818, to establish commercial alliances with Rhio, Lingga and Siak (ibid: 76 & 90-91). Unfortunately, the Dutch turned a blind eye to this commercial treaty when they established a settlement in Rhio with the Raja Muda.

99. Supposedly drafted by Raffles himself (Wurtzburg [1954],461). However the supplementary instructions sent a week after, most probably in response to the Dutch ambitions for Rhio, are more important because Raffles's actions were based upon them; that is, should Rhio be occupied, Raffles was free to negotiate with the ruler of Johore for a settlement although with some caution. It is quite likely that Hasting's government had some word of Dutch intentions in Rhio already and was uncertain of the outcome. (See Boulger, 291-302, Wurtzburg [1954], 461-466.) The instructions are reprinted in Donald and Joanna Moore (1969) *The First 150 Years of Singapore*. Singapore: Donald Moore Press in association with the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce

100. The Dutch occupation of Rhio eventually worked to the advantage of Raffles. In Raffles's own words, the occupation of Singapore completely turned the tables on the Dutch, it was the "death-blow to all their plans" (to Duchess of Somerset, 9th Nov., 1820, Raffles 1837, V.2, 65). By 1833, Rhio, the original objective of the Indian government, had lapsed into a "somnolent state," for even the planters there preferred to sell their products at the free port of Singapore. Darbishire, in Makepeace, 24.

101. Curiously, on the same day Raffles was issued his instructions (November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1818), the Dutch had secured a treaty from the Raja Muda of Rhio. Although supplementary instructions were given to establish a treaty with the ruler of Johor, Hastings, keeping in mind London's orders to avoid any dispute with the Dutch, had issued a new order to Raffles, that is, to desist from every attempt to form a settlement in the Archipelago. Hill claims in his introduction to the translations of *Hikayat Abdullah* that the letter was sent three weeks after Raffles left Calcutta. However, the letter never

providence -- eventuated the founding of Singapore.

Other than Raffles, two other names have been associated with the founding of Singapore: William Farquhar, Resident of Malacca and Singapore, and Captain Daniel Ross, the Hydrographer whom Raffles engaged to survey the suitability of The Carimons, a group of islands, and Singapore. Although Rhio was the primary objective, Raffles, from his correspondence, clearly considered Singapore as a worthy alternative. His most important letter is to William Marsden, dated 12<sup>th</sup>, December, 1818<sup>102</sup> written off the sandheads, "[the] Dutch have hardly left us an inch of ground to stand upon...My attention is principally turned to Johore, and you must not be surprised if my next letter to you is dated from the site of the ancient city of Singapore." This is significant because until December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1818, when Raffles arrived in Penang to meet up with Farquhar, he was supposedly unaware of the Dutch action at Rhio. Correspondence dated the 1st and 16th of January, 1819, also indicated that Raffles had already selected Singapore as his location. Although praised by the Dutch for his "discovery" of Singapore, Daniel Ross's role in the founding is less controversial than Farquhar's. As the Hydrographer, Ross was sent by Raffles to survey the Carimons and the islands south of the Straits of Malacca as far as Singapore. He was the agent of a plan already laid out by Raffles. On January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1819, after declaring the unsuitability of the Carimons, Ross suggested the advantageous spot of Singapore, quite unaware that Raffles had already decided upon the island. Later on, William Farquhar would claim that it was his suggestion and not Raffles's, or Ross's, that Singapore should be considered. This claim is questionable because of two eyewitness accounts<sup>103</sup>, and inconsistencies in his memorial to the EIC directors, which

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reached Raffles in time, for Raffles had postponed the initial mission to Acheen/Acheh (Northern Sumatra), (quite likely having heard wind of the Dutch actions) the place where Bannerman had instructed Raffles to wait for new orders from India. If anything, Raffles would have distrusted Bannerman, and instead headed for the Straits of Singapore (Mills, 55).

102. Raffles 1837, V.2, 9-10.

103. Wurtzburg, 1954 provides the clearest evidence that Farquhar had never suggested Singapore, but remained with the Carimons as his choice. In fact, a diary kept by a Captain Crawford (not to be confused with John Crawford), indicates that most of the party except Farquhar considered the Carimons to be unsuitable owing to an exposed harbour, and undefensible (483). Farquhar's memorial to the Court of Directors of the East India Company claims that it was his suggestion that the party stopped at Singapore but also that he had attempted to broach the subject of a settlement in Singapore when he was earlier on, under Bannerman's orders, negotiating commercial alliances with Rhio.

The second eyewitness account, belongs to Wa Hakim, who lived on the island and was part of the Kelumang Tribe of "Orang Laut" (sea gypsies or people of the sea). He was around fifteen at the time of the landing on 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1819. His testimony contradicts that of Abdullah the Munshi who credits Farquhar with the founding. Wa Hakim's

was written during his acrimonious battle with Raffles over the administration of Singapore.<sup>104</sup> Farquhar, having favoured The Carimons as far back as July 1818 -- when he was instructed by Governor Bannerman of Penang to establish commercial treaties with Rhio, Lingga, Pontianak, and Siak, had displayed initiative by opening negotiations on his own authority with the Raja Muda of Rhio for The Carimons. It is also interesting that at this time, the Dutch had alleged that Farquhar was considering establishing settlements at the Carimons, or *Singapore*. The reference to Singapore is significant for despite Farquhar's considerations of Singapore, he had settled upon the Carimons.<sup>105</sup> Ultimately, the birthright must be accorded to Raffles, whose ambition for Singapore was

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narrative is recounted in *JSBRAS* (10) December 1882, 285-286. There is corresponding evidence to his description of Singapore around 1819 (see W.W. Skeat and H.N. Ridley (1900) "The Orang Laut of Singapore" *JSBRAS* 35: 247-250). There is however some vagueness surrounding one part of the testimony and that is the matter of the Orang Laut, Batin Sapi who was told to fetch Sultan Hussein or Tunku Long which Malay scholars argue is impossible due to the aristocratic etiquette of the times. But Abdullah supposedly did not arrive in Singapore until four months or even a year after the founding, and this story was probably recounted to him. See two articles published by C.A.Gibson-Hill "Raffles, Alexander Hare & Johanna van Hare" and "The Date of Munshi Abdullah's first Visit to Singapore" in the *JMBRAS* 28, Part 1, pages 184-195. Furthermore, Abdullah was confused as to the nature of the flotilla of 6 ships, which he divided into two separate parties Bin Abdul Kadir, 51. This is initially true, but the ships joined up at the Carimons, and sailed together to Singapore (Hill, 154; Wurtzburg [1954] 481-484, Moore and Moore, 17).

104. See Boulger, 353-362; Wurtzburg [1954], 474-498; Buckley, 5.

105. C. M. Turnbull's (1977) *A History of Singapore 1819-1975*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford U. press offers one of the most comprehensive histories of Singapore. She however clearly sympathizes with William Farquhar and sees him playing a greater role in the post-founding years of Singapore while reducing Raffles to the "visionary" aspect. She maintains that the only reason why Singapore was one of Raffles's most successful projects was due to him NOT being there forgetting the more problematic political aspects of Java and Bencoolen. Certainly Java was more difficult due to the Dutch presence. Despite her contention that Raffles entertained megalomaniac ambitions for the entire region and that Singapore only had a minor role, the fact is that Raffles saw Singapore as the regional keystone gleaned from his letters. Where perhaps Farquhar and himself differed, were the priorities of administration and rule. One could not know if Farquhar made a mistake or not by the restructured land allocations but certainly both men had different intentions, and no one could have known what Raffles could have carried out if he had spent the entire four years in Singapore. The point is it is easier to work with a mostly unsettled land. Turnbull might also realize that by the time Raffles founded Singapore, he was, though experienced in matters of governance, still only 38 years old. However she concedes too that Farquhar favored the Carimons and not Singapore, and that Raffles was thinking at least a hundred years ahead.

germinated as early as 1817. Only Raffles knew "why Singapore was Singapore"<sup>106</sup> having created and nurtured his idea of a great commercial emporium with a cosmopolitan quality. From his correspondence and his EIC Memorial, William Farquhar had never envisioned the far-reaching "magic of free trade" nor the potential commercial force of Singapore as Raffles clearly did.

The creation-gaze of Sir Stamford Raffles was but one moment in the ever-becoming of Singapore – a representational act also rooted in Raffles's romance with the antiquity of the Malayan Archipelago. Singapore's historic location as an ancient port was highly attractive to Raffles whose nature was oriented towards historical origins and revitalizing ancient civilizations, having expressed his "pleasure of setting afoot on such a classic ground...The lines of the old city, and of its defences are still to be traced, and within its ramparts the British Union waves unmolested."<sup>107</sup> Nothing would have appealed more strongly to Raffles's archaeological sentiment than the restoration of Singapore to its former glory.<sup>108</sup> He would frequently emphasize the historical background of Singapore in both his personal and official correspondence – "the [Native Authorities] will hail with satisfaction the foundation and the rise of a British Establishment in the central and commanding Situation once occupied by the Capital of the Malayan Empire then existing in the East."<sup>109</sup> But the restoration of Singapore's former glory had a foreign character. Modern *laissez-faire* Singapore was a *Creation*, an admixture of an imagined historical memory, British geo-political exigencies, and individual vision.

"Rob me not of my political child"<sup>110</sup> – the wariness of the phrase was a reminder of Raffles's previous failed attempts to create a centre of British power in Java and Sumatra. He was acutely aware of the possibilities of failure, and his correspondence in the first few months echoed the pessimism – "[Singapore] bids fair to be the next port to Calcutta, all we want now is the certainty of permanent possession, and this of course, depends on authorities beyond our control."<sup>111</sup> Even Bencoolen, which he once optimistically aspired to make a commercial entrepot to rival Dutch Batavia was "the very worst settlement..completely shut out..with scanty passing trade."<sup>112</sup> The three years

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106. Darbshire in Makepeace, 26.

107. Letter to William Marsden dated January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1819.

108. Raffles had after all, nearly, initiated a new conflict between the Dutch and the British when he refused to hand over Padang on the grounds of its archeological value.

109. Cowan, 90.

110. Letter to Duchess of Somerset, 11th Oct., 1822, Raffles 1837, V.2, 240.

111. Ibid, 25.

112. Ibid, 140-141

after the founding of Singapore were spent in personal tragedy, and battling the Dutch and his superiors in London and Calcutta who were furious that once again, Raffles had drawn Britain into another conflict with the Dutch.<sup>113</sup> During these three years, he was also actively carrying out the administration of Singapore from Bencoolen via letters to Farquhar. As he informed the Duchess of Somerset, "All I wish is, to remain long enough to see my settlement at Singapore firmly established."<sup>114</sup>

The possessive pronoun is not just a colourful expression on Raffles's part -- the frequency of "my child," "my settlement," "my colony" in his correspondence (and one must infer, his conversations) is powerfully indicative of his intense possessiveness over Singapore, and his claims to birthright. The following are excerpts from various letters and memoirs:

*my colony* thrives most rapidly, we have not been established four months, and it has received an accession of population exceeding five thousand...how much interested I am in the success of the place; it is a *child of my own*, and I have made it what it is. You may easily conceive with what zeal I apply myself to the clearing of forests, cutting of roads,

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113. For a full account of the Anglo-Dutch conflict over Singapore, see Marks's *The First Contest for Singapore*. After the founding of Singapore, the Dutch vehemently protested for Singapore was supposedly part of the Rhio Sultanate. In some ways, the English did not have formal rights to the island. The Dutch having occupied Rhio through their negotiations with the Sultanate, assumed Singapore was also under their jurisdiction. The Dutch had assumed that Hastings in Calcutta and the London authorities would not tolerate such an act especially when both sides were careful not to be drawn into a war and upset Anglo-Dutch negotiations. Matters were not helped either by Raffles's enemy in Penang, Governor Bannerman who assured the Dutch personally that this was an individual initiative and Calcutta would certainly repudiate Raffles's act. Hastings however did indeed originally sanction the establishment of a factory in Singapore in the two letters of instructions in late November, 1818 before sending out the third letter negating the original orders, which Raffles did not receive on time. The result of Bannerman's conciliatory action with the Dutch basically provided a loss of face for Hastings who, aggravated by Bannerman's actions, ordered him to send troops to secure the new settlement and protect it. To add fuel to the fire, the very wily Temenggung and Sultan Hussein of Johor, sensing impending trouble between the Dutch and the English, had informed the Dutch in Malacca and their friends in Rhio that they had acted under duress when they signed the treaty with Raffles. Raffles's actions were indeed risky, and quite likely gambled on Hastings's support -- as well as the reluctance to go to war over an island like Singapore, no matter the consequences. That communication was poor, and that the arguments dragged on -- and Raffles had hoped they would prove advantageous to the situation. Raffles was convinced the longer he held on to Singapore, the more likely the island would prove to be a valuable settlement, too costly to give up. See also Turnbull, 1-33.

114. Ibid, 158.

building of towns, framing of laws, &c. &c.<sup>115</sup>

[Singapore] is a great and flourishing city...I do not like to say much on the subject, because it is something like praising *one's own child*; but I may fairly say that it has in every respect exceeded even my most sanguine expectation...<sup>116</sup>

What, then, must have been my feelings, after the loss of almost everything that was dear to me on that ill-fated coast?<sup>117</sup> After all the risks and dangers to which this my *almost only child* had been exposed, to find it grown and advanced, beyond measure and even my warmest anticipations and expectations, in importance, wealth and interest -- in everything that can give it value and permanence.<sup>118</sup>

I cannot well say more about it, without subjecting myself to the charge of egotism, for it is, indeed, everything I could wish for and rising and improving in every way fully equal to my expectations. It is at least a *child of my own; and now that I am in other respects childless*.<sup>119</sup>

Singapore was not a distant object, but constituted an integral part of Raffles's life, the culmination of a lifelong political vision. Although situated in Bencoolen, Raffles kept a close watch over Singapore, demanding constant reports from Farquhar, and ensuring that his instructions were carried out properly (they were not). In his letters, Raffles's thoughts would vacillate between colony and family; discussion of his children, and their health would be immediately accompanied by discussion of his other "child", Singapore. More poignant is Raffles's conception of Singapore as his almost only child after the sudden deaths of his own three children, and the consistent language of a proud parent who had nurtured a child's success. Raffles was more than just the statesman-administrator; he firmly believed in his benefactory role, even if it was tainted with hubris, to bring the blessings of freedom and commerce throughout the Indian Archipelago – and "to enlarge the sphere for the extension of British principles" (ibid, V2: 166). His ambition and imagination far exceeded (and exhausted) the objectives and capabilities of the EIC. Singapore was Raffles's Utopia, where he could create his desired settlement – the centre of commerce and learning in the Indian Archipelago.

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115. Letter to DS, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1819, in Raffles1837, V.2, 25. (italics mine)

116. February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1820, ibid, 87-88. (italics mine)

117. Sumatra.

118. Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>, 1822, ibid: 240. (italics mine)

119. Letter to Thomas Murdoch, Dec 4<sup>th</sup>, 1822, ibid, 251, (italics mine). This is made in reference to the death of his 3 children in Bencoolen. The 4th, Ella was sent home to England. Another infant, barely a few months old, also passed away.

"I would be the protector of the native states,"<sup>120</sup> a desire which Raffles pounded out in a letter to Thomas Murdoch, in 1820, along with a list of ambitious undertakings which he admitted would not be accomplished in his lifetime. But Raffles had recognized that Singapore presented a different challenge – with only approximately 150 inhabitants scattered around the island, Singapore enabled him to create anew, and effectuate his principles of English liberalism and free trade. In Singapore, he had the opportunity to build a whole new metropolis of trade from scratch, and not improvise upon pre-existing structures of rule, and agricultural practices as in Java and Bencoolen, where various constraints enmired him in financial difficulties and charges of incompetence:

I am present engaged in establishing a constitution for Singapore, the principles of which will I hope ensure its prosperity. The utmost possible freedom of trade and equal rights to all, with protection of property and person, are the objects to be attained, and I shall spare no pains to establish such laws and regulations, as may be most conducive to them. In Java I had to remodel and in doing so to remove the rubbish and encumbrances of two centuries of Dutch maladministration. Here *I have an easier task and the task is new*. In Java I had to look principally to the agricultural interests, and the commercial only so far as they were concerned with them; here on the contrary commerce is everything, agriculture only in infancy. The people are different as well as their pursuits.<sup>121</sup>

Raffles had once expressed that he wanted to administer Singapore on his own principles, and if he could not, he was not interested in going. His declaration of Singapore as a free port went against all that the EIC stood for, and was promulgated during a time when the EIC was preserving its monopoly of the China trade. The job of "creating" a city was made more difficult when Raffles, upon his arrival at Singapore on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1822, discovered that his original plans had not been put into effect. The conflict of interest with Farquhar,<sup>122</sup> and the subsequent deterioration of their friendship, as well as ill-health

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120. Raffles 1837, V.2, 166.

121. To Duchess of Somerset, 30th November, 1822, Raffles 1837, V.2.1837, 242-243. (italics mine).

122. This became personal, involving family members – Captain William Flint was Raffles's brother-in-law who was selected to be Master Attendant, over Farquhar's choice and son-in-law, Francis Bernard. There are muddled details here of misdeeds, paranoia and lack of foresight, certainly on Raffles's part. A series of incidents, most likely ambiguous, would have led to the mudslinging and arguments between Raffles and Farquhar. It was most likely that the personalities of these two men were incompatible and the early unregulated conditions in Singapore made any form of appeasement impossible – thus making worse what could have been perhaps, resolved, if there were laws and governing structures in place. It got to a point where Farquhar bitterly complained that his name was not even mentioned in Sophia Raffles's collection of her

presented new obstructions which prevented him from accomplishing much more. Furthermore, the conflict which eventually deteriorated into petty factioning convinced him that he could not depend on anyone else:

My time is at present engaged in remodelling and laying out my new city, and in establishing institutions and laws for its future constitution; a pleasant duty enough in England, where you have books, hard heads, and lawyers to refer to, but here, by no means easy, *where all must depend on my own judgement and foresight.*<sup>123</sup>

Yet one cannot deny that Raffles achieved much in the scant eight months he was present in Singapore. He laid out a provisional constitution which formalised Singapore's status as a free port (even though Singapore was still not formally British), abolished slavery, established a magistrate system, set up a town plan which has persisted today, allotted land for sale for various purposes, including mercantile warehouses, assigned lots for the native *kampung*s (villages), supervised the construction of buildings and reclamation of land, and established a botanical garden and an institution of higher learning. Although many of his measures and laws were later modified, and improved upon by John Crawfurd, his successor, Raffles had already ensured the foundations for the future of his island-colony:

I have not remained at Singapore eight months for nothing; two-thirds of the time...spent in pain and annoyance...I have had everything to new-mould from first to last; to introduce a system of energy, purity and encouragement; to remove nearly all the inhabitants and to resettle them; to line out towns, streets and roads; to level the high and fill up the lowlands; to give property in the soil and rights to the people; to lay down principles, and sketch institutions for the domestic order and comfort of the place, as well as its future character and importance; *to look for a century or two beforehand*, and provide for what Singapore may one day become, by the adoption of all such measures of forecast as reason and experience can suggest.<sup>124</sup>

Ill-luck dogged Raffles after he left Singapore on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1823: the ship, *The Fame* carrying him home along with his possessions caught fire -- and his documents, botanical and zoological collections, antiques as well as artistic works were lost. The loss of his writings contributed to the difficulties of presenting his case in his memorial to the EIC court of directors, and though he tried very hard to obtain copies through the Governor Generals' archives, he was generally unsuccessful. To make matters worse -- he received a pension of £500.00 per annum, half of what he originally expected. Raffles was found dead at the bottom of the stairs in his High Wood residence in the early hours of

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husband's letters and memoirs. It was but not to his liking. See *The Singapore Chronicle*, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1830, NL 3219.

123. Boulger, 333. (italics mine)

124 . Letter dated 12th June, 1823, Raffles, 1837, V.2, 284.

Wednesday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1826, at age 45 -- in unexpected debt to the EIC for the amount of £22,272 for expenses incurred since 1816. These also included expenses credited in the course of not following precise orders, and counted as extraneous, as in the case of postponing the Acheen mission due to his haste of reaching Singapore.<sup>125</sup>

After a service of nearly thirty years, and the exercise of supreme authority as a Governor for nearly twelve years of that period, over the finest and most interesting but perhaps least known countries in creation, I [have]...closed my Indian life with benefit to my country..I [have] not been an unprofitable servant or a dilatory labourer in this fruitful and extensive vineyard..(Sir Stamford Raffles)

It is quite fitting that the phrase "*Si monumentum, Quaeris, Circumspice*" (if you would see his monument, look around) -- the words engraved on a tablet near the tomb of English Architect, Sir Christopher Wren at St. Paul's Cathedral -- are also engraved below the statue of Raffles which presides over the spot where he supposedly first landed. Raffles is himself buried in an unknown grave in Hendon parish church.<sup>126</sup> There is, however, a Raffles memorial at Westminster Abbey, located in the north choir aisle which consists of a life-sized seated statue with an extensive inscription on the pedestal<sup>127</sup> including this line: "He founded an emporium at Singapore -- where in establishing freedom of person as the right of the soil -- and freedom of the trade as the right of the port he secured to the British flag -- the maritime superiority of the Eastern seas."<sup>128</sup> A bust honouring him as the founder of The London Zoological Society (1826) is erected at the London Zoo by the lions' display. A brass tablet was finally erected in 1887 by members of the Raffles family at Hendon.

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125. See *Statement of Services of Sir Stamford Raffles*. London. John Bastin's introduction provides a quick summary of the events following Raffles's return to England. C.E. Wurtzburgh's biography (published posthumously in 1954) of Raffles provides an account of Raffles's explanation for the expense charges that the EIC Directors leveled against him. Lady Sophia Raffles was able to negotiate a settlement of £10,000 with the EIC directors and the matter was settled by March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1827 and a bond of mutual release was executed. See Wurtzburgh [1954], 725-743.

126. The Vicar of Hendon Parish did not allow the putting up of a memorial tablet at the time of burial. Maurice Collis, yet another biographer of Raffles, attributes this to the antagonistic relationship between the Vicar, whose personal income had derived from slave plantations, and Raffles who had opposed slavery outright. Maurice Collis (1966) *Raffles*. London: Faber and Faber, 211-212. Raffles's coffin was accidentally discovered in April 1914 in a vault underneath the church while the church was undergoing renovations. The vault has been sealed up again. See Wurtzburgh [1954], 739 and 743.

127. Or more precisely, located in the north aisle within the iron gates behind the choir screen.

128. Personal observation from a visit to Westminster Abbey.

Contemporary Singapore is Raffles's Singapore, "humming to the tongues and feet of its residents of many nations" and as "enduring as the earth,"<sup>129</sup> where the vision of the entrepot still remains -- the island nation honoured with the world's busiest port and a dazzling economy. Raffles's name commemorates the island -- inscribed on street signs, schools, buildings, a subway station, a museum, and a prominent hotel whose fame lies in the once gathering of literary figures, and a cocktail named the *Singapore Sling*. In fact, practically half the urban landscape of Singapore is a reminder of its colonial inheritance -- a cosmopolitanism forged by the magic of free trade. And it was magical in its display of centripetal forces -- the diasporic lure of migrants, and merchants flocking to the island-settlement once it was declared a settlement and free port. No one describes the plethora of merchants flowing into Singapore better than Abdullah:

In no time the number of traders and white merchants continually increased, and the fame of the settlement of Singapore spread far and wide, confirming that Singapore had become a permanent settlement. Thus, many people from all over moved to Singapore, and some established agencies in Singapore, sending in goods from various places. For these reasons that I have mentioned, Singapore became populous with people from various countries engaging in all occupations and trades, all of them gathering in Singapore.<sup>130</sup>

While the acquisition of Singapore was far from an individual achievement -- it, however, originated with individual initiative and vision.

Harry J. Marks is correct when he writes that "no other man was so persistent, resourceful, and ebulliently insubordinate in his eagerness to create a new establishment against the Dutch as a bastion of British profit and power. [Raffles] was the one indispensable man, necessary but not sufficient..."<sup>131</sup> Marks's argument is that the acquisition of Singapore exhibited a complex web of "purpose, counter-purpose, and chance; of individual decisions made for valid or invalid reasons", and that after the landing at Singapore, Raffles disappeared into the shades, and the impersonal forces in Calcutta and London guided Singapore to its destiny. Yet I do not wholly support Marks's argument for he reduces Raffles's role to that initial landing, and ignores his vision, as well as the early attempts of nation-building and urban planning. Singapore would not have been possible if it were not for the constant insubordination of Sir Stamford Raffles, who stood his ground not only against the Dutch, but his fellow Englishmen and the

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129. Sir Frederick Weld in Boulger, 340.

130. Bin Abdul Kadir, V1, 164. It is interesting that the Dutchman Col. Nahuijs, (Penang, letter dated June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1824) though generous with his praises of Raffles and his political acumen, thought that Singapore's success was temporary and that the Dutch would more than meet the challenge and the free port was hardly a threat. See IOR MSS Eur B. 111/L 103/40 (fifth letter of the series).

131. Marks, 250.

Company.

There was no doubt that Raffles was in Singapore for altogether, less than a mere eight months, but it was a productive period in which he laid out plans for a future commercial centre, strategically situated between India and China, and not the temporary trading post which some envisioned Singapore to be. Furthermore, while commercial expansion, the urgency of new markets and the China trade would have inevitably forced the British to acquire a strategic post in the Archipelago, it was Raffles's tenacious vision which accomplished it, whether it was Banka, Rhio or the Carimons. What Raffles created was not an island-nation, but an *Idea*, constructed out of the geographical position of a landmass framed within political and economic interests, and textured with individual imagination. Modern Singapore did not *become* because of a few negotiated treaties, it *became* when Raffles fixed his gaze upon Singapore, and *invoked* a free port, namely, the "great commercial emporium" of the East – thereby, translating an idea nurtured so long by him into reality. And as imagined as spaces and places are, they do not necessarily presuppose imagined communities. More importantly, were it not for the congregating merchants drawn to the duty-free port, and enterprising environment; the 2 million Spanish dollars value of imports and exports within the first 22 years of the founding; and the growing support of the private traders – the incentives would not have been there for the British to keep Singapore. The players in Calcutta and London merely legitimated the possession of Singapore, they did not envision its possibilities. That credit must ultimately belong to Raffles

## 2. Malay Lessons<sup>1</sup>

But how does one found a settlement?

In the *Hikayat Abdullah* (Chronicles of Abdullah), Munshi Abdullah uses the Malay verbs *membuat*, *membuka*, *membina*, and *menjadi* with reference to the founding of Singapore. Most English translations of the *Hikayat* resort to the general ‘found’ or ‘founding’ without calling attention to the definition of the verbs. The verbs, however, accordingly denote, ‘to make or create’ (*membuat*), ‘to open or to establish’ (*membuka*), ‘to build, to set up, to erect’ (*membina*) and finally, ‘to transform or to become’ (*menjadi*). Abdullah does not use them in the same order throughout the book. While the founding of Singapore might not necessitate any precise linguistic explanation, it is doubtful that even given the context of how the sentence is written or the nature of the narrative, Abdullah was using those verbs to mean the same thing. It is true that the best translation for *membina* ‘to build’ and *membuka*, ‘to open’ is most expediently, ‘founding’ but Abdullah consistently uses *membuat*, ‘to make or create’ in terms of an initial stage of finding a settlement and occupying it. At times, the use of *menjadi* and even *membina*, connote the certainty of *membuat* during the post-founding period. The use of the verb *menjadi* whenever linked with the founding of Singapore, is most interesting for it is framed within magic – a transformation wrought by the wizardry of commerce:

*Maka istimewa pula pada zaman ini, semenjak Selat telah menjadi negeri, bilalang telah menjadi lang, dan pijat-pijat pun telah menjadi kura-kura, dan chacing pun telah menjadi ular naga. Bermula ada pun asal-nya segala ajaib ini terbit-nya dari sebab harta dunia ini; maka jikalau hina dan bodoh sekali pun, asal ada berharta, neschaya ia-lah pandai dan bermulia; maka jikalau pandai dan mulia, tetapi tiada berharta, neschaya terhina juga.<sup>2</sup>*

But especially in our present time since the founding of Singapore, the grasshoppers have become eagles, and bedbugs are tortoises, and

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1. All Malay text and translations are taken from three sources: Bin Abdul Kadir, Munshi, A. (1908). *Hikayat Abdullah*. 2 Vols. Singapore: Methodist Publishing House. [in Malay]; Munshi Abdullah Bin Abdul Kadir (1918) *The Autobiography of Munshi Abdullah*. trans. by Rev. W. G. Shallabear. Vol. 1. Singapore, Methodist Publishing House, and Munshi Abdullah Bin Abdul Kadir (1970) *The Hikayat Abdullah An Annotated Translation* by A. H. Hill Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press. I have also depended on my own translations.

2. Bin Abdul Kadir, 1908, 2.

earthworms are serpents/dragons. Such wonders have come to pass through the influence of the world's wealth. Despite being ignorant and despised, one who possesses wealth will be regarded as clever and highly respected; yet if one is clever and highly respected, yet penniless, he will be held in low regard.

*Selat* which is literally translated as the straits refers here to Singapore. An explanation perhaps could lie in the metonymical perception of the region -- that Singapore is merely part of the cluster of islands at the nexus of three Straits -- the Straits of Johor, Malacca and Sunda, and considered a possession of the Johor Sultanate. But this is a cartographical palimpsest in which by the magical trick of language and geo-political will, *selat* materializes into -- and becomes the entity that we call Singapore. The rest of the landscape; the straits, Malacca, the islets, surrounding islands are all written over -- re-engraved as Singapore -- as all attention and activity are focused on the new settlement and port-city.

What could Abdullah Bin Abdul Kadir or (more popularly known as) Munshi Abdullah have observed during those early years when he wrote about such sorcery -- of grasshoppers into eagles and bedbugs into tortoises? The paragraph is found in the opening pages of the *Hikayat Abdullah* -- one of the most significant accounts of early Singapore. It is not entirely fiction when he writes:

*Ada pun segala perkara yang tersebut ini-lah menjadi hairan aku oleh sebab melihat ke'ubahan dunia ini dengan kenyataan ada-nya, dari-pada tiada di adakan, dari-pada ada tidak di-tidakkan; bahwa hutan menjadi negeri, dan negeri menjadi hutan; maka sakalian ini-lah menunjukkan dunia ini serta dengan neamat-nya it tiada kekal ka-pada sa'orang jua pun, melainkan ia'itu seperti pinjaman juga ada-nya; maka, apabila orang yang empunya it datang meminta, dapat-tiada ia'itu di-pulangkan juga ada-nya.*<sup>3</sup>

All the things which I have mentioned, astonish me as I see plainly how the world changes -- things coming into existence from nothing, and things which exist are being destroyed; a jungle becomes a settled land, and a settled land reverts to jungle. These things show us the transitoriness of the world and its pleasures, like something borrowed which must be returned when the owner demands it.

Abdullah begins his 'memoirs' around October 1840, although he provides October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1840 as the time when his friend, quite likely the Reverend Benjamin Peach Keasberry,<sup>4</sup>

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3. Bin Abdul Kadir, 1908, 163-164.

4. The originator of the proposal may be uncertain as Abdullah does not provide a name for the Orang Putih (literally white man or European) who was his *sahabat* (friend) *yang ku-kaseh akan dia* (dear friend, or literally, a friend whom I am dear to or fond of). John Thomson, whom Abdullah entrusted with the manuscript in 1846 for translation (which Thomson carried out in his retirement years in New Zealand) identified the person as Alfred North, an American missionary who worked with Keaseberry. Benjamin Peach

suggested that Abdullah should record the events of his life. In 1840, Abdullah was already 43 years of age and had lived through some remarkable changes in Malacca, and most particularly Singapore where the peopling of an island and the construction of a port-city took place. All these he had recorded with awe, but also with wit, cynicism and irony. Abdullah was born eight months after the Dutch were ousted from Malacca, and had served under Sir Stamford Raffles,<sup>5</sup> founder of Singapore, who was stationed in Malacca. Abdullah apparently visited Singapore four months after its founding in January 1819, though this is uncertain judging from the simultaneous presence of some individuals in England, Malacca and Singapore such as Captain William Flint, Raffles's brother-in-law, who was the newly-appointed harbour-master but *did not* arrive in Singapore until April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1820.<sup>6</sup> Given that Abdullah is reaching twenty years into the

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Keaseberry (1811–1875), the son of a colonel in the Indian Army, was educated in Mauritius and Madras. He had originally a brief excursion in Singapore as a general storeowner. When he came to Singapore in 1837, he was part of the London Missionary Society (LMS) which he joined in Batavia. Keaseberry eventually went to America and came to Singapore under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The American Missions were relocated to China in 1839 and Keaseberry rejoined the LMS. When most of the LMS members left in 1847, Keaseberry severed his connections with the society and continued his work in Singapore. He opened a small school around the Rochor district (near the river) where he taught printing and also printed missionary tracts and books at the American Board's printing establishment at Battery Road. He was also the Superintendent of the Malay Classes at the Raffles Institution and also conducted his services in Malay. He then went on to open a school for Malays where the Temenggung sent his two sons to study – one of them, the highly respected Sultan Abu Bakar of Johor eventually erected a monument over his grave. Keaseberry dedicated 40 years of service to Singapore. Alfred North (1807-69) was a printer who was attracted to missionary work and came to Singapore in 1836. he took charge of the Mission's printing press, and was himself a Malay scholar. He left Singapore in 1844. Information on Keaseberry, North, The LMS, and other American missionaries -- including Abdullah's observations of Americans, "I noticed that in appearance, speech, colour of skin, manners and clothes, he was in no way different from an Englishman"-- can be found in Hill, 281-298. Also a detailed biography of Keaseberry can be found in C. B. Buckley, (1902/1965). *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819 - 1867*. 2 Vols. Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 320-322 and more information can be found in W. Makepeace, et. al. (eds.) (1921) *One Hundred Years of Singapore*. 2 Vols. London,: John Murray, V.II, 237.

5. Abdullah also bid farewell to Raffles who left in 1823, an emotional experience for Abdullah -- and William Farquhar in 1824 whose departure was a remarkable affair, attended by most natives and merchants.

6. For a detailed discussion including reprints of correspondence between Raffles and respective individuals, see two articles published by C. A. Gibson-Hill "Raffles, Alexander Hare & Johanna van Hare." and "The Date of Munshi Abdullah's first Visit to

past, it is more than forgivable that his memory might have montaged spaces and times. Abdullah lived in Singapore long enough to have taught Malay to and worked closely with numerous administrators (Raffles, Farquhar, Crawford, Thomson), missionaries and merchants, experienced the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty in 1824 whereupon Singapore and the Malay Peninsular came under British protectorate, witnessed land reclamation and roads built, ethnic cantonments laid out, godowns and buildings erected, the establishment of a Botanical Garden, a school -- Raffles Institution (1823), churches, the setting up of the first European Hairdresser and Tailor (around 1833), the use of the photographic daguerreotype<sup>7</sup> – and the influx of immigrants from all over – including those who became prominent merchants like Alexander Laurie Johnston, Syed Omar bin Ally Al Juneid, Alexander Guthrie, and Seah Eu Chin. Abdullah stopped writing around 1846 – at least nothing is recounted afterwards. In February 1854, Munshi Abdullah made a pilgrimage to Mecca and then went to Jeddah where he died in October – supposedly of the plague.

Abdullah Bin Abdul Kadir was born in 1797, of Yemenese Arab-Tamil ancestry in Malacca. He came from a family steeped in learning, and his father, a Linguist fluent in Malay, Tamil and Arabic, also taught William Marsden, the eminent Orientalist and close

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Singapore.” in the *JMBRAS* 28, Pt.1 from pages 184-195. It is more than likely that Abdullah skipped a year in his recollections.

7. On December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1843, George Dutronquoy placed the following advertisement:

Mr. G. Dutronquay respectfully informs the ladies and gentlemen at Singapore, that he is complete master of the newly invented and late imported Daguerreotype. Ladies and Gentlemen who may honour Mr. Dutronquay with a sitting can have their likenesses taken in the astonishing short space of two minutes. The portraits are free from all blemishes and are in every respect perfect likenesses. A lady and gentlemen can be placed together in one picture and both are taken at the same time entirely shaded from the effects of the sun. The price of one portrait is ten dollars, both taken in one picture is fifteen dollars. One day's notice will be required.

George Dutronquay arrived sometime on March 1839 in Singapore as a painter and advertised to paint miniatures, portraits and the like. In May he opened a hotel called the London Hotel on High Street, where the Hotel de l'Europe stood at the corner of High Street and the Esplanade. The Supreme Court stands there now after the Hotel de l'Europe closed down and was demolished. See Buckley, 341 and 400. See Gretchen Lim (1996) *In Granite and Chunam* Singapore: Landmark Books, 70. However Abdullah's first encounter with the Daguerreotype was even earlier than the above as it was a chance encounter – it was an American doctor who was on a warship anchored in the Singapore Harbour. Gaston Dutronquoy was also rather an enterprising man. When George Coleman left Singapore, Number 3, Coleman Street was leased by Dutronquoy and converted into the London Hotel.

friend of Stamford Raffles. As a teacher, Abdullah established close relationships with British and American missionaries, administrators and officers who became his students. Abdullah was also known to his fellow natives as *Abdullah Padre* referring to his association with the missionary community.<sup>8</sup> His work would take him to Singapore, where he recorded the growth of Singapore, and resumed his friendship with Farquhar and Raffles. A. H. Hill, who provides the most comprehensive translation of the *Hikayat Abdullah* complains that despite Abdullah's invaluable contributions as teacher, scribe and translator for many Europeans and merchants, he is overlooked in many autobiographical accounts, and journals including Raffles's memoirs as edited by his second wife, Sophia Raffles. Only John Thomson, in his *Glimpses into Life in Malayan Lands* referenced Abdullah with respect to life in Singapore, Chinese secret societies like the Thian Tai Huey,<sup>9</sup> and included a chapter on the Mohammedan for whom he obviously had great respect, and shared a good deal of debating time over such matters as polygamy and religion. Thomson found Abdullah to be unique among the Malays for his freedom of thought and independent tone, which Thomson attributed to the missionaries whose company Abdullah kept quite frequently. John Thomson is also credited with the only description of Abdullah, "[he] was tall, spare, energetic, of bronze complexion, oval faced, high-nosed, and cross-eyed. He spoke broken English, but understood it pretty well in general conversation."<sup>10</sup>

Abdullah's earlier education would include a temporary stint as a scribe for Raffles at the age of eleven, an experience which produced some interesting observations of Raffles. The two-volumed *Hikayat Abdullah* were written around the early 1840s,<sup>11</sup> and the narrations are gleaned from stories and experiences recounted to him, and his own experiences, including a "mortifying" (to Raffles, at least) situation which, unknown to those concerned, Abdullah had witnessed through a crack in the door at age eleven.<sup>12</sup> Although some of his narration requires correction in light of what was recorded elsewhere during that period, Abdullah does humbly begin his *Hikayat* with apologies for his "ineptitude" and "deficient knowledge". Composed of colourful vignettes of life in Malacca and Singapore under Dutch and British administration, sometimes not in

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8. "He was a teacher of the Malayan language, by profession; and his name must be long associated with the first English missionaries, both as their teacher of the language, and as the translator of their printed scriptures" See John Thomson (1864/1991) *Glimpses into Life in Malayan Lands*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 323. Thomson considered it rare that Abdullah attempted an autobiography, for someone of his racial persuasion.

9. Hill/Abdullah, 1970: 217-204. Hill provides in his notes an explanation of the group. Thomson, 206-210.

10. Thomson, 326.

11. Hill/Abdullah, 26.

12. Ibid, 11.

chronological order, Abdullah's language ranges from lively wit to criticisms, sometimes even anger and frustration. There are many moments too when Abdullah's opinions contradict the general portraits of individuals, such as Governor Butterworth whom the European community clearly disliked. Lost in the English translations are the cultural texture and idiomatic contexts, in which these stories, and the accompanying *nasihat* (moral reflection and advice) with which he ends his narrations, are related. He also employs a variety of tropes -- metaphors, similes, as well as Malay proverbs and apothegms pop up frequently, for example, "*untong sabut timbul, untong batu tenggelam ada-nya*" or "if you have the luck of a coconut fibre, you float, if you have the luck of a stone, you sink,"<sup>13</sup> along with his *pantuns* (poetry) which he wrote for Raffles and his first wife, Olivia. Yet, Abdullah was far from the self-effacing native who stumbled behind his Colonial masters. As much as he has been criticized for being an unquestioning Anglophile, and for his exasperation with the Natives and Chinese around him -- at whom he directed his accusation of "*seperti katak di-bawah tempurung*" (like a frog under the coconut shell) mentality, he was actually quite critical of the Europeans he encountered throughout his life.

Abdullah's view of the Europeans who administered the settlements was not often praiseworthy, despite his warm accounts of William Farquhar, Stamford Raffles, the Reverend Keaseberry, and John Thomson. More often, Abdullah's description reduced the European colonizers, especially those who exercised a draconian hand, and overweening superiority to comical characters and caricatures. For example, the Dutch secretary named Bangoor was called a "horse leech" and "*Tuan Penyapu*" (Mr. Sweep/Broom) because the Malaccans would often start sweeping their homes once Bangoor passed by for fear of being fined. Of the English in Malacca, he wrote that the locals perceived them as tigers who were often looting and causing fights, as well as drunks "who rode on a green horse" (*naik atas kuda hijau*, meaning drunk).<sup>14</sup> Abdullah reserved his most scathing criticisms for so-called English Scholars of the Malay world who insisted on their superiority in the Malay language and culture, while ignoring the nuances of idiomatic expressions, local grammar and cultural peculiarities. One such person was C. H. Thompson (not to be confused with John Thomson) whom Abdullah described as obstinate as captured in "*hujan berbalek ka-langit*" (rain returning to the sky). Abdullah accused him of not wanting to learn the Malay language, but to destroy it. Abdullah went so far as to walk out on Thompson, insisting that he would not be one who received payment for teaching an incorrect language.<sup>15</sup> Abdullah had a more ambivalent view of John Crawford whom he found to be conscientious and efficient but impatient and temperamental, incapable of dealing with a measure of understanding, the natives around him. It is the articulation of personalities in his social life and the art of human

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13. Bin Abdul Kadir, 1908: 164.

14. Ibid, 56.

15. Ibid, 103-105. Hill tells us that despite the quarrels between Abdullah and Thompson, they became firm friends, 110.

observance which Abdullah excels at, but more so, he provides a local window into a rapidly changing world.

*Hata sa-telah tentu-lah sudah gaji dan perjanjian negeri itu, dalam sedikit hari maka Tuan Raffles pun berlayar-lah ke Benggala, di-tinggalnya Tuan Farquhar menjadi raja, dan Tuan Flint menjadi shahbandar, dan Tuan Bernard, ia'itu menantu Tuan Farquhar, menjadi magistrate dalam negeri Singapura. Kalakian maka negeri Singapura pun pada masa itu umpama matahari yang baharu terbit, makin tinggi makin-lah besar chahaya-nya, maka dagang pun terlalu-lah banyak masuk tumpah ruah, maka segala saudagar pun dari-pada tiap-tiap negeri datang-lah berniaga, maka sedikit ia hendak berniaga, banyak ia hendak melihat negeri bahary; maka dagangan pun seperti ayer pasang-lah datang-nya dari-pada tiap-tiap negeri, maka seperti dagangan Eropah itu jangan di-kata lagi, barang yang tiada pernah di lihat oleh nenek-moyang kita pun ada-lah seperti sayur ada-nya bertimbun-timbun pada tiap-tiap hari tiada berhenti empat lima tempat leong jenis-jenis barang-barang, serta murah nya*

A few days after the allowances and the treaty agreements concerning the settlement had been concluded, Mr. Raffles sailed for Benggal, leaving Mr. Farquhar in charge as Resident, Mr. Flint as harbour-master, and Mr. Bernard who assists Mr. Farquhar as the *magistrate* of Singapore. At that time, Singapore was like the rising sun, its radiance increasing as it rose. A great many Merchants poured in -- merchants from various countries coming to trade, but most came to see the new settlement rather than to trade. A brimming tide of goods flowed in from every country, especially European goods -- things which our ancestors had never seen before piled up like vegetables, and everyday without cessation, they were auction off in four or five different places very cheaply.

The titles of 'Magistrate' and 'Resident' are untranslated -- there are no Malay equivalents to supplant that administrative concept and Abdullah does not attempt to find nor explain them. There are in fact forty-three different English words used in the *Hikayat*. If, recalling our Wittgenstein here, the horizons of language form the horizons of our social worlds, the ease in which Abdullah inserts an English word or two, and sometimes, Chinese -- resonates the semiotic cacophony of early Singapore enmeshed in dizzying times.

*Sa-bermula semenjak Singapura sudah menjadi negeri, chita Eropah di-buat-nya basahan, dan sakhlal di-buat-nya seluar, dan kain Bugis berkilat dan sapu-tangan batek terchanchang di-kepala, dan yang ada berpayong setera di-tangan, dan berchopal di-kaki dan bertutur chara Inggeris, dan Bengali, dan Keling seperti ayer, maka kalau Inggeris hendak bertutur dengan dia chara Melayu di-jawab-nya chara Inggeris.*

But since Singapore became a settlement, European prints have been used as bathing cloths, broadcloths as trousers, and glossy Bugis cloth and batik hankerchiefs as hats, and some carry umbrellas and wear shoes, and talk fluently in English and Bengali and Tamil; and if the English want to

... speak to them in Malay, they answer in English.<sup>16</sup>

As much as Abdullah chides his own people and other non-Europeans for their limited views and superstitions,<sup>17</sup> he also apprehends their reconfigured subjective perception of self and relation to the world. There are the borrowings and mixings of materials and their transformation, as observed by Abdullah when he writes of European prints used as bathing cloths, and Bugis hats.<sup>18</sup> Abdullah's perception, metaphorically articulated, tinged with irony and wonder though reflecting a more fluid and transitional attitude, indicative of the swirling, if not confusing changes around him. Such progress, for Abdullah, is characterized by transitions and contingencies, and even a little luck. To Abdullah, there is a surreal feel to how money has mediated and transformed human social existence so quickly -- a rupture in the natural transition of life -- and yet inevitable. But his view does not presuppose a timeless, unchanging existence, and he is more than acutely aware of the disjunctures (and conjunctures) wrought by the impact of commercial activity.

But it is a different world already -- and one which allows for the melding of identities and the dissolution of ethnic lines where even the native peoples insist on speaking English despite being spoken to in Malay. One only has to look at Abdullah himself who often played the mediator between the British, and the natives—as well as other ethnic groups, who included the Chinese, the Klings, the Armenians, and Jews. Yet there is little notion of loss in Abdullah's narrative -- or the lamenting of authentic worlds fading into some distant past but rather a more Baudelairean modernity feel to the passage of time -- of something fleeting, transitory and fugitive. Abdullah's consciousness of time is still different, for his conceptualization is more cyclical, unlike Walter Benjamin's angel of history who turns its back on the settling din and dust. Even the use of the simile for

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16. Bin Abdul Kadir (1908), 163.

17. A good example concerns the building of the original St. Andrews church (construction started 1834, and was consecrated 1838, see the essay entitled "So Small a Community") which drew consternation from Malays, Tamils and Chinese not only in Singapore but as far as Malacca. According to the local legend in the area, the building of such sacred places demanded sacrificial heads to appease the evil spirits. A rumour then started that the English were looking for heads, to the point that Abdullah's wife in Malacca wrote to him, imploring him to stay in after dark. It was Abdullah who had to explain and allay fears among the local communities (Abdullah/Hill, 1969, 281-286). According to J.F.A McNair, the same incident surfaced in 1856 with the building of the new St. Andrews Church after the old one became too dangerous to worship in due to a lack of lightning conductors. The rumour was apparently put out by the lowest classes of the Chinese who were uncomfortable with the Indians, and in order to create trouble for the Indian convicts.

18. The batik sarong or other forms of cloth, is used, even today, as a bathing cloth, meaning that one wraps a sarong around the body when taking a bath (both men and women). The hat in translation deserves an illustration. However, it is not our conventional notion of a hat, but a head-wrapping.

Singapore, the rising sun -- the *oriens* -- must presuppose a setting sun, the *occidens*. The landscape renews itself – change happens.

Why should natives be untouched by it?

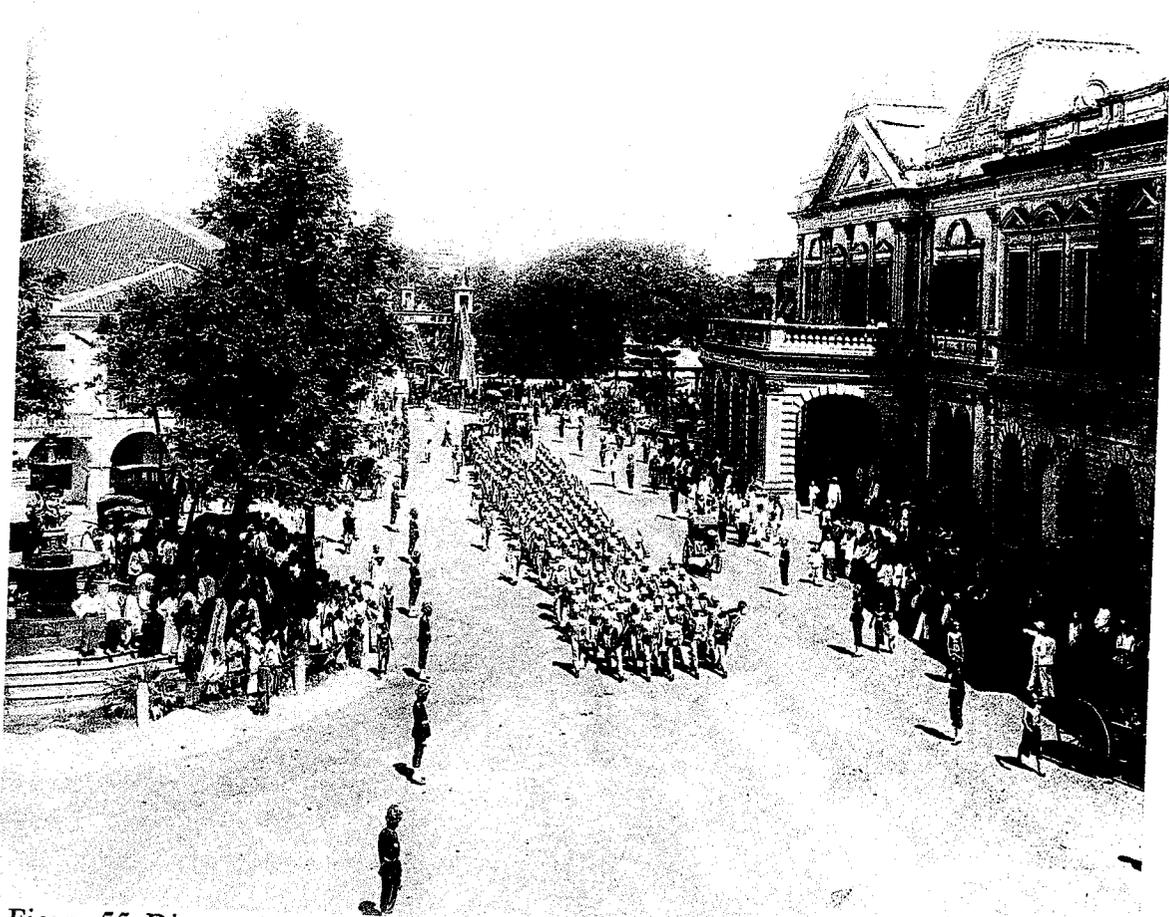


Figure 55. Diamond Jubilee Parade, June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1897, published in Reena Singh (1995) *A Journey Through Singapore* Singapore: Landmark Books, 75.

## MUSINGS

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1887, to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Day, a crowd, consisting of Singapore's colonial elite, assembled at The Padang. To great pomp and ceremony, with the Colonial army decked in full regalia and in the attendance of Sultan Abu Bakar of Johor whose grandfather<sup>1</sup> had signed the original treaty ceding Singapore to the British -- Sir Frederick A. Weld, Governor of the Straits Settlements (1880-1887), unveiled the statue of Sir Thomas Stamford Bingley Raffles, the founder of modern Singapore. "In Raffles," the Governor declared in his panegyric speech, "England had one of her greatest sons."<sup>2</sup>

Cast in bronze by Thomas Woolner RA, and standing aloft a grey granite pedestal, an arrogant stance of folded arms and leg in stride, in the centre of the concrete path which crosses The Padang, between St. Andrew's Road and Connaught Drive, with the Gothic spire of St. Andrews Cathedral to its back, and facing the sea, Raffles's statue was said to have provoked the following initial reaction from the Malays: "*Hai yah! Dia orang hitam macam kita*" (Hai yah! He's a black/dark man just like us). To the Malays who were present, the statue became known as *orang besi* (iron man). Other than the bronze shield with Raffles's arms and motto of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George -- *Auspicium Melioris Aevi* -- there was no other inscription on the pedestal. On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1887, this was rectified by a contest in which a Chinese alumnus of the Raffles Institution, and book keeper for Guthrie & Company, Mr. Lim Koon Tye, won the Skinner Jubilee Prize of \$25 for the best inscription. The inscription would not find a tablet space until 1919 when the statue was moved to its present location.

Perhaps it was the sense of isolation -- Raffles presiding over the wide, expansive Padang, and facing even a wider sea -- rather than the bustling commercial emporium he had founded that finally prompted the change of site. On February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1919, the Centenary celebrations of Singapore's founding — by resituating King Chulalongkorn of Siam's Elephant Statue<sup>3</sup> gift to Parliament House — the *orang besi* would find a new

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1. The Treaty of Friendship and Alliance (1824) was signed between the East India Company, Sultan Hussain, and Sultan Abu Bakar's grandfather, the Temenggong Abdul Rahman. See C.M. Tumbull, *A History of Singapore 1819—1975*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 29.

2. Demetrius C. Boulger, *The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles*. London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1897, p. 337.

3. Recall that the statue was a gift from the Siamese king to commemorate his visit in March 1871, and was erected on June 25, 1872 in front of the Town Hall (which later became the Victoria Memorial Hall). It was untouched by the Japanese during the World War II because Siam was an ally, part of the "Co-Prosperity Sphere". See chapter entitled 'Admiral Keppel's Harbour', pages 00-00. In S. Ramachandra, *Singapore Landmarks*

## Raffles Statue at the Padang

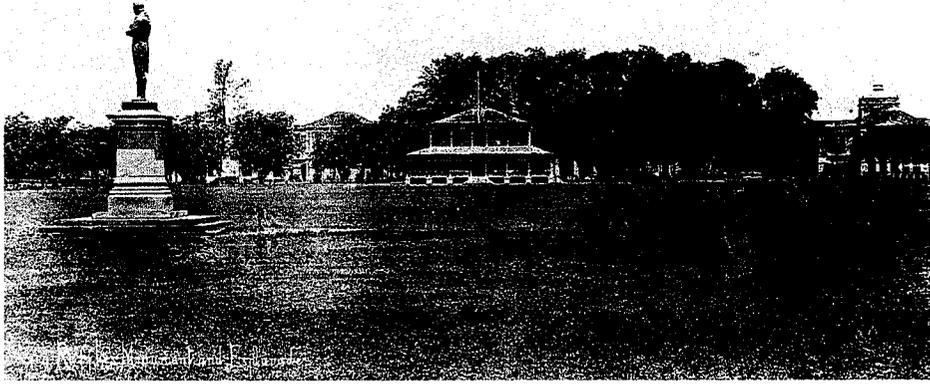


Figure 56. Raffles Statue from W. Makepeace, et. al. (1921) *One Hundred Years of Singapore* London: John Murray, 238.



Figure 57. (National Archives of Singapore)

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home outside the Victoria Memorial Hall<sup>4</sup> (in Empress Place).<sup>5</sup> An elaborate ceremony heralding the second unveiling of the statue was held with more encomiums to Raffles delivered by representatives from the various Chambers of Commerce and the present Governor of the Straits Settlements, Sir Arthur Young (1911—1919). In near Grecian shrine-like fashion, the statue was now encircled by a semi-circular Italian colonnade, raised parterre in the Italian Renaissance style, seats, and two rows of decorative flower-vases flanking a fountain pool.<sup>6</sup> A time capsule ‘bottle’ containing newspapers and coins was buried a little north of the statue. Mr Lim Koon Tye’s inscription would also finally be emblazoned across the plinth:

1819 — 1919

This tablet to the memory of Sir Stamford Raffles, to whose foresight and genius Singapore owes its existence and prosperity, was unveiled on February 6, 1919, the 100th Anniversary of the foundations of the Settlement.

But the statue was not left to reside peacefully there either.

To the Japanese who marched victoriously into Singapore on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1942, the statue was a symbol of ignominious British defeat. With a sense of aesthetic foresight, the Japanese destroyed the colonnade and flower-vases; the statue, remarkably, survived with minor damages, and was summarily removed, and stored in the Raffles Museum. This was fitting for in a way, had the Raffles statue remained, it would be the witness of the proud colony’s surrender, and the decapitated heads which garlanded nearby Anderson Bridge.<sup>7</sup> While in the museum, the statue was placed in the rotunda with a notice beneath

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*Past and Present*. Singapore: Eastern University Press, 1961, 4 & 20.

4. As stated in pages 50-55, this was originally built as the Town Hall in 1862, an appendix that became the Memorial Hall was added in 1902. The building was eventually known as The Victoria Memorial Hall, and finally became the Victoria Theatre and Memorial Hall in 1954. It is most distinguished for its clock tower which has survived multiple chronological changes. The clock has rung out British Colonial time, Tokyo time, Malaya time and Singapore time. See Edwin Lee, *Historic Buildings of Singapore*. Singapore: Preservation of Monuments Board, 1990, 43. and Marjorie Doggett, *Characters of Light*. Singapore: Times Books International, 1985, 10-11.

5. Named Empress Place in 1907 by the Municipal Council to commemorate Queen Victoria. It was once Dalhousie Place.

6. For a more elaborate account of the centenary celebrations, see Walter Makepeace (ed) et. al., *One Hundred Years of Singapore Two Volumes* London: John Murray, 1921, V. II, 570-585.

7. Named after John Anderson, Governor of the Straits Settlements, 1904-1911. A list of Governors is found in D. J. M. Tate, *Straits Affairs: The Malay World and Singapore - Being Glimpses of the Straits Settlements and the Malay Peninsula in the Nineteenth*

it explaining in Japanese, Malay and English, that it represented the founder of *Syonan-to*.<sup>8</sup> Anticipating a magnificent victory, the Japanese debated the fate of the statue. It was to be either melted down for its copper content or placed in a planned Tokyo museum of Imperial Conquests. But the Raffles Museum's aristocratic Japanese curator, the Marquis Tokugawa, conscious of its historical significance, hid the statue and reported it destroyed.<sup>9</sup> Needless to say, at war's end, Raffles emerged unscathed and took his rightful place outside Victoria Memorial Hall, minus the colonnade and the flower vases on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1946. Though the colonnade and flower vases were never replaced, the fountains gushed again during Elizabeth II's coronation in June 1953. In 1959, at the peak of anti-colonial sentiment, the statue once again escaped near destruction, this time by the People's Action Party (PAP), Singapore's ruling party. Years later, the former Foreign Minister, S. Rajaratnam, would reflect with some remorse that if the party had been successful in its iconoclastic objectives, it would have sanctioned a dishonest society which denied its own past.

When the death of Stamford Raffles on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1826 was conveyed to the Singaporean community, it was announced in *The Singapore Chronicle* that a monument to Raffles on Government Hill was proposed. A letter to the editor on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1827 signed Anon suggested an obelisk -- but placed on the surrounding islands since such a structure on Government Hill would interfere with the landscape. The writer goes on to say:

This whatever form [the monument] may assume, ought to be of imposing magnitude, of correct symmetry and proportions and more calculated to make an impression and whole than by the attractions of its detail, however chaste and ornamental they may be.<sup>10</sup>

In 1924 and 1925, at the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley, a replica of the bronze statue of Raffles greeted the curious visitor at the entrance of the Malayan pavilion, which stood adjacent to the New Zealand Pavilion -- foregrounded by a cool, temperate man-made lake. The Malayan pavilion, with its bud-shape doorway, stood conspicuously in red, yellow, black and white with two lofty towers and a dome, illuminated by Chinese lanterns made in Singapore. In 1972, yet another statue, also an exact replica constructed out of *white* polymarble, made from plaster casts of the 1887 figure was erected on a site

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*Century as seen though the Illustrated London News and Other Contemporary Sources.* Hong Kong: John Nicholson Ltd., 1989.

8. Singapore was renamed *Syonan-to* during the occupation. The museum became known as *Syonan Hakabutsu Kan*. Gretchen Liu, *100 Years of The National Museum, 1887-1987*. Singapore: National Museum, 1987, 56.

9. Liu, 54—58. See Norman Edwards and Peter Keys (1988) *Singapore: A Guide to Buildings, Streets, Places*. Singapore: Times Books, 377. Also see David Brazil's hilarious, *Street Smart Singapore*. Singapore: Times Books International, 1991, 44.

10. *The Singapore Chronicle*, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1827. Microfilm, NL 3219.

in Boat Quay, where Raffles supposedly first stepped on shore on January 28<sup>th</sup> 1819.<sup>11</sup> Some protested the historical oversight of the location -- for Raffles had really disembarked on Rochor River, slightly more than a mile east of the celebrated landing spot.

Today, the Raffles statue outside Victoria Theatre and Memorial Hall continues to gaze southward – even elsewhere, or perhaps indifferently over his island legacy -- his statuesque musings, if any, interrupted all too frequently by busloads of tourists. Mostly Japanese, they throng the statue with their cameras and camcorders, attempting to capture a whimsical moment during their travels abroad.

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11. Even the dates are disputable. This is from Hill, 1970, 140. Some historians claimed it was the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1819. It is quite likely the 28<sup>th</sup>, given Raffles's nature and his eagerness to survey the island.



Figure 58. Empress Place, Raffles Statue, 1970s (personal postcard collection)

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Note. I have used the abbreviation *JSBRAS* for the Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Society and *JMBRAS* for Journal of the Malayan/Malaysian Branch of the Royal Society. Portions of this thesis have been published in my article cited here in the section **Other Sources**.

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## Appendix I

### A Note on the Uses of Currency<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the thesis I have switched between the Spanish Dollar and the Sterling Pound. There are some places where I have used the generic dollar and when possible, I have provided exchange figures for the pound and the dollar. The exchange rates are only estimates and provide no more than a general idea of the conversion during these times.

The Spanish Dollar (SD) was the standard of value adopted in the region. The financial negotiations that Stamford Raffles and later Resident Councillor, John Crawfurd carried out with the Sultan and Temenggung over Singapore were mediated by the SD. Despite the existence of a silver coinage consisting of rupees, the SD was popular among merchants in the Straits Settlements, especially Penang. Gold was hardly ever seen. In 1835, the East India Company (EIC) revised its currency legislation and enforced the EIC rupee as the standard coin and the legal tender. The move was read by Singaporean merchants as a threat. A Chamber of Commerce meeting was held on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1837 and it was decided that the introduction of Company rupees to replace the popular Spanish dollars and Dutch guilders would injure the commerce of the Settlements – Penang, Malacca and Singapore, as well as the native states.<sup>2</sup> As a concession, a copper currency was adopted in 1847 and struck at the Calcutta Mint, and was legal tender at a fraction of the dollar. In 1855, this too was withdrawn in order to force the use of the EIC rupee. Despite the presence of the rupee and the copper currency, the Spanish dollar continued to be used especially among the merchant community, “the Law is powerless against public convenience.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1867, the year of the transfer of the Straits Settlements to the Colonial Office,<sup>4</sup> an ordinance was passed by the local Government repealing all laws which made the Indian coins legal tender and that from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1867, the following currencies were accepted in its place: the Hong Kong dollar, the silver dollar of Spain, Mexico, Bolivia and Peru, and any other silver dollar to be specified. In 1874, the American trade dollar and the Japanese yen were admitted to unlimited legal tender. Sometime in 1872, the question of a British trade dollar was raised. In 1874, the Singapore Chamber of Commerce and the

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1. Information here is largely drawn from the discussion on currency by C. W. Darbishire “The Commerce of Singapore” in W. Makepeace et. al *One Hundred Years of Singapore* 2 Vols. London: John Murray, 44-54.

2. C. B. Buckley (1902/1965) *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* Singapore: Fraser and Neave, 318.

3. Darbishire, 46.

4. Buckley, 756. This is the petition by European merchants complaining of the currency impositions and other grievances, with regard to the transfer of the settlements.

Hongkong Chamber of Commerce advocated the creation and introduction of a British trade dollar in China and the Straits Settlements but the home government was reluctant due to the cheapness of the Mexican dollar. Finally in 1886, the Singapore Chamber of Commerce called for the demonetization of the Mexican dollar, other dollars and the yen and requested that a British trade dollar (at 416 grains and 900 fineness<sup>5</sup>) be accepted as the only legal tender in the Colony. The Legislative council approved this, but nothing was done. In 1890, the Mexican dollar became the standard and the American dollar, the Japanese yen, the Hong Kong dollar and the half-dollar were made unlimited legal tender. The Straits Settlements half-dollar and silver coins at 800 fineness were made legal tender for the amount of two dollars, and the Colonial copper, one dollar.

In 1891, non-legal tender monies were prohibited for circulation. The American trade dollar and the Japanese yen were demonetized and the yen was only accepted for transshipment purposes. In 1893, the value of the dollar was 2s. 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. There was also fear of the falling price of silver. A local committee of Government officials, members of the Chamber of Commerce, and representatives of the Chinese community met to discuss the introduction of a gold standard. The committee was divided – with half of the members surprisingly advocating the circulation of the Indian rupee. The belief that it was better to circulate the rupee in order eventually to fix a gold standard, and the fear of bringing the dollar to the gold standard. Most of all there was the fear of fixity and the effects to the colony's trade. The matter was never resolved.

In 1894, a British dollar was introduced for circulation in the Eastern colonies. The Bombay mint struck a coinage of a British dollar weighing 461 grains and 900 fineness. However, the issue of the one dollar came under fire and went through another controversial round of discussions. Such was the “tenacity of [the] *laissez-faire* policy that even with regard to currency – a matter which, it is generally conceded, should be subject to Government control and regulation – the bulk of opinion during the first eighty years of the Settlement's existence was antagonistic to any Government interference.”<sup>6</sup>

As for the Currency Note Bill, the issue of notes began on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1899 after a few years of wrangling over its feasibility. One dollar notes were issued in 1906. In 1896, the dollar had an average value of 2s. 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. and the Chamber of Commerce, uneasy with the vacillating rates, inquired into the gold standard and the fixing of the value at 2s. By 1902, the exchange of the dollar had dropped to 1s. 6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>d. In 1903, The Barbour Commission<sup>7</sup> recommended that: a) the introduction of the Straits dollar be at the same

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5. Refers to the gold content in 1,000 parts of a bar or alloy. A normal ‘good delivery bar’ is 995 parts pure gold and five parts other metals or impurities. The gold market accepts bars only up to a purity of 999.9 (four nines) but in electronics a bonding wire of 999.99 (five nines) is used. The fineness is usually stamped along with the refiner's or assayer's mark. Fineness is also expressed in carats, especially in the jewellery trade.

6. Darbshire, 49.

weight and fineness as the British dollar (b) “the demonetization of the Mexican and British dollars as soon as the supply of the new dollars were sufficient.” (c) “that the coinage of the new dollar should cease until its exchange value had reached whatever value in relation to the sovereign might be decided on by the Government.”

The recommendations were passed and in November 1904, the recoinage of old dollars was completed and thirty-five million new Straits dollars were received, followed by the demonetization of British, Hong Kong and Mexican dollars. On January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1906, the coin was fixed at the gold value of 2s. 4d.. Also in Singapore there was an issue of notes for gold at \$60 for £7. In 1906, silver’s value rose to a new height and once again the value of the dollar was debated, either to reduce the silver content or raise its nominal value. Ultimately, the decision was to reduce its size, and the old fineness of 900 was retained at 312 grains. To prevent the drain on silver reserves, the British sovereign and 50 cent pieces were made unlimited legal tender.

The value of silver continued to create a stir, and by 1917, when silver had risen to a new height the dollar was reduced to the fineness of 600. The government was also issuing twenty-five and ten cent notes. By the 1920s, the dollar note eventually ousted the metal coin and the demand for the silver dollar became non-existent.

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7. Ibid, 51.

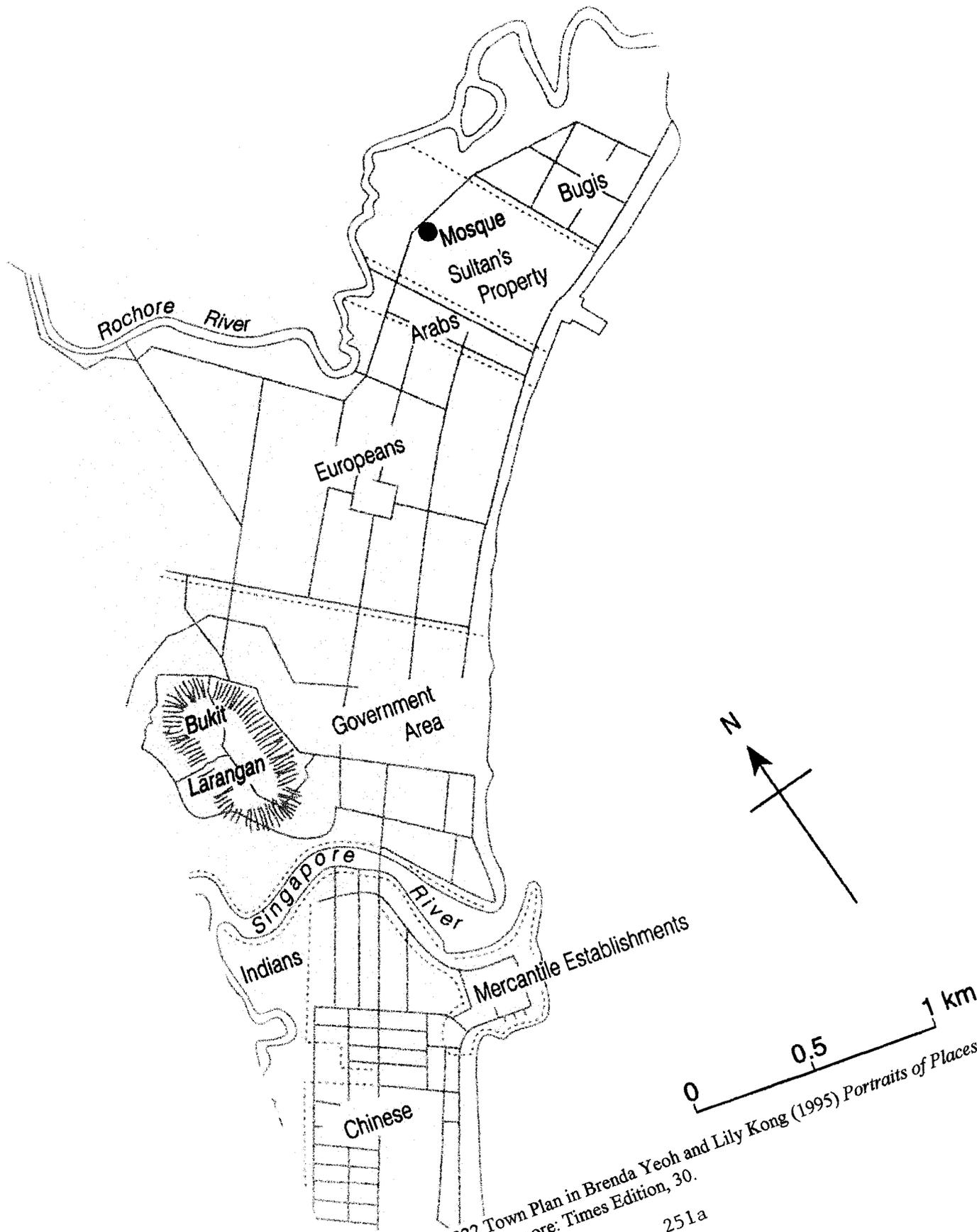


Figure 59. Raffles's 1822 Town Plan in Brenda Yeoh and Lily Kong (1995) *Portraits of Places: History, Community and Identity Singapore*. Times Edition, 30.

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Appendix II - Town Plans 1819 and 1822/23<sup>1</sup>

Town Plan, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1819. Instructions to Major Farquhar, first Resident Councillor of Singapore.

1. Previous to my departure, I think it necessary to call your particular attention to the 11th para, of my letter of the 6th February, and to the importance of immediately improving the conveniences of the port for shipping, an object to which in the present advised state of the Settlement all others ought to give way.

2. Points of primary importance to be attended to, should be the construction of convenient watering places, and affording to ships the means for watering, ballasting, as well as loading, with the least possible delay. The want of these conveniences has already been felt in several instances which have occurred during my stay here, and I feel satisfied that you will concur in the necessity of giving your early attention to this subject, as well as to the removal of the present temporary buildings between the stores and the river, and the erection of a convenient shed or bankshall at which merchants may load their goods. The removal of the bazaar from its present site is indispensable.

3. With regard to Police and the Administration of Justice, it does not appear to me necessary in the present state of the Settlement that any precise regulations should yet be laid down. As Resident, you are necessarily vested with the authority of chief magistrate and will of course exercise that authority, as is usual in places subject to British control, but where British laws may not have yet been introduced. As also the larger portion of the population may in a certain degree be considered as camp followers and consequently subject to your military authority as commandant, it will be left to your discretion to act in either of these capacities according to circumstances, by which, with the assistance of the native authorities, you will be fully competent to provide for an efficient police and the settlement of such matters as do not require a more regular judicial proceeding. The Chinese, Bugguese and other foreign settlers are to be placed under the immediate superintendence of chiefs of their own tribes to be appointed by you, and those chiefs will be responsible to you for the police within their respective jurisdictions.

4. In higher cases of a criminal nature for which the military regulations or usage may not provide, the law of the country as it exists must necessarily be considered in force. The mode in which this law is to be carried into effect, will hereafter be defined as experience may direct, and in the meantime the present mode may be observed as far as in your judgment may appear advisable for the attainment of substantial justice. In the conduct of these proceedings you will of course exercise a personal superintendence and your sanction and confirmation is to be considered necessary to all decisions. It is to be hoped that cases of this nature will be of rare occurrence, and it is considered of importance that

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<sup>1</sup> Plans are extracted from C.B. Buckley (1902/1965) *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819-1967*. 2 Vols. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 56-58 and 79-87.

disputes between natives should as far as possible be left to be settled among themselves, according to their respective usages and customs.

5. These duties as above directed must in all cases be exercised by yourself or your assistant, as your representative, and cannot be delegated to any separate authority.

6. The whole space included within the Old Lines and the Singapore river \*[that was about between where the Cathedral compound and Elgin Bridge are now] is to be considered as Cantonments and of course no ground within this space can be permanently appropriated to individuals. Whenever you may have planned the lines, parades, &c., for the troops and set apart sufficient accommodation for magazine, &c., it will be necessary to allot sufficient space in a convenient and proper situation for officers' bungalows. The extent of each to be regulated by you according to circumstances, and the ground to be occupied by the officers as is usual in other Cantonments. The residency of the Tumonggong [this was on the river bank somewhere between where the Court House and Hill Street are now] is of course to be considered the only exception. The whole of the hill extending to the fort within the two rivers and the fresh water cut is to be reserved for the exclusive accommodation of the Chief Authority and is not to be otherwise appropriated except for defences.

7. Beyond these limits, the opposite point of the river, including the whole of the lately cleared high ground, and a space of 200 yards from the old lines, should also be reserved entirely for public purposes and no private building whatever for the present allowed within the same. In the native towns, as they have been and will be marked out, proper measures should be taken for securing to each individual the indisputable possession of the spot he may be permitted to occupy, which should be regularly registered in your office, certificates of which may be granted.

8. The European town should be marked without loss of time; this should extend along the beach from the distance of 200 yards from the lines as far eastward as practicable, including as much of the ground already cleared by the Bugguese as can possibly be required in that direction, re-imbursing the parties the expense they have been at in clearing and appropriating to them other ground in lieu. For the present the space lying between the new road and the beach is to be reserved by government, but on the opposite side of the road the ground may be immediately marked out into twelve separate allotments of equal front, to be appropriated to the first respectable European applicants. To these persons a certificate of registry and permission to clear and occupy may be granted, according to the following form:-

"No.-This is to certify that A. B. has permission to clear a spot of ground situated \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ following dimensions \_\_\_\_\_ and to occupy the same according to such general regulations as are now or may hereafter be established for the Factory of Singapore."

9. Whenever these allotments may be appropriated, others of convenient dimensions may in like manner be marked out in line and streets or roads formed according to regular plan.

10. It would be advisable that a circular carriage road should be cut in each direction from the cantonments during the present dry season.

11. A bridge across the river so as to connect the cantonments with the intended Chinese and Malay towns on the opposite side of the river, should be constructed without delay and as soon as other more immediate works are complete a good bungalow for the residence of the chief authority may be constructed on the hill.

T. S. RAFFLES. *Singapore, 25th June,*

1819

Town Plan 1822/1823. Various documents

LAND ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE.

To James Lumsdaine, Esq. Nathaniel Wallich, Esq. and Captain Francis Salmond.

Gentlemen,-It having been determined on the first establishment of this Settlement that the whole space included within the old lines and the Singapore river should be reserved exclusively for public purposes, and His Excellency the Governor General in Council having directed that the land subsequently occupied by individual settlers on the north bank of the Singapore river should be resumed, it has become necessary to fix upon another site on which the European merchants may construct adequate warehouses for the accommodation of the different descriptions of goods collected by them, and no spot has appeared better calculated for this purpose than the opposite bank of the Singapore river now in part occupied by Chinese.

Having consulted with Mr Coleman, by profession an architect, and with others and having myself partially examined the ground, I am not aware of any objection to the plan of building the warehouses on this line, except such as may arise from the additional expense which will be necessary in raising the ground and from some moderate compensation which it may be just to make to the Chinese on account of this removal. Hitherto the European merchants would seem to have laboured under an erroneous impression that they would eventually be allowed to have their warehouses on the side reserved by Government, which on many accounts was naturally preferred by them, but this delusion being now at an end, it is to be expected that they will gladly enter into the plan now under consideration and that the activity and energy which is now so conspicuous will easily overcome, all minor and comparative disadvantages.

No title whatever can be granted to those individuals who have built store houses on the ground reserved for the Company and they will not have the power to transfer them as property, neither will any new buildings whatever be allowed to be erected thereon by individuals, and with the view of placing the mercantile community with regard to advantage for building, on the most equal footing possible, it is proposed to levy by way of ground rent or otherwise such a tax on the ground temporarily occupied by the existing buildings as shall be equivalent to the greater expense which may be incurred in laying the foundations on the opposite side of the river.

It is proposed that an embankment, which may at the same time serve to confine the river and drain the adjacent ground and afford the convenience of a long line of wharf in front of the warehouses, should in the first instance be constructed along the south side of the river, from the road opposite Ferry point to that which has been marked out for the intended bridge, so as to form an extensive crescent of about six or seven hundred yards, in the rear of which the range of the warehouses may be built on one uniform and approved plan.

In prosecution of the plan above stated, it is further proposed that with the view of preserving uniformity and ensuring the goodness of the materials and workmanship, this embankment or line of wharf should be constructed under the immediate superintendence of Government, the expense to be repaid by the individual, as the lots may be appropriated. Allowing sixty feet for the front of a warehouse and a space of 12 feet between each, it is estimated that the projected site is calculated to afford room for between 20 and 30 separate and commodious buildings. The depth proposed to be allotted to the range of buildings is 100 feet from the wharf for the warehouses and 50 feet in the rear for a yard, at the back of which will run a High Street, so as to admit of a back front to the buildings on the land side.

Previously, however, to the adoption of a plan involving such important interests, I am desirous of obtaining the best and most competent advice which circumstances admit, and with this view, I have appointed you to be a committee for the purpose of taking into your most deliberate consideration the plan now proposed, in all its bearings, and reporting in how far you deem the same advisable and advantageous and as preferable to any others which offer.

In selecting you for this important duty, I have been influenced no less by a full confidence in your peculiar qualifications and ability to form a correct judgment on the subject, than by the circumstance of your being wholly unconnected with any of the local parties, or conflicting interests which have heretofore so unfortunately prevailed at this Settlement.

I am, &c.,  
(Signed) T. S. RAFFLES.

Singapore, 17<sup>th</sup>, October, 1822.

#### TOWN COMMITTEE.

Proclamation by the Hon'ble Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, Lieutenant Governor of Fort Marlborough and its Dependencies.

Whereas several European Merchants and others having occupied and constructed buildings of Masonry on portions of ground on the North Bank of the Singapore River and elsewhere, within the space intended to have been reserved exclusively for public purposes, viz., between the old lines and Singapore River from the sea inland to the back of the hill:

Under the present circumstances of the Settlement it is not the desire of Government to insist on the immediate removal of such buildings as may have been constructed of

Masonry by Europeans and completed before the 10th April last, unless the same may become indispensable for the public service, but the parties interested are warned of what is intended, and the construction by individuals of all further buildings whatever, as well as the outlay of all further sums of money on those already constructed within the limits aforesaid, after this date, is most strictly prohibited.

The terms on which the above indulgence will be granted to present occupants will be hereafter made known.

These orders have application principally to the ground near the River occupied or intended to be occupied for commercial purposes and have no immediate reference to officers' Bungalows, for which, being a public purpose, an express provision was made, but it is clearly to be understood that all dwelling houses or buildings whatever situated within the limits aforesaid, whether the same may be in the actual occupation of Military Officers or of private individuals, are considered to be on the same footing and alike subject to the cantonment, regulations.

That no person may plead ignorance hereof, the Resident will cause this Proclamation to lie duly promulgated and copies affixed at the usual places for general information.

Given under my hand, at Singapore, this 29th day of October, 1822.

(Signed) T. S. RAFFLES.

Notice is hereby given, that in order to afford comfort and security to the different descriptions of inhabitants who have resorted to this Settlement, and to prevent confusion and disputes hereafter, it is the intention of Government forthwith to appoint a competent Committee, with such advice and assistance as may be necessary, for appropriating and marking out the quarters or departments of the several classes of the native population.

This committee will consist of three European Gentlemen and of a Representative from each of the principal classes of Arabs, Malays, Bugis, Javanese, and Chinese, and it will hold its first sitting on Monday next.

Pending the sitting of this Committee and until further orders all persons are required to suspend the construction of whatever buildings they may have in hand, whether of stone, brick or wood.

It is required of all persons to attend the summons of the said committee and to afford all possible information and assistance in their power that may be demanded of them.

That no one may plead ignorance of this advertisement, the same is to be translated into the native languages, published by beat of going, and affixed at the usual places in Campong China, Campong Glam, and elsewhere.

By order, &c.,  
(Signed) L. N. HULL,  
Acting Secretary.

To Captain C. E. Davis, President.

George Bonham, Esquires, Members

Alex. L. Johnston, Esquires, Members

Gentlemen,-The extent of the native population which has already accumulated at Singapore and the rapidity with which it daily increases, render it expedient that in providing for its accommodation a timely attention should be paid to its future regulation, with reference to the circumstances of the place and the peculiar character and institutions of the several classes of inhabitants of which the society will be composed.

1. It has been observed by the Supreme Government "that in the event of Singapore being permanently retained, there seem every reason to believe that it will become a place of considerable magnitude and importance, and it is essential that this circumstance should be constantly kept in mind, in regulating the appropriation of land. Every day's experience shews the inconvenience and expense that may arise out of the want of such a forecast" and in this respect an economical and proper allotment of the ground intended to form the site of the principal town is an object of the first importance, and one which under the present circumstances of the Settlement will not admit of delay.

2. In order to provide for this object in the best and most, satisfactory manner which our present means admit, I have appointed you to be a committee for the purpose of suggesting and carrying into effect such arrangements on this head, as may on the whole appear to be most conducive to the comfort and security of the different classes of inhabitants and the general interests and welfare of the place, and in the performance of the duty you will be assisted by the Assistant Engineer and Assistant in the Police Department, and guided by the following instructions.

#### EXTENT OF THE TOWN GENERALLY.

3. In considering the extent of ground necessary to be appropriated for the town generally, reference must be had not only to the numbers of the present inhabitants and the probability of their future increase, but to the nature and occupation of the several classes of which it is composed and the demands they may respectively have to preference in regard to advantageous sites for trade, &c., and it will be a primary object to secure to the mercantile community all the facilities which the natural advantages of the port afford. At present a considerable portion of the sea and river face, which may hereafter become important for mercantile purposes, is occupied by the lower classes of Chinese, and as

might be expected many of the early settlers have occupied positions and extent of ground which are now urgently demanded by a higher and more respectable class. A line must be drawn between the classes engaged in mercantile speculation and those gaining their livelihood by handicrafts and personal labour; the former, and particularly the principal merchants, will require the first attention, and there does not appear any reason why the latter should in any instance be allowed to occupy those situations which are likely at any time to be required by the commercial community. The cultivators form a third and interesting class, particularly of the Chinese population, but as no part of the ground intended to be occupied as the town can be spared for agricultural purposes they will not fall under your consideration, except in as far as it may become necessary to exclude them.

4. The town may already be considered to occupy an extent of the sea face, from Tulloh Ayer to the large inlet formed by Sandy Point of nearly three miles, and it may be presumed that if a space is reserved from thence inland in every direction of from half a mile to a mile, as the ground may admit, it will be sufficient for all the purposes required in a principal town. A second town is gradually rising near the Salat or Malay Straits, and as soon as the road of communication is opened it may be expected that a very considerable population will collect in that quarter, but this does not fall under your immediate consideration.

5. Along this line of sea face it will be expedient to preserve for the public all the space between the road which runs parallel to the beach and the sea, and generally deemed advisable in the neighbourhood of the Settlement to reserve an open space along the beach, excepting where it may be required by individuals for special purposes. With this view the Chinese artificers and others who have settled on the beach near Tulloh Ayer and Campong Glam will be required to remove from thence without delay.

#### GROUND RESERVED BY GOVERNMENT.

6. In the distribution of the ground intended to form the site of the town, you will most particularly observe that the whole of the space included between the Singapore river and the old Lines, inland from the sea face to the back of the hill, including a space of 200 yards East of the old lines, is reserved for the immediate purposes of Government.

7. You will further keep in mind that Government also necessarily reserves all such commanding points in the town and its vicinity which may be useful for the defence of the place, such as the point at the entrance of the river, and the high grounds to the westward as well as the space between Sandy and Deep Water Points to the eastward, which it is intended to appropriate as a Marine Yard. With these exceptions the whole of the space above pointed out may be allotted to individuals.

#### EUROPEAN TOWN AND PRINCIPAL MERCANTILE ESTABLISHMENTS.

8. In fixing the site of the European town to the eastward of the cantonments, it was in the first place considered that the north east bank of the Singapore river as far as the hill

would, with the whole of the space included within the old lines of Singapore, be indispensable for the public service, whenever the permanence of the settlement might be established; and in the second it was obvious that if relinquished by Government its extent was too limited to admit of its affording accommodation to all the European and other merchants who might be expected eventually to settle, and experience has already abundantly verified these presumptions. It is admitted that the N. E. bank of the river and space occupied as cantonment possess peculiar advantages for the public in general and for the particular use of Government, and it is deeply to be regretted that any deviation should have been allowed from the original plan; under existing circumstances, however, some modification is thought advisable, and with the view of affording every possible accommodation to the trade of the port, it is proposed that in addition to the sea face to the eastward of the cantonments, the whole of the S. W. bank of the Singapore river with a circular road round the hill between the point and Tulloh Ayer, shall be appropriated for the use of European and other merchants.

9. Under this arrangement and the immediate accommodation which has been afforded to the principal part of the European merchants already settled, it is concluded that individuals will no longer feel an inclination to intrude on what may be considered the peculiar property of Government, but that those who may have planted themselves within its precincts will be sensible of the impropriety, and zealous in repairing the inconvenience they have occasioned, by an early removal of the materials of which their buildings are composed.

10. The necessity of draining the ground on the south west side of the river, is no less indispensable for the health of the Settlement than for securing the foundations of whatever permanent buildings may be erected thereon, and it is intended to proceed on the operation with the least delay practicable. In the meantime however, and during its progress, it is necessary that the present temporary buildings along the banks of the river should be removed, a measure which it will be your duty to carry into effect under the advertisement of this date, in such manner as shall be least inconvenient to the parties concerned.

11. To the Eastward of the Cantonments as far generally as the Sultan's, and inland to the bank of the Rochor river and the foot of the hills, including the whole of the great Rochor plain, is to be considered as set apart exclusively for the accommodation of European and other principal settlers.

#### NATIVE DIVISIONS OR CAMPONGS

12. Your attention however is to be more exclusively directed to the proper allotment of the Native divisions of the town, and the first in importance of these is beyond doubt the Chinese.

## CHINESE CAMPONG.

From the number of Chinese already settled, and the peculiar attractions of the place for that industrious race, it may be presumed that they will always form by far the largest portion of the community. The whole therefore of that part of the town to the south west of the Singapore river (not excepted as above) is intended to be appropriated for their accommodation. They will be permitted to occupy the south west bank of the river above the intended bridge on certain conditions, and the highroad leading from the bridge to the present Chinese campong, as well as the banks of the small inlet to the southward of it, will offer many advantageous situations as yet unoccupied. These will be particularly pointed out to you by the executive officer and you will proceed to mark out this division of the town generally inland as far as practicable up the slopes of hills, as may appear to be likely to be required, reserving an appropriate place above the bridge for the accommodation of the lower classes of Chuliahs and others employed in boats, cooly work, &c.

13. In establishing the Chinese campong on a proper footing, it will be necessary to advert to the provincial and other distinctions among this peculiar people. It is well known that the people of one province are more quarrelsome than another, and that continued disputes and disturbances take place between people of different provinces; it will also be necessary to distinguish between the fixed residents and itinerants, -between the resident merchants and the traders who only resort to the port for a time. Of the latter those from Amoi claim particular attention, and it may perhaps deserve consideration whether on account of their importance it may not be advisable to allot a separate division for their accommodation even to the westward of the Cantonments, beyond the European town and the Sultan. The object of Government being to afford the utmost accommodation to every description of traders, but more particularly to the respectable classes, you will always keep this in view, and while you generally direct your attention to the importance of concentrating the different classes of the population in their separate quarters, you are not to lose sight of the advantage which may arise from deviating from this rule in special cases where the commercial interests of the Settlement are concerned. Few places offer greater natural facilities for commerce than Singapore and it is only desired that the advantage of these facilities be afforded to all who are competent to avail themselves of them in the proportion to their relative importance and claims to consideration.

14. It being intended to place the Chinese population in a great measure under the immediate control of their own chiefs, you will fix up such central and commanding sites for the residence of these authorities and appropriate to them such larger extent of ground, as may tend to render them efficient instruments of police, and at the same time raise them in the consideration of the lower classes.

15. You will also line out the different streets and highways, which should as far as practicable run at right angles and in no instance be less than - feet in breadth. To preserve uniformity and regularity hereafter, you will be pleased to class the streets

according to their relative advantages of situation under the heads of 1st, 2nd and 3rd class, determining the least space along the street which shall be occupied by each house and consequently fixing the exact number of houses which each street will contain. It is proposed to fix a small ground rent on the spot occupied by each house, of one, two and three dollars for every fathom of front, according to the above classes, to be collected annually on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January and you will inform the parties that prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> of January next arrangements will be made for numbering the houses and granting them certificates of possession. Each street should receive some appropriate name and it will become the duty of the police to see them regularly numbered. Each street or division should also have a portion set apart for a police station.

16. The danger and apprehension of fire is at present so great that the most respectable of the inhabitants, including all the native merchants, seem desirous of constructing buildings of masonry with tiled roofs, and it will be at any rate necessary to stipulate for this in the immediate vicinity of the allotments set apart for the larger commercial store houses

17. The concentration of the different descriptions of artificers, such as blacksmiths, carpenters, &c., in particular quarters should also be attended to.

DESCRIPTION OF HOUSES TO BE CONSTRUCTED, EACH HOUSE TO HAVE A  
VERANDAH OPEN AT ALL TIMES AS A CONTINUED AND COVERED  
PASSAGE ON EACH SIDE OF THE STREET.

18. It will further be advisable that for the sake of uniformity and gaining as much room as possible a particular description of front for all brick or tiled houses should be attended to, and it is conceived that while the breadth of the streets is strictly preserved as above directed, a still further accommodation will be afforded to the public by requiring that each house should have a verandah of a certain depth, open at all times as a continued and covered passage on each side of the street.

19. In fixing a proper site for the principal church, theatre, &c, care should also be taken that it be in a central and open situation and that a considerable space be kept clear in the vicinity.

20. Although the object of your appointment does not include the details of police it will nevertheless be incumbent on you to suggest any general regulations which may appear to you. as advisable in this respect, as far as the same may be connected with the plan of the town and the nature of the buildings of which it will be composed; under this head may be included draining, lighting, watching, cleansing and the like.

BUGIS CAMPONG

21. Next to the Chinese your attention will be directed to the Bugis settlers. They at present occupy the whole extent from Campong Glam to the mouth of the Rochor River, but it is conceived that they may be wore advantageously concentrated on the spot beyond

the residence of the Sultan. In this case a part of Campong Glam, immediately adjoining the Sultan's residence, may be occupied by the Arabs according to a plan that will be submitted by Lieutenant Jackson, who has instructions to mark out the European town in that direction.

22. In the allotment of the Bugis town it will be equally necessary to attend to economy in the distribution of ground by laying out regular streets inland towards the river and obliging the inhabitants to conform thereto. At present the houses are scattered without any attention to order or convenience. This will become the more necessary in the event of its being determined to allow a Campong in this direction to the Amoi Chinese, as alluded to in a former paragraph.

#### ARAB CAMPONG.

23. The Arab population will require every consideration and their expected numbers should not be estimated at less than from 1 to 2000. No situation will be more appropriate for them than the vicinity of the Sultan's residence, and it will only be necessary in providing the accommodation they require to keep in view the convenience of separating them as far as practicable from the European dwellings, with which they will in such case come nearly in contact,

#### MARINE YARD.

24. It being intended to appropriate the space between Sandy and Deep Water Points as a Marine Yard, permission will be given to Chinese artificers to settle in the vicinity of the public works on certain conditions, and by this arrangement it is calculated that accommodation will be afforded for a large portion of that description of people who will now be required to remove from the opposite beach. A moderate compensation to such Chinese settlers as may be required to remove their dwellings, under the arrangement now generally directed for the native town, will not be objected to, but the same must be defined and in no case exceed the actual expense to which they may be put to in removing.

25. The beach from the extremity of the European town will still continue open for the repair and building of native vessels as at present, and it is proposed that hereafter a public pier should be thrown out in this quarter in the most convenient spot for trade,

#### CHULIAH CAMPONG.

26. Reference has already been had to the advantage of allotting a separate division for the town class of Chuliahs up the Singapore river, and this will of course be done with a due consideration of their expected numbers, and the necessity of their residence being in the vicinity of the place where their services are most likely to be called for.

#### MALAYS.

27. The Malay population being principally attached to the Tumongong, or engaged in fishing, may not require any very extensive allotment. It is probable the larger portion of

the former will settle near Panglima Prang's and the upper banks of the river; and the latter will find accommodation for themselves in the smaller bays and inlets beyond the immediate line of beach reserved for the town, but you will of course advert, to the same as far as may be necessary.

#### MARKETS

28. As a measure of police it is proposed to remove the fish market to Tulloh Ayer without delay and it will be the duty of the committee to consider in how far the general concentration of the fish, pork, poultry and vegetable markets, in the vicinity of each other, may not be advantageous for the general convenience and cleanliness of the place.

29. The importance of early provision for Mohametan and Chinese burial grounds, particularly the latter, at a suitable distance from town, will necessarily fall under your consideration.

30. You will assemble as early as practicable and as soon as you shall have decided on some general mode of proceeding for the despatch of business, you will be pleased to call upon the heads of the principal classes of natives to be present, at your deliberations, explaining to them the object of your appointment and the desire of government, in associating them with you, that the interest of all should be duly considered in the arrangements adopted.

31. With reference to the extent and nature of the duties required it will be advisable that you should report your proceedings from time to time for consideration and confirmation. and that whenever you have generally defined the, arrangement to be adopted in any particular division, you have leave the detail to be carried into effect by the Executive Officer or Police Department, or some subordinate committee who will as occasion requires receive especial instructions for the purpose from Government, according to your recommendation.

32. In conclusion, it may be only necessary to observe that in imposing such extensive and varied duties on your committee, I feel fully confident that they will be performed in the manner most advantageous to the general interests of the Settlement and most creditable to yourselves and that you will duly appreciate their importance and necessity.

I am, &c.,

(Signed) T. S. RAFFLES

Singapore, 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1822.

To

G. Bonham, Esq., Lieutenant Jackson, and F. Bernard, Esq. Gentlemen,

1. It being essential that the several arrangements for the improvement of the town of Singapore should be carried into effect with the least delay practicable, I am directed to inform you that the Lieutenant-Governor has been pleased to appoint you to be a

committee for the purpose of superintending these arrangements and carrying them into effect forthwith, conformably to the plan laid down. with such modifications as may from time to time be communicated to you by the Lieutenant-Governor.

2. The general plan of the, town, shewing the allotment of the different Campongs, principal roads and streets, and ground reserved for public purposes, is in possession of the assistant Engineer who will from time to time communicate with the Lieutenant-Governor personally on any modifications that may become necessary.

3. The first and most important point to be attended to is the removal of the native population and buildings from the. space on the north bank of the river between the Tumongong's and the sea, to the opposite side of the river, and a date should be fixed at which the present buildings, if not removed by the present occupants, will be pulled down by Government.

4. I enclose for your information the report of the Resident on the value of these buildings and the progress made by the parties in removing, and it will be your duty to see that a proper allotment of ground on the opposite side be made for all persons obliged to remove and who may not already have provided themselves with lots.

5. In the event of any question arising relative to the amount of valuation of any particular property, you will give due consideration to the same and submit your opinion thereon for the further orders of the Lieutenant-Governor.

6. The principle on which it has been resolved to proceed in granting remuneration to the parties, is to advance them one half of the estimated value of their present buildings immediately, and to pay the remainder at the expiration of six months if a brick building, or of three months if of plank, to be calculated from the 1st of February, provided the buildings are then removed or transferred to Government.

7. It is probable that to some of the parties advances have been made on this account, as the Resident was long since authorized to grant to them whatever remuneration he deemed the parties entitled to, the particulars of these you will of course ascertain and attend to.

8. The Resident will now be authorized to make such further advances on this account as may be required, on bills from the parties countersigned by the members of the committee.

9. The removal of the Chinese houses on the sea face at Campong Glam, the formation of the Chuliaah campong there, and the laying out and appropriating of Bugis town will also deserve your early attention.

10. The removal of the Chulia and Dhoby encampment near the Sepoy Lines should be immediately effected, in order that the ground may be appropriated for the purposes for which it is intended.

11. During the progress making by your committee the assistant Engineer will use every exertion in his department, and on reference to the Sitting Magistrate, you will at all times obtain the most ready and efficient assistance from the police, and as all parties have long had notice of the intentions and views of Government, there seems no occasion longer to delay the adoption of any measure of general improvement on account of the particular accommodation of individuals.

12. The formation of the new streets with the construction of the markets are objects deserving your early attention, and as the object of your appointment is to enable you not only to prosecute but complete all the arrangements for laying out the town, you are authorized to make such appropriation of ground to natives as may be entitled to consideration, and finally to do all such things in view, (*sic*) reporting your proceedings from time to time for the information of the Lieutenant-Governor.

13. The Lieutenant-Governor feels satisfied that the members of this committee will both individually and collectively feel the high importance of the trust reposed in them, and execute the same with zeal and ability.

I am, &c.,  
(Signed) L. N. HULL,  
Acting Secretary

Singapore, 28th February, 1823.