Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

Hack, Karl

Published by NUS Press Pte Ltd

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REINVENTING THE GLOBAL CITY

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Edited by
Karl Hack and Jean-Louis Margolin,
with Karine Delaye

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Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
Attap	Palm thatch (in Malay)
AWARE	Association of Women for Action and Research
BS	Barisan Sosialis (Socialist Front)
CPF	Central Provident Fund
EDB	Economic Development Board
EIC	English/British East India Company
EOI	Export Oriented Industrialisation
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLC	Government Linked Company
GRC	Group Representation Constituency
Hanyu pinyin	"Chinese language sound spelling" — presently the most widely used transcription of Chinese in Latin alphabet, adopted in the PRC in 1958
HDB	Housing and Development Board
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IPS	Institute of Policy Studies, Singapore
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore
ISI	Import Substitution Industrialisation
JMBRAS	*Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*

JSEAS	*Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*
JSBRAS	*Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JTC	Jurong Town Corporation
Kampong	Village (in Malay)
KBE	Knowledge Based Enterprises
MCA	Malayan/Malaysian Chinese Association
MICA	Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts
MNC	Multinational Company
NUS	National University of Singapore
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OIOC	Oriental and India Office Collections
PAP	People's Action Party
Pemuda	Youth (in Indonesian)
PUB	Public Utilities Board
SCCC	Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce
SCCL	Singapore Centre for Chinese Language
SDP	Singapore Democratic Party
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SIJORI	Singapore-Johore-Riau (Growth triangle)
TNA	The National Archives, Kew Gardens, London
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UN	United Nations
URA	Urban Redevelopment Authority
VOC	Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company)
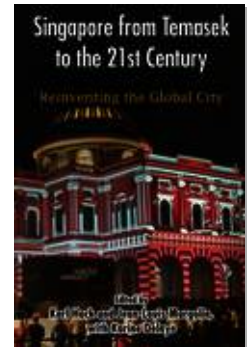
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Preface

This book resulted from the meeting of scholars, and ideas, from Asia and Europe.

First, Jean-Louis Margolin and Karine Delaye organised a panel at the European Association of Southeast Asian Studies conference at the Sorbonne in 2006. This looked at the role of "centralité et singularité" (centrality and singularity, or uniqueness) in maintaining Singapore's role as a global city. Several of the contributors to this volume delivered papers at the Sorbonne, namely Charles Goldblum, Karine Delaye, Karl Hack, Jean-Louis Margolin, Anthony Reid, and Christina Skott.

Second, it quickly became obvious that French scholars were thinking about the nature of the "global city" in general, and of how "centrality" and "singularity" were central to the identity of such cities. For them, investigating the case of Singapore — something unconventional in French academic worldview — allowed a fresh reappraisal of some of Fernand Braudel's theories on *système-monde* (world-system). It also allowed new insights into more recent debates on historical geography (on *espaces-mondes* especially), in relation to the *Annales* school of thought.

Third, a very different discourse was underway in Southeast Asia. Karl Hack argued that Singaporeans increasingly thought in terms of a neverending "remaking" of their city. Indeed, the term "remaking" was increasingly one employed by the Singapore government itself. Numerous committees, rules and institutional frameworks were being created to facilitate the island-state's ongoing "remaking", with periodic peaks of activity.

The European and Southeast Asian approaches were combined when Karl Hack was invited to join the original conference convenors, Jean-Louis Margolin and Karine Delaye. The project was now widened to investigate how Singapore had been repeatedly "remade" or "reinvented" over the centuries, in a struggle to attain, sustain or recover centrality (a hub position in particular flows of goods, ideas and people) and singularity (competitive advantages stemming not just from geography, but from administration, population, and policy).

The editorial team then decided that we should ask additional scholars — both French and those based in Southeast Asia — to join the project. The idea was that we should divide the book into two. Part I should deal with "structure, themes, and the long duration". Anthony Reid's chapter already covered the city's long-term function as a "cosmopolis", or exchange and mixing point for trade and peoples in central Southeast Asia. We recruited one additional French scholar for this part of the book, and one additional young Singaporean scholar. The former was Nathalie Fau, so we had someone to talk about "regionalisation" and Singapore's long-term place in wider geographical structures. The latter, Derek Heng, was asked to provide a set of characteristics which he could track over the long duration. Together, these chapters would give readers bigger frameworks, and point them outwards towards thinking on global cities in general.

Part II of the book was to have chapters which provided the reader with two things. First, a potted chronological coverage of Singapore, from the 14th century to the present. Hence, we recruited scholars to fill periods, in addition to those already discussed by our original groups of scholars, namely: Singapore-based archaeologist John Miksic to explain the 14th century; Kwa Chong Guan, the 15th to 17th; Catherine Paix, the 19th; and Ooi Giok Ling, the mid-20th. The second function of these chapters was for each to describe a discrete attempt to "reinvent" or remake the island in order to sustain its centrality and singularity. In this way, the island's history would be told as a "non-story" — a series of non-linear, often dramatically different, experiments.

To cap off the structure, and the combination of Asian- and European-based scholars, two of the editors (French-based Margolin and Singapore-based Hack) wrote Chapter 1, "Singapore: Reinventing the Global City". This linked the themes and chapters, and explained how the book relates to the historiography on Singapore, and to recent writing on global cities and on global city regions.

The result is what you see before you: a blend of themes and chro-nology, of Asian- and European-based scholars, and of approaches to the empire global city. We hope it is some small reward to our colleagues, institutions, and contributors, whose time and energy have been heavily taxed along that half-decade. During the making of the book, many of the contributors have seen seismic shifts in their lives or careers. Karine Delaye has moved to Mauritius, Karl Hack from the Nanyang Technological University to Oxford, UK. More sadly, Ooi Goik Ling, a warm colleague and steadfast intellectual support, is no longer with us. We are honoured to be able to include one of her last pieces of work here.

Finally, we also thank all those who contributed to the original panel and the final book, and Paul Kratoska and NUS Press for their help. The latter has proved, as ever, empathetic to scholarly needs, and passionately committed to helping scholars to integrate images and maps to make history take on form and colour.

Karl Hack, Jean-Louis Margolin, and Karine Delaye,
May 2010

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Singapore:
Reinventing the Global City

Karl Hack and Jean-Louis Margolin

Today's Singapore is a "global city" with a stellar reputation for good governance. But how did it attain this status? What lessons does its past offer for its future, and for the future of other cities which aspire to attain, retain or enhance a similar status?

Historically, it served as a nodal point between Southeast Asia and the wider world. Even in the recent past, it focused narrowly on entrepôt facilities, being a manufacturing base, and hosting regional headquarters for foreign companies. Yet from the 1990s, it has tried to establish itself as much more: as a hub for services such as entertainment, education and sport, and as a world leader in high technology niches such as bio-medicine. Transformations such as these would have seemed surprising from the perspective of 1990, when the emphasis was still on finance and transportation; improbable in the manufacturing-centric 1970s; and unthinkable in the 1960s, when the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) — in its semi-official uniform of white trousers and shirt — was attacking jukeboxes and "yellow culture".

Yet these evolutions are as real as they are dramatic. In entertainment, by 2002, Singapore had opened the Esplanade — Theatres on the Bay.

This entertainment complex hosts arts festivals, and was one of the earliest components of the Marina Bay area which is still taking shape (on reclaimed land) just beyond the mouth of the Singapore River.[1] In 2005, the go-ahead was given for construction of two casino-based "integrated resorts" in the surrounding area, to be completed by 2010. In sport, meanwhile, 2008 saw Singapore host its first Formula One race, even as it eyed a regional role for the Sports Hub it was constructing, and for its specialist sports school.[2] In biomedicine, it had already built a Biopolis quarter, and a hi-tech zone dubbed "One-North" was being constructed alongside it. In education, medical tourism, sport and biotechnology, its government had therefore put in place training, rules and infrastructure to establish Singapore regionally, if not globally, in additional niches. What characterised all these initiatives was the neverending quest to sustain centrality by constant reinvention.

Singapore has thus attained and defended a centrality in the region, and for goods, services and people passing through the region. It has done this both by nurturing existing comparative advantages — with ever more efficient shipping facilities, for instance — while also developing new attributes. In short, it has succeeded in being central not only because of its geographic position but because, in addition, it constantly develops new singularities. Singapore and its place in regional and global networks is a carefully constructed, and oft-reconstructed, artifice. There have been repeated rises, declines and even falls. The latter notably include an 18th century with little recorded activity, and its capture by Japan in 1942. So there is no single, unilinear "Singapore Story" for a historian to weave into a continuous whole. After each disaster, and sometimes in the absence of disaster, Singapore has been restructured or reinvented anew. These reinventions have included elements as varied as Malay myth and dynastic history (see Chapter 5), Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles' 1819 visions for making the island a centre for reviving Malay cultural and economic fortunes (Chapter 7),[3] free trade policies, and post-1965 export-orientated industrialisation (Chapter 12). There has been no single recipe for success. Rather, the island of Singapore has served as a location for discontinuous and varied attempts to make it a nodal point.

How can the history of partly discontinuous experiments stretching over hundreds of years best be told? A single author could attempt to tell it as a largely continuous story, as C.M. Turnbull did in *A History of Singapore*. Her work became a main reference for anyone studying Singapore from its first publication by Oxford University Press in 1977,

Plate 1.1   Esplanade — Theatres on the Bay

to its third edition by NUS Press in 2009.[4] But to achieve a sense of continuity, Turnbull restricted herself mostly to post-1819, when the British East India Company established a "factory" or trading post on the island. In addition, the mere act of trying to impose such a narrative can obscure the dramatic contrasts in the ways Singapore has sought centrality.[5] It can also tend towards over-focusing on what in the past led to the present (rather than what made each era function as it did); or towards making the past seem to lead towards a single correct model for the present, and more ominously, for the future.

The latter approach was put to the Singapore public most dramatically in a 1997 sound and vision show entitled "The Singapore Story", subsequently refracted into a video which was screened at the Singapore History Museum (today's National Musem of Singapore) until 2003.[6] A particular "Singapore Story" with lessons attached was now integrated into education, sometimes overtly as "National Education", and into ministerial pronouncements. This reached its apotheosis in Lee Kuan Yew's *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan* Yew (Singapore: Times, 1998), and *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story* (Singapore: Times, 2000). Lee had stood down as Prime Minister in 1990 after leading the country from when the PAP first won power in 1959. His resignation was a planned transfer of power to a carefully nurtured second and third generation of leadership, with Lee subsequently retaining influence first as Senior Minister (1990–2004), and then as Minister Mentor (2004–). Older PAP leaders now sought to enlist history — as memories started to fade and the wartime generation began to pass away — to show why only the PAP's approach could have worked for postwar Singapore. It is therefore no surprise that these works tell a story in which a small cadre of leaders is seen as carefully treading the only possible path to success — through self-discipline and international investment — surrounded on all sides by a swampy morass from which they are assailed by liberals, communists, communalists and others, whose foolish visions could only have led to disaster.

It sometimes seems as if one must be either for the state-favoured Singapore Story, or as with Carl Trocki and other critics, for modifying it on the grounds that it exaggerates threats, dismisses real alternatives, and downplays the contributions of non-PAP actors to history.[11] Hence, one either subscribes to the Singapore Story (which Hong Lysa and Huang Jianli further dissect in *The Scripting of a National History*),[12] or argues that the PAP's opponents were not mere communists, fellow travellers and dupes, but genuine left-wingers and liberals whose alternatives were victims

of collateral damage in the PAP's struggles against communism, and to a lesser extent, against communalism. In short, critics imply the PAP used a sledgehammer to crack a nut, and continued using the sledgehammer long after the remaining nutshell had been pulverised. Hence, the title of Michael Barr and Carl Trocki's *Paths Not Taken: Political Pluralism in Postwar Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008). This includes chapters on the liberal vision of the first, and Jewish, Chief Minister David Marshall (Chief Minister, 1955–1956), on ex-detainees such as trade unionist Michael Fernandez, and on youth, Catholic activists and civil society. David Marshall's liberal vision — inspired by the lawyer's respect for the sanctity of the individual tagged on to the Labour Front's commitment to social justice — provides just one such tantalising alternative.[13]

These alternative models all wilted in the face of the PAP implementation of a "communitarian" society (broadly meaning placing community above individual freedoms and rights),[14] and of disciplined, state-led, foreign-investment-driven development. So successful has the latter been that even a book like *Paths Not Taken* baulks at totally rejecting, or replacing the officially sanctioned Singapore Story, claiming instead only that it "complements it" by adding the stories of "unrecognised contributors to the construction of Singapore".[15] As such, neither *Paths Not Taken*, nor the swelling stream of memoirs and oral histories of the 1950–1960s, nor even a new generation of scholars who study particular groups' histories for the postwar era, entirely escape the Singapore Story framework. Even social scientists such as Yao Souchou in *Singapore: The State and the Culture of Excess* have tended to hone in on the controlling aspects of the state, in an attempt to explain just how the state has so successfully restricted protest. His conclusions are thus less about Singapore per se, and more about how an intelligent leadership, colonial and postcolonial, calibrates coercion, tending to opt for the least harmful control (such as press licensing rather than arresting journalists).[16]

Hence, the Singapore state, whether as a positive or a negative, is always a referent, a framing device, even when not explicitly discussed. More importantly for this book, such approaches still leave us with a narrow view of the ways Singapore has sought regional and global city status in the past, and so a narrow view of the possibilities for the future.

The new wave of history about Singapore mentioned above (and of young historians) will continue to be invaluable in telling us more about the variety of groups and possibilities, particularly for the turbulent 1930s to 1960s, and within that especially for the 1950s to 1960s. It suggests

that within the overall PAP-driven framework, there was a greater range of "Makers and Keepers of Singapore History": the title both of a journal special edition in 2007 and of a 2008 workshop.[17] As well as members of a broadly conceived left (seen as including many non-communists), this new wave puts back into history groups such as Singapore's Anglophone Asian middle class (studied by Chua Ai Lin), Muslims (Khairuddin Aljunied), cartoonists (Lim Cheng Tju), local communities and events (Loh Kah Seng on Bukit Ho Swee),[18] and even regional networks of traders, intellectuals and others for whom Singapore was just one place to lay their hat in a broader Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian area (Mark Frost).[19] This new wave of history also overcomes — to some extent at least — the ultra-restrictive Singapore attitude to releasing (or rather not releasing) official government records. It will surprise no one who knows Singapore that no Cabinet records have been released for the post-1959 period. The new wave of historians attempts to sidestep this by drawing on private records, oral history and other non-official raw material. Hence, newspapers and literary works help make it possible for Chua Ai Lin and Mark Emmanuel to research and teach cultural history.[20] Others turn more specifically to "history from below"[21] and build on previous works which have used coroners' records, and Malay and Chinese materials, to develop our knowledge of the lower orders of the Singapore Asian communities under British rule, long reduced to be *classes laborieuses, classes dangereuses*[22] (labouring classes, dangerous classes), such as rickshaw pullers and prostitutes.[23] In addition, the "new wave" has spawned a great deal of oral history in particular, as well as an online journal, *S-pores*.[24] This oral history sometimes works against the pull of the Singapore Story, to offer glimpses of non-PAP actors' ideas and motivations on their own terms. Hence, Fong Chong Pik's memoirs (Fang Chuang Pi, dubbed "The Plen", or communist plenipotentiary by Lee Kuan Yew), for all its limitations, does convey how passionately he believed in the 1950s–1960s that only the communists might effectively oppose and reform "the darkness of colonial society".[25]

But in focusing fairly narrowly on the period around the 1950s–1960s in particular, this new wave still tends to entrench rather than challenge the Singapore Story tendency to privilege the years the PAP has been in power. No doubt the oral history will eventually advance into the 1970s and beyond, but it will not, of course, have much more to say about more distant periods. In short, the new wave provides a mosaic of groups and perspectives on the very recent past. But this very richness in some

ways increases the tendency to downplay the long duration in Singapore's history. We still need to find a way of approaching history that brings out the full range of experiments with how to make Singapore a singular and central place.

One alternative approach is to eschew the narrative (and the plural narratives and paths) approaches in favour of one which both takes a longer view of the island's history, and which looks at each historical era as in some ways unique, distinct, and even to a degree, non-sequential. That means using the appropriate expertise — chronological and disciplinary — to discover how people at each particular time viewed the problem of achieving centrality through a particular blend of singularities. How can a range of expertise sufficient to this task be achieved?

One way would be for a single author to accumulate sufficient knowledge of periods as far apart as Srivijaya and the 1990s, and disciplines as varied as politics, geography, and archaeology. That is not impossible, but might involve a life's work. Meanwhile, an alternative is the one taken by this book: assemble an edited volume, which while not comprehensive, throws light on many of the most critical reinventions of Singapore. Others before us have reached not dissimilar conclusions. For instance, Kernial Singh Sandhu and Paul Wheatley's massive *Management of Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1989) used multiple contributors to investigate themes as varied as the arts, identity, and price stability mechanisms. But that monster volume was a snapshot of the 1980s, and of how two post-independence decades had led to the 1980s.[26] Notwithstanding its size, it offered an analysis of a relatively narrow slice of time. Historians have also had a go at explaining Singapore's history through an edited volume. Most notably, Ernest Chew and Edwin Lee's *A History of Singapore* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991) divided into two parts. The first contained chronological chapters stretching from the 18th century to the then present. The second half had chapters each dealing with a theme, such as population growth, media and welfare. But the result was more a textbook than an analytical study, with the chronological chapters, for instance, providing invaluable but terse surveys of events.

There have also been studies which deal with Singapore over longer periods, even back to the 14th century, but these have tended to focus on narrower themes. Hence, Murffett *et al.*'s *Between Two Oceans: A Military History of Singapore* spans the centuries (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1999). But its focus is specifically military. By contrast, Tan Tai Yong *et al.*'s *Maritime Heritage of Singapore* (Singapore: Sun Tre Media, 2005)

is more an enthralling kaleidoscope of detailed studies than an attempt to understand how Singapore maintained its position in the world. Its individual chapters invoke fascinating vignettes on themes such as *tongkangs* (small, broad-beamed trading vessels), lighthouses and maps. They provide building blocks for a more detailed history of Singapore, but in such a way that the macro-picture of how Singapore was being positioned is more implied than explicitly discussed. In short, others have already divined that, to understand the variety and chronological scope of Singapore's regional and global links, it may be necessary to marshal a multi-author volume, with contributions from diverse disciplines. But until this volume, no one study has attempted to harness multiple authors to provide a picture of the main ways in which Singapore has been positioned as a regional or global city. That is what this book does.

The structure of the book is intended to introduce ways of analysing and thinking about global cities first, and then specific periods and reinventions of Singapore, second. Part I on "The Global City: Structures, Themes and the Long Duration" sets the scene. In it, a historian, an archaeologist/early modern historian, and a geographer (Anthony Reid, Derek Heng, and Nathalie Fau respectively), write about long-term and comparative frameworks for analysing Singapore. These chapters provide tools for thinking about Singapore in the longer term, as well as in broad regional and global contexts. They embed Singapore's history on big canvases, both temporal and chronological.

Firstly then, Anthony Reid in Chapter 2 focuses on "Singapore between Cosmopolis and Nation", arguing that Singapore has flourished best in periods as diverse as the 14th and 20th centuries, when it has taken the form of a deliberately multicultural, cosmopolitan society. This form of society has been the type best placed to benefit from middle Southeast Asia's position across flows of trade, ideas and people from Europe and India to Asia, and in reverse. His chapter begs the question: could Singapore revert from its current emphasis on the nation, back towards eras when it was defined more by its cosmopolitan nature? It also forces us to consider Singapore not so much as a discrete space or nation, but as a type of meeting space for peoples, trade and ideas that has been historically common in the surrounding maritime region.

Derek Heng in Chapter 3 takes a contrasting approach, concentrating on identifying what the key variables are for the island over time. He expresses these in his Figure 3.1. This approach allows him to apply a constant set of variables to analysing very different eras in Singapore's

Plate 1.2 National Museum of Singapore with night illuminations

Reopened with a new History Gallery, the National Museum of Singapore tried to overcome the problems discussed in this chapter by having both a central pathway of major events, and also an interweaving pathway showing different individuals' perspectives on events, periods and institutions. To some extent, this does bring out how, in each period, there were debates about how to reinvent Singapore. The new gallery also informed the writing of a populist "eyewitness" view of Singapore's history by Mark Ravinder Frost and Yu-Mei Balasingamchow, eds., *A Biography of Singapore* (Singapore: National Museum of Singapore and Editions Didier Millet, 2009).

In July 2008, this city-centre, colonial-era building was illuminated with successive colours and patterns as part of the Night Festival. For the third Night Festival in 2010, the museum transformed the surrounding area with street theatre, whimsical lights and carnivalesque play, with performances spread across several museums and other locations. In this way, very modern techniques were used to bring history directly to ordinary shoppers, residents and tourists.

history. It suggests looking for different combinations of his fixed set of key variables at different points in time, such as the balance between core and non-core (immigrant and sojourning) in the population, the extent of political autonomy, and the scope of its economic sphere.

The first of our long duration chapters is thus historical in tone, the second slightly more akin to political science in constructing a model for comparing different periods. The third, Nathalie Fau's "Singapore's Strategy of Regionalisation" brings to bear the geographer's sensitivity to space. She points out that in recent times, Singapore has not just interacted with the world as a small city-state per se, but rather, has attempted to construct a regional growth triangle. Hence, since 1989, it has carefully nurtured relationships — with varying success — with the state of Johor in southern Malaysia, and with the Riau Archipelago (especially the islands of Batam and Bintan) in neighbouring Indonesia. Just as Hong Kong has increasingly integrated with the Pearl River Delta in China, moving many industries offshore, so Singapore has tried to make itself the investment control centre for its own artificially constructed region. Fau's approach thus echoes the wider tendency towards using Global City Regions as units of analysis. She suggests that in some ways, Singapore is disadvantaged in this new game since its Global City Region has to call upon areas outside its state boundaries, leading to tensions between Singapore and countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, and between the latter countries and the regions in them most willing to cooperate with Singapore. Fau thus suggests that it is much more difficult for Singapore to play the Global City Region game than it is for many of its competitors.[27]

Fau's chapter also reminds us that a country or territory — and particularly a global city — has to be analysed not just with a view to its narrow state boundaries, but with a view to how it attempts to make connections beyond them, to transnational space. We might add that Singapore's economic existence has been framed by broader than national boundaries in very different periods. Hence, in the early 19th century, it was technically a part of the British East India Company's possessions, for a time administratively tied to the Bengal Presidency. More recently, the state investment arm, Temasek, has sought to project Singapore beyond its boundaries by strategic investment (something discussed by Goldblum in Chapter 14 as well as by Fau), as have individual companies such as the Temasek-controlled Port of Singapore Authority (PSA International). As of 2009, the latter controlled more than 28 ports in 16 countries, competing with the likes of Dubai Ports.

Part I thus brings very different approaches to bear, so as to create a variety of ways — historical, conceptual, and spatial — of analysing Singapore's different attempts to reinvent itself over the long duration. Part II, by contrast, shifts the emphasis from identifying concepts and tools, to dealing with discrete periods and themes. Each part of Part II's chapters deploys a specialist in order to provide a case study for a specific period in which Singapore was reinvented. Together, these cover key moments from the 14th century up to the present. We make no claim to be comprehensive. We have, for instance, no chapter on the Japanese Occupation of 1942 to 1945, when Singapore was positioned as *Syonan-To* (Light of the South). That is, it was intended to become a Japanese command centre for the Nanyô (South Seas), set within a wider Japanese imperial and cultural system.[28] This period certainly deserves proper analytical treatment. No doubt many readers will be able to think of others that, given indefinite space, we might have added. But our chosen topics are the ones which best allow us to make clear the sheer variety of ways in which Singapore has been positioned, and allow us to cover the majority of the most important reinventions of Singapore. A brief description of these chapters — which follows below — will give an idea of how contrasting these reinventions were.

The first chapter in Part II, Chapter 5 by John Miksic, looks at the 14th to 15th centuries. It shows us how a relatively brief period of commercial success was achieved at that time by successfully combining land-based urban culture with the sea-based *orang laut*. This chapter also serves the vital function of reminding us that Singapore first flourished as a major port in the 14th century, as *Temasik* (also written Temasek) and then as *Singapura*, before slowly sinking back into relative obscurity.

This dramatic pattern of rise and decline can be traced in the humble remains lying under the island's soil. Archaeologists have, for instance, preserved *in situ* a cross-section of a dig on the island's Fort Canning Hill — the Bukit Larangan or "Forbidden Hill" of old. From here, Singapore's 14th-century rulers could look across the mouth to the Singapore River, and beyond to the Strait of Melaka (Straits of Malacca).[29] This, and similar excavations reveal a 14th-century layer of soil peppered with pottery shards from across Southeast Asia and China. Clearly, the 14th-century island port did make itself a, if not the, central place for exchanging products which came to the Strait of Melaka from the region, from China, and from other areas too.[30] However, as you move upwards through cross-sections of such archaeological digs, there tends to be a thinning of remains in the next layers. By the time you reach the layers for the 17th to

Plate 1.3   Cross-section of Singapore history: archaeological dig preserved at Fort Canning (Bukit Larangan), Singapore

18th centuries, there is scarcely a shard to be seen. Then, around the late 18th to early 19th centuries, there is a gradual reappearance of shards and of other litter of history. Indeed, just kicking the ground around Fort Canning sometimes reveals shards of 19th century pottery and glass: a bit of a late 19th-century beer bottle here or a fragment of marmalade pot there: the distinctive detritus of British imperialism.

The story the shards trace does not lie. We do have to think of diverse experiments and models of Singapore's place in the region and beyond in different periods. Hence, by Kwa Chong Guan's Chapter 6, on "Singapura as a Central Place in Malay History and Identity", we are looking at a 16th- to 18th-century Singapore in decline as a port. Notwithstanding that maritime decline, Kwa shows us that it continued to play a central place in Malay history, and in Malay ideas about power and authority. The Malay royalty who left Singapore to found new royal centres — in Melaka in the early 15th century, later in Johor, and then in the Riau Archipelago — did not forget Singapore. Quite the contrary, Singapore (or Singapura) became more important as a part of the Malay memory and worldview, and as a marker on journeys to other places, than as a port in its own right. It was, in the *Sejarah Melayu* (*Malay Annals*), the place where a new dynasty had been founded: the dynasty which in various guises at Melaka/Malacca, Johor and the Riau Archipelago, continued to dominate the Malay world for centuries.

Rather than seeing a continuous story, therefore, our different chapters show Singapore's very different types of centrality in different periods. Notwithstanding a continuing Malay interest in the island, its decline in importance is shown continuing into the 18th century. That decline reflected the general stagnation or regression of international trade in much of East Asia, one that also led to the bankruptcy of the hitherto dominant Dutch East India Company (VOC — *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*) in 1800, and its replacement as colonial ruler by the Dutch state. The strong connection with the Indian subcontinent, essential at least since the 15th century, also weakened, and was not fully replaced by the important growth of trade with China. Singapore showed then one of its most constant characteristics: it is a "photographic plate" of Southeast Asia and the regions which border it — buoyant when everything goes well with them, yet vulnerable to fluctuations in their fortunes and trade.

For the 18th century, then, there is scarcely a shard or coin to be found in archaeological excavations. The island's population only began to recover at the beginning of the 19th century, as a local Malay ruler
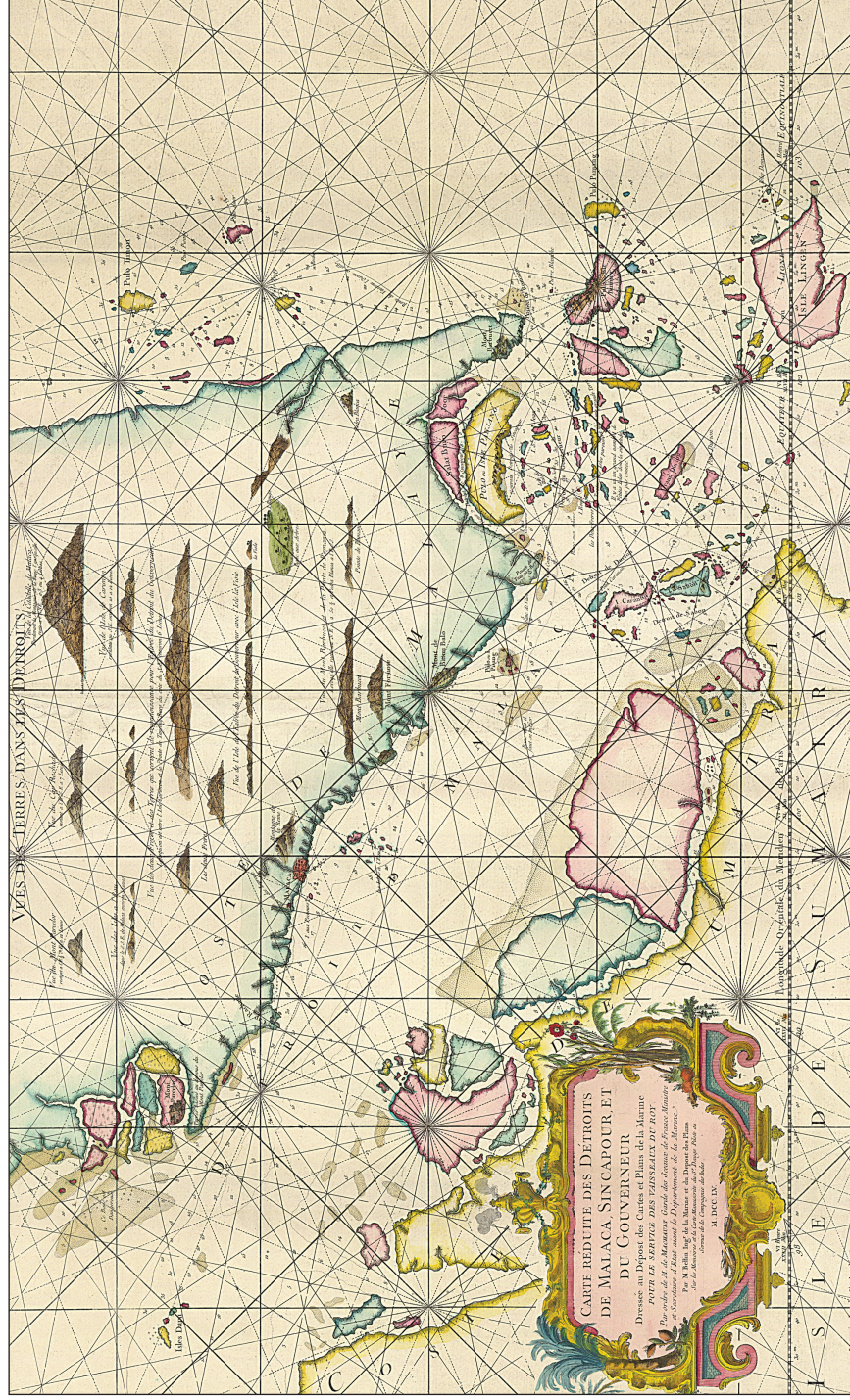
Map 1.1 The Malacca, Singapore and Governor Straits by Jacques-Nicolas Bellin, 1755

The area around the Straits of Melaka formed a vital international maritime crossroads long before Raffles founded a British settlement in Singapore in 1819. This map shows how Singapore appeared in the pre-Raffles era, on an 18th-century map, as a landmark proximate to these shipping routes.

from within the Johor-Riau polity, the Temenggong, incorporated it into his maritime realm. By 1819, it was again supplying significant numbers of the ships so crucial to Malay princes, though its population may still have been under a thousand, made up mainly of *orang laut* (sea people), a smaller number of Malays, and a handful of Chinese.

With the island's emergence as a supplier of ships to the Temenggong, it was brought into the story of friction between the Dutch colonial government based in the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia), and the Malay and Bugis rulers of the Riau Archipelago. Already then, it was becoming a part of bigger stories as the Dutch reasserted influence over the Strait of Melaka after the end of the Napoleonic wars.[31] It was to be the arrival of the British East India Company (EIC) in 1819, and its exploitation of these tensions, which would turn Singapura's slow recovery to meteoric rise.

It was, however, far from pre-ordained that Singapore would be the EIC's main location in Southeast Asia, far from it. The EIC had established a factory and garrison at Bencoolen, on Sumatra's southwest coast, as early as 1685. This had been an annoyance for the Dutch would-be monopoly on Sumatra's main export: pepper. But Bencoolen was not on a major sea-line. Consequently, in the 1770s, the EIC tried — without success — to establish a factory in Balambangan in the Sulu Archipelago. This was southwest of the main Philippine islands, and so well-placed to tap trade from China and the Dutch East Indies alike. In 1786, the EIC did secure a factory on Penang Island, at the northern entrance of the Straits of Malacca. Notwithstanding Penang's success, the EIC still sought a place more central to the Straits and to the South China Sea. Singapore (or a nearby island, such as Karimun) was already the main goal in failed 1787 Anglo-Dutch negotiations. The Dutch, understanding only too well what was at stake (they had themselves hesitated between the Johor-Singapore area and west Java for their main operational centre, in the early 17th century), resisted until the 1824 Anglo-Dutch treaty. Before they gave way, they had to endure successively the massive infiltration of the British country traders in the whole region from the 1760s; the assault of pirate groups (such as the Iranun) who often did business with the British from the 1780s; and the taking of Dutch Asian possessions into British "protection" between 1795 (Malacca) and 1811 (Java) during the Revolutionary/Napoleonic wars. Britain, the powerhouse of economic modernity, and already dominant in the Indian subcontinent, was in Southeast Asia a revisionist power. It was seeking to intrude in areas

where the Dutch had been long established. But it was also a question of method: to the traditional Dutch mercantilist monopolies, the British — and notably Raffles — opposed a then revolutionary economic liberalism, associated with some humanitarian principles.

This major transition is the subject of Christina Skott's Chapter 7, "Imagined Centrality: Sir Stamford Raffles and the Birth of Modern Singapore". Traditionally, Raffles has been thought of as a near-genius who saw that Singapore's position could control the Straits of Malacca, who understood that free trade would be the key to its success, and who alone had the gall to force action on the EIC in 1819. It is true that at this time, his EIC masters were under pressure from London not to annoy the Dutch. For London, Dutch friendship in Europe mattered more than port-collecting in the east. Yet, Skott shows that the way Raffles arrived at the idea of Singapore as a central place was rather less logical than sometimes assumed. It was characterised by a tendency to dreaming, some of it blatantly impractical. He had long sought a place he could claim had historically enjoyed centrality in the Malay world, in the hope of persuading his EIC masters to make such a place into a major centre of British influence. He was capable of fastening on the most unlikely candidates. Hence, he had initially argued that malaria-ridden Bencoolen on Sumatra's southwest coast could play this role when first appointed its local Lieutenant-Governor (appointed 1817, present 1818–1824). Previous to that, he had fantasised that Java might form such a centre, when sent to head its caretaker government as Lieutenant-Governor there in 1811–1816, at a time that Dutch territory in Europe had fallen under Napoleon's effective control. When the end of European war saw the British return the Dutch to Java, and the latter reassert influence over the Riau Archipelago and the Straits of Malacca, Raffles' gaze belatedly settled on Singapore. Singapore was the last fantasy of Raffles' feverish imagination, and the last of his grandiose moral, political and economic schemes to establish British regional leadership over the "Malay" maritime world of Southeast Asia.

Skott shows how fantasy became, in this case, reality. She demonstrates how Raffles' knowledge of Singapore, and his conception of it becoming a British-controlled beacon and central point in the Malay world, were powerful forces in reshaping the island's destiny. It was not simply envisaged as a central economic place — that is reading history back from the present — but as a place where Britain could centralise Malay revival. For the British conveniently theorised that monopolistic Dutch control of the region had caused decay in Malay society and economy. In many ways,

Raffles' full vision for Singapore never materialised. It did indeed become a free port. But it did not spark a Malay political, economic and cultural revival, even if it did later, for awhile, become a Malay intellectual centre in its own right. Skott's chapter is thus vital in reminding us that we cannot simply read the present backwards, nor see Singapore's rise from 1819 as a result of single-minded economic thinking. Its creation had been fuelled by a much larger vision of its role in the Malay world, initially intended to be achieved by three-way rule over the island: split between the EIC factory, the Temenggong, and the man the British tendentiously recognised as "Sultan" of the Johor and Riau area. That more cooperative vision was only finally and definitively ditched in 1824, when Singapore (rather than mere rights to a factory on its southern coast as in 1819) formally became a British possession.

Notwithstanding the parts of Raffles' vision that failed, Singapore flourished. Raised up again by him as East India Company factory, Singapore's population went from around 1,000 to 5,000 or more within a couple of years. By the first census of 1824, it numbered 10,683, with the Malays and then the Chinese forming the largest two groups. Malays and Chinese moved from Malacca and the nearby Riau Archipelago, and Bugis and European ships streamed into the port. As Reid and Heng's Chapters 2 and 3 hint, however, it did not immediately become an overwhelmingly immigrant Chinese city. Rather, until the 1850s if not 1860s, it was a genuinely cosmopolitan British Empire port of the "Straits". At that time, it had a significant core of Malays and other Southeast Asian groups, alongside Straits Chinese, who were long settled in the region or who had intermarried with the local population. Our chapters therefore remind the reader on a number of occasions that Singapore has had many cosmopolitan periods, whether that meant a mix of Malay, Javanese and *orang laut* in John Miksic's 14th and early 15th centuries, or of Malays, Chinese, Peranakan and numerous trading groups such as Armenians, Arabs, Parsees, Jews, Indians and others (including the British and other Europeans, as well as the Americans) in the mid-19th century. Singapore has seldom been so much central as well as singular as it was around the third quarter of the same century. This was an era of multiple experiments that led the island-colony from a regime of indirect rule (long imposed by the very lack of means of the colonial power) to direct rule.

Indeed, free trade meant low revenues, so that the chosen method of drawing trade to Singapore for a long time ensured very limited government. Indirect rule, with heavy reliance on locally based Asians as

Plate 1.4 Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator

Completed in 1836, with donations from Armenians in Singapore, Java and India, the church is a useful reminder of the cosmopolitanism of 19th-century Singapore — during its "Straits Settlements" period — and of the disproportionate wealth and importance during that period of small groups such as the Armenians, Jews and others. There were 624 Armenians recorded in Singapore from 1820–2004, yet this was the first Christian Church constructed of stone in Singapore.

intermediaries, was the rule of the day. Consider that, as late as 1877, Singapore's Chinese Protectorate was formed to gradually bring indirect power — exercised through local Chinese clans, business and secret society leaders — under stronger colonial influence. Yet by the 1920s, the colonial state had actually banned secret societies, expanded its numbers of Chinese dialect-speaking employees, tightened supervision of immigration and labour contracts, and was recognisably modern, bureaucratic and more direct in its rule. By the 1920s, in addition, opium use was controlled and the farming out of revenues had been replaced with direct state control of all taxes. Thus were laid, between 1877 and the 1920s, the foundations for a modern, efficient but intrusive state that was going to become the trademark of post-First World War Singapore.[32]

It is partly Singapore's status as one of the most advanced, and certainly one of the most economically liberal, cities that allowed it to become one of Asia's most eagerly sought-after role models. For many French colonists, Dutch *mise en valeur* (realising the economic potential) of Java's resources and British shaping of a modern, active, generally peaceful emporium were the two examples to take inspiration from. Karine Delaye's Chapter 8, "Singapore: A Model for Indochina? (1860–1920s)", shows how French colonial officials constantly eyed Singapore for its policies towards trade, Chinese, labour and opium, amongst other areas. In some cases, they admired the British example, but concluded it could not be replicated, for instance, fearing free trade in Saigon might benefit the economically stronger British more than themselves. In other cases, as in anti-opium policy, they concluded that Singapore lagged behind the French example. Either way, Delaye's chapter offers us a new way of looking at Singapore, by analysing how it appeared when looked at as a potential model. It can be read alongside Paix's Chapter 9 and Goldblum's Chapter 14, which trace attempts to export Singaporean models of urban planning and Singapore economic expertise in much more modern periods.

Delaye, meanwhile, shows that one group in particular had a marked preference for British-controlled Singapore over French-controlled Saigon: namely, Chinese immigrants and traders. The relative personal and economic freedom the Chinese enjoyed in Singapore, compared to French and Dutch territories, further helps to explain why they became — numerically — the most important group in reinventing late 19th-century Singapore. From the 1870s to the 1880s — after the opening of the Suez Canal, the multiplication of steamships, and the opening up of tin mines and later rubber plantations in Malaya — the steady trickle of

immigrants from China became a flood. This turned Singapore for the first time into an overwhelmingly Chinese city, rather than its previous status as a cosmopolitan city not dominated by any one ethnic group, despite the Chinese having soon become the largest single group. Indeed, in some respects, it is misleading to think of "the Chinese" as a coherent group in earlier periods. Divisions existed according to district of origin, clan and especially dialect, and Mandarin only gradually became a binding force, as its use — especially in schools — spread from the early 20th century.[33]

Catherine Paix's Chapter 9 on "Singapore as a Central Place between the West, Asia and China: from the 19th to 21st Centuries" therefore deals with changes in the relationship between Singapore and China. Paix monitors the tensions in the relationship, and the ways Singapore at times even became a significant place in Chinese history, as early 20th-century nationalists such as Sun Yat Sen (Sūn Zhōngshān in *hanyu pinyin*) viewed the overseas Chinese as important supports. Yet, as Paix points out, it was not a simple case of Singapore trading on its Chineseness. The trauma of the Cold War, and the ruling PAP's struggle against communists and radicals within its own ranks, actually led to a distancing from China, and especially from Chinese chauvinism, after 1959. It was, according to Paix, only during the 1980s that Singapore started to encourage Chinese sub-identity — including making learning Chinese as a mother tongue compulsory for Chinese schoolchildren. Only from the 1980s, did Singapore seek better ties with, and investment in an economically liberalising China. So Paix's chapter is important in showing how complex, and sometimes ambivalent, the reinvention of Singapore as a city — whose inhabitants are ethnically mostly Chinese — has been. The very place of Chineseness within Singapore has been reinvented.

If Paix's chapter deals with the vital question of China links (and Singapore becoming a model for China and other countries), the first of Hack's two chapters examines the reinvention of Singapore as a more regionally focused "Malayan" city. His Chapter 10 on "The Malayan Trajectory in Singapore's History" acts as *agent provocateur*, forcing the reader to consider Singapore's "Malayan" period not as just a brief and bruising dash in — and out — of Malaysia in 1963–1965, but as something with deeper roots: as one trajectory amongst several, and as one which gradually swelled to become predominant by the 1940s–1960s. As such, it notes the growth of a feeling that, far from being "Chinese", "Malay", or even "cosmopolitan", Singapore was (or rather, should become) an integral and inseparable part of a distinct Malayan entity. By the 1950s, there

was considerable discussion on that issue, which reflected a desire for Singapore to take a central role not just in a Malayan economy and a wider Malayan federation, but also in defining a Malayan culture and nationalism. The end vision for the PAP, we should remind ourselves, was not originally an independent Singapore, but rather, a modern, socialist "Malaya" in which Singapore would take its supposedly rightful place.

Hack's chapter thus warns readers against seeing a Singaporean identity where none yet existed, at least not in the form of aspirations to separateness from peninsular Malaya. He argues that, in the 1940s to 1950s in particular, Singapore-based leaders hoped to exchange the island's place as central to the British Empire-in-Southeast Asia, for one as central to a Malayan nation and state that would include Singapore as well as the peninsula. It is a vital reminder that stories of the origins of a Singaporean nation and state should not be allowed to distort our understanding of particular eras in the island's history. In this period, one main strand of its history (or trajectory or narrative) was the debate about how Singapore was, and could become, Malayan (and acceptable to Malaya after that state's independence in 1957): administratively, culturally, economically, militarily, and in other ways. It is important to understand this attempted reinvention and why, ultimately, it failed.

Indeed, Hack shows that one reason for that failure was precisely that Singapore and PAP visions of what Malayan meant, and of how Singapore could achieve a centrality within the new Malaysia by its singular modernity and multiculturalism, were unacceptable to the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). Since UMNO and its peninsular Chinese allies in the Malayan/Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) ultimately called the shots in the new Malaysia, the failure to make these visions compatible was fatal to Singapore's Malayan aspirations. As a result, Singapore left the federation of Malaysia on 9 August 1965, less than two years after its formation on 16 September 1963. Only then — and even then, tentatively at first — could the Singaporean project and era truly begin.

Part of Singapore's vision of its singularity within a future Malaysia had related to its view of itself as the most modern, and most economically and financially developed part of that new country; and of itself as the advanced manufacturing centre for a Malayan economic hinterland. Hence, the next chapter focuses on how the PAP, as the governing party in a semi-independent state from 1959, sought to keep and enhance its privileged position in the region. It sought to defend its singularity in 1959 as the state with the highest GDP per capita in Asia, with one of

the best educated workforces, and — thanks partly to the British military — with high levels of infrastructure and technical abilities. Margolin in Chapter 11 therefore investigates — using the PAP's own programmes, *Petir* (the party paper) and petitions and pronouncements — how the PAP leaders saw their struggle in the 1950s and early 1960s partly as one to preserve and enhance these pre-existing singularities. They even hoped to improve upon them, by making Fabian socialist-style planning more effective, and by asserting the sort of discipline over labour that a British colonial state had found politically too costly to attempt.[34] Faced with the need to play a long game for attaining political and economic union with Malaya (and so the sort of centrality they most craved and thought necessary), from 1959 to 1963, they concentrated on honing their singular competitiveness. Margolin shows that the PAP itself underwent adjustment, if not reinvention, of its own plans and ideas in this period, as it sought to keep abreast of rapidly changing circumstances.

Notwithstanding Singapore's frustrating period of purgatory outside the Federation of Malaya in 1955–1963, as its Labour Party and then the PAP struggled with labour militancy and communist subversion, the island did thrive. It survived the trauma of separation from Malaysia on 9 August 1965 too, to transform itself from a port city of sojourners with inadequate housing and poorly integrated communities, into a centre for multinational manufacturing and headquarters. Ooi Giok Ling's Chapter 12 on "Singapore's Changing International Orientations, 1960–1990" shows how this post-1965 transformation was achieved: by imposing even more rigid central state control, dictating education, national service, language patterns (for instance, squeezing Chinese dialects off official radio and television) and clamping down on dissent, industrial as well as political. This was based for the first time on that new creation, the Singaporean. The later 1960s to 1970s thus extrapolated on the economic policies outlined in Margolin's period, while additionally having to reinvent the economy as less dependent upon Malaysia for its growth, and citizens as the new category of the disciplined Singaporean. The latter was achieved partly by focusing around concepts which could unite rather than divide, such as meritocracy and modernisation.

From late 1965 to the 1980s, the emphasis shifted, then, to developing Singaporeans disciplined and educated enough to allow the city-state to attain a regional centrality for western and Japanese investment and headquarters. The earlier leaning towards Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) as the surest route to boost the island, and the aim for a

Singapore-in-Malaysia, were now quietly ditched. Instead, the state increasingly concentrated on Export Oriented Industrialisation (EOI), fuelled by attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Singapore was lucky, as at the time, businesses were experimenting with a new international division of labour. Singapore could capitalise on its singularities — the economic legacy of imperialism and the discipline attained under the PAP — to capture much of the regional investment. The shift therefore worked, making late 20th-century Singapore a central place for petrochemical processing, manufacturing of electronic goods, and multinational headquarters. The fractured, cosmopolitan empire-port had been reinvented as the disciplined nation-state, and as a centre of manufacturing investment in addition to its old roles as entrepôt and as a basic processing centre for Malayan and Indonesian rubber, tin and timber. It was increasingly making the world, not merely Malaysia or even the British Empire, its economic hinterland.

The PAP had, to some degree, reinvented its own plans and image of what Singapore would and could be, and successfully. Again, however, Singapore could not stand still. The later chapters of the book look at post-1990s challenges. In this period, the singularities that had sufficed in the previous two decades were no longer enough, as other countries in the region, such as Malaysia and Thailand, also began to attract large amounts of foreign investment. Reliance on foreign investment attracted by low costs and high quality governance and infrastructure was no longer adequate. Indeed, together with the ability of the state to pre-empt many of the island's most talented individuals, the reliance on multinationals threatened to stifle the growth of homegrown entrepreneurs, and so of distinctly Singaporean creativity and wealth creation. The late 20th-century re-emergence of China and India, it was initially feared, might also suck investment out to cheaper locations, and a Singapore already achieving first world salaries had therefore to find new singularities, a new competitive edge, to attract talent, investment and foster new kinds of centrality.

Hack's Chapter 13 on "Remaking Singapore, 1990–2004: From Disciplinarian Development to Bureaucratic Proxy Democracy", thus shows how Singapore entered the 21st century determined to take its central role one step further, by transforming its education and culture. This was intended to ensure not only that it would attract increasingly talented and networked foreigners, but also that it could now produce and reproduce its own knowledge creators and networkers. These latter, it was hoped, would include a younger generation not just bilingual in English and

another language, but actually bicultural and able to move naturally in the world of a renascent China. It was, by contrast, slow at first to realise that such biculturalism was just as badly needed for its Malay and Indian citizens. That might allow them to recover their traditional role of middlemen between Singapore, maritime Southeast Asia and India, balancing somewhat the powerful Chinese connection. Thus, Singapore might be placed in a better position to restore and maintain its centrality in Asia as a whole: as it had previously relied on close relations with all three of these Asian subregions.

But Hack's chapter also hints at how Singapore contemplated a much more profound reinvention of its society in order to compete in an ever more globalised world. Constant upgrading of manufacturing and services, it was now argued, demanded an ever more creative society, ready to compete for the highest value-added enterprises in education, media, research and high-end services such as law. The sort of citizen — the *Homo Singaporeanus* or *Homo Temasekanus* — and education that had sufficed in previous eras were not going to suffice for the future. Constantly increasing global trade and inter-connectivity, the state reasoned, now demanded the creation of citizens who would be more global in outlook, more willing to take risks, and who might be less easily controlled and channelled by the state. The competition to retain its own increasingly educated and outward-looking population, and to attract the best talent from abroad, raised questions about just how far old models of politics, society and social engineering again needed reinventing, as opposed to just tweaking. Were the old types of education and citizens the right ones, for instance, if Singapore wanted (as its government was saying it did by 2006) to become a regional, niche player in creative areas such as Asian-based film production and computer games design? The state had clearly concluded it was not, as education itself underwent successive experiments and overhauls, and the state encouraged growth in new areas such as the arts, biomedicine and media. Hack's chapter traces the much wider range of choices, and slightly wider degree of lassitude, made available to Singaporeans between 1990 and 2004, and beyond.

Hack's chapter thus reminds us that the structure of Singapore itself — its society, state and space — has sometimes been restructured in order to better serve the island's international needs. He explains how — by transforming pre-existing models of feedback and grassroots links — the government has also gradually transformed the state into a "bureaucratic proxy democracy". That is, while not allowing western-style democracy

(rule by the demos or at least their easily replaced representatives), or liberalism (placing the rights and interests of the individual first, society second), it has developed a structure which is uniquely skilled at gathering information on the desires, needs and grumbles of its people. Despite very deep-seated tensions between old, disciplinary habits of the state and the new desire to encourage diversity and creativity, the state does desire a broader and more sophisticated feedback and involvement in policy formulation. The chapter argues that if we want to understand Singapore's latest reinvention, we need to move beyond simplistic and sometimes sterile debates about whether Singapore is deficient as a "democracy", or successfully authoritarian because of its skill at "calibrated coercion".

Goldblum's Chapter 14, by contrast, focuses more specifically on the state's approach to spatial planning in the last half-century, showing how it moved from borrowing foreign urban planning models, to reinventing these, and finally, to becoming a model exporter. If Hack shows a ruling party developing its own model of politics, Goldblum shows a state developing its own distinct approach to spatial planning.

Urban development, and especially housing, have since 1959 been central factors in the legitimisation of the PAP's rule, and in the restructuring of the island in the service of economic ends. This has continued to be the case into the 1970s and beyond. Thus, between the 1971 Concept Plan on the one hand, and its revisions in 1991 and afterwards on the other, the city was converted from an industrial, "fordist", homogeneous metropolis into a post-industrial, intelligence- and leisure-oriented one. The recent division of the island into four, and then five regions for planning purposes reflects this shift towards greater flexibility. It means its internal space is bound to be more differentiated in the future, but simultaneously, the connection of all areas with the external world is even more emphasised than before.

This latter, external connection is becoming a ubiquitous feature, rather than the preserve of specialised areas such as the harbour, airport, industrial zones, and financial centre. In addition to these changes, Singapore's urban planning has always had a two-way international dimension. It both seeks out and borrows foreign best practice from abroad — as in the greening of the postcolonial city — and is increasingly also regarded as a model for potential export, most prominently to China. Since the late 1980s, Singapore has been sought by China as one model for new town planning. The investment that followed had mixed success in developing a new town and industrial centre in Suzhou, but the launch of Tianjin eco-city with URA (Urban Redevelopment Authority) cooperation in 2008

showed that Singapore retained an innovative edge — and a determination to succeed in China. It applied to planning Tianjin eco-city a range of concepts — such as green connectors between different housing areas and heavy use of water features for aesthetics and leisure — which Goldlum's Chapter 14 shows are also being applied in the newest new towns on the island. Notable amongst these is Punggol 21 in Singapore's northeast (see pp. 391–4). More than that, the Tianjin project — when complete after 2020 for up to 350,000 people — will potentially help Singapore to position itself as a champion of more eco-friendly, sustainable models of town planning for both domestic and export purposes.[35]

Singapore thus entered the 21st century with an emergent national identity, as a successful, developed country hosting some four million Singaporeans and foreigners, determined to produce a population better equipped to network and to continually reinvent the island's competitive edge. The island-state was also sought after in some quarters as an exemplary model of urban development.

Yet Singapore faces as much uncertainty in the future as in the past. China and India's rise, periodic economic crises, and a fast-evolving global economy, can significantly alter the context Singapore must operate in years rather than decades. These uncertainties about the future make a new look at the past ever more useful and necessary. For the past offers a sort of archive of ways in which Singapore has, at different periods, experimented with different types of centrality, different arrangements of population, politics and society, and taken different roads to sustaining old singularities and creating new ones.

This begs one last question: why present this as a study of the reinvention specifically of global cities, rather than merely of port cities or just of Singapore itself? Today's Singapore is most obviously a global city, but what of Singapore in the 19th century, let alone the 14th? Are we stretching the meaning of global city to breaking point by looking so far back in time? It might be objected that it is anachronistic to talk of a global city before the world became truly interconnected by the Internet, with individual companies dividing up their production between countries, and ultimately, outsourcing functions to wherever costs and service levels justified. Are not truly global cities the creations specifically of a 20th- to 21st-century world? In which case, we could only talk of Singapore becoming a global city — and an example for other aspiring global cities — relatively recently.

This restrictive use of the term would be naïve, since the different

regions of the world have been increasingly joined up from the 15th to 16th century onwards. The taproots of globalisation go back a long way, and anyway there is no obvious point in recent history when Singapore, Hong Kong, London or any other city could be said to have rapidly changed towards a "new" global status. Hence, McDonagh and Wong (respectively experts in urban studies and in media and communications), argue that "Hong Kong has been intrinsically 'global' since it took shape 165 years ago at the edge of two world empires — China and Great Britain".[36] We argue that not only did Singapore, likewise, owe its modern form to being part of the British world empire from 1819, but that its various rulers had already aspired to global status centuries before that. True, their notion of global or at least extra-regional reach was more restricted, but it was nevertheless something more than mere local or regional ambition.[37] Indeed, we would suggest that studying global cities as if they were invented at some point after 1960 is a bit like studying the last few inches of a tree. It tells you relatively little about how the tree came to be there, how it functions, and how it might behave in changed conditions. To our colleagues in the social sciences, we would say: every scientific approach to a human artefact — such as a city — has its uses, but the time dimension, as developed by historians, could give your own analyses and hypotheses a more secure basis. The thin layer of the present is often misleading.

Cities, then, did not suddenly become global at some point in the late 20th century, but rather gradually over decades, if not centuries. Indeed, the defining moment when cities exploded in number and size and interconnectedness is arguably the 19th century, when not just Singapore, but Chicago and Melbourne, to name just two of countless examples, blossomed from puny settlements to major cities.[38] We maintain that any true understanding of how the world became global, and of how cities such as Singapore achieve, lose and regain such a status, cannot afford to be historically shallow. For us, being a global city means that a city acts as a — and prefereably the — major nodal point between a region and other parts of the world, attracting disproportionate amounts of foreign trade, personnel, international services and expertise coming to the area. Such cities — whether at the stage of aspiring to this status, or having achieved it — compete to place themselves at the centre of networks of trade, technology, tourism and services. In order to attract such flows, they must make themselves into unique places with strongly differentiated characteristics: for while there is room for many peripheries, there can be

few major centres. This striving may be done mainly by private actors, such as merchants and companies, by state institutions, or more probably by a combination of both.

Success, as for Singapore, has thus been in no way a pure gift of nature, a function merely of location. Trade and politics can shift suddenly, and the city that does not adapt quickly enough can ultimately lose its nodal function or even its independence, atrophying as Venice did in the 18th century. So, being a global city necessitates something more. It demands that a city nurtures existing and new competitive advantages. It can mean, as we have seen, seeking transnational reach or spaces, developing new areas, becoming part of a city-region, or even specialising in niche sub-areas — for instance, particular types of finance or Asian-related medical problems, or films and games with an eye to Asian culture and taste. Hence, with so many cities competing, it can make sense to target resources, tax breaks and educational investment in order to achieve a competitive edge. Even more important — as it makes growth and prosperity more sustainable — is human investment, or more precisely, the ability to create a society vibrant with knowledge, creativity, debates; a society made of strong individuals proud to live together. Thus, there are many possible models, but all demand that the global city not only have a geographic and trade centrality, but maintain singularities: distinctive qualities which protect its position; an ability to stay ahead, and to be seen as something like a desirable and intriguing place to go, as well as a useful model for others.

Notes

1. Since the Marina Bay area will evolve further over several years, the best way of tracking it is online via its government website <http://www.marina-bay.sg/> [accessed 19 May 2009] or the Singapore Urban Redevelopment Authority website <http://www.ura.gov.sg/> [accessed 19 May 2009]. Marina Bay is an artificial bay into which the Singapore River now empties; the larger area is now closed off by the Marina Barrage, while "Marina Bay" is also the name given to the artificially constructed land which encloses the bay, as well as the bay itself.
2. Accepting people could excel in different ways — including sports and arts — and supporting them to do that, rather than rather crudely sorting and grading people according to narrow academic criteria (notably in languages and mathematics), involved one of the biggest — and as of 2009 ongoing — transformations. Hence, by 2009, there were specialist schools not just in

mathematics and science (NUS High School), but also in arts, sports, and for less academic students (such as Pathlight School for autistic students). See Hack's Chapter 13, "Remaking Singapore 1990–2004: From Disciplinarian Development to Bureaucratic Proxy Democracy". Initially, there was some reluctance to lower academic criteria for entry to the specialist sports school, but adjustments seem to be taking place.

3. Christina Skott was known as Christina Granroth at the time of the conference where the idea for this book was first discussed.

4. C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore* (first edition, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1977, second edition 1989). C.M. Turnbull briefly served in the colonial civil service in Singapore in the 1950s, eventually becoming a Professor of History at Hong Kong University. A third edition of her seminal work was published by NUS Press in 2009, just after her death in 2008.

5. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*.

6. The museum — which ultimately traces its ancestry back to the Raffles Library and Museum set up in 1849 and given separate existence as a museum in 1887 — reopened in December 2006 with a name change from the Singapore History Museum (1993–2003) to the National Museum of Singapore, with the new multimedia history gallery being just the most dramatic of several, such as exhibitions on life stories, food and film. *National Museum of Singapore Guide* (Singapore: Editions Millet, 2007).

7. Hong Lysa and Huang Juanli, *The Scripting of a National History: Singapore and its Pasts* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008).

8. While helping to fill in important moments in the "Singapore Story" such as merger and separation, these books nevertheless have their origns in academia and painstaking academic approaches. See, for instance, works by NUS historians Tan Tai Yong, *Creating 'Greater Malaysia': Decolonization and the Politics of Merger* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008), and Albert Lau, *A Moment of Anguish: Singapore in Malaysia and the Politics of Disengagement* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1998). They tend to use western archives (especially the British, but also Australian and American) intensively, and draw on Singapore perspectives. Partly due to a perceived difficulty in accessing relevant Malaysian archives, the latter's perspectives tend to be less well represented.

9. *The History of Singapore*, Discovery Channel, shown in Singapore on 4 December 2005, repeated 5, 12, 19 December that year; related Singapore Heritage Society-Asia Research Institute Forum of 13 December 2005; and Zakir Hussain, "Singapore's Past Rehashed", *Straits Times*, 12 December 2005.

10. See Hack's Chapter 10, which does use Lim Chin Siong's own words in dealing with the merger debates of 1961–1965. This lack of telling the story through Lim's words and policies of the time is notwithstanding attempts to reconstruct the outlines of his life, and to portray his role more sympathetically. See C.J. W.-L. Wee, "The Vanquished: Lim Chin Siong and a Progressivist

National Narrative", in *Lee's Lieutenants: Singapore's Old Guard*, eds. Lam Peng Er and Kevin Tan (New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1999), pp. 169–90; and Tan Qing Quee and Jomo K.S., *Comet in Our Sky: Lim Chin Siong in History* (Kuala Lumpur: INSAN, 2001).

11. E. Kay Gillis, *Singapore Civil Society and British Power* (Singapore: Talisman, 2005).

12. Hong and Huang, *The Scripting of a National History* is the best study of this process, including both mainstream state efforts, and the treatment of "Chinese heroes" such as Sun Yat Sen (at the Sun Yat Sen Memorial Hall) and Aw Boon Haw. It also reprints Hong's "The Lee Kuan Yew Story as Singapore's History" from *JSEAS* 33, 3 (October 2002): 545–57.

13. Kevin Tan, *Marshall of Singapore: A Biography* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008) is the latest work; Chan Heng Chee, *A Sensation of Independence: A Political Biography* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984) is the classic version; and for the flavour of the man, see also Melanie Chew, *Leaders of Singapore* (Singapore: Resource Press, 1996), pp. 69–82. The PAP view of Marshall tends towards arguing that — though he played a role — his recklessness overstimulated events and his subsequent opposition to merger and formation of the Workers' Party was opportunistic, if not dangerous. Chan Heng Chee favours a more generous view of his role in the early years of nationalism.

14. The still classic study of communitarianism is Chua Beng Huat, *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore* (London: Routledge, 1995). As a sociologist, Chua has since looked instead at how identity is constituted in a partly depoliticised society. Hence, discussions of, for instance, food hybridisation and cultural producers, allow him to see how Singaporeans challenge official views, and constitute their identities semi-autonomously in ways that contradict, for instance, state stress on the innate separateness of Chinese, Malay and Indian realms. See his *Life is Not Complete Without Shopping: Consumption Culture in Singapore* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003), pp. vii–viii, *passim*.

15. Barr and Trocki, *Paths Not Taken*, pp. 1–2.

16. Yao Suchou, *Singapore: The State and the Culture of Excess* (London: Routledge, 2005) comes to this conclusion using a social science battery of approaches on issues such as the caning of Michael Fay, judicial decisions on fellatio, and the war on terror. See also, Carl Trocki, *Singapore: Wealth, Power and the Culture of Control* (London: Routledge, 2006).

17. This trend to increasing the number of individuals and organisations acknowledged as having made positive contributions to Singapore's recent history need not be anti-PAP. Indeed, one of the most notable examples is Lam Peng Er and Kevin Tan's *Lee's Lieutenants: Singapore's Old Guard* (New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1999), which included an early attempt to

understand Lim Chin Siong's PAP role better, and studies of Malay and Chinese educated party leaders.

18. "Conference on the Makers and Keepers of Singapore History", Asian Research Centre, NUS, Singapore, 10 November 2008, included papers by most of those named, as well as more on rural associations (C.C. Chin) and other forgotten or suppressed stories and voices. Its theme was also that "Keepers" needed to ease access, so not only voices per se, but also specifically the "other" side of the PAP story (including that of unions, activists, etc.) could be understood. See also "The Makers and Keepers of Singapore History", *Tangent* 6, 2 (2007) Special Issue, and "Voices of History", *Tangent* 6 (April 2003) Special Issue. Recent works by the younger generation include Chua Ai Lin's "Imperial Subjects, Straits Citizens: Anglophone Asians and the Struggle for Political Rights in Inter-War Singapore", in *Paths Not Taken: Political Pluralism in Post-war Singapore*, eds. Carl Trocki and Michael Barr (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), pp. 16–36, and Syed Muhd Khairuddin Aljunied, *Colonialism, Violence and Muslims in Southeast Asia: The Maria Hertogh Controversy and its Aftermath* (London: Routledge, 2009).

19. Mark Ravinder Frost, "Emporium in Imperio: Nanyang Networks and the Straits Chinese in Singapore, 1819–1914", *JSEAS* 36, 1 (2005): 29–66.

20. Chua Ai Lin and Mark Emanual had introduced a course on the Cultural History of Singapore at the National University of Singapore around the time this book was completed.

21. This suggests not just history *of* underclasses and the neglected, but history *from their perspective*, using sources which give them a voice. For a conceptual discussion, see Karl Hack, "Sex and Empire", in Open University, *A326 Empire: 1492–1975*, Block 4 (Milton Keynes: Open University, 2009), pp. 271–311.

22. The quotation is in fact the title of the famed study on Paris 19th-century proletariat by Louis Chevalier, namely *Classes Laborieuses et Classes Dangereuses Pendant la Première Moitié du XIXe Siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1958).

23. This is also neatly conceptualised as "history from the underside" in Peter J. Rimmer and Lisa M. Allen, *The Underside of Malaysian History: Pullers, Prostitutes, Plantation Workers* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990); James Francis Warren, *Ah Ku and Karayuki-san: Prostitution in Singapore 1870–1940* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1993) and *Rickshaw Coolie: A People's History of Singapore 1880–1940* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003, first published 1986). See also the work of Warren's student, Stephen Dobbs, in *The Singapore River: A Social History 1819–2002* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003).

24. "S/pores: New Directions in Singapore Studies", at <http://s-pores.com/> [accessed 22 July 2009]. For instance, issue 2, 1 (February 2009) was a special edition on the leftist figure, Dr. M.K. Rajakumar, including articles

by historians (Hong Lysa and Mark Ravinder Frost) as well as people with experience of the left, such as ex-Barisan Socialis leader and detainee Poh Soo Kai, and Tan Jing Quee. The first four editions concentrated on the 1950s.

25. See also Poh Soo Kai, Koh Kay Yew and Tan Jing Quee eds., *The Fajar Generation: The University Socialist Club and the Politics of Postwar Malaya and Singapore* (Petaling Jaya: SIRD, 2009). There is a book in English on Lim, namely Tan Jing Quee and K.S. Jomo, *Comet in Our Sky: Lim Chin Siong in History* (Kuala Lumpur: INSAN, 2001), but the volume of his memoirs containing speeches is only available in Chinese. Consequently, there is the feeling of never seeing through Lim's eyes. Even those speeches we have in translation — for instance, as reported in *The Plebeian*, the Barisan Sosialis paper — seem part neutered in English. But there is also a swelling stream of oral history and memoir literature emerging from ex-left wingers, including Fong Chong Pik (Fang Chuang Pi, dubbed "the Plen" by Lee Kuan Yew), *Fong Chong Pik: The Memoirs of a Malayan Communist Revolutionary* (Petaling Jaya: SIRD, 2008), especially pp. 74–8; and the work of C.C. Chin and others.

26. This was followed up by Arun Mahizhnan and Lee Tsao Yuan, eds., *Singapore: Re-engineering Success* (Singapore: IPS, 1998). More recently, there is Bridget Welsh, James Chin, Arun Mahizhnan and Tan Tarn How eds., *Impressions of the Goh Chok Tong Years in Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009).

27. See also Saskia Sassen, "Global Cities and Global City-Regions: A Comparison", in *Global City Regions: Trends, Theory, Policy*, ed. Allen J. Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Andrew Jonas and Kevin Ward, "Introduction to a Debate on City-Regions: New Geographies of Governance, Democracy and Social Reproduction", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31, 1 (2007): 169–78 and reply in 32, 2 (2007): 443–58. Finally, the degree to which the politics of the 1950s–1960s — of merger and separation — continues to irritate Malaysia-Singapore relations is well covered in Takashi Shirashi, ed., *Across the Causeway: A Multi-Dimensional Study of Malaysia-Singapore Relations* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2009).

28. The wider Japanese system is briefly discussed in Karl Hack and Tobias Rettig, *Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 225–6, and p. 37 notes 63–7. Perhaps still the most significant work in English on this period is Peter Duus, Ramon H. Meyers and Mark Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). See also Jean-Louis Margolin, *L'Armée de l'Empereur: Violences et Crimes du Japon en Guerre, 1937–1945* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2007). For Japanese empire in relation to Singapore, see Paul H. Kratoska, *The Japanese Occupation of Malaya 1941–1945* (London: Hurst & Co., 1998). The semi-official version can be found in Lee Geok Boi's excellent *The Syonan Years: Singapore under Japanese Rule, 1942–1945* (Singapore: National Archives, 2005).

29. We use Melaka for precolonial times and for the post-1970 period when Malay spelling was revised; Malacca for periods of British domination. Where possible, this book otherwise uses new rather than old spellings for Malay names, hence for instance, Johor not Johore, and Hanyu Pinyin, not Wade Giles for Chinese, hence Guomindang not Kuomintang. Where we think it might help, we give the alternative in brackets.

30. John Miksic and Cheryl-Ann Low Mei Gek, eds., *Early Singapore, 1300s–1819* (Singapore: Singapore History Museum, 2004) has superb chapters on these issues by the authors, Derek Heng, and Omar Chen.

31. See, for instance, Carl Trocki, *Prince of Pirates: The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore, 1784–1885* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007, first edition 1997).

32. For this transition, ranging from the Chinese Protectorate, constituted in 1877 as a way of increasing influence over "indirect rule" allies in the Chinese clans and secret societies, to a fairly modern state in the 1920s, see for instance, C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, pp. 85–8 and — for opium and indirect rule — Carl Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Singapore, 1784–1885* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990), *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade* (London: Routledge, 1999), and Chapter 3 of his *Singapore: Wealth, Power and the Culture of Control* (London: Routledge, 2006).

33. Such differences contributed to some 19th-century riots. But as late as the 1950s, some Chinatown residents viewed living amongst people of different dialects groups as an alien and new experience compared to living in China. See, for instance, Barrington Kaye, *Upper Nankin Street Singapore: A Sociological Study of Chinese Households Living in a Densely Populated Area* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1960), pp. 227–9, *passim*.

34. The Fabians were an intellectual grouping (in some ways akin to modern policy institutes which have a political bias) within the British Labour Party. From its late 19th-century inception, it stressed specialist research in order to inform structural reform, thus underpinning a fairly elitist and technocratic approach. For claims that this approach heavily influenced the Cambridge-educated young "Harry" Lee (as Lee Kuan Yew then called himself), see especially, Michael Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Beliefs Behind the Man* (London: Curzon, 2000).

35. Charles Goldblum and Wong Tai Chee, "The China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park: A Turnkey Product of Singapore?", *The Geographical Review* 90 (January 2000): 112–22. Chye Hui Sze, "Tianjin Eco-City Breaks New Ground", in *Skyline* (URA bimonthly newsletter), September-October 2008, pp. 5–6. The eco-city concept combines a number of old and new Singapore planning concepts, for instance, the old (high density, high-rise living, neighbourhoods rebranded as eco-cells with all required amenities including

some employment) and the new (linear parks as "green connectors", here one running all the way through and combined with cycle and pedestrian routes), use of water features, combining eco-cells as one eco-neighbourhood in a way that maximises opportunities for travel without car and divides the eco-cells by green spaces and corridors which facilitate non-car movement. But it takes these principles further, with an increased emphasis on sustainability. See also <http://www.tianjinecocity.gov.sg/> [accessed 9 July 2009]. Amazingly, the idea was broached to China by Singapore in 2007, and yet groundbreaking occurred in September 2008.

36. Gary McDonagh and Cindy Wong, *Global Hong Kong* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. xi.

37. Indeed, Singapore's 14th- to early 15th-century flourish, and after it Melaka's early success, seem to have been intimately connected to the rise of Chinese trade in the region, and also to the Chinese Admiral Zheng He's (Cheng Ho) voyages of 1405–1433. See Geoff Wade, "Ming Chinese Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia", in *Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia*, eds. Hack and Rettig, pp. 39–72, and the editors in ibid., pp. 18–24.

38. This point is brilliantly made in James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 1–5.
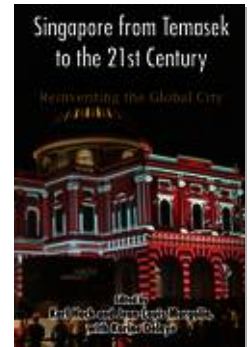
Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

Hack, Karl

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Singapore between Cosmopolis and Nation

Anthony Reid

Singapore is often seen from a postcolonial perspective as one of the anomalies left behind by the British empire; a port city trying to become a state. This paper takes an opposite perspective, grounded in the long history of "central Southeast Asia", the corridor between Bangkok and Jakarta. The Peninsula, and the hinterland of the two vital Straits of Melaka and Sunda, has for millennia been a place of exchanges, transshipments and portages. It is an area "made for merchandise", with poor agricultural soils but many strategic locations for the necessary points of exchange between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

The mixed population of Chinese, Indians, Southeast Asians and Europeans in such cosmopolitan entrepôts was not an accident of colonial displacement, but a necessity for the regional role in world trade. Seen from this perspective, the anomaly may be the 20th century, with its attempt to impose an alien concept of nation on the *cosmopoleis* which had taken root there. The 21st century may well see a reversal of this pressure, and a return to the region's natural need for cosmopolis.

Definitions

In using the term "cosmopolis", I am indebted not so much to the cosmopolitan-heartlander dichotomy of Singapore discourse, but to Immanuel Kant and his newly fashionable *Towards Perpetual Peace* (1795), where cosmopolis is used to denote a world system where differences between communities are accommodated in a kind of federal structure.[1] My agenda is more modest than Kant's universal one, and my use of the term is restricted to an urban context. I use it to describe a form of city-state relatively well-developed in Central Southeast Asia (as in some other global crossroads), where a necessarily plural community is governed through leaders themselves cosmopolitan in culture and able to mediate between groups. I will however endorse one finding of Kant, that while religion and language separate nations, "the spirit of commerce unites them", so that the task of cosmopolis is to mediate these two contrary impulses.

As a kind of antithesis of cosmopolis, we place the familiar modern idea of nation, as a community imagined as having important elements of cultural homogeneity, the location of which coincides, or *should* coincide, with the territorial borders of a nation-state and the authority of a single government. Putting aside for the moment a few antecedents of the national idea which may have made a marginal earlier impact in some quarters of Southeast Asia, I will argue that this was a concept imposed by Europeans, and that it remained alien to the region until the 20th century's remarkable love affair with nationalism. One of the features of 20th-century nationalism was to try to impose the nation backwards onto a cosmopolitan past, claiming the "Empayer" of Melaka, Brunei or Majapahit as the antecedent of modern nation-states. In this construct, cosmopolis is embarrassing, and where it cannot be avoided, has to be put down to aberrant colonial schemes to divide and rule. I want to proceed in the opposite direction, tracing the cosmopolitanism of quite ancient times forward to the point where it is overtaken by nation in the 20th century, and to see whether this makes a difference to how we imagine the future.

The third element of my title, "Central Southeast Asia", is the Bangkok-Jakarta central axis of Southeast Asia. It is formed by the world's longest peninsula, nearly blocking the shipping route between East Asia and the rest of Eurasia and Africa, the two Straits through which it obliges that shipping to pass, and the adjacent littoral. It is thus a natural place of entrepôts and meeting places, set moreover in a climatic zone relatively unfriendly to intensive agriculture. The high year-round

rainfall, thick vegetation and mediocre soils made this in the *longue durée* a region very difficult to develop for rice agriculture, so that hunter-gatherer populations, as well as tigers and elephants, dominated the hinterlands. The entrepôts which developed at strategic locations in this zone took for granted that they would import most of their food staples by sea. Only in the 19th and 20th centuries were the malarial lowlands of this region harnessed on any significant scale for permanent agriculture. I have called it elsewhere the historically "empty centre" of Southeast Asia, or the "low centre" of my saucer model of Southeast Asian identity.[2] Although Central Southeast Asia developed significant centres of wet-rice agriculture in the 20th century, it remains today what it has been throughout recorded history, one of the most urban-dominated zones of the world.

The first major population concentrations to arise in this zone must have been watering points for vessels, and harbours where cargoes were discharged from vessels and transferred to portages across the rivers and passes of the peninsula. Paul Wheatley called the whole long period between about 550 and 1400 CE "the Isthmian Age", because of the importance of little port-states at both ends of the portages across the peninsula.[3] At times when piracy was under control and the sea route of the Straits was viable, entrepôts were still essential for vessels waiting for a change of monsoon to take them safely home on a following wind. It was therefore essential to the viability of such entrepôts to be hospitable both to traders coming across the Indian Ocean from India and the Middle East, and to those coming across the South China Sea. A third strand, usually also present, were traders bringing the spices and forest products of the Indonesian Archipelago to this central zone in exchange for textiles and other manufactures from China and India.

Cosmopolis was therefore built into the nature of the successful entrepôt in this zone; but security was not. The problem for cosmopolis in this part of the world was to find a form of government that would protect commercial communities rather than preying upon them. Where it happened, the formula had almost nothing to do with nation, but much with the supernatural charisma of kingship. Since monarchs were themselves one of the greatest dangers to the accumulation of wealth, some of the most successful comopoleis, Banten and Patani in the early 17th century or Aceh in the late 17th, chose a female ruler or a minor as a means to combine royal charisma with the effectively oligarchic power of the leaders of commercial communities.[4]

Precolonial Cosmopoleis

Chinese and Arab sources since the sixth century have reported numerous collecting and trade centres with puzzling names within this zone, of which the most important was that known to the sources as San Fo Chih, Sribuza or Srivijaya. They make clear that it was a crossroads, "an important thoroughfare on the sea-routes of the foreigners on their way to and from [China]", as Chou Ch'u-fei reported it.[5] The earliest inscriptions in the Malay language are here, and they are in the form of curses, threatening horrible things if the diverse groups who took the oath at the stone failed in their duty of loyalty. It was, in other words, a very plural polity, held together by largely magical means.

Although Srivijaya has surprisingly little to say for itself, the way it is remembered [as Bukit Seguntang] in the Malay texts is interesting. The *Hikayat Hang Tuah* records a longstanding concept of Malay sovereignty, that a charismatic ruler attracts a diverse trade and population.

> It became known among all nations that Bukit Seguntang had a king … whose demeanour was exceedingly kind and courteous, and who cared for all foreign traders and scholars. After this was heard in all countries, people from here and there came to Bukit Seguntang; from the sea and from the land they came to approach this king.[6]

The surest historical evidence for the diversity of foreigners who spent time in Srivijaya, however, was the description of the city by the seventh-century Chinese monk, I Qing. He insisted that there were more than a thousand Buddhist priests in its monasteries, and advised pilgrims from China to spend time there to master Sanskrit and Pali before travelling on to the holy places of India. Where there were Indian and Chinese monks maintaining these language abilities, there must have been Indian and Chinese commercial communities maintaining the monks. Chinese trading communities are also likely to have helped manage the tributary trade between Srivijaya and Tang China, so important for the commerce of the whole region. One of the heirs of Srivijaya was 14th-century Temasek, of which Wang Dayuan reported that "the men and women dwell together with Chinese people" — which suggests there was not yet a developed cosmopolis with separate ethnic quarters, but rather a mixing tending towards hybridity.[7]

The evidence of the Nakhon Si Thammarat chronicle, one of the oldest Peninsula literary productions, is intriguing as to the very plural origins of what eventually became Thai Buddhist and Malay Muslim polities on the

Peninsula. The origins of the Peninsula dynasties are there traced to a moment of Chinese interaction with the salt-exporting centre of Phetburi in the Gulf of Siam at a time evidently pre-dating the rise of Ayutthaya — perhaps equating to the 13th century. The ruler of Phetburi, himself possibly a Khmer with origins in Angkor, provides sandalwood to a visiting Chinese ship, and is rewarded by the Chinese emperor with his daughter (or granddaughter) by a Champa princess, Candradevi. She is sent to Phetburi with 19 ships and 7,400 servants and concubines to serve the king of Phetburi. He then sends out his sons and retainers, some endowed with Chinese consorts and *Khèk* (likely to be Austronesian, or possibly Khmer) auxiliaries, to found other polities including the predecessor of Nakhon. The principal son, ancestor-figure of the Nakhon line, in turn sends out *Khèk* in boats to become rajas of the *Khèk* principalities further south, including areas we now know as Trang, Songkhla, Patani, Kedah and Pahang.[8] This type of source has been recently used by Chris Baker to rewrite the origins of the Thai kingdom as an ethnically diverse trading emporium rather than the successor of Sukhothai as in the national canon.[9]

What we know of Peninsula ports like Mergui, Tenasserim, Phukhet, Penang, Kedah and Melaka on the west coast, and Nakhon Sithammarat, Songkhla and Patani on the east coast, in the 15th to 18th centuries shows essentially mixed trading populations. Indian traders of various sorts tended to dominate the commerce of the west coast cities, and Chinese those of the east coast, but ethnic categories were in constant flux as male long-distance traders married or cohabited with female Southeast Asians who did the local marketing. Their children formed new commercial diasporas in the region, often referred to as Malay if Muslim, and Chinese if not.

The sources are the most helpful for pre-1511 Melaka. We know that a hybridised Malay-speaking Muslim elite ruled over an intensely cosmopolitan entrepôt by developing a ritualised charismatic monarchy, and by putting the highest possible priority on succeeding Srivijaya as the privileged tributary gateway from Central Southeast Asia to the China market. Melaka's most successful ruler, Sultan Mansur (r. 1459–1477), was saluted as a cosmopolitan king in 1472 by the King of Ryukyu: "your virtues are known to neighbouring countries, and you put yourself in the place of others and make no distinctions among various peoples, loving others as you do yourself and treating people equally".[10] Tomé Pires reported that 84 distinct languages were spoken by the people of pre-Portuguese Melaka.[11] The most important commercial communities, each settling in their own districts with wealthy bilingual headmen over them,

were Gujaratis (1,000), other North Indians, Arabs and Persians (3,000), South Indians (unspecified, but more numerous than the former); Javanese (10,000 settled in Upeh), Mons from Pegu, Luzons from Manila and Brunei, Ryukyuans, Chinese and various peoples from the Archipelago.[12]

The Thai-ruled trading cities in the northern half of the peninsula were also known for their intense variety of trading groups. When we have fuller descriptions of Ayutthaya in the 17th century, one claimed that "almost half of the kingdom is populated by Peguans, taken in war; … there are also many Lao". The royal guard was Chinese and Muslim; and the standing army composed in equal measure of Thai, Mon, Khmer and Lao.[13] Another French source emphasised how the freedom of its commerce attracted to Ayutthaya:

> a great multitude of strangers of different nations, who settled there with the liberty of living according to their own customs, and of publicly exercising their several ways of worship. Every nation possesses its own quarter … Moreover every nation chooses its chief.[14]

The best early modern Southeast Asian defence of pluralism was perhaps that of the Thai King Narai (r. 1657–1688), declining a request from King Louis XIV of France that he become a Catholic Christian. He expressed surprise that King Louis should expect everybody to have the same faith and rituals, whereas God himself seemed to rejoice in the great diversity of his human creation. "Ought not one to think that the true God takes as great pleasure to be honoured by different worships and ceremonies, as [he does] to be glorified by a prodigious number of creatures."[15]

Ayutthaya's successor, Bangkok, continued this pattern in the early 19th century. Though estimates of the flourishing cosmopolis' ethnic populations vary, most agreed that Thais were a small minority in a rich tapestry of Chinese (the largest category), Mons, Thais or Siamese, Lao, Vietnamese, Malays, and so forth.[16]

Further south in the Peninsula, the diversity was equally marked. Malay was the *lingua franca* in most ports, and hence, place names were expressed to foreigners in their Malay variants — Ligor, Singora, Ujung Salang or Junk Ceylon; not Nakhon, Songkhla and Phuket. The ruling family appears to have been basically Thai in Nakhon and Malay in Patani, but the elite was certainly bilingual, and there were any number of Chinese and Indian high officials at both places.

At the time of van Warwyck's visit to Patani in 1602, the most important figure in commercial and military affairs was said to be the Datu

Seri Nara, a Peranakan Chinese, or in the Dutchman's terms, "a Malay of Chinese origin", converted to Islam.[17] Observers in the 17th century noted that the Chinese trade was the life-blood of the city, ever since 2,000 Cantonese "pirates" (according to Ming annals) made it their base in the 1560s.[18] Patani was then the kind of base for the Chinese Southeast Asian trade that Bangkok, Batavia and Singapore later became, with their ships sailing throughout the Archipelago as far as Makasar, and to Ayutthaya and Hoi An (Cochin-China). When Olivier van Noort discovered Patani traders in Brunei in 1601, he found they were a community that had fled or been banished from China, and presented themselves as still very Chinese even under their own Patani king, with "the same laws as exist in China".[19] But Patani traders in eastern Indonesia a generation later were classified as a kind of Malay, and it seems safe to assume that a considerable number of them did assimilate to the mobile Malayo-Muslim commercial elite which featured in all the ports eastward of Sumatra in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Cosmopolis, in other words, was built into the very fabric of the Peninsula's character, to an extent hard to match by any other area of comparable size on our planet, before the European impact.

European Concepts of "Nation"

The much-debated concept of "nation" had a long history in Europe going back to the Middle Ages, though it became politically central for certain early "nation-states" in the 16th century.[20] Portugal was one of these, and the Netherlands took the concept of nation-state to unprecedented successes in the 17th century. If we exclude the eccentric imperial project of the early Ming emperors and their Zheng He fleets, it was the quarrelling Europeans who brought to the Indian Ocean for the first time the idea of using military force to support the commercial aims of one "nation" against its perceived competitors. Especially when projected into foreign, Asian waters, this programme rested on new concepts of loyalty based on race, religion, and language.

The Portuguese and Spanish set out on their voyages of discovery at almost the identical moment, in 1492, when they took the major step towards the nationalist project of realising homogeneity within their borders, by expelling their Jews and Muslims. To Southeast Asia, the Portuguese introduced a spirit that is often described as crusading, but it is closer to the mark to say they projected overseas the religiously-coloured

early nationalism of a small and compact people. Their visceral enemies were first, the "Moors" whom they had fought down the Iberian Peninsula; second, the Protestant Dutch, who replaced the Muslims as enemy number one in Asia; and third, the Castilians with whom they bitterly contested exclusive rights in Asia.

Tomé Pires may have been the first to write the word "nation" in a Southeast Asian context when explaining why the classic cosmopolis of Melaka, ready as always to use Gujarati and other merchants to defend it, as well as the *orang laut* sea people, had fallen before a handful of passionately nationalist Portuguese.

> The people did not back the king of Melaka, because in trading lands, where the people are of different nations (*nacões*), these cannot love their king as do natives (*naturall*) without admixture of other nations. This is generally the case, and therefore the king was disliked, though his mandarins fought.[21]

The ruling elite of Melaka would have had difficulty understanding this point, completely alien to the explanatory frame adopted by the Melaka chronicle, which was largely written to explain the fall of the great city. It weaves a moral tale about cosmic retaliation for a breaking of the contract between Ruler and the ruled.[22] Every Southeast Asian monarch had relied upon professional forces culturally different from himself, who could be relatively well trusted to be dependent on the king. Assorted Muslim and later Portuguese professional gunners served the mainland Buddhist states. In Melaka, even the exemplary "Malay" warrior Hang Tuah is quoted in chronicles as admitting to being "Hybridised Malay [*Melayu kacukan*], mixed up with Majapahit Javanese".[23]

Their early nationalism helped the Portuguese to win some battles, but it largely killed the golden goose of cosmopolis, which the Portuguese essentially sacrificed to their initial sense of nation as necessarily excluding Muslims. Titling himself "Lord of the conquest, navigation and commerce of Ethiopia, India, Arabia and Persia", King Manoel was too much prisoner of the national idea to allow his servants to play the necessary neutral role in the would-be Portuguese entrepôts. On the key sectors of trade where it had influence, the Portuguese crown sought to monopolise trade in the hands of either the crown itself (increasingly unable to cope with the demands) or merchants licensed by the crown. Only in Macao and Nagasaki, where the Portuguese were too weak to apply their dangerous ideas of nation, could they make substantial profits by operating within a kind of cosmopolis.

European Nation Ruling Asian Cosmopolis

Of course, not all the cosmopolis was on the Asian side, or nation on the European. Firstly, the Portuguese onslaught onto Muslim shipping caused a reaction, whereby the expelled or injured Muslim merchants rallied behind rulers, particularly Aceh, willing and able to stand up to the Portuguese. We could identify a national response in Aceh, which in turn damaged its cosmopolis by excluding the Portuguese in the 16th century, and even the Chinese (on Islamic grounds) for some of the 17th. The 17th-century law against Thai women marrying foreigners is another such contradiction of the long-term tolerance which appears to mark Thai management of foreign traders.[24]

The Europeans for their part learnt quickly of the enormous advantages of cosmopolis, and built their own versions, albeit with a touch of nation in the way they ruled. The Portuguese were less successful than their successors largely because they made all the mistakes from which the Spanish, Dutch and English learnt.

The Spanish learnt something from Portuguese mistakes, but basically they were extraordinarily lucky. Though dreaming of spices and souls, Legazpi's conquistadors arrived in the Philippines just as China for the first time licensed its shippers to trade to the south legally, in 1567. Since their anti-Muslim bias did not get in the way of this arm of trade, the Spanish moved their headquarters in 1571 to the principal Chinese trading base at Manila, and took advantage of the boundless enthusiasm of Chinese traders for Mexican silver. Manila managed to become both the most important single Southeast Asian destination for Chinese traders until about 1640, and the most important for Japanese until about 1610 (when Hoi An took over), despite the paranoid outbreaks of Spanish nationalism that constantly threatened to kill this golden goose also. By 1603, there were about 20,000 Chinese residents in the city, largely self-governing, as well as 1,500 Japanese.[25]

For our Central Southeast Asia story, however, the Spanish are important chiefly as a model for the Dutch in the 17th century, who more self-consciously learnt the lessons of how to build an Asian cosmopolis. The Dutch brought a more clearly established sense of nation, in which a republican ideal of the common participation of the property-holding elite was far more important than either religion or dynasty. The chief foes of their nationalism, however, were the Spanish and Portuguese, not the Muslim and Chinese traders they found in Asia. They managed, therefore, to be relatively clear-eyed about the commercial advantages of

cosmopolis. Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587–1629) was the most determined advocate of a permanent Dutch stronghold in Asia, emulating those of the Portuguese and Spanish, and he established it in 1619 by capturing Jakarta and renaming it Batavia. His goal was, as he explained to his Board of Directors,

> to establish a place where so great a concourse of people would come to us, Chinese, Malay, Javanese, Klings and all other nations, to reside and trade in peace and freedom under Your Excellency's [VOC] jurisdiction, that soon a city would be peopled and the staple of the trade attracted, so that [Portuguese] Melaka would fall to nothing.[26]

These calculations were similar to those of Raffles' two centuries later, when he argued that by attracting Asian traders through good conditions, Singapore would eclipse the Dutch settlements. But in his time, Coen was so far ahead of most English opinion that one nationalist English trader complained,

> I cannot imagine what these Hollanders meane, to suffer these Maleysians, Chinesians and other Moores of these countries, and to assist them in theyr free trade through all the Indies, and forbidde it theyr own servants, countrymen and bretheren.[27]

In reality, Coen was heir to Dutch ideas about the nation, but fortunately for the persistence of Jakarta as Batavia, his scheme to develop a solid Dutch citizenry in Batavia to embody it was a failure. The Dutch-speaking European and Mestizo communities declined steadily in demographic significance as the city grew, from 29% of the population in 1632 to 23.5% in 1739.[28]

Within two years of its founding, there were 1,263 Chinese paying the city's poll tax, attracted or dragooned from Banten and other nearby sites, as well as from Chinese ships. They were engaged in service industries, construction, craft production and provisioning. Unlike Manila or Portuguese Melaka, Batavia did not particularly encourage Chinese or other Asians (unless they were Catholics and therefore potential enemies), to adopt the Calvinist faith of its rulers. The developed Dutch sense of an ethnically and culturally homogeneous nation here worked in favour of cosmopolis, by setting limits to the local hybridity tolerated in the Dutch community, and thereby necessitating a plural city.

During Batavia's commercial apogee between 1680 and 1730, it was probably the most important international entrepôt in Asia, and had an extremely diverse population. Of the 71,600 counted both inside and outside the walls in 1699, for example, 4.8% were European and Eurasian Christians: 11% Asian Christians of very diverse ethnic backgrounds

(*Mardijkers*); 16.2% Chinese; 1.8% Indians, chiefly Muslim; 3.5% Malays; 31.6% assorted other Indonesians (Javanese and Balinese beginning to predominate); and 36% slaves of chiefly east Indonesian background.[29] Each of these categories was enormously varied internally, but the diasporic tendency to ally and identify with larger groups, especially where these had official status, was also in play here.

The two most economically important Asian categories for the trade of the city, Chinese and Malays (an essentially diasporic trading community having little in common with 20th-century understandings of the term), each had their own captains and administrative autonomy. From the outset, a prominent Chinese trader, So Bingkong, was appointed Captain of the Batavia Chinese, and his authority was reinforced with the right to certain monopoly revenues, in what became an entrenched pattern of Sino-Dutch economic partnership. Indian Muslims acquired their officer only in the 18th century.

British Rule and Southeast Asian Cosmopolis

By the 19th century, Britain was certainly a nation-state, and the British imposed many of the fundamental monopolies of the nation-state in Asia. One of the first steps had to be clear boundaries within which British sovereignty was absolute and British laws, currency and institutions prevailed. The 19th century was unprecedented in the way the map of southern Asia (China-Korea-Vietnam had got there first) was painted in different colours, with lines demarcating one sovereignty from another. Burney, for example, pointed out to the Chancellor [*Kalahom*] of Siam:

> the advantage of having regular boundaries established as soon as possible between the Siamese dominions and our conquests on the coasts of Tenasseri … I added that the English earnestly desire to live in the vicinity of the Siamese as good friends and neighbours, and not in the same unsettled and unsocial terms as the Burmese had done; that for this reason we are anxious to have the boundary and rights of each party fixed, so as to prevent all chance of mistake or dispute between our subordinate officers.[30]

But being sated with nation in India and Burma, the British saw the merits of cosmopolis in Central Southeast Asia, and were very slow to encourage any imagining of nations there.

Francis Light, the pioneer of what became the British hegemony of the Peninsula, was appropriately fluent in both Thai and Malay, and had

his principal base in Phuket before becoming the first British Resident of Penang in 1786. His infant settlement began with a diversity typical of the Peninsula. "Our inhabitants are composed of Chinese, Malays, Christians, Chulias, Siamese and Tannoes," he wrote a year after its foundation.[31] In the 1820s, James Low explained the difficulties of administering justice in the settlement when the chief languages current were English, Hindustani, Tamil, Arabic, Telugu, Bengali, at least ten dialects of Chinese, Burmese, Mon, Siamese, Malay, Javanese, Buginese and Batak.[32]

The ports on the Peninsula side of the Malacca Straits became in the 19th and 20th centuries the archetype of cosmopolis, perhaps more resistant to the contrary needs of nation than any other corner of the globe. The British took cosmopolis to one of its highest levels by adding their own notion of a free port open to migration and trade to what they inherited — the indigenous notion of cosmopolis and Dutch legal arrangements within it. Penang and Singapore were open virtually to anyone, and attracted a diverse population. The proportion that could be considered "British" (though that category was not emphasised in censuses) never exceeded one per cent, though English and Malay became the *linguae francae* of an exceptionally mixed population.

No culture could be said to dominate Penang at that time, and the largest categories in the census of 1833 — 40% Malays, 22% Chinese, 20% "Chulias" and 3% "Bengalis" — were in practice much divided into different linguistic and cultural groups. Sumatrans, Burmese and Siamese were of similar demographic weight to the Europeans, while communities of Arabs (142 in 1833), Parsees or Zoroastrians (51) and Armenians (21) were very small and yet capable of sustaining their own social and religious institutions. [33] The same was true of Singapore, though the proportions differed. Chinese were 41% (and predominately male), Malays 34%, Tamils 9%, "Bugis, Balinese, etc." (the only majority female category, thanks to the marriage market) 8%, North Indians 2.4%, and "native Christians" 1.4%.[34] Arab, Jewish, Armenian and German communities were smaller but economically and socially significant, with their own religious and social institutions (the German club was established before Germany was, in 1856).[35] In the 20th century, Russian and Japanese communities became significant, and increasingly also a French-speaking one. Religious festivals, marriages, funerals, national days, and visiting troupes from external homelands were the occasions for each group to celebrate its culture and to put it on show for the cosmopolitan audience.

The 20th-Century Imposition of Nation on Cosmopolis

"Central Southeast Asia", like the rest of the world, was carved into nation-states in the 20th century. Imperial nationalism required sharp boundaries and undisputed sovereignty within them; anti-imperial nationalism provided the missing ingredients of imagined communities — popular mobilisation and the aspiration for a uniform and universal education. The Dutch unified the archipelago with rather extreme forms of monopoly, mercantilism and protectionism at different times. In consequence, Batavia/Jakarta was in uninterrupted decline as cosmopolis, relative to other centres, from about 1760 until today. Having established the supremacy of the nation over the cosmopolis by the end of the 18th century, there could be no logical way out except eventually to democratise that nation through some form of majority rule. Indonesia's transition to independence would have been on a more pluralist, federal basis without the revolution which followed the Japanese surrender, but it is difficult to imagine a decolonisation process that could have revived the once-great Batavia cosmopolis — particularly in competition with Singapore.

Siam began the transition to nation-state in the 1890s as the self-strengthening essential to holding off its aggressive imperial neighbours. The process of transition became more drastic with the 1932 revolution, and reached its most extreme under the Japanese-aligned nationalist government of Phibun Songkhram in 1938–1944. Nation was explicitly imposed on cosmopolis. A single Thai identity was defined, with prescribed patterns of (western) dress and behaviour, Chinese and Malay newspapers and schools were almost all closed, and the separate system of Islamic inheritance and marriage law was abolished in favour of a uniform Thai system.[36]

At the centre of "Central Southeast Asia", in British Malaya, cosmopolis was most strongly entrenched. Even the idea of a nation-state was barely established. The strongest nationalist movements prior to 1945 had been in support of other identities — Chinese, Indian, and Indonesian. Even the Japanese rulers of the southern Peninsula in 1942–1945 used the nationalisms of China, India, Indonesia and Thailand to mobilise feelings against the Allies, not any local sense of nation. Not surprisingly, this was the last corner of colonial Asia to gain its independence, in 1957 (as Malaya) and 1963 (enlarged as Malaysia), after a lengthy communist insurgency and various unsuccessful schemes to create a single citizenship.

Even the education system could not be effectively unified, as separate Chinese, Malay and English language schools continued to mould students towards different aspirations. The very concept of national culture had to be plural, representing a cosmopolitan mosaic of different traditions.

When the experiment to unite Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo failed in 1965, Singapore was split off from Malaysia to form its own state. Two very different visions of how to build a nation-state on such a cosmopolitan base had fatally collided. Each of the separated parts would proceed to attempt to realise its own vision in the ensuing decade, the Malaysian increasingly Malay-dominated, the Singaporean dominated by an English-educated meritocratic elite. As the Singapore Prime Minister later asked rhetorically, "How were we to create a nation out of a polyglot collection of migrants from China, India, Indonesia and several other parts of Asia?"[37]

On hindsight, the 1960s can be seen as the peak of what James Scott called "high modernism", and its assumption that the task of the state was to create a relatively homogeneous nation. In both Singapore and Malaysia, cosmopolis continued, though assailed in Malaysia by escalating demands for Malay language and deference to Islam, and in Singapore by an ambitious programme of integrated housing and education. As increasingly global competition created an international context where the advantages of cosmopolis could not be ignored, it made a predictable comeback. Jean-Louis Margolin already drew attention recently to "the great return of immigration", and the process was further marked at the 2000 census.[38]

The Singapore figures show the turnaround in the last decades of the nationalist century. Singapore's foreign-born population, one clear measure of the strength of cosmopolis in the mix, has usually been among the highest in the world, reflecting its status as cosmopolis par excellence. But this proportion showed a consistent decline throughout the 20th century, as migration from China, India and Indonesia largely ceased, domestic birth-rates soared, and the pressures of nation made themselves felt. The foreign-born proportions fell from a world-beating 72% in the 1921 census to 35% in that of 1957 and 21.8% in that of 1980. Since then, however, it has risen to 24% in 1990 and 33.6% in 2000, almost back to the level of 1957.[39] Foreign contract workers, down to as low as 100,000 in the early 1980s, reached 530,000 in 1999.[40] As the economy picked up, the total non-resident foreign population reached 875,000 at the end of 2006, representing a 10% increase on the previous year.[41]

By the end of the 20th century, the public rhetoric of nation appeared both less necessary in itself and less opposed to cosmopolis. Public leaders appealed to make Singapore "a cosmopolitan centre, able to attract, retain and absorb talent from all over the world",[42] or "a global hub where people, ideas and capital come together".[43] Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's 2006 National Day speech took this approach to new heights, making the need to attract large numbers of talented migrants its major theme. He seized the opportunity to lecture his audience that "each one of us, we have to welcome immigrants".[44] And rather like the theme of this chapter, he appealed to the cosmopolitan immigrant past of Singapore to justify its cosmopolitan future.

> Singapore offers something unique. We are an Asian society with an Asian heritage and culture and roots and yet we are an open and a cosmopolitan society. We use English as a common language, we keep our mother tongues and our cultures intact and alive and people from many cultures and backgrounds can come here, live here, be comfortable here and enjoy, integrate into our society. Become Singapore and yet retain what is unique about them and the links which they have back to their own cultures, their own homelands, their own sense of identity. And this is not just the three major races, Chinese or the Indians or the Malays but also many other smaller groups. In the earlier generations, we had Parsis, we had Jews from Iraq, we had Armenians, we had Arabs — little, little groups came to Singapore and made their home here and made their contribution here. Today, we get people from all over the world too. We have people from Turkey, there are Portuguese, somebody from Venezuela, somebody from Morocco, even a Korean or two, some Russians. And they add colour and diversity to this society.[45]

Interestingly Malaysia has witnessed the same turnaround after the 1980 census, though from a lower level of foreign-born population. Even though Malaysian public rhetoric is still about nation, and very little about cosmopolitanism, its foreign-born population rose from the 1980 nadir of 4.6% to 5.6% in 1990, and 8% in 2000.

The interplay between cosmopolis and nation will continue in the 21st century. The needs of nation for cultural coherence and political community will not disappear, though they may seem less urgent as nation-states and their members are knitted ever more intimately into supranational communities and economies. The birth rate of Singapore, like most of urban Asia, has been declining sharply, below replacement level throughout the 1990s. In addition, Singaporeans emigrate at the rate of about a thousand a year. Without immigration, therefore, the total population would be

rapidly ageing and in overall decline by the 2020s. We can be sure that Singapore, as supreme example of the type of cosmopolis that has long flourished in one of the historically most open crossroads of the world, will be increasingly interesting to a globalised world in which none can afford to isolate themselves behind a wall of homogenised national culture. Having managed to resist the demands of nation better than most should prove an asset in the 21st century, as it was not always in the 20th.

Notes

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3. Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1961).

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5. Cited Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, p. 63

6. Kassim Ahmad, ed., *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1964), p. 6.

7. Wang Dayuan, as translated in W.W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fourteenth Century", *T'oung Pao* 16 (1915): 131.

8. David Wyatt, *The Crystal Sands: The Chronicles of Nagara Sri Dharrmaraja* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southest Asia Program, 1975), pp. 102–10. One of the *Khèk* tributaries thus founded is intriguingly listed as Aceh. Wyatt (see 104n5) translates *Khèk* throughout this section as Malay which, though politically more correct, means imposing a modern ethnic term backwards to a pre-Muslim period when no such term was known. *Khèk* literally means guest or outsider, and has come in modern Thai to be used somewhat disparagingly for Malays, and darker people and Muslims more generally.

9. Chris Baker, "Ayutthaya Rising: From Land or Sea?", *JSEAS* 34, 1 (2003): 41–62.

10. Atsushi Kobata and Mitsugu Matsuda, eds., *Ryukyuan Relations with Korea and South Sea Countries: An Annotated Translation of Documents in the Rekidai Hoan* (Kyoto: Kobata, 1969), p. 114. Melaka's replies (in Chinese) to these letters were full of conventional phrases such as "All within the bounds of the four seas are brothers", but acknowledge that "traveling merchants come swarming to us from afar"; ibid., pp. 113, 118.

11. Armando Cortesão, trans., *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires* (London, Hakluyt Society, 1944), p. 269.

12. Ibid., pp. 254–5, 281–2.

13. L'Abbe de Choisy, *Journal du Voyage de Siam Fait en 1685 & 1686* (Paris: Chez Sebastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1687), p. 242.

14. Simon de La Loubère, *The Kingdom of Siam* (1693, reprinted Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 10–1, 112.

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21. *Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, p. 279 (Portuguese text p. 504).

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23. *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, p. 175. See also Anthony Reid, "Understanding *Melayu* (Malay) as a source of Diverse Modern Identities", *JSEAS* 32, 3 (October 2001): 295–313.

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29. Calculated from tables in Raben, *Batavia and Colombo*, Appendix III.

30. Journal of Burney, 15 February 1826, *The Burney Papers*, 5 vols. (Bangkok, 1910–14; reprinted Gregg International, 1971), I, pp. 85–6.

31. Cited in K.G. Tregonning, *The British in Malaya* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1965), p. 46. Tannoes suggests a refugee community from Tenasserim, a Peninsula port that had recently been conquered by Burma from Siam, though since they are later described as Muslim, it would have to represent a (predominately Indian) Muslim commercial element of the city.

32. James Low, *The British Settlement of Penang* (Singapore, 1826; reprinted Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 291–2.

33. Calculated from figures in ibid., pp. 125–6 and T.J. Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (1839; reprinted Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 54–5.

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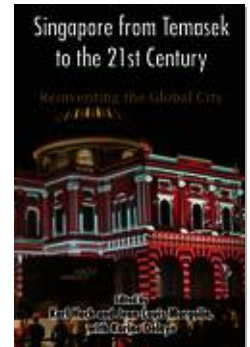
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Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

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Casting Singapore's History in the Longue Durée

*Derek Heng*

Introduction

Since Singapore attained its independence in 1965, it has been obsessed with the struggle to become and remain a successful city-state and global city. Having been regarded by much of the world, and its founding fathers, as a political anomaly, as too small to survive in a world of large nation-states linked to economic hinterlands, it focused on future survival at the cost of forgetting much of its past, especially its past before the arrival of the British in 1819. One of the key challenges to historians of Singapore is to reconcile the apparently anomalous post-1965 experience with the longer history of the island as part of the Malay Peninsula and maritime Southeast Asia.

Up until the mid-1980s, the history of Singapore had been constructed with the post-1965 era as the core of the narrative, centred on the dual themes of the emerging city-state and nation-state. The pre-1965 period had been incorporated to provide the narrative with a primeval genesis, with 1819, the year that the British East India Company settlement was founded on Singapore by Stamford Raffles, being the start-date of this

historical narrative. This conveniently eradicates any major Malay link, and so any idea that Singapore is or should be part of a larger Malaysian entity, the island having been forced out of Malaysia in 1965.

Since 1984, however, ten archaeological excavations, at various sites on Fort Canning Hill and at the north bank of the Singapore River, have revealed that a significant settlement did exist on Singapore since the late 13th century at least. Scholarship has also brought to light, and has led to the recognition of Singapore's past between the 15th and early 17th centuries, when the island was part of the Melaka and Johor Sultanates in the 15th and 16th centuries respectively.

Such developments in the knowledge of Singapore's past pose a number of dilemmas in the construction of historical narratives for the island. First, the various phases of Singapore's past initially appear to have
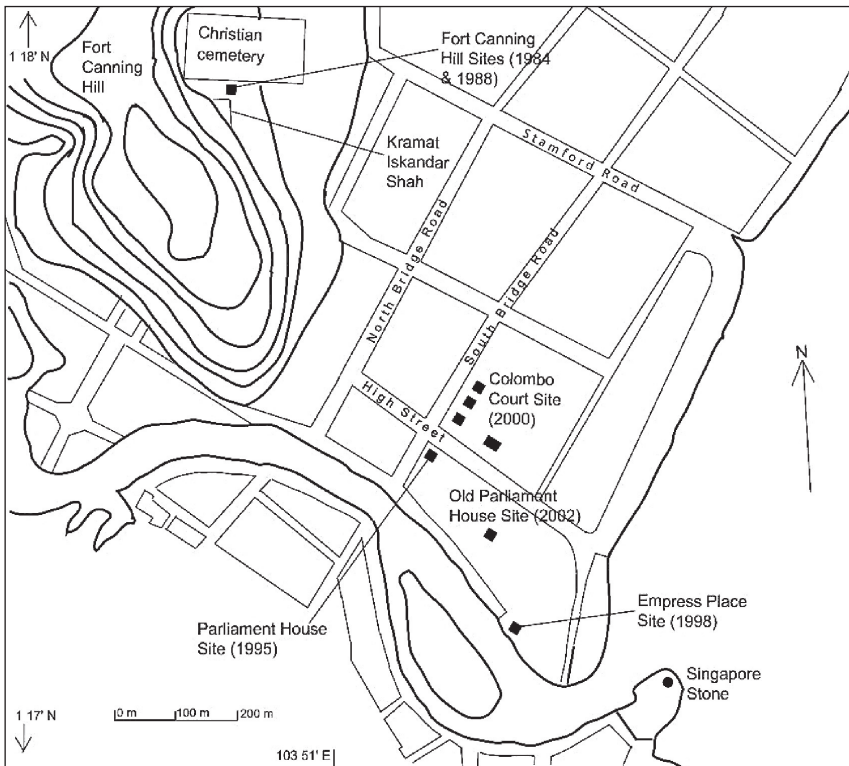
Map 3.1 Archaeological sites around the Singapore River

been different from one another, making them seemingly irreconcilable as part of a singular, coherent and continuous historical experience of the island. The different periods seem to float centuries apart. The adopting of the nation-state approach has inevitably led to this same past to be regarded as a series of disjointed historical periods, for the most part irrelevant to the understanding of the present-day, post-1819, and certainly post-1965 "modern" context.

Slowly, however, since the archaeological explorations, scholarship has attempted to put the pre-1819 past back into the story: to reconcile Singapore's past in the long duration of seven centuries by adopting the global and regional city approach. Singapore's major settlement phases have been argued to be the high points in its past, based on its intrinsic strategic location at the crossroads of the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, and which demonstrated a continuity of Singapore's history over a period of 700 years. At the least, Singapore can be seen to have had several periods when it thrived as part of larger international networks, with the 14th and 19th to 20th centuries representing peak periods in this role.[1] The most effective argument for such an approach has been made by Kwa Chong Guan, where he argues that the perception of a succession of peaks in Singapore's historical experiences as a regional and international city may be made.[2]

This approach raises a number of issues concerning historical narratives. The more recent arguments for the relevance of the pre-1819 past to the present are based on Singapore's continued relevance to the external world, which are, in effect, exercises at internationalising the history of Singapore. This regional or international city approach assumes that Singapore has been, to a large extent, essential or indispensable to the regional and international contexts in particular periods. This assumption, however, appears to be flawed, as Singapore has been more dependent on the region and world, and has had to adapt to the changes in the region and world, than the world or region has had to be dependent on it. At times, Singapore has been a settlement, but not one of great importance to the region or in the international context. These arguments also fail to relate the societies of the port-settlements in Singapore's past and their key characteristics to this regional and international history. They do not say much about Singapore as Singapore.

So we have so far three main approaches: the nation-state approach emphasising post-1965; the city-state approach; and the global and regional city approach. In both the city-state and nation-state approaches, there is

an acceptance of the inherent breaks in the chronological timeline of the historical narrative. The historical process is therefore one of starts and stops, as opposed to one with a continuous trajectory. The global and regional city approach, meanwhile, while not entirely eradicating the impression of a disjointed history, may focus too much on Singapore's supposed regional importance, and too little on its own internal nature.

What this chapter proposes is something quite different. First, it takes the longue durée as its chronological framework, looking for changing patterns across centuries. Second, it takes a social science approach in breaking down the Singapore settlement into key economic, political and social characteristics. By doing this, it is able to show a history based on Singapore's repeated adjustments, sometimes self-conscious reinventions of itself, in order to remain relevant as a Melaka Straits region port-settlement. Sometimes, this remaking was internally driven, and sometimes, it was driven by rulers based in the surrounding area; but throughout, Singapore had to achieve some kind of centrality or role by offering a singularity which ranged from acting as headquarters of what was to become the Melaka dynasty, with its sacral *daulat* or ruling power, to providing localised but essentially subordinate port services within a larger Johor-Riau Sultanate. It also shows certain common threads throughout, such as the absence of a subordinate hinterland, and reliance on exports, especially re-exports.[3] What provides the unity, if not quite narrative thread, is thus in part Singapore's history as repeated adjustments to the demands of being a Melaka Straits port, needing to tap the trade between the Indian Ocean and South China Sea.

This chapter will demonstrate how certain key variables can be used to analyse Singapore. It will show that different arrangements of these variables — which achieved the repositioning of Singapore as a regional or global city in response to changed regional and global contexts — enabled the island to successfully sustain itself over the last 700 years.

Identifying the Key Political, Economic and Social Characteristics of Singapore's Past

If only for heuristic purposes — that is, to provide tools which will help us learn about Singapore — we begin by proposing six key phases in Singapore's settlement history. These are outlined in Figure 3.1.

The six periods outlined in Figure 3.1 are: 1) Temasik (sometimes spelt Temasek), the first documented polity and settlement on Singapore island, of the late 13th to 14th centuries; 2) Singapore as a part of the

Melaka and Johor Sultanates, from the decline of Temasik to the early 17th century; 3) the period of the East India Company trading factory of Singapore, from foundation in 1819,[5] until the company's dissolution in 1858; 4) Singapore as a British crown colony and administrative centre of British Malaya (1867–1963); 5) Singapore as part of the Federation of Malaysia, from Singapore's merger into Malaysia in 1963 to its separation in 1965; and 6) Singapore as an independent nation-state since 1965.

Most of these periods were characterised by an absence of political autonomy. Singapore as an autonomous settlement is evident only during two periods. The first is the Temasik period in the 14th century, when the settlement had its own raja. Ceremonial trappings that were an outward exhibition of the raja and polity's political autonomy, such as the establishment of a royal cult, appear to have been carried out.[6] Economically, the port of Temasik was able to engage in international trade, handling traders arriving from China, the Indian Ocean littoral and Southeast Asia,[7] as evidenced by the more than 1,000 kilogrammes of Chinese, Indian and Southeast Asian ceramic sherds excavated to date in Singapore. The second phase is the current, post-1965 period, when Singapore was and is established as a sovereign nation-state.

The other settlement phases feature Singapore as part of larger political entities. Little is known of Singapore's political history during its tenure as part of the Melaka and Johor Sultanates. A number of Portuguese accounts note that Singapore became the fiefdom of the Laksamana, or admiral, of the Melaka Sultanate in the 15th century. Kwa Chong Guan details the history in Chapter 6, "Singapura as a Central Place in Malay History and Identity", whereby the Malay raja in Singapore left after Thai and Javanese attack, ultimately forming a new port polity at nearby Melaka on the Malayan mainland. After the fall of Melaka to the Portuguese in 1511, the Melaka Laksamana retreated back to Singapore Island.[8] However, the Laksamana remained subordinate to the rulers of Melaka, who several times moved their main base, until in the 16th and early 17th centuries their successors were known as the rulers of the Johor Sultanate. The Laksamana was therefore a chieftain, and not a raja, or ruler, and did not assume the role of a ruler of an autonomous port-polity. Singapore as polity remained part of the larger entity of the Melaka and Johor Sultanates.

Between 1819 and 1867, Singapore was under the jurisdiction of the British administration in India, and from 1867 to 1963, the colony was ruled directly from London, the centre of the British Empire. Following the

Context:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Melaka Straits The Straits between present-day Malaysia to the north and Sumatra to the south, where ships from India and China meet between monsoons. Reid shows how successive regional cities attempted to become strong and cosmopolitan centres in order to tap this trade.[4]	**Temasik** (Late 13th–14th centuries)	**Singapore under Malacca and Johor Sultanate** (15th–early 17th centuries)	**East India Company Factory** (1819–1858)	**Singapore as the centre of British Malaya** (Late 19th–early 20th centuries)	**Singapore as a part of Malaysia** (1963–1965)	**Independent Singapore** (1965–)

Figure 3.1 Proposed periodisation of Singapore history

merger with Malaysia in September 1963, Singapore continued, politically, to be part of a larger entity. It was no longer the administrative capital of this larger entity, but was replaced by Kuala Lumpur in this role. Singapore had to be represented at Kuala Lumpur in national-level policymaking, and assumed a subordinate role in the political framework of Malaysia.

Nonetheless, between 1819 and 1867, and between 1963 and 1965, Singapore did experience partial political autonomy. As an East India Company factory, it was effectively governed as a self-financing settlement by successive governors appointed by the British in India. Indeed, from 1832, it was the administrative seat for the Straits Settlements as a whole, which also included the Malayan peninsular ports of Malacca and Penang. The success of the Straits Settlements governors' respective tenures in Singapore was gauged by their personal achievements at the port-settlement. Administration, or rulership, of the port city was individualistic as well as institutional. The settlement during this period thus experienced a significant measure of localised political autonomy. As a part of Malaysia between 1963 and 1965, meanwhile, Singapore's government retained its own Prime Minister and government, which had autonomy over such local matters as education and labour. More important aspects of state power, such as defence and foreign policy were in the hands of the federal government of Malaysia.

Geographically, all the settlement phases, apart from the British colonial period during the late 19th to mid-20th centuries, were urban settlements devoid of a significant geographical hinterland. These settlements functioned primarily as nodal points of exchange in international trade, and not as staple ports or as gateways to a significant geographical hinterland.

Economically, the tendency has been for the economies of these settlement-phases to be externally orientated. The primary reasons for this orientation include the small local population base, and the absence of a resource-rich hinterland. This has dictated the need to obtain wealth from external sources. The limited economic sphere has also placed a limit on the volume and range of products that could be sourced from the peripheral regions and made available for export through Singapore. The external orientation has therefore not been one determined by the outflows, but rather the inflows. Thus, Singapore's volume of imports has historically exceeded the volume of exports. In all the settlement-phases, Singapore's viability has been dependent on its ability to make a select number of products available for export, for which the settlement has been internationally well known.

This is evident in the case of Temasik. Economically, it did not have any significant agrarian base, and depended almost entirely on external sources for both its wealth and provisions. This it achieved by servicing ships and traders peddling in the Melaka Straits region. It was then the only port-polity in the Southern Malay Peninsula area. However, contending port-polities in the wider Melaka Straits region during this time included Palembang, Jambi, Tamiang, Kota Cina, South Kedah, Lambri and Semudra, each jostling for a slice of the international maritime trade pie. Some historians have maintained that Temasik achieved pre-eminence mainly by recruiting *orang laut* sea people who could protect trade, and even coerce traders into stopping at the port rather than at its competitors'. But there is strong evidence that Temasik maintained its viability primarily by attracting foreign traders to its port, through the availability of several products that were in demand in the international markets, such as lakawood incense, cotton and hornbill casques (the bone protruding from the top of a hornbill's top beak, which has been used by the Chinese and Southeast Asians for carving). It established its niche export market by ensuring that the quality of lakawood that it offered was unique, while the uniqueness of hornbill casques were not easily matched by the other ports in the Straits region.

The same may be said of the first half of the 19th century, when Singapore was the key Southeast Asian centre of the trade in gambier. Gambier, which was produced mainly in the Riaus, Singapore and South Johor, was made available to the international market through Singapore.

The external economy was apparently important during the 15th to 17th centuries as well. Not much is known of the economic activities of this period. However, ceramics from China and mainland Southeast Asia, corresponding to the time-period of this settlement, have been recovered from archaeological sites on the north bank of the Singapore River and from the Kallang River Basin.[9] The quantity of these finds, however, pale in comparison to those of the Temasik period. Finally, a 1604 map by the Portuguese mathematician — Manuel Godinho d'Eredia (1563–1623) — notes the existence of a harbour master's office located on the southern coast of Singapore Island.[10] All these indicate that the settlement continued to maintain some trade with China and mainland Southeast Asia, however much smaller than during Temasik times. The island was now, economically, a secondary part and subordinate port of the larger entity of the Melaka Sultanate and of that Sultanate's 16th-century manifestation as the Johor Sultanate.

The arrival of Raffles and the East India Company in 1819 rapidly boosted levels of activity. Indeed, excavations have sometimes revealed a rich layer of shards from the 14th and 19th centuries, but relatively little in between.[11] Between 1819 and 1858, Singapore functioned as an entrepôt and transshipment port. As a transshipment hub, it depended on attracting shipping and traders plying along its maritime waterways to call at its port. As an export gateway, it serviced the gambier and pepper industry in Singapore and Riau, which at its peak during the first half of the 19th century, accounted however for less than two per cent of Singapore's total trade.[12]

Between 1963 and 1965, Singapore once again became a port-settlement without a hinterland. Attempts by Singapore's government to retain Singapore's role as the gateway and economic centre of the Malayan Peninsula through the formation of a common market comprising Singapore, East and West Malaysia, did not materialise.[13] The Malay Peninsula was no longer integrated with Singapore's economy, and the economic structure that was established during the British colonial period was dismantled.

Since then, Singapore's port function has been confined to that of a nodal point in the network of international shipping. In an age of shipping conglomerates with international networks, Singapore is no longer a crucial port-of-call. Neighbouring regions could, and have been, establishing comparable ports-of-call. Singapore therefore has had to compete, as port-polities along the Melaka Straits region did historically, against other ports in the region to attract trade and shipping. In addition to the entrepôt role, the global consumer economy and globalisation have enabled Singapore to develop an export-oriented economy that is based on value-added manufacturing. More recently, it has progressed to include such activities as the provision of financial and legal services as well as research and development.[14] These manufacturing activities and the provision of services are not supported mainly by domestic demand, but by external markets. External sources also provide the resources, such as raw and partially manufactured materials, financial capital, labour and intellectual skills, needed for these value-added economic activities to be sustained. In this respect, Singapore does not serve as a gateway of a much larger geographical and economic hinterland, but is dependent on its ability to attract foreign capital and resources to ensure its economic viability.

The extent of Singapore's economic influence throughout most of its history, with the exception of the 15th to early 17th centuries and

the British Malaya period, was confined largely to Johor and the Riau Archipelago. The two-way exchange between these peripheral regions and Singapore is characterised by the exchange of tradable goods rather than the supply of raw materials for value-added economic activities in Singapore. In this economic relationship, the position of Singapore at the apex, with the peripheral regions in supporting roles, is also a recurring theme.

In the case of Temasik, the settlement established itself as much more than a transshipment and service centre. It became a main gateway into the international and regional economic system for its immediate peripheral region.[15] This immediate region was a likely catchment area for Temasik's export products, while Temasik was, in return, the key source of foreign products to this region.[16] Temasik was at the apex of a pyramidal two-way exchange relationship, exerting a significant economic influence over the immediate region.[17]

Between 1819 and 1867, Singapore's influence also extended to this immediate region. This is particularly evident in the gambier and pepper trade. By the 1830s, Singapore overtook Tanjung Pinang as the centre for the Chinese gambier trade, thereby realigning the flow of gambier and pepper produced in the Riau-Lingga Archipelago towards Singapore. By the 1840s, with gambier and pepper cultivation spreading to Johor, the economic influence of Singapore was extended to this area as well.[18] A two-way exchange between the Riau-Lingga Archipelago and Johor on the one hand, and Singapore on the other, with Singapore at the apex of this relationship in the role of gateway to the international economy, developed.

The limits of Singapore's economic sphere to this immediate region are not so much due to the unwillingness or inability of Singapore's economy to exert a greater influence. Instead, the external context within which these settlements existed imposed limits to the projection of the settlements' respective economic spheres. These external factors were mainly political, and not economic. The regional context experienced by Temasik, characterised by the absence of any single port-polity powerful enough to bind the ports in the Melaka Straits region into some form of hierarchical structure, and by the autonomy of port-polities competing on almost equal footing to attract trade to their respective ports, was probably the most liberal of the regional contexts that Singapore's settlements experienced over the last 700 years. It was also during this phase that Singapore's economic sphere was at its largest, possibly extending into

the Pulau Tujuh Islands near the Natunas and the northern islands in the Lingga Archipelago.[19]

On the other hand, during the 15th to early 17th centuries, the lack of political authority resulted in Singapore not being able to project and maintain an economic sphere in the southern Melaka Straits region. During this period, Melaka was the key gateway to the international economy for the Southern Melaka Straits region, and Singapore fell within its economic sphere. Singapore therefore played a subordinate role, servicing the port of Melaka by supplying it with exportable products sourced from the island. This state of affairs continued in the 16th century, when Melaka was under Portuguese rule. The *Suma Oriental* records that a type of timber, known as blackwood, was shipped regularly from Singapore to Melaka, where it was purchased in large quantities by traders from China.[20]

Still more restrictive limits were placed on Singapore's economic influence over the immediate peripheral region in two periods. From 1819 onwards, the delineation of the Dutch sphere of influence in the Riau Archipelago restricted Singapore, while from 1965 onwards, Indonesia and Malaysia's territorial borders hemmed Singapore in. In these periods, Singapore was therefore faced with the absence of a geographical hinterland, and the dependence on international trade for economic survival. The island has thus had a limited sphere of economic influence through much of its history, with the notable exception of 1896 to 1941, when the Malay States were more economically integrated with the island.

In the post-1965 period, the success of Singapore's economic activities has led it to expand its economic space over time. Presently, Singapore has managed to build up an enlarged economic sphere along the lines of an Extended Metropolitan Region. Singapore is the centre of an integrated system of economic activities, serving as the gateway to the international economy where the concentration of human and money capital is highest. The peripheral region, which supports the centre by providing completed products that can be made available for re-export by the centre, in effect includes the nearby Malaysian state of Johor and the Indonesian province of the Riau Archipelago.[21] This relationship is unequal, with Singapore at the apex, and special tax and other regimes on the Riau island of Batam.

The extent of its economic sphere is commensurate to the amount of autonomy that other states, of which Singapore's immediate external region is part, accord to their respective territory within this region. Thus, Kuala Lumpur has established a special economic agreement with Singapore with regard to the latter's economic interactions with Johor. While the

autonomy enjoyed by the provincial governments in Indonesia has resulted in Riau choosing to align itself with the economic centre of Singapore, rather than with such Indonesian centres as Jakarta, Pekan Baru, Jambi or Medan. The extent of this economic sphere is also dependent on the willingness of the immediate external region to assume a subordinate role to Singapore. When a part of this region decides to break away from this relationship and to subject itself to another centre, or to establish itself as a rival economic centre, Singapore's economic sphere is reduced accordingly. This has taken place over the last decade or so, with Johor deciding to build itself as a rival to Singapore both as a manufacturing base and as a transportation hub. Riau, on the other hand, continues to remain firmly in this structure: that is evident from the inclusion of the Riau Islands in the recently concluded Singapore-USA free trade agreement.

The external orientation that the settlements of all phases have had to adopt had a tremendous impact on the social make-up of the settlements. The absence of any significant domestic agrarian base, and the sparse populations of the settlement patterns along the Melaka Straits region coast, necessitated an openness so as to attract the labour, goods and capital necessary for the success of the settlements' economic activities. Thus, the population has been drawn from the neighbouring and further regions, facilitated by the transport links that converged at Singapore. The extent of the cosmopolitan nature of the populations of the respective settlement phases was commensurate to the amount of economic opportunities that Singapore offered.

In this regard, the Temasik period, the East India Company period between 1819 and 1858, and the British colonial period of the late 19th to mid-20th centuries, were the periods of Singapore's past when it probably had the most cosmopolitan populations. The population comprised migrants from the immediate area, the wider Melaka Straits region, and even from key states in Southeast Asia, the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean littoral. There was no "local" population beyond a few *orang laut* or sea people and a very few long-established Malays, with most of the indigenous population drawn from the coastal areas of the Melaka Straits region.

The 15th to early 17th centuries, on the other hand, were characterised by low volumes of trade being conducted in Singapore, and most likely by the lowest level of economic activities experienced by Singapore in the whole of its settlement past. This period witnessed Singapore with the least cosmopolitan population. The Portuguese account *Decadas da Asia* (1552) by João de Barros notes that after Melaka was established in the early 15th

century, the population of Singapore dropped dramatically, as most of its inhabitants migrated to Melaka, and then to Johor, which were the centres of the region's economy during the 15th to early 17th centuries.[22] Similarly, the population of Singapore between 1963 and 1965, which was already cosmopolitan in nature due to the social legacy left by the British colonial period of the late 19th to mid-20th centuries, most likely experienced stagnation in inward migration during this short-lived period.

Openness to the inward and outward flows of human capital, mirroring the flow of goods, has produced unique characteristics in the populations of Singapore's past settlement phases. The populations comprised two key groups of people. The first is the core group, consisting of those who have committed their fortunes to the settlement. This core group has a vested interest in the continued viability of the settlement, and its elite therefore seek to participate in the process of policymaking. The identity of the group is based on association and alignment with the ruler or ruling class of Singapore in the respective periods, which often serves as the only viable unifying factor amongst a population that comprises individuals from diverse origins.

The openness of the settlements to the two-directional flow of human capital, and the ease with which newly arrived individuals are permitted to participate in the policymaking process, are keys to the existence of this core group in the settlement periods of Singapore's past. Hence, in the British period after 1867, Straits Chinese merchants were invited onto the Legislative Council. By contrast, in periods of low trade, it may be difficult to establish and delineate a core group.

In this regard, the existence of a significant, and at times even majority, core group may be identified in three periods of Singapore's history: 1) the Temasik period; 2) between 1819 and 1867; and 3) post-1965. In the case of Temasik, certain residents were able to gain access to the court, and to influence policies.[23] Wealth appears to have been a key requisite, although there was apparently a need for such individuals to commit their fortunes sufficiently with the polity in order to attain such influence. Inclusion into the political process was not based on ethnicity, but rather on an individual's commitment to the settlement and his loyalty to the ruler of the port-polity. Between 1819 and 1867, policies were formulated with the help of a select group of prominent individuals. These included British country traders and key Chinese, Arab and Southeast Asian merchants and capitalists. They formed a core group in Singapore, having committed their fortunes with the settlement, and exercised significant influence over

administrative policies implemented in Singapore, such as taxes and land usage. This group was distinct from the large majority of the population of Singapore who were sojourners, such as the migrant labourers and businessmen, who may have remained at Singapore for a prolonged period of time, but never considered their commitment to the settlement as being permanent.[24]

For post-1965 Singapore, the core group comprises those who have been recognised by the state as its citizens. Historically, the core group has been fairly small, due mainly to the establishment of a suitably high level of wealth as a key consideration for the inclusion of a person into the grouping, but in the post-1965 period, this group initially encompassed the bulk of people resident in Singapore on the eve of decolonisation in Southeast Asia and the attaining of independence in 1965. The people of Singapore, who had hitherto maintained a sojourning outlook, had to localise their identity, partly as travel to China became more difficult from the late 1930s, and especially following the formation of the nation-state of Singapore in 1965. The result was that Singapore's population then comprised a core group, with inclusion based solely on citizenship, thereby enabling them to partake in the political decision-making process.

The openness of Singapore throughout its past has also led to the formation of a second key group in Singapore's populations — the non-core group. This group comprises individuals attracted to the settlements because of the economic opportunities available, but who do not commit their fortunes to the settlement, or are not permitted to participate in its political processes. This non-core group is significant in size, due to the openness of the settlements to the two-directional flow of human capital. It has been present in the population of Singapore throughout the course of Singapore's past. The size of the non-core group of a given period of time, however, is inversely proportional to the size of the core group of that period. Thus, during the Temasik period, between 1819 and 1867, and during the British Malaya period between the late 19th and mid-20th centuries, the respective non-core groups were larger than the core-groups. Conversely, in the post-1965 period, the non-core group has consistently remained smaller in size than the core group.

Thus, the key features of Singapore's settlement past, as listed in Figure 3.2, may be defined as follows: 1) the extent of political autonomy; 2) the relative size of the core and non-core groups in the population; 3) the key economic role being that of a gateway to a geographical hinterland, or as a port serving as a transshipment point in international

	Temasik (Late 13th–14th centuries)	Singapore under Melaka and Johor (15th–early 17th centuries)	East India Company Factory (1819–1858)	Singapore as the centre of British Malaya (Late 19th–early 20th centuries)	Singapore as a part of Malaysia (1963–1965)	Independent Singapore (1965–)
Relative political autonomy	X		X			X
Part of a larger political and economic entity		X (secondary role)		X (primary role)	X (secondary role)	
Existence of proportionately significant, and influential, core as well as non-core groups	X		X	(empire building vs. localised rule)		X
Major transshipment hub between larger regional markets	X		X	X	X	X
Making unique products available for export	X		X			X
As a gateway to a larger economic entity	X		X	X		X
Economic sphere limited to Johor and Riau	X		X			X

Figure 3.2 Key variables in Singapore's past

shipping in competition with others in the region; 4) an overwhelming dependence on external markets and resources for its economic viability; and 5) the extent of its economic sphere.

Casting the Longer Cycle of Singapore's History

Certain patterns and characteristics reoccur throughout Singapore's 700-year history, within the context of two main models for urban settlement frameworks. In this respect, the Temasik, East India Company factory and post-1965 periods mirror one another as politically autonomous or semi-autonomous urban centres, more or less devoid of a hinterland, and comprising large and influential core and non-core groups. Conversely, the period between the 15th and early 17th centuries, the British Malaya period and the period of Singapore's merger with Malaysia (1963–1965) mirror one another as urban settlements that were an integral part of a larger entity. Singapore over the last 700 years has therefore oscillated between the two poles of the political, economic, social and spatial features of its settlements. Bearing these in mind, in what ways, if at all, can Singapore's *longue durée* be cast as a continuous historical process?

One of the approaches currently adopted by historians, which mirrors the first settlement framework mentioned above, is to highlight the Temasik period and the early East India Company phase as the peaks in Singapore's historical cycles, with key political, economic and social characteristics similar to those of post-1965 Singapore.[25] This framework fits the imperative of an independent city-state and nation-state, addressing both the needs for nation-building as well as justifying the state's existence and economic sustainability in the absence of a substantial hinterland. The most apparent problem that this approach presents, however, is the evident gaps that result within the seven-centuries period of Singapore's past. The periods of Singapore's history that do not fall into this framework have had to be cast as low points or even as irrelevant within the historical process of the last 700 years. We end up with a history of episodic flourishings of a settlement, punctuated by decline and low level activity.

It may instead be possible to adopt an approach that overcomes this punctuated view of Singapore's history. Such an approach would view Singapore's past in the *longue durée* within the framework of a dialectical oscillation between the two settlement patterns mentioned above: politically autonomous port-polities with a limited economic hinterland, and settlements that are politically and economically subordinate to a larger entity.

On the one hand, certain phases of Singapore's past may be depicted as politically autonomous port-polities: urban settlements at the apex of the hierarchical structure that they are in, but constrained by the near-absence of an agrarian base, a large indigenous population, or a geographical hinterland replete with natural resources. On the other hand, other phases may be depicted as urban settlements that, though they were politically and economically subordinate to a larger regional entity that was replete with these geographical resources, were unable to fully exploit those resources due to their secondary position within the hierarchical structure.

Such a historical perspective would be centred on the historical experiences and constraints evident in the urban settlements of the region within which Singapore is situated, the Melaka Straits region. Up until the 19th century, the urban settlement pattern in the Melaka Straits region was modelled after the coastal port-settlement model. The classical Melaka Straits region port-settlement was the form of social organisation and settlement pattern prevalent up until the 19th century. Such settlements did not possess any significant agricultural base, and were dependent on external trade both for subsistence needs, such as food, and for wealth, which was generated through the import of regional products that were in turn made available to foreign traders at higher prices. The key to their economic and political viability was the accessibility of unique products, or products of unique quality, not available at most other ports servicing the Asian maritime trade, and the existence of favourable international economic structures. This last factor, an international and regional context conducive to allowing traders to call in numbers at these port settlements, was critical. At times when the regional or international context did not permit such dispersed political and economic autonomy in the region, the settlements were subsumed under a larger political or economic entity, only to re-emerge when the external context again changed to favour these settlements' autonomy. The coastal port settlement embodied the manner in which coastal societies in the Melaka Straits region survived and prospered by responding and adapting to their ever changing external economic and political environment up until the 19th century.

Such an approach to understanding the historical experience of Singapore over the last 700 years would be anchored within the context of the historical experience of the region within which it has historically existed. It would also consistently be anchored by the imperative of having to engage the external environment as best as the settlement can, in order to be economically viable and sustainable as a settlement or polity, a

characteristic of Singapore's historical experience regardless of which point in time one is looking at. The fact that Singapore has throughout the course of the last 700 years been an urban coastal settlement and constrained by the nature of such a spatial organisation, dictates that, regardless of the nature of Singapore's links with its surroundings, the settlement itself has had to react and adapt, or be forcefully subsumed by the ever changing external economic and political environment.[26]

The approach outlined above also shifts the historical narrative away from positioning the historical dynamics of Singapore's interaction with the external world solely as one characteristic of a regional or global city, regarded as an indispensable nodal point in the international and regional network of economies and political entities. Instead, it positions the island within the framework of an urban settlement hampered by: the absence of an agrarian base; the absence of a large indigenous population; and the lack of a geographical hinterland replete with natural resources. It sees the island not as following a single path in response to these challenges, but rather as oscillating between: engaging the external environment as best as it can in order to be and remain economically viable as an autonomous polity; or having to forgo its political and economic autonomy when conditions were against it. Such an approach towards the constructing of a historical narrative of Singapore would permit the trajectory of Singapore's history to be viewed from a perspective that accords it a sense of continuity, and using sets of characteristics whose oscillations can be traced across time.

Conclusion: Singapore's History as a Series of Echoes between Two Spatial Frameworks

The nation-state is today the prevalent model of polity in Southeast Asia, and also the framework within which the histories of most Southeast Asian states are constructed. However, the nation-state, at least in maritime Southeast Asia and in particular the Melaka Straits region, is a relatively recent phenomenon. The polities in this region have historically oscillated between asserting political and economic autonomy as independent port cities, and being subsumed within the larger framework of regional maritime empires.

In this context, Singapore presents itself as a unique case. While other historical port-polities of maritime Southeast Asia have been subsumed in the course of the 20th century through the construction of nation-states

and the placement of national boundaries, Singapore has maintained a distinct economic and at times political identity over the last 700 years. This has accorded the island a certain consistency to the development of its settlements in the past and present, despite ups and downs. As a result, Singapore's settlement pattern and its political, economic and social characteristics have remained consistent to that of a Melaka Straits region port settlement throughout the entire course of its known existence.

One of the most fundamental problems in constructing a historical narrative of Singapore that extends into the past before 1819 is the difficulty in reconciling the various phases of the island's past with one another. In determining that the past be relevant or reflective of the present-day context of Singapore as a sovereign nation-state, the nation-state model has been used as the framework in the recounting of Singapore's historical experiences. The result, however, has been that the island's past has been cast as a series of largely discontinuous periods, with only those corresponding to the present-day situation being emphasised in the resulting historical narrative.

This chapter instead envisages Singapore's past as a continuous process comprising discontinuous historical periods, underpinned by a singular framework: the coastal settlement pattern of the Melaka Straits region. It sees this story as the repeated remakings of Singapore, sometimes voluntarily and sometimes under duress, sometimes as autonomous settlement and sometimes as subordinate, in response to elite and regional changes.

Notes

1. Tan Tai Yong, "Surviving Globalisation: An Historical Perspective", *Commentary* 18 (2002): 17–21; Wong Lin Ken, "The Strategic Significance of Singapore in Modern History", in *A History of Singapore*, eds. Ernest Chew and Edwin Lee (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 17–35; Kwa Chong Guan, "From Temasik to Singapore, Locating a Global City-State in the Cycles of Melaka Straits History" in *Early Singapore 1300s–1819; Evidence in Maps, Text and Artefacts*, eds. John N. Miksic and Cheryl-Ann Low Mei Gek (Singapore: Singapore History Museum, 2004), pp. 124–46.
2. Kwa, "From Temasik to Singapore", pp. 124–46.
3. See Chapter 6 by Kwa Chong Guan for the *Sejarah Melayu* and its family of texts, and issues such as Singapore's role in genealogy and *daulat*.
4. See Chapter 2 by Anthony Reid.
5. Wong Lin Ken, "Singapore: Its Growth as an Entrepot Port, 1819–1941", *JSEAS* 9, 1 (1978): 53.

 6. Derek Heng Thiam Soon, "Reconstructing Banzu, a Fourteenth Century Port
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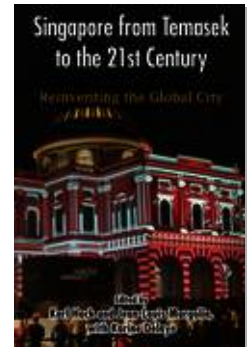
Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

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Singapore's Strategy of Regionalisation

Nathalie Fau

The terms "International City" and "Global City" are used regularly throughout the development plans of the State of Singapore, and in numerous planning documents produced for it. Hence, one report presented in 2003 to the Minister of Commerce and Industry by the "Economic Review Committee" (composed of representatives of the majority of the State's most important ministries and agencies) was accordingly entitled "New Challenges, Fresh Goals: Towards a Dynamic Global City". This is not merely a figure of speech or an ambition, for no other country, no other city of such modest size — a territory measuring a scant 700 square kilometres and numbering less than five million inhabitants — is so widely present in the international economy.

This concept of the global city originated in urban research focused on Western cities. As Godfrey and Zhou have pointed out, "the analytical bias inherent in world-city studies reflects and in turn perpetuates well-established Eurocentric views of the global economy under the guise of objective data".[1] Yet, despite numerous similarities, each global city has experienced a specific process of emergence and growth that is linked to

its history, its regional environment and also the different roles played by the respective states.[2]

Another characteristic of research on global cities is that it has most often been carried out by economists, with the consequence that it focuses mostly on the distinctive economic activities of these cities, rather less on their spatial development. For a geographer, by contrast, analysis of the centrality of a global city as a site is an all-important element. This allows us to take into account the site's location and its outreach, and the relations that result from these. The centre is of course the dominant area, but any study of such a centre only takes on its full significance through an analysis of its spatial organisation, which implies its relationship in a hierarchy with further, subordinate sites.

This chapter examines, therefore, the spatial specificities of the global city of Singapore. It does this by comparing it not only to the other global cities but also by situating it within the local, regional and global spheres.

Its first part analyses the formation of the global city of Singapore by identifying the actors involved in this process: multinational firms, but also, and this is less typical, the state and its regional partners in eastern Asia.

Its second part highlights the regional development strategy of the global city of Singapore. Because it is constantly confronted by the narrow confines of its territory, the city-state's government does not merely seek to internationalise its economy. Paradoxically, in order to better pursue its insertion into a global network, it also deliberately chooses to relocate Singapore's production in areas of close proximity. That is, in production it chooses to give preference to geographical contiguity.

This approach invites us to ask, lastly, how Singapore manages to articulate the interconnections between the different actors throughout the world and between the different spatial scales in which it takes part.

The Place and the Specificities of Singapore among "Global Cities"

From international city to global city

Introduced by Patrick Geddes in a book entitled *Cities in Evolution* (London: Benn, 1951), the notion of world cities was adopted 15 years later by Peter Hall.[3] The latter identified seven urban centres which played a leadership role in the world, namely London, Moscow, New York, Paris,

Tokyo, the "Randstad Holland" group of cities (comprising the conurbations of Rotterdam, Utrecht and Amsterdam) and the German "Rhine-Ruhr" zone (consisting of Cologne, Essen, Düsseldorf and Dortmund). These cities were distinguished from one another by their political importance, for example, as hosts to powerful governmental organisations or even international institutions, and by their economic importance, particularly in playing a key role in international commerce.

The term "world cities" was progressively replaced by "global cities", made popular by Saskia Sassen.[4] The adjective "global" is intended to be more precise than "world", for it designates cities disposing of command centres committed to participation in globalisation networks, and whose emergence is the result of strong interactions between urbanisation and globalisation. Their development is not the simple consequence of globalis-ation, for they also contribute to the latter by their internal dynamics. For Sassen, the global cities (primarily New York, London, and Tokyo; and to a lesser degree, Paris, Milan, Frankfurt, and Singapore) are the fruits of a new international division of labour. The deindustrialisation of developed countries and the industrialisation of the more competitive developing countries has necessitated a rapid internationalisation of the financial sector that depends upon a network of transactions on a global scale. This notion relies on the hypothesis according to which the economies of the global cities are based on their coordinating functions for a global economy. However, paradoxically, the more widespread the new information and communication technologies become, and the more the economy becomes global, the more a restricted number of areas, the global cities, are strengthened. Today, the principal factor in the location of economic activities has thus become spatial agglomeration, for it allows a reduction in the costs of transactions and provides advantages resulting from the presence in a given site of several firms from the same sector or industry. The command centres, the global cities, decide, innovate, lead and influence the world's economy.

A city resolutely oriented towards the global economy

At first perceived in the middle of the 1980s as a model of the world city, Singapore is more often associated today with the notions of a global city or global hub.[5] This shift in terminology highlights the evolution in the economic ties that Singapore fosters with the rest of the world. Since its

formation, Singapore has always played the card of internationalisation, but the modalities of its integration in the global economy have become diversified. The city has been in turn: a warehouse port during the colonial period; an industrial tax-free zone labouring for the global market starting in the 1960s; and finally, a centre for high-end services, attracting the headquarters of multinational firms in the 1980s.[6] All of these functions remain, and each has seen a rise in its level of technology.

The port of Singapore welcomes some 14,000 ships per year, and in 2005, the modernity and efficiency of its infrastructures allowed it to become once again the world's leading port for the transshipment of containers, outpacing Hong Kong. Singapore conserves a significant dimension of its "warehouse economy" by means of re-exportation (46% of its exports). In the industrial sphere, the government pursues a policy of openness and attractiveness directed towards activities with high monetary returns. Manufacturing activities, which continue to represent one quarter of its GDP, have meanwhile become specialised in small sectors of high technology, particularly in electronics, biotechnology, maritime and industrial engineering and chemistry, and attract investors from the entire world. Multinational companies represent 80 per cent of its industrial sector. By serving as a headquarters for these companies, Singapore favours their regional development in the Asia Pacific region. As a result, the city hosts an impressive number of foreign firms' headquarters (some 280). No less than 4,000 international firms maintain a regional office in Singapore, while 3,000 others have at least a branch presence. It is also the leading financial site in Southeast Asia, and since 1968, the headquarters of the Asian dollar market. The exponential growth in its foreign commerce reflects this choice of an extrovert economy; it represents more than US$300 billion in 2004, compared to a mere US$5 billion in 1965. It is the world's only example of commercial exchanges representing more than three times its GDP.

Foreseeing and adapting to the future

In the context of growing economic competition, this ability to diversify is an advantage. The cities that have the best places in the global hierarchy are those that offer the widest range of metropolitan functions. Competition, because of its variety, demands a very high degree of flexibility and capacity to adapt, of innovation, and even of anticipation. The global cities are highly resilient, and they draw their dynamic force from the continuous

reorientation of their development: "from a certain stage in development, the cities produce sufficient 'diversity' to become metropolises whose development becomes self-sustaining and cumulative by means of their mechanisms for diversification and their selection of the most dynamic activities, functions and sectors".[7] For the government of Singapore, this continual renewing of the city-state's economic capacities is a necessity dictated by its struggle for survival, since it is handicapped by its modest territorial and demographic dimensions, and by the absence of natural resources. Planning is therefore at the centre of the Singaporean project, and the government continually seeks to compensate for its structural handicap by anticipating the evolution of the global economy.[8]

The global projection of Singapore

The latest economic reorientation implemented by the government has allowed the city-state to progress from the status of world city to that of global city. A global city is not only a passive receptor of global flows; it is also a source that generates those flows. The internationalisation of Singaporean firms had its real beginning at the start of the 1990s. The total amount of foreign direct investments (FDI) by Singapore was less than US$1 billion in 1976 and still a mere US$1.7 billion in 1981. Then, it rose to $13.6 billion in 1990, $55.7 billion in 1996, and finally $328 billion in 2004.[9] This was a direct result of the government's policy, whose goal was to reduce the risks of a loss of competitiveness due to the growth of the other countries of Southeast Asia.[10] This policy was launched after the recession of 1985–1986.

The new policy was launched even though the first wave of globalisation of Singaporean investments had been a relative failure, particularly in the United States and in New Zealand. This was due to a lack of knowledge of these markets. The government then offered incentives to businessmen to invest in the region, in order to rely upon already existing knowledge and networks.[11] In January 1993, Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew launched a new strategy entitled "Regionalisation 2000" whose goal was to reinforce the external wing of the economy.[12] The economic crisis of 1997–1998 in Asia and the reduction in the investment rate (19 per cent of the GDP for 2005 as opposed to 50 per cent in 1984), in a context marked by China's increasingly attractive economy, has reinforced the government's conviction that the creation of value must henceforth be based on expansion beyond its borders.

The internationalisation of Singaporean firms and their geographical ascendancy has taken the form of a series of concentric areas around Singapore: the first area being the local proximity market, next the regional market, and finally the global market. The SIJORI growth triangle, a cross-border cooperative network between the state of Johor (Malaysia) and the Riau Archipelago (Indonesia), instituted in 1989, is thus the first milestone of this regionalisation. The government's goal is to encourage the relocation of manual labour in the direction of neighbouring countries where salaries are not as high, while keeping the command activities in Singapore. Since the middle of the 1990s, Singaporean firms have subsequently enlarged their field of action to all of Asia, giving preference first of all to Southeast Asia, then to China and India. During the period 1981–1996, more than 50 per cent of Singapore's FDI was directed towards Asian countries. In Asia, the investments were concentrated in the construction of industrial zones, hotels and real estate, shipping infrastructure and shopping centres. Since 2000, a new geographical shift in investments has taken place to the benefit of Europe and Australia, particularly in the real estate and financial sectors, and of the West Indies and Latin America, where investors are attracted by the natural resources and by the regional markets.[13]

A global city-state

Singapore constitutes an atypical example among the global cities because of its status as a city-state. This is a situation when, as Yeung points out, "a state is contained within a specific urban territorial system".[14] Contrary to other global cities, which are integrated into far larger national territories, there is therefore no such conflict of interest as between a state that attempts to balance spatial development within its larger territory, and the major cities which try to obtain a greater degree of autonomy in order to gain visibility on the global level. In the majority of countries, the effect of these divergent interests and goals between the state and the larger metropolises is seen spatially in the frequent difficulties experienced in urban management. For the administrative limits of the urban sphere rarely coincide with those of the metropolitan region as defined in terms of urban dynamics. Often, the global city is managed at several levels, and this fragmentation of power makes it difficult to put joint planning in place, which lessens its attractiveness.[15]

In addition, the Singaporean State is not obliged to choose between and arbitrate for several cities, as it is the case in numerous developing countries. Within a national territory, it is indeed neither cost-effective nor efficient to promote several global cities, and states tend to favour one single city in order that it might become the showcase and the driving force for development within the country.[16] In the city of Singapore, such problems of competency and arbitration solve themselves. As a city-state, notes K.C. Ho, Singapore does not suffer from having to deal with different levels of intra-governmental relations. This absence, he argues, gives Singapore as a city an unusual degree of free play in trans-governmental relations.[17] No conflict exists between different players, since the interests of the nation and of the city necessarily coincide. In Singapore, the State is always directly involved in the economic development of the city, not only in creating conditions favourable to foreign investors, but also in putting in place a truly capitalist state.

An urban-planner state

The state has shaped Singapore territory to make it fit the requirements of globalisation. The territory is constantly being remodelled and is in a permanent state of "conversion/revolution" as a result of "the existence of systematic links between, on the one hand, the all-encompassing and ever-increasing globalisation of Singapore's economy and, on the other, the permanent transformation of national territory".[18] The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), a public board responsible for planning whose name (redevelopment) is significant, constantly redefines the functions of the city-state and the corresponding territorial development. In order to receive the multinational firms in a brand new industrial zone, the southwest coast, the coastline of Jurong, has been totally redesigned. Hills have been flattened, coastal marshes filled in, small islands grouped together and entirely new islands have been created. As for the development of tertiary services, the historical centre has been completely renovated: the inhabitants have been relocated in new residential zones in the periphery, the slums have been destroyed as part of urban renovation programmes, vertical construction has been implemented, conservation programmes have preserved the architectural heritage, and a large bay (Marina Bay) has been constructed between strips of land that stretch out from the city centre, in order to accommodate commercial premises, large hotel complexes and holiday resort zones.[19]

A developmental state

The state, not content with merely guaranteeing favourable conditions to foreign investors, has become directly involved in the development of Singapore by acting in a business fashion within the city-state itself, and increasingly, abroad. It is not local private businesses that have caused the city to progress from the status of a world city to that of a global city, but rather, Government Linked Companies (GLCs). These include businesses of which several were entirely state-controlled or created by the state at the outset. Many have become private, though often only partially so, since 1990.[20] The activities of these GLCs are coordinated and directed by Temasek Holdings, a powerful financial holding established in 1974 by the government that was managing a portfolio of some US$60 billion by the end of 2005. Although more than half of Temasek's portfolio is still invested in Singapore, as opposed to 17 per cent in Asia and 14 per cent outside of Asia, in the near future, its activities will be divided geographically between three spheres: locally, throughout Asia with the exception of Japan, and in the OECD countries. Since 2003, Temasek has invested massively in the financial sectors of Indonesia, Thailand, Korea and China. The global outreach of Singapore is seen essentially through the GLCs, which are involved in the communications sector as well as in the industrial, commercial and financial sectors.

Throughout the 1990s, the international expansion of Singaporean public firms has, for the most part, followed the pattern of concentric regional development as recommended by the government. The successive geographic expansion in the internationalisation of Keppel Land is a significant example.[21]

This real estate branch of the Keppel Corporation Limited group concentrated first on the national level. It continues to be involved in important projects, such as the relatively recent reconstruction of the new sea fronts at Marina Bay and Sentosa.

At the beginning of the 1990s, it also began to export its expertise to the immediate neighbouring region, mainly through the SIJORI growth triangle of Singapore-Johor-Riau. It expanded into Riau within the framework of a joint investment. Together with Indonesia's Salim Group, Keppel Land constructed "an integrated beach resort spanning 447 hectares of land on the north coast of Pulau Bintan", including the Club Med "Ria Bintan" that opened in October 1997.[22] Its investments in the Malaysian state of Johor have also been numerous, particularly in the construction of "townships" in the vicinity of the motorway links between Singapore and

Malaysia. For instance, Taman Sutera in Skudai (which became an outer
suburb of Johor Bahru) is an entirely planned township of 490 hectares
that includes all types of residences, shopping centres, schools and even
a university.

In the middle of the 1990s, Keppel Land took advantage of the
simultaneous opening of the markets in the countries of continental
Southeast Asia and China to enlarge its scope of action more widely on
the regional level. In Myanmar, the firm is focussing on the construction
of luxury hotels, particularly in Yangon and Mandalay, whereas in Thailand
and Vietnam, it built middle class and upper middle class residential
neighbourhoods, and participated actively in the renovation of the city
centres. Moving still further outwards, its first market today is China.
Keppel Land is present in the principal Chinese cities (Shanghai, Beijing,
Chengdu, Kunming, Tianjin, Wuxi, Fuzhou and Hong Kong), carrying out
diverse projects there, all of a luxurious nature, such as the construction
of luxury hotels, high class residential zones, condominiums, office towers,
golf courses and the complete renovation of sea fronts.[23] Since January
2006, it has also gained markets in secondary Chinese cities experiencing
economic growth, such as Tianjing, Jiangying and Qingdao. It has done
this through Dragon Land, a Singaporean company specialising in the
Chinese market, of which it now possesses 67 per cent of the assets.[24]

Finally, since 2004, Keppel Land has turned towards the Indian
market: construction projects for condominiums and for a luxury residential
zone were undertaken in Bangalore, and it sought to expand to all of the
country's major cities: New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai.[25]

By thus spreading out its expertise, Keppel Land is gradually making
Singapore a model of urbanism in eastern Asia.

Singapore at the Heart of Regional and Worldwide Networks

A global city is not isolated; it depends, as does any city, on local and
regional networks that it organises and controls. Beyond those, it is
integrated into the network of global cities. In addition to the traditional
urban networks is superimposed a system at the global level, and to the
notion of hinterland is added that of hinterworld, which describes the
metropolises to which a global city has access through trade. This "global
network" of Taylor's, or "global megalopolitan archipelago" of Dollfuss,
links areas that are far distant from each other physically, but united

by numerous interrelations.[26] It comprises the more important strategic activities, and structures the greater part of the worldwide flow of human resources, data and capital. But how can we evaluate the weight and the role of Singapore within this "global megalopolitan archipelago"? One possible answer is to follow the analytic grids proposed by research on global cities. These tend to focus either on the hubs of this global network, or on the flows that link these global cities.

A hub of the global economy

Studies on the hubs focus on the functions of the global cities, in particular on highly specialised services, and show that this network is structured according to a hierarchy that they then attempt to evaluate. The determination of criteria for classification is, however, far from obvious, and causes the results to vary considerably, not so much at the higher end of the scale (Tokyo, London, New York) as immediately underneath. Beaverstock, Smith and Taylor have carried out such a census of those global cities that appear in some 15 articles on this topic.[27] Only the cities of London, Paris, New York and Tokyo appear systematically. Singapore is cited nine times, which is less than its rival Hong Kong (11), but far more than the other major cities of Southeast Asia: Bangkok (three), Jakarta (once), Kuala Lumpur (twice), and Manila (twice).

One of the most innovative classifications is presently the one established by the Globalisation and World Cities Study Group (GAWC). This research group includes economists and geographers whose goal is to propose a method for classifying global cities. This classification is based exclusively on the notion of business services from which only the very largest cities benefit, and is established first by selecting the leaders in four branches of global activity in the high-end services sector and then by analysing their locations. In the group's words, "Using Saskia Sassen's 1991 argument that it is advanced producer services which are the distinctive feature of contemporary world city formation, we focus on four key services: accounting, advertising, banking and law". A mark is attributed to the cities in each of these spheres (from 1 to 3). Then, the cities are ranked in three categories according to their total scores: those having a total of more than 10 points are classified as "Alpha world cities"; those having 7 to 9 points are "Beta world cities"; and finally, there are the "Gamma world cities", with between 4 and 6 points.[28] The cities at the top of the list are, not surprisingly, those already identified by Sassen.

They are the only ones to appear at the top of the classification in each of the branches of activity and thus achieve the maximum possible total of points (12 points). With a total of 10 points, Singapore is classed, along with Hong Kong, as an Alpha world city, listed just after London, New York, Paris and Tokyo. On a functional level, the city-state is thus a true hub of the global economy.

The southern pole of the eastern Asian growth axis

The advantage of an analysis in terms of flows is that it situates each global city within its region as a whole, and identifies its horizontal links, that is, the links between it and the other cities of the same rank. A study directed by Yeung, which focuses on flows within cities of the Asia Pacific zone, thus highlights the existence of a "new functional city system" in this region.[29] It analyses in particular the flow of shipping and communications, and identifies the formation of three "mega-urban corridors", linking the principal capitals of the Asia-Pacific region.[30] The first urban corridor, located to the north, connects Tokyo, Osaka, Seoul, Pusan, Pekin, Tianjin and Shanghai. Another corridor, located in the south of China and in Taiwan, includes Hong Kong, Guangzhou, the Pearl River (Zhujiang) Delta, and Taipei. Finally, further to the south, a third urban corridor links the principal cities of Southeast Asia, particularly Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Jakarta.

Consequently, Singapore owes its status as a global city in great measure to the economic growth of its regional environment. Since the 1980s, Singapore has been increasingly integrated in the economies of eastern Asia. Singapore is indeed the southernmost hub of the economic growth axis that stretches along the Pacific edge of eastern Asia and that links the Straits of Malacca and Southeast Asia to Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Chinese coast, along with Korea and Japan.[31] At first constituted around a maritime route that came into use in the first half of the 19th century around the Straits of Malacca, this axis has become increasingly prominent since the mid-1980s with the growth of intraregional commerce.[32] It has since taken shape and structure "by the cross-flow that follows the maritime pathways, the flight patterns, the undersea cables and, less visibly, the flow of capital, all of which flow in the same direction and around the same axis".[33]

Singapore is a strategic regional link of this growth axis, while at the same time a relay structure on the global level. For example, the study of

ports and containerised shipping lines in eastern Asia shows Singapore's role as a hub port and its capacity to structure the region's trade, while at the same time linking it to the rest of the world. Its port is the southern hub of the principal shipping line for container carriers that head west towards Europe and towards America; it is linked in an almost straight line with the other hubs that give structure to this maritime axis, that is, the large ports of Hong Kong and Taiwan, and the lesser ones of Pusan and of Japan, which combine to represent 71% of containerised shipping in the region. In addition, this "port centre" or "branching-out port" also drains by "feeders" the freight of the lesser ports of Southeast Asia, themselves equipped to handle containers, but on a more modest scale, and redistributes to them. There is constant communication with the ports of Bangkok and Laem Chabang in Thailand, with Manila, with the Indonesian ports of Djakarta, Belawan, Ujung Pandang and Surabaya, and with those of Malaysia.[34]

The analysis of airborne shipping flows leads to a similar conclusion regarding the role of Singapore in the network of eastern Asia.[35] While Tokyo dominates as the doorway to America for the Asia Pacific region, and Hong Kong constitutes the principal centre of the internal circulation within Asia, Singapore reigns in the south as the doorway to the South Pacific. Conjointly with Bangkok, it also dominates as the gateway to the Gulf countries and Europe. Since the opening in 1981 of the ultramodern airport of Changi and the construction of a second terminal in 1990, the city-state is also, along with Bangkok, the hub of intra-ASEAN air movements and a doorway to the Asia-Pacific region. In 2005, it received 79 airline companies, linking it to 177 cities in 54 different countries.

Singapore has established itself as a global city by participating actively in the integration of all of eastern Asia in the world system and by becoming one of the structural poles of regional growth. However, although its participation in globalisation has allowed Singapore to overcome the confines of its domestic market, its lack of territory remains a major handicap. A comparison with the other global cities is conclusive. With its mere 700 square kilometres, the Republic of Singapore covers an area equal to about seven times that of downtown Paris, but the latter is only the heart of an urban region. The greater metropolitan region of Paris stretches over 12,000 square kilometres. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government covers a territory of 5,777 square kilometres, and Greater Tokyo 13,143 square kilometres. Even if the global cities have a tendency

to pull away from the rest of their hinterland, their links to their local environments are more complex. In order to transcend its territorial limits, Singapore has built up around itself an urban cross-border region. The specificity of Singapore is that it has experienced a spatial evolution that obeys both the logic of the large global metropolises and that of cross-border regions.

A Global Cross-Border City

From a world city to a global city region

The formation of a network of global cities has transformed the world into a global mosaic, comprising a series of heavily developed geographical regions scattered around the globe. But these geographical regions are not limited to the hubs constituted by their metropolitan areas.[36] Each of these geographical regions possesses its own organisation and prominence. Above and beyond these cities, it is thus the urban regions that are at the heart of globalisation. The term "Global City Region" proposed by Allen Scott has thus proved to be more adequate than that of "Global City".[37] Globalisation is not without consequences for the internal organisation of the urban regions. Competition for the financing or the growing accessibility of more and more distant areas has resulted in the process of urban sprawl. The strength of New York is, above all, its insertion in the megalopolis described by Gottman. That is, its strength lies in its urban coalescence with — and increasing interactions with — several regional metropolises, in an area stretching over 700 kilometres from Boston to Washington and from the Atlantic to the Appalachian mountains.[38]

The cross-border spread of Singapore

The Singaporean government has had to resolve a similar problem concerning the limits of the urban region of Singapore. If the city limits had been made to coincide with the borders of the nation, the city-state would not have been able, as with the other global cities, to play upon the spatial differentiation between the centre, in which are concentrated the rarer and more creative functions with the highest added value; and the periphery, to which are relegated the industrial functions, those that are less profitable and more costly in terms of capital and manual labour. The originality of

Singapore, however, is to be the heart of an agglomeration comprising a hinterland situated in other states, and separated from Singapore by water. Saturated by its own growth, Singapore has gradually spilt over into the neighbouring territories. The Singaporean relocations and investments have thus been progressively oriented towards those parts of Indonesia and Malaysia which are closest to Singapore.[39]

The first phase, in the 1980s, concerned the state of Johor in Malaysia. Its proximity, the quality of its transportation and shipping infrastructure and the massive investments it has received (close to two thirds of the Singaporean capital invested in Malaysia), have caused the south of Johor to become integrated into the economic region of Singapore. Despite the presence of a national border, the state of Johor furnishes the city-state with water, food, labour (25,000 commuters per day), green spaces and leisure facilities, and discount shopping (7.5 million one-day shopping excursions per year). Since January 1998, a second bridge between Tuas (in west Singapore) and Gelang Patah (Johor) links the city-state to the peninsula. It accommodates an extra 200,000 vehicles per day. Industrial zones are rapidly growing on both sides of the bridge. A new urban and industrial corridor, parallel to the one already established further north, is thus forming between Jurong (in western Singapore) and the southwest of Johor.

The second phase of the extension of Singapore took place at the end of the 1980s, towards Batam in the Riau Archipleago, situated only 25 kilometres from Singapore and reachable in 30 minutes by boat. The Riau Archipelago, which was sparsely inhabited until the 1990s, has been economically absorbed by the city-state. A high degree of functional specialisation of the territory has been implemented in the Riau Archipelago in response to the needs of Singapore. The development of each island is planned according to a strictly identical pattern, although each maintains a certain degree of specificity within this vast zoning programme: the industrial zones of Batam have welcomed multinational firms relocated from Singapore, the northern coast of Bintan has been transformed into a seafront of luxurious resorts developed for businessmen's leisure, and the island of Karimun will soon become an extension of Singapore's shipyards and oil refineries.[40]

Singapore has relegated the least profitable and most space-consuming and labour-intensive, and even the most polluting activities towards Johor and Batam, which thereby have come to serve as its outskirts, absorbing its "urban discharge".

By gradually incorporating these neighbouring regions into its own economic space, Singapore has imposed itself as a central region from which the management functions are exerted directly on the peripheral regions, whose development is closely linked to it despite the fact that they are part of another national territory.

The complementarity of infrastructures and a division of labour on the micro-regional scale is achieved. Singapore possesses financial, commercial and industrial skills, and benefits from high quality transportation infrastructures and qualified human resources. The provinces of Johor and Riau are characterised by inferior levels of revenue and development, but also by financial reserves and relatively low-cost manual labour.[41] The functioning of this region is thus based on a pattern very similar to that of other cross-border regions (for example, the United States-Mexico one) associating complementary regions in terms of infrastructures, manual labour, and natural and financial resources. The relocations from Singapore towards the neighbouring areas may, in part, be explained by the disparity in salaries and in the levels of qualification of manual labour on either side of the border.

By exploiting these differences, Singapore has thus extended its network of subcontractors, by encouraging vertical specialisation in each of the regions through the division and separation of the different stages of production. Singaporean firms, located in Singapore itself, use highly qualified manual labour and ultramodern, high technology. They have relocated in Johor the industries needing semi-qualified manual labour, and in Batam the labour-intensive activities for which low salaries are more a determining factor than the level of qualification.[42] This industrial reorganisation has given a two-fold advantage to Singapore: it has allowed the city to rise to a higher industrial level (specialisation in higher technology industries) and to prevail as a regional centre for coordination, logistics and support services, not only within its own agglomeration but also throughout Southeast Asia.

An unfinished cross-border urban region

Contrary to general ideas about cross-border regions,[43] the SIJORI growth triangle was not created under the impulsion of investments from the private sector, but rather relied entirely in its initial stage of development on deliberate policies of the neighbouring governments.[44] The man behind the initiative for the formation of SIJORI in 1989 was Goh Chok Tong,

then Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore. In addition, within the economic development framework of the islands of the Riau Archipelago, the governments of Singapore and Indonesia were present at the very outset in the building up and the management of the infrastructure. The development of the island of Batam has been directed, planned and managed by the central government in Jakarta.[45] On the Singaporean side, the project was conceived by the Economic Development Board (EDB), the agency for the economic development of Singapore, and by two state-owned companies: Singapore Technologies Industrial Corporation (STIC); and Jurong Environmental Engineering (JEE). Together, they took over the development and financing of Batam's industrial infrastructure. They implemented the same techniques that were used in the development of the industrial zones of Singapore.[46]

Despite this high level of state involvement, however, the governments have displayed a certain reticence in institutionalising this cross-border cooperation, preferring a more pragmatic approach. Until 1994, the date a trilateral and intergovernmental "Memorandum of Understanding" was signed, the only formal framework in existence had been established between Singapore and Indonesia. There was no agreement between Singapore and Malaysia, nor any between Malaysia and Indonesia. This approach had been justified as being a specifically Asian form of cooperation. When the term "growth triangle" was coined on 21 December 1989, Goh Chok Tong highlighted the Asian method that "does not require the same degree of formalisation as that used by Westerners", but constantly adapts in order to achieve the maximum possible advantage for each of its participants. The development of this cross-border agglomeration has not taken place according to political decisions or fixed rules, but in response to economic flows, and has reshaped itself under the influence of the markets and of the well-understood interests of each.

That, at least, is the public line of the governments involved. In reality, the difficult institutionalisation of this cross-border region reflects, above all, the underlying conflicts that exist between the partners. Singapore perceives its neighbours both as regional partners and as potential adversaries, and the SIJORI triangle is placed as much under the banner of reciprocal mistrust as under that of cooperation. Mistrust on the part of Singapore, is that of a city-state composed of a population of mostly Chinese descent for its two large neighbours, who belong to the Malay world. The recurring discussions between Malaysia and Singapore concerning water supply are in this regard a revealing example of the underlying tensions between

the two states. Until recently, the state of Johor furnished 40 per cent of Singapore's water needs, but the Malaysian federal government regularly called these contracts into question, and at times threatened not to renew them when they end in 2011 and 2061. There is also mistrust on the part of Indonesia and Malaysia regarding Singapore, as it is the initiator of the project. Singapore is accused of exploiting its partners and giving preference to the Chinese diaspora to the detriment of native Malaysians and Indonesians. The Indonesian and Malaysian press regularly denounce even the term "growth triangle". Their concern is that, though there is certainly growth, who benefits most from this? The expected effects of cooperation seem to have especially profited Singapore. According to *Asiaweek* of 31 July 1992, Singapore represents a mere 3 per cent of the territory of SIJORI, but captures more than 90 per cent of its profits. Kuala Lumpur has always expressed some reservations about the pursuit of cooperation between Johor and Singapore, sometimes denouncing the "imperialist" nature of this cooperation that relegates Malaysia to the rank of a junior partner.

This lack of confidence between the partners has hindered the formation of a true cross-border integrated area, such as that which has developed in Europe around Geneva or Basel. The cross-border spillover of Singapore's urban dynamics has not, in any way, involved the formation of a "border city" as defined by Christian Schulz and the research group "Cities and Borders":

> the notion of 'border city' characterises an urban cross-border territory — or even an agglomeration — in which the State's boundaries have lost their importance and functional and socio-economic integration is further advanced" … [it is thus defined by the importance of] … functional links (for example, shipping and communications infra-structures), the common political activities (for example in the framework of cooperative cross-border projects) as well as social relations (personal contacts between the two populations, cultural exchanges etc.). It is probably the last aspect that is the most important for the durable cohesion of such a region.[47]

While the motorway and maritime links between Singapore and its two partners are of excellent quality, they are not sufficient to constitute a fully functioning cross-border agglomeration. On the contrary, we are witnessing the persistence and even the increase of the phenomenon of infrastructure replication within this region. The current policy of the State of Johor thus aims as much at competing with Singapore as at

establishing complementary relations. In an attempt to step outside of Singapore's shadow, its government has gambled on the construction of its own modern infrastructures.[48] In the port sector, it is pursuing a two-fold strategy: reducing the number of its exports that transit through Singapore by improving the infrastructures serving the port of Pasir Gudang, and capturing some of the city-state's transshipment by creating a new port just 45 minutes away from the international maritime route going through the Straits of Malacca. The old port of Pasir Gudang has been equipped with additional wharves specialising in the warehousing and export of palm oil, and is becoming specialised in the handling of bulk liquids (petroleum and its derivatives). As for the new port of Tanjung Pelapas (PTP), located at the southern tip of the Malaysian peninsula, in close proximity to the second bridge constructed between Johor and Singapore, it has emerged as a direct and serious rival for the port of Singapore. Since its opening in March 2000, this port, which is capable of receiving the most recent port-container ships at a cost of less than 30 per cent of what is charged by Port of Singapore Authority, has been attracting ships that until then used to be stationed in Singapore. The world's two biggest shipowners, Maersk Sealand (Danish) and Evergreen Marine (Taiwanese)[49] thus decided, one in August 2000 and the other in April 2002, to transfer activities there from Singapore. The same spirit of competition has also led to the parallel construction of infrastructures in the oil-refining sector. The government of Singapore has built an oil refinery on the island of Jurong supplied by the natural gasfields of Natuna. Parallel to that, the government of Johor, in association with the federal government, has its own development plan for an oil refinery in Tanjung Lepas (Johor). The goal is admittedly to enter into direct competition with Singapore.

Likewise on the Indonesian side, although the dynamics are quite different, there are strict limits to cooperation. Incapable of competing with Singapore, the Indonesian government has tacitly lost its sovereignty over the islands of Riau. After the 1997 crisis, the reorganisation of the country and the putting into place of new legislation on decentralisation initially slowed the flow of investments towards the Riau Archipelago. The *Asia Times* on 9 December 2001 ran the headline "Paradise Lost on Batam Island". In 2000, more than two thirds of the projected relocations were called into question. Orders for electronic products decreased by 70 per cent on the island of Batam, and industries closed down while the population increased by 20 per cent. This influx of migrants, victims of the economic crisis, maintains a climate of insecurity that is not conducive to

attracting new investors. Indonesia's decentralisation programme — part of its own post-Suharto political reorganisation — also raises concerns about greater complication in administrative procedures. This is related to the numerous instances of incoherence between the administration in Jakarta, and the provincial government in Pekanbaru. Faced with this climate of uncertainty, Singaporean investors are at best watchful, and at worst pessimistic.

There is also the risk of the Riau islands drifting away further from the rest of Indonesia. After initial doubts over decentralisation, the Singaporean businessmen and government came to support this policy. They pronounced themselves particularly in favour of the formation of the new province of the Riau islands and thus of a separation from the continental part of the province of Riau, which in their opinion is the only solution that would reassure investors.[50] This fracture was reinforced by the governmental law of March 2001 that restricted interior migrations towards these islands. Indonesians desiring to go to the Riau Archipelago now had to present either a hotel reservation or proof of housing by a family member residing on the islands, and a corresponding authorisation from the local police, or a job contract. This fracture between the Riau islands and continental Riau is now almost official, and has allowed Singapore to better integrate Batam and Bintan in its development plans. In February 2002, with the agreement of the Indonesian government, the government of Singapore included these two islands in the latter's free trade agreement signed with the United States. Singapore, Batam and Bintan thereby benefit from preferential access, and are exonerated from taxes for their exports of computer products to the American market.[51] This provision, in addition to encouraging multinational companies to relocate to Batam and Bintan, confirmed their economic detachment from Indonesian territory and their partial integration within Singaporean territory.

Conclusion

Since the creation of Singapore, the government has consistently presented internationalisation as indispensable to the very survival of the country. It has backed up its pronouncements with constant efforts intended to take advantage of the opportunities presented by globalisation. In Singapore, everything is changing, everything is constantly being reshaped by the state, which is constantly redefining its priorities; not only is it perpetually making plans for Singapore itself, but it also attempts to go beyond its own

confines by creating a region of cross-border cooperation, and by making foreign investments. This internationalisation is profoundly regional, and the momentum of the city-state cannot be dissociated from that of eastern Asia, and increasingly, of China and India.

To some extent, this latter movement represents an ambition to avoid over-reliance on its closest neighbours. Indeed, the cross-border agglomeration of which Singapore is the centre has so far proved to be only a limited success or, looked at from another angle, a partial failure. While this agglomeration seems to have breeched national borders, the integration of this region remains largely unfinished. There remains an absence of functional integration, of a cultural community, or of joint management of environmental problems. Despite increasing cross-border investment, rivalries between the states continue. These are shown by the persistence of parallel infrastructures on either side of the border between Malaysia and Singapore, and by Indonesian fears of further encroachment, as it witnesses Singapore's spatial absorption of the Riau Archipelago. As a result, these areas of close proximity appear to some extent as experimental laboratories: as Singapore's expertise was perfected and sharpened within its national territory, it was first tested with success in these areas, before being exported further afield.

The originality of Singapore as a global city is thus of being a terri-tory constructed by a strong state that has sought to build a network in which the horizontal interactions with far-away other economic hothouses are more important than the vertical relations with its own hinterland. However, with respect to the evolution of the other global cities, this remains a potential weakness. The other global cities rely on their surrounding environments, on the formation of ever larger urban regions, in order to strengthen their positions at the global level. The global city of Singapore could therefore be penalised by its difficulties in constructing a Global City Region.

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28. GAWC (Globalization and World Cities Study Group), at <http://www.lboro. ac.uk/gawc/>. The demographic factor has been totally excluded from this classification. This plays to the advantage of cities like Singapore, which does not appear on the list of megacities established by the UN, which comprises cities that have a minimum of ten million inhabitants. Singapore's limited share of the human resource market does not appear as an obstacle to its classification as a global city and, with the new logic of economic globalisation, the production of wealth and the influence of a city are no longer proportional to its population. New Delhi, Kinshasa and Lagos, which are among the densest urban concentrations in the world, carry very little economic weight globally.

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31. Christian Taillard, ed., *Intégrations Régionales en Asie Orientale* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2004).

32. This intraregional commerce is fed by the exploitation of regional complementarity: the adoption by the eastern Asian countries of a strategy for the promotion of exports, the opening of China and the former communist countries, the relocation of firms from Japan and then of the Newly Industrialised Countries towards Southeast Asia and China, and finally the establishment of an international division of labour at the regional level. Thus,

the older and newer industrialised countries of the zone constitute not only a sort of global "workshop"; they tend to evolve into self-sufficient markets. During the 1990s, the "intra-Asian" exports of merchandise rose by 4 points: it grew from 42.1% to 46.6% of total sales between 1990 and 1999, most of which circulated along the coastal axis. See Taillard, ed., *Intégrations Régionales en Asie Orientale*.

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43. The "growth triangles" have often been defined as "natural economic zones". The term "natural economic zones" was used for the first time by Robert A. Scalapino in his "The United States and Asia: Future Prospects", *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1991–1992): 19–40. Scalapino, Professor at the University of Berkeley, picked up the term to designate the Hong Kong-Guangdong zone. The expression was subsequently adopted by economists and businessmen, who argued or at least hoped that political borders, national legislation and bureaucratic barriers would be eroded by economic flows. In the same vein, see Kenichi Ohmae's use of the neologism "Region-States" for cross-border zones

in Asia. His "Region-States" are regional groupings turned first and foremost towards the global economy and not towards the nation-state, and regrouping 5–20 million inhabitants in order to be economically viable. Kenichae Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 90.

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Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

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Temasik to Singapura: Singapore in the 14th to 15th Centuries

John Miksic

Singapore was a city before it was even called by this name. Long before the settlement was revived by Stamford Raffles in 1819, the north bank of the Singapore River was linked to regional flows of people, culture, religious ideas, and trade. This chapter asks: who were the inhabitants of 14th- to 15th-century "Singapore" (or Temasik, Banzu, or any of its various other names)? Did they think of themselves as Singaporeans or Malays or did they think of themselves as having other identities? Did these inhabitants imagine that they could make this island a centre of importance in the world they inhabited? Singapore appears in Malay, Chinese, Javanese, and Vietnamese records as a place of some significance. What sort of singularity, uniqueness, or comparative advantage, did the island and its inhabitants have? By trying to answer these questions, this chapter may provide a feel for what it was like to live on the island we now call Singapore in the period from the 14th to the early 17th centuries.

Many people still assume that ancient Singapore belongs to the world of fable rather than history.[1] Enough archaeological evidence has been

collected since 1984 to confirm the hypothesis that by 1330, Singapore was already a going concern. Hundreds of thousands of artefacts, local and foreign, especially pottery sherds, broken pieces of pottery unearthed from ancient urban contexts, leave no room for doubt that 500 years before Thomas Stamford Raffles made a pact with local Malay rulers, a forerunner to the hypermodern metropolis now occupying this island already existed. This new information allows us to reconsider ancient written records, and integrate Longyamen, Banzu, and Temasik into the history of Singapore.

In the absence of any effusive documents, attempts to imagine how the people of Singapore actually thought of themselves, what emotional connection they felt to this piece of land, in a word their identities, must be speculative. How did inhabitants of "the-place-now-called-Singapore" of the 14th century perceive their place in the world? Would they have called themselves Singaporeans? It might be more prudent to leave these questions alone, since no definitive answer can ever be given, but the undeniable interest these subjects now raise can be cited as reasonable justification for describing a range of answers, and presenting reasons why some answers are more plausible than others.

This chapter sets the stage by discussing places with comparable characteristics to Singapore, thus allowing us to form some conjectures regarding the probable composition of Singapore's population in 1350 and its ethnic diversity. We can reconstruct with some degree of confidence a picture of how various groups came to Singapore, and how they perceived their relations with their fellow residents who came from different origins. Next, we can imagine how people here saw their place in an international context. They were certainly concerned about relations with Java, Sumatra, Vietnam, Siam, South Asia, and China. The conclusion of these deliberations is that some relationships and identities were surprisingly similar to contemporary concepts of Singaporeans as people with both local and global points of reference.

Simple words like "identity" set off fierce debates among sociologists and anthropologists. Ideas about ethnicity and culture were very different in the previous centuries. It is inadmissible to project modern definitions of ethnicity 700 years into the past, and highly unlikely that all criteria used today to determine who belongs to what group would have been meaningful to people then. The concept that natal or birth community confers permanent ethnic identity, which some people still believe today, has not always been taken for granted in the past.[2] Robert Hefner proposed

the term "permeable ethnicity" to refer to the ease with which people in the Straits of Melaka and elsewhere in Southeast Asia could switch ethnic identification. A.C. Milner went further, arguing that "it may be misleading to read the concept of 'ethnicity' in any form back into the precolonial archipelago world. To speak of civilisational communities or groupings may be more helpful".[3] A wide range of group identities and affiliations was available for early Southeast Asians to choose voluntarily; many more ethnic groups existed in the past than today, and this fragmentation was associated with a highly variegated range of symbols of group membership.

It might be tempting to see Singapore's 14th-century inhabitants as Malay, but that would be misleading. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the terms "Malayu", "Melayu", and "Malay" were increasingly used as a general term to refer to people domiciled in the Straits area. It is also true that in the 14th century, a Sumatran dynasty established itself first in Singapore, and moved to Melaka around 1400, where it became the key reference point for "Malay" culture and genealogy. The term "Malay" has experienced many shifts of meaning in the relatively brief time since Raffles came to Singapore. In the 18th century, Malay identity underwent significant changes due to the breakup of Melaka's successor kingdom, Johor and the immigration of people from other parts of the archipelago to the Straits of Melaka.[4] For example, the inhabitants of Siak, east Sumatra, who formerly considered themselves Minangkabau, may have negotiated the meaning of being Malay in order to claim the mantle of Johor's successor.[5]

Leonard Andaya summarises contemporary thoughts on the possible origins of the term "Melayu".[6] The conclusion is that we cannot equate Singapore's indigenous population of the 14th century with the identity today glossed as Malay. The customs, language, and religion which are badges of membership in that group today were not linked in the same way in the 14th century. The people of Singapore, as the *Malay Annals* (*Sejarah Melayu* in Malay)[7] makes clear, were not then Muslim; and neither was the dynasty which a Sumatran noble moved from Palembang to Singapore.[8] Their religious orientation will be discussed below.

Within ancient Singapore, there was not one but two groups of indigenous inhabitants who lived just a few kilometres apart, but displayed major differences in dress and lifestyles. People in the Straits of Melaka seem to have valued membership in groups identified with very specific localities.

If we discard the term "Malay", we are placed in a quandary, for we need some word to describe the majority (and minority) indigenous populations of Singapore in the 1300s. Archaeology provides useful criteria by which to define the geographical extent of semi-hereditary, semi-voluntary sociocultural units to which ancient Singaporeans belonged. Pottery made in 14th-century Singapore[9] belongs to a type found at various sites along the entire Straits of Melaka, from south Thailand, Pengkalan Bujang, Kedah, Malaysia,[10] and Kota Cina, north Sumatra,[11] at one extreme, to western Java (Banten Girang); it also appears in western Borneo (Tanjong Kubur, Sarawak[12]) and at Kota Batu, Brunei,[13] at the other. This type of pottery has been called Bau Malay.[14] It began to be made around the sixth century, and became the favoured style over this large area.

The distribution of a common pottery style shows a shared consumer culture, and strongly suggests (but of course does not conclusively prove) the existence of a shared identity in the maritime realm of Southeast Asia. Pottery is still used to create and reinforce group identities and boundaries. It does not automatically indicate the language spoken by the makers, however, since pottery can be traded across ethno-linguistic boundaries, and styles from one group of potters can influence those of another. Burmese earthenware pottery, for example, resembles Bau-Malay of the Melaka Straits-Riau-Borneo region, but no ethnic relationship between these two groups is likely. This similarity is probably due to the fact that this pottery style had a single origin in prehistoric southern China and was subsequently adopted by other groups.[15]

Another way of identifying shared identity is by the terms outsiders use to describe a group. Outsiders have long used terms such as "Malayu" or "Melayu" (the predecessor to today's Malay) to refer to groups of people who looked the same to them, but who recognised important degrees of difference among themselves. The Batak of north Sumatra, while sharing important similarities in the eyes of non-Batak, prefer to identify themselves by localised group names such as Karo, Mandeling, Dairi, and Toba. These different points of view are sometimes termed emic (internally used linguistic terms or reference points) and etic (externally used linguistic reference points).

The name first appeared when a kingdom calling itself Malayu sent an embassy to the court of China in 644. It was mentioned in the journal of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Yijing, who visited Sumatra 30 years later. The people of a rival Sumatran kingdom, Srivijaya, did not call themselves

Malayu. No doubt the origin of the word, or at least its use to designate a Sumatran population, stems from the association of a group of people with the kingdom called Malayu. It is possible that the name "Malayu" came from the name of a river; people in the straits have long named themselves after the river along which they settled. This was still the practice in 19th-century Singapore, when groups named themselves *orang Kallang*, *orang Seletar*, and so forth, after the rivers where they lived.

The kingdom of Malayu was the rival of Srivijaya for over 300 years, from roughly 670 to 1025.[16] The question of how the name "Malayu" came to designate the people who acknowledged themselves the subjects of Melaka, across the Straits on the "Malayan peninsula", in the 15th century, is enigmatic. O.W. Wolters shows that the main early historical record of this people, now commonly called the *Sejarah Melayu* (*Malay Annals*) or *Sulalatu's-Salatin*, omits any reference to the Malayu-Jambi kingdom in its account of Melaka. Instead, the genealogical line which this "Genealogy of Kings" espouses begins with its founding on Seguntang Hill, Palembang, thence through the island of Bintan in the Riau Archipelago, onward to Singapore, and finally to Melaka.

The "Genealogy of Kings" can be further analysed for the light it sheds on the gradual formation of modern Malay identity. The inescapable conclusion, however, is that the word "Malayu" would not do justice to the complex composition of the indigenous population of 14th-century Singapore; the island's inhabitants probably did not refer to themselves with this term, the meaning of which has since evolved through several stages: first into a more inclusive sense, and later into a means of including some while excluding others.

Wang Dayuan, a Chinese trader and would-be member of the literati class, wrote a text entitled *Dao yi zhi lue* (*Description of the Barbarians of the Isles*; hereafter abbreviated as *Barbarians of the Isles*), published in 1349. He was born around 1311 in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, which became a prosperous port during the Song Dynasty. Nanchang may have been a centre of porcelain trade in Wang's day; it is near the valley of Jingdezhen, a major pottery-producing centre. In a postscript to his text, Wang says that he "attached to a boat when I was young to go for sea-travel", probably meaning that he booked space for himself and his goods. He made two voyages, one between 1330–1334, the other from 1337–1339.[17] Unfortunately, we know almost nothing else about Wang, including his reasons for becoming the first Chinese sea trader to write about his experiences. His book is unique, standing outside standard Chinese literary

genres. He took some quotations from an earlier work, the *Zhufan zhi* (*Treatise on the Barbarians*), written by Zhao Ruguo, the harbour master of Guangzhou, in 1225. He modelled some aspects of his work on Zhao's book, but both the style and structure of the *Barbarians of the Isles* differ significantly from that or any other early Chinese text.

The *Barbarians of the Isles* was excerpted from poems Wang wrote, which have not survived.[18] Wang was less inclined than other Chinese writers of his time to depict foreign customs and people as inferior to those of China. Wang wrote accounts of Longyamen and Temasik, parts of the island of Singapore, which stand out from the rest of his text because they contain many first-hand observations. Most of his book consists of rather brief entries on various ports and countries. He normally confined his remarks to business matters such as the products which could be bought and sold in a particular place. Like a typical businessman, he was economical with words. His writing style is condensed, obscure, and ambiguous, but it is the best written description we are ever likely to obtain of Singapore in this period, so it behoves us to scrutinise it forensically. Wang deviated from his normal style when he described two communities in the Singapore area as so different as to be almost diametrically the opposite of each other.

Wang's account of Longyamen and Temasik has been translated several times, the most commonly available translation being that by Paul Wheatley.[19] The earlier translation by W.W. Rockhill (1914) is also useful.[20] Dr. Geoff Wade of the National University of Singapore has provided a more literal translation of this section, and has also made a significant contribution to scholarship by placing references to Southeast Asia in the Ming dynasty's *Ming shi lu*, or *Veritable Records*, online.[21]

Wang lists 99 places. Longyamen (Dragon's Tooth Gate or Strait) is precisely in the middle (number 49). This is not coincidental; in Wang's view of the world, the ocean could be divided into an eastern and a western sea, and the boundary between them was the Dragon's Tooth Strait.[22] In section 44, Wang describes Banzu as "linked to the hill behind Longyamen".

Zhao Ruguo in 1225 mentioned Longyamen, but as Rockhill concluded in 1914, it must have been a different place from the one Wang was talking about.[23] The most likely conclusion is that in the 14th century, Longyamen or Dragon Tooth Strait was the narrow waterway between Singapore's southern shore and the island of Sentosa which is barely a stone's throw from it. His Banzu, a hill behind Longyamen, is probably Fort Canning Hill, which dominates the mouth of the Singapore River.
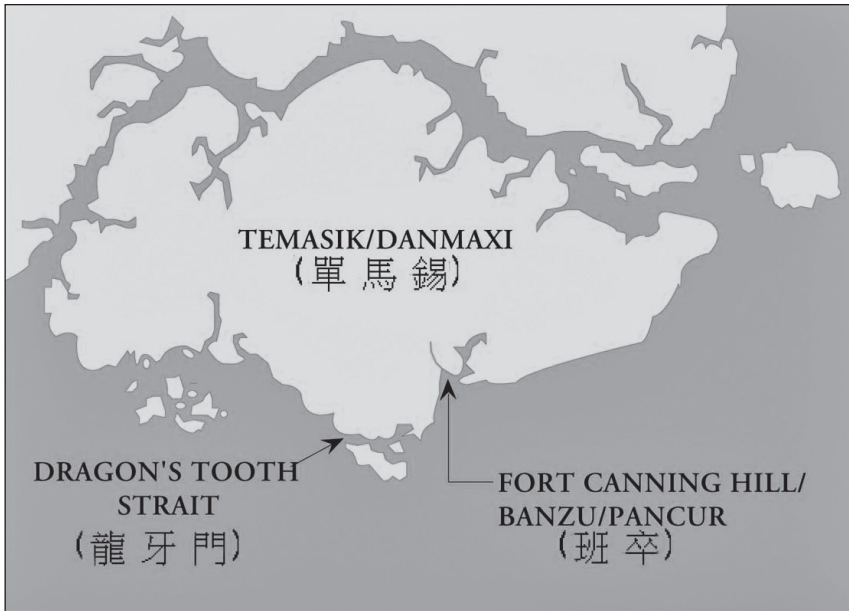
Map 5.1 14th-century Singapore: Temasik, Banzu and Dragon's Tooth Strait

Banzu (pronounced *ban dzoo*) is probably a phonetic transliteration into Chinese of the Malay word "Pancur" (spring of water). Knowledge of sources of drinkable water is critical for sailors. Pancur is a commonplace name in the Straits of Melaka. Important sites known as Pancur included an ancient port on the northwest coast of Sumatra (now known as Barus) which was visited by Arabs, Indians, Chinese, and Javanese in the 11th and 12th centuries, and a 16th-century capital of Johor. When the British arrived in Singapore, there was still a spring of water on the slope of the Forbidden Hill (Fort Canning Hill) facing the Singapore River. Raffles' Malay teacher, Munshi Abdullah, said that the local inhabitants called it the *Pancur Larangan* (Forbidden Spring) because the princesses of ancient Singapore had bathed there.

Wang Dayuan's Pancur can be identified with high probability as a reference to today's Fort Canning Hill. Springs on hills were often thought to be sacred. The Hindu image of Mount Meru at the centre of the universe — where Indra, king of the gods, resided — is closely connected with Asian symbols of kingship. All three early Malay capitals (Palembang, Singapore, and Melaka) had similar geographic features: the sacred centre

lay on a hill overlooking a river. In order to be considered suitable as a Malay capital, a site no doubt had to have such a natural layout. In each case, the hill probably represented Mount Meru, divine centre of the universe. The king's palace symbolised the mythical palace of Indra, the king of the gods, which floated above the peak. Bathing places were normal components of Indonesian palaces. Singapore's Banzu conformed to the classic Malay layout for a royal centre, with a palace on a hill overlooking an estuary. In Raffles' time, local residents not only called the spring the Forbidden Spring, but also called today's Fort Canning *Bukit Larangan*, the Forbidden Hill.

The first line of Wang's description of Dragon's Tooth Strait, in Wheatley's translation, states: "The strait runs between the two hills of the *Dan-ma-xi* (Temasik) barbarians, which look like dragon's teeth". The significant point to note is that Wang uses the term "Temasik" to refer to a population group apparently living in a broader area of which the Dragon's Tooth Strait formed a part. So what did "Temasik" mean: the territory or the inhabitants of Singapore, or both? It seems that "Temasik" denoted the people living in a specific area including both Singapore's main island and smaller neighbouring islands.

The inhabitants of the waterway were described in Wheatley's translation as piratical. Dr. Wade translates Wang's description of this passage as "the favourite customs [of the people who live at the Dragon's Tooth Strait] are pillage and plunder". Wang wrote that the people there made a profession out of preying upon Chinese traders on their return voyages to China; why they should have been spared these depredations on their outward voyage is difficult to comprehend. The size of the Dragon's Tooth Strait's population can be estimated from the statement that the pirates could send 200 to 300 boats at one time to attack trading vessels. This suggests that their population must, at a conservative estimate, have totalled a few thousand, if each boat had just two or three adult males, and if adult males comprised 20 per cent of the population. No population figures are available for any 14th-century Southeast Asian city. The earliest reliable calculation of a Southeast Asian city's population is that by Reid, who estimated the population for Malaya as a whole in 1600 at not more than 500,000, and for Southeast Asia as a whole at 23 million; Melaka under the Portuguese contained about 12,000 people, but only 5,000 during the period of Dutch rule in the 17th century. A population of several thousand thus constituted a considerable figure for its time and place.[24]

Wang refers to a tradition that the district chief or headman accidentally excavated an object which Wheatley translated as a "jewelled headdress", Wade as a "jade crown". Dr. Wade notes that this could either be taken literally, or interpreted as a figure of speech signifying the attainment of ascendancy over the place. The story of a lost crown parallels that of a story in the *Malay Annals/Genealogy of Kings* according to which Singapore's first ruler had to throw his crown overboard during the short trip from Batam Island to Singapore in order to quell a storm. This event may have been a symbolic reference to the fact that a historically-known ruler of Singapore, Parameswara, probably came from Palembang after having lost his kingdom to a Javanese attack around 1392.[25] The legend about a crown may have been changed by later chroniclers. The story of the semi-archaeological discovery of a crown implies the existence of a tradition according to which Singapore was inhabited before the 14th century. No concrete evidence for this exists — the soil layers below those of the 14th century contain no human remains — other than some stone tools found near Tuas dating from about 4,000 years ago. Nevertheless, a geographical work attributed to the first-century Greek cosmographer Klaudios Ptolemaeus, the *Geographike Huphegensis*, suggests that there was a trading port named Sabana somewhere in the Singapore vicinity 2,000 years ago.[26]

The next line of Wang's *Barbarians of the Isles* describes a ceremony in which the population of Longyamen celebrated the New Year. The tribal chief or *chiuzhang* (a term used to refer to the leader of a group to whom were attributed charisma and prowess, according to Dr. Wade) wore the crown in an audience. This tribal chief parallels O.W. Wolters' concept of early Southeast Asian rulers as Big Men with *sakti* (supernatural power).[27] This account also suggests that leadership in this group was rather loosely organised, possibly based on achieved rather than hereditary status. This social organisation is typical of groups which outsiders have lumped together under the rubric of Sea Nomads, *orang laut* (literally "people of the sea") in modern Malay. Such *orang laut* comprised the largest fraction of the indigenous population when Raffles arrived, living in Singapore under the leadership of "Malay" royalty from the Melaka lineage. A powerful bond of loyalty between Sea Nomads and Malay nobles had existed since at least the age of 14th-century Temasik, perhaps going back to the seventh-century founding of Srivijaya.

The next line of the *Barbarians of the Isles* contains a statement which is of great significance for the interpretation of 14th-century Singapore

society. Rockhill translated this passage as: "Men and women live mixed up among the Chinese".[28] Wheatley rendered it as: "The natives and the Chinese dwell side by side". Wade provides the literal translation as follows: "The Prime Minister [*xiangfu*] instructs both men and women to live in harmony with the Chinese people", or "Men and women reside beside Chinese people".[29] In his entire account, Wang mentions only two overseas Chinese communities. One of these was not important; it consisted of some Chinese aboard ships of the Yuan fleet sent to attack Java in 1292 who fell ill, and were left behind on *Goulan Shan* (possibly Gelam Island, off west Borneo). In Wang's day, 40 years later, "over 100" of the original men and their descendants "live mixed up with the native families".[30] Whereas the men on *Goulan Shan* seem to have been in the process of assimilation to a Bornean identity, the overseas Chinese in Longyamen appear to have formed a dynamic mercantile community, the inhabitants of which maintained Chinese identity.

It is difficult to comprehend why Chinese should have lived in Longyamen if it was a lair of "pirates", whose main victims were Chinese, when the organised trading settlement of Banzu was nearby. It is possible that Wang mixed up information about Longyamen with an observation about Temasik in general, or surrounding sea-based people, or that the Chinese were living at Banzu. Perhaps Longyamen's inhabitants combined everyday trading with occasional raiding when at war with neighbours. On the other hand, Wang says that Longyamen did have some trade; it offered coarse lakawood and tin ore in exchange for "red gold" (possibly a copper-gold alloy), silk, cotton cloth with floral patterns, low-quality pottery, and metal containers.

Longyamen appeared in the *Yuan Shi* (the official record of the Yuan Dynasty compiled in the succeeding Ming period) in a note which states that China sent a mission there which also visited Champa and Cambodia in 1320 to seek tame elephants. In 1325, Longyamen sent a return mission to China with a memorial and tribute, indicating it possessed the political sophistication and cohesion necessary to engage in international diplomacy.[31] This seems to contradict Wang's next section which describes the bloodthirsty nature of the Longyamen's denizens, and alleges that they only obtained trading goods from Quanzhou traders, where Wang may have had commercial connections, by piracy.

Although one cannot be entirely sure what Wang was talking about, it seems clear that he was recording the existence of a settled overseas Chinese community in the Temasik region. If so, this is the first written

reference to such a community, and therefore, is of major historical significance.

Perhaps Wang's peculiar phrasing was meant to draw a distinction between the intertwined nature of Chinese and local settlement in Temasik, rather than the usual pattern of Chinese life in Southeast Asia: in separate quarters protected by stockades, such as Marco Polo described Chinese constructing for temporary protection in Sumatra in 1292, or in designated foreign quarters as in precolonial and Dutch-period Indonesia, and as foreigners in China were required to do at all times during China's imperial phase. The Chinese did the same in Melaka, to which Singapore's 14th century rulers moved in the early 15th century.

The *Ying-yai Sheng-lan* (*Supreme Survey of the Ocean Shores*) was the first important Chinese reference work to be written on Southeast Asian commerce since Wang Dayuan. It was probably written between 1425 and 1432 by a Chinese Muslim named Ma Guan (otherwise transliterated as Ma Huan), who served as an interpreter and recorder with Zheng He's (Cheng Ho) 1413 expedition. The text was edited around 1436 by Chang Sheng. Ma Guan wrote: "Whenever the treasure-ships of the Central Country arrived there [in Melaka], they [the Chinese] at once erected a line of stockading, like a city-wall, and set up towers for the watch-drums at four gates; at night they had patrols of police carrying bells; inside, again, they erected a second stockade, like a small city-wall, [within which] they constructed warehouses (*guang chang*) and granaries; [and] all the money and provisions were stored in them".[32] Since Singapore's rulers had by then moved to Melaka, it seems reasonable to assume that much of Singapore's Chinese population had moved with them. The other *guang chang* was in Samudera, not Palembang.

It seems then very likely that early 14th-century Singapore had one of the first settled populations of Chinese in Southeast Asia, and that Singapore had unusually close links to China in the 14th century. During the early 15th century, the first instinct of the Yongle emperor of the Ming Dynasty was to treat all overseas Chinese as traitors and unfilial to their ancestors (having neglected their graves), and he considered wiping them out. Palembang, which had become a miniature Chinese kingdom, was attacked and thousands were killed. It was then decided to appoint a special Pacification Commissioner (*xuǎn wéi sī*) from the surviving Chinese community. For a brief period between 1405 and 1433, before China turned inwards, Palembang and Melaka occupied special statuses in China's official relations with Southeast Asia.

To return to the 14th century, before Singapore's ruler moved to Melaka, a Chinese population lived peacefully alongside a "Temasik" population. The practice of isolating foreign merchant communities from locals is found in many cultures; it can be found in Mesopotamian sources of the third millennium B.C.E. From the standpoint of local rulers, this practice protected their subjects from absorbing foreign, possibly subversive, ideas; from the foreign standpoint, it enabled the trading communities to retain their own customs, and often to maintain extraterritorial legal systems. Even if Wang singled Singapore out for special mention because of the unusual situation where Chinese lived alongside the local population, this would not account for Wang's omission of references to any other Chinese communities. It seems unlikely that he would have neglected to mention at least the more important ones. Ming accounts of the early 15th century never fail to record the locations of large overseas Chinese communities. The logical inference must be that Temasik was unique because of the existence of significant overseas Chinese settlement there, though other communities may have existed at Kota Cina (northeast Sumatra)[33] and in Cambodia in the 12th and 13th centuries.[34]

Like most Chinese, Wang considered personal appearance an important subject when observing other cultures. Almost every one of his descriptions of trading ports contains information on local hairstyles and clothing. The obvious conclusion is that each port had its own style which set it apart from its neighbours. The ports of the Straits may have had similar pottery, but the appearance of the population themselves was very distinctive in each port. It seems likely that each place took pride in creating and accentuating its own local identity. The people of Longyamen tied their hair in a bun, meaning they let it grow long, and wore short cotton shirts. Wheatley translates a phrase in Wang's account to mean that they also wore black cotton sarongs, but Wade amends this to mean that the shirts were blue/green (*qing*; e.g. *qingbai*, a special Chinese colour category including dark blue/green) in colour, and that the cloth was of low quality.

The people of Banzu, in contrast to Longyamen, lived around a terraced hill. This could be no other place than the hill called *Bukit Larangan* (Forbidden Hill) when the British arrived in 1819, then Government Hill, and finally Fort Canning Hill. As we have seen earlier, a spring of water called *Pancur Larangan* (Forbidden Spring) still poured abundant water from the side of this hill in the early 19th century. Far from being robbers and murderers, the people of Banzu/Pancur were "by custom and disposition honest". Their costumes and hairstyles were quite different from their

neighbours' at the Dragon's Tooth Strait: their hair was cut short, and they wore headcloths of "false gold-patterned satin wrapped around the head and a red-oiled crude/coarse cloth tied around the body" (Dr. Wade's translation). The latter is a possible description of Indonesian batik or patterned cloth. Implicit in his description is that the people of Banzu wore better quality clothing, and were thus more sophisticated than the people of Longyamen. This impression is reinforced by his next remark which states that they were industrious, making salt by boiling sea water, and brewing a kind of rice wine. They were said to be ruled by a "chief"; Wang refers to him by a word denoting a leader who is not independent, but a vassal of another more powerful ruler.

In further contrast to the Longyamen scoundrels, Banzu people possessed such trade goods as "very fine hornbill casques, lakawood of moderate quality, and cotton".[35] Chinese traders were able to obtain these commodities in exchange for such goods as satin, iron bars, printed cloth, red gold, pottery, and iron cauldrons.

Too little archaeological reconnaissance has been carried out in the Keppel Harbour area to verify the suspicion that a pirates' lair lay near there. The obvious point would be around the spot where until 1843, stood a rock which protruded prominently from the water and was known in English as Lot's Wife, in Malay as Batu Berlayar (Sail Rock), and may have provided the inspiration for the term "Dragon's Tooth Strait". It formed a navigational landmark as well as an omen of potential disaster lurking just beyond it. Archaeological research on and near Fort Canning has been able to confirm and amplify Wang's description of Banzu.

Excavations on Fort Canning Hill began in 1984; since when scholars have recovered several tons of 14th-century remains from the 85-hectare area between the former coastline, the Singapore River, Fort Canning Hill, and Stamford Road. Excavations just outside these boundaries have yielded negative results, indicating that the 14th-century settlement was rigidly enclosed within a boundary formed by an earthen rampart which ran along Stamford Road. This pattern is different from other settlements of approximately the same period. Cities in early Southeast Asia were not usually enclosed by walls; settlements had no clear boundaries, and the standard strategy when attacked was to flee rather than to defend a city.[36] The goal of this strategy was to maximise the preservation of population; people were deemed more valuable than property, and many invasions were launched to capture people rather than territory. Fixed defences were therefore neither necessary nor a rational investment.
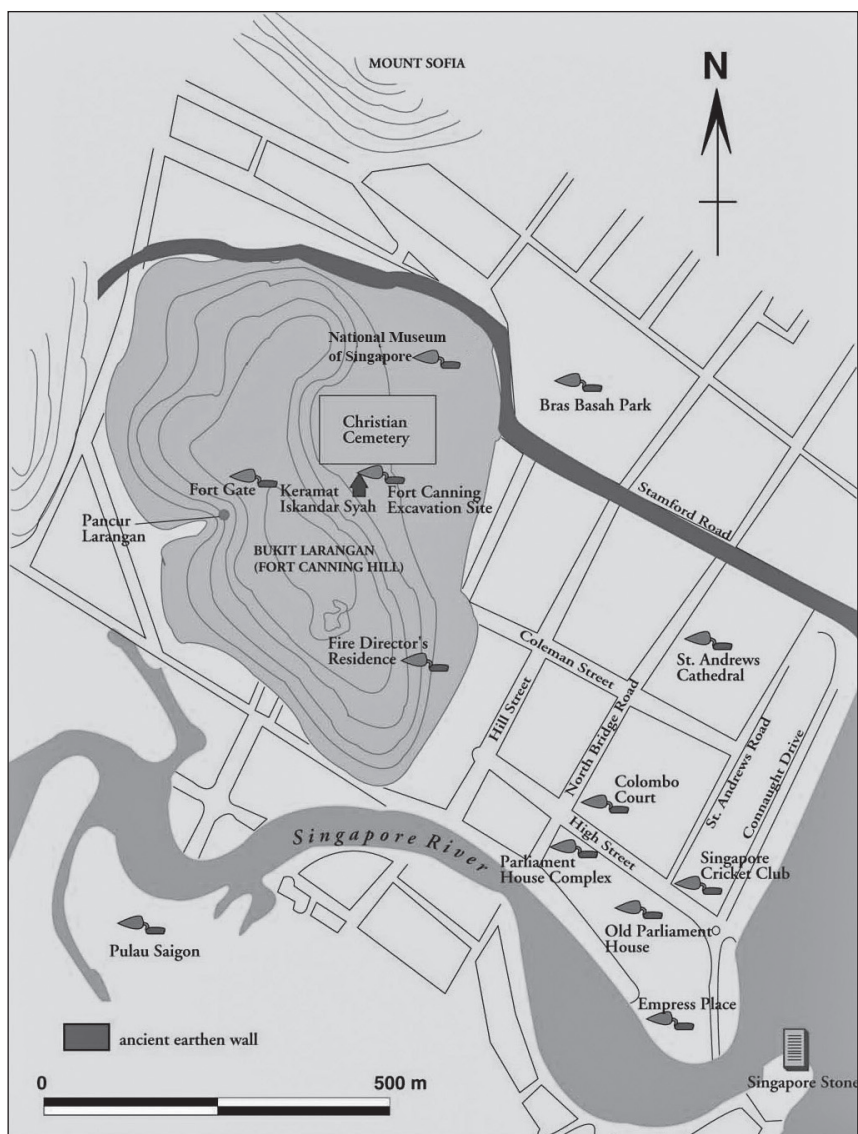
Map 5.2 Archaeological sites in the centre of modern Singapore

Temasik also appears in a comment which Wang inserts into another section of the *Barbarians of the Isles*, on Xian ("Siam") somewhere in the lower Chao Phraya valley.

> In recent years [circa 1325–1330] they [*Xian*/"people of Shan/Siam"]
> came with seventy odd junks and raided *Dan-ma-xi* and attacked the
> city moat. [The town] resisted for a month, the place having closed the
> gates and defending itself, and they not daring to assault it. It happened
> just then that an Imperial envoy was passing by (*Dan-ma-xi*), so the
> men of *Xian* drew off and hid, after plundering *Xi-li*.

One assumes that by Temasik, Wang was here referring to the
settlement which elsewhere he calls Banzu. The raid on Temasik was part
of a long history of enmity between the Malays and the Siamese. The
History of the Yuan says that around 1295, "since the people of *Sien* (Siam)
and of *Ma-li-yü-erh* (Malayu) have long been killing each other and are
all in submission at this moment, an imperial order has been issued telling
the people of *Sien*: do no harm to the *Ma-li-yü-erh* and hold to your
promise".[37] This imperial command, like many others issued to Southeast
Asians, had no effect.

The *Malay Annals*/*Genealogy of Kings* mentions a moat (*parit
Singapura*) and describes Singapore as a fortified city which withstood
one Javanese siege, and fell to a second only because of the treachery
of a minister. Remains of an earthen rampart, indicated on a map of
1825 as "the old lines of Singapore",[38] ran for over a kilometre from the
shore to the landward side of Fort Canning Hill, parallel for much of its
course to a Freshwater Stream. The stream still exists, though it is now
covered with concrete for much of its length. In 1822, the rampart was
described by John Crawfurd, second Resident of Singapore, as being 16
feet (5 metres) wide and 9 feet (2.5 metres) high, without any visible gates.
The rampart was never described again; it must have been levelled when
Stamford Road was built.

To construct a wall, a permanent defensive work, the inhabitants
required a degree of cooperation and centralised direction. This level
of sociopolitical integration is beyond that of a simple society with no
bureaucratic institutions. It requires a polity able to mobilise resources
for the common good, thus some form of taxation or corvee — in order
words, a leadership structure. Possession of a wall marks 14th-century
Temasik as unusual for its time. Settlements of this period in the Straits
of Melaka, if they were defended at all, usually possessed only stockades
of perishable material such as logs or thorny bamboo. The construction
of a more durable, labour-intensive fortification shows that its inhabitants
felt an unusually strong attachment to a particular location. Rather than
resigning themselves to flight when faced by an enemy, they were resolved

to defend this precise spot. Why they should have formed such an unusual identification with a place is not possible to discern from the written sources. That they did defend their city against armed invaders is confirmed by both Wang Dayuan and the *Malay Annals*. They must have had some sort of military organisation which was able to withstand attacks from much larger neighbours, notably Xien/Siam, and Java-based Majapahit.

Another form of evidence for a particularly well developed society in Singapore was a long inscription on the face of a boulder. This inscription, called the Singapore Stone in early descriptions, stood on a "rocky point" at the mouth of the Singapore River in 1819. The Merlion statue was erected on the same location, before it was moved to the site on reclaimed land it now occupies. The Singapore Stone may have been mentioned in the *Malay Annals/Genealogy of Kings*' story of Badang, the Singapore version of Hercules. In one of his feats of strength, Badang threw a boulder from the palace on the hill (now Fort Canning) to the point at the mouth of the Singapore River.

The stone was blown up in 1843 as part of a project to build Fort Fullerton. Fragments were saved, but they are inadequate to make a translation possible. The script belongs to the general form known as *Kawi* which was used in Indonesia. An inscription in this script exists at Pengkalan Kempas, near Melaka, dated 1462. The few words which can be deciphered appear to be Sanskrit. The inscription itself was 50 to 52 lines long, an impressive text. The date of the inscription is unknown, but must date from the period before the region was converted to Islam in the early 15th century. The conclusion which can be drawn from this data is that Singapore was home to a literate population in the pre-Islamic period. This contrasts with the common perception that precolonial Singapore had been no more than a backwater, a primitive fishing village and haunt of sea rovers.

Singapore continued to exist after its ruler, Iskandar Syah, was expelled in the late 14th century. This is recorded in the *Malay Annals/Genealogy of Kings*, and proven by archaeological remains found along the Singapore River at Empress Place, Old Parliament House, and Parliament House Complex. In the *Malay Annals/Genealogy of Kings*, when Melaka was founded, Singapura became the domain of the son of Sri Bija Diraja, perhaps as an inheritance from Sri Bija Diraja himself. Sri Bija Diraja was the *Laksamana*, the commander of the Sultanate's maritime forces.[39] The greatest hero in the *Malay Annals*, Hang Tuah, held the same title. During the reign of Sultan Mansur Syah, Melaka's most glorious period,

Singapura was said to maintain 40 three-masted cruisers.[40] Singapura and its surrounding islands was the main naval base of Melaka, which had no seafaring population of its own.

Singapore's seafaring experts probably belonged to two groups. One would have been the more land-oriented people of Temasik (notably Banzu), who pursued a range of economic activities including fishing, trading, industry, and agriculture. Another important source of seafaring manpower would have been the people called *orang laut* ("sea people" in Malay), and *Çelates* (from the Malay word *selat*, "strait") by the Portuguese. Both Portuguese and Malay records agree that when the Palembang ruler had moved to Singapore, one of his main sources of support had been a group of Sea People. According to the Portuguese, the Sea People who came with this ruler from Palembang (or perhaps Bangka) chose not to live in Singapore. Instead they stayed at Karimun. The Portuguese say they felt unwelcome in Singapore.

The island of Karimun occupies a strategic position at the south end of the Straits of Melaka. It lies about 30 kilometres west of Singapore, and is visible from the latter from atop its hills and tall buildings. A rock face on the north side of Karimun bears a Sanskrit inscription carved in the eighth or ninth century, during Srivijaya's golden age, indicating that the population there had some part to play in the kingdom. They may have watched over the shipping, compelling it to call at Srivijaya in order to pay tolls. Zhao Ruguo suggests that foreign ships may have paid toll there rather than diverting to Palembang.

Chinese sailing directions of the Yuan and Ming Dynasties refer to Karimun as an important navigational landmark. According to Wang Dayuan, this is where ships returning to China from the Western Ocean (that is, India) formed a fleet for safety, and prepared for battle against the pirates in the Dragon's Tooth Strait. According to the Portuguese, it was the Sea People who discovered the site of Melaka after the ruler was driven out of Singapore. When the Portuguese took Melaka, the *laksamana* was a descendant of these Sea People. Thus, Hang Tuah may have been a member of this group.

After the fall of Melaka in 1511, the Malay capital returned to the Johor-Singapore-Riau area. The sea people there were divided into different *suku* ("tribes", communities; small groups), usually speaking a Malay-related dialect, occupying a particular range of sea and islands, and carrying on special occupations. The *Suku* Mantang specialised in making swords and spears. Others were rowers, providing "transport of envoys and letters to

rulers in foreign countries", producers of agar-agar and sago, suppliers of water and wood, or of hunting dogs.[41] In the 16th and 17th centuries, European sources depict the sea people as the Malay sultans' most loyal subjects. 17th-century Dutch sources say that the chief of the sea people of Singapore had the title Raja Negara Selat (king of the country [or town] of the Straits).[42] Their link to the Malay rulers was only severed in 1699, when the last sultan with a claim to be directly descended from Sri Tri Buana, the Malays' first king and founder of Singapore in the *Malay Annals/Genealogy of Kings*, was assassinated. The sea people, having lost their focal point in the person of the Malay royal line, dissolved into fragmented and isolated groups, and many eventually adopted Malay identity.

In 1515, the Portuguese said that the people who lived in Singapura were Çelates.[43] Supposedly the officers of Bendahara and Laksamana were hereditary among the Çelates in Melaka. By the time the British arrived in Singapore in 1819, several *suku* of sea people still lived here. The Singapore River belonged to the *Suku* Gelam, who also lived on Batam and other nearby islands. Munshi Abdullah mentioned that they worshipped a rock near the mouth of the Singapore River, which may have been the Singapore Stone. After the British arrived, they moved to the nearby Pulau Berani. By the early 1920s, they had assimilated to Malay culture.[44] The *Suku* Seletar lived on boats around mangrove swamps on the north coast of Singapore near the Seletar River mouth. The Biduanda-Kallang people who lived in the mangrove swamp at the Kallang River were decimated in a smallpox epidemic in 1848.[45]

There were thus two groups who could lay claim to being natives of Singapore in 1330: the estuarine-dwellers around the Singapore River, and the piratical or raiding population around the Dragon's Tooth Strait. They differed in many fundamental respects, probably including religion (as will be explained later). Each had its own rulers, and political and economic systems. The defensive fortification which may already have existed in Wang Dayuan's time may have been meant at least in part to protect the estuarine dwellers from the other, although Wang only mentions an attack by the Siamese.

During the mid-14th century, it seems possible that Temasik became more unified. Archaeological remains excavated on seven sites thus far studied in the ancient urban area around Fort Canning Hill indicate a population of unusual discernment and material wealth. Research in the islands of Riau also indicate that the people there, while still culturally distinct from those of Temasik, were linked with them in a commercial

network which made both sides rich. The 14th-century remains excavated from Singapore reveal relatively equal proportions of Chinese and local pottery. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from this data. For comparison, ceramics at Kota Cina (northeast Sumatra) included 30 per cent Chinese ware in the 12th and 13th centuries. No Southeast Asian sites from the 14th century are as well documented as Singapore; thus we cannot draw any comparisons with contemporary trading ports. The increase in Chinese ware in 14th-century Singapore may be due to chronological factors (for example, declining prices of Chinese ceramics) rather than increasing wealth of the local population. In terms of quality of Chinese artefacts, however, some unusually rare items, found on Fort Canning Hill, strongly suggest that Singapore had special access to, and interest in, Chinese items. These include a Chinese bowl with compass directions written under the glaze. This is a unique object; no similar item has been reported even in China. Other finds consist of fragments of a pillow of white porcelain with the highly refined form of a Chinese theatre, an intricate artefact only a few examples of which are known from China, and the use of which was probably confined to the elite. Fragments of large white porcelain incense burners have also been found on Fort Canning (the "Forbidden Hill").

Another unique type of artefact consists of shards of elaborate glass vessels. Chemical analysis has shown that they were made in China; once again, no such artefacts have been reported from Chinese sites.[46] It is probable that they were made in a south Chinese port, possibly Quanzhou, where Arab tastes were well known, and Chinese glassmakers may have learnt new techniques from Arab craftsmen. Approximately 10,000 Chinese glass beads were also found on Fort Canning Hill, in comparison with a mere handful from the other six sites so far investigated. This data confirms the validity of the name *Bukit Larangan* (Forbidden Hill), by which Fort Canning was known in 1819. The story that the hill had once been a palace is almost certainly true; these unique items suggest a high degree of social differentiation between the elite on the hill and the commoners settled on the plain below. Fragments of gold, including a cache of gold jewellery found in 1928 on the hill, add further weight to this hypothesis, as does the report of John Crawfurd in 1822 that the eastern and northern slopes of the hill bore numerous ruins of buildings of good quality brick. Few brick fragments have so far been found in 14th-century strata on the hill, but the site of the modern Keramat Iskandar Syah (shrine for Iskandar Syah) almost certainly marks the former location of one of these buildings.

The *Bukit Larangan* site seems to have been abandoned by 1400, probably evidence of the evacuation of the local ruler to Melaka.

The economy of 14th-century Temasik was based on trade and manufacturing. Wang Dayuan only mentions distilling of rice wine. Fort Canning has yielded traces of gold and glass working (recycling of broken Chinese shards to make bracelets). Copper, bronze, and iron working have been documented at the nearby Parliament House Complex and the Singapore Cricket Club sites. All these required the import of raw materials and their transformation in Singapore. This evidence for occupational specialisation is augmented by plentiful and widespread discoveries of coins, mainly Chinese but including a few Sri Lankan coins. Their distribution and quantity strongly suggest that they were used as the basic medium of exchange in the city. Thus, monetisation had proceeded to a significant extent, setting the society quite apart from any suggestion of a simple barter trade.

Chinese artefacts thus provide abundant evidence for the importance of a commercial link with China. Other imported items came from Java, Thailand, Vietnam, and India. These are much less numerous, but this may be misleading, because their exports to Singapore may have been of perishable nature, including food and clothing. The *Malay Annals/Genealogy of Kings* does not mention Chinese trade, but does mention Singapore's relations with India. For example, the second ruler of Singapore, Paduka Sri Pikrama Wira, was said to have married Princess Talai Puchudi of Kalinga, a kingdom on India's east coast.[47]

Were there Indians resident at Temasik, or were there at least strong links to India? The evidence is equivocal for another regional centre: Bandar Bapahat. Here, near the probable location of a 14th-century palace of a ruler named Adityawarman at Bukit Gombak, west Sumatra, a channel for water was hewn into rock. On one side was an inscription in a particular form of localised Sanskrit typical of the 14th century. On the other side of the channel, was an inscription in south Indian Grantha. This may or not signify that there was "an important south Indian component among the subjects of Adityawarman".[48] Similarly, archaeological data does not permit us to conclude that there were Indian (or Sri Lankan) inhabitants in 14th-century Temasik. The discovery of imported south Asian (Indian or Sri Lankan) statuary in nearby Kota Cina from the 12th or 13th century, and the 11th-century Tamil inscription at Barus, however, indicate that south Asians would not have been strangers to Singapore's shores. There is as yet no evidence that Hinduism existed as an organised religion in ancient

Singapore, but no Buddhist objects have yet been discovered either. This complete lack of clearly religious objects is surprising, given Crawfurd's description of extensive brick ruins on Fort Canning Hill, which must have been religious sanctuaries. The mundane nature of all artefacts so far discovered suggests that the interests of 14th-century Singaporeans were mainly commercial in nature.

Singapore's economy was therefore quite well developed in the 14th century. Our data does not permit us to distinguish between different phases during this period; it is possible that Singapore's prosperity and sophistication became more pronounced after Wang's visits in the 1330s, when the settlement may have been only 30 years old. One way in which Singapore could have become more prosperous would have been through an expansion of its role as a local commercial hub. Evidence that this did occur comes in the form of numerous discoveries of 14th-century Chinese pottery in graves in the nearby islands of Riau. Chinese traders did not go to these islands; at least no records of such contact exist in Zhao Ruguo or Wang Dayuan (or in Ma Guan or other Ming writers either). The inescapable conclusion is that the people of Riau obtained their imported items in Singapore.

Riau people had numerous commodities which were highly prized in China at the time. These included pearls, tortoise shell, coral, and a sausage-like marine creature called a sea cucumber. All these, being sea products, the sea nomads or *orang laut* were perfectly suited to provide. Thus, by the mid-14th century, the people of the Dragon's Tooth Strait may have shifted the main weight of their activities from preying upon traders to becoming traders; not directly with the Chinese, but through Singapore. This kind of symbiotic relationship was typical of the relations between Malays and *orang laut* in later times.

The discovery of many burials on the islands of Riau as far from Singapore as the Natuna Islands and the island of Midai, hundreds of kilometres away, indicates the scale of this commerce. Some form of economic exchange such as barter may have been involved; possibly the Sea Nomads of those islands delivered marine products to the Temasik rulers as a kind of tribute, in return for tokens of esteem in the form of Chinese wares and gold jewellery. At least one person was buried with a boat on the island of Midai. This type of burial custom is associated with local Southeast Asian beliefs dating to prehistoric times which focus on the ability of the ancestors to affect the living, for better and for worse. They had to be propitiated. This belief had long disappeared from the
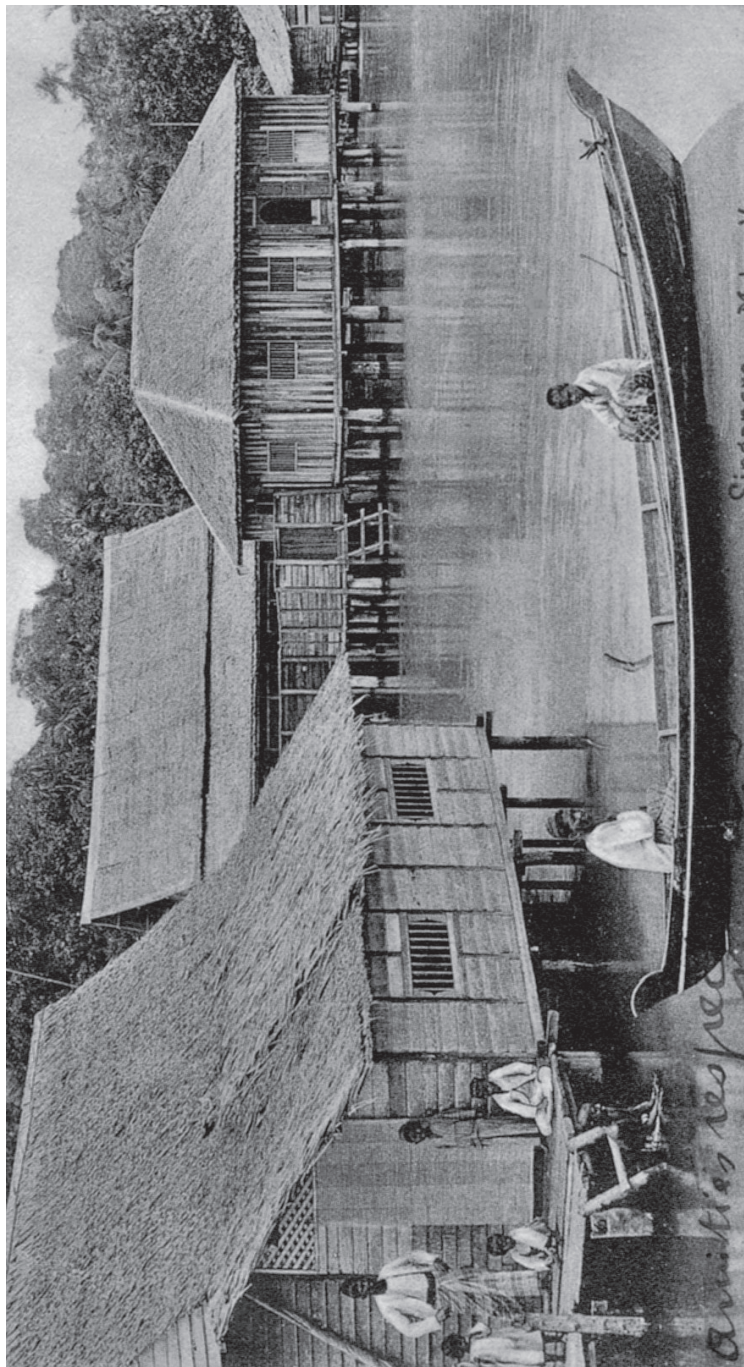
Plate 5.1 "Malay" houses from 1910
Both Malays and *orang laut* commonly lived in stilted houses, thatched with the attap palm, often near or along rivers or the sea as in this picture.
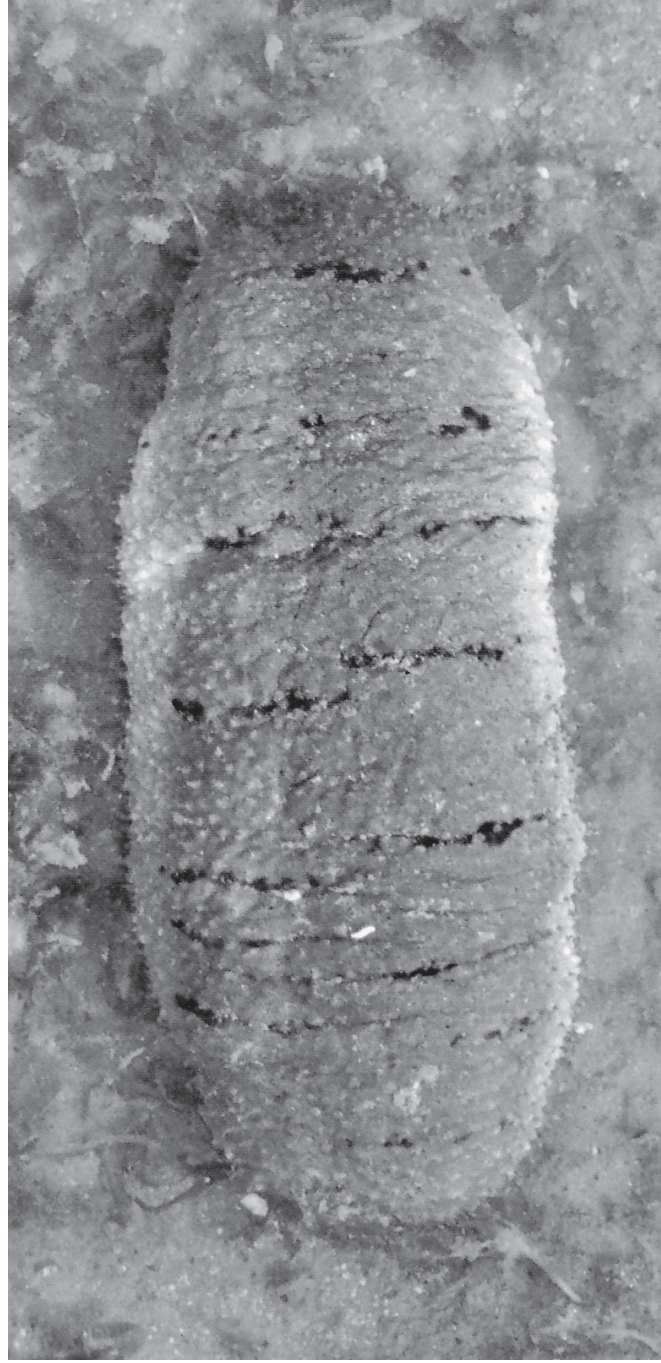
Plate 5.2 Sea cucumber basking in shallow coastal waters just off Singapore

A sea cucumber photographed at Chek Jawa on Pulau Ubin, an island a five-minute boat ride off the northeast coast of Singapore. Sea cucumbers, along with hornbill casques, were just some of the many forest and marine products exported from the Straits of Melaka and islands of maritime Southeast Asia. In a way, they are one of the key forces behind the Straits and Southeast Asian piracy described in J.F. Warren's *The Sulu Zone 1768–1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformaiton of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (Singapore: Singapore Univeristy Press, 1981).

maritime trading kingdoms of the Straits of Melaka. No burials have ever
been found in such sites as Kota Cina or anywhere on Singapore. This is
due to the fact that the fundamental religion in these areas was Mahayana
Buddhism. The elite in particular usually sought to become initiated into
higher and higher orders of esoteric Buddhist ritual. Thus, no offerings
were given to the dead, who according to Chinese accounts, were usually
cremated and whose ashes were thrown into the sea or rivers.

Thus, the two belief systems continued to exist side by side: the sea
nomads perpetuating their non-Indic beliefs, the Temasik land dwellers
following Buddhism which had been implanted firmly in South Sumatra by
the beginning of the kingdom of Srivijaya in the seventh century. The two
identities thus coexisted despite the regular communication and exchanges
between them. This pattern continues today; on the island of Karimun, a
population of sea nomads still lives near the ancient Srivijayan inscription.
They call themselves *orang akit*, not *orang malayu;* they live mainly by
fishing and their religion is not Muslim. They claim to be Buddhist, but
possess neither statuary nor temples other than a rude hut on the edge of
the village. That such an identity still persists today is testimony to the
natural and anthropological dynamics which favour the perpetuation of
numerous alternative ethnicities in the Singapore region.

14th-century Singapore maintained diplomatic relations with the
Mongols in the early period, and with Vietnam, according to Vietnamese
sources. Javanese sources claim that Temasik was part of the empire of
Majapahit by 1365.[49] The *Pararaton* (*Book of Kings*), in a famous episode,
quotes the prime minister of Majapahit, Gajah Mada, as taking an oath to
conquer a list of countries. These are listed in geographical order; Temasik
appears among places located in Sumatra and west Borneo.[50]

Portuguese maps and finds of the late Ming Dynasty porcelain show
that Singapore continued to be a trading port until the early 17th century.
Then, the settlement at the Singapore River estuary seems to have been
abandoned, perhaps as the result of an attack by the Acehnese. For the
next two centuries, probably only a few small bands of sea people held
out on Singapore's fringes. Place names such as Tanah Merah, Sungai
Bedok, and Tanjong Rhu, found on Eredia's map of Singapore, still exist
today. Archaeological research along Singapore's east coast may yet reveal
evidence that there were villages in that area, even though the old urban
area around the Singapore River had been abandoned.[51] The Forbidden
Hill and Forbidden Spring were still remembered and respected in 1819.
Thus, there is a thin but demonstrable connection between Singapore's first

age of prosperity in the 1300s, and the revival of this ancient port which began with the arrival of Raffles. As far as he was concerned, Singapore had a specific identity based on a deep and illustrious past.

Archaeological research has confirmed Raffles' assumption. Although not everything in the *Malay Annals*' description of Temasik/Singapura can be taken literally, there is no reason now to doubt that for the population of the Straits of Melaka, Singapura retained a lustre long after the centres of trade and political power moved elsewhere. The artefacts recovered in 20 years of digging prove that Singaporeans did engage in a wide range of commercial activities in the 14th century, including trade and manufacture. They had access to very rare items from China. The probability that Singapore was one of the earliest sites of a permanent population of overseas Chinese is high. The archaeological remains support Wang Dayuan's statement that Chinese and natives lived side by side.

The recovery of thousands of tiny glass beads from Fort Canning Hill leads to a further hypothesis. In Melaka, a few decades later in the 15th century, a new identity emerged: the Peranakan or "Nonya Baba" culture, a hybrid of Chinese and Malay language and traditions. One of the more important art forms of this culture consists of beadwork, applied to such items as sashes and slippers. It could be proposed that Peranakan culture had its inception before the founding of Melaka, in Singapore. We do not know what the beads found on Fort Canning were used for. One use of beads is, of course, for making necklaces, but it is possible that beads were concentrated in this particular location because it was the site of a workshop in which they were sewn onto textiles. Other crafts like glass recycling to make bangles, and gold working, were probably conducted in the same area; in other words, the site may have been a palace craftsmen's zone. In the 15th century, after the founding of Melaka, Portuguese sources record that Singapore's population gradually moved north to the new port. Possibly, Peranakan culture had already undergone its formative stage in Singapore.

Miksic speculates as to whether Peranakan culture — mixing Malay, Chinese and other crafts and objects into a distinct Straits blend — has roots far back as the 14th century. At that time, Chinese and Malays lived side by side at Temasik/Bangsu. Marriage of "Malay" women to Chinese eventually helped to produce this blended culture. Early archaeological discoveries included evidence of large-scale beadworking. The photograph overleaf shows old and contemporary Peranakan shoes revealing typical beadwork and floral patterns.

Plate 5.3   Peranakan culture and the Straits: Peranakan shoes and beadwork

Now Singapore is once again a cosmopolitan city dependent on trade and transport, with a multiracial population. Although the constituents of Singapore's society and their relationships with one another differ from those found there 700 years ago, due to changes in religion, economic patterns, and immigration, the population is still united by a common identity as a society of honest and gentle people in a region prone to instability. It is again hosting distinct population groups, "Malay", Chinese and now Indian, as well as Western and other expatriates, who live side by side peacefully and help to network and interlink Singapore with other regional markets, just as Temasik's Chinese probably linked it to expanding

Plate 5.4   Peranakan culture and the Straits: Peranakan silver buckle
A silver buckle from a Peranakan family. Peranakan families often spoke a mix of Malay and Chinese (for instance, Hokkien). The females (*nonya* as opposed to the male *baba*) might wear "Malay" style dress of sarong (wrap-around material, often of ornately-patterned local batik) and kebaya (long blouse worn hanging down outside the sarong).

Chinese trade in the 14th century. Singapore's centrality, as a major entrepôt in Southeast Asia and link to the world, then as now, may have been forged by this successful cosmopolitanism. It has been characterised by a unique level of openness to outside groups, and an atmosphere in which they lived in equanimity without losing their individual identities. Modern Singapore's cosmopolitanism thus has much in common with the character of Singapore's multiethnic population which Wang Dayuan described in 1349.

Notes

1. O.W. Wolters for example in *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970) concluded that since there was as yet no archaeological or other evidence that Singapore had been a great trading port, the first chapters of the *Genealogy of Kings* (*Malay Annals*) had to have been fabricated to camouflage a period when the rulers of Palembang had been subjugated by the rajas of Jambi.

2. Robert W. Hefner, "Introduction", in *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia*, ed. R.W. Hefner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), p. 14.

3. A.C. Milner, "Who Created Malaysia's Plural Society?", *JMBRAS* 76, 2 (2003): 12.

4. See, for example, Virginia Matheson, "Concepts of Malay Ethos in Indigenous Malay Writings", *JSEAS* 10, 2 (1979): 351–71.

5. Timothy Barnard, "Malay Identity in the Eighteenth Century", *JSEAS* 32, 3 (2001): 333.

6. Leonard Y. Andaya, "The Search for the 'Origins' of Melayu", *JSEAS* 32, 3 (2001): 315–30. This special issue provides excellent coverage of the complexity of Malay ethnicity.

7. The correct title of this work in Malay is *Sulalatu's-Salatin*, which can be translated as *The Genealogy of Kings*. Many versions exist. The best English-language translation is that of C.C. Brown, edited and translated as *Sejarah Melayu/Malay Annals* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970). See also Kwa Chong Guan's Chapter 6.

8. For Singapore's centrality to the Malay world based on the *Malay Annals*, see also Kwa Chong Guan's Chapter 6.

9. Omar Chen Heng Liang, *Earth to Earth* (Master's thesis, Southeast Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore, 2001).

10. Nik Hassan Shuhaimi bin Nik Abdul Rahman and Othman Mohd. Yatim, *Antiquities of Bujang Valley* (Kuala Lumpur: Museum Association of Malaysia, 1990).

11. E. Edwards McKinnon, "Research at Kota Cina, a Sung-Yuan Period Trading Site in East Sumatra", *Archipel* 14 (1977): 19–32; J.N. Miksic and C.T. Yap, "Compositional Analysis of Pottery from Kota Cina, North Sumatra: Implications for Regional Trade during the 12th to 14th Centuries", *Asian Perspectives* 31, 1 (1992): 57–76.

12. W.G. Solheim II, "The Prehistoric Earthenware Pottery of Tanjong Kubor, Santubong", *Sarawak Museum Journal* 12, 25–6 (1965): 1–62.

13. Matussin Omar, *Archaeological Excavations in Protohistoric Brunei* (Brunei: Muzium Brunei Penerbitan Khas no. 15, 1981).

14. W.G. Solheim II, "Southeast Asian Earthenware Pottery and its Spread", in *Earthenware in Southeast Asia*, ed. J.N. Miksic (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003), pp. 1–21.

15. Solheim, "Southeast Asian Earthenware Pottery", p. 18.

16. Barbara Andaya, *To Live as Brothers: Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993).

17. Kwee H.-K., *Dao Yi Zhi Lue as a Maritime Traders' Guidebook* (Honours thesis, National University of Singapore, 1997), p. 64, fn. 31.

18. W.W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fourteenth Century", *T'oung Pao* 15, 2 (1914): 64, considered Wang's literary style poor.

10. Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1960), p. 82.

20. W.W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fourteenth Century", *T'oung Pao* 15, 1 (1914): 419–47; and 15, 2 (1914): 61–159, 236–71, 374–92, 435–67, 604–26.

21. See <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/>. The *Ming Shi-lu* (明實錄) (also known as the *Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty*) is a collective name for the successive reign annals of the emperors of Ming China (1368–1644). Each of the *shi-lu* comprises an account of one emperor's reign, and was compiled after that emperor's death on the basis of sources created during the reign.

22. R. Ptak, "Images of Maritime Asia in Two Yuan Texts: *Daoyi zhilue* and *Yiyu zhi*", *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 25 (1995): 47–75.

23. See also Chung Chee Kit, *Longyamen is Singapore — the Final Proof?* (Singapore: Friends of Admiral Zheng He, 2000); also published in *Zheng He's Voyage Studies* 2 (2005): 15–31.

24. Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680*, *Vol. One: The Land Below the Winds* (Singapore: Silkworm edition, 1988), p. 18; *Vol. Two: Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale, 1993), p. 73.

25. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya*.

26. Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*.

27. O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1982).

28. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade", p. 131.

29. Wheatley, *The Golden Chersonese*, p. 82. Dr. Wade's literal transition will be published in John Miksic, *Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea*, in press.

30. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade", p. 261.

31. Hsü Yün-Ts'iao, "Singapore in the Remote Past", *JMBRAS* 45, 1 (1972): 3*ff.*

32. J.V.G. Mills, ed., *Ying-yai Sheng-lan*, trans. Ma Huan (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1970), p. 113.

33. J.N. Miksic, *Archaeology, Trade, and Society in Northeast Sumatra* (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1979).

34. A Mongol envoy to Angkor in 1296, Zhou Daguan, describes the excellent treatment given to Chinese traders, who often took local wives, but he does not explain whether these were short-term temporary liaisons, or resulted in permanent migration to Cambodia. Paul Pelliot, *Mémoires sur les Coutumes du Cambodge de Tcheou Ta-Kouan. Version Nouvelle Suivie d'une Commentaire Inachevé*. Oeuvres Posthumes de Paul Pelliot. (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1951).

35. Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*.

36. A. Reid, "The Structure of Cities in Southeast Asia, Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries", *JSEAS* 11, 2 (1980): 235–50.

37. G. Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1968), p. 205.

38. The National Archives (formerly known as the Public Records Office), Kew Gardens, United Kingdom; Map 80480.

39. Brown, *Sejarah Melayu/Malay Annals*, pp. 117–8, 241 note 625.

40. Brown, *Sejarah Melayu/Malay Annals*, p. 67.

41. L.Y. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor 1641–1782* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975).

42. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor*, pp. 256, 259, 264, 281, 288.

43. A. Cortesao, ed., trans., *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944): 2nd Series, Vol. 89. Two Volumes. Volume II, p. 262.

44. D.E. Sopher, *The Sea Nomads* (Singapore: National Museum Singapore, 1977), p. 105.

45. Sopher, *The Sea Nomads*, p. 107.

46. J.N. Miksic, C.T. Yap and Hua Younan, "Archaeology and Early Chinese Glass Trade in Southeast Asia", *JSEAS* 25, 1 (1994): 31–46; J.N. Miksic, Yap Choon Teck, and Vijiyakumar, "X-Ray Fluorescence Analysis of Glass from Fort Canning, Singapore", *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 83 (1996): 187–202.

47. Brown, *Sejarah Melayu/Malay Annals*, pp. 23–5.

48. N.J. Krom, *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis*. Second Revised Edition ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1931), pp. 414–5; *Oudheidkundige Verslag* (1912): 46.

49. T.G. Th. Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century: A Study in Cultural History* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Translation Series number 4, Volumes II, III, 1960), p. 11.

50. Krom, *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis*, p. 36.

51. J.V.G. Mills, *Eredia's Description of Malaca, Meridional India, and Cathay*, Introduction by Cheah Boon Keng (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS Reprint 14, 1997).
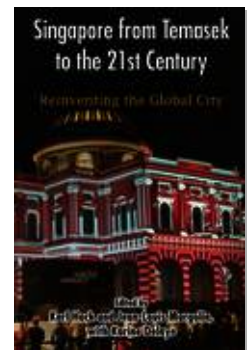
Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

Hack, Karl

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Singapura as a Central Place in Malay History and Identity

Kwa Chong Guan

Perceiving Singapore's Strategic Location

In 1703, country trader Alexander Hamilton called at Johor en route to China, and visited the recently elected Bendahara Sultan 'Abdu'l-Jalil Ri'ayat Shah, whom he had known before the latter's elevation to the Sultanate.[1] Hamilton recorded that the sultan:

> treated me very kindly, and made me a Present of the Island of *Sincapure*, but I told him it cold be of no Use to a private Person, tho' a proper place for a Company to settle a Colony on, lying in the Centre of Trade, and being accommodated 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 fat; And the Woods abound in good Masts for Shipping, and Timber for building. I have seen large Beans growing wild in the Woods, not inferior to the best in Europe for Taste and Beauty; and Sugar-cane five or six Inches round growing wild also.[2]

It was a century before the British East India Company recognised Hamilton's prescience of mind, with Raffles' foundation of a factory or

settlement at Singapore in 1819. As Wong Lin Ken, former Raffles Professor of History at the old University of Singapore, has argued:

> Singapore had no strategic naval significance until Britain, as the growing dominant naval power in the early nineteenth century, thought it necessary to have a place that could simultaneously command the Archipelago approaches to the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Raffles' acquisition of Singapore was the unforeseen long-term result of Anglo-French rivalry in the Indian subcontinent, the consequent rise of the British raj, and the need to defend its interest in the Bay of Bengal and the transoceanic route to the Archipelago and China.[3]

Professor Wong unfortunately did not have access to Portuguese, Spanish or Dutch archives, otherwise he might have realised what Peter Borschberg has subsequently demonstrated, that these powers, two centuries before the British, had plans for forts in the Straits of Singapore.[4] How did Sultan 'Abdu'l-Jalil and his predecessors and successors come to value Singapore so lightly, in contrast to Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch recognition of the strategic significance of the waters around Singapore?

Lack of resources and will, however, ensured that these earlier Iberian interests in Singapore and its environs remained plans. It is thus to Raffles that the credit of "discovering" in Singapore a location "commanding the Southern entrance of the Straits of Malacca, and combining extraordinary local advantages with a peculiarly admirable Geographical position" goes.[5] Were generations of Malay sultans unaware of what Alexander Hamilton, then Iberian and Dutch traders, and finally Raffles, all saw in Singapore's geographical location?[6]

This chapter explores the place of Singapore in Malay views of themselves and their region. It shows that they may indeed have been unaware of Singapore's strategic significance. But it was pivotal, and indeed in many ways, dominated their narration of who they were as a people and community. Singapore's place in the Malay world of the 15th to early 19th centuries was not characterised by its geographic and strategic centrality, but rather by its mythical underpinning of Malay historical consciousness.[7]

This chapter's exploration of Singapore as a central place in Malay social memories and myths of their identity will be based around a close reading of the history of the Melaka and Johor sultans, as narrated in the *Sejarah Melayu* or *Malay Annals*. These were later recognised as the pre-eminent example of classical Malay prose style. Alternatively entitled the *Sulalatu's-Salatin* or *Pedigree of the Kings*, the text is a series of loosely linked episodes and records about Melaka and to its continuity in the Johor

court. Singapura is recalled in the first six episodes of the *Malay Annals* as the beginnings of Melaka, and of the dynasty to which most peninsular Malayan Sultanates subsequently traced their origins. This essay will first summarise what is said about the beginnings of the Melaka sultans in Singapura, before delving into the deeper meanings of this *Malay Annals* narrative of the beginnings and earlier origins of the Melaka sultans. This will allow us to understand the Johor sultans' conception of themselves and their place in history.

Singapura in the *Malay Annals*

The earliest extant text of the *Malay Annals*, carrying an Islamic year-date of 1021 H (1612 CE) was copied for Sir Stamford Raffles on paper with an 1816 watermark.[8] This 1612 CE version carries forward the story of the Melaka sultans after the loss of their emporium to the Portuguese in 1511, and narrates their attempts to reestablish themselves in the nearby Riau Archipelago, then at Kampar in south Sumatra, before moving upstream of the Johor River in 1530. From this upstream location, Sultan Ala'u'din Ri'ayat Shah ventured forth to challenge the Portuguese for control of the Melaka Straits. So successful was he that he provoked the Portuguese into despatching Dom Estavão da Gama to attack him in 1535 and 1536. Raffles' MS no. 18 version of the *Malay Annals* ends with this 1535 Portuguese attack on Ala'u'din.

Challenged and harried by not only the Portuguese but also by the Achenese, then an emerging power in the Straits of Melaka, the Johor sultans were forced into a peripatetic existence, and could not have found the 16th century a propitious one for their efforts to reestablish the glory of Melaka. The next rewriting of the *Malay Annals* may have been commissioned by Sultan Abdu'llah Ma'ayat Shah in the 17th century. It was undertaken by his "prime minister", the Bendahara Tun Muhammad, or Tun Seri Lanang, when both were prisoners of the Achenese and attempting to rationalise the trauma of their captivity. Tun Seri Lanang has since been credited as the principal author of the *Malay Annals*. This version of the *Malay Annals* has become known as the long version of the *Sejarah Melayu*, and concludes with a mention of a Jambi attack on Johor in 1673.[9]

Common to all the versions is that Singapura was founded by a prince from Palembang in south Sumatra, named Sri Tri Buana, the Lord of the Three Worlds. He was one of three brothers who descended from heaven

onto the sacred hill of Palembang, *Bukit Seguntang Mahameru* (the world-mountain). There, they transformed the rice fields of two widows into gold and silver, and when met by the two widows, claimed to be descendents of Alexander the Great. Chapter 2 of the *Malay Annals* describes the exploits of the South Indian king, Raja Shulan of Nagapatam, including his conquest of a city named Gelanggui (meaning "The Treasure of Jewels") with a fort constructed from black rock somewhere in the southern half of the Malay Peninsula. One of Raja Shulan's daughters is said to have married a grandson of Alexander the Great. One of her sons, Raja Chulan, deterred from attacking China, then dived into the sea where he married the aquatic queen Mahtabu'l-Bahri. Their issue consisted of the three sons who descended on Bukit Seguntang.

According to Chapter 2 of the *Malay Annals*, the eldest brother was invited to become the ruler of the Sumatran polity of Minangkabau; and the second to be the ruler of Tanjong Pura in western Kalimantan (Borneo). The youngest was invited by the ruler of Palembang, Demang Lebar Daun, to take his place. Underpinning Demang Lebar Daun's abdication of the rule of Palembang to the young prince, now entitled Sri Tri Buana or Lord of Three Worlds, is a sacred social contract. The *Malay Annals* records that:[10]

> Both of them took a solemn oath to the effect that whoever should depart from the terms of the pact, then Almighty God would overturn his house so that its roof was laid on the ground and its pillars be inverted. And that is why it has been granted by Almighty God to Malay rulers that they should never be bound or hanged or disgraced with evil word. If any ruler should put a single one of his subjects to shame, that would be a sign that his kingdom would be destroyed by almighty god. Similarly it has been granted by almighty God to their Malay subject that they should never be disloyal or treacherous to their rulers, even if their rulers behaved evilly or unjustly towards them.

However, Sri Tri Buana eventually decided to seek his fortune away from his adopted city. First, he sailed to Benten in the nearby Riau Archipelago, where he was adopted by the local queen. Then, Sri Tri Buana set out yet again:

> And Sri Tri Buana came to a very large, high rock. He climbed on to the top of this rock and looking across the water he saw that the land on the other side had sand so white that it looked like a sheet of (?) cloth. And he asked Indra Bopal, "What is that stretch of sand that we see yonder? What land is that?" And Indra Bopal replied, "that, Your

Highness, is the land called Temasek [Singapore]." And Sri Tri Buana said, "Let's us go thither." And Indra Bopal replied, "I will do whatever Your Highness commands." So Sri Tribuana embarked and started on the crossing … And when they reached the shore, the ship was brought close in and Sri Tri Buana went ashore with all the ship's company and they amused themselves with collecting shell-fish. The king then went inland for sport on the open ground at Kuala Temasek.

And they all beheld a strange animal. It seemed to move with great speed; it had a red body and a black head; its breast was white; it was strong and active in build, and in size was rather bigger than a he-goat. When it saw the party, it moved away and then disappeared. And Sri Tri Buana inquired of all those who were with him, "What beast is that?" But no one knew. Then said Demang Lebar Daun, "Your highness, I have heard it said that in ancient times it was a lion that had that appearance." And Sri Tri Buana said to Indra Bopal, "Go back to Bentan and tell the queen that now we shall not be returning, but that if she wishes to show her affection for us, will she furnish us with men, elephants and horses, as we propose to establish a city here at Temasek." And Indra Bopal set forth to return to Bentan: and when he arrived there, he presented himself before Wan Sri Benian to whom he related what Sri Tri Buana had said. "Very well," said Wan Sri Benian, "we will never oppose any wish of our son." And she sent men, elephants and horses without number. Sri Tri Buana then established a city at Temasek, giving it the name Singapura."

Sri Tri Buana is said to have died after a reign of 48 years, being buried "on the hill of Singapura". According to the *Malay Annals*, he was succeeded by his son, Sri Pikrama Wira. During the latter's reign, according to Chapter 4, the eastern Javanese kingdom of Majapahit, which claimed suzerainty over Singapura, attacked the trading port because its ruler was deemed insufficiently deferential.[11] This chapter of the *Malay Annals* also describes the protocols and ceremonies for Sri Pikrama Wira's marriage to the daughter of the Tamil ruler of Bija Nagara. Sri Pikrama Wira died after a reign of 15 years and was succeeded by his son with the reign title Sri Rana Wikerma.

Much of Chapter 5 of the *Malay Annals* is taken up with stories of Sri Rana Wikerma's war chief Badang, from "Sayong on the mainland", who acquired supernatural strength by eating the vomit of a demon he caught. Rumours of Badang's strength spread as far as Kalinga in India, whose king decided to challenge Badang in a trial of strength with his own strongman. Badang defeated the Raja of Kalinga's strongman by hurling a huge rock across the Singapore River. Badang is also credited with laying a boom

Plate 6.1 Keramat Iskandar Shah on Bukit Larangan (Fort Canning Hill)

Keramat (shrine) venerated as the resting place of the last of Singapore's early king's, Iskandar Shah. The structure is of more recent origin, but early British administrators found that locals believed this to be a historical site in the 1820s, and nearby archaeological excavations revealed 14th-century remains.

across the Singapore River to control access into it. Sri Rana Wikerma died after a reign of 13 years and was succeeded by his son Dam Raja.

It was during the reign of Dam Raja that the famed swordfish or garfish (Tylosurus crocodiles) attack occurred. The *Malay Annal's* describes the panic caused by the

> swordfish, which leapt upon any one who was on the sea shore. If they attacked the victim in the chest, he was pierced through the chest and died; if they attacked the victim's neck, his head rolled off his shoulders and he died, and if they attacked the victim in the waist, he was pierced through the waist and he died. So great was the number of those killed by the swordfish that there was a panic and people ran hither and thither crying, "The swordfish are come to attack us! They have killed thousands of our people!" It took a young boy to propose that a stockade of banana tree trunks be erected on the shore to trap the swordfish as they leapt out of the water.[12]

This chapter of the *Malay Annals* also contains a long account of the rulers of Pasai, a major entrepôt contemporaneous with Singapura, on the northeast coast of Sumatra, and its adoption of Islam. Singapura joins this story when a man from Pasai, Tun Jana, who possessed mystical powers, visited Singapura and tried to impress the queen by multiplying a betel-palm tree growing in front of the palace into two palms. Dam Raja thought this display of mystical power irreverent and had Tun Jana executed. Because of his spiritual powers, Tun Jana's body was then spirited to Langkawi, while a clot of his blood which stained the earth turned into a rock. Chapter 6 of the *Malay Annals* closes with a description of the tragic reign of Iskandar Shah the fifth and last ruler of *Singapura*. He was forced to abandon his port city to invading Javanese forces, and fled north through the jungles to the mouth of the Bertam River, where he established a new port city he named Melaka.

Reading the *Malay Annals* on the Founding of *Singapura*: between *Mythos* and History

Interpreting this account of the founding of Singapura, and subsequent stories about it, has proved both difficult and controversial. Richard Winstedt, the pre-eminent British "colonial" scholar of Malay literature and history, was scathing in dismissing this *Malay Annals*' account of the founding of Singapura as a "hotchpotch of Chola and Palembang folklore [out of which] little can be made".[13] Professor Oliver W. Wolters also

rejected the historicity of this account of Singapura, arguing that it was the creation of a Melaka court genealogist attempting to justify the legitimacy of his sultan to rulership. [14] This classification of the *Malay Annals* stories of Singapura as myth is founded on a distinction rooted in classical Greek philosophy between *mythos*, referring to fable, folklore and fiction, and *logos* for rational argument.[15]

For Winstedt, Wolters and others, the absence of other texts referring to Sri Tri Buana and his successors confirms the *Malay Annals* as *mythos* rather than *logos*. Both Winstedt and Wolters prefer the Portuguese accounts of the founder of the city they had conquered in 1511, because they believed those to be more consistent with *logos*. The thrust of these Portuguese reports, which was based on what they learnt from the people of Melaka, was that the founder of Melaka was a renegade prince from Palembang who was forced to flee Majapahit forces despatched to crush a rebellion he had staged. This renegade prince carried the name Parameswara — a name which Javanese courts awarded to men who married women of higher royal status or became prince consorts. In these 16th-century Portuguese accounts, "Paremeswara" arrived in Singapore, where he was welcomed by its ruler. However, Parameswara was an ungracious visitor who murdered his host and usurped his emporium, for which act he had to flee from a Thai expeditionary force despatched to avenge the assassination of their vassal. Withdrawing through the jungles of Johor, Parameswara emerged at Muar on the west coast of the peninsula, where he founded a new emporium he named Melaka. For Wolters, these Portuguese reports are more historical as they can be correlated with the Ming dynastic records. Wolters argues that the *Malay Annals*' narrative, by contrast, is not a record of the past as it actually happened, but a narrative of what it should have been. It was written to demonstrate the right of the Melaka sultans to rule. Parameswara's violent past thus became mythologised into the figure of Sri Tri Buana and his successors by a genealogist of the Melaka court in 1436. This genealogist was seeking a cosmic origin for his sultan, to demonstrate the legitimacy of his rule as the divinely appointed successor of the Palembang-centred Srivijaya polity.

As the dominant trading power in the Melaka Straits from the seventh to the 11th centuries, Srivijaya in the long cycles of the maritime history of island Southeast Asia has challenged the agrarian realms of central and east Java. The challenges to Majapahit Java of the *Malay Annals*' Sri Tri Buana, or of the Portuguese Parameswara, was the continuation of this

historic rivalry between a maritime trading power in the Straits of Melaka and an inland agrarian power on Java.[16] But Winstedt and Wolters did not see such an underlying historical reality. Guided by their view of the *Malay Annals* as fiction, they dismissed what Sir Stamford Raffles saw in 1819, and Dr. John Crawfurd noted in 1822, of an earlier settlement on Singapore as "antiquities" of no great significance.

Since 1984, however, a series of archaeological excavations directed by John Miksic have confirmed what the 14th-century Chinese trader Wang Dayuan claims to have seen: a thriving port in 14th-century Singapore. Both the *Malay Annals*' memories and the Portuguese reports concur that the beginnings of Melaka are to be sought in a thriving port of trade in 14th-century Singapore. Both these accounts of the beginnings of Melaka are about social memories: the *Malay Annals* are memories of the Melaka court; while the Portuguese are based on the social memories of their new subjects.[17]

Both accounts are acts of *mimesis*, meaning the imitation or representation of reality through art or narrative.[18] But the accounts represent and mimic rather different historical realities. The Javanese informants of the Portuguese were remembering Malay sultans in the Javanese definition of the world and their history. To get an idea of this world-view, we can use two key Javanese texts: the 14th-century *Desawarnana* or *Nagarakertagama*, and the 16th-century *Pararaton*. If these are a guide to the perspective of the Javanese informants, then their perceptions of Singapura would have been of a recalcitrant vassal against whom military expeditions had to be launched. But the Melaka court genealogist was reconstructing Malay collective memories to suggest that Melaka owes its origins to a divine genealogy (Alexander and Avalokitesvara), and heroic ancestry (Sri Tri Buana and Iskander Shah), making Melaka under its third sultan the historically and theologically inevitable outcome of this genealogy. The rather different social memories of this genealogy of the Melaka sultans are the playing out of the deep historical tensions in the maritime history of island Southeast Asia. The difference between the *Malay Annals* and the Portuguese accounts of the founding of Singapura may therefore not be as categorical as Winstedt and Wolters make out.

As social memories, both the *Malay Annals*' memories of Sri Tri Buana, and the Portuguese reports of Parameswara, also display a similar underlying narrative structure. They are different representations or mimesis of the experiences of one underlying Sri Tri Buana/Parameswara figure. Both begin with a departure from Palembang in Sumatra. For Sri

Tri Buana, it is a journey to a new future; but for Parameswara, it is a flight from danger. Both continue with a dramatic arrival in Temasek: the sighting of a mythical lion for Sri Tri Buana and the murder of his host for Parameswara. Both have Temasek renamed Singapura or Lion City. Whether under Sri Tri Buana or Parameswara, both have this emerging as a major emporium. Both the *Malay Annals* and Portuguese accounts also end with a tragic departure from *Singapura*. The descendents of Sri Tri Buana lost Singapura because they were betrayed by a disloyal subject; and Parameswara had to abandon Singapura to an avenging overlord seeking revenge for the assassination of his vassal. The challenge is to try to understand these two different tellings of the same structure or mythos of Singapura, and of its role in Melaka's beginning.

Realism in Tun Seri Lanang's *Sejarah Melayu*

The "folklore" and "myth" which Winstedt read in the *Malay Annals* was for their 1612 compiler, Tun Seri Lanang, a historical reality that he was documenting. Tun Seri Lanang is convinced that the social memories he is remembering are true because they can be authenticated. The *Malay Annals* thus claims to be history as a verifiable account of the past. Tun Seri Lanang assures his audience that the black stone fort of the city of Gelanggui which Raja Shulan overran "still exists to this day" with its name mispronounced as "Linggiu". The search for this black stone fort of "Gelanggui" continues up to today.[19] Tun Seri Lanang also confirms that the story of the strongman Badang is true, because the rock he hurled across the Singapore River "is there to this day on the extremity of Tanjong Singapura". Similarly, the boom he laid across the River "still exists at Singapura". Furthermore, the stone that the Raja of Kalinga sent to mark the grave of Badang at Buru "is there to this day". Bukit Merah, the "red hill", is even now remembered as the spot where the young boy who saved Singapura from the swordfish attack was executed by Dam Raja, who viewed the boy's intelligence as a threat. The red-orange lateritic soil of the hill is said to be the "guilt of this young boy's blood laid on Singapura".[20]

The image of Singapura that emerges from the first six chapters of the *Malay Annals* is of "a great city, to which foreigners resorted in great numbers so that the fame of the city and its greatness spread throughout the world". Under its second ruler, Sri Pikrama Wira, son of Sri Tri Buana, Singapura was sufficiently powerful to challenge the major hegemon in

the archipelago, Java's Majapahit, in a display of diplomatic theatrics that escalated into a major Majapahit invasion of Singapura. The *Malay Annals* provides a graphic description of this:

> And the Javanese troops landed and fought the men of Singapura; and a great battle ensured. Loud rang weapon on weapon; terrifying was the roar of the warriors shouting; the din was unimaginable. On either side many were killed and the ground flowed with blood. By evening the Javanese had retreated and gone back on board their ships. So long is the story of the battle between Singapura and Java that were I to tell it in detail, listeners would have more than their fill.

The ensuing story of Sri Pikrama Wira's marriage to the daughter of the Tamil ruler of Kalinga is essentially a story of conspicuous display of wealth and Singapura's stature among Indian kingdoms. The Raja of Kalinga's pitting his strong man against Sri Pikrama Wira's strong man Badang can be interpreted as an unstated competition for power between Singapura and Kalinga. The Raja of Kalinga's despatch of a gravestone for Badang on his death can arguably be read as an acknowledgment of respect, if not deference to Sri Pikrama Wira. Likewise, the Raja of Perlak's desire to set his strong man against Badang can be seen as another contest of power in which Sri Pikrama Wira emerged the victor.

Singapura could presumably have gone on to greater achievements if it had not been betrayed by one of its officials. According to the *Malay Annals*, Sultan Iskandar Shah alienated one of his officials, Sang Ranjuna Tapa, when he executed one his concubines on a false accusation. The concubine happened to be Sang Ranjuna Tapa's daughter. Her father decided to betray his sultan to Majapahit by "open[ing] the gate of the fort" for invading Javanese forces. For his heinous crime of treason, Sang Ranjuna Tapa and his wife were transformed into rocks. According to Tun Seri Lanang, these two rocks could still be seen in his time.

The Prowess of a Raja

For Tun Seri Lanang, not only Sultan Iskander Shah, last Raja of Singapura and first Sultan of Melaka, but also his predecessors were historical personages. To them is credited the emergence of Singapura as a great city, respected by others like Kalinga and able to challenge the regional power, Majapahit. Their achievements are in large part the consequence of a divine genealogy. To Sri Tri Buana is attributed a genealogy that traces back to the Macedonian world conqueror, Alexander, or Raja

Iskandar Zulqarnain, who according to another text, the *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain* (*Story of Iskandar Zulkarnian*), spread the faith of Ibrahim to its furthest limits in India. In Tun Seri Lanang's world — of 16th- and 17th-century Johor — it made eminent sense to appropriate for one's genealogy the Persian-Islamic myth of Alexander the Great as a defender of the faith. This would enhance one's credentials in a "Persianised" Indian Ocean trading world. Professor Sanjay Subrahmanyam[21] has documented a 15th-century migration of Persian elites across the Indian subcontinent and Ocean, creating a Persianised trading world between the 15th and 18th centuries. These Persian elites played a significant role in the courts of local rulers: by advising them; helping them install the administrative structures and traditions for state formation; and by expansion into trade across the Indian Ocean, in which Melaka emerged as a leading emporium.

The problem in the *Malay Annals* is that this Alexandrian legend uneasily joins a series of narratives and myths from an earlier era of Malay history when, in the words of the pre-*Malay Annals*' *Ceritera asal Raja-raja Melayu* (*Genealogy of the Malay Kings*), "the Malays had not yet embraced Islam". The interposition of the long story of the Rajas of Pasai and their conversion to Islam, leading to the story of Tun Jana and his execution, suggests that Islam was a strange and foreign force to Singapura. The prevalent political-religious culture in much of 14th-century island Southeast Asia was still a form of Mahayana Buddhism that found its way into the region from the seventh century. Srivijaya, whose legacy Demang Lebar Daun inherited and transmitted to Sri Tri Buana, was Mahayana Buddhist to its core. The *Deśawarnana* (*Description of Districts*) and the *Nagarakrtagama*, a cardinal text for our reconstruction of 14th-century Java, describe Majapahit practising a form of esoteric Mahayana Buddhism that synthesised the worship of the Buddha with Siva or Visnu.

In this political world, suffused with Mahayana Buddhism, a claim to rulership would be judged on the impeccability of the claimant's genealogy, and how it evinced an accumulation of mystical-spiritual prowess. Ayam Wuruk (1350–1380), whose reign is glorified as the golden age of Majapahit in the *Deśawarnana*, is described in its opening stanzas as an incarnation of Siva and Buddha in this world. Other Majapahit and earlier Singhasari kings also claimed to be incarnations of Hindu and Buddhist deities. Adityavarman, the Singhasari-Majapahit prince who moved to establish his own kingdom in the Minangkabau highlands of

Sumatra, consecrated himself as an incarnation of the Mahayana Buddhist bodhisattva Avalokitesvara around 1347CE. In this environment, Sri Tri Buana as an aspirant to rulership had therefore to evince similar qualities and accumulation of spiritual prowess. He is thus credited with descending (with his two brothers) down the sacred hill of Bukit Seguntang, symbol of the mountain abode of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara at the centre of the old Srivijayan realm, extruding all the symbolism of not only a regal, but more importantly, a sacred person. The 40 days of consecration rituals he and his consort, Demang Lebar Daun's daughter, went through were to commemorate his embodiment as Avalokitesvara, the Lord of the Three Worlds of Buddhist cosmology.[22]

The Portuguese apothecary, Tome Pires, who was a supervisor of the spice trade in Melaka from 1512 to 1515, learnt from his local informants that the intent of Parameswara's/Iskandar Shah's consecration to become the embodiment of Avalokitesvara, was to challenge Majapahit overlordship of Palembang, and so to reestablish Srivijaya's influence over other ports in the Straits of Melaka. The intent of this challenge to Majapahit was not lost on its court, which despatched an expeditionary force to quash this renegade prince, forcing him to flee to Singapore (reckoning from Pires' account which allows for just one king) around 1392. The *Malay Annals* would of course imply an arrival at Singapore some decades earlier.

Sri Tri Buana's renaming the island he arrived at as "Singapura" was probably not so much because he sighted a specimen of *Felis leo*, so much as to assert that this was where he intended to reestablish the lion-throne (*siṅhāsana* [Sanskrit], *singgasana* [p. 21 of *Raffles Ms 18*]). The lion-throne represented the earthly seat of Avalokitesvara, where he and his consort sat for his consecration rituals in Palembang. Singapore's Bukit Larangan or Forbidden Hill (Fort Canning, which broods over the mouth of the Singapore River), would have been the ideal symbolic representation of the Mount Patola of Avalokitesvara. As such, it was an ideal place for Sri Tri Buana to locate his lion-throne. 19th-century Malays called Fort Canning *Bukit Larangan* or Forbidden Hill precisely because they believed that the spirits of the old rulers still roamed there.

Singapura thus played a central, critical role in the transmission of this foundation myth of Melaka, and subsequently Johor, with its divine genealogy and historic ancestry. Singapura was where Sri Tri Buana or Parameswara — depending on which account you follow — landed after leaving Palembang. For Sri Tri Buana, Singapura was an auspicious

location for a new city he was seeking to establish; for a Parameswara fleeing avenging Majapahit forces, it was a refuge at an emporium that was outside and able to stand up to Majapahit imperium. But the course of events forced Sri Tri Buana's descendents (or Parameswara) to decamp Singapura and seek a new location, to rebuild their vision of establishing a new emporium that would continue the legacy of Srivijaya. It was this foundation myth that Sultan Mahmud's descendents carried out of Melaka in 1511 and up the Johor River where they attempted to reestablish the glory of Melaka and Srivijaya. In January 1819, Tengku Long (the older brother of the then Sultan of Johor) sailed from Bintan to Singapore. There, taking the name Sultan Hussein, he joined Stamford Raffles in establishing a new city which he, Hussein, apparently hoped would inherit the legacy of Melaka and before that, Srivijaya.

Prefiguring Melaka's and Johor's Present

The events of Sri Tri Buana's 48-year reign and those of his four successors on Singapore are critical to the Melaka and Johor sultans' understanding of their future. This is because what happened on Singapura in the century (reckoning from the *Malay Annals*) between Sri Tri Buana's arrival and Iskandar Shah's flight prefigures their present, shaping their future.[23] The underlying mythos of this century of history is that Singapura in the reign of Sri Tri Buana's successor was emerging as a great city on its way to reestablishing the glory of Srivijaya. But its historical destiny was undermined by a breach of the sacred contract that Sri Tri Buana and Demang Lebar Daun entered into at Palembang. This breach occurred when the final ruler, Iskandar Shah, wrongly executed the daughter of his courtier, Sang Rajuna Tapa, and he in turn betrayed his raja by opening the gates of Singapura to invading Majapahit forces. The island thus sank in a morass of treachery, which sundered the original pact.

Iskandar Shah's subsequent flight from Singapura was what the literary critic Erich Auerbach terms a "figural interpretation", which

> establishes a connection between two events or persons in such a way that the first signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second involves or fulfils the first. The two poles of a figure are separated in time, but both, being real events or persons, are within temporality. They are both contained in the flowing stream which is historical life, and only the comprehension, the *intellectus spiritualis*, of their interdependence is a spiritual act.[24]

Restated, what happened on Singapore was the fulfilment of an earlier text arranged in Palembang and a potential prefiguration of events to be fulfilled with the fall of Melaka to the Portuguese.

This anxiety of Malays towards their sultans and the latter's justice towards their subjects haunts the sultans of Melaka and Johor. Six of the seven deathbed testaments of sultans recorded in the *Malay Annals* deal not so much with the disposition of properties and succession, but with ethical admonitions to their successors to be just to their subjects, and injunctions to Malay subjects to be loyal to their sultans. The interplay of this theme of reciprocal obligations and restraints forms an underlying template of Melaka and Johor history.[25] The fall of Melaka, Chapter 12 of *Raffles Ms 18* implies, follows Sultan Mahmud's wrongful execution of his Bendahara on the basis of a false accusation. He retires in penitence, leaving Melaka to his son, Sultan Ahmad, who according to the *Malay Annals*, "had no great liking for the chiefs", preferring instead a group of youthful favourites. For the Johor sultans, this "figural interpretation" of the loss of Melaka and before that, the loss of Singapura, must have weighed heavily on them, especially after the regicide of 1699, when the last direct descendant of the Melaka-Johor dynasty was killed.

Tun Seri Lanang and his predecessors who compiled the *Malay Annals* were combining Perso-Islamic myths of a "Muslim" Alexander with Mahayana Buddhist theology to form a template for their history. The genealogy of the Melaka sultans they constructed on this template claimed Alexander and Avalokitesvara as having both figurative and literal dimensions. For them, Alexander, Avalokitesvara, Sri Tri Buana and his successors are not fictions, but real persons. But they are also figurative persons, prefiguring yet-to-come personages and events that will fulfil the divine revelations and commitments made by Sri Tri Buana to Demang Lebar Daun, and tragically played out in Singapura. The variant versions and tellings of the *Malay Annals* can then be read as different configurings of this foundation myth. The analogy to what Tun Seri Lanang had done in another context and era would be the early Christian reaffirmation and rewriting of old Judaic figures, such as Adam and Moses, to create a "New" Testament. Adam became a figurative referent for Jesus in I Corinthians 15:22, where it is stated that "as in Adam all died, so in Christ all shall be made alive". The entire body of old Hebrew and Judaic theology is designated an "Old" Testament and appropriated to become the prologue of a "New" Testament.[26]

Conclusion

Sultan Mahmud and his descendants never seem to have considered Singapura, residence of their forefathers and where their history began, a suitable location for a new capital after 1511. Perhaps Singapore was too exposed and vulnerable to Portuguese and Acehenese attacks. More likely, Singapore was only a harbour for traders to call at, but without the economic potential of a great river hinterland which the Sungei Musi offered Srivijaya; the Pasang and Pasi rivers to Samudra-Pasai or the Sungei Muar to Melaka. Whatever may have been the rationale, it was Sultan Mahmud's grandson, Sultan Ala'u'd-din who sailed up the Johor river to its junction with the Serting river to establish a new capital in around 1529–1530. In relocating up the Johor river, Sultan Ala'u'd-din was not moving into a backwater region. The archaeological evidence — primarily the range and volume of earthenware and Ming/Qing underglazed cobalt blue porcelain sherds — points to the Johor river as a part of the trading network of the Riau islands.[27]

The Johor sultans could not be unaware of Luso-Dutch rivalry from the 17th century, and battles for control of the waters around Singapure to ensure safe passage for their vessels. The Johor sultans were active participants in that Luso-Dutch rivalry. They must have been aware of any Portuguese or Spanish or Dutch plans to build forts on or around Singapore, as their concurrence would have been sought for any such venture. But Luso-Dutch and later British rivalry for control of the waters around Singapore evidently did not impress upon the Johor sultans that Singapore's location might have a strategic significance worth their effort to control. This essay has argued that Singapore's significance to them lay more as a contested "realm of memory" among contenders to rulership of the Malay people.

The ability to appropriate and configure the *mythos* of divine origins and right to rule the Malay people enacted in Singapura is central and fundamental to any claim to rulership. The *Raffles Ms 18* of the *Malay Annals*, with its 15th-century origin, is probably Sultan 'Ala'u'd-din's claim to configure the *Malay Annals* to legitimise his new city up the Johor river. The much later "long version" of the *Malay Annals* may be the Bendahara Sultan 'Abdu'l-Jalil's configuring of the *Malay Annals* to justify his lineage's close interrelation to the sultans, and so evince his right to rule after the 1699 regicide. But the consequence of the regicide continued to haunt the Bendahara Sultan and his successors. A Minangkabau adventurer, Raja Kecik, claiming to be the posthumous son

of the assassinated Sultan Mahmud, successfully attacked and captured the capital of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Jalil, on Bintan in the Riau islands, in 1718. This claim by Raja Kecik to be the posthumous son of Sultan Mahmud is declared in the *Hikayat Siak*, the first half of which is a straight copy of the *Malay Annals*, and which then carries the narrative forward to the establishment of a rival kingdom along the Siak river to challenge Johor-Riau.[28] This *Hikayat Siak* can be read as portraying the regicide of 1699 as a prefiguration of Siak's claim to a place in the Malay world and right to rule that world.

Raja Sulaiman, the son of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Jalil, responded to the Mingangkabau challenge by calling in Bugis warriors who had been migrating to Selangor and Johor, among other areas in the Straits of Melaka, to escape internal wars in their homeland from the late 17th century. As mercenaries, the Bugis successfully assisted Raja Sulaiman in dislodging the Minangkabau pretender, Raja Kecik, from Bintan. As recompense, they staked a major claim to political power, their leaders becoming the *yang dipertuan muda* or *Yamtuan Muda*, the "junior ruler". In effect, the Malay sultans, though still providing the Johor-Riau dynasty's *Yang dipertuan Besar* or major rulers, found themselves reduced to titular heads of their realm. This Bugis claim to power is justified in their rewriting of Malay history by their court historian and genealogist, Raja Ali Haji, in his *Tuhfat al-Nafis*.[29] This narrates the Bugis achievements in building their base at Bintan, in the Riau Archipelago, into the leading entrepôt in the Straits of Melaka, so challenging Dutch Melaka in the 18th century. But the *Tuhfat* also starts with Sri Tri Buana's arrival in *Singapura*, which is interpreted as prefiguring the Bugis right to rule the Malay world. In this context, the *Tuhfat* can be read as the Bugis appropriation of the Malay past as fulfilment of their historical destiny.

As social memory of the Malay community, this essay has argued that the *Malay Annals* is a "realm of memory" that structures the Malay past and defines the Malay identify that flows from this past. 14th-century Singapura was, in a sense, the beginning, or at least a new beginning, of this distinct "Malay" past, which had its origins in the mists of Bukit Seguntang Mahameru, itself the centre of Srivijaya at Palembang. The underlying theme of the *Malay Annals* is how the events of Singapura prefigure Melaka's and Johor's present in the 15th to 18th centuries. Malay and then Bugis rulers repeatedly tried to embed their *Hikayat* — histories or stories — in these earlier accounts, so that the Singapore Story could prefigure their later role. In short, from the 15th to 18th centuries,

Singapore was not a strategic or geographic centre for the Malay world; far from it, but it was an important central place in Malay myths and social memory.

Notes

1. Sultan 'Abdu'l-Jalil was elected to succeed Sultan Mahmud Shah, who was assassinated in an act of regicide in 1699. Hamilton had on earlier visits met Sultan Mahmud Shah and recorded that "he was a great *Sodomite*, and had taken many of his *Orankays* or Nobles Sons, by Force into his Palace for that indominable Service". See L.A. Andaya's reconstruction of the circumstances of Sultan Mahmud's assassination and its consequences as a critical turning point in Johor history in his *The Kingdom of Johor 1641–1721: Economic and Political Developments* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 186–91.

2. Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies*, ed. Sir William Foster (Amsterdam: N. Israel/New York: Da Capo, 1970 reprint), II, p. 52. For his impressions of Sultan Mahmud Shah in 1695, see p. 51.

3. "The Strategic Significance of Singapore in Modern History", in *A History of Singapore*, eds. Ernest Chew and Edwin Lee (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 31.

4. Peter Borschberg, "Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch Plans to Construct a Fort in the Straits of Singapore, c.1584–1625", *Archipel* 65 (2003): 55–88.

5. Raffles' report to John Adams, Chief Secretary to the Supreme Government, Fort William on his establishment of a "British station" on Singapore. I would like to thank Dr. John Bastin for extending to me a copy of his private printing of *Sir Stamford Raffles's Account of the Founding of Singapore* (Eastbourne: Private printing, 2000). The report is dated 13 February 1819 from Pinang and filed in vol. 308 of the *Bengal Secret Consultations* (India Office Records, British Library).

6. In contrast to the Europeans who left archives of their plans and actions, so facilitating the writing of Eurocentric history, the Malays have not left such records. We have therefore to attempt a construction of how they may have defined the logic of their situation, on which see Kwa Chong Guan, "Why Did Tengku Hussein Sign the 1819 Treaty with Stamford Raffles?", in *Malays/Muslims in Singapore; Selected Readings in History, 1819–1965*, eds. Khoo Kay Kim *et al.* (Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Publications/Association for Muslim Professionals, 2006), pp. 1–36.

7. Myths as stories of superhuman beings, heroes, spirits or ghosts may appear unreal and unbelievable, but when adopted by a community to explain its origins or transformation and decline to its members, become believable and real. In the context of this essay, literature, as Northrop Fry argued in his classic

Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957 and reprints) derives from myth, and literary criticism recapitulates the process by which myth underlies the different genres of literature: comedies, romance, tragedy and irony/satire and related each to the others in a cycle like the four seasons.

8. Registered as "Raffles Ms 18" in the Library of the Royal Asiatic Society, London. Sir Richard Winstedt's romanised transcript in *JMBRAS* 16, 3 (1938): 1–226 has been corrected in a new romanised edition by Abdul Rahman Hj. Ismail and reissued as Cheah Boon Kheng (compiler), *Sejarah Melayu: the Malay Annals*, Reprint 17 (Kuala Lumpur: *JMBRAS*, 1998). See also Muhammad Hj. Salleh's edition of the same text as *Sulalat al-Salatin ya'ni perteturun segala Raja-Raja* (*Sejarah Melayu*) (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan and Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1997).

9. This "long version" of the *Sejarah Melayu* is known to us through at least nine manuscripts. W.G. Shellabear based his hybrid edition of the *Sejarah Melayu* on Maxwell 26 (Royal Asiatic Society) and a short version popularised by Abdullah bin Abdulkadir Munshi which ends with the death of Tun Ali Hati, *Sejarah Melayu*, ed. Baru (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967 reprint). A. Samad Ahmad has also edited this "long version" of the *Sejarah Melayu* as *Sulaatus Salatin* (*Sejarah Melayu*) (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka, 1979). See R. Roolvink, "Sejarah Melayu: Masalah versi-versi yang lain", in Cheah's compilation of the *Sejarah Melayu*, pp. 21–35, and the earlier and longer version of this paper as "The Variant Versions of the Malay Annals", *Bijdr. Taal-, land- en Volkenkunde* 123, 3 (1967): 301–24 for a sorting of the 29 variant versions of the *Malay Annals.*

10. C.C. Brown's translation of "Raffles Ms 18" as "The Malay Annals", *JMBRAS* (1952): 25, 27, 32–3. Brown's translation is also available as an Oxford University in Asia reprint. P.E. de Josselin de Jong also drew attention to this "social compact" as the dominant theme of the *Malay Annals* in "The Character of the "Malay Annals", in *Malayan and Indonesian Studies: Essays Presented to Sir Richard Winstedt on his Eighty-Fifth Birthday*, eds. J. Bastin and R. Roolvink (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 240–1. This idea of a "social contract" as the basis of relations between the rulers and the ruled was almost certainly not Islamic, as the Baghdad caliphs ruled by divine fiat of Allah. Neither does it appear to have been a Brahmanic concept adapted from India, Manu having made it clear that kings were the creation of God to save man from a Hobbesian state of nature. The idea does however occur in Buddhism and is described in at least two Buddhist texts, the *Agganna Suttanta* (Digha Nikaya XXVII), pp. 20–1, trans. Rhys Davids, *Sacred Books of the Buddhist*, p. 88, and the *Mahavastu*, "The Great Story", an old Buddhist Sanskrit text narrating the life of the Buddha Sakyamuni, trans. J.J. Jones, *Mahavastu translations*, vol. 1, *Sacred Books of the Buddhist*, p. 16

11. This attack on Singapura may be identical with the attack that the oldest Malay history, the *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* records was led by Majapahit's great prime minister Gajah Mada against not only Temasek, but also a series of other port cities in the archipelago, including Pasai. See A.H. Hill, "Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai: A Revised Romanised Version of Raffles Ms 67", *JMBRAS* 33, 2 (1960): 159–60. The 16th-century Javanese "Book of Kings", the *Pararaton*, records that Temasek was among the list of places Gadjah Mada took a sacred vow to subjugate. See J.L.A. Brandes, N.J. Krom, Jan Laurens Andries, and Jonker, Johann Christoph Gerhard, *Pararaton (Ken Arok) of het boek der Koningen van tumapel en van Majapahit/uitg. en toegelicht door J.L.A. Brandes; bewert door N.J. Krom; met medewerking van J.C.G. Jonker, H. Kraemer en R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff/Batavia: Albrecht, 1920), pp. 36 and 141ff.

12. Brown translation, "Sejarah Melayu", p. 50. The *todak* or garfish is a pelagic fish capable of swimming at great speed near or skimming the surface of the water, so appearing to stand on its tail. Other Malay texts describe similar *todak* attacks on people in other localities.

13. Winstedt, *A History of Malaya*, revised and enlarged edition (Singapore: Marican and Sons, 1962), p. 41. Note also Winstedt's scathing comments on the *Malay Annals* in his benchmark "A History of Classical Malay Literature", *JMBRAS* 31, 3 (1958 reprint of *JMBRAS* 17, 3 [1939]): 129. Winstedt's approach to these Malay texts is to read them as sources for the construction of genealogies and political chronologies. For criticisms of Winstedt's approach and alternatives, see H.M.J. Maier, *In the Centre of Authority: The Malay Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (New York: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1988).

14. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History* (London: Lund Humphries, 1970).

15. However, as the philosopher Paul Ricoeur has persuasively argued in *Time and Narrative*, trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer (Chicago: University Press, 1988), vol. 3, pp. 180ff, history and fiction are interwoven in that fiction draws on history and history draws on fiction. The principal argument of *Time and Narrative* is that we try to make sense of the subjective time we live in (as opposed to the cosmic time of physics) by "emplotting" the disparate events of our lives into a narrative that incorporates fictions which explains and justifies the events of our lives. The Malays of Melaka and Johor thus emplotted their lives around their sultan with whom they had a sacred contract. For a discussion of science as a fiction and myth through which we interpret our world, see Mary Midgley, *The Myths We Live By* (London: Routledge, 2004).

16. C.D. Cowan, "Continuity and Change in the International Maritime History of Maritime South East Asia", *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 9, 2 (1968):

1–12 tracks this tension from the seventh century to 1942. Arguably, the post-1945 arguments between nationalist leaders for a *Melayu Raya* centred on the Straits of Melaka and an *Indonesia Raya* based on Java is a continuation of this historic tension.

17. For a reading of the *Malay Annals* as social memories as Maurice Halbwachs defined them in his *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Memoire* (New York: Arno Press, 1975 reprint of 1952 edition) and *La Memoire Collective*, 2nd edition, revised by Jean Davignaud (Paris: Presses Univ. de France, 1968), see Kwa Chong Guan, "The Value of Oral Testimony: Text and Orality in the Reconstruction of the Past", in *Oral History in Southeast Asia: Theory and Method*, eds. P. Lim *et al.* (Singapore: National Archives of Singapore and ISEAS, 1998), pp. 21–3.

18. See Eric Auerbach's benchmark study, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. W.R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003 reprint) reworking the classical Greek concept of *mimesis* as re-creation and mimic of reality in literature.

19. Tun Seri Lanang's assurance of the existence of a Linggiu is on p. 18 of Brown's translation of "Raffles Ms 18". See Raimy Ché-Ross, "The 'Lost City' of Kota Gelanggi: An Exploratory Essay Based on Textual Evidence and an Excursion into 'Aerial Archaeology'", *JMBRAS* 77, 2 (2004): 27–58. This renewed search for Gelanggi/Linggiu made headline news for several months in the Malaysian media in 2003–2004.

20. V.R. Savage and B. Yeoh, *Toponymics: A Study of Singapore Street Names* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003), p. 68.

21. Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad: Intra-Asian Elite Migration and Early Modern State Formation", *Journal of Asian Studies* 51, 2 (1992): 340–62; and his "Persianization and Mercantilism: Two Themes in Bay of Bengal History, 1400–1700", in *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal, 1500–1800*, eds. D. Lombard and O. Prakash (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), pp. 47–85, and Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 45–60.

22. The three worlds are: the world of Desires [*kamadhatu*] of man, the world of Form [*rupadhatu*] of the Buddha and finally, the world without Form [*arupadhatu*], the world of pure perception which is visually represented on the terraces of the Barabudur monument.

23. W. Linehan accepted the dates the *Malay Annals* assigned for Sri Tri Buana's reign and those of his four successors, and correlating Iskandah Shah's establishing Melaka with the Ming records of this event, calculated that Sri Tri Buana would have arrived at Temasek in 1299. See his "The Kings of 14th Century Singapore", *JMBRAS* 20, 2 (1947): 117–27 (reprinted in *JMBRAS* 42, 1 [1969]: 53–62).

24. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 73.

25. C.B. Walls, *Legacy of the Fathers: Testamentary Admonitions and Thematic Structure of the Sejarah Melayu* (Ann Arbor, MI: Xerox University Microfilms, 1974).

26. In more contemporary times, the demented Colonel Kurtz in Francis Ford Coppola's 1979 film *Apocalypse Now* is arguably a figurative person representing the reality of the Vietnam War and what many of us perceived had gone wrong in that war. The film's classic status may be because it successfully projected a mythic reading of the Vietnam War that many of us identify with.

27. See C.A. Gibson-Hill, "Johore Lama and Other Ancient Sites on the Johore River", *JMBRAS* 28, 2 (1955): 177ff.; G.G. Solheim II and E. Green, "Johore Lama Excavations, 1960", *Federation Museums Journal* new series 10 (1965), reporting on their excavation and reconstruction of Kota Batu at Johor Lama; C. Jack-Hinton, "Further investigations at Johore Lama: Preliminary Notes", *Federation Museums Journal* new series 8 (1963): 24ff; and A. Lamb, "Notes on Beads from Johore Lama and Kota Tinggi", *JMBRAS* 37, 1 (1964): 88–98.

28. Tengku Said, who copied the text that is extant today as Cord.Or.7304 in the Leiden University Library, is usually credited as the author of this version of the *Sejarah Melayu*. The jawi text of this version has been reprinted: Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, compiler, *Hikayat Melayu atau Sulalat'us–Salatin*, Siri Penerbitan Karya Tersohor Klasik Melayu (Melaka: Institut Kajian Seharah and Patriotisme Malaysia/GRAHA IKSEP, 1998); Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *Hikayat Siak; Dirawikan oleh Tengku Said* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka, 1992) is a rumi transcription of pages 402 onwards of Cord.Or.7304.

29. V. Matheson, ed., Raja Haji Ahmad and Raja Ali Haji, *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn Bhd, 1982).
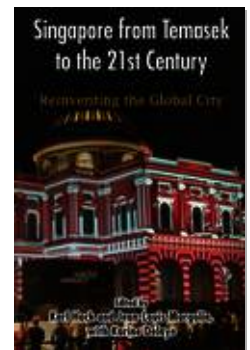
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Imagined Centrality:
Sir Stamford Raffles and the
Birth of Modern Singapore

Christina Skott

In early February 1819, John Crawfurd noted in his journal:

> This spot of ground is the site of the very ancient city and fort of
> Singapura, whose sovereigns, upwards of 1000 years ago gave laws to
> Java, Sumatra, and their adjacent islands, and a great part of the Malay
> Peninsula … This place once so great, powerful, is now a petty fishing
> village, until our coming here unknown in modern history or geography,
> for Sir Stamford found accounts of it, in a very old Malay work. I
> sincerely hope that under the auspices of the English, it will again
> revive to its former splendour.[1]

Crawfurd was a member of the British expedition, which a few days
earlier had landed on the mouth of Singapore River. The party was led
by Sir Stamford Raffles, who had immediately taken up negotiations with
the local chief, the Temenggong of the Sultanate of Johore, for permission
to set up a British factory on the island.

Debates on Raffles' role in the birth of modern Singapore have often
centred on how far he stands alone as founder. The image of "Raffles of
Singapore" was created in Lady Raffles' 1830 biography of her late husband,

but William Farquhar, another member of the expedition and Singapore's first Resident, immediately countered this by publicly stating that he himself had "at least a large share" in the birth of the new settlement.[2] In modern historiography, the eventual choice of Singapore in favour of other alternative localities has often been seen as a collective decision, in which Captain Daniel Ross played an important role.[3]

The wider reasons for the establishment of a British trading factory at Singapore are well documented. In the historiography of British expansion, the birth of modern Singapore has been seen as prompted by strategic concerns and policies of the East India Company, and above all, by the changing nature of British involvement in the East as a consequence of the Charter Act of 1813, whereby the East India Company's monopoly on the China trade came to an end. Moreover, the gaining of a British foothold in the Straits of Malacca has been considered in the context of events in Europe, of Anglo-Dutch rivalry and the emergence of a British view that it was necessary to counter other European powers in Southeast Asia.[4] In regional historiography, on the other hand, the acquisition of Singapore has been examined in the context of events in the Malay world, as part of the internal politics of the Johor Sultanate, and the ways in which the British and Dutch were able to secure influence by their involvement in succession disputes.[5]

Overall, however, it has been impossible to ignore the pivotal role of Raffles, the East India Company servant who has remained one of the most enigmatic figures in British colonial history. Of humble origins and largely autodidact, but equipped with immense personal ambition and unrelenting energy, Raffles would stage one of the most remarkable careers in British colonial history. Victorian panegyrics and a string of early biographies pictured him as "one of England's greatest sons", while modern scholars have been more ambivalent. Raffles has been marked out as a visionary Benthamite and utlilitarian, one of the first British administrators to draw up and implement a robust and systematic plan for a "civilising mission",[6] while others have seen him as a prime example of the new British official with an absolutist temper pursuing aggressive policies with little respect for native authority.[7] Raffles has also been portrayed as a son of the Enlightenment, a visionary of Empire convinced that free trade would pave the way for British expansion in the region. Another persistent image is that of Raffles as the ultimate man on the spot, an orientalised civil servant positioned on the fringes of empire, a man who could and would disobey his superiors in London and Calcutta. In summary,

although many aspects of his career have attracted scholarly attention, the literature is still remarkably fragmented, and a modern evaluation of Raffles' life and work is still lacking.[8]

This chapter touches on one of the most neglected aspects of Raffles' career, namely the relationship between his scholarly endeavours and his measures as a British official.[9] From the very first months after his arrival in the region in 1805 until his final departure in 1823, Raffles relentlessly pursued enquiries into the histories and languages of the peoples of the Malay world. This scholarship was driven by his desire to create a niche for himself as an Oriental scholar in line with the careers of British administrators in India such as Sir William Jones. In terms of publications, however, not a great deal was achieved. The bulky *History of Java* appeared after that island was given back to the Dutch and would remain Raffles' only major scholarly publication. Raffles' recovery of these local histories was enabled by outside circumstances, as he was posted first to the Malay Peninsula, and later to Java and Sumatra. Raffles himself was aware of the novelty of this investigation: this was a part of the world of which the British knew little, with a great but unknown past, in short a region which offered prospects for endless scholarly pursuits as well as commercial prospects and political influence.[10]

In his policies, Raffles made use not only of his acquired knowledge of historical events, but of his own understanding of the "original" characteristics of Malay society. One important aspect of this was his belief that the Malays had a glorious past as a maritime trading nation, and that this greatness could be restored by "improving" the Malays, guiding them back to a life of trade and commerce. The idea that Malay society was in decline was not new, and it has been argued that it originated partly from European knowledge of early reports from the region, which did describe a golden age, when Southeast Asian states had been more efficient, wealthy and politically stable.[11] But in Europe, the region now known as Southeast Asia had for centuries been seen as a blank spot in comparison to India and China, and it is necessary to see Raffles' ambitions to construct histories of the Malay peoples against this perceived European ignorance.[12]

Raffles' recovery of "historical" texts and his imaginings of Malay society, I argue, were instigated through his intimate friendship with the romantic poet and self-confessed Oriental scholar, John Leyden. His readings of Malay texts, therefore, must be seen not only in the context of British attention to ancient texts of the Indian subcontinent at this time, but within a Romantic retrieving of the past which had moulded Leyden's

thinking in Scotland, where the importance of ancestry and lineage was revealed in texts. Raffles was able to construct a lineage of what he came to refer to as an ancient "Malayan Empire", set up in various localities, but still in essence preserving the character of society which in Raffles' mind marked the Malays out as a people "congenial to British minds".

The aim of this chapter is to examine the ways in which Raffles was able to imagine and reimagine historical centralities for the Malay world. This thinking culminated in the idea that Singapore had formerly been an important entrepôt, which not only had attracted trade from the region and beyond, but had been the originating location for a line of rulers whose authority was still present in the memories of the people. By taking possession of this very location, the seat of ancient reverence, it would be possible for the British to gain influence not only among the Malays located there, but in the greater Malay world. Since Malay was a *lingua franca* across much of the Dutch Indies and even beyond, this was ambition of some scope. This chapter therefore highlights the intricate relationship between scholarly pursuits and the use of knowledge for political ends at this particular time. However, the story of the birth of Singapore also highlights the uniqueness of Raffles the scholar-administrator in British expansion, as great visions very soon had to give way to considerable pragmatism in order to secure Singapore's survival.

Despite the European project of mapping the world which was well underway by the time of British expansion into the Malay world, 18th-century knowledge of the East was still very much dependent on classical and biblical associations. The Malay Peninsula had from medieval times become associated with Ptolemy's Golden Chersonese and Solomon's Ophir, and early Iberian chroniclers of the East complained that "it is not easie to find Malaca in ancient bookes" (for this chapter, we follow the most common useage of the European sources when talking of European writings — "Malacca" rather than the pre- and post-European spelling of "Melaka").[13] Portuguese writers pictured the *Malayos* of Malacca as sophisticated and refined, but due to Portuguese unwillingness to share information, very little was published about the Malay world prior to the arrival of the Dutch and English at the beginning of the 17th century.[14] Compilers of knowledge therefore became dependent on a few travel accounts which portrayed the Malay in a very negative light.[15]

In their reports to the King of Portugal, several Portuguese chroniclers had described the events leading up to the founding of Malacca and its early history. The most important of these was the apothecary Tomé Pires,

who was able to outline the history of the Malacca Sultanate by tracing the dynastic origins back through Singapura to Palembang in Sumatra.[16] Pires' report, the *Suma Oriental*, which is now considered one of the most important sources for the history of early Malacca, was published in full only in the 20th century. The *Suma* was therefore only known in the truncated version published in Italian in the travel compendium *Navigazione e Viaggi* by G.B. Ramusio.[17] Reports such as Pires' were also used by chroniclers in Portugal, most notably João de Barros, who in his *Décadas da Ásia*, compiled knowledge of the East from a variety of available sources, including what seem to be "interviews" with local people.[18] Although Barros' *Ásia* was never translated in full, its precise information on the early history of Malacca was copied and used by numerous cosmographers in the 17th century.

A new phase in European knowledge of Southeast Asia followed the appearance of Francois Valentijn's five-volume *Oud en Nieuw Oost–Indiën* (1724–1726). Here, a slightly altered version of the early history of Malacca was presented, apparently based on Malay manuscripts.[19] Valentijn also attempted to create a "history" of the Malays, who now were said to originate from Sumatra, "Manaingcabo" and Palembang. Although Valentijn's massive tomes quickly became the main source of information on the Malay world in Europe, it seems that this publication received little acknowledgement in Britain. Instead, travel accounts of the 18th century presented the British reading public with an increasingly blurred picture of the Malay world. The Malays were assumed to originate from Malacca, having spread throughout the archipelago. A stereotyping also emerged by which the Malays were increasingly described as ferocious, dangerous and unpredictable. This image was partly based on confusing reports of strange and savage peoples of the interior of the Malay Peninsula, but was compounded by fresh reports of European encounters with piracy and violence in Malay waters.[20] Perhaps the most quoted 18th-century book in this respect was *Travels of a Philosopher*, written by French physiocrat Pierre Poivre, who saw the Malays as formerly a great trading nation that had become "restless, fond of navigation, war, plunder, emigrations, colonies, desperate enterprises, adventures, and gallantry".[21]

The founding of Penang in 1786 came to generate a new awareness of Malay lands in Britain. Visitors to the new settlement, as well as East India officials stationed there, began to call for a revision of the assessment of Malay character. The assumed ferociousness of the Malays

was seen as a result of European ignorance and endless repetition of old knowledge. The Malays were, it was now claimed, in fact naturally more active, energetic and more enterprising than all other Asian peoples.[22]

It is against this backdrop of often conflicting and imprecise knowledge that Raffles' rapid transformation into a scholar of the Malay world has to be seen. Thomas Stamford Raffles had left school at the age of 14 and taken up a position as a clerk with the East India Company in order to support his mother and sisters. His diligence and frantic pursuit of knowledge during his early years in the East India House — later mythologised by his biographers — resulted in him being chosen for the post of Assistant Secretary to the Council in Penang, which had been made a fourth Presidency of India in 1804.[23]

Raffles arrived at Penang in 1805. One month later, another ambitious man arrived on the island. This was John Leyden, Scotsman, medical doctor and published poet.[24] Also of humble origins, Leyden's quest for learning and his formidable linguistic abilities had earlier attracted the attention of Sir Walter Scott, whom he later assisted in the collecting of Scottish ballads. From an early stage, Leyden also developed an interest in exotic adventure.[25] After giving up plans to travel to Africa, he decided to become a "furious Orientalist, nemini secundus".[26] Determined to make his way to the East, he took up medical studies and was appointed to the hospital in Madras. In India, Leyden pursued his scholarly ambitions with a restless energy, learning numerous languages in a short time.[27]

Having been taken ill in India, Leyden had been advised to travel to Penang, then considered the "healthiest spot in India". During his four months of convalescence in Penang, Leyden struck a very personal friendship with Raffles and his wife Olivia, but he also found time for his Oriental scholarship, writing to Walter Scott:

> I have established my reputation as an Orientalist beyond all contradiction. Before I set off for Bengal I shall have acquired the Malay which is childishly easy and made some progress in Pali Siami and Birman and then there will not be a language from the point of the promontory of Malabar to that of Malacca, the dialect of Bengal itself excepted of which I shall not possess a respectable knowledge.[28]

Leyden's article "On the Languages and Literature of Indo-Chinese Nations", which appeared in *Asiatic Researches* in 1808, was the first scholarly article on the languages of mainland Southeast Asia published in English, and remained one of the most quoted sources on the region for decades.[29]

Together, Raffles and Leyden acquired and copied a number of Malay manuscripts. Among these was a text which Leyden identified as the "national poem" of the Malays and began translating into English. After Leyden's death, Raffles would publish this translation as the *Malay Annals*.[30] The editors of a recent republication of Leyden's translation have interpreted his interest in this chronicle through the parallels between Scottish and Malay literature in the oral rendering of the *hikayats* (stories or narratives).[31] But it appears that Leyden also felt drawn to the Malays through the images of fearlessness and adventure which so well fitted his own personality.[32] In addition, the two friends clearly felt that they had been given unique access to a hitherto unknown document which held the key to the history of the Malay people. This text, now known in the Malay form of its name as the *Sejarah Melayu*, had in fact been the main source for the abovementioned Portuguese accounts of the history of Malacca, something which Leyden and Raffles seemed unaware of.

Leyden's crucial role in Raffles' rapid acquisition of the Malay language has long been acknowledged,[33] but it also seems that Leyden influenced Raffles' ideas about the expansion of British influence in the region.[34] It was during these early years that Raffles began to refer to the ancient characteristics of Malay society and governance. Firstly, he saw how reverence for lineage, kinship and ancestry strengthened bonds and loyalties between ruler and follower. Authority involved the protection of subjects, since "whenever a raja exposes his subjects to disgrace, it is the certain token of the destruction of his country; hence also it is, that none of the Malay race ever engage in rebellion, or turn their faces from their own rajas".[35] Consequently, the future role of the British was envisaged by Raffles as mild and paternalistic, in stark contrast to the supposed tyranny of the Dutch.

Secondly, these texts had much to say about bonds between states, as Raffles developed a belief that a future relationship between Southeast Asia and Britain should be built around ancient loyalties and dependencies within the region. His plan for a "Protectorate" was clearly based on his perceptions of ancient relationships between states, characterised by a relative looseness of dependence, a hierarchical ordering under a protective overlordship, where "trade not territory" was the goal.[36] Within this thinking of spheres of influence, Raffles was able to apply two different understandings of Malay, both of which had been in place for a long time.[37] What Raffles sometimes referred to as the "Malayan group" comprised a wider "imagined" Malay world.[38] This whole region, Raffles argued, was

characterised by its diversity, but also the absence of prejudice, and a "spirit of enterprise and freedom" which distinguished it from the rest of Asia.[39]

In a narrower sense, Raffles defined the Malays as the people whose history he and Leyden had discovered in the *Annals*.[40] In contrast to the quiet Javanese who had little aspirations for trade, Raffles saw the Malays as a seafaring and commercial nation, naturally bold and "devoted to speculations of gain, animated by a spirit of adventure, and accustomed to distant and hazardous enterprizes".[41] This, as we have seen, was not new, but the *Annals* also provided Raffles with important information about the history of a people. Unlike the *Annals* themselves, Raffles later referred to this as the "Malayan Empire", which he, in contradiction to the original character of the text, saw as a continuous story of emerging centres, from the Sumatran origins, through Singapore, to the eventual founding of Malacca and move to Johore.

The idea of the continued importance of ancient centralites of the Malay world was never far away as Raffles' career unfolded. This was at the forefront when in 1808, Raffles forcefully campaigned against the East India Company's plans to abandon Malacca, "the capital of the Malay straits".[42] As the old centre of trade networks of the region, Raffles insisted, Malacca would always retain its prestige. With the city in hand, "the whole of the Malay Rajahs in the Straits and to the Eastward might be rendered not only subservient but if necessary tributary".[43] Here, Penang, with a "vagrant and restless" population weighed little in comparison to the antiquity and ancient fame of Malacca.[44] The rulers of the Malay states, he convinced his superiors, would be anxious to maintain friendship with any power holding the fabled Malacca, a name that "carries more weight to a Malay Ear than any new settlement".[45] Raffles pleas fell on deaf ears, as Malacca was handed back to the Dutch.

Another opportunity to draw on history opened up as Britain began to prepare for the invasion of Java in 1810. Leyden had left Penang in early 1806 to take up the post as teacher of the Hindustani language at the College of Fort William in Calcutta.[46] Correspondence between Raffles and Leyden during the following years often returned to the grand visions of British expansion in the East which the two had begun drawing up in Penang.[47] Leyden was by now a confidante of the Governor-General Lord Minto, a fellow Scotsman and Borderer, who would lead the Java expedition.[48] Leyden himself volunteered to join the forces as a translator.

Lord Minto's correspondence in the months leading up to the invasion clearly shows how little the British knew about the island they were about

to invade. Leyden contributed by looking into the history of Java. In the *Annals*, he found the ancient Javanese kingdom of Majapahit, with a power so great that every prince in Java and "half of the Princes of Nusantara" acknowledged its overlordship.[49] To Leyden, the ancient reverence for the *Bitara*, the ruler of Majapahit, appeared as a key to the Malay world, as he proposed that this title would be assumed by the Governor General of India.[50] Leyden urged Raffles to write to all the rulers of the region to come in person to meet the "Good Maja Rajah of Bengal", the new *Bitara* who would reign in Malacca and conquer Java. The idea was to summon a "general Malay league", a confederation of kingdoms brought together and led by the British, but functioning according to ancient traditions of interaction between states.[51] Leyden also envisaged a "parliament" made up of representatives from all Malay states who would send their "most ancient and sagacious men", to meet in "some celebrated ancient place".[52] These plans never materialised, but Raffles would return to the idea of the *Bitara* several times during his career, increasingly seeing himself in this role.[53]

Two days after landing in Java, Leyden died from a sudden illness caused by spending long hours examining old Javanese manuscripts in a damp library. To Raffles, Leyden's death was a hard blow.[54] Nevertheless, as Lieutenant-Governor of Java from 1811–1816, he commissioned agents to collect Javanese manuscripts. This enabled him, after returning to England in 1816, to publish his *History of Java* in which the history of the island for the first time was systematically put together with the help of indigenous sources. Also, Raffles again felt he had found a "national poem", the *Brata Yudha*, which was translated in its entirety.[55] By this time, Java had already been returned to the Dutch, and Raffles had been assigned a post in Bencoolen in Sumatra, where he arrived in March 1818.

In Bencoolen, Raffles had the opportunity to return to his historical enquiries, this time by taking an intense interest in the Sumatran origins of the "Malayan Empire". In 1783, William Marsden had written in his *History of Sumatra* that the Minangkabau seemed to be the original people of the island. Even so, Marsden, like others at this time, assumed that all Malays in Sumatra had arrived from the Peninsula in a wave of emigration which had encompassed the whole archipelago.[56] Already during his time in Penang, Raffles had generously shared his new insights into the history of the Malays with Marsden, and in the third 1811 edition of the *History*, Marsden revised his position. He now wrote that had he learnt from various sources that the founders of the celebrated kingdoms of Johor, Singapura

and Malacca originated from the Minangkabau, and that Malay presence in the Peninsula "should only be considered as colonisation".[57]

Since his arrival in Bencoolen, Raffles had been eager to visit the place he thought of as the "ancient capital of the Malayan empire". Raffles' expedition to the Minang highlands in 1818 fulfilled all his expectations: he found ruins of an ancient city, where the former glories of the place and its people could still be felt and seen.[58] As the first European, Raffles had visited the place "whence all the Malayan Colonies now scattered along the coast of the Archipelago first sprung".[59] He also made a treaty with the Minangkabau ruler, whom he referred to as "Emperor", who conceded all "overlordship" to the British. In Raffles' mind, this was an important move, which ultimately would secure British influence in the whole of Sumatra.[60] However, the symbolic significance of a treaty with a tribal chieftain in the middle of Sumatra, not surprisingly, failed to impress or interest Calcutta, and more importantly, it was against official British policy. Raffles was forced to annul the treaty, adding further to his bitterness over the ways in which his initiatives in Sumatra were repeatedly turned down by his superiors.

A new settlement in the Straits of Malacca had been part of Raffles' campaign to increase British influence in the region since Java had to be given up.[61] From Bencoolen, he made attempts to secure new British posts along the southern route into the Sunda Straits, but the way he had taken matters into his own hands had brought him into conflict with his superiors.[62] The Charter Act of 1813, whereby the East India company lost its monopoly on trade to the East, had increased the importance of faster routes to China, and it was furthermore becoming clear that Penang had not lived up to expectations.[63] In his proposals for a new trading post presented to the East India Company's Board of Control, Raffles had repeatedly emphasised the China trade and the necessity to implement the principle of free trade, but he also stressed the potential of local trade within the archipelago. Most passionately, Raffles pleaded for the need to counter Dutch expansion in the region, and this was his main argument when he visited Calcutta in early 1818, managing to secure the approval of the Governor-General to establish a commercial station somewhere in the Straits of Malacca.[64]

The events leading up to the fabled landing at Singapore are well documented and closely linked to the internal politics of the Johor-Riau Sultanate, in Raffles' eyes, the heir to the "Malayan Empire".[65] At this point of time, however, the Sultanate was in disarray, weakened by succession

disputes following the death of Sultan Mahmud in 1812. The two principal ministers — the Bendahara residing in Pahang, and the Temenggong in Singapore and proximate islands — were increasingly acting as independent rulers. The court in Riau had for a long time been dominated by a Bugis group, led by the Bugis junior ruler or *Yamtuan Muda*. The two contenders for the throne were supported by rival factions — Tengku Hussein (also known as Tengku Long), the elder son, was backed by the Malays, while the Bugis supported the younger Abdul Rahman, who was also favoured by the Dutch. For the British, it was now necessary to negotiate a treaty with the Sultanate in order to secure a new trading post in the Straits. It was with Abdul Rahman that William Farquhar, the British administrator who best knew the local political situation, had negotiated a settlement with regard to the Karimun islands in 1816. Karimun, to the west of Singapore, was still in the picture when a British expedition approached the Straits in January 1819.[66]

The Board of Control in London had in January dispatched instructions to Calcutta not to let Raffles go ahead with his plans.[67] Before this reached Penang, however, Raffles had already ordered Farquhar to proceed to the Straits of Singapore: "having ascertained the capabilities of Sincapore and its vicinity and the result being satisfactory, you will make such arrangements for securing to us the eventual command of that important station". Farquhar was also told not to go ahead until Raffles himself was able to join the expedition.[68] Later, John Crawfurd would claim that no particular spot was contemplated, that it was the suggestion of Farquhar to put into Singapore for information.[69] However, Crawfurd's own journal from this time transmits a more ambivalent picture: after surveying the Karimons on 27 January, the party had just finished dinner "and taken a little wine after it", when Raffles arrived on the island and convened a council in the evening. Only at this moment did Captain Ross point out a spot on Singapore Island with a good harbour and cleared of jungle which he had seen earlier. Here, the choice of Singapore emerges as a preconceived strategy, as Crawfurd wrote in his journal that "the whole was a preconcerted plan, Sir S. having the power of doing as he liked in Calcutta".[70]

The question of when Raffles first set his eyes on Singapore has long been debated. Lady Raffles' claim that the site of Singapore had been on Raffles' mind before he left England in 1817 has been disputed.[71] In 1818, several alternatives for a new station were still on the table, but it seems clear from existing documents that Raffles did not seriously contemplate

sites apart from Johor-Singapore after his return from Calcutta.[72] Already in January 1818, Raffles wrote that the island of Singapura seems to possess "peculiar and great advantages" for the planned factory.[73] Plans to settle at Singapore are mentioned in a letter to Marsden of 12 December 1818.[74] In Munshi Abdullah's later compiled narrative, we find Raffles telling William Farquhar that "we intend at all costs to found a settlement on the Island of Singapore".[75]

How had Raffles gained knowledge about of Singapore as an ancient "Malay capital"? Raffles would have had access to both European and Malay accounts. As we have seen, the story of the founding of Malacca had been recycled in European publications for centuries.[76] In Pires' account, the Prince Parameswara flees his native Palembang and arrives in Singapura, where he kills the local ruler. After five years in the city, Parameswara is driven out by Siamese forces. He together with his followers proceed north where Melaka is eventually founded. In this version, Singapore is repeatedly mentioned, but there is very little information about the city itself or its trade. In European accounts more generally, "Sincapura" was always mentioned as a predecessor to Malacca, and Prince Parameswara is named as the founder of the "Malay" polity at Singapura.[77] In most European versions, likewise, Parameswara is driven out after an attack from Majapahit or Siam. He or his son Sri Iskandar Shah, after fleeing Singapore, eventually founded Malacca.

It remains unclear to what extent Raffles was acquainted with these European publications prior to his arrival in Asia as a young man. However, throughout his time in the East, he had been sent books from Europe, and he was in correspondence with William Marsden, who in England was building up a substantial collection of literature dealing with Asia.[78] It was only during his stay in England in 1816 and 1817, that Raffles had direct access to Portuguese publications. It is known that selections from Barros' *Ásia*[79] were translated to him during this time by his friend, Thomas Murdoch, who also kept an extensive library of travel literature.[80] It was in Barros' work that we find the most detailed description of ancient Singapore, as a great port city which gathered traders from all over the world, from the eastern and western seas.[81] It was therefore only a few years before the founding of Singapore that Raffles found confirmation of the existence of the ancient maritime kingdom of Singapura in European sources.

The European sources were, however, just one source of inspiration. Raffles later wrote that: "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".[82] This was misleading, as Singapore island had been included in sea charts and maps for centuries, but what Raffles here refers to is the importance of Singapore as an ancient political and commercial centre, as seen through the Malay sources, some of which were known only to a few people, if not only to himself.

As we have seen, the most important Malay manuscript describing the greatness of ancient Singapore had been known by Raffles since his earliest days in Penang.[83] (Indeed, Kwa's Chapter 6 shows that a copy was first made for Raffles on paper with an 1816 watermark.) This, then, was the *Malay Annals* or *Sejarah Melayu*. In these, Singapura is founded by Prince Sri Tri Buana, a descendant of Alexander the Great, who had left Palembang in search for a suitable place to build a new city. Being attracted to a certain spot by a lion-like beast, the Prince named it Singapura, meaning "Lion City". This city flourished and became "a great city to which foreigners resorted in great numbers so that the fame of the city and its greatness spread throughout the world". Having once turned back invading forces from the Java-based kingdom of Majapahit, the fifth king of Singapura, Sultan Iskandar Syah, was finally defeated and moved north. He eventually settled down at Malacca, where he and his descendants built up the most successful trading port ever in the Malay world.[84] This story, in its different manuscript versions, resembled those told by Europeans in form, but differed in detail and in the importance and prestige attached to both Singapore, and to the dynasty it describes. One notable difference of emphasis is that in the *Sejarah Melayu*, Singapura is portrayed as a regional rival of the mighty kingdom of Majapahit, and a longstanding commercial and political centre.[85] In European versions, by contrast, it is presented as a more recent and less powerful creation.

Singapore had been a part of Raffles' "imagining" of a Malay past from the time of his first acquaintance with Leyden in Penang. Significantly, Raffles had provided William Marsden early on with information which enabled him to make changes to the 1811 edition of the *History of Sumatra*, by adding "Singapura" as one of the region's kingdoms of historical importance.[86]

So how did Raffles' revival of the ancient centre work out in practice? After landing at the mouth of Singapore River, Raffles wrote to Marsden: "Here I am at Singapore, true to my word".[87] He and Farquhar immediately started negotiations with the Temenggong, who was assured

that a treaty with the British "shall be a means of resurrecting the line of the ancient kings".[88] Raffles himself made inquiries, which confirmed that the sultan was indeed descended "through 25 sovereigns from the first Hindi prince who established himself at Singapore".[89] It was now that it was decided to ignore Farquhar's earlier agreement to acknowledge the younger son of the previous sultan (Sultan Mahmud, d.1812) as Sultan. The younger son, Abdul Rahman, had secured the royal regalia. But Abdul Rahman, as Raffles later explained to Calcutta, had been the candidate of the Bugis Yamtuan Muda (and so not necessarily the candidate with strongest Malay support) and should on those grounds be "particularly excluded from all affairs which had a reference to the political Interest of the Malayan Empire".[90] More to the point, perhaps, was that Sultan Abdul Rahman was inclined, under pressure, to accept Dutch sovereignty. He signed an agreement with the Dutch on 26 November 1818.

Abdul Rahman's older brother, Hussein, was supported by the Temenggong. He was quickly called in to Singapore, and on 6 February, a treaty was concluded between the Temenggong, "His Highness the Sultan Hussein Mahomed Shah Sultan of Johor", and the East India Company to set up a trading post at Singapore.

Raffles' private letters from this time never fail to point out that the British now had acquired the site of an ancient capital. His friends in England were told how he had discovered fortifications of Singapura, the very spot which "not less than six centuries ago" had been the "ancient maritime capital of the Malays". Raffles also announced that he had found the ruins of the fortifications of the ancient capital of Singapura: "Here I have just planted the British Flag, and a more commanding and promising Station for the protection and improvement of all our interests in the quarter cannot be well conceived".[91] Raffles now began to refer to Singapore as the "Hindu City of the Lions", as the original seat of the "Malayan empire", which had included both Sumatra and Java.[92] It was a spot "in the very heart of the Archipelago, or as the Malays call it, it is the "Navel of the Malay countries": as the old Singapura had been an emporium which "embraced the largest portion of the commerce between Eastern and Western nations", the new Singapore could and would aspire to take up its mantle.[93]

Raffles left Singapore in early February 1819. Returning in May the same year, he was able to report to England that "My new Colony" was already thriving.[94] After a short stay, he appointed William Farquhar

Resident, and returned to Bencoolen. He was not to see his new settlement for another three years. Despite Raffles' optimism, the fate of the new settlement would remain undecided for years.

The news of the founding of Singapore reached Calcutta within a month, and although the Governor-General Lord Hastings disapproved of Raffles' actions, he agreed to the treaty with the Johor Sultanate, awaiting London's approval.[95] Officials in Calcutta, concerned about the China trade, were on the whole more benevolent to the new station, but when London received the news in August, the reaction was negative, as ministers in Britain saw things in view of the European situation. Dutch protests which inevitably followed resulted in a paper war, where the role of Raffles the maverick administrator was given a high profile on both sides: the British could claim that Raffles had acted alone and in defiance of orders not to go ahead. The Dutch, on their part, were now able to vent their longtime frustration with Raffles.[96] Negotiations with the Dutch were begun but had to be interrupted, partly because of lack of information about what actually was happening in Singapore.[97]

Meanwhile, Raffles repeatedly assured his superiors that securing this particular site had been a genial move with far reaching consequences for British influence in the region. By acquiring Singapore, the British had in one blow positioned themselves in the centre of the Malay world, declaring:

> in the minds of the natives it will always be associated with their fondest recollections, as the seat of their ancient government, before the influence of a foreign faith had shaken those institutions for which they still preserve so high an attachment and reverence. The advantage of selecting a place thus hallowed by the ideas of a remote antiquity, and the veneration attached to its ancient line of kings, from whom they are still proud to trace their descent, must be obvious.[98]

He could also report that envoys, ambassadors and chiefs from most of the Malay states and Sumatra had come to him in Singapore to seek protection and support. He now informed his superiors that the southern peninsula had in the past constituted one kingdom — nominal power over this whole area was, he claimed, still in the hands of the Sultan of Johor, who now resided in Singapore and had conceded "overlordship" to the British. With Singapore in hand, all the Malay sultans would see themselves under British protection, because "our sultan is the head of all the Malay states".[99]

From Bencoolen, Raffles kept himself informed about developments in Singapore, becoming increasingly concerned with Farquhar's competence to manage the settlement. In late 1822, Raffles was back in Singapore, Farquhar was dismissed and Raffles set out to deal with the most acute issues, namely the planning of the new city and policing, and the drawing up of a "constitution". In a few years, Singapore had already changed beyond recognition.[100] The European population was still very small, and early observers complained that the few British merchants were of dubious character.[101] There had, however, been a great influx of Chinese, mainly from other parts of Southeast Asia. The new free port acted as a magnet especially for regional trade and the phenomenal growth of both commerce and people at Singapore was the marvel of every visitor.[102]

Although Raffles' vision of re-establishing Singapore as a centre for regional trade seemed to materialise, his second big plan, that of bringing the Malays back to a life in commerce, would be harder to achieve. For a variety of reasons, Raffles' relationship with Sultan Hussein and the Temenggong deteriorated.[103] The Malays did not seem willing to take part in commercial activities in Singapore. Piracy continued to plague ships headed to and from Singapore, and the local Malays were believed to be complicit. Raffles confronted the Temenggong, only to be told: "It is not the custom of rulers to engage in trade for they would lose dignity before other rulers". As for piracy, the Temenggong told Raffles: "Piracy is our birth-right and so brings no disgrace". Raffles was said to have been furious, telling the Malays: "Very well, if you are not willing the matter is closed".[104] The Temenggong and his followers were forced to leave the town and settle on its outskirts. A few years later, the then Resident John Crawfurd reported to Calcutta that, although the Malay chiefs had initially been led to entertain "unfounded hopes of aggrandisement", they had proved unfit for it: their employment had in no way been "necessary or even beneficial in the formation, maintenance, or progress of this settlement".[105]

It was, ultimately, not the descendents of the ancient kings who would secure the survival of British Singapore. Shortly before leaving Singapore for good in 1823, Raffles had to concede that the Chinese might always form the majority of the population.[106] In Java, Raffles had taken a hostile attitude towards the Chinese, who were not "children of the soil", and he saw the roots of Dutch misrule in the ways the Chinese had been favoured over the Malays and Javanese.[107] In Singapore, however, the raising of revenue was becoming a matter of life and death for the new settlement, and William Farquhar early conceded that the Chinese were "the only
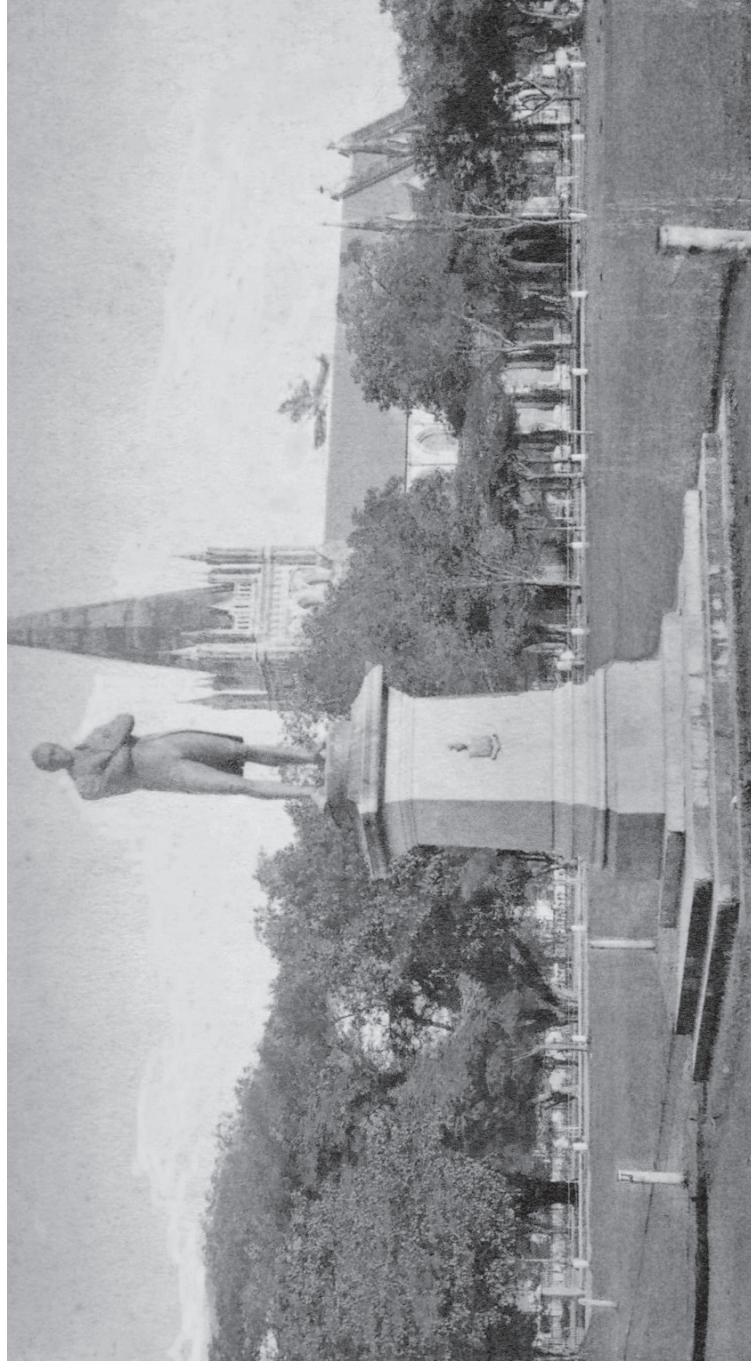
Plate 7.1 Statue of Sir Stamford Raffles

Sir Stamford Raffles' statue, as erected on the Padang in 1889, with St. Andrew's Cathedral behind it. It currently stands in front of the Victoria Memorial Hall, with a second, postcolonial statue standing over the Singapore River, near the old Parliament House.
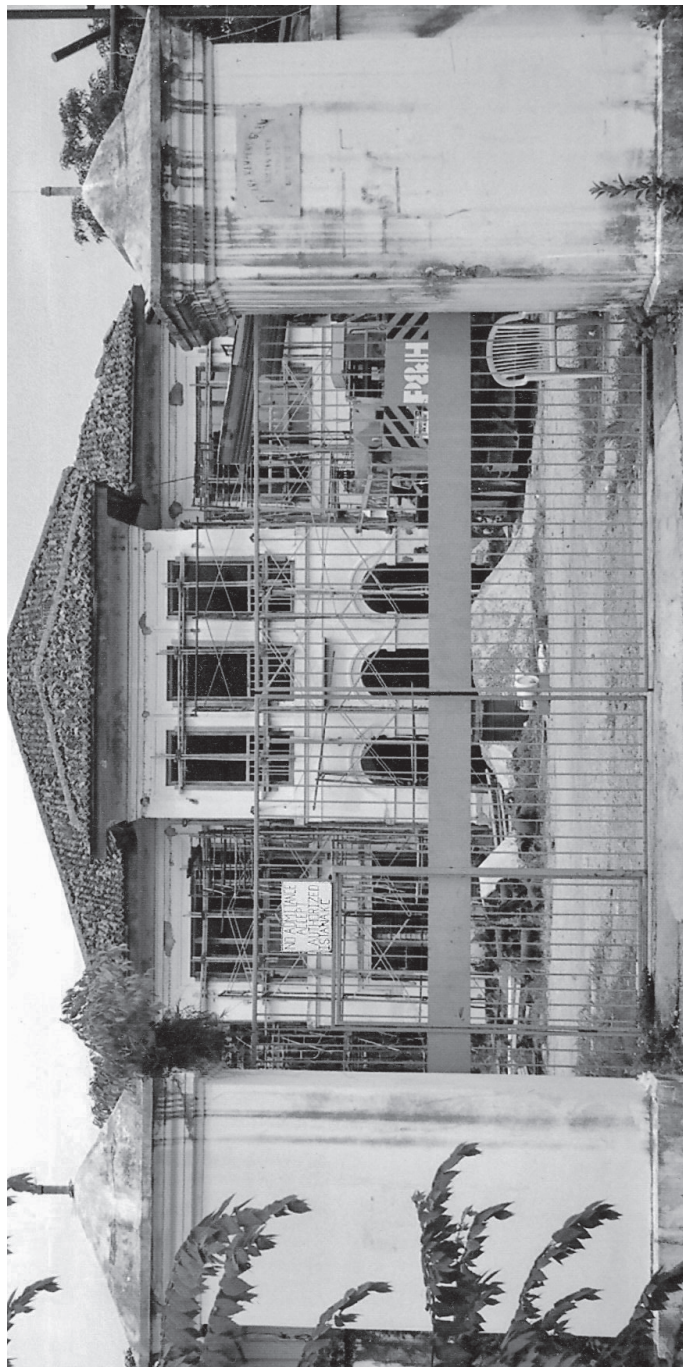
Plate 7.2 Istana Kampong Glam

Sultan Hussein, whom Raffles recognised as the rightful Sultan of Johor-Riau and hoped would turn to trade, built a wood and attap roof istana (palace) in Singapore at Kampong Glam. His son Sultan Iskandar Ali Shah had the structure that persists to today built by European architect Coleman between 1836–1843. The palace was declared state-owned in 1897 after a succession dispute, and in 2004, was reopened as a Malay Museum and Heritage Centre. This photograph is of the istana under restoration.

people of the East from whom a revenue may be raised without expense and extraordinary efforts of government".

John Bastin long ago concluded that it is impossible to distinguish Raffles' more philanthropic motives from his political and economic agenda.[108] In Penang, the need for income had forced the British administration into dependence on revenue raised from gambling farms frequented by the Chinese. But within Raffles' grand "civilising mission", the abolition of gaming and cockfighting had always been high on the list of vices to be abolished. He initially therefore prohibited gambling in Singapore, and the ban was reinforced when he returned in 1822. But, within a few years, Resident Crawfurd had to allow gambling, an important source of revenue for the struggling settlement. Soon, Singapore's fortunes were reported to be derived "more from the vices than from the industry of the people".[109]

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show how the birth of modern Singapore evolved from Sir Stamford Raffles' awareness of the island as the site of an ancient commercial centre for the region. Throughout his career, Raffles had been able to acquire new insights into a historical past, which enabled him to "imagine" a lineage of changing centres of the Malay world: starting with Sumatra, on to Singapore and Malacca to Johor. These centres were connected by ancient authorities and bonds between followers and ruler. Here, the ruler was the focus of loyalty, whereas the geographical position of the changing centralities was less important.[110] In Raffles' visions for the Malay world, the British would fashion their influence in the region on these ideas. The "Malay empire" had been held together by personal authority, and Raffles was always keen to point out that contrary to British rule in India, the focus here was on trade and exerting informal influence, not on the acquisition of territory. Furthermore, in contrast to Dutch rule in Southeast Asia, British overlordship would appeal to the inhabitants through mild and paternal principles of government and personalised loyalties.

"Knowledge" of the unique and ancient characteristics of Malay society enabled Raffles to contrast the peoples of the region against the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. Then known as further India, he announced that the Malay world was "in fact the other India".[111] The difference lay not only in the absence of caste system, generally seen

as an obstacle to the improvement of Indians, but in the fact that the Malays were, like the British, a maritime people "addicted to commerce". He assured his superiors that the rulers and peoples of the Malay states would always be more open to new customs and ideas than the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent.[112]

The refounding of Singapore therefore points to the new uses of knowledge which characterised British expansion in the East at this time. Raffles' Malay scholarship has to be seen in the context of the mapping of languages and literature, and the growth of historical and comparative linguistics which was taking place in the Indian subcontinent. As India's past took a more coherent shape, officials in Calcutta, inspired by Romanticism, argued for the preservation of ancient institutions and the need to be sensitive to India's history.[113] In relation to this growing scholarship, Southeast Asia was still perceived as unknown, and Raffles worked tirelessly to put the region on the scholarly map.[114] His *History of Java*, together with William Marsden's *History of Sumatra* and John Crawfurd's *History of the Indian Archipelago* (1819) would within a decade transform European knowledge of the Malay world.[115] These three men were all British officials, and the new scholarship was thus intertwined with British expansion in the region, which in turn had been set in motion largely by the Napoleonic wars in Europe. But the story of Raffles and Leyden also illustrates the ways in which this diverse region was felt to open up prospects for endless scholarly investigation as well as personal advancement.

Raffles' personal correspondence reveals that he developed a both romantic and personal relationship with the past, and I have argued that this was at least partly inspired by John Leyden.[116] Raffles eventually saw himself as the new *Bitara*, the overlord of the Malay world, writing: "My immediate influence will be felt over not less than 30 millions — while indirectly and eventually it may include ten times that amount! — it is unnecessary to say more —".[117] In this huge sphere of influence, Singapore could be the navel around which the "other India" would revolve. Singapore also had a very personal significance for Raffles, as a kind of fulfilment of Malay history, where he would personally take up the fallen mantle of the ancient Malay kings, as he asked to be buried alongside the ancient Malay kings on top of Singapore Hill.[118]

It was Raffles' belief that Singapore once had "embraced the largest portion of the commerce between Eastern and Western nations", and that this greatness could be revived.[119] He was also convinced that the Malays

would "hail with satisfaction the foundation and the rise of a British Establishment, in the centrical and commanding situation once occupied by the Capital of the most powerful Malayan Empire then existing in the East".[120] Very soon, however, it became clear that the reality of the new settlement was different. The marginalisation of the local Malays in Singapore was heavily linked to everyday issues of law and order. The regalia of the Johor sultans were still with the court in Riau, and the "British" Sultan Hussein in Singapore could not claim much prestige among the wider communities of Malays.[121] Raffles' plans to make Singapore a centre for "Malay" learning by setting up an educational institution had to be given up due to budgetary constraints. Furthermore, the Anglo-Dutch treaty which followed in 1824 would finally divide the Malay world into colonial spheres of influence.

The measures taken by Singapore's first Residents go far to illustrate the pragmatism which increasingly characterised this phase of British imperial expansion. In 1819, Singapore was not the central place Raffles wished it to be, but part of the Temenggong's realm, a small player within local networks of trade and power. In British Singapore, regional trade would be the lifeline of the new settlement, but this was as much due to its status as a free port and the orderly ways of carrying out trade as to any associations with an ancient past. Within the Malay Peninsula, it would take decades of informal influence for Singapore to reestablish itself as a "capital", but those who benefited were principally European investors and a steadily increasing Chinese population. Here, Raffles' romantic visions of reviving the "Malayan Empire" form a striking contrast with the realities of the British port city, where it often became necessary to "improvise empire" to ensure Singapore's survival.

Notes

1. John Crawfurd, *Extracts from the Diary of Captain J.C.F. Crawford 1818–1819*, Wurtzburg Collection, Add. Mnscr. 7388, Cambridge University Library.
2. Lady Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* (London: John Murray, 1830). Reprinted with an introduction by John Bastin (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991); William Farquhar, "The Establishment of Singapore", *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China and Australasia*, II, new series (May-August 1830): 140. See also C.E. Wurtzburg, *Raffles of the Eastern Isles* (first published London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1954; Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 705–11.

3. Ernest C.T. Chew, "The Foundation of a British settlement", in *A History of Singapore*, eds. Ernest C.T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Singapore: ISEAS/Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 37–40; "Sir Stamford Raffles's Account of the Founding of Singapore", Introduction by John Bastin (Eastbourne: Privately Printed, 2000), p. 10.; C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore, 1819–1988* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989). A variety of primary sources on the founding of Singapore are compiled in *JMBRAS* 42, 1 (1969).

4. A.J. Stockwell, "British Expansion and Rule in Southeast Asia" in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume 3: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 371.

5. Nicholas Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World 1780–1824* (Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1962); C.H. Wake, "Raffles and the Rajas. The Founding of Singapore in Malayan and British Colonial History", *JMBRAS* 48, 1 (1975): 47–73.

6. Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815–1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (London: Batsford, 1976), p. 76.

7. L.A. Mills, *British Malaya 1824–67* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 46. C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780–1830* (London and New York: Longman, 1989), pp. 73, 211–2, 244. Biographies of Raffles are D.C. Boulger, *The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles* (London: H. Marshall & Son, 1897, reprinted 1973); Maurice Collins, *Raffles* (London: Faber, 1966); R. Coupland, *Raffles, 1781–1826* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934); Emily Hahn, *Raffles of Singapore: A Biography* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968). The most used reference source is still the 1830 compilation of original correspondence and other documents by Lady Raffles (note 2). See also W. Cross, "Stamford Raffles the Man", in *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, vol. 1, eds. W. Makepeace *et al.*, with an introduction by C.M. Turnbull (first published London: John Murray, 1921; Singapore: Oxford in Asia hardback reprints, 1991).

8. For Raffles' policies in Java and Sumatra, see John Bastin, *The British in West Sumatra (1685–1825)* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965) and *The Native Policies of Sir Stamford Raffles in Java and Sumatra: An Economic Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957). Raffles' contribution to ethnographical knowledge is acknowledged in Nigel Barley, ed., *The Golden Sword: Stamford Raffles and the East* (London: British Museum Press, 1999). A critical view of Raffles' measures in Java is presented in M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c.1200* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 150. See also Hussein Alatas, *Raffles: Schemer or Reformer* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1971), and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied, *Raffles and Religion: A Study of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles' Discourse on Religions amongst Malays* (Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2004). For Raffles' contribution to natural history, see John Bastin, "Sir Stamford Raffles and the Study of Natural History in Penang, Singapore and Indonesia", *JMBRAS* 63, 2 (1990).

9. See, however, Mary Catherine Quilty, *Textual Empires: A Reading of Early British Histories of Southeast Asia* (Monash papers on Southeast Asia, 48, Monash University, 1998).

10. Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, Appendix, p. 19.

11. Anthony Reid, "Historiographical Reflections on the Period 1750–1870 in Southeast Asia and Korea", *Itinerario* 18, 1 (1994): 79–80. These ideas were not confined to Europeans, as depictions of Malay society as decadent and oppressive were emerging also in Malay literature around this time, most famously through Raffles' Malay scribe, Munshi Abdullah. See, for example, Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Chapter 2.

12. See Glyndwr Williams and P.J. Marshall, *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Dent, 1982), pp. 79ff. Here, the Indian subcontinent and China are given extensive chapters, whereas knowledge of Southeast Asia is seen to consist of a few travellers' accounts. For early complaints about the lack of information about the region, see Peter Heylyn, ed., *Cosmographie in Four Books: Containing the Chorographie and Historie of the Whole World, and All the Principal Kingdoms, Provinces, Seas, and Isles Thereof*, second edition (London: Printed for Henry Seile, 1657), pp. 818–9.

13. Father Joseph de Acosta, *The Natural & Moral History of the Indies*, reprinted from the English translated edition of Edward Grimston, 1604, and edited, with notes and an introduction by Clements R. Markham, Vol. 1, Hakluyt Society (Hereafter HS), 60 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1880), p. 33. On the classical sources in European knowledge, see Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese: Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula before A.D. 1500* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1961).

14. Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa: An Account of the Countries Bordering on the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants*, Vol 2, HS, sec. ser., 49, ed., trans. Mansel Longworth Dames (London: Hakluyt Society, 1921). See, however, Anthony Reid, "Understanding *Melayu* (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities", *JSEAS* 32, 3 (2001): 295–313.

15. Ludovico Varthema's travel account is here the most widely used, see for example Richard Willes, ed., *The History of Traualye in the West and East Indies, and Other Countreys Lying Eyther Way, Towards the Fruitful and Ryche Moluccaes* (London: Richarde Iugge, 1577), p. 403. See also *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema*, translated from the original Italian edition of 1510, with a preface by John Winter Jones, and edited with notes and an introduction by George Percy Badger (London: Hakluyt Society, 1863).

16. See I.A. Macgregor, "Some Aspects of Portuguese Historical Writing of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries on South East Asia", in *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D.G.E. Hall (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 173.

17. Republished as Giovanni Battista Ramusio (1485–1557), *Navigazioni e viaggi: a cura di Marica Milanesi*, Volume Secundo (Torino: Einaudi, 1979).

18. Barros calculated a date for the founding of Malacca, 1258 AD, which was repeated in other publications. I.A. Macgregor, "Some aspects", p. 185; C.R. Boxer, *João de Barros: Portuguese Humanist and Historian of Asia* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1981), p. 104; M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Arhcipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), pp. 36–59; Donald Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol I: A Century of Discovery, Book 2* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 500–9. See also Walter Gray Birch, ed., *The Commentaries of the Great Alfonso Dalboquerque*, translated from the Portuguese edition of 1774, Vol 1, HS, 53 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1875), p. 63.

19. Francois Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, V (Amsterdam: Dordrecht, 1726) pp. 316–20. See also "Valentyn's Description of Malacca", *JSBRAS* 13 (1884): 49–74, 63–6; and Amin Sweeney's discussion of Valentijn in *A Full Hearing: Orality and Literacy in the Malay World* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1987).

20. Abbé Claude Marie Guyon, *A New History of the East Indies, Ancient and Modern*, Vol. 1; partly translated from French (London, 1757), p. 360. See also, for example, Charles Frederick Noble (attr.), *A Voyage to the East Indies in 1747 and 1748* (London: T. Becket and P.A. Dehondt, 1762), p. 47. For the Malay in Britain, see Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 209–10.

21. Pierre Poivre, *Travels of a Philosopher, or, Observations on the Manners and Arts of Various Nations in Africa and Asia*, translated from French (London: J. Davidson, 1769).

22. Sir Home Popham, *A Description of Prince of Wales Island in the Streights of Malacca: With its Real and Probable Advantages and Sources to Recommend it as a Marine Establishment* (London: Printed for J. Stockdale, 1805), pp. 30–2.

23. See, for example, Coupland, *Raffles*, p. 6. Wurtzburg, *Raffles*, p. 20.

24. There is no modern biography of John Leyden. For biographical information, see John Leyden, *Poems and Ballads by Dr. John Leyden*, with a "memoir" of Leyden by Sir Walter Scott, supplemented by Robert White (Kelso: J. & J.H. Rutherfurd, 1858). Leyden's poetry was published as *Poetical Remains* (London: Longman Hurst Rees Orme and Brown, 1819). The most comprehensive biography is John Reith, *Life of Dr. John Leyden* (Galashiels: A. Walker & Son, 1923). None of these dwell on Leyden's contribution as an Oriental scholar. See also Virginia Matheson Hooker and M.B. Hooker, "Introductory Essay", in *John Leyden's Malay Annals*, MBRAS Reprint, 20 (Selangor, 2001), pp. 1–79, where Reith's biography is neglected. For a critical review, see John Bastin, "John Leyden and the Publication of the Malay Annals (1821)", *JMBRAS* 75, 2 (2002): 99–116.

25. Walter Scott, "Biographical Memoir", in *Poems and Ballads*, p. 14.

26. Ibid., p. 26.

27. Contemporaries often commented on Leyden's flamboyant and unpolished behaviour. See Hastings Fraser, ed., *Memoir and Correspondence of General James Stuart Fraser of the Madras Army* (London: Whiting and Co Ltd, 1885), p. 13. For a detailed discussion of Leyden's linguistic scholarship, see Bastin, "John Leyden".

28. R.H. Cholmondeley, *The Heber Letters* (London: Batchworth Press, 1950), pp. 207–8.

29. Leyden's "Sketch of the Island of Borneo" was published posthumously in 1814 in the proceedings of the Batavian Academy of Arts and Sciences. He also published *A Comparative Vocabulary of the Barma, Malayu and T'Hai Languages* (Serampore: Mission Press, 1810). See Raffles, "Introduction", in *Leyden's Malay Annals*, p. v.

30. For Raffles' manuscripts, see R. Roolvink, "The variant Versions of the Malay Annals", in *Sêjara Mêlayu, or Malay Annals*, ed., trans. C.C. Brown with a new introduction by R. Roolvink (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970), pp. xv–xxxi.

31. Hooker and Hooker, "Introductory Essay" in *John Leyden's Malay Annals*.

32. Raffles, "Introduction", in *Leyden's Malay Annals*.

33. Wurtzburg, *Raffles*, p. 35.

34. Reith, *Life of Dr. John Leyden*, p. 261. After Leyden's death, Raffles wrote that "most of the principal measures of my administration were suggested by his all-powerful genius". T.S. Raffles, *The History of Java*, Vol. 1, p. x. Within a short time, Raffles' wife Olivia also died, and was buried next to Leyden in Buitenzorg.

35. The opening section of the *Annals* described events which established loyalty between the Malays and their ruler. See *John Leyden's Malay Annals*, pp. 26–7.

36. Coupland, *Raffles, 1781–1826*, p. 28; Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. 71

37. See Anthony Reid, "Understanding *Melayu* (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities", in *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries*, ed. Timothy Barnard (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), pp. 1–24.

38. [Raffles], "The Maritime Code of the Malays", *JSBRAS* 3 (1879): 62–84. In its widest sense, this included the Peninsula, Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes, the Moluccas, Sulu, but also Mindanao as well as "the Black Papua States of New Guinea". Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, pp. 15, 70.

39. Raffles, "Introduction" in *John Leyden's Malay Annals*, p. xi.

40. Sir Stamford Raffles, "The Maritime Code of the Malays", Part II, *JSBRAS* 4 (1880): 1–2.

41. Raffles, *The History of Java*, I, p. 57.

42. Boulger, *Raffles*, pp. 64–75.

43. Wurtzburg, *Raffles*, pp. 68–79. See also Brian Harrison, *Holding the Fort: Melaka under Two Flags, 1795–1845* (Kuala Lumpur: *JMBRAS* monographs, 14, 1985), pp. 66–7.

44. In his report to the Governor and Council of Penang, he pointed out that "the Malays, not generally valued as subjects, are here industrious and useful member of society". Wurzburg, *Raffles*, p. 69.

45. Raffles to Governor and Council, 31 October 1808, Bengal public consultations 17 March 1809, copy in Wurtzburg Collection, Add. Mnscr 7366, Cambridge University Library.

46. It was after his stay in Penang that Leyden began to study Chinese, as he planned to teach Chinese at the Fort William College. From Penang, Raffles sent Leyden Chinese books and their translations, including Confucius and books on China's ancient history. See Leyden to Raffles, March 1808, Raffles collection, Mss. Eur. D 29, Oriental and India Office Collections, London.

47. Leyden to Lord Minto, 30 August and 12 July 1811, Mss 11320, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. Leyden also nourished plans to investigate the relationship between Malay and the languages of New Zealand.

48. Minto was also fascinated by Leyden's learning and personality, writing: "I do not believe that so great a reader was ever so great a talker before", Reith, *Life of Dr. John Leyden*, pp. 297–8.

49. Brown, ed., trans., *Sêjara Mêlayu, or Malay Annals*, p. 22.

50. It was important, however, that this should not be seen as dictated from above, but would be "the spontaneous and voluntary act of the Malay chieftains". Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. 71.

51. Leyden to Lord Minto, 12 July 1811, Mss 11320, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. 51; Wurtzburg, *Raffles*, p. 130.

52. In his communications with Lord Minto, Raffles suggested that ancient relationships between kingdoms should be drawn upon, as it would be easy to "interfere without much trouble" by re-establishing authorities. Leyden to Raffles, in Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, pp. 25–6.

53. While in Sumatra, he began to see himself as the *Bitara*, a "Lord Paramount" with the local rulers as his Barons and the people as their vassals. Raffles to Thomas Murdoch, 22 July 1820, Mss. Eur. D742, Oriental and India Office Collections, London.

54. See Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, with an introduction by John Bastin, vol. I (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. x, where Raffles lamented the death of his friend Leyden, "who expired in my arms".

55. Raffles initially planned to publish *Brata Yudha* as a separate publication. Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. I, pp. 415–68.

56. William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra, Containing An Account of the Government, Laws, Customs, and Manners of the Native Inhabitants, with a Description of the Natural Productions, and a Relation of the Ancient Political State of that Island* (London, 1784); William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*. A reprint of the third edition introduced by John Bastin (Kuala Lumpur, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 42. Marsden's work was the first systematic description of any part of Southeast Asia written in English.

57. In his 1811 *History*, Marsden made reference to Leyden's article, along with other European sources which only now were added. See Marsden, *The History* (1783), pp. 268–76; (1966), p. 326; Marsden to Raffles, 1809, Raffles collection, MSS. Eur. C742/2, Oriental and India Office Collections, London.

58. The expedition was partly prompted by the ongoing Padri uprising. To Marsden, Raffles wrote that the expedition had once and for all confirmed that the Malayan empire was of very ancient origins. See Christine Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism in a Changing Peasant Economy: Central Sumatra, 1784–1847* (London: Curzon, 1983), p. 246.

59. Wurtzburg, *Raffles*, p. 445.

60. Wurzburg, *Raffles*, p. 446; Bastin, *The Native Policies*, p. 138.

61. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 67

62. John Bastin, "Raffles' Attempts to Extend British Power in Sumatra", in *Essays on Indonesian and Malayan History* (Singapore: Donald Moore, 1965), pp. 164–79.

63. Stockwell, "British Expansion", p. 374.

64. Wurtzburg, *Raffles*, pp. 461–4.

65. See, for example, Chew, "The Foundation of a British Settlement".

66. For the most detailed discussion and Raffles' original account of the founding of Singapore, see "Sir Stamford Raffles's Account".

67. The Dutch were later told that Raffles had "no authority on political arrangements". Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 10.

68. Raffles to Farquhar, 16.1.1819, Bengal secret consultations, volume 307, copy, Wurtzburg Collection, Add. Mnscr. 7366, Cambridge University Library.

69. John Crawford, *Mission to Siam* (Farnborough: Gregg, 1971), p. 565.

70. This was also Farquhar's own version: "I suggested to Sir Stamford, that it might be advisable to stop at Singapore". See Farquhar, "The Establishment of Singapore", p. 140. In Crawfurd's journal, Farquhar is said to have spoken warmly for the Karimons, but "I believe no other person entertained the like sentiments of the goodness of the ground". John Crawfurd, *Extracts from the Diary of Captain J.G F. Crawford 1818–1819*, Wurtzburg collection, Add. Mnscr. 7388, p. 13, Cambridge University Library. See also Wurtzburg, *Raffles*, pp. 705–11.

71. Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. 370; "Sir Stamford Raffles's Account", p. 10.

72. "Sir Stamford Raffles's Account", p. 10.

73. Raffles to Bannerman 31.1.1818. Bengal secret consultations, vol. 307, copy, Wurtzburg Collection, Add. Mnscr. 7366, Cambridge University Library.

74. Boulger, *Raffles*, pp. 268–73.

75. See Munshi Abdullah, *The Hikayat Abdullah*. An annotated translation by A.H. Hill (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970), Chapter 11.

76. Tomé Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, ed., trans. Armando Cortesão, HS, sec. ser, 90 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1944), pp. 229, 232.

77. In Valentijn's account, "Paramisera" was replaced by Iskandar Shah as the supposed founder. See, for example, Peter Heylyn, ed., *Cosmography in Four Books*, improved by E. Bohun, seventh edition (London, 1703), p. 822; Herman Moll, ed., *Thesaurus Geographicus, or, The Compleat Geographer: Part the Second* (the third edition very much enlarged) (London: printed for A. and J. Churchill, and T. Childe, 1709). A much copied travel account mentioning the Parameswara story was Johan Nieuhof, *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670*, with an introduction by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 178.

78. Marsden himself added a number of Portuguese sources to his 1811 edition of the *History of Sumatra*.

79. This work had been republished in 1777.

80. John Bastin, "Introduction" in Raffles, *History of Java*, p. xvii. In his *History*, Raffles made numerous references to Barros regarding Portuguese presence in Malacca. Later, Murdoch arranged a translation of Mendez Pinto. Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. 560.

81. João de Barros, *Ásia. Segunda Década, VI* (Lisboa: Agência Geral das Colónias, 1945), pp. 250ff.

82. T.S. Raffles, "The Founding of Singapore", *JMBRAS* 42, 1 (1969): 74.

83. Raffles, "The Maritime Code of the Malays", Part II, p. 11.

84. Roolvink, "The Variant Versions", p. 62. For a summary of this this story, see Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* (London: Macmillan Asian Histories Series, 1982), pp. 33–4.

85. *John Leyden's Malay Annals*, pp. 40, 45.

86. Also on maps accompanying the book, Singapura had been added. Marsden, *History (*1986).

87. Letter to Marsden 31 Jan 1819, in Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. 376.

88. Munshi Abdullah, *The Hikayat Abdullah*, p. xxxx.

89. Raffles to Adam, 13 February 1819, *Bengal secret consultations*, vol. 308, copy, Wurtzburg Collection, Add. Mnscr. 7366, Cambridge University Library.

90. "Sir Stamford Raffles's Account", p. 24.

91. Letter to Duchess of Somerset, Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. 378.

92. Letter to Colonel Addenbrooke, *JSBRAS* 2 (1879): 175–82. Letter to Marsden, 31 January 1819, in Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. 376. William Jack's Letters to Nathaniel Wallich, 1819–1821, *JSBRAS* (1916): 161.

93. Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, pp. 98, 350, 535, Appendix, pp. 13, 26.
94. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 11.
95. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 10.
96. See copy of this correspondence in *Occupation of Singapore*, Wurtzburg Collections, Add. Mnscr. 7367, Cambridge University Library.
97. C.H. Philips, *The East India Company 1784–1834. Vol VI* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), pp. 321–2.
98. Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, Appendix, p. 27.
99. Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. 402; Raffles to Secretary of Government, Fort William, 22 June 1819, *Factory Records, Sumatra*, vol. 47, copy in Wurtzburg Collection, Cambridge University Library, Add. Mnscr. 7367.
100. In 1821, Singapore had 5,000 inhabitants, of which 3,000 were Malays and more than 1,000 Chinese.
101. *Journal of Thomas Otho Travers, 1813–1820*, ed. John Bastin (Singapore: A. Banfield), *Memoirs of the Raffles Museum* 4, p. 152; George Windsor Earl, *The Eastern Seas*, with an introduction by C.M. Turnbull (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1971), reprint of 1837 edition, pp. 415f.
102. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 13.
103. See Raffles' report of Secretary of Government, Fort William (note 99).
104. Munshi Abdullah, *The Hikayat Abdullah*, p. 163.
105. Charles Burton Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*, with an introduction by C.M. Turnbull (first published 1902; Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 163.
106. Song Ong Siang, *One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 8–9.
107. See Lea E. Williams, "Indonesia's Chinese Educate Raffles", *Indonesie* 9, 4 (1956): 369–85.
108. Bastin, *The Native Policies*, p. 139.
109. Sir Stamford Raffles, *Statement of the Services of Sir Stamford Raffles*, with an introduction by John Bastin (Kuala Lumpur, 1978), pp. 32, 34; Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 49.
110. See, however, Milner, *Invention of Politics*, Chapter 1, where Raffles' scribe and Malay instructor Munshi Abdullah, is seen as initiating the idea of a Malay "nation", the primacy of race over raja as focus of loyalty and identity.
111. Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, pp. 98, 431.
112. The lower degree of civilisation in comparison to the Javanese was here not a disadvantage, since the Malays were "more influenced, and quicker discerners of superiority of individual talent, than is usual among people not far advanced in civilization." Raffles, "Introduction", in *John Leyden's Malay Annals*, p. xv.
113. Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 25; O.P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discussions of India's Past 1784–1838* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

114. On the eve of the Java invasion, he arranged a hasty meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society in Malacca, and in Batavia, he set about to revive the dormant Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, founded in 1778.

115. By largely neglecting previous European writing on Java and presenting its ancient history through "new", indigenous sources, the aim had been to present Java as the home of an ancient civilisation as well as to defend the author's own administrative measures as Lieutenant-Governor there.

116. See, however, John Bastin's critique of the use of private letters, in "Sir Stamford Raffles' Account".

117. Letter to Thomas Raffles 9 November 1819, quoted in "A Highly Important Collection of Autography Letters" (London: Maggs Brothers, 2004), p. 10.

118. Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. 535.

119. Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, Appendix, p. 26.

120. C.D. Cowan, "Early Penang and the Rise of Singapore 1805–32", *JMBRAS* 23, 2 (1950): 90.

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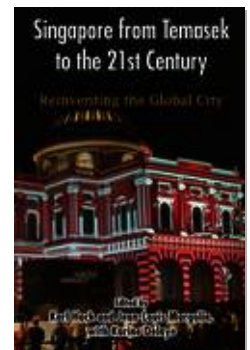
Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

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Singapore: A Model for Indochina? (1860–1920s)

Karine Delaye

Introduction

Assaults on European missionaries led to escalating French involvement in Indochina in the mid-19th century culminating, in 1862, in the establishment of the colony of Cochinchina. This incorporated three (later six) provinces of what is now southern Vietnam. The neighbouring Cambodian monarchy became a French protectorate by 1863. In the 1880s, the French then expanded their interest over the rest of the country, including Annam in the centre and Tonkin in the north. As a consequence of these advances, the French were able, in 1887, to create the Federation of Indochina. This comprised the colony of Cochinchina, and the protectorates of Cambodia, Annam and Tonkin (and from 1893, Laos as well), all brought together under a Governor-General.

In short, the French arrived in Southeast Asia relatively late, in the second half of the 19th century. When they sought colonial models for their newly acquired Indochinese acquisitions, they naturally looked towards other successful European colonies in Asia. Singapore, as a prosperous British colony, attracted their attention in particular. Since its founding in

1819, Singapore had developed at a remarkable pace, offering an enviable example of success in many domains.

French colonists and administrators had been interested in Singapore's economic development and administrative organisation ever since Indochina had been conquered. The general conditions had, however, been very different. In fact, one can still wonder that such a territory had been chosen as an example to model their new colony upon. Was Singapore's strategic location not the main reason for its success, and therefore something impossible to transpose elsewhere?

This chapter studies how the French of that period looked upon Singapore in order to determine the ways — both practical and theoretical — in which it might be used as a model, and the role it played in discussions concerning the future development of Indochina.

Singapore: A Model Port and City for Saigon

The French who travelled from the metropolis to Indochina inevitably passed by, or stopped over, in Singapore. From these French visitors emerged an impression of this port as one of efficient organisation, which many then duly recommended as a model for Saigon. The French, however, were faced with conflicting opinions regarding the best course for their own colony, and different conditions there to those faced by Singapore.

A free port which became the greatest Asian entrepôt

The first characteristic that the French (administrators, tradesmen, planters and travellers) noticed about Singapore was its free port status and its function as an emporium. In their minds, these two factors were undeniably linked by a relationship of cause and effect. This appreciation recurred across time, from the conquest of Cochinchina in the 1850s–1860s, to beyond the First World War.

As early as 1848, Auguste Haussmann, in his *Voyage en Chine, Cochinchine, Inde et Malaisie* underlined the legitimacy of British choices, and in this case, the choice made by Singapore's founder, Thomas Stamford Raffles. In 1819, the latter had declared the new British establishment a free port and "the facts have proven the great wisdom and immense importance of this measure. The prosperity of Singapore grew at an extraordinary pace …"[1] Haussman adds: "this port has become the great commercial entrepôt

of Europe and India along with China and the Malay Archipelago".[2] Close to half a century later, the French colonial experience in Indochina was something widely different, yet their opinion of Singapore was unchanged: "What makes Singapore's prosperity is its immense entrepôt where all kinds of Oriental wares are heaped".[3]

The narrative of Auguste Denoist de la Grandiere during the Cochinchina expedition in 1858, however, throws some light on Singapore's natural assets and the activities of its port on the eve of the expedition:

> The natural harbour is well protected and can easily contain the ships which call in from all the ports of India and China. The huge junks with their strange shape, the Malay boats, the European looking buildings; all heaped together pell mell, carry on freely with their trading under the protection of the English flag.[4]

All these facilities made Singapore a privileged site for a port and a magnet for regional and international trade. At the crossroads of Indian, Chinese and Malay worlds, Singapore served, as a traveller once emphasised, as "a link connecting the different markets of India, China, Japan and Java",[5] generating an abundance of wares and greeting various peoples because of its central location on major seaways.

A modern and cosmopolitan city

Singapore is thus described as a fascinating, cosmopolitan city where the exotic East met the modern West. Chinese and Indian coolies could be seen as well as rich European settlers in comfortable homes; rickshaws and light carriages competed with modern trams. Multicoloured shops stood next to grand hotels like the London Hotel (owned by a Frenchman) or the already famous Raffles Hotel founded by the Sarkies Brothers, Armenians who also owned other grand hotels in the region. The splendid Botanical Gardens were another singular attraction.

The continual comings and goings of ships therefore corresponded to the intense commercial and financial activity, the mingling of peoples and the exchange of money. Paul Bonnetain, using the terminology of social Darwinism popular at that time, exclaimed: "this struggle for life and dollars had a grandeur".[6] Many explained this development by a general atmosphere of liberalism. According to Maisonneuve-Lacoste, around 1892: "A regime of freedom and tolerance, allied with a rigorous justice, was able to attract people from the neighbouring regions: today, the population has grown prodigiously to over 100,000 inhabitants,"[7] whereas Singapore

had only around 1,000 inhabitants at the start of the 19th century. This rise could only be explained by the great influx of immigrants, essentially Chinese (firstly Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese) and Indian (Tamil and Bengali). Elsewhere, Haussman added: "Nowhere else is it possible to meet a greater mixture of costumes than in Singapore".[8]

A strategic naval base

Lastly, Singapore was perceived as a port with military advantages of the highest order. Situated on the important Straits of Malacca, it was central from a strategic, as well as from a commercial and cultural point of view. In an article published in the magazine *Le Tour de Monde* in 1866, Blerzy describes Singapore in this way:

> The key to the Javanese, Indian and Chinese seas, the port of call that serves all steamships in the far off colonies, the most important coal depot in this region of the globe. It is strategically equidistant from Calcutta, Hong Kong and Australia. All European fleets that have been attracted by wars with China in the Far East have appeared in Singapore Harbour. Troops based there can just as easily be sent in aid to India or to Japan. In the present state of steam navigation, which demands frequent stops, vast docks and abundant supplies of coal, the English, for sure, have no other distant possession that is more precious.[9]

Squadrons could be sent from Singapore in all directions — China, India, Southeast Asia and the Malay Archipelago or the Pacific — as well as to Indochina. This is why the French feared an English blockade in the Straits. There also loomed the possibility of being cut off from France in case of war. Thus, Singapore's wide, deep and well-sheltered harbour, coupled with its strategic location, afforded it defensive as well as offensive qualities.

But it was especially after the First World War that the possibility of establishing a proper naval base was evoked. The *Pacific Review* records: "Since the Washington Conference and the accord of the five powers (1921–22), England has agreed not to augment its defences in Hong Kong and other insular possessions of the British Empire in the Pacific Ocean east of longitude 110°".[10] This, happily, did not apply to Singapore, which was to the west of this meridian. The port commanding the entrance to the Pacific Ocean would therefore be made invulnerable so as to ensure the defence of Australia and watch over British interests in Asia.[11] It thus became a priority for the British in Asia to build an arsenal with all the

necessary equipment, and in 1922, huge reservoirs of oil were stocked there to replenish the British fleet in the region.[12]

Singapore had long since been developed as a defended port, but that was not how opponents of the project perceived it. Many Frenchmen saw the new military developments as a threat for Indochina. Ironically, it was the failure to reinforce the new defences with sufficient aircraft and ships that would hasten the downfall of both British and French colonies during the Japanese invasion of 1942.[13]

Singapore was therefore an open port and had become an emporium, a busy cosmopolitan city, and a strategic naval base. Consequently, despite the existence of other free ports in the Straits Settlements like Georgetown and Malacca, it was incontestably Singapore, through its importance and rapid development, which served as a yardstick and model for the port of Saigon.

Comparisons with Saigon

The main port of the Straits Settlements was the last stop on the journey from France to Saigon: in French eyes, the gateway to "French Asia". People who disembarked at Saigon after the journey from France still had recent, positive impressions of Singapore imprinted in their minds. Therefore, they automatically and very naturally compared it to Saigon. For Gabrielle Vassal, the English wife of a French colonial doctor, Saigon paled in comparison to the British port of call:

> Singapore with its lush greenery and famous gardens, overpopulated Chinese districts and canals crammed with boats, made us want to see Saigon all the sooner as we had heard that it was the most beautiful city in the Far East … But we were sorely disappointed on entering the vast and monotonous plains that surrounded Saigon. Images of the beautiful entrances of Colombo and Singapore still haunted our memory.[14]

It would have been easy to put the lady's opinion down to chauvinism on account of her being British, but she was not alone in saying so. Many passengers and French captains shared her sentiments, pointing out Saigon's difficult access, located far inland as it was.

This location meant that, while arrival at Singapore was unproblematic and had a certain charm about it, the meanders of the Saigon River constituted a natural constraint and a real danger for ships. They were forced to be of a limited size and to pay a fee in order to be guided in and out by experienced navigators. Jean-Louis De Lannesan, future

Governor-General of Indochina, on an investigative mission there in 1887, pointed out the disadvantages. He stressed that Saigon was more than "40 miles inland, resulting in a time loss of a full 48 hours, not counting unloading and expenses incurred by the established fees", such as navigation and outgoing freight.[15] Such a waste of time and money hardly encouraged the handling of merchandise at Saigon. De Lannesan concluded that "despite all the efforts that we could ever make, Saigon would never outdo Singapore".[16] Furthermore, insufficient port facilities accentuated the inferiority of Saigon so much so that Raoul Castex, in his *Les Rivages Indo-chinois*, points out:

> The passenger arriving from Europe finds the transition from Singapore to Saigon rather dull. He compares the current state of our first Indochinese port with what he has seen in the capital of the Straits … here all the handling of the merchandise is accumulated and centralised by the powerful 'Tanjong Pagar Dock' company with its three kilometres of quayside, its 325,000 tonne coal stock and its five big dry docks![17] Saigon itself is less beautiful and less busy than some patriotic speeches might have us believe. Its image in any case suffers in comparison with Singapore.

Bonnetain justifies the divergence of opinion between travellers by a sort of homesickness, which could colour one's judgement:

> Stories of Far Eastern travels written by the French be they learned or of the globetrotter type, rarely fail to display a certain admiration when describing Saigon. And this optimism, whether we share it or not, can easily be explained. For 28 to 30 days after embarking at Marseille one only sees English lands … the first French soil would therefore necessarily benefit from a patriotic state of mind and an Anglophobia that most travellers find difficult to suppress …[18]

The first impression could therefore be a positive one. But minds quickly changed when they started analysing the official statistics or questioning the civil servants. As for the city that Bonnetain was impatient to discover, it was described as "dead on the pretext of the heat",[19] emphasising that in Saigon, "social life was anaesthetised by debilitating naps"[20] between 10am and 4pm while in Singapore, under temperatures just as harsh, activity was in full swing. To make matters worse, the French settlers were hardly involved in commercial activities, which were carried out by foreigners — English, German and Chinese — who monopolised all trade.

Some however, preferred to avoid direct comparison with French colonies so as not to hurt the patriotic feelings of their readers, and

therefore used the Dutch Indies instead, where the customs system closely resembled the French one, in order to affirm the superiority of Singapore and of its liberal option. Thus, Octave Collet affirms:

> Singapore is one of the most flourishing ports in the world and that it is owned by the English is happy for humanity: the Dutch with their fiscal minds and narrow conceptions, would not have failed to make it a customs post; the English on the other hand have made it a free port, open to everyone …[21]

Geostrategic position, accessibility, harbour equipment, and commercial facilities are the criteria which determine the importance of a port. Singapore, as we have seen, was well endowed in all these aspects. Could Saigon suffer from such a comparison? Apart from patriotic kindness, the picture was a rather negative one. Was it then judicious to want to apply such a model to Cochinchina?

The debate on the status of Saigon harbour

For many, the establishment of the French in Saigon was to be the decisive start of their spread into Asia, as the English had done in Malaya with the establishment of Singapore. Parallels were naturally drawn between the two cities, as seen above, so the temptation to apply the Singapore model to Saigon was strong.

In 1859, when the conquest of the city had only just been accomplished, a debate started in Cochinchina and the metropolis over the commercial regulations that were to be adopted in the new colony. The majority of the traders and agents who were familiar with the region proposed Singapore as an example. We may quote the French Consul in Singapore. His reports were regularly transmitted to the Colonies and Navy Minister, who also ensured that the reports reached the Governor of Cochinchina. In 1860, the Consul explained that Singapore's prosperity was

> … largely due to absolute free trade and security, which it has enjoyed ever since it was established. Other ports in Indochina are hardly worse situated and are yet far from following its example … Your Excellency will judge if this fiscal mode is not preferable to a high tax, which would favour the smuggling of valued goods like opium.[22]

His successor later added that "the French captains, having been seduced by the prosperity of Singapore, would have liked Saigon to become a free port, exempt of all taxes".[23]

The same year, the French colonial administration decided to use the English experience to push for the case for a flexible customs system that favoured free trade. Saigon was consequently declared a free port. In doing so, the goal was not only to imitate Singapore's success but also to justify the new French colonial advances in Asia, proving it a conquest that benefited everyone. Traders, whatever their nationality, would be able to profit from free trade under the protection of the French flag. The European powers had no reason to oppose this endeavour, and the British, who had many times failed to establish good relations with the Annam Empire, finally saw something good in the French colonisation of Vietnam.[24] Tarling writes:

> Though the British in Burma were aware of these moves, they had not opposed the French venture in Cochinchina. There had been several British attempts to develop a commercial relationship with Vietnam, but the Nguyen dynasty had rebuffed them all. There was less reason for opposing the French. The old jealousies were dying out, the *Hong Kong Register* had declared: a commercial settlement at Danang might benefit the whole of commercial Europe, not France alone, if it helped to spread western civilisation and more liberal policy in this quarter of the globe.

The idea of a liberal approach to Indochina's trade nevertheless found several French voices raised in opposition. Opposition was largely due to the precarious nature of French trade and navigation in the Far East, then a British preserve. So the debates were heated between those leaning towards a liberal regime that would enable Saigon to become a new emporium in the inter-Asian trade, and those in favour of closer ties with France and the preservation of a customs system that would prevent direct confrontation with foreigners, who had a competitive edge over them.

Given the inferior French trade position, the idea of a free port — one that hardly corresponded with France's colonial traditions — was finally abandoned in 1887, under the pressure of metropolitan French interests. France abruptly washed its hands off the region without considering its true situation. A general customs tariff was indiscriminately applied to all its territories.[25]

Singapore, nevertheless, remained an example for many observers. For example, Bonnetain wrote that very year that the only solution for Saigon to become "a real port" would be "to imitate what our neighbours have done in Singapore, that is to proclaim the trade freedom and the exemption of all duties for all ships, whatever the colour of their flag".[26]

Furthermore, many French settlers who were traders in Indochina were outraged at the metropolitan decision-makers' change of tariffs, describing it as improper and arbitrary.[27] According to J.L. de Lanessan, who quoted the remarks of a French settler from Tonkin, it was regressive, and against the interests of the colony:

> The system recommended today is not a new one. It reigned for two centuries under the name of Colonial Pact, and followed the same principle: keep the colonial markets open only to Metropolitan products. This system proved its impotence and resulted in so many complaints that it collapsed in 1861.[28] To return to the economic ideas of Colbert's time would be to regress.[29]

However, that was exactly what was done.

The application of the General Tariff in Indochina was furthermore seen as "purely fiscal and in no way protective" as it did not discriminate between French products and regional products such as bird nests and ginseng.[30]

Due to the instability of European-Indochinese maritime trade, French goods were forced to use the only French freight company available at the time, the Messageries Maritimes, making them more expensive than cargo of other origins, that could travel at lesser cost.

To the British, the French protectionist attitude in Southeast Asia was as incomprehensible as it was unfair.[31] The Singapore and Hong Kong Chambers of Commerce suggested in 1901: "… the ports of English colonies being open to French products, it should be suggested to the French government that the same exceptional treatment should be accorded to merchandise coming from English colonies into France and Indochina …".[32]

But Frézouls, chief of Customs and Excise in Indochina saw things differently, regarding the conditions pertaining to Indochina and to the interests of French trade:

> Suffice for me to remind everyone that Singapore and Hong Kong are two big entrepots where all sorts of merchandise are concentrated. If we were to accord an exceptionally favourable regime to goods coming from these two ports, namely the minimum tariff, it would abolish the effect of Indochina's general tariff. Now that the protectionist regime created by the January 1892 law is beginning to bear fruit, such a measure would shake the whole edifice and seriously jeopardise Indochinese foreign trade. I might add that French maritime trade would be definitely ruined by an adherence to the wish of the English.

Europe-Indochina freight being more expensive by French companies than by other foreign companies, the only way to fight back consists in making profit from the minimum tariff reserved to certain goods properly transported by French ships.[33]

This last remark proves the French's ambiguous position regarding the Singaporean model; it was admired and at the same time rejected. Specific colonial situations could explain this.

A commercial success, but specific conditions

In 1917, "the port of Singapore became the third most important in the world", and according to the French Consul of Singapore, the war had not hampered its prosperity in any way".[34] Its success seemed incontestable, solid and durable. However, as we have seen, this model could not easily be applied to Cochinchina, because the method did not sufficiently guarantee a success in the latter's different conditions. How then did French observers see Singapore's location as unique, in its centrality and in its accompanying advantages?

For the majority of observers during that time, it was the free port status that explained the success of the Singaporean emporium. But in reality, was it not the other way around? Rather, was it not the entrepôt function, given its key location and a long emporium tradition that explained and justified the free port option, which on its own could not guarantee success?

According to a geopolitical study, *Singapour et son Environnement Régional*, published in 1987 by Philippe Régnier, there is a certain historical continuity in Singapore's function as an emporium: both as a world trading post (for British colonial activities in the past and for international activities today) and a regional centre (for the Malay world in the past and the larger ASEAN of today). Its centrality fits the definition that Fernand Braudel gives of a "world economy", that is: "A part of the planet that is economically independent, self-sufficient for essential goods and on which its liaisons and foreign exchanges bestow an organic unity".[35]

The main difference between Saigon and Singapore therefore lies not so much in the adoption of opposing economic systems but more so in Singapore's own geographical location "at the angle of Asia", following the expression used as early as 1883 by Elisée Reclus in his *Nouvelle Géographie Universelle*. The French only understood it too late. It may be recalled with some amusement how, during their 17th-century bid

at penetrating Southeast Asia through Siam, under king Louis XIV, the French had tried so badly to obtain the port of Mergui (in the south of present-day Myanmar), that they turned down the offer of a territory, on the pretext of it being too far from the central Siamese authority. That area had included Johor and the island that was one day to become Singapore.[36]

The gradual realisation that the port of Saigon was naturally and materially inferior was, therefore, the reason why the French authorities judged it useless to continue trying to model Saigon on Singapore, which thrived essentially on redistribution and trade.[37] Saigon, on the other hand, like so many other cities in the region, could not hope to become a centre of distribution based on its accessibility at the crossroads of maritime routes and its location as the gateway to a hinterland rich in natural resources.

This is why some thought it better to abandon the free port project, which would only benefit long-established traders who were not even French, but English, German or local Chinese.

The customs system and the geographical location of Saigon were therefore the two factors which, together, explained Saigon's inferiority to Singapore. As highlighted by Le Myre de Vilers, a former Governor of Cochinchina, in 1902:

> In vain did we try to divert the traffic to Saigon. It suffices to look at the map to see that it was impossible … Why would rice from Siam destined for Hong Kong stop at our colony making a 200 mile detour, plus navigation, lighthouse and anchorage fees. Let us add that our customs system, with its incessant vexations, denies France and its colonies the main trade flows.[38]

If Cochinchina could not imitate the free port model of Singapore, could it at least be inspired by other policies that the British had experimented in the Straits, and thus try other ways of running French Indochina?

Singapore and British Malaya: A Model of Colonial Management for French Indochina

From model to critique: comparisons, reproductions and distancing

Singapore was not only a port. The city was also considered as the economic as well as the administrative capital of the Straits Settlements, and more

generally, by the early 20th century, of what was called "British Malaya" — that is, all British colonies and protectorates of the Malay Peninsula and of the northern part of Borneo. Consequently, Singapore provided a window upon other forms of colonisation.

The role of the French consuls in Singapore was essential, as they had to transmit regular information to the Governor-General of Indochina in the form of official reports and personal commentaries on the situation, as well as on methods employed in Singapore and other parts of British Malaya.[39] These agents mostly answered requests for information coming directly from Indochina, which also financed study missions to the Malay Peninsula and other British possessions in the region. As a result, there were attempts at copying certain measures taken in British Malaya. But sometimes, these observations also gave rise to criticism and distancing, when it came to colonial methods employed in Singapore.

The matters which particularly interested Indochina, and came up repeatedly in the description and commentaries of travellers and agents, were: opium, immigration, and economic development. Topics like the functioning of the legal system, the education of "native" people, rules concerning civil servants, and funds borrowed during the First World War, were also discussed in official correspondence.[40] But these references were few and far between in colonial literature. The *Bulletin de l'Asie Française*, *Revue Indochinoise* and *Bulletin Économique de l'Indochine* were the most important journals that regularly published articles on the Straits Settlements and British Malaya. Their audience remained limited, and touched only a colonial readership. We shall therefore limit the present study to the most common topics, as they were the ones that influenced the colonial management of French Indochina.

Opium

Information concerning opium, sometimes having an influence on decisions, was regularly transmitted to and from the Consul in Singapore, his correspondents being generally the Governor General or the Head of the *Douanes et Régies* (Customs and Excise). Chantal Descours-Gatin, in her 1992 thesis entitled *Quand L'Opium Finançait l'Indochine* (*When Opium Financed Indochina*), unveils how the example of Singapore played a role in the administration of opium in Cochinchina. The establishment of monopolies for the fabrication and commercialisation of opium became

a general phenomenon, but the author shows that "the opium monopoly was organised in the British Colonies prior to being adopted by the French. Most importantly, it was Singapore that served as a model to be copied by Cochinchina in 1862–64".[41] In the first half of the 19th century, opium operations were leased to the Chinese in Singapore; that, is, the right to market opium in specific areas was auctioned out in the so-called "opium farm" system. But as the bidders were not controlled, those bidding for the opium farm regrouped into associations, in order to impose their own prices. As a remedy for such drawbacks, a board for the direct control of opium prices was set up in Singapore. "The same remedies for the same pains", as popular wisdom prescribed. On 10 May 1864, *Le Courrier de Saigon*, quoting an article from The *Straits Times*, made a specific comparison between the Singapore opium farm leases and those in Cochinchina, suggesting the application of the same principle.

At the same time, enquiries made while searching for solutions to budget problems concluded that consumption taxes would be the answer. So it was proposed that a Singapore-style monopoly of opium sale should be adopted.[42] In 1881, the Colonial Council of Cochinchina finally voted a full control on opium trade.[43]

Indochinese interest in the Straits Settlements opium management was rekindled at the start of the 20th century by the rise of the anti-opium movement. This movement gave the opium question a whole new dimension, both regionally and internationally.[44] The debate centred upon questions of morality and profit. How was one to reconcile social, moral and health concerns with budgetary needs? For the opium revenue then still constituted between 25 and 50 per cent of the Straits Settlements Government's yearly revenues.[45]

The Indochina government followed the evolution of the debates and measures taken in the British colonies very closely. In preparation for the first big Shanghai conference on opium, a telegram was sent to the French Consul in Singapore requesting for him to

> Urgently make known the decision made by the government of the Straits Settlement and the Federated Malay States on the subject of opium, following the commission meeting that was called regarding the matter. Please also give results on farm lease or control for the last five exercises, including 1907 if possible, as well as current price of prepared opium.[46]

The Consul transmitted information picked up from the newspapers and the official Gazette, as well as direct correspondence with Straits

officials. In this respect, however, the British colony did not shine as a model, and in 1916, the French Consul in Singapore underlined the inefficiency of the policy that had been put into practice in the Straits Settlements in order to reduce opium consumption.[47] In 1922, despite an anti-drug drive led by the League of Nations, the situation in British territories of Southeast Asia had hardly improved. The French Consul in Singapore therefore telegraphed:

> Price of opium sold unchanged since 1919 and the government has not taken any new measures to restrain consumption; convinced that, because of present economic crisis and sorry state of colony's and Federated Malay States' finances, government less and less disposed to abolish or even reduce good source of revenue. I have not received statistics.[48]

He also adds that the absence of figures is not to be taken lightly: for five years, the government of the Straits Settlements had published very few figures on opium, in order not to fuel the debate and thus cover up the lack of progress in that matter.[49]

Indochina, on the other hand, wanted to appear as a pioneer in the anti-opium campaign. In a 1921 note to the League of Nations, it stressed its dissuasive policy of gradually raising prices, which had started in 1907. England, in contrast, had refused to sign the related La Haye agreement in 1913.[50] So, after having copied Singapore in establishing the control of opium, Indochina distanced itself from it to keep its good reputation.

Immigration and labour management

The question of labour preoccupied administrators, settlers and big business. The French colonies and Indochina in particular, faced a shortage of workers, which jeopardised development.[51] The search for solutions once again led them to look at neighbouring colonies, which might provide alternatives to existing Indochinese policies.

The Governor of Cochinchina was especially eager to get from the French Consulate in Singapore the relevant information on the board that handled Chinese immigration. The Consul sent official British documents to the Governor General, such as the 1880 ordinance concerning Chinese immigrants, and also the 1882 ordinance concerning their contracts. His 1899 commentary on these British measures was full of praise. He emphasised the fundamental liberalism that in his eyes governed the whole organisation of the colony:

> Singapore is a free port, there is no administration of *Douanes &*
> *Regies* (Customs & Excises), nor taxes, only insignificant charges.
> Asians, whatever they are, are on a par with the English. All residents,
> regardless of their ethnic background, benefit from the most liberal
> and enlightened of regimes. As for the Coolie, he is more protected
> by the law than his own employer. The Straits colony is certainly
> the Paradise of the Coolie because there is no fiscal tax, capitation,
> anthropometry or other such measures degrading to men regardless of
> colour … That is the secret behind the preference the Chinese have
> for the Straits.[52]

By contrast, the Chinese in Indochina were subjected to very strict
regulations. For example, they could not enter the country without a passport
issued by the French consular authorities in their country of origin.[53] They
were also subjected to sanitary quarantine and once authorised to stay in
the country, had to pay a personal tax depending on their length of stay.

The conditions given to Chinese settlers were just as "exceptionally
favourable" in North Borneo.[54] An arrangement was even made between the
British and Chinese governments in 1913, making Chinese immigration
easy. According to this agreement, immigrants would be provided a free
passage to Borneo, allocated a minimum of five hectares of land per family,
grains for the first sowing and no rent for two years. Those who despite
all this were unhappy, ill, or dead, would eventually be repatriated free of
charge.

No intergovernmental agreement of this type was ever signed with
Indochina. Chinese authorities were not favourable to immigration to-
wards French colonies, because some companies did not pay any kind of
compensation to immigrants, or if they did, it was late. In Swatow (present-
day Shantou), there were even press campaigns exhorting the Chinese not
to go and work in places where conditions were judged poor. Indochina
had to save itself from this bad reputation.[55] A 1904 article in *La Revue*
Indochinoise attempted to do just that, by comparing the Indochinese and
Straits Settlements regulations concerning Chinese immigration. The aim
was to demonstrate that, contrary to common perceptions, "Asians coming
to Indochina enjoyed a freedom that they did not know elsewhere".[56]
According to the article, the freedom of movement the Chinese in
Cochinchina benefited from was not equalled in the Straits where, "the
Chinese were subjected to surveillance and almost military checks".[57] It
also underlined the severity of British legislation on secret societies. But
the demonstration was not very convincing, because in giving a detailed list

of Chinese patterns of immigration to Singapore, the author only showed up the shortcomings of the French system.

Confronted with the thorny question of Chinese immigration, Indochina also turned its eyes to the methodical recruitment of coolies from India, which was common practice in the Straits at the beginning of the 20th century. Several articles on this subject were published in the *Bulletin du Comité de l'Asie Francaise*.[58] In Indochina, this Indian immigration, which came mainly from the small French establishments in India, remained more limited.

Economic development

The third recurring topic of French correspondence on Singapore and British Malaya was the impressive economic potential of these possessions. The development of rubber plantations is especially emphasised, this observation being based on the numerous official British reports (notably *Annual Reports* on British possessions) and reviews of French missions. Detailed notes were written by French Consuls[59] and by specialists on Indochina (generally members of the Department of Agriculture, Forests or Trade) on *Hevea Brasiliensis* (the rubber tree) in Singapore and its environs.[60] Very precise information was given on the climatic and geological conditions necessary for production, and on legislation and labour. The aim was to take advantage of the experiences of the neighbouring region: "Our planters in Indochina can easily compare these facts to their personal observations and adopt the agricultural methods most suited to their climate and soil, judging from the difference of situations".[61]

Mining and tin production in the Malay Peninsula was also the object of particular attention and gave rise to numerous investigatory missions.[62] French observers were struck by the liberal conditions offered to investors when compared to Indochina's exacting regulations. It was easier to obtain mining concessions or plantations in Malaya, no matter what nationality one belonged to. Such ease was unthinkable in Indochina.[63] One understands why many French like Jacques de Morgan, John Errington de la Croix or the famous writer, Henri Fauconnier, preferred to settle in Malaya rather than in Indochina. And Bonnetain relates without giving any name: "The story about this planter who applied for some unproductive areas is well known. His demand went mouldy during more than two years in the carton boxes. Finally tired, he decided to go asking a concession to the British Governor of the Straits Settlements in Singapore. The latter immediately

agreed to it and our compatriot created a wonderful plantation, as our Cochin-China has not yet".[64]

Lack of capital and administrative flexibility and less favourable geological and human conditions were also factors that hindered Indochina from learning and benefiting from the British experience. The French territories never managed to reach the level of economic development attained by the Straits Settlements and British Malaya.

The colonial management of the Straits Settlements and British Malaya appeared therefore as a success to most French. The French colonial administration was nevertheless unable to transpose all these methods. A different colonial tradition and mentality, whose scope is shown in Leopold de Saussure's *Psychologie de la Colonisation Française*,[65] goes a long way to explain the different choices. That explanation is insufficient, however, and once again, one has to admit the existence of natural, material and political differences in order to understand certain decisions. Finally, in colonial matters, one should consider the weight of the unspoken. Indeed, how were the French to admit to simply aping the colonial methods of their old rival? National pride forbade it.

But how did the British manage their own pride? Did they have the same reservations about copying French — or more likely, Dutch — methods? Was their own experience in India their main intellectual background in determining their methods in Southeast Asia? We are going to consider, as a kind of epilogue, some thoughts on how French colonial policies were seen from Singapore.

Indochina Seen from Singapore

Official British reports rarely evoked French colonial management of Indochina, but that did not mean that the colonial authorities were totally uninterested. Regular requests for information addressed to the British consuls in Indochina or to the French Consulate in Singapore prove the contrary. And numerous requests made by the French for information concerning opium were echoed in those addressed by the British to the government of Indochina.[66]

This coming and going appears less of a quest for a foreign example than as a simple preoccupation with gathering knowledge that was common to both sides. The Straits Settlements already benefited from the long previous experience of the British in India, through the East India Company, the overlord till 1858. After the 1867 transfer from the India

Office to the Colonial Office, they also gained from the more general British experience of colonial management. So the British felt little need of Indochina as a likely source of models.

Two further sources of information could give some insight into British attitudes toward Indochina: colonial newspapers, and travelogues written by Peranakans (locally settled Chinese, sometimes also intermarried with Malay or other women from the region) about Indochina. The British newspapers seemed to look upon French colonial action with some severity, and with a francophobia which reflected British public opinion of that time.[67] Furthermore, the tensest periods of economic competition and territorial rivalries were used by British residents to pressurise the Straits government into action. For example, an article in the *Straits Times* of September 1886 called to the attention of the Straits Settlements government the quickness with which France had created a coal station in its Cochinchina colony, thus ending its dependence on Singapore. According to the newspaper:

> The Government should remember the promptness with which the French authorities acted during the Tonking campaign, when [the navigation companies] saw that we were making it difficult for their war ships to make coal; they … established a permanent coal depot in Saigon, which enabled them to do without English aid in peace or war … Although it deprived Singapore of a profitable trade, we can no less congratulate the French for their energy and promptness … and we hope that soon we will be able to congratulate ourselves for our own actions in this respect.[68]

It was here more competition than a quest for a model.

Chinese traders, who travelled the length and breadth of Southeast Asian trade routes depending on its trade, had a very critical opinion of French colonisation. Claudine Salmon has extensively analysed the written narratives of overseas Chinese.[69] Their conclusions, since the second half of the 19th century, were very similar to the press reports whose role we have seen above. Most of these indigenous travellers' impressions were first published in Chinese and Malay language newspapers.

The traders who travelled to Vietnam on business were generally long-time settlers in the Straits Settlements. They found in Saigon's Cholon district a small community of Straits-born rice exporters, and opium farm owners, with whom they had commercial and, very often, family ties. Take, for instance, the accounts of Tan Keong Sum, a Baba Chinese educated in Singapore, who travelled to Vietnam several times at the turn of the

century. He observed closely the major civil and military administrations, admired Saïgon urbanism and its Zoological Park, but judged the French colonial policies wholly negative for the Vietnamese, who were impoverished and diminished by them.[70] On the contrary, he admired and appreciated the British colonial management, no doubt because of his own privileged status in a colonial society, which seemed to him more open than in Vietnam. After three months in Saigon, the author explained his desire to return in the following manner: "The place is not easy, the laws are strict and one cannot be attached to it for long, that is why I took the boat back to Singapore".[71] Tan Keong Sum also seemed to have suffered administrative vexations (compulsory visa, capitation tax, surveillance) that immigrant Chinese were victims of. This Asian trader then agreed with many of his European contemporaries, stressing that the regulations discouraged Chinese immigration to French Indochina.[72] Once again, the scales dip in favour of Singapore, and the author attributes the following judgement to a Chinese in Vietnam: "If one compared the English and the French governments, it would appear that the former is able to use leniency followed by flexibility repeatedly in order to educate the people, whereas the latter can only be strict and does not know indulgence".[73]

Conclusion

The pride Singaporeans feel for their economic success and the arrogance they are sometimes perceived as showing towards the other countries in the region can be compared to the impressions of foreign travellers of the colonial period, the French from Indochina in particular. Already in the 19th century, Singapore appeared in the eyes of some to be a model; a model to be copied, criticised and envied.

People therefore asked how far the Singapore and British Malaya models could be applied in Saigon, and in French Indochina more generally. This problem of model transferring remains topical. Gilbert Etienne has posed a similar question in his foreword to Philippe Regnier's *Singapour et son Environnement Régional* — can the Singaporean model be useful to other countries in today's world? In his words: "Is it then possible to propose for other countries the Singaporean model, one of the key questions of this work? No, if one takes account mainly of its nature as a city-state; yes, if one thinks of the competences and clarity of its leadership".[74]

So, through a reflection on ideological and practical use of the Singaporean model in Indochina, this chapter has attempted to demonstrate

the material and political limits of such transfers. In Indochina, the Singaporean model was sometimes an object of emulation, as for instance in early opium policy; sometimes an object of study, as with rubber and immigration. At the same time, there were material limits, as well as differences in colonial tradition and mentality, which limited the transfer of practices.

Whatever the scale considered — port, village or larger colonial entity — it remains difficult to measure how far a Singaporean model could have been applied in Indochina. In a context of exacerbated nationalism and international competition, certain transpositions were not, and perhaps are not, possible. While the experience of their neighbours was recognised as successful, French colonists often preferred to be original and independent in their approach. Other Indochinese transpositions had different origins, such as British India or Netherlands Indies, and even Burma, as highlighted by Joseph Dautremer in *Une Colonie Modèle: La Birmanie sous le Régime Britannique*.[75]

Nevertheless, the question of the value of the Singaporean model, and the degree to which it can be transposed elsewhere, remains a crucial one. In that sense, Singapore retains, or perhaps we should say, has regained a kind of centrality. As a highly successful regional hub and a soundly governed city-state, its practices continue to compel consideration, including in today's independent Vietnam, the major successor state of French Indochina.

Notes

1. Auguste Haussmann, *Voyage en Chine, Cochinchine, Inde et Malaisie, Vol. I Du Cap au Nord de la Chine* (Paris: Desessart & Olivier, 1847) and *Vol. II* (Paris: Sagnier & Bray, libraires, 1848), pp. 152–3.
2. Ibid.
3. R. Maisonneuve-Lacoste, *Inde et Indochine, les Pays, les Évènements, les Arts* (Paris: P. Le Soudier Editeur, 1893), pp. 252–3.
4. Auguste Denoist de la Grandière, *Les Ports de l'Extrême-Orient, Souvenirs de Campagne, 1858/60* (Paris: Société Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer, 1994), p. 13.
5. Hector Piétralba, *D'Haïphong à Toulon, Souvenirs de Voyage* (Paris: Charles-Lavauzelle Éditeur, 1892), p. 38.
6. Paul Bonnetain, *L'Extrême-Orient* (Paris: Maison Quantin, coll. "Le Monde Pittoresque et Monumental", 1887), p. 56.
7. Ibid.

8. Haussmann, *Voyage en Chine, Cochinchine, Inde et Malaisie*, Vol. 1, p. 157.

9. Blerzy, "Les Colonies Anglaises de la Malaisie: Penang, Malacca, Singapore et Sarawak", *Revue des Deux Mondes* 66 (1866): 6.

10. "La Base Navale de Singapour", *La Revue du Pacifique* (July 1923): 132.

11. CAOM (Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence — today Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, ANOM), Indochine, GGI, dos. 18.972, the French Consul in Singapore (CFS) to the Governor General of Indochina (GGI), 17 December 1917 (copy from a despatch sent to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MAE], 15 December 1917).

12. "Construction de Réservoirs à Pétrole à Singapour", *La Revue du Pacifique* (December 1922): 58.

13. Malcolm Murfett, John N. Miksic, Brian P. Farrell, and Chian Ming Shun, *Between Two Oceans: A Military History of Singapore from First Settlement to Final British Withdrawal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Chapter 6. See also Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn, *Did Singapore Have to Fall? Churchill and the Impregnable Fortress* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), pp. 20–5, 29–39.

14. L. Gabrielle Vassa, *Mes Trois Ans d'Annam* (Paris: Hachette, 1912), pp. 3–4.

15. J.L. de Lanessan, *L'Indo-Chine* (Paris: 1889), pp. 478–9. This statement suited the British observers and was translated and quoted by E.F. Chapman in his *Secret Report on the Military Position and Aims of France in Indo-China* (July 1891) to the War Office Intelligence Division.

16. Ibid.

17. Raoul Castex, *Les Rivages Indo-Chinois, Étude Économique et Maritime* (Paris/Nancy: Berger-Levrault, 1904), p. 23.

18. Bonnetain, *L'Extrême-Orient*, p. 123.

19. Ibid., p. 125.

20. Ibid., p. 56.

21. Octave Collet, *L'Étain, Étude Minière et Politique sur les États Fédérés Malais* (Brussels: Falk Fils, no date but post-1903), pp. 22–3.

22. MAE, CCC (Correspondance Consulaire et Commerciale), Singapour, Vol. 3, 1856/66. From CFS to MAE, 30 March 1860: about the Ordinance of the 10 January 1860 concerning the opening and the trade organisation of the Saigon River: "According to this tariff, commercial vessels would have to pay an anchorage tax of two piastres per ton, whatever the importance of their operations, and opium will be taxed 20% *ad valorem* at the entrance."

23. MAE, CCC, Singapour, Vol. 3, 1856/66. From the CFS to the MAE, 17 June 1860.

24. Nicolas Tarling, *Imperialism in Southeast Asia: A Fleeting, Passing Phase* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 116.

25. Ordinance, 8 September 1887.

26. Bonnetain, *L'Extrême-Orient*, p. 47.

27. The British Consul in Saigon transmits to the Foreign Office some articles from the newspapers *Le Saigonnais* and *L'Indochinois* on the preference given by the Chamber of Commerce to the previous tariff. TNA (The National Archives, Kew Gardens, London), FO (Foreign Office) 27/ 2923. From the CAS (English Consul in Saigon) to the SSFO (Foreign Office Secretary), 12 August 1888.

28. The British and the French concluded a Free Trade Agreement at that date.

29. Lanessan, *L'Indochine*, p. 601.

30. Ibid., p. 603.

31. MAE, NC (commercial negociations), Grande-Bretagne, vol. 36. Report from Mr. Little, British Consul in Pakhoï, in mission in Indo-China, translated by E. Clavery, French Consul in mission through Asia to the MAE, 30 November 1903.

32. CAOM, GGI, dos. 8863: From Mr. Frézouls, Director of the "Douanes et Régie de l'Indochine" to the GGI, 13 March 1901, about duties in the Straits Settlements and Hong Kong ports.

33. Ibid.

34. MAE, CPC, nouvelles séries: Indes, Vol. 26, Malaisie et Singapour 1910–17. From the CFS to the MAE, 20 August 1917. If the rank varies from an author to another, Singapore is always among the first: "… Singapore would be among the major world ports, according to the British Statistics, at the 8th position", behind London, New York, Anvers (Antwerp), Liverpool, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Rotterdam. But "The indigenous navigation is not included, hence an under-estimation of Singapore", in *La Revue du Pacifique* 1 (November 1923): 508.

35. Philippe Régnier, *Singapour et son Environnement Regional, Étude d'une Cité-État au sein du Monde Malais* (Paris: PUF, 1987), p. 12.

36. Frédéric Mantienne, *Les Relations Politiques et Commerciales entre la France et la Péninsule Indochinoise (XVIIe Siècle)* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2001), pp. 182–3.

37. MAE, CCC, Singapour, Vol. 4, 1867–77. From the CFS to the MAE, Data on the commerce in Singapore, 15 November 1879.

38. Le Myre de Vilers, "Le Traité Franco-Siamois", *La Revue des Deux Mondes* 12 (November 1902): 62–73, 67.

39. See, for example, CAOM, GGI, dos. 32.922: Consulat de France à Singapour, Correspondances diverses, 1911–24: Official reports and ordinances on opium, immigration, plantations.

40. CAOM, GGI, dos. 8385: Justice Organisation in the Straits Settlements, 1899–1900, dos.18.969: War Loan in the Straits Settlements, 1916, dos. 54.061: CFS, War Taxes Perception ordered by the British Government, 1918–19, dos. 54.076: CFS, Ordinance on Teaching in the Straits Settlements, sent to the GGI, le 2 Nov. 1920, etc.

41. Chantal Descours-Gatin, *Quand l'Opium Finançait la Colonisation, Histoire de la Ferme de l'Opium en Indochine* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), Introduction. See also Philippe le Failler, *Le Mouvement Anti-Opium et l'Indo-Chine, 1906–40* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Provence, 1993), pp. 66, 74.

42. CAOM, GGI, dos. 14.202: CFS, Opium and rice alcohol farms adjudications in Cochinchina, 1878. See also, Etienne Denis, *Bordeaux et la Cochinchine sous la Restauration et le Second Empire* (Paris: Delmas, 1965).

43. CAOM, GGI, dos. 14.315: From the Governor of Cochinchina to the French Consul in Calcutta, 25 January 1881: mise en régie de la ferme de l'opium en Cochinchine. Indochinese officials and residents also showed an interest on what was going on in British India and Burma, see: ANVS (National Archives of Vietnam, in Saigon), Goucoch (Cochinchina Government), II A 45/058 (2): Finances, opium. Enquiry on opium consumption in Burma, 1894.

44. On this point, see also Le Failler, "Le Mouvement Anti-Opium et l'Indo-Chine", pp. 118, 312.

45. Ibid., pp. 15, 68. On this question, see also Carl Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800–1910* (London: Cornell University Press, 1990), and Yen Ching-Hwang, *Community and Politics: The Chinese in Colonial Singapore and Malaysia* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1995), pp. 147–73.

46. CAOM, GGI, dos. 42.906: Opium: Correspondence with the CFS, 1908–35. Telegram from the GGI to the CFS, 3 February 1908. 14 years later, the preoccupation was still the same, according to an Official Telegram from the GGI to the CFS, 20 July 1922.

47. CAOM, GGI, dos. 42.906: op. cit. From the CFS to the GGI, 23 November 1916: "The retail price of opium has been recently increased. But this measure does not have the expected consequences: the consumption has increased again, the sales grew up every month and the civil servants from the Opium Office are busier than ever." See also file 18.975: New regulations on opium sale and consumption in the Federated Malay States, 1917.

48. CAOM, GGI, dos. 42.906: op. cit. Official Telegram from the CFS to the GGI, July 1922.

49. CAOM, GGI, dos. 42.906: op. cit. From the CFS to the GGI, 29 July 1922. This letter said, put briefly, that because the British do nothing, they publish nothing!

50. CAOM, GGI, dos. 43.020: Note on Opium by M. Lacombe for the League of Nations, 7 October 1921.

51. Francis Mury, *La Main d'Œuvre aux Colonies: Travailleurs Noirs, Hindous et Japonais* (Paris: Imprimerie des Congrès Coloniaux Français, 1904), p. 1.

52. CAOM, GGI, dos. 47.347: Statute of the Chinese in the Straits Settlements, 1899. Report from the CFS to the GGI, 12 April 1899 and minutes from the GGI to the President of the Chamber of Trade and Agriculture of Cambodia.

There are also many reports on the issue in the Netherlands Indies and the Philippines. The comparison is regional. See also MAE, CCC, Singapour, Vol. 7: Letter from the CFS to the MAE, 24 February 1887: Creation of the Chinese Protectorate in the Straits Settlements.

53. MAE, CPC (Correspondance Politique des Consuls), Angleterre, Vol. 55, op. cit. From the CFS to the MAE, 5 December 1884, Copy of a letter from Governor-General of Cochinchina to the CFS, 11 November 1884.

54. MAE, CPC, ns (nouvelle série), Chine, Vol. 688: Chinese Immigration. From the French Legation in China to the MAE, 7 November 1913.

55. MAE, CPC, ns, Chine, Vol. 688. From the person in charge of the French Consulate in Amoy to the MAE, 19 June 1914.

56. "L'Immigration Chinoise", *Revue Indochinoise* 1 (1904): 764.

57. Ibid., p. 765.

58. The *Bulletin du Comité de l'Asie Française* spread statistics and official data to a larger audience. Some examples of articles published in the *Bulletin*, British Asia Section: "Une Question de Main-d'Oeuvre dans les États Confédérés Malais", 1911, "Les Coulis Hindous dans la Malaisie Britannique", "Straits Settlements et États Confédérés Malais — Recrutement des Coulis Tamouls ou Klings".

59. Comte de Bondy, "Considérations sur la Plantation de l'Hévéa aux Straits Settlements", *Bulletin Économique de l'Indo-Chine* (March-April 1911): 277–80.

60. See, for instance, M.E. Carle, "Culture des Plantes à Caoutchouc dans la Presqu'île Malaise. Extraits d'un Rapport de Mission", *Bulletin Economique de l'Indochine* (*BEI*) (1907): 762–82; M.G. Vernet, "Rapport sur les Principales Maladies de l'Hévéa dans la Péninsule Malaise, à Java et à Ceylan", *BEI* (November-December 1910): 655–73; "Hevea Brasiliensis: Culture et Exploit-ation dans la Péninsule Malaise, à Java et à Ceylan", *BEI* (January-February 1912): 40–98; F. Deiss, "Plantes à Caoutchouc de Malaisie", *BEI* (August 1899): 447–8; and Dr. Yersin, "Les Plantations de la Péninsule Malaise", *BEI* (1900): 641–3.

61. CAOM, Indochine, GGI, dos. 22.067. CFS: Renseignements sur les Plantations d'Hevea Brasiliensis dans la Péninsule Malaise, 1910–11. Report from August 1910.

62. J. Errington de la Croix, "Sept Mois au Pays de l'Étain", *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, 7th Series, 3 (1885): 394–2. Octave Collet, *L'Étain, Étude Minière et Politique sur les États Fédérés Malais* (Brussels: Falk Fils, no date). A. Brochier, *Gisements d'Étain dans la Péninsule Malaise, les Indes Néerlandaises et le Haut Tonkin* (Hanoi-Haïphong: Gallois, 1906).

63. A. Brochier adds that: "All was done to facilitate the prospecting activities, without any distinction regarding the nationality." Ibid., p. 10.

64. Bonnetain, *L'Extrême-Orient*, p. 126.

65. Léopold de Saussure, *Psychologie de la Colonisation Française dans ses Rapports avec les Sociétés Indigènes* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1899), p. 87.

66. CAOM, Indochine, GGI, dos. 54.026: To the Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements about the opium smuggling repression Indochina, and map of the opium factory in Saigon, 1909.

67. CAOM, Indochine, GGI, dos. 32.922, from the CFS to the GGI, 13 March 1924: The Straits Settlements' newspapers and their anti-French tendency. MAE, Série E, Possessions britanniques, vol. 44, from the CFS to the MAE, 28 March 1924: The local press and the Reuters agency in Singapore.

68. MAE, CCC, Singapour, Vol. 6. From the CFS to the MAE, 9 September 1886, about coal supplying in the Far East. We have to mention that it is not the English original version but only a translation from the French one.

69. Claudine Salmon, "Regards d'un Peranakan de Singapour sur le Vietnam (1888)", *Archipel* 43 (1992): 138–63, and Ta Trong Hiêp, "De Batavia à Saïgon: Notes de Voyage d'un Marchand Chinois (1890)", *Archipel* 47 (1994): 155–86.

70. Keong Sum Tan, "Récit d'un voyage au Vietnam", *Archipel*, 43 (1992): 149, 154–5.

71. Ibid., p. 145.

72. Ibid., pp. 147, 154.

73. Op. cit., p. 155.

74. Philippe Régnier, *Singapour et son Environnemen Régional*, Préface. Jean-Louis Margolin has introduced the same discussion in his *Singapour 1959–1987: Genèse d'un Nouveau Pays Industriel* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), pp. 278–83, with an emphasis on the value of Singapore's example for similar cosmopolitan globalised metropolises with a strong immigration tradition.

75. Joseph Dautremer (French Consul in Rangoon 1904–08), *Une Colonie Modèle: La Birmanie sous le Régime Britannique*, Paris, Guilmoto (undated), translated by Mr. Scott under the title *Burma under British Rule* (London: Unwin, 1913).
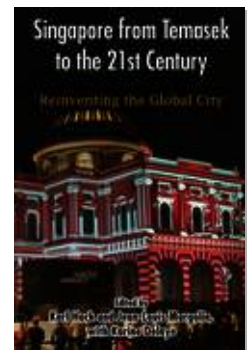
Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

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Singapore as a Central Place between the West, Asia and China: From the 19th to the 21st Centuries

Catherine Paix

China's reopening to the capitalist world and its continuous expansion have revived in Singapore the ambition of bringing the city-state to the rank of a "global city", and of making it an unavoidable mediation centre between the West, China and Asia. This central position on a global scale, which is being reaffirmed today, cannot be dissociated from the way the Chinese businessmen and ruling elites have sought to distinguish and assert themselves and the city towards their regional environment and China at different periods of its history: first, by taking advantage of their belonging to the Chinese world, their roots and networks within the region and the overseas Chinese community; second, by steadily trying to put the island-state in the best position to foster its international role.

From the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century, the Chinese merchants who were settled in Singapore made their position as intermediaries in the colonial system, and their relationship with China a stepping stone for their business expansion and social assertion. Looking for recognition in China and open-minded to western progress, they answered the call of the Chinese authorities for help, and expressed their

ambition to take part in the modernisation of their country of origin and its affirmation towards Japan and Western powers. They became famous through their political role as the leaders of the support that overseas Chinese brought to the nationalist cause. This contributed to establish their influence far beyond their role as traders and to turn Singapore into a base for the overseas Chinese in the region.

In the postwar period, the relations with China became very limited, and from independence, the ruling elites marked their will to make Singapore a "global city" distinct from the region and embedded in western modernity. But, while opening the island to multinational companies, they strengthened its trading and financial role in the region, kept up its Chinese characteristics and quietly kept open some economic relations with China.

This proved fortuitious when, after 40 years of isolation, China called again upon overseas Chinese capital and skills, seeing the city-state as a model of government and of opening to the outside, as well as a possible entry point for Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. Singapore was then able to resume its traditional role as an economic, cultural and political mediator between the West, Asia and China.

These three important periods in the history of Singapore and its relationships with China deserve some attention at a time when China's rising power is not without risks for Asian stability, and where Singapore appears as one of the main political engineers of the process of regional integration, and as a privileged interlocutor between the western powers and China in maintaining economic growth and security in the area. The renewed relationships with China have indeed become an important political card for the Singapore government to ensure its economic repositioning at a regional and global level since the 1980s. More than ever, Singapore's position in the new configuration now appearing in the region will depend on its ability to interpose itself within Asian relationships.

From Family to Manchu Allegiance: "Mandarin Merchants" Seeking Social Recognition

In its last decades, after banishing them from the "Middle Kingdom" for centuries, the imperial government changed its attitude towards the Chinese who ran for a long time an important part of the maritime trade in Southeast Asia. Deeply destabilised, the Manchus took the measure of

overseas Chinese wealth and attempted to mobilise them in an effort to capture subsidies to help finance their last-hour modernisation campaign in China. In Singapore, some of the Chinese merchants who had found themselves economically strengthened by British colonisation looked then on China as "an unlimited field for their activities".[1] Looking for prestige and legitimacy, on an individual basis, many Chinese merchants and leaders pledged their allegiance to the Qing dynasty.

Following western penetration in China and British intervention in the Malayan Peninsula (after 1874), this period is marked by a profound transformation of Singapore's society, and by rapid changes in the social strata represented by the Chinese merchants of Singapore.

Since the British had acquired Singapore in 1819, British commercial agents had rapidly expanded their influence over the trade in the region. The development of the entrepôt economy had also attracted an increasing flow of immigrants of different origins (Indians, Malay, Bugis, and Chinese). These developments gave rise to a more diversified society composed of prominent and petty merchants, and of various professions linked to the functioning of the city port. Singapore's population soared from 10,000 in 1824 to 97,111 in 1871.

Initially, this growth rapidly enriched the more successful Chinese entrepreneurs. Chinese gambier and pepper plantations quickly expanded, first in Singapore and then overspilling into the nearest Malayan peninsular state of Johor, just across the narrow straits to the island's north. The junk traffic with China also greatly expanded. Those Chinese — notably Teochews — who financed the planters and controlled their remittances, and the gambier exports to China were rapidly enriched and gained influence. Moreover, in this period, the British relied heavily on those Chinese merchants who had settled early in the Straits. These were able to act as reliable partners and privileged commercial intermediaries with the Malay population, and were good intermediaries with the Chinese population. Their knowledge of both western and Malay languages and business practices and their connections with Chinese (often meaning Chinese of the same dialect group) were invaluable to an under-resourced colonial state. Therefore, a prominent and wealthy Chinese merchant class, with a strong presence of Chinese from Malacca who were deeply rooted in Malay society and more westernised, consolidated its position in Singapore. To revenues derived from trade and gambier, some also managed to add revenue by successfully bidding to run the opium and gambling farms.
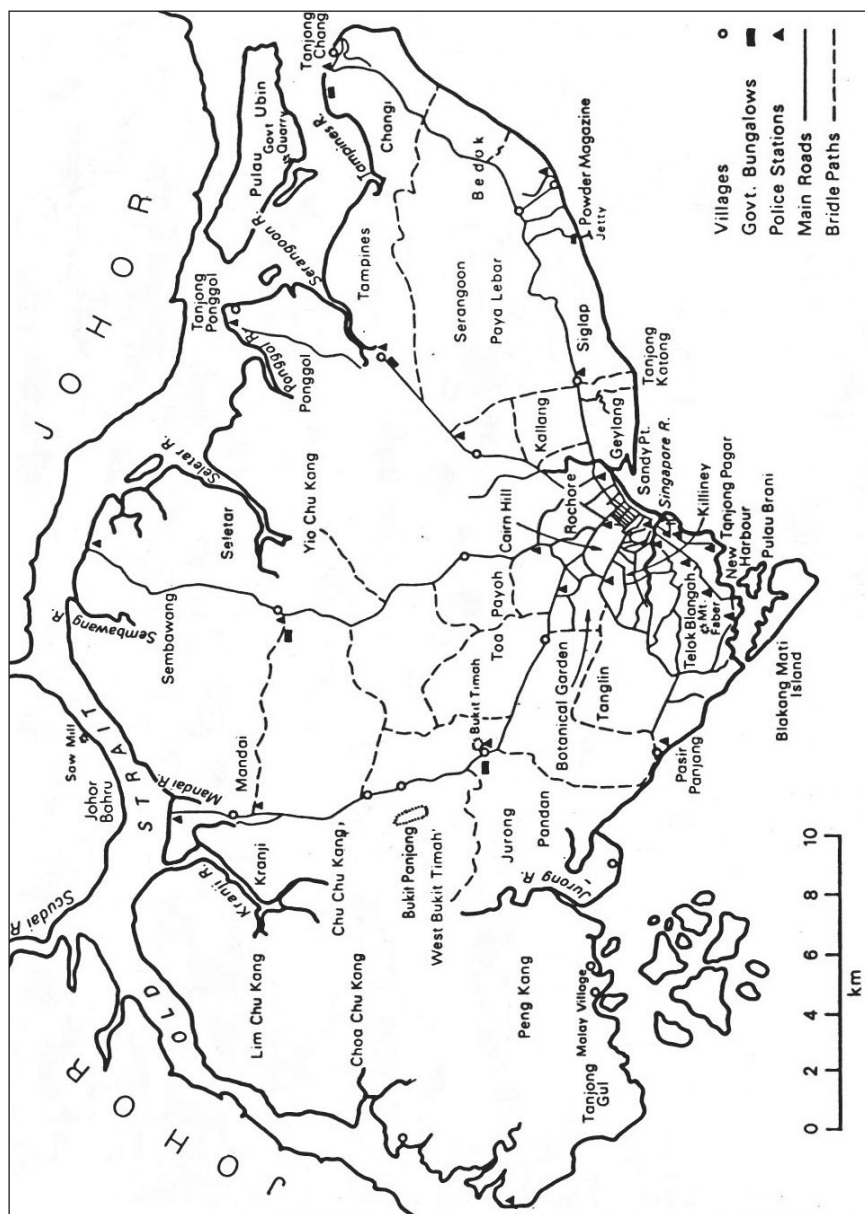
Map 9.1 Singapore in the mid-19th century

From the middle of the century, however, and still more from the colonisation and the exploitation of the Malayan Peninsula, this pattern changed. From the 1850s onwards, the British gradually displaced the Chinese merchants and financiers involved in the gambier and pepper plantations, and the coastal junk traffic with China and the region. Since the Bowring Treaty (1855), which opened Siam to foreign trade, they had interfered into the intra-regional trade — notably the rice trade — which was formerly under Chinese control. They also greatly increased their shipping trade with China and their control over gambier exports to Britain. The opening of China's ports to Westerners in the 1840s–1850s, and the British taking of Hong Kong in 1842, also allowed them to intrude upon the remittance business, and upon the transportation of Chinese emigrants.

Then, from the 1880s, Singapore had rapidly reinforced its regional position as a political centre of the British in Malaya, and as a main commercial centre for the collection of raw materials, and the redistribution of goods. It also further developed its role as well as a major transit centre for the coolie traffic and for the redistribution of labour to the surrounding region. The rapid growth resulting from these expanding activities attracted a massively increasing stream of Chinese immigrants, far in excess of mid-19th century levels. Singapore's population increased dramatically from 97,111 in 1871 to 181,602 just 20 years later, in 1891. By 1901, it had reached 226,842. Although the island maintained its multiethnic character, the new settlers were mainly Chinese. They were also, just as significantly, divided into different dialect groups. These vast and rapid changes undermined the control of the traditionally dominant class of Malacca Chinese merchants. That group had become to some extent disconnected from China, and some of them even spoke English better than Chinese. They were not all well-equipped to deal with the new sort of mass immigrant society, and some lost their initial position. While others did succeed in "re-sinicising" and adapting to the new context, as a class, they became much less significant after 1870 to 1880. They were, for the most part, replaced by a new generation of entrepreneurs more recently arrived and more able to control the waves of emigration, which came with the exploitation of the resources of the Malayan peninsula and the Dutch Indies. The more successful of this new wave of entrepreneurs could hope to accumulate vast amounts of capital by tapping the rapid growth in the production and trade of raw materials such as tin and (later) rubber, as well as by expanding business in the redistribution of goods.[2]

Plate 9.1 Rickshaws on a Singapore street
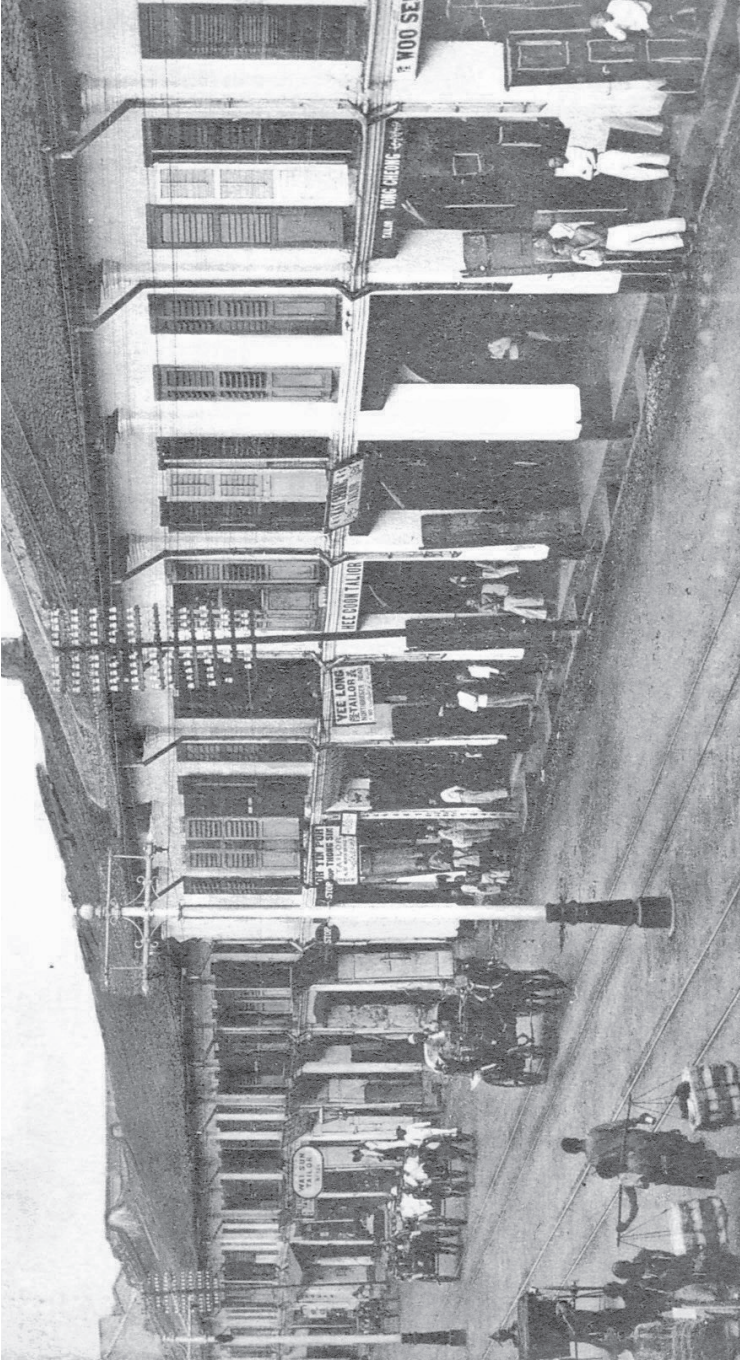
Plate 9.2 North Bridge Road

North Bridge Road showing two-storeyed shophouses typical of pre-1914, together with a covered five-foot walkway, and carriages and tramlines.

Strongly connected to their place of origin, and often coming from rural areas, they still carried with them the traditional values of their native countries and their dreams of social escape. In the "Middle Kingdom", material goods did not confer much prestige, and merchants found themselves at the bottom of the social scale. Most were excluded from political power and were hampered by bureaucrats' restrictive supervision and exactions. The social stigma attached to emigration redoubled their lack of social prestige.[3]

In colonial society, these Chinese merchants found themselves confronted by more "bourgeois values", which ascribed higher status to economic success than did society in China. But if the Chinese merchants' material wealth was an essential attribute in accessing a position of power within their community, its translation into status was not straightforward. This required that they shared wealth according to traditional values — that they munificently express their filial piety; and share wealth with their family, village and region of origin. Moral exemplarity and education were also effective routes to achieving high social status, which may help to explain the number of temples, and schools especially, founded. These activities ensured social gratitude to the "benefactors", symbolic acknowledgment that business could not hope to bring.

These traditional routes to social prestige were made even more attractive by the near impossibility — in British colonial society — of achieving full integration. Even though, from the 1880s onwards, the British relied on them to control an unstable, divided community which was rapidly increasing in numbers, and to guarantee its docility, even those Chinese who were "Europeanised" were never completely accepted in European circles. A strong cultural discrimination was added to their exclusion — for the most part anyway — from colonial decision-making.

It was this quest for prestige and legitimacy which the Chinese imperial government tried to use. Emissaries were soon actively trading mandarinal titles in Singapore as an incentive for merchants to collect funds for their regions of origin. Nearly 300 Singapore-based Chinese merchants were thus able to acquire mandarinal rank from 1877 to 1912.[4]

There is another field where the Chinese community leaders' loyalty represented an essential stake for the imperial power. Only they were capable of controlling the Chinese urban community as it started to be agitated by reform and revolutionary movements. The Manchu emissaries' will to control this agitation was matched by the Singapore Chinese elite's desire for order. Quite apart from the need not to disrupt business, they wished

to legitimise their social power and widen its base, and were concerned by the "moral deterioration" and moral danger in a vast, relatively young and overwhelmingly male immigrant community. Enlisting the ties of language and culture of origin might be one way to domesticate and integrate this mass of individuals. Imperial agents thus tried to encourage, or take over, the cultural movements which were beating the drum of traditional values, especially those transcending clan and dialect limits.[5]

In the years which followed China's 1895 defeat by Japan, the Qing agents' calls to the Chinese expatriates became increasingly frequent. Economic development was perceived as the ultimate means of restoring sovereignty. This was, after all, what seemed to have worked for the victor, Japan, following its Meiji revolution.[6] Yet, in China itself, the emergence of a vibrant entrepreneurial class had been held back by bureaucratic supervision, and was partly restricted to the compradors who acted for Westerners. By contrast, overseas Chinese offered a ready pool of entre-preneurs apparently able both to provide capital directly, and to spur China-based initiatives by their example. Less involved in the country's social structures, they were probably also more inclined to embrace an economic reform which could bring far-reaching social change in China itself. Their entrenched interests were, after all, in the Nanyang (South Seas) more than in China.

It is not possible to measure the exact scope of the Singapore mer-chants' intervention in this effort of modernisation. But they were keener to contribute to emergencies and status-raising causes such as education, than to make business investments in what seemed a risky situation in China. Their investments in sectors such as railways or mines nevertheless do seem to have been important, and some of them developed ambitious projects in the provinces they originated from.[7] Through the collection of funds and their financial participation in important cultural investments and ventures, they also contributed to connect the Chinese overseas busi-ness community to China's entrepreneurs. Those who answered favourably to the Qing government's approaches strengthened their position in the traditional order — whilst even enjoying a certain amount of revenge. They thought they were contributing to the building of a nation which they wanted to be powerful, and that they would share in its prestige at a time when the successive defeats of China facing foreigners brought them loss of face in the colonies where they were established. They found there an opportunity to widen the geographical scope of their activities and to expand their business connections and networks in China and the region,

whilst conserving a certain amount of independence, guaranteed by their being resident outside China.

It was more in their role as cultural intermediaries than by the size of their financial contribution, that some of these merchants played an important role in their country of origin. Freed from the educated bureaucrats' stranglehold and strengthened by their experience as middlemen and their eclecticism, they contributed to the spreading of new ideas in the pre-revolutionary context whilst upholding the traditional system.[8]

All these campaigns contributed to the development of a feeling of loyalty for their country of origin among the Chinese merchants in Singapore, and to the emergence of nationalism among the overseas Chinese. Above all, they represented an opportunity for this group to strengthen their social status. By multiplying their contacts with Chinese in different countries, they were able to widen their networks beyond clan membership. They also became more self-assured in their social as well as their ethno-cultural identity. This initially very fragmented community also started to structure itself around a growing feeling of belonging to the same cultural and political entity. The bestowing of Chinese citizenship to Chinese overseas residents in 1909 sanctioned this growing sense of identity.[9]

From China Attachment to Chinese Nationalism

The 1911 revolution in China, assisted from the outside by overseas Chinese, and particularly by those of Singapore and Malaysia, marked an important turn in the relationships between the Singapore entrepreneurs and China.[10] The hopes that it brought and the deep heartbreak which followed, did revive this attachment to China and placed the entrepreneurs in a position where they could participate more actively in the process of socioeconomic and political change in their country of origin.

They were no longer only looking for acknowledgment and social status. In a period of fast economic growth, they also tried to defend their interests and conceptions by engaging in social and cultural actions which they thought might strengthen the possibility of Chinese economic growth. National unity and the modernisation of China now became major preoccupations. As the Chinese government increasingly called for their political and financial support, they also attempted to channel to their profit the growing nationalist feelings within their communities, and more widely among the overseas Chinese. Their relationships with China were

One man changed China.
Dr Sun Yat Sen

Lee Kuan Yew

Plate 9.3 Sun Yat Sen Villa

This two-storeyed "bungalow" was built by a Chinese businessman, and lent to Sun Yat Sen from 1906–1911. During this period, Southeast Asia provided a place for meetings and fundraising for revolutionaries. The villa has been refurbished, and its galleries now project the idea that Singapore played a significant role in this period of China's history. The statue of Sun Yat Sen is a later addition, as is the memorial stone which quotes Lee Kuan Yew: "One man changed China: Dr. Sun Yat Sen".

Plate 9.4 Sun Yat Sen addresses comrades
Re-creation at the Sun Yat Sen villa to represent a standing Sun Yat Sen addressing his colleagues.

therefore established on a widening basis, becoming more intense on the economic level and taking a much stronger political character.

This politicisation was probably further accelerated because, in the years preceding 1911, the Malayan Peninsula Chinese had become one of the richest overseas Chinese communities in Asia. As such, it had become a privileged refuge for reformers and for the revolutionary movement led by Sun Yat Sen (Sūn Zhōngshān in *hanyu pinyin*). This made Singapore the nerve centre of their political activities and an important place for the diffusion of their ideas.[11] The Singapore Chinese community was animated by strong anti-Manchu feelings, more open to western ideas, and benefited from stronger social mobility. As such, it showed itself the most receptive of all overseas Chinese communities to the nationalist ideas that Sun Yat Sen and his movement put forward in order to unite around their cause a society still deeply divided along clan lines, and whose patriotic feelings remained strongly coloured by communalism.

For their part, entrepreneurs were divided. Preoccupied with economic success, they always sought to remain on good terms with the colonial and Chinese governments in order to preserve their interests on both sides, and their patriotism remained strongly tainted with opportunism. Many rich merchants and mining investors, some of whom had made their allegiance to the Manchu regime, refused their support to Sun Yat Sen and aligned with the reformists. Those who had little or no economic interest or pre-existing political relationships with China showed themselves on the contrary very open to Sun Yat Sen's ideas, and some of them joined his party — the Tongmenghui — as early as 1906.

Nor was it just the China-born and Chinese-educated who joined. Some English-educated Straits Chinese with strongly progressive views were attracted too. Notable amongst these was Lim Boon Keng, who became a member of the Singapore Legislative Council, a member of the Chinese Advisory Board, and in 1900, one of the founders of the Straits Chinese British Association. He balanced comfort with modern medicine and English colonial society on the one hand, with an interest in reinvigorating Chinese learning, and campaigning against the Qing (including the cutting of pigtails in 1895) and against vices such as opium.

Nevertheless, the main supporters of China itself were the China-born and China-educated, for whom integration into the colonial framework was much more difficult. As they had been facing a degree of political and social exclusion, the revolution of 1911 offered them a route to full social and political recognition in their country of origin. It also gave

this a concrete form, by focussing them on the idea of overturning the established order in China, at least partly for the benefit of the emerging bourgeoisie. After 1911, some of them became famous for their patriotism and their capacity to mobilise the Chinese community ideologically and politically, bringing with them the majority of entrepreneurs in support of the nationalist cause, and in defence of China's territorial integrity and modernisation. This was notably the case with rubber entrepreneur, Tan Kah Kee, who distinguished himself both by his social and cultural actions — notably educational endowment — and his political engagement in China, and went on to help coordinate anti-Japanese relief efforts and volunteers in the run up to 1941.[12]

Two major themes enabled leaders such as Tan Kah Kee to overcome clan and dialect differences, and so to widen their leadership to the overseas Chinese community in Asia, and to emerge as a pressure group towards Britain and China.

One theme was the financing of social and cultural activities which ensured their legitimacy and social position in Singapore, notably the development of education. Educational funding was not merely philanthropic. They considered it one of the pivots of modernisation, and therefore as a form of structural intervention in China. Their main idea in founding schools was to provide China with an elite that possessed the skills necessary to run a modern state, and whose patriotic feelings would underpin national cohesion and development.

Close to the ideals of Sun Yat Sen, they did not dissociate economic development from social progress, and were persuaded that the diffusion of science — as well as a break with those traditional aspects of behaviour which acted as a brake on enterprise — could become a vector of change.[13] Very attached to certain aspects of the Chinese traditional value system on which their leadership and the cohesion of their community in Singapore was based, they believed that progress towards assimilation of western ideas had to be combined with attachment to Chinese culture. It had to remain grounded in the Chinese language and some elements of the Chinese culture capable of strengthening attachment to the nation, and so of serving as a springboard for the unification of China.

Throughout this period, the initiators and leaders of this movement, like Tan Kah Kee, thus endeavoured to found numerous schools and to stimulate the modernisation of businesses, to raise the entrepreneurs' level of technical skills and to introduce new social behaviour, whilst also encouraging traditional Chinese cultural manifestations and the learning of

Mandarin. Hence, for instance, Lim Boon Keng balanced western medical science (he graduated from Edinburgh University, and helped found the Singapore Chinese Girls' School) with an interest in Confucianism. Tan Kah Kee balanced investment in business and schools (including establishing Amoy/Xiamen University in 1921) with emotional attachment to China.

The Chinese community's financial mobilisation, not only for charitable deeds and for the benefit of their regions of origin, but for political objectives with a national dimension, was thus an increasingly important aspect of its commitment to China. Leaning on the traditional links uniting emigrants to their families through their monetary contributions, and playing on their compassion and budding political interest for China, some leaders had, as early as 1911, channelled the financial resources of their community to support the revolutionary movement.

Developments from the end of the 1920s only served to increase this patriotic engagement. At this time, the Guomindang was forging ahead with its military conquest of China, while simultaneously Japan's territorial ambitions were becoming more obvious. These developments made the Chinese community more responsive to the political situation, while the nationalist government and the Guomindang redoubled their efforts to obtain support abroad. The latter increased its involvement in overseas Chinese affairs in the hope of securing political loyalty and funding.[14] Following in the Manchu's footsteps, the nationalist government put in place structures aiming to protect their interests in the colonies, encouraged investments in China, most of all in Chinese culture and education. It hoped these would cement Chinese identity among migrant populations and develop nationalist feelings among them, whilst preventing any communist advance, and also harness the skills of overseas Chinese leaders and businessmen. In parallel, the Guomindang developed propaganda and infiltrated key overseas Chinese organisations. Notable amongst the latter was the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Singapore, founded in 1906.

What was in this for the Singapore Chinese elite, beyond indulging its own growing patriotic feelings? Its involvement still brought a measure of sought-after legitimacy in China, at a time when its economic interest in it was strengthening. But it also gave the elite the opportunity to consolidate its social base in Singapore, and to try and point this in directions which would not compromise its economic rise and its relationship with the colonial authorities. Anti-Japanese agitation seemed safer for its interests than, for instance, communism was in the 1930s.

Singapore entrepreneurs were also experiencing a period of rapid economic growth and accumulation, linked to the rubber boom of 1909–1910 and the First World War. These developments incited them to enter new sectors — notably industry — and led them to hope to benefit from any expansion of capitalism in China. The world recession then showed how fragile their position was. But it also intensified the sense of competition some felt with Japanese products. That, and their increased interest in China, made them more sensitive to Japanese expansionism.[15] At the same time, the world economic crisis that unfolded in the early 1930s made the lower ranks of the Chinese community more susceptible to the class ideology put forward by the communists, the influence of which started to be strongly felt amongst workers.

The battle for political control of the Chinese community thus intensified, with Guomindang and Communist organisation (the Malayan Communist Party was founded in 1930) both strengthening. Hence, Chinese entrepreneurs tried to harness their prestige and community positions to channel the local Chinese population towards nationalism in the first place, and later on specifically towards anti-Japanese mobilisations for "National Salvation". Faced with communist tactics of mass organisation, they also attempted to reorganise their own associations, to give them a wider social base and strengthen their ideological and political influence. Traditionally apolitical, the Chinese community remained organised along clan lines, and its nationalism corresponded less to a political choice than to a renewed concern with expressing a sense of belonging to Chinese civilisation, and towards their specific regions of origin. Fed by strengthening anti-foreigner feelings, this nationalism "without political borders" was a boon to the elite groups.[16] They knew how to use it to their advantage by giving it an essentially anti-Japanese character. On the initiative of the Entrepreneurs' Club, which included an important pro-nationalist faction, they initiated a campaign in 1928 to help the victims of the Japanese aggression in Shandong. This was the origin of a real mass movement in Singapore and Malaysia, which transcended clan divisions and carried all sections of society. Accompanied by a more direct stand and by actions against the Japanese and in favour of the Guomindang, it was a springboard for consolidating and widening their political leadership amongst the overseas Chinese. Notably, at the end of the 1930s, there was the creation of structures to collect funds from Singapore and from all over Asia in support of the nationalist government's war effort against Japan. It also marked a decisive step in their political

assertion, without necessarily pitching them against the colonial power. If at first the British perceived a threat of an "empire within an empire" and of "foreign interference" in local politics, they then started to support these moderate leaders, whose influence was deemed to be a safeguard against the politicisation of the Chinese population and the progression of communist ideas.[17]

In China, the importance of the funds collected by the bodies they controlled, as well as the extension of their leadership in Asia, gave them heavier political weight and more independence to defend their interests.[18] Their actions in favour of social unity and political stability — two pre-conditions to any modernisation process in China, according to them — were therefore constantly associated to a direct stand against all that was detrimental for business. Moreover, they gave their initial vocation for playing the middlemen — between the local populations, the colonial authorities, and China — new political, cultural, social and spatial dimensions.[19]

Distancing from China in the Phase of Independence and National Construction

The postwar years, which served as a prelude to independence and to the Cold War, took Singapore entrepreneurs progressively away from China. Even before and during the war, communists captured the leading position in anti-Japanese organisation, overshadowing more traditional-style leaders. Then, after the war, the 1949 communist victory in China had profound repercussions in Malaya and Singapore, where the communist party (MCP) was by 1948 waging a guerrilla war against the British.[20]

From the late 1940s onwards, the evolution of the political situation was grafted on to the anti-colonial movement and the fight for independence. Parties supported by Chinese businessmen — such as the Progressive Party in postwar Singapore — were soon outflanked by more radical and left-wing parties, ultimately costing the entrepreneurs their political leadership. More politicised, more differentiated also now — with the emergence of a middle class of intellectuals trained in English schools — Singaporean society transformed rapidly. Class consciousness and organisation within political parties and trade unions won some ground over clan and ethnic identification, and other traditional means of carrying out associative political life. The growth of poverty and the rise of Malay nationalism rapidly caused the popular and middle classes to side with left-

wing parties. A number of entrepreneurs also found themselves politically weakened from having collaborated with the Japanese. Although divided, they were deeply involved with the Guomindang. However, their political experience, focussed on China and grounded in community loyalty, made them incapable of preserving their social and political hegemony.[21] After ten years of deep political instability, characterised by wide-ranging social movements and a very severe repression of the communist movements, the postwar situation led to a transfer of leadership to the benefit of the English-educated elite, now better armed to serve as intermediaries between the local people and the colonial authorities.[22] The 1950s to 1960s' passage towards independence, which moved the political preoccupations of the Chinese population away from China and towards Singapore, then initiated a long period of economic, social, cultural and political distancing from China. This turned entrepreneurs away from their country of origin, despite the fact that Singapore's and China's pragmatic foreign policies aimed at preserving their economic relationships, if at a low level.[23] Carried to power on a multiracial basis by the anti-colonial and revolutionary movement in a context of acute social crisis, the leaders of Singapore's People's Action Party (PAP) quickly excluded and suppressed the most leftist elements of their party, in the name of political stability and social peace.

The PAP attack on alternative sources of social mobilisation went well beyond communism, however. It sought to break up the ethnic and associative networks which perpetuated the attachment to the mother country, and could therefore be a focus either for a chauvinism which might mar race relations, or for opposition to the government. From the PAP seizure of office (June 1959) to the merger with Malaysia (16 September 1963), a whole series of actions undermined associations and the traditional community organisation. In their place, the PAP started to build what would become a web of mass organisations meant to prevent any resurgence of the revolutionary movement: Community Centres and Citizens' Consultative Committees, loosely connected via connections to PAP Members of Parliament, local party activists and the PAP-controlled People's Association. The traditional clan associations still existed, but little by little, the state was establishing itself as the main agent for social change, and the main channel down to grassroots levels.[24]

So the China link was being vitiated by geopolitics and conflict (the 1948–1960 Malayan Emergency and resulting state anti-communism, the 1949 declaration of a People's Republic of China) and PAP societal

reorganisation alike. It was to be further weakened by the Singaporean response to being levered out of Malaysia on 9 August 1965.

Having broken off from Malaysia, the PAP had even less hope of developing by using Malaysia as an economic hinterland. Yet conveniently, Singapore's crucial geo-strategic position now combined with a global move for developed countries to begin moving some production offshore. Singapore policymakers quickly moved from a more regional vision of the island's development, to a vision of a "world city". Such a city would not be as reliant on middlemen and links to China and India as in previous eras. As such, it would not have as great a need for "Chineseness" and China links. Indeed, anything redolent of tradition might be thought of as an impediment to economic growth based on good governance, technical modernity, and ruthless efficiency in the service of a world market place.

The aim now was to make Singapore into "an exceptional state" within the regional and international space.[25] The emphasis was less on the entrepôt role, and more on attracting foreign capital and skills to boost export-orientated industrialisation, and to foster its regional pre-eminence in services.

This new economic stance also drove the Singapore government further into the camp of the pro-western countries in the region. As if that was not enough to encourage a cooler attitude to communist China, Singapore was also sensitive to accusations that it might become the "third China". The government was anxious to distance the Chinese population from the Chinese question and to avoid any recurrence of the communal issues that had ignited riots in 1950 and 1964. For the PAP, in those first years of independence, removing ethnic particularism and assimilating western ways of thinking were means of creating the basis of a national identity capable of speeding up society's adaptation to an economy with a global vocation.

Returning to an idea which the entrepreneurs had placed at the heart of their economic modernisation project, the Singapore leaders gave a very large place to education. But their initial approach, if anything, was at the opposite of the Chinese entrepreneurs' previous efforts in endowing Chinese-language schools. Education — entirely focussed on economic development — was given an overwhelmingly scientific and technical mission. Furthermore, now that the Malaysian dream was crushed, Malay could be sidelined as a *lingua franca*. Instead, they chose to unite people through English, while allowing an element of bilingualism

in primary schools.[26] By 1970, 32% of the Chinese population could only read and write in English, and that percentage seemed destined to grow.

   Very tight control of the associative movements and the press (to prevent any resurgence of a "Chinese chauvinism" or any implication in China politics), and massive state intervention in education and the social and symbolic fields, took away the entrepreneurs' traditional prerogatives in these areas. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce continued to promote traditional cultural activities, but where the members of the bourgeoisie remained culturally attached to their country of origin, they had to face determined opposition from the government.[27] Finally, and outside the political suppression of any manifestation of sympathy to China, the interruption of Chinese immigration between Singapore and China in and after the war further weakened links. As Reid's Chapter 2 shows, between 1921 and 1981, the percentage of the population who was foreign-born dropped from 72 to 21.8 per cent.

   The business class was won over or at least politically neutralised, to a great extent, by economic success. But it lost all initiative on the ideological level. The business class did not manage to impose itself very far on the political level any more, even though it still represented a very influential pressure group and had some links (including some very close links) with members of government. As to its relationship with China, it shrank to almost nothing.

   Not quite to nothing though. Singapore's image of itself as an emerging global city resulted in a foreign policy approach which kept doors open. It believed that its survival required avoiding any conflict with neighbours, while preserving it from the dominance of any one country. In order to make the island as attractive and open to the world as possible, the Singapore leaders therefore developed a "balance of power" approach to international relations.[28] Marked by the preservation of regional stability as its leading principle, early into independence, Singapore's foreign policy consisted in maintaining relationships with countries and superpowers in both camps. Aligning itself to the United States of America to preserve its regional and international position did not prevent it from keeping doors open to the other side. Hence, despite their divergences and the total lack of diplomatic relations (China did not recognise Singapore's independence until 1970, and Singapore did not restore diplomatic relations until 1990), economic relationships with the People's Republic of China were preserved and even encouraged from both sides. Singapore was perceived by China

as a potential gateway to Southeast Asia, and remained one of its main trading partners in the region in spite of the relatively small volume of trade involved. Moreover, while affirming their anti-communism and developing economic and military relations with Taiwan, Singapore's leaders supported the "One China" principle. It was a balancing act so that, for instance, business trips to China were allowed, but only with very strict monitoring.[29]

Until the end of the 1970s, the state's policy towards China and Chineseness was therefore characterised by ambiguity. Yet, this was also a serviceable ambiguity, because it made it possible to change direction very quickly should circumstances demand it. From 1975 — after the Sino-US rapprochement in 1971–1972 — Singapore leaders began to develop more formal relations with China. In 1976, when Lee Kuan Yew visited China, he still firmly expressed strong ideological opposition to it, but also declared that "Singapore would not be anti-China".[30] By the middle of the 1970s, some Singapore Chinese entrepreneurs had also begun to invest in China.[31]

Return to an Intermediary Vocation in the Modernisation of China since the 1980s

Starting in 1979, the liberalisation of the Chinese economy and its reopening to the capitalist world were immediately followed by a strengthening of the economic and political links between Singapore and China. In China, this reversal of perspectives placed once again the question of Chinese culture and its relationship with western modernity at the centre of the ideological debate, with the Chinese government seeking to introduce, as it did before, western techniques without the cultural and political system that went with them. Singapore, with its combination of fast economic development and relatively authoritarian government, therefore seemed a palatable model of inspiration. It was well-placed to resume a role of an economic, cultural and political mediator between the West and China.

Opting for a policy of controlled attractiveness for foreign capital and businesses, with once again economic modernisation as its key phrase, China rapidly called on the cooperation of Singapore entrepreneurs and leaders and encouraged the trade relationship between the two countries, not only because it could benefit China and give it a foothold in Southeast Asia, but also because Singapore represented a reassuring partner. China was seduced by the way Singapore managed its opening to the

outside world and by its public control in many industries where foreign investments and expertise were needed. That represented a model to follow for China's opening, and facilitated bilateral cooperations, notably with Chinese state enterprises. In Singapore, China's opening was immediately interpreted as an opportunity which had to be seized.

The 1980s were also marked by a noticeable electoral erosion of the PAP, and a rise in the fortunes of a political opposition which, in the 1970s, had seemed almost moribund. These were perceived as signs of falling social cohesion, and led Singapore leaders to question the westernisation which they had promoted.[32] The return to the Chinese outlook of the island and the development of relationships with China appeared then as one of the many ways by which the government might attempt to prevent any drift towards a more democratic system. It was also a way to face the fragility of an economic construction entirely dependent on the outside. Leaders thus reacted in a resolutely authoritarian manner at a time when other countries in Asia started a democratisation process, attempting for instance to stem the rapid growth of Christianity among the Chinese, as it became more critical of a policy which had economic growth for its only referent.[33] The PAP also began to re-centre the national ideology around a few cardinal principles, specifically grounded in "Asian values" and more specifically Confucian values, which were supposed to bring citizens together.

Perhaps more importantly for Singapore's China links, more stress was given to bilingualism and mother tongue learning from the 1980s. Significantly, whilst starting to encourage clan organisations, hitherto perceived as a potential rival focus of support, the government launched the "Speak Mandarin Campaign", now presenting Chinese language as one of the keys for getting into the Chinese market. Certain that China's economic growth would open multiple economic opportunities and mindful of preserving internal and regional stability, the government thus responded very rapidly to the calls of the People's Republic of China.[34]

As early as 1979, Singapore and China signed a bilateral exchange agreement. During the whole of the 1980s, trade exchanges between the two countries experienced continual growth, from which Singapore benefited in two ways: the consolidation of its petroleum activities, and the diversification of its export markets. Singapore also sought to interpose itself as a relay for multinational firms wanting to invest in China. By 1988, China ranked sixth amongst Singapore's trading partners, after the US, Malaysia, Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand.[35]

State encouragement was vital to such growth. But right from the start, entrepreneurs also attempted to renew their links with their province of origin — notably Fujian and Guangdong — and established some small joint-ventures there. Then, from the middle of the 1980s, bigger investments were made in sectors where Singapore entrepreneurs were competitive and China required management expertise.[36] Large groups such as Hong Leong, Kuok and Wah Chang invested in a dozen Chinese provinces, in the construction sector (harbour infrastructure, civil engineering, hotels, urban housing) and oil logistics.[37] The main Singapore banks also started to give out loans to finance large projects, and progressively extended their operations to different provinces. Some industrialists in the electronic sector started to deliver training and knowledge of international market outlets to Chinese enterprises. But local entrepreneurs — small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in particular — had yet to engage in the manufacturing sector, with the exception of some labour-intensive industries (concentrated in the textile, clothing and food sectors).

Moreover, Singapore's entrepreneurs — who found themselves more culturally separated from China than some of their counterparts in Asia — showed some reticence to invest there. By contrast, they could draw on solid networks in the neighbouring countries (Malaysia and Indonesia in particular), where many had relocated their light manufacturing industries in the 1980s. A government regionalisation drive at the turn of the 1990s had intensified these links, for instance, with the Growth Triangle between Singapore, Riau in Indonesia, and Johor in Malaysia.

During the 1980s, it was therefore the large business groups — especially the Government Linked Companies (GLCs) confident in their skills and their links with multinational firms and the Chinese authorities — who played the most important role in China. Especially prominent were large public infrastructure projects in joint-ventures with Chinese firms — in harbours, airports, industrial and urban infrastructure, maritime transport, shipyard building and repairs — and cutting edge electronics.[38] By the beginning of the 1990s, the overall investments of Singapore's enterprises represented 15 per cent of the total amount invested in China by the Overseas Chinese.[39]

Chinese representatives also came to Singapore at different times in the 1980s to learn about how the island had used economic and social management policies to encourage foreign direct investment (FDI).[40] They even called on some of its eminent leaders, such as former Deputy Prime Minister Goh Keng Swee and one of the engineers of the city-

state's development strategy: he was appointed economic advisor of China for the development of special economic zones in the middle of the 1980s. On the regional level, whilst looking to strengthen its links with neighbouring states, the Singapore government, in the person of Lee Kuan Yew, also put itself forward as mediator to facilitate relations between the People's Republic of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, because of its good relationships with the different protagonists.

From the beginning of the 1980s, China had become a central element of the Singapore development strategy. But it was from the 1990s that the relationship deepened, especially when diplomatic relationships between the two countries were re-established, and China initiated its second stage of reforms and privatisation. The relationship became more political, whilst rapidly strengthening on the economic level. Singapore leaders were no longer content with an advisory role or model transfer. They now sought to encourage China to engage politically and economically in the Southeast Asia and wider Asian regions, whilst pursuing a strategy of internationalisation in all directions, to compensate for Singapore's vulnerability and reaffirm its position of global and regional centrality.

China's Involvement in the Regional Economic Integration Process since the 1990s: Building a Renewed Position of Centrality

The sustained economic growth of China from the beginning of the 1990s reactivated the Singapore Chinese ambition to see their country of origin rise to the rank of first world power. Yet, Singapore's leaders also shared with their neighbours the fear of a regional economic polarisation around China. As a matter of fact, China's imports from ASEAN increased seven-fold between 1993 and 2001, and then more than doubled from 2001–2006, making China ASEAN's fifth most important trade partner by the latter date. But China's trade exchanges with ASEAN still represented only 9.2 per cent of China's total trade in 2004, compared to 30 per cent with Northeast Asia (Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan). China also became more competitive not only in labour-intensive industries, but also for high technology sectors and services, and of course for FDI. Whereas at the beginning of the 1990s, the other Asian countries attracted two thirds of FDI, China was now attracting around 70 per cent.[41] Thus, China's economic rise can be considered as an opportunity in terms of trade and investment, as well as a threat.

Singapore leaders sought to anticipate these evolutions. From the early 1990s, they placed more emphasis on investment in China, and implemented a strategy to transfer Singapore's skills and expertise on a larger scale. Indeed, China needed foreign experience to keep attracting international capital, and to keep up with the country's rapid mutations: from manufacturing industry to logistics and infrastructures, notably industrial estates or turnkey business parks, where Singaporeans transfer their management skills and services. The most important of such projects was to be the Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP), launched in 1994. This was a joint venture between Singapore, the Suzhou Township Development, the Keppel group (a GLC), its Chinese counterpart the Suzhou Industrial Park Corporation, and a consortium of 24 Singapore companies. Although this joint project — presented as a model of Singapore's success — gave rise to tensions between the partners, it was successful in attracting foreign companies, among them the largest multinational companies. It led the way throughout the 1990s to an increasing flow of investment and joint projects from Singapore.[42] By using their reputation and privileged links with the MNCs, and through government-to-government relations, the largest Singapore business groups — the GLCs in particular — played an essential part in that evolution, taking SME and foreign firms in their wake.[43]

Having at first consolidated their presence in the most open and developed coastal provinces, Singapore companies have also progressively expanded their businesses to new provinces and cities, something China encourages, in line with its policy of spreading development to new regions.[44] Since China's accession into the World Trade Organization in 2001, which led to a liberalisation of the financial and services sector, they have also invested in banking and other services as well, where China lacks the same cutting edge and competences.[45]

Both state and companies, therefore, now have a significant role in China: the city-state plays a specific role in providing expertise through its Public Boards of planning and development; while Singapore's companies have succeeded in acquiring a lasting presence in China.

Thus, as early as 1997, China became the first investment destination for Singapore, with over US$25 billion invested in 2005. Their two-way trade reached 8 per cent of Singapore's total trade in 2003, making China Singapore's fifth largest trading partner that year. Moreover, this is not a one-way flow.[46] Whilst Singapore is re-exporting an important part of its imports from China to the region (40 per cent), it is also becoming a

stepping stone for Chinese companies looking to reach out to the region and to internationalise. In recent years, Chinese companies (private and public) have established themselves in Singapore and listed on the stock exchange in increasing numbers, in order to gain access to the knowledge and resources they need to go global.

This progression was encouraged during the period by government interventions to incite Singapore entrepreneurs to invest in China (notably through consortia associating SME to GLCs and foreign MNCs), and to strengthen trade exchanges and business relationships between the two countries. It was also supported from the beginning of the 1990s by an overall economic strategy, which worked at national and international levels, that was intended to seize the opportunities opened by China's rise without compromising growth and stability in Singapore and Southeast Asia as a whole.

In Singapore, the government adopted a policy of promoting the city-state as a regional headquarters for foreign MNCs, and developed a more aggressive strategy of regionalisation/internationalisation and economic adjustment. It was meant to maintain the city-state as a major global and regional financial and services centre, and to preserve its competitiveness in manufacturing. Reaffirming their ambition to turn Singapore into a global city, Singapore's leaders launched a triple strategy. First, they initiated a huge programme of public works to maintain Singapore's attractiveness for foreign firms. Second, they carried out the economic conversion of the island to cutting edge technologies and state of the art services. They tried to counteract the lack of space and manpower through government interventions to assist SMEs in enhancing their competitiveness and capacities for innovation, as well as their expansion abroad jointly with the MNCs and GLCs. Finally, this strategy was embraced in a cultural and ideological framework which emphasised Asian exceptionalism. An "Asian Values" campaign was launched in 1991. This initially looked like an attempt to affirm regional solidarity, including China, as well as to counter what was seen as a dangerous tendency towards liberal ideas at home. Bilingualism was encouraged once again: more importance was given to the learning and use of Mandarin by the English-educated professionals. From the early 1990s, there was also an active foreign policy aimed at preserving the balance of forces in Asia as well as the attractiveness of Southeast Asia.

Above all, and beyond the economic realm, Singapore has consistently supported efforts to encourage dialogue between China and regional

associations, for instance, supporting dialogue and cooperation between China and the ASEAN countries. Singapore supported China's association with ASEAN as a consultative member in 1991, then as a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994, and as a full dialogue partner in 1996. Singapore has, however, continued its attempts to engage other countries and regions as well, so as to avoid over-exposure to Chinese influence. Singapore was actively involved in the enlargement of the framework for regional cooperation, especially with the formation of the ASEAN + 3 Forum in 1997 (China, Japan, and South Korea), and the first meeting of ASEAN + 6 in 2005 (the three countries, plus India, Australia, and New Zealand). They have also accompanied their regional strategy towards China with a strengthening of their links with the United States in the economic domain as well as in the security and defence sectors, and especially in the war on terror since 2001. Singapore also played an important part in encouraging the engagement of the European Union in the region — notably in initiating the Asia-European Meeting (ASEM) in 1996.

Last but not least, Singapore's strategy towards China, and its balance of power approach, has been accompanied, since the beginning of the 1990s, by a reactivation of its relationships with India. This has included attempts to engage in Southeast Asia this essential counterweight to China's rise, as well as to seize the new economic opportunities opened by India's economic liberalisation and "Look East" policies.[47] Singapore actively supported India's engagement with ASEAN: in specific sectors of mutual concern in 1992; as a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1995; and then as a full dialogue partner in 1996. India's economic reforms launched in 1991 were followed by intense diplomatic activity, and an active mobilisation of Singapore's Indian business community.[48] Singapore, meanwhile, was regarded by India as a possible gateway to the region, one with an Indian minority.[49] These economic developments, together with increasing engagement of India and its rapprochement with China, have helped to strengthen Singapore's middleman role in Asia.

Since our main topic is China-Singapore relations, it is enough to note here that in Singapore's India policy, there were echoes of Singapore's China engagement. Hence, in the early 1990s, Singapore's government and business groups — the GLCs in particular — started to invest in partnership with local governments and Indian business groups, such as in the IT Park of Bangalore launched in 1993 — a move that was followed by an increasing flow of investments in different sectors, ranging from

infrastructure to services and manufacturing. This made Singapore one of the most important foreign investors in India, and gave the city-state opportunities to diversify its outward investments, as well as to tap into India's pool of software engineers.

Conclusion

Singapore's entrepreneurs no longer have the same ambitions as their predecessors, who were keen on redistributing part of their profits to help modernise China. Indeed, it was the Singapore state, notably through its GLCs and government initiatives, which spearheaded the major drive back into China. Having become more deeply rooted in their regional environment during the period of slack relations with China, Singapore's entrepreneurs first showed some nervousness about setting up in China. They still encounter difficulties in their business negotiations there, due to their legalistic and hierarchical mindset, their difficulties not just in speaking Mandarin but in being fluent culturally too, and perhaps also due to a diffident approach to risk-taking.[50] But since the 1990s, with government support, a new generation has emerged, which differs from the older ones by a stronger competitive attitude and openness to the international market. As a result, it has gained a stronger foothold in China.

With a high level of education, this new generation of entrepreneurs and professionals has contributed to the development of high value and high technology businesses in the industrial and services sector. More generally speaking, Singapore business groups and entrepreneurs as a whole have demonstrated, jointly with the GLCs, their efficiency in strategic developments. This has given them a specific position in China, compared with others in Asia, and should contribute to sustain the Singapore economy in the future. Thus, they have rapidly seized the new opportunities opened by China's ongoing liberalisation of services, investing in new areas of services where they transfer their management competencies, and gaining more influence in new niches of high technology. Furthermore, as Singapore is becoming a springboard for China's and India's entreprises looking to expand in the region and internationalise their operations, they are also taking advantage of their cultural links to India and China, and they play an important mediation role in their familiarisation to the Southeast Asian and global markets.

No doubt that they could continue to gain advantage from China's growing economy at a time when China's presence in Southeast Asia

and its economic relationships with India are increasing. China's rise is now regarded less as a threat than as an opportunity, and considered as a possible engine of growth in Asia. If the relationships between the city-state and China are not without ambiguity, Singapore's policymakers have reaffirmed the ambition of their predecessors to contribute to its modernisation while preserving its stability. Above all, they have again been able to turn Singapore's cultural uniqueness and its relations and networks at a regional and global level to the advantage of the city, and so to compensate for its small size.

If, as seems probable, China continues to develop economically, and to strengthen its relationships in Asia, Singapore may remain a central player in the midst of the most important economic zone in the world, and so further strengthen its position as a global city.

Acknoweldgements

Notes

1. Michael Godley, *The Mandarin-Capitalists from Nanyang, Overseas Chinese Entreprise in the Modernization of China, 1893–1911* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
2. See Lee Poh Ping, *Chinese Society in Nineteenth Century* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1978); Lynn Pan, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Chinese Heritage Centre, 1998); Jean-Louis Margolin, "Naissance d'une Bourgeoisie Asiatique non Étatique: Les Chinois d'Outre-Mer en Péninsule Malaise au XIXe et au Début du XXe Siècle", in *Pour une Histoire du Développement: Etats, Sociétés, Développement*, eds. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, Daniel Hémery and Jean Piel (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988; republished in 2007).
3. Etienne Balazs, *La Bureaucratie Céleste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968); Wolfram Eberhard, *Social Mobility in Traditional China* (Linden: E.J. Brill, 1962).
4. Yen Ching Hwang and Stephan Fitzgerald, "Ch'ing Sale of Honours and the Chinese Leadership in Singapore and Malaya (1877–1912)", *JSEAS* 1 (1970): 20–32.
5. The movement which was started in China by Kang Yu Wei, who preached an institutionalisation of Confucianism, thus had an important impact in Singapore.

6. Albert Feuerwerker, *Economic Conditions in the Late Ch'ing Period*, *China's Early Industrialization* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1958).

7. Godley, *The Mandarin-Capitalists from Nanyang*, Chapter 7.

8. Ibid., Chapters 4 and 5. Chang Pi-Shih, for instance, is a key figure of this modernisation attempt.

9. Stephan Fitzgerald, *China and the Overseas Chinese: A Study of Peking's Changing Policy, 1949–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

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12. C.F. Yong, *Tan Kah-Kee*: *The Making of an Overseas Chinese Legend* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987).

13. Jean Chesnaux, *Sun Yat-sen* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1982).

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15. Yong, *Tan Kah-Kee*.

16. François Joyaux, *Géopolitique de l'Extrême-Orient*, 1 (Paris: Editions Complexes, 1991); Lynn Pann, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*: *A History of the Chinese Diaspora* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990).

17. Victor Purcell, *The Position of the Chinese in Southeast Asia*.

18. Yong, *Tan Kah-Kee*; Stephen Leong, "The Malayan Overseas Chinese and the Sino-Japanese War".

19. Catherine Paix, "The Singapore Domestic Bourgeoisie: How Entrepreneurial? How International?", in *Singapore Changes Guard: Social, Political and Economic Directions in the 1990's*, ed. Garry Rodan (New York: St Martin's Press and Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1993); Catherine Paix and Michèle Petit, "Itinéraires et Stratégies d'une Bourgeoisie: Le Cas de Singapour", *Strates* 1 (1986).

20. The Nanyang Communist Party, mainly Chinese, was founded in Singapore in 1928 and became the MCP (Malayan Communist Party) in 1930.

21. Yong, *Tan Kah-Kee*; Wang Gungwu, *Traditional Leadership in a New Nation: The Chinese in Malaysia and Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaysia, 1981).

22. Jean-Louis Margolin, *Singapour 1959–1987*: *Genèse d'un Nouveau Pays Industriel* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989).

23. Those had been maintained in spite of the break up of diplomatic relationships in 1950. Fitzgerald, *China and the Overseas Chinese*; Yong, *Tan Kah-Kee*.

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25. Charles Goldblum, "Singapour, l'Etat d'Exception", L'Implosion Urbaine, *Hérodote* (Paris, 1983).

26. Jean-Louis Margolin, *Singapour 1959–1987*.

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28. For an in-depth analysis of this notion that has been a cardinal principle of Singapore's foreign policy until now, see Michael Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy: Coping with Vulnerability* (London: Routledge, 2000) and Asad-Ul Iqbal Latif, *Between Rising Powers — China, Singapore and India* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2007).

29. Gu Yuan Yang, "China/Singapore Economic Relations: History and Prospects for Development" in *ASEAN/China Economic Relations, Trends and Patterns* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1987) and *China Business Review* (May-June 1990).

30. Asad-Ul Iqbal Latif, *Between Rising Powers*, p. 54.

31. Henry W.-C. Yeung, "Transnational Entrepreneurship and Chinese Business Networks — the Regionalization of Chinese Business Firms from Singapore", in *Chinese Entrepreneurship and Asian Business Networks*, eds. Thomas Menkhoff and Solvay Gerke (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

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33. Christians represented 10.3% of the population in 1980, 18.7% in 1988; this level reaching 38.5% among those who studied at university. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 June 1989.

34. This turn to Confucian values and Mandarin language led at the time to the creation of Special Assistance Plan schools with extra Chinese language capacity, and the creation of the Institute of East Asian Philosophies (IEAP), to strengthen the Chineseness of Chinese Singaporeans as well as to give an ideological framework to Singapore's way of development. See Asad-Ul Iqbal Latif, *Between Rising Powers*.

35. Cf. Gu Yuan Yang, "China/Singapore Economic Relations"; *China Business Informations*, 15 October 1990.

36. Catherine Paix, "The Singapore Domestic Bourgeoisie: How Entrepreneurial? How International?"; and "Taiwan et Singapour: La Seconde Longue Marche sur les Voies de la Réussite Capitaliste", in *Esprit d'Entreprise et Nouvelles Synergies de Part et d'Autre du Pacifique* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1997).

37. The Wah Chang group, the rise of which had originated in the trade between China and the United States, had maintained important economic relationships with China and had participated in China in the 1970s to the construction of oil platforms and shipyard modernisation.

38. The first joint venture between a Consortium of Singapore's GLCs — including Sembawang Maritime, Jurong Town Corporation, Jurong Shipyard, Intraco Ltd and the Port of Singapore Authority — and China's Nanshan Development Company took place in 1984. See Henry W.C. Yeung, "Transnational Entrepreneurship and Chinese Business Networks".

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40. Shee Poon Kim, "Singapore-China Special Economic Relations: In Search of Business Opportunities". According to Tay Beng Chuan, then President of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Chamber received more than 100 delegations from China between the late 1970s and the late 1980s. See Tay Beng Chuan, *Historical Development of Sino-Singapore Economic and Trade Relations* (Singapore: SCCI, September 2000).

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42. The creation of the Suzhou Industrial Park and its evolution are well documented. For details, see Ng Beoy Kui, "Ethnic Chinese Business in an Era of Globalization: The Singapore Case", in *Southeast Asia's Chinese Businesses in an Era of Globalization: Coping with the Rise of China*, ed. Leo Suryadinata (Singapore: ISEAS, 2006); Shee Poon Kim, "Singapore-China Special Economic Relations: In Search of Business Opportunities", *Ritsumeikan International Affairs* 3 (2005): 151–76; Charles Goldblum and Wong Tai Chee, "The China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park: A Turnkey Product of Singapore?", *The Geographical Review* 90, 1 (January 2000): 112–22.

43. Ng Beoy Kui, "Ethnic Chinese Business in an Era of Globalization".

44. Sree Kumar, Sharon Siddique, and Yuwa Hedrick-Wong, *Mind the Gaps: Singapore Business in China* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2005).

45. Singapore's businesses are notably playing a more important role in transfering their experience in healthcare, education, accountancy, and other business services. Recently the biggest financial companies such as the DBS or Temasek Holdings — two GLCs — and UOB and OCBC took important parts in the capital of different private or public Chinese banks (the Bank of China in particular).

46. Singapore-China trade exchanges increased fourfold over the period 1991–2001 and sustained an annual growth rate of 31% between 2002–2003. See Sree Kumar *et al.*, *Mind the Gaps: Singapore Business in China*.

47. Christophe Jaffrelot, "India's Look East Policy: An Asianist strategy in Perspective", *India Review* 2, 2 (April 2003): 35–68; Asad-Ul Iqbal Latif, *Between Rising Powers;* Catherine Paix, "Entre le Dragon et l'Éléphant: La Place de Singapour dans le Processus d'Intégration Mondiale et Régionale de la Chine", third annual conference on global Asian perspectives, *From Shanghai to Bangalore, Reappraising Business Models* (Paris: Unesco, June 2007) (unpublished paper).

48. This mobilisation was marked by the formation of the "Gopio Global Organization of People of Indian Origin" in 1996 which gathered together the Indian entrepreneurs from the diaspora (Non Resident Indians — NRIs) and it has been strongly supported by Singaporean Indian business associations until now.

49. According to Narasimha Rao (then India's Prime Minister) during his visit in Singapore in 1994. Cited by Jaffrelot, "India's Look East Policy".

50. See Sree Kumar *et al.*, *Mind the Gaps: Singapore Business in China*.

Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

Hack, Karl

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The Malayan Trajectory in Singapore's History

Karl Hack

"I do not believe that Singapore could survive as an independent island state."

Lee Kuan Yew, *Singapore Legislative Debates* [SLAD] 2, 15 (5 December 1956), col. 1089.

"We of Singapore look forward to the day when our strength will be added to your strength, and our separation will be ended ... MERDEKA."

Singapore Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock proposing congratulations to the Federation, Singapore Legislative Debates [SLAD] 2, 35 (21 August 1957), col. 2493.

"Singapore has always been, and still is, an integral and inseparable part of Malaya. As such, it is not, and can never be independent ... The Malayan people are Malayans, not so-called Singaporeans and so-called Malaysians ..."

The Plebeian [Barisan Sosialis paper], 25 August 1967.

Most stories have a beginning, middle, and end. In the modern history of Singapore, however, the middle seems to have gone missing. In the 1970s, the beginning of Singapore's "modern" history could still be presented as part of a Straits Settlements Story, as in Mary Turnbull's *The Straits Settlements 1826–67: Indian Presidency to Crown Colony* (London: Athlone Press, 1972), and Chang Hai Ding's *Straits Settlements Foreign Trade* (Singapore: National Museum, 1978). This reflected the reality of the majority of Singapore's post-1819 history. The island was administered as a dependency of Sir Stamford Raffles' factory at Bencoolen from 1819–1824, separately under Calcutta until 1826, then alongside Penang and Malacca as part of the Straits Settlements Presidency. This last answered to the East India Company's government in India. Despite Singapore becoming the administrative seat of the Presidency in 1832, its judicial centre remained in Penang until 1854. The Straits Settlements became a crown colony in 1867, but remained distinct from the Malay Sultanates on the mainland, and from the British protectorates on Borneo. Most of post-1819 "Singapore" history was thus part of a Straits Settlements Story, with the three territories under one set of legal, administrative and judicial structures. This cosmopolitan Straits Settlements period, before the massive increase in Chinese immigration from the 1870s turned Singapore into a society mainly of male Chinese sojourners, was the one that established Singapore as a free trading world city.

Speed forward to the histories of the 1980s. Independence had come, unwanted, on 9 August 1965. We now find that the Straits Settlements Story was replaced by a Singapore Story more fitted to the needs of statehood, of being us-not-them (not-Malaysians). Now books increasingly assumed a teleology in which what went before 1965 was measured by how it led to an independent Singapore. Turnbull's next major work was her *A History of Singapore, 1819–1975*. Lee Kuan Yew's memoirs, published in 1998, were called *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*.

History had skipped from the "Straits Settlements Story" to the "Singapore Story". The Malayan trajectory had become truncated to 1961–1965. Now the "Malaysia" idea appeared as if sprung on an unsuspecting Singapore public by Malaya's premier, Tunku Abdul Rahman, in May 1961, with realisation at the foundation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963. In this story, the idea comes just in time to save a People's Action Party (PAP) leadership terrified that its left-wing might otherwise triumph. It plays the function of flushing that left-wing out, into the new Barisan Sosialis party, and of defeating them politically in the merger referendum

of September 1962. Malaysia is then undermined by Malay "ultras" from the mainland whose reckless campaigning in Singapore sparks racial riots in July and September 1964.

In this story, the PAP is all but forced to abandon a gentlemen's agreement for Singapore and Malaya not to meddle in each other's politics, leading it to market its meritocratic "Malaysian Malaysia" vision to the peninsula, in combination with opposition parties from across Malaysia. This in turn causes alienation from UMNO in 1964–1965. Singapore duly leaves Malaysia on 9 August 1965. The British are seen, correctly for 1959–1965, as significant but limited players. They hold the Singapore bases, and through Singapore's Internal Security Committee (ISC, with three British members, three Singaporeans and one Federation) retain the power to intervene in Singapore's internal security up until September 1963.

It is true that this view of Malaysia almost as an interruption jars with the vision the PAP held in the era itself — in which merger was seen as necessary — and the tears Lee Kuan Yew shed on local television on 9 August 1965; but nonetheless, that is how it comes across in modern versions of the island's history.

Just how far history was being artificially moulded by the needs of the nation-state, can be seen when we remember that for all but 15 of the 156 years that Turnbull's 1977 volume covered, Singapore was a part of the Straits Settlements, whether as Indian Presidency (1826–1867) or crown colony (1867–1946 — interrupted by the Japanese Occupation of 1942–1945). Singapore's history of being rooted in larger frameworks — or rather of overlapping pulls towards such frameworks as the Indian, the Straits, the South Seas and Malayan — had not changed; historians had.

What gets lost in this quick skip from Straits Settlements story to Singapore story is the Malayan trajectory.[1] That is, the tendency for Singapore to become a central place in Malayan politics and economics, and to increasingly view its future as one of intensifying that role while retaining an entrepôt function. In turn, this can lead to the "Malaysian" period of 1961–1965 being seen as a brief interlude, and as a concoction with little rationale except political expediency. This chapter, by contrast, argues that the Malayan pull was rooted in decades-long developments, just as its dissolution was rooted in contrary and equally long-gestated forces.[2]

We should describe this Malayan aspect, therefore, not as a discrete period, but as an increasing Malayan gravitational pull or trajectory, relative to others. Singapore has been subject to several such gravitational pulls

towards larger systems — Indian, Southeast Asian, Malayan, British empire, even Japanese. We should think of each of these as made up of several types of interaction — political, military, infrastructure, investment, administrative, educational, population, cultural, and so on. Each of these trajectories jostled with the others, and each's gravitational power ebbed and flowed over time. This approach not only better explains Singapore's shifting relationship to the Malayan, but also helps us to better understand the range of forces working for and against the idea of Malaysia in the culminating 1961–1965 period. It also allows us to see the Malayan trajectory as still exercising some gravitational pull even after formal separation, right up to the present.

The Malayan Trajectory: Historical Roots

Journals as barometers of the Malayan

The main trajectories we have suggested for 1819–1965 — Indian Ocean, Straits Settlements, and Malayan — reflect in the main journals concerning the area: the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Sea*; the *Straits Settlements Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*; and the latter's name-change to the *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*.

Hence, in the 1840s, Singapore was seen as one of the eastern outposts of an Indian-based system, semi-detached from the surrounding region. This reflects in the first issue of the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Sea* (Singapore, 1847): the brainchild of Penang-based colonial official J.R. Logan.[3] It was supported by the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Colonel Butterworth, and the Bengal Government — the Indian Presidency to which the Straits Settlements answered. The logic was the need for a society emulative of those in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Ceylon and Hong Kong, and to make superior Dutch efforts to disseminate knowledge on this subregion known to an English-language audience. The journal proposed to cover "all subjects connected with the Archipelago".[4]

The journal was one of several — each acting as the East India Company and British state's information-exchanging mechanism for the subregion of the India-centred system whose trade it dominated. But there was also recognition that the Straits Settlements' primary area was, to some extent, already "Malayan". It was this Malayan area which the Straits Settlements could best function as a centre (albeit a subordinate centre in

MALAY PENINSULA
1951

Scale 40 Miles to an Inch

10 5 0   10   20   30   40   50   60

THAILAND

Singgora
Haad Yai
Pdg. Besar
PERLIS
Kangar
Jitra
Kuah
LANGKAWI
ISLANDS
Alor Star
KEDAH
Baling
Betong
Kroh
Sungei Patani
PROVINCE
WELLESLEY
George Town
PENANG
Butterworth
Kulim
Bt. Mertajam
Parit Buntar
PERAK
Taiping
K. Kangsar
Ipoh
Batu Gajah
P. PANGKOR
Lumut
Telok Anson
Tapah
Sabak
Tanjong Malim
SELANGOR
Batang
Berjuntai
K. Selangor
Rawang
Kuala Lumpur
Port Swettenham
Klang
Kajang
Seremban
Port Dickson
NEGRI
SEMBILAN
Tampin
MALACCA
Malacca
Muar

Tumpat
Pasir Mas
Kota Bharu
Tanah Merah
Pasir Puteh
Kg. Raja
Kuala Krai
Kuala Gris
KELANTAN
Merapoh
Cameron
Highlands
Kuala Lipis
Jerantut
Raub
Fraser's Hill
Bentong
Maran
Mentekab
Temerloh
PAHANG
S. Pahang
Pekan
Kuantan
Kuala Trengganu
TRENGGANU
K. Dungun
K. Kerteh
Chukai

Gemas
Segamat
Kluang
Batu Pahat
JOHORE
Pontian Kechil
Kukup
Kota Tinggi
Johore Bahru
SINGAPORE
Endau
Mersing
P. TIOMAN

CHINA SEA

STRAITS OF MALACCA

SUMATRA

REFERENCE
Railways..............................
Railways under reconstruction.........
State Boundaries.....................
International Boundaries................
Main Roads..........................

Map 10.1 The Federation of Malaya and Singapore in 1951

the wider Indian system). The first edition stated that, though the Dutch Indies and other areas would feature in it: "It will, in a more particular manner, be a journal of the British Settlements on the Straits of Malacca, and of the Malayan Peninsula … the Peninsular extremity of Asia … a great area whose 'economical value' is only just demanding attention and shows great potential".[5]

So mid-19th-century Singapore remained a cosmopolitan empire city in the "Indian Archipelago", and to a lesser extent in the relatively "unexplored" "Malayan" area in which the three British settlements were located, but not yet truly embedded. First, the Indian authorities, then from 1867, the Colonial Office limited intervention in the Malayan peninsula. The key exception was Johor, whose rulers the British recognised first as Temenggongs in Singapore and surrounding areas, then as sovereign in Johor as opposed to the titular Sultan (1851), and finally as Maharajas and (1886) Sultans. Singapore-based Chinese merchants moved gambier and other investments across the straits. The *Straits Times* of 1 July 1846 talked of "a young Singapore" springing up there.[6] Between the 1830s and mid-1870s, the Straits Settlements saw further, cumulative penetration of the peninsula. Straits merchants supported local Malay rulers in disputes, and advanced money to Chinese business ventures. It was these relationships — and the influx of Chinese labourers into the West coast that they fuelled — which increased the scale and duration of inter-Malay disputes in the western states in the 1860s–1870s. By the early 1870s, Straits merchants were petitioning the Colonial Office for intervention in the Malay states.

Traditionally, scholars focus on this resulting in Sir Andrew Clarke, as Acting Governor of the Straits Settlements in 1873–1874, being instructed to investigate relations with the Malay states, whereupon he signed with Perak chiefs the January 1874 Pangkor Engagement. In this, the British-recognised sultan promised to accept a British Resident whose advice he would "ask and act upon", on all subjects excepting Malay religion and custom. This was the template for the system, which over the next 40 years, extended to every Malay state, each accepting either a Resident, or a representative with lesser powers. On the other hand, 1874 was also the result of the overwhelming impact of Straits interpenetration with Malay states, while also confirming the still limited degree to which the Straits was centred on the "Malayan", as opposed to entrepôt, Indian and British empire roles. That is, intervention was still via indirect rule, executed through a small knot of Europeans advising local Malay sultans.

Plate 10.1   Istana Besar (Grand Palace, Johor Bahru) audience chamber

The audience chamber at the Istana Besar was built in the 1860s. Sultan Hussein and Temenggong Abdul Rahman signed the first treaty giving the British rights at Singapore in 1819. The family of Sultan Hussein faded, but Temenggong Abdul Rahman's family — though basing themselves at Telok Blangah in Singapore — had claims in neighbouring Johor. They developed Johor in partnership with Chinese. In the 1850s, they established a new township at the Johor landfall of a ferry from Singapore: Tanjung Puteri, renamed Iskandar Puteri (after the then Temenggong) and then Johor Bahru. They cooperated with Britain and British business, leading the British to recognise them first as Maharajas and then as Sultans of Johor. The Johor rulers installed European-style law codes and facilitated the linking of Malaya's west coast railway onwards to Singapore. Even though they resisted a British General Adviser until 1914, the Sultans of Johor epitomised the way Singapore and the Malay states interpenetrated between the mid-19th century and the 1920s.

The significance of 1874 reflected in the first (July 1878) edition of the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. The new journal announced itself vital in the light of "The opening of the Native States". Every Resident joined. The society was to hold monthly meetings. The first edition was overwhelmingly about the Settlements and Malayan peninsula. At the society's first meeting, at the Raffles Library Singapore on 4 November 1877, the Venerable Archdeacon G.F. Hose, presiding, announced the aim of "forming of a Society to promote the collection and record of information relating to the Straits Settlements and the neighbouring countries", including "scientific information" on "the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago".[7] The new society was framed as a corresponding branch of the London-based Royal Asiatic Society.

At the Thursday 28 February meeting, "Mr Skinner, at the request of the President, exhibited a sketch Map of the Malay Peninsula on a large scale, which is being gradually filled in as surveys are made or information is otherwise received ..."[8] The Venerable Archdeacon Hose's Presidential address discussed terms for the whole area archipelagic, including "Malaya" (due to the Malay *lingua franca*), and the French *Malaisie*. He continued that

> The uncompleted map which is displayed on this wall, is one that is now being carefully prepared under the able direction of Mr. Skinner … I will ask you now to look at that map: observe the immense spaces which are blank, or have merely the name of the native Government to which they are supposed to be attached written across them, such as Kelantan, Patani, Tringganu [sic]; and compare them to the few districts, almost entirely on the Western Coast, in which the mountains are sketched in, the course of the rivers traced, and the names of towns and villages inserted. Does this not remind some of us of what the map of Africa used to look like in our school days, before the discoveries of Livingstone and his successors? Yet it is not of a vast continent like Africa … But of a narrow peninsula at its greatest 200 miles across and known to Europeans for 370 years …

The map was to be filled in from information from local states, Siam, by the Maharaja of Johor's trained surveyors and British officers on travels. There "must" be a central mountain spine to be filled in, and slopes possibly suitable for cultivating coffee and tea. The Dutch success "gives one a very high idea of what might be done by capital and enterprise in so vast an extent of country, which has hitherto been profitless for want of human inhabitants possessed of those resources by which alone the

tyranny of nature can be overcome".[9] There was now a focus on the Straits role in developing the peninsula, including by collecting manuscripts for a proposed library.

The next name change of the journal gives an indication of progress made, as first tin production, and from the early 1900s, rubber plantations also rapidly expanded. These entailed massive Chinese immigration — often filtered through Singapore — until by the 1930s, some west coast Malayan states (and most of the bigger west coast towns) had a Chinese majority. Chinese families and businesses spread across the peninsula and Singapore, and British "Agency Houses" might have offices or warehouses in Singapore, but managed or invested in a whole series of enterprises (marketing goods, running rubber plantations) in Malaya. The Straits Settlements and the west coast of Malaya had become thoroughly demographically, economically and (if only at the highest level) administratively interpenetrated.

Hence, the *Straits Settlement Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* Annual General Meeting of 10 February 1922 agreed that "The name of the Society shall be 'The Malayan Branch, Royal Asiatic Society'" from 1 January 1923, as "a majority of members reside away from Singapore".[10] The first edition of the *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* appeared in April 1923. The society's patron was His Excellency Sir Laurence Guillemard, who as Governor of the Straits Settlements was also High Commissioner for the Federated Malay States (FMS, formed effective from 1896 to unite four of the peninsular Malay states: Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang). The progress of journals and societies thus traces the changing way in which Singapore's relationship with its surrounding area was framed, in which a "Malayan" trajectory in Singapore history was building alongside, and ultimately overshadowing, the Indian Ocean and Straits trajectories.

People and politics

Were Singapore-Malayan relations reaching a tipping point by the 1920s–1930s? At the political level, various schemes were attempted, with the aim of achieving a Malayan framework which would better coordinate all the Malay states with one another and Singapore. By the 1920s, the aim was to entice the five Unfederated Malay States (UMS, Perlis, Kedah, Terengganu, Kelantan and Johor) into the FMS. In the 1920–1930s, two Governors also aspired to abolish the Chief Secretaryship of the FMS,

so bringing the peninsula more tightly under their influence. That failed, and the means employed to achieve closer integration, ironically, came to include the devolution of powers away from the Federal Secretariat in the 1930s, in the hope of making the FMS more attractive to UMS states — all to no avail.[11] Administratively and politically, the region remained fractured. Within the Malay states, only "Malays" (anyone from the region, who also spoke Malay and professed Islam) were integrated, as subjects of each sultan.

In terms of politics and demography, the Malayan trajectory in some ways went into reverse from the 1930s. Demographically, the world depression led to the British limiting male Chinese immigration from 1933. Easier access for women led to a more settled and Malaya-orientated Chinese population, but the Malays were left, only just, the largest single population in the Malay states. This is related to the second development. The idea of the "Malayan" bred its own antithesis, frightening some Malays that the British — far from being protectors — might now allow immigrants to attain rights on a par with them.[12] Malay nationalism stirred, through a combination of Islamic reform, growth of a Malay print community, a feeling that Malay interests and primacy had to be fought for against Chinese economic preponderance, and a growing sense of a pan-Malayan Malay identity.[13] With the first pan-Malayan meetings of Malay associations (such as the Singapore Malay Union founded by Mohammed Eunos in 1924) in 1939 and 1940, this entrenched a communal notion contrary to more syncretic notions of the "Malayan".[14] The growing sense of *bangsa Melayu* (Malay nation or community), of Malays' membership in a universal Islamic community, and of "Malayan" identity, were growing simultaneously, providing a smorgasbord of identity options.[15]

Education, ideas and the Malayan

The growth of a sense of the Malayan can be seen in areas such as education. At the tertiary level, Raffles College opened in Singapore in 1928 with a mixed Malayan intake. The University of Malaya (its successor from 1949 on the same Bukit Timah campus) took only a third of its students from Singapore as late as 1960.[16] The initial 1948 plan for the latter was to construct a purpose built campus in Johor, where a single-site university would have the room to expand and serve the entire Malayan area. The reality was that funding and student numbers did not match a unified campus project, which was dropped in 1954. The new plan was for the

Bukit Timah campus (now as the University of Malaya in Singapore), to be joined by a new Kuala Lumpur branch (as the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur). The latter opened in 1957 in temporary accommodation, so that there were 1,600 students in the former and 323 in the latter by August 1959.[17] It was hoped that the two "divisions" of the University of Malaya would be complementary. But the demand for comprehensiveness on both and existence of separate senates and councils led to divergence, with strong Federation desire for their own, national university by 1959. In January 1962, the University of Malaya split, leading to the birth of the University of Singapore. Ironically then, the peak tide of the Malayan in tertiary education came between 1905 (when King Edward VII Medical College was founded in Singapore) and 1949. By the time Malaysia came into being in September 1963, the tide was already ebbing.[18]

Even at the peak, there were also deep-seated tendencies working against a Malayan approach. Though some of the peninsula's best students were schooled at Raffles College, others never progressed beyond the Malay College Kuala Kangsar, the Malay Eton of the East. Even if they did go to Raffles College, some proceeded into the Malayan Civil Service, which accepted only Europeans and Malays for its highest echelon. The vast majority experienced vernacular systems in Malay, Chinese (Mandarin and dialects) and Tamil. This meant that Malay teachers existed in a Malay rather than Malayan universe, one more concerned with themes such as reviving Malay commercial power, and even the possibility of a union of "Malays" in the peninsula and the Netherlands Indies.[19] Journalists were also divided into different language streams.

At its peak then, the pan-Malayan ambitions were grand, but their taproots were shallow. The myriad of organisations Harper kaleido-scopically presents to us in his *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya* remained for the most part stubbornly cast in communal mould, whether cultural or (as with Chinese Chambers of Commerce) economic in nature.[20]

Not that the Malayan idea was solely restricted to the English-educated.[21] The Chinese tended to have family, business and clan links cutting across local territorial boundaries. As they turned from being mostly long-established and empire-loyal "Straits Chinese", or sojourners, many developed a Malayan Chinese identity. Local-born Chinese soared from 31 per cent of Chinese in Singapore in 1930, to 60.7 per cent in 1941, and 72 per cent in 1953.[22] Famine, warlordism, Sino-Japanese conflict, and then the wartime occupation and postwar conflict in China,

weakened the notion of return. The question — what should a Malayan be? — became more prominent for Chinese from the 1920s. This can be seen in the growth of a local-based "Nanyang [South Seas as in south of China] Chinese literature". From 1927, *Nanyang Siang Pau*'s literary weekly aspired to reflect local flavour, and to translate Malay literature. But initially, this was more a reflection of living in a new "Nanyang" setting, rather than identifying with a homeland. It was in the 1930s that Chinese literature first "grew into 'Malayan Chinese literature'".[23] The latter term was used by Qiu Zhizhen (pen name Fen Ming) in *Lion's Roar*, a supplement of *Nanyang Siang Pau*. Though themes of immigrant angst continued, and post-1937, an anti-Japanese genre flourished, the ground was shifting. It shifted further due to the wartime resistance against Japan, which though linked to China-patriotism, also meant spilling blood on local soil. Postwar, with a majority of Chinese now local-born, and in the context of decolonisation in India, Burma, Ceylon and Indonesia, Chinese writers began to talk about the struggle for independence. By the heated Chinese press debates of 1947–1948, the "Malayan" proponents were the majority, even before the inauguration of the People's Republic of China in October 1949. Tie Gie's poem "Who are We" caught the spirit of the moment:

> Who are We?
> We are
> Children
> Grown up in the equator.

Chinese literary consciousness now took on a distinctively Malayan outlook, which reflected the family and business realities of Chinese interrelationships across the area.[24] This replaced or overlaid the older Straits *Hua Qiao* (overseas Chinese) and empire-port identities.

Another portentous move in this direction was the formation of the *Malayan* Communist Party (MCP) to replace various Nanyang organisations in 1930, and the process by which its leaders changed from being mainly China-born in the 1930s, to the local-born and -orientated in the 1940s. From 1945–1948, the MCP could join hands with English-educated radicals in the new "Malayan Democratic Union", which in turn could ally with wealthy businessmen such as Tan Cheng Lock to defend the notion of equality in the abortive new "Malayan" citizenship the British proposed in 1946.[25] The "Malayan" trend amongst Chinese and many English-educated was beyond politics, and reflected across almost all non-Malay political groups.

This narrative gained even greater purchase amongst Chinese with advanced English-language education. Wang Gungwu wrote English-language poetry in the 1940s–1950s, which mixed terms and images from all races with local references.[26] The local sarong kebaya was fashionable alongside contemporary Western styles of dress. Many Singapore-based urbanites and even kampong (village) dwellers of the island might see themselves as urban Malayans. Singapore was increasingly a space to experiment with being modern, urban and Malayan.

In this respect, it is interesting that just as the University of Malaya was becoming less unified, the Malayan Chinese made their tertiary education more Malayan. The Nanyang University was established in 1956, on land in Jurong given by the Hokkien Huay Guan, using public donations. But "Nantah" had a pan-Malayan regional delegates' conference with 11 regional councils. Though it was supposed to give a home to Chinese language educated students not catered for by the University of Malaya, it had a determinedly Malayan vision. In 1960 debates, "Penang delegate Mr Chan Siew Teong, in a heated speech, stressed that the Federation supporters had not helped build the university simply to allow it to become an exclusively Singapore university". Gan Teck Yeow, the Selangor delegate to the pan-Malayan conference of Nanyang University, told graduates not to think of China, but as "citizens of Malaya and Singapore".[27]

By 1961–1962, the English-educated, and high school and tertiary educated from the Chinese language stream, thought in Malayan terms. Some Malays, who had attended Raffles College or the Malayan Forum (a student discussion group in England), also mixed on a Malayan basis. But as a whole, the spirit and the subaltern leadership for Malays (journalists, teachers, local civil servants and religious leaders) were moved more by the idea of Malay culture and protecting Malay interests. A "Malay Malaya" versus "Malayan Malaya" dichotomy was already rooting.

This was the spirit which informed angry reactions to the British-imposed Malayan Union of 1946, and associated plans to grant citizenship to Chinese generously and remove the sovereignty of Malay sultans. This was to pave the way for unified citizenship and modern politics. Singapore was to be excluded from the "Malayan Union" mainly because Malay opinion was not ready to accept the overall Chinese majority its inclusion entailed. Instead, its inclusion was to follow later, as the Union developed more normal, cross-communal politics from local elections upwards. A unified Malaya, and perhaps a unification of all British territories in Southeast Asia, would be a work of decades. An overall British Governor-

Plate 10.2 Nanyang University
The main university building opened in 1956, and officially in 1958.

General for Southeast Asia (from 1948, a Commissioner-General) was instructed to facilitate the long-term design.

The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), with its "Hidup Melayu" slogan, was founded in response in 1946. Its first leader, Dato Onn, afterwards failed to get UMNO to embrace multiracialism, even in 1950–1951 when tempers had calmed. He then failed to make his multiracial Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) a serious alternative. Malay determination to defend their claim to indigeneity, and so to special treatment, was too entrenched. In a 1949–1950 Communities Liasion Committee (CLC), Malay leaders had made it abundantly clear — in hours of sometimes heated debate — that they regarded Malays as the indigenous group, meriting economic support in return for admitting more (but not all) non-Malays as citizens.[28] Indeed, the CLC deal of 1949–1950 was a precursor of the later "New Economic Policy" of the 1970s. Malays were supposed to get state and voluntary Chinese help as part of the bargain.

The British clung to their Malayan Union for a while in 1946, but you could not *force* Malays into voluntary cross-communal politics. So the British negotiated a new federal structure which restored the sultans' sovereignty and Malay rights, limited Chinese citizenship severely, but retained a unified central legislature and government, and the novel notion that there was a citizenship to which all (not just "Malays" as subjects of the sultans) could aspire. For the British, this meant they had preserved the foundation on which they hoped to build broader, modern, consensually cross-communal Malayan politics. The new Federation was inaugurated on 1 February 1948. But its different names reflected schizophrenia over its identity. To anyone whose *lingua franca* was English, it was the Federation of Malaya, a body "in-waiting" for cross-communal politics and ultimate reunification with Singapore. For Malay-speakers it was *Persekutuan* **Tanah Melayu** or "Federation of Malay Lands", with sovereignty residing in the Malay sultans (charged with protecting Malay interests), and a flag which included the crescent as the symbol of Islam.

The peninsular notion of identities was forged between 1949–1956, with politics based on communal organisation. The Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and Malayan Indian Congress joined UMNO in an Alliance, accepting Malay rights, Islam as a state religion, and Malay as the preeminent language, on the understanding that their separate languages, cultures and school systems would be tolerated. The Alliance swept to victory in national elections — taking 51 of 52 elected seats in July 1955.

With their cooperation also essential to efficient anti-insurgent operations, they were able at a January-February 1956 conference to get a promise of full independence for 31 August 1957.

By comparison, Singapore's politics proceeded down a mainly non-communal path. An April 1955 election returned a Labour Front government and David Marshall as Chief Minister. But the elections were also followed by a revival of strikes, student activism and communist-directed Anti-British League (ABL) agitation. Consequently, the British accepted that the Federation would advance to independence first, on 31 August 1957 — with communal politics not the cross-communal politics they had hoped elections from towns upwards would build. With Marshall's failure to secure at least full internal self-government for Singapore at an April–May 1956 London conference, Singapore was left trailing. Worse still, in mid-1955, the Tunku had warned Marshall that he was not keen on merger before independence, and did not favour Singapore's planned extension of citizenship to more than 200,000 foreign-born Chinese. In early 1956, the Tunku would only countenance thought of Singapore eventually joining as a 12th state, and rejected Marshall's idea of a confederation. Not only was the Federation changing from laggard to leader in decolonisation — from no elected members in its Assembly in 1954 to a firmly entrenched Alliance government from August 1955 — but the chances of merger were fading.[29]

The myriad of experiments from below, both for Malay and Malayan identities — were thus deeply rooted in the society and politics of the Federation as it sped towards independence.[30] There was there an UMNO-led narrative — a Malay-language celebration of Malay culture and civilisation, and of Malay primacy within Malaya; a Chinese cultural narrative more inclined to clans, dialect groups, Chambers of Commerce and Chinese-language education and culture; and of course, narratives by Tamils, Sikhs and others. All these joined in the peninsular Alliance as an UMNO-dominated organisation for elite accommodation.

In Singapore, by contrast, the "Malayan" approach and hopes were stronger. PAP Minister of Home Affairs Ong Pang Boon, for instance, called both for a reasonable understanding of the Malay position in 1959, and yet — with other Chinese-educated leaders in the PAP — for working towards a multiculturalism which envisaged a fusion of the cultures in Singapore and Malaya.[31] Even in Singapore, however, communal organisation remained significant. There was a Singapore Branch of UMNO (SUMNO). This originated in 1951 as a branch of UMNO Johor,

becoming a full-fledged state branch in 1953.[32] There was a Singapore Alliance, of SUMNO, Singapore MCA, and for a few years after 1954, SMU (Singapore Malay Union). In 1955, the Alliance won three seats in April elections, leading it to be included in David Marshall's Labour Front-led coalition government. The Alliance's Abdul Hamid Jumat became Minister for Local Government, Lands and Housing, and Mohd Sidik Abdul Hamid became Assistant Minister of Education. From 1955–1959, Singapore had a blended approach. On the one hand, the Labour Front coalitions — led by David Marshall and then Lim Yew Hock — were committed to "Malayan" ideas and cross-communal approaches. On the other, their coalition governments incorporated the specifically communal Singapore Alliance.

SUMNO maintained its three seats in the 1959 Singapore elections. Yet, it lost its place in government because the Labour Front successor (the Singapore Progressive Alliance or SPA, which attracted members from several parties) was reduced to four seats. The defeat of the SPA-Alliance coalition was also a defeat for the blended model, of a multi-communal core party combining with an Alliance of specifically communal parties.[33] SUMNO and the PAP did, however, cooperate in the Assembly over specific issues in 1959–1963, such as education and especially merger.[34]

Before we go on to discuss post-1959 in detail, we need to look at how other stands of development worked for and against Singapore's Malayan trajectory

Infrastructure

In Southeast Asia, as in India and other areas, the colonial state created the structures for a nation-state, and these structures defined its possible scope. Hence, in the 1870s, the Malay states had little inland transport, relying mainly on rivers and the sea. As late as the 1920s, the east coast of Malaya was very poorly linked to the west, scarcely at all to Singapore. By the 1950s–1960s, by contrast, trade, transport and investment found all of these units closely intertwined. Hence, by 1964, the percentage of external trade of Singapore with the Malayan states was 27.5 per cent, ahead of the UK's 8.5 per cent at number two.[35] At the same time, early PAP plans envisaged import substitution industrialisation, through which Singapore would provide manufactured goods for a Malayan hinterland.

Singapore was also part of a postal union with the Federation, subject to 1938 and 1949 agreements. There were standardised regulations and

Plate 10.3   Malayan Railways mural

The FMS Railways (later Keretapi Tanah Melayu or KTM) terminal at Keppel Road, Singapore is still decorated with murals representing the full range of Malaya's economy and geography.

Plate 10.4   Malayan Airways advertisement

A Malayan Airways aircraft high above Singapore, the hub from which it served Southeast Asia. This advertisement appeared in the *Straits Times* annual, where other companies also adopted the tactic of presenting Singapore as their hub for "Malayan" and Southeast Asian operations.

postal rates, with the Postmaster General of Malaya handling international postal arrangements, even though revenue collection remained separate.[36] Postwar military forces were also distributed between the two territories on the assumption that they formed one unit. After the war, the Royal Malayan Navy was concentrated on Singapore, and the infantry forces on the Federation. It was 1957 before Singapore — with the Federation independent and growing internal security issues — raised its first infantry battalion.[37]

Both road and rail transport, meanwhile, attained far-reaching pan-Malayan dimensions from the 1920s. Both were boosted by the opening of the causeway between Singapore and the peninsula in 1923, replacing the ferry service. The entire railway line was by the 1920s owned by the Federated Malay States Railways (FMSR), which extended its services to Malaya's east coast that decade, as well as to the heart of Singapore.[38]

The origins of today's national airlines of Malaysia and Singapore, meanwhile, go back to 2 April 1947, when a twin-engined Consul — the *Raja Udang* — rose into a cloudless tropical sky, inaugurating a thrice weekly Kallang-Kuala Lumpur (KL)-Ipoh-Penang Service. This was Malayan Airways, a private venture initially owned mainly by the British Overseas Air Corporation (BOAC) and Qantas.[39] With a name-change to Malaysian Airways Limited (MAL) in 1963, the company became locally owned in 1966, when the two local governments each took 42.7 per cent of the equity. Hence, a locally-owned Malaysian airline — renamed Malaysia-Singapore Airlines (MSA) — only came into being *after* Singapore separated from Malaysia, effective 1 January 1967. It was 1970–1971 before the two countries decided on a split (Malaysia wanting to focus more domestically, Singapore internationally), giving birth to Singapore Airlines (SIA) in 1972.

In short, the Malayan/Malaysian logic of developing infrastructure and related economic interdependence was not only strong, but in some areas (railway system, airlines, currency), persisted beyond "separation".[40] In this way, the elements of the Malayan trajectory had their own chronology and pace.

Summary of progress towards the Malayan

On the one hand, "Malaya" had come, by the 1950s, to be accepted as a term which included Singapore. Many sporting competitions were Malayan, with a Malaya Cup in football and in rugby; while roads, railways, postage

stamps, airlines, tertiary educational institutions and even complementary military forces bound this Malayan area more and more together. On the other hand, Malay nationalism had in the 1920s–1940s taken a course which saw Malay as the core identity, and "Malays" as the "indigenous", with other cultures as non-indigenous and outside the core identity of the region. So there were very different Malay-centred and Malayan-centred notions of identity. The latter suggested a syncretic, *rojak* (a local salad) identity in which the Malay might provide the language but would not necessarily dominate politically or culturally. Furthermore, separate police forces and other institutions suggested divergence. With the Federation ploughing on to separate independence on 31 August 1957, the question soon became: could and should Singapore forge a separate, independent existence and identity?

Elite Quests for the "Malayan": 1942–1961

The answer to the above question was deemed — by the British and most Singapore politicians — to be "no", in that Singapore was by itself too reliant on trade, and had insufficient capital to fund the educational, welfare and infrastructure needs of its rapidly growing population. That was the "common-sense" of a British empire which sought to cobble together coalitions in Southern Arabia, the West Indies, and in Central Africa in the 1940s–1960s.[41]

British plans and Malay obstacles

Why had Britain decoupled Singapore from the new Malayan Union in 1946? Because they felt that Malays would only accept more democracy and centralisation if they were not made a minority by the addition of Chinese-majority Singapore. Hence, Singapore, with its base facilities, was temporarily excluded. A British Governor-General (from 1948, Commissioner General) would facilitate cooperation amongst Malaya, Singapore and the British Borneo territories. A 1946 White Paper unsuccessfully proposed for Singaporeans to be eligible for an abortive "Malayan Union citizenship". Singapore was to be a "Malayan" global port in-waiting until — over decades if not generations — a British Dominion of Southeast Asia could be forged.[42] Already in 1947, the *Straits Times* was clear that, as regards wider union, "The real danger comes from Malay nationalism".[43]

In 1953–1954, a Joint Coordination Committee was appointed for the two territories, including non-official politicians, to coordinate taxation, medical affairs and more. Leading politicians expressed enthusiasm for eventual merger. But simultaneously, UMNO politics continued to conceive of decolonisation as a reclaiming of public space for the Malay — Malay language, culture, businesses — while tolerating subsidiary space for Chinese and Indians. The inclusion of mainly-Chinese Singapore might destabilise this Malay vision of decolonisation through Malay-dominated "elite accommodation". Apart from anything else, in a united Malaya and Singapore, Chinese could outnumber Malays.

Singapore politicians, however, remained wedded to the idea of eventual union. This can be seen in the final solution to the April to May 1957 constitutional conference in London on Singapore's future. The previous year's negotiations had broken down over one question: how could the British retain an ability to intervene in internal security, given their military bases and fear of the communists — and yet grant total internal self-government? The British wanted to retain chairmanship, and a casting vote on a Defence and Internal Security Committee, with the right to intervene quickly in Singapore's security affairs. In the last stages of the conference — too late to be adopted — it was suggested that a Malayan member be added.

The latter idea was on the table from the beginning of the April to May 1957 London conference on Singapore's future. This agreed to leave external affairs and defence to the British, but also to set up an Internal Security Council (ISC) which could order the local government to take action. But this time, the three British and Singapore ISC members would balance out, with a seventh, Federation representative holding the balance of power. The Singapore delegation, including the PAP, accepted this on the basis that if Singapore sought the confidence of the Federation with a view to merger, a Federation casting vote was logical. It would also give the Federation an active role in Singapore's affairs. This agreed, Singapore's new 1958 constitution (effective 1959) allowed almost total internal self-government, reserving defence and foreign affairs to Britain. It also provided for a further review after five years in operation, meaning by June 1963.

PAP thinking on Malaya and the Malayan

The PAP swept to power in Singapore's May 1959 elections. It won 43 of 51 seats, SUMNO three, the SPA four, and an independent one.

When the PAP took office on 3 June, Lee Kuan Yew told the crowd gathered in front of City Hall that "It is but a step towards merger with the Federation of Malaya and *Merdeka*".[44] This echoed the first Governor's address on behalf of Marshall's government in 1955, and Lim Yew Hock's New Year's address of January 1959.[45] It was also deeply rooted in Lee's beliefs.[46] In September 1950, fresh off the boat from England, Lee told journalists that they ought to abandon chauvinistic descriptions such as "overseas Chinese" and "Singapore Chinese", which were "obstructing the work of Malayan nationalism". He called for a "Malayan" outlook. The Chinese contribution should be to "enrich then Malayan culture slowly being created" with knowledge of Chinese literature and history. Though he envisaged room for all cultures, he saw the Malayan "national" culture as something above and infused by them.[47] It was a view of nationalism encouraged by participation in the London-based "Malayan Forum", in which students from Malaya and Singapore had debated politics in the 1940s.

From foundation in November 1954, the PAP was committed to a Malayan path to independence. Lee's platform in Tanjong Pagar in the 1955 elections was for "a democractic, non-communist" Malaya. By 1958, the PAP was clear that the "Malayan" would require harnessing language and education policies. Malay would emerge as the main language, but for the moment, English must become compulsory in all schools above primary because it was "only in the English schools that children from all three communities find a common class-room and play ground, and in the end a common acceptance of certain values of life".[48] Eventually, there would be a unified national education system "directed towards the development of a common Malayan outlook and a united Malayan nation".[49] In early 1959, the PAP's journal *Petir* repeatedly returned to the theme of how to make Singapore palatable for merger. Yet, its concept of the "Malayan" remained radically different from the Federation concept of national culture. Take the PAP response to Malay "special rights" in the Federation (guaranteed for at least 15 years from independence). In *Petir*, they were viewed as a "transition" measure, to help Malays catch up economically.

The PAP ideal remained that once that had happened, there could be a "Socialist Society", where "All men are equal, and no privilege should accompany the accident of birth, race, rank, religion or sex". Rewards should correspond to "work and ability", which together defined a person's "worth" to society, though Malay was accepted as the national language for good.[50] The PAP view of the "Malayan people" was therefore different

from that of UMNO. For UMNO, "Malay" should continue to define "Malayan" or "Malaysian" culture — its language, dress and religion — leavened by a subordinate tolerance of space for other cultures, and even subordinate inclusion of other cultural images into the "national". For the peninsular Malays, there was already a pre-existent basis for national culture: "Malay" culture. What this needed was distilling and refining, and its relationship with the subordinate "others" managing. For the PAP, however, a new national culture had to evolve, with the state stimulating and supporting this historical process, while holding at bay communalism.[51] S. Rajaratnam, the PAP's first Minister of Culture, conceived of culture as "the total accumulation" of attitudes and forms which could be passed across generations, implying the sifting of a sort of *rojak* national culture from the many elements.[52]

This background sheds light on the "Enright Affair" of 1960. Professor Dennis Enright, the new Professor of Literature at the University of Malaya, arrived in the first flush of PAP enthusiasm for anti-"Yellow Culture" campaigns, banning jukeboxes, and removing any risk of offence to any community. On 17 November 1960, he gave his inaugural lecture on "Robert Graves and the Decline of Modernism", also commenting on Singapore. On 20th November, the *Straits Times* ran with headlines that the Professor had told politicians to leave culture open-ended rather than hothousing a "Malayan culture". He had warned that "a sarong culture, complete with pantun competitions and so forth" would be as ridiculous as to "bring back the maypole and the morris dancers in England" so that a government should "leave the people free to make their own mistakes".[53] The PAP launched letters to the press, at the end of which the state satisfied itself that Enright had agreed it was not his place to comment on local politics. The Enright episode showed up the PAP's insecurity over the "Malayan". For the content of "Malayan" as envisaged in Singapore (inside and beyond the PAP) was both wide and yet shallowly rooted. This was not a mere question of tactics — the MCP was in the same boat as the PAP in terms of seeing "Malayan" as a multiracial, *rojak* identity in the process of being created — it was rather a case of underlying trends in thought in Singapore, and amongst non-Malays on the peninsula.

There were already hints in *Petir* that the PAP might want to take this debate into peninsular politics. Yet, the PAP was not the Alliance's preferred partner even in Singapore. That would have been David Marshall's Labour Front (later merged with other parties as the Singapore Progressive Alliance or SPA) — Singapore Alliance coalition.

That coalition was in government from 1955–1959, and in Lim Yew Hock (Chef Minister, 1956–1959) featured a leader well networked with, and liked in the Federation. They might have offered the possibility of being absorbed into the Alliance structure, while giving Singapore access to, and influence over federal government. The PAP, by contrast, was seen as tainted by its more radical members, and by commitment to "social revolution" and class politics.

The May 1959 *Petir* stated: "By encouraging Malayan Chinese and Indian workers to fight efficiently through non-communal parties we would be able to show our brothers in the Federation that class and not race should be the basis for effective political action". It argued that Singapore should simultaneously help remove the fear of "Chinese domination" by showing that "race and religion has nothing to do with politics or economics, then the merger of Singapore and the Federation becomes inevitable".[54] In other words, the PAP notion in 1959 was that they should work to influence a change in the basis of Federation politics, so as to encourage merger. Unfortunately, what was to happen was that the PAP would go for an acceptance of merger for political convenience in 1961, and then afterwards try to change Federation notions of the "Malayan". Yet UMNO continued to prefer the SPA-Alliance.[55]

The Battle over "Phoney Merger"

At the beginning of 1961, merger seemed years off.[56] It seemed more likely that Singapore would come up to June 1963 — the deadline for constitutional review — facing the dilemma of whether to demand independence alone, or at least the end of the ISC. The 1958 constitution had only granted Singapore internal self-government, limited by the ISC. The PAP left-wing now believed independence would — initially — be better than merger with a right-wing Federation, which anyway looked unlikely.

By contrast, *The Fixed Political Objectives of Our Party*, published in the 26 January 1961 issue of *Petir* insisted on the unity — political and economic — of the Malayan sphere. Socialism was only possible, it claimed, in a unified Malaya.

So merger was not on the table, and the June 1963 date for constitutional review implied discussions would have to begin by 1962. The core PAP leadership around Lee, and the left or "progressive" wing, now started to polarise around this issue.

At this point, the Federation Government was disinterested in any merger that included Singapore, despite interest in extending the Federation to some Borneo territories.[57] The Tunku was predisposed to enlarge his federation of Malay lands in the latter manner, but UMNO would not bear the related cost of taking Singapore as an additional bride. Then came the April 1961 PAP loss at the Hong Lim by-election. Popular ex-mayor Ong Eng Guan had left the party after a frustrating spell as Minister for National Development. He now trounced it with more than 70 per cent of the vote. Key UMNO leaders now concluded that PAP meltdown was a real prospect. Any such shift to the radical left might make Singapore Malaya's Achilles' heel, and fan the dying embers of insurgency in the Federation.

Now the Tunku had a motive for paying the price for the merger with Borneo territories he desired, and a way of persuading reluctant UMNO colleagues that the price had to be paid. On 27 May 1961, the Tunku told foreign correspondents he favoured widening the Federation, by merging with Borneo territories and Singapore. By 3 June, the Singapore Government had responded, and by July, Singapore-Federation negotiations had started.

In Singapore, internal PAP fractures became intolerable in July. The party lost the Anson by-election to ex-Chief Minister David Marshall on 15 July, with some of the progressive wing criticising the party leadership just before. The leadership called a vote of confidence in the government, and expelled those of the "progressive" wing who did not vote for it. The latter 13 were expelled from the party, forming the Barisan Sosialis at the end of that month. They took the majority of PAP branch committees and paid secretaries with them. Seeing rushed merger as a tactic by Lee to get the Alliance to remove his left-wing opponents from within the PAP, and to avoid being on the wrong side of a debate about whether to have full independence in 1963, they now put their heads above the parapet.[58]

What was the Barisan Sosialis's position over merger? Most of the left — including the MCP — favoured a united Malaya given the right conditions. Was the Barisan then a tool of the MCP and its hidden cadres, attempting (as Malayan Special Branch argued) to achieve one of the following options: full merger in order to facilitate attacking the centre; loose confederation in order to avoid federal internal security powers in Singapore; or if those failed, no merger at all? Some within Barisan were communists, or fellow travellers, but the relationship between communism and the broader left-wing was subtle. In 1956, the Special Branch had

estimated there were no more than 25 MCP members in Singapore, with about 1,500 Anti-British League mass executives, and another 1,500 not fully integrated into the latter. This was before waves of arrests in 1956–1957 devastated the party, and the at times barely functional MCP Singapore Town Committee. This number of communists, who were inchoately connected and intermittently funnelled instructions from leaders in Indonesia, were in no position to "control" a mass party such as the Barisan.

On the other hand, prestige was attached to the communists for their wartime resistance to Japan, and for postwar political and union struggles against the British. In the context of worldwide anti-colonial struggle, this meant that they could influence, if not set, the tone of Barisan policy. Despite their tendency to talk of "communists", even the Malayan Special Branch sometimes saw the likes of Lim Chin Siong as merely "under strong communist influence". The language employed by British and federal representatives was elastic, reflecting the reality that Lim and many others had a Marxist frame of reference, and shared with communists the willingness to act as united fronts and to resort to direct action (or in extremis violence) if constitutional means failed.[59] British Commissioner for Southeast Asia Lord Selkirk believed Lim would not necessarily incline towards the Soviet Union and China, and might be kept to constitutional means. For a while in 1961–1962, Selkirk was therefore reluctant to sanction arrests of Lim and his associates.[60] The Barisan was then a "progressive" left party which — like the early PAP — overlapped communism at its extremes, and in the way many members conceived of themselves as part of a worldwide, anti-colonial, "progressive" trend which included communists. The Barsian tried to position itself as the party that truly represented the working classes (notably the Chinese working classes) in opposition to the now overwhelmingly bourgeois (and mainly English-educated) top leadership of the PAP, and jostled to control the labour movement.[61]

Even Lee, in his 1961 "Battle for Merger" radio speeches and book, confessed that Barisan Chairman Dr. Lee Siew Choh and some others were not communists, though supposedly naïve. Lee's main dramatis personae of those speeches, his "Plen" or communist plenipotentiary, was Fong Chong Pik (Fang Chuang Pi). Fong, underground, hunted, loosely connected to other cell members, and to judge from his later memoir, less than devastating intellectually — had limited ability to translate orders from Eu Chooi Yip in the Riau Islands into action.[62] The Barisan, then,

was a mix of Chinese-educated who disliked the PAP's centralisation of
real decision-making power in the hands of a few mainly English-educated
such as Lee and Goh Keng Swee, and had hopes for more radical policies
as the PAP slipped away from its more socialist early rhetoric.[63]

What was the debate between the PAP and the Barisan over merger?
As early as June 1961 — still inside the PAP — Lim Chin Siong was
adamant that he was not communist, but that equally he did not oppose
merger. He wrote in the *Straits Times*:

> To begin with, let us not pretend that anyone is against merger. Malaya
> and Singapore are not two separate states. The present division is an act
> of the British colonial government, and every genuine Malayan seeks
> the union of these two territories … the question now arises: on what
> terms will this be effected? …
>
> **Our Concern**
> Any constitutional arrangement must not mean a setback for the people
> in terms of freedom and democracy … The PAP, we believe, wants
> the total eradication of colonialism. Colonialism makes itself felt in
> Singapore via the Internal Security Council.
>
> **Obnoxious**
> The continued detention of trade unions and others, the obstruction of
> trade union unification, and the restrictions on freedom and the rights
> of the people loyal to the anti-colonial cause are some of the obnoxious
> features with which we have to put up …
>
> **Colonialism**
> We have therefore invited the government to:
> 1. Release immediately all political detainees still under detention;
> 2. Assist speedy unification of the trade union movements;
> 3. Grant the right of citizenship and franchise to all those loyal to the
>   anti-colonial struggle; and
> 4. Allow freedom of press, speech, assembly, organisation for the
>   purpose of advancing the anti-colonial struggle.
>
> … in the meantime, the issues are being clouded — not deliberately
> we hope — by the larger question of merger …
>
> Merger is a matter that must be worked out to a great degree of clarity.
> It is not a thing to be accepted without firmly defined purposes. Great
> sacrifices have been made by the people to achieve their present position
> in Singapore and merger must never turn out to be a sell-out of any
> sort. If merger is to be achieved without regard for the socialist cause

then the reactionary S.P.A. is in the best position to achieve it, especially with its close political links with the ruling party in the Federation.

The Principle

… is that merger should in no way restrict the advance of Malayan socialism. It is in the absence of this assurance that we … claim for the abolition of the Internal Security Council and the achievement of full internal self-government.

LIM CHIN SIONG
Singapore[64]

Lee Kuan Yew attacked this as reneging on the declarations Lim and his colleagues made upon release from detention in 1959. Those had included reference to the Federation fear of a Chinese majority, and the need for Singapore to assuage "the genuine fear" of the Federation's Malay majority.[65] When registered in August 1961, the "Party Objects" of Barisan nevertheless included the following: "To eradicate colonialism and set up a united national independent state comprising of the Federation of Malaya and Singapore". Another was to "mobilise all sections of the people for the building of a Malayan nation", and the party shared the PAP commitment to Malay as the national language.[66] The Barisan position was that there needed to be more eradication of colonialism, and of its tools such as the ISC, so that merger might increase rather than decrease democracy (and their own freedom). Speaking in torrential rain on May Day 1962, Lim warned that the "working class movement" was not obliged to follow agreements made between "colonial powers and discredited politicians", and would not be crushed. Appealing for workers to unite on class, not communal grounds, he reassured listeners that with the rise of socialism, and independence of Afro-Asian countries, history was on their side, so that "there can be no doubt whatsoever that final victory of the workers and the socialist movement! Merdeka!!!"[67] The PAP were finished, he continued: "They do not have a hope in hell the moment the people have a chance to express their true feelings about them".[68]

Barisan Sosialis opposition to merger was thus partly a power play versus erstwhile PAP comrades, whom they felt had not allowed them (and so the Chinese workers and Chinese-educated they represented) due influence. It was also about their fear that Kuala Lumpur might clamp down on them, and on associated trade unions and direct action.[69] Safeguards offered for individual states were, in their view, inadequate.[70] Even later concessions such as Singapore autonomy in education and labour were meaningless if a right-wing Federation government retained

the right to intervene through its control of internal security. It might simply arrest trade unionists and students.[71] Yet, the losses the PAP was willing to accept, for instance, the lack of representation proportional to population in the federal parliament, seemed real. The Barisan would be rendered less able to help left-wing allies in the Federation.[72]

It is also worth noting, however, that the Barisan had little to say about the type of Malaysia they would like to see (and few positive policies for Singapore). For some Barisan leaders, anti-colonialism, Merdeka, progressive politics and their right to represent "the workers" seem to have been sufficient aims, from which all else would follow. For others, such as Said Zahari of the mainland Party Rakyat, anti-colonial policy involved the removal of foreign bases, and the restructuring of the economy to end dominance by foreign capitalists: not things likely to help an entrepôt with ten per cent of its economy derived from bases.[73]

Barisan leaders, meanwhile, argued that when the PAP said Singapore could not survive without merger, it meant the PAP could not survive.[74] On 10 July 1961, the University of Malaya hosted a meeting of "More than 1,000" students, tutors and the public on "The basis of merger". Sandra Woodhull — under attack from the PAP's Devan Nair as having reneged on earlier commitment to merger — replied that "he wanted to ensure that there would be no setback in terms of freedom so far achieved" vis-à-vis "the right-wing policies" of the Federation.[75] It was an open break in the PAP, days ahead of the Anson by-election.

The subsequent run-up to referendum (in September 1962) is often held up as the linchpin of the "battle for merger", with the Barisan tripped up. That is, in August 1961, they proposed Singapore have full merger on a basis of equality and equal citizenship for current Singaporean citizens, or alternatively, be part of an autonomous unit in a confederation which the Borneo states could join later. Barisan publicly committed to the idea of merger with full equality on 2 August 1961, but also asserted that in its absence, Singapore should otherwise seek full independence in 1963.[76] At the end of August, Barisan promised that if the Federation would support Singapore's absorption on the same basis as existing states, they "would exert their influence to win the people of Singapore to accept full and complete merger forthwith, that is, with Singapore as the 12th state of the Federation and with [my emphasis] *Singapore citizens automatically becoming Malayan citizens with proportional representatives in the Federal Parliament …*"[77] Barisan wanted a general election in which each party could seek a mandate for its preferred option, in their case, "complete

merger" as the basis for building an alliance with peninsular peasants, workers and intellectuals.[78]

Lee Kuan Yew and the Tunku issued a press communique on 23 August 1961. This stressed Singapore would retain education and labour autonomy, and that a working committee would be set up, but did not mention citizenship. In the *Straits Times* of Friday 22 September, Minister for Finance Goh Keng Swee said the Barisan's full merger would mean disenfranchisement of "nearly half" the electorate (most due to being foreign-born) under current federal laws of citizenship.

By the November 1961 publication of Singapore White Paper 33, on merger, the battlelines were drawn. On the one side, the White Paper reflected a PAP-negotiated deal with the Federation whereby all Singapore citizens would become Malaysian nationals (but not full citizens, hence with no voting rights on the peninsula). Singapore would get less federal seats than its population demanded (in contrast to North Borneo and Sarawak). In return, Singapore would retain autonomy over labour and education. The Barisan repeated its demand for full merger and equality, with all existing 624,000 Singapore citizens becoming full Malaysian citizens, able to exercise their rights anywhere in the new state, and federal seats proportional to population. Lee Siew Choh pointed out in the Assembly that the Malayan constitution did allow for all the citizens of any acceding state to be considered for citizenship if the Federation parliament desired. At independence on 31 August 1957, the Federation had made all citizens of its pre-existing units citizens of the new state. It had even waived its language requirements for applicants for naturalisation in the immediate period after independence. The PAP therefore fell back to claiming the Barisan was impolitic to demand full federal citizenship for all Singapore citizens, even if it was theoretically — under the Federation Constitution — possible. This was because so many Singapore citizens would not meet existing Federation rules for becoming a citizen (for instance, on speaking Malay, and birth or residence).[79]

Lee Siew Choh's s case was that this was not "merger", but "sell-out". "We now know, Sir," he told the Assembly on 21 November, "… that the Tunku does not want merger. He wants our country, but not our people …" and so

> what is called merger is not merger. It is sheer domination of Singapore by the Federation. We must, therefore, reject these proposals. But if it is possible for Singapore to join in a confederation of Malaysia as an

autonomous unit, then we shall welcome this advance as a step towards full merger. And if none of these ways are open to us, then we should in the discharge of our constitutional obligations go to London in 1963 when the demand should be

Mr Marshall: Independence.

Dr. Lee Siew Choh: — for full and complete internal self-government … the minimum demand.[80]

It was the proposal for full merger as a constituent state like Penang or Malacca that the PAP seized upon from late 1961. The PAP insisted this would disenfranchise many Singapore-born citizens, and mean not retaining autonomy in education and labour. They made this Option B (minus the Barisan's demand for full federal citizenship for all current Singapore citizens) in the 1962 referendum, denying opposition demands to make it a simple "yes" or "no" to PAP proposals.

Such details probably did not dictate the outcome of the subsequent referendum. The Barisan problem was that they were fighting against the Malayan trajectory in Singapore history. They were arguing against taking a particular type of merger on offer, agreed in principle by the Federation. The price for federation now probably seemed worthwhile to many. The PAP had an offer "in the bag". By contrast, the "options" the Barisan suggested were either not available (loose confederation would not meet the Federation desire to ensure the Barisan and communists could never take control), or not obviously superior to the PAP proposal (merger like any other state as opposed to with retained powers over education and labour). The Barisan's arguments were weak relative to the overwhelming, long-held desire in Singapore for closer union. So the PAP-brokered merger terms had the whiff of a one-off, not-to-be-missed, if slightly tarnished opportunity.[82]

The PAP branded the following debate as the "Battle for Merger" against what it purported was communist-manipulated opposition. Lee's 12 radio speeches of 13 September to 9 October 1961, also published as *The Battle for Merger*, portrayed this as a do-or-die opportunity to achieve Singapore's only viable future, with the alternative possibilities ranging from certain reduction of pay and profit for everyone in the short-term, to loss of water from the mainland or ultimate absorption by force in the future. He portrayed Lim Chin Siong as a communist, and other Barisan leaders as dupes of a communist game, played to avoid their arrest by the central government.[83]
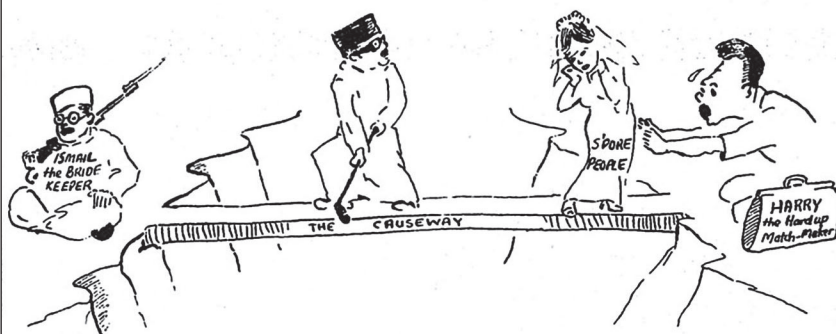
Plate 10.5 *The Plebeian* **cartoon on the merger, 1962**

This cartoon reflected the theme followed from the first edition of the Barisan Sosialis' *The Plebeian*, that Singapore was being offered "marriage" as a mistress (*The Plebeian* 1, 1 [April 1962]: 3). The idea of needing to marry before the causeway was cut off is a reflection of the Tunku's statement (*Straits Times*, 14 April 1962) that if merger failed, "Why shouldn't we close the Causeway if keeping it open would present easy access for subversive elements to enter and destroy our country?"[81]

By November 1961, the outlines of merger had been negotiated between the governments of the Federation and Singapore, and were published in the Singapore White Paper "Command 33" of 15 November. Singapore would retain control of education and labour, and in return have just 15 seats in the central legislature: less than its population warranted and the 19 Lee had asked for. Singapore citizens would become Malaysian nationals, only able to vote in Singapore.[84]

The PAP government introduced a referendum bill in March 1962 (passed in June), calling for a referendum in September 1962. When the terms of the referendum were announced in July, they enraged the Barisan. The choice was to be: (A) the PAP terms of merger of Command Paper 33 of November 1961, with safeguards for labour and education; (B) complete and unconditional merger on the same basis as the existing 11 states (which the PAP claimed meant disenfranchising some citizens and losing labour and education control); or (C) to join Malaysia on terms no less favourable than Sarawak and North Borneo. (A) was symbolised by a Singapore Flag; (B) by a Penang Flag; and (C) by the badges of North Borneo and Sarawak. This was made plausible by the fact that all parties agreed there should be merger, disagreeing only over the approach. Despite the Barisan's subsequent anger, it is possible that even had (B) been framed by them — as full unconditional merger with all Singapore citizens becoming full Malaysian citizens — it would have made little difference.

The weight and range of press support for getting a deal done was impressive, with the press seeing the heated debate as about detail not principle. *Sin Chew Jit Poh* emphasised consensus that Malaysia was economically and socially desirable, *Nanyang Siang Pau* added that small territories needed to unite for international stature and to end colonialism. Though they gave a full airing to Barisan arguments, both newspapers wanted merger quickly. The *Straits Times*, and also the Malay and Indian papers, were all cheerleaders for federation. The *Berita Harian* dismissed the Barisan tactics as underhand attempts to block Malaysia while saying they supported it.[85] The first week of February 1962 saw crowds thronging to the night market and cultural attractions of "Malaysian Week" in Singapore — showcasing the cultures of five territories and the prospect of being part of a country of more than 10 million rather than 1.7 million.[86] Simultaneously, the Malaysian Solidarity Convention Committee (MSCC) — ministers from the five territories — held its second meeting in Singapore.[87]

The Barisan tactics to suggest Singapore was only being offered second-class "national" status, not citizenship, backfired. The Federation confirmed Singapore citizens would be termed Malaysian citizens (in fact, the Federation only offered a concession in nomenclature). The PAP continued to claim that Barisan's favoured full merger might result in some losing citizenship (when Penang merged in 1946–1948, foreign-born residents did not automatically get citizenship).[88] The Barisan argued you could hardly compare the merger of a smaller territory a decade earlier, and denounced the PAP's "Big Bluff of 'Penang-Type merger'". They protested that in a union of two "peoples", there was no reason why all existing citizens could not be accepted as Malaysian citizens. *The Plebeian* of 15 May 1962 even told its audience that Lee Kuan Yew would rather see the Tunku open fire "on the people of Singapore" than lose power, but all to no avail.[89] PAP tactics made the public aware that negotiating a better deal was problematical.[90] Had the Barisan stuck to the simple argument Lim had given in early 1961, that merger at this stage might undo recent progress and mean less not more freedom; they would at least have had clarity on their side. Instead, they opted for a dual strategy: either get full integration into Malaysia to maximise Singapore's representation and so influence in overall politics; or if that was not possible, block federation and go for full self-government (or independence) with no ISC for June 1963.[91] Their tactics were at worst duplicitous, and at best, confused people.

Not that clarity would have made much difference. On the one hand, by mid-1962, the PAP strength in Parliament was down from 43 to 25 out of 51.[92] On the other, it is possible that one reason the Barisan chose to fight on the details of merger was that they recognised the overwhelming desire for a Malayan solution. More to the point, most Singapore citizens probably had no intention of moving to the Federation, and so having no voting rights there was irrelevant to them. Moreover, even had Singapore received all the 19 federal seats Lee Kuan Yew asked for — or even slightly more — it would have made scant difference to a system the Alliance dominated. The socialist allies the Barisan hoped to combine with were not strong, and would become even weaker in the May 1964 federal elections.

Faced with the "phoney" referendum, the Barisan, in July and August 1962, suggested people cast blank votes.[93] The PAP then secured an amendment to the referendum bill, so spoilt votes could be counted as a vote for the option favoured by the Legislature. When the votes were counted in early September, Option A got 397,626 votes (c. 71 per cent),

with 144,077 blank (c. 25 per cent).[94] *The Plebeian* screeched that it was "Fascism in Referendum" and rigging with a legal figleaf.[95] But the PAP had its mandate. After Indonesian opposition, and a final delay to allow the United Nations to ascertain the views of the people of Britain's Borneo territories, Malaysia came into being on 16 September 1963.

Barisan did not to accept that the PAP had won a genuine mandate. They now portrayed Malaysia as a tool of Britain's neo-colonial plotting. By October 1962, Lim had shifted from mainly opposing the PAP, to portraying two sides: the Federation-led right-wing forces; and the left-wing or "progressive" forces throughout Malaya and Borneo. This fitted the Barisan leaders' self-image. *The Plebeian* ran features on the "puppet" South Vietnamese regime, the Indonesian claim to West Irian, and the danger of British military bases. The paper pictured the party as part of a broad movement of anti-colonialists, in contrast to the PAP support of the ISC and British bases. By November 1962, Sandra Woodhull was telling *The Plebeian* readers that the game now centred on the Federation, with the Malayan peasantry as the deciding force.[96]

This shifting discourse shaped the Barisan's response to events in Brunei. There, August 1961 elections had overwhelmingly returned Sheikh A.M. Azahari's Partai Rakyat Brunei (PRB). This entitled the PRB to all 16 elected seats in the Brunei Legislative Council of 33. The PRB was expected to demand self-government for Kalimantan Utara (North Borneo) as opposed to Brunei entry into Malaysia, at a scheduled 5 December Legislative Council meeting. At the last minute, that meeting was postponed to 19–20 December.

The Barisan, naturally, had close links to other "progressive" parties, including the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP). There had been visits by politicians and trade union leaders from the Borneo territories to Barisan.[97] It is therefore not surprising that some Barisan members were in Borneo when revolt broke out. Dominic Puthucheary and unionist Inche Hussein Jahidin had gone to Brunei on 4 December after a trade union conference in Sarawak, hoping to be there during the historic Legislative Council meeting scheduled for 5 December. They were not to know that the meeting would be postponed, with the result that the PRB turned to armed revolt on 8 December. Given the PRB's overwhelming popular mandate, the Barisan then declared: "This is a popular uprising against British colonialism and must command the support of all genuine anticolonialists", and that the Singapore and Federation governments would be condemned if they did not oppose the British.[98] The revolt

was, claimed *The Plebeian* of 31 December, proof that Malaysia was a British and Federation plan to circumscribe the freedom of Singapore and Kalimantan Utara (North Borneo, in whose name the Brunei revolt was launched): "The rebellion in Kalimantan Utara is a sign of the people's will to freedom". "Will Brunei Become a 2nd Algeria?" asked one article from *The Plebeian*.[99]

Dominic Puthucheary wrote a long and emotive account for *The Plebeian*, in which he reported ordinary workers and peasants telling him they wanted to end colonialism, and seek a better life. "They told me the revolt [in neighbouring districts of Sarawak] was spontaneous … I knew they were simple peasants, but courageous, and that their hearts were crying for freedom and justice. I paused and tried to imagine the massacre that would take place in the villages of Sibutu and Niah by the British soldiers and their Gurkha mercenaries".[100]

In late December, Lim expressed the Barisan's certainty "that with the support of the newly emergent nations in the world the people of Kalimantan Utara (North Kalimantan) will soon achieve their national aims". According to the *Straits Times* of 24 December, Lim also pledged his party's support for Indonesia's "pro-revolt" stance, significant as that country moved towards "Confrontation" of Malaysia.[101] By early January 1963, Lim Chin Siong's tone — perhaps anticipating arrests — hardened. He warned of the possible "establishment of a Fascist and military dictatorship in the country", so that "The leftwing forces must then make the necessary judgement on the matter". There could be "no harmony, no development, and no progress for our nation" until the "progressive forces" were released and included.[102]

The Barisan could now be deemed to be supporting not just the cause of the Brunei rebels, but rhetorically at least their use of violence, which it had avoided condemning. That convinced the ISC that it had a pretext to launch long discussed arrests. Previously, the Federation had wanted Singapore to arrest limited numbers prior to merger, while Singapore had hoped to delay and let the Federation do this dirty work later. Britain had equivocated while Lim and other Barisan leaders kept to constitutional means.[103] Early on the morning of 3 February, Operation Cold Store now swung into action, with the arrest of more than 100 left-wingers, including members of Barisan, and the Singapore Association of Trade Unions. Lim Chin Siong, Sandra Woodhull, James Puthucheary, Fong Swee Suan and others were swept up. By the 21 September 1963 elections — just after Malaysia came into being — the party machinery was part crippled. In

spite of this (or partly because of it, out of sympathy at ill-treatment), it still won 33.3 per cent of the vote. First past the post competitions translated this respectable percentage into a miserable 13 seats to the PAP's 37 (out of 51).

Operation Cold Store further radicalised *The Plebeian*. It removed nuanced thinkers, such as Lim Chin Siong. It also made it seem clearer than ever that Malaysia was indeed a neo-colonialist British plot to keep their influence; and a PAP plot to use Federation control of internal security to remove their opponents. From 1963, the quality of writing in *The Plebeian* dropped. It became wedded to support for Kalimantan Utara's independence before merger — when the TNKU rebels had been resolutely ousted — and its writing increasingly parroted Beijing.[104] Some public renunciations, such as Sandra Woodhull's in early 1964, left the Barisan increasingly undermined.[105] A general strike of October 1963 failed, and there was acrimonious debate over how far to take action beyond the strictly constitutional, parliamentary road.[106]

Malaysia at Last

With the inauguration of Malaysia in September 1963, the PAP had arrived at their promised land. The PAP cabinet were almost all, bar Lee Kuan Yew, Malayan-born.[107] The Singapore anthem was, from 1959, *Majulah Singapura*, sung in Malay, which was also a national language. Education was supposed to ensure knowledge of English, Malay and a mother tongue. Singapore had the benefits of federation and yet retained control over labour and immigration. Onerous defence and security duties were now made federal duties, even if at the cost of handing over 40 per cent of Singapore's revenue. A common market was supposed to follow, boosting Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) and easing Singapore's unemployment. Federation might prevent Malaya diverting Singapore's entrepôt trade in tin and rubber to its own ports. What could go wrong? A lot, since the PAP and the UMNO images of decolonisation, and of the "Malayan" (in its political, cultural and economic guises) were rooted in radically different trajectories, one Malay-centred and the other Malayan-centred. Their jarring mental worlds were unveiled at the very moment of Malaysia's birth, in two separate announcements on 16th September 1963.

Lee welcomed federation in modern left parlance, as a state based on "liberty and justice and ever seeking the welfare and happiness of

her people in a more just and equal society". Tunku Abdul Rahman welcomed it "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful … ever seeking to defend and uphold peace and harmony among its people …" UMNO saw union as uniting with "Malay" brothers in Borneo while preventing any Singapore lurch towards communism. Singapore viewed it as an opportunity to erode communal politics. It would soon try to erode the Malayan Chinese Association's (MCA) position as UMNO's urban partner.

Subsequently, the PAP would portray their 1964 foray into peninsular elections as a defensive reaction to UMNO meddling in Singapore politics in September 1963. It was true that mainland politicians supported the local SUMNO, and that Malays loyal to the PAP were criticised in virulent language. But given SUMNO's relationship with UMNO, that was all but unavoidable. Besides, *Petir* and the *Singapore Year Book 1964* suggested a more ambitious rationale. The April edition of *Petir* presented the nine PAP candidates on the peninsula as precursors of a "social revolution", to set the scene for real adjustment in 1969. If elected, they would, with the Singapore seats, make the PAP the second largest party after UMNO.[108] The *Year Book 1964* quoted Lee saying, after the elections:

> 'A government of Malaysia which combines the strength of UMNO, with its rural Malay mass base, with the effectiveness of the PAP policies in subtly and intelligently countering Communist subversive activity in the towns is the best answer which the challenge of communism poses to us, the best way to ensure a healthy climate in which economic and political development will keep forging ahead'.

This was after a campaign manifesto in April 1964 for a "united, democratic and socialist Malaysia, based on the principles of social justice and non-communalism". Lee Kuan Yew restated these themes in the Malaysian Parliament on 21 May 1964, even after the PAP's nine candidates chalked up a humiliating return of just one elected. The PAP presented itself as offering "modern", rational solutions, as with its Housing and Development Board (1960).[109] The PAP decided they could represent modernity-urban-multiracial-social justice, alongside UMNO as a rural party, and so competed only versus the MCA in select urban constituencies.

The tactic of starting with a few candidates was not at all reassuring, notwithstanding PAP arguments. The PAP had done the same in Singapore in 1955 (running four candidates, getting three elected), after which it had

taken it just four years to achieve power. The MCA could not fail to see the foray as preparation for their replacement in the Alliance. UMNO would see it as an attack on the very principle of elite accommodation between mainly communal parties. This PAP vision evoked visceral reactions by the MCA, and from those in UMNO who saw their role as decolonising by reclaiming social and economic space for Malays. Led by UMNO Secretary General Syed Jaafar Albar, they increasingly supported Singapore Malays and SUMNO in protesting against resettlement programmes on the island. Inflammatory language in the Malay-language newspaper *Utusan Melayu* set the scene for July and September 1964 race riots in Singapore.

The Malayan dream was turning to Malaysian nightmare. The details are covered elsewhere, so it is enough to note that what was maturing was a political "civil war" over the meaning of "Malayan". The Alliance leadership faced pressure to ensure Singapore Malays got a better deal, and a voice (following the loss of all Singapore Alliance seats in 1963 elections). Following the debacle of PAP entry into peninsular elections in April 1964, UMNO wanted to get issues concerning Singapore Malays turned over to them, perhaps in return for some Singapore presence (not Lee) in the federal government. The PAP tried to help Malays through allowing expanded Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) programmes in Singapore, and the Tunku and Federation ministers appealed for calm. Yet, as soon as 21 September, the Tunku again criticised PAP leaders at an Alliance meeting in Singapore. Mistrust — fuelled by the underlying differences — meant the slightest misstep by either side could flare up.[110] The November 1964 federal budget — ballooning on the back of confrontation with Indonesia — resulted in demands that Singapore up its contribution to federal revenues. With slow progress towards a common market as well, this further fuelled discord.[111]

By December 1964, the Federation side was ready to talk about looser arrangements, if it would get Singapore representatives out of the federal parliament. In January 1965, the talk was of restricting Federation powers to defence and internal security, and possibly removing Singapore representation from the federal parliament. But the British opposed, and no agreement could be found.[112]

The dispute over the meaning of the Malayan reached a critical level with the Singapore-led launch of the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (MSC) on 9 May 1965. The MSC united the PAP, the peninsular parties such as Gerakan, and parties from the Borneo territories, on a platform seeking a genuine multiracial "Malaysian Malaysia" as opposed to a

Malay Malaysia. On 27 May, Lee told the Federal Parliament (speaking in Malay) that Malay rights provided privileges for a few — and the opportunities to service that elite for the mass of Malays — whereas PAP equality and development could breed a generation trained in science and "modern industrial management".[113] Soon, some within UMNO were calling for Lee's arrest for attacking Malay rights — and so the very foundation stone of the peninsular political system. This was notwithstanding the fact that the Alliance and its allies took 125 of 159 seats in the April 1964 federal elections.[114]

On the economic side, the granting of pioneer status certificates to new industries in Singapore had slowed to a trickle, following the transfer of this power to Kuala Lumpur.[115] Again, the Singapore vision of their role — as the advanced financial, logistical and industrial centre for a Malayan hinterland — had jarred with Alliance's (and notably MCA) hopes to develop the peninsula itself. Singapore did not seem to be advancing beyond Penang's status — as a free port inside the Federation but outside of its tariff walls.

By June 1965, the core of the Singapore and the Kuala Lumpur political elites wanted and needed a way out. In July, the two sides secretly negotiated for separation. The outcome was separation on 9 August 1965. The reason ultimately was not PAP or UMNO tactics or personalities. It was the incompatibility of Singapore and UMNO visions of the "Malayan" and "Malaysian". The UMNO vision was communal, with decolonisation as the reclaiming of space by Malay forms, around which other communities would be allowed subsidiary space. The Singapore (and especially PAP) vision was multiracial, utilitarian, collectivist, planning-driven, urban and centred on a meritocratic rather than an ascriptive, communal view of elites. This difference extended to the economic sphere. The PAP viewed Singapore as a services, planning and advanced industrial centre for Malaya, and as its New York. In 1959, *Petir* had made clear that this vision demanded "an economic union", one so important they might bargain away joint control of the port to get it.[116] UMNO, by contrast, viewed Singapore more as quarantine area in which a Chinese and communist threat could be contained, while the Tunku also viewed it as a "price" to be paid for including "Malays" in the Borneo territories in his federation of Malay lands. Even if the Tunku could accept Singapore as a "New York" of Malaysia, some MCA figures arguably saw Singapore as an economic competitor.

Being Malayan Outside of Malaysia

So it all ended it tears. But even after separation, the umbilical cord was only half-severed. Malaysian water passed to Singapore at cut price, and treated water passed back at below market price. It was 1972 before the two countries separated the joint Malaysia-Singapore Airline into MAS, taking domestic routes, and SIA, taking the international. As late as February 1966, Singapore's Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam could argue: "constitutional and political separation have not obliterated the brutal fact that the two territories are interdependent". The Singapore Government *Mirror* printed a "Plea for Co-operation in all fields" below a picture of the causeway, stating: "so long as the Causeway spans the Straits of Johore and so long as the Causeway is not broken, Malaysia and Singapore will remain to be one. It is not necessary for the two countries to unite because they are already one. The Johore Causeway is like a navel-cord to two twins". Twice daily rail services to Kuala Lumpur continued. The very tensions between the two sides would be about these interdependencies: over the registration and savings of Malaysians who worked in Singapore; currency with 1966 hopes for a joint currency board followed by separation in 1967,[117] how to manage the withdrawal of Federation troops; the airline; and (with deteriorating relations from the 1990s) over water and the development of Malayan railway land, which cut to the heart of Singapore; and even about the Malaysian development of rival port facilities.[118]

Conclusion

This chapter argues that there was a long-term development of a Malayan trajectory in the island's history (itself made up of developments in culture, infrastructure, administration, politics, education and other areas). This must be analysed alongside the similarly long-term development of trajectories (such as that of Malay political nationalism stressing indigeneity, and later, elite accommodation as the primary political drivers) which worked against merger, or at least against the sort of merger Singapore elites hoped for. Though political tactics — British, Federation, and by multiple Singapore players — helped to dictate the timing and experience of merger, the politics was shaped by the deeper underlying currents, which had their own chronologies. This was so much so that official separation on 9 August 1965 did not, and could not, immediately destroy the Malayan trajectory. Different aspects of the two territories' inter-relationship deteriorated or were ended at varying points of time over decades. In military bases,

water, transport, aviation, worker movements and other areas, "separation" or disentanglement was a long process. In education, disentanglement was already well underway by January 1962, before merger was achieved.

Another way of looking at this is to argue that Singapore's divorce from Malaysia was, in part, a peninsular Malaysian rejection of the sort of centrality Singapore sought. This was one which included Singapore's aspirations for manufacturing and economic leadership as much as its aspiration to champion a multiracially equal "Malaysian Malaysia", rather than a Malay Malaysia. The PAP experimented with different paths to these aspirations — hoping for federal government membership, trying to undermine the MCA as an Alliance partner, and finally campaigning overtly for a Malaysian Malaysia, but the key fact was that their vision of Malaysia was distinct. It was also anathema to UMNO and the MCA.

Finally, the fact that the politics rested on top of a more rooted Malayan trajectory meant that it remained, and remains, in the two countries' interests to recognise and build on that trajectory. This has happened, at times, despite strained political relationships. Hence, for instance the development of the so-called SIJORI or growth triangle of Singapore-Johor-Riau islands and, more recently, of an Iskandar Economic Zone in south Johor. As of July 2008, the Malaysia-Singapore Joint Ministerial Committee for the latter agreed on a Malaysia Automated Clearance system, with fast-tracking for regular commuters between Iskandar and Singapore.[119] The eventual aim was for a smart card system and significantly increased bus routes. In areas such as tourism and air hub facilities as well, the early 21st-century challenge from Thailand and other areas made it in the interests of both parties to cooperate more.

At the same time, the forces which contributed to the split remained potent in dividing the two sides, notably: different approaches to ethnic and communal groups and the related politics, and Malaysia's desire to modernise itself rather than leaving Singapore as the most modern centre for the region. Hence, for instance, the 1961–1962 water agreements — based on Singapore receiving cheap raw water and returning a lesser quantity of cheap processed water — came under pressure as soon as Malaysia had invested in more of its own modern treatment plants. Hence, also Malaysia's development of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP) in Johor as a competitor, in part, to Singapore's container facilities.[120] The key to the future is therefore not just to pick off low-lying fruit — that is, solving the areas of dispute most easily tackled — but to address how to optimise cooperation while recognising the different political trajectories and values.

Hence, the continuing need is not just for incremental improvements in the mobility of citizens between the two areas, and cooperation in areas such as education, tourism, and security, but to develop models of cooperation which meet the needs of the two countries' radically different approaches to the "Malayan" trajectory in Singapore history.

Notes

1. Albert Lau, *A Moment of Anguish: Singapore in Malaysia and the Politics of Disengagement* (Singapore: Times, 1998); John Drysdale, *Singapore: Struggle for Success* (Singapore: Times, 1986); Dennis Bloodworth, *The Tiger and the Trojan Horse* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2005).
2. Tan Tai Yong, *Creating 'Greater Malaysia'* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008), p. 2.
3. *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Sea* (1847): Preface, i–viii.
4. Ibid., Preface.
5. Ibid., vii.
6. *Straits Times*, 1 July 1846, p. 2.
7. *JSBRAS* 1 (1878): 11.
8. *JSBRAS* 1 (1878): v, 1–12.
9. Ibid., 5–7.
10. *JSBRAS* 35 (1922).
11. Albert Lau, "The Politics of Becoming 'Malaysian' and 'Singaporean'", in *Across the Causeway*, ed. Takashi Shiraishi (Singapore: ISEAS, 2009), p. 95.
12. Lau, "The Politics of Becoming 'Malaysian'", p. 96.
13. Edwin Lee, *Singapore: The Unexpected Nation* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008), pp. 24–8.
14. Lee, *Singapore*, p. 26.
15. W.R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1994).
16. "Yong: University Cannot Remain an Ivory Tower", *Straits Times*, 11 June 1960.
17. Malay Mail, *Federation of Malaya Year Book 1960* (Kuala Lumpur: Malay Mail, 1960), pp. 126–7.
18. A.J. Stockwell, "'The Crucible of the Malayan Nation': The University of Malaya and the Making of a New Malaya, 1938–62", *Modern Asian Studies* 43 (2009): 1149–87.
19. Immigrants from the Indies, and school teachers at Sultan Idris Teacher Training College (opened 1922) were foremost, forming in 1938 the Young Malays' Association or *Kesatuan Melayu Muda*.
20. Tim Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
21. Lee, *Singapore*, p. 44.

22. *Colony of Singapore Annual Report 1953* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 24.

23. Wong Yoon Wah, *Post-Colonial Chinese Literatures in Singapore and Malaysia* (Singapore: Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore, 2002), p. 12, *passim*.

24. Ibid., pp. 15–7.

25. Lee, *Singapore*, p. 55, referring to the MDU joining Tan Cheng Lock and others in a Council of Joint Action in December 1946, with Tan as Chairman and MCP Eurasian Gerald de Cruz helping.

26. Wang Gungwu, "Trial and Error in Malayan Potry", *The Malayan Undergrad* 9, 5 (July 1958), as reproduced in S/pores, at <http://s-pores.com/2008/01/malayanpoetry/>.

27. "View China as Foreign Land", *Straits Times*, 4 April 1960.

28. ISEAS, Singapore, Tan Cheng Lock papers, folio 23; Durham University, Malcolm Macdonald papers, Box 22/8/20, *passim*.

29. Lee, *Singapore*, pp. 116–8.

30. See Harper, *The End of Empire*, for approach, even though Singapore was not his main focus.

31. Sai Siew Min and Huang Juali, "The 'Chinese-Educated' Political Vanguards: Ong Pang Boon, Lee Khoon Choy and Jek Yeun-Thong", in *Lee's Lieutenants: Singapore's Old Guard*, eds. Lam Peng Er and Kevin Tan (St Leonard's: Allen & Unwin, 1999), p. 140.

32. Elinah Abdullah, "The Political Activities of the Singapore Malays, 1945–1959", in *Malays/Muslims in Singapore: Selected Readings in History 1819–1965*, eds. Khoo Khay Kim, Elinah Abdullah and Wan Meng Hao (Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 2006), p. 133.

33. Lee, *Singapore*, p. 146, the PAP took 13 seats, 7 LF, 4 each Workers Party and Liberal Socialists.

34. Lee, *Singapore*, p. 153.

35. *Singapore Yearbook 1964*, pp. 96–8.

36. <http://www.singpost.com.sg/singpost_06about_history.htm> [accessed 12 July 2009].

37. Karl Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia: Britain, Malaya and Singapore, 1941–68* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), pp. 111–3.

38. *Malayan Railways: 100 Years 1885–1985* (Kuala Lumpur: AMW Communications, 1985).

39. Roy Allen, *SIA: Take-off to Success* (Singapore: Singapore Airlines, c.1990).

40. Lee Soo Ann, *Singapore: From Place to Nation* (Singapore: Pearson, 2007). Until 1966, there was a currency board for Singapore and the Federation/Malaysia.

41. None of these federations survived, but in contrast to Malaysia/Singapore, some common institutions — such as the University of the West Indies — did.

42. Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation*, pp. 43–50.

43. *Straits Budget*, 14 August 1947, "The Future of Singapore" (formerly in *Straits Times*, 7 Auguest 1947).

44. *Times* (London), 4 June 1959.

45. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 1 January 1959.

46. *Singapore Legislative Assembly Debates* [henceforth *SLAD*], Vol 1, 1 (26 April 1955), cols. 4–12.

47. *Straits Times*, 2 September 1950, on Lee's 1 September talk. He arrived back from England in August.

48. Yong Nyuk Lin, "Spring Source of our Nation", in *Tasks Ahead*, part II, p. 3.

49. People's Action Party, *PAP: The Fourth Anniversary Celebration Souvenir* (Singapore: People's Action Party, 1958), p. 21.

50. *Petir* 2, 2 (February 1959): 1–2.

51. *Petir* 2, 3 (March 1959): 2.

52. Rajaratnam, "On the Creation of a National Cutlure: A Reply to the Sceptics", *Sunday Mail*, 27 September 1959, cited in Chan Heng Chee, *S. Rajaratnam: The Prophetic and the Political* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2007), pp. 102–4.

53. D.J. Enright, *Memoirs of a Mendicant Professor*, new edition (Manchester: Carcanet, 1990), pp. 122–6.

54. "Towards a Malayan Nation", *Petir* 2, 5 (May 1959): 1ff.

55. Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Times, 1998), p. 474. As late as 1962, the Tunku was keen on increasing the Singapore Alliance strength, including by hints that the PAP might give the latter a clear run in a by-election.

56. Lee, *Singapore*, p. 178.

57. A.J. Stockwell, *Malaysia* (London: TSO, 2004), pp. 3, 28–9, 61–8.

58. Hussin Mutalib, *Parties and Politics: A Study of Opposition Parties and the PAP in Singapore* (Singapore: Times, 2003), pp. 73–5 posits 3 factions: English-educated, Middle Road, and oscillating but disenchanted by Lee's tactics. Francis Thomas, "Two Political Facts", *Straits Times*, 19 July 1961.

59. Ooi Keng Bee, *The Reluctant Politician: Tun Dr. Ismail and His Time* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2006), pp. 140ff.

60. T.N. Harper, "Lim Chin Siong — The Man and His Moment", in *Comet in our Sky: Lim Chin Siong in History*, eds. Tan Qing Quee and K.S. Jomo (Kuala Lumpur: INSAN, 2001), pp. 3–55.

61. See NRA: A816/19/321/43, "Subversion and Counter Subversion in Singapore", RL Harry Commissioner to RG Casey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 July 1956; and Poh Soo Kai, Koh Kay Yew and Tan Jing Quee, eds., *The Fajar Generation: The University of Socialist Club and the Politics of Postwar Malaya and Singapore* (Petaling Jaya: SIRD, 2009).

62. See Fong Chong Pik (Lee's "Fang" or "Plen"), *Fong Chong Pik: The Memoirs of a Malayan Communist Revolutionary* (Petaling Jaya: SIRD, 2008).

63. Mutalib, *Parties and Politics*, pp. 80–2, for ISC having Barisan "under the control" of communists.
64. Lim Chin Siong, "The Conditions for Merger", *Straits Times*, 24 June 1961, p. 10.
65. *SLAD* (21 July 1961), cols. 1847–1850.
66. Mutalib, *Parties and Politics*, pp. 78–9.
67. *Plebeian* 1, 3 (15 May 1962): 3.
68. Lim Chin Siong to 17 May 1962 rally, as reported in *The Plebeian* 1, 5 (18 July 1962): 4.
69. Lim Chin Siong says: "I'm Not a Communist'", *Straits Times*, 31 July 1961, p. 8. As political secretary, "I was not allowed any say in the formulation of Government policy. I soon discovered that my responsibility was to support any action or chance utterances of Government ministers … to give the impression that the workers and the Government were one" in the absence of party democracy and accused of opposing the PAP in Hong Lim. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 27 January 1962, LP1.
70. "No Guarantee in 'Safeguards'", *The Plebeian* 1, 3 (15 May 1962): 1.
71. "Lee Dishonest in Merger 'Choice'", *The Plebeian* 1, 4 (8 June 1962): 1.
72. Ibid.
73. Even when running for election to Bukit Timah in 1955 — with areas with no electricity or piped water — Lim contrasted with his opponents in focussing not on water or social insurance, but on repealing Emergency regulations and National Service, *Straits Times*, 22 March 1955, p. 2.
74. "The National Day Scandal", editorial, *The Plebeian* 1, 4 (8 June 1962): 1.
75. "PAP Will Not Stay a Punching Bag", *Straits Times*, 12 July 1961, p. 1.
76. Mutalib, *Parties and Politics*, p. 88, citing *Sunday Times*, 2 August 1961, *Straits Times*, 18 September 1961.
77. *Straits Times*, 30 August 1961, as cited in Mutalib, *Parties and Politics*, p. 87.
78. *SLAD* (21 November 1961), col. 401, citing Barisan stand of 28 August 1961.
79. *SLAD* (21 November 1961), cols. 318–22, 327–33, *passim*.
80. *SLAD* (21 November 1961), cols. 399–406.
81. The *Barisan* rebutted that the Federation would suffer more than Singapore by such an action; see *Straits Times*, 17 April 1962, as cited in Mutalib, *Parties and Politics*, p. 91.
82. *SLAD* (21 August 1957), col. 2493. In August 1957, William Tan described proposals to the Federation for merger as "like rain water dripping off the back of a duck …"
83. Lee Kuan Yew, *Battle for Merger* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 4–6, *passim*.
84. Mutalib, *Parties and Politics*, p. 85.

85. See, for instance, *Tamil Nesan*, 7 February 1962, *Tamil Murasu*, 7 February 1962, *Utusan Melayu* (the UMNO-aligned paper) in general, and *Berita Harian*, 7 September 1961, editorial, "Barisan and Merger".

86. Malaya and Singapore would have had 7.724 million, 44.3% Chinese and 43% Malay and indigenous. For 1962 see Stockwell, *Malaysia*, pp. 111, 225–6, 10.1m total, 7.095m in Malaya.

87. *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, editorial, 3 January 1962; "The Launching of Malaysia Week", 29 January 1962; *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 29 January 1962, editorial.

88. "The Referendum Plot", *The Plebeian* 1, 1 (April 1962): 3.

89. "Some Odd Thoughts of *Metellus* on the Decline and Fall", *The Plebeian* 1, 3 (15 May 1962): 1.

90. *Sin Chew Chit Poh*, 2 September 1961, LP1. *The Plebeian* 1, 2 (18 April 1962): 6.

91. Ooi, *The Reluctant Politician*, p. 140, gives Malayan Special Branch analysis as: "if the early capture of the Central Government through complete integration of Singapore is denied, the Communists must try to reduce the powers which the central government now seeks, particularly in respect to internal security …"

92. Mutalib, *Parties and Politics*, pp. 86, 114 note 18. 13 were left to form *Barisan* in July 1961, three left to join Ong Eng Guan's party, one died, and another resigned in July 1962. Two more PAP members — Tan Wee Tiong and T.T. Rajah — left to join Barisan after the initial batch.

93. *The Plebeian* 1, 5 (18 July 1962); *The Plebeian* 1, 6 (8 August 1962): 1.

94. Mutalib, *Parties and Politics*, p. 93.

95. "Fascism in Referendum: Varsity Forum Condemns PAP", *The Plebeian* 1, 4 (8 June 1962): 1–2.

96. Mutalib, *Parties and Politics*, pp. 94–5.

97. "*Merdeka!* — in the Rain", *The Plebeian* 1, 3 (15 May 1962): 1.

98. *Straits Times*, 10 December 1962; citation from *The Plebeian* 1, 12 (14 December 1962): 1.

99. *The Plebeian* 1, 13 (31 December 1962): 1.

100. *The Plebeian* 1, 13 (31 December 1962): 2.

101. *Straits Times*, 24 December 1962, p. 7.

102. "Left-Wing Forces May Have to Make Judgement: Barisan", *Straits Times*, 1 January 1963, p. 2.

103. NRA: A11536, Australian High Commission Kuala Lumpur to Canberra, 18, 28, 29 January 1963.

104. *The Plebeian* 15 May 1963 (6 September 1966).

105. "The Tragic Business of Barisan Sosialis", *Straits Times*, 26 February 1964.

106. Lee Siew Choh failed to win the "constitutionalist" faction over to a more "militant revolutionary policy" after Cold Store, and had hoped small-scale sabotage and violence might accompany the strike of October 1963. NRA:

A1838, TS696/7/2/Part 1, JIC(FE)128/64(Final), The Communist Threat in Malaya and Singapore, by Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East), 8 October 1964.

107. Just under one third of the PAP's 51 candidates in 1959, and about half Singapore-born. "Biographies of Our 51 Candidates", *Petir* 2, 5 (May 1959): 4–9.

108. "Defeat the Traitors of Malaysia: Help Start Off the Winds of Change", *Petir* (April 1964): 1.

109. *Singapore Year Book 1964*, pp. 3–4, 368ff.

110. NRA: A1838, TS696/7/2/Pt A, Australian High Commission in Malaysia (Singapore) to Canberra, 10 October 1964. The Tunku blamed Singapore representatives for criticism in the London press.

111. Tan Siok Sin, *Goh Keng Swee* (Singapore: Didier Millet, 2007).

112. Lee, *Singapore*, pp. 255–7.

113. Lee, *Singapore Story*, pp. 609–15.

114. Ooi, *Reluctant Politician*, pp. 153–4. For the seats, see Wang Gungwu, *Malaysia: A Survey* (Singapore: Donald Moore, 1964). The PPP, for instance, took 2.

115. In mid-1964, Tan Siew Sin assured the common market "would certainly be established as scheduled". A Tariff Advisory Board would report within months. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 24 August 1964.

116. "Our Economic Policy", *Petir*, Special Issue (April 1959): 2.

117. *Mirror* 35, 2 (29 August 1966).

118. S. Rajaratnam, "Respect our Independence and Sovereignty", *Mirror* 2, 9 (28 February 1966).

119. "Faster Clearance to Iskandar", *Straits Times*, 6 April 2009, A9.

120. Kamarulnizam Abdullah, "Johor in Malaysia-Singapore Relations", in *Across the Causeway*, ed. Takashi Shiraishi, pp. 128ff. See also Teofilo C. Daquila, "Economic Relations: Competing or Complentary?", pp. 200–30, ibid.

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Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

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The People's Action Party Blueprint for Singapore, 1959–1965

Jean–Louis Margolin

On the eve of the crucial 30 May 1959 Parliamentary elections, the People's Action Party (PAP) was confident of victory. Having made a strong showing at the 1957 City Council elections, it now embarked on a wide-ranging revamping of its doctrine. One of the reasons such changes were necessary was that previous programmes reflected the party's origins: an awkward alliance between a social-democratic, English-educated elite on the one hand; and (mostly) Chinese-speaking and communist radicals who commanded union and mass support, on the other. The former had been handed a gift from the Gods in late 1957, when arrests of left-wing Central Executive Committee (CEC) members by the colonial authorities gave the initiative to the self-styled moderates. Led by Lee Kuan Yew, the latter consolidated their control of the party by 1958 rule changes, whereby the CEC selected cadres, and cadres then selected CEC members.[1] When some of the more prominent detainees from the more radical wing were released in June 1959, they were shackled into junior posts. Thus insulated from threat of being outvoted by radicals in the branches, the PAP CEC was ready to write a new blueprint. This would be their blueprint for

the self-governing state which Singapore would become after the 1959 elections, as scheduled by the State of Singapore Act of the British Parliament (August 1958).

To successfully manage the last stages of decolonisation, and if possible to achieve the aim of full independence through merger with a reluctant Malaya, the PAP now had to be considered as a realistic and constructive force by the middle class as well as by the British and the Malayans. More generally, the party had to be theoretically refurbished, after its rather confused formative years. The result of these demands was a series of long, detailed and programmatic texts of 1958 to 1959, namely *The New Phase after Merdeka* ['independence'] — *Our Tasks and Policy* of November 1958;[2] *The Tasks Ahead: PAP's 5-year plan 1959–64* of May 1959; and *The Ends and Means of Socialism* of June 1959.[3]

Seen from more than half a century later, these three texts seem to foreshadow what would become the major strengths of Lee Kuan Yew's government: always to remain one step ahead; to be prepared for the unexpected; and to be able to programme as closely as possible the future of Singapore. On these points, the city-state's achievements have subsequently been remarkable. Consequently, excavating the initial source of the PAP's political legitimacy and programmatic approach to policy is of immense importance in assessing its persisting commanding position in present-day Singapore, as well as how Singapore confirmed its subsequent, central position within Southeast Asia.

These PAP programmes, and the approach which underlay them, were to be tested and improved over the taxing first decade which this chapter details. In this period, there were startling transformations, not only of specific policies, but also in the general world situation, in the region, and in Singapore itself. The city-state experienced the most dramatic changes in circumstance and direction in this period: into Malaysia (1963–1965) and then out of it to independence (9 August 1965); socialist and then capitalist; industrialist through import substitution and then through export orientation. Here is a major challenge: explaining how what was unique and underlying in these programmes and in the more general PAP approach to planning the future helped Singapore to repeatedly reinvent itself in the light of fast-changing circumstances; explaining too the continuous strengths that coped so well with such massive discontinuities. The constant round of reinvention, a permanent feature in Singapore's history, has never been more obvious than under Lee Kuan Yew (Prime

Minister, 1959–1990) and his political heirs. Furthermore, during their extended rule, no period has seen more rapid and decisive changes than this first decade.

This decade presented the PAP with three sets of major transformations. On the world scene, there was the rapid fading away of colonialism and British power culminating with the rundown of British bases from 1968, as well as the eruption on a large scale of new, major economic actors: the multinational companies. On the regional scene, there was the increasing necessity to take sides in a Cold War whose vortex was located in Vietnam; but also the economic growth, on a capitalist basis, of countries such as Thailand, Taiwan, and Malaysia and, belatedly, even Indonesia. On the domestic scene, there was the dramatic challenge then decline of the indigenous pro-communists of the early to mid-1960s, and the no less dramatic merger then separation issues of 1963–1965. These challenges combined to force Singapore to redefine its very identity.

These challenges might have derailed seasoned politicians, and could have wrecked larger and stronger countries than Singapore. Happily enough — if not for their thoroughly crushed opponents, then at least for the city-state — the team of leaders that came into power in 1959, and ruled almost unchanged throughout the following decade, had three important advantages. First, they were young, most being in their thirties; secondly, they were open-minded and flexible; and last but certainly not least, they were ruthless. As with their senior contemporary, Mao Zedong, the ends always justified the means. But, contrary to the dogmatic helmsman, the end itself was reviewed and modified if and when changing circumstances required it.

Despite a PAP public discourse which emphasised continuity, and the unfailing forecasting ability of its leaders, the changes of general perspective were far-reaching. The very world view of key individuals — such as Lee Kuan Yew as Prime Minister, and Sinnathamby Rajaratnam as Culture Minister (1959–1964), the man-in-charge of theoretical questions in those years — was transformed in this period. These conceptual and programmatic evolutions have seldom been studied for themselves, as most historians of recent Singapore have concentrated on the day-by-day decisions, and their immediate rationale. Our purpose is to explore what lies immediately behind, below and beside the surface political process, shaping it at one remove. Consequently, our main sources are the widely scattered ideological and (more seldom) theoretical statements made in this period by the party and its leaders.

Prologue: The Initial Programme and its Ambiguities

During the inaugural meeting of the PAP on 21 November 1954, Lee Kuan Yew presented the six major objectives of the party.[4] Three were political, all of them connected with the independence of Malaya. The new state should be unified with Singapore; it should be "unitary" (not federal), with equal rights for the migrant Chinese and Indians as well as for the Malays; it should be ruled through universal suffrage, and based upon the ideal of the "creation of a prosperous, stable and just society". The three other points were characteristic of a left-wing, socialist party: "To abolish the unjust inequalities of wealth and opportunity"; to fight against unemployment and exploitation; to create a comprehensive system of social security and benefits for those unable to work. The accompanying, much longer manifesto was slightly more radical: it demanded a quick Malayanisation of the civil service and the repeal of Emergency laws and regulations, especially of those curtailing the freedom of trade unions, and of the "arbitrary power of arrest and indefinite detention without trial".[5]

This initial programme was a compromise between the two factions of the PAP, the reformist, socially moderate elite group led by Lee Kuan Yew, and the radical, communist-leaning, union-based wing. It had not been exceedingly difficult to agree on independence, democratic freedoms, merger with Malaya, or the building of an advanced national economy. But the very meaning of these demands remained hazy: were they just one step towards the lofty goal of a socialist Malaya modelled on the Soviet Union or China, or did an independent, democratic and social state constitute an end in itself? That very ambiguity ensured the durability of the 1954 documents: they were never explicitly rejected by the party, even if, from 1959, they were quietly put aside and half forgotten. It is notable that the 1961 split of the left-wing, and the resulting Barisan Sosialis (Socialist Front), insisted on its faithfulness to the original manifesto. By contrast, Sinnathamby Rajaratnam, prominent among the moderates, explained later why the manifesto remained in many ways unfinished and open: "The drawing up of the manifesto for the new Party was by no means an easy task, particularly when individuals in the group had different views and interpretations of terms such as 'democracy' and 'socialism'".[6]

Indeed, during its first three years of existence, the PAP embarked on a swing to the left. It proclaimed itself "socialist" in 1956, but even beforehand, it started developing a strongly-worded egalitarianism. According to *The Tasks Ahead* of 1956, what is aimed at is a society "in which

the great differences of wealth and opportunity between our peoples would be reduced and gradually eliminated".[7] The way towards it could be not entirely peaceful: the other political forces, *Petir* stressed in 1958, "are equally afraid of any party which is really out to bring about a social revolution. They recognise that the PAP is such a party".[8] In numerous *Petir* articles, the representatives of the left-wing used a language almost indiscernible from communist discourse. Thus, in 1956, left-wing leader Sandra Woodhull underlined that "one of the greatest impediments to peace recognised by the neutral Asian and African countries is the phobia of communism and Soviet Russia engendered in the West". And he evoked "the genuineness of Soviet desire for peace".[9] It is probably no coincidence if, along the years 1954–1957, the PAP published few programmatic or theoretical documents: the 1954 manifesto and the 1956 *The Tasks Ahead* were the only exceptions. The party was too deeply divided to go much further. However, the shortlived triumph of the radicals at the PAP August 1956 conference, quickly followed by their administrative detention, ensured the definitive victory of the Lee group. The unchallenged moderate line led then to the publication of several essential documents. These changes — this process of reinventing the PAP as something palatable to Malaya — formed the solid background to the PAP taking government in 1959.

1959: A Socialist Party?

The general perspective of the party's 1958 and 1959 publications remained undoubtedly socialist, but clearly reformist. According to *PAP: The Fourth Anniversary Celebration Souvenir* of 1958, "socialism can be achieved step by step through peaceful parliamentary democracy".[10] The party projects, the *Tasks Ahead* (May 1959 version) emphasises, "are realistic and are based on actual existing political and social conditions and economic circumstances".[11] Therefore, far from being a "workers' party" or "people's party", the PAP now described itself as an interclass movement: "the traders and local businessmen who are honest support us because they gain by the elimination of squeeze and corruption, and the establishment of an honest and efficient government".[12] The only declared enemy, in a purely rhetorical way, is foreign capital, whose denunciation is used as a tool towards national unity: "It is necessary to explain to our Malay people that it is not the non-Malays who are depriving him of economic opportunities, but a colonial capitalist economy".[13]

A generally positive inventory

The PAP programmes now also became surprisingly positive about the colonial legacy. Taking them together, the balance sheet of the economy, after 140 years of colonisation, is presented in positive terms. PAP publications note the high level both of per capita national income (then Asia's highest, Japan included) and of workers' wages. The latter were then at least twice as high as anywhere else in the region, hence the need to protect the local labour market against a potentially massive foreign immigration. The other advantage, invoked to explain high incomes, is the ingrained quality of population and location: "First [Singapore] people are industrious and enterprising. Second, her central position in Southeast Asia made her the natural trading centre for the entire region".[14] That gives to the colony "access to large markets in neighbouring countries".[15] Furthermore, capital is abundantly available. The main problem would be to tap it in favour of a development policy which would be based on massive industrialisation. Hence, even at this stage, the PAP emphasised the necessity of an interventionist government: "the large gaps that will be left in the investments needed of Singapore by private enterprise must be filled by the government, if the economy is not to collapse under the pressure of our rapidly increasing population".[16] Nevertheless, as future Finance Minister Goh Keng Swee noticed, the stage of initial capital accumulation was already largely overcome by the 1950s, through a century and a half of foreign investments, and even more significantly, through the settling in Singapore of a huge segment of the most successful Chinese business people from the region. The future government should lead, induce, coordinate, and modify the allocation of already available funds and labour; significantly, in 1959, even the communists did not advocate extensive nationalisations.

On the other side, the most serious weakness was seen as the manufacturing sector: it employed less than a fifth of the working population, even as unemployment was rising. Population growth was high, and the prosperity of entrepôt trade was threatened by the nationalistic trends in newly independent Indonesia (1949) and Malaya (1957). The only solution was to "reorganise our economy from a non-productive trading economy to a productive one",[17] and "to expand our manufacturing industries".[18] This implied what was, for the time, standard Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) strategy, replacing foreign imports with home-manufactures, but also, given Singapore's limited size, it implied a merger with Malaya. That alone could supply a large enough economic hinterland to make an

ISI model credible. Economic logic therefore seemed to demand a closer relationship. *Petir* (the PAP official newspaper) evoked the "fundamental economic unity of the two territories", and stated: "every effort must be made to coordinate the policies of the two territories".[19] The first measures to be adopted should be a common market, and widening of the scope of the new industries. This would also allow a sharing of the burden: Malaya would focus on the transformation of primary products, and Singapore on the consumer goods. The international connections of the island would facilitate the penetration of foreign markets by Malayan goods. The future economic union would be a tremendous incentive for foreign investors, and in addition, the level of economic as well as political uncertainty would be lowered. It is significant that even at a time when socialist ideas were most influential, Singapore's international orientation was accepted: everybody understood that Singapore's prosperity, even its very existence, depended on this.

Towards a mixed economy

The problem was that, in 1959, merger with the Federation remained a remote possibility: the newly independent (August 1957) Malay-dominated Federation of Malaya did not want to internalise Singapore's Chinese majority and turbulent politics. The most urgent task should therefore be to increase the government's capacity for economic intervention. As early as February 1959, *Petir* announced that the cornerstone would be the creation of an Economic Development Board (EDB) "partly political and partly industrial", in which both trade union and business leaders would sit.[20] EDB's mission would be to give technical assistance to companies, to pilot development planning, and to lend capital to manufacturing industries. EDB could also initiate joint ventures with private companies, eventually as a majority partner, or be the sole owner of some newly formed companies. EDB's role, therefore, should be to supervise and advise private capital, not to victimise or marginalise it. The EDB project may be traced to the report elaborated in 1955 by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which recommended the setting up of a division of industrial development aiming at a closer connection between government and private businesses.[21] Consequently, a Singapore Industrial Promotion Board had been initiated by the Lim Yew Hock government in March 1957. However, its severely limited means had left it almost inactive. A new impulse had come from another report

released in January 1959: F.J. Lyle, industrial development adviser at the Commonwealth-sponsored Colombo Plan, recommended a powerful Joint Industrial Development Council, common to Singapore and the Federation of Malaya.[22] As a consequence, early in 1959 (*before* the crucial May elections which propelled the PAP to power), two important laws had been voted: the Pioneer Industries (Relief from Income Tax) Ordinance, and the Industrial Expansion (Relief from Income Tax) Ordinance (IEO). Similar measures had preceded in Malaya in 1958. The setting up of the actual Economic Development Board — with comparatively huge means at its disposal — was to take place in August 1961.

More generally, the idea of a semi-planned economy, with the government as the major actor, should be related to Lee Kuan Yew's formative years in the late 1940s to 1950s. His first trip out of Singapore, between 1946 and 1950, had been to London and then to Cambridge to study law. At the time, the Labour government, led by Clement Attlee, was in power, with its far-reaching plans for nationalisation, town planning, and even for a National Health Service. There, according to Michael Barr, Lee came under the influence of ideas originating with the Fabians, a group committed to social change based on thorough research and state-led action, and closely associated with the Labour Party.[23] He was going to retain for a long time the British Labour Party's and Fabian's moderate, parliamentary, anti-communist but strongly statist conception of socialism. He would combine that conception in a peculiar way with his admiration for the authoritarian and effective government that, according to him, the Japanese had brought to Singapore in 1942.[24] According to one of his close friends of that time, he was then also an avid reader and great admirer of the following authors — John Strachey (a "revisionist" British Labourite, who wrote the 1956 *Contemporary Capitalism*), George Padmore (the famous Trinidad-born, Pan-African leader, who wrote the 1956 *Pan-Africanism and Communism*), and Ashok Mehta (close to India's Prime Minister Nehru since 1955, he became in 1962 his Economic Affairs and Planning Minister, and in 1959, published *Democratic Socialism*). All three of them had been Marxists, close to the international communist movement, but had converted later to social-democratic conceptions focusing on economic and social planning, welfarism, social justice and equal opportunities. They rejected widespread nationalisations and egalitarianism, and were staunch anti-communists.[25] Lee was going to slowly discard his initial socialist leanings, probably under the influence of Goh Keng Swee, one of the PAP's most cerebral members. Goh, until

the early 1950s, had shared the same admiration for a UK-style welfare state; in that period, he had headed what could be to this day the most thorough investigation on social stratification in Singapore.[26] But, as early as the late 1950s, he seemed to have switched his intellectual allegiance towards Adam Smith, Schumpeter, Max Weber and even Hayek. He started promoting a non-ideological pragmatism that was to become the main economic motto in independent Singapore. He also had only praise for Victorian moral values, which according to him, provided a strong foundation for development.[27]

While paying lip service to the then prevailing socialist dogma of nationalisation, the PAP now rejected that policy in practice. The first reason was the huge prevalence of small businesses: expropriating a few large companies would have a limited effect, while the resulting loss of confidence with indigenous as well as foreign investors could spell disaster for such an open economy. Furthermore, the compensation to be offered to the shareholders (their spoliation was out of question) would be a tremendous burden for the weak public budget. But the most decisive argument was the relative lack of management skills among civil servants. Alluding to the already obvious failures induced by economic nationalism in Indonesia and Ceylon, the PAP concluded that a well-managed private company delivered more than a drifting government company in terms of economic development. The perpetuation of a dominant private sector was thus assumed, while the government's role was to facilitate faster development. A major role was recognised for foreign capital, although "the major form of foreign capital that government can hope to seek will be inter-governmental loans". But direct investments would remain necessary, be it for knowledge transfer or for the mastering of modern methods in management. Consequently, attractive incentives should be offered to foreign capital. Despite widespread fears, independence should help: once the collusion between foreign firms and colonialism was broken, "a modus vivendi beneficial to both Malaya and the foreign capitalist may be worked out". One of the first measures to be taken should be the creation of pioneer industries that would not cut down on direct taxation, but would allow "generous loss deductions and preferential treatments for profits actually re-invested [and] provision of opportunities for the investment of surplus undistributed funds".[28] So the PAP was advocating a doubly mixed economy: public as well as private, indigenous as well as foreign.

The methods: austerity and discipline

However, the influx of foreign capital as well as government action would have no long-term effect if development did not become everybody's concern: "it will have to be the result of a total national effort — a national effort in which every section of the population must make as complete a contribution as possible. The Government must devise measures that will ensure this contribution is made". Far from promising any paradise on earth of prosperity and automatic social progress, as so many colonial liberation movements were doing in that period, the PAP, with that blunt, Churchillian directness that was to become all too familiar to Singaporeans, stated in 1959 that "capital formation will require a long period of austerity and hard work. We must also recognise that there may even be a lowering of the already low standards of living of the working class".[29] At a time when Keynesian financial principles, such as government pump priming the economy to avoid slumps and hardship, had become widely accepted, a conservative budget policy was still advocated. Those curious Singaporean socialists appear very close to monetary orthodoxy, when they state that a strong currency is a kind of Kantian categorical imperative, which may request heavy sacrifices, particularly a severe restriction in spending: "in a word, the Malayan dollar is a good and sound currency.[30] This is a great help to our trade. A stable currency also enables people to plan far ahead into the future".[31]

To reach these goals, the PAP logically recommended a reduction in public spending as well as an increase in private savings, on a part voluntary, part compulsory basis. Civil servants' wages should be lowered (a practical and symbolic measure), while taxation of the higher incomes should be increased. The PAP claimants to power also tackled contentious issues of industrial relations, issues which touched on the power base of the left-wing union leaders, themselves members of the party. These leaders, such as Lim Chin Siong, derived their power from their ability to organise direct action and protest. Yet, PAP publications now advocated reining in these areas, calling for "industrial peace [and] political stability". Alluding to the strike waves of 1955–1956, which on occasion had led to riots, they warned: "a strong government would not hesitate to suppress any attempts of coercion by violence and intimidation".[32] This was a strange discourse for former union advisers and strike leaders, on the verge of being elected by voters, themselves frequently trade union members. But it was also a discourse that heralded the repressive measures which would follow. Some of these are even detailed in the programmatic statements:

the new government should receive power to impose a negotiated solution in labour disputes, through compulsory arbitration.

Some measures could be regarded as closer to workers' demands, but they never propose to give them increased responsibilities over their own fate: they seem inspired by paternalism. Thus, legislation should be amended to oppose arbitrary firings; business taxation for the pre-existing retirement fund should be increased; a bold social housing policy should free many employees from their employers' goodwill and degrading housing conditions; collective bargaining and contracts should be generalised; cheap technical education should be spread out, as a precondition of industrialisation. Even more ambivalent was the PAP's declared will to give birth to a powerful "unified trade union movement".[33] On the one hand, "splinter and yellow unions" should be disbanded, and unionisation of the civil service would be allowed.[34] On the other hand, all the unions should compulsorily adhere to the Singapore Trade Unions Council (STUC). And if the employers would be forced to recognise the unions, the counterpart would be a strike holiday. The general inspiration is clear: to strengthen the unions' institutional power, but a power on (or against?) the working class, at least as much as against the employers. Even before assuming power, the PAP was speaking the language of the disciplinary, developmental state, stating: "the country's economy must be safeguarded from industrial unrest ... the PAP, more considerably than any other political group in Singapore, has ... advocated law and order — and justice — in industrial relations".[35] Thus, as early as 1959, Lee Kuan Yew used the "industrial peace with justice" motto, constantly pressed upon the population in the following years.[36] The main aim was to integrate the unions in the government network: a Trade Union House would be built in the heart of Singapore, unionists would be offered managing positions in statutory boards, and a union centre for economic research (*not* for social issues) would be initiated.

Welfarism and national mobilisation

Regarding social reforms, the PAP remained more clearly a left-wing party, although national integration, nation-building and economic development were the rationale behind social progress, especially in the fields of urban and housing policies. Urban infrastructures, it said, should be greatly improved, starting with a complete revamping of the corresponding administrations: for better efficiency, the elected City Council should

disappear, and the municipal services be merged with those depending on the government, under a new Public Utilities Board. The languishing Singapore Improvement Trust, only able to deliver 21,000 social housing units since 1947, should be replaced by a new Housing Authority, told to deliver no less than 10,000 units per year, and to develop urban planning. Land and housing speculation should be severely dealt with.[37] The specific problems of the "rural" (actually more and more suburban) areas, strongholds of the radical Left or of the Malay parties, were also not to be neglected. Outside the improvement of the infrastructure, squatters were to benefit from the grant of land property titles or of long-time leases, before being relocated in the new social housing estates. Community Centres (already existing in a few neighbourhoods) were to be created everywhere, and incentives would be offered for the location of light manufacturing industries.

The right to health was recognised for all: "in a decent socialist society, every person is entitled, as a right, to access to all the medical services needed to maintain himself in sound health".[38] The PAP proposed importing physicians from abroad, to make up for local shortages. Disease prevention would also be organised on a massive scale, in coordination with the progressive elimination of the slums. The government would have to increase the number of hospitals and medical centres, as well as to facilitate their accessibility to the general public; and to initiate progressively a centralised system of health insurance, on a voluntary basis. Earlier, the party had made more comprehensive promises. The fifth point of the initial November 1954 manifesto had proposed a social security system for all those unable to work, whatever the cause. And in February 1957, the PAP had made its own the bold proposals of the official Committee on Minimum Standards of Livelihood, in which Sinnathamby Rajaratnam had been a member: a minimum wage in the less prosperous economic sectors; a comprehensive health insurance for all wage-earners; and quite generous sickness, retirement and unemployment benefits.[39]

However, the right to education is the one most extensively developed in the PAP programme. The school system was a central concern for the majority Chinese community, as well as for the incoming political leaders, who considered schools as the most efficient tool towards the transformation of society and the unification of the nation. Public education should first and foremost "inculcate in children those mental attitudes and habits that are necessary for successful economic effort, such as respect for hard work, honesty, habits of thrift, punctuality, etc."[40] With their

desire to achieve merger with Malaya in mind, and the perceived need to fight Chinese chauvinism (and so indirectly both communists and Chinese traditionalists), a progressive unification of degree systems, of syllabi, and of textbooks was vigorously emphasised.

In the future, Malay should emerge as the main language, but at present, English — already cleared of any colonial stain — should be privileged, for: "It is only in the English schools that children from all three communities find a common classroom and playground, and in the end a common acceptance of certain values of life".[41] English should become compulsory for all from primary school. The main goal was "integration of all schools ... in a unified national education system, directed towards the development of a common Malayan outlook and a united Malayan nation".[42] Finally, to promote industrialisation, a new balance should be established between the academic and technical streams. Until then, technical education had been underfunded. Therefore, in cooperation with the proposed Economic Development Board (EDB), several professional schools should be created; manual work at all levels should be introduced; and development of tertiary technical and technological education should be ensured. The enhancement of human capital in the service of development is seen as an unavoidable complement to the economic policy.

In Chinese traditional values, women's education was conspicuously neglected. By contrast, the young, left-leaning westernised PAP leaders intended to break away with their ancestors' prejudices. Gender equality in every field was stated as a principle. Several measures were detailed, such as the prohibition of polygamy (except among the Muslims); the development of family planning, kindergarten and maternity hospitals; and the introduction of paid maternity leave. A more determined fight against prostitution and "yellow culture" was not forgotten, nor were restrictive measures regarding divorce by (male-originated) repudiation, then plaguing the Muslim community.[43] But, though it was stated with vehemence that present-day women were still "the slaves of their husbands and children", the complete achievement of rights and wages equality was postponed until a fully socialist society was born: "this may not be possible immediately. It must be achieved step by step without dislocating our economy".[44]

1959–1965: Inflections and Hesitations

As all observers — and Singaporeans — foresaw it, the PAP gained a victory, and a crushing one at that, at the 30 May 1959 Parliamentary

elections. The PAP had reached power within five years of its inception in 1954, and after the infant party had returned just three of 25 seats in the 1955 elections. The nucleus of the government was a group of English-educated professionals clustered around Lee Kuan Yew. These self-styled moderates were tasked with the implementation of the 1958–1959 programme outlined above. Contrary to the preceding government, the image of an honest, serious, competent team was quickly projected, with cuts in civil service salaries and the all-white uniform of PAP parliamentarians setting the tone. There was some progress across a range of fields, if not as fast as many expected. Above all, from May 1961 onwards, the PAP government seemed able to make the great dream of Malayan unification come true.

However, the leadership was to suffer two tremendous setbacks. First, in July 1961, the party split. The radical wing formed Barisan Sosialis, in some ways used as a front organisation for the banned Malayan Communist Party. The new party virtually bled the old one white, taking many of its branch activists, and one third of its MPs, making the PAP majority wafer thin for the next two years. Secondly, as early as 1964, the merger with Malaya — achieved in September 1963 — was to become a nightmare of unfulfilled promises and ethnic tensions, that led to some of the worst riots ever suffered in Singapore. The result was separation, effective in August 1965. This was the nerve-wracking backdrop against which the PAP team had to implement its programme: a programme which in itself contained strong challenges to grassroots, union, and communist leaders.

Initial reinsurances

The PAP took office in June 1959. The inaugural 1 July 1959 address to the Assembly by the new Yang di-Pertuan Negara (Head of State), written by Lee Kuan Yew, started by reassuring the middle class and the business circles about the government's intentions. Sir William Goode, the last Governor, becoming the first Yang di-Pertuan for a six-month period, declared that the new government intended to create "a climate of confidence, under which trade, expansion and industrial growth can take place".[45] This climate would result from concrete measures to give

> private enterprise, both of local and overseas origin, all the encour-
> agement and assistance they need, so that they can set up new
> factories which will create more jobs for our growing population.
> The Government will not impose restrictions upon foreign investors

on the transfer of profits and capital, apart from normal exchange controls.[46]

The government, he continued, would welcome "technicians, scientists and industrialists" from abroad. Thus, from its inception, the PAP sought foreign expertise across the board.[47] Private business should remain the driving power of economic growth: "The field of manufacturing industry … should, on the whole, be left in the hands of private enterprise and capital", as Lim Tay Boh, the PAP's leading economist, stated in 1960.[48] Economic growth, as the very condition for social progress, would be accorded full priority: "If we cannot create more jobs, then all these welfare efforts will be in vain".[49]

Even more significant was an address by the new Prime Minister to the Rotary Club on 24 February 1960. The very presence of Lee in this sanctuary of colonial capitalism (he had refused previous invitations) was an event in itself. His declarations were congruent with the symbolic importance of the gesture:

> Basically we are not reformists. We do not believe that changes in the social order can be accomplished through the alteration of some particular institution, activity or condition. But, revolution aside, the first business of a government is to govern firmly and wisely in the interests of the whole community. And the interests of the whole community in our entrepot situation require the active participation and co-operation of the managerial and professional elite … And since it is our desire to see that the system continues to operate effectively and efficiently, it must necessarily follow that we are prepared to allow the old incentives to continue.[50]

Thus, the "revolutionary" Prime Minister, facing the impossibility of sea-changes in Singapore society, favoured a "technical conservatism". Soon enough, conservation of the existing order would occupy his whole horizon.

The taming of the unions

As Lee was courting the bosses, Labour Minister Kenneth Byrne was finalising a Trade Unions Ordinance and an Industrial Relations Ordinance (IRO). Both documents were inspired by the pre-election proposals. But no concrete action was taken to implement the unification of the unions. This was the main demand of the STUC, now dominated by pro-communists. And while the rights to strike and to form union branches were reasserted,

ensuring respect for the ordinances by unwilling bosses was more difficult. Furthermore, the freedom of action of workers' organisations was reduced. The duration of collective agreements — they barred the unions from striking when enforced — was extended. And the masterpiece of the ordinance was the compulsory arbitration of conflicts, at the discretion of the Labour Minister. Strikes became restricted to cases where arbitration had failed. In the first version of the ordinance, recourse to the arbitration court would have become compulsory in case of failure in negotiations between employers and employees. This would have virtually legislated strikes out of existence, since employers kept the option of simply refusing to make any concession. But in 1960, the Lee government was not yet almighty: in front of the unanimous opposition of the unions, the stillborn ordinance was repealed, and the reformulated IRO imposed a common recourse of both parties before the Arbitration Court.[51]

Lee Kuan Yew did not shy at openly threatening those unions which behaved a bit too independently. For instance, reacting publicly to the sending of a union delegation to Beijing on 1 May 1960, he warned that the government "is under no obligation to protect any communist activist who chooses to use the trade union movement as a base for his political activities".[52] According to *Petir*, "the PM reminded the people that in a non-communist socialist state, the leadership of the trade union movement must be in non-communist socialist hands".[53] The union leader closest to Lee, Devan Nair, was even more explicit as early as July 1959. According to him, the union cadres had to change; from experts in struggle, they had to convert into experts in negotiation. A year later, an unsigned article in *Petir* is even more pressing: "workers and the trade union movement must understand and accept the necessity for industrial expansion, and avoid doing anything harmful to it".[54] The STUC should adopt a position, "clearly and unequivocally", on that issue. Otherwise, it would demonstrate its irresponsibility.

Socialism or pragmatism?

"The Fixed Political Objectives of Our Party", published in the 26 January 1961 issue of *Petir*, was the first major PAP political statement since "The New Phase After Merdeka" of 1958. Comparing the two documents, "The Fixed Political Objectives" is notable for its atheoretical and polemical tone. It bitterly criticises the "pro-communist" Left, as well as the increasingly vocal advocates of an independent Singapore. Indirectly, that shows the

growing popularity of a demand, regarded by many as the only way to escape colonial status quickly. For the 1958 Constitution only granted Singapore internal self-government, and even then circumscribed by the right of an Internal Security Council (with three members each from Singapore and Britain, one from Malaya) to dictate action to safeguard internal security. The main focus of "The Fixed Political Objectives", however, was on the essential unity — political and economic — of the entire Malayan sphere. Socialism could only be thinkable, it claimed, at the level of a unified Malaya. But that should not prevent the quest for an immediate betterment of the Singapore workers' fate. For the PAP, criticising the pro-communist trade-unionists, "it is the interests and welfare of the people that are paramount, not dogmas and slogans".[55] This ideology-blind pragmatism, which was to emerge fully triumphant in the 1970s, replaced earlier attempts at theoretical elaboration. References to specific thinkers, theories and historical experiences are conspicuous by their absence.

The party leadership was also endorsing pragmatism and flexibility towards the anti-colonial struggle:

> We cannot help hating colonialism. No one who wants to create a socialist Malaya can help being anti-colonialist … But whilst the objective remains fixed, we have to adjust our tactics to changing political circumstances.[56]

To over-focus on fighting British rule, and achieving complete independence, would prevent any constructive policy, which Lee Kuan Yew deemed possible even under "independence at 75%". The anti-colonial strategy was detailed in another PAP document, "PAP and Colonialism", published in *Petir* in April 1961, just three months after "The Fixed Political Objectives". In "PAP and Colonialism", violent means are explicitly repudiated: "The PAP has never believed in the use of violence to overthrow colonialism".[57] Four main struggles were now defined. Two had been already won: the Malayanisation of Civil Service and the election by popular suffrage of a Legislative Assembly with the normal attributes of a democratic Parliament. Two had still to be attained: full responsibility in Defence and Foreign Affairs, and full control over the economy.

Regarding defence, pragmatism was requested: the closure of the British military bases would deprive Singapore of revenue *Petir* estimated at $250 million (equivalent to half the public revenue). Furthermore, it claimed that the smallest independent army would cost around $150 million a year. The premature departure of the British, before more economic

development took place, would worsen the already low living standard of the masses. The same pragmatic approach was recommended for economic policy. A massive withdrawal of foreign capital would be a passport to disaster: "If people want development to be carried out wholly by local capital, then they should give a clear mandate to cut down living standards very drastically".[58] Politically, that would probably lead to dictatorship. Actually, the concomitant State Development Plan of 1961 did give some more moderate, realistic answers, for combining local and foreign capital, as well as for government intervention. A rapid industrialisation process — the Plan's central goal — would deliver in the near future the secure foundations for economic independence. In the meantime, the strength and honesty of the government would prevent any risk of domination by foreign economic interests.

Further steps in the departure from socialist tenets were taken around 1965, when Singapore had to redefine its destiny, in the heat of the quarrel with Kuala Lumpur that preceded the 9 August 1965 separation, and independence. Lee Kuan Yew presented a new course in May 1965 at the Asian Socialist Leaders' Conference in Bombay. He still described himself as an "unrepentant Socialist",[59] but he noticed that, since the first Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon in 1953, "They have been twelve years of many disappointments and few successes for democratic socialists".[60] The main reason, he argued, had been the lack of "the organisational drive, managerial and technical expertise in administration and management, and the technological and industrial skills to be able to realise their plans for economic transformation".[61] The socialist parties also hesitated at tapping the necessary expertise where it could be found: among the most advanced capitalist countries. Finally, "in preaching individual liberties and human freedoms, they forgot to insist, as the communists and the capitalists did, on the individual human duty to work hard and give its utmost".[62]

Thereafter, pragmatism would remain the keyword. The PAP increasingly perceived the challenge to be one of repeated, *ad hoc* approaches to very specific problems that should be solved one after another, at the smallest possible cost and with the maximum celerity. Any kind of ideology, or even general theory, was considered as at best useless, and probably harmful. As Culture Minister S. Rajaratnam said in *PAP — 10th Anniversary Souvenir* in 1964: "The party has the capacity to recognise hard facts and form its theory from them, and not the other way around".[63] According to an anonymous party high cadre, who spoke in 1970: "A distinct ideology does not help to solve real problems such as modernisation and national unity. We are

more a problem-solving party. Our philosophy is based on what we do".[64]
The PAP, seriously weakened in 1961 by the separation of its (majority)
radical wing, replenished its ranks, not with socialist-leaning ideologues,
but with "problem-solvers". Rajaratnam described as such the 18 new PAP
candidates running for the 1968 Parliamentary elections: "new men of
talent and experience from all walks of life who could solve economic,
social and political problems".[65] They included no less than five univer-
sity professors, three general managers, two lawyers, one school principal,
and one technician. Among the four trade unionists, two were teachers.

    References to socialism were not yet abandoned, but downsized to a
vague adhesion to cultural, social and political Western-style modernisation.[66]
According to Rajaratnam, speaking in June 1966 in Vienna, here are
"the essentials of socialist creed — the search for economic and social
justice, belief in an open society, the right of people periodically to judge
the Government through free elections and repudiation of the barbaric
superstition that racial, religious and linguistic solidarity is the way to
international peace, prosperity and justice".[67] Everything here could be
subscribed to by any liberal-leaning mind. Socialism dissolved into thin
air, or more precisely, into democracy.

Welfare or workfare?

Did the PAP try and implement its 1959 economic programme? Yes
indeed, if one considers the will to transform the government into an
active economic agent. That led to a huge increase in the part played by the
forced savings (the pre-existing but now much-expanded Central Provident
Fund, CPF), and by state expenditure on capital accumulation; and to the
creation of statutory boards. These included the Economic Development
Board (EDB), Housing and Development Board (HDB), Jurong Town
Corporation (JTC), and Port of Singapore Authority (PSA). All that
may not have been very innovative. But the PAP leaders — and first of
all Goh Keng Swee as the economic overlord — stated over and again
that it was less important to have good theories than to implement good
applications. The means were what counted most, and among them, first
the extra economic ones: a non-corrupt government; a societal environment
encouraging work and seriousness; and a general atmosphere of efficiency.
According to Goh, the aim of politics was "to achieve the changes in
society and the individual human beings that will permit the objective
factors of economic development to assert themselves".[68]

Even during such a rocky period as the years 1960–1965, the amount of state expenditure more than doubled (at current prices), and its part in the expenditure on the gross domestic product (GDP) increased from 15.7 per cent to 17.4 per cent (1966). The gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) of the public sector was multiplied by three in value and by more than two in percentage of the GDP. Between 1959 and 1963, it jumped at the impressive rate of 27.5 per cent per year.[69] It was then almost on a par with the GFCF of the private sector, but was used more strategically, through the newly created Development Fund. Thus, it became a major engine for economic development — something that was not to fade away thereafter, despite the huge influx of foreign private capital. Increased government spending allowed the rapid completion of the huge housing and public works projects, and singularly the setting up of the new industrial estates. If the state development expenditure leapt forward, current expenditure was drastically limited, especially through an initial reduction of the wages of civil servants. But the most important government impulse cannot be quantified: it is the urge to continuously improve efficiency and results, the contagious will to make things happen. In those years, the EDB started becoming the symbol of that "Singapore spirit", so much in contrast then with the laxity and incompetence of most Southeast Asian public administrations.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the PAP "forgot" some of its 1959 promises: those catering for the plight of the most destitute members of the community. It does not mean — far from it — that the government took lightly its responsibilities in social development. Expenditures classified as "communities and social services" remained constantly at a very high level: more than 45 per cent of the budget. Health accounted for 13 per cent of the expenditures. However, investment in that sector reached less than 30 per cent of the initial objectives; the existing infrastructure was not significantly developed (only 300 hospital beds were created between 1959 and 1961), despite their insufficiency and despite a fast growing population (increasing by a total of more than 14 per cent in five years). Education was the biggest budgetary item: more than 23 per cent of expenditure in 1960 as well as 1966 — though the State Development Plan 1961–1964 had forecast the even higher figure of 29 per cent. Thus, this objective was not reached, and schools functioned at breaking point: two daily sessions, overcrowded classes, compulsory overtime for teachers, and a lack of extracurricular activities. Nevertheless, the progression towards universal primary schooling did not abate, nor did

the explosive expansion of secondary education. The number of primary school pupils grew from 267,000 in 1959 to 336,000 in 1963; high school students almost doubled from 49,000 to 84,000.

The real success story was the construction sector. Building investments outstripped the Plan's objectives by 30 per cent. The results were impressive, from 1,600 finished housing units in 1959 to 12,200 in 1962. The dynamism of the HDB had already achieved the construction of 32,900 housing units by the end of 1963, allowing the relocation of 150,000 people. This was more than what had been achieved by the defunct Singapore Improvement Trust since 1929. The global improvement in *per capita* living space was already perceptible in 1966 statistics. The housing crisis, however, was far from being solved: waiting lists were so extensive that it took two to three years to get a HDB flat, without much possibility of choice. Besides that, building the new high-rise blocks meant the forced eviction of many dwellers of the oldest parts of Singapore, and of the extensive squatters' neighbourhoods. These inhabitants got priority access to the new buildings, but if they were there generally better housed than before, they also had to cope with rents which were sometimes perceived as a heavy burden.

The weak point was social welfare. On that budgetary item, the "socialist" PAP government did even less well than the pre-1959 administrations: 3.9 per cent of total expenditures in 1956, 2.7 per cent in 1961, 1 per cent in 1968. Consequently, the recipients fell from 22,000 in 1960 to 19,000 in 1967, even as the (unassisted) unemployed were almost permanently more than 60,000.[70] The benefits remained minuscule: $26 per month for a married couple, plus $5–8 for each child, even as, in 1953, the average wage reached $140, while the cheapest rented room cost $16.[71] The destitute were increasingly abandoned to the care of private associations, when they could afford it. The PAP proposals of the 1950s were conveniently forgotten: social security for some, health insurance for all, unemployment benefits, minimum wage. More generally, investment grew at the expense of private consumption, whose component in the GDP fell from 78.4 per cent in 1960 to 70.7 per cent in 1965.

Epilogue: 1965–c.1970: Towards the Global City

Singapore is an exception in many ways. Its accession to independence was unique, as it was obtained through expulsion from Malaysia. The beneficiary, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, greeted the news with tears

of grief. As we have seen, he had betted his political career on a unified Malaya, that was supposed to solve in one stroke the political, economic and identity uncertainties. The obvious weaknesses of a young nation plagued with unprecedented ethnic tensions and the highest unemployment rate in its history were compounded by a highly volatile regional environment, characterised by the escalating American intervention in Vietnam, the Indonesian political crisis, and a little further away, the inception of China's Cultural Revolution. The July 1967 announcement by Britain of the progressive reduction of a base that employed around one tenth of the workforce and guaranteed a minimal military protection to a Chinese-majority city in the Malay world was seen by some as the final blow. All that cried for major adaptations of the policies hitherto followed. Singapore had to initiate one of the boldest remakings in its history. However, in several aspects, the changes were more inflections than revolutions. The guiding principle, more than ever before, was non-ideological. Survival was at stake. It called for numerous transformations, but always on an *ad-hoc*, pragmatic basis. Three particularly affected domains will be considered. But there were some reversals too among the most established official statements, those exposed *ad nauseam* in the programmatic texts of the late 1950s. For example, soon enough, the viability of an independent Singapore started to be emphasised in official discourse and propaganda, although it had been strongly denied in 1959.

A nation of armed traders?

The most dramatic policy change concerned national defence, something hardly mentioned in the initial 1959 PAP programme. Even after inde-pendence, it had not been considered a priority. According to Rajaratnam, "money spent on weapons of war and armies is wasted money. Furthermore, it is obvious to us that given modern techniques of war, a country of about two million people can never on its own adequately secure its own defence".[72] But the July 1967 notification by Britain of a phased withdrawal, whose end was forwarded to 1971 in January 1968, demanded a massive effort if Singapore did not want to be at the mercy of somewhat unpredictable, and not very loving neighbours. Suddenly, a strong, modern defence force received top priority: "Under the present circumstances in Singapore, national defence is more important than economic development … and economic development cannot thrive if there is lawlessness in this country".[73] Lee, in a pre-election radio talk on 22 March 1968, emphasised

the unprecedented nature of the situation: "we shall no longer have the British Army … to defend us. This is the final chapter in the making of a nation. From a protected trading centre of a vast empire, we must become a self-reliant industrialised nation-state responsible for our own security".[74]

From a mere 7 per cent of public spending in 1967, defence jumped to 33 per cent in 1970, and remained at that level for several years. In a part of the world where professional armies are more common, an Israeli-type of national defence was selected, and the country secretly hosted 45 Israeli military advisers from 1969 till 1975.[75] The goal was to train and keep fit and ready a very large reserve force, and to build a forward defence strategy so as to compensate for the small size of home territory. According to the Prime Minister, "Singapore opted for the Israeli pattern, for in our situation it appears necessary not only to train every boy, but also every girl, to be a disciplined and effective digit in the defence of their country".[76] Even if the project to draft girls was stillborn, the intentions were clear: using the army as an active agent of national cohesion, making that body, traditionally despised by the Chinese, a nursery of modern, tough and skilled Singaporeans. The army model did spread in high schools, where dozens of thousands of students participated in a police-led *Cadet Corps*. As in Israel, the officer corps has provided the country with top politicians, even if the transformation of the army itself into a political lobby appears out of the question.

The inescapable US ally

The small country felt a vital need for allies: another question evoked only in the vaguest terms in 1959. The traditional protection offered by the British, something curiously taken for granted by Singaporean anti-colonialists, was strengthened for a time through the April 1971 *Five Power Defence Arrangements* (UK, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore) — but it did not ensure any permanent military presence in Singapore, and the last British soldier left in 1976. Close, friendly relations with the United States have received (and retain to this day) a top priority, despite an initial uneasiness with the US military escalation in Vietnam, clearly expressed through a strong support to Norodom Sihanouk's neutralist policy, during Lee's April 1966 visit to Cambodia (significantly his first official journey abroad). The Prime Minister had earlier expressed a very "British" contempt for the Yankees: "If the British withdraw, I am prepared to go on with the Australians and the New Zealanders. But I am

not prepared to go on with the Americans … The administration lacks depth of judgement or wisdom, which comes out of an accumulation of knowledge of human beings and human situations over a long period of time".[77] In October 1965, Rahim Ishak had rejected any idea of support to the US in Vietnam: "In the Vietnam conflict, it will not be wise for Singapore to take an anti-China posture or an anti-US posture and, least of all, an anti-Vietcong posture".[78] Nevertheless, invited by President Johnson in October 1967, Lee adopted a hawkish position regarding Indochina, asking the US "to stick out the Vietnam war until the end of time if necessary".[79] He underlined "the relative peace and security your effort in Vietnam provides".[80] The balance of power policy, permanently the very axis of Singapore foreign policy, asked for a strong, permanent US military presence in East Asia. It was the safest way to deter communist (or neighbouring) aggression, especially as America became after 1973 less involved than regional powers in border disputes or domination designs.

The painful choice of the world

Because the merger with Malaya had failed, the very basis of the development strategy had to be reviewed: the merger years had been disappointing in the economic field too, and an import substitution industrialisation policy without at least the Malayan hinterland appeared impracticable. But fortunately, an alternative strategy had been drafted already, as early as 1961: the United Nations Industrial Enquiry Mission, led by Dutch economist Albert Winsemius, had then emphasised the potentialities for a Singapore-centred industrialisation, tapping both the considerable local amounts in private capital and the not insignificant indigenous market; a slight, selective tariff protection would be useful, but four fifths of the growth should be export-led.[81] Winsemius was to be consulted again several times by the Singapore government. As early as 1962, he had forecasted the probable failure of the intended common market with Malaysia. And most importantly, he contributed to the quick economic U-turn that followed separation: "Export Oriented Industrialisation" (EOI) soon became the new key phrase: "Singapore's survival requires a mainland, whether it is across the Straits in Malaya, or across the seas in advanced Western countries".[82]

   What was not to change was economic voluntarism. But it had to be redirected towards export promotion, through statutory boards more active than ever, through the mobilisation of private savings (there, the

compulsory Central Provident Fund [CPF] played an essential role), through important tax incentives (such as the 1967-reviewed legislation on "Pioneer Industries"), and through land and town planning. Through stringent new labour laws too, such as the 1968 *Employment Act*, or the 1968-revised *Industrial Relations Bill*. The scanty remnants of the initial pro-worker stance of the PAP were shed away, in favour of a strictly pro-capitalist orthodoxy. In 1968, Goh Keng Swee, then Minister for Finance, proclaimed the need for "an open competitive system", and for an environment "providing the most efficient service at the lowest possible cost".[83] Lee was much harsher when he addressed the Singapore Employers Federation in May 1967: Singaporeans had "to get rid of this attitude that: You owe me a living. I was born here. According to the Charter of Human Rights, I am entitled to the following things: minimum wage, holidays with pay, education and so on. It is the attitude which we have set out to dispel". As in China at that very moment, the Prime Minister intended to trigger a kind of Cultural Revolution — but a capitalist one: "Now we have to re-educate not only our trade-union leaders but, even more important, the workers …"[84]

Conclusion: Change and Continuity

In many areas, the first eventful six years of power were decisive in shaping what the PAP was to remain in the next four decades. The changes between 1959 and 1965 were all the more striking, with a government's programme that was as ambitious as it was realistic. The 1958–1959 programmatic documents had identified four major goals that went side by side: independence through merger; an acceleration of economic development; the extension of democratic rights and freedoms, especially regarding trade unions; and the development of all aspects of social welfare. Actually, the two first goals soon proved contradictory to the two last. The strong emphasis put on merger with Malaya as well as on economic stability placed the unions and social welfare on the back seat. That choice led directly to the July 1961 split. Later on, the necessity for the PAP to rely on the most moderate and conservative segments of the electorate so as to face an initially tremendously popular Barisan Sosialis induced an accentuation of the pro-market, anti-union, pro-Western trends.

Nevertheless, the influence of socialist ideas did not disappear at once. The PAP strongly distrusted private capital (especially the indigenous one), accusing it of: first, not being entrepreneurial enough; second, of lacking

any long-term view; and third, of tending towards support for a narrow Chinese chauvinism. Therefore, Lee's government was never too tempted by the benign *laissez-faire* so common in the region, that degenerated all too often into the unholy alliance between corrupt officials and powerful private cronies. Social welfare itself far from disappeared. But as we have seen, it shifted from a concern for the most destitute to a concentration on community development, and actually to the accumulation of human capital as well as to voluntarist pushes in favour of economic development. Hence, the diminishing transfers to the poorest and the relative stagnation of healthcare, but the constant progress of education, and the tremendous outburst of public housing. All these features were to enter into the "genetic code" of the PAP, to this day.

However, it could be argued that the five years or so following 1965's separation were at least as meaningful as the preceding period. They implied, first and foremost, a complete redefinition of Singapore identity, and a clean break from the long-repeated "evidence" of the necessity of merger with Malaya. The combination of the logics of independence and of the dangers of a rapidly changing regional configuration led to the accelerated construction of a strong army — something conspicuously absent from the 1959 programme and from the debates of the subsequent years. The same factors imposed a decline of British influence, much more rapidly than scheduled, and a "discovery of America" by British and Oxbridge-educated PAP leaders. Finally, the philosopher's stone of rapid economic development was discovered at last, in the shape of export oriented industrialisation, starting around 1967. That decisive choice induced further restrictions for the Labour movement, and increased the pressure on the workers and more generally, on the whole society.

A very central policy that has not changed much all along the whole decade has been political authoritarianism — something so closely associated with Singapore in innumerable descriptions and comments. The PAP has never considered parliamentary democracy and freedoms as ends in themselves. They constituted useful instruments (for a time) towards full decolonisation, or towards Malayan unity, or towards modernisation of the socioeconomic framework — on that point, there was a kind of consensus between the two wings of the party, before July 1961. And at the height of the contest between the PAP and the Barisan Sosialis, between 1961 and 1963, Lee proved a ruthless leader, ready to use almost any means at his disposal to crush the adversary: manipulation of the media, deregistration of the biggest trade unions, and administrative internment of opponents

for an indefinite period of time, MPs included. One should nevertheless acknowledge that no opponent was ever executed — legally or illegally — and that the heaviest forms of torture were apparently never used.

Especially when the influence of socialism receded (even in words), after 1965, the PAP leaders pronounced themselves quite openly against the most basic tenets of democracy. "The people are more interested in what is good government than in having an opposition," said Rajaratnam.[85] In early May 1962, Lee Kuan Yew, speaking at Chatham House, in London, did not shy at stressing: "If I were in authority in Singapore indefinitely, without having to ask those who are governed whether they like what is being done, then I have not the slightest doubt that I could govern much more effectively in their own interests. That is a fact which the educated understand, but we are all caught in this system which the British export all over the place hoping that somewhere it will take root …"[86] Thus, for Lee, the flaw in democracy is to give as much power of decision to the uneducated as to educated people. His vision of good government seems to relate to enlightened despotism, with eventual voting rights restricted to the best and the brightest. An organised society should, according to him, be structured like a machine: a "brain" should govern the whole, without undue interference from subordinates reduced to the role of screws or bolts — one of his favourite metaphors. Speaking in September 1965 to civil servants, he declared: "I want to make sure that every button works".[87] As for Goh Keng Swee, he considered in February 1965 that primitive capital accumulation was hardly compatible with democracy, as it meant great sacrifices to most: "To effect the transfer of resources from the countryside for development purposes requires a ruthlessness of purpose of which only a well-established (perhaps only an irremovable) central authority is capable".[88]

Conversely, it would be only too easy to count up the points of the "1959 programme" that have been put aside, the statements that have been forgotten, or reneged on. For some decades, for example, women's rights, initially prominent, became less so, and women — so active in the PAP of the 1950s — fell away from the party leadership. Socialist principles would go under, and orthodox Smithian economic dogma would triumph. The pan-Malayan statements would have to give place to a narrower Singaporean nation-building. Suppression of independent trade unions would eclipse the notion of workers' rights, in favour of a narrower conception of worker's welfare. Welfarism itself — in the sense of a citizen's right to get support in times of need — would become something like a

bad word. Scepticism towards the positive role of foreign capital would be torn up, and replaced by a bright red carpet before multinational companies. Higher taxation (for the rich) for greater social equity would give way — at least in words — to lower taxation for greater economic efficiency.

But in practice, the level of the various contributions to the public sector would remain constantly high. More generally, the often proclaimed liberalisation of the economic system would stay partial and elusive. Quite paradoxically, an unplanned and highly externally orientated economy became at the same time one of the most thoroughly thought about, pro-grammed and organised. Regarding society, the tightness of government control over it has long been proverbial. The supposed inefficiency induced by European-style welfarism has constantly been damned, but the public sector has constantly intervened in education, health services, transportation, housing, and has supervised closely the daily life of Singaporeans, generally to their benefit, even if it went along with a measure of infantilisation. Other central features did show a striking continuity, such as the "twin mix" of the economy (public/private; indigenous/foreign), or the modernising and technicist dogma. In many sectors, the transformations have been more obvious in words than in deeds.

In summary, the reinvention of Singapore that the PAP initiated and led in the immediate postcolonial era has been rich in setbacks, con-tradictions, and even painful failures. In the end, however, and through its very singularity, it did well to maintain and extend the traditional central role of the island-city.

Notes

1. The Roman Catholic Church was the explicit model claimed: Popes pick up cardinals, who elect the next Pope, though another possible model closer to home was the Malayan Communist Party and its cadre system.
2. *Merdeka* means independence in Malay; the PAP then sponsors Malay language as proof of its sincerity at advocating merger with Malaya.
3. Published between the electoral victory and the assumption of power, under the theoretical signature of the most prominent "pro-communist" detainees belonging to the PAP left-wing, on the eve of their liberation.
4. See Fong Sip Chee, *The PAP Story — The Pioneering Years* (Singapore: PAP Chai Chee Branch, 1979), p. 12.
5. Ibid., p. 21.
6. Quoted in ibid., p. 14.
7. "The Tasks Ahead", in *Petir* 1, 3/4 (August-September 1956): 1.

8. *Petir* 1, 4 (May 1958): 2.

9. *Petir* (June 1956): 4.

10. Toh Chin Chye (PAP chairman), "Preparing Ourselves", in *PAP: The Fourth Anniversary Celebration Souvenir* (Singapore: People's Action Party, 1958), p. 1.

11. *The Tasks Ahead*, 1959, p. 6.

12. Ibid., p. 5.

13. Ibid., p. 16.

14. *Celebration Souvenir*, p. 12.

15. Ibid., p. 1.

16. *Petir* 2, 1 (January 1959): 3.

17. Toh, *Tasks Ahead*, Preface, p. 8.

18. *Celebration Souvenir*, p. 13.

19. *Petir* 1, 18 (October 1958): 4.

20. *Petir* 2, 2 (February 1959): 5.

21. IBRD, *The Economic Development of Malaya* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1955).

22. F.J. Lyle, *An Industrial Development Programme* (Singapore: Legislative Assembly, 1959), p. 31.

23. Michael D. Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Beliefs Behind the Man* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), pp. 14–6, 62–74.

24. Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1998), pp. 58–9, 74.

25. Jean-Louis Margolin, *Singapour 1954–1980 — Economie, Politique, Société: Une Dialectique* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Université Paris-VII, 1982), pp. 229–44.

26. Goh Keng Swee, *Urban Incomes and Housing: A Report on the Social Survey of Singapore 1953–54* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1956).

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Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

Hack, Karl

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Singapore's Changing International Orientations, 1960–1990

Ooi Giok Ling

Singapore's development from the 1960s to the 1980s, and especially after its separation from Malaysia on 9 August 1965, was one of increasingly international orientation.[1] In a sense, this might seem to be a statement of the obvious. After all, modern Singapore has always been outwardly oriented. Singapore was a major entrepôt port in Southeast Asia in the colonial period, and since 1965, the island-state has relied on foreign capital to aid its industrialisation.[2] But its increasingly international orientation since self-government in 1959 has been significantly different from its earlier role as centre of that part of the British colonial empire that was in Southeast Asia.

Singapore's role in the Southeast Asian region as a centre of trade and commerce par excellence has been due to far more than its geography. Its selection as a British colonial port city and administrative outpost did indeed owe much to its central location, both within the region and on the sea routes between the West and the Far East. But this locational advantage became a liability in the 1960s, when Singapore's relations with its closest neighbours, Malaysia and Indonesia, turned sour. Not only did

Malaysia (1957) and Indonesia (1949), as newly independent nation-states, decide on becoming more self-contained in terms of port and trading activities, cool bilateral relations with both also implied that Singapore could no longer rely on the local linkages which had previously helped it thrive as a colonial port city. In short, the centrality to the regional economy which had been a boon in in colonial times, now threatened to provide some of the city-state's greatest challenges. It was fortunate for Singapore that its highly centralised state planning of the mid-1960s coincided with fortuitous structural shifts in the international economy.

This combination of state-led planning and development, and changes in the international economy, have allowed the city-state to find a new type of centrality, this time as a regional centre and nodal point in an increasingly interconnected global economy, with an increasingly global division of labour. These state-driven efforts to recreate and remake the economy of the city-state thrust Singapore into the league of dynamic and well-developed Asian tiger economies by the 1980s.

The development of Singapore has often been compared to Hong Kong, another British colonial port city. Until 1997 and the handing of Hong Kong back to the Chinese government, both Singapore and Hong Kong were city-states, and both were members of the exclusive set of East Asian tiger economies or newly industrialising countries. Singapore's geographical location as a port, however, could be considered superior to that of Hong Kong, sheltered as it was from the typhoons and tropical storms to which the latter is vulnerable. Geographically, Singapore is located in a region known as the Doldrums which, by its name, suggests stability in climatic and weather conditions including rather slow moving winds and biological changes.

With its brief and tumultuous union with Malaysia over by 1965, Singapore became an island-state cut off, politically at least, from the larger territory to which it had always been linked. Having also faced hostility from Indonesia when still part of Malaysia, Singapore was effectively politically estranged from the countries in its immediate vicinity. It had slim prospects of continuing its historical role as port city for the region's continuing stream of exports of agricultural goods to the industrialised West.[3] In brief, Singapore could no longer rely on its centrality in a regional economy that the British colonial administrators had created since the late 1800s. The British colonial economic space in Southeast Asia was being unravelled by the emergence of Malaysia and Indonesia as independent nation-states bent on economic nationalism. As the first Prime Minister

of Singapore between 1959 and 1990, Lee Kuan Yew recounted in his memoirs:

> My third and biggest headache was the economy — how to make a living for our people? Indonesia was 'confronting' us and trade was at a standstill. The Malaysians wanted to bypass Singapore and deal direct with all their trading partners, importers and exporters, and only through their own ports. How was an independent Singapore to survive when it was no longer the centre of the wider area that British once governed as one unit? We needed to find some answers and soon, for unemployment was alarming at 14 per cent and rising. Furthermore, we had to make a living different from that under British rule. I used to see our godowns filled with rubber sheets, pepper, copra and rattan, and workers laboriously cleaning and grading them for export. There would be no more imports of such raw materials from Malaysia and Indonesia for processing and grading. We had to create a new kind of economy, try new methods and schemes never tried before anywhere else in the world, because there was no other country like Singapore.[4]

There were, however, some dissenters from the view that Singapore would only succeed if it were to be intensively internationally-oriented. Dennis Bloodworth has provided a less than charitable summary of some of the dissenters and their works:

> *Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore* by T.J.S. George was a 215 page sneer from the pen of an Anglo-Indian … [describing] Lee as a tyrannical dictator who had turned the republic into a 'neo-colonial beachhead'. *Singapore in Southeast Asia: An Economic and Political Appraisal* was the work of a British Marxist named Ian Buchanan who predicted that, thanks to the gross errors of an irresponsible government, massive unemployment would trigger a bloody uprising.[5]

According to Buchanan:

> The basic feature of domestic politics in Singapore … is the manifest failure of development policy to narrow social and economic disparities within the Republic's life. Instead, the reverse is happening — the gulf between rich and poor is widening, and political polarisation between 'open' and 'underground' movements is hardening, beneath an unreal façade of prosperity … the early 1970s may well see a resurgence of civil unrest reminiscent of the mid-1950s, when a disgruntled mass of people decided that considerations of domestic well-being were more important than those of a foreign strategic stake in Southeast Asia — and fought in the streets, in the schools and in the factories and business houses.[6]

Such opposition to the external orientations of Singapore's economy stemmed from scepticism that this dependence would solve the high unemployment and underemployment of the 1960s. Singapore's development path would remain heavily dependent on external forces, continued economic growth in developed Western countries, and stability in the region. The state's investment in schemes such as the Jurong Industrial Estate took a relatively long time to achieve their goals because they started from little or nothing: in 1967, the enterprises in the Jurong Industrial Estate employed little more than 2 per cent of the total workforce. Indeed, the estate was described as somewhat of a white elephant at the time.[7] This was paralleled by slow growth in the economy in the late 1960s. Wages for the unskilled workers remained generally flat during these early years of industrialisation, while state legislation quelled the power of the trade unions. Furthermore, Buchanan argued that the "early inclination towards socialism in Singapore was abandoned: the ruling PAP [People's Action Party] under Lee Kuan Yew, steered the country away from the ideals of 'rugged independence' and 'neutralism' into a position of 'pragmatic' dependence upon the industrialised nations within the new pattern of imperialism".[8]

Hence, Singapore was relatively unique in the region in the development agenda it set and its focus on drawing foreign investors to Singapore to set up their factories. In contrast, the majority of the Southeast Asian states focused on indigenising ownership of the businesses in their newly independent countries, some to a larger extent than others. Large state-owned enterprises emerged in Indonesia whereas in Malaysia, the preferential policy favouring *bumiputera* or "sons of the soil" who were defined as the Malays, was extended from the 1970s to investment and business ownership in the country.

The turning to international business investors to develop its "new" form of centrality, or at least nodality, in the international economy rather than region's, was a state-led effort. During the period between 1965 and 1990, Singapore was the only country in the region which focused so single-mindedly on recreating itself into an international centre for foreign business investors and travellers. The key development strategies — industrialisation and urban development — were geared entirely towards the establishment of a new centre of trade and commerce in Singapore. Developments during this period thrust Singapore into the ranks of world cities and superseded its role as the colonial port city. Lee Kuan Yew has pointed out in his memoirs:

The government played a key role in attracting foreign investments; we built the infrastructure and provided well-planned industrial estates, equity participation in industries, fiscal incentives and export promotion. Most important, we established good labour relations and sound macro-economic policies, the fundamentals that enable private enterprise to operate successfully. Our largest infrastructure development was the Jurong industrial estate, which eventually covered 9,000 acres, with roads, sewers, drainage, power, gas and water all laid out. It had a slow start. By 1961, we had issued only 12 pioneer certificates … By the end of 1970, however, we had issued 390 pioneer certificates giving investors tax-free status for up to five years, extended to 10 years for those issued after 1975 … Our break came with a visit by Texas Instruments in October 1968. They wanted to set up a plant to assemble semiconductors, at that time a high-technology product, and were able to start production within 50 days of their decision.

Lee went on to explain why these developments demarcated Singapore in stark terms from its neighbouring Asian powers, both within and beyond the immediate Southeast region:

During this period, China was in the throes of Mao's Cultural Revolution. Most investors thought Taiwan and Hong Kong too close to China and headed for Singapore. We welcomed everyone, but when we found a big investor with potential for growth we went out of our way to help him get started … American MNCs laid the foundations for Singapore's large high-tech electronics industry. Although we did not know it then, the electronics industry was to mop up our unemployment and turn Singapore into a major electronics exporter in the 1980s.[9]

The first (1960s) phase of industrialisation initiated by the government was mostly labour-intensive and export-oriented. After all, the major development goal set was employment. For international investors from the US and Europe looking for low-cost sites for labour-intensive industries, Singapore was ideal because of its geographical location as well as the open-door policy to foreign business and international orientation of the government. The centrality of Singapore was boosted by factors such as the low wages, lack of union unrest and relative political stability. In addition to the Economic Development Board (EDB) that was set up in 1961, the Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) was established in 1968 for the development of major industrial estates, to provide low-cost sites for foreign manufacturing firms.

The international orientation for the economy, language and education policy was paralleled by an urbanisation strategy that unequivocally

wrenched people from their farming and livelihoods from land as well as village settlements to resettle them in new towns and public housing estates developed largely outside the city and outer urban areas of the main island of Singapore. The percentage of the population residing in the city centre was reduced to a third between 1965 and 1982.[10] There was a major reorganisation of space to make way for international business and tourist-related activities throughout the island, but especially in the central area of the city-state. Urban redevelopment was synchronised with the deliberate urbanisation strategy in a way that made Singapore's development wholly different from that of other Southeast Asian countries (and from other postcolonial cities in general) at the time.[11]

A combination of domestic politics and ideological orientations had turned most of the Southeast Asian region inwards and often away from urbanisation as a development strategy.[12] Having achieved independence from colonial regimes that in some Southeast Asian countries had been hard-won, it was natural for many of the national governments of the newly emerging nation-states to turn away from strategies such as inviting the former Western colonial powers back into their countries. Similarly, with large rural populations that had been mostly left out of the urbanisation seen during the colonial period, most national governments in the Southeast Asian region would not have found it politically feasible to embark on the kind of urbanisation strategy that the city-state of Singapore was able to. Indeed, many of these Southeast Asian nation-states launched regional development programmes that were aimed at correcting the uneven development that had resulted from colonial rule. In other Southeast Asian countries, ideological conflicts and wars even led to some programmes of de-urbanisation as seen in Vietnam in the 1970s, and more dramatically in Cambodia at the time. Singapore therefore went against both these regional trends — the anti-urban bias and focus on rural development.[13]

The focus of the state sector on "recentring" international business investments in Singapore thus saw its transformation from a port city and island-state into an internationally-oriented city-state. The development of an urban-industrial centre with the attendant infrastructure — port, airport, telecommunications are discussed below — resulted in the expansion of the built-up area to 50 per cent of the land area in Singapore in the period between 1965 and 1990. This was a period that saw the massive physical transformation of Singapore.[14]

Urbanisation and infrastructure development, as highlighted in the discussion above, was a process intended to integrate Singapore's economy and population with the world's. This is reflected in the land-use and other infrastructural development including the port and airport, which was largely driven by the state. Sectors such as tourism as well as oil refining have reinforced the outward orientation that Singapore has taken in its development agenda. Such international orientations have had major implications for Singapore's economy and ultimately its urban development and identity.

Urbanisation — Spatial Order of an Export Platform

The spatial redevelopment of Singapore that was seen between 1965 and 1990 was patterned very much after, and largely shaped by the international moorings to which the economy was increasingly linked. In Singapore, the changes in economy were inextricably bound up with urban planning, and economic as well as housing development.[15] Spatial changes were also aimed at nation-building, both as a political necessity, and as a further tool for providing the sort of peaceful population which would be marketable as a labour force. Beginning in the 1960s and well into the 1970s, the focus was on the resettlement of the majority of the population from overcrowded central areas to public housing estates being developed in the outer urban area as well as in the rest of the island. The massive relocation exercise which ensued eventually included cottage industries, pig farming activities and small businesses such as the lighterage activities along the Singapore River.

The national resettlement programme was tantamount to the sweeping out of the old colonial spatial order, and in its place, the establishment of a new ordering of land-use development that would be urban and international. Old ethnic neighbourhoods would be uprooted and relocated to new public housing estates, with racial quotas preventing ghettoisation in these. Similarly, the port and warehousing activities along Singapore River in the heart of the city were relocated to other parts of the coast. This paved the way for the redevelopment of the banks of the river into a financial centre befitting of its international orientations, together with a major hotel and entertainment district.

The objective of the national resettlement programme was therefore urban renewal, that is, the redevelopment of the city centre into a central business site befitting of the aspiring world city with its international

orientations. There was a need in the city centre for land which could be allocated to the development of hotels, shopping centres and offices, as well as other commercial premises for cinemas, recreational and such activities. Such new developments were aimed at international businesses and tourists. Local small businesses had effectively to make way for the new large-scale developments in retail and other commercial activities.

In the resettlement of the small shopkeepers from the city centre, the HDB's resettlement department explained the rationale as one of phasing out small-scale retailers in the city centre who would not be able to compete in the redeveloped central area. It explained: "The rationale behind the new measure was that the marginal shopkeepers in the downtown area could only survive on low-controlled rent and that generally they lacked the modern entrepreneurial skills and the larger capital outlay required for their new enterprises after relocation … The Central Area would have changed fundamentally after redevelopment. If their scale of operation were to remain unchanged, they would not be able to compete against the shopkeepers still remaining in rent-controlled premises in other parts of the Central Area … The last option available, therefore, was to retire them from their businesses with increased incentives in pecuniary compensations".[16]

The majority of the population resettled from the city centre was relocated to high-density and high-rise public housing. A snowballing effect was created in that land had to be secured for the development of the housing estates required to accommodate the families being resettled from the city centre. Resettlement had subsequently to be extended to the rural households and village settlements, so that land would be made available for the development of new towns and public housing estates. Fishermen and farmers alike were eventually resettled in high-rise and high-density apartment blocks.[17] The choice of high-rise and high-density public housing followed on the legacy that the British colonial authorities had left behind. In 1927, the colonial administration had established the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) to provide housing for the poor and low-income households in the colony. The housing form was medium-rise and medium-density housing. When the HDB was established through statute by the government in 1960, the decision to go high-rise was largely driven by the shortage of land, particularly in and around the city centre where the population was largely concentrated. According to political scientist Robert E. Gamer, the decision was taken by then Minister for Finance, Dr. Goh Keng Swee:

> Dr Goh felt that the problem of squatters on land scheduled for public housing would be minimised if the housing were built at greater density. The SIT had generally built its structures two to seven stories in height and left considerable green space between buildings. This provided pleasant open spaces, but sometimes the density in these estates was lower than in squatter-occupied areas. Dr Goh called for ten-storey structures, to be built closer together. He suggested that the structures be constructed on land currently being used for building public housing, but at the new higher densities. The new structures could then house the squatters they displaced and still offer ample room for additional inhabitants.[18]

The legal framework was redesigned to enable the implementation of the city-state's urban redevelopment and urbanisation plans. Legislation was introduced to allow the state the right to acquire land that was privately owned for public purposes. The Land Acquisitions Act of 1966 provided the state authorities and agencies with great powers to appropriate land for the urban infrastructural and housing development programmes. This legislation also made the state the largest landowner by the 1970s. The powers of land acquisition were conferred on at least 11 other statutory boards, including the Housing and Development Board, Port of Singapore Authority, Jurong Town Corporation, Urban Redevelopment Authority, Economic Development Board, Public Utilities Board, the then Telecomunications Authority of Singapore, Mass Rapid Transit Corporation and National University of Singapore, for their infrastructure and estate development.[19] Between 1949 and 1984, acquisitions by these various authorities amounted to some 30.2 per cent of the total land area of Singapore.[20] Many of these statutory boards have been key agencies in the development of infrastructure, crucial to the implementation of plans to look to international business investments for its growth and progress.

The concentration of land in state ownership, together with the return of the same political party, the PAP, to political office every election between 1968 till now, led to a consistency in development policy as well as its implementation. This means that the international orientations of the economy were maintained, as well as the construction of the city to match such orientations. Not surprisingly, the built-up area in the city practically doubled between 1950 and 1970, from 18.5 per cent of the total land area to 32.4 per cent.[21]

Further legislation was introduced to remove the constraints on urban redevelopment that had been imposed by the 1947 Control of Rent Act, introduced by the British colonial administration to manage the worst

of the housing shortage problems in Singapore following the end of the Second World War. The Controlled Premises (Special Provisions) Act of 1969 was introduced to facilitate the work of urban renewal in the city centre within designated areas. This heralded the legal framework that would remove rent control such that by 1969, the proportion of all buildings so controlled had fallen to 38 per cent, down from 46 per cent in 1960.[22]

Both urban redevelopment and infrastructural as well as public housing programmes were implemented with clockwork efficiency. The development of public housing resembled closely an industrial process for mass housing production through which blocks of flats or apartment units were produced in the fastest and cheapest way. Public housing has contributed to what some see as the industrialisation of everyday life.[23] Housing estates were themselves planned in a chequerboard and repetitive pattern, with each estate being provided with a replica of the range of estate facilities and services developed in the others. All new towns were planned with industrial estates. These were estates being developed in addition to the largest one at Jurong that had been established for the multinational corporations. Many of the cottage industries and small local enterprises that were being resettled from the city centre were relocated to these centres. The aim was to enable residents to work close to their homes. Furthermore, most new towns were planned for a relatively high degree of self-sufficiency, with schools, shops, medical clinics and banking facilities among others. The approach to such housing development was most likely influenced by the postwar reconstruction of new townships in Great Britain, as well as British new town planning principles.

Public housing would be the housing norm for the industrial workforce that Singapore was counting on to attract international investors. In more ways than one, public housing provided the affordable housing that would enable the kind of social stability and elimination of labour unrest that Singapore has enjoyed since the 1960s. This political stability has been ensured in spite of severe work conditions, compounded by the effort made by the state to control wage levels, in order to maintain the economic competitiveness it was relying on to draw international investors.

Multinational Corporations — "Escalator to the Top"

The colonial port city had thrived on the basis of its entrepôt trade in rubber, tin and other commodities, particularly in the 1950s.[24] While the entrepôt

activities continued to remain important to the port development initiatives in Singapore, there were major shifts in the nature of these activities as the region too industrialised, and as the postwar economic boom created new opportunities for the city-state to develop its outward orientations "… as a city-state with an export-oriented industrialisation strategy in place since the mid-1960s. Singapore has long been reliant upon integration with the international economy. The domestic bourgeoisie did not have sufficient interest or capacity to contest this. Consequently, the PAP has championed internationalisation ahead of economic nationalism".[25]

If regional relations posed Singapore with major challenges in the 1960s, the world economic environment proved to be the silver lining in the otherwise cloudy development horizons at the time. When Singapore embarked on its crusade to win over international investors and its export-oriented development strategy, the new international division of labour was emerging.[26] Multinational corporations were actively searching for offshore locations where low value-added goods could be assembled. Countries such as the United States also helped the new international division of labour by allowing special tariff provision for offshore assembly.[27] Not surprisingly, a large proportion of the corporations which took up the incentives offered by the Singapore government at the time, were manufacturing electronics for their home market. Beginning in 1965, the Singapore economy grew at 9 per cent annually.

The shift to being the export platform for multinational corporations, as evident in Figure 12.1, was pursued by the Singapore state well into

Industry	Output			Employment		
	1960	**1970**	**1980**	**1957**	**1970**	**1980**
Agriculture and mining	3.9	2.7	1.5	8.8	3.8	1.7
Manufacturing	11.7	20.2	28.1	14.1	22.0	30.1
Utilities	2.4	2.6	2.1	1.2	1.1	0.8
Construction	3.5	6.8	6.2	5.2	6.6	6.7
Commerce	33.0	27.4	20.9	24.2	23.4	21.3
Transport and communications	13.6	10.7	13.5	10.6	12.1	11.1
Finance and business services	14.4	16.7	18.9	4.6	4.0	7.4
Other services	17.6	12.9	8.7	30.6	26.8	20.8

Figure 12.1   Employment and output by sector, 1960–1980[29]

the mid-1980s when the economy faced its first recession. By 1973, manufactured goods had taken over from primary commodity exports (excluding petroleum) in the Singapore economy.[28] Fuelling the drive for multinational corporations and foreign direct investment was the statutory board established in 1961, the EDB.

The housing of the industrialising workforce with their families has been seen as a disciplining process, one crucial to the success of the economic planning strategy.[30] This coupled with the taming of the trade unions provided the stability and conditions that favoured the rise of the multinational corporations (see Figure 12.2). By 1980, total cumulative foreign investments were double the value of local investments in Singapore. Foreign firms controlled three quarters of manufacturing output, and hence were largely responsible for the international orientation of the economy.[31] Manufacturing growth was driven largely by exports which rose from 31 per cent of total manufacturing sales in 1967 to 54 per cent in 1973.[32]

After Singapore's separation from Malaysia, economic growth was rapid, averaging an annual rate of 12.7 per cent. Perry, Kong and Yeoh provide the context for this, writing:

> The foundations for this growth had been laid prior to the separation. Investment incentives had first been introduced in 1959 under the Pioneer Industries (Relief from Income Tax) Ordinance and Industrial

	1970	1975	1980
United States	343	1,118	2,091
Japan	68	454	1,187
Europe	423	1,170	2,992
• United Kingdom	199	481	1,172
• Netherlands	183	473	1,292
• Germany	3	105	243
• France	8	22	57
• Other European countries	40	89	226
Others	161	638	822
Local	na	na	3,469
Total cumulative foreign	995	3,380	7,092
Total cumulative	na	na	10,561

Figure 12.2   Cumulative foreign and local investments in manufacturing by country (gross fixed assets in millions of Singapore dollars), 1970–1980[33]

Expansion (Relief from Income Tax) Ordinance. New investors which met certain criteria were accorded pioneer status and were entitled to tax exemption for five years, and approved existing firms were given tax incentives to invest in the expansion of productive capacity.[34]

Legislation was introduced to further enhance such tax relief throughout the 1960s. Profits of export industries were taxed at 4% compared to the 40% it would have otherwise been, for periods of 10 to 15 years. This liberal investment environment included free port status together with limits on the controls concerning foreign investment, ownership and profit repatriation.

Other legislation was intended to bring the trade unions and labour to heel. The first two acts — the Employment Act and the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act, both of 1968 — were aimed at making the city-state cost-competitive. In the mid-1960s, it was deemed to be a relatively high-cost country by Asian standards. Hence, the Employment Act reduced public holidays from 15 to 11 days. Similar reductions were made to vacation leave entitlements. The number of standard working hours was increased from 39 to 44. Benefits for workers were also made contingent on disciplined behaviour at the workplace. The qualifying period for retrenchment benefits for workers was also extended.

Furthermore, the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act curtailed the influence of trade unions by removing rights to negotiate over redundancies and job restructuring. The state also established control over wage negotiations by setting up a National Wages Council in 1972 to make recommendations on wage increases, incentives and salary structure. Indeed, the Industrial Relations Act was amended in 1972 to allow the Industrial Arbitration Court to enforce National Wages Council recommendations.[35] Collectively, the legislation on employment together with industrial relations succeeded in restraining wages compared to competitors, such that by 1969, wages in the electronics industry were lower than those in South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and were less than one-eleventh those in the United States for equivalent levels of productivity.[36]

Then, in the mid-1980s, Singapore suffered its first recession. Cheaper, labour-intensive sites had emerged throughout Southeast Asia, including in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. Singapore found it could no longer compete on low wages and a disciplined workforce alone. The decision was made to shift away from labour-intensive industries to high-technology and high-value-added industries. This was Singapore's second industrialisation phase, with a focus on raising productivity and more capital-intensive

business. The trend had already started before the recession, when a tight labour situation had led to automation and other strategies. The mid-1980s also saw the Operational Headquarters (OHQ) intiative by the EDB In 1986, in which an incentives package comprising tax holidays and exemptions was introduced to draw manufacturing transnational corporations and services firms to locate their business headquarters in Singapore. The state was trying to further integrate Singapore's economy with the world by "plugging" itself into the control and coordination as well as labour functions of global corporations.

Hence, the transformation of Singapore into an international centre for foreign direct investments, and then for regional business headquarters, entailed more than the mere provision of infrastructure. Foreign direct investments were presented with a package of incentives comprising urban industrial sites, infrastructure, labour force costs, education and discipline, and legal and property frameworks.

In the effort to develop an additional international tourism sector, equal intensity was applied to provide a built environment that was conducive for the international travellers. With a minuscule land area, the focus of the effort had to be less on selling natural attractions and more on the urban and built-up areas.

Tourism — the World's Downtown

The Singapore Tourism Board started out as the Singapore Tourism Promotion Board in 1964. Up until the 1980s, its main role was to develop tourist attractions and hotels. Singapore compared badly with Hong Kong and Bangkok as a tourist destination in the early 1960s. It lacked casinos and nightclubs, and had only 1,200 hotel rooms compared to 6,000 in Hong Kong and 5,000 in Bangkok.[37] The early tensions between the effort required to develop Singapore into a tourist destination and the concerns about the corrupting influences of such an effort on the local population are reflected in then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's comments on the development of Sentosa Island into a "big-time pleasure haunt". This was announced in 1965:

> We've got an island set aside for all this ... We don't want all this ... but the American tourists like it, and all Malaysians can go there. Singaporeans will serve them. But, for Singaporeans, we will go to sleep early. We will wake up early. Tomorrow we work hard ... Let the other fellow have a good time. Never mind — we will give the

full red carpet treatment. But for Singaporeans I say 'First thing in the morning, physical jerks — P.T. Those who want a real massage — we can beat them up properly'.[38]

Between 1965 and 1969, construction began on 40 hotels and some S$500 million was committed to building 10,000 hotel rooms.[39] By 1969, Singapore had 60 tourist hotels with a further 27 under construction, as well as a host of large-scale shopping complexes, eateries and even cabarets.

The focus on tourism was responding to a tourism boom throughout East and Southeast Asia arising from American business and other interests in the region, including military "rest and recreation" visitors, notably from Vietnam. With the ending of the Confrontation with Indonesia in 1966, the number of tourists from Indonesia also rose. The situation remains almost similar today, with the Asia-Pacific region still described as the world's hotbed of tourism activity.[40] Indonesian tourists also remain the largest national group among visitors to Singapore.

By 1999, tourism receipts of Singapore totalled some US$5.16 billion, compared to US$5.93 billion for Thailand, its far larger neighbour, which then took the highest receipts among six Southeast Asian countries including Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. For Singapore, it was not a mean feat, considering its small size and population of around four million. In the region, only Brunei has a smaller population.

The reinvention of Singapore into a major tourist destination has been entirely predicated on consumptionscapes: shopping, eating, entertainment and heritage shopping and dining areas. With the focus on constructing urban landscapes for the consumption of tourists, including theme parks, Singapore has been labelled Disneyland with the death sentence.[41]

While the majority of the local population had been resettled from the central area, the ethnic neighbourhoods they previously populated such as "Chinatown" and "Little India" have subsequently been conserved, with development plans including strategically located hotels of both the "boutique" and "business" variety.[42] Surveys conducted among locals generally find these respondents feel conservation to be targeted more for tourists rather than locals.[43]

Tourism has been an important economic sector in Singapore, though land use planning has had to weigh tourism needs against visions of modernising Singapore's landscapes.[44] A variety of labels have been in use since the 1960s to project images of Singapore to the international tourism market — "Shopping Paradise", "Instant Asia", "Surprising Singapore", among others.[45]

By the mid-1990s, the tourism sector accounted for some 10.3 per cent of GDP.[46] In 1994, there were some 6.9 million visitor arrivals, a five-fold increase on 1975.[47] Singapore's population was 2.4 million in 1980 and in 1990, around 3 million. In 1983, the economic slowdown that Singapore faced was accompanied by a drop in tourist arrivals. This was attributed to "the lack of colour in the increasingly antiseptic city-state".[48] Furthermore, according to the Tourism Task Force set up to review tourism development, Singapore had lost its "Oriental mystique and charm best symbolised in old buildings, traditional activities and bustling road activities" in the process of developing the "modern metropolis".[49] The review led to the Tourism Product Development Plan of 1986, which in turn paved the way for the conservation of many of the ethnic neighbourhoods in and around the city centre.

In the process of reviving the tourism sector, Singapore has also promoted itself as a medical centre. In 1987, the medical expenditures of tourists alone amounted to S$23.3 million.[50] These initiatives were among the many changes that have transformed the role of the Singapore Tourism Board from merely that of developing new tourist attractions and hotels. In 1982, the board also developed the Malaysia-Singapore Tourism Council, among other inter-government alliances with national tourism organisations in the region. This was a strategy predicated yet again on its centrality in the region. The longstanding strategy of making Singapore attractive for MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) had meant the need to plug the city into international networks for air and sea travel. In 1985, some 1,231 such MICE events were organised in Singapore. This required infrastructural development to complement the telecommunications services in demand by the international business sector. Both the airport and port were equally important in the internationalisation of the economy and economic role of Singapore. The port and airport facilities that were developed were also important for tourist arrivals and in attracting international travellers to Singapore.

The Port and Airport

Singapore is one of the few colonial port cities in the world that has added a major airport and air travel hub role to its other international functions. Among the other port cities competing for top place with Singapore, such as Kaoshiung, Hong Kong and Rotterdam, few can be considered to have focused as much attention as Singapore has on the internationalisation of its airport.

The Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) was established in 1964 to provide and maintain port facilities. This was a far cry from 1946, when the Singapore Harbour Board had resumed control over port facilities that had fallen into disrepair during the war. The PSA, established in 1964, commenced more extensive investment to ensure port and shipping services would be adequate to support the industrialisation programme.[51] Continuous upgrading and expansion, together with efficiency and low port charges, have helped the port forge ahead of competitors, such as Hong Kong and South Africa.

During the 1970s, neighbours such as Malaysia attempted to divert traffic to their own ports, Malaysia by developing Pasir Gudang in southern Johor. Such regional competition, however, up to the end of the 1980s at least, scarcely dented Singapore's dominance of maritime traffic.[52] Singapore became a major maritime nation with its own merchant fleet. A government-linked corporation, the Neptune Orient Lines (NOL) became an international shipping company.

Singapore grew by the 1980s into the world's busiest port, overtaking both Rotterdam and Kobe in terms of the tonnage of ships handled.[53] That was for a large part due to the huge number of oil tankers calling at the port installations. Part of the success has been due to the location of the port along one of the busiest sea traffic routes in the world. Furthermore, in 1984, round-the-world container shipping was introduced. Such shipping implied the need for fewer but more efficient ports, with faster turnaround time. Both such turnaround time for ships and the relatively low port charges enhanced the centrality of the port of Singapore.

The international airport of Changi was opened in 1981 with one runway and one terminal. This was the third location to which the island's main airport had been shifted as urban expansion, congestion and the

	Passengers			Air Cargo (tonnes)	
Year	Aircraft landing	Arrival	Departure	In transit	Discharged	Loaded
1980	37,956	3,140,273	3,151,032	1,002,794	90,713	91,062
1990	48,803	7,237,233	7,166,347	1,217.178	167,388	299,684

Source: Department of Statistics, *Yearbook of Statistics*

Figure 12.3   Air traffic, 1980–1990

growth of air traffic volume necessitated the move to less developed parts of the island-state. Coupled with the development of a highly successful international airline, the Singapore Airlines (SIA), Changi Airport has grown into one of the busiest airports in the world. By 1984, a second runway and terminal had began operating, and the land reclamation for the airport fundamentally changed the island's shape on maps.

The addition of a large-scale international airport to Singapore's already thriving port was further exploitation of its locational advantages. Effort had increased over the years to not only ensure Singapore the command of a geographical centrality in the spatial and locational sense, but also in relation to international transport and communications networks. One contributing factor has been Singapore's open sky policy, which allows other international airlines to compete for passengers in Singapore itself. In return, this has boosted the fortunes of the national airline, which has been able to negotiate reciprocal landing rights in overseas destinations such as Tokyo, London and New York.

Many international airlines use Singapore as a transit stop or break-journey point, particularly on the routes between Europe and the Asia-Pacific. Again, the centrality of Singapore and its locational advantage have lent themselves to the development of its dominance as both port city and airport hub.

The Oil Economy

From 1892, Singapore had served as the storage, transshipment and distribution centre of petroleum in the Far East.[54] Singapore's oil refinery industry was launched later, in 1961, when Shell opened a small refinery. This was soon followed by the other major oil companies, including the country's own Singapore Petroleum Company which formed a consortium — the Singapore Refining Company — with Caltex, British Petroleum, Japanese and other partners.[55] In the two decades to 1980, Singapore provided almost half the gasoline and fuel oil, over two thirds of the jet kerosene and diesel, and about a quarter of the naphtha imported by countries in the Asia-Pacific region.[56]

Singapore's rise as the region's main oil refining centre has been attributed to its location as well as the deficiencies in the region's oil refining industry.[57] Singapore itself relies entirely on oil imports, such that export refining became the logical course of development given the small domestic market. The ascent of the city-state in the international oil-

refining sector has been boosted by the oil supplies in the region — both Indonesia and then Malaysia have been major suppliers. This prompted an increase in the United States' investment, which doubled in just one year between 1969 and 1970.[58] Newly-established firms related to the booming oil industry led to a sharp rise in the number of incoming foreign managers, financiers, consultants and other technical expertise.

A new pattern of international interest developed in Singapore in the 1970s because of the trends in investment in oil-related activities — trading, transport, finance and hotel management, among other things — together with a host of electronics, military and civilian aircraft maintenance, ship repair, and a range of export-oriented assembly industries. Singapore reasserted its centrality as a service and distribution base for international business that was in part being fuelled in the region by oil supplies from neighbouring countries.

Conclusion

The changes to the physical environment in Singapore until the 1960s were generally gradual, followed by a shift in gears from the launching of the industrialisation programme. According to geographer Wong Poh Poh, the changes to the Singapore landscapes between the 1960s and the late 1980s have been unprecedented in Singapore's history: "Swamps, tidal wasteland and agricultural land have decreased significantly while the built-up area, including industrial sites, has increased at the expense of nearly all other land uses".[59]

Singapore, in the period between 1965 to the 1980s, continued to play the same role that it had done in the past century and half, which was being the "head-link city" between the developed nations of the West and the underdeveloped nations of Southeast Asia.[60] If its role as entrepôt centre remained, the partners had changed however, with the relative decline of the importance of Britain and peninsular Malaysia and the increase in trade with East Malaysia, Indonesia, the United States and Japan. At the same time, it also assumed a new role as Southeast Asia's main oil refining centre as well as being its most important port city and maritime nation.

The expansion into other economic activities such as tourism and air travel has leveraged considerably on Singapore's centrality, that is, its geographical location, as much as its international orientations. Exploitation of its centrality has been extended to the development of medical services

aimed at visitors from the region seeking healthcare in Singapore as well as international tourists using the city-state to transit to other Southeast Asian destinations. The shift seen in its international business strategy between the 1970s and 1980s has been the elevation from regional to global competition, as the city-state scaled the industrial ladder of value added and productivity.

The main sources of prosperity for Singapore can be attributed to its international orientation which has never wavered since the 1960s. Its complex of servicing and distribution facilities for Western enterprises in Southeast Asia is one such source. The other has been the entrepôt trade with Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and then, tourism. The city-state, in developing these economic sectors, has consistently taken advantage of its central location in the region, and in addition, sought to deepen its integration with and servicing of the global economy.

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Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

Hack, Karl

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Remaking Singapore, 1990–2004: From Disciplinarian Development to Bureaucratic Proxy Democracy

Karl Hack

1990 and 2004: these two dates precisely demarcate Goh Chok Tong's time as Prime Minister of Singapore — from Lee Kuan Yew's retirement to become Senior Minister in 1990 to Lee's son, Lee Hsien Loong, becoming Prime Minister on 12 August 2004. But these dates demarcate something more important than the mere passing of time and personalities. Within this period, Singapore's politics, economy and education underwent important changes. Taken as a whole, these constituted a transit from "disciplinarian development" towards a new, if not entirely original form: that of bureaucratic proxy democracy. This latter is neither merely authoritarian in its approach to the general population, nor genuinely "democratic". Instead, it aims to provide a "proxy" for democracy, the purpose of which is not merely to maintain power, but by deepening and broadening inputs from individuals, groups and civil society into the planning process — to optimise the planning, and the realisation and development of, the "nation".

We can get a general sense of how profound the changes between these two dates were, if we start by freezing history in 1990 and 2004,

and asking for each: what was the situation in Singapore? What sort of society and economy did the city-state possess at that particular moment in time?

Bookends to a Period: 1990 and 2004

The situation at the beginning of this period can be illustrated by two seminal public texts, a book from 1989, and a speech from 1990.

The book published in 1989 was the second edition of what is now the most-cited history of Singapore to date, and almost certainly for a long time to come: C.M. Turnbull's *A History of Singapore, 1819–1988*.[1] Its concluding chapter noted the dawn of a new era, in which a better educated generation, in a more stable and prosperous world "began to question restrictions and discipline" which had seemed necessary in the face of communism, separation from Malaysia in 1965, British withdrawal from military bases from 1968, and the struggle to create a reputation as a place for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and multinational headquarters from the 1970s, so as to fund a growing population, much of it with little more than primary education and the most basic of accommodation.[2]

According to Turnbull, "consciousness of the recent past weighed perhaps too heavily with the leadership, and particularly Lee Kuan Yew, making him over-fearful for the future and trapped in his own experience of history", at a time when Singapore was no longer a potentially explosive society of transient immigrant communities but a nascent nation, and no longer threatened by communism and subversion, but a largely literate society, raised in Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats which racial quotas kept mixed, and educated in new schools which mixed races and drilled multicultural and multiracial tolerance. According to Turnbull, Singapore thus "still faced the problem of reconciling Western-type democracy and individualism with social and economic discipline".

The withdrawal from Parliament in the late 1960s of the Barisan Sosialis had left the field open to the People's Action Party (PAP) electoral dominance from 1968–1988, to the extent that the ruling party could guarantee a majority before most elections. In addition, electoral changes were introduced after the PAP's grip lessened slightly in the 1980s (following J.B. Jeyaretnam's Workers' Party by-election victory in 1981, and during the brief 1990s flourish of Chee Soon Juan's Social Democratic Party, with its *Dare to Change* theme of more freedom and welfare).[3] These seemed to support Turnbull's thesis, including as they did the introduction

and increase in Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs), where electors voted for a slate of candidates, thus further reducing the chance of the handful of determined opposition candidates making inroads, even if they did manage to avoid making statements which attracted defamation suits.[4] Of course, in as much as Turnbull had identified a real problem — rather than just echoing the liberal mantra that modernisation inevitably created its own contradiction, in the form of an increasingly economically important and assertive middle class — it was likely to become starker in the late 1990s, as Singaporeans became amongst the world's most intensive consumers of mobile phones, the Internet and newly introduced cable (though not satellite) television. These developments meant that the state's effective influence, or at least negative, limiting influence, over the editorial policy of the *Straits Times* stable of newspapers, and over mainstream television, became less significant.

Turnbull's 1989 book thus pictured a political elite whose worldview was partially ossified by its own 1968–1988 success, a success so dramatic that it had, ironically, changed society. By implication, the old emphasis on discipline, based on a Machiavellian view of a divided society waiting to explode — and indeed exploding in 1950 and 1964 racial riots — and an economic view of Singapore as a resource-less and vulnerable island-spot, threatened to prevent the elite from responding quickly enough to the changing needs of society at home, and of economic challenges abroad. On this view, one might have expected Goh Chok Tong — a government-scholar who had made his name turning around the government-owned shipping line, Neptune Orient — to be a safe pair of hands to hold the premiership from 1990, until the younger Lee, Lee Hsien Loong, might be ready to take the baton.

Yet, when Goh Chok Tong assumed the premiership in November 1990, the signals were mixed. On 28 November 1990, in his maiden speech, the new Prime Minister declared that:

> My mission is clear: to ensure that Singapore thrives and grows after Mr Lee Kuan Yew; to find a new group of men and women to help me carry on where he and his colleagues left off; and to build a nation of character and grace where people live lives of dignity and fulfilment, and care for one another …

He also later claimed that he had decidedly rejected Lee Kuan Yew's advice to make himself feared, in favour of his own style. So there was to be a change from the rigidly disciplinarian, save-and-build, consumption-postponing, self-reliant, anti-welfare state philosophy of the previous era.

But then again, Lee Kuan Yew remained as Senior Minister, his son became Second Prime Minister, and Goh Chok Tong continued: "My stress is on continuity, not a break with the past".

Goh Chok Tong thus promised a "gentler, kinder" society, but it was not clear if this pointed to a new path, or was merely the beautification of the old one in the face of rising expectations, as Singapore's per capita GDP approached, and even overtook the level of some first world countries. In the eyes of western liberals, Singapore had experienced an almost classic Marxist development of one class (the PAP-developmental government) calling forth its antithesis. The PAP's state-led developmental capitalism and laissez-faire approach to welfare had called forth its own antithesis in the shape of a wealthier population less convinced of the need for the sacrifices that had created it. So perhaps this was not so much a change, as a defensive stroke. Perhaps it was not so much a remaking of Singapore, or a Soviet-style glasnost and perestroika combined, as a Chinese and Vietnamese-style economic restructuring with continued party dominance, given the state continued to command the heights of the economy. In addition, some critics might have seen his and other new generation leaders as having been deliberately "blooded" in 1987–1988, in the detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA) of social workers and catholic activists, whose combination of social activism and networking the state had presented as subversive entryism.

In 1989–1990, then, the jury was out. Was Singapore remaking, or marking time with defensive strokes, including re-emphasising Asian values of community above individual (1991–1996 was the height of the government's rhetoric about "Asian values" underpinning Singapore's past and future success)?[5]

For 2004, the bookend was clearer. The defining moment was August 2004. On 9 August, Singapore celebrated its 39th National Day parade, a combination of military review, carnival, modern-era games opening pageant (complete with spectacular fireworks) and socialist realism, all rolled together under 2004's slogan of "A Progressive Society". This theatre of state was followed by the 12 August 2004 handover of the premiership from Goh Chok Tong to Lee Hsien Loong, and the tone-setting first National Day Rally speech of the new Prime Minister on 22 August 2004. From our viewpoint of "Remaking", a number of things were remarkable about this speech, and the way it set the scene for what followed.

First, the tone had changed from the deeply competitive, survival of the fittest line, to include the notion (at the National Day Rally Speech)

of taking everyone on the race, the wheelchair included. There was an explicit call to treat the disabled as "our brothers and sisters too".

Second, there was an explicit call for Singaporeans to be more pro-active in contributing, and the clear drift that the state could increasingly not plan effectively without this. This was backed by the symbolic statement that public entertainment licences would no longer be needed for meetings held inside buildings.

Third, changes intended to slow or reverse declining fertility reinforced the impression of a subtle shift coalescing, one in which the quality of life is increasingly recognised as an issue in keeping Singaporeans, producing Singaporeans, and changing mindsets from regimented, channelled competition and discipline towards more space for creativity and personal pursuits. The measures included increased maternity leave, reducing the civil service week to a five-day one from five-and-a-half, and extending tax breaks to all the first four children, and regardless of parents' educational levels.

At a practical level, when local author Catherine Lim wrote for the *Straits Times* in August 2004 — alleging public cynicism about the sincerity of the government's attitude to feedback, and that increased space under the new Prime Minister would probably still be very limited — the style of government response was very different to that seen in previous years. There was no rebuke for being *boh-tua*, *boh-suay* (Hokkien, basically meaning answering back, impertinence),[6] nor was there a demand for people to limit comment on politics unless joining a party — at their peril — as there had been when Catherine Lim criticised the government in 1994.[7] Lee Hsien Loong, in a January 2004 speech to the Harvard Club, had also talked of creating a more vibrant "civic" society, albeit balancing this against the need to move at a pace acceptable to the PAP's core HDB (Housing and Development Board, publicly built but now often privately-owned) flat-dwelling "heartlanders". One can be cynical about this, as after all, the British Raj had been fond of arguing that it represented the interests of quiet rural Indian masses over an annoying and partly deracinated "chattering class": in other words, politicians and civil society leaders who criticised colonial rule. But a slew of symbolic measures over the next five years, allowing bar top dancing, reverse bungee jumping, more reporting of gay issues in the *Straits Times* (but falling short of allowing gays and other groups to state their own case directly), and incremental relaxations in censorship, all point to changes in tone.[8]

In between these dates, there is one more, which subdivides the period into two qualitatively different phases of "remaking". This is 1997, with its Asian financial crisis. As we shall see under education below, this helped to transform the situation from one of bolting "new economy" skills onto old models of education and control, to fundamentally reconceiving the type of citizen desired, and the education and "civic society" required to produce this.

These dates thus, arguably, demarcate a transitional period. At the 1990 starting point, Singapore was a narrowly disciplinary and semi-authoritarian society with a one-party dominated state having a firm grip on society, and using a whole raft of controls to close down opposition. The latter included security laws allowing for detention without trial, media controls, government-domesticated unions, and a lack of a welfare state (especially the lack of a safety net against unemployment). Together with an education system highly competitive but allowing a relatively low proportion of students through to high school (called Junior Colleges) and tertiary education (less than 10 per cent in 1990), this combined to discipline citizens into compliance with the needs of both government-owned and multinational companies.[9]

The transition was towards a society in 2004 still dominated by one party, the PAP which has ruled since 1959, and to a government still emphasising society above individual, and a need for development — informed by rational, state-led planning with inputs mainly directed to the state, rather than to adversarial public and media debate. It was not, in intent at least, a transition to a western-style liberal and individualistic society. Indeed, 1991 had seen the issue of a White Paper on Shared Values that started the "Asian values" debate, and emphasised: 1) nation before community and society before self; 2) family as the basic unit of society; 3) community support and respect for the individual; 4) consensus not conflict; and 5) racial and religious harmony.[10] The mid-1990s saw the government pushing these "Asian values". This was, after all, a period when people still attributed East Asian, and especially Japanese, economic success to culture and discipline as much as to economic policies. Supposedly, the pre-existing mother-tongue teaching (Chinese, Tamil or Malay according to race) could help to root more communal Asian values even as society became more modernised, and more exposed from the mid-1990s to the world of the Internet. The excesses of the Asian values rhetoric tailed off in the late 1990s as Japan faltered despite its social characteristics, and then the Southeast Asian financial crisis of 1997 exposed just how hollow ideas

of common "Asian values" across very different societies was. But the idea of core national values, and of avoiding western-style adversarial politics as influential on policymaking, persisted.

Indeed, arguably Japan's faltering and the 1997 crisis, along with the rise of China as the major destination for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Asia (excepting software investment, where India became the major player) helped to change a tentative, almost reluctant reconfiguration of Singapore's social re-engineering into something more dramatic. Post-1997, the economic heroes of the moment were, and to some extent remain despite the dotcom crash of 2000–2001, the Microsofts and Googles (founded by people who left university and took risks), the media companies, and the branding. It was not just the 1997 crisis itself which prompted this, but also the way the crisis ensured key neighbours increased their drive to be more efficient, transparent and investor-friendly, and to create airhubs (KLIA or Kuala Lumpur International Airport opened, and Bangkok made a bid to challenge Changi as an air hub), and ports (Tanjung Pelapas in Johor, which lured major container carriers away from Port of Singapore Authority).

This is without mentioning entrants from further afield, such as Dubai, with its rapidly expanding Emirates Airlines, and development for shipping and tourism. It became increasingly obvious from 1997 that — however much electronics at 25 per cent of the economy, and oil services would remain important mainstays, and as much as the likes of Port of Singapore Authority would long remain more efficient than their neighbours — Singapore could no longer rely as heavily on merely being an island of modernity, efficiency and transparency in a sea of less developed and less business-friendly neighbours. The problem with being a good example turned out to be that, eventually, others copy you with some degree of success. Something more would be needed.

Indeed, this is the central debate, or perception. With the rise of China and India as FDI locations, and Chinese cities such as Shanghai threatening to outdistance Singapore even in relatively high technology areas such as LCD-production and semiconductors, Singapore from 1997–2000 faced a scenario characterised by the following four threats.[11]

The first was static FDI or at best a slowing rate of growth of FDI, and FDI creating fewer jobs as investment moved up the value-added chain. Thus, there was the threat of "hollowing out" of jobs if not of overall production. This was made worse because the majority of big companies were foreign, and so Singapore could not rely on retaining higher-value added

research and development, branding and services as factories shift, as might be the case in countries such as the United Kingdom or United States.[12]

The second threat was low Total Factor Productivity Growth. It became obvious that Singapore's share in world exports was falling in the 1990s, and its productivity growth (as opposed to growth due to adding extra inputs of labour, and of mainly foreign capital) was low, much lower than in countries such as Finland and Ireland. Indeed, its educational levels (reflected in degree-level and secondary-level education) were low relative to competitors such as South Korea, and against most countries likely to compete for "value-added" production of goods and services, except perhaps when compared to Taiwan.[13]

The third threat was the reality that the old model of competing by, in effect, cutting costs for investment (tax breaks, union controls, purpose-built infrastructure, and latterly allowing contract foreign labourers with lower costs and minimal housing) had limited durability. This was because post-1997 crisis, Asian competitors such as Thailand and Malaysia were improving governance, and were more willing to compete on similar cost grounds.

The fourth and final threat was that the "flying geese" pattern of constantly moving to higher value-added production looked like breaking down, as China and India might leapfrog stages. By 2004, for instance, Shanghai was building the world's first Maglev train, capable of reaching 300 kilometres an hour in two minutes, albeit on a rather restricted airport to downtown route. And India was making fast inroads into computer software.

In other words, Singapore had a genuine challenge, to which various committees responded from 2000, notably, the trio which reported in 2003: the Remaking Singapore Committee; the Economic Review Committee; and the Censorship Committee.

Yet we might, again if in cynical mode, condemn this as so much tinkering: same engine, different tuning. After all, one of the clearest responses to the recurrent crises of 1997, 2000–2001 and 2003 was to reduce business costs, shifting taxes from company and personal to indirect taxes (Goods and Services Tax or GST, the equivalent to Europe's Value Added Tax or VAT), reducing employer contributions to the Central Provident Fund (CPF) from 20 to 16 to 13% by 2004, and saying this would stay rather than be temporary, and pressurising employers to have a larger component of wages as variable (monthly variable and variable bonuses), so companies could react to crises by cutting costs rather than jobs, as unemployment

Plate 13.1 Biopolis

stuck at above 4 to 5%. Surely, this was the same government and EDB-led "pick the winners and provide low costs to entice investment" approach? Surely, Temasek Holdings (the government's investment arm) still owned strategic Government Linked Companies (GLCs), and these companies intended to spearhead investment and the drive towards regional and global presence? Hence, for instance, Paix's Chapter 9 shows GLCs spearheading the intensification of the investment drive into China and India, in and beyond from the 1990s. And despite attempts to reduce government distortion of market prices so a freer market could set the scene for entrepreneurialism, the government still controlled most land, and influenced labour costs through a National Wages Council. It also monopolised much investment funding through administering the CPF (workers must contribute funds to it in order that they can later draw on it for welfare and old age purposes), private schemes taking the back seat. It also continues to consciously pick out "winners", that is, high value-added areas for development, such as providing high-end educational services, and developing biomedicine. Hence, 2003 saw the opening of a $500 million Biopolis complex, with Life Science-related courses at universities subsequently increasing.

Yet, despite the continuation of much of the old — necessary in part to slow any "hollowing out" of electronics, which still contributed many jobs for the less qualified — there was also a new trend. This was seen in the post-2000 emphasis on Knowledge Based Enterprises (KBEs), and on the need for a larger class of Singaporean capitalists and entrepreneurs, even if necessary by spinning off more Temasek-bred companies into the private realm. More to the point, as we shall see, there was increasing conviction that this required not just a reduction in the state's role, to become less "nanny" and more "referee", but also a more fundamental re-engineering of society itself.

Now the question becomes: did these concerns really spark a nascent "remaking" of Singapore in a fundamental sense? To further answer this question, or at least begin to frame an answer, I take five elements of remaking.

Five Elements in the Remaking of Singapore

These five elements are culture, the economy, education, civic society, and population. In each case, the questions are: just how fundamental were changes from 1990 to 2004, what aim, and to what effect?

Culture

The cultural changes had at least a threefold target.

First, they were intended to create a "Global City of the Arts" or "Renaissance City" as opposed to the previous emphasis on a services and manufacturing city; one where leadership in entertainment would draw high value-added tourism and conference trade, and landmark events and buildings, in the style of the Sydney Opera House, would reinforce Singapore's brand image. Ultimately, a new entertainment complex, "Esplanade — Theatres on the Bay", or the "Durian" as its spiky fruit shell form is sometimes known locally, opened in 2002 to top off new museums (Arts, Asian Civilisations).

Second, they were intended to enhance Singapore's ability to retain talent (reflected in concern over "cosmopolitans" and emigration numbers to high quality of life destinations such as Australia) and attract "foreign talent" in the competitive market of global city-states.

Third, however equivocally at first, they seem to have increasingly come to be seen as having a wider, more structural importance in re-engineering Singaporeans for a modern, more service, KBE, and brand and value-added style of economy. In this KBE economy, even continued viability in areas such as container ports relied on ever-greater creativity to keep ahead; now surrounding states were also modernising more effectively, and after the shock of 1997, reducing their rent-seeking and other distortions.

This third area was the most fundamental, if slow to develop. A very weak parallel to the Soviet Union might be drawn here. The Soviet Union could modernise from the 1930s to 1960s on the basis of state direction and concentration of capital in key areas, while development relied largely on basics such as expanding education, and providing infrastructure. An authoritarian state's ability to accumulate capital for such large-scale projects is quite high, given it can do this by high enforced saving, and by keeping wage rises relatively low and so diverting funds to investment. Compared with a fully democratic situation, there is less pressure to allow a greater percentage of production to be consumed rather than invested. But beyond the 1980s, this model increasingly failed to deliver the rate of innovation and efficiency required in the Soviet Union.

Likewise, Singapore from 1959 to the 1970s emphasised delayed consumption, combined with labour discipline, in order to direct massive amounts of investment into schools, hard infrastructure, and even integrated, purpose-built industrial areas such as Jurong, under its Jurong Town

Corporation (established in 1968). Into the 1980s, there was little threat to this model, as China's modernisation was restricted to limited areas, and surrounding countries suffered from problems of governance, notably corruption and rent-seeking, and infrastructure deficits. By blending the best aspects of state direction with the best aspects of capitalism, the PAP was still able to deliver consistently high growth rates.

But after the mid-1990s, Singapore faced the prospect that most other advanced cities, and to a lesser extent, most advanced countries had faced much earlier: a movement of industry to lower cost locations, possibly generating into a significant level of de-industrialisation. That is, the electronics that supplied about 25 per cent of Singapore's economic output, and to some extent other industries too, could not be relied upon to stay put, as efficiency increased in lower cost areas. Hence, belatedly, it needed to plan for a future when KBEs of all sorts — research and investment, branding, services, educational services, higher value-added biomedicine, media and more — would have to provide the cutting edge for growth, and knowledge creation which would help established sectors such as electronics move upstream.

There was also a need to rebrand Singapore into the 1990s both to retain Singapore's increasingly mobile new generation, and to attract the best of foreign talent to work there. This was in addition to the obvious point that culture emerged as a big selling point for cities worldwide, with for instance, the European Union appointing cities as "European Capital of Culture" on a rotating basis.

On the other hand, there was an inbuilt conservatism in the PAP upper ranks, and so it claimed, in its public housing (HDB) "heartlanders". This claim was to some extent backed by surveys.

This is, however, a case of a clear development occurring immediately in the Goh Chok Tong era. As early as 1991, a National Arts Council (NAC) was set up, and MITA too (Ministry of Information and the Arts, now known as MICA),[14] with George Yeo as Minister talking about making Singapore a Renaissance and creative city. MITA's "Renaissance" aims included promoting the arts (National Arts Council, 1991), heritage (National Heritage Board, 1993), and a well-read society (National Library Board [NLB], and a huge success in increasing readership, as it made libraries user-friendly).

Whatever the artistic stirrings before, this drive to be a "Global City for the Arts" was a major shift from the more industrial and instrumental 1970s and 1980s, when Lee Kuan Yew scarcely saw the point in history

(for a time, it disappeared from the school curriculum), and the few museums went without significant "upgrading". By contrast, in 1992, the EDB, no less, published *Singapore — Global City for the Arts*, heralding the conceptualisation of a central Heritage District containing no less than five museums, to include a new Asian Civilisations Museum, and an Art Museum.[15]

The same document talked of the hardware and software to be put into place. Software was to include grants (with a centralised Arts Endowment Fund and annual government funding) and arts training, with the aim of drawing on the island-republic's multicultural heritage, to create a focus for Asian art. Hardware was to include the now opened "Esplanade — Theatres on the Bay", with a concert hall with a capacity of 2,000 and a large theatre, as well as smaller halls. By 2005, the year after Goh Chok Tong handed over the premiership to Lee Hsien Loong, further venues, such as a new performance venue in the old Parliament Building, had opened up.

An Arts Festival began in 1996, eventually becoming an annual event. And all this, it must be said, before the Asian financial crisis, with George Yeo articulating an image of Singapore as "one of Asia's leading Renaissance cities of the 21st century … requiring Singapore to develop … a high intensity of knowledge, and place ourselves as a hub [a favourite Singapore term] for commerce, finance, culture, communication and transportation".[16]

An important part of this process was the development of television, with additional terrestrial channels, and the opening up of cable television. Indeed, progress is often more visible at the popular or mass level than at the level of high brow theatre and culture. The library, for instance, increased visitorship from 5 million to 31.2 million from 1994–2003, with a programme of events, reading spaces, child-friendly corners and also magazines, in-library cafes, and audio and visual materials.[17] Arguably, even the old Singaporean penchant for tuition and study books was helping to seed publishing and multimedia companies, some of which might one day emerge as strong regional, if not global, brands.

By 2003, the Economic Review Committee could identify the creative industries as a promising sector of the economy. MITA's vision was both to broaden and deepen cultural assets and to grow the contribution of the creative industries from the then 3 per cent of GDP to 6 per cent in 2012. This trend was also to be consolidated after 2004, with the opening of a specialist arts school, and changes to school ranking to emphasise bands

of schools, not individual establishments (so increasing the importance of a school's non-academic activities to their status and recruitment). To achieve this vision, Singapore will need many creative talents, including people talented in the performing and visual arts, design, creative media and information technology. To attract this range — and the talents required to seed a desired expansion of local film, animation and games businesses — Singapore may well have to further "liberalise" its arts, media and creative environment further, for instance, by moving beyond the rather cautious liberalisation of censorship recommended in 2003. But this need for creativity, and a breadth of talents, extended well beyond the "cultural", to the economy as a whole.

Economy

In 2003, Singapore's Economic Review Committee made a slew of recommendations. Some concerned old-style cutting of business and transaction costs such as reducing taxation. That harked back to a strategy of enticing business by lower costs which dated at least to 1958, when pioneer certificates — which ensured tax concessions — had been first introduced for new industries. But the committee also suggested more innovative directions. Hence, one area it highlighted was the need for more entrepreneurship. In short order in 2003, the post of Minister of Entrepreneurship was created, and filled with Raymond Lim.

According to Juergen Rudolph, this reflected a core failure. Singapore had been consistently rated as one of the world's most competitive economies, but as a poor or average performer in entrepreneurship. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) shows both this poor ranking, and yet significant post-2001 improvements. In 2001, when Singapore was first included in the study, it ranked 19th out of 21 countries. Just two per cent of its adults engaged in start-ups and young firms. By 2003, this percentage was 5.4 per cent, placing Singapore 26th out of 40 countries on GEM's Total Entrepreneurial Activity rankings. GEM also ranks firms, classing a firm as "entrepreneurial" when it produces innovative changes in the market or adds new types of jobs. Such firms made up barely 19 per cent of Singapore firms in 2003, and just 9 per cent of the workforce.[18]

Rudolph also found that Singapore's entrepreneurial environment has been limited by historical, governmental, societal, psychological, financial and educational constraints. Historically, until the early 1990s, Singapore pursued an entrepreneurial substitute policy, multinational companies and

the government substituting for local entrepreneurship.[19] Government-linked companies (GLCs) dominated, and had a competitive advantage through being closely tied to the government. In governmental terms, it was not so much red tape as social control that impeded entrepreneurialism. Creative Technology founder Sim Wong Hoo came up with the acronym NUTS: No-U-Turn-Syndrome. He argued that in the US, you can make U-turns anywhere, unless there is a sign barring it, but in Singapore, the opposite applies. This NUTS culture supposedly promoted rules-based life and a lack of risk-taking.[20] Socially, there had been little recognition of entrepreneurs, and both social and legal stigma associated with failure and bankruptcy. Not failing was more important than trying, and the education system reinforced the primacy of conformity and the need never to fail. Heavy emphasis on streaming, and primary leaving results and then O- and A-Levels being used rigidly for high school and university selection for a low percentage, created a system where failure at any level could carry inordinate costs in lost life chances. Narrowly conceived academic excellence, often obtained by studying series of past examination papers and "model answers", worked against variety and risk-taking, while producing superlative engineers and a salariat for multinationals. Indeed, the 1990s' introduction of school ranking tables initially intensified the problem, as it was in schools' interests to focus even more narrowly on subjects where they could achieve comparative advantage. Psychologically, these factors inhibited innovation and variety, and financially, there was also a lack of seed funding, especially since the Asian financial crisis of 1997. Furthermore, employers were increasingly seeing the education system as not providing the range of abilities needed to encourage the creativity and adaptiveness basic to further economic development.[21]

However, after Raymond Lim's appointment, there was real movement. Tax reductions (corporate, and employer contributions to CPF funds) followed, a Home Office Scheme allowed fledgling entrepreneurs to conduct business from their homes, and an EntrePass Scheme liberalised visa and employment rules for foreigners to come to Singapore, based on their business plans. Government financing schemes commenced for start-ups, for instance, the Start-up Enterprise Development Scheme (SEEDS), matching every dollar raised by third-party investors. Bankruptcy laws were relaxed. A "No Wrong Door Policy" ZIP (Zero in Process) meant the onus was on civil servants to coordinate cross-agency matters, and Public Officers Working to Eliminate Red tape (POWER) was introduced. There was even a government website.[22] A "Yellow Pages Rule" was introduced

as well, that whenever a product or service was in the yellow pages — that is, if it is produced by the private sector — the government should not produce it, to avoid "crowding out" the private sector. Hence, training was to be done by the private sector, for example, the Entrepreneurs' Resource Centre ran highly successful short courses for would-be-entrepreneurs, and The Asian Centre for Professional Excellence offered an MBA programme in Entrepreneurial Management through the Entrepreneurship Institute Australia (EIA).[23]

   What was happening in terms of the economic "Remaking" of Singapore was complex. It mixed elements of the old and the new. The old included continuing the tactic of cutting business costs, while taking good governance to new levels (now other Asian countries were also stressing governance) by refining government services. It also included continuing to use the Economic Development Board to attract players in industries identified as possible winners, now "Knowledge Based Enterprises" in sectors such as education, bioscience, and research and development, and a Studio offshoot of Lucas Industries, aimed to blend east and west on celluloid (or at least in digital form).[24] But at the same time, there was a trend towards wanting more Singaporean businesses, better able to react quickly and nimbly as the pace of technological change accelerated, and as knowledge, not simply better governance and undercutting business costs, became the waves of the future. This all leads to what is perhaps the key indicator that there really was something closer to a "remaking" in Singapore, as opposed to a defensive adjustment. This is the area of education.

Education

As with economics, 1997 might be seen as somewhat of a watershed. The year before, one international study ranked Singapore's seventh and eighth graders first in both mathematics and science.[25] This had been achieved by a massive investment in education from the 1960s, combined with rigorous testing, central control of curricula, and largely traditional chalk and talk teaching to classes of around 40 students, often based on worksheets, and on drilling model answers. It was a phenomenal achievement, but the emphasis was heavily on the "right answer", and only in more elite, high schools (called Junior Colleges, for 16–18 year-olds) on process and leadership skills. Even when the emphasis began to change in the mid-1990s, for instance, with awards to schools for extra-curricular activities (termed co-curricular), and to provide Edusave funds for schools to use on

enrichment, these tended to be viewed instrumentally. The entire system delivered superbly, on narrow academic criteria, and on the criteria of national cohesion, even if the latter was at the cost of a degree of cynicism and detachment. Setting the bar high for university entrance, and higher for coveted Public Service scholarships, ensured pragmatic fulfilment of the narrow criteria set for these routes.[26]

Innovation in the 1980s to early 1990s had, if anything, increased the notion of programming a cohesive, disciplined citizenry, with an increased emphasis also on "mother tongue" teaching both to root values as the society became more modernised (briefly reinforced by the introduction of religious teaching), and to produce citizens abler to link to the three major Asian markets of Singapore, namely: Tamil for India, Malay for Southeast Asia, and Chinese for China. Beyond that, there was the introduction of "Critical Thinking", but initially, and somewhat bizarrely, as add-on lessons mainly for more elite students, including lessons based on Edward de Bono's ideas.

Again, 1997 saw the beginnings of something more fundamental. In 1997, Goh Chok Tong launched a "Thinking Nation, Learning Schools" (TNLS) concept. A thinking skills programme launched in 66 schools, with a Centre for Teaching Thinking in 1998, to prepare teachers. Teachers were to become continual learners, with 100 hours of training a year. This programme was extended to all schools in 2000, but soon came up against the fact that creative thinking could not be taught in one pocket, while in all the others, assessment remained unchanged. Hence, there followed a whole series of measures which gradually changed to an infusion approach. Between 2000 and 2004, these were coalescing into a major structural change.

First, assessment was changing from answer-based and towards process-based answers. In History and Social Sciences, for example, this meant "Levels of Response Marking", marking for the different levels of skills used in dealing with sources, for instance. It meant the introduction of Project Work from primary level up, with assessment based on soft skills of research, cooperation, analytical methods and presentation. This move towards emphasising soft skills, and creativity and student-centred learning, was of course incipient, but 2004 marked another step forward in the area of school staffing. Primary schools restricted their Primary 1 intake classes to 30, not 40, a measure presumably to creep upwards a little, and in his National Day Rally speech, Lee Hsien Loong promised thousands of new teachers for schools. In short, process-led and innovative

teaching would be a criterion for assessing schools, with the resources to be provided, processes to be infused throughout the curriculum, and the curriculum itself cut in 2001 by 30%.

Secondly, it meant changing the criteria for clearing each hurdle. Experiments were made with using SATs (Standard Assessment Tests based on the American model) scores — which proved just another test to drill for — for university entrance. Some schools were allowed to take into consideration non-academic criteria. Ultimately, the major changes came later, however. These included, for 2004 university entrance, allowing a first wave of entrants to be based on those showing additional skills and passions, even if their results were not amongst the best, dropping or making less rigid second language requirements for university entrance, and allowing a range of schools to specialise in particular areas, and vary entrance criteria accordingly. On a wider basis, extra-curricular activities, already rebranded co-curricular, would become more important, as school ranking tables were changed to banding groups of schools. Hence, within a band, a school would have to differentiate itself by value-added activities, not merely academic scores.

Alongside this, the idea of a more holistic education was pushed, with schools instructed to attend to the full spectrum of academic, social, and emotional learning. Hence, the emphasis was placed not just on co-curricular activities, national education and sporting culture, but also on other areas such as entrepreneurialism and even social service. By 2005–2006, the National Institute of Education had started running a Group Endeavours in Service Learning (GESL) for trainee teachers, so they could prepare themselves for leading social service activities in schools by doing them themselves. This encapsulated several of these new areas: learning soft skills such as leadership, planning, imagination and cooperation, imparting a wider view of community, assessing beyond a narrow, economically driven range of skills, and aggressively expanding the activities schools offered and so the different areas of excellence students might develop.

This was also part of the third wave, which involved providing a greater variety of tracks in education, with less chances of simply being failed by the system on narrow criteria. For instance, the 1990–2004 period saw the LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts (for diploma and degree), a new Sports School, and a National University of Singapore High School specialising in mathematics and science. An Arts School was also planned for 13–18 year olds, and from 2005, Singaporeans could go to school at

Plate 13.2 Holistic Education — St. Andrew's School and Junior College

Banners advertising St. Andrew's School achievements. The school here emphasises both value-added awards for academic work, and also awards across a wide range of co-curricular activities. This reflects the state's move towards ranking schools in bands of academic attainment, thus making achievements in other areas important differentiators. What distinguishes Singapore schools is increasingly not just solid teaching across all schools and relatively modern, purpose-built facilities, but also pressure on schools to deliver real, measurable achievement across a huge range of areas encompassing academic, citizenship, co-curricular, and entrepreneurial. In 2009, the Ministry of Education decided to encourage primary schools to provide each parent with a "Holistic Development File" on their child.

two International Singapore Schools (Anglo Chinese School being first), which combined international orientation with flag-raising, singing the anthem, and national language requirements. Singaporeans still needed special dispensation to move entirely out of the Singapore education system (for example, by attending non-Singapore run international schools), but the movement towards more variety and more holistic education was nevertheless dramatic. So dramatic, indeed, that in terms of permeating this approach throughout state and neighbourhood schools, Singapore had a claim to be a world leader. Indeed, in and beyond 2004, the very diversity of skills, activities and opportunities schools were required to provide would become in itself an issue, increasing teachers' and school leaders' already high workloads.

Fourthly, there was a radical restructuring of select secondary schools and Junior Colleges, in order to build on the idea of different tracks, to increase the move from answer-driven to process-driven education, and so to develop the range and type of skills relevant to KBEs. Previously, all students at secondary schools took the O-levels at 15 or 16, before proceeding to narrowly vocational Technical Institutes, more broadly vocational Polytechnics, or Junior Colleges to prepare for leadership and university. In 2003, some schools were allowed to entirely eliminate the O-levels stage, creating "through-programmes" by which students took no examinations until 18. Some schools and Junior Colleges teamed up, other Junior Colleges expanded to teach a wider age range, with schools having the option of sticking to traditional examinations, switching to the International Baccalaureate, or developing their own diplomas.

National Junior College, for instance, introduced a programme allowing no examinations from 13 until A-levels at 18. Instead, there would be extra projects, work and research placements including the option of overseas work, and modules available in areas such as "Man and Society". There would also be a switch from narrow disciplines to studying "authentic" or "Problems-Based Learning" and problems in real contexts. For instance, "Environmental Science" from a variety of angles. This is a good example of the degree of innovation, though in a sense invidious, since there were equally startling changes at other Junior Colleges.

Finally, there was an attempt to add to the infusion of information and communication technologies, national education (broadly speaking, citizenship education) and creativity, the area of entrepreneurial skills and "responsible risk-taking". This last area could range from nine-year-olds running their own school café, to NUS running one-year courses on business

in facilities in Silicon Valley for select students.[27] It also meant aiming, in the late 1990s to early 21st century, at having information technology (IT) used in 30 per cent of school lessons. This being Singapore, the IT policy would inevitably be subject to periodical review and upgrading, with no stinting on the necessary infrastructure.

By 2004, then, there was the making of a remaking, and the beginning of an Education Hub. INSEAD had a school in Singapore, one of several such leading medical and business institutions to do so. There was now the Singapore Management University (SMU), and the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) was offering some Open University courses, in a journey that would culminate after our period in it attaining full university status (as UniSim in 2005). It is true that some ideas hatched now failed, for instance, the University of New South Wales campus that opened in 2007 quickly closed down, its fees apparently suppressing recruitment. But the trend for more variety at schools and Junior Colleges, and for more tertiary institutions, became thoroughly embedded by the end of the 1990–2004 period. This meant that, going forward, there would inevitably be different selection criteria and different paths open to students. There was a broadening of the pathways to success. Whether that qualifies as making Singapore the "Boston of the East" — as it would like — remains to be seen. The reluctance of Warwick University (in 2005)[28] to open a campus — with fears that Singapore's political climate might eventually clash with the needs of academic freedom being a factor — showed there were still limitations, as did the sheer challenge of producing and maintaining teachers highly trained and motivated enough to manage such an education system. In terms of attracting regional students, and so becoming an education hub, Singapore's relatively high cost of living also remained an issue, despite the attractiveness of its quality and use of English.

As with other areas of "Remaking Singapore", the process had started as a handmaiden to a disciplinary, developmental state, with parts of it aiming to bolt new skills on to the old model, and with parts being defensive against fears that a "third generation" (since independence) would lack the cohesion and hunger of their parents. Indeed, in areas such as languages, we can see an incremental improvement of bolt-on skills, rather than a sudden innovation in the type of learning and attitudes. The 1980s' stress on teaching mother tongue languages was partly motivated by a desire to preserve the language skills necessary to engage effectively with East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia.

The 1990s' expansion of Special Assistance Plan Schools, where more intensive Chinese language education was available, built on this. By 2005, Singaporean policy envisaged not just bilingual students, but a bilcultural elite, upgraded with knowledge of Chinese culture, history and exchanges.[29] This trend continued beyond our period. In 2008, the Ministry of Education announced that the following year, it would set up a Singapore Centre for Chinese Languages to hone related pedagogy.[30] Indeed, by then, there was also some evidence that it recognised the need to give more assistance to biculturalism for Indians and Malays — with their ability to link to South Asia and to the region — as well. By 2009, there was already a Malay Heritage Centre, and plans were afoot to open an Indian Heritage Centre by 2012.

In short, the incremental adding of new skills, and new levels of existing skills, continued alongside the more transformative elements of educational change, and the state continued to feel ambivalent towards the effects of its innovations. Hence, it goes without saying that Singapore's aims — to control and yet set free creativity — embodied a deepset contradiction within its education system, one nicely encapsulated in the encouragement in schoolchildren not of "risk-taking" per se, but of "responsible risk-taking". For the humanities and social sciences in particular, there was still a tendency to want to suggest for teachers correct answers even to supposedly process-driven or moral discussions. The expectation amongst students that there would usually be such a "correct" answer still held the danger that students — particularly below the more elite schools and at lower levels — would see their main role as reflecting that answer back, rather than genuine reflection. This was of course more acute the closer any "learning" came to topics the state regarded as sensitive, such as morals, the nation, ethnicity, the correct approach to welfare and Singapore's economy, and so on.[31] In addition, changes in primary education have arguably been slower — ironically — than those at higher levels, in part because preparation for the PSLE (Primary School Leaving Examination) remains all-important for parents with an eye to secure places at the best secondary schools, notwithstanding falling class sizes. Even here, however, a 2009 Primary Education Review presaged lower class sizes, less examinations for the youngest children, and pressure for schools to ensure participation in outdoor pursuits and arts, in order to produce "independent learners" and "caring citizens".[32]

Despite this very real and deep-seated ambivalence, the more transformative aspects of reform slowly became more prominent from

around 1996–1998, as the process of "remaking" started to shift emphasis from the bolting-on of things such as extra language skills to infusion, with the ironic aim of using state-led social engineering to reprogramme youth as more creative, entrepreneurial, with varied skills and passions, with more soft, processing skills, and with the "habits of mind" (to plagiarise one of then Minister of Education Tharman Shanmaguratnam's phrases) which would allow citizens to become future Sim Wong Hoos.[33]

All of which raises the question: is the liberal's claim — that democracy and a more autonomous, critical civil society is the necessary underpinning and result of economic creativity — true?

Civil society and bureaucratic "democracy"

On civil society, it is enough to note that the tension between the old and new is as obvious here as it is elsewhere in the "Remaking" project. Statements by top politicians, for instance, softened the government's stance on gays, but "People Like Us", an unofficial group, was still denied registration, and scenes of homosexual affection were frowned on, while the print media was discouraged from allowing interest groups to state their own case (as opposed to having it reported by others). Generally speaking, you could have your views reported by press ultimately controlled by the state, but you would be unlikely to be able to directly "voice" those views as reported speech, still less in substantive articles or statements of your authorship.

Singaporeans were certainly being urged to believe that the government would listen more seriously to their ideas if directed through feedback, but self-censorship remained a real, biting issue for all sorts of groups: for newspaper journalists looking over their shoulder at editors; for civil servants who might want to write to newspapers on issues; and for citizens in general, who needed permission to register any society claiming to act on issues of politics, or as a pressure group. The warning administered to Catherine Lim in 1994, that dissatisfied people should join a political group, and be prepared to be dismantled according to the normal rules of politics, had certainly softened, with Catherine Lim herself suggesting in 2004 that things might be changing.[34]

Nevertheless, it remained true that individuals who crossed swords with the PAP on high issues repeatedly found themselves the object of action causing them to lose their effectiveness; and in some cases, to face bankruptcy or even flee the country. The list includes Francis Seow in 1988; Mohd Jafrie in 1991; Tang Liang Hong and J.B. Jeyaretnam

after they narrowly failed to win the Cheng San Group Representation Constituency in the 1997 General Election, with the latter eventually bankrupted for a defamation which was indirect; and Chee Soon Juan for admittedly feeble accusations that the PAP had actually given money to Suharto during the 2001 General Election. Of course, 9/11 and the following 2002 arrests of Jemaah Islamiyah cell members — found to be plotting attacks on American targets in Singapore — seemed to confirm that the Internal Security Act, with its powers of detention without trial, and without judicial review, was very much active.

The trend was nevertheless clear, with "Singapore 21" (a campaign from 1999 to encourage "active citizenship", the idea that "Every Singaporean matters", and feedback on the sort of society Singaporeans wanted),[35] and with Lee Hsien Loong's 2004 calls for Singaporeans to be more proactive. He was supposedly deluged by emails after calling for the young to come forward with their ideas and willingness to help. In theory, societies could by then be automatically registered (though the list of exceptions reached Monty Pythonesque proportions). Certainly, any group aiming to lobby for an interest still needed to register, and would have found the government-influenced press reluctant to directly allow them a platform or voice, even if it would report events. Again, politically, it was still difficult for any serious opposition to develop, given the press stance was to voice the government, but not usually to voice other groups. In addition, as for education, there is a deep-seated tension between the desire to genuinely encourage active participation through government channels, and the tendency to present pre-packaged policies for "discussion" which can have limited impact at best on actual policies. But, notwithstanding these limitations, the space available was increased. The desire and perceived need to engage people, and win their hearts and participation rather than merely their occasional votes and acquiescence, marked a shift, even if it was likely to proceed like a groping in the dark. Criticism continued, especially from academics able to obtain an overseas base. Hence, for instance, James Gomez, as coordinator of the Monash Asia Institute's Singapore Studies project on civil society, ran an energetic website.[36]

Important as it is, however, the liberal-west versus soft authoritarian PAP dichotomy, and debate over whether the latter will have to bend to the former to develop further, is as yet premature. Indeed, if Chua Beng Huat is to be believed, it is in part irrelevant, since good governance and economic success over a protracted period have in a sense depoliticised many Singaporeans.[37]

Population

Instead, it is worth looking briefly at another area where PAP social engineering has gone from fine-tuning old policies, towards what could be construed as the beginnings of a mindset shift.

Independent Singapore's population policy has gone through distinct stages. In the 1950s, Singapore had a high birth rate, with unemployment a fear, further fuelled by reductions in British military facilities, which at their 1960s peak may have underpinned employment for up to 10 per cent of the population. The final phasing out of British bases from 1968, before Singapore's nascent export oriented industrialisation strategy had had time to ripen, continued the pressure. Hence, from 1959 to the 1970s, the concern was to limit population. China's fall to communism and Cold War fears, also ensured strict controls on immigration (dual citizenship was not and is not allowed, and preference is shown for admitting those with needed skills and education). This completed the shift begun from the 1930s depression, when Singapore had moved from being an immigrant society with sub-replacement fertility level, to having a core of second- and then third-generation local-born citizens. In essence, 1930–1990 was a very different phase of history in population terms, characterised from 1945 to the 1970s by increasing or high fertility.

Then, by the 1980s, population growth levelled, and the new concern was the falling fertility of the most-educated. This prompted an attempt at state social engineering, by offering inducements carefully targeted at educated women, with for instance, increased tax relief for women with more than three O-levels, and the establishment of a Social Development Unit (SDU) whose job was to encourage graduates to meet, and hopefully more. This was partly informed by an elitist, eugenicist notion that intelligence and characteristics were as much, if not more, created by inheritance as by nurture, with Singapore's small population making the perpetuation of a sufficiently broad and strong elite, and so the perpetuation of its own legacy, a concern to an ageing first-generation leadership.

During Goh Chok Tong's 1990–2004 premiership, Singapore failed to move beyond this stage in actual policy, though its declaratory position shifted dramatically. From the 1990s, the decline in fertility which previously was a concern for the middle and most educated classes became a general concern, as Singapore followed the secular trend of other advanced countries. By 2004, fertility rates were less than 1.4 per couple and falling, despite increased benefits for families, state subsidies

for kindergarten education, and the possibility of employing maids. In 1990, foreigners made up 10 per cent of the population of 3 million, and in 2003, 18 per cent of 4.185 million, that without reckoning on Permanent Residents, for some of whom the classification would be one of convenience.[38] What percentage of the population could be called rooted? As George Yeo had asked earlier, was Singapore in danger of becoming, for the more mobile citizens, not a home but a hotel? If Singapore did not yet face a United Arab Emirates scenario, of citizens being reduced to a minority, the tangent raised major questions, especially in the face of significant emigration of so-called "cosmopolitans".

February 2003 thus witnessed a major declaratory offensive, with February turned into a month-long "Romancing Singapore" festival, urging people to "take the time to smell the roses". The *Straits Times* regaled bemused readers with an article on the best carparks in Singapore to make out in.[39] But in policy terms, there was drag. While some private companies shifted from a five-and-a-half day week to a five-day week, the civil service merely allowed Statutory Boards to experiment with every second Saturday off, women received less medical benefits than their husbands, and maternity leave remained two months. At the same time, Amy Khor, a relatively recent PAP figure, was given the task of reviewing family policy, and civil society groups such as AWARE were allowed some scope to air their views, especially of course when done through the proliferating feedback channels.[40]

Nor should this be thought of in narrowly population-utilitarian terms. In and before the 1980s, Singapore was used to state campaigns, backed by adverts, to stand in queue or, in the 1990s, to allow people off Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) trains before entering, or to show kindness by not being *kiasu* (having the fear of losing out, hence always needing to be first regardless of courtesy). But at the same time, the handicapped were invisible, specialist schools a Cinderella and underfunded sector, and the fiercely competitive education and economic sector (and emphasis on self-reliance and charity rather than state welfare) meant a systemic tendency against any calls for making it possible for each citizen to realise their full potential. In this regard, there appears to be a significant change in tone.

This is epitomised in three 2004 events, two serious and one less so. The less serious is Singapore Idol. The Singapore version, though, featured a number of people with disabilities, including a deaf singer using sign language, and a man with a speech impediment, whose determination to

show they were not afraid to perform in public was presented sympathetically. The second is the image of Lee Hsien Loong's National Day Rally speech, talking of running the race together, including taking "the wheelchair with us". With teachers about to be trained in "Group Endeavours and Service Learning", and entrepreneurial activities also having scope to focus on community service, this now had the potential to form one part of a society moving towards a wider conception of values. The third was the opening of the Pathlight School in January, with a remit to provide the best possible academic and non-academic education for autistic children. The latter in particular was symptomatic of the ongoing shift — however uncertainly — from an almost Darwinian notion of struggle and how society must be constantly disciplined for this, towards a more organic view of the value and potential of all citizens.[41]

Did Singapore now also have its own rising "new *priyayi*" (in Java, a term ascribed to those working in middle class sectors not reliant on government funding and control)? That is, old choices of a good career mainly demanded a narrow route of O- and A-level excellence, followed by Junior College, and a scholarship at best, leading to civil service, law, engineering or accountancy. In many cases, the best scholarships and jobs were beholden to state rules and boundaries. But from the 1990s, notwithstanding market shocks, choices multiplied, and career paths too, with media, branding, culture, and start-ups increasing. Indeed, the relative decline of "rice bowl" careers, and the introduction of new areas such as Lucasfilms projected studio, promise to make this "new *priyayi*" class larger. These are people often with more work flexibility planned around the laptop, internet and even assignment or self-employment rather than fixed salariat, ever more demanding on the state. One does not have to accept naïve bourgeois liberal ideas of more middle class equalling more democracy, but the implication might be that the state's current recreation of itself as facilitator, more hands-off, and less directive, was by 2004 organic and here to stay.[42]

Historically speaking, there remains the question of where this was going. Would Singapore return to the pre-1930 phase, when it was truly an immigrant society, with the hunger, variety and connections that brought, but also increased difficulty in maintaining cohesion and national service?[43] Could it combine a core citizenry at above-UAE percentages with attracting the best of foreign talent? Would the government need to build on Lee Hsien Loong's implicit, rather than explicit, conceptualisation of what might be the good life, when in his National Rally Day speech, he

referred to an American model of working hard for less time, and playing hard too, and if so, what room is there for input from below to genuinely help coalesce new notions? Will feedback step-change at any point (and in any of its myriad forms) to provide more genuine initiating input into policy formulation, rather than the mere trimming of existing policies? Perhaps this sort of issue also reflected in the PAP's repeated calls for a younger generation to come forward, and be willing to contribute, both indirectly, and by becoming the late 30s to early 40s component of a future generation of volunteered, but carefully sifted, politicians.[44]

Fortunately for Singapore, the needs for arresting fertility decline and attracting top, mobile talent turned out to be similar, centring on continuing to move education, housing choices, entertainment, and work-life balance, in ways which concentrate on what the "good life" is conceived to be in a postmodern, and for many, post-industrial, information-rich world.

Conclusions, Reflections, Questions

It can be difficult to fathom this "Remaking" process which coalesced around 2000–2004. At one level, it could result in top-down creation of so-called "Remaking" committees in institutions, with the reality being managements already had clear agendas. Top-down calls for change jost-led with different generations' pre-existing habits of mind, and with structures designed previously to control rather than facilitate, so that the whole exercise could appear by turns exhilarating and propagandistic. In every sector, there were tensions. Education was to re-engineer citizens as process-driven, critical thinking if not critiqueing entrepreneurial self-starters, but these same people were to be community-orientated and direct civic feedback through government-approved channels. Entrepreneurs were to bloom, but GLCs would continue, state corporations picking winning sectors, and CPF absorbing much of the country's savings. In short, the PAP would engineer innovative, critical, independent citizens who nevertheless would agree to one-party dominance of the media and society being necessary in order to optimise use of Singapore's limited talent pool. Indeed, the very best of these citizens would be eventually earmarked for integration into the PAP itself, as part of its policies of pre-empting talent, and of elite renewal.[45]

Nevertheless, this chapter has suggested that what took off in the 1990s partly as an attempt to shore up a pre-existing system, by adding a layer of creativity and initiative, coalesced into something potentially more

paradigmatic. That is, and partly under the impact of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, and its spur to China and Southeast Asian countries to improve governance, Singapore veered towards the conclusion that changes could not be mere add-ons. It seemed to conclude that such changes must now represent a re-engineering of the *Homo Singaporeanus* (or more elegantly *Homo Temasekanus*), and of his (and her) relationship to the workplace, and to the state. Where this would end, with a more American conception of national identity and creativity as wider melting pot, or an Athenian conception of an increasingly smaller percentage of citizens leading the "good life" and directing, while contract-work foreigners do much of the work, or as something uniquely Singaporean, was still anybody's guess. This still depended on forces exterior (would the sense of external threat intensify or abate?) and internal (how would debates unfold between second-, third- and fourth-generation leaders within the PAP?).

Hence, the five areas dealt with above had an overlapping effect, describing a Venn diagram at the core of which is the aspiration of remaking Singapore into a more creative, value-adding, soft-skilled, and even "heartware"-equipped, nation. One that would thus be equipped to survive globalisation and to retain and attract a globally-mobile middle class, not just economically, but in terms of cohesion as well. Hence, the increasing emphasis on the state doing less in order to achieve more, teaching less facts and placing less weight in curriculum in order to imbue more process skills, working less in order to allow more babies and more leisure (supporting the Renaissance City vision), and less government direction in order to allow a wider creative base.

At the same time, western interpretations of this process can still seem blinkered. In the 1980s, Singapore was supposedly an authoritarian state, a "fine city" (in the sense of a fine for everything) where one could not dance at rock concerts, or chew gum (a 1992 ban on sale, not consumption after public transport problems). Or a city where development must inevitably call forth demands by a middle class for more freedom of civil society, and so a more liberal, multiparty democracy with effective opposition.

In fact, it is not self-evident that there is any such necessary relationship, especially in a country with a very narrow citizen base, in an even narrower geographical space, such that there is a touch of Venice or Athens — of the city-state where all players in key policy areas operate in close proximity. This is combined with a state policy towards "dissent" and against pressure group-led public debate that further reduces the space for western-style liberal democracy. That is, people may be brought into

the PAP or state bodies, or encouraged to channel "feedback", especially through the official Feedback Unit. Opponents were often internalised. Chang Heng Chee, Ambassador in the United States, was an early critic of sorts. Those not incorporated — while subject to defamation courts where this is deemed justified — may alternatively be subjected to a "dead-man-standing" routine, moved harmlessly sideways.

In other words, the liberal versus authoritarian dichotomy, while great for parlour debates, may not be the best heuristic device for plotting the future of a state, government and society trying to evolve its own model. This model includes a blend of old and new ingredients: state-led planning; a "civic" society which directs information flows towards the government; unwritten out of bounds markers; a state now stepping back to be more referee and less nanny; and greater choices and pathways for individuals who are nevertheless still competitively disciplined. In other words, this was a government struggling with its own perestroika and carefully calibrated glasnost, to create a kind of "bureaucratised proxy democracy". That is, a system which while not democratic, nevertheless seeks to perform some of the functions of a democracy. It seeks public affirmation, proliferates feedback channels to capture the thoughts, desires and grumbles of the "demos" with ever more detail, and increasingly forces state actors to be responsive to them.

This model goes beyond recent descriptions of the Singapore system as an authoritarian state using self-restrained "calibrated coercion", that is, only such coercion as is minimally necessary to achieve a desired effect. It also goes beyond models which combine that calibrated coercion with acknowledgement of "soft" factors, such as legitimacy earned through economic success. Those models — as for instance suggested by Yao Souchou and Cherian George[46] — emphasise a combination of economic success, efficiency, "sufficient to task" or "calibrated coercion" (e.g. press controls rather than bannings), and hegemonic control of media and education. All of which is helpful, but all put together, their image of the self-restrained authoritarian government does not entirely capture the two-way nature of the process involved in a "bureacucratic" or "administrative" proxy democracy.

Such a form of proxy democracy is successful because it replaces many of the functions of a western-style civil society and opposition by alternative feedback mechanisms. By survey and feedback mechanisms, some embedded within government agencies such as housing, the political system takes on some of the role of aggregating interests that inter-party rivalry in a full

democracy provides for. The potential for this approach was there from early on in the PAP's government, when from the early 1960s, it built grassroots organisations and sought to link these and Community Centres closely to its own organisation, notably through the People's Association.[47] The difference being that what started with a strong desire to close down space against Barisan Sosialis — and was then reminisicent of eastern bloc "People's Democracies" with a capitalist flavour added — is now available to a government needing to increase feedback and volunatarism. Where before, this meant MPs "meet-the-people" sessions and grassroots leaders, increasingly it also includes MPs' emails being available, online feedback encouraged, and focus groups held. In addition, in 2003–2004, civil servants were told they must justify rejections of public requests.

The result is not just an authoritarian one-way street, but rather a two-way street in which the lane travelling towards the government is narrower than the one going towards the people, but nevertheless exists. The model is, therefore, one of calibrated coercion in service of bureaucratic proxy democracy, managed by a "Fabian"-style elite. This elite is dedicated to national development, to constantly re-engineer society to provide the "social values" relevant to each age[48], to implement policies based on painstaking research, and to reproduce new generations of leaders in its own image.

This chapter has been about the short period in history when, I suggest, an initially defensive move matured into a qualitative change. As such, I am reluctant to go into what followed 2004 in any detail. Except perhaps to say that, if anything, the ensuing period of 2004–2009 seemed to entrench rather than alter the trajectory described above. Hence, by 2009, S. Jayakumar (in one of his last speeches before stepping down as Deputy Prime Minister) reminded civil servants to "serve the people with humility, respect, and empathy". Perhaps more significantly, he pointed out that nine top echelon civil servants were attached to grassroots organisations that year, with 15 such attachments planned for the following year. Other top civil servants were attached to or volunteers at Community Development Councils, statutory boards, the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), private companies and also overseas.[49] So the trend towards trying to suck information up to the government through myriad information systems was accompanied by embedding state servants into society. You could interpret this as tentacle-like grip on society — which in one sense it was — but it is also more two-way. The new model might increasingly be one of the state as hyper-linking webmaster, providing platforms, even

conceptualising spaces (such as biomedical sciences, or Singapore as an education hub), and having the power to include or exclude links, but with its role as facilitator taking front-seat; its role as disciplinarian and censor taking the back more often.

If this trend were to continue, together with the devolution of more parts of the civil service into increasingly customer-oriented, and results and feedback-assessed, statutory boards, one is presented with the possibility of a proxy for democratisation and liberalisation. For the citizen, there may be more choices in education, a more responsive and client-driven civil service and statutory boards, more state assistance and soft infrastructure for start-ups, arts, and more talent going to the private sector and less to a slimmed down civil service, more private financing options, more educational and personal pathways — but still for the moment with one-party dominance.

At the same time, it is worth asking if such a model has inherent flaws. For instance, take public health. It may be that the current model of provision — featuring health insurance which citizens pay for and choose themselves and so have in very varying levels — is the best one. A system which channels information on citizens' problems so efficiently gives the government the chance to endlessly trim such an existing system, avoiding political disaster or patients going entirely untreated. But this could in turn act as a prop to existing assumptions, and so put off reconsideration of fundamental principles. Similarly with feedback systems, do they make people feel ownership, and genuinely source best ideas, or act more as a safety valve for frustrations and problems? Again, might the system make it easier to adjust existing policies without fundamental reconsideration, and even leave important groups in society feeling "managed" and disciplined rather than enfranchised?

Above all, to understand both the limitations of Singapore's post-1990 "Remaking", and yet just how dramatic it had the potential to become by 2004, especially as its "new *priyayi*" or internet-era-*pemuda* (youth) fourth generation started to impact, one needs to start remaking our own models and heuristic devices. One of these is the notion of a coherent "Remaking". This is a 21st-century term, which coalesces several strands, and is now self-consciously articulated by the Singapore government. If we want to see Singapore as one case study in a world where states and global cities compete on an almost intimate basis, we may be in need of some serious upgrading of our understanding of Singapore in this "Remaking" phase.

That is, of course, if we are convinced this was, is, or is becoming not just a re-packaging and rebranding, but a genuine move towards remaking Singapore. It also depends, of course, on the state not doing a U-turn, whether in the face of an external impact such as world depression, deglobalisation or accelerated global warming, or due to internal concerns. Horizon scanning for such threats (and opportunities) is in itself an obsession of the Singapore government and civil service. At the point of completing this paper, in 2009, the balance between old disciplinarian and new "remaking" remained open-ended. Indeed, the very scale of India and China's rise — if not interrupted — and opportunities that were creating for Singapore (both as a peripheral part of their networks and as a central place between them), was easing pressure for more radical and accelerated restructuring. As Paix's Chapter 9 showed, the rise of both India and China was reestablishing Singapore's convenient role as a central place between them, and for them in Southeast Asia. As in the past, so in the future, very real choices remained, each bundle of decisions implying a different future.

Notes

1. Mary Turnbull had been a colonial civil servant, a member of the University of Malaya, and subsequently a professor at the Univeristy of Hong Kong. When she died in late 2008, she had completed but not yet published a third edition of her *A History of Modern Singapore*. It finally appeared in 2009.

2. C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819–1988* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 320–7.

3. Chee Soon Juan's high point as SDP leader was the mid-1990s, when the SDP won over some Workers' Party members, and before a 1996 Parliamentary Select Committee in which Chee's party was accused of presenting flawed figures on government health subsidies. Chee was ultimately dismissed as an NUS lecturer for misusing research funds to despatch his wife's thesis. He also published at the time *Dare to Change* and in 1995, *Singapore: My Home Too* (Singapore: Chee Soon Juan, 1995), with other short books following.

4. These variously hit J.B. Jeyaretnam, most recently after the 1997 General Election, ultimately resulting in his disbarment from Parliament, where he had sat as one of the losing Workers' Party team in Cheng San GRC. This team received the highest opposition vote without winning a seat. Electoral laws allowed for the appointment of the closest loser as a third opposition MP when there were less than three.

5. Lee Kuan Yew, better known as Harry Lee in the 1950s, and himself having to improve his Chinese, said in 1981: "We are becoming too Westernised.

We must go back to Asian values". But the values chosen, however packaged as neo-Confucian, smacked of a combination of corporatist, conservative, emigrant, and middle class values of self-reliance combined with family and community before individual, the wish to reign in individualism likely to upset supposedly "Asian" sensibilities, and the very real PAP desire to rule unhindered by pressure politics. "Asian values" were to be underpinned by a turn to Confucian values and compulsory learning of a "mother tongue" as well as English in schools. "Mother tongue" learning was seen as providing cultural ballast as well as economic benefit. There was also the creation of Special Assistance Plan schools with extra Chinese language capacity, and of the Institute of East Asian Philosophies (IEAP) to strengthen the Chineseness of Chinese Singaporeans. In reality, of course, other than a higher value placed on family (partly a reflection of rapid development not having had time to erode values that centuries of industrialisation and urbanisation had in the west), values did not seem greatly uniform across successful Asian countries: contrast, for instance, Taiwan to Singapore. The theme was therefore gradually de-emphasised and elided into a stress instead on "Singapore values" by the decade's end. In reality, it had probably also been influenced by a naïve response — in the west as well — to Japan's then apparently inexorable rise.

6. The phrase is Hokkien, literally meaning "no big, no small", and is used to admonish someone for not knowing their place. Its use smacked of the repeated PAP mantra that people could not criticise policies from a professional or extra-parliamentary standpoint, but should enter politics to do so.

7. *Straits Times*, 16 August 2004, p. 15. See also "The Great Affective Divide", *Straits Times*, 26 August 2000. The original 1994 article alleged a divide between Goh Chok Tong's desire for a gentler society, and Lee Hsien Loong's firmer influence. It became clear on Lee's subsequent assumption of the premiership in 2004, however, that his term would have at least a great, if not a greater emphasis on taking along everyone in society. In the following years, as one example, schools were set up to cater especially to autistic (Pathlight) and non-academic (Northlight) children. For the first time, buildings and transport received significant adjustments to improve disabled access.

8. The distinction between "reporting" on groups such as "People Like Us" (PLU, a group supporting gay interests) and "voicing" them is important. The *Straits Times* — in effect under government influence — might very well report an event or case made, but would be unlikely, say, to allow space for a PLU or opposition leader to write at length, or even be quoted at any great length. A debate with the strongest arguments laid out at equal length for both sides or a debate including substantive direct statements by each side, was very rare if not extinct in this period, if not beyond. Journalists would undoubtedly try — as professionals, if nothing else — to see how far they could push these limits, but would nevertheless be aware of unwritten "out of bounds"

markers. A case could be made for arguing that "non-political" figures such as Catherline Lim were now to be allowed slightly more chance to put their opinions directly.

9. Christopher Tremewan, *The Political Economy of Singapore* (London: Maccmillan, 1994), and written in the late 1980s to early 1990s.

10. Tremewan, *The Political Economy of Singapore*, p. 146, citing the *Straits Times* of 6 January 1991.

11. The following points are extracted from the various chapters in Arun Mahizhnan, *Singapore Perspectives 2004* (Singapore: IPS, 2004), especially Manu Bhaskaran, "Rethinking Singapore's Economy", pp. 19–31.

12. W.G. Huff, "Singapore's Economic Development: Four Lessons and Some Doubts", *Oxford Development Series* 27, 1 (1999): 46.

13. See also W.G. Huff, "Singapore's Economic Development: Four Lessons and Some Doubts", p. 45. By 1995, Goh Chok Tong was explicitly addressing this concern.

14. In 2004, it was changed to the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA). Its website is at <http://app.mica.gov.sg/> [accessed 16 June 2009], and contains the latest Renaissance City Plan, at the time of writing for 2008–2015.

15. For much of what follows, there is C.J.W.-L. Wee, "National Identity, the Arts, and the Global City", in *Singapore in the New Millenium: Challenges Facing the City-State*, ed. Derek da Cunha (Singapore: ISEAS, 2002), pp. 221–41; and the truly excellent Kian-Woon Kwok and Kee-Hong Low's "Cultural Policy and the City-State: Singapore and the 'New Asian Reniassance'", in *Global Culture: Media, Arts, Policy, and Globalization*, eds. Diane Crane *et al.* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 149–68.

16. George Yeo quoted by *Sunday Times*, 18 May 1997, and on p. 152 of Kian-Woon Kwok and Kee-Hong Lowe, ibid.

17. *Straits Times*, 8 May 2004, p. L14.

18. Juergen Rudolph, "Can the 'Nanny State' Promote Entrepreneurship?", *Malaysiakini* (online magazine), 11 August 2004, citing *Business Times*, Singapore, 29 January 2004.

19. Huff, *The Economic Growth of Singapore*, 1994, p. 320, cited in ibid.

20. Sim Wong Hoo, *Chaotic Thoughts from the Old Millennium*, cited in ibid.

21. Huff, "Singapore's Economic Development: Four Lessons and Some Doubts", p. 47.

22. For public service initiatives in general, including related websites, see <http://www.ps21.gov.sg/initiatives.htm> [accessed 2004].

23. Juergen Rudolph, "Can the 'Nanny State' Promote Entrepreneurship?". The author was at the time Managing Director of the Asian Centre for Professional Excellence in Singapore and on the academic board of the Entrepreneurship Institute Australia.

24. Lucasfilms' studio was to have 25% EDB participation, presumably aiming at a niche combination of Western styles, and Asian such as Japanese anime, for film and computer games. The 300 staff were to be for production, scripts and design remaining in the US, but presumably it is seen as a nursery for Singapore talent as well.

25. International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement, Third International Maths and Science Study, November 1996.

26. See S. Gopinath *et al.*, eds., *Education in Singapore* (Singapore: Prentice Hall, 1997) for background and details. A more recent work is highly critical — and very valuable in asking how the system impacts on communal issues — but fails to adequately flag and engage with post-1990 systemic shifts. This is Michael D. Barr and Zlatko Skrbiš, *Constructing Singapore: Elitism, Ethnicity and the Nation-Building Project* (Copenhagen: NIAS, 2008). It is also overly cynical and reductive in framing the entire education system as about elite production and support, rather than acknowledging the state's real attempt to counter the difficulties of multilingual education, and (more recently) to ensure all citizens can "succeed" in their particular areas of strength.

27. *Straits Times* 26 June 2004, H14, mentioning also competitions such as Startup@Singapore and the LKY Global Buisness Plan competition.

28. When Warwick dropped the idea of a Singapore campus, the political issues were understandably picked up by the press, though it is quite possible that economic doubts also had a role, Singapore being a relatively expensive location for overseas students.

29. In 2008, the Ministry of Education announced that in the following year, it would set up a Singapore Chinese Language Teaching Centre. Indeed, by then, there was also some evidence that it recognised the need to give more assistance to biculturalism to Indians and Malays — with their ability to link to South Asia and to the region — as well. By 2009, there was already a Malay Heritage Centre, and there plans were afoot to open an Indian Heritage Centre as well.

30. See <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2008/09/singapore-to-set-up-centre-for.php> [accessed 3 April 2009].

31. "Responsible risk-taking" is the sort of phrase you can hardly object to without appearing perverse. Yet it does raise the question of how far a student — or more generally citizen — interprets it as "responsible" within the bounds of the PAP-state's unwritten out of bounds markers. That is, the question remains as to how far students and teachers do not just respond to overt government instructions and curricula, but also self-coordinate to perceive government requirements, "working towards" the government's perceived desires.

32. For a critical view of past practices and the all-encompassing effects of early streaming and meroticracy (including in entrenching class advantage), see Michael D. Barr and Zlatko Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore: Elitism, Ethnicity*

and the Nation-Building Project (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2008), pp. 127ff. A 2009 Primary Education review recommended, amongst other things: all government schools being single-session (and so more able to provide CCAs) by 2016, all-graduate recruitment by 2015, all Primary 1–2 students to take part in two broad areas (Sports and Outdoor, Performing and Visual Arts), and training more teachers in arts, sports, and music as well as more subject specialists for upper primary, and scrapping examinations at Primary 1 and 2 in favour of mini-tests. In short, all measures that address previous deficiencies at the neighbourhood primary level. Pupil-to-teacher ratios were due to decline from 21:1 to 16:1 by 2016. *Straits Times*, 15 April 2009, p. A4. See also the relevant ministry site, at <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/primary/> [accessed June 2009].

33. Sim Wong Hoo helped found Creative Technology, which most famously produces media players, notably with the *Zen* brand. His 1980s formed company developed early audiochips, with Creative's Sound Blaster technology soon found in many computers. He also oversees a $250m venture capital fund, but started not as a product of a junior college and university, but of a polytechnic and an engineering company, who tried and failed to build and sell his own computer.

34. "Outspoken Commentator Changes her Views", *The New Paper on Sunday*, 29 August 2004, p. 8. She noted the dropping of the "Out of Bounds markers" caveat from Lee Hsien Loong's August speeches, as opposed to speeches as recent as January.

35. See <http://www.singapore21.org.sg> [accessed 16 June 2009], though most resources are from 2000–2003. A committee was set up in 1999 to facilitate discussion of what sort of society Singaporeans wanted for the 21st century.

36. <http://www.jamesgomeznews.com> [accessed 2004 and 3 April 2009].

37. Chua Beng Huat, *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore* (London: Routledge, 2005), Chapter 3, p. 64, *passim*. For example, the government tamed the unions through its own NTUC (1964), enforced arbitration versus strikes (1968), a National Wages Council (1972) and (1982) legislation stating major aims of unions to include improving industrial relations and productivity, while one key union showing signs of independence (a pilots union) was taken on quite directly as recently as 2003. Ryan Goh, seen as behind a leadership change in response to pay cuts and unhappiness, had his Permanent Residency revoked for allegedly manipulating matters.

38. *The Edge*, Singapore, 9 August 2004, p. 6.

39. "Romancing Singapore" was one of 70 recommendations of a then Public Education Committee on Family, subsequently known as "Family Matters! Singapore". The yearly "Romancing Singapore" commenced in 2002, and the website and activities were still going in 2009. See <http://www.romancing singapore.com/> [accessed 3 April 2009].

40. AWARE is the Association of Women for Action and Research. Available at <http://www.aware.org.sg/> [accessed 3 April 2009].

41. In 2009–2010, Eden School — which deals with more severely autistic children aged 6–18, was also due for upgrading and a wider emphasis on employability. At the same time, over 100 special needs officers had been provided to schools, to help integrate children into the mainstream, *Straits Times*, 4 April 2009, B9.

42. In "Singapore's Young are a Brave New Cohort", *Straits Times* 12 August 2004, p. 18, Alvin Pang talked of this, including the notion of a civil servant who was also a "guerilla social activist", increasing low national volunteerism, from 9.3% in 2000 to 14.9% in 2002, and the chances of "The New Singaporean" being "less cynical than exacting, more selective than apathetic", with a strong impatience for the paternalistic and the bureaucratic.

43. In this respect, one might note a shift in attitudes, perhaps, towards the likes of Li Jia Wei, Singapore's China-born table tennis star (she beat the world number 1 in August 2004, before failing to clinch a 2004 Olympic gold). Previous years' press comment has included debate on whether foreign-born imports can be "Singaporean" icons, but of course historically speaking, people who left their homelands for greener pastures (in this case, because China's pool was so large, opportunities were limited) are, historically speaking, the typical "Singaporean". Singapore's only Olympic medallist was in fact China-born. One wonders whether there is an unarticulated, historically ironic debate here about what "Singaporean" was, is, and shall be.

44. Strangely, the PAP's cadre system, by which the leadership selected cadres, who are gatekeepers for new party members, makes the PAP a hybrid between a party (it aggregates national interests if not demands, but election is not a serious barrier for its chosen candidates) and a strategic civil service (individuals can be chosen for their skill sets and ability to contribute to the direction of policy, rather than emerging from political power bases). For this system, see also the following note.

45. For a critical analysis of PAP elite formation, see Carl Trocki and Zlatko Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore: Elitism, Ethnicity and the Nation-Building Project* (Copenhagen: NIAS, 2008).

46. Yao Suchou, *Singapore: The State and the Culture of Excess* (London: Routledge, 2005) comes to this conclusion using a social science battery of approaches on issues such as the caning of Michael Fay, judicial decisions on fellatio, and the war on terror. Cherian George, an ex-editor at the *Straits Times*, has described the government's press powers as hegemonic in the Gramscian sense. For example, 1974 legislation and subsequent amendements provide for management shares with 200 times normal voting rights, through which the government controls the *Straits Times* and appoints its very highest officials. The threat it creates, let alone reality, of state restrictions or of

licence revocation gives a motive for papers (even foreign journals with local circulation) to self-coordinate to government out of bounds markers. For instance, the relevant minister can restrict a foreign paper's circulation if it is deemed to interfere in local politics. Yet Cherian George (by the time of publication, a Nanyang Technological University academic) too subscribes to the "comfort and [calibrated] control" thesis, even co-running a website on it. See <http://calibratedcoercion.wordpress.com/> [accessed 31 March 2009].

47. See *Petir* 3, 8 (February 1960): 4–5, on the need to get the English-educated involved in "active mass politics" in cooperation with "the natural leadership" of non-English speaking groups as "elder brother".

48. This idea of social engineering has always been part of the core, English-educated PAP leadership's vision, and as much because of the planning instincts of his colleagues as because of Lee Kuan Yew. See, for example, *Petir* 2, 2 (February 1959), Goh Keng Swee, "The Political Aspects of Economic Development", p. 3.

49. Goh Chin Lian, "Think Global, says Jaya", *Straits Times*, 31 March 2009, p. B3, though frankly the title could equally have echoed his call to "keep in touch with the ground". That, thinking globally and looking long-term, were the three original messages. The attachements of top echelon officers to local organisations were to be nine for 2009 and 15 for 2010, while in the former year, 40 had volunteered for boards of non-profit organisations and 40 were seconded to Community Development Councils, statutory boards, then NTUC and private companies. Others were given "global" attachments, for instance to embassies and the Tianjin Eco-City project. Speaking at the annual top echelon dinner, he said: "Public services should not be delivered mechanically and public policies cannot be formulated purely on an intellectual understanding of issues or theoretical models."

Singapore from Temasek to the 21st Century

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Singapore's Holistic Approach to Urban Planning: Centrality, Singularity, Innovation and Reinvention

Charles Goldblum

Singapore is unique amongst Southeast Asian cities in that its urban dimension has come to encompass all aspects of its social and economic system, and the entire space of the state has been integrated into a single overall planning framework. These characteristics are further enhanced by the way the People's Action Party (PAP) government has used urban planning as a major tool for achieving far-reaching structural change in the economy and society alike.

This chapter explores Singapore's urban planning and the way it has come to encompass the whole of the city-state, with a particular focus on the key 1971 plan, and its modification in 1991. The first of these plans — the Long Range Concept Plan implemented from 1971 — was particularly important in ensuring that urban planning provided a framework for new economic relations with the wider world (not just neighbouring countries) as Singapore's hinterland. The 1991 plan, as we shall see, took this integration of urban planning and international economic relations a step further. Indeed, by that point, Singapore's model of urban planning was already becoming one not just for use in Singapore itself, but also subject to export to other countries.

The aim of this chapter is, in short, to elaborate the city-state's urban — and urban planning — history in relation to its internationalisation process, and to show how Singapore went from being mainly an importer of urban planning concepts, to becoming an exporter of such concepts in its own right.

Urban Planning Concepts for a Unique Space

Singapore's uniqueness, considered in its urban dimension, is commonly admitted by analysts and scholars to stem from its specific status as not just a city, or a state, or an island, but as a distinct blend of all three: an island-city-state.[1] This combines with the advantages of its strategic location, as the major seaport in the Malacca Straits, and the related success of its harbour and entrepôt trade. This combination of strategic location and island-city-state may explain, or at least enlighten, how Singapore has been able to overcome the usual third world city challenges of rising population, inadequate services and poor governance. What is all the more impressive is that Singapore did have to grapple with these sorts of problems — notably including high population growth and vast amounts of overcrowded housing stock — in the early years of self-government and independence. This makes the question — "How did Singapore overcome these challenges?" — all the more interesting.

The best example of Singapore's success in escaping these problems is still the astonishing performance of its housing policy. The five-year programmes launched by the Housing and Development Board (HDB, founded in February 1960) in the early 1960s — as part of the state-led structural transformation process from full internal self-government (1959) to independence as a city-ctate (1965) — have led to the production to date of more than 880,000 housing units.[2] By concentrating on practical, low-cost and high-rise housing, and moving ever-outwards from the centre, the HDB was able to fund volume-building from the very beginning. Consequently, the HDB performance contrasted sharply with the much smaller housing production achievements of its colonial era predecessor, the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT). This has meant that the HDB has been able to achieve a dramatic change in Singapore's residential situation: from a majority of urban slum and rural *kampong* (Malay for "village") dwellers to an overwhelming majority of inhabitants living in HDB flats produced and managed by the public sector. It is all too easy to forget that in the 1950s, Singapore had significant numbers of farms,

as well as palm attap-thatched kampong dwellings. About 85 per cent of Singapore's citizens and permanent residents now live in these HDB-produced flats. Most of them (around 93 per cent) are involved in home ownership schemes, the first of which was introduced in 1964, and the flats tend to be integrated with local services and situated alongside industrial zones which provide jobs.[3]

But this housing policy performance has by no means been merely a natural solution of mass-production housing that the government was able to simply import — modular fashion — from western countries, thanks to its own financial capacities and land resources. In reality, Singapore has adapted western models, ultimately to produce models which are uniquely its own. The housing policy, for instance, was conceived and established from its very beginnings in 1960 by the ruling party — the PAP — as much more than a mere matter of providing accommodation. Instead, it was very quickly seen as a main tool for economic development and nation-building. It was to become an integrative part of a complex planning strategy combining central area redevelopment, and new town development further afield, which brought Singapore to a total transformation of its territory through planned urbanisation.[4]

In this respect, urban planning gained a specific position in Singapore's comprehensive modernisation strategy: from a limited colonial administration concerned with slum and sanitation problems, to a sophisticated administrative state increasingly innovating in the field of urban planning. Three statutory boards were established to lead this urban modernisation process, namely the aforementioned HDB created in February 1960; the Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) in 1968, which developed a vast new industrial zone out of the rural west of the island; and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) in 1974. These were respectively in charge — in their initial stages — with the implementation of housing (HDB), of new industrial zones (JTC), and of urban renewal of the central area (URA).[5]

This physical change apparatus also included a broader social engineering dimension, with the aim of transforming an immigrant petty trader society to a high technology, sophisticated nation; and a "plural society" of communities with a tendency to cluster together into one in which all population groups (notably Chinese, Malay and Indian) were present in residential areas roughly in proportion to their percentage of the overall population. Hence, for instance, the introduction of ethnic quotas for HDB blocks. In that sense, the achievement of urban planning's broader

purposes has been dependent upon the coordination of policies in diverse fields — such as population, citizenship, industrial policy and transport — through the control of their spatial impact or land use.

Let us look in more detail at how this has involved importing foreign planning models, and then radically redesigning them. Even before the Second World War, Britain had experimented with "Garden Cities" such as Welwyn Garden City, intended to be communities surrounded by green belt, and divided into neighbourhoods each having a balance of residential, industrial and recreational features. Then, early after the Second World War, the concept of "New Town" planning became one of Britain's most successful exports. From the 1946 New Towns Act to the 1970s, Britain built more than 20 new towns — such as Stevenage — with overall plans before construction and usually with distinct "neighbourhoods", each planned to have a good balance of services and amenities. Singapore was one of the early destinations in this process of exporting urban planning concepts from Britain. Hence, Singapore's Queenstown housing and industrial estate project, launched in the 1950s, featured the building of a "New Town" which integrated flats, industry and amenities.[6] Even earlier than this, the Tiong Bahru housing estate implemented in the 1930s could be considered as a prototype for new town planning. Indeed, in 1958, an SIT Master Plan for the island was approved which included the notions of a green belt around the central urban area, a series of satellite towns around that involved building up to 10,000 new housing units a year, and the building of higher rise flats with some clearance of kampongs.[7]

Singapore clearly imported many of the key ideas behind urban planning from Britain, including key ideas from Britain's garden city and New Town movements. But it did not remain a passive receiver of urban planning concepts such as Master Plan, Green Belt, Garden City, Housing and Industrial Estate or New Town. Thus, for instance, Tiong Bahru's relatively low-rise high-specification approach to building flats was replaced, under the HDB, with an approach that allowed higher volumes to be built at lower specifications, and so to be let out at affordable rents without having to divert resources into subsidising them. Hence, after experimenting with imported planning concepts, the PAP governments were also quick to make adjustments to suit Singapore's specific needs and land-scarcity. The city-state thus rapidly gained the status of effective innovator, and would go on to become a qualified model producer and exporter to other developing countries looking for alternatives to pure copying of Western development prototypes. Singapore's new town planning experience was to

become unique not just in the way it transformed foreign models, but also by the sheer scale of its town planning. Singapore is the only country in the world having more than 80 per cent of its inhabitants living in a new town environment, that is, urban settlements conceived and implemented according to new town planning principles, locally reinterpreted to match with the constraints of high-rise, high-density public housing.

Along with the large scale of Singapore's approach to new towns, the degree to which it has integrated them into an overall economic strategy has also been unique. The 1971 Long Range Concept Plan played an important part in this process. It introduced the notion of a ring of new towns radiating out from the central district, all fully integrated through pre-planned transport and service developments. The new town concept was thus integrated within a comprehensive physical planning system which covered the whole territory, organising the functional relations between new town ring development and urban core (Central Business District, CBD) redevelopment.

Key principles used in this comprehensive planning system (as well as *action planning* as a tool for implementing the principles) had been imported into Singapore in the early 1960s by a UN international mission, which included established international planning experts. Their main focus, however, had been urban renewal in line with an industrialisation campaign aimed at creating jobs and attracting foreign investments. Their urban planning system was more restricted to the Central Area, which was targeted for comprehensive redevelopment. Consequently, the importance allocated to new towns within this system was significantly increased when in 1967, the Singapore government signed a new "Plan of Operation" with the UN to prepare a comprehensive long-range island-wide Concept Plan. The resulting and first Concept Plan, as discussed above, was released in 1971.[8]

If the 1971 Concept Plan increased the emphasis on satellite towns, and their integration into broader development, the 1991 Revised Concept Plan brought in totally new principles. These were informed by new demographic and economic perspectives, involving a number of key shifts such as: from strict birth and immigration control to population growth incentives targeted at particular (more educated) groups; and from state quasi-monopoly in housing mass-production to encouraging controlled privatisation and increased variety of housing. The new planning concepts introduced according to these orientations, namely the territorial subdivision into four "regions" (later expanded to five, namely Central, East, North-

East, North and West, apart from the Central Area which is the city centre). Each planning region is headed by a regional centre. The regions are also integrated with high technology corridors and international business parks, as an instrument for encouraging a shift towards a more knowledge-intensive economy (as discussed in Hack's Chapter 13). All these changes have affected the form and status of existing and projected new towns, for instance, with even the HDB allowing private builders to bid to provide units in a post-1992 "design and build" policy; one which encourages a greater diversity of form.[9]

In that sense, the two Concept Plans discussed — of 1971 and 1991 — mark two major periods in the city-state's development. The 1971 Concept Plan was strongly related to the then-new pattern of international economic relations, which featured international companies moving more production offshore. It was an expression of the necessity for Singapore to create the local conditions for implementing its economic global strategy, namely in the field of industrial development and tertiary sector modernisation. With limited prospects in Southeast Asia due to regional conflicts — notably the Vietnam War and diverse communist and ethnic insurgencies — Singapore seized upon new opportunities to attract foreign investment with the expansion of multinational companies. The JTC's construction of a new Jurong export processing zone — the showpiece of Singapore's first industrialisation drive — should be considered together with the new town built nearby to house its mostly low-skilled workforce. In turn, the Jurong development should be considered alongside plans for Central Business District (CBD) development programmes, since the exports helped finance the latter.

The changes seen in the 1991 Revised Concept Plan, as mentioned above, do not express any withdrawal from the previous Global City strategy. They are rather refinements which help to move Singapore towards greater flexibility, higher technology and knowledge-based industries, and so a higher value-added range of exports and services. This is both a natural refinement and advance on previous planning, and also a response to increasing exchange and competition within the ASEAN.

Singapore: A Potential Model City for Asian Neighbouring Countries?

Singapore continues to try and find ways of reformulating and renewing urban development, including on occasion through international

competition, and by inviting world famous architects and planners such as Kenzo Tange, I.M. Pei and John Portman to participate. Kenzo Tange, for instance, discussed Singapore plans as early as the 1970s, and contributed key designs such as that of the UOB Plaza (1995). This is all a part of what Rodolphe De Koninck calls Singapore's self-conscious *permanent revolution* in its use of space, its self-conscious quest for better models and ideas.[10] In other words, Singapore's government has created a laboratory for new town planning, with the unique experience resulting from the implementation and management of more than 20 new towns. Its success also makes the city-state appear as a showroom of town planning models, which others seek out, and which Singapore itself has also come to see as a potential export. That is, it recognises that it might not only invest abroad directly, but also provide expertise and high level services in the realm of urban development.

This is not just a matter of exporting Singapore's experience on its own territory. As Fau's Chapter 4 showed, Singapore has long sought to escape its narrow boundaries. At one level, this has involved extensive land reclamation. But it has also involved the sort of expansion abroad of industrial activities which Fau discusses. Hence, it moved some production into neighbouring countries. Since the late 1980s, this movement has concentrated in particular on Johor State in Malaysia, and the nearby Riau Islands of Batam and Bintan in Indonesia. Thus, the idea of a SIJORI (an acronym for Singapore-Johore-Riau) growth triangle.[11] By the end of the 20th century, Singapore was also looking to use its expertise even further afield, notably in China, with the Singapore-Suzhou industrial new town project (frequently presented as Singapore Two). Singapore clearly aspires to be much more than a middleman or transshipment point for western concepts to go east. Rather, it seeks to develop and export its own blend of policies. The problem, of course, being that what works in a Singapore dominated for more than 40 years by the PAP, may struggle to cope with more complex political situations, and more fractured planning regimes, abroad. Ironically, Singapore's greatest barrier to exporting its model may be that political stability at home leaves it ill-equipped to deal with the political aspects of planning abroad.

This situation of Singapore seeking to become a city-model producer and exporter may also appear as a source of contradictions when it comes to the question of the nature of the goods which are supposedly exported. Jurong Town — which was to become the first and for a long time, the largest free trade and export processing zone in Southeast Asia — appears

as a significant example in this respect. According to a "fordist" rationale linking mass-production growth with the improvement of workers' living standards, this industry and seaport zone was to be selectively coupled with a new town under the responsibility of the same public developer: Jurong Town Corporation. The development functions were then institutionally disconnected and distributed between JTC (for industrial zoning) and HDB (for residential zoning) according to the logic of institutional specialisation mentioned above.[12]

Nevertheless, the model which has been exported in mainland China is still an adaptation of the Jurong Town "fordist" selective coupling, while Singapore itself is moving beyond that simple model. That is, Singapore seeks to become not just somewhere that implements models, but also a model producer in the urban realm.[13] Thus, due in part to its land shortage, Singapore is in a process of externalisation of its industrial production activities to the neighbouring Malaysian State of Johor and the Indonesian Riau Islands. The Riau island of Batam, for instance, was earlier feared as a potential competitor to Singapore, but has instead come to serve as host for Singapore-owned factories and hotels.

In Singapore itself, the perpetual revolution in land use and urban planning continues. The city-state is producing, in the northeastern part of the main island, a futurist concept of new town named Punggol 21. This is to be dedicated not merely to integrating the residential functions to an export-oriented industrial system as before, but also to leisure activities and creating waterfront housing (both along the coast and a new inland waterway, and by creating new reservoirs). Conceptualised and put in place from the mid- to late-1990s (and about halfway through construction at the time of publication), Punggol 21 is symbolic of one of the leisure-oriented aspirations of the Singapore dream for waterfront housing in the 21st century.[14] Could Punggol 21 be taken as a means of urban planning to maintain Singapore's competitive edge in Southeast Asia? It is also part of a more subtle shift in the way urban planning serves development needs, with the state responding to the perception that both "heartland" Singaporeans, and more footloose highly educated "cosmopolitan" Singaporeans and foreigners, require a different level of amenities. Able people can choose, and HDB's increasing emphasis on "design and build", diversity of designs, park corridors, community greens with residents having a say over their use, and even building higher rise "homes in a park" are aimed at attracting and retaining a more mobile population.[15]

Plate 14.1   Punggol I

Billed as public housing for a new future, with waterways and associated leisure activities (walking, kayaking) integrated, Punggol is in fact a new town in two parts, linked by its own LRT (Light Rail Transport). The first loop of this was open by 2009, and is seen in this picture running through traditional-style high density public housing, which has basic essentials such as playgrounds at ground level radiating out from a bus and MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) hub.

Plate 14.2 Punggol II

The second phase of Punggol (under construction in 2009–2013) will take advantage of nearby waterways. What was originally to be a drainage canal between two rivers (the Sungei Ponggol and Sungei Serangoon) is to become a focus, with walkways, leisure facilities, "waterside living" and the "heartwave" mini-waterfall with walkway beneath. So Punggol is intended to combine established housing principles and densities with a greater emphasis on leisure.

More generally, we should scrutinise the physical and conceptual nature of the planning products which might be exported from Singapore. That way, we can perhaps offer some answers to those — critics and supporters alike — who question the transferability of Singapore's experience and models. What do we say to people who ask: how could a small city-state with overwhelming state control, and predominantly populated by a Chinese urban immigration, be a suitable model for large neighbouring states, with an important rural population?[16] The level of state control in Singapore is particularly important, extending to effective control of much of the land as the main factor of urban production (namely through land acquisition, land taxation and micro-zoning and development control).

The next sections will specifically tackle this problem of just how far Singapore's environment, and so its models, are just too unique to be easily exported.

Questioning the City-State's Singularity in Urban Development

Until the 1980s, the question of reproducing the Singapore experience in the large cities of neighbouring countries — though often raised — remained theoretical. This was because of the magnitude of the urban problems they were facing, and the economic gap between Singapore and the other ASEAN countries which excluded (for instance) the possibility of massive public housing programmes.

Since the second half of the 1980s, however, sustained economic growth and the part played by large cities in this have created a much more favourable context for the regionalisation of Singapore's global city strategy.[17] From the late 1980s until the 1997 Asian crisis at least, several trends combined to make the Singapore model seem more relevant to its neighbours, namely: urban development became one of the major drivers of economic development in many ASEAN countries; major regional political conflicts were solved or put aside; and the region's communist countries were integrated into regional institutions. Together, these trends made it possible for Singapore to envisage the exportation of its Asian modernisation doctrine, particularly by claiming that Singapore's success was based on shared Asian values such as self-discipline, and putting family and community above self. In this way, Singapore's high level of state control could be presented as a distinctly "Asian" preference for harmony and community over western liberalism's surrender to rampant individualism.[18]

It is also worth remembering that in earlier periods — with nationalist uprising and regional conflict in the 1960s and 1970s — Singapore had often been considered by its nearest neighbours as a foreign entity. It could be presented as a Chinese and westernised element intruding into the Malay world. As such, Asian scholars tended to refer to it as belonging to the East Asian "Confucian" group of newly industrialised countries, together with Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea, rather than with its own region. But since the end of the 1980s, with regional conflict and nationalist passions more or less subdued, Singapore has been less constrained, and better integrated into ASEAN structures which have an increasing economic priority. This has given Singapore more scope to present itself as a leader in the discourse of Asian modernisation. Hence, the "White Paper on Shared Values" tabled in Parliament in 1991 — the year the Revised Concept Plan was launched — was intended not just for domestic but also for foreign use. It stressed the need to find a way to modernise Asian — and developing — societies apart from the western political and cultural references. With the economic opening of former communist countries in Asia, and the adoption by some of them of export-oriented strategies, Singapore's experience of rapid development suddenly acquired a new significance. With the Singapore government having long declared the superiority of cities to the rural world, it offered a — if not the — prime example of successful, rapid, state-accelerated urbanisation and economic growth.

This state concern with urbanisation as modernisation was deeply entrenched within the PAP. According to Goh Keng Swee (then Minister of Finance) in 1967:

> In the traditional villages people live very much as they did over the past thousands of years. They grow food for themselves and the little extra they have they sell or barter for the things they need. They believe in the ancient gods, in evil spirits and practise the most benighted superstitions which had been handed down to them over the ages … It is the role of the cities in Asian countries, established and developed as beach-heads of Western imperialism, to transform themselves under their independent national governments into beach-heads of a dynamic modernisation process to transform the countryside … Independent Asian countries can hardly be satisfied with the definite continuation of backwardness in the countryside. It is in the process of transforming the countryside and its traditional societies that the Asian city has a vital role to perform.[19]
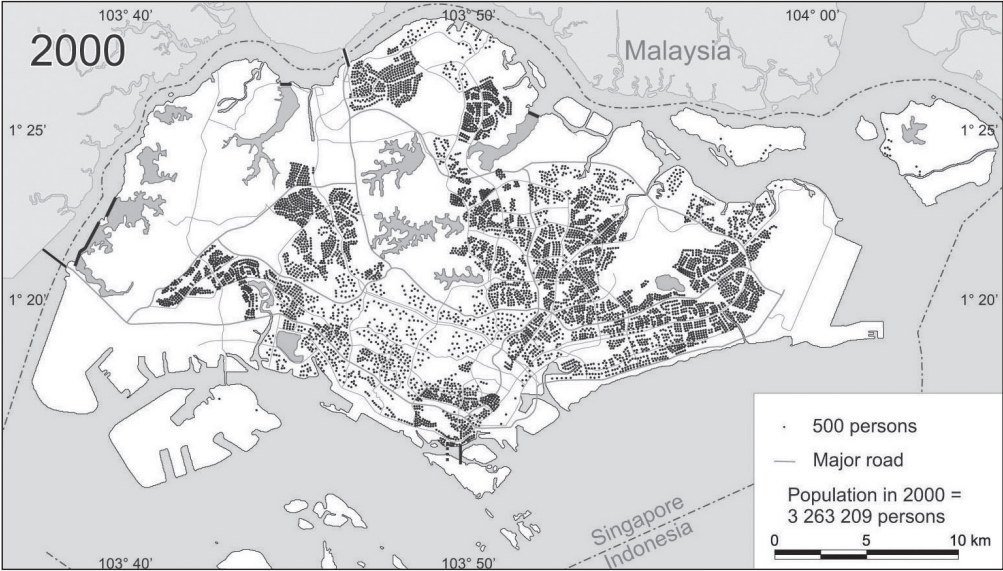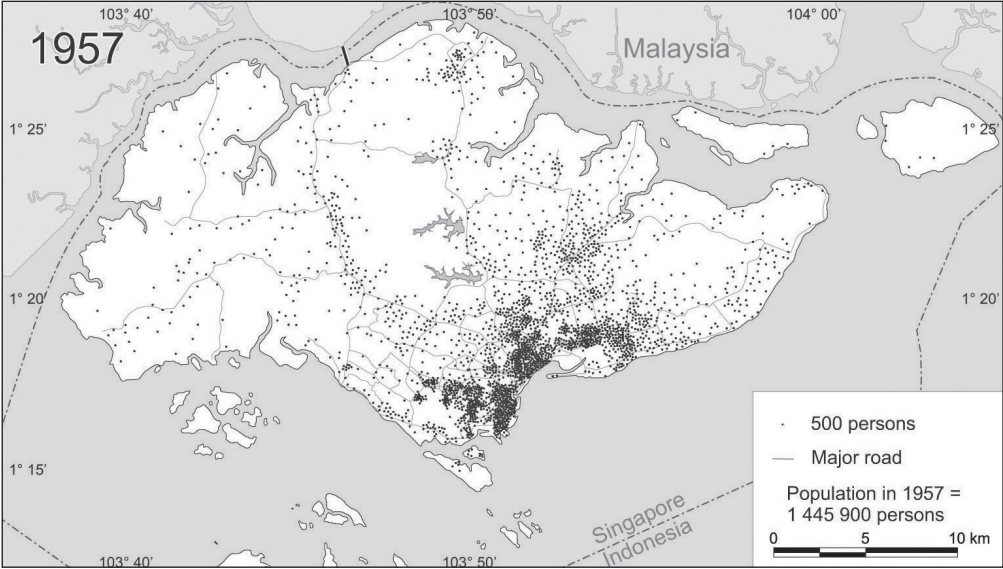
Map 14.1 Singapore's population, 1957 and 2000

This attitude opened the way for Singapore to export its expertise in the different aspects of urban development, with new opportunities for cross-border industrial development, which would have been unthinkable in the previous decade.

This trend also gave a new dimension to the tourism-oriented slogan of "Instant Asia" guiding the urban conservation and redevelopment of Singapore's older districts of Chinatown, Kampong Glam, Little India, and the Civic [colonial] Centre in Singapore's central area. Reinventing Singapore's colonial past, with a new emphasis on the multicultural origins of its social and architectural space, became by the late 1980s, a part of the "reasianisation" of its economic strategy.[20]

Many examples testify to Singapore's many-sided involvement in this strategy of exporting its models. Perhaps most obviously, in 1989, the HDB set up a specific company for exporting its expertise, under the name CESMA International. At the time of writing (2008), Singapore's former chief planner and most experienced urban public project manager, Liu Thai Ker (a retired civil servant) was heading a major architectural, urban planning and engineering consultancy firm which developed most of its projects abroad, notably in Asia. He had also been appointed as a planning adviser for the development of Shanghai and other major cities in mainland China and Taiwan.

This trend had already been predicted in the 1990s by Rem Koolhaas, a well-known international architect with substantial experience in Asia. He then wrote:

> More and more, Singapore claims itself as a laboratory for China …
> Projecting outward from Singapore, an asymmetrical epicentre, there
> will be new Singapores across the entire mainland. Its model will be
> the stamp of China's modernization.[21]

But does the exportation of expertise, skill or even turn-key projects like "Singapore Two" really reproduce a part of Singapore's sophisticated urban system as it has now developed? Or rather, does it export versions of Singapore's first-generation industrial new towns such as Jurong? In other words, does it involve merely piecemeal export of specific aspects of planning (such as mass transportation, traffic regulation, heritage district preservation, and industrial zone creation) rather than a holistic approach in accordance with Singapore's comprehensive planning system? Moreover, how will the export of such components affect Singapore's singularity as a model city?

Within the reorganisation process of the East Asian economy, Singapore may seek to play a leading role as a regional centre — or as a "hub" for physical and virtual information and communication networks.[22] But the question remains, can Singapore's urban system remain an integral part of the city-state's singularity, in an era dominated by global cities, in a world where globalisation is supposed to make societies and territories uniform and standardised, and where Singapore itself seeks to export its models of urban planning?

During the last decade, new town development has become a common feature for all Southeast Asian countries competing for the NIC (newly industrialised country) status.[23]

These trends have resulted in other cities converging on Singapore's model, at least partly. Take, for instance, the core or central business districts of these cities. Most of the Southeast Asian metropolises and capital cities have, at least partly, integrated the four major components of the new vertical urban cores as defined according to Singapore's model for its CBD. These are: high-rise office buildings, international hotels, luxury shopping complexes, and high-standard condominiums. Most of these cities have also developed expressway networks and some have already established mass transit systems. These common trends may easily be observed by visiting the neighbouring cities and their surroundings. For instance, Bangkok has its mass transportation network and its high-rise condominium developments; Kuala Lumpur has its high tech Multimedia Super Corridor; and Jakarta and even Ho Chi Minh City now have vertical central business districts and new town developments. Though not necessarily led by the same urban policy motives (similar physical features often conceal distinctive intentions and are supported by different public/private, national/foreign operators), the similarity of these new urban features is unquestionable and is likely to spread in the future.[24]

Nevertheless, these features of the planned or "regular" city usually have to negotiate or combine with informal or substandard ways of producing, occupying and using urban space within the city fabric. This is very different to the execution in Singapore, where they are integrated within a comprehensive physical plan in the form of a holistic concept, and where informal and substandard use of spaces is largely prevented. That is, once spaces are earmarked for specific uses, this is strictly and effectively enforced. So the Singapore system still remains unique, most of all in the way holistic planning gives not only shape but also meaning to all the physical components, organising their relations and connections

at several scales. This is clearly shown by the principles introduced in the 1991 Revised Concept Plan. That worked at several levels, all interlinked. At the very top, it offered a territorial level "Constellation Plan". This organised the relations between the 20 plus new towns and the central area, partly through the mass transportation network. At the local level, there was a Development Guide Plans system with 55 planning sectors coming under this system. The same integrative effects apply to the organisation of a whole set of projects and action programmes concerning the development of the national territory. These latter include: implementing a science hub and technology corridors according to the "intelligent island" project;[25] introducing urban conservation as part of the central area redevelopment in the 1980s; and integrating environmental planning with the prospect of catering for 4, and then 5.5 to 6 million inhabitants.

Mastering space in terms of land use and of urban development is, of course, a main issue for Singapore, and the city-state has surely succeeded in becoming a real master in this realm. In some ways, it was handed advantages, for instance with its limited territorial size making holistic planning and experimentation with new models easier.[26] In other ways, the characteristics of its government and civil service have been important, notably the strong will and capacity of an authoritarian government. To these strengths can be added the seeming support (or at least high level of responsiveness) of a large part of Singaporeans, in part stemming from economic success, and in part from the early sense of crisis created by the 1950s civil disorder and communist insurgency, and by the 1965 separation from Malaysia.[27]

In short, Singapore continues to be unique in its holistic and integrated approach to urban planning, exporting only individual components of its planning model, rather than the model as a whole. Yet Singapore's very capacity to innovate and maintain its lead in urban planning, and so to diffuse new approaches, is itself reliant on the very uniqueness of Singapore's position and government, factors which are not in themselves transferable. There is, in this way, a tension between the necessity and reality of being unique, and yet wanting to be a "central place" which can create and export approaches to urban planning.

The Central Area in Singapore's Planning Model

We have talked a lot about overall strategy and plans, and about new towns, but so far, we have said relatively little about the island's central

urban area. Yet this area's functions, and the way they integrate with new towns and industrial areas, are vital. The function of the city centre as an urban matrix — the place which gives shape and form to the rest of the urban space — is emphasised by the level of control exerted to ensure its efficient functioning. Its continued efficiency is protected by selective land use, by extensive traffic control through road pricing and through an "area licensing scheme" (car drivers are charged when they enter the business district of Singapore). All this in addition to direct government control in terms of local administration, and all intended to ensure that it can efficiently fulfil its administrative role, and function as an anchor point for the system as a whole.

This key importance of a relatively small central urban area is an echo of Singapore's early period as an East India Company "factory" (trading post). When Raffles established a factory there to facilitate east-west trade, he from the very beginning planned the most central area around the Singapore River as a matrix for the distribution of ethnic and functional land uses in the other parts of the island, but having its own land use restricted to administrative buildings and functions.[28]

The centrality of Singapore has therefore to be considered at several scales, from global (the island's attempt to export its urban planning approaches) to local. The continuous focus placed by the PAP government on the Central Area confirms that the PAP has always regarded the efficiency of this central area as vital to the system as a whole. One of the first political acts of the newly autonomous state in 1959 was the abolition of the Municipal Council, then headed by an elected but uncompromising politician, Ong Eng Guan. Separate municipal government was replaced by the integration of Central Area administration into a strongly centralised political system. Put bluntly, the PAP government took control of municipal as well as state government. This taking of political control in the Central Area was a precondition for carrying out a large-scale urban renewal. Large-scale urban renewal, in turn, was a means of introducing new modern land uses, and for transforming the social fabric. This really accelerated with the establishment of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) in 1974, with control over both the core administrative and commercial districts, and the densely settled shophouses and flats around them. This allowed the URA to remove traditional ethnic-based identities and activities from near-central districts, notably from Chinatown. By the 1980s, its focus shifted to not only optimising the central district's role as an administrative, commercial and service matrix, but also (now the original inhabitants had

largely been removed to facilitate conservation) to preserving within it distinct heritage areas.[29] Hence, the conservation — and adaptation for small-scale offices and for tourism — of areas on the periphery of the centre, such as Chinatown, Little India and Kampong Glam.

The changes in centrally located areas such as Chinatown also reflected on a larger scale, as spatial physical planning was designated as a multipurpose social transformer. It was to play a role both in eradicating previous concentrations of communal and political identity, and in building a new relationship between citizen and state. Hence, from its inception in 1965 as an independent and sovereign state, community centres and their management committees, consultative committees of citizens, residents' committees, and block committees have become basic elements for structuring new grassroots organisations. To a great extent, these have taken the place of more traditional associations, such as the numerous Chinese associations under the umbrella of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The new committees and Community Centres help to hierarchically organise the new social, physical and institutional space under the umbrella of the PAP, with its People's Association playing an important link role.[30]

This can of course be interpreted as a political will to control or even to neutralise social space, but it is also an answer to the political need to mobilise society and to invent new social, micro-social links which will not sustain old communal and political tensions. This process of building local, mass and micro-level links to the government and PAP at the centre continues. Recent developments in this respect include first the town councils established in 1988–1989 on the basis of electoral constituencies as substitutes for municipalities or local government in the management of the new towns. In other words, members of parliament (MPs) — often elected as a team in Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) — take responsibility for government in their respective town councils. There is no equivalent for the Central Area, even after its designation as a part of the five regions system in the context of Singapore's regionalisation. It therefore lacks even that indirect element of elected government. Three other components, namely Jurong, Tampines and Woodlands, are planned to become mega-new towns. So the specificity of the core area is maintained, and as mentioned, protected in terms of administration.

Far from a simple depolitisation process of social and physical space, this trend reveals the political importance of physical space development and management for the Singapore government. This importance of the core area as a matrix of the physical comprehensive planning system

was confirmed and institutionalised once URA was expanded in 1989 to include the Planning Department (previously a planning authority within the Ministry of National Development). Since then, the new function of the chief planner is to assume the responsibility of physical planning for the whole nation, in which drawing up the (strategic) Concept Plan and its ten-yearly revisions are a key role.

This may well be considered as a factor of Singapore's singularity, enhanced — as earlier mentioned — by its strategic core position in the Asia-Pacific region; not only as a hub in the realms of finance, airport activities and high-technology industry (a highly enviable central position, fiercely contested by Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur), but also a centre in the sense of a connecting place for economic flows, and an interchange between several worlds: East and West, but also Southeast and Northeast Asia (namely Japan, the three other "dragons" and the PRC), and even South Asia (namely India). The linguistic dimension of the city-state's social space, resulting from the geographical diversity of origins of its population, and which was initially supposed to be "neutralised" by the values of national integration and by the spatial planning mentioned above, is now of value in maintaining it as a centre of influence and of high level services export in Asia. Hence, Chinese, Tamil and Malay language classes are compulsory as "mother tongue" instruction for the respective groups (even if many Indians learning Tamil, for instance, may not be of Tamil origin at all).[31]

In that sense, Singapore seems to make efficient use of its historical background in relation with the three major areas of origin of its population: (Southern) China; Malaysia, and more broadly, the Malay world; and the Indian subcontinent. These also correspond with the major heritage areas in the city urban conservation strategy (Chinatown, Kampong Glam, and Little India). These neighbourhoods are still felt by Chinese, Malays and Indians as the cradles and strongholds of their respective cultures, most obviously during the ethnic/religious festivals, even if their status as densely populated enclaves has been ended.

But when it comes to architectural and spatial features, one may wonder if anything from Singapore's urban heritage, and from its richly plural Asian identity, can find physical expression in new, innovative architecture and planning.[32] One of Singapore's leading architects, Tay Kheng Soon, has raised this issue many times since the 1960s, notably in relation to the lack of democracy in the decision-making process concerning urban development. In a strongly argued paper, he criticises the *modus operandi*

Plate 14.3
Shophouses and
a modern temple
in Chinatown

for the creation of a so-called Chinatown theme park in Singapore and the quest for presumed "authentic" architectural references to mainland China. He, and others, suggest this is a disneyification (as much for tourist purposes as to reflect Singaporean identity), which ignores actual uses of areas and buildings. Hence, for instance, an oversized building occupied by a Buddhist temple now sits on the edge of Chinatown, out of scale with its surrounding two- and three-storeyed shophouses. He therefore suggests this reflects a lack of authenticity in Singaporean architectural production.[33] So on the one hand, the reversing of the gradual clearance of the Chinatown areas has preserved some trace of the past. Chinatowns have been a creation of the Nanyang (overseas) Chinese, and the largest part of Singapore's Chinatown — one of the most famous in Southeast Asia, and considered as a reference model for the early shophouse development in Southeast Asian capital cities like Bangkok and Phnom Penh — had been cleared by the URA in order to build the city-state's modern central business district. But at the same time, the conservation of the remainder of this area is subject to its integration with overall economic priorities such as tourism, and these may take precedence over "authenticity".

Though mentioned, together with the quality of environment, as a guiding principle for the 2001 Concept Plan, the related question of identity still remains a sensitive issue in Singapore, due to its historical and political implications in terms of communalism.[34] Reinventing the past through architectural rehabilitation and renovation is used in Singapore's urban planning battery as a way to "neutralise" by physical means some awkward references to its own past. In this way, it participates — together with land reclamation and urban redevelopment — in the (permanent) transformation into an artificial urban island as regards its physical aspect.

What are the costs of Singapore's choices? Has its preference for "concrete abstraction" as a modernisation agency imposed a price in terms of loss of "authenticity" in its indigenous built environment and architectural form? Has the legacy of large-scale urban standard mass production which has transformed its own identity been an obstacle in keeping its model city status and its capability as exporter of urban planning concepts and methods?[35]

Reinventing the City-State?

To summarise, there is a constant tension — in urban planning — between Singapore's desire to remain different and singular, and so better, and its will to demonstrate its success by exporting elements of its urban planning.

Singapore has also very successfully imported planning models and best practices from elsewhere, and modified these to the point that they become distinctly its own. But despite this, its capacity to remain a model city in a globalising world is now contested by other Asian megacities such as Shanghai and Mumbai, consequently exposing the city-state to the risk of losing its central position within the economical and technological network it contributes to create and to expand.[36]

So far, Singapore has proved — since the 1970s, with its world and then global city strategy — not only its ability for innovation, but also the structural necessity of a permanent reinvention of its institutional, social and economical structures as a way to keep its central position. This has been vital in maintaining its position ahead, and in some ways above in economic competition between Asia's world cities. Though a small country which can in no way pretend to compete with large Asian states like China or India in regional power games, it remains a major point or hub in the world economy.

But the increasing competition from other cities means that reinvention remains as crucial as ever. In its attempts to remain a central place, Singapore will therefore continue to rely heavily on its urban planning system. This will continue to be a, if not the, major tool for organising this permanent reshaping of its basic structures in order to fit with the haphazard evolution of the contemporary world system, and therefore to keep ahead as a "Tropical city of excellence".[37]

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