

Ingo Iskandar Video Timeline (may not go to plan)

1)Introduction of group members and topic (45 seconds)

2)Context of the event (2 minutes)

3)Impact of the event (2 minutes)

4)Outro (15 seconds)

Total time: 5 minutes

Topic: Expansion of the Rubber industry and its impact on Singapore

### Context

**Natural** rubber was first used by the indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin for multiple purposes. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Europeans had begun to experiment with rubber as a waterproofing agent. In the early nineteenth century, rubber was used to make waterproof shoes. The best source of latex, the milky fluid from which natural rubber products were made, was *hevea brasiliensis*, which grew predominantly in the Brazilian Amazon. Thus, by geographical accident, the first period of rubber's commercial history, from the late 1700s through 1900, was centered in Brazil; the second period, from roughly 1910 on, was increasingly centered in East Asia as the result of plantation development. The first century of rubber was typified by relatively low levels of production, high wages, and very high prices; the period following 1910 was one of rapidly increasing production, low wages, and falling prices. What initially caused rubber to become more popular was the popularisation of the bicycle. At first, Brazil and the other countries that shared the Amazon basin had the advantage of profiting from rubber as they were the only exporters of rubber, selling almost 90 percent of the total commercialised rubber in the world. However, as of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Southeast Asian Plantations developed a low-cost, labour-intensive alternative to produce rubber while being 80 percent more productive. This caused the Brazilian government to attempt to prevent *hevea brasiliensis* seeds from being exported. However, this turned out to be a failure, as in 1876, Henry Wickham, who was an Englishman, smuggled 70,000 seeds to London, for which he received eternal criticism by Brazil. In 1877, a case of 22 rubber plants arrived in Singapore and were planted at the Singapore Botanical Garden. Since rubber trees needed 6 to 8 years to be mature enough to yield good rubber, tapping began in the 1880s. This was how rubber trees ended up in Singapore.

### Impact on Singapore

Singapore exported rubber in massive quantities. Before that, for many years, plantation owners had shown zero to little interest in growing rubber as an agricultural crop. However, when the motor car industry created a new demand for rubber tyres, there was a "rubber boom". Its impact on Singapore was huge, and rubber laid the foundations for the city's modern entrepot trade. Firstly, it expanded Singapore's global trade considerably. Due to the city's small size limited rubber production, it became a hub for processing and exporting rubber instead. Secondly, rubber had a significant impact on the infrastructures of modern Singapore. Though the Chinese dominated the processing industry, they still depended European capital. As the rubber trade grew, Chinese entrepreneurs needed their own capital. Hence, they created their own banking systems to finance the industry, which supported the growth of Singapore overall. Last but not least, the impact of rubber might have been due to Singapore's

demographics. Producing rubber required a lot of labour, which became the main cause of migration to Singapore. During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a constant flow of labourers from India and China, many of which settled in Singapore. This changed our society irreversibly and changed Singapore as a whole, potentially improving its economy.

Sources: <https://kontinentalist.com/stories/how-the-rubber-plant-hevea-brasiliensis-and-latex-changed-singapore>

<https://eh.net/encyclopedia/the-international-natural-rubber-market-1870-1930/>

Singapore, A journey through time, 1299s to 1970s Secondary One Book