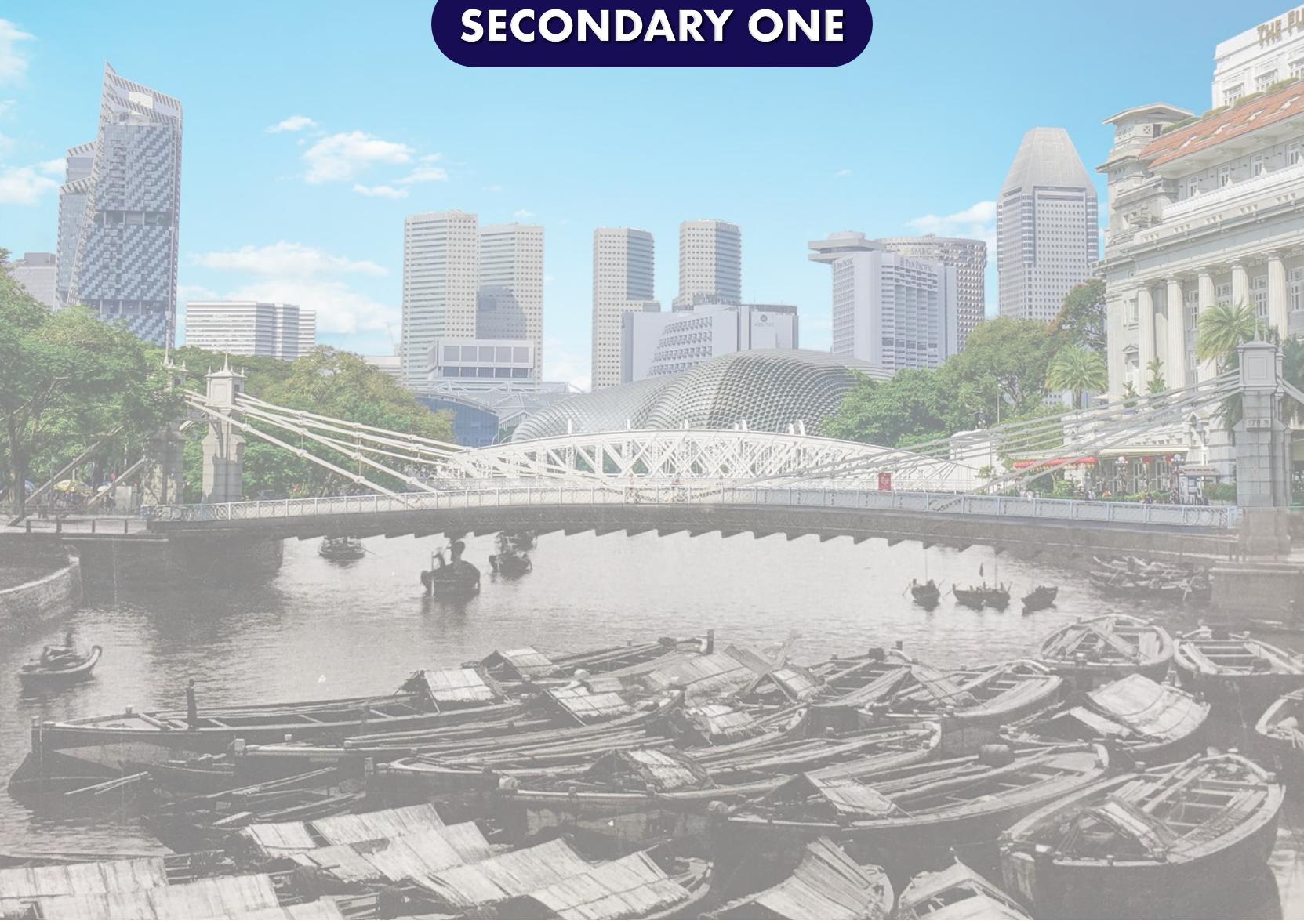


SINGAPORE

A Journey Through Time,
1299-1970s

SECONDARY ONE



CURRICULUM PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SINGAPORE



STAR PUBLISHING PTE LTD



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Front and back covers Cavenagh Bridge, 2018 © Phuong D. Nguyen/
Shutterstock.com. Cavenagh Bridge, c. 1900 © Gretchen Liu Collection,
courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

Preface

You are about to embark on an exciting journey through the past! Far from being just fun facts and dates, history is alive and all around us. Look around you and the Singapore you are living in today – you can find traces of the past in buildings, places, names and even objects. The study of history allows us to make sense of the past and draw connections to the present.

Have you ever wondered how Singapore came to be?

This book takes you on a journey to uncover Singapore's development over the centuries. You will read stories and examine historical sources that provide clues to answering questions about Singapore's past.

Start with **From Temasek to Singapore (1299–Early 1800s)** and trace Singapore's connections to India, China, the Southeast Asian region and beyond from as early as 1299. Find out how Singapore was part of the key trading networks even before the arrival of the British.

Your journey continues with **Singapore's Development as a Port City Under the British (1819–1942)**. Here, you will examine how British rule and external developments shaped Singapore in various ways. During this period, many different groups of people from the region and beyond also came to live and work in Singapore. Learn about their experiences, the challenges they faced and their contributions up to the fall of Singapore in 1942.

When you move on to Secondary 2, you will proceed to study **Singapore's Struggle for Independence (1942–1965)**. You will explore how key developments from the 1940s to the 1960s shifted Singapore from a British colony to an independent country. As you learn more about Singapore's road to independence, you will discover how this was influenced by post-war global and regional forces, and individuals during this period.

The journey comes to a rest with **Surviving as an Independent Nation-State (1965–Late 1970s)**. Here, you will find out how a sense of belonging, reality and hope was fostered as Singapore navigated the challenges of being a newly independent nation-state during this time.

In this journey, various features in this coursebook will guide you in making sense of Singapore's history. Through your study, you will develop greater awareness and curiosity about the past and its relationship to the present. The knowledge and skills you acquire will enable you to be open to multiple perspectives and empathise with people from diverse backgrounds. These will stand you in good stead, not just academically, but also in your everyday life.

Singapore's history does not just end here. Your experiences and stories will one day become part of it as time passes. Knowing history puts you in a better position to make decisions that will shape the future.

Finally, have an enriching and exciting journey ahead as you learn about Singapore's rich history!

How to Use This Book

In each chapter, interwoven in the content are historical concepts, skills and activities that can guide you in answering the inquiry question.

Features to Guide and Consolidate Learning

CHAPTER

1

How Connected Was Early Singapore to the Region and the World?

Chapter Inquiry

The key question provides a focal point for you to investigate the chapter topic.

Chapter at a Glance

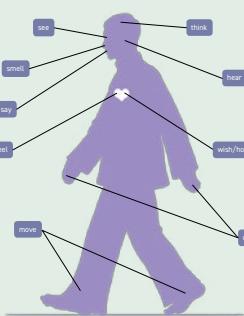
You will learn:

- Why the Japanese invaded Singapore during World War II
- Why Singapore fell to the Japanese during World War II

LET'S REVIEW

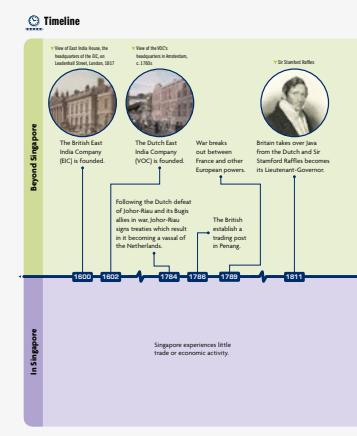
Imagine you are a migrant who moved from China, India or the surrounding regions to Singapore in the 19th century. You have worked here for three months. You might be an entrepreneur, a labourer or a craftsman. What would a typical day in your life look like? What might be your thoughts, feelings and actions? You can use the picture below as a frame to share your "life story".

Share your "life story" with a classmate.



Chapter at a Glance

This feature outlines the content that you will learn from the chapter.



Timeline

The timeline helps you understand key events and developments that took place in Singapore and beyond. You will see the sequence of events that will be mentioned in the chapter.

Let's Review

This feature helps you consolidate your learning by linking it to the chapter inquiry.

Features to Develop Skills and Conceptual Understanding

Learn a Skill

This feature introduces the skills of historical analysis. Using examples from the chapter, it highlights a particular skill and gives you opportunities to apply your learning.



LEARN A SKILL: ANALYSING IMAGES

When examining images, such as photographs or illustrations, study them in detail and search for clues within the images to help you understand what they are trying to show. Use the three-step process of See-Think-Wonder to guide you. Look at the steps below.

Step 1 See: What do you see?
Step 2 Think: What do you think is going on?
Step 3 Wonder: What does it make you wonder?

Here is an example of how the See-Think-Wonder process can be used to analyse an image.

Example



A painting depicting a group of men working on a ship's deck. Some are standing, some are sitting, and one man is resting his chin on his hand. The scene is set outdoors with a cloudy sky in the background.

What do you see?
What details do you see in the image?
I see...
- men labourers;
- labourers working at night;
- labourers working in a cramped space;
- a man resting his chin on his hand;
- the shadows of some of the labourers on the side of the ship.

What do you think is going on?
What do you think might be going on in the image? (You may tap on your answer.)
I think...
- labourers worked in cramped conditions to deliver coal supplies to the ship.
- labourers were working at night.
- their labour was paid for.
- labourers were closely supervised to ensure they did not stop working.
- if this image was taken during the day, it would have been because the labourers worked at night.
- the labourers worked in Singapore at the time.

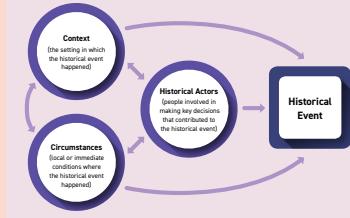
What makes you wonder?
What additional questions/thoughts do you have regarding this image?
I wonder...
- how labourers were working at night;
- how labourers were paid for their work;
- if this image was taken during the day, it would have been because the labourers worked at night;
- the labourers worked in Singapore at the time.

BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: CAUSATION

In Chapter 2, young historians often examine the causes of key historical events. This is not always a simple task. In many historical events, there are multiple causes, and one cause does not always lead to another. To really understand how a historical event came about, historians need to examine the possible causes from different angles. One useful way is to look at them in terms of:

- the broader context or setting (e.g., physical, political, economic, social, cultural, military in which the event occurred);
- the immediate or local circumstances of the event (e.g., whether people were unhappy or prepared to act); and
- the roles of key historical actors (individuals who made major decisions that contributed to the historical event).

Besides looking at causes separately, it is also useful to look at how different causes might have interacted with each other. Keep this in mind as you read about the fall of Singapore during World War II in this chapter.



```
graph TD; Context((Context  
[the setting in which the historical event happened])) --> HE[Historical Event]; HE --> Circumstances((Circumstances  
[local or immediate conditions where the historical event happened])); HE --> HA[Historical Actors  
[people involved in making key decisions that contributed to the historical event]]; Circumstances --> HA; HA --> HE; HA --> Circumstances
```

Case Investigation

This feature explores historical issues using a range of sources, allowing you to engage in a short inquiry task related to the chapter inquiry.



CASE INVESTIGATION

Who founded Singapore?



Today, Raffles' name can be seen all over Singapore: Raffles Place MRT station and Raffles Boulevard, just to give a few examples. This is because Raffles is often recognised as the founder of Singapore. However, not everyone takes this view.

Given what you have learnt about the contributions of Raffles, Farquhar and Canning to the development of Singapore, who do you think founded Singapore? Before answering this question, think about what it means to found a city and what it means to rule a city.

Some maintain that Raffles was the founder as he signed the 1819 Treaty that allowed the British to set up a trading post in the southern part of Singapore. Others argue that Farquhar was the founder of Singapore as he did the work of building Singapore from scratch. Some may even consider Canning as the founder as he signed the 1824 Treaty of Friendship and Alliance that gave the British control over the whole island.

Read the sources that follow and conduct your own investigation into who founded Singapore.

Sources

Sources are used to illustrate people's experiences or perspectives. The accompanying questions guide you in examining these sources more closely.

SOURCE 5

When you encounter the enemy after landing, regard yourself as an avenger who has at last come face to face with his father's murderer. Here before you is the man whose death will lighten your heart of its burden of brooding anger. If you fail to destroy him utterly, you can never rest at peace. And the first blow is the vital blow.

— An extract adapted from Read This Alone and the War Can Be Won, a pamphlet given to Japanese soldiers on their way to attack Malaya

1. What emotions do you think this pamphlet was trying to stir up among the Japanese soldiers?
2. What does this tell you about the preparations that the Japanese made for the attack on Malaya and Singapore?



Be a Young Historian

This feature introduces you to key historical concepts and explains how they are relevant to the study of history.

Features to Enhance Understanding or Encourage Exploration

Illustrated Stories

This feature combines illustrations and narration to help enhance your understanding of people, events and developments in history.



DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to the naval base, the British built underground bunkers in secret places all over the island. These bunkers were used for defence purposes, such as stores and air-raid shelters. One of the most extensive networks of bunkers lies at Fort Canning, where the headquarters of the British forces was located.



▲ The entrance (left) and interior (right) of Battlebox, an underground British military command centre, which is open to the public as part of the Battlebox tour

Did You Know?



This feature provides you with fun facts relevant to the chapter content.



Who Was

This feature gives you background information on key historical personalities introduced in the chapter.

Who was HENRY RIDLEY?



Henry Nicholas Ridley (1855–1956) became the first Director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens in 1888. He is most well-known for inventing a technique for tapping rubber trees without damaging them, which extended the trees' productivity and lifespan. Known as "Mad Ridley" or "Rubber Ridley", he repeatedly tried to interest European and Chinese businessmen to cultivate rubber trees as an agricultural crop. His promotion of rubber coincided with the invention of the pneumatic tyre for motor cars. In 1955, just before he passed away, the Institution of the Rubber Industry gave him its highest award, the Colwyn Medal.



Think!

How would Raffles' actions have been viewed by the different parties?



"Think" Bubbles

This feature encourages you to think more deeply about what you have just read on the page.



Learn on the Go

Scan the QR code or use the link to access a relevant lesson on the Singapore Student Learning Space (SLS) to extend your learning.

To monopolise or have monopoly over something means that a company, person or state has complete control over it so that it is impossible for others to become involved in it.

Glossary

The glossary explains keywords and vocabulary used.

▼ View of Singapore from Government Hill (present-day Fort Canning Hill) by John Turnbull Thomson, 1846





Plantation

Campiong Glorn

▼ Detail from Town and Harbour of Singapore, drawn by William Farquhar and presented to the East India Company in 1825



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What Is History All About?

What is history to you? Is history simply a collection of stories from the past? A long list of facts and dates to remember? What do you know about the history of Singapore?

Before we go further, let us start with this simple activity.

ACTIVITY

Do you remember what happened during your first day of school? Write it down on a piece of paper. You could think about how you travelled to school, who you met upon entering school, or the activities that you participated in during orientation. When you are ready, share it with your class.



Now that you have shared what your first day of school was like, take a closer look at what you have written and compare it with a friend's. What do you notice? It is likely that there are details that your friend included that you left out.

Why do you think there might be a difference? What made you choose to include some details and exclude others, and why is it not possible to include every detail? These are some of the questions that you may have when thinking about history and how it is written.

What Is History?

History is the study of the past. This may include individuals, societies, past events and developments, or even places. However, history is not the past. History does not and cannot fully show how it was like in the past.

This may not make sense at first, but think back to the earlier activity where you wrote about your first day of school. You chose to include certain details while leaving out others because it would have been impossible for you to feature everything that happened that day. Would another person be able to completely know what it was like for you on the first day of school?

In the same way that you selected events or experiences that you felt were most important to you, historians have to make decisions regarding what to focus on and how to present it, based on what they feel would best represent the past. As historians are also people like you, their perspectives are also shaped by their personal experiences. From this, you can see that history consists of different accounts carefully constructed by historians.



How Is History Constructed?

When you recall past events in your everyday life, you do so based on your memories. However, instead of relying on their own memories, historians have to rely on clues to construct history. These clues are called sources. When you ask good questions about sources, you are able to extract useful evidence from the sources about what the past might have been like.

The chart below shows the different types of sources historians may use and questions historians may ask to find out more about the past. What other questions might you ask?

Questions you can ask about sources to find out more about the past:

- Who produced the source?
- When was the source produced?
- Where was the source produced or found?
- Why was the source made?
- What was the source used for?
- What does the source tell you about the past?
- What is excluded from the source?

Types of Sources

Artefacts

Objects used and left behind by people in the past



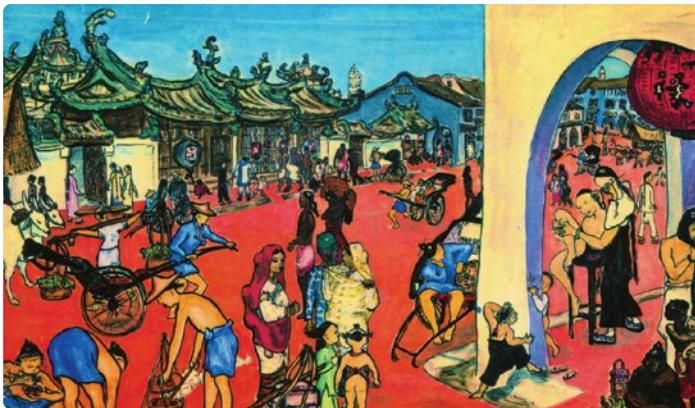
▲ Rickshaw from the late 19th century on display at the National Museum of Singapore.
Rickshaws were a form of transportation in colonial Singapore.



▲ Chettiar marriage necklace, 19th century

Pictorial Records

Maps, photographs, paintings, posters and cartoons



▲ Drawing of Chinatown and Thian Hock Keng Temple by Marie Fauconnier, a French artist, 1910



▲ Map showing the region around Singapore and Johor by Manuel Godinho de Erédia, a Malay-Portuguese writer, 1604

Written Accounts and Records

Personal and government documents, newspapers, letters and books



▲ Landing permit of a Chinese migrant, 1934



▲ Sejarah Melayu (Sulalat al-Salatin), edited by Munshi Abdullah, Singapore, 1840

Oral Accounts

Spoken words, stories and eyewitness accounts

Picture of an oral history interview in progress. Oral accounts of the past can be collected by interviewing people about their life experiences.

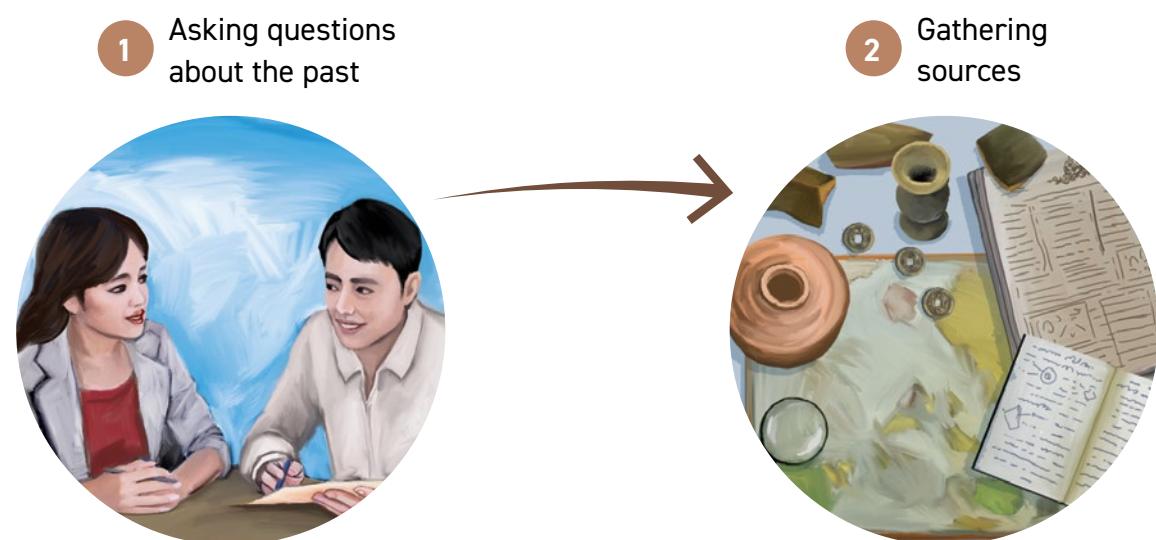


It is important for historians to use a variety of sources from various viewpoints to inform their construction of history. Why do you think this is so?

Historians need to ensure that the evidence they have is strong enough to make sound conclusions about the past.

However, it is important to remember that historians make conclusions about the past based on the sources that are available to them. It is impossible for historians to completely recover or recreate everything from the past. This means that claims they make about the past may change when new evidence comes to light.

The diagram below outlines the steps historians may take to understand more about the past. You will be following these steps in your study of history.



Stages of Historical Inquiry



4 Exercising reasoning to write a logical conclusion about the past

3 Examining the sources to extract information in order to form a response to the questions asked

Why Study History?

Now that you know what history is and how it is constructed, why should you study it?

You study history in order to:

- understand what people went through in the past;
- make connections between the past and the present to anticipate the future; and
- acquire critical thinking skills that are useful in your daily life.

Your journey through Lower Secondary History begins in late 13th-century Singapore. Read on to find out more about Singapore's history!

▼ View of South Bridge Road by Peter Bernhard Wilhelm Heine, 1860



UNIT

OVERVIEW

1

From Temasek to Singapore (1299–Early 1800s)

This map shows major trade routes connecting Asia to Europe in the past.

Look at where Singapore is located.

EUROPE

- What do you notice about Singapore's location?
- Why do you think Singapore's location might have been important in bringing about its success as a trading port?



In this unit, we will explore how Singapore's location within trading networks affected its rise and decline as a trading port. We start the story in 1299, tracing Singapore's rise and decline through the centuries, until the arrival of the British in 1819. Embark on a journey to discover how Singapore's geographical location and reactions to events occurring in the wider region contributed to its success or failure as a trading port.





1 How Connected Was Early Singapore to the Region and the World?

Look at the scenes below of Singapore today. What do they tell you about Singapore?



Singapore has been an independent country since 1965. It is an important **trading centre¹** for the region and the world. Singapore is also a diverse society. People from different races, who speak different languages and practise different religions, live and work in this country.

Have you ever wondered:

- What was Singapore like in the past?
- How similar or different was Singapore in the past compared to today?
- How did Singapore become what it is today?

In 1856, the British official Dr John Crawfurd wrote that there was no record of Singapore having been occupied before the British arrived in 1819. It was only occasionally used as a hideout by pirates at the time. Was Crawfurd's description of Singapore's past an accurate one? Had Singapore been just a sleepy and unimportant island before 1819? You will learn more about the history of early Singapore in this chapter.



Chapter at a Glance

You will learn:

- What Singapore was like before 1819
- What connections early Singapore had with the region and the world
- How regional and international developments shaped early Singapore

¹ A trading centre is where the exchange and sale of goods takes place. It is typically located along a major trade route.



Timeline

Major Kingdoms/ Empires in the Region

c. 650–c. 1370s
Srivijaya

c. 1290s–c. 1510s
Majapahit

682

1025

c. 1299

c. 1400

The decline of Srivijaya begins with the invasion by the Chola Kingdom in India.

According to the *Sejarah Melayu*, Sang Nila Utama, also known as Sri Tri Buana, arrives in Temasek and renames the island Singapura.

Parameswara (also known as Iskandar Shah), a prince from Palembang, establishes a trading port at Melaka.

Srivijaya emerges as the dominant kingdom in the Malay Archipelago.



▲ Bronze statue from the Srivijayan period



▲ The *Sejarah Melayu* also records that Sang Nila Utama was a Palembang prince from Srivijaya.



▲ Artist's impression of Melaka in the 15th century

Regional and Global Developments That Impacted Singapore

c. 1400–1511
Melaka Sultanate

1528–Early 19th century
Johor Sultanate

1490s–1500s 1511 1528 1600s–1640s 1619 1641 1699 →

Melaka falls to the Portuguese.

The Melaka Sultan's son, Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah II, establishes the Johor Sultanate.

Melaka falls to the Dutch.

The Johor Sultan, Mahmud Shah II, is assassinated, plunging the Sultanate into a political crisis.

European voyages of discovery and economic expansion result in the growing conflict and competition between the European maritime countries extending into Asia.

Conflict between the Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese in Southeast Asia intensifies as they compete for trade and colonies.

The Dutch establish a permanent trading base in Batavia (present-day Jakarta).



▲ Vasco da Gama sails from Europe around the Cape of Good Hope to India in 1497.



▲ Dutch-Portuguese battle in the Straits of Melaka in 1606



▲ View of Batavia, c. 1754



BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: CHRONOLOGY

Chronology refers to the arrangement of past events according to the order in which they took place. Historians place events in chronological order to help them better understand what happened during a specific time period in the past. This can be done by arranging events based on the year in which they occurred.

BCE

Years are traditionally numbered with reference to the year of the birth of Jesus Christ. Previously, the term "BC", which refers to "Before Christ", was used. Recently, some historians have begun to number years more neutrally, without religious references. Hence, the period BC is referred to as "Before Common Era" or "BCE".

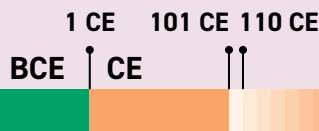
CE

"CE" is short for "Common Era". 1 CE is the year Christ was born. Previously, the term "AD" or "Anno Domini", which is Latin for "in the year of the Lord", was used.



Timeline

Decade
A decade refers to a period of 10 years.



Century

A century refers to a period of 100 years.
The 6th century CE therefore refers to the years 501–600 CE,
and the 21st century CE to the years 2001–2100 CE.

501 CE 600 CE

Millennium

A millennium refers to a period of 1,000 years.
The 1st millennium CE therefore refers to the years 1–1000 CE,
and the 2nd millennium CE to the years 1001–2000 CE.

LEARN ON THE GO

Find out more about how historians understand time @ go.gov.sg/lshc101.



Reigns or Dynasties

One way of referring to different times in history is to categorise them according to the reigns of individual rulers or entire dynasties. For example, the Ming dynasty refers to the years 1368–1644 CE in China, when the country was ruled by the Ming emperors, while the Victorian era in British history refers to the period 1837–1901 CE, when Queen Victoria was the ruler of Great Britain.



▲ Portrait of Emperor Taizu, founder of the Ming dynasty, who reigned from 1368 to 1398



▲ 1843 portrait of Queen Victoria, who reigned from 1837 to 1901. The British Empire expanded greatly during the Victorian era.

1000 CE

1368–1644 CE
Ming dynasty

1837–1901 CE
Victorian era

2000 CE

1685–1815 CE
The Enlightenment

Periods

Another way of referring to different times in history is to divide it into periods. Periods may be named after significant developments that happened then. For example, some historians regard the period between 1685 and 1815 for Europe as the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment due to the scientific, cultural, philosophical and political developments that occurred there during this period.

Other Ways of Marking Time

Different calendars are also used to organise the year, such as the Chinese lunar calendar.



▲ Present-day version of the Chinese lunar calendar

How Did Singapore's Geographical Location Affect Its Connections with the Region and the World?

In our journey to understand our past, it is important to constantly bear in mind where Singapore is located. Singapore is part of the region of Southeast Asia, which lies to the south of China and east of India.

These two large countries were home to old and influential civilisations which traded extensively throughout the region and beyond. For example, Chinese goods, such as silk and ceramics, were in demand as far away as Europe, while products from Southeast Asia, such as spices, scented wood and shells, were highly valuable in China and India.



Turtle shell



Ceramic vase



Silk



Spices



Scented wood

▲ Examples of goods traded between Southeast Asia and the rest of the world

During ancient times, the most important trade link between the civilisations of Asia, the Middle East and Europe was the network of land routes known as the Silk Road. This route connected China through Central Asia to the Roman Empire, which controlled much of the Middle East and Europe for many centuries.

However, this route became less safe for traders due to increased danger and difficulties involved in travelling across the Silk Road. They had to rely instead on travelling via the maritime route.

DID YOU KNOW?

The term “Silk Road” was only coined after the mid-19th century. In 1877, the German traveller Ferdinand von Richthofen used the term to describe the network of land routes. Coincidentally, the ancient Greeks referred to China as “Seres”, which literally means “land of silk”.



▲ Map 1.1: Land and maritime routes connecting Asia, the Middle East and Europe during ancient times

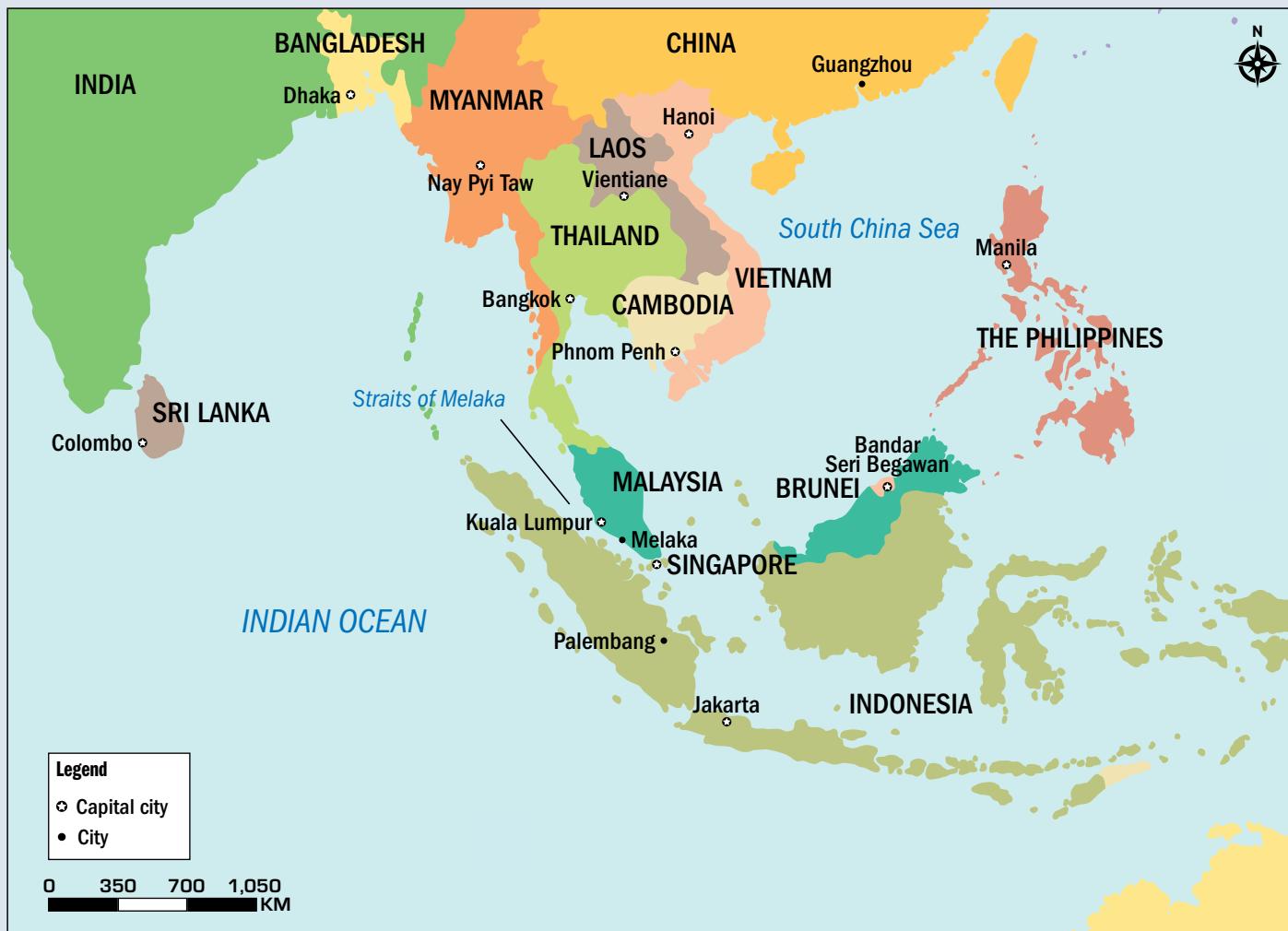
▼ Artist's impression of camels carrying people and goods along the Silk Road





LEARN A SKILL: READING MAPS

A map is a graphical representation of all or part of the world's surface. It gives a bird's eye view of the world. Reading and understanding maps are important in the study of history. Historians use maps to understand how geography influenced developments in history. Let us learn more about how geography influenced Singapore's history by studying the map below. Follow the guide on the next page to help you.



▲ Map 1.2: Map showing present-day Southeast Asia, India and China

1 Countries

The areas of land on the map are coloured to represent different countries, and important cities and other features are labelled. Can you locate the following countries on Map 1.2?

- **China**
- **India**
- **Indonesia**
- **Malaysia**
- **Singapore**

2 Water Bodies

The blue areas of the map represent water bodies, such as the oceans and seas. Two important water bodies in the region are the **Indian Ocean** and the **South China Sea**.

- Can you locate the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea on the map?
- What are the places that a traveller sailing from China to India might pass?

3 Legend

The **legend** at the bottom of the map tells you what the different symbols on the map represent. In this map, the legend shows the two symbols that represent capital cities and cities in the different countries. A capital city is where the main government offices of a country are located.

4 Distances

Some maps come with a **scale**, which helps you to calculate distances. For a large area to be represented on a piece of paper, it is necessary to scale down the actual size of the area. The scale refers to the proportion by which a map has been reduced and tells you the distance represented by each unit of measurement on the map.

For example, in Map 1.2, the scale at the bottom tells you that 1 cm on the map represents 350 km in real life. With this, you can measure the actual distances between places on the map.

Calculate the distance across the South China Sea between Singapore and the port of Guangzhou in China. How about the distance between Singapore and Melaka?



Many trading centres emerged in Southeast Asia in response to this trade. Travellers from China, India, the Middle East and Southeast Asia who passed through this region would stop at various ports to pick up items to trade, acquire supplies such as food and water, repair their ships or wait for favourable weather conditions before continuing on their journeys.



▲ **Map 1.3:** Founded in Sumatra, Srivijaya was situated close to the southern entrance of the Straits of Melaka and possessed a good port at Palembang. By suppressing piracy and serving as a centre for the trade of local products such as spices and scented wood, Srivijaya extended its control over many parts of the region.



Over time, the wealth gained from trade allowed some of these ports to grow into small kingdoms, also known as maritime kingdoms. Two examples in Southeast Asia were Srivijaya and the Melaka Sultanate. Look at Maps 1.3 and 1.4. Are you able to identify the changes that took place in Southeast Asia when the region was under Srivijaya and the Melaka Sultanate?



▲ **Map 1.4:** Located along the Straits of Melaka, Melaka provided a convenient stop and a safe harbour for traders passing through the Straits. Goods from India, Southeast Asia and China were brought to Melaka where they were bought and sold. These included dyes, porcelain and cloth such as silk.

▼ Illustration showing a view of Batavia (present-day Jakarta, founded by the Dutch in 1619 on the island of Java) in the 18th century by Jan van Ryne



Let us examine the map of Southeast Asia below to understand how the island of Singapore was involved in this maritime trade.

Singapore lies off the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, along a waterway known as the Straits of Melaka. Ships sailing from China to India and beyond would have to pass through the Straits of Melaka as the quickest route to their destinations. This reduced the amount and cost of supplies they needed, such as food and water, as well as the risk of pirate attacks and accidents. Other routes through the islands further east, in what is today's Indonesia, would take a longer time to complete.

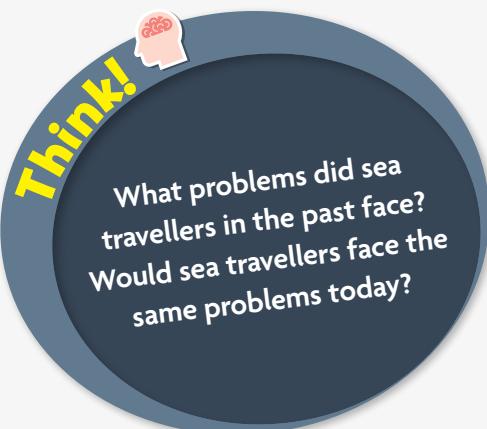
Singapore's location also allowed it to benefit from the monsoon winds, which are seasonal rain-bearing winds. In the days of sailing ships, journeys by sea were almost entirely dependent upon wind patterns. The southwest monsoons blow from June to September, while the northeast monsoons blow from December to March. Map 1.5 below explains how the prevailing monsoons determined the course of trade.

Countries with economic interests in Asia would place great importance on the Straits of Melaka. Control of the Straits would allow them to move their ships quickly and safely within and beyond Asia. In different historical periods, the Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, British and Japanese would attempt to control the Straits to secure maritime routes for their ships between the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. These attempts to control the Straits were a key factor in shaping the development of Singapore over the centuries.

Map 1.5: Ships leaving China for Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean had to catch the northeast monsoon, which would take them west. On the other hand, ships departing from Indian Ocean ports for China via Southeast Asia would have to make use of the southwest monsoon. If ships caught the monsoons at the right time, the strong winds would allow them to complete their voyages quickly.

DID YOU KNOW?

The travelling time of sailing ships in early times depended on many factors. While longer distances generally meant a longer travelling time, other factors also affected how long it would take to get from port to port. For example, ships had to wait for favourable wind and weather conditions before setting sail. They might even have had to stop at other ports along the way to replenish supplies or take shelter during a storm.



How did EARLY SINGAPORE become an IMPORTANT TRADING CENTRE?

Southeast Asia was positioned to benefit from the maritime trade taking place between China and the rest of the world.

This trade enabled several trading centres to emerge and develop throughout the region.

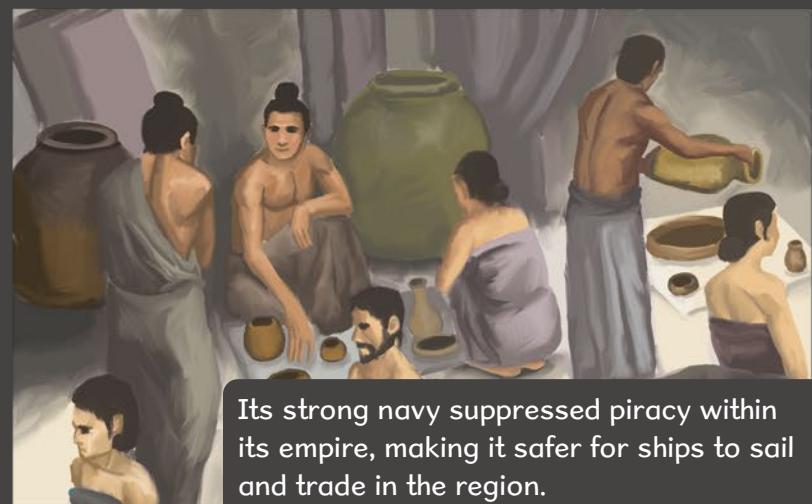
SRIVIJAYA
Palembang

Srivijaya developed around the port of Palembang in Sumatra.



Over time, it grew into a powerful **empire*** that brought stability to places controlled by it.

* An empire is a group of territories controlled by a single ruler.



Its strong navy suppressed piracy within its empire, making it safer for ships to sail and trade in the region.



However, from the 11th century onwards, Srivijaya started to decline due to external threats, such as invasions from ...



the Chola Kingdom of southern India,

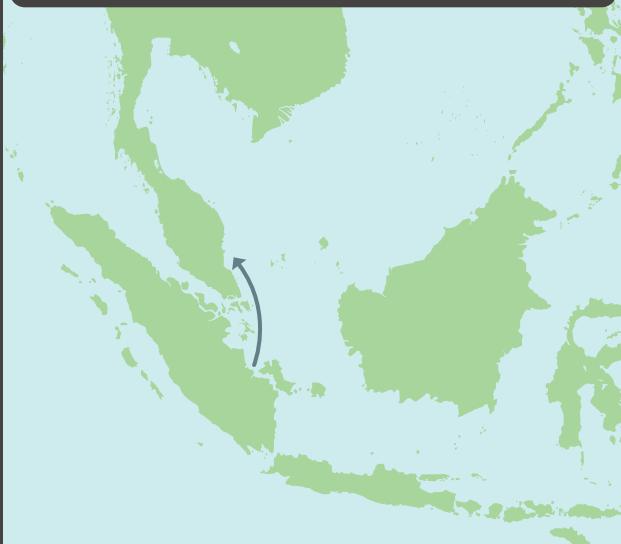


the Siamese Kingdom (present-day Thailand),



and Majapahit, which was based in Java.

Due to the decline of Srivijaya, trade shifted northwards and ports in the area benefitted.



During this period, trade between China and Southeast Asia also increased.



These factors contributed to the rise of early Singapore, also known as Temasek then, as a trading centre in the 14th century.





Cotton



Ivory



Sea cucumbers



Hornbill casque

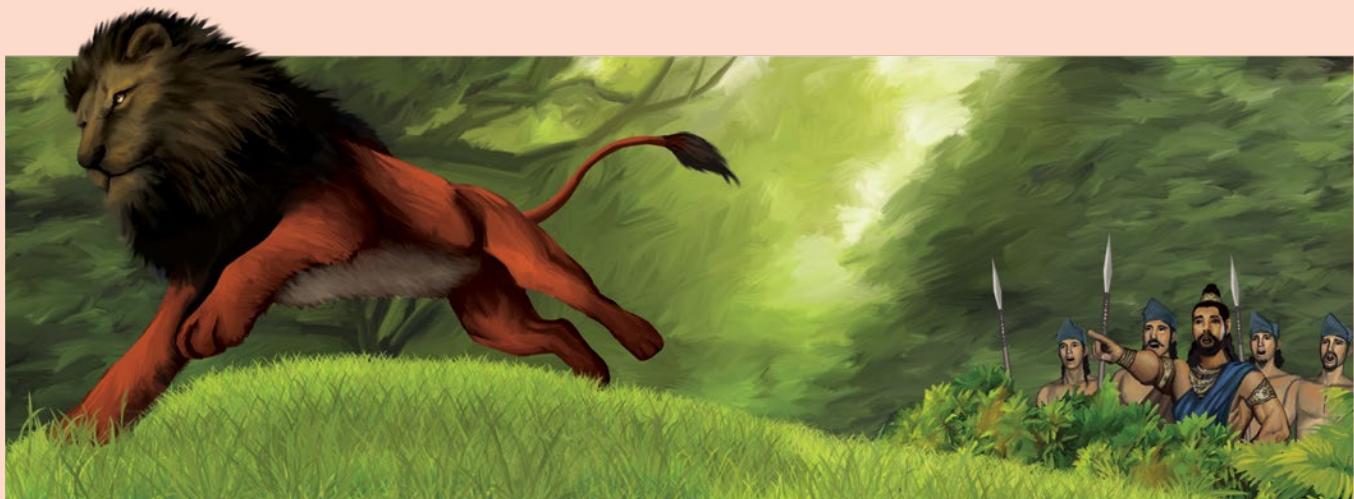
▲ Examples of goods sought after by the Chinese

DID YOU KNOW?

The story of Sang Nila Utama, also known as Sri Tri Buana, comes from a 17th-century text known as the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals). It tells the story of a prince who left Palembang for an island to the north. When he arrived at the island called Temasek, he spotted a lion.

This is an adapted passage from the *Sejarah Melayu* that describes this event:

Near the mouth of the river Temasek, Sang Nila Utama and his attendants saw an extremely beautiful animal, its body of a red colour, its head black and its breast white, extremely agile and of great strength. Sang Nila Utama enquired what animal this was, and was informed that the ancient histories described the singha, or lion, in the same manner. Believing that this was a fine place to contain so fierce and powerful an animal, Sang Nila Utama decided to form a settlement in the country of Temasek.





BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: EVIDENCE

How do we know about early Singapore's connections with the region and the world?

Historians use a variety of sources that provide us with information about Singapore's past. Sources can come in many forms. There are:

- textual records, which provide written information about the past;
- archaeological finds, which reveal the nature of economic activities, social hierarchies and religions;
- maps, which show us the geographical importance of places; and
- scientific data, which tells us about changes in the environment.

Let us see what various sources tell us about early Singapore's connections with the region and the world.



TEXTUAL RECORDS

Wang Dayuan was a Chinese traveller who visited Singapore in the early 14th century. The record of his travels, written in 1349, describes communities of natives and Chinese living on the island, the agricultural activity they conducted, as well as the fact that some were pirates.



This textual source tells us about the connections between early Singapore and China. Using Wang Dayuan's text, we can conclude that Singapore was among the ports visited by Chinese traders in the 14th century.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

Pieces of Chinese ceramics were discovered at Empress Place, near the Singapore River. These shards came from bowls, plates and cups which were produced in China during the 13th to 15th centuries.



These shards indicate that Singapore was connected to the trade network in the region. Different traders bought and sold Chinese ceramics, which were typical trade items. The fact that these Chinese ceramics were found in Singapore suggests that there was trade between Singapore and the region.

HOW WAS EARLY SINGAPORE CONNECTED TO THE REGION AND THE WORLD?

This map shows that Singapore was known to European travellers in the 16th and 17th centuries, who frequently used the waters around Singapore in their journeys through the region. Singapore was thus part of the trade network that connected Europe and Asia in this period.

MAPS

Manuel Godinho de Erédia was a cartographer, or mapmaker, who served the King of Spain. He produced many maps of countries in Asia. This map of Singapore was drawn in the 1600s, and depicts the coastline of Singapore, with some place names similar to those still being used today.



Tree rings like these suggest changes in climate that could have impacted the accessibility of maritime routes, and caused famine and drought in the region, e.g., in China. Singapore's trade would have suffered in such periods.

SCIENTIFIC DATA

Scientific evidence, such as tree ring records, allows us to understand the patterns of wind and rain in Asia in the last thousand years. For example, a larger gap between tree rings indicates that there was plentiful rainfall in a certain year, while a smaller gap suggests drought had taken place.



Archaeology is the study of the physical remains of past human societies. Archaeological digs since the 1920s have uncovered artefacts at Fort Canning and other areas around the Singapore River. Among the artefacts found were shards of expensive Chinese porcelain and gold ornaments. This is evidence that there was trade between early Singapore and the region. Read on to find out about the various artefacts uncovered from the excavation sites in Singapore.

Artefacts at Fort Canning Hill

Besides the discovery of gold ornaments during excavation works for a reservoir in 1928, the oldest visible remnants of the past are the fort gate and the old British cemetery. The *keramat* (ceremonial grave) of Iskandar Shah was also found here. He was supposedly the fifth ancient ruler of Temasek. Approximately 30,000 artefacts from the 14th century were recorded at the site. Glass beads form a large proportion of these artefacts.



▲ Blue and white stem cup,
14th century

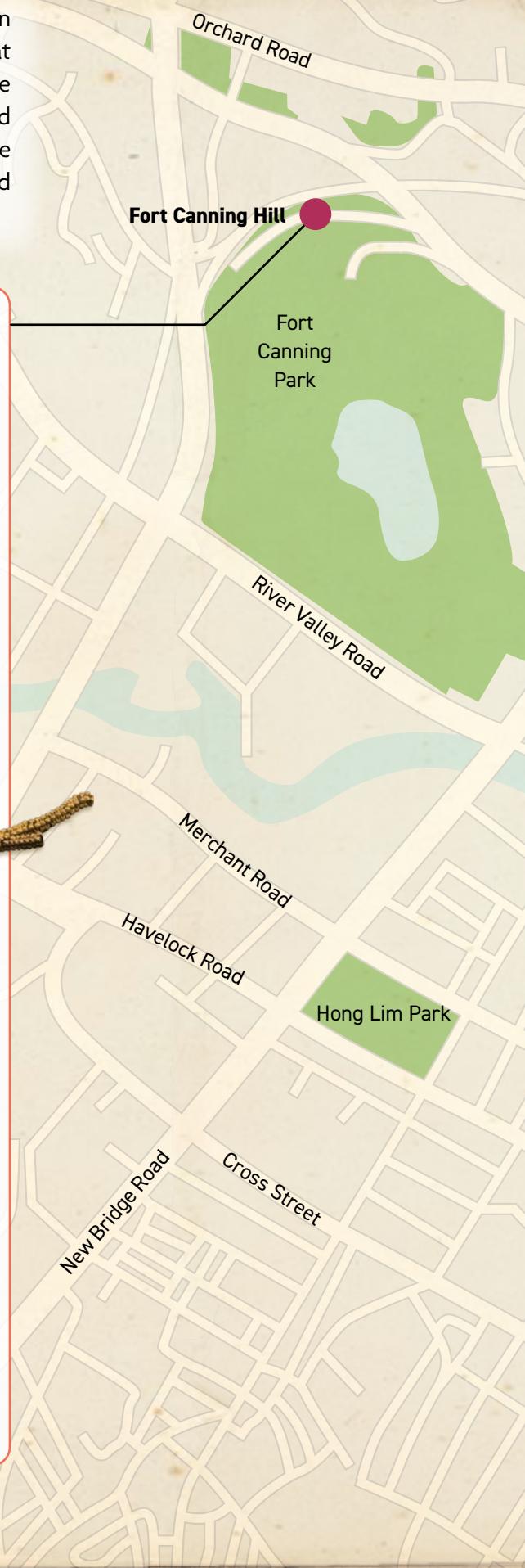


▲ Gold earrings and armlet, mid-14th century.
The armlet has a design of Kala, the Hindu
god representing time and destruction.



▲ Glass beads, 14th century

▲ Map 1.6: Present-day map showing the location of excavation sites around the Singapore River





Artefacts at Parliament House Complex

Excavations at this site between 1994 and 1995 revealed artefacts dating from before the British colonial period. Among the artefacts is a large collection of Chinese porcelain dating from the late 13th to the early 15th century.



▲ White stem cup fragment,
12th-14th century



▲ Dehua plate fragment, 14th century



▲ Mercury jar, 14th century

Artefacts at Empress Place

Excavation work was conducted at this site in 1998 and 2015. The artefacts found provide more evidence about pre-1819 Singapore.



▲ Ceramic shards with design motifs
in underglazed blue, 19th century



▲ Majapahit-style headless
horseman, c. 14th century

Why Had Singapore Declined by the 15th Century?

The prosperity of early Singapore, however, did not last. By the middle of the 14th century, Singapore had started to decline and would soon be overshadowed by a new port city to its north: Melaka.

One major reason for its decline could have been the climatic and economic changes that affected the trade with China. Scientific evidence shows us that weather patterns underwent severe changes in the 14th century. This contributed to droughts and famines in China. As the Chinese economy collapsed under this strain, trade between Southeast Asia and China would have suffered accordingly. This probably reduced one of the major sources of early Singapore's wealth.

Like Srivijaya, Singapore also fell prey to external threats. As a small island, it was always vulnerable to the larger powers in the region. We have already seen how invasions from hostile kingdoms brought about the downfall of Srivijaya. Similarly, the Kingdoms of Majapahit and Ayutthaya (in Thailand) launched attacks on Temasek that weakened it by the end of the 14th century.

In c. 1400, the Melaka Sultanate was founded along the Straits of Melaka, north of Singapore. The Sultanate became one of the dominant trading centres in the region, and soon extended control over much of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra. Like Singapore, Melaka was situated in a convenient location for traders travelling between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, providing them with a safe harbour during their long voyages. See the following page for the story of Melaka's founding.

▼ Detail from a relief in Fort Canning Park in Singapore showing warriors in early Singapore fighting off attackers



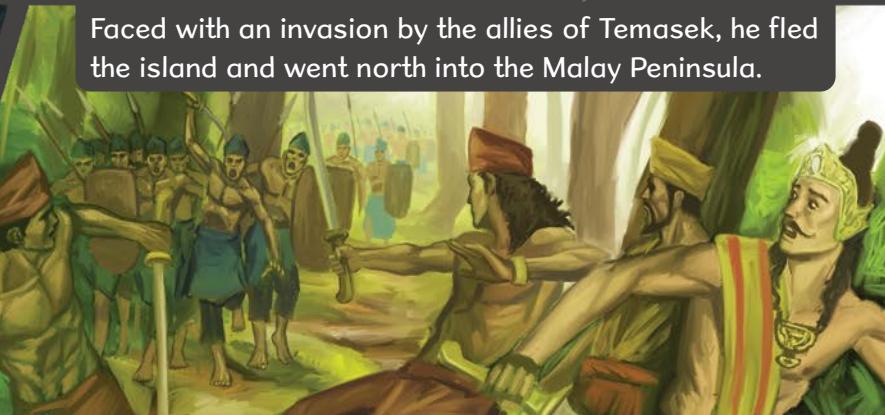
▲ Map 1.7: Areas controlled by the Melaka Sultanate

The FOUNDING of MELAKA

Parameswara, a prince from Palembang, had overthrown the ruler of Temasek.



Faced with an invasion by the allies of Temasek, he fled the island and went north into the Malay Peninsula.



One day, while resting under a tree when out hunting, Parameswara witnessed a small mousedeer bravely fighting off his hunting dogs.



Parameswara believed that the bravery of the mousedeer was a sign that this was a good place to establish a city.



He asked his men for the name of the tree he was resting under, and was told that it was a Melaka tree.



This was how the city of Melaka came to be founded.

Parameswara's conversion to Islam and marriage to a Muslim princess from Sumatra also attracted Muslim traders to Melaka. Furthermore, Parameswara established Melaka's status as a vassal of China. This meant that it would pay **tribute**² to the Chinese emperor in return for protection. This gave Melaka security from threats posed by rivals in the region. The peace that Melaka enjoyed allowed it to grow as a trading centre, attracting traders from Sumatra, India and the Middle East. Trade with Europe also grew in importance, and this brought European fleets to Southeast Asia in greater frequency and numbers.

During this period, Singapore was overshadowed by Melaka and ceased to serve its previous role as a centre of trade linking the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. However, it was still important to the Melaka Sultanate as it was home to the Orang Laut, a seafaring people who were the backbone of Melaka's naval forces.

DID YOU KNOW?

The term "Orang Laut" means "people of the sea". The Orang Laut lived on houseboats and wandered about from place to place, usually in search of good fishing grounds where they could catch fish and other sea animals.



▲ 17th-century drawing of how the Orang Laut warriors of the Sultan may have looked like

DID YOU KNOW?

After Sultan Muzaffar Shah, the third ruler of Melaka, established Islam as the official religion of Melaka in the middle of the 15th century, Islam began to have a significant influence on the art of Southeast Asia.

For example, prior to the arrival of Islam, Southeast Asian woodcarving was influenced by Hinduism and depicted deities and creatures as symbols. However, as Islam forbade such depictions, floral designs and Arabic inscriptions from the Quran were subsequently featured instead.



▲ Floral motif carving on the main door of Tranquerah Mosque, Melaka, built in 1728

² To pay tribute is to send valuable gifts to a more powerful ruler, usually of a larger territory, as a form of respect.

The Arrival of the Europeans

At the beginning of the 16th century, religious, political and economic rivalries were intensifying among the major powers of Europe. With the voyages of discovery in the late 15th century in which European sailors opened new maritime routes into Asia and other parts of the world, this conflict and competition began spreading into Asia.

Some famous voyages were those of Christopher Columbus, who landed in North America, and Vasco da Gama, who established a maritime route from Europe to India, passing around the Cape of Good Hope in the south of Africa (see Map 1.8). This route to India was particularly important as it allowed Europeans to bypass the eastern Mediterranean, which was under the control of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Turks were constantly at war with the European countries in this period.



▲ Christopher Columbus

▲ Vasco da Gama



▲ Map 1.8: Newly discovered maritime route connecting Europe with Asia in the late 15th century

The rivalry between the maritime nations of Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands began to focus on Asia as they raced to tap its markets and establish trading settlements across the region. Accompanying the European presence were many Christian missionaries who ventured into India, Southeast Asia and China.

From the 16th century onwards, while European influence was growing in the region, the Melaka Sultanate was weakened and divided by power struggles and internal rivalries. This made the kingdom vulnerable. When the Portuguese decided to take over Melaka, their well-armed forces easily conquered the city. With a loyal group of officials and Orang Laut warriors, the Sultan fled south. His successor would establish a new kingdom along the Johor River, which came to be known as the Johor Sultanate.



▲ **Map 1.9:** This map shows the outposts established by the European powers by the late 17th century. Outposts are places that represent a government or a trading company that is located far away. The late 15th century saw the arrival of European powers in Asia who began to create permanent outposts in places such as Goa, Melaka, Manila and Macao. By the 18th century, the Dutch were the dominant European power in Asia and controlled a vast empire that spanned the islands of present-day Indonesia.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the Catholic missionary orders founded during the 16th century was the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits. One of their most famous members, Francis Xavier, who was instrumental in spreading Christianity in Asia, passed through the waters off Singapore in 1551 while returning from Japan to the Portuguese-controlled port of Goa in India.

During the rule of the Qing dynasty, the Jesuits also established themselves in China, where they introduced Western inventions, such as mechanical clocks, and European techniques of art to the Chinese elite.



▲ Francis Xavier

▼ Detail from a 17th-century Dutch painting by Jan Martszen de Jonge depicting a battle between Dutch and Spanish troops





BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: ACCOUNTS

Accounts are writings about events that happened in the past. Different accounts may exist about the same historical event. Why is it important for historians to look at more than one account of an event? Let us look at two accounts of Parameswara's escape from Singapore to Melaka.

ACCOUNT 1 SEJARAH MELAYU

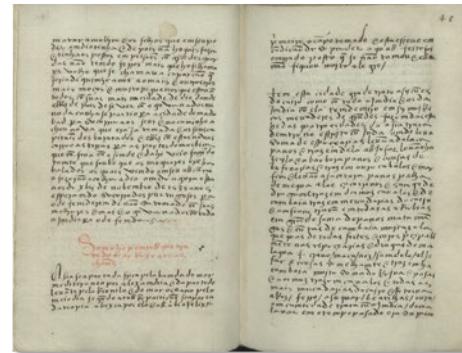
In the *Sejarah Melayu*, we are told that Iskandar Shah (Parameswara) succeeded to the throne of Singapore. His minister, Sang Ranjuna Tapa, had a daughter whom the King loved. But the King's mistresses schemed against her and accused her of unfaithfulness. Iskandar Shah had her executed. Sang Ranjuna Tapa was deeply saddened and sent a letter to Java, seeking the help of the Majapahit for revenge. The Majapahit forces arrived, engaged in battle and subdued Singapore. Iskandar Shah fled from Singapore to Muar (in Johor).



▲ *Sejarah Melayu (Sulalat al-Salatin)*, edited by Munshi Abdullah, Singapore, 1840

ACCOUNT 2 SUMA ORIENTAL

In the *Suma Oriental*, written by a Portuguese traveller in the early 16th century, Parameswara is supposed to have killed the King of Singapore shortly after he arrived on the island. He took control of the island and the waters around it. However, the King of Siam, who was father-in-law to the King of Singapore, decided to attack him. Parameswara did not dare to confront him and fled with about a thousand men up the Muar River (in Johor).



▲ Pages from the *Suma Oriental*

These two accounts provide very different details about the invasion of Singapore and Parameswara's escape. What are some differences in the accounts?

We would not have known about the other possible version of events if we had read only one account. Hence, it is important to look at different accounts to consider other ways that events might have occurred.

Why do you think these two accounts tell us different details about the same events?

LEARN ON THE GO

Go deeper into the importance of historical accounts @ go.gov.sg/lshc104.



How Important Was Singapore Under the Johor Sultanate?

Under the Johor Sultanate, Singapore revived some of its trading functions that had been lost during the period of Melaka's dominance.

During this period, several European travellers, such as Tomé Pires, Manuel Godinho de Erédia and Jacques de Coutre, wrote about an official known by the title of **Shahbandar**³ based in Singapore. The presence of a Shahbandar indicates that Singapore could have been an important trading centre for the Johor Sultanate as his duty was to oversee foreign trading communities and issue trading licences to foreign traders.

At the same time, there is evidence of trade between the Johor Sultanate and China during this period. A 17th-century Chinese map depicts shipping routes from the main Chinese port of Quanzhou to different parts of Asia. One such route is shown leading to Johor. Archaeological evidence supports this. Chinese porcelain from the 17th century found in the Kallang River suggests that items made in China were being traded in and around Singapore, and similar porcelain has also been uncovered in Johor. Singapore was therefore the gateway for a system of trade that passed from China through Singapore and down the Johor River.



▲ 17th-century Chinese porcelain, found in the Kallang River c. 1970



▲ The term “Xabandaria” (Shahbandar), marked near the Singapore River on this Portuguese map, indicates the presence of a Shahbandar in Singapore.



▲ Map 1.10: 17th-century Portuguese map depicting the region around Singapore and Johor, by Manuel Godinho de Erédia

³ The Shahbandar, or “Lord of the Haven” in Persian, is similar to today’s port master of a harbour. The Shahbandar was a representative and official of the Johor Sultanate stationed in Singapore. Appointed by the Johor Sultan, he was in charge of managing and controlling a harbour or port in Singapore. He also performed gatekeeping duties, which included meeting traders before they proceeded upriver to the capital of the Johor Sultanate.

What Caused Singapore to Decline Again?

Singapore declined in importance from the mid-17th century due to political changes in the region. After 1610, the Dutch turned their attention southwards towards the Sunda Straits and Java, away from the Straits of Melaka. The Dutch also established their main base in Asia at Batavia (present-day Jakarta) in 1619. They became the dominant European power in Southeast Asia after capturing Melaka from the Portuguese in 1641. By the 18th century, maritime traffic was bypassing Singapore.

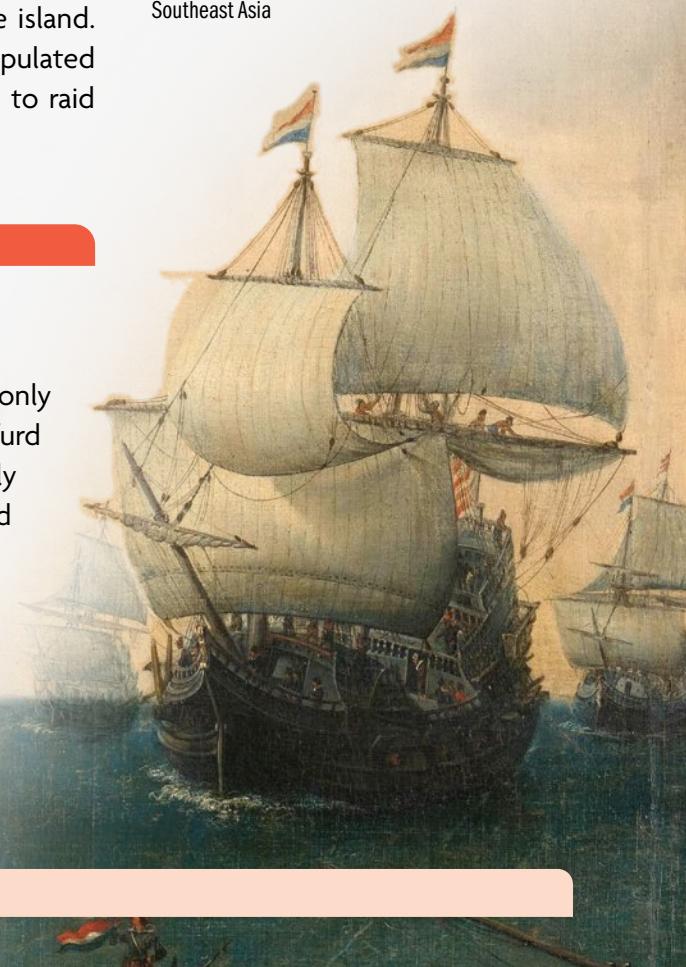
Another factor for Singapore's decline was the political crisis that resulted from the assassination of the childless Sultan Mahmud Shah II in 1699. This ended the dynasty of Sultans who claimed to be from the direct bloodline of Sang Nila Utama. The capital of the Johor Sultanate later shifted to Riau, and Bintan developed as the main regional emporium.⁴ By this time, trade had moved decisively away from Singapore. Since the Johor capital was no longer in the Johor River region, there was no longer need for a Shahbandar in Singapore.

By the 18th century, Riau and other regional ports had replaced Singapore as centres of trade that linked the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea. As Singapore had lost its importance, shipping now bypassed the island. Singapore and the nearby coastal regions became sparsely populated places where the inhabitants lived off the sea and pirates visited to raid or hide.

▼ Early 17-century painting by Hendrick Cornelisz Vroom of Dutch ships that operated in Southeast Asia

Conclusion

Was Singapore always such a sparsely populated island and only occasionally used as a hideout by pirates as described by John Crawfurd (see page 11)? While we have established in this chapter that early Singapore certainly had connections with the region and the world at different periods of its history, there is incomplete evidence to show the extent of these connections. In the next chapter, you will find out how Singapore became a British trading post.

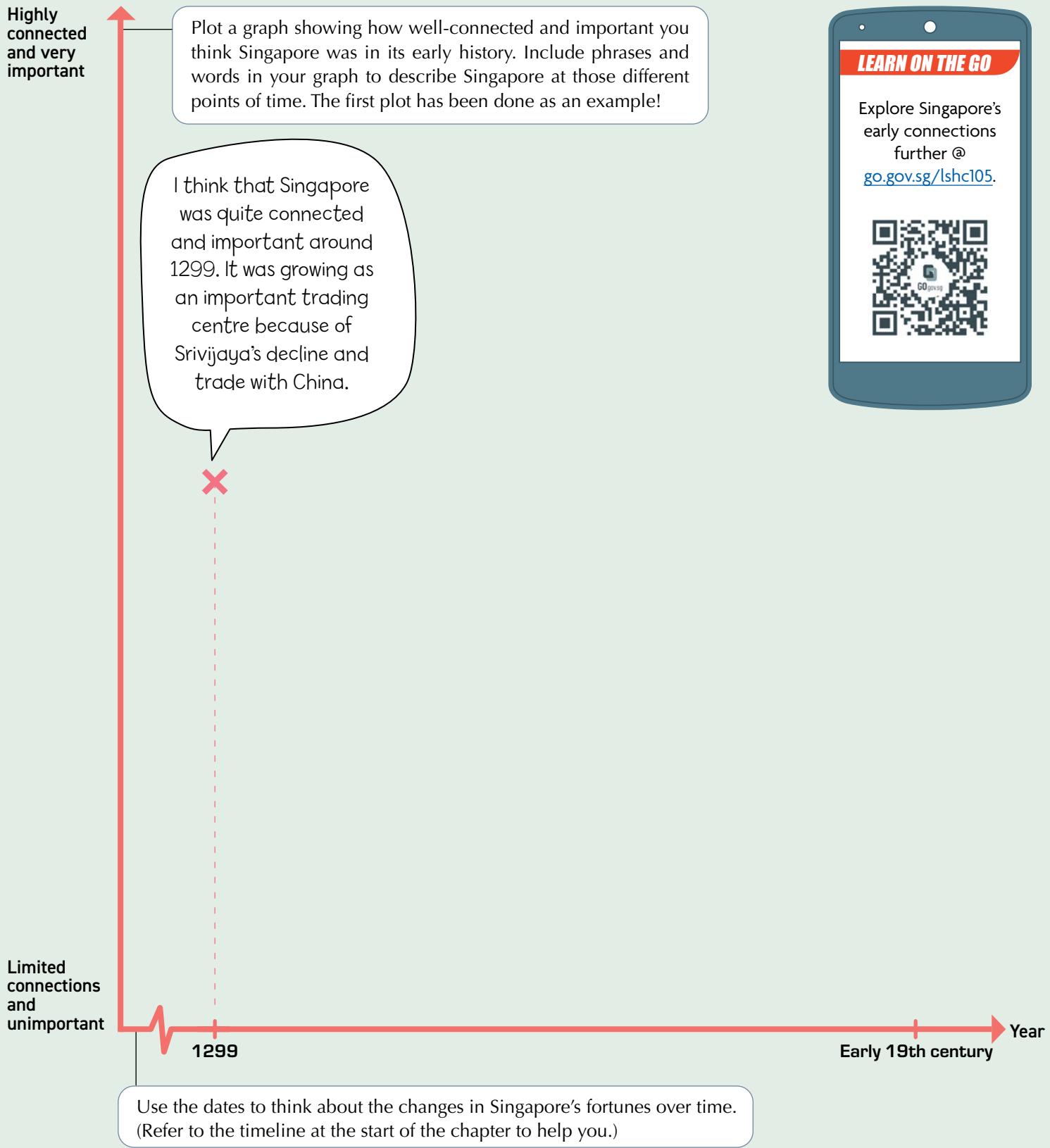


⁴ An emporium is a centre of trade and business activities.



LET'S REVIEW

After going through the chapter, you may wish to use this diagram to help you summarise what you have learnt about early Singapore's history.



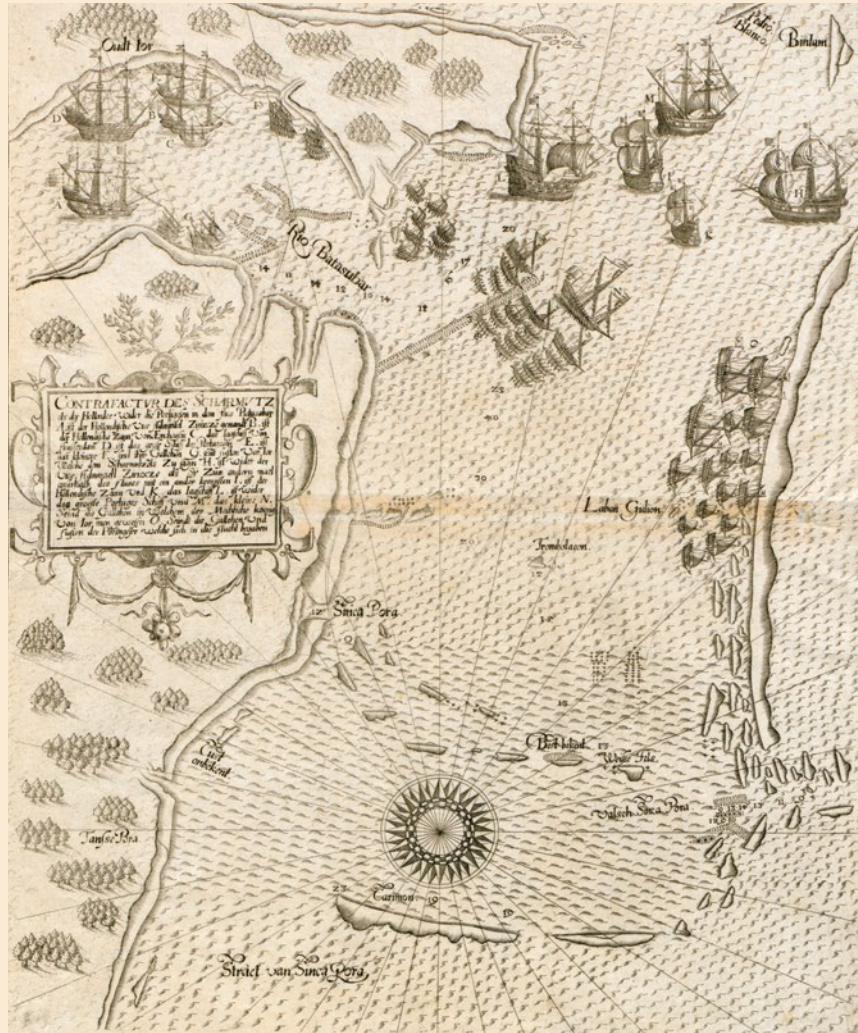


CASE INVESTIGATION

How interested were the Europeans in Singapore before 1819?

In the following chapter, you will learn about the establishment of a British trading post in Singapore in 1819. You already know that some Europeans, such as the Portuguese and the Dutch, had been in Southeast Asia since the 16th century and that their presence grew steadily in the following centuries. The Portuguese controlled Melaka for over a century, and the Dutch had established a vast empire in the East Indies (present-day Indonesia) by the 17th century.

However, during this period, were the Portuguese and the Dutch interested in Singapore? Read the following sources to find out more.



▲ Detail from a 17th-century map depicting a battle between the Portuguese and the Dutch on the eastern coast of Singapore in 1603

SOURCE A

By the beginning of the 17th century, the Portuguese and the Dutch were fighting over the waters around Singapore. The Dutch wished to challenge the Portuguese and Spanish control of trade in many parts of the world. In Southeast Asia, the Dutch attacked Portuguese trading **fleets*** approaching the waters around Singapore while en route from Macao [in China] to Melaka.

- Adapted from an account by historians Tan Tai Yong, Kwa Chong Guan and Derek Heng of the conflict in the waters around Singapore during the 16th and 17th centuries, published in 2009

* A fleet is a group of ships.

SOURCE B

In the middle of the Singapore Straits, there is an island [present-day Sentosa]. Your Majesty should order that a very strong **fortress*** be built here. One side of the Strait is so narrow that it can be closed off with a chain; the other is wider, but no ship can pass through either of these Straits without being in close distance of the fortress, which can then sink them using their cannons. This is the best way to destroy the Dutch rebels. If Your Majesty were to send 40 ships, it would be more likely to put an end to the Dutch who are in the East Indies.

– Adapted from a letter by European trader Jacques de Coutre to the Spanish King, written in 1610

* A fortress is a place or building set up for defence against enemy attacks.

SOURCE C

Johor is unsuitable as a base, because one cannot reach it every time of the year. It is important for a base to be established at a location which will not be too affected by monsoon winds. I cannot think of a better place than in the Strait of Sunda or Banten [in the west of Java]. We can always get there easily, once we have passed the Cape of Good Hope. I had an eye on the islands of Jeyakerta [Jakarta], which are very well situated for defence as well as good locations from which to manage everything.

– Adapted from a letter by Dutch Admiral Matelieff de Jonge commenting on instructions by the Dutch East India Company Directors to look into the establishment of a base in the region of the Johor River, close to Singapore, written in 1610

SOURCE D

The Dutch East India Company recognised the importance of the Singapore Straits and its surrounding lands and islands when they arrived in the Straits region. After much thinking, they decided not to establish a base in the Singapore-Johor region. From then on, the Dutch would focus on the Sunda Straits and northwestern Java instead.

– Adapted from an account by historian Peter Borschberg of the Dutch search for a base for their operations in Southeast Asia in the 1600s, published in 2016

INVESTIGATE!

1. Read **Source A**. Why were the Portuguese and Dutch “fighting over the waters around Singapore”?
2. Read **Source B**. Why did the European trader Jacques de Coutre suggest building a very strong fortress “in the middle of the Singapore Straits”?
3. Read **Sources C** and **D**. How interested were the Dutch in establishing a base in Singapore?

REPORT!

Having read all the sources, rate on a scale of 1 to 4 how interested the Portuguese and the Dutch were in Singapore in the 16th to 18th centuries.

1

Not at all interested

2

A little interested

3

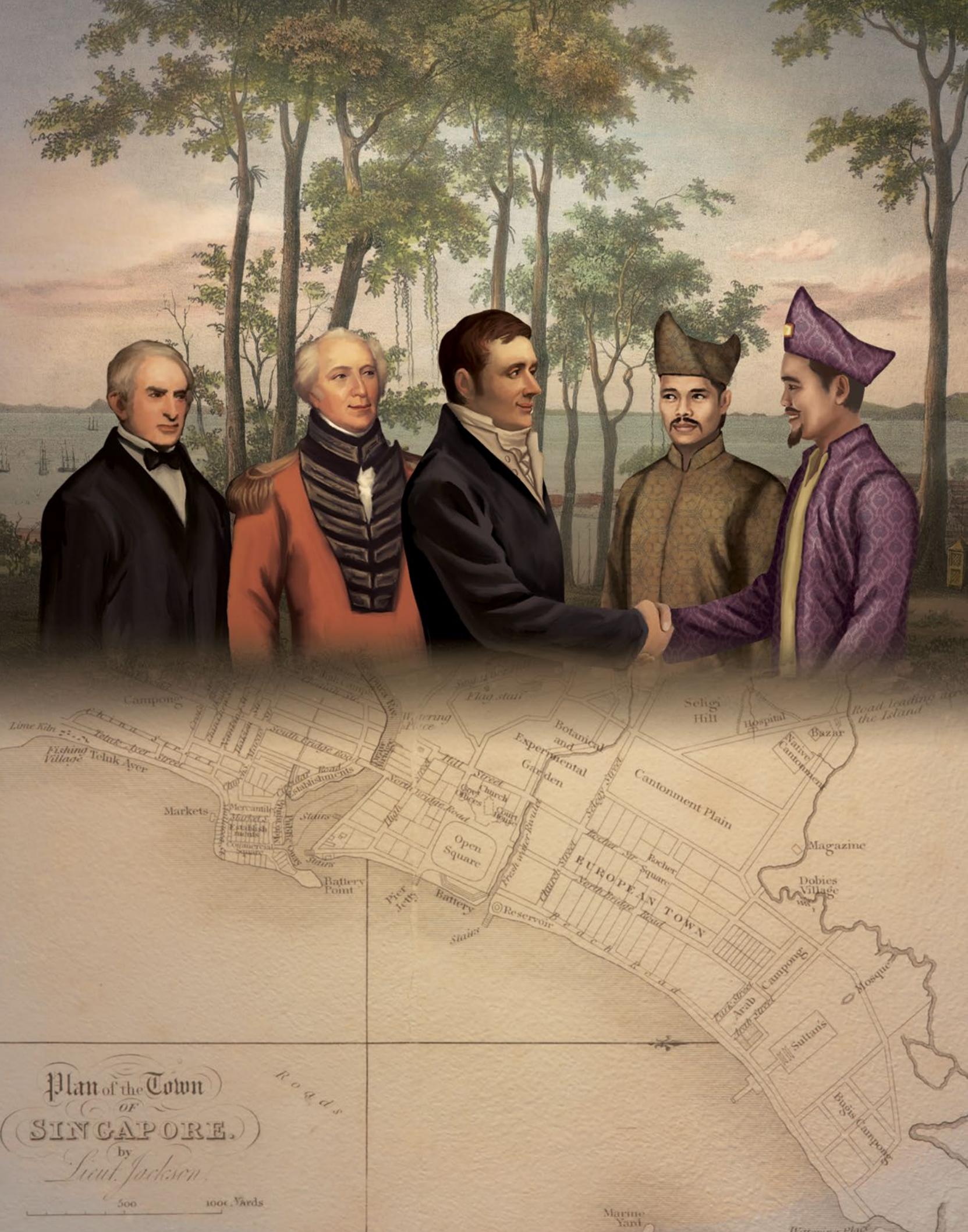
Somewhat interested

4

Very interested

Write down one to two sentences to explain the rating that you have indicated above. Share your response with a classmate.

I think that the Portuguese and the Dutch were _____ interested in Singapore in the 16th to 18th centuries as ...



Plan of the Town
of
SINGAPORE.
by
Lieut. Jackson.

500 1000 Yards

Marine
Yard

2

How Did Singapore Become a British Trading Post?

As you learnt in Chapter 1, Singapore's history did not begin in 1819. There have been traces of early Singapore's role as a trading centre long before that.

However, by the 18th century, Singapore had little trade or economic activity. It would regain prominence later in the 19th century as a British trading post and port city.

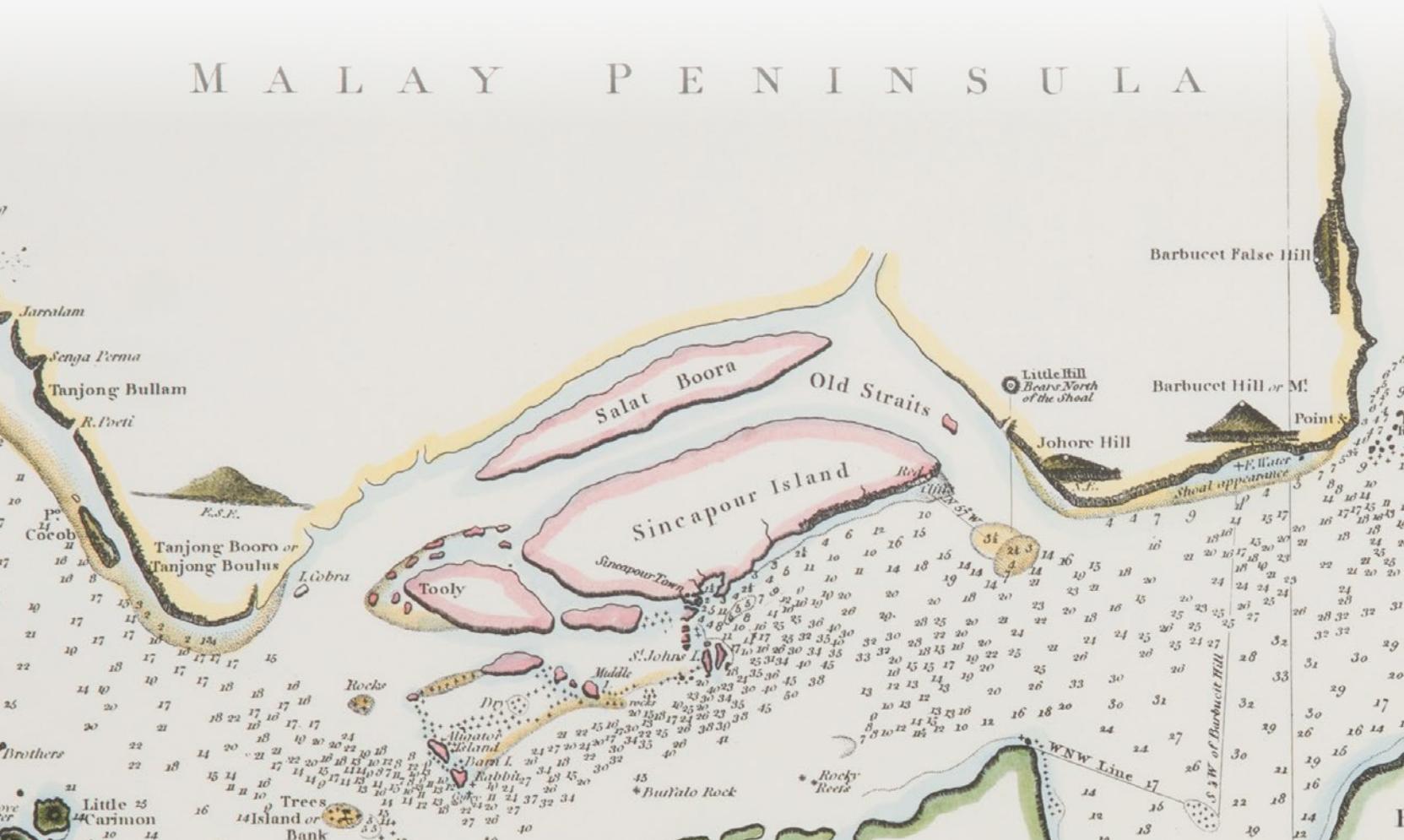
In this chapter, you will learn why the British set up a trading post in Singapore and the challenges they faced in doing so. You will also learn about the efforts of key individuals to develop Singapore between 1819 and 1826.

▼ **Map 2.1:** James Horsburgh's *Chart of the Straits of Singapore*, 1806. A copy of this map was likely used by Stamford Raffles and William Farquhar on their first voyage to Singapore. The numbers on the map indicate the depth of the water at those spots.

Chapter at a Glance

You will learn:

- Why the British set up a trading post in Singapore
- How the British overcame challenges to establish a trading post in Singapore
- How key individuals contributed to the development of Singapore from 1819 to 1826





Timeline

Beyond Singapore

▼ View of East India House, the headquarters of the EIC, on Leadenhall Street, London, 1817



The British East India Company (EIC) is founded.

▼ View of the VOC's headquarters in Amsterdam, c. 1760s



The Dutch East India Company (VOC) is founded.

▼ Sir Stamford Raffles



War breaks out between France and other European powers.

Britain takes over Java from the Dutch and Sir Stamford Raffles becomes its Lieutenant-Governor.

Following the Dutch defeat of Johor-Riau and its Bugis allies in war, Johor-Riau signs treaties which result in it becoming a vassal of the Netherlands.

The British establish a trading post in Penang.

1600

1602

1784

1786

1789

1811

In Singapore

Singapore experiences little trade or economic activity.

▼ Artist's impression of Tengku Abdul Rahman (left) and Tengku Hussein (right)



Sultan Mahmud Shah dies unexpectedly in the Riau Islands. His younger son, Tengku Abdul Rahman, becomes the Sultan instead of the heir and elder son, Tengku Hussein.

The Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814 (also known as the Convention of London) is signed. The British agree to return Java and Melaka to the Dutch.

November: The Dutch sign a treaty with Johor-Riau by which the treaties of 1784 are renewed.

March: Raffles becomes the Governor-General of Bencoolen.

The 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty between Britain and the Netherlands is signed. The Dutch formally drop their legal claims to the island of Singapore.

The EIC forms the Straits Settlements by grouping Penang, Melaka and Singapore together.

1812

1814

1818

1819

1822

1823

1824

1826

The British establish a trading post in Singapore. Sir Stamford Raffles appoints Major William Farquhar as the first Resident of Singapore.



▲ Major William Farquhar

Raffles visits Singapore for the final time and appoints Lieutenant Philip Jackson to draw up a plan for the future layout of Singapore.



▲ Dr John Crawfurd

DID YOU KNOW?

The British East India Company (EIC) was set up in 1600 to help British traders find larger markets and establish profitable trade with countries in Asia. It was given a royal charter to trade in India, Southeast Asia and China by the British government. This meant that only the traders of the EIC could trade in these areas. Among its employees was Raffles. The EIC ceased to exist in 1858.



▲ The EIC's coat of arms

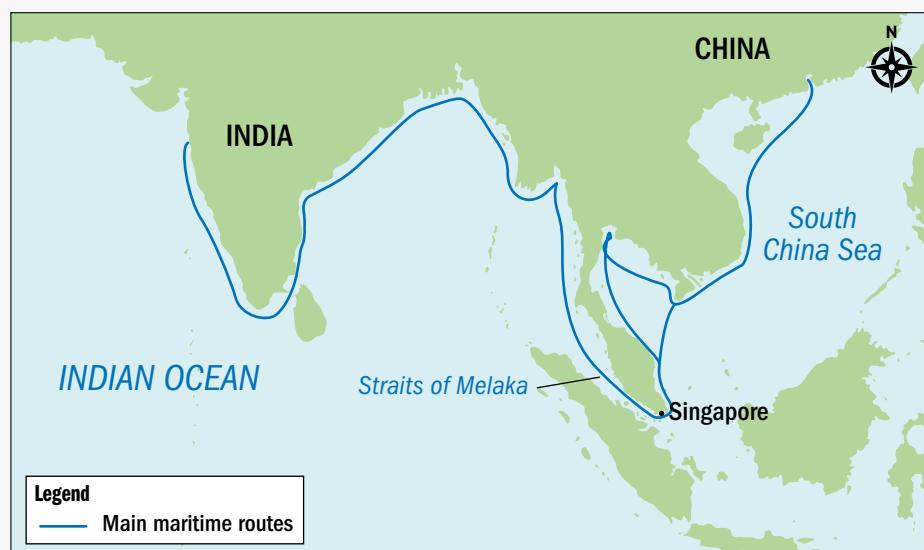
Why Did the British Become More Involved in Southeast Asia in the 19th Century?

Prior to the 19th century, most of British trade in Asia was conducted by the British East India Company (EIC). However, there was limited EIC presence in Southeast Asia. British presence in the region only grew from the mid-18th century onwards due to the need to protect the India-China trade and interest in the spice trade.

Importance of the India-China Trade

By the late 18th century, much of India was under the control of the EIC. Trade between India and China had become the EIC's major source of income. The EIC exported cotton and opium from India, as well as wool from Britain, to China. In return, the EIC bought tea, silk and porcelain from China, which were highly sought after in Britain at that time.

To protect its lucrative India-China trade, the British needed to control the Straits of Melaka and the waters surrounding Singapore, which linked the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea (see Map 2.2). However, at the start of the 19th century, these were controlled by the Dutch. The EIC's trade was confined to Bencoolen (present-day Bengkulu, see Map 2.3 on page 49). Therefore, there was a need to find places in Southeast Asia that were free from Dutch control.



▲ Map 2.2: Map showing the India-China maritime trade routes

Think!

Why were goods such as tea and opium important to the EIC?

Interest in the Spice Trade

From the 1400s onwards, spices such as cinnamon, pepper and nutmeg from parts of Asia were as valuable as gold in Europe. They were used for cooking, medicinal purposes, and were especially useful for preserving food as refrigeration and artificial preservatives had not yet been developed. Due to the high demand for spices, prices rose and the consumption of spices became an indication of one's wealth. The EIC also wanted a share of the flourishing spice trade in Southeast Asia.

The European powers began competing with each other for control over the spice trade. Near the end of the 15th century, explorers began searching for new ways to reach the spice-producing regions.



Mace



Cinnamon



Cloves



Nutmeg

▲ Examples of spices sought after by the Europeans

DID YOU KNOW?

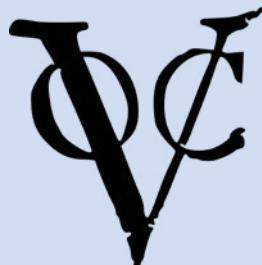
The lucrative spice trade sparked European interest in the Spice Islands or Moluccas (present-day Maluku Islands) in the 16th century. Valuable spices such as cloves, mace and nutmeg could only be found on the Spice Islands. By 1700, the demand for spices in Europe had decreased while the demand for Indian textiles and cotton had grown. Spices further declined in importance in the 18th century with the growth of the coffee and tea trades. However, despite the relative decline in the importance of the spice trade, it was still lucrative to the European traders in Southeast Asia.



▲ Fort Belgica in present-day Maluku Islands, built by the Dutch in 1611 to protect their spice trade

DID YOU KNOW?

The Dutch East India Company, or Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), was founded in 1602 and served the interests of the Dutch government overseas. It was crucial in helping the Dutch government negotiate treaties and establish colonies overseas. The VOC was issued a charter by the Dutch government that granted it exclusive trading rights covering the areas from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. The VOC ceased to exist in 1799.



▲ The logo of the VOC

Why Did the British Establish a Trading Post in Singapore?

Since the 17th century, the British and the Dutch had been fierce competitors for trade outside Europe. Britain had already developed trade links with China, India and parts of Southeast Asia. However, the Dutch controlled a larger part of Southeast Asia as compared to the British. Thus, the British had limited success establishing a trading port in Southeast Asia up to this time.

Problems Faced by the British EIC in Southeast Asia

Dutch Control of the Spice Trade

As you learnt in Chapter 1, the Dutch were already a dominant European power in Southeast Asia. At the height of its power, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) **monopolised¹** the trade in cloves, mace and nutmeg.

After the Dutch took over Melaka in 1641, they shifted the main trade routes to the Sunda Straits. Dutch ports such as Batavia (present-day Jakarta) became the key trading ports in Southeast Asia, replacing Melaka. By the 19th century, the Dutch were able to control trade along the Straits of Melaka and the Sunda Straits. Dutch control over these waterways meant that the British were confined to trading in Bencoolen.

▼ Hendrick Dubbels' painting *View of Batavia*, c. 1650, with Dutch ships in the foreground



¹ To monopolise or have monopoly over something means that a company, person or state has complete control over it so that it is impossible for others to become involved in it.

Unsuitability of Existing British Ports

After 1786, the British had two trading ports, in Penang and Bencoolen, where British ships could stop for refuelling or repairs on their journeys between India and China. However, both were unsuitable trading ports due to their location (see Map 2.3 below).

Bencoolen was unsuitable as it was situated on the western side of Sumatra and not along the main trading route between India and China.

Penang was too far north to allow the British to control the Straits of Melaka or protect British ships travelling through the Straits.



▲ Map 2.3: Map showing Dutch and British ports in Southeast Asia in the early 19th century

The BRITISH SEARCH for a NEW PORT

Sir Stamford Raffles, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen, sought to increase British presence in Southeast Asia. He sought a port that would command the southern entrance to the Straits of Melaka. Such a port would help the British to compete with the Dutch for trade and could serve as the halfway port for traders travelling between India and China.



The Dutch possess the only passes through which ships must sail into the Archipelago, the Straits of Sunda and Melaka; and the British have now not an inch of ground to stand upon between the Cape of Good Hope and China, nor a single friendly port at which they can obtain water supplies.

*Stamford Raffles
14 April 1818*

The Dutch lodged official protests against Raffles' initiatives, which resulted in them being rejected by his superiors. The British did not want to anger the Dutch.



In September 1818, Raffles went to India and obtained the support of the Governor-General of India, Lord Hastings, to establish a British port in Southeast Asia. Lord Hastings recognised the threat the Dutch could pose to British interests in the region. He authorised Raffles to establish a trading post at the southern end of the Straits of Melaka, provided that this act would not bring the EIC into conflict with the Dutch.



However, the EIC headquarters in London had sent a letter to India forbidding Raffles from laying claim on any territory that could possibly be claimed by the Dutch. As the British government wanted to keep the Dutch as their close allies, they assured the Dutch that Raffles had no authority to undertake such political decisions. But by the time the letter reached India, Raffles had already set sail to search for a new trading post.



Raffles and Major William Farquhar began searching for a suitable place to establish a British trading post. Farquhar's preferred location, the Karimun Islands, proved unsuitable. On 28 January 1819, Raffles, Farquhar and their eight ships dropped anchor off St John's Island. Raffles was greeted by some Orang Laut, who informed him that Singapore was not occupied by the Dutch.



Suitability of Singapore

Singapore possessed several qualities that made it an ideal trading port. First, Singapore had a natural sheltered harbour. Second, Singapore had a good supply of drinking water. Third, its location at the southern tip of the Straits of Melaka meant that Singapore could be the halfway port between India and China. Find out more about these qualities in the “Learn a Skill” feature on pages 53–55.



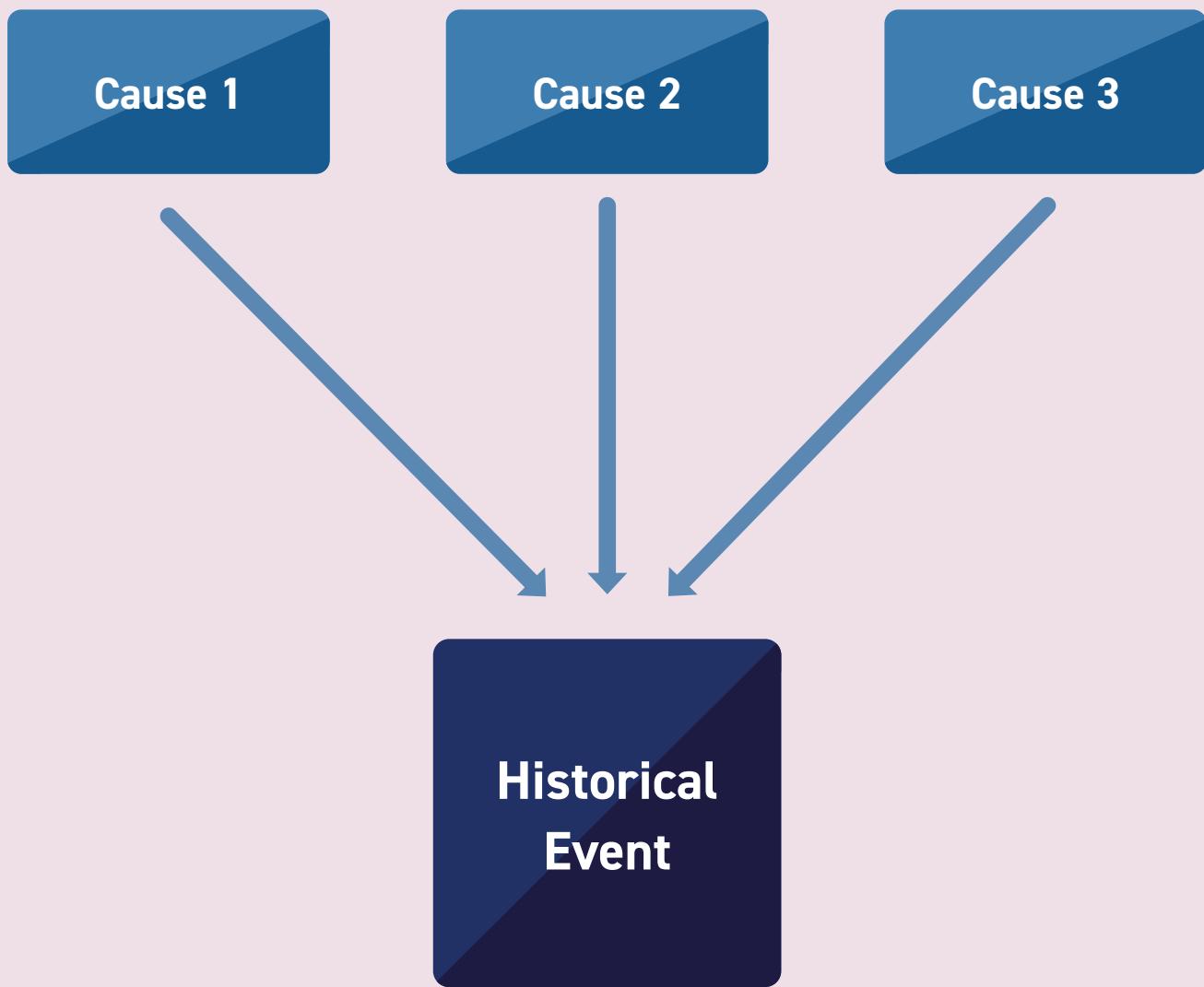
BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: CAUSATION

The British eventually established a trading post in Singapore. What led to that decision?

When historians study an event, they often look at its causes. Causes are the reasons for an event. They usually involve people, events or actions.

An event can have more than one cause. In such a case, historians need to examine multiple causes in order to better understand why the event took place. The causes may vary in their influence, with some being more important than others.

As you go through the chapter, try to identify the various reasons or causes that led to the establishment of a British trading post in Singapore.





LEARN A SKILL: MAKING INFERENCES

Historians seek to understand past events or issues by examining sources and making inferences from them. Making inferences involves interpreting the sources and trying to understand what they can or cannot tell us about the past. Historians usually make inferences from a source with a specific question in mind, rather than in general. They also make use of what they already know (contextual knowledge) about a topic, event or issue, to help them interpret the source.

Look at the steps below on how to make an inference.

Step

1

Identify the keywords in the question.

Step

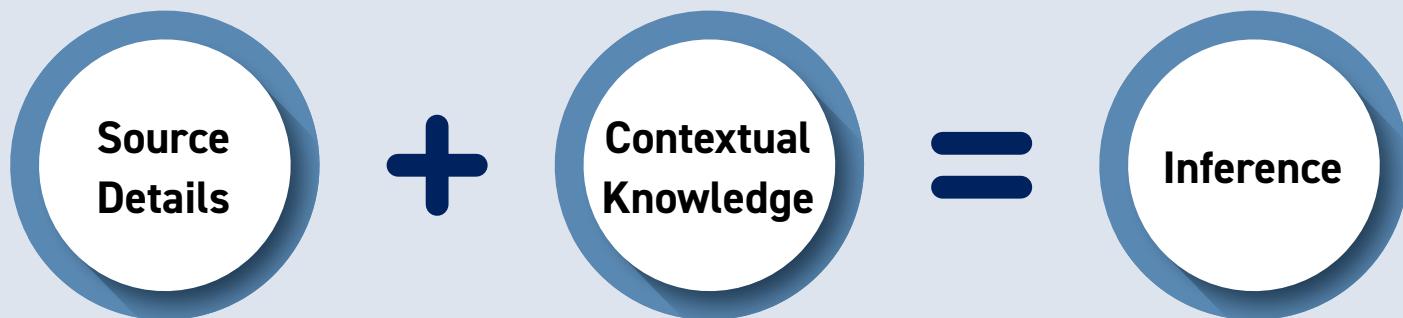
2

Identify the source details (information from the source) that answer the question.

Step

3

Use the source details and what you might already know about the issue (contextual knowledge) to arrive at a conclusion.



Let us see how this works using the example on the next page.

Example

SOURCE 1

Singapore seemed ideal. While the southwestern bank of the river was swampy, the ground on the northeastern side was level and firm. There was an abundance of drinking water, and the river mouth formed a natural sheltered harbour. Singapore was conveniently placed as a centre for trade with the eastern archipelago and only a few miles from the main maritime route through the Straits of Melaka to China.

– Adapted from A History of Modern Singapore, 1819–2005 by British historian Constance Mary Turnbull

1. What does Source 1 tell you about why the British chose Singapore as a port?

1 Identify the keywords in the question

What does Source 1 tell you about **why the British chose Singapore** as a port?

Reasons for choosing Singapore

2 Identify the relevant source details

Reason 1

Singapore seemed ideal. While the southwestern bank of the river was swampy, the ground on the northeastern side was level and firm. There was an **abundance of drinking water**, and the river mouth **formed a natural sheltered harbour**. Singapore was **conveniently placed as a centre for trade** with the eastern archipelago and only a few miles from the main maritime route through the Straits of Melaka to China.

– Adapted from A History of Modern Singapore, 1819–2005 by British historian Constance Mary Turnbull

Reason 2

Reason 3

3 Use the source details and your contextual knowledge to draw conclusions

Source Details	Contextual Knowledge	Inference
"abundance of drinking water"	Ships need to replenish their water supply during long journeys.	Ships travelling from other parts of the world, e.g., India, could replenish their water supply in Singapore during their stopover on the way to China.
"formed a natural sheltered harbour"	The region that Singapore was located in experienced monsoons during certain times of the year.	Singapore's harbour could protect British ships from storms.
"conveniently placed as a centre for trade"	The India-China trade was the EIC's main source of income by the late 18th century.	Singapore's suitable location meant that traders from all over the world could come to Singapore to trade. Singapore could also serve as a stopover for ships on the way to China. This would enable the British to increase their trade with China.

Now try it yourself!

SOURCE 2

I am fully satisfied of the value and importance of the Island of Singapore. There is a most excellent harbour which is even more defensible and conveniently located for the protection of our China Trade and for controlling the Straits of Melaka, as compared to Riau. Moreover, it has been deserted for centuries and long before the Dutch power existed in these Seas.

- Adapted from a letter written by Raffles to Lord Hastings, 8 January 1819

1. Source 1 identified three reasons why the British chose Singapore as a port. According to Source 2, what was another reason that the British had for choosing Singapore as a port? Use the table below to help you.

Source Details	Contextual Knowledge	Inference

How Did the British Establish a Trading Post in Singapore?

As you have seen in Sources 1 and 2 (pages 54 and 55), Singapore possessed several qualities that made it an ideal port. However, establishing a trading post on the island was not an easy task for the British. They faced a number of obstacles in doing so.

On 29 January 1819, Raffles and Farquhar met the local chief, Temenggong Abdul Rahman. Raffles informed the Temenggong that the EIC wanted to set up a trading post in Singapore.

The Temenggong replied that he did not have the authority to grant permission to the EIC. As Singapore was part of Johor-Riau at that time, only the Sultan of Johor-Riau could do so. However, Johor-Riau was a vassal of the Dutch as a result of the Treaties of 1784 and 1818.

Raffles knew that he had to find a solution. An opportunity arose after the Temenggong told him what had happened after the death of the previous Sultan. Read the following illustrated story to find out more.



The SUCCESSION DISPUTE and RAFFLES' ACTIONS



The late Sultan Mahmud Shah, ruler of Johor-Riau, had two sons: Tengku Abdul Rahman, the younger son, and Tengku Hussein, the elder son and heir.

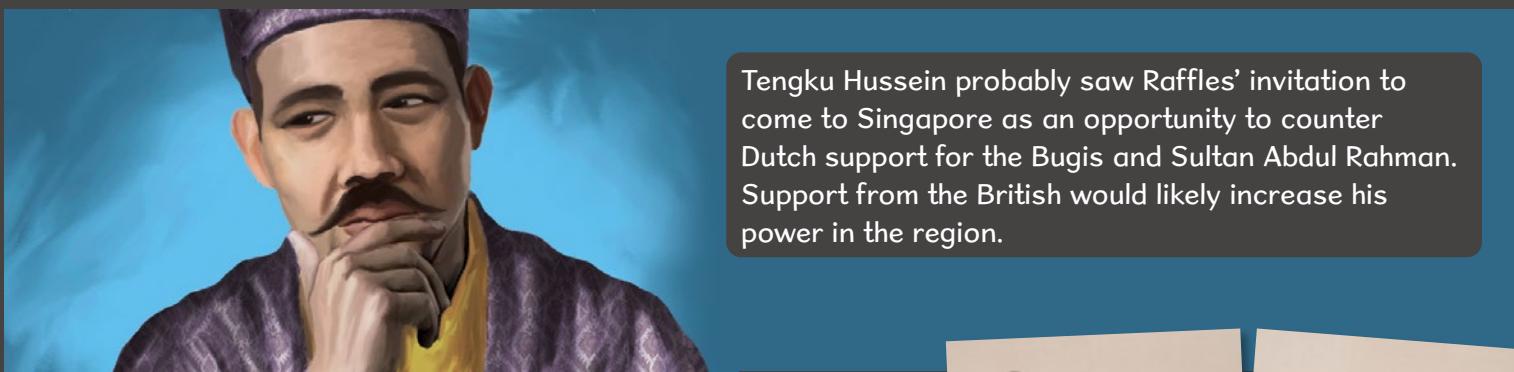
When Sultan Mahmud passed away in 1812, only Tengku Abdul Rahman was present. Tengku Hussein was away in Pahang for his marriage. The Bugis chiefs, who had considerable influence in Johor-Riau, appointed Tengku Abdul Rahman as the new Sultan in Tengku Hussein's absence.



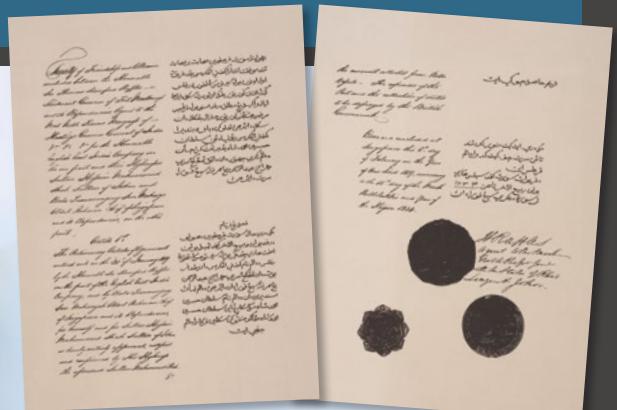
Those who supported Tengku Hussein, including the widow of the late Sultan Mahmud Shah, were unhappy, but they were powerless to do anything. Without a strong ally, Tengku Hussein decided to live quietly in Riau.



Raffles learnt about this and invited Tengku Hussein to Singapore, promising him protection and financial assistance. With the Temenggong's help, Raffles secretly brought Tengku Hussein back to Singapore.



Tengku Hussein probably saw Raffles' invitation to come to Singapore as an opportunity to counter Dutch support for the Bugis and Sultan Abdul Rahman. Support from the British would likely increase his power in the region.



▲ Pages of the 1819 Treaty between Sir Stamford Raffles, Sultan Hussein and Temenggong Abdul Rahman

On 6 February 1819, Raffles recognised Tengku Hussein as the rightful Sultan. He signed an agreement with Sultan Hussein and the Temenggong which allowed the British to build a trading post in the southern part of Singapore island. In return, the Temenggong and Sultan Hussein would receive an annual payment as compensation. The British also agreed to give protection and support to the Sultan and Temenggong if they agreed not to make any treaties with other Western powers. After signing the treaty, Raffles made Farquhar the first **Resident*** of Singapore and left for Penang the next day.

Think! 
How would Raffles' actions have been viewed by the different parties?

* The title of Resident is given to the British officer in charge of a British settlement.

Dutch and British Responses

The Dutch were angry when they heard the British had established a trading post in Singapore. They contested Raffles' actions, claiming that Singapore belonged to them since it was part of Johor-Riau, which was under the Dutch area of influence.

Initially, the British government in London was also angry with Raffles as his actions threatened its friendship with the Dutch. Lord Hastings, however, was convinced of the need for a British trading post in Singapore to prevent Dutch advancement in the region around the Straits of Melaka and the Sunda Straits. Over the next few years, British traders in Southeast Asia also became convinced of the need to retain Singapore for the protection and expansion of British trade in the East.

The dispute was only settled several years later.

How Did the British Resolve the Dispute over Singapore?

Despite the hostility between the Dutch and the British over the question of Singapore, neither declared war on the other. Both governments wanted to remain on friendly terms.

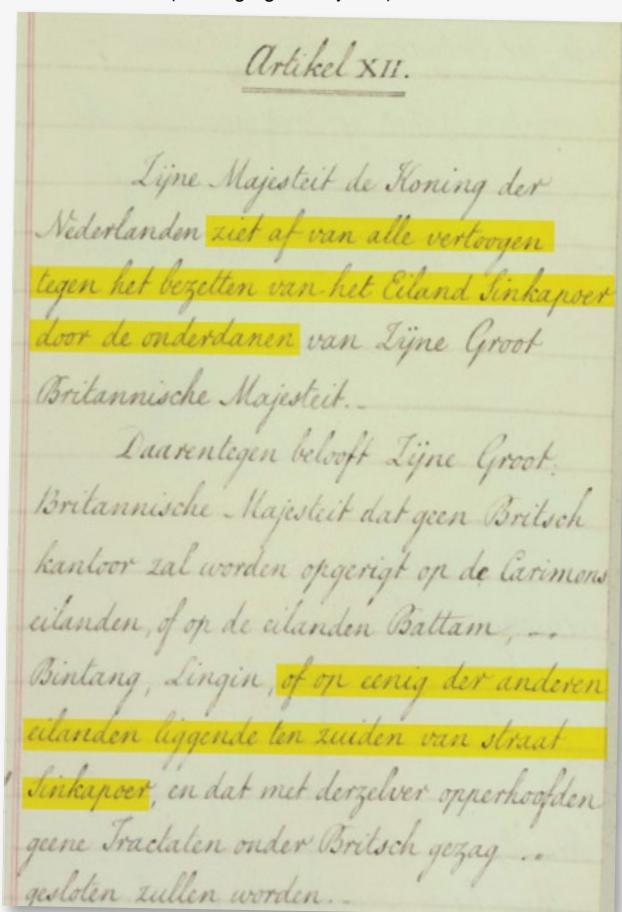
During recent European wars which took place between 1789 and 1815, the British became aware of the importance of the Netherlands to their defence and security. It was therefore important for the British to keep the Dutch as an ally against future threats.

For the Dutch, the wars in Europe had severely disrupted their trade and shipping. They had become bankrupt and had borrowed heavily from Britain. The Dutch therefore did not want to be involved in more wars as this would further harm their economy.

1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty

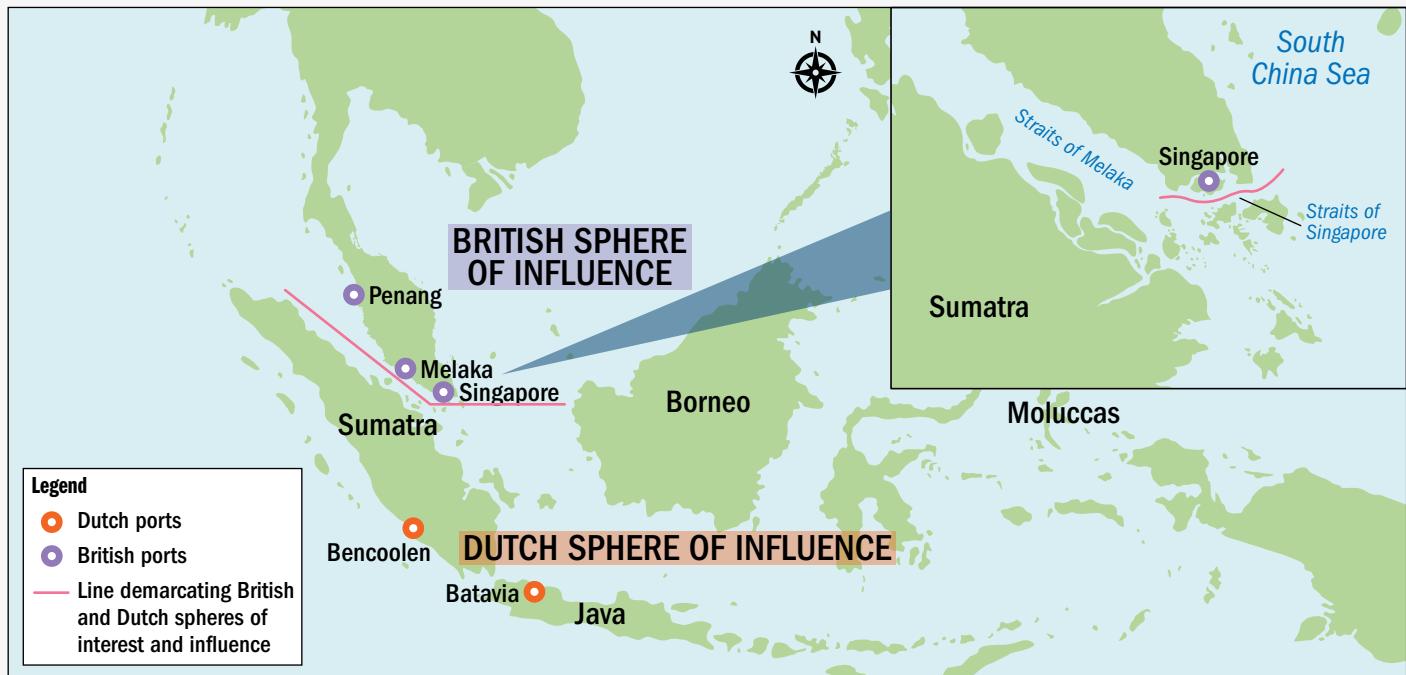
With all these considerations in mind, the British and the Dutch agreed to settle their disputes. On 17 March 1824, they signed the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty, in which the Dutch withdrew their objections to British presence in Singapore.

▼ Detail from Article 12 of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty, 17 March 1824, which states that the Netherlands "withdraws the objections which have been made to the occupation of the island of Singapore ..." and the British were excluded from "any of the other islands south of the Singapore Straits" (lines highlighted in yellow)





▲ **Map 2.4:** This map, printed in the early 19th century, was used at the time of the final negotiations of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty in London between December 1823 and March 1824. Notice the pencil line (indicated by the blue arrow) running through the Singapore and Melaka Straits on the map. This was drawn to illustrate a proposal made by Anton Reinhard Falck, a Dutch diplomat and chief negotiator of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty. He proposed using the line to divide the region into British and Dutch spheres of influence.



▲ **Map 2.5:** Map showing Dutch and British bases after the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty

As a result of the treaty, the Malay Peninsula and the East Indies (present-day Indonesia) were divided into two **spheres of influence**² (see Map 2.5). The British transferred Bencoolen to the Dutch in exchange for Melaka. The British now occupied Penang, Melaka and Singapore. According to the treaty, the Malay Peninsula and Singapore came within the British sphere of influence while Sumatra and all islands to the south of the Straits of Singapore were under the Dutch sphere of influence. The Dutch had control of the trade within their sphere of influence but not beyond.

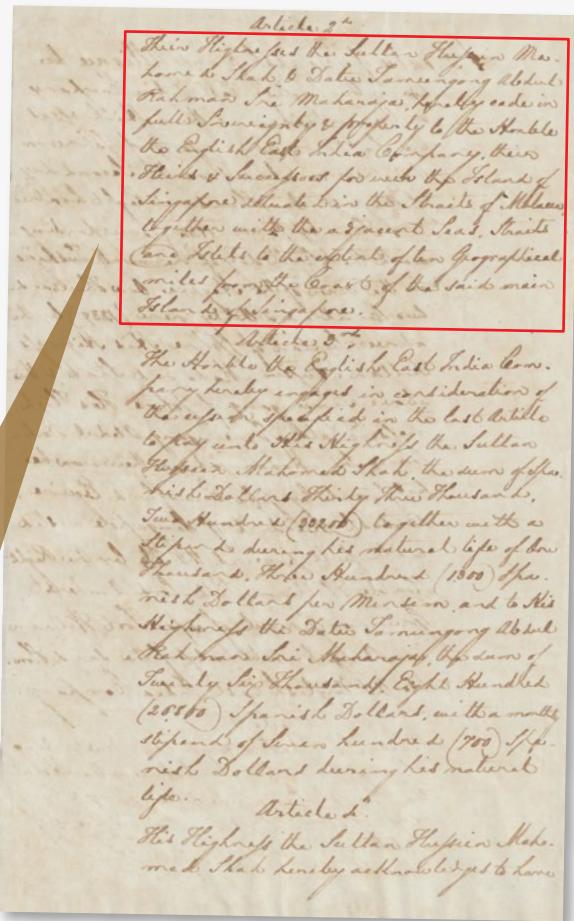
² A sphere of influence is an area or region over which a country is acknowledged by others to exercise dominance or control.

1824 Treaty of Friendship and Alliance

The treaty that was signed on 6 February 1819 did not give the British control of Singapore. The treaty merely gave the British permission to build a trading post in the southern part of Singapore island. Singapore only officially came under British control on 2 August 1824 when Dr John Crawfurd, the second Resident of Singapore, signed a treaty with Sultan Hussein that allowed the British to take control over the whole island of Singapore. The Sultan and the Temenggong handed over control of Singapore island to the EIC in return for larger sums of money than they had previously been entitled to.

Article 2 of the 1824 Treaty of Friendship and Alliance states as follows:

Their Highnesses the Sultan Hussein Mahomed Shah [also known as Sultan Hussein], and Datu Tamungong Abdul Rahman Sri Maharajah [also known as Temenggong Abdul Rahman], hereby cede in full sovereignty and property to the Honourable the English East India Company, their heirs and successors for ever, the Island of Singapore situated in the Straits of Malacca, together with the adjacent Seas, Straits and Islets, to the extent of ten geographical miles from the coast of the said main Island of Singapore.



▲ Page from a copy of the 1824 Treaty of Friendship and Alliance

Treaty	Who Signed It?	What Was the Outcome of the Treaty?
• 1819 Treaty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sir Stamford Raffles • Sultan Hussein • Temenggong Abdul Rahman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The British were allowed to set up a trading post in the southern part of Singapore island.
• 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives of the British government • Representatives of the Dutch government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dutch dropped their legal claims over Singapore. • The areas in the Malay Peninsula and East Indies were divided into British and Dutch spheres of influence.
• 1824 Treaty of Friendship and Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr John Crawfurd • Sultan Hussein • Temenggong Abdul Rahman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The British were given control over the whole of Singapore.

▲ Figure 2.1: Treaties that impacted Singapore

What Did the British Do to Develop Singapore as a Settlement Between 1819 and 1826?

Although Raffles was the one who signed the 1819 Treaty that allowed the British to establish a trading post in Singapore, he was not the only person involved in its development. In fact, he left for Penang the day after signing the treaty.

Let us look at the efforts of some individuals who helped to develop the settlement.

Major William Farquhar

Before leaving Singapore, Raffles appointed Major William Farquhar as the first Resident of Singapore and left him with instructions on what to do.

For a start, Farquhar set up defence positions at the Singapore River and Government Hill (present-day Fort Canning) with the help of 100 sepoys (Indian soldiers). This was due to the fear of a Dutch attack to enforce their claims over Singapore.

The British decided to make Singapore a free port. This meant that fees were not collected from ships entering the port; taxes were only imposed on selected products, such as opium. Farquhar placed a British official on St John's Island (located to the south of the main island of Singapore) to inform passing ships about the new settlement and its free port. Many traders came, and Singapore soon grew into a bustling marketplace.

By 1823, Farquhar had attracted many people, including traders and labourers, from Melaka to Singapore. Traders from Melaka helped solve Singapore's food shortage issues, which were brought about by the increasing population. To raise funds to ensure the smooth running of Singapore, Farquhar went against Raffles' orders and sold licences for gambling and the sale of opium and liquor. Using the funds generated from the sale of these licences, Farquhar set up a police force.



▲ Major William Farquhar

DID YOU KNOW?

Farquhar was so popular with the people of Singapore that when he left in 1823, thousands turned up to send him off. They brought him gifts, including the silver epergne (ornamental table centrepiece) below from the Chinese community.

Today, there is no road or place in Singapore that bears Farquhar's name. Farquhar Street in Kampong Glam was the only road named after him, but it is no longer in existence.

Farquhar was an avid collector of the drawings of wildlife and flora native to the Malay Peninsula. Farquhar Garden, part of the newly restored Fort Canning Park, was officially opened on 27 May 2019. This garden features plants which fascinated Farquhar, such as gambier and guava.



▲ Silver epergne given to Farquhar by the Chinese in Singapore

Sir Stamford Raffles

From 1818 to 1824, Raffles was based in Bencoolen, Sumatra. During this period, he only visited Singapore three times.

In October 1822, Raffles made his third and final visit to Singapore and remained until June 1823. It was during this visit that he realised Farquhar had not developed the island in the way he wanted. He became unhappy with Farquhar and dismissed him. With the help of Lieutenant Philip Jackson, Raffles designed the Singapore Town Plan. This Plan allocated areas to the respective ethnic groups in an orderly manner (see Map 2.6).

Raffles also shut down gambling dens, which had been a source of income during Farquhar's term as Resident. Raffles felt that gambling was harmful to the population, and had banned it when he was in charge of Bencoolen from 1817 to 1822.

DID YOU KNOW?

Raffles had a keen interest in natural history. During his time in Southeast Asia, he collected specimens of plants and animals. The *Rafflesia* plant and *Dinopium rafflesii* (olive-backed woodpecker) are some of the plants and animals named after him.

On his last visit to Singapore, Raffles set up a botanical and experimental garden around Government Hill to cultivate cash crops such as cloves and nutmeg. Cash crops are crops grown for selling rather than for self-consumption.



▲ Illustration of the first botanical and experimental garden in Singapore, 1840



▲ Sir Stamford Raffles

Chinatown

Chinatown was allocated to the Chinese community. It was separated into different areas for the different dialect groups.



▲ Hokkien Street, 1890s

Commercial Square

Commercial Square, on the south bank of the Singapore River, was designated as an area for conducting trading activities.



▲ Commercial Square, with John Little & Co's department store on the left, c. 1910

Singapore Town Plan, 1822



Chulia Kampong

Chulia Kampong was allocated to the Indian trading community.



▲ Chulia Street, with Bonham Building on the right, c. 1900

Civic District

The Civic District was reserved for government use. Individuals were not allowed to construct their houses here.



▲ The Padang (labelled Open Square on the map), with the Singapore Cricket Club (left) and Municipal Building (right) in the background, 1900s

European Town

European Town was set aside for the European trading community.



▲ Bras Basah Road, c. 1905

Kampong Glam

Kampong Glam was assigned to the Malays, Bugis and Arabs. Sultan Hussein also resided in this area.



▲ Sultan Mosque, located at the corner of Arab Street and North Bridge Road, c. 1930

▲ Map 2.6: The layout of Singapore according to the Singapore Town Plan by Lieutenant Philip Jackson in 1822

Dr John Crawfurd

Dr John Crawfurd was appointed by Raffles as the second Resident of Singapore during his final visit to Singapore.

After Raffles left Singapore in August 1823, Crawfurd reintroduced licences for public gambling and the sale of opium. The profits earned were used to ensure the smooth running of Singapore. Crawfurd also maintained the policy of free trade in Singapore, in accordance with Raffles' wishes. Singapore's first newspaper and street lighting were also introduced when Crawfurd was Resident.

Crawfurd played an important role in the signing of the 1824 Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, in which Sultan Hussein and the Temenggong handed over control of Singapore to the EIC. With the signing of this treaty, Singapore officially came under British control.



▲ Dr John Crawfurd

DID YOU KNOW?

Crawfurd followed in his father's footsteps and studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. With an interest in languages and history, he also studied the Malay and Javanese languages during his time in Southeast Asia. After leaving Singapore in 1826, he was sent on a mission to Burma (present-day Myanmar) in 1826 before returning to the United Kingdom in 1830.

Crawfurd made several unsuccessful attempts to enter the British Parliament in the 1830s. In 1868 (the last year of his life), he became the first President of the Straits Settlements Association, which was established to protect British interests in the region.

Crawford Street, Crawford Lane, Crawford Bridge and Crawford Park are named after him, although his surname is spelt differently.

Conclusion

The British established a trading post in Singapore in 1819 after a long period when there was little trade or economic activity in Singapore. In doing so, the British had to overcome challenges posed mainly by Dutch dominance in the region. The uncertainty over the status of Singapore led to claims by both the British and the Dutch. This was only resolved with the signing of the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty. The British were then able to focus on developing Singapore as a trading port.

In 1826, the EIC grouped Singapore together with Penang and Melaka to form the Straits Settlements. What was the impact of this on Singapore? Did the free port of Singapore take off after 1826? You will learn about this in Chapter 3.

▼ Illustration inside John Crawfurd's book *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochinchina*, published in 1828, showing a black-and-white version of the painting titled *A View of the Town and Roads of Singapore from the Government Hill* by Captain Robert James Elliot





LET'S REVIEW

Use the flow chart below to summarise what you have learnt in this chapter. Each question in the flow chart points you to the corresponding section in the chapter.





CASE INVESTIGATION

Who founded Singapore?



Today, Raffles' name can be seen all over Singapore: Raffles Place MRT station and Raffles Boulevard, just to give a few examples. This is because Raffles is often recognised as the founder of Singapore. However, not everyone takes this view.

Given what you have learnt about the contributions of Raffles, Farquhar and Crawfurd to the development of Singapore, who do you think founded Singapore? Before answering this question, think about what it means to be a founder. What does it mean to found a place?

Some maintain that Raffles was the founder as he signed the 1819 Treaty that allowed the British to set up a trading post in the southern part of Singapore. Others argue that Farquhar was the founder of Singapore as he did the work of building Singapore from scratch. Some may even consider Crawfurd the founder as he signed the 1824 Treaty of Friendship and Alliance that gave the British control over the whole island.

Read the sources that follow and conduct your own investigation into who founded Singapore.

SOURCE A



The inscription on a statue of Sir Stamford Raffles (left) in London:

To the memory of
Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, L.L.D. F.R.S.
Lieut. Governor of Java
and first President of the Zoological Society of London.
Born 1781 Died 1826.

Selected at an early age to conduct the government
of the British conquests in the Indian Ocean,
by wisdom, **vigour**,* and **philanthropy**,†
he raised Java to happiness and prosperity
unknown under former rulers.
After the surrender of that island to the Dutch,
and during his government in Sumatra
he founded an emporium at Singapore,
where in establishing freedom of person as the right of the soil,
and freedom of trade as the right of the port,
he secured to the British flag
the maritime superiority of the eastern seas.

Ardently§ attached to science,
he laboured successfully to add to the knowledge
and enrich the museums of his native land,
in promoting the welfare of the people committed to his charge,
he sought the good of his country,
and the glory of God.

* Vigour refers to energy and enthusiasm.

† Philanthropy is the donation of money to support good causes or charity, e.g., the building of schools, hospitals and museums.

§ Ardently means very enthusiastically.

SOURCE B

The progress of my new settlement is in every way most satisfactory, and it would gladden your heart to witness the activity and cheerfulness which prevails throughout. Every day brings us new settlers, and Singapore has already become a great emporium. Houses and warehouses are springing up in every direction.

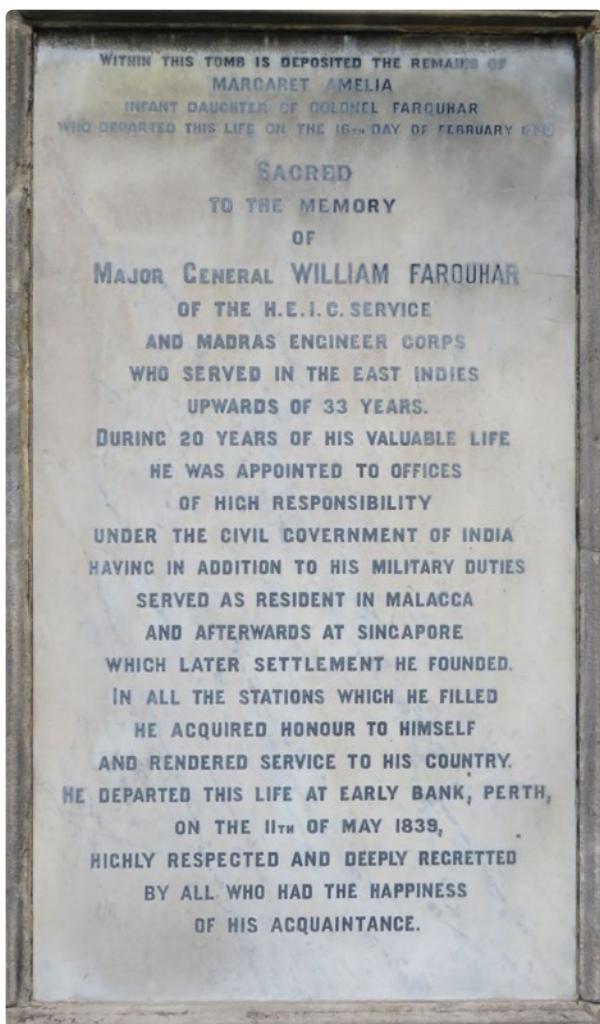
– From a letter by Stamford Raffles to his cousin, Reverend Dr Thomas Raffles, written in 1823

SOURCE C

Farquhar, the first and only official to hold the dual posts of Resident and commandant in Singapore, deserves much more credit in the founding of Singapore than he is popularly given. He had initiated the search for a new post and negotiated the commercial treaty with Riau that laid the groundwork for Hastings' instructions to Raffles to establish a new post. ... Farquhar built up Singapore's trade and population to such an extent that Britain's initial disinterest in Singapore changed to a determination to retain it. While Raffles had higher responsibility for Singapore, it was Farquhar who, against the odds, had built the settlement from scratch into a successful port.

- Adapted from a description by Australian writer Nadia Wright of William Farquhar's contributions to the development of Singapore, published in 2017

SOURCE D



The inscription on the memorial to William Farquhar (left) in Perth, Scotland:

Sacred
to the memory
of
Major General William Farquhar
of the H.E.I.C.* Service
and Madras Engineer Corps
who served in the East Indies
upwards of 33 years.

During 20 years of his valuable life
he was appointed to offices
of high responsibility
under the civil government of India
having in addition to his military duties
served as Resident in Malacca
and afterwards at Singapore
which later settlement he founded.
In all the stations† which he filled
he acquired honour to himself
and rendered‡ service to his country.
He departed this life at Early Bank, Perth,
on the 11th of May 1839,
highly respected and deeply regretted
by all who had the happiness
of his acquaintance.

* H.E.I.C. refers to the Honourable East India Company.

† Stations refer to positions.

‡ To render is to provide.

SOURCE E

Crawfurd cannot be considered a founder or co-founder of the colonial settlement. It was Raffles and Farquhar who laid the foundations in January–February 1819, and could at least lay claim to this distinction, as reflected in the inscription on the base of Raffles' statue in Westminster Abbey, London, and that on Farquhar's grave in Perth, Scotland.

Yet, it was Crawfurd who actually signed the final treaty which brought Singapore under British control, and deserves to be remembered and commemorated for this achievement. Sadly, he is the least remembered of the three, though there are a few traces in Singapore.

*– Adapted from a description by Singaporean historian Ernest Chew
of John Crawfurd's contributions to Singapore, 2002*

SOURCE F

In some ways, history has been unfair to Farquhar and Crawfurd, who gave early Singapore the efficient **administration*** that Raffles could not supply. The actual implementation of Raffles' policies fell to Crawfurd. Raffles drew broad sweeping outlines, and it was left to practical and realistic men like Farquhar and Crawfurd to fill in the details.

*– Adapted from a description by British historian Constance Mary Turnbull
of the contributions of Raffles, Farquhar and Crawfurd, published in 2009*

* Administration refers to the work involved in running a government, place or company.

INVESTIGATE!

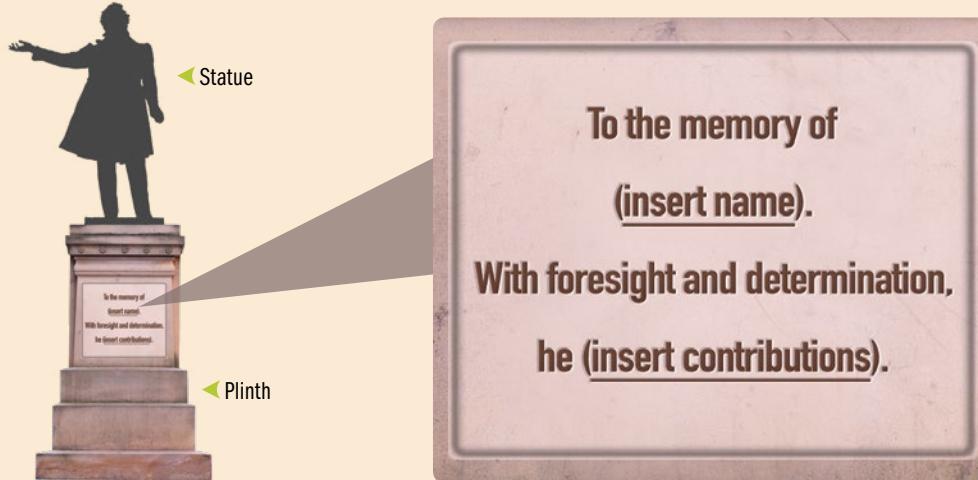
1. Read **Sources A** and **B**. What were Stamford Raffles' contributions to the development of Singapore?
2. Read **Sources C** and **D**. What were William Farquhar's contributions to the development of Singapore?
3. Read **Sources E** and **F**. What were John Crawfurd's contributions to the development of Singapore?

REPORT!

Now that you have read the sources, list the ways in which Raffles, Farquhar and Crawfurd contributed to the development of Singapore. Use the sources and what you have read in the chapter as evidence to support your ideas. If you wish, you can present your findings in a table like the one below.

Individual	Contributions to the Development of Singapore	Evidence
Stamford Raffles		
William Farquhar		
John Crawfurd		

Given your findings, who do you think founded Singapore? Create an inscription for a plinth, which is a base supporting a statue, for that person. A sentence starter has been provided below to help you in creating the inscription for the person who you think founded Singapore.



Who founded Singapore?



UNIT

2

OVERVIEW

Singapore's Development as a Port City Under the British (1819-1942)

In this unit, we will study the changes in Singapore under British rule. We will also learn about the experiences of the various groups of people living in Singapore, the challenges they faced and their contributions up to the fall of Singapore in 1942.

The pictures on these two pages show different people and street scenes in colonial Singapore. From these pictures, how do you think these people contributed to Singapore's development as a port city under the British?







How Did British Rule and External Developments Affect Singapore's Growth as a Port City from 1819 to 1942?

When the British first arrived in 1819, there was uncertainty over Singapore's status as a British trading post. The status of Singapore was established when it came under British rule after the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty and the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance in 1824. Singapore was declared a free port from its founding days and soon became the centre for regional trade. Many people flocked to the island to enjoy the benefits of **free trade**.¹ By the eve of the Japanese invasion in 1942, Singapore had become a very prosperous and important **port city**.²

What were the reasons for Singapore's growth? In this chapter, we will look at the role of the British in developing Singapore as a port city. We will also look at the impact of external developments, such as the opening of the Suez Canal and the Great Depression, on Singapore's growth.

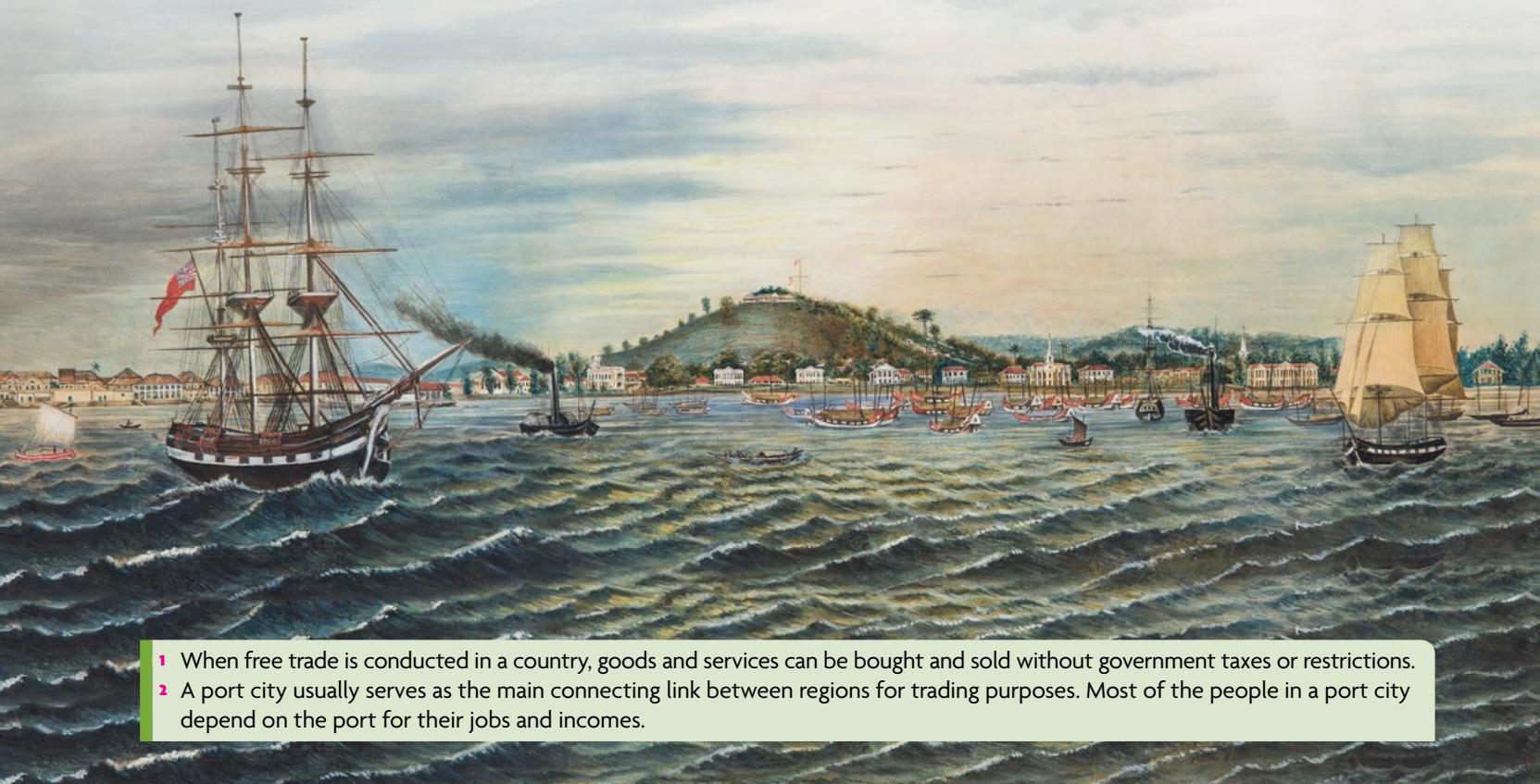


Chapter at a Glance

You will learn:

- How British rule helped Singapore develop into a port city
- How external developments impacted Singapore's growth as a port city

▼ Painting by Robert Wilson Wiber of Singapore's busy harbour, with Fort Canning Hill in the background, 1849



¹ When free trade is conducted in a country, goods and services can be bought and sold without government taxes or restrictions.
² A port city usually serves as the main connecting link between regions for trading purposes. Most of the people in a port city depend on the port for their jobs and incomes.

Timeline

Beyond Singapore

▼ View of East India House, the headquarters of the EIC, on Leadenhall Street, London, 1817



The EIC loses dominant control over the China trade.

1826

1832

1833

1852

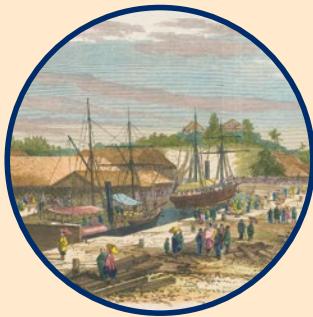
1857

Singapore replaces Penang as the capital of the Straits Settlements.

The East India Company (EIC) forms the Straits Settlements by grouping Penang, Melaka and Singapore together.

The New Harbour (later renamed Keppel Harbour) at Tanjong Pagar is opened.

Thomas Dunman is appointed as the first full-time Commissioner of Police.

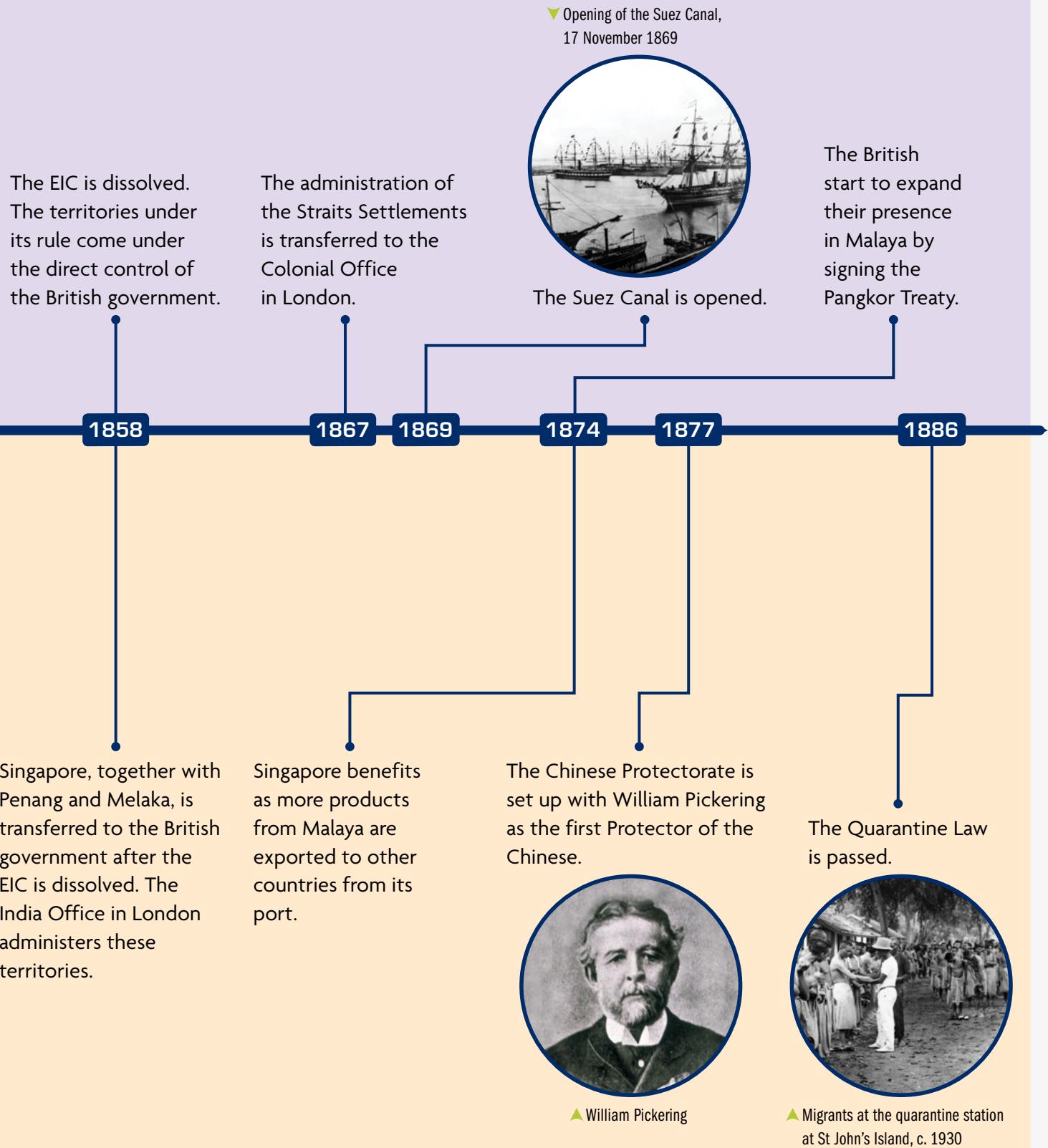


▲ Opening of the third dock at the New Harbour, 1869



▲ Artist's impression of Thomas Dunman

In Singapore





Timeline

Beyond Singapore

▼ 1909-1910 Model T by Ford Motor Company, one of the biggest automakers in the US in the early 1900s



The development of the motor car industry in the United States fuels the demand for rubber.

1887

1890

1896

1897

1900s

The Public Health Department is set up.

New roads and railways link Malaya to Singapore, facilitating the transport of tin ore and rubber to Singapore for processing and export.

Singapore becomes a major processor and exporter of rubber.

The Straits Trading Company is formed, playing a key role in smelting tin ore from Malaya.



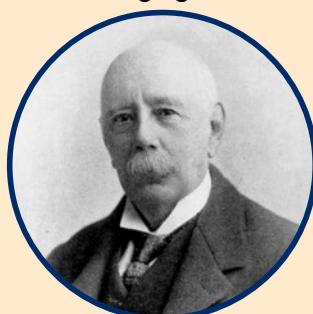
▲ The first tin smelter on Pulau Brani

The Dangerous Societies Ordinance, which bans secret societies, comes into force.



▲ Secret society members, 1900s

Henry “Mad” Ridley, director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens, finds a way to tap rubber sap without damaging the tree.



▲ Henry Ridley

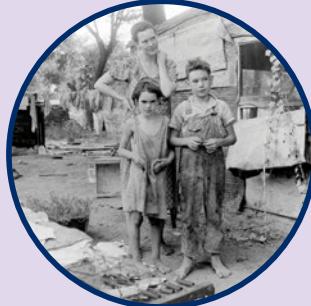
▼ British soldiers, wearing anti-gas helmets, operating a machine gun during a battle in World War I



World War I

1914–1918

▼ Impoverished family in the US, 1936



Wall Street Crash in the United States; start of the Great Depression

1924

1929

1931

1942

The Johor-Singapore Causeway is opened.



▲ The Causeway enables the rise of motor transportation between Singapore and Malaya.

Rubber prices plunge to an all-time low, causing many rubber companies in Singapore to go bankrupt.

Japanese troops invade Singapore.



▲ British troops surrendering to the Japanese

How Did the British Help Develop Singapore into a Port City?

The British played an important role in Singapore's development. Let us look at six areas in which the British contributed to make Singapore a port city with extensive trading networks to all parts of the world. As you read this section, think about the areas in which the British made the most contributions.



▲ Figure 3.1: British contributions to Singapore's development as a port city

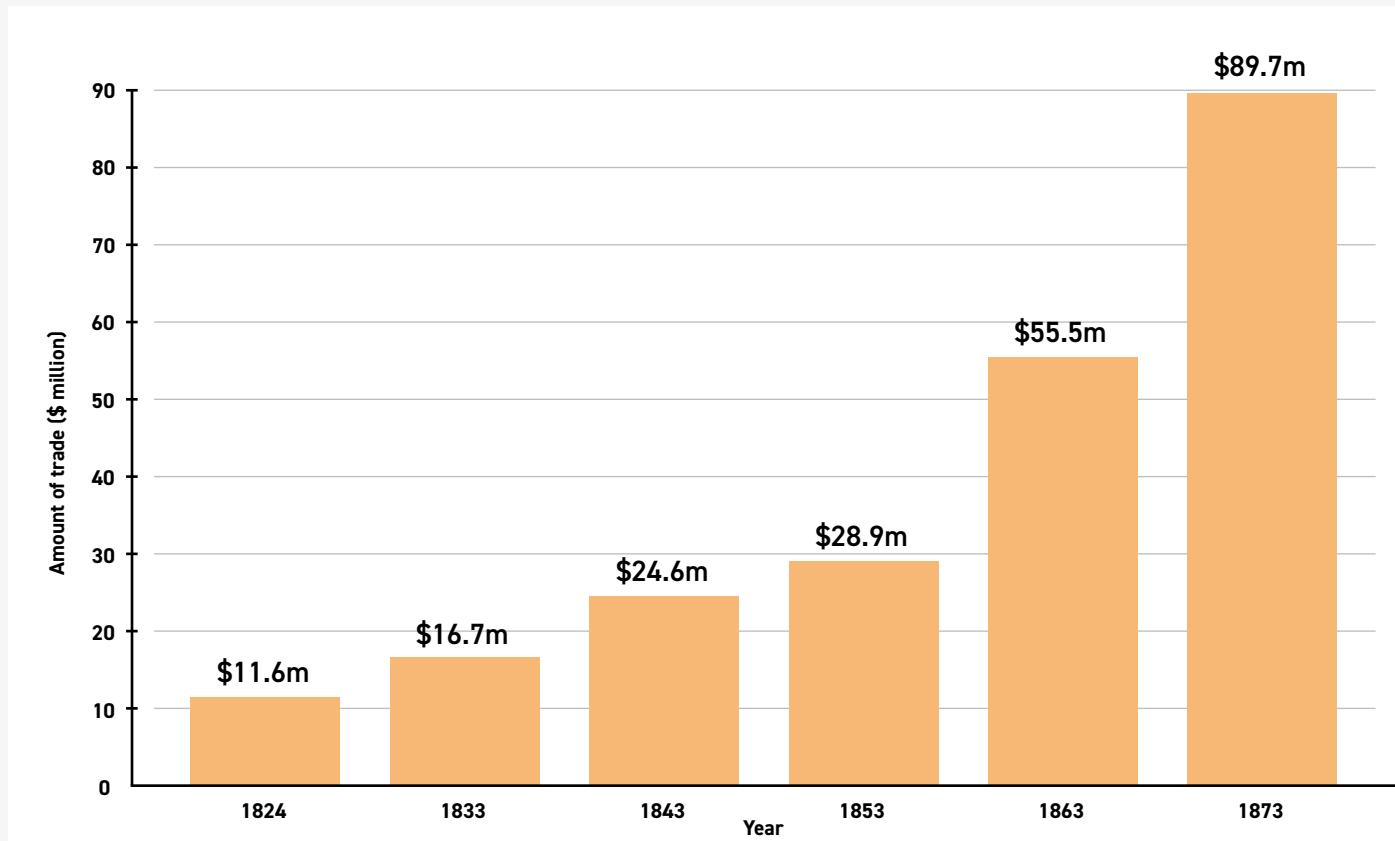
Free Port Status

A key factor attracting traders to Singapore was its free port status, which the British put in place in 1819. Traders came in ships from different places and could trade freely with one another in Singapore. They were not required to pay taxes on the goods they carried.

Much of Singapore's trade in the 19th century involved transshipment and entrepôt trade. Transshipment refers to the transfer of goods from one trading ship to another while in transit at the port. The repackaging and redistribution of imported manufactured goods and regional produce is known as entrepôt trade. Profits were made by processing and packaging goods before they were re-exported elsewhere. Study the illustrated story on the next two pages to find out more about Singapore's entrepôt trade.

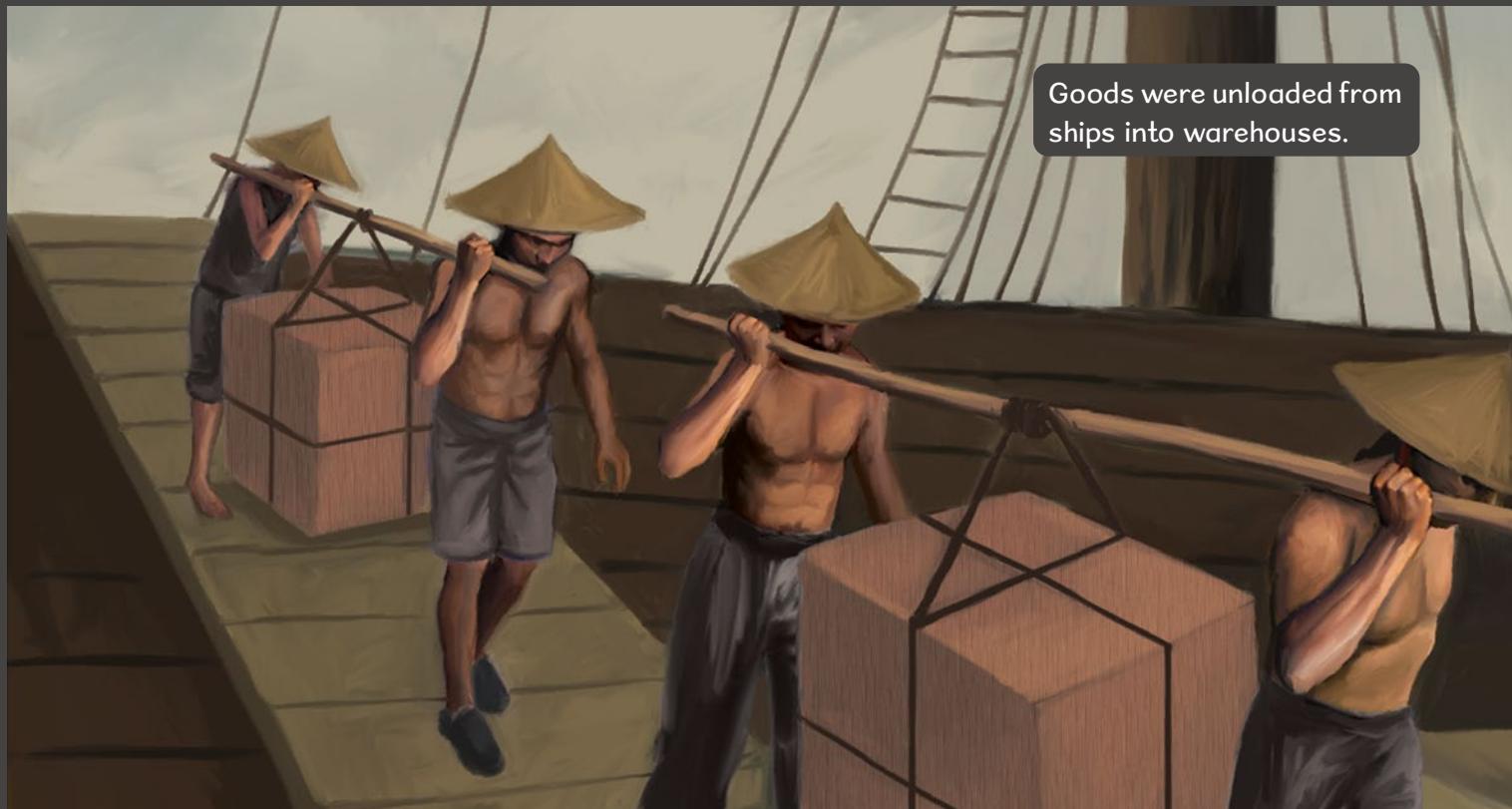
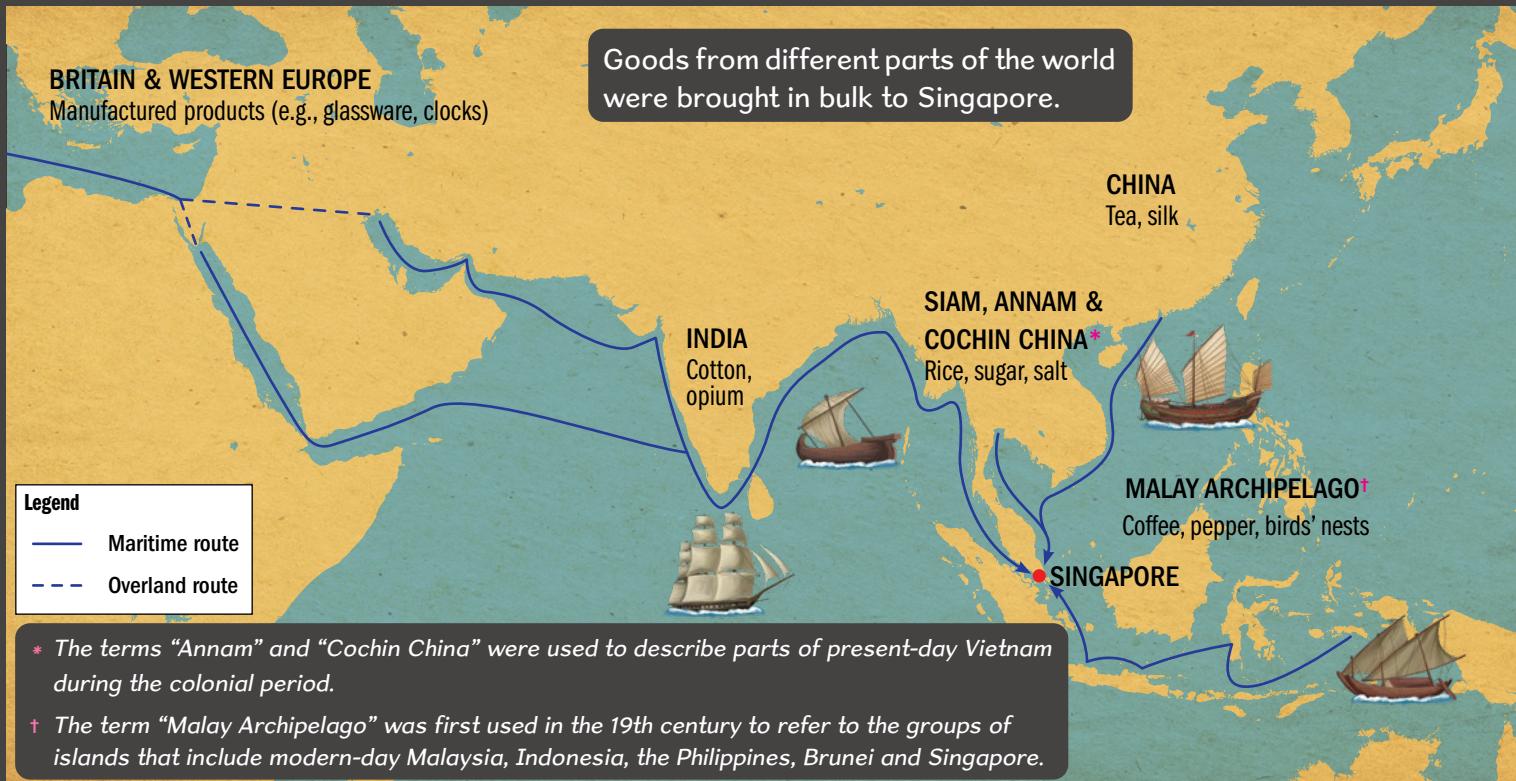
What were the reasons for transshipment and entrepôt trade? Why were the goods not sent directly by the producers to the consumers? This was because Singapore provided an easily accessible, tax-free and centrally located place for both Western and Asian goods to be collected and exchanged.

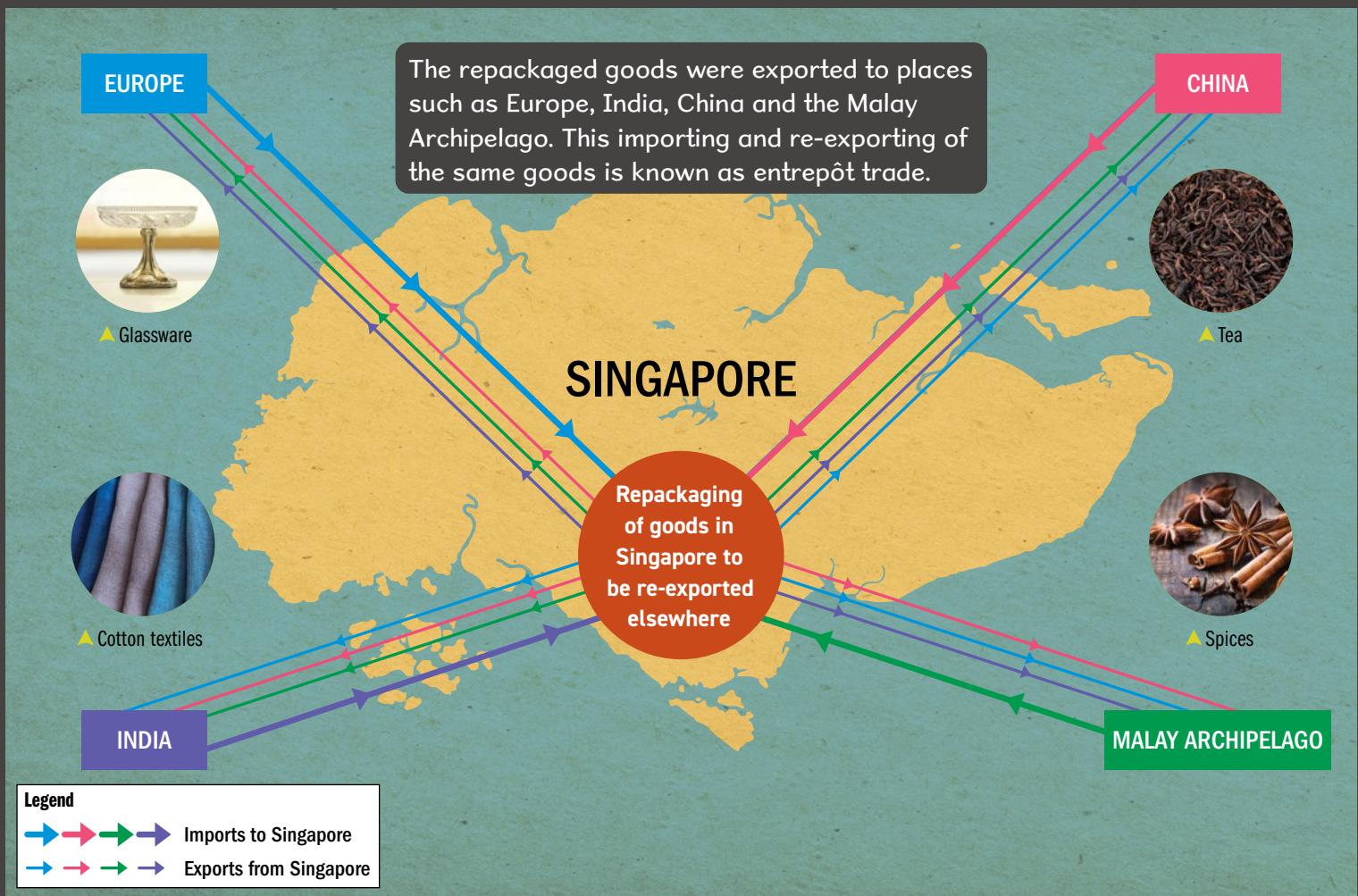
As a result, Singapore flourished as a port city. Between 1830 and 1867, its trade almost tripled. By the time Singapore was handed over to the Colonial Office in 1867, it was already one of the most important and prosperous ports in the British Empire.



▲ Figure 3.2: Bar graph showing the growth in Singapore's trade from 1824 to 1873

ENTREPÔT TRADE in 19th-century Singapore







LEARN A SKILL: INTERPRETING STATISTICAL DATA

Statistical data can be represented in different ways, such as charts, tables or graphs. A chart, table or graph tells a story and allows people studying it to extract relevant information and draw conclusions about a topic.

The following are some useful tips for analysing a chart, table or graph:

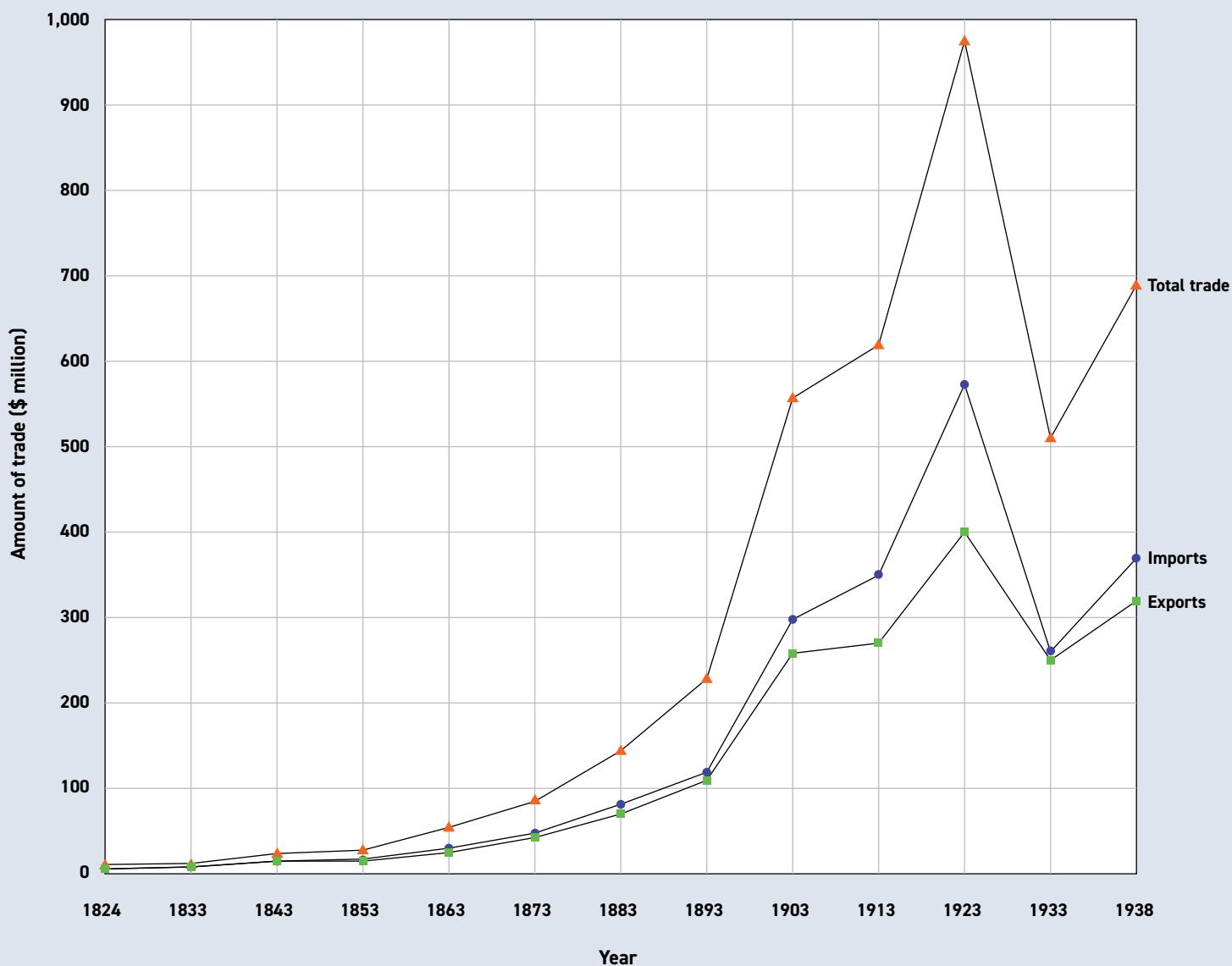
- Look at the title of the chart, table or graph.
- Examine the column headers (for tables) or legend (for charts and graphs) to find out what the data represents.
- Survey the dates and note the time interval.
- Look for trends or patterns of change.
- Scan the data to find out whether the numbers are moving upwards or downwards.
- Note the level of the increases or decreases.
- Use your historical knowledge to explain the changes.

Study Figure 3.3 below and Figure 3.4 on the next page. Both show Singapore's trade in terms of imports and exports between 1824 and 1938, represented in the form of a table and a graph respectively.

Year	Imports (\$ million)	Exports (\$ million)	Total (\$ million)
1824	6.6	5.0	11.6
1833	9.1	7.6	16.7
1843	13.1	11.5	24.6
1853	15.5	13.4	28.9
1863	29.8	25.7	55.5
1873	47.9	41.8	89.7
1883	79.2	68.2	147.4
1893	124.0	108.5	232.5
1903	299.3	257.7	557.0
1913	349.7	272.4	622.1
1923	573.0	402.7	975.7
1933	261.7	251.1	512.8
1938	369.6	320.3	689.9

▲ Figure 3.3: Table showing the value of goods traded in Singapore between 1824 and 1938

- Adapted from data compiled by Wong Lin Ken, an economic historian focusing on the trade of Singapore, published in 1991



▲ Figure 3.4: Graph showing the value of goods traded in Singapore between 1824 and 1938

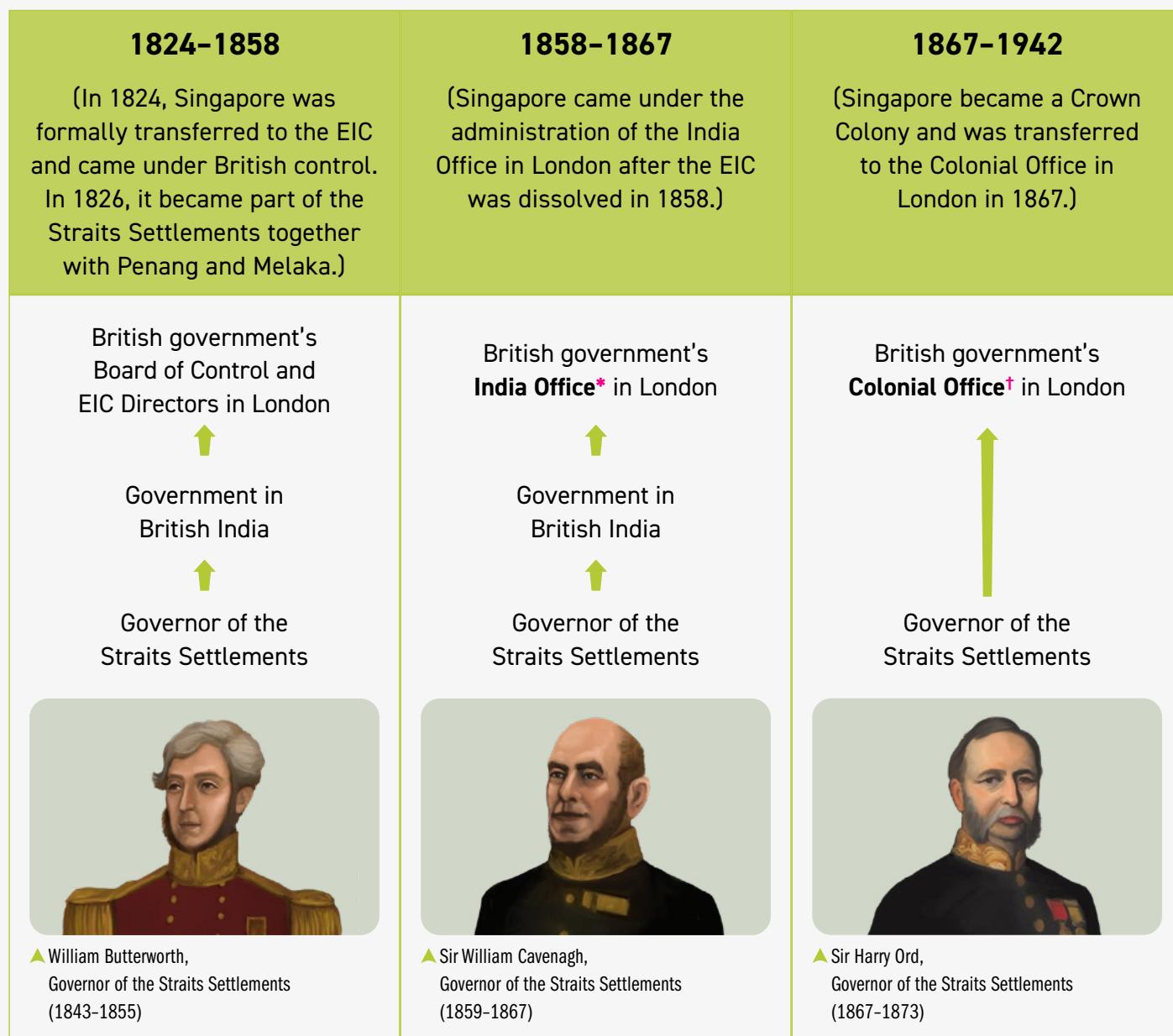
- Adapted from data compiled by Wong Lin Ken, an economic historian focusing on the trade of Singapore, published in 1991

- What trends do you observe in the total trade of Singapore from 1824 to 1938?
- Explain the trends in Singapore's imports and exports from 1824 to 1938.
- Is the table or the graph a better way to represent the data on Singapore's trade? Why do you think so?



Administrative Changes

Under the British, Singapore went through several changes in administration. These administrative changes influenced its growth as a port city. From 1819 to 1823, all decisions regarding Singapore had to be approved by Sir Stamford Raffles, who was the Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen. Singapore was placed under the control of India after Raffles returned to England in June 1823. In August 1824, Singapore was formally transferred to the EIC, which controlled Singapore from 1824 to 1858. Look at Figure 3.5 below to see how Singapore was governed from 1824 to 1942.



▲ **Figure 3.5:** Diagram showing an overview of how Singapore was governed from 1824 to 1942. The government in each row reported to the one above, as indicated by the arrows. Images of some of the British administrators in charge of Singapore over time can be seen in the table.

* The India Office was a British government department established in 1858 to oversee the administration of British India.

† The Colonial Office in London was the government department in charge of British colonies throughout the world.

Administration by the East India Company and the British India Government (1819–1867)

When Singapore was established in 1819, it was placed under the administration of Bencoolen, where Raffles was Lieutenant-Governor. After Raffles returned to England for good in June 1823, Singapore was placed under the British India government. In 1824, Singapore was formally transferred to the East India Company (EIC), which controlled Singapore from 1824 to 1858.

During this time, the government in Singapore had difficulty managing the needs of the expanding population and the increasing size of Singapore's trade. At the same time, it had trouble raising money to pay for better port facilities, security and social services such as education and healthcare. When the government wanted to impose taxes on Singapore's trade, the traders protested. They argued that any proposals to tax trade would affect Singapore's free-port status, which in turn would affect their businesses.

Unable to raise funds from imposing taxes on Singapore's trade, the government had to turn to taxing gambling, opium and liquor. Owners of gambling houses, opium shops and liquor shops who could offer the largest sum of money to the government were granted the right to collect taxes. However, when gambling was banned in 1829, the tax on gambling houses could no longer be collected. This greatly reduced the government's revenue. Thus, there was insufficient money for improving conditions in Singapore and for providing social services.



▲ China Street, 1890s. China Street was once known for its numerous gambling dens.



▲ Late 19th-century opium den

▼ *Singapore from Mount Wallich* by Percy Carpenter, 1856. This view of early Singapore stretches from Pearl's Hill (left) to Tanjong Rhu (right). Mount Wallich (located at present-day Telok Ayer) was levelled to reclaim Telok Ayer Bay. Despite little financial resources provided by the EIC and the British India government before 1867, Singapore prospered, as shown by the increasing size of the town area in the painting.



To make up for the shortage, the EIC supplied the Singapore government with money. However, this changed in the 1830s, when the EIC lost its dominant control of trade with China as the British government opened it up to other British traders.

Given that the EIC had founded the settlements in Penang and Singapore to protect and promote its China trade, it now lost interest in the Straits Settlements. As a trading company, the EIC prioritised maximising profits. Since the Straits Settlements were being run at a loss, the EIC began to cut costs and refused to spend more money to improve the Straits Settlements. It dismissed many officials to reduce their number and cut the pay of those who remained.

Think!

Why do you think the government in India showed little interest in the affairs of the Straits Settlements?

▼ Illustration by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd showing the interior of the headquarters of the EIC at Leadenhall Street in London, where cargoes from the East were put up for auction, 1820. From this building, the EIC ruled over many parts of the world, including British India and the Straits Settlements, with little interference from the British government.



Despite their lack of enthusiasm, the EIC and the British India government did contribute towards the development of Singapore. Read Source 1 to find out more about what the EIC (1824–1858) and the British India government (1858–1867) did to help develop Singapore.

SOURCE 1

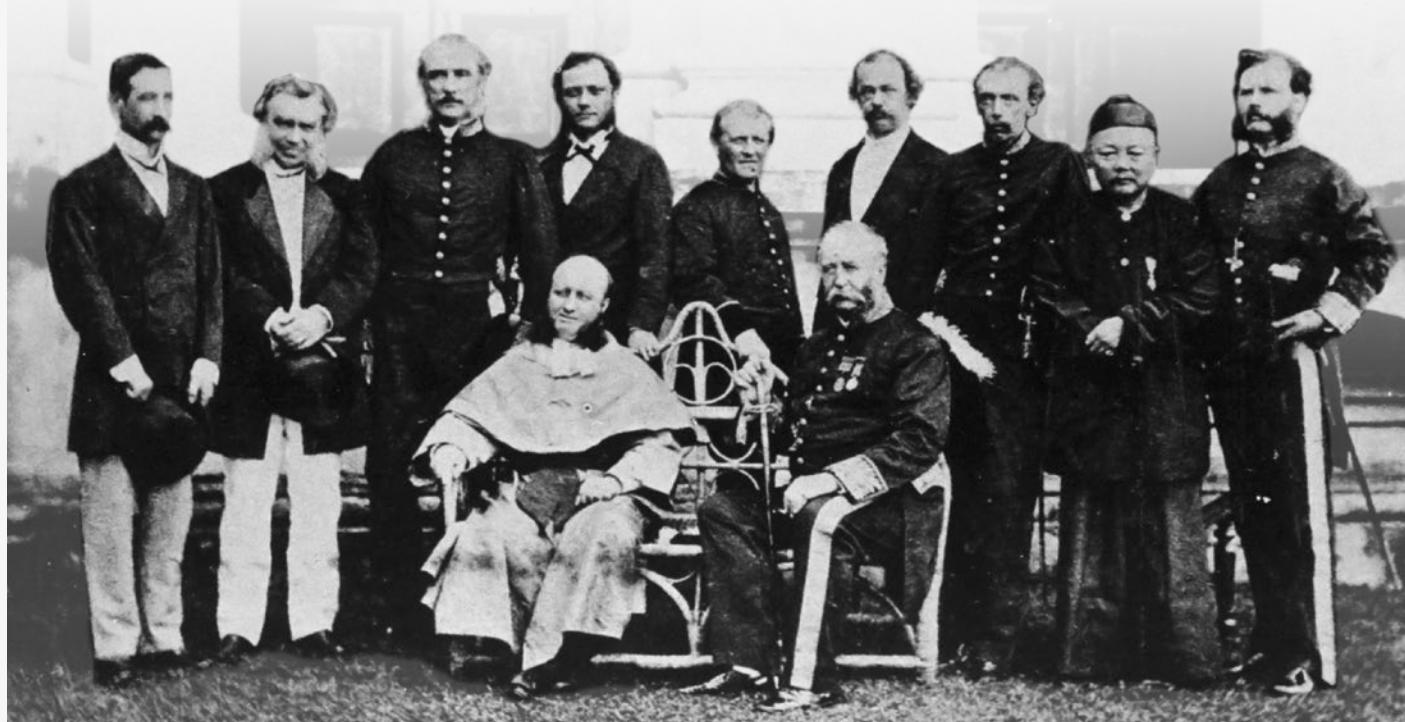
The Straits Settlements owes a debt of gratitude to the East India Company. It is true that by 1867, the prosperity of Singapore was largely due to the resourcefulness of its people. However, it should not be forgotten that the Company established an able and just administration, which allowed Singapore to build up its trade freely. While it is easy to condemn the Company for being stingy, it was not a little thing that for 34 years from 1833 to 1867, the British India Government supported a constant drain on its finances to maintain a colony from which it gained no profit, and which hardly paid a cent in taxes.

– Adapted from an account by British historian L. A. Mills of the contributions of the East India Company and the British India government to the colony of Singapore before 1867, first published in 1925

1. According to Source 1, how did Singapore benefit from being under the control of the EIC and the British India government?

Administration as a Crown Colony (1867–1942)

The year 1867 was important in Singapore's history as the colony was put under the direct control of the Colonial Office. The conversion of the Straits Settlements into a **Crown Colony**³ of Britain allowed Singapore to enjoy nearly 75 years of peaceful administration.



▲ Members of the Legislative Council in 1873, including Chief Justice Sir Thomas Sidgreaves (seated left), Governor Sir Harry Ord (seated right) and the sole Asian, Hoo Ah Kay, also known as Whampoa (standing second from right)

³ A Crown Colony refers to a place or territory directly ruled by the British government on behalf of the British King or Queen.

Figure 3.6 below gives an overview of the British administration in Singapore from 1867 to 1942.

▼ Whitehall in London, where the Colonial Office was located, 1866



British Government in London (Colonial Office)

- Responsible for British colonies around the world



Governor of the Straits Settlements

- Represented the King or Queen of Britain
- Assisted by an Executive Council and a Legislative Council
- Had veto power (the ability to reject laws passed by the Legislative Council)



Executive Council

- Comprised high-ranking British officials
- Advised the Governor and helped him carry out the laws



Legislative Council

- Comprised high-ranking British officials from the Executive Council and non-official members who were mainly Asian and European traders
- Helped the Governor make laws

▲ Figure 3.6: Overview of the structure of government in Singapore when the British administered Singapore from 1867 to 1942

In the following sections, you will read more about the initial problems faced by the early police force and the gradual reforms introduced to improve its quality in the early 20th century. Besides maintaining law and order in Singapore, the government also attempted to curb piracy in its surrounding waters that affected its trade.

Law and Order

Crime

Singapore's population increased from barely 150 in 1819 to about 6,000 in 1821. Large numbers of settlers continued to come into Singapore thereafter. A **census**⁴ taken in 1911 showed that there were 57 different languages spoken among the population. With the influx of **migrants**⁵ and the growth of trade, there were also more robberies, murders and other crimes. Maintaining law and order was a challenge.

Police Force

In 1820, William Farquhar, the Resident of Singapore, made his son-in-law, Francis James Bernard, the chief police officer. However, Bernard had other duties and could not give all his time and attention to his police work. Moreover, the police force was a very small one, consisting of the chief police officer, one writer, one jailor in charge of the prison, one European sergeant and eight Asian policemen. This was hardly enough to keep the peace in a population of a few thousand settlers.

Over the years, the police force remained small and weak. In 1843, some European and Asian traders in Singapore called a public meeting to talk about the inability of the small police force to maintain law and order. The traders then wrote to the Governor to ask for a stronger police force. They pointed out that the many crimes on the island made their lives and property unsafe.

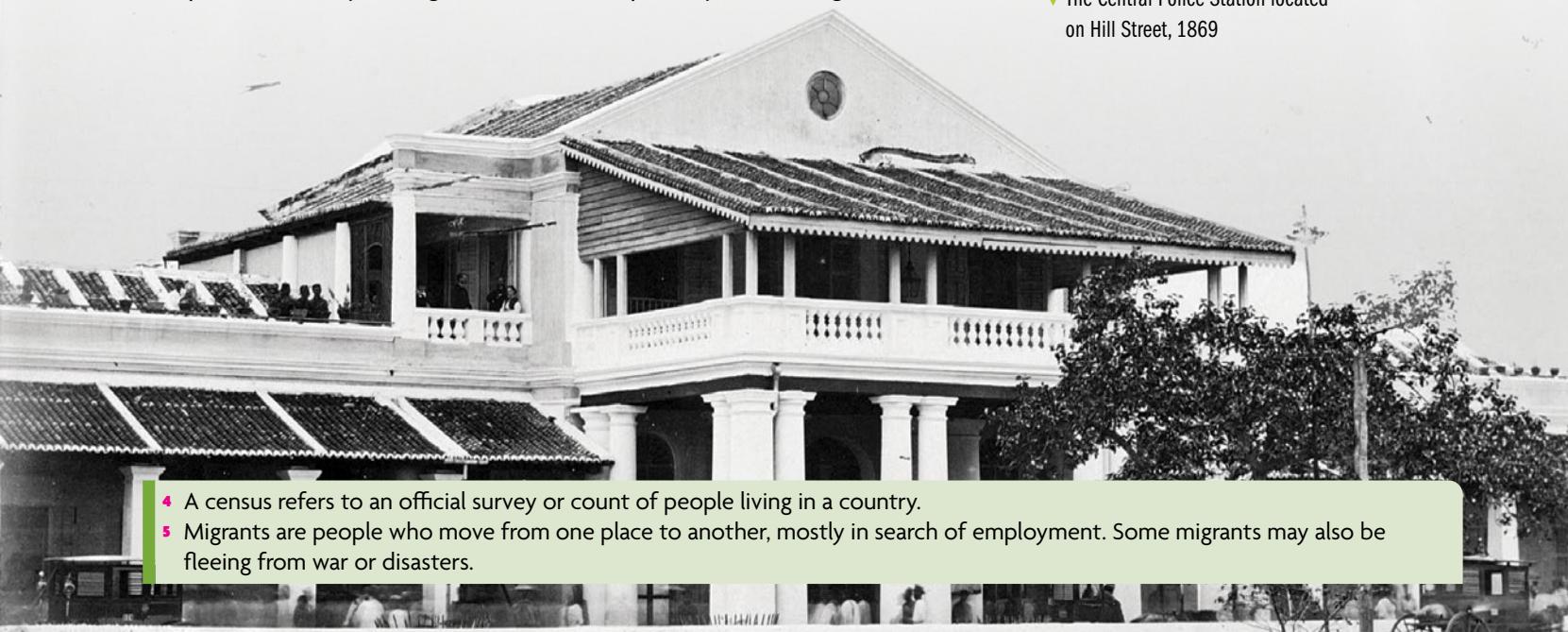
As a result, Thomas Dunman was appointed as Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Superintendent of Police in 1843, and as Singapore's first full-time Commissioner of Police in 1857. During his tenure, Dunman persisted in making the police force more appealing to potential recruits by fighting for better working conditions and higher wages. In doing so, he managed to attract better men into the police force. Thus, he was able to enlarge the police force by taking in more men, especially those of good character.

Who was THOMAS DUNMAN?

Thomas Dunman (1814–1887) was respected by both European officials and traders, and had useful contacts with the Chinese community. A very hands-on man, he was usually out at night performing different duties. His daily schedule saw him up and about at four in the morning, only returning home at midnight. Dunman took good care of the men under him and even conducted night classes to teach them to read and write. He received a Sword of Honour from Governor Butterworth for putting down the 1854 Hokkien-Teo Chew Riots. Dunman Road, Dunman Secondary School and Dunman High School are all named after him.

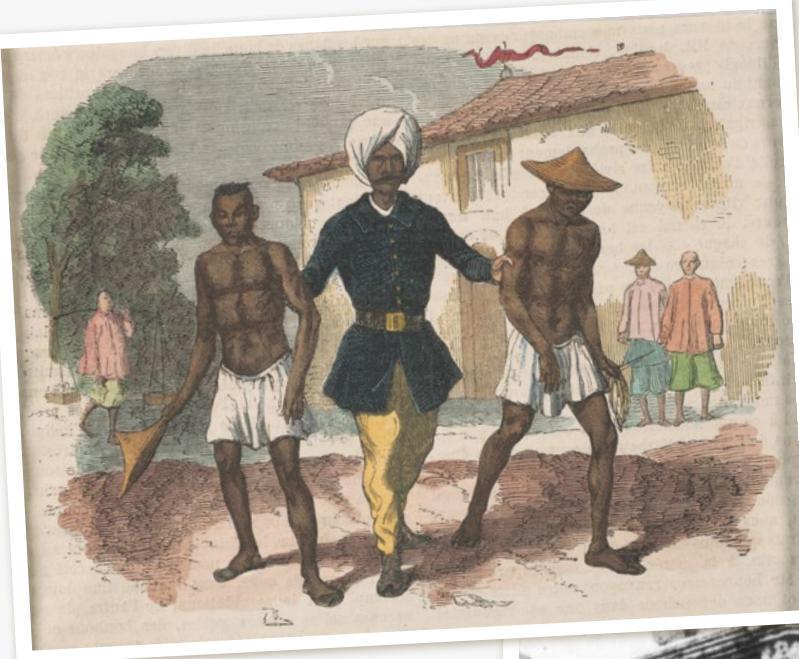


▼ The Central Police Station located on Hill Street, 1869

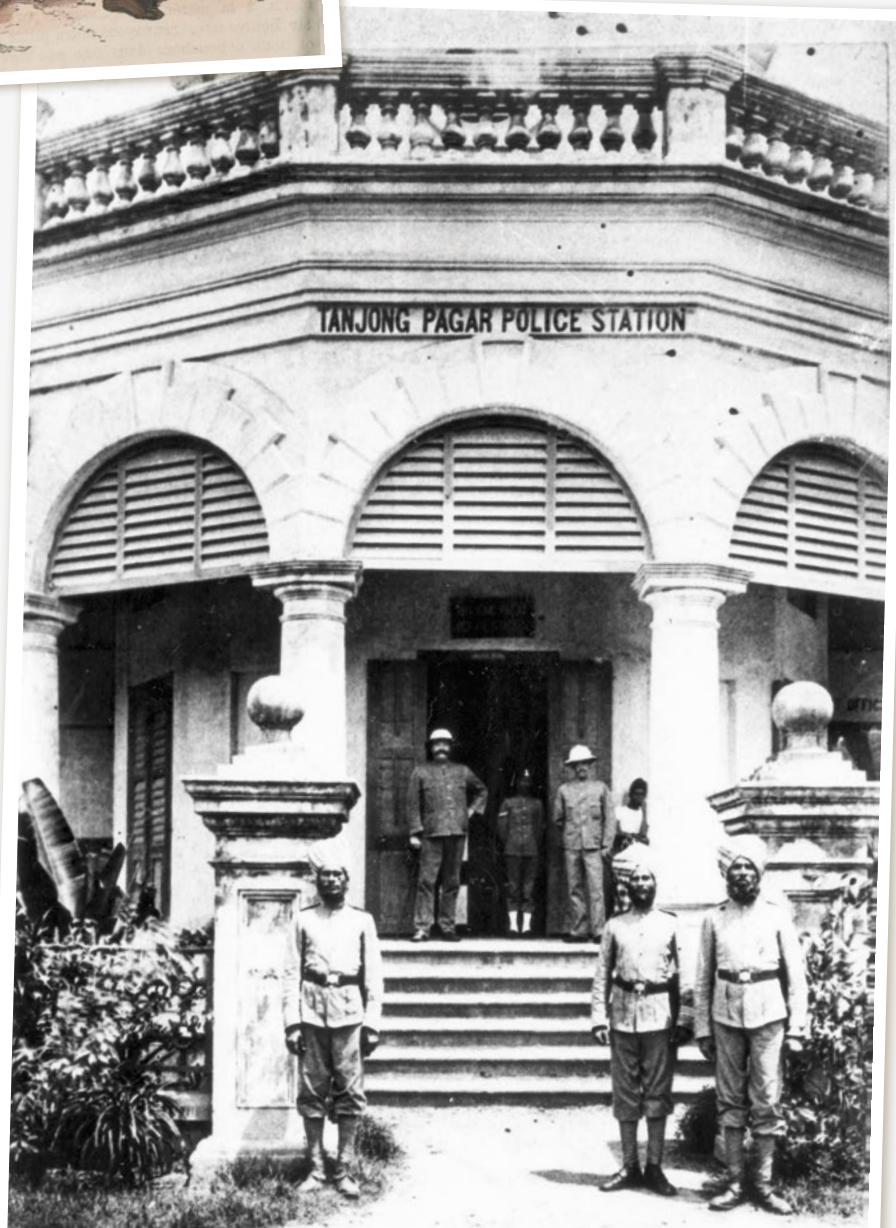


⁴ A census refers to an official survey or count of people living in a country.

⁵ Migrants are people who move from one place to another, mostly in search of employment. Some migrants may also be fleeing from war or disasters.



◀ Illustration showing a policeman with two thieves, c. 1890s



Policemen standing outside ▶
Tanjong Pagar Police Station,
1880

Despite Dunman's best efforts, he could not solve all the problems of crime and disorder. His men did their work well and tried to manage the situation when serious riots broke out, but the rioters usually outnumbered them and the government had to send soldiers to help the police. Still, by the time Dunman retired in 1871, he had achieved much by reducing gang robberies and improving the quality and morale of the police officers.

After Dunman's retirement, reforms to the police force continued. A police training school was started in 1881, and a separate detective force was established in 1884.

By the 1930s, with the use of telephones, motor cars and radio communications, the work of the police force had become more efficient. At the same time, officers who had gone through professional training under the police cadet system filled senior posts in the police force. The police force was about 2,000 strong, unlike the small team it started with in the early 1820s. All these improvements made Singapore a safer and more peaceful place.

DID YOU KNOW?

Riots broke out quite frequently in 19th-century Singapore. Among the largest were the Hokkien-Teochew Riots in May 1854 that left about 500 dead and some 300 homes destroyed. Other major riots included the 1876 Chinese Post Office Riots and the 1888 Verandah Riots.



▲ Officers from the Detective Branch, 1906. This branch was later renamed the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Labour Abuses, Secret Society Problems and Prostitution

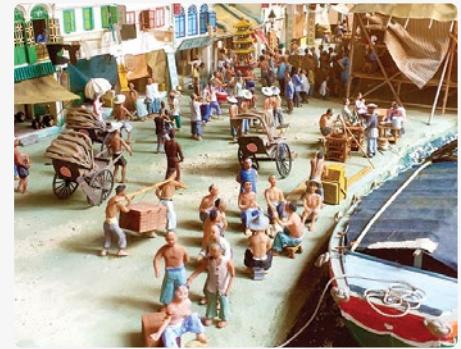
As Singapore grew as a commercial centre, it attracted more and more Chinese migrants, who were drawn by the prospect of work as well as the opportunity to flee from wars, poverty and famine in China. By 1871, the Chinese community comprised 58 per cent of Singapore's population, numbering about 55,000 in total. However, Singapore's rapid development and prosperity had another dark side: labour abuses, secret society problems and prostitution.



► Model of a ship the Chinese migrants took to come to Singapore. This model can be found at Fuk Tak Chi Temple along Telok Ayer Street, first constructed in 1824. The temple was one of the first stops for Cantonese and Hakka migrants arriving from China. They would go there to offer thanksgiving for their safe passage to Singapore.

▼ Mural by Yip Yew Chong showing the arrival of coolies in Singapore. This mural can be found on Amoy Street, outside Thian Hock Keng Temple.





► Diorama at Fuk Tak Chi Museum showing migrants at work



Labour Abuse of Coolies

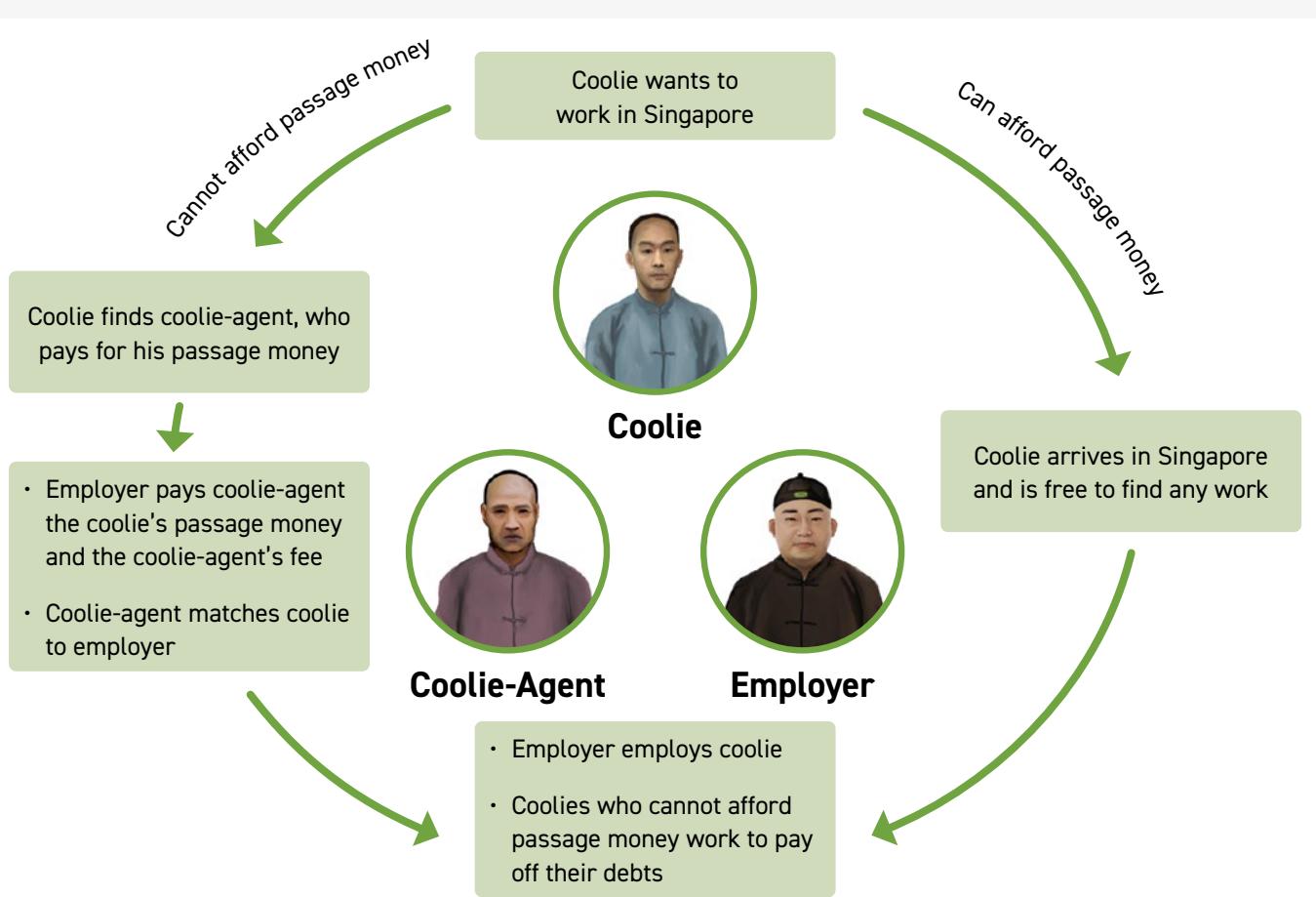
The Chinese migrants who came to Singapore were known as *sinkehs* (new guests). Some had the money to pay for their passage from China. When they arrived in Singapore, they were free to take on any job they found.

However, there were others who were too poor to pay for their passage and had to find a coolie-agent, who would pay their passage money. In return, these coolies promised to work for any employer who was willing to pay the coolie-agent a sum of money to employ them (see Figure 3.7). This sum was much more than the passage money, as it included the coolie-agent's fee. The coolies would then have to work without pay for a year or more to pay off the debts they owed their employers for paying the coolie-agents. They were usually provided with food and lodgings, and might be given a small sum of money for the whole period of their service.

The demand for Chinese coolies in the mid-19th century was not limited to Singapore. There was also a great need for them in Australia, the United States, the plantations in Java and Sumatra, and the tin mines in Malaya. The coolie trade grew very quickly, and Singapore became one of its major centres. Thousands of coolies poured into Singapore every year, many of whom were then sent to work in neighbouring countries or to other parts of the world.



▲ This photograph, taken in the early part of the 20th century, shows a Chinese coolie carrying a gunny sack, a common sight in Singapore during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



▲ Figure 3.7: Diagram showing the relationship between coolies, coolie-agents and employers

Coolie-agents were responsible for finding coolies to meet the demand in different parts of the world. They were often tempted by huge profits, and thus tried to obtain coolies by any means possible. While thousands of poor Chinese were willing to seek their fortunes abroad, many others were tricked or kidnapped by coolie-agents in China.

Conditions during the voyage from China were very poor. The coolie ships were often described as “floating hells”. It was common for hundreds of men to be crammed aboard a junk meant for a fraction of the number. As a result of the overcrowding as well as the lack of food and water, many coolies died during the long voyage.

The coolies’ misery did not end when they landed in Singapore. To prevent them from escaping, many of them were locked up in houses that were cramped and unhygienic. They were closely guarded by gangsters hired by the coolie-agents until employers were found.

Read Sources 2 and 3 to learn more about how the coolies were treated.



▲ Boat arriving in Singapore with Chinese coolies, c. 1900. The original photograph was in black and white. Colour has been added to it digitally in recent times to enhance its effect.

SOURCE 2

The coolies are mostly from the countryside of China. They all cried out for protection. They declared that they had been tricked to leave their homes by promises that they would be brought to Singapore and receive good wages as labourers and craftsmen. There was a promise that after paying a low sum for their journey, they would soon save enough money to send to their friends or to return home with. Instead, they had heard that they would be sent to work in the tin mines of another country.

We went to inspect a house in Telok Ayer, where the coolies had been confined. We found the place to be unfit even to keep pigs. Many men were confined here without notice.

- Adapted from a report that William Pickering, Protector of the Chinese in Singapore, submitted to the Legislative Council in Singapore on February 1877

SOURCE 3

A friend of mine suggested I leave China by saying, “Look how poor you are here. If you follow me, I can take you to Singapore, where you will get such good employment. Very soon you will pay off the small amount of passage money required and will save a lot of money.” On arriving in Singapore, we were taken to a shop upstairs and were locked up, only having very little rice and saltfish. We could not go out for anything. I don’t complain much about food, as long as I can get some work to make money. But we were not allowed to speak up or know what was being done with us.

- Adapted from an account given by a coolie named Lew Ship Yit to William Pickering, Protector of the Chinese in Singapore, in the late 1870s

1. What does Source 2 tell you about the way the coolies were brought into Singapore?
2. What do the two sources suggest about the coolies’ experiences?

Secret Society Problems

The large number of Chinese migrants in Singapore saw the emergence of another problem: **secret societies**.⁶

Many of those who arrived from China found it useful to join a secret society. They were mostly poor and uneducated young men who had never been outside their hometown. In Singapore, where they were far from their families and friends, they felt lonely and helpless. Thus, when they were befriended by members of a secret society who helped them to find work or lodgings, they would end up joining the secret society.

As members, they could enjoy the protection of the society. For example, when they became sick, the secret society would take care of them. When poor members died without anyone to bury them, the secret society would arrange for a proper burial.

By the 1840s, there were several secret societies with thousands of members. Their numbers increased with the rapid growth of the Chinese population.

Despite the support they provided to the migrants, secret societies were also a source of problems. Members of secret societies often took part in gang robberies, gang fights and other forms of lawlessness. Gangs of up to 200 secret society members would carry out armed robberies, usually at night but sometimes in broad daylight, on the homes of the rich. These secret societies were also responsible for many of the riots that occurred in the 1840s and 1850s as they fought for the control of territory and illegal vice trades such as gambling and prostitution.

For a long time, the government took no steps to tackle the problem. This was because the British officials had few dealings with most of the Chinese living in Singapore and knew very little about how these secret societies operated. Until the 1870s, there were no British officials who understood the various Chinese dialects. The European officers in the police force and all the policemen, who were Indians and Malays, did not speak the language either, and could not find out anything about the secret societies and their activities.



◀ A receipt given for contribution to Ghee Hin Society, late 19th century. These receipts were used to acknowledge monetary contributions made by members of the society.



Seal used by the Ghee Hin Kongsi, one of the first secret societies in Singapore, to indicate the completed payment of membership fees, 1913 ▶

Row over rice led to the riots in 1854

▲ Headline of an article published on 25 July 1974 in *The New Nation* reflecting on the impact of the 1854 Hokkien-Teochew Riots caused by members of secret societies, which paralysed 19th-century Singapore

⁶ The Chinese secret societies in Singapore were a form of mutual aid for the migrants who came from different parts of China in the 19th century. Their origins can be traced to the Tiandihui (Heaven and Earth Society), a secret society in China founded for the purpose of overthrowing the Qing dynasty and restoring the Ming dynasty.

▼ Artist's impression of the 1854 Hokkien-Teochew Riots. The riots started because of conflicts between the Hokkien and the Teochew communities in Singapore. They lasted 10 days and military troops had to be summoned to help the small police force restore order.





▲ 19th-century illustration showing the interior of the Ghee Hin Kongsi, with details of the rites of the initiation ceremony

Prostitution

The majority of migrants who came to Singapore for work were Chinese males. Most of these migrants were unmarried or had left their wives in their homelands. Few Chinese migrant women came to Singapore as it was seen as a man's responsibility to earn a living elsewhere. This resulted in a very unbalanced ratio of men to women in Singapore (see Figure 3.8 below). As working conditions were hard for the male migrants, many turned to opium smoking, drinking, gambling and visiting **brothels**⁷ to escape the hardship.

There was great demand for prostitutes, which meant that brothel owners and **traffickers**⁸ could make large profits. In the latter part of the 19th century, many young, female migrants from China were tricked into the prostitution trade in Singapore. They were promised well-paid jobs, but when they arrived in Singapore, they were sold to keepers of brothels and forced to earn money for them.



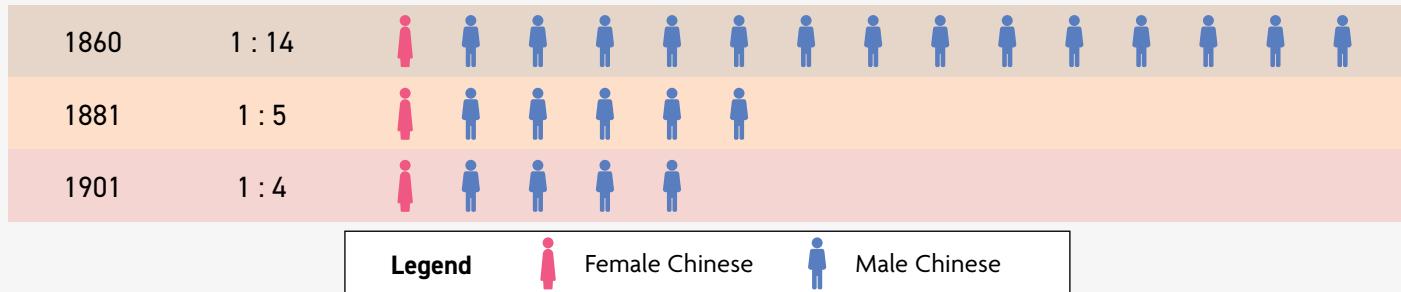
DID YOU KNOW?

During the 19th century, Singapore was not only a trading port city. It also had a reputation of being a sleazy place where prostitutes were regarded as part and parcel of daily life.



▲ Postcard from "Fuji" restaurant at 3 Malay Street (present-day indoor street in Bugis Junction shopping mall) showing a Japanese lady, c. 1920. Restaurants like these were used by Japanese prostitutes, known as *karayuki-san*, to seek or meet customers.

▲ Photograph showing a *pipa tsai* (Cantonese for "little pipa player"), late 19th century. The *pipa*, or Chinese lute, is a four-stringed musical instrument made of wood. These girls were trained to play the instrument and sing to entertain men in clubs and brothels in Singapore. In some cases, the *pipa tsai* were forced into prostitution.



▲ Figure 3.8: Chart showing the ratio of female to male Chinese in Singapore between 1860 and 1901. For example, in 1860, there were 14 Chinese men for every Chinese woman in Singapore.

⁷ A brothel is a place where people engage in prostitution.

⁸ A trafficker is a person who unlawfully transports people or forces them to work in order to benefit from their work or service.

Chinese Protectorate and the Dangerous Societies Ordinance

It was only after the transfer of Singapore to the Colonial Office in 1867 that the government made a greater effort to control the Chinese population. In May 1877, a government department called the Chinese Protectorate was set up to tackle the problems of secret societies, coolie abuses, poverty and prostitution among the Chinese community.

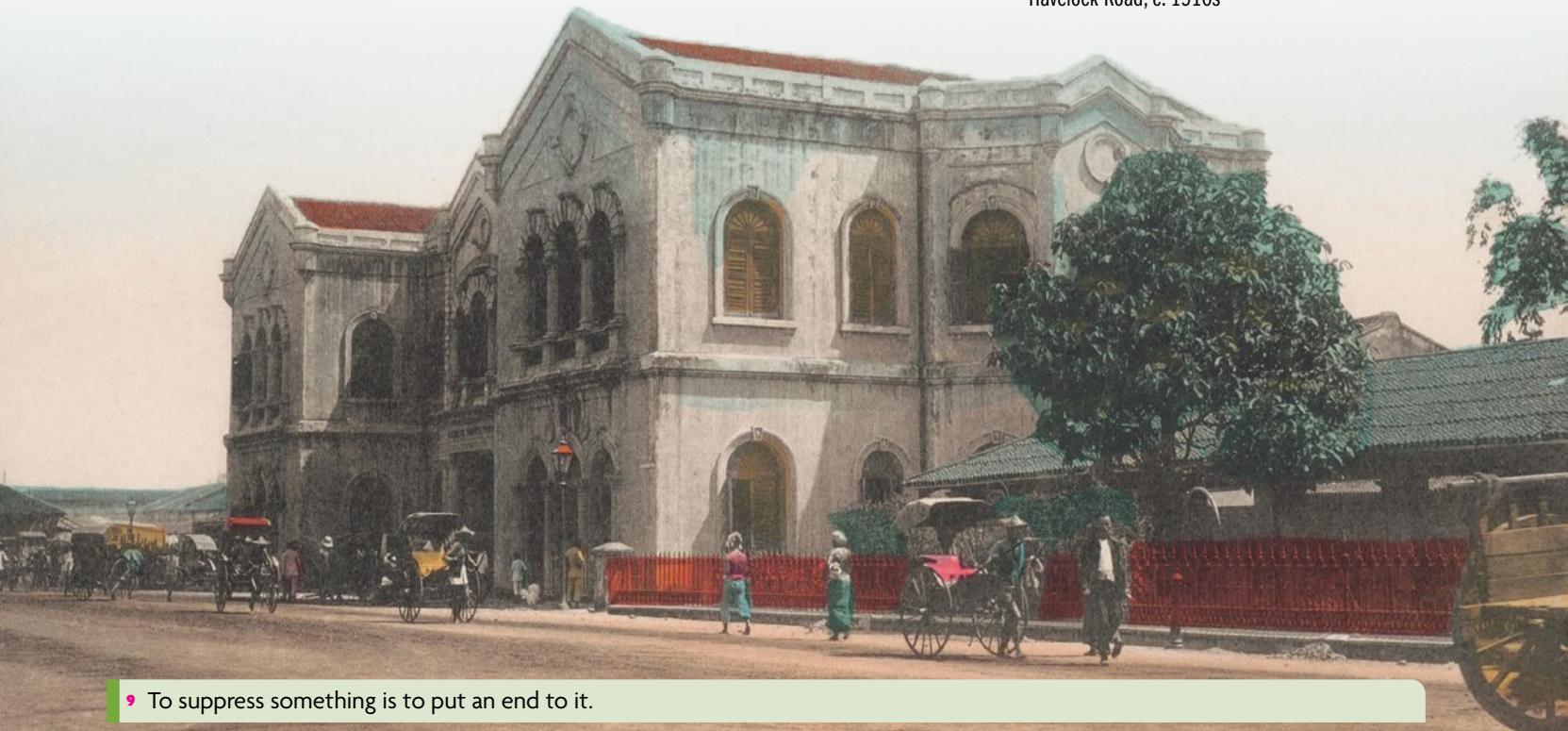
The head of the department was William Pickering – the first Protector of the Chinese. Pickering's tact, fluency in several Chinese dialects and personality helped him gain the trust of the Chinese. He was thus able to develop a comprehensive understanding of the complicated operations of secret societies. Along with improvements in policing, Pickering managed to bring some sense of order to Singapore society. Take a look at the illustrated story on the next page to find out more about the work of the Chinese Protectorate.

Apart from establishing the Chinese Protectorate, the government also pushed through a law to **suppress**⁹ dangerous societies and make them automatically unlawful. The 1890 Dangerous Societies Ordinance gave the Governor the power to banish Chinese migrants and abolish any society deemed too dangerous. The threat of banishment was particularly effective as the Qing government often arrested and executed such individuals once they returned to China. Thus, although disturbances continued to take place after the passing of this law, the days of large-scale secret society fights that paralysed Singapore were over.



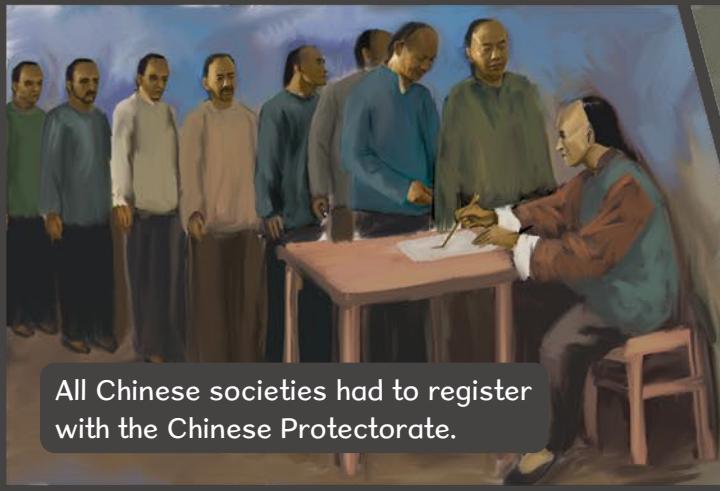
▲ William Pickering, first Protector of the Chinese in Singapore (1877-1889)

▼ The Chinese Protectorate building located on Havelock Road, c. 1910s



⁹ To suppress something is to put an end to it.

The WORK of the CHINESE PROTECTORATE



All Chinese societies had to register with the Chinese Protectorate.



Pickering persuaded the Chinese community to settle their quarrels at the Chinese Protectorate instead of going to the secret societies.

The Chinese Protectorate controlled the coolie trade by registering the coolie-agents and lodging houses. Pickering's officers visited every coolie ship that arrived from China and inspected the coolie houses to ensure that the coolies were treated fairly.

The Chinese Protectorate worked with the leaders of the Chinese secret societies to build trust between the British and the community.



The Protectorate set up a department called Po Leung Kuk (Cantonese for "Office to Protect Virtue"), which rescued many young girls from being sold to brothels. It also provided shelter for those who were poorly treated as servants.



Despite the government's best efforts, it was unable to completely reduce the power of the secret societies. Fights still broke out occasionally and the abuse of coolies and women continued. This was partly because some of the coolies and women did not come forward to seek the help of the Protectorate.

Piracy

Apart from dealing with law and order within Singapore, the government also had to tackle the problem of piracy in the region. Although it did not directly affect most of the people in Singapore, piracy posed a great danger to the lives, property and trade of the trading community. Trading ships **plying**¹⁰ the Straits of Melaka were often attacked by pirates, their cargoes taken, and travellers killed or sold as slaves.

Every year the “pirate wind”, or the season between August and October, brought large fleets of pirate boats from northern Borneo to the Straits of Melaka, where they attacked the trading ships and boats sailing between Singapore and Penang. Throughout the year, trading ships were also attacked by pirates who came from pirate settlements along the coasts of Java, Sumatra and Malaya.

The situation became so bad that pirates could be seen attacking ships just outside Singapore’s harbour. Because of this, many traders stayed away. Thus, Singapore’s trade suffered greatly and the traders lost huge sums of money.

The traders repeatedly asked the government in the Straits Settlements to take strong action against piracy. However, the Straits Settlements government lacked the legal means to punish the pirates and had to send them to India for trial. Only after many appeals by the traders did the government in India send gunboats to patrol the waters.

While the gunboats destroyed many pirate ships and hideouts, this was only a temporary solution. To suppress piracy completely, a permanent naval force was needed in the Straits Settlements, something the EIC could not afford. Since the Straits government had only three gunboats in its fleet, it was unable to curb piracy effectively.

Attempts by the traders in Singapore to urge the authorities in both India and London to take action did not result in much change. It was only in the early 1870s that piracy became less of a problem due to increased patrolling by the British and other European powers.

19th-century illustration of an Iranun pirate. The Iranun people came from Mindanao (part of present-day Philippines) and northern Borneo (part of present-day Sabah), and had a fearsome reputation for their raids on ships in the region.



¹⁰ To ply is to travel regularly over a fixed course or between certain places.



▼ Artist's impression of a pirate battle off the coast of Singapore in the mid-19th century



Education

Educational Opportunities (1819–1867)

For the most part of the 19th century, the British government provided few education and healthcare services for the people in Singapore. Much of the population were migrants more interested in making money before returning home than settling down and raising families. Coupled with the government's constant lack of funds, this created a situation in which the provision of social services was not a top priority for the British government.

From Singapore's founding till 1867, the British paid little attention to education. They did not control English or **vernacular education¹¹** and focused only on subsidising a few schools. While the British provided free primary schooling in the Malay language, very few Tamil-language schools were established by the government and none were catered for the Chinese population.

By and large, the British left the development of education in the hands of those who were concerned about it. In other words, schools devised their own ways of organising classes, the number and choice of subjects, and how they were taught. From 1830 to 1867, there were very few schools established by the government. Instead, the establishment of schools was left mostly to the efforts of various Christian **missionary¹²** groups and European traders.

Before 1867, there were few educational opportunities for children as many parents did not see the value of English-language education. Few students attended these schools. Chinese education, apart from opportunities to study Chinese at the Singapore Institution (present-day Raffles Institution), was practically non-existent.

▼ Raffles Institution located on Bras Basah Road, c. 1900



¹¹ Vernacular education refers to education conducted in the native languages of the main communities, in this case, the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities in Singapore.

¹² A missionary is a person who visits a place with a religious mission. In this case, the missionaries were people who visited Singapore to spread the teachings of their faith.

Educational Opportunities (1867–1942)

From 1867 onwards, educational activities in Singapore grew. The expansion of education in this period was based on the principle of meeting the needs of the British colonial administration. With Singapore's rapid socio-economic development after 1867, it became necessary to provide English education to create a supply of English-speaking clerks in the government and companies. The British government took deliberate steps to promote English as the medium of instruction, providing government grants to schools that imparted English to students whose home language was not English.

As for education that did not directly support trade and government administration in Singapore, it was usually left to non-governmental agencies. This had two major consequences. First, it led to the growth of many Chinese schools run by the Chinese community from 1911 onwards. These schools did not tolerate any interference from the government. Second, schools established by Christian missionaries were given a free hand in how they were run.

In summary, from 1867 to 1942, although there were improvements in the educational provisions by the government, there was a distinct lack of quality education that catered for the needs of the local people. Educational opportunities were primarily provided to meet the needs of the colonial administration. In the next chapter, you will find out more about the other types of schools established by the various communities who donated land and money to build schools to give students a chance to learn.



▲ Anglo-Tamil School established by the Methodist Mission, c. 1880s



▲ The Chinese High School (present-day Hwa Chong Institution) established in 1919 by Tan Kah Kee, c. 1938

▼ Music lesson in session at Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus school on Victoria Street, 1924



Healthcare

For a number of decades after the British trading post in Singapore was founded, the government did not provide medical services for the general public. There were only one or two government doctors who looked after sick soldiers in a military hospital, and a few European doctors who served mostly the Europeans and rich Asians.

The poorer Asians were not so fortunate as they could not afford proper medical treatment. Before the 1860s, due to poverty, the Asian population suffered from malnutrition, overcrowding and poor sanitation. These problems contributed to the high death rate among the Asian population in Singapore.

After Singapore became a Crown Colony in 1867, coordinated attempts were made to improve public health. In 1887, the government set up the Public Health Department to tackle health issues in the town area. Some of the measures included setting up a malaria (a mosquito-borne disease) committee to supervise the draining of swamps, replacing the bucket system with a modern water-carriage sewerage system and clearing dirty streets and drains. Attempts were also made to improve housing conditions, such as reducing overcrowding in living quarters in Chinatown.



▲ Night-soil carriers, late 19th century. Before the days of the toilet bowl and sewerage system, people used to excrete in buckets, which were cleared daily by the night-soil carriers.

▼ One of the streets in Chinatown where coolies stayed, c. 1930



Public healthcare was also improved with the completion of a new general hospital building at Outram Road in 1882. The hospital started off as a shed near Bras Basah Road and Stamford Road in the early years of Singapore's founding. Its site changed several times before it finally settled at Outram Road.

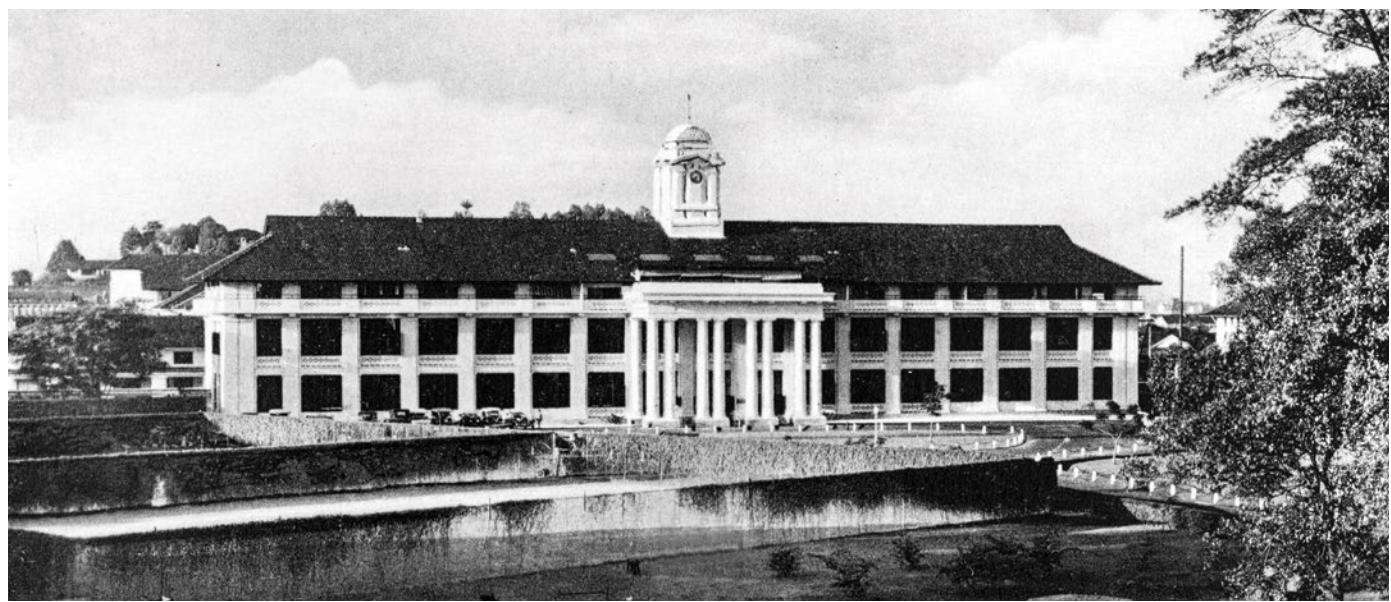
To prevent infectious diseases such as smallpox and cholera from spreading, a **quarantine**¹³ law was passed in 1886 whereby passengers arriving in Singapore by sea had to be checked by a doctor. Those found to be suffering from infectious diseases were isolated to prevent the diseases from spreading.

Despite these steps by the government, the death rate was still higher than the birth rate. For example, from 1896 to 1900, the birth rate was 3,835 births per year as compared to the death rate, which was 8,847 deaths per year.

DID YOU KNOW?

A quarantine station operated on St John's Island for slightly more than 100 years before it was officially closed on 14 January 1976.

▼ The General Hospital at Outram Road, early 20th century



▼ Male migrants at the screening and quarantine station at St John's Island, c. 1930



¹³ A quarantine describes a time during which people, in this case migrants, suspected of carrying contagious diseases such as smallpox and cholera are held in isolation away from the main population.

One reason for the high death rate was the overcrowded and unhygienic living conditions of the poor in the town area. Due to the availability of jobs there, many of the workers preferred to stay in shophouses in the town area. However, these shophouses were often overcrowded, unsanitary and poorly ventilated. This gave rise to the spread of highly contagious diseases such as tuberculosis and cholera, which affected many of these workers.

Another reason was the poor understanding of certain diseases in the 19th century. For example, it was not until 1897 that Sir Ronald Ross discovered that malaria was transmitted by a type of mosquito. Before that, doctors thought the disease was caused by poisonous air coming out of rotting plants in swampy areas. Moreover, most Asians did not seek treatment when they were ill due to the lack of money or a mistrust of Western medicine.

By the beginning of the 1940s, public health had generally improved due to two reasons. First, economic growth in Singapore generated greater government spending on healthcare. Second, the increased awareness of the need to improve healthcare led to calls by the local people for the government to tackle the spread of diseases in Singapore.



▲ Living conditions in a typical shophouse in Chinatown, c. 1907



▲ Living conditions of rickshaw pullers and labourers in a shophouse, c. 1941

Facilities

Expansion of Port Facilities

The process of improving Singapore's port facilities started in the 1850s, along with the expansion of Singapore's trade and the arrival of steamships. By this time, the Old Harbour at the Singapore River had become increasingly overcrowded. There was insufficient space along the river banks to build more warehouses for storing goods and coal, or to build dry docks for ship-repairing.

In 1852, the New Harbour (renamed Keppel Harbour in 1900) was built in the strait between the southern coast of Singapore island and two smaller islands – Pulau Brani and Pulau Blakang Mati (present-day Sentosa). The harbour had deep waters, allowing steamships and sailing ships to sail right up to it. It was also sheltered from strong winds and big waves by the two smaller islands.



▲ Map 3.1: Map showing the location of the Old and New Harbours

▼ Illustration showing the opening of the third dock at the New Harbour, 1869



Singapore's port facilities expanded further in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as its trade and industries continued to grow. In 1913, the government set up the Singapore Harbour Board (present-day Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore [MPA]) to make further improvements to the port.

New wharves, docks, storehouses and machine shops were built. Modern machinery, such as forklifts, cranes and tractors, was used for loading and unloading goods. The modernisation of the port was done just in time to cope with the increasing world demand for tin and rubber, and the rapid opening of plantations in Singapore and Malaya. (See pages 116–119 for more information on the impact of the growth of the tin and rubber industries on Singapore.)

A railway system was also set up to link the port to parts of Malaya. Subsequently, in 1924, the Causeway between Singapore and Malaya was opened.



Collectively, these changes improved the services provided to ships that called at the port. These improvements helped in part to make Singapore one of the busiest and most prosperous ports in Asia.

DID YOU KNOW?

Coin divers, like the ones shown below, were a familiar sight to passengers passing through or disembarking at the New Harbour. These divers plunged into the waters to bring up a stone in exchange for a few coins from passers-by on nearby boats. This sport continued to entertain new arrivals in the harbour till the 1920s.



▲ Illustration showing local youths diving for coins at the New Harbour, 1872

◀ Façade of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station, c. 1932. The station served as the southern terminus of the railway network connecting Malaya to Singapore.

▼ The opening of the Causeway, seen here in 1925, helped improve links between Singapore and Malaya.



What Impact Did External Developments Have on Singapore's Growth as a Port City?

In the second half of the 19th century, Singapore's trade significantly expanded due to a number of external developments, in particular, the opening of the Suez Canal and the expansion of the tin and rubber industries. However, with the onset of the Great Depression in the early 1930s, Singapore's trade and industries took a hit.

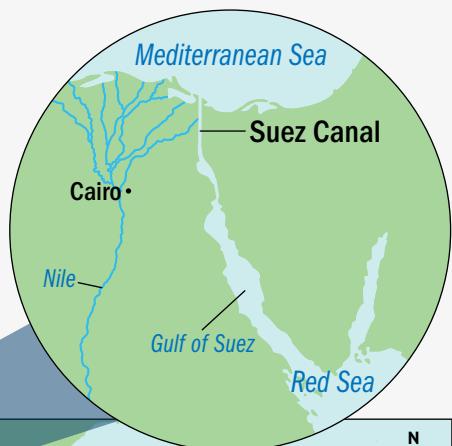
Suez Canal

Opening of the Suez Canal

Prior to the opening of the Suez Canal on 17 November 1869, ships travelling between Europe and Asia had to make a long and often dangerous journey around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa. The journey from London to Singapore usually took at least 120 days. This changed with the opening of the Suez Canal (see Map 3.2).

Not only was the Suez route shorter than the Cape route, the faster steamships were increasingly used instead of the slower sailing ships. The journey from London to Singapore now only took about 50 days. Within a few years of its opening, the Suez Canal became one of the busiest waterways in the world.

▼ Close-up showing the location of the Suez Canal



▲ Map 3.2: Comparison of the Suez and Cape routes

▼ Opening of the Suez Canal, 17 November 1869



Impact of the Opening of the Suez Canal on Singapore

Singapore benefitted greatly from the opening of the Suez Canal in several ways. First, it shortened the time needed for people, mail and cargo to travel from Europe to Singapore. This meant lower shipping costs because of the savings in distance and time.

Second, it increased the volume of ships passing through the Straits of Melaka and calling at the port of Singapore to refuel and collect food supplies. The Straits of Melaka overtook the Sunda Straits as the main route from Europe to the Far East, thus securing Singapore's dominance in the region.

Third, it led to the increased use of steamships as sailing ships could not use the Suez Canal throughout the year. This enhanced Singapore's role as a coaling station. Despite advances in marine technology, steamships travelling long distances had to stop at regular intervals to refuel with huge quantities of coal and fresh water.

As a result, a series of coaling stations developed along these shipping routes from southern Asia, down the Straits of Melaka and into the South China Sea. Singapore, as one of these coaling stations, became even more important in the trade between Europe and the Asia Pacific region.

DID YOU KNOW?

Apart from the Suez Canal, alternative routes across the Pacific and the North American continent were considered. Among them was the Panama Canal route, which was opened on 15 August 1914.



▲ Coolies coaling a steamship in Singapore, 1900s

▼ Illustration showing a steamship docking at a coaling station at the New Harbour, 1876



Tin and Rubber Industries

Expansion of the Tin Industry and Its Impact on Singapore

For most of the 19th century, Singapore's entrepôt trade relied on an extensive and sea-based **hinterland**¹⁴ that stretched from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean. This trade involved mainly goods such as agar-agar, beeswax, opium and tobacco. However, by the end of the century, Singapore, with a more clearly defined land-based hinterland in Malaya, had gradually become the port from which Malayan commodities such as tin and rubber were processed and exported to the rest of the world.

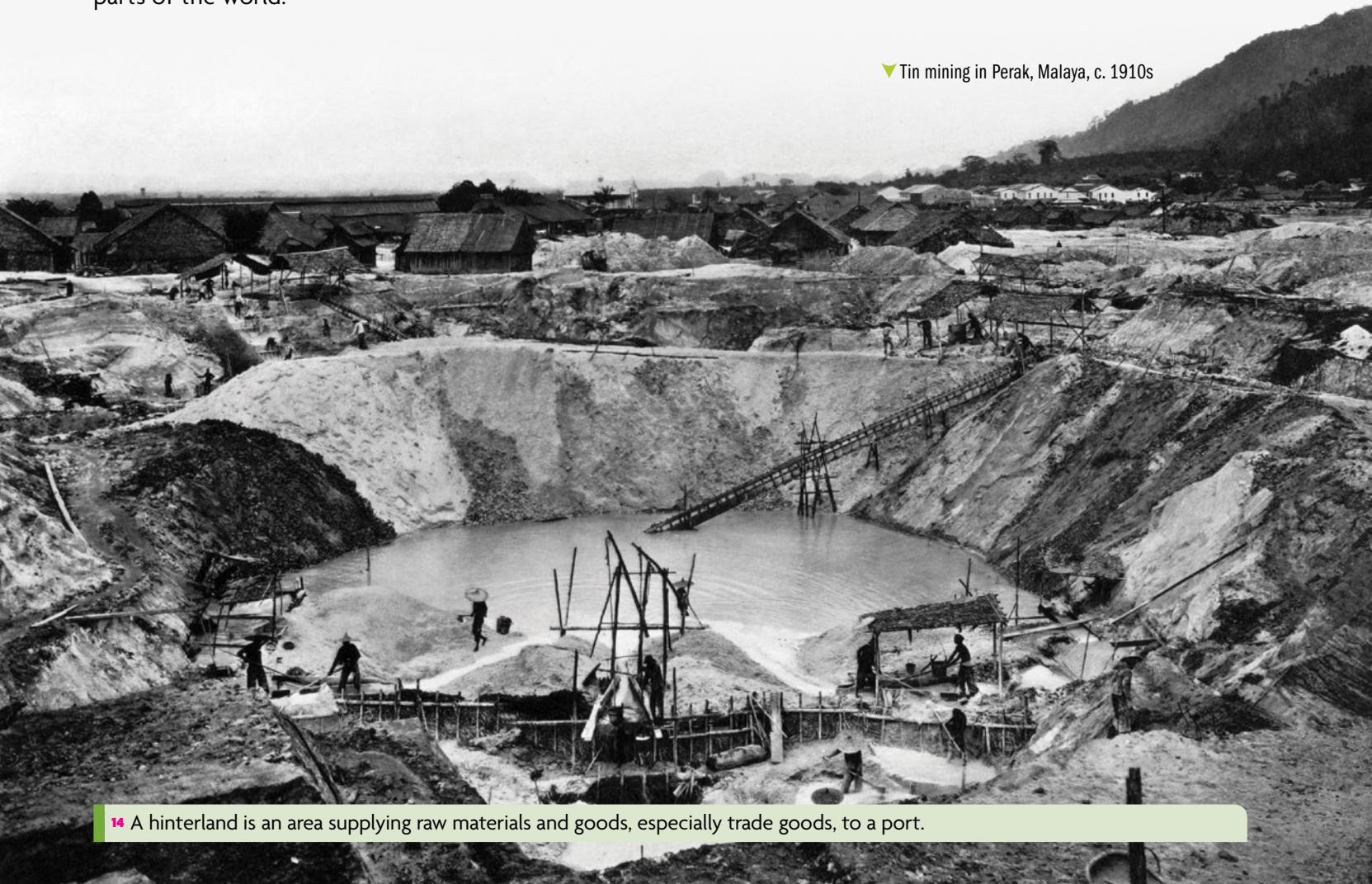
The expansion of the tin trade was due largely to external developments. First, the spread of British control to parts of Malaya after 1874 led to peaceful conditions there. This facilitated the development of tin mining and the tin trade. At the same time, the canning industry in the United States was expanding, which resulted in a corresponding increase in the demand for tin.

All this led to the growth of trade between Malaya and the Straits Settlements, especially Singapore. This growing trade added a great deal to the volume of trade that Singapore was already conducting with other parts of the world.



▲ Advertisement for Highland Brand Evaporated Cream, a popular brand of canned concentrated milk in the US in the late 19th century

▼ Tin mining in Perak, Malaya, c. 1910s



¹⁴ A hinterland is an area supplying raw materials and goods, especially trade goods, to a port.

The amount of tin produced in Malaya increased rapidly, partly because of the new machinery and new methods of mining that began to be used by the Chinese and European miners. In 1874, Malaya was the fourth-largest tin producer in the world. By the 1890s, it was producing more than half of the world's tin.

From 1890, a large part of Malayan tin was brought to Singapore as tin ore, which is tin that has not been purified. At a tin smelting¹⁵ factory established by the Straits Trading Company on Pulau Brani, the tin ore was smelted and made into blocks of almost 100 per cent pure tin. By the early 20th century, the factory had become the leading tin smelter in the world.

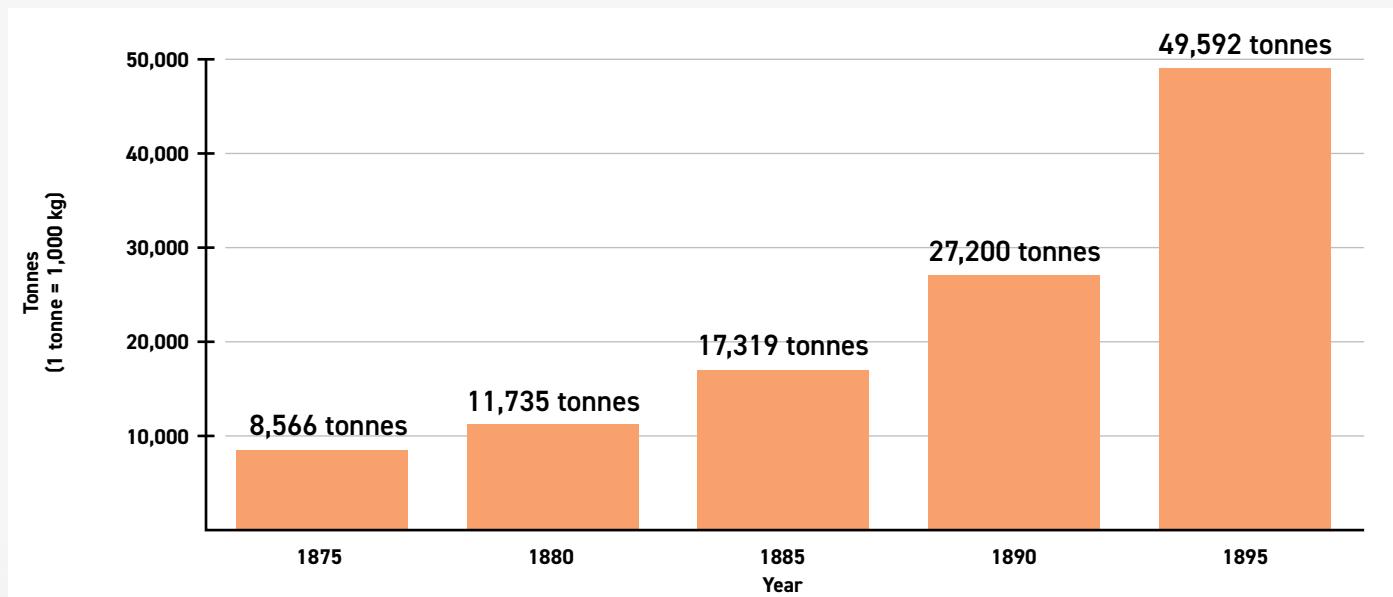
The tin smelting industry and the tin trade brought handsome profits to many businessmen in Singapore. They also increased the general prosperity of the island. By the end of the 19th century, tin had become the most important item of trade among the imports and exports handled by Singapore traders.

DID YOU KNOW?

Pineapples were commonly available in Singapore from the mid-1800s. However, they spoilt easily. One solution was to preserve them in tin cans. By the early 1920s, Singapore had become one of the leading exporters of canned pineapples in the world.

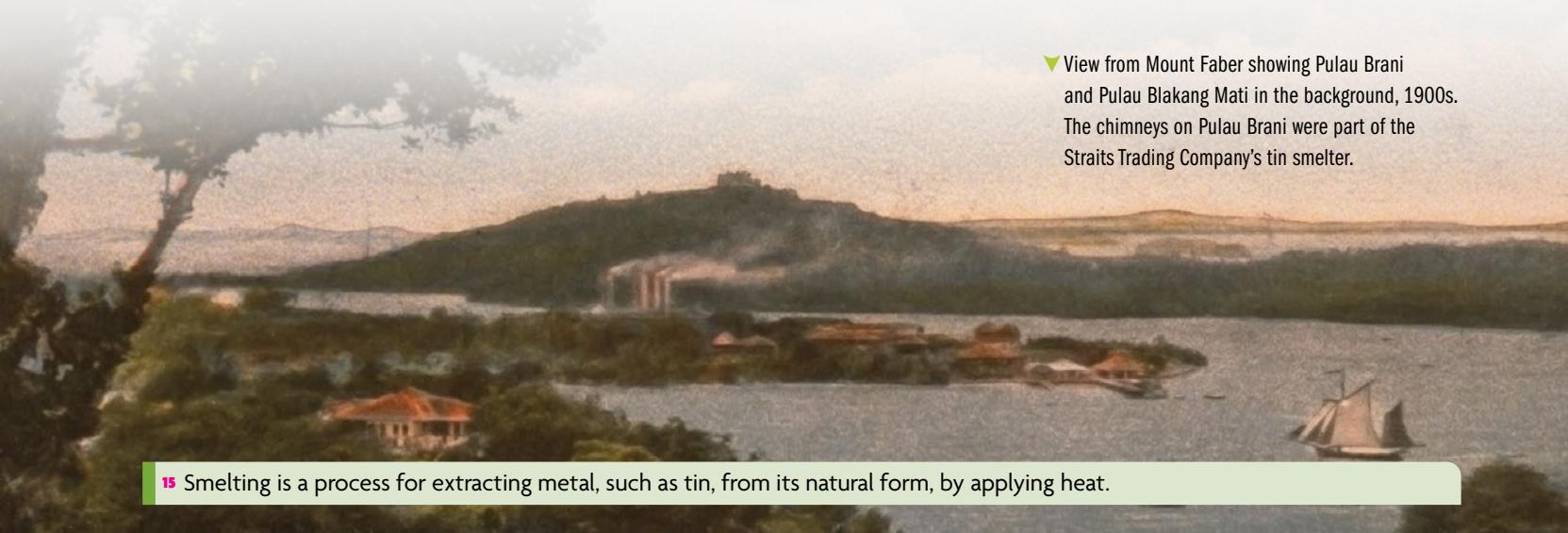


▲ Pineapple cannery in Singapore, c. 1908



▲ Figure 3.9: Bar graph showing the amount of tin produced in Malaya from 1875 to 1895. New mines were opened up between 1875 and 1895.

▼ View from Mount Faber showing Pulau Brani and Pulau Blakang Mati in the background, 1900s. The chimneys on Pulau Brani were part of the Straits Trading Company's tin smelter.



¹⁵ Smelting is a process for extracting metal, such as tin, from its natural form, by applying heat.

Expansion of the Rubber Industry and Its Impact on Singapore

In the early part of the 20th century, Singapore also exported rubber in large quantities. For many years before that, plantation owners had shown little interest in growing rubber as an agricultural crop. However, this changed when the motor car industry created a new demand for rubber tyres.

It began in the later part of the 19th century, when the rubber industry took an important step forward with John Dunlop's invention of the pneumatic tyre (hollow tyre filled with air). Bicycles could now be fitted with these tyres instead of solid tyres. More importantly, the pneumatic tyre made possible the rise of the motor car industry.

The production of millions of cars in the United States led to a great demand for rubber for making tyres. As the supply of rubber from Brazil and Africa was insufficient to meet this demand, the price of rubber shot up very quickly. Because of this, planters in Malaya became interested in growing rubber on a large scale and hurried to the Singapore Botanic Gardens to ask for seeds.



▲ 1909–1910 Model T by Ford Motor Company



▲ Rubber seeds

DID YOU KNOW?

Singapore's first rubber plantation was in Punggol, where rubber trees were grown in a coconut plantation in 1907.

1

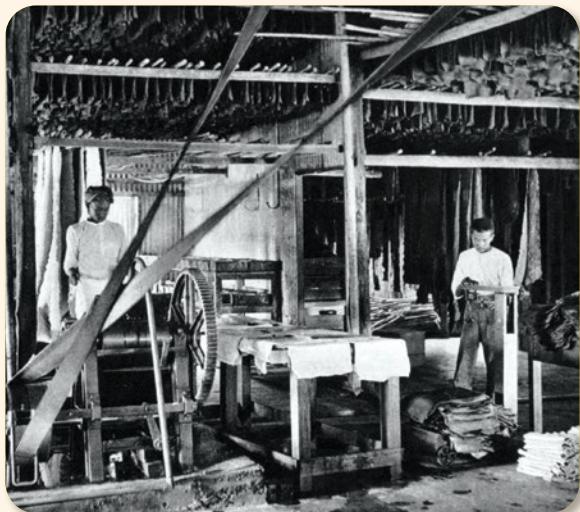
Tapping rubber trees for their latex



▲ This photograph shows a new method of tapping rubber trees without damaging the bark, discovered by Henry Ridley in 1897.

2

Processing the latex into rubber sheets



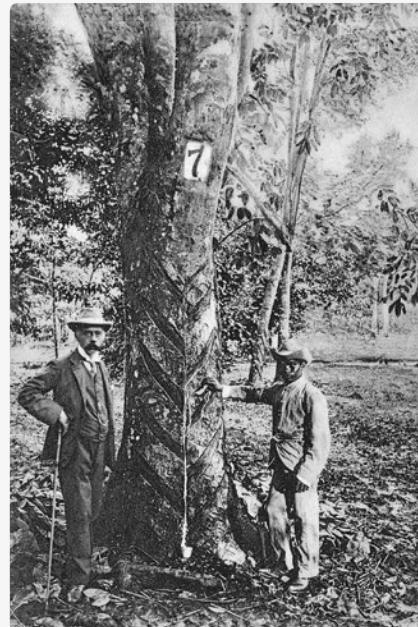
▲ Turning latex into rubber sheets in Malaya, c. 1900s

▲ Figure 3.10: Flowchart showing the processing of rubber

The planters in Malaya were not the only ones who turned to rubber planting. European and Chinese traders in Singapore also realised that they could make a fortune from the rubber boom by providing **capital**¹⁶ to open rubber plantations. Several large European companies in Singapore formed rubber companies in England. These new companies in England then sold shares (investments by individuals for part ownership of a company) to the public in order to obtain the huge capital needed to open up large rubber plantations in Malaya.

In 1911, the Singapore Chamber of Commerce established a Rubber Association, which organised sales of rubber in Singapore and made it an international rubber market. Thus, rubber exports from Malaya rose from 104 tonnes in 1905 to 196,000 tonnes in 1914. Over the next few years, Malaya overtook Brazil as the world's biggest producer of rubber, with most of the rubber exported through Singapore.

Henry Ridley (left) at the Singapore Botanic Gardens with one of the rubber trees grown from a batch of seedlings from Kew Gardens in London, c. 1905 ➤



Who was HENRY RIDLEY?

Henry Nicholas Ridley (1855–1956) became the first Director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens in 1888. He is most well-known for inventing a technique for tapping rubber trees without damaging them, which extended the trees' productivity and lifespan. Known as "Mad Ridley" or "Rubber Ridley", he repeatedly tried to interest European and Chinese businessmen to cultivate rubber trees as an agricultural crop. His promotion of rubber coincided with the invention of the pneumatic tyre for motor cars. In 1955, just before he passed away, the Institution of the Rubber Industry gave him its highest award, the Colwyn Medal.



3

Loading rubber sheets onto ships for shipment to other countries



▲ Loading rubber sheets onto a lorry for transport to a ship, c. 1940s

4

Using rubber sheets to manufacture various products



▲ Raw rubber arriving at London Docks, c. 1930s

¹⁶ Capital refers to money and possessions used to start a new business.

Great Depression

Events Leading to the Great Depression

In the early 1930s, Singapore's trade and industries were hit by the **Great Depression**.¹⁷ Read the illustrated story below to find out more about this worldwide event.

Events leading to the GREAT DEPRESSION

In the early 1920s, companies in the United States were making huge profits and the prices of their shares rose. Thus, many people bought shares as a way to make quick money.

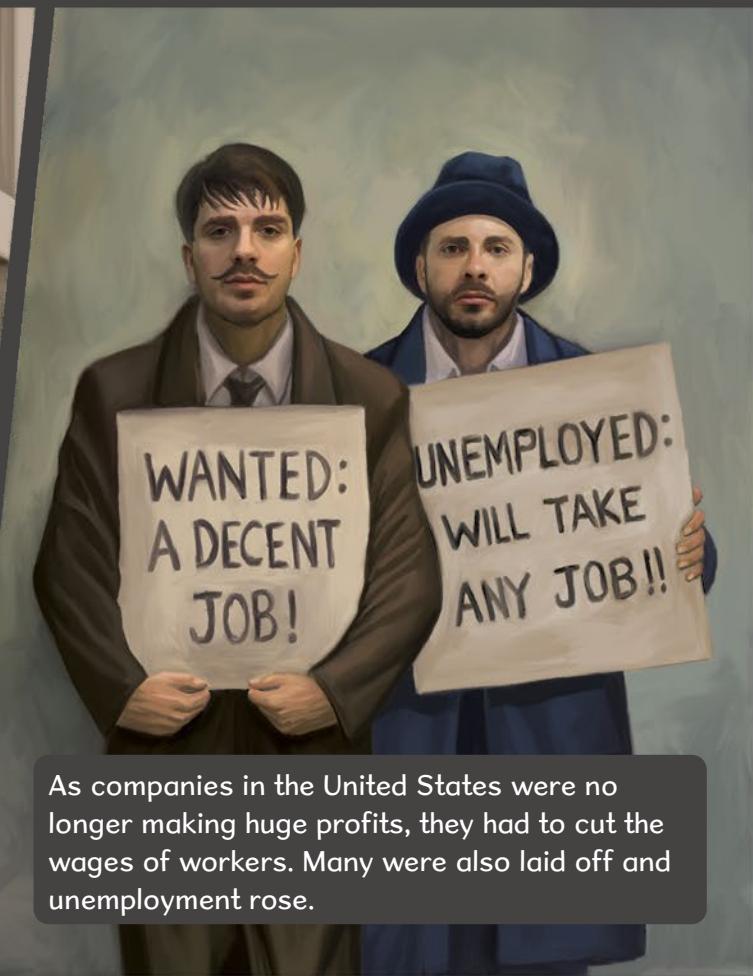
But by 1929, many companies were losing money as they were unable to sell their goods. As a result, some people decided to sell their shares. This caused share prices to fall, which led more people to sell their shares.

On 24 October 1929, share prices decreased rapidly. This led to the collapse of the New York Stock Exchange located on Wall Street. This became known as the Wall Street Crash.

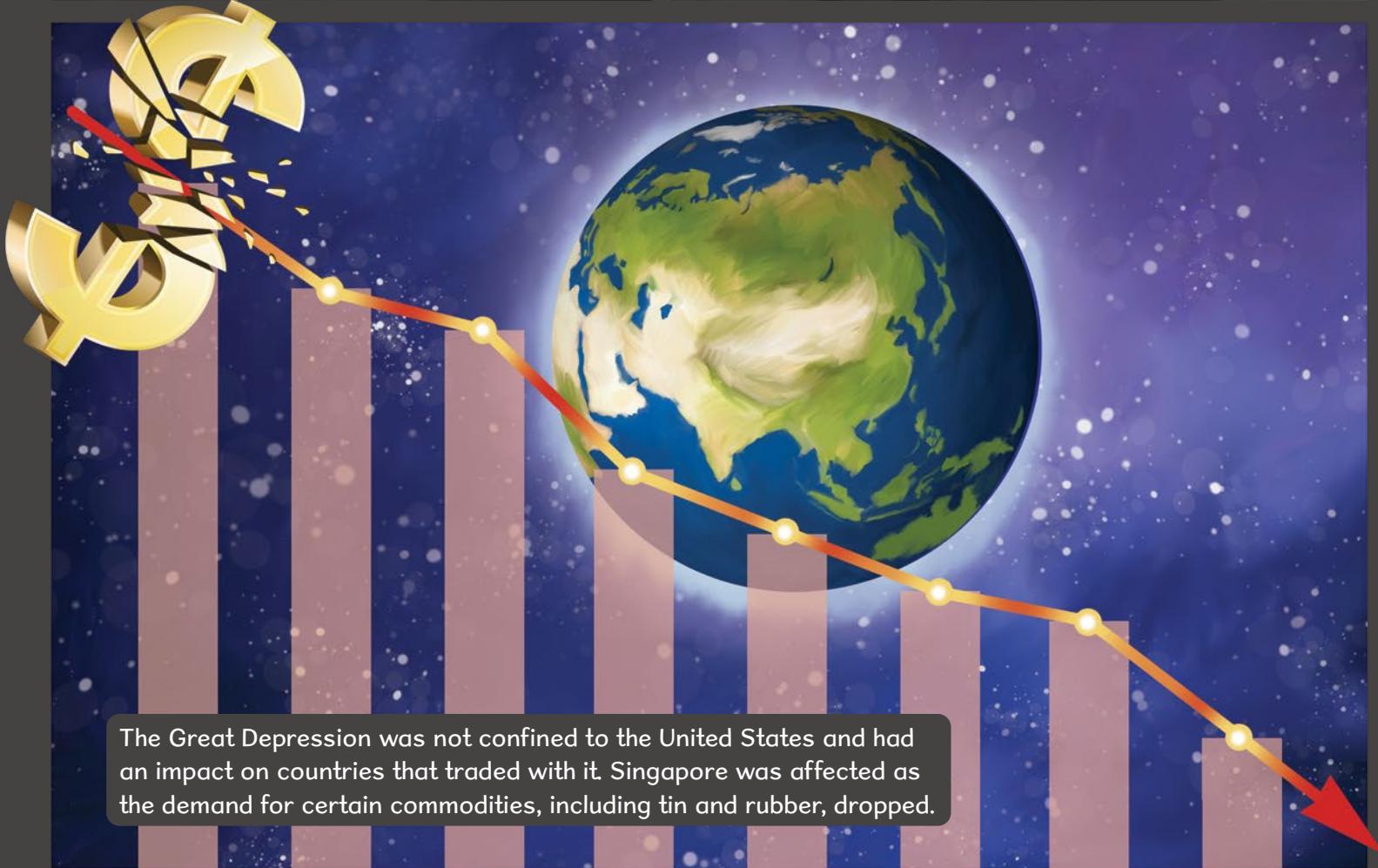
Those who had borrowed money to buy shares had to sell their belongings to pay the banks what they owed. Many tried to withdraw their savings, but some banks did not have the money to pay them and were forced to close down. As a result, many people lost their life savings.

¹⁷ A depression is a time when there is a great decrease in business activities with many people losing their jobs. The Great Depression was so named because of the impact it had on many countries around the world.

With the economic hardship, spending on goods fell drastically.



As companies in the United States were no longer making huge profits, they had to cut the wages of workers. Many were also laid off and unemployment rose.



Impact of the Great Depression on Singapore

Singapore was hit particularly hard as its economy depended largely on overseas trade, especially the export of Malayan tin and rubber to the United States market. Prior to the Great Depression, prices of tin and rubber were very high. As a result, too much tin and rubber was produced. With the economic depression, the prices of tin and rubber fell drastically as the companies that used them closed down. For instance, the price of rubber fell from an average of 34 cents in 1929 to 4.95 cents in June 1932.

The Great Depression worsened the lives of people in different communities in Singapore. Companies suffered losses and had to cut expenses by retrenching workers. Many businessmen lost their wealth or became bankrupt. There was thus widespread unemployment and hardship.

Who were most affected by the Great Depression? How did people cope? Read Source 4 to find out more about the impact of the Great Depression on the people in Singapore.



► Rubber export coupon, c. 1930s. In order to protect the rubber industry during the Great Depression, the British imposed a restriction on the export of rubber by issuing coupons which gave the owners the right to export a certain percentage of their total rubber production.

SOURCE 4

Life in Singapore during the Depression was considerably varied. Estate workers, clerks and labourers in the international economy suffered more than those in the local economy, such as government employees. Although they were a minority, people with stable employment experienced a low cost of living in the early 1930s. Those who took up work as hawkers, farmers or tutors could get by if they could survive the increased competition.

At the individual level, self-reliance, mutual help and family bonds helped people find work or obtain living expenses, food and lodging from family members and friends. The slump was difficult for large families with young and old dependents, while life was also painful for *sinkehs* with few local contacts and lone elderly persons, but their numbers were small due to emigration. More established families with members of working age could usually make ends meet.

– Adapted from an account by Singaporean historian Loh Kah Seng describing the impact of the Great Depression on people in Singapore, published in 2006

- Based on Source 4, why were some people less affected during the Great Depression than others?

It became increasingly difficult for people to find jobs. Whenever there was a job vacancy, hundreds would apply for it. Even the government had to cut the number of its workers and reduce the pay of those who remained.

Many of the unemployed had to depend on their friends or relatives. Many migrants had to return to their homelands when their friends and relatives could no longer support them.

To improve the economic situation, the government passed a series of laws from 1928 to restrict and reduce the number of migrants entering Singapore, especially unskilled male Chinese labourers. The number of Chinese migrants dropped from 242,000 in 1930 to less than 28,000 in 1933. The government also arranged for large numbers of unemployed Chinese and Indians to return to their homelands.

By 1934, business conditions in the United States and other countries had improved, so exports from Singapore began to increase again.



▲ In 1933, a new law was introduced which required new migrants to pay a fee of \$5 to obtain a landing permit (left), which had to be exchanged for a Certificate of Admission a month later. An example of a Certificate of Admission for Chinese migrants is on the right.



▲ Landing permit of a Chinese migrant, 1934

登 岸
准 證

(一) 凡領有此項准證之外籍人民于其將來再到此埠時不得根據此准證以求豁免履行一千九百三十二年(外籍人民律例)內之一切規定手續

(二) 凡領有此項准證之外籍人民無論何時均可向其居留埠之移民廳長請求將此准證轉換為入境執照而免另行繳費

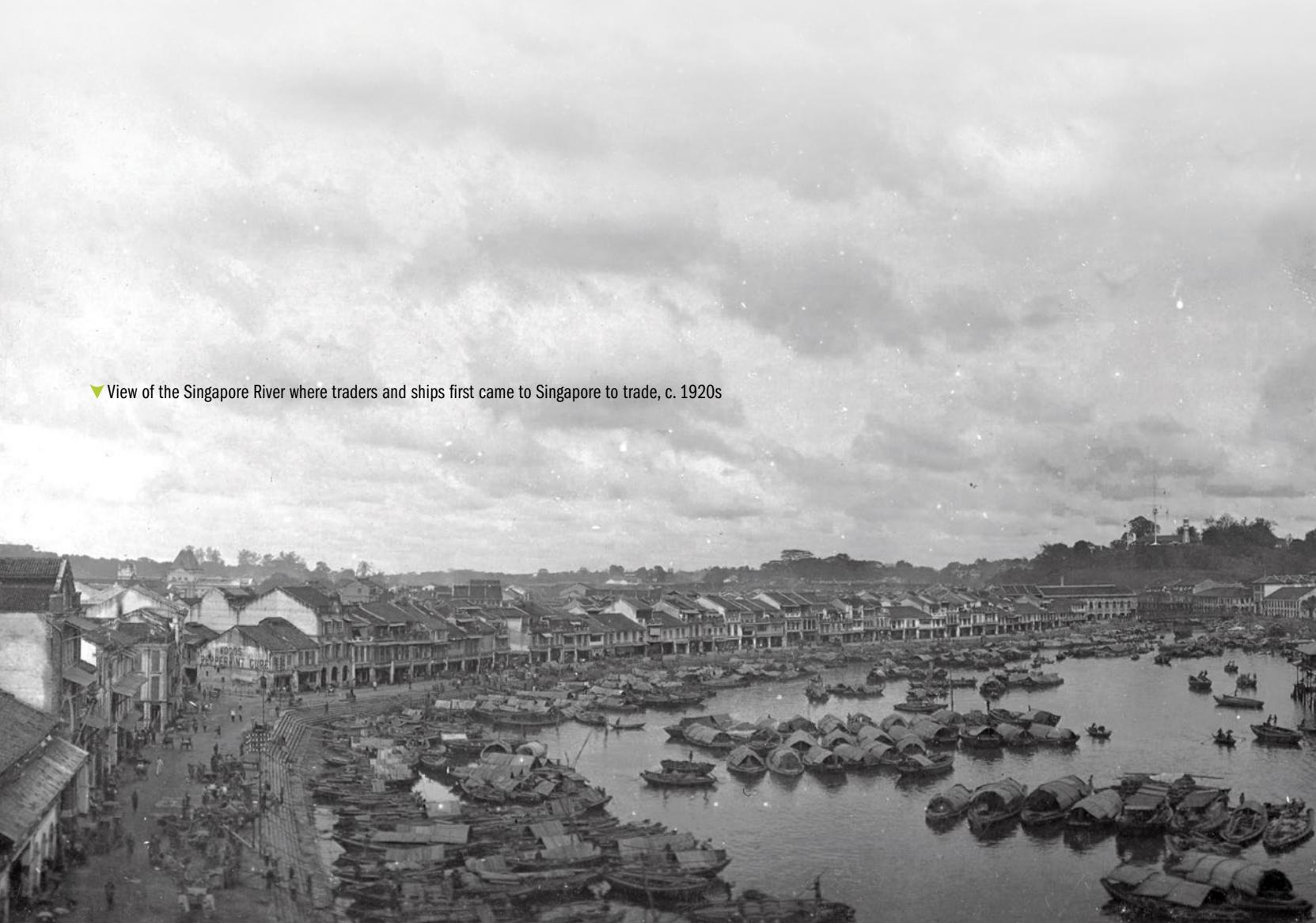
(三) 凡領有有效力之入境執照者得以豁免履行一千九百三十一年(外籍人民律例)第一編內所規定之一切手續

Conclusion

By 1942, Singapore had grown into a busy port city with considerable trading networks. Trade was at an all-time high. This was due to a combination of reasons. One was the policies implemented by the British, which provided the peace and stability necessary for trade to flourish. For example, the British expanded and modernised port facilities, which enabled Singapore to handle the increasing volume of trade. External developments, such as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the expansion of the tin and rubber industries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, also facilitated Singapore's growth.

The migrants, who had come in droves since Singapore's founding in 1819, played a crucial part in helping to develop Singapore as a port city. They provided not only trading expertise but also the labour required to build up Singapore and its networks of trade. In the following chapter, we will look more closely at the contributions of various groups of people who came to live and work in Singapore.

▼ View of the Singapore River where traders and ships first came to Singapore to trade, c. 1920s





▲ Postcard showing Boat Quay on the left and Empress Place buildings (present-day Asian Civilisations Museum) on the right, 1920s





BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Look at the picture on the right. It shows present-day Boat Quay, which is a popular entertainment spot in Singapore. Has it always been like this? What has changed? What has remained the same?

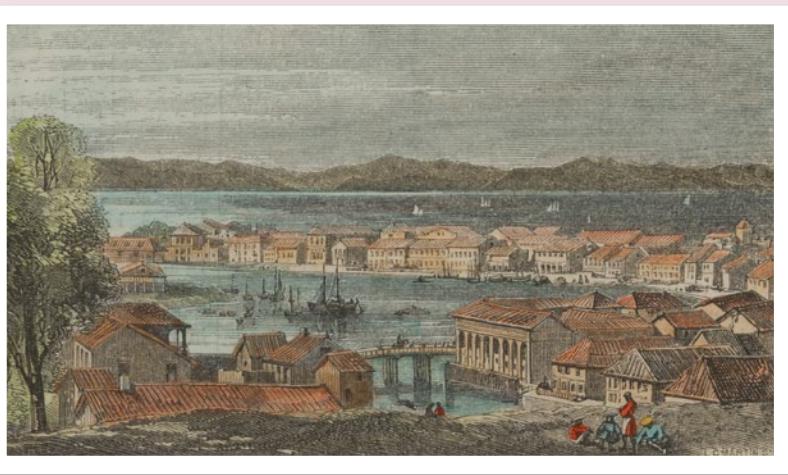
When historians study the past, they use **change and continuity** to describe or compare developments in societies across time. Understanding change and continuity helps students of history recognise that change occurs in different ways (e.g., in terms of economic activities and technology) and at different paces (e.g., gradual, slow and fast). When things remain the same, historians usually refer to them as having some form of continuity. Change and continuity can also exist together. The images below show how Boat Quay, where the Old Harbour was located, has developed over the years.

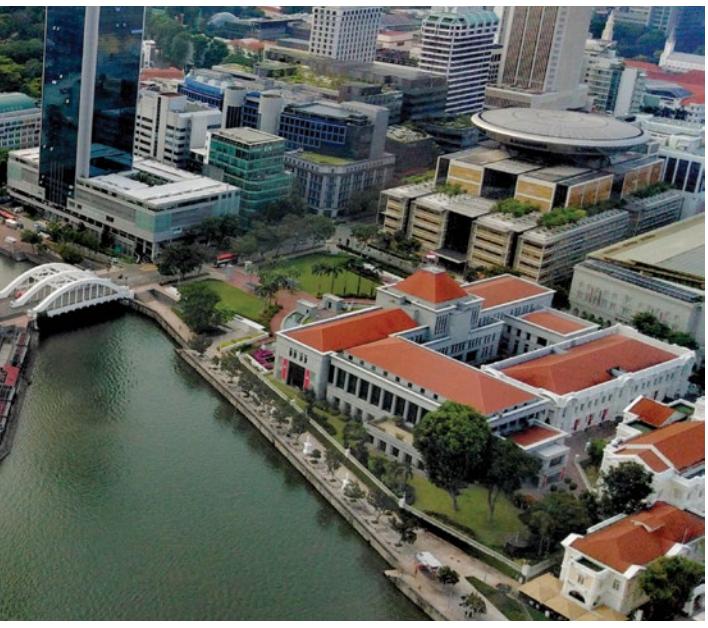


1840s

1860s

1880s





Now that you have learnt about Singapore's development from 1819 to 1942, what do you think are the types of changes that have taken place? Was there anything that you noticed that stayed the same throughout this period of time in Singapore?

◀ Present-day Boat Quay

LEARN ON THE GO

Find out more about how historians understand change and continuity @ go.gov.sg/lshc303.



1907

Early 20th century

1967





LET'S REVIEW

Use the table below to summarise what you have just learnt about how British rule and external developments helped Singapore to grow as a port city between 1819 and 1942.

How Did Singapore Grow as a Port City?	
British Rule <p>You may consider how British rule helped to develop Singapore as a port city in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• free port status• administrative changes• law and order• education• healthcare• facilities	
External Developments <p>You may consider how the following external developments impacted Singapore as a port city:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• opening of the Suez Canal• growth of the tin and rubber industries• Great Depression	



CASE INVESTIGATION

Why was law and order difficult to maintain in 19th-century Singapore?

Prior to Singapore's transfer to the Colonial Office in 1867, one of the problems faced by the government was maintaining law and order. Read the following sources to find out what some of these challenges were.

SOURCE A

Years	Number of People Living in Singapore	Number of Police Officers in Singapore
1830s	16,634	18
1840s	52,891	133
1860s	81,734	385

▲ Table showing the number of police officers in Singapore in relation to the total number of people living there (1830s–1860s). The numbers in this table are estimated.

SOURCE B

The secret societies were used by the Chinese to maintain control within their community. It was also a way to regulate the contact between the Chinese masses and the British administration. As a result, the Singapore authorities also found themselves making use of the secret societies as an instrument of government. This was because from 1826 to 1877, there was no government institution to deal directly with the Chinese population.

- Adapted from an account by British anthropologist Maurice Freedman of the Chinese community in 19th-century Singapore, published in 1960

SOURCE C

The Chinese who arrived in the Straits Settlements come from different provinces. The people of each province grouped together and formed a secret society. The aim of these secret societies is to offer mutual protection, but they are often used to commit crimes. These groups hinder the administration of justice in the law courts of the Straits Settlements.

- Adapted from an account of 19th-century Singapore by John Cameron, owner and editor of The Straits Times from 1861 to 1881, published in 1865

SOURCE D

Weak government, lack of finance, secret society power, and migrants who did not stay long made early Singapore a violent place. The hundreds of Chinese who lived on the isolated pepper and gambier farms in the countryside were beyond the reach of government. The authorities did not exert much control in the countryside. Even the town was unsafe. The main danger came from gang robberies, which were reputed to be the work of Chinese secret societies. Gangs of up to 200 Chinese raided parts of the town almost every night in the early 1840s. Their chief targets were the Malay districts, but they sometimes attacked Indians and Europeans too. The whole town lived in fear, and the tiny police force kept out of the way until the gangsters had gone.

- Adapted from an account by British historian Constance Mary Turnbull of life in Singapore in the early 1840s, published in 2009

SOURCE E

The government not only showed an ignorance of Chinese dialects but also had an unconcerned attitude towards governing Singapore. During the period of the East India Company's rule in the Straits Settlements, the primary concern of the Straits Settlements government was to increase the importance of Singapore as a trading post.

- Adapted from an account by Singaporean historian Eunice Thio of the role played by the government in early 19th-century Singapore, published in 1980

INVESTIGATE!

1. Study **Source A**. What do the figures suggest about the difficulties/challenges faced in maintaining law and order in Singapore before 1867?
2. Read **Source B**. How did the British government deal with secret societies from 1826 to 1877?
3. Read **Source C**. What did secret societies do to “hinder the administration of justice”?
4. Read **Source D**. Why was early Singapore “a violent place”?
5. Read **Source E**. What did the government in Singapore focus on during the period of the East India Company rule?

REPORT!

After reading the sources, note down the **key points for the government’s difficulty in maintaining law and order in 19th-century Singapore** in the table below. An example has been done for you.

Why Was Law and Order Difficult to Establish in 19th-Century Singapore?

Key Point	Supporting Evidence from Source(s)
The government at that time had other priorities, such as developing Singapore’s trade, compared to maintaining law and order.	Source E says that “the primary concern of the Straits Settlements government was to increase the importance of Singapore as a trading post”.

Using the points you have written down, what do you think were the key reasons for the government’s difficulties in maintaining law and order in 19th-century Singapore?



What Role Did the People in Singapore Play in Its Development as a Port City from 1819 to 1942?

In Chapter 3, you learnt about the role of the British and external events in Singapore's development as a port city. However, the new settlement also thrived because of the migrants who came from the region and beyond to live and work in Singapore. In this chapter, you will find out more about the migrants' contributions to the economy, education, healthcare and law-making that helped Singapore grow as a port city.

▼ Samsui women working at a construction site, late 1930s



Chapter at a Glance

You will learn:

- Who the different groups of people coming to Singapore from 1819 to 1942 were
- Why the migrants came
- How they helped develop Singapore into a port city





Timeline

Beyond Singapore

In Singapore

1823 1825 1826

1842 1844

The first convict labourers from India arrive in Singapore.

The East India Company (EIC) forms the Straits Settlements by grouping Penang, Melaka and Singapore together.

Singapore Institution is founded. It later becomes the Singapore Institution Free School, which offers classes in English, Chinese and Malay at the primary level. This school would eventually be known as Raffles Institution.



▲ Raffles Institution at its first site on Bras Basah Road, 1890s

Chinese Girls' School, later renamed the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (CEZMS) School is founded. This school would eventually be known as St Margaret's School.



▲ Pupils at the CEZMS School, c. 1850s

Tan Tock Seng establishes a paupers' hospital (hospital for the poor) on Pearl's Hill. This hospital would later be known as Tan Tock Seng Hospital.



▲ Painting by John Turnbull Thomson showing the Chinese Pauper Hospital on Pearl's Hill, 1848

The EIC is dissolved.
The territories under its rule come under the direct control of the British government.

1858

1867

1912

1919

1929

1942

Thong Chai Medical Institution is set up.



▲ Doctor tending to a patient at Thong Chai Medical Institution, 1890s

The Alsagoff Arab School is founded. Students are taught Arabic language and Islamic knowledge as well as reading and writing in English and Malay.



▲ Alsagoff Arab School, 1950s

The Chinese High School is founded. This school would later be known as Hwa Chong Institution.



▲ The Chinese High School on Bukit Timah Road, 1930s. The clock tower has been preserved as a national monument.

▼ Impoverished family in the US, 1936

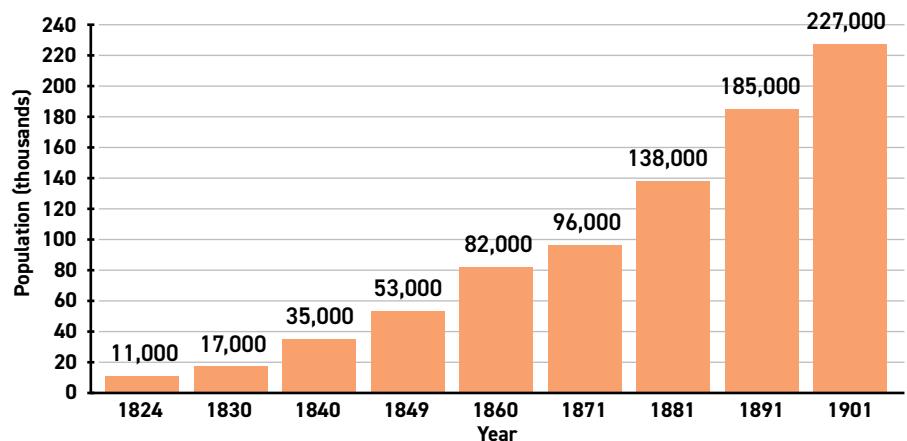


Wall Street Crash in the United States; start of the Great Depression

Japanese troops invade Singapore.

Who Were the Migrants?

Within a few years of Singapore's founding, people were flocking to it. Figure 4.1 below shows the population growth from 1824 to 1901. These figures reflect the population of both locals and migrants. What trends do you observe? Where did these groups of migrants come from?



▲ Figure 4.1: Bar graph showing the population growth in Singapore from 1824 to 1901. The population figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Population Figures from the Census Report, 1891		
People	Sub-Group (If Any)	Numbers
Europeans and Americans		5,254
Eurasians		3,589
Chinese	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cantonese• Hokkiens• Hylams (Hainanese)• Khehs (Hakkas)• Straits-born Chinese (Chinese Peranakans)• Teochews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">23,39745,8568,7117,40212,80523,737
Native Groups of the Malay Archipelago	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achehnese• Baweanese (Boyanese)• Bugis• Dyaks (Dayaks)• Javanese• Jawi Pekans (Jawi Peranakans)• Malays• Manilamen (present-day Filipinos)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">22,6771,639968,54130222,70134
Native Groups of the Colonial Territories of British India	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bengalis and other natives• Parsees• Tamils	<ul style="list-style-type: none">3,4525412,503
Other Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Africans• Annamese (present-day Vietnamese)• Arabs• Armenians• Burmese• Japanese• Jews• Persians (present-day Iranians)• Siamese (present-day Thais)• Sinhalese (present-day Sri Lankans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">133280668262871909211159

Take a look at Figure 4.2 and Map 4.1 to find out who these migrants were and where they came from.



▲ Figure 4.2: Population figures adapted from the Census Report, 1891

▼ **Map 4.1:** Map showing the places of origin of various migrants who came to Singapore in the 19th century



As you can see, migrants came to Singapore from different parts of the world. Let us find out why they did so.

Why Did Migrants Come to Singapore After 1819?

Just as it is today, it was not easy for people in the past to leave their homelands and start anew in a foreign land far away. Not only did the migrants have to brave the dangers of long-distance travel, such as shipwrecks and disease, they also faced much uncertainty about the future in the lands where they eventually settled. Thus, for migrants to come to Singapore after 1819, they had to have strong reasons for leaving their homelands, and Singapore must have had qualities which drew them here.

Push Factors

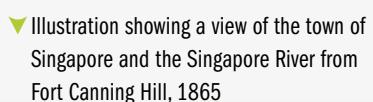
Push factors refer to unfavourable circumstances that motivate people to settle elsewhere. Many of the migrants left their homelands because of the poor living conditions. Some experienced hunger and poverty while others feared for their lives. These problems were often brought about by overpopulation, natural disasters or conflict. For example, many in China, India and Southeast Asia were affected by the unrest and instability caused by wars, rebellions and lawlessness in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The people worried about their families' and their own safety. It also became difficult for them to earn a livelihood. As a result, they left to seek more peaceful and prosperous lives elsewhere.



▲ Illustration by Vincent Brooks from a British newspaper in October 1877 showing both humans and animals affected by famine in India

Pull Factors

Pull factors are the favourable conditions that attract people to move to a new place. While push factors made people leave their homelands, pull factors attracted them to find work in Singapore. The major pull factors in the 19th and 20th centuries were trade and business opportunities, and better job prospects.



▼ Illustration showing a view of the town of Singapore and the Singapore River from Fort Canning Hill, 1865



The many trading and business opportunities available in Singapore attracted people from Europe, India, China and neighbouring countries.

With its excellent geographical location, Singapore served as a convenient meeting point for traders from many parts of the world stopping to replenish their fuel and food supplies. Taking advantage of its good location and trading networks, numerous traders came to Singapore for the many diverse goods that could be found and traded. By exchanging or selling their goods and buying local products, they were able to obtain what they needed and return home.

Singapore's free port status meant that traders did not have to pay taxes on trade. This enabled them to make larger profits in Singapore than in other ports in the region.

Singapore's free immigration policy allowed migrants to come and go as they pleased. They were not required to pay for immigrant passes and papers or apply for permission to enter and leave Singapore. This made it easier for people from China, India and the surrounding regions to come to Singapore. It also meant that traders could come as often as they liked for trade and business.

Another major pull factor was the availability of better job prospects. Different types of jobs were available because the British needed to develop roads, bridges and other **infrastructure**¹ to support the increase in port activities and provide for the growing population who had started coming in increasing numbers since Singapore's founding.

Singapore was also an attractive option for the poorer migrants because they could receive higher wages than what they received back home. Since they could come and go freely because of the free immigration policy, many did not see Singapore as a permanent home and planned to return to their homelands after earning enough money.

LEARN ON THE GO

Find out more about why people came to colonial Singapore @ go.gov.sg/lshc401.



▲ Cavenagh Bridge, c. 1890, as seen from the southern bank of the Singapore River.
The bridge was opened in 1869 to link the Civic District on the northern bank of the Singapore River to Commercial Square (present-day Raffles Place) on the southern bank.



▲ Labourers at work on a street in Chinatown, early 20th century

¹ Infrastructure refers to the basic facilities, systems and structures that are required for a place to function, such as water pipes, roads and sewage drains.



BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: DIVERSITY

When historians study the past, they need to look at **various experiences faced by different people**. This is because people may have different experiences even if they live in the same place during the same time. Studying similarities and differences in people's experiences helps historians develop a more complete understanding of the past.

People's experiences could be influenced by their occupations. Consider the **entrepreneurs**,² labourers and craftsmen in Singapore in the 19th and early 20th centuries. How would their work have shaped their experiences? How similar or different would their lives have been?

LEARN ON THE GO

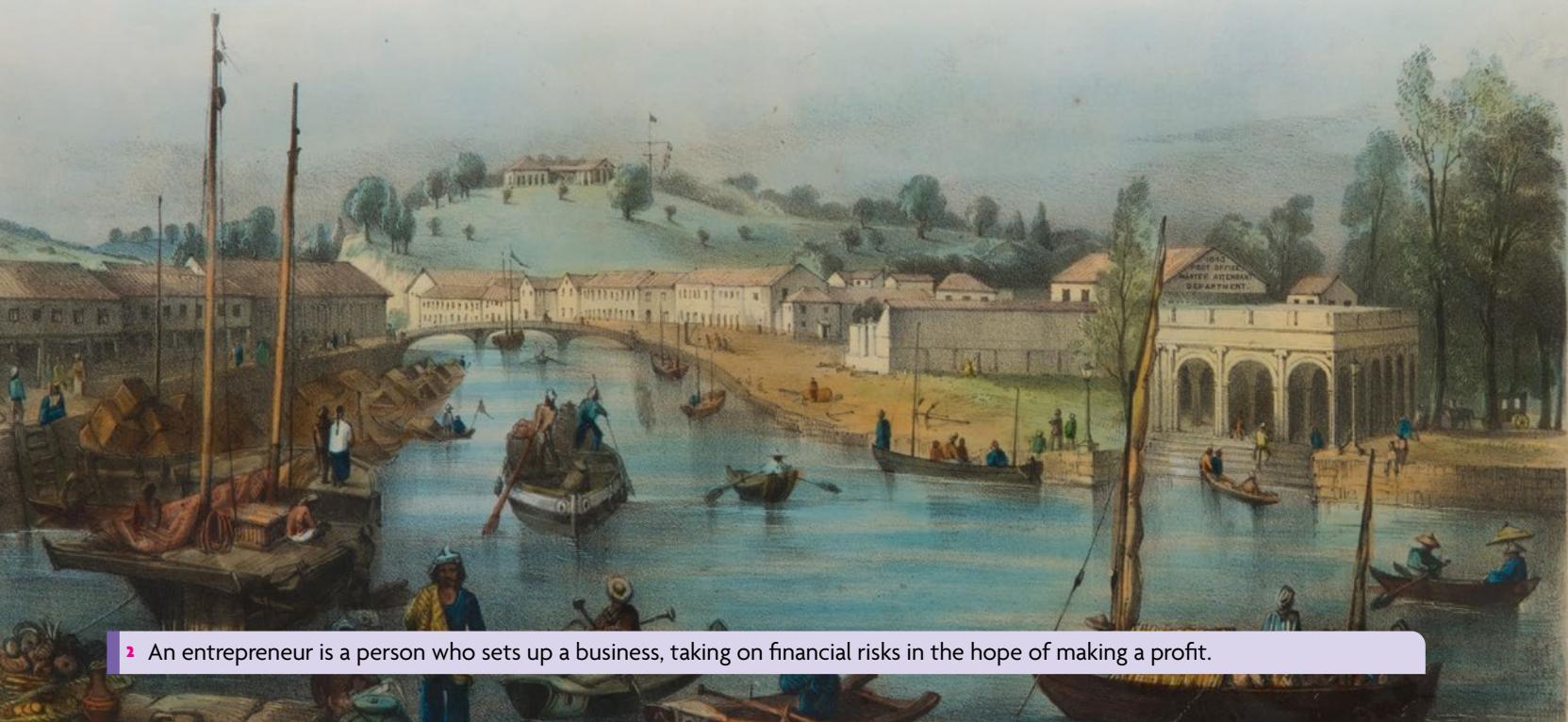
Explore the diversity of people's experiences in colonial Singapore @ go.gov.sg/lshc402.



What Were the Occupations of the Different Groups of Migrants?

Upon arriving in Singapore, one of the first concerns for the migrants was to secure their livelihoods to survive in Singapore. The hope of earning and saving enough to return in prosperity to their homelands was also on their minds. In fact, many migrants simply took up the same trade or occupation they had before coming to Singapore. Others, such as the coolies, had signed contracts to take up a job even before they left home. Regardless of where they came from, Singapore offered an opportunity for migrants to improve their lives.

▼ Hand-coloured print of Edwin Augustus Porcher's painting of Singapore River with Thomson Bridge (later replaced by an iron bridge named Elgin Bridge), 1851



² An entrepreneur is a person who sets up a business, taking on financial risks in the hope of making a profit.

Entrepreneurs

Traders

When Singapore was founded, the first group of people who came were the traders. Many traders were attracted by the favourable trade policies. These traders engaged in commercial activities along the Singapore River. Boat Quay became the busiest part of the river, with many shophouses and warehouses lining the riverbank.

Some Europeans also set up **agency houses**³ here. In return for their services, they received a **commission**.⁴ Some of these agency houses include A. L. Johnston & Company (established in 1820 by Alexander Laurie Johnston) and Boustead & Company (established in 1828 by Edward Boustead).



▲ Sculpture of Alexander Laurie Johnston by Aw Tee Hong located at Maybank Tower in Raffles Place, the site of Johnston's former warehouse



▲ Edward Boustead

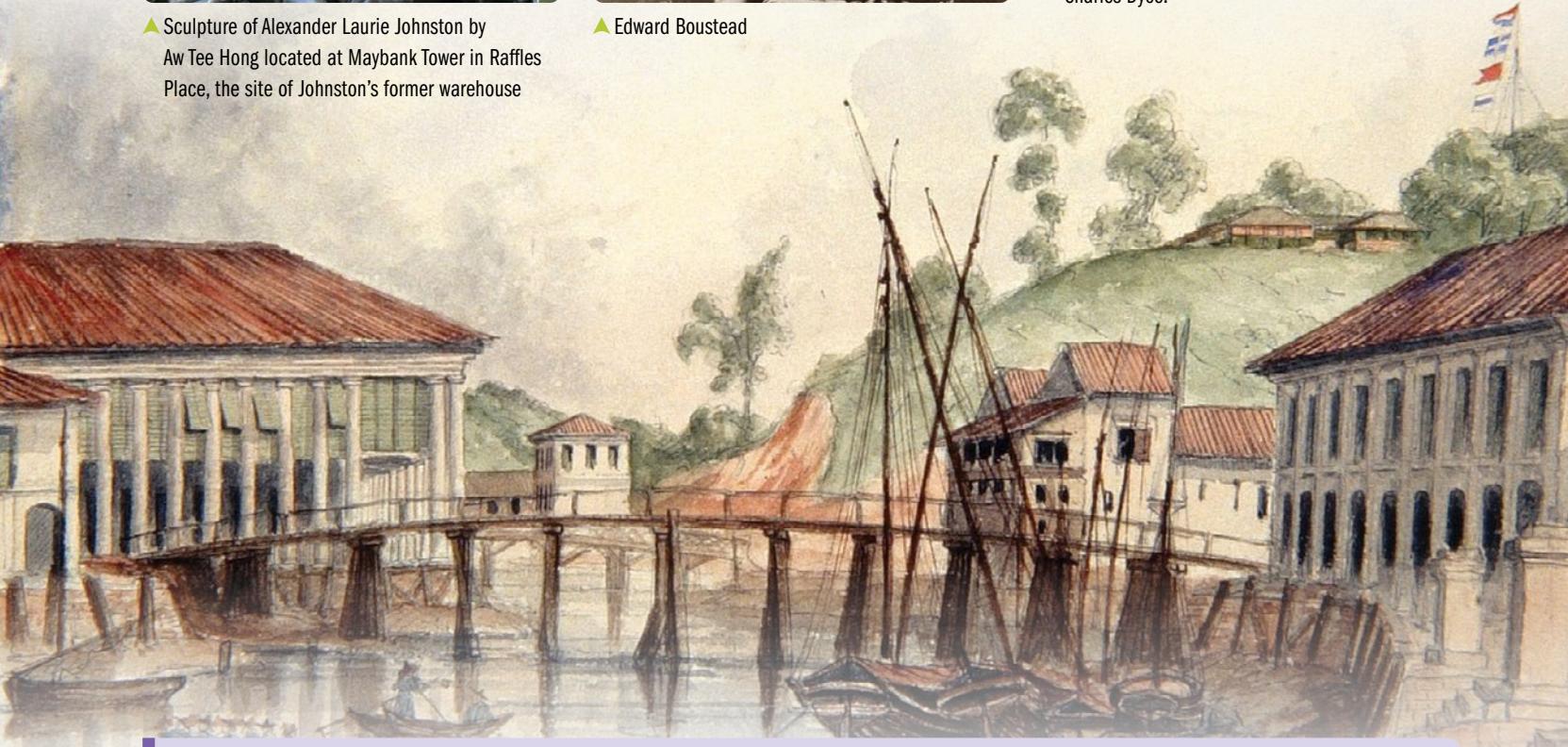
DID YOU KNOW?

Upon his death in 1888, Boustead left a sum of money to construct a building for sailors living in Singapore. The building, named after Boustead, was opened in 1892 by the Governor of the Straits Settlements. In the late 1970s, it was demolished for port expansion works.



▲ Boustead Institute on Anson Road, early 20th century

▼ Edward Boustead's warehouse is the large building on the left of this 1847 watercolour sketch by Charles Dyce.



³ Agency houses were companies that helped European manufacturers to sell their goods, such as opium and tea, to other traders in exchange for goods from Southeast Asia, such as spices and birds' nests.

⁴ A commission refers to the fee for the service of selling a good. It is usually a percentage of the cost of the good.

The Europeans who set up the agency houses often had difficulty dealing with Asian traders because of their differences in language. Thus, the Chinese Peranakans, who could speak English, Malay and Chinese dialects, played a significant role in facilitating communication between the European and Asian traders.

Several Chinese Peranakans even set up their own trading businesses in Singapore. Among them was Melakan-born Tan Kim Seng, who became one of the most well-known members of the Chinese community during the colonial period.



▲ Tan Kim Seng



◀ This silver epergne (ornamental table centrepiece) carries the following inscription: "... to Tan Kim Seng and Tan Beng Swee [son of Tan Kim Seng] of Singapore as a mark of esteem and friendship, and in acknowledgement of the many and valuable services rendered to himself personally as well as to his firm (Boustead & Co. of Singapore) ... , January 1862."

Apart from the European agency houses and Chinese traders, many traders from various parts of the Malay Archipelago were also attracted by Singapore's free port status. One trader who arrived in the 1800s was Melakan-born Hajjah Fatimah Sulaiman. Having lost her husband at a young age, she continued and expanded his business in Singapore, gaining great wealth in the process.

Yet another trader who came shortly after Singapore's founding was Naraina Pillai. He was an Indian trader from Penang who started a factory in Singapore to produce bricks. He also had a cotton cloth business, which later grew to become one of the largest in Singapore. Other Indian traders, particularly from Penang, soon followed. By the early 1870s, there were substantial numbers of Indian traders, including Wassiamull Assomull. He was a textile trader with extensive trading connections outside of India and became very prosperous by the end of the 19th century.



DID YOU KNOW?

Hajjah Fatimah Sulaiman was formally admitted to the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame in 2005 for her many contributions to Singapore.



▲ Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, completed in 1846

◀ In 1827, Naraina Pillai established Singapore's oldest Hindu temple, the Sri Mariamman Temple on South Bridge Road. This picture was taken around 1905.

The Bugis were also attracted by Singapore's free port status. They had been trading in the region long before the Europeans arrived. However, after the Dutch took control of the East Indies and its trade routes, they imposed taxes on traders. This affected the spice trade of the Bugis, who traditionally used these trade routes. When Singapore became a free port, it thus attracted vast numbers of Bugis ships. By the beginning of the 20th century, several hundred Bugis traders and their families had moved to Singapore. One of the most prominent Bugis traders was Haji Omar Ali, who arrived in Singapore from the Dutch East Indies in 1880 and subsequently owned many properties in Singapore. His youngest son, Haji Ambo Sooloh, expanded his father's business and later became one of the founders of the Malay newspaper *Utusan Melayu* (Malay Messenger) in 1939.

▼ Kampong Bugis, one of the places where the Bugis settled after they landed in Singapore, c. 1890s

Who were THE BUGIS?



The Bugis were among the first few groups of people to arrive in Singapore in 1819. They originally came from the southwestern peninsula of Celebes (present-day Sulawesi in Indonesia).

The Bugis were an important seafaring people in Southeast Asia who were well known for their maritime trading and boatbuilding skills. When they first landed in Singapore, they settled in Kampong Glam, Kampong Bugis and later Kampong Rochor (the area around present-day Lavender MRT station). Landmarks such as Bugis Street and Bugis MRT station are reminders of the Bugis' links to these areas.



▲ Bugis sailor aboard his ship, 1950s



The presence of the Bugis in Singapore in turn attracted Arab and Indian traders from the Middle East and India. This was due to the Bugis' close ties with the Arab and Indian trade networks in Southeast Asia.

The Arabs were also attracted to Singapore as a commercial entrepôt. Many of the Arabs in Southeast Asia originated from Hadhramaut in southern Arabia. They had been active traders in Southeast Asia since the 7th century.

Among the first Arab traders to arrive in Singapore shortly after its founding were Syed Omar bin Ali Aljunied and his uncle, Syed Mohammed bin Harun (Haroon) Aljunied, two wealthy Hadhrami Arabs from Sumatra. They were soon followed by numerous others who set sail from parts of Malaya, Sumatra and Java.

In the latter part of the 19th century, another wave of Arabs came from Hadhramaut to Singapore. This included the Alkaff brothers, Ahmad and Abdul, who established their company, Alkaff & Company, in the 1860s. This was partly due to the increased use of steamships and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 (see Chapter 3), which made the journey easier.

Records show that in the 1880s, there were as many as 800 Arabs living in Singapore, mainly concentrated in the area around Arab, Baghdad, Bussorah, Jeddah and Muscat Streets. By the 1930s, the Arab community had become one of the largest property owners in Singapore, with an estimated 80 per cent of the Arabs' primary income coming from rent.

▼ The Alkaff Arcade, the first indoor shopping centre in Singapore when it opened in 1909, at Raffles Place, c. 1920s. The Alkaff family owned many properties along the Singapore River and was one of the wealthiest families in colonial Singapore.



DID YOU KNOW?

Syed Omar bin Ali Aljunied donated one of his many plots of land for the building of St Andrew's Church (now known as St Andrew's Cathedral) in 1823. Later, he also donated land to Tan Tock Seng in 1844 for the construction of a hospital for the poor, known as Tan Tock Seng Hospital today.

▼ Sultan Mosque, located at the corner of Arab Street and North Bridge Road, c. 1930

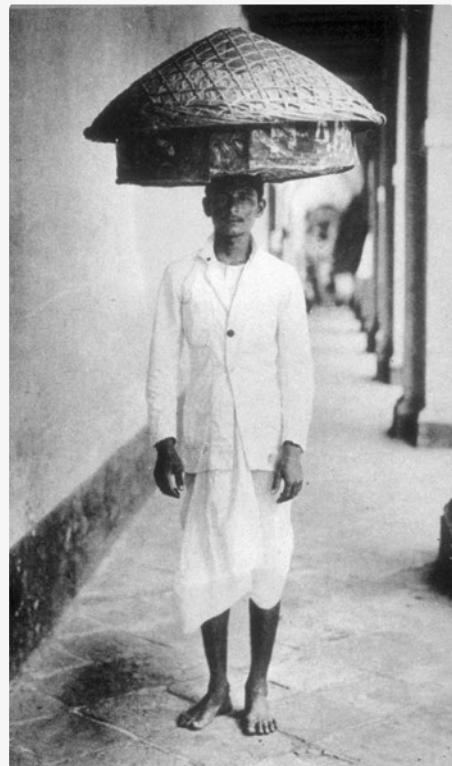


Street Traders

Another group of traders were street traders. There were many different types of street traders. Food traders, who sold quick and cheap meals to the coolies and other workers, formed the largest group. There were also small-scale farmers, fishermen and hunters who sold food products they had grown or caught in the streets and markets. Yet another group of street traders sold items such as sandals, brooms and towels, while street barbers and cobblers, who provided haircutting and shoe-mending services to the community, made up the last group of street traders.



▲ Chinese street traders, c. 1920s



▲ Indian bread seller, c. 1910s



▲ Malay satay seller, 1900s

Moneylenders

As Singapore grew as an entrepôt, it attracted Indians skilled in trade, accounting, banking and credit. These skills were in high demand due to the commercial activities carried out in the port city.

One particularly influential group was the Chettiar, or Indian moneylenders. They arrived from the 1820s onwards and operated in the Singapore River area. Different groups of traders would borrow money from these moneylenders as very few banks would lend them money. In this way, the Chettiar contributed to Singapore's commercial importance.



Chettiar moneylender, c. 1890 ▶

Labourers

Male Coolies

Labourers, or coolies, made up a large group of the migrants. Many were Chinese men who came to Singapore in the latter half of the 19th century. They provided much-needed labour as workers were needed to load and unload goods at the ports, and carry goods to and from boats and warehouses situated along the Singapore River. There were also large numbers of Indian labourers recruited to the Straits Settlements, especially from 1867 to 1941, to help in the development of the port city. These labourers worked at the various plantations in Singapore and Malaya, and helped to build roads, railways and harbour facilities.

Coolies were also heavily involved in coaling, or the loading of coal onto steamships, which was a messy and tiring job. This was an essential service required by major shipping companies. The coolies' hard work helped Singapore gain a reputation for efficiency.

As trade grew, more coolies were brought in. In addition to their work at the ports, they were employed in construction work while others cleared land for plantations. Some became rickshaw pullers, who played an important role in providing an inexpensive means of transport for a wide range of people, such as European businessmen, local street traders and even school-going children.

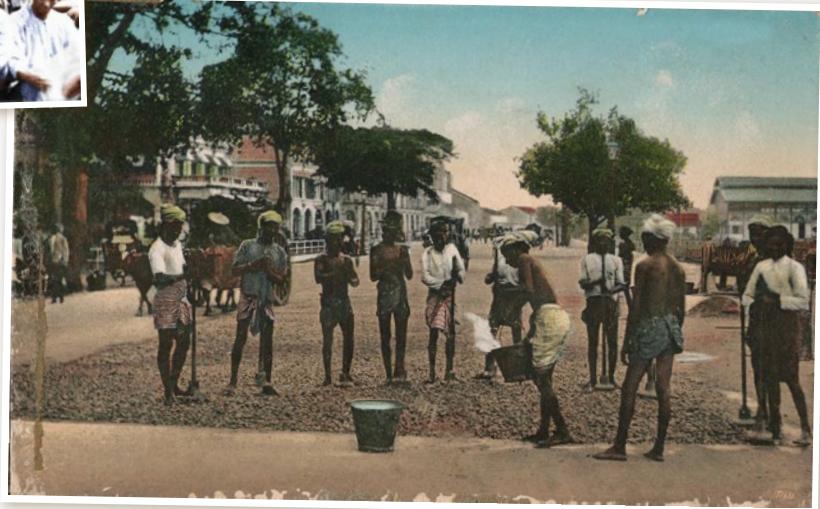


◀ Chinese migrant workers at a rubber plantation, late 19th century.
The original photograph was in black and white. Colour has been added to it digitally in recent times to enhance its effect.



▲ A European man, his servant and a rickshaw puller, c. 1890s

Indian labourers repairing a road in Singapore, c. 1910 ▶



DID YOU KNOW?

Life as a rickshaw puller was very tough. The job was physically demanding as each coolie had to carry a few hundred kilograms of weight every day to various parts of the city. Rickshaw pullers also faced occasional danger as some were stabbed or beaten to death for either moving too slowly or protesting over the underpayment of the agreed fees for the rickshaw ride. For a day's work, each rickshaw puller earned around 30 to 40 cents. To make ends meet, many had to take on additional jobs either as labourers or shop workers.

Samsui Women

Manual labour was borne not only by the men. From the 1930s onwards, it was common to see women in bright red headdresses and dark clothes on construction sites. The work they did was physically demanding. For example, they had to balance heavy pails of cement on the two ends of a stick slung across their shoulders. These female labourers were known as Samsui women because many came from the Sanshui (Samsui in Cantonese) district in Guangdong province, China (see Map 4.2).

DID YOU KNOW?

The Samsui women wore red headdresses as they were eye-catching and reduced the chances of accidents occurring at construction sites. These headdresses also protected their hair from dust and dirt. In addition, the women used discarded rubber tyres to make sandals that protected their feet when they worked at the construction sites.



▲ Map 4.2: Map showing the location of Sanshui, where many of the Samsui women originated



▲ Building Site / Samsui Women by Liu Kang, 1951



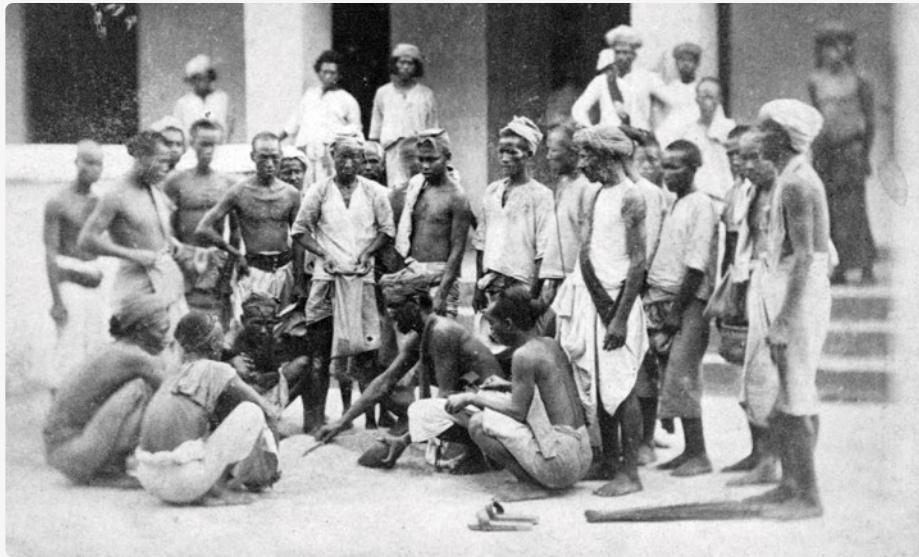
▲ Samsui woman working in a construction yard, late 1930s

Convict Labourers

From 1825 to 1873, the main source of labour for public works in Singapore was Indian convicts brought over by the British.

Due to the scarcity of labour in the new colony, there was plenty of work for the convicts. They were tasked to clear jungles, sweep the streets, lay the earliest roads, tend the town's gardens and parks, and construct buildings.

Some notable roads and buildings constructed by Indian convict labourers include High Street, the first street in Singapore, and many of the important government buildings there. The nearby St Andrew's Church (now known as St Andrew's Cathedral) was also built by convict labourers trained in construction work.



▲ Indian convict labourers, 1870s

▼ Part of the convict jail located between Bras Basah and Stamford Roads, c. 1870

DID YOU KNOW?

Indian convicts who came to Singapore were divided into six different classes. For example, there was a small group of convicts (male and female) who were employed in hospitals and public offices. Some of these convicts brought with them specialist knowledge. For example, Bawajee Rajaram from Bombay (present-day Mumbai) drew plans for public buildings such as the St Andrew's Cathedral. Convicts were also engaged in varied tasks from making bricks to taking photographs of their fellow inmates.



▲ Bricks from an archaeological excavation at the Cathedral of Good Shepherd in 2013. The excavation showed the remains of what might have been originally part of the convict jail located on Bras Basah Road.

Think!

What do you think happened to these convict labourers after they had completed their work in Singapore?



Craftsmen

Boatmakers

Some communities, such as the Bugis, were engaged in boatmaking. The Bugis were skilled in building ships and boats that Malay traders used to ferry goods to neighbouring islands. They thus established a thriving shipbuilding industry and Bugis trading vessels, such as the *phinisi* (sailing ships), could be found transporting goods along the Singapore River.

▼ Scaled replica of a Bugis *phinisi* on display at the Malay Heritage Centre



► Modern-day picture showing the construction of the frame of a Bugis *phinisi*

▼ Artist's impression of a fleet of Bugis *phinisi*. These ships were small but fast on water.



Now that you know what the various communities did in Singapore, what do you think life was like for them? Read the following sources to find out more about how they felt after arriving in Singapore in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

SOURCE 1

On my first day of arrival in Singapore as a child, I felt like I was a **fish out of water**.^{*} Everything was new to me. I couldn't understand people who talked to me because they sounded different. They were all speaking with a different accent, which was different from mine. The people living here also spoke a mixture of Malay words with their own languages. I could not understand what they were saying. I could not understand sentences such as "*Lu suka ki pasar bo?*".[†]

The people here were so different. Among the Chinese, there were people from different provinces who spoke different dialects that were completely different from mine, such as the Hainanese. Then there were also so many other races, speaking languages I had never heard, and wearing different clothes.

- Adapted from an account by Low Cheng Gin, whose family was forced by bandit attacks to leave his village in China in 1925. He had never left his village before coming to Singapore at the age of 10.

* "A fish out of water" is a phrase indicating a person is away from his or her usual environment.

† The sentence is a mix of Hokkien and Malay, and means "Do you like to go to the market?".

SOURCE 2

It was very difficult to get a job in the early 1930s, unless you had a lot of experience and recommendations from friends. I got a job eventually only because one of my friends recommended me to the Singapore Traction Company. Otherwise, I couldn't get one because everywhere you went, you would see a "NO VACANCY" signboard. I was quite disappointed, you know. My uncle told me, "If you come to Singapore, you can easily get a job, you know." But when I came here I could not find any jobs.

- Adapted from an account by Palanivelu Natesan, who came to Singapore in June 1930 during the Great Depression. Natesan eventually found work as a clerk with the Singapore Traction Company and later worked as a radio broadcasting assistant.



◀ Singapore Traction Company (STC) trolley bus, 1950s. Trolley buses, which replaced trams as the main mode of transport in Singapore in the late 1920s, were run mainly by the STC.

SOURCE 3

Singapore is certainly the most convenient city I ever saw, as well planned and carefully executed as though built entirely by one man. It is like a big desk, full of drawers and pigeonholes, where everything has its place, and can always be found in it. For instance, around the Esplanade [present-day Padang], you find the European hotels; around Commercial Square [present-day Raffles Place] are all the shipping offices, warehouses, and shops of the European traders; and along Boat Quay are all the ship chandlers [people who deal in supplies and equipment for ships]. Nearby, you will find a dozen large Chinese medicine shops, cloth shops, tin shops, and shops kept by blacksmiths, tailors and carpenters. There are also people selling fruit, vegetables and grain. Owing to this peculiar grouping of the different trades, one can do more business in less time in Singapore than in any other town in the world.

- Adapted from an account by American zoologist William Temple Hornaday, who spent two years travelling around India, Sri Lanka, the Malay Peninsula, Singapore and Borneo collecting animal specimens. This account was taken from his book, Two Years in the Jungle, published in 1885, which was inspired by his travels.

1. According to Sources 1, 2 and 3, what were the different experiences of the three men in Singapore?
2. Why do you think their experiences were different?

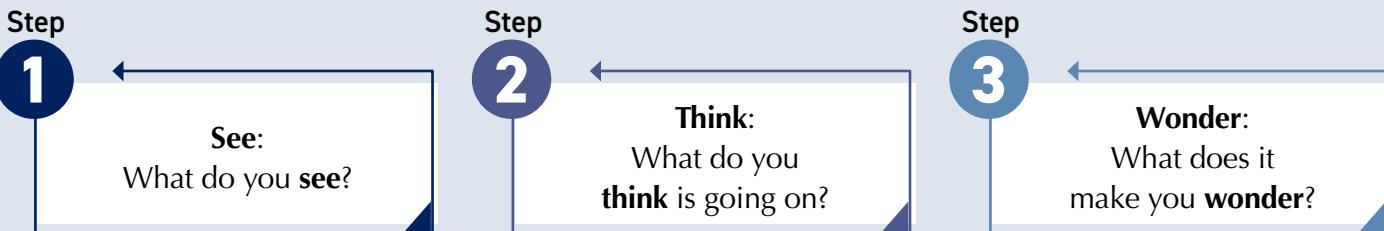
▼ Hotel de l'Europe at the Esplanade (present-day Padang), c. 1910s. This hotel was first built in the 1850s and later rebuilt in the 1910s. The hotel was then demolished in the 1930s to make way for the former Supreme Court building (today part of the National Gallery Singapore).





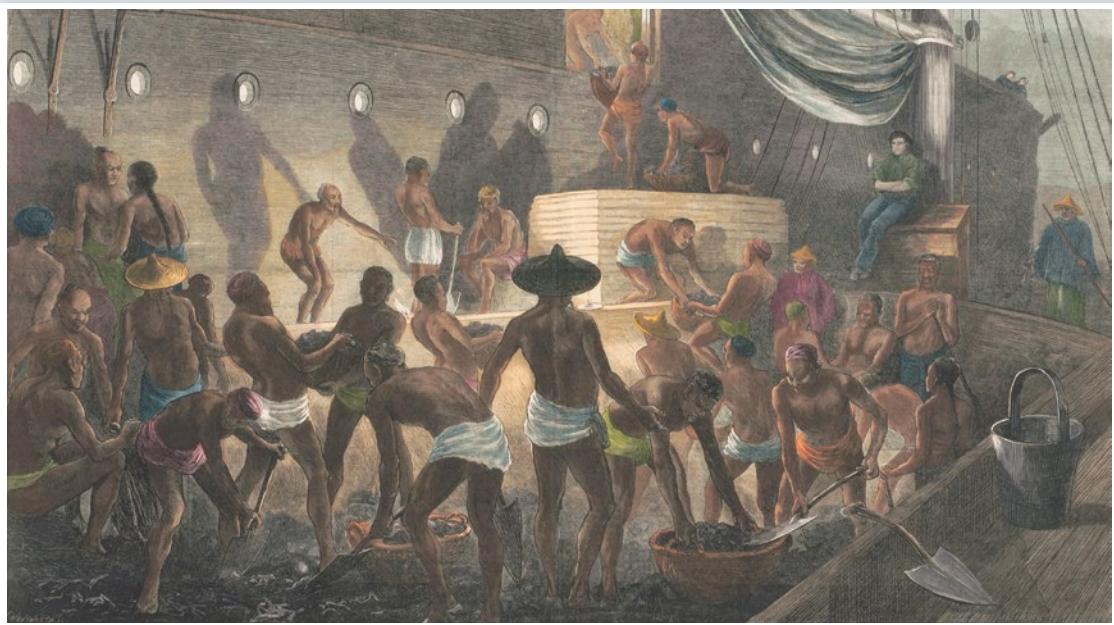
LEARN A SKILL: ANALYSING IMAGES

When examining images, such as photographs or illustrations, study them in detail and search for clues within the images to help you understand what they are trying to show. Use the three-step process of **See-Think-Wonder** to guide you. Look at the steps below.



Here is an example of how the **See-Think-Wonder** process can be used to analyse an image.

Example



► Illustration of labourers working on a steamship, published in *Illustrated London News*, a weekly British newspaper, 18 January 1873

1 What do you see?	2 What do you think is going on?	3 What does it make you wonder?
What details do you see in the image?	What do you think might be going on in the image? (You may tap on your contextual knowledge about this topic.)	What additional questions/thoughts do you have regarding this image?
<i>I see ...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• many labourers;• labourers working at night;• labourers working on a steamship;• a seated man with folded arms;• another seated man resting his chin on his hand; and• the shadows of some of the labourers on the side of the ship.	<i>I think ...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the labourers worked in cramped conditions to deliver coal supplies to the steamship;• the labourers were closely supervised to ensure that they completed the loading of coal supplies on time; and• life for the labourers was difficult as they had to do back-breaking work.	<i>I wonder ...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• why the labourers were working at night;• how the labourers were paid for their labour; and• if this image is representative of the lives of the labourers working in Singapore at the time.

Now, use the three-step process to analyse the following image.



▲ Photograph of labourers at work on a street in Chinatown, c. 1900s



1 What do you see?	2 What do you think is going on?	3 What does it make you wonder?
What details do you see in the image?	What do you think might be going on in the image? (You may tap on your contextual knowledge about this topic.)	What additional questions/thoughts do you have regarding this image?
<i>I see ...</i>	<i>I think ...</i>	<i>I wonder ...</i>

What Educational Opportunities and Healthcare Services Were Provided by the Migrants?

The promotion of trade was the main priority for the British authorities in Singapore. Thus, the welfare of the general population was not a primary focus of the British. Healthcare services and educational opportunities provided by the British were therefore inadequate to meet the needs of the people. In response, some migrants helped fund educational and healthcare provisions for the larger community in Singapore.

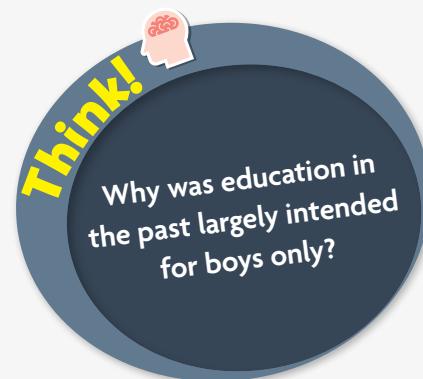
Education

In Chapter 3, you learnt that the British only ran schools that supported their economic interests and to fill certain government positions. They provided few other educational opportunities even till the early part of the 20th century. Various people and organisations thus stepped in to fill the gap, establishing schools that benefitted their communities.

Prior to 1900, schools were largely intended for boys. There were very few schools for girls, except those run by Christian missions that took in orphaned and homeless girls. For example, Maria Dyer, an English missionary, started one of the earliest schools for such girls. Originally called Chinese Girls' School, then later Church of England Zenana Missionary School (present-day St Margaret's School), it began as a home for young Chinese girls rescued by the police before they could be sold off. Read Source 4 to find out more about it.



▲ Artist's impression of Maria Dyer



SOURCE 4

St Margaret's School, Singapore's oldest school for girls, was established in 1842 by missionary Maria Dyer. It began as a missionary effort to save *mui tsai* ("little sister" in Cantonese), or bonded domestic servants. In 1842, Maria and her husband, Samuel Dyer of the London Missionary Society, were transiting in Singapore on their way to do missionary work in China when Maria was moved by the plight of these girls. So she obtained permission to house these homeless girls and began the work of teaching these girls English, the Christian faith and home economics. It was the first school for girls in Singapore established in a time when the education of women was considered unimportant.

- Adapted from an online account of Singapore's oldest school for girls

1. What motivated Maria Dyer to establish a school for girls in Singapore in the 1840s?
2. Why was the establishment of a school for girls unusual at this point of time in Singapore?

Wealthy Chinese traders also built schools to provide Chinese education in Singapore. Among them was Tan Kim Seng, who opened two Hokkien schools, one near Thian Hock Keng Temple in Telok Ayer Street and the other in Amoy Street.

Another Chinese trader, Gan Eng Seng, founded the Anglo-Chinese Free School (present-day Gan Eng Seng School) in 1885. At that time, it was the only school in Singapore that taught both Chinese and English. In the Chinese schools, the teachers would use dialects such as Hokkien, Cantonese and Teochew to teach students to recite passages from Chinese literature. Students also learnt to write letters and to use the abacus.

Other Chinese businessmen and organisations also started building schools in the 20th century. For example, in 1915, the Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan established a school for girls called Chong Hock Girls' School (present-day Chongfu School) that was situated beside Thian Hock Keng Temple on Telok Ayer Street. The first Chinese secondary school for boys – the Chinese High School (present-day Hwa Chong Institution) – was started by a group of rich businessmen led by Tan Kah Kee in 1919.

Some Malay schools were also built by wealthy individuals in the early 20th century. For example, the Alsagoff Arab School (Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah) was founded in 1912 with the help of Syed Mohamed bin Ahmed Alsagoff. Students were taught Arabic language and Islamic knowledge as well as reading and writing in English and Malay.

Schools were also set up by organisations such as the Ramakrishna Mission in the early 20th century. For example, they established schools that taught students in both English and Tamil.

Some other schools, such as Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, Raffles Institution and St Joseph's Institution, were also set up in the 19th century by various individuals and organisations. See Map 4.3 on the following two pages for the early locations of these schools.



▲ Students at the Chinese Free School on Amoy Street, c. 1905. The Chinese Free School was established in 1854 and funded by Tan Kim Seng.



▲ Gan Eng Seng



▲ Syed Mohamed bin Ahmed Alsagoff



▲ Alsagoff Arab School on Jalan Sultan

◀ Staff and students at the Ramakrishna Mission Tamil School, first half of the 20th century

Tao Nan School (present-day Peranakan Museum)

Founded

1906

Founder

Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan



▲ Tao Nan School on Armenian Street, 1910

Raffles Girls' School

Founded

1879

Founding Principal

Miss M. Nelson



▲ Raffles Girls' School on Queen Street, c. 1928

Anglo-Chinese School (present-day Singapore Philatelic Museum)

Founded

1886

Founder

Reverend William Fitzjames Oldham



▲ Anglo-Chinese School at the foot of Fort Canning,
c. 1890

Fort Canning Park

Bras Basah Road

Stamford Road

Armenian Street

Hill Street

Canning Rise

▲ Map 4.3: Present-day map showing the locations of some of the early schools in Singapore

Catholic High School

Founded
1935

Founder
Reverend Father Edward Becheras



▲ Catholic High School on Queen Street, c. 1936

St Joseph's Institution (present-day Singapore Art Museum)

Founded
1852

Founder
John Baptist de La Salle



▲ St Joseph's Institution on Bras Basah Road, c. 1910

Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (present-day CHIJMES)

Founded
1854

Founder
Blessed Nicolas Barré



▲ Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus on Bras Basah Road, c. 1910

Raffles Institution (site of present-day Raffles City)

Founded
1823

Founder
Sir Stamford Raffles



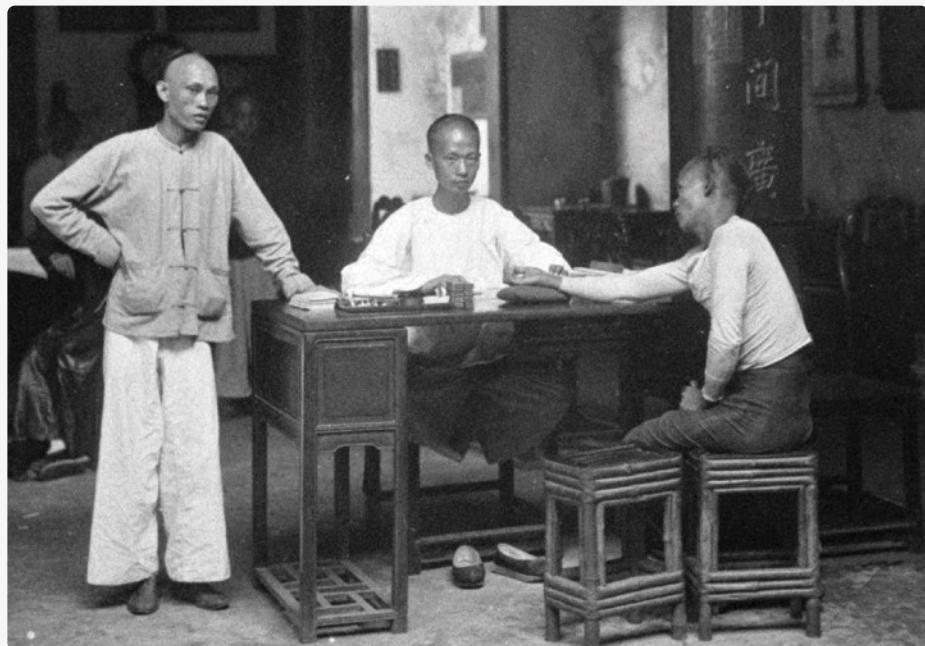
▲ Raffles Institution on Bras Basah Road, c. 1920



Healthcare

Lack of nutrition, poor sanitation and overcrowding meant that diseases such as malaria, cholera, typhoid, smallpox and tuberculosis were common among migrants. Many of the sick lay on the road with sores on their bodies, too weak to move. When they died, their bodies were left on the roads.

The government did little to provide healthcare and related social services for the public. Thus, various local groups took it upon themselves to develop self-help organisations instead of relying on the government to address this issue. For example, Gan Eng Seng, whom we read about earlier, led the establishment of Thong Chai Medical Institution in the latter part of the 19th century. This institution ran a clinic to give free treatment and free medicine to poor people of all races.



▲ The former Thong Chai Medical Institution on Eu Tong Sen Street has been preserved as a national monument.

◀ Doctor tending to a patient at Thong Chai Medical Institution, 1890s

▼ Patients at Thong Chai Medical Institution, c. 1890s



Other successful businessmen, motivated by the desire to help the less fortunate, donated large sums of money to provide medical services and amenities. This included building water wells for the community and ensuring that the poor had proper burials after they passed away. Among these businessmen was Tan Tock Seng, who constructed a hospital for the poor using land donated by Syed Omar bin Ali Aljunied. Read Source 5 to find out more about what he did for the people in Singapore.



▲ Tan Tock Seng

SOURCE 5

Health conditions in the 19th century were very bad. The poor and sick were given little access to medical treatment. Tan, an immigrant of Fujian descent from Melaka who became a wealthy trader in Singapore, offered to donate \$5,000 to set up a hospital for the poor. On 25 May 1844, the foundation stone for Tan's hospital was laid on Pearl's Hill. The hospital was first called Chinese Pauper* Hospital. It was later named Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

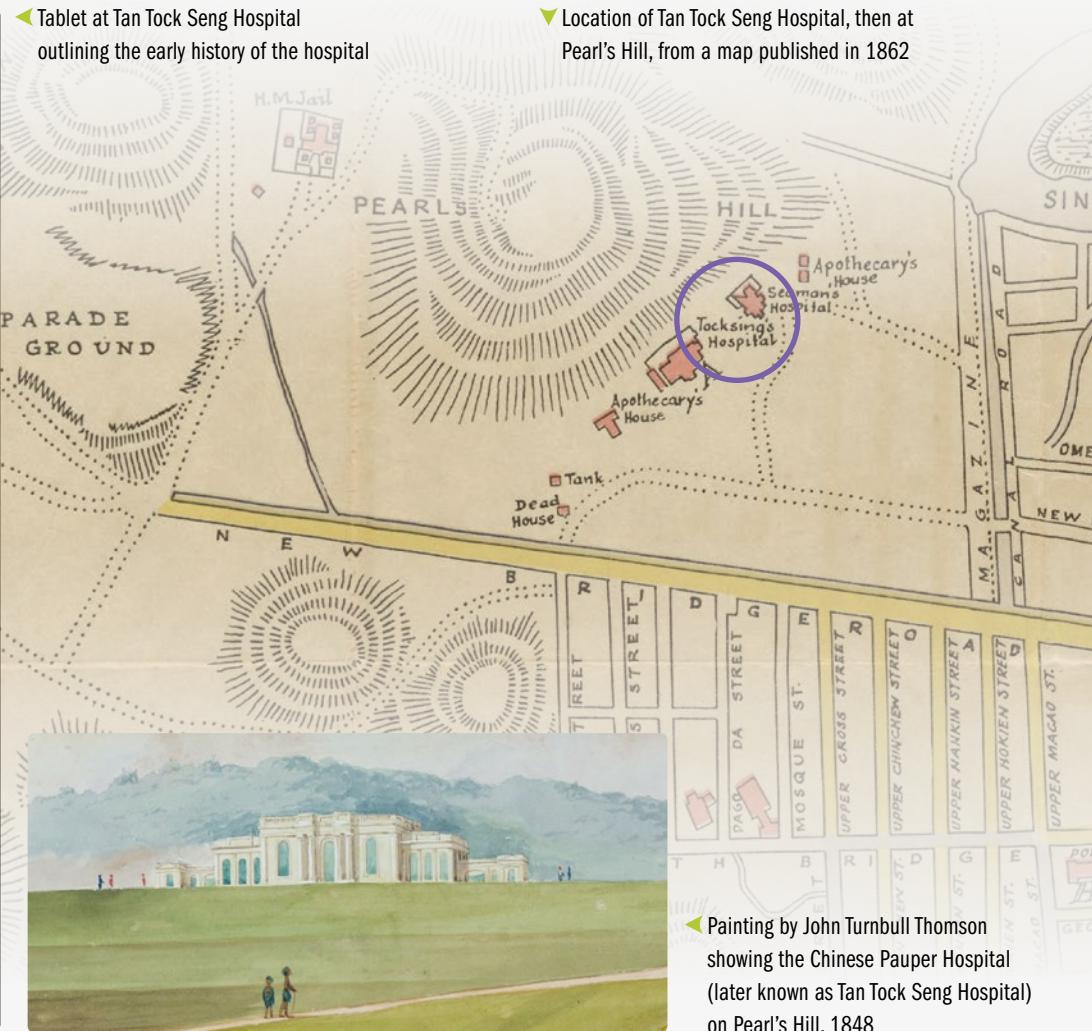
- Adapted from an online description of the establishment of a paupers' hospital in Singapore

* A pauper refers to a person who is very poor.

- According to Source 5, how did Tan Tock Seng's actions benefit the people in Singapore?



◀ Tablet at Tan Tock Seng Hospital outlining the early history of the hospital



▼ Location of Tan Tock Seng Hospital, then at Pearl's Hill, from a map published in 1862

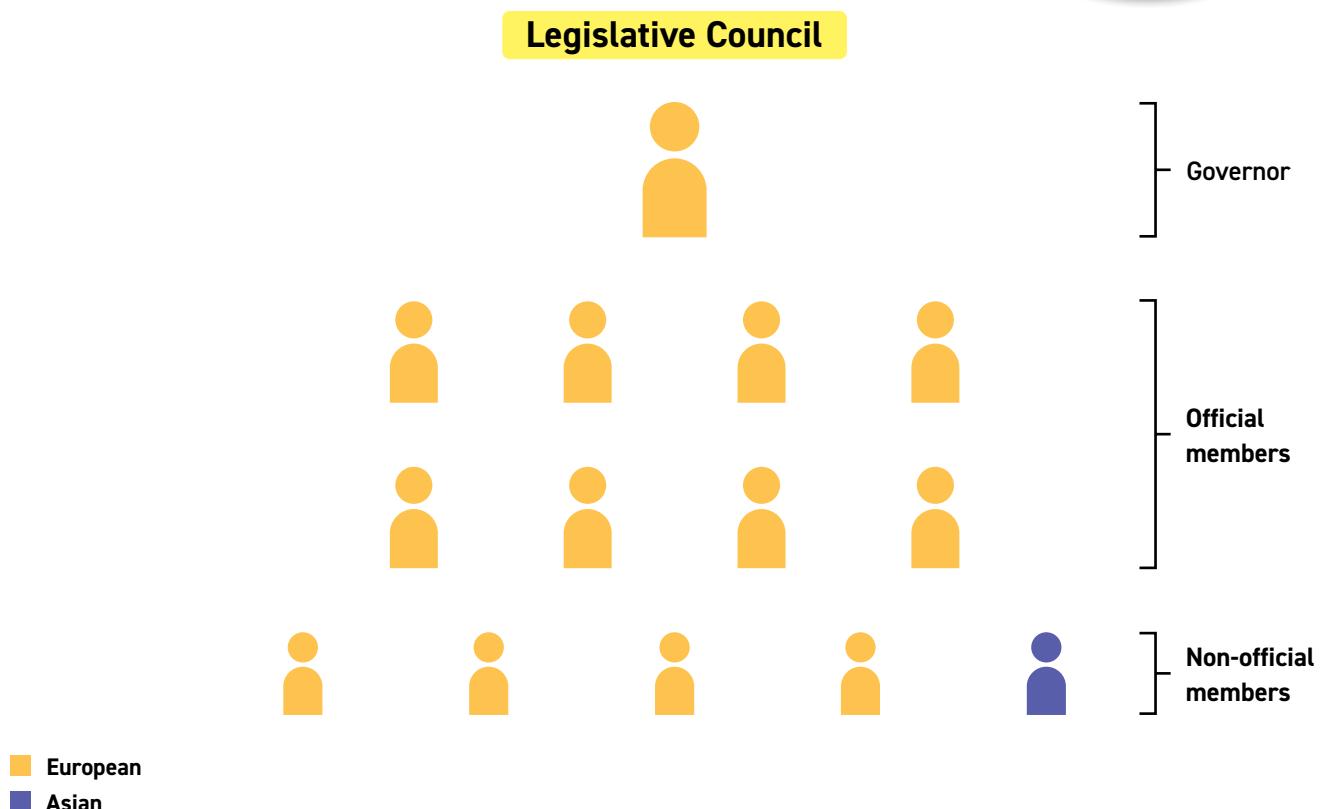
◀ Painting by John Turnbull Thomson showing the Chinese Pauper Hospital (later known as Tan Tock Seng Hospital) on Pearl's Hill, 1848

How Did the Migrants Participate in Making Laws for Singapore?

In the early years of Singapore's establishment, all decisions were made by the British for the people in Singapore. Most migrants were not interested in having a say in how Singapore was governed since they were not thinking of staying in Singapore for long. Nevertheless, over time, some migrants participated in making laws that helped make Singapore a better place to work and live in.

Local Involvement in the Government

In Chapter 3, you saw that after 1867, the government in Singapore was headed by a Governor who ruled with the help of an Executive Council and a Legislative Council. Look at Figure 4.3 below, which shows the composition of the Legislative Council in 1869, comprising the Governor, eight **official members** and five **non-official members**.⁵



▲ Figure 4.3: Diagram showing the composition of the Legislative Council in 1869

⁵ Official members in the Legislative Council assisted the Governor in running the affairs of the Straits Settlements. When it came to voting, they had to support the Governor. The non-official members, who were made up of European and Asian traders, could speak and vote as they pleased.

For many years, the non-official members of the Legislative Council consisted of only a few European and Asian traders. As they were outnumbered by the official members (comprising only Europeans), and so could be outvoted, it was very difficult for them to persuade the government to act on their suggestions. This made the non-official members unhappy.

Over the years, there was pressure on the government to increase their numbers. By 1924, the number of non-official members had increased, with an equal number of non-official and official members in the Legislative Council. This was also a step towards getting more local people involved in the affairs of the colony.

Asian non-official members such as Dr Lim Boon Keng and Eunos Abdullah proposed laws that were passed by the Legislative Council. For example, in 1927, Eunos Abdullah asked the government to set aside a very large piece of land for a Malay settlement called Kampong Melayu. The settlement subsequently provided low-cost housing for the Malays and allowed them to earn a living by growing fruit and vegetables as well as rearing poultry.



▲ Scene showing residents at Kampong Melayu in 1935. The residents are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the reign of the British King George V.

However, there were times when proposals by Asian leaders were rejected by the Legislative Council. One example is the ban on opium proposed by Dr Lim Boon Keng from 1895 onwards. Read the illustrated story on the next page to find out what happened.

Who was DR LIM BOON KENG?

Dr Lim Boon Keng (1869–1957) was born into a family of Chinese Peranakans in Singapore. He was the first Chinese to be awarded the Queen's Scholarship (now known as the President's Scholarship) in 1887. He studied medicine in Edinburgh. After returning to Singapore in 1893, he opened a dispensary (pharmacy) to treat patients suffering from cholera. Apart from his involvement in the Legislative Council, he also launched campaigns to fight opium use in Singapore and played a role in the development of Chinese and English education for young Chinese.



Who was EUNOS ABDULLAH?

Eunos Abdullah (1876–1933), the son of a Sumatran trader, was one of a select few Malay boys to attend Raffles Institution at that time. He worked in Johor after his studies, then returned in 1907 to Singapore, where he was responsible for editing a new Malay-language newspaper called *Utusan Melayu*. He later became the first Malay and only Muslim representative appointed by the colonial government to sit on the Straits Settlements Legislative Council in 1924.



The PROPOSAL to BAN OPIUM



Dr Lim Boon Keng wanted opium smoking to be banned as he saw how it had destroyed many Chinese migrants' lives. He spoke about the evils of opium smoking both in and outside the Legislative Council.



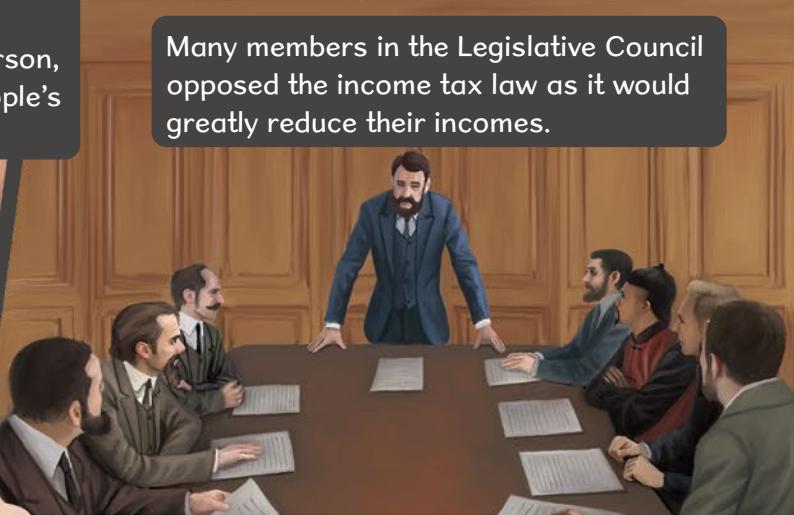
The Legislative Council was unwilling to ban opium as it would mean a great loss of income for the government.



To make up for the possible loss of income for the government, the Governor at that time, Sir John Anderson, asked the Legislative Council to pass a law to tax people's salaries and profits from their businesses.



Many members in the Legislative Council opposed the income tax law as it would greatly reduce their incomes.



Due to the fierce opposition, the income tax law was not passed. Opium was not banned and the government continued to obtain a large part of its income from opium until the Japanese Occupation of Malaya and Singapore.

British Attitudes Towards the Locals

As we read earlier, local non-official members such as Dr Lim Boon Keng and Eunos Abdullah used their influence to persuade the colonial government to increase the number of local non-official members in the Legislative Council and introduce proposals to help the local people. Some of these local non-official members also formed associations such as the Straits Chinese British Association and the Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (Singapore Malay Union) to improve the lives of the people.



◀ Members of the Straits Chinese British Association, c. 1900

Though there were attempts to involve some of the locals in making laws, the British rulers did not treat the Asians as equals. They believed that British culture was superior, and that they had the responsibility of “civilising” those they ruled. This belief in British superiority was reflected in how Singapore was governed. Most of the high-ranking officials in the colonial government were British. Even well-qualified locals were not given important positions in the government.

Most of the Europeans in Singapore were also given privileged treatment. Read Source 6 to find out more.

SOURCE 6

I called Mr Tan Ah Hung, a senior Chinese teacher, “Sir”, when I spoke to him, until I was advised that this embarrassed him in the kind of world we lived in. My starting salary of \$400 was far higher than his even though he had many years of most valued service. Salary and skin colour were what mattered, not personal merit and achievement.

– Adapted from an account by Francis Thomas, a British teacher at St Andrew’s School in Singapore in the 1930s

1. Why was Mr Tan embarrassed when Thomas called him “Sir”?
2. What does this source show you about the treatment of Asians by the British during this time?

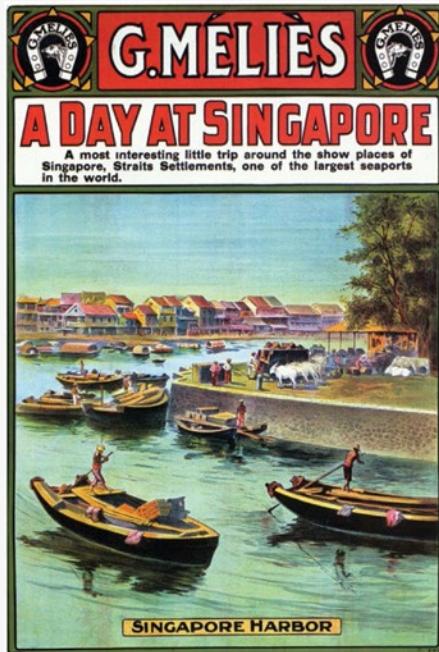
There were other instances of privileged treatment. For example, the railway department discouraged Asians from travelling in first-class carriages. In certain hotels, Asians were not allowed to use the dance floor or the bar as these were reserved solely for Europeans.

Conclusion

From the outset, Singapore flourished because of a number of reasons. Among them, the policies of free trade and free immigration established by the British helped Singapore develop considerably. These two policies led to the arrival of different groups of migrants, who played an important role in developing the port city.

News of Singapore's establishment as a free port in the centre of a rich area of trade spread quickly. By 1824, the population had reached about 11,000 due to the influx of migrants.

The migrants came to Singapore for various reasons. Many left their homelands because of poor living conditions. They were also attracted to Singapore, which offered better job prospects and trading opportunities. Most came with one thought in mind: to earn as much money as they could in the shortest possible time and take it away with them. In doing so, they helped develop Singapore as a port city. These included the enterprising traders from different parts of the world who used Singapore as a base to build their trading networks in the region. The labourers from China, India and the surrounding areas also toiled behind the scenes, building many parts of Singapore that enabled it to thrive as a port city.



▲ View of Singapore from a poster of a French movie called *A Day at Singapore* by Gaston Méliès, published in 1913

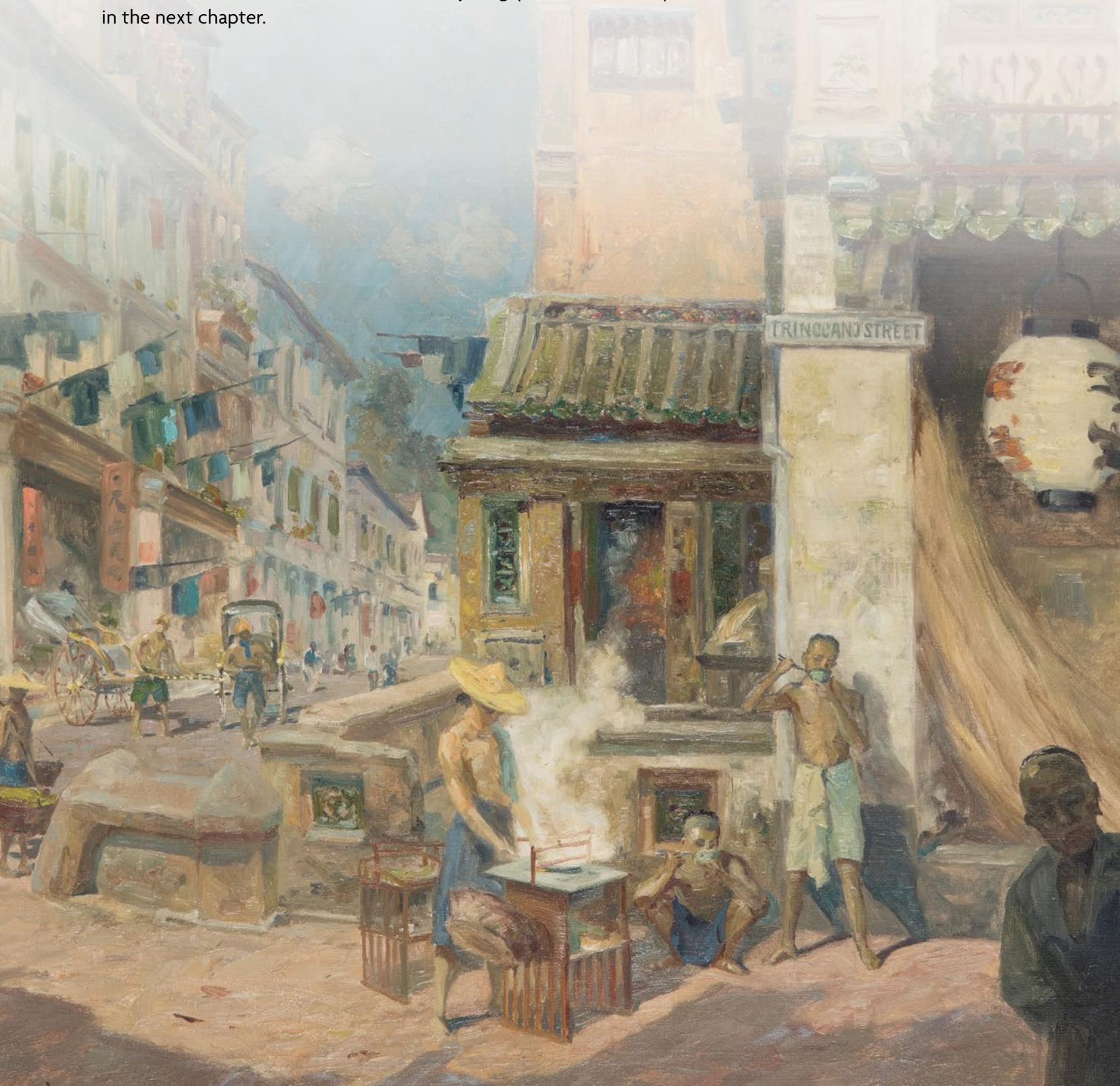
▼ Indian labourers at a work site in Singapore, c. 1870



As Singapore grew into a vibrant port city, some groups of people prospered. They provided money and land to help improve the lives of the people in Singapore in various areas, including education, healthcare and law-making. Together with the British rulers and external developments, which you read about in Chapter 3, the various communities helped Singapore flourish.

However, Singapore's success was disrupted when the Japanese attacked at the end of 1941. Find out more about why Singapore fell to the Japanese in the next chapter.

▼ Painting by Hugo V. Pedersen showing life along Trengganu Street in Chinatown, c. 1897

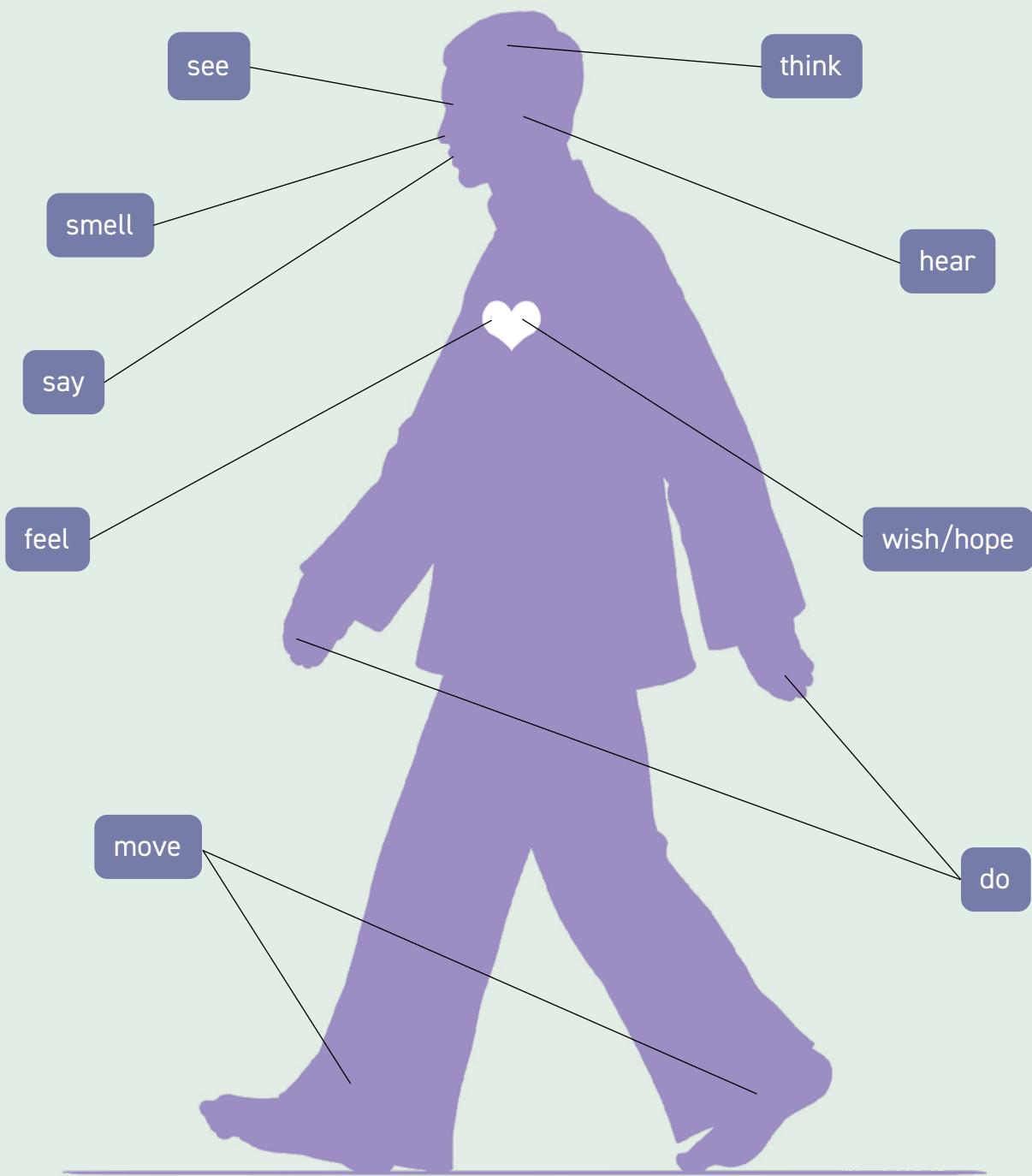




LET'S REVIEW

Imagine you are a migrant who moved from China, India or the surrounding regions to Singapore in the 19th century. You have worked here for three months. You might be an entrepreneur, a labourer or a craftsman. What would a typical day in your life look like? What might be your thoughts, feelings and actions? You can use the picture below as a frame to share your “life story”.

Share your “life story” with a classmate.





In what ways was Singapore considered a centre for the exchange and spread of ideas before 1942?

British rule in Singapore created a stable and successful society based on trade, commerce and immigration. Thus, the port city developed many trade networks with different countries. This resulted in an increasing number of migrants arriving from China, India, the Malay Archipelago and other places around the world. Apart from shipping, goods and people, ideas also started coming into Singapore from various parts of the world. Read the following sources to find out the ways in which Singapore became a centre for the exchange and spread of ideas before 1942.

SOURCE A

By the end of the 19th century, Singapore was developing into a regional **intellectual hub*** for the various local communities. It was also becoming a regional printing and publishing hub. This development grew out of the availability of printing presses and trained pressmen, introduced by Christian missionaries as early as 1823. The earliest Singapore-printed books bore the imprint of Mission Press or Institution Press. The oldest surviving Japanese version of any portion of the Bible was published in Singapore in 1837.

The earliest Malay publications were religious texts, as were the early Tamil works. Among the early newspapers published and printed in Singapore were *Jawi Peranakkan* (1876), and Chinese papers such as *Tifang Jih Pau* (Local News, 1845) and *Jit Sheng* (Rising Sun, 1858). Among the earliest printed books was Munshi Abdullah's *Hikayat Abdullah* (1849).

The demand for Malay reading materials, which were also read by literate Straits Chinese, led to a thriving translation industry of both Chinese and English classics.

- Adapted from a description of 19th-century Singapore by historians Kwa Chong Guan, Derek Heng, Peter Borschberg and Tan Tai Yong, published in 2019

* An intellectual hub is the main centre for the exchange and spread of ideas in a region.



▲ The oldest surviving issue of *Jawi Peranakkan* – the 28 March 1881 (Vol. 5, No. 214) edition

SOURCE B



Singapore was a centre for pilgrims preparing for the haj from the late 19th century until the late 1970s. This photograph shows pilgrims arriving in Singapore after returning from Mecca,* c. 1940s.

* Mecca is a city in present-day Saudi Arabia and is home to the Kaaba, the holiest site in Islam and the direction of Muslim prayer.

SOURCE C

Singapore's reputation as a centre of Islamic life and learning in the late 19th century was widespread. This reputation rested on its position as key stopover for pilgrims[†] and Arab migrants. It also became a publication and distribution centre for Islamic religious writings. Students from all over the Malay Archipelago wishing to further their studies in Islamic studies went either to Mecca or to the Straits Settlements, where they studied with scholars, most of whom had studied in Mecca.

– Adapted from an account by British historian William Roff of the influence of ideas on Singapore from the late 19th century, published in 1967

[†] Pilgrims are people who go on special journeys for religious reasons.

SOURCE D

In the 19th century, most Chinese had little interest in the political affairs of Singapore and Malaya. They were too busy trying to make a living to be concerned with much else. In the early years of their move, their ties with China, the country they had left, remained strong.

In the early part of the 20th century, Singapore became a suitable place for raising money to support political activities in China. In the 1930s, many of the activities by some Chinese organisations were stopped by the British, and on occasion their leaders jailed for threatening the peace of the community.

– Adapted from an account by Jim Baker, an American history teacher in Singapore, published in 2014

INVESTIGATE!

1. Read **Source A**. In what ways was Singapore “a regional intellectual hub for the various local communities”?
2. Read **Sources B** and **C**. How did Singapore serve as a centre for Islamic life and learning?
3. Read **Source D**. In what ways did Singapore become a base for the spread of political ideas for the Chinese living in Singapore before 1942?

REPORT!

After reading the sources, note down the **key points for how Singapore was considered a centre for the exchange and spread of ideas** in the table below. An example has been done for you.

In what ways was Singapore considered a centre for the exchange and spread of ideas before 1942?	
Key Point	Supporting Evidence from Source(s)
Political ideas coming from China in the early part of the 20th century influenced some of the Chinese living in Singapore. Some even raised money to support political activities taking place in China.	Source D states that “in the early part of the 20th century, Singapore became a suitable place for raising money to support political activities in China”.
Using the points you have written down, describe the ways in which Singapore was a centre for the exchange and spread of ideas before 1942.	



5

Did Singapore Have to Fall to the Japanese in World War II?

In Chapters 3 and 4, you saw how Singapore enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity under British rule. However, this was not to last. World War II broke out in Europe in 1939 and spread to Asia in 1941. By 15 February 1942, Singapore had fallen to Japanese invasion.

Coming only 70 days after Japanese troops first landed on the coast of northern Malaya, the fall of Singapore has often been described as one of the greatest British military disasters of World War II. How could this have happened? Why were the British defeated in such a short time? Could Singapore have been defended against the Japanese?



Chapter at a Glance

You will learn:

- Why the Japanese invaded Singapore during World War II
- Why Singapore fell to the Japanese during World War II

▼ British commanders on their way to surrender to the Japanese at the Ford Factory in Bukit Timah, 15 February 1942





Timeline

Beyond Singapore



United States warships arrive in Japan.

1853



World War I

1914–1918



Adolf Hitler comes to power in Germany.

1921

1933

In Singapore



The naval base at Sembawang under construction

The British decide to build a naval base in Singapore.

▼ German soldiers entering Poland at the start of World War II



Germany invades Poland; start of World War II in Europe

Germany defeats France and takes over most of Europe; Britain is the only major power in Western Europe left opposing Germany.

The United States stops selling oil to Japan.

Japanese forces land in southern Thailand and northern Malaya.

▼ Battleship USS Arizona burning after the attack on Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941



Japan attacks Pearl Harbor; start of World War II in the Asia Pacific

Japan invades China.

1937

1938

1939

1940

1941

1942

Singapore's naval base is officially opened.



▲ The naval base, 1941

The naval base and its defences are completed.

British forces surrender in Singapore.



▲ General Percival and party on their way to surrender Singapore to the Japanese on 15 February 1942

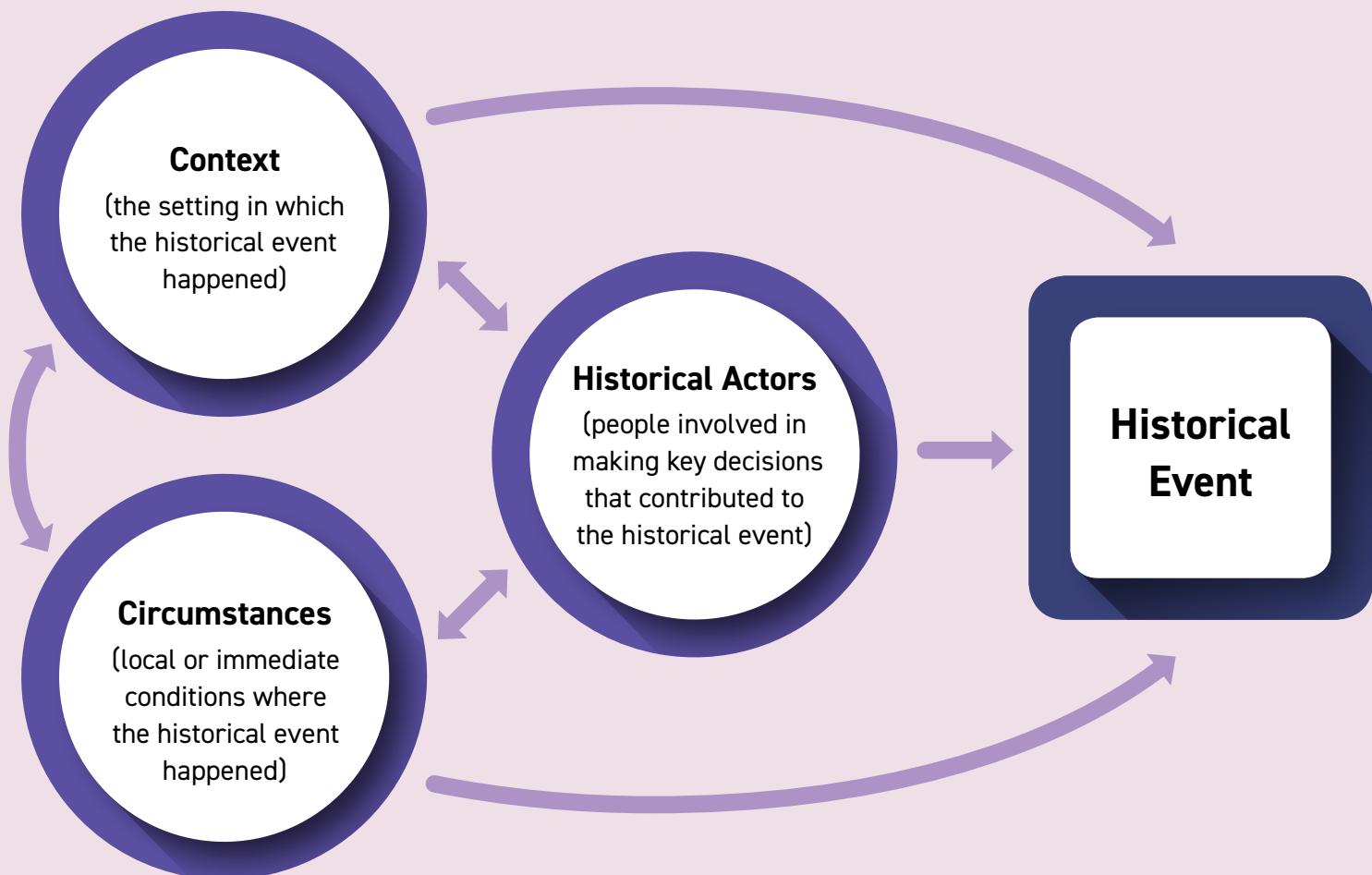


BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: CAUSATION

In Chapter 2, you learnt that historians often examine the causes of key historical events. This is not always a straightforward matter. Related events do not necessarily take place one after another, and one event does not always lead to another. To really understand how a historical event came about, historians have to examine the possible causes from different angles. One useful way is to look at them in terms of:

- the broader **context** or setting (e.g., physical, political, economic, social, cultural, military) in which the event took place;
- the immediate or local **circumstances** of the event (e.g., whether people were unhappy or prepared to act, the weather on the day of the event); and
- the roles of key **historical actors** (individuals who made major decisions that contributed to the historical event).

Besides looking at causes separately, it is also useful to look at how different causes might have interacted with one another. Keep this in mind as you read about the fall of Singapore during World War II in this chapter.



Why Did War Break Out in the Asia Pacific in 1941?

To understand why World War II began and spread to the Asia Pacific, we must look at what happened before that. In the 1920s, the British Empire was the largest in the world, comprising over a quarter of the world's land area and population. However, in the 1930s, two rising countries, Germany and Japan, began to pose serious threats to the British Empire and to international peace, as illustrated below:

The RISE of NAZI GERMANY



After World War I, Germany lost its status as a **great power**.*

* A great power is a very strong country that can dominate or influence other countries.



The economy was in ruins and there was great hardship.



In these circumstances, Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party rose to power.

They wanted to make Germany a great power again, and hence won the support of many Germans.



They rebuilt the German military into something more powerful than before.

By the late 1930s, it seemed as if Germany was getting ready for another war.

The RISE of MODERN JAPAN

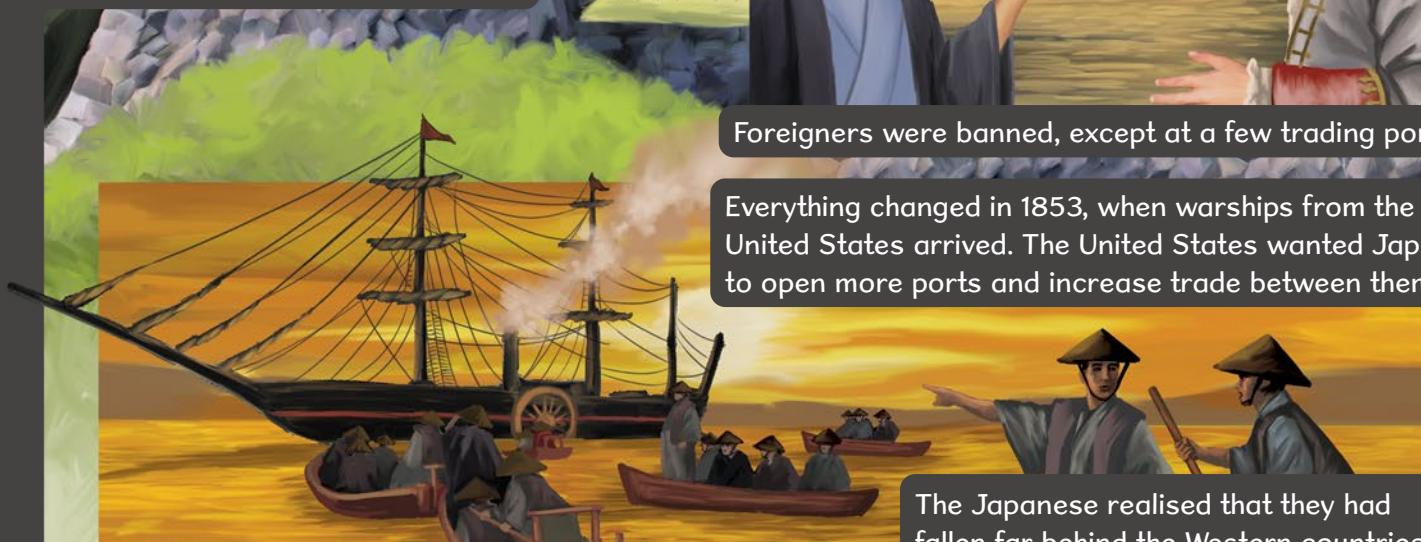


From the 17th to mid-19th centuries, Japan had kept to itself.



Foreigners were banned, except at a few trading ports.

Everything changed in 1853, when warships from the United States arrived. The United States wanted Japan to open more ports and increase trade between them.



The Japanese realised that they had fallen far behind the Western countries.

To catch up, Japan had to change.



In less than 50 years, Japan became a modern, industrialised country.



However, being a mountainous and heavily forested country, Japan lacked natural resources of its own.



At the same time, Japan had ambitions of becoming a great power.



To do this, the Japanese set out to build their own empire in Asia, which would give them the land and resources they needed.



This would eventually bring Japan into conflict with Britain and the United States.

Towards the end of the 1930s, the international situation deteriorated drastically. Large-scale conflict broke out both in Europe and in Asia. These developments had important implications for the security of Britain and its empire overseas, as shown below:

The OUTBREAK of WORLD WAR II

Having rebuilt the German military, Hitler planned to make Germany even more powerful.



Soon, Germany began taking over some of its neighbouring countries.



In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. To stop Hitler, Britain and France declared war on Germany. Thus, World War II began in Europe.

By 1940, Germany had defeated France and taken over most of Europe.



On the other side of the world, in Asia, the drums of war were also beating more loudly.



Britain was the only country left in Western Europe opposing Germany.

To force the Japanese out of China, the United States stopped selling oil to Japan.



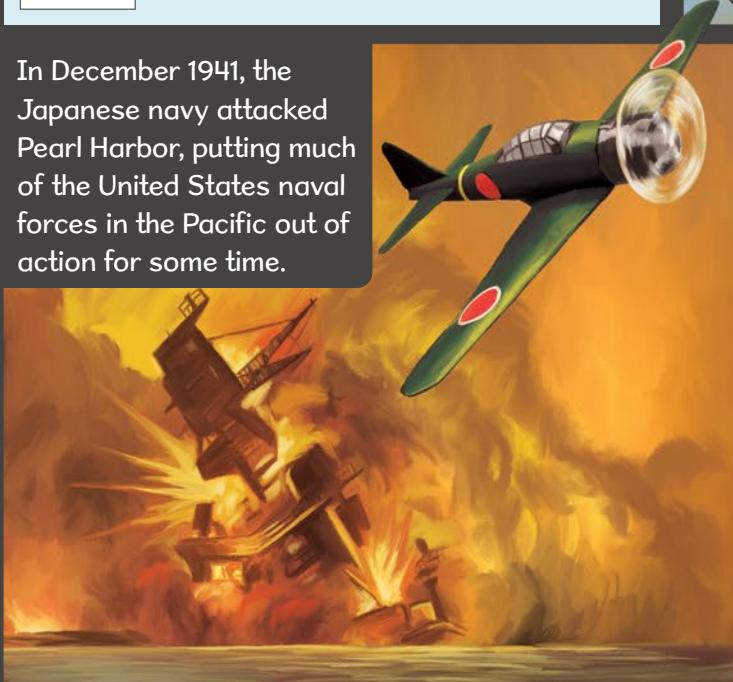
Japan would not withdraw from China. But it was desperate for oil to keep its industries going.



Southeast Asia was a possible solution to Japan's problems. It had plenty of oil and other useful resources such as tin and rubber.



In December 1941, the Japanese navy attacked Pearl Harbor, putting much of the United States naval forces in the Pacific out of action for some time.



Only one country stood in Japan's way. That was the United States, with its powerful naval fleet stationed at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

At the same time, Japanese forces landed in southern Thailand and northern Malaya.



The worsening situation in Europe and the Asia Pacific during the 1930s meant the British had to make some difficult choices. They had to weigh the defence of the British homeland against the defence of its widespread overseas empire. Ultimately, defending Britain itself was more important. As we shall see later, this decision had an impact on British plans for defending Malaya and Singapore, and the actual forces available to resist the Japanese invasion.

Was Singapore Really an “Impregnable Fortress”?

By the late 1930s, Singapore had come to be thought of by many people as an “**impregnable fortress**”.¹ How did this come about? Was Singapore really such an “impregnable fortress”?

British Defence Plans

The Rising Threat of Japan

During the 1920s, the British realised that Japan was a possible threat to their empire in the Far East. This was because Japan had ambitions to create its own empire in Asia. In particular, Singapore and Malaya were important targets, as they would give Japan access to the rich natural resources of Southeast Asia and control over the vital shipping route of the Straits of Melaka. Malaya’s tin and rubber would support Japanese industries and war production, while Singapore’s port and important location made it an ideal base for Japanese attacks on the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia) and possibly even Australia. Conquering Singapore would also be a great boost to Japan’s national pride.

The “Singapore Strategy”

Given the importance of Malaya and Singapore, the British had to make preparations to defend them against the rising threat of Japan. However, Britain had been exhausted by World War I and the British public were unwilling to keep up military spending after the horrible experience of the war. As a result, British power had declined and Britain was no longer able to maintain a large permanent military force to protect its colonies in Asia.

To solve this problem, the British decided to construct a large, modern naval base in Asia. Singapore was chosen as the site because of its geographical location and importance as a port. In the event of a war, Britain would send a fleet of warships to the base to protect its large overseas empire. While the fleet was on its way, Singapore would have to rely on local defences built by the British. This plan became known as the “**Singapore strategy**”.²



▲ Map 5.1: Territories occupied or controlled by Japan, November 1941

DID YOU KNOW?

After the British set up a trading post in Singapore in 1819, the question of how to defend it arose. However, little was done until the outbreak of war between Russia and Britain in 1854. Fort Canning was built in 1860, but turned out to be inadequate for defence purposes. It was not until after World War I that Singapore began to have stronger defences.

¹ A fortress is a place or building set up for defence against enemy attacks. The key features include strong walls, gun positions, underground bunkers (shelters), and the presence of a large number of troops. Singapore was known as an “impregnable fortress” because it was thought to be very difficult, if not impossible, for an enemy to conquer.

² A strategy is a broad, general, long-term plan to achieve one or more objectives.

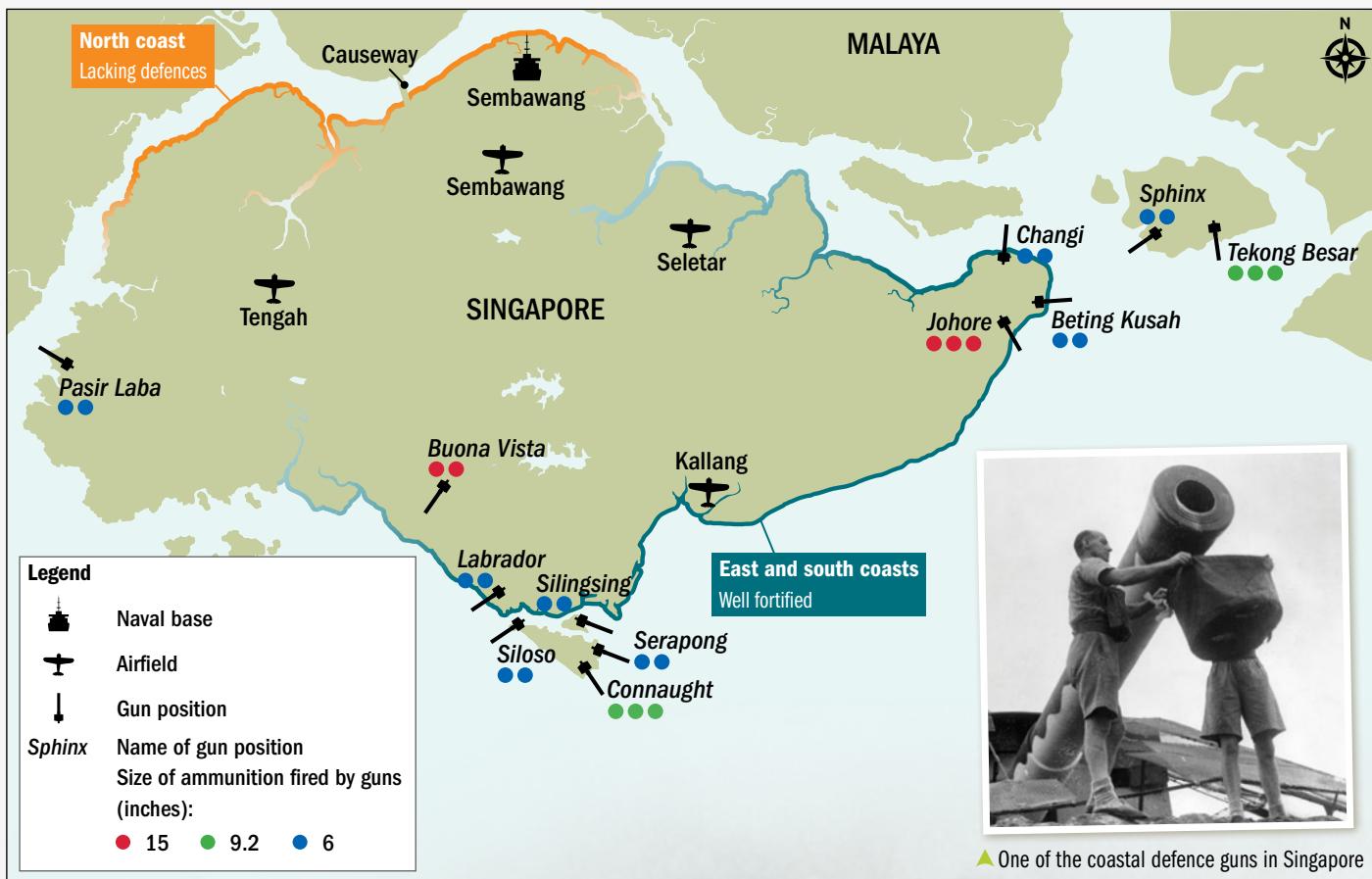
Sembawang, an area in northern Singapore, was chosen as the location for the naval base. By 1941, the naval base and its defences were completed: military airfields were constructed at Tengah, Sembawang and Seletar, and gun positions were set up to defend Singapore against attacks from the sea (see Map 5.2).

DID YOU KNOW?

Kallang Airport, opened in 1937, was originally built as a civil airport. It was used as a military airfield when the Japanese invaded Singapore.



Japanese soldiers at Kallang Airport, 1942 ▶

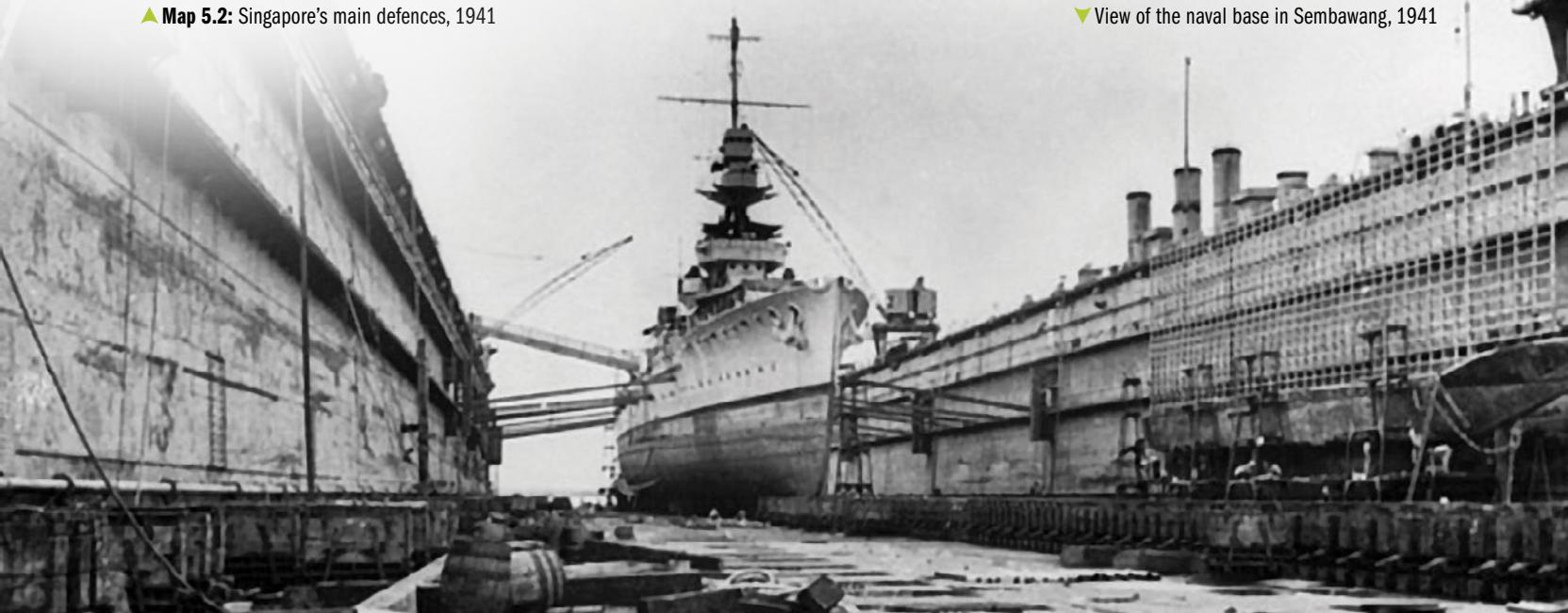


▲ Map 5.2: Singapore's main defences, 1941



▲ One of the coastal defence guns in Singapore

▼ View of the naval base in Sembawang, 1941



DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to the naval base, the British built underground bunkers in secret places all over the island. These bunkers were used for defence purposes, such as stores and air-raid shelters. One of the most extensive networks of bunkers lies at Fort Canning, where the headquarters of the British forces was located.



▲ The entrance (left) and interior (right) of Battlebox, an underground British military command centre, which is open to the public as part of the Battlebox tour

The completion of the naval base and its accompanying defences led many people to believe that Singapore was an “impregnable fortress”. However, the “Singapore strategy” turned out to be unrealistic. For example, it was initially assumed that the situation in Europe would remain peaceful so that a powerful fleet of warships could be sent to Singapore if necessary. As it happened, that was not possible because of the rise of Nazi Germany and the subsequent outbreak of World War II in Europe. Britain needed all the defences it had to protect itself.



▲ Figure 5.1: Changes in the “Singapore strategy” over time. Note how the estimated time for the British fleet to arrive in Singapore increased, while the number of ships decreased, even as the international situation worsened in the 1930s.

The Defence of Malaya

In order for the “Singapore strategy” to work, the naval base had to be defended until the British war fleet arrived. However, the British began to realise that the defence of Singapore and the naval base was linked to the defence of Malaya. Singapore could not be held if Malaya was lost. Thus, defending Malaya became an issue of importance to British military planners.

At first, the British thought that Singapore could not be attacked from the north. They believed it was difficult to land troops in Malaya during the monsoon and advance through the thick jungles. Hence, when the British built the naval base in Singapore, they put in place defences to protect it from sea attacks from the south and the east but not from an attack from Malaya in the north (see Map 5.2 on page 181). The naval base, its defences, and the natural protection of the Malayan jungles led the British to believe that Singapore was as strong as a fortress.

By the 1930s, British military commanders in Malaya realised that their assumptions were untrue. With improved equipment, troops could land in Malaya even during the wet and windy monsoon season. Furthermore, with the construction and improvement of roads and railways, an army could move through Malaya without going through the jungle.



▲ Australian soldiers moving through the Malayan jungle during a training exercise, May 1941

▼ Men from the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force in training, November 1941

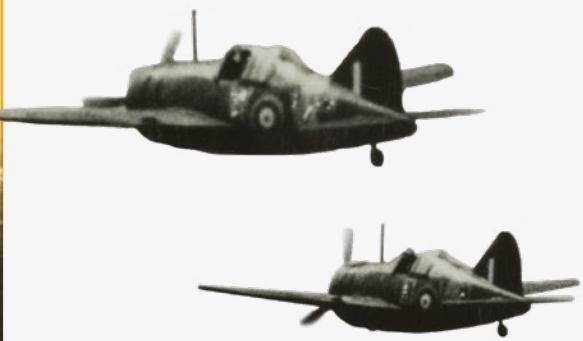


DID YOU KNOW?

Johor and Singapore are linked by the Causeway, which was completed in 1924. The Straits of Johor, which separates the two, is only 1.6 to 4.8 km wide. An enemy conquering Johor could launch air and artillery attacks on the naval base without having to invade Singapore itself!



Given all these developments, it became clear to the British that it was essential to defend Malaya from hostile attacks. They drew up plans to prevent an enemy army from landing in northern Malaya. Military airfields were built in many parts of Malaya to provide bases for aircraft to defend it from hostile landings. In this way, the British hoped to deter potential enemies from invading their colonies.



▲ Buffalo fighter planes over Malaya, c. 1941

▼ Pilots running to their planes at Sembawang Airfield in Singapore, c. 1941





LEARN A SKILL: COMPARING SOURCES

As you learnt in Chapter 1, historians rely on a variety of sources to answer historical questions and construct accounts of the past. Not only do they have to examine each source, they also have to compare them to check the information they contain.

How do we compare sources? Look at the steps below.

Step

1

Understand the question

It is necessary to **understand the question**, so that you can keep it in mind when reading the sources.

Step

2

Identify the criterion for comparison

Based on the question, **identify the criterion for comparison**. This can also be done by looking at the common topic or issue of the sources.

Step

3

Make inferences from each source

a. **Read each source for relevant information**

Study each source carefully and pick out details that are relevant to the question.

b. **Infer what each source says in relation to the criterion for comparison**

Make use of the source details and your background knowledge to help you. You will have already learnt this in Chapter 2.

Step

4

Match the inferences from both sources using the criterion for comparison

Match the inferences you have gathered from both sources. **Determine whether the sources are similar or different based on the criterion for comparison**. Do the sources agree or differ with each other? Do they give the same or different answers to the question?

Here is an example of how to compare sources using these steps.

Example

Noel is studying the fall of Singapore during World War II. He wants to answer a question on Singapore's defences. He goes to the archives and finds two relevant sources (Sources 1 and 2 below). How should Noel compare the sources?

SOURCE 1

They [the British] talked about Singapore as an impregnable fortress. Some called it the **Gibraltar of the East**.^{*} As far as I knew ... they had a lot of big guns here ... and they had concrete beach defences ... I thought the defence was quite good.

- Adapted from an account by Ismail bin Zain, a clerk in Singapore in the 1930s

* Gibraltar, a British overseas territory in Europe, was heavily fortified due to its important location. It was considered difficult to conquer partly because it was surrounded by high cliffs and the sea. Singapore was sometimes referred to as the Gibraltar of the East to indicate that Singapore was also heavily fortified.

SOURCE 2

No one should have been fooled by the legend of the mighty fortress of Singapore. The place had none of the natural characteristics of an old time fortress like Gibraltar; nor was it "fortified" in any way, though it had been armed with guns which were useless against anything but a sea-borne assault.

- Adapted from an account written after the war by C. A. Vlieland, who was Secretary of Defence in the Singapore government from 1939 to 1941

1 Understand the question

The question that Noel wants to answer is "Was Singapore really a fortress?". So he reads Sources 1 and 2 to find what they say about whether Singapore was a fortress.

3 Make inferences from each source

From Source 1, Noel infers that Singapore was a fortress as it had "a lot of big guns" and "concrete beach defences", which meant "the defence was quite good".

From Source 2, Noel infers that Singapore was not a fortress, because it was not "'fortified' in any way", and the guns it had were "useless" against most attacks.

2 Identify the criterion for comparison

Sources 1 and 2 both talk about whether Singapore was a fortress. Since that is also the question Noel wants to answer, the criterion for comparing the sources is their views on whether Singapore was a fortress.

4 Match the inferences from both sources

Sources 1 and 2 disagree in what they say about whether Singapore was a fortress. Source 1 says Singapore was a fortress, but Source 2 says it was not. Hence, Noel concludes that Sources 1 and 2 have different views on whether Singapore was a fortress.

Now compare Sources 2 and 3 using the same steps. Do they agree on whether Singapore was a fortress? Why or why not? Make use of the diagram below to help you. An example has been done for you.

SOURCE 3

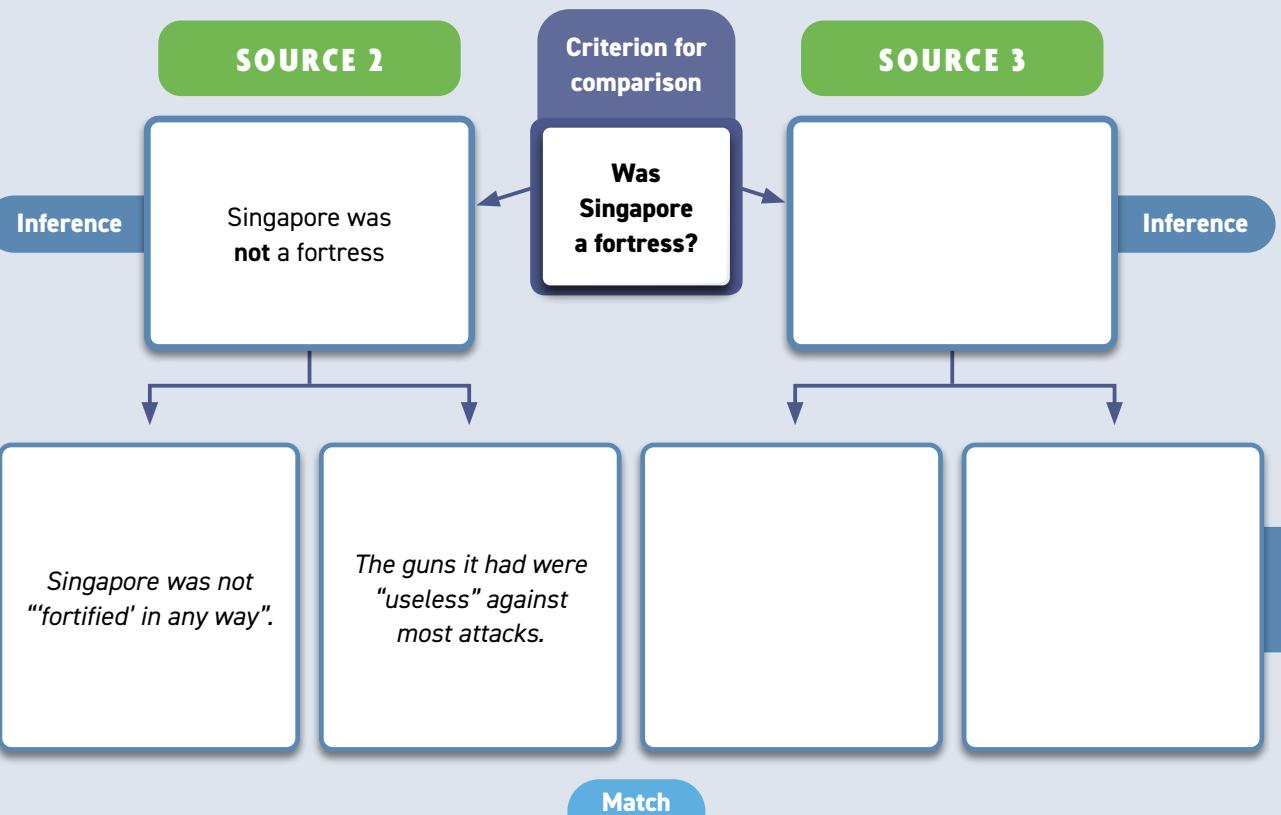
By definition, a fortress is a place that can be defended against attack from any direction. However, even if a place is too strong to attack directly, an enemy who is prepared to wait or negotiate can still in the end capture it through starvation or betrayal. Anyway, the classic fortress had been invented before there were aircraft capable of dropping bombs over fixed defences.

We have seen that attacking Singapore from the land side was regarded as impossible and that no steps were taken to build defences there.

- Adapted from a book on the fall of Singapore by historians Richard Holmes and Anthony Kemp, published in 1982

LEARN ON THE GO

Sharpen your source comparison skills @ go.gov.sg/lshc501.



Sources 2 and 3 are _____ (similar/different) in their views on whether Singapore was a fortress.

British Forces

Although the British made plans to defend Singapore and Malaya, they did not have enough resources available to carry them out. Apart from resisting German invasion in Europe, the British were also fighting in North Africa and supporting the Soviet Union in its struggle against Germany. Compared to these demands, defending its colonies in the Far East was of low priority.

As a result, whatever military forces the British could spare for Malaya and Singapore were insufficient in both number and quality. For example, the British air force in Malaya and Singapore comprised mostly ageing and outdated Buffalo fighters, nicknamed “flying coffins” due to the short life expectancy of their pilots in battle. They were also outnumbered by Japan’s modern Zero fighters. Thus, during the fighting, most of the British fighters were destroyed and the remainder evacuated to the Dutch East Indies or Australia. There were also not enough troops to protect the numerous military airfields all over Malaya. In the end, the Japanese were able to capture many of these airfields and use them to attack other parts of Malaya and Singapore.

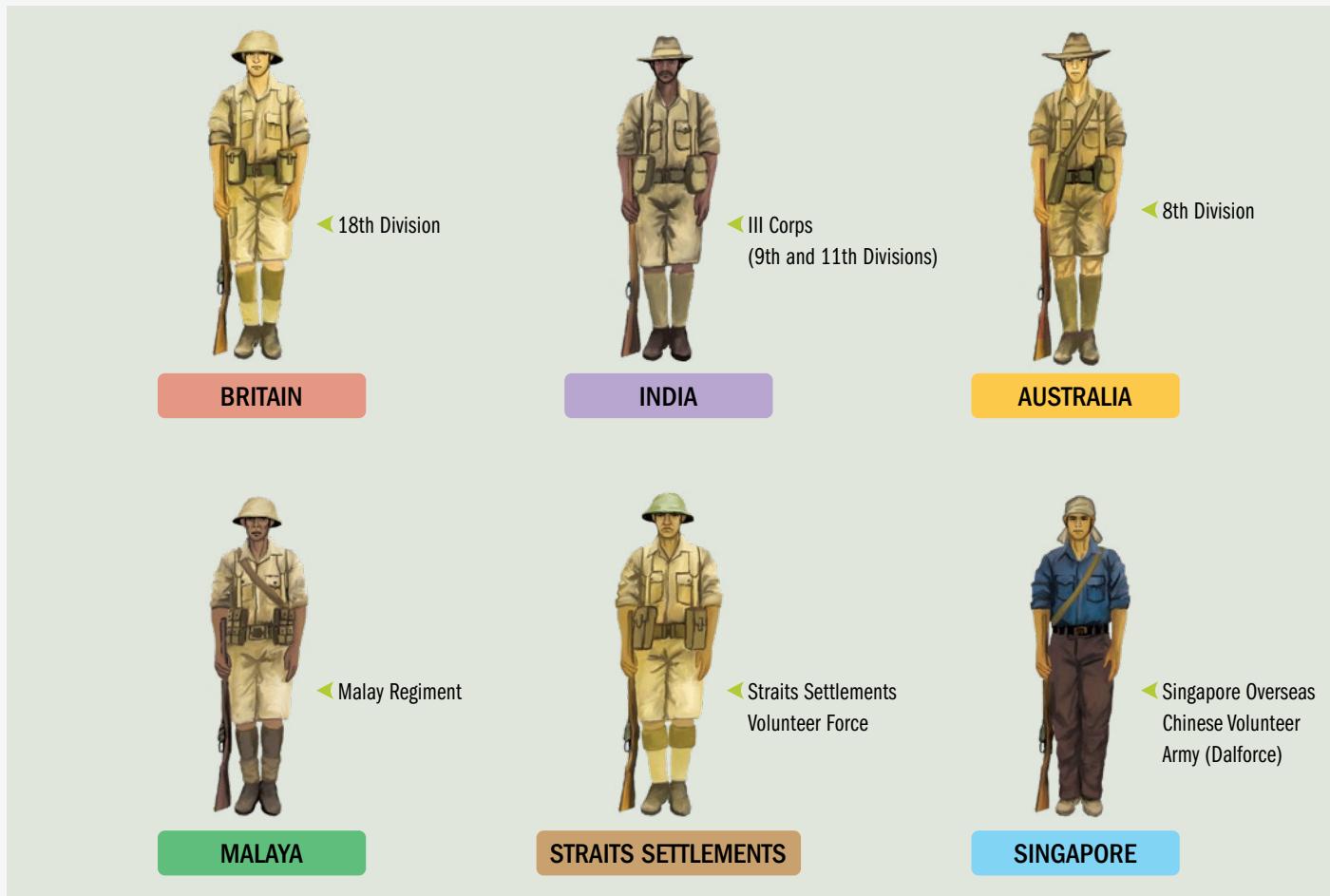
Furthermore, the forces defending Malaya and Singapore came from many different parts of the British Empire, including Scotland, India and Australia (see Figure 5.2). This made it difficult for the military commanders to understand and work with one another. While some units fought bravely during the Japanese invasion, many of the soldiers did not feel it was their duty to fight hard and sacrifice themselves in the defence of the colonies. The British were also reluctant to call on the locals to contribute to the defence. Only a small number of local forces were raised and they often received minimal training and equipment.



▲ The outdated Buffalo fighters (above) used by the British in Malaya were no match for the Japanese Zero fighters (top).

▼ Scottish soldiers training in Singapore (left) and Gurkha soldiers from India training in Malaya (right) just before the war. These troops helped defend Malaya and Singapore against the Japanese invasion.





▲ **Figure 5.2:** The ground forces defending Singapore included soldiers from Britain, India, Australia and Malaya, as well as volunteers from the Straits Settlements and Singapore.



▲ Soldiers from the Australian 8th Division arriving in Singapore, 1941. The 8th Division suffered heavy casualties during the war.

Most of the troops sent to Malaya and Singapore were poorly trained and ill-equipped. There were no tanks and very few anti-tank weapons, because the British thought tanks were unsuitable for the jungle. The soldiers received little or no training in fighting in the tropical climate. To make matters worse, there were not enough officers to lead the men. The British forces were led by General Arthur Percival. Though an experienced and capable officer, he had not led such a large and diverse military force before in actual combat.

As mentioned earlier, Singapore's defences were designed to prevent an attack from the sea. The big guns put in place were to be used for firing at big ships. While these guns could be turned landwards to fire at enemies on land, they were not equipped with the right ammunition to shoot at such enemies.

Due to the war in Europe, the British could only afford to send a very small fleet of warships to Singapore. The fleet comprised two battleships, HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse*, and a small number of escorting warships. This naval force was called Force Z.

One of Singapore's 15-inch coastal defence guns ▶



▼ HMS *Prince of Wales*



Who was GENERAL ARTHUR PERCIVAL?

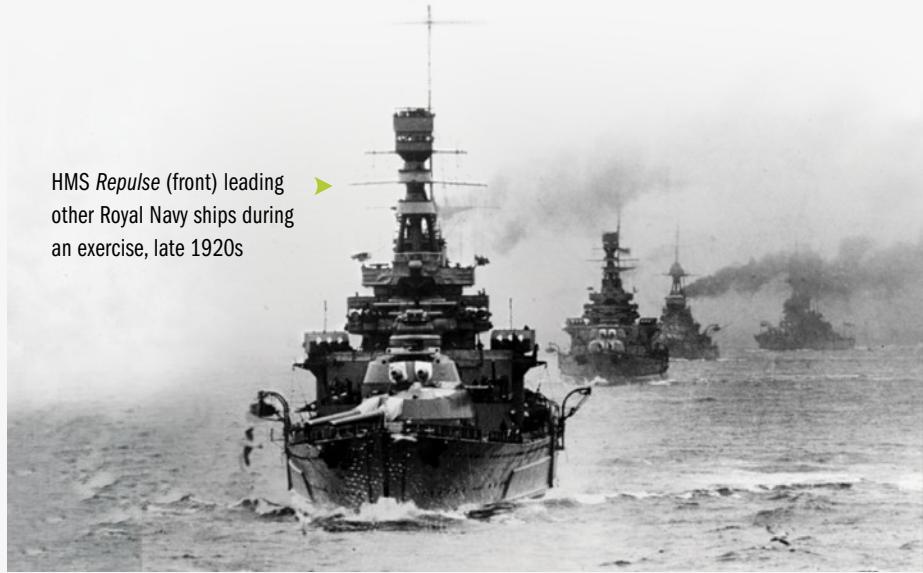
Arthur Percival (1887–1966) did not set out to be a soldier. He was originally a clerk at an iron trading company after leaving school. When World War I broke out, he enlisted in the army. He was rapidly promoted and earned several honours, ending the war as a respected Major. Thereafter, Percival remained in the army, serving in places such as Russia and Ireland.

In 1936, Percival was posted to Malaya to take charge of defence planning. It was during this time that he became aware of the Japanese threat to Singapore's security. He thought about how the Japanese might attack, which turned out to be very similar to the actual invasion during World War II. A plan was drawn up to occupy southern Thailand to prevent Japanese troops from landing there, but it was not carried out as the British feared it would offend the Thai government.

In 1941, Percival was appointed as the General Officer Commanding (Malaya), with the temporary rank of Lieutenant-General. Thus, he became the overall commander of the forces defending Malaya and Singapore against the Japanese invasion.



On 8 December 1941, Force Z sailed out of the naval base in Singapore and headed towards Kuantan (see Map 5.3), where the British thought Japanese soldiers would be landing. On 10 December, the fleet was spotted by Japanese planes, which bombed and sank both battleships. Several hundred men, including the Admiral commanding Force Z, went down with the ships. This was a serious blow to British naval power in the region.



▲ **Map 5.3:** HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse were sunk just off Kuantan in the east coast of Malaya.

Read Source 4 to find out what people in Singapore thought about the loss of Force Z at the time.

SOURCE 4

We had been informed that HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* had been sunk by the Japanese. Radio broadcasts and newspapers in Singapore tried to reduce the importance of the naval disaster. They also urged the people to remain strong, loyal and confident and informed them that better days were ahead. Large military reinforcements were coming to Singapore, so we were told. Singapore as the Gibraltar of the East could be held by the British indefinitely. We were thus comforted and reassured.

- Adapted from an account by Thio Chan Bee, a teacher in Singapore in the early 1940s

- According to Source 4, were the people worried by the loss of Force Z?
- Why do you think the radio broadcasts and newspapers tried to paint such an optimistic picture of the situation in Singapore?

With the destruction of Force Z and the air force, the British had lost their naval and air superiority in the region. The Japanese could make use of their mastery of the air and the seas to reinforce their attacks. Only the British army was left to repel the Japanese attacks.





▲ Artist's impression of the final Japanese attack on HMS *Prince of Wales*



▲ HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* (left) after being hit by Japanese torpedoes. One of their escorting warships can also be seen in the foreground.



▲ HMS *Prince of Wales* sinking



▲ The crew of HMS *Prince of Wales* abandoning ship

Japanese Plans and Strategies

Japanese Preparations for Invasion

Even before the outbreak of World War II, Japan had made preparations for a potential invasion of Malaya and Singapore. Japanese spies disguised as tourists or barbers helped to gather information for the military. The Japanese army also set up a special research unit to look into techniques for jungle fighting and the training of soldiers for the invasion of Malaya. A pamphlet on useful tips was written for these soldiers to read before the invasion (see Source 5).



▼ Japanese soldiers crossing a river in Malaya using an improvised bridge, c. 1942

▲ Japanese soldiers in heavy camouflage advancing through the Malayan jungle, c. 1942



SOURCE 5

When you encounter the enemy after landing, regard yourself as an avenger who has at last come face to face with his father's murderer. Here before you is the man whose death will lighten your heart of its burden of brooding anger. If you fail to destroy him utterly, you can never rest at peace. And the first blow is the vital blow.

- An extract adapted from Read This Alone and the War Can Be Won, a pamphlet given to Japanese soldiers on their way to attack Malaya

1. What emotions do you think this pamphlet was trying to stir up among the Japanese soldiers?
2. What does this tell you about the preparations that the Japanese made for the attack on Malaya and Singapore?

The head of the special research unit was Colonel Masanobu Tsuji. He was also the mastermind behind the attack on Malaya and Singapore. When the Japanese learnt from their spies about Singapore's defences, Tsuji decided not to attack it from the sea. Instead, he planned for the Japanese invasion force to land on the beaches of southern Thailand and advance down Malaya to attack Singapore from the north. His plan was adopted and carried out during the actual invasion.

Colonel Masanobu Tsuji ▶



Japanese Forces

While the British forces defending Malaya and Singapore were mostly inexperienced, poorly trained and ill-equipped, many troops among the Japanese forces tasked with the invasion were experienced, battle-hardened and well-supported with weapons, aircraft, warships and tanks. They were led by General Tomoyuki Yamashita, a highly regarded commander. He was supported by young, capable and highly motivated officers.

The preparations made by the Japanese before the invasion proved to be valuable. Using their knowledge of the Malayan jungle, the Japanese brought light tanks and bicycles to move their soldiers around quickly. The soldiers were lightly equipped so that they could move fast and catch the enemy by surprise (read Source 6 on the next page to find out more about the differences between the Japanese and British forces).



▲ Japanese tanks in the Malayan jungle, 1942. The original photograph was in black and white. Colour has been added to it digitally in recent times to enhance its effect.

During the invasion, Japanese control of the air and the sea gave them an advantage. Japanese fighters could support their troops on the ground and drop bombs on the defending forces. Japanese control of Indochina (present-day Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) and the South China Sea also allowed them to launch more attacks and supply their troops without interference from the British.

Who was GENERAL TOMOYUKI YAMASHITA?

Tomoyuki Yamashita (1885–1946), the son of a village doctor, had a distinguished military career even before the invasion of Malaya and Singapore. He graduated from the Imperial Japanese Army Academy in 1905, ranked 16th out of 920 officer cadets. Thereafter, Yamashita went through several postings and attained the rank of Major-General in 1934.

In 1936, Yamashita got involved in a failed attempt by some military officers to take over the government in Tokyo. He was banished to Korea as a result. He also spent time commanding troops in northern China and Manchuria.

After World War II broke out, Yamashita was sent to Italy and Germany, where he met Adolf Hitler. Upon returning, he was posted to Manchuria as commander of an army there. In November 1941, he was appointed as commander of the newly formed 25th Army, tasked with the invasion of Malaya and Singapore. After the successful invasion of Malaya and Singapore in 1942, Yamashita became known as the “Tiger of Malaya”.



However, the Japanese forces were severely outnumbered by the defending British forces. For that reason, Yamashita decided to depend on speed and surprise to overcome the British. During the battles for Malaya and Singapore, the British were repeatedly caught off guard by surprise attacks, retreating in haste to avoid being cut off from behind. As a result, they left behind large quantities of supplies, equipment and weapons that the Japanese took for their own use.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Japanese soldiers often referred to the supplies that they captured from the British as "Churchill supplies". Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister of Britain at the time of the Japanese invasion (see page 201 for more information on Churchill).

SOURCE 6

The majority [of the Japanese] were on bicycles, talking and laughing just as if they were going to a football match. They seemed to have no standard uniform or equipment and were travelling as light as they possibly could. The general impression was one of extraordinary determination. They had been ordered to go, and in their thousands they were going, though their equipment was second-rate and much of it had obviously been acquired in Malaya.

[In comparison, the British soldiers were] equipped like Christmas trees so that they could hardly walk, much less fight.

*— Adapted from an account by Freddie Spencer Chapman,
a British soldier in Malaya during the invasion, published in 1963*

1. Compare the descriptions of the Japanese and British soldiers. Which do you think was the more effective fighting force? Why?



▲ Japanese soldiers using bicycles as a form of transport to move quickly through Malaya, c. 1942. The original photograph was in black and white. Colour has been added to it digitally in recent times to enhance its effect.

How Did Malaya and Singapore Fall to the Japanese?

War came swiftly to Singapore. On 8 December 1941, Japanese troops landed in Singora and Patani in southern Thailand, and Kota Bahru in northern Malaya. They advanced rapidly through Malaya despite the efforts of the defending forces. By 31 January 1942, the Japanese had seized Johor Bahru and were ready to invade Singapore.



▲ Japanese soldiers landing in Kota Bahru, Malaya, 8 December 1941



▲ Map 5.4: The Japanese advance down Malaya



▲ 1940s Japanese postcard showing Japanese soldiers at Slim River. British troops suffered heavy casualties in this battle.

27-30 January 1942

1 The Destruction of the Naval Base

The British decided to destroy the naval base to prevent the enemy from making use of its facilities. The loss of the famous naval base was one of the greatest military setbacks ever suffered by the British.

7 February 1942

3 The Fake Attack

To trick the British, the Japanese bombarded the northeast of Singapore heavily and attacked Pulau Ubin. In response, the British moved troops and precious supplies such as petrol and explosives from the northwest to the northeast, just as the Japanese wanted.

9 February 1942

5 The British Blunder

The Japanese made quick repairs to the Causeway, which had been blown up by the British during their retreat. This allowed the Japanese to move more troops and equipment into Singapore. Meanwhile, Percival made plans to withdraw from the Kranji-Jurong line to the city centre if necessary. Unfortunately, the orders were misunderstood and some defending forces withdrew immediately, leaving the northwestern part of Singapore undefended. When the mistake was discovered, the British counter-attacked, but it was too late. By then, the Japanese had reached Bukit Timah.

1 February 1942

2 The Japanese Headquarters

General Yamashita set up his headquarters at the palace of the Sultan of Johor. This clever choice gave him a clear view of northern Singapore from the palace's five-storey tower. Although it was an easy target, Yamashita was confident that the British would not fire at the home of their old friend, the Sultan. He was right.

Johor

8-9 February 1942

4 Landings in the Northwest

Japanese forces crossed the Straits of Johor in the northwest, where it was narrowest. Unsure of where the Japanese would attack, General Percival had spread his troops all along Singapore's northern coast. With too large an area to defend, the British forces could not stop the Japanese from securing a foothold on the island.

10-11 February 1942

6 The Battle of Bukit Timah

Bukit Timah was important as it held British supplies of food, ammunition and spare parts. It also faced a reservoir, which was a vital source of water supply. Fierce fighting took place here. Armed only with swords, grenades and small rifles, Chinese volunteers fought bravely alongside the defending forces. The Japanese later took revenge by killing all the Chinese men, women and children in the nearby village.



▲ Japanese soldiers at Bukit Timah Hill, 10 February 1942



Sultan's Palace



Causeway



Kranji River



Tengah Airfield



Bukit Timah



Ford Motor Factory

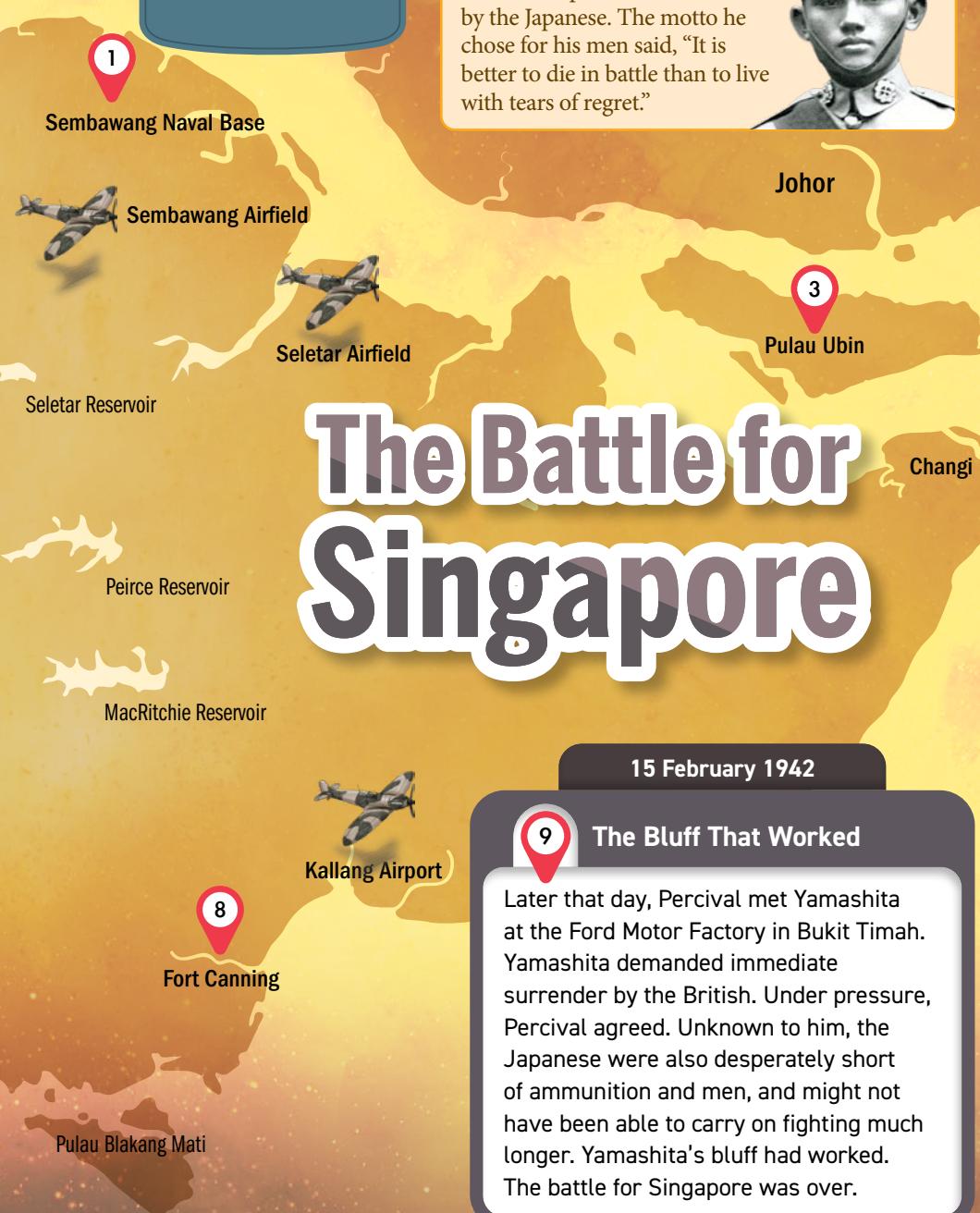


Pasir Panjang Ridge





Find out more about how Singapore fell to the Japanese @ go.gov.sg/lshc502.



The Battle for Singapore

Who was LIEUTENANT ADNAN BIN SAIDI?

Before the war, Adnan bin Saidi (1915–1942) was a trainee teacher in Malaya. He joined the Malay Regiment when it was set up by the British in 1933. An excellent soldier, he was voted best recruit and eventually became a Lieutenant. During the Japanese invasion of Singapore, Lieutenant Adnan and the Malay Regiment fought bravely to defend Pasir Panjang. Despite being wounded, Lieutenant Adnan refused to yield and kept on fighting. He was later captured and killed by the Japanese. The motto he chose for his men said, "It is better to die in battle than to live with tears of regret."



13–14 February 1942

7 The Battle of Pasir Panjang

The Japanese reached Pasir Panjang Ridge (present-day Kent Ridge Park), close to the Alexandra area where the main British ammunition stores and military hospital were located. It was defended by the Malay Regiment, including Lieutenant Adnan bin Saidi. The Japanese attacked and surrounded the hill. Fierce fighting took place, with many killed on both sides. However, the Malay Regiment was heavily outnumbered and was eventually defeated.



▲ Men from the Malay Regiment at bayonet practice, October 1941

15 February 1942

8 Decision at Fort Canning

On the first day of the Lunar New Year, British commanders met at the underground bunker at Fort Canning. Percival wanted to counter-attack, but his commanders were against it. The soldiers were exhausted. Their supplies of food, water and ammunition were running out. The prospect of street fighting meant more casualties. To avoid further bloodshed, the British decided to surrender.



▲ Wax figurines in Battlebox showing Percival (centre of table, standing) and his senior officers discussing Singapore's surrender on the morning of 15 February 1942

15 February 1942

9 The Bluff That Worked

Later that day, Percival met Yamashita at the Ford Motor Factory in Bukit Timah. Yamashita demanded immediate surrender by the British. Under pressure, Percival agreed. Unknown to him, the Japanese were also desperately short of ammunition and men, and might not have been able to carry on fighting much longer. Yamashita's bluff had worked. The battle for Singapore was over.



BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: CAUSATION

Earlier in the chapter (see page 174), you learnt that historians sometimes look at the causes of a historical event in different ways. In doing so, they may ask whether the event would necessarily have happened given the particular set of factors at that time, or whether things could have turned out differently if the initial conditions or factors had been different.

In the case of the fall of Singapore, one way is to look at whether the defeat could have been prevented or avoided by examining the causes in terms of:

- the international context (e.g., the war in Europe);
- the circumstances in which the battles for Malaya and Singapore were fought (e.g., the readiness and preparations of the British and Japanese forces); and
- the choices and decisions of the military and political leaders (e.g., Churchill, Percival and Yamashita).

▼ Surrender negotiations at the Ford Motor Factory, 15 February 1942



Conclusion

The fall of Singapore has been described as the worst military disaster ever suffered by the British. Numerous books have examined the reasons for the defeat and whether it could have been avoided. Having studied this chapter, would you agree that Singapore was doomed to fall?

In the international context, the British were fighting a major war, not just in Asia, but also in Europe and North Africa. With their limited resources, the British simply could not defend every place with all their might. On the other hand, with the United States rebuilding its forces after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese were able to focus on attacking Southeast Asia. Given this, it is clear that the Japanese held the advantage over the British in Southeast Asia.

For British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the defence of Britain itself was more important than the defence of its colonies in Asia, including Singapore. This meant that fewer resources were made available for the defence of Singapore. Thus, British commanders in Malaya and Singapore had to make do with what they had, which was mostly inferior to what the Japanese forces had. To make matters worse, the defenders were under-prepared to resist the Japanese invasion, due to poor planning and training. On the other side, the Japanese forces were well-prepared and equipped. These circumstances, combined with the international context of the war mentioned earlier, made the defence of Singapore a very difficult, if not impossible, task.

Finally, what about the roles of key individuals? Could Singapore have been saved if Churchill had sent more troops and weapons? What if General Percival had been a better commander, or General Yamashita a worse one? As Prime Minister, Churchill had to prioritise the defence of Britain over that of its colonies. It might be unreasonable to expect him to allocate more resources to Singapore when Britain was fighting for its own survival. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether more resources or a better commander of the British forces could have made a significant difference, given the odds stacked against them. On the Japanese side, a less competent commander than Yamashita might have taken longer to conquer Singapore or at a higher cost, but he most probably would still have managed it in the end.

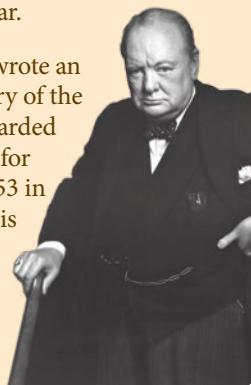
The fall of Singapore marked a new chapter in the island's history: 123 years of continuous British rule had been disrupted. The people in Singapore looked to the dawn of Japanese rule with uncertainty, anxiety and fear.

Who was WINSTON CHURCHILL?

Winston Churchill (1874–1965), the descendant of a famous 18th-century English general, had a brief military career before becoming a Member of Parliament in 1900. He then held many important posts in the British government up to 1929.

Churchill was one of the few British politicians to recognise the dangers Hitler posed to Europe and the British Empire. He became Prime Minister of Britain in May 1940 and refused to surrender to Germany. His brilliant speeches, strong determination and tireless efforts inspired and sustained the British people towards eventual victory in the war.

Churchill later wrote an acclaimed history of the war and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953 in recognition of his achievements.



▲ Japanese troops celebrating the capture of Singapore, February 1942. The original photograph was in black and white. Colour has been added to it digitally in recent times to enhance its effect.

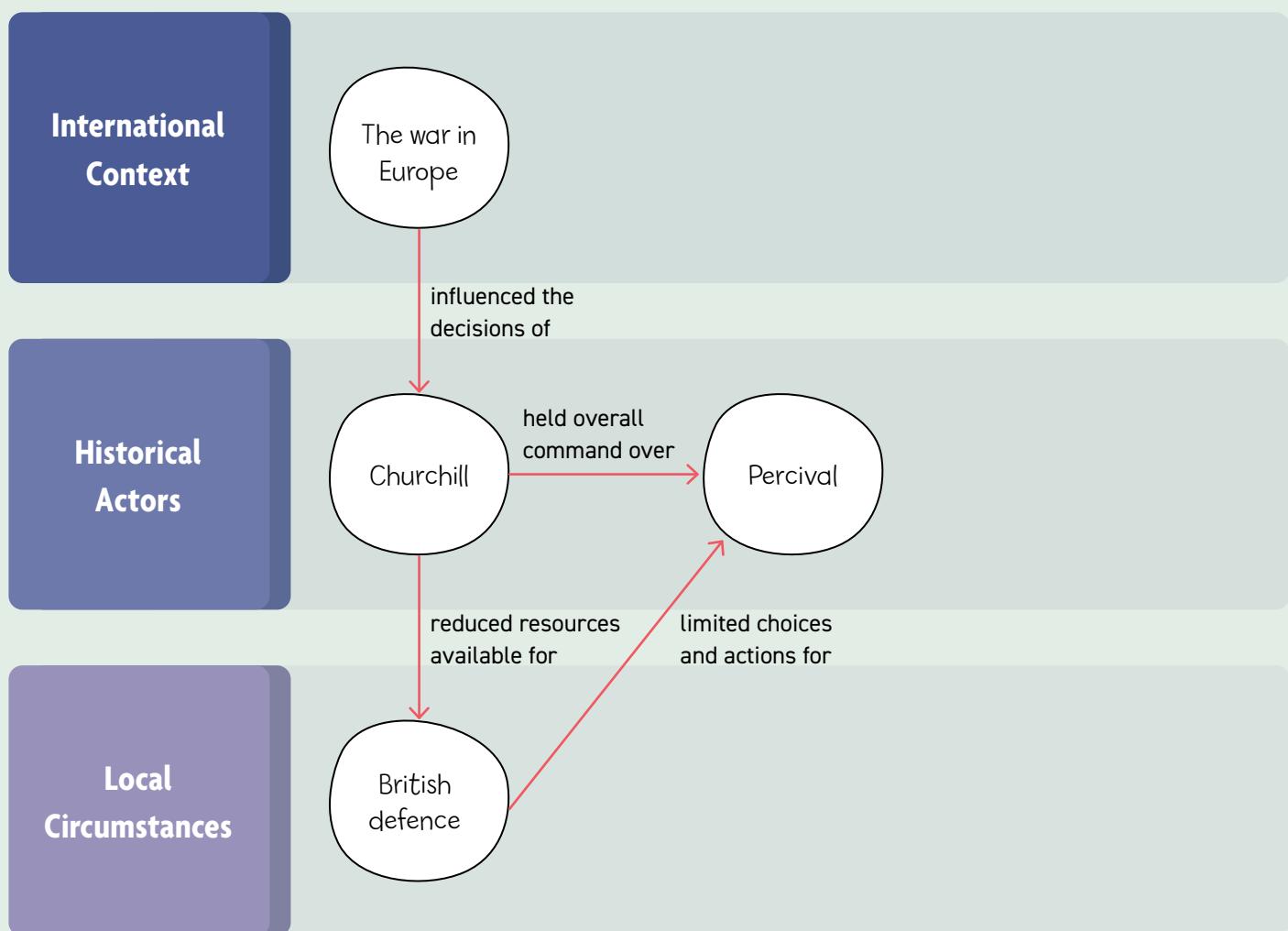


LET'S REVIEW

Here are some factors that contributed to the fall of Singapore. Based on what you have learnt in this chapter, group them into the following categories:

- international context;
- historical actors; and
- local circumstances.

How are these factors connected to one another? Draw a graphic organiser to link them. Some examples have been done for you.





CASE INVESTIGATION

Was General Percival to blame for the fall of Singapore?

As the overall commander of the British forces defending Singapore, General Percival received much criticism for his role in the military disaster. After surrendering Singapore to the Japanese, Percival joined many of his troops as a prisoner of war. At the end of the war, he was released and attended the ceremony marking the formal surrender of the Japanese. Thereafter, he retired from military service and returned to Britain, where he wrote an account of the Malayan campaign. Unlike other British military officers who retired with the rank of Lieutenant-General, Percival was not awarded a knighthood (an honour usually awarded to people who have provided exceptional service to the country).

There are many differing views about Percival. Some feel he was a poor commander who made too many crucial mistakes. Others argue that he was simply a convenient scapegoat (person to blame) for the military disaster. How far was Percival to blame for the fall of Singapore? Read the sources that follow and carry out the investigation to decide for yourself.

SOURCE A

A courageous, compassionate and intelligent soldier of great integrity, Percival was not a born leader and field commander, and he was slow to adapt to changed circumstances. While he impressed many people who knew him well, Percival lacked the ability to command people's attention. Slight in build, he appeared shy and oversensitive, while his calm manner could easily be mistaken for disinterest and weakness.

- A description of General Percival, adapted from a book by British historian Constance Mary Turnbull, published in 2009

▼ General Percival (extreme right) with war reporters in Singapore, late January 1942



SOURCE B

Percival was certainly treated unfairly by those who came after him. His personal bravery, ability as a staff officer and genuine concern for the welfare of his troops are all beyond dispute. Percival was given an impossible plan. By making whatever changes he could, he might have delayed, but not prevented, the fall of Singapore. He certainly lacked charisma, and the gift of inspiring men to the highest pitch of heroism and determination. Percival was unfortunate that he was given responsibilities far beyond his capabilities, and he lacked the ability to inspire and lead.

– An evaluation of Percival, adapted from a book by military historians Richard Holmes and Anthony Kemp, published in 1982

SOURCE C

Many of the causes which contributed to our defeat in Malaya and Singapore had a common origin, namely the British Empire's lack of readiness for war. Our shortage in ships, aircraft and tanks, the inexperience of our leaders, and the lack of training of our troops, can all be attributed to a failure to prepare for war. In 1941, when the crisis came, it was too late to put things right. By that time, we were engaged in a life and death struggle in the West, and war material which might have saved Singapore was sent elsewhere. The choice was made and Singapore had to suffer. In my opinion this decision, however painful and regrettable, was unavoidable and right.

– An extract adapted from General Percival's memoirs, published in 1949

SOURCE D

Forces	Malaya Command (General Percival)	25th Army (General Yamashita)
Combat Troops	87,000	55,000
Tanks	0	80
Aircraft	150–250	550–600
Warships	4	11

▲ Table showing the estimated British and Japanese forces deployed in Malaya and Singapore as of 7 December 1941

INVESTIGATE!

1. Read **Sources A** and **B**. How similar are they in telling you about Percival's leadership?
2. Examine **Sources A** to **D**. Group the sources according to whether or not they support the claim that Percival was to blame for the fall of Singapore. How do these sources differ in their view of Percival's role in the British defeat?

REPORT!

After reading the sources, note down the **key points on whether Percival was to blame for the fall of Singapore** in the table below. Provide evidence from the sources to support the key points. An example has been done for you. After that, write your conclusion in the last row.

Percival Was to Blame	Percival Was Not to Blame
Percival was not an inspiring leader. According to Source A, he “was not a born leader and field commander”. He also “lacked the ability to command people’s attention”.	
My conclusion is ...	

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