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In my opinion, it is important to celebrate in 2019 for the 200th Anniversary from 1819 since 1819 is the start of the modern Singapore history. Though 1819 may seem insignificant from the view of continuous rise and fall of longue duree history cycles, many of Singapore’s present success can be traced back to 1819 which is still meaningful to today’s society. Raffles may be challenged as being the founding figure of Singapore, but it is still worth to commemorate him as his contribution to Singapore was undeniable and priceless and still continued to affect Singapore’s current generation.

There is unreplaceable significance of year 1819 in terms of Singapore Story since Singapore Story started with British colonization which can be traced back to East India Company governance in 1819. First published edition of the history started with the year from 1819 and it is the starting time of the Singapore story narrative by PAP government[[1]](#footnote-1). Singapore Story explains how Singapore has survived and flourished through multiple periods of troubles such as WW1 and WW2 and the basis of success originated from British governance from 1819. The Singapore Story aims to preserve the fact of history and raise an awareness in Singapore society and learn from the lessons of the past[[2]](#footnote-2). In order to implant the national identity through Singapore Story and inculcate values so that Singaporeans will not be complacent and continue to learn from past, it is thus important to celebrate 1819 as mark of 200 years since 1819.

In the longue duree aspect, 1819 is also significant in terms of being the key turning point in Singapore’s historical cycles. Throughout Singapore’s history, there are certain patterns and characteristics of rise and fall continuing to reoccur. In 700-year history cycles, Temasek period can considered as peak with political, economic and social features quite close to the post-1965 Singapore according to Derek Heng[[3]](#footnote-3). The year 1819, being the dividing line between the past Temasek era and the modern Singapore, is important since it is the start of the modern Singapore history as well as the starting point of Singapore’s continuous growth from 1819 until nowadays. However, critics may argue that in the longue duree viewpoint, this is just another case of rise and fall which does not have the utmost value to celebrate, but the fact that the rise after 1819 lasts until today is undeniable. There is not point denying the value of 1819 since it is the time when modern Singapore can trace its presence back to. Thus it still meaningful to have the 200th Anniversary for the year when Singapore had its turning point and continued to succeed until today.

In the demographic point of view, it is commonly recognized that Singapore’s current population mostly came to this strategic location only after the time of British colonization and revival as a port in Malay World in 1819[[4]](#footnote-4), and the Chinese majority in Singapore at that time made Singapore stand out in Malay world. Most Singaporeans have their ancestors coming and living in Singapore after 1819. This is important as to celebrate in 2019 as 200th Anniversary 1819 is to recognise Singaporeans’ family history and memory on this island. This can cultivate a collective sense of belonging to this island since their family ancestors had lived in Singapore for a few generations starting from 1819. Thus it is important to celebrate 1819 because 1819, being the starting point, allows Singaporeans to trace their ancestors’ existence on this island.

In terms of economy, 1819 is also crucial to modern Singapore’s development. The free trade policy started in the governance of East India Company became the root of Singapore’s continuous prosperity until today, making it the regional and international trading hub. Singapore’s economy has far predefined at that time by transshipment trade, entrepot trade as well as the imports and exports for local necessities. Starting from 1819, Singapore benefitted from external trading network provided by EIC to have a significant increase in trade volume and welcomed foreign investment, allowing it to prosper quickly. From 1819 to 1867, Singapore quickly expanded trade in scale and enjoyed economic advantage[[5]](#footnote-5). Singapore becomes strategic location not because of geometrical attributes but how people such as Raffles and Lee Kuan Yew designed and engineered it. Singapore government kept the business environment and policies created by Raffles such that Singapore continuously keeps the strategic location as economic hub in the region. To have the 200th Anniversary is just to recognize the value of 1819 and Raffles’ contribution in terms of shaping Singapore’s economic basis.

It is also important to consider whether it is necessary to celebrate in 2019 in terms of the significance of 2019 in Singapore Story which talks about how Singapore succeed through all difficulties. The 200th Anniversary celebrates Singapore’s current success in modern history. The opposing views may be saying that the prosperity of today’s Singapore society should be attributed to good governance from Lee Kuan Yew and PAP government which should be credited for Singapore’s success and SG50 is enough for celebrating independence and 200th Anniversary is redundant. In comparison, Raffles’ contribution in the colonial age was significant but had comparatively less impact on today’s Singapore. However, Raffles’ contribution on town plan, free port, law and order[[6]](#footnote-6) actually built the basis of Singapore society and it is impossible to neglect Raffles when talking about the process of Singapore’s prosperity. In discussing Singapore’s success, it is crucial to include 1819 and thus its 200th Anniversary in 2019 in Singapore Story narrative as a milestone of Singapore’s success.

To celebrate at this point-in-time does not mean that British rule and a migrant majority are decisive breaks from the past, but rather it is flipping a new page in the longue duree history cycles. To celebrate 200th year Anniversary of 1819 is to acknowledge the process from trough to peak in the longue duree process, though Singapore may continue to grow after 2019. Singapore’s aspirations of becoming a global city state and trading hub have been implanted in the maritime history in Malay World. The 200th Anniversary marks a point-in-time in longue duree history when Singapore’s aspiration allows it to emerge and transform itself into a global city after its revival as a port from fallen Temasek and thus the 200th Anniversary is thus significant in marking 2019 in longue duree history for Singapore’s aspirations.

In conclusion, there is still need to celebrate 200th Anniversary of 1819 since it is a acknowledgement of Raffles’ contribution. This 200th Anniversary is more likely to be seen as a credit for Raffles’ vision of what Singapore could be after two centuries and for laying down the principles for that vision[[7]](#footnote-7). Though it is true that independent country should have independent history, but modern Singapore history started far before independence in 1965. Turnbull’s point that Singapore has to address its past if it wants to forge a national identity was recognized[[8]](#footnote-8)[[9]](#footnote-9) and the 200th Anniversary is still valuable. Thus there is enough reason to celebrate 200th Anniversary in 2019.

(1170 words)

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