

bibliasia

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A Celebration of Maps

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Charting Our World



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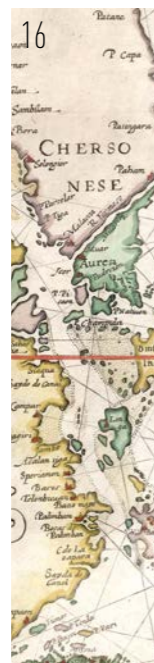
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Director's Column

In 1881, a 2,500-year-old clay tablet with inscriptions was found in Sippar, Iraq. However, it was only toward the end of that century that its significance came to light: the cuneiform on the Babylonian tablet was finally translated and read – unveiling what is probably the first map of the world.

The principle of this discovery, described in Jerry Brotton's absorbing work *A History of the World in Twelve Maps*, underpins the articles in this issue devoted to map-making and, by extension, understanding the world around us. As Dr Farish A. Noor suggests in "Maps as Statements of Power and Domination", maps are to be read in their context so as to fully comprehend their true meaning and intention. Travel accounts are invaluable complements to maps which, as Juffri Supa'at's article "Travelog Melayu" illustrates, serve as important documents of the history of cultures.

In the days before satellite imaging, map-making was partly the result of a leap of imagination. Tan Huism postulates in "Geo|Graphic: Celebrating Maps and their stories", that all maps are mental maps that reflect the cultural and historical backgrounds as well as personal perspectives of their makers. "Geo|Graphic" is the National Library's most ambitious exhibition to date – a celebration of maps of Singapore and the region from as early as the 15th century. Additionally, four evocative art works that process data, mapping and memories to create a narrative of what lies beneath contemporary life in Singapore will be showcased as part of the exhibition.

This issue, which bears the theme "Charting Our World", also features three articles that document personal map-making or perhaps, more accurately, sense-making efforts.

In "The Secret Maps of Singapore", Bonny Tan sheds light on a set of colourful hand-drawn maps created by three women in the late 1980s to document Singapore's multiethnic cultures and flavours; their occasionally quirky but always engaging perspectives come across literally in vibrant colour. Juria Toramae, creator of "Points of Departure", a project supported by the Singapore Memory Project (SMP), superimposes old photographs – the artefacts of memories – onto their present-day locations in a disorienting map of Singapore's past and present. In "A Nation of Islands", another project supported by the SMP, Zakaria Zainal rediscovers Singapore's southern islands through the stories of its former inhabitants. These stories often reveal a deep attachment to a slower, more placid island lifestyle that existed for decades before urbanisation took root.

Quite fittingly, this issue introduces the map collections of the National Library and National Archives. Senior Librarian Makeswary Periasamy highlights some of the early maps of Southeast Asia from the National Library's rare collection, many of which illustrate the development of European cartography in the region. Archivist Kevin Khoo highlights key maps in the National Archives' collection, which trace the history of Singapore from British colony to independent Republic, right up to the present day.

The spirit of discovery and inquiry continues in "On the Trail of Francis P. Ng". Dr Eriko Ogihara-Schuck tracks down the elusive Francis P. Ng (or more accurately, Teo Poh Leng), author of possibly, Singapore's first book-length English poem. Dr John van Wyhe addresses the misconception over the origins of the theory of evolution and clears the air over the alleged animosity between Charles Darwin and his contemporary, Alfred Russel Wallace, in "Darwin in Cambridge and Wallace in the Malay Archipelago".

In *The Shallows*, a book I continue to return to time and again for its artfully expressed history of the human mind, Nicholas Carr traces the evolution of map-making to the advances of the human intellect – from drawing what we see to drawing what we know. I would extend this idea to also drawing what we feel and aspire to.

As Dr Noor succinctly puts it, maps are never simply maps.

Gene Tan
Director, National Library

BiblioAsia is a free quarterly publication produced by the National Library Board. It features articles on the history, culture and heritage of Singapore within the larger Asian context, and has a strong focus on the collections and services of the National Library. BiblioAsia is distributed to local and international libraries, academic institutions, government ministries and agencies, as well as members of the public. The online edition of BiblioAsia is available at: <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/Browse/BiblioAsia.aspx>

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On the cover:
Detail taken from a 1725
hand-drawn Dutch map
depicting the southern section
of the Malay Peninsula. The
little blob on the left shows
Singapore spelt as "Oud Straat
Sincapura" (Old Strait of
Singapore). In the middle of the
map is Straat Sincapura (Strait
of Singapore), the maritime
channel located between
Sentosa and Telok Blangah.
Courtesy of Leiden University
Library, 006-14-012.

Errata
The article, "Lee Kip Lin:
Kampung Boy Conservateur",
published in *BiblioAsia* 10(3)
has been corrected to reflect
inaccuracies in content. Please
refer to the revised version at
<http://www.nlb.gov.sg/Browse/BiblioAsia.aspx>. We apologise
for the errors.

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Geo | Graphic

“Geo | Graphic”, a multi-disciplinary festival of exhibitions, installation artworks and lectures on the subject of maps takes place at the National Library from 16 January to 19 July 2015. **Tan Huism** explains why you should not miss this event.

Tan Huism is Head of Exhibitions and Curation at the National Library of Singapore. She started her curatorial career at the National Museum of Singapore before moving to the Asian Civilisations Museum, where she became Deputy Director of Curation and Collections.

The act of graphically representing the world around us is an early human impulse – judging from the prehistoric engravings of landscapes found in caves and rock shelters.² Perhaps the earliest surviving example of a world map is a 2,600-year-old clay tablet³ dating to around 600 BCE, representing a Babylonian’s view of the world. Some might debate that the tablet cannot be considered a map as it is neither drawn to scale nor does it accurately capture the geographical landscape – for example, the river Euphrates is drawn as a set of parallel lines. From a scientific perspective, this clay tablet would certainly not qualify as a map. What, then, constitutes a map?

According to J.B. Harley and David Woodward, editors of a multi-volume series *History of Cartography* first published in 1987, “maps are graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, or events in the human world.”⁴ Most scholars who study maps have come to accept this definition of a map. This inclusive definition challenges the generally accepted view of maps as utilitarian, geographical and scientific, and its evolution as a move towards objective “truth”. It opens up the discourse on maps as objects that combine both the visual and the textual, as shaped by their makers. Maps need not depict places that are found on our physical earth, such as cosmological maps of paradise and other worlds, nor do they have to be tangible in the way the maps in our smart phones are.

All maps are, in a sense, mental maps as they reflect not only the cultural and historical backgrounds but also the personal perspectives of their makers. This is because maps are simplified representations of space within which map-makers have to decide what details to include or exclude. Maps that claim to provide “accurate descriptions” of a place may be overstating their assertion.⁵ Aside from reflecting the worldview of the map-maker, maps can be used to reinforce accepted values and power structures.

Maps, atlases and globes are often used metaphorically to represent power (real or imagined) and domination over territories. For instance, Queen Elizabeth I has been depicted in a portrait standing on the map of the British Isles,⁶ and in other paintings with her hand poised over a globe. In ancient China,

“You can render space and suspend time.” So writes American author Ronlyn Domingue of the powers of the map-maker, or cartographer, in her fantasy novel *The Mapmaker’s War*¹.

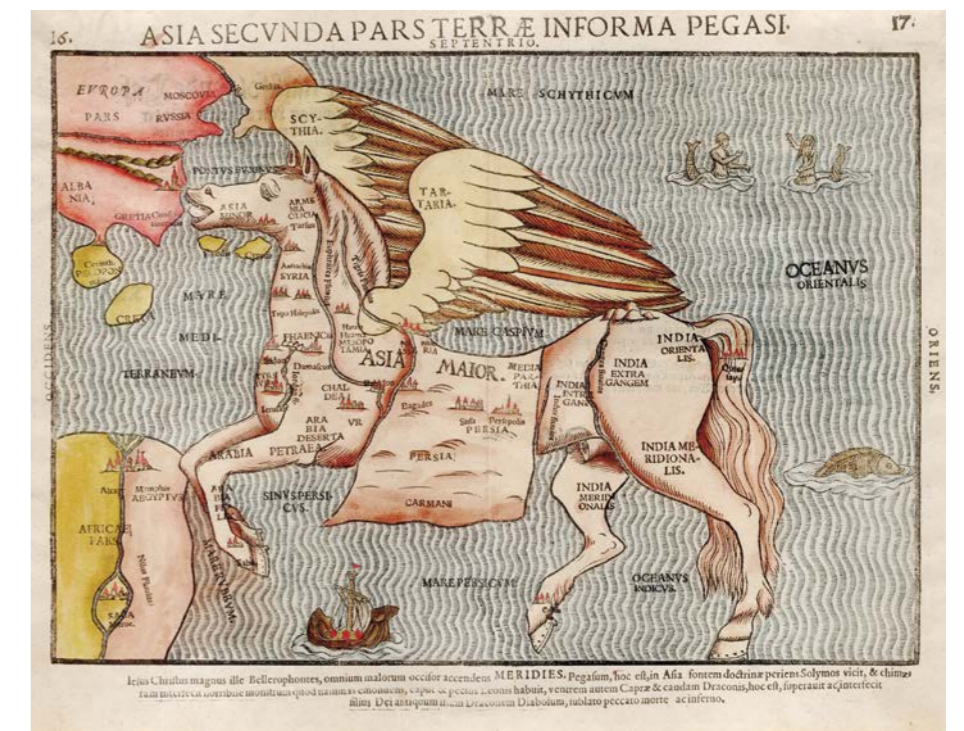
the handing over of maps by the defeated state was a sign of submission to the victor;⁷ and 17th-century Mughal emperor, Jahangir, was depicted in portraits as standing atop a terrestrial globe.⁸

Maps have a special significance in Singapore. Given the dearth of historical material on Singapore before the arrival of Stamford Raffles in 1819, pre-19th-century maps depicting the island act as important visual records of our early origins. The National Library’s latest exhibition, “Land of Gold and Spices: Early Maps of Southeast Asia and Singapore”, provides visitors with the unique opportunity to view these rare early maps. This exhibition is part of a larger festival of maps and mapping called “Geo | Graphic: Celebrating Maps and Their Stories”.

“Geo | Graphic”, which is a curated combination of exhibitions and programmes, explores the diverse world of maps and showcases the collections of the National Library (NL) and the National Archives of Singapore (NAS), as well as mapping-related artworks by four Singapore artists.

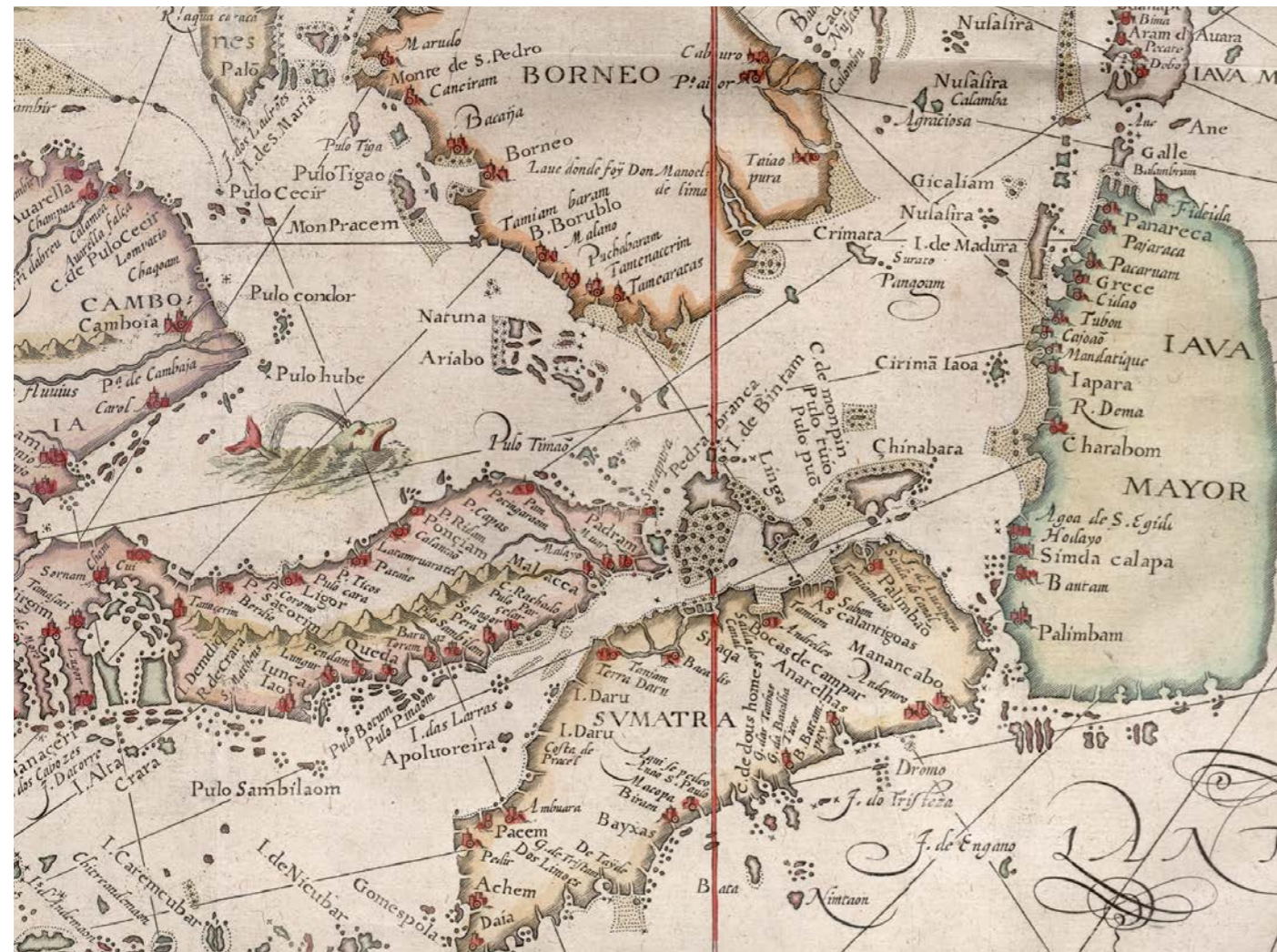


Painting of the fourth Mughal emperor, Jahangir, standing atop a terrestrial globe. © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (CBL In07A.15). www.cbl.ie



This map is from *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae (Itinerary of Holy Scripture)*, written by the 16th-century pastor and theologian, Heinrich Bunting. The map shows the continent of Asia as Pegasus, the winged horse in Greek mythology. The book, which features the Bible written in the form of a travel account, was first published in 1581. Another map in the book depicts the world in the shape of a three-leaf clover with the sacred city of Jerusalem in the centre and with Asia, Europe and Africa as leaves. National Library of Singapore Collection.

(Right) This 19th-century chart with place names written in Bugis script is a rare example of an extant map of the region drawn by an unnamed Southeast Asian cartographer. Some early maps of the region drawn by Europeans are believed to have been based on indigenous maps and sources. In turn, indigenous cartographic traditions were also influenced by European maps of the time. This nautical chart, believed to be a pirate's map, shows heavy borrowings from Dutch maps. *Courtesy of University of Utrecht Library.*



**LAND OF GOLD AND SPICES:
EARLY MAPS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA
AND SINGAPORE**

This anchor exhibition for “Geo|Graphic” reveals how Southeast Asia was perceived, conceived and mapped by the Europeans from the 15th to the early 19th century. The exhibition starts off with maps based on *Geography*, the seminal work of the 2nd-century Greek astronomer and mathematician Claudius Ptolemy. Ptolemy plotted out what he considered as the known terrestrial world at the time. The region we now know as Southeast Asia was for Ptolemy “India Beyond the Ganges” – a land where gold, silver and other exotic products abounded. In 13th-century Europe, the tables of longitudes and latitudes from *Geography* were translated into maps to accompany the text, first in manuscript form and, later, in the 15th century, in printed editions. These maps constitute some of the earliest European depictions of Southeast Asia. Eventually, the lure of spices and riches brought the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and British to the region and their intrepid journeys can be explored through the various maps displayed at the exhibition.

A highlight of the exhibition are several pre-1800 maps that contain names such as Cinca pula, Cingatola and Sincapura. Could these names refer to Singapore? Also on display are early printed and hand-drawn maps that identify Singapore as Old Strights of Sincapura, Iantana, Pulo Panjang and Sincapour. Whatever the names used, these maps clearly point to Singapore’s existence before 1819 and offer a glimpse into its maritime history. Another highlight are the rare hand-drawn Dutch and English maps that have been borrowed from European libraries and displayed in Singapore for the first time.

(Right) On this hand-drawn and coloured 1725 Dutch map depicting the southern part of the Malay Peninsula and the Riau archipelago, Singapore is marked as Oud Straat Sincapura (Old Strait of Singapore). The Old Strait of Singapore is the name of the maritime channel between Sentosa and Telok Blangah. *Courtesy of Leiden University Library, 006-14-012.*

(Left) The Dutch merchant/traveller and historian, Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1563–1611) is credited with writing a book on the navigational routes to the elusive East Indies (referring generally to India and Southeast Asia). The Portuguese, who at that time controlled the lucrative spice trade to Europe, kept such information secret. Sailing directions and accurate maps from Linschoten’s book *Itinerario* (first published in 1596), later paved the way for the Dutch and British to venture to the region. This cropped detail of a larger map from the English edition of the *Itinerario*, published in 1598, shows “Sincapura” at the tip of the Malay Peninsula. Interestingly, Linschoten’s map is oriented with the east at the top, with the entire region positioned on its side. *National Library of Singapore Collection.*



ISLAND OF STORIES: SINGAPORE MAPS

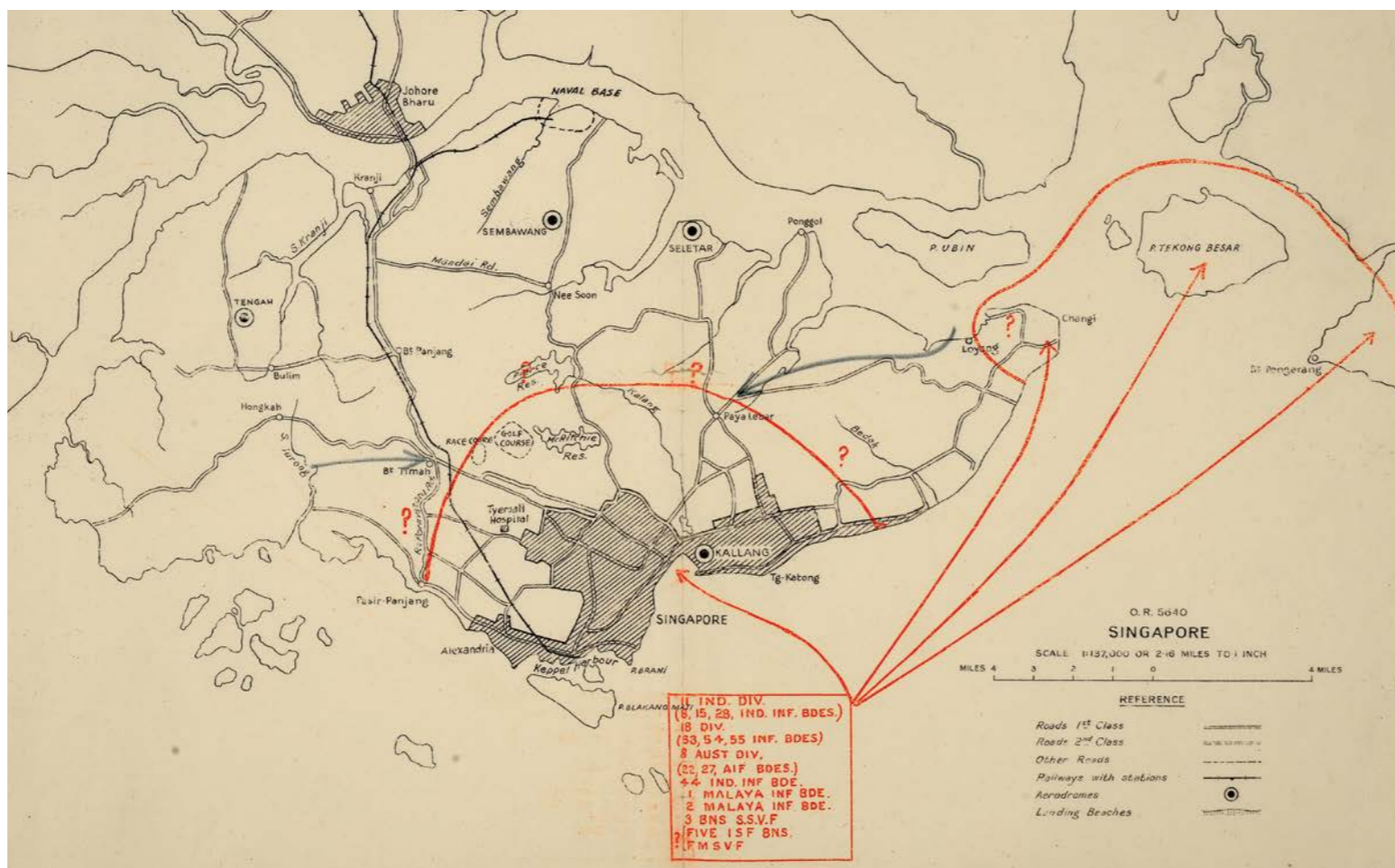
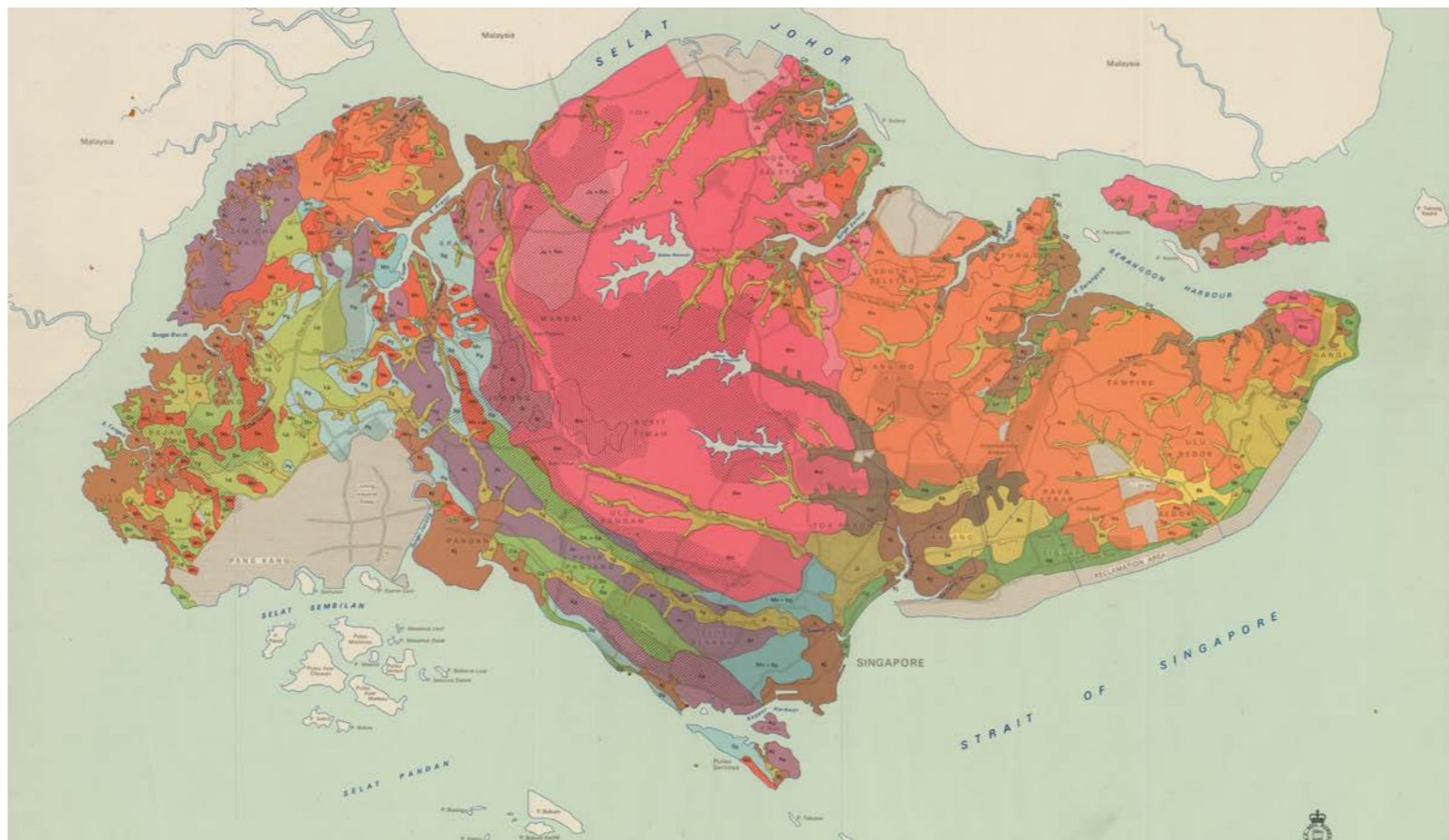
Do you know where “zero point” is located in Singapore? Or where the “circus” at Orchard Road was found? “Island of Stories” draws on an eclectic mix of Singapore maps that capture intriguing moments from our country’s history. This exhibition, organised by NAS and NL, showcases the NAS’ map collection. Accompanied by images and audiovisual elements, the exhibition weaves a multifaceted story of Singapore’s past.

On display are maps that depict Singapore’s farmland and soil composition; stories of the detached mole (breakwater that provides a safe protected area for smaller ships to anchor) at Marina Bay; the election fever of 1955; 3-D aerial photography; and alternative urban concepts for Singapore.

A special Geographic Information System (GIS) developed with the Urban Redevelopment Authority enables visitors to overlay maps from the mid-19th century over a contemporary map of Singapore to see how our landscape has radically changed over the years. Another highlight are three maps drafted by the British army during the Malayan campaign and the Battle for Singapore, which detail the movement and disposition of British and Japanese troops in Northern Malaya. This display, comprising rare maps on loan from the National Archives of the United Kingdom, commemorates the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in 2015.

(Top right) This 1977 map depicts the findings of the very first comprehensive soil survey of Singapore. It is still the only known officially commissioned soil map of Singapore to date. The island’s central area is made of hard granite, indicated in pink. This natural feature has influenced much of the urban development on the island, with most of the construction work taking place outside this central zone made up of softer alluvium and sedimentary rocks. *Survey Department, National Archives of Singapore Collection.*

(Right) This map, on display at “Island of Stories: Singapore Maps” organised by NAS, shows the positions of the British (in red) and Japanese military units (in blue) on 12 and 13 February 1942. The Battle for Singapore began on 8 February and after four days of intense fighting, the Japanese forces broke through the initial British defences and captured the western half of the island, as depicted on the map. The British eventually surrendered on 15 February 1942. *Courtesy of National Archives of the United Kingdom; National Archives of Singapore Collection.*



**SEA STATE 8 SEABOOK:
AN ART PROJECT BY CHARLES LIM**

seabook was conceived by artist Charles Lim as a site for the agglomeration of archival material, anecdotes and memories that explores Singapore’s relationship with the sea. Lim, who is Singapore’s 2015 representative to the Venice Biennale, has a close relationship with the sea as he is a former national sailor and represented Singapore in the 1996 Olympics.

This particular project is an extension of Lim’s previous solo-exhibition, “In Search of Raffles’ Light”, held in 2013 at the National University of Singapore (NUS) Museum. Both these projects are part of Lim’s body of work known as the SEA STATE series, which was first initiated in

2008 and continues with his exploration of Singapore’s maritime ecology. Developed together with the librarians at NL, *seabook* highlights the vast amount of information and data gathered from maps, charts and newspaper clippings, as well as scholarly material grappling with the complex relationship between Singapore and the sea – from colonial times to the present day. The stories encompass the mundane – such as fishing as a livelihood, the everyday lives of island communities, regulations on the use of the sea for leisure and other purposes, as well as sea-related tragedies, including an attack on a girl by a swordfish in 1961. The exhibition, jointly organised by NUS Museums and NL, highlights the troubled relationship Singapore has with its seas and its continued undercurrents in our lives.

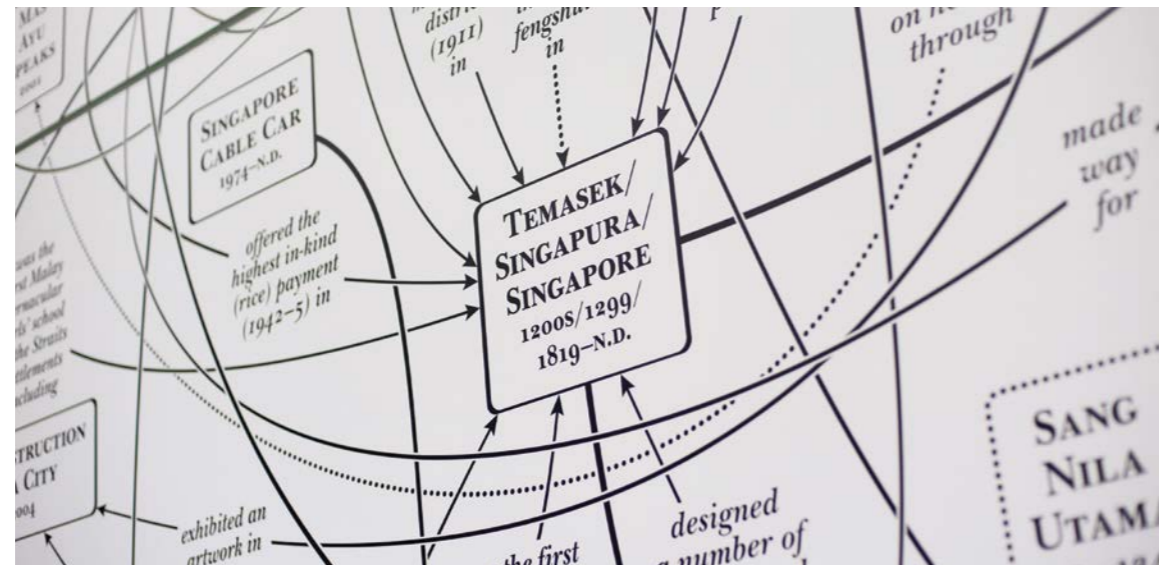


Artist Charles Lim’s work, *Sea Safe* (2014), in progress.

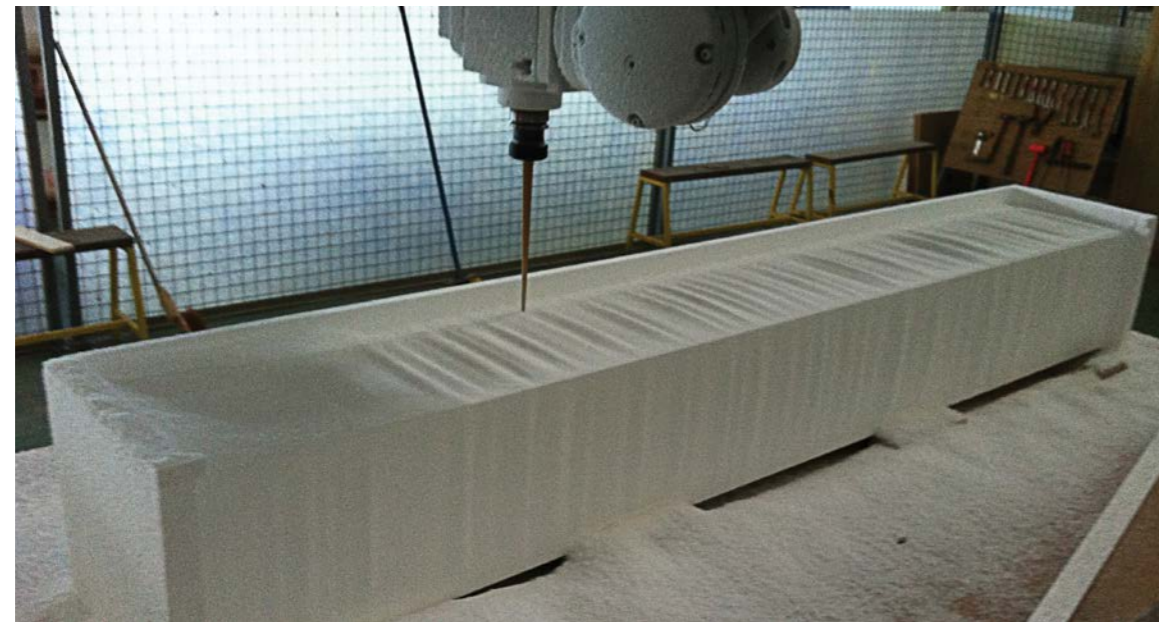


Artist Charles Lim working on *seabook* with NL librarian, Janice Loo.

Close-up of Michael Lee's *Notes Towards a Museum of Cooking Pot Bay* (2010–11), from his artwork, *Bibliotopia*.



A polystyrene block is given a textured surface in Jeremy Sharma's *Outliers* (2014–2015).



Stills from Sherman Ong's work, *the seas will sing and the wind will carry us (Fables of Nusantara)*.



MIND THE GAP: MAPPING THE OTHER

Making up the art component of "GeolGraphic" is "Mind the Gap", which presents the works of three Singapore contemporary artists, who harness data collection and mapping to investigate what lies beneath the surface of contemporary life.

Bibliotopia by Michael Lee

Michael Lee's research interest focuses on urban memory and fiction, emphasising their contexts and issues of loss. He translates his findings into diagrams and texts, in particular, the mind map. Lee finds the mind map powerful in generating ideas and organising vast amounts of data. In *Bibliotopia*, Lee uses the device of the mind map to uncover the "secret bookscape" of Singapore's book culture. Focusing on the genres of short fiction, horror and the teen novel through the literary output of Catherine Lim, Russell Lee and Adrian Tan, he seeks to draw out secrets that are hidden within, or exposed by, narratives on identity, adolescence and the ghostly in Singapore.

Outliers by Jeremy Sharma

In the installation work *Outliers*, by multidisciplinary artist Jeremy Sharma, are four white polystyrene blocks with undulating surfaces that capture in material form the signals of dying stars. When dying stars explode, their remnants (also known as pulsars) emit electromagnetic pulses that can be detected by a radio telescope on earth. These pulses are emitted until the star finally burns out, which could take anything between 10 and 100 million years.

With the help of a pulsar scientist, Sharma has been collecting and categorising radiographic data of selected pulsars according to size, distance from earth and age at the time of discovery. This two-dimensional data was then converted into 3-D landscapes of valleys and peaks created by 3-D printing technology.

Outliers contemplates the profound space-time distance the signals of dying stars travel in order to communicate their death throes.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT GEO | GRAPHIC

Geo|Graphic: Celebrating Maps and Their Stories runs from 16 January to 19 July 2015 at the National Library Building. The programme details are as follows:

- L1 Singapore's first topographical and city map
- L10 Land of Gold and Spices: Early Maps of Southeast Asia and Singapore
- L11 Island of Stories: Singapore Maps
SEA STATE 8 seabook | An Art Project by Charles Lim

MIND THE MAP: MAPPING THE OTHER

Presents the works of three Singapore-based contemporary artists who harness data collection and mapping strategies to investigate what lies beneath the surface of contemporary life.

- L7 *Bibliotopia* | By Michael Lee
- L8 *Outliers* | By Jeremy Sharma
- L9 *the seas will sing and the wind will carry us (Fables of Nusantara)* | By Sherman Ong

- A series of lectures on the theme of maps and mapping has been organised as part of "GeolGraphic". The series aims to encourage discourse on the construction of knowledge, memory and identity through the understanding of the complexity and dynamism between contesting social narratives and spaces.
- Free guided tours of the exhibition will be available every weekend from 7 February to 19 July 2015. English tours run from 2 to 3pm and Mandarin tours from 2.30 to 3.30pm. Each tour is limited to 20 participants and no registration is required.

AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Be sure to visit our interactive exhibition "MAPS!", which explores maps and navigation through history, at selected public libraries. For more information on all programmes, pick up a copy of GoLibrary or access it online at <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/golibrary/>

the seas will sing and the wind will carry us (Fables of Nusantara) by Sherman Ong

Sherman Ong is a filmmaker, photographer and visual artist whose practice centres on the relationship between place and the human condition. In this video installation, he uses the documentary/ethnographic film genre to tell stories of migration, trans-border identities, myths and memory in island Southeast Asia. The histories and contemporary stories of the region are explored through the stories of nine individuals featured in a series of video vignettes. The stories include an Acehnese living in Malaysia recounting the loss of his family in the Asian tsunami of 2004; a Peranakan (Straits Chinese) woman describing her life of servitude while waiting for the "right" man to come along; and a Chinese woman arriving in Singapore in search of a better life. ♦

Notes

- 1 Domingue, R. (2013) *The Mapmaker's War: Keeper of Tales Trilogy: Book One*, p.1. Atria Book.
- 2 Smith, C. (1994) 'Prehistoric cartography in Asia' in Harley, J.B. and Woodward, D. (ed.), *Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- 3 This clay tablet which was found in Iraq is now in the collection of the British Museum.
- 4 Harely, J.B. and Woodward, D. (ed.) (1987), Preface in Volume 1, *Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies*, p. xvi. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- 5 See Monmonier, M. (1991), *How to lie with maps*, University of Chicago Press, United States of America.
- 6 This oil painting known as "The Ditchley Portrait", was painted around 1592. It is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London.
- 7 Yee, C. (1994). "Chinese Maps in Political Culture" in Harley, J.B. and Woodward, D. (ed.), *Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- 8 A miniature painting of Jahangir standing on the globe shooting at his enemy, Malik Anbar, dated 1620 is in the collection of the Chester Beatty Library. Another painting of Jahangir standing on a globe shows him embracing Shah Abbas of Iran, dated 1618 is in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art.
- 9 Boschberg, P. (2010). *The Singapore and Melaka Straits: Violence, Security and Diplomacy in the 17th century*. Singapore: NUS Press.

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Maps as Statements of

POWER AND DOMINATION

Drawing from his personal collection of maps amassed over three decades, **Dr Farish A. Noor** invites us to truly read maps and look beyond their geographical boundaries.

The census, the map, and the museum: together, they profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion – the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry.

– Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*

Dr Farish A. Noor is an Associate Professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. He has been collecting books, maps and prints of Asia since his student days in Europe and has been researching the subject of state-formation and religio-political movements across Asia.

I write this as an academic who also happens to be a collector of antiquarian books, prints and maps of Southeast Asia, a hobby I have indulged in since my late teens, and which has left me in a state of perpetual poverty as a result. Those who belong to this small fraternity of aficionados will readily testify to the joy of collecting and the boundless pleasure of reading and appreciating books and maps that date back centuries. I am proud to say that although my passion has left me penniless, the state of destitution, thankfully, applies only to my wallet and not my sensibilities.

Antiquarian maps have long been sought after, for both their aesthetic as well as historical value. Those familiar with the workings of the antiquarian trade would know that such maps are also worthy investments in the long-run.

Having said that, the academic in me would also point to the academic worth of maps as documents of power and as records of the progression of power in the most comprehensive sense: both political-military as well as epistemic. Aside from

the inherent beauty of some maps – and it should be noted that some antiquarian maps are undoubtedly visually stunning objects in themselves, deserving of appreciation as paintings and sculpture are – the added value of old maps is that they are historical records that document the march of exploration and conquest as well as the spread of (geographic) knowledge of the world.

MAPPING AND KNOWLEDGE: HOW WE COME TO KNOW THE WORLD

In this essay I would like to address the topic of maps and map-making and how maps can (and should) be *read* rather than simply merely *looked at*. By *reading* maps I mean that the map is never simply a chart or a plan of territory, but also a statement (of intent or ambition) that can be interpreted and understood.

We need to begin with the premise that maps are never simply maps. Here is where we encounter the puzzle of maps and map-making, and it is more an epistemic puzzle than a practical one. For if we were to start off with the Platonic premise that all forms of representation are merely that – *re-presentations* of things as they really are – then all representations are to be regarded as counterfeit. What, then, is a map? And how do maps *map* the world? Granted that all maps are necessarily the product of human effort and are invariably tainted by subjective bias and the cultural perspectivism of the cartographer, they nevertheless need to

correspond to some reality in order to fulfil their functions as maps that, well, map. But as representations of the world, maps merely stand for the “thing” that they represent.

The philosopher Heidegger would interject by noting that the world of the *thing-in-itself* can never be known directly, but only through a (flawed, limited and subjective) human perspective. Taken in broad strokes, the upshot of this argument is that a map of Asia therefore does not really “discover” Asia, but really *invents* Asia as it goes along.

Some might object to this argument on the grounds that maps illustrate things as they *are* in the world, but that misses the point: While it cannot be denied that things exist in the world, the more fundamental question is *how* those things come to be *regarded* as the things they *are* in the first place; which can only be a matter that is subjectively decided. For instance, elevations of earth and rock exist, but whether they exist as mountains or hills is a matter of subjective human judgement, and lie not in the things-in-themselves. There is, in fact, no universal standard that distinguishes the difference between hills and mountains, and the criteria differs from country to country. The American definition of a mountain is any land mass that rises to the height of a thousand feet, (610m) while in the United Kingdom, mountains need to be higher than two thousand feet (305m). (One country’s mountain is another country’s hill, evidently.)

That mountains are never simply mountains and that landscapes are never simply

landscapes is evident when we compare the different modes of mapping that once existed in the world, prior to the advent of modern states and modern regimes of knowledge and power. Benedict Anderson (1983) notes that prior to Western colonialism in Southeast Asia, these societies had developed and used two types of native maps that were meaningful and relevant to their own needs: The cosmological map and the travel guide-map. In Anderson’s words:

The “cosmograph” was a formal representation of the three worlds of traditional cosmology. The cosmography was not organised horizontally, like our own maps; rather a series of superterrestrial heavens and subterrestrial hells wedged in the visible world along a single vertical axis. It was useless for any journey save that in a search for salvation and merit. The second type, wholly profane, consisted of diagrammatic guides for military campaigns and coastal shipping. Organised roughly by the quadrant, their main features were written-in notes for marching and sailing times, required because the map-makers had no technical conception of scale... Neither type of map marked borders.²

(Background) Close-up of a Central Javanese batik embellished with a cosmological map motif. *Courtesy of Farish A. Noor.*

The cosmological map that Anderson speaks of was common in Southeast Asia and can be seen in the motifs of Javanese batik cloth that were produced then and even now. Patterns such as *lereng*, *cuwiri* and *wahyu tumurun* repeat the cosmological ordering of the Javanese universe with the heavens above and hell below, with humankind residing in the material world of objects in between. The Javanese understanding of themselves and their place in the world was complex, and apart from the cosmological worldview that placed them in the natural material world – where gods and demigods interacted with and directed the affairs of human beings – the idea of “Javaneseness” was itself fluid and amorphous.

Such maps are hardly ever seen – much less used – these days, living as we do in a modern world that has been shaped and informed by our modern world-view and sensibilities. Across the post-colonial world, schools that teach cartography and mapping do so via the medium of the terrestrial map that charts out lands and seas, delineating borders of states and marking out the territory of respective nation-states, which remain the primary actors on the stage of global politics. Living as we do in the age of such nation-states, it is no wonder that our own understanding of geography and mapping has been shaped accordingly, and that the present generation of Asians are somewhat disconnected from earlier forms of mapping that were once familiar to their ancestors. But the questions arise: How did this modern form of mapping emerge and what can be said about modern maps and how they map the world?

MAPS AS A HISTORY OF IDEAS: HOW ASIA CAME TO BE KNOWN

The maps that I have been collecting for more than three decades are almost entirely European or inspired by European cartography. Among the joys alluded to the map collector mentioned earlier is having the time to look at them at leisure and to discern the evolution of knowledge and mastery of the globe over the centuries.

Beginning with some of the oldest maps in my collection such as Sebastian Münster’s³ maps of Southeast Asia (1540) and Asia (1598), we can see how the world was perceived then. Münster’s 1540 map of Southeast Asia was Ptolemaic⁴ in its inspiration, drawing from classical sources that suggested the world ended at the East and that there was no such thing as the Pacific Ocean. Among the quirks of the map are the obvious absence of Java, Borneo, Sulawesi and the rest of the archipelago,

and the fact that Southeast Asia was then referred to as Greater India or India Extra Gangem. In his later map of the Asian continent (1598), Münster gives us a glimpse of Asia – rendered more accurately this time – that is entirely bereft of borders, suggesting a fluidity of movement and contact that has been alluded to by scholars like K. N. Chaudhuri whose “Asia before the age of Europe” was indeed a seamless landmass where peoples, ideas and commodities moved with ease, and which long pre-dates our much-vaulted claims of globalisation and cosmopolitanism today.

These maps, produced as they were in the 16th century, tell us something about the nations that produced them. Münster’s maps (1540 and 1598) were produced at a time when Western Europe was slowly emerging from the Dark Ages and when European military-economic power was unable to conquer and dominate the rest of the world. Long before the Industrial Revolution, the first maps of Asia by the Spanish and Portuguese – and later the English, Dutch, French and other Europeans – depicted an Asia that was vast, rich and overpowering – but at the same time laden with wonders and all things exotic. (Note that Münster’s 1540 map of Southeast Asia comes with curious vignettes of strange and wonderful creatures that were said to roam the countryside in Asia.)

Maps of Asia grew more sophisticated and detailed over the next century as European explorers intensified their efforts to venture into the region – initially for the sake

of trade and finding the precise route to the Spice Islands, and later for conquest. From the maps of Petrus Bertius⁵ (1616) to Nicholas de Fer⁶ (1714), we can actually see how the development of better maritime technology gave the Western explorers and merchants an edge over their Asian rivals, and how in time they were able to navigate their way across the archipelago and produce maps that grew increasingly more accurate with each new navigation. Bertius’ (1616) early map of Java, for instance, was for all intents and purposes completely useless as a tool for precise navigation but it does show us where the first European merchant-explorers first landed and made contact with the Javanese. The map points out the major trading centres along the northern coastline of Java, but



Portrait of French cartographer and geographer, Nicholas de Fer. Wikimedia Commons.



Münster’s 1540 map of Southeast Asia made no reference to Java, Borneo and the rest of the archipelago, and the region was referred to as Greater India. Courtesy of Farish A. Noor.



Nicholas de Fer’s 1714 Geographie. Courtesy of Farish A. Noor.

offers no information whatsoever about the southern coast of the island, for the simple reason that few European ships had ever ventured there at that point.

Antonio Zatta e Figli’s⁷ 1784 map of Asia reveals even more about this story of discovery and the extension of Western knowledge about the Orient in the manner in which it offers detailed and precise information about the Indian subcontinent and the Southeast Asian archipelago, but is relatively silent about China and Japan. Looking at the map today, and scanning it from West to East, we can clearly see the march of power and exploration going hand-in-hand.

By the late 18th century, much of the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia had been mapped out, thanks in part to the intense rivalry between the various European trading powers that wanted to set up their bases of operation there. But turning to the East we can see that much of East

Asia remained vacant and obscure, thanks to the policies of the kingdoms of China and Japan (that refused to allow Europeans to penetrate deeper into the interior of their realms) and also thanks to the power that the East Asian states had (in comparison with the weaker Southeast Asian polities) that prevented further colonial intervention and cartography.

Through these maps we can see the story of Empire and colonialism unfolding – as the trading nations of Western Europe developed their military and transport capabilities, they were increasingly able to travel further and to project their power abroad. Zatta e Figli’s map of Asia shows an Asia of the 18th century where Western power and knowledge were spreading in tandem from West to East, and also tells us something about how some of the Asian kingdoms then (notably China and Japan) had attempted to resist the combined might of Western

economic and epistemic power. South and Southeast Asia had been “unveiled” thanks to the technological advantage enjoyed by the militarised trading companies of England, Holland, France and Spain, which conducted their business dealings in the form of armed companies that could also conquer territories in the name of their respective nations.

Maps can, therefore, be read as documents that record the rise and fall of powers, and how the process of knowing Asia was linked to the relative decline of Asian nations and their inability to resist such attempts at charting and mapping their territories. As Indian and Southeast Asian kingdoms declined in both economic and military power, so too were their territories opened up to European cartographers who began to venture further inland, producing maps that were more accurate and reliable, but which also told the story of Western conquest of the East.

**MAPS AS COLONIAL HISTORY:
CARTOGRAPHY IN THE SERVICE OF EMPIRE**

In 1817, *The History of Java* by Thomas Stamford Raffles was published, one year after the brief British occupation of Java came to an end. Later, in 1820, John Crawfurd's *A History of the Indian Archipelago* was published. While both works feature maps that were produced by the same cartographer, J. Walker, the two maps tell us two very different stories of the men who wrote the books and their perceived roles during the British occupation of the Dutch colony of the East Indies.

Crawfurd's map of the Southeast Asian archipelago featured all of the East Indies, as well as the Malayan Peninsula and the Straits Settlements. Hand-coloured versions of the map point out the British-ruled Straits Settlements and parts of the Malayan Peninsula that had come under British influence, whereas the Dutch East Indies were marked by a different coloured outline altogether. By this stage, the borderless world of Asia envisioned and captured in the map of Münster (1598) was long gone and the process of colonisation had begun in earnest, carving out chunks of Asia and appropriating pieces of land under the rule of various Western empires.

Raffles' map, however, stands out in the manner in which it singles out Java in particular, and is replete with knowledge of the land and what lay beneath its surface

as well. It includes several smaller maps of coastal landing-sites (including one of Pacitan, along the southern coast of Java, which hitherto had not been properly surveyed and mapped by anyone), as well as a map of the mineral deposits of Java located across the island.

The Raffles-Walker map of 1817 marked the most significant advance in terms of knowledge of Java at the time. Not only did it obviously surpass the maps of earlier cartographers such as Langenes and Bertius, it was also superior to the map of John Stockwell (1811 and 1812) published at the outset of the British occupation of the island, as well as the maps that had been produced by the Dutch who had controlled Java since the 17th century. The Raffles-Walker map was fundamentally a statement of power and control, for it depicted not only the antiquities of Java – important Javanese temples and heritage sites such as Borobudur, Prambanan, Dieng and the temples of East Java are all accounted for in the map – but also the advance of British power across the island.

Two features stand out on this map: Across the middle of Java is a dotted line that charts the progress of Raffles himself – as he had set out to map the island and explore the interior – a journey that brought him to the ruins of Borobudur, which was mapped, drawn and hastily restored. On the western part of the map is a clear, straight line that marks the “new road” that was

constructed by the British in 1815 that connected Batavia (Jakarta) to the coastal city of Cirebon, by-passing many isolated villages and towns in the countryside, and rendering the journey from Batavia to Cirebon much faster and easier.

These two features tell us something about the nature of British rule in Java and what the British colonial administrators – notably Raffles himself – wanted to do during their period of rule there. Raffles' exploratory mission sought to identify the important relics and heritage sites of Java's past, establishing their antiquity and subsequently relocating them to museums as part of local native history. The new road of 1815, on the other hand, was a marker of progress and a statement of intent: It demonstrated how the British, over a period of six years, had not only become masters of the land they surveyed, but were also able to alter that land by the creation of new roads that allowed for even deeper penetration into the interior, and in times of crisis would also be used to project and deliver British military power to other parts of Java with expedience.

The inclusion of Raffles' exploratory path and the new road of 1815 in the final version of the Raffles-Walker map was a testament of power in every sense of the word – epistemic power (in the sense that the British had managed to know more about the past of Java than the Dutch and Javanese themselves) as well as military-economic-administrative power (in the sense that all

parts of the island had been brought closer together via a network of new roads, canals and paths, and implying that no part of Java would ever be obscure again.)

Such maps produced in the 19th century were, and remain, documents of imperial-colonial power. By the time men like Crawfurd and Raffles were writing about Southeast Asia and mapping the region, Western colonial power and colonial knowledge were both at their zenith, rendering local knowledge-systems and world-views redundant or at best quaint or exotic. Half-a-century earlier, cartographers such as Alexander Dalrymple (who mapped North Borneo, Sulu, Palawan and Mindanao in 1764) were still able to acknowledge local sources of information and data, and on his map of the East Borneo coast, Dalrymple even pays tribute to local Bajao and Sulu navigators who helped him in his work. It is quite telling that no such attribution was found in the works of Crawfurd, Raffles and those who came after them, for by then the British East India Company and the Dutch East Indies Company were staffed by Western cartographers schooled in Western norms of map-making, and who viewed the lands that they conquered as commercial prizes for possession and exploitation.

COLLECTING HISTORY, REGARDING POWER

For map collectors with an academic disposition, antiquarian map collecting is more than a hobby with ample dividends.

Beautiful though such maps may be, their added worth lie in the story they tell, which happens to be the story of power and knowledge, and how the two came together during the age of late industrial colonial-capitalism. The lesson that can be derived from maps is that the world never simply *is* or *was*, but is instead *constructed* via human intellectual (and martial) effort, and put together into a coherent whole that can be seen and known.

The maps of Asia I have discussed in this essay tell us something about how the *idea* of “Asia” came about, and how Asia was later divided into neat compartmentalised blocs comprising “Central Asia”, “South Asia”, “Southeast Asia” and “East Asia”. From the fluid and globalised world of Münster in the 16th century to the compartmentalised one of the 20th century, maps tell us how the world was literally and figuratively made up, invented, categorised and compartmentalised. But for us to fully appreciate these developments as they have been recorded in maps, we need to go beyond simply *looking* at them, and begin to see what is *written* in them. ♦

Notes

- 1 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Press. 1983. pp. 163-164.
- 2 Anderson, 1983. pp. 171-172.
- 3 Sebastian Münster was one of the first cartographers who produced an account of the world as it was then

- known. His work *The Cosmographia* (1544) included some of the first maps of Asia.
- 4 This refers to all maps that were inspired by the geographical accounts of the scholar Claudius Ptolemy, a 2nd-century Greek astronomer and mathematician.
 - 5 Petrus Bertius was a Flemish cartographer who was also known for his writings on philosophy and theology. His works on geography included some of the first detailed maps of Asia, with information culled from European navigators who had travelled there.
 - 6 Nicholas de Fer was a French cartographer whose influence extended beyond France: Apart from producing maps for the King of France, he also produced maps and books on geography and navigation for the court of Spain.
 - 7 Antonio Zatta was a Venetian cartographer whose production was enormous by any standards. He produced very detailed maps of Europe, Africa and Asia, and his masterpiece was his four-volume atlas of the world.

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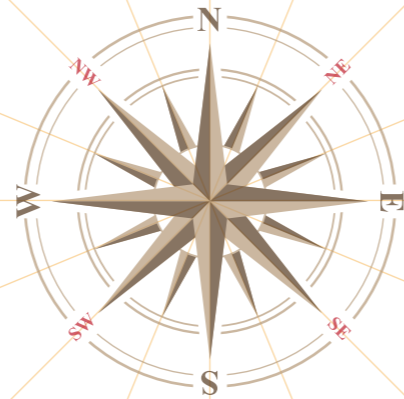
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A Map of Java was produced by the British cartographer J. Walker in 1817, and appeared in the book *The History of Java* by Stamford Raffles. The map is notable for its documentation of the advance of British power across the island. *Courtesy of Farish A. Noor.*



THE NATIONAL LIBRARY'S RARE MAPS COLLECTION



The National Library has a collection of rare maps dating back to the 15th century. **Makeswary Periasamy** shares the significance and history of these maps and their makers.

Makeswary Periasamy is a Senior Librarian with the National Library of Singapore. She selects and acquires rare materials for the National Library and also oversees the map collections of the library. Makeswary has several years of experience in cataloguing, heritage collections management, reference and research, as well as in managing large-scale preservation projects.

The National Library's Rare Maps Collection forms part of the valuable Rare Materials Collection held in its Lee Kong Chian Reference Library. The collection contains topographic maps and navigational charts covering Singapore, Southeast Asia and Asia, as well as town plans and street maps of Singapore and Malaya. The majority of the maps were printed by European map-makers before 1945.

Most of the maps were inherited from the former Raffles Museum & Library, in particular a set of early Malayan maps photocopied by J.V. Mills in 1936, now known as the Mills Collection, which comprises 208 maps and charts relating to the Malay Peninsula from the period before 1600 until 1879. Other maps were donated to the library and the rest were purchased over the years. In 2012, the library acquired the valuable and historically significant David Parry Southeast Asian Map Collection, which

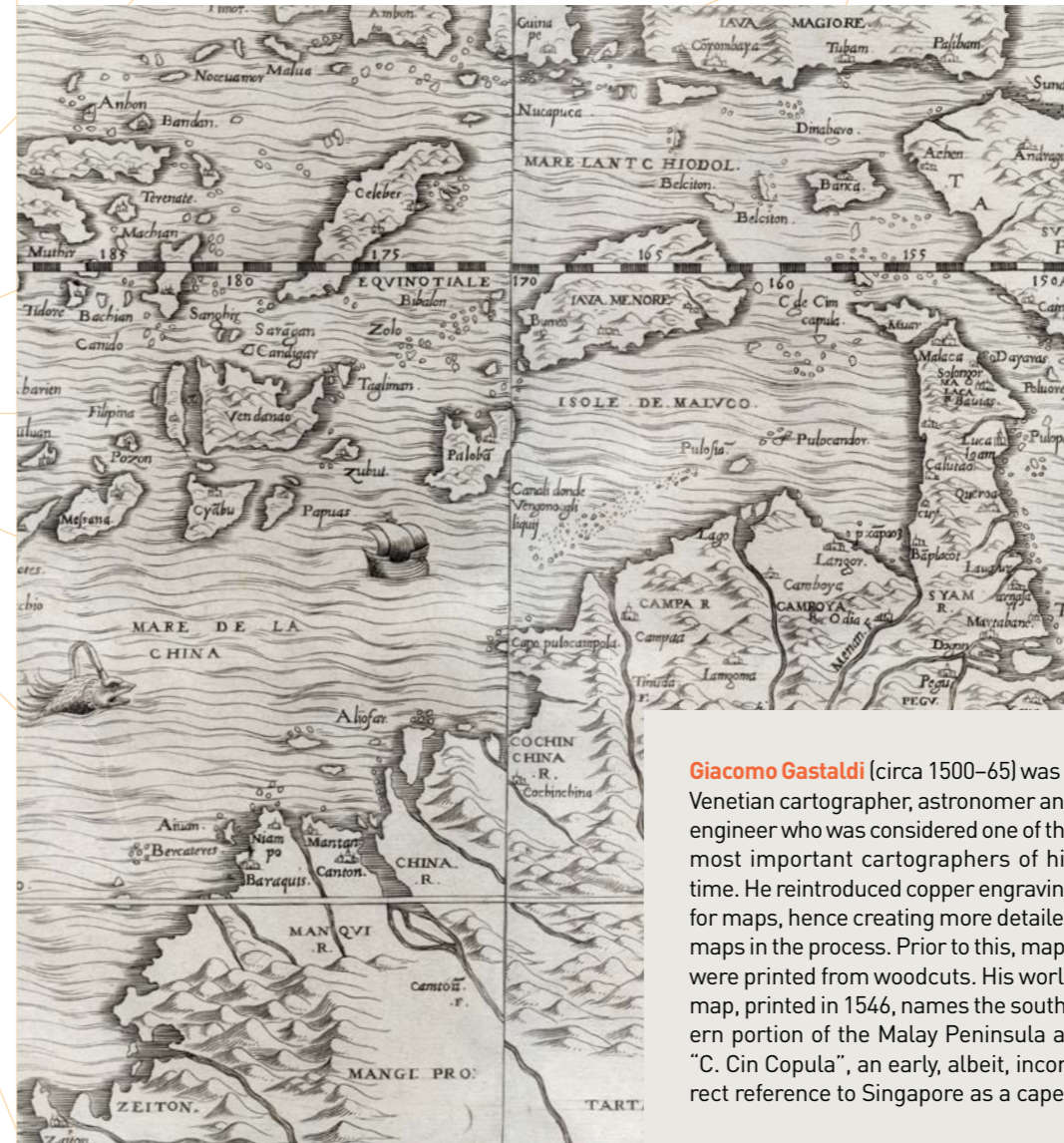
constitutes 254 maps dating from the 15th to 19th centuries and created by prominent European cartographers.

The Rare Maps Collection includes maps that illustrate the development of European mapping of early Southeast Asia, as well as the history of the region. These early maps and charts were produced during the "age of discovery" when Europeans were looking for a sea route to Asia and the famed Spice Islands (Moluccas, today known as Maluku) of Indonesia, in the hope of securing the lucrative trade in spices such as pepper, cloves and nutmeg.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to discover a sea route to Asia in the late 15th century when the intrepid explorer Vasco da Gama reached India in 1498. The Spanish followed suit not long after and managed to sail to Asia in the early 16th century. Having found a safe route to Asia, the Iberian powers began to explore the region, in the process mapping the surrounding lands as well as charting its waters.

The first printed maps of Southeast Asia, however, were produced by Italian and German map-makers from the late 1470s onwards – even before the Portuguese and Spanish arrived in the region. These early maps were based on Claudius Ptolemy's *Geography*, the 2nd-century Greek astronomer's work that contained precise instructions on mapping the world. The textual instructions in *Geography* contained several fundamental errors but nevertheless continued to influence map-making for centuries despite newer discoveries.

Italy and Germany played important roles in map production at the start of the Renaissance period, particularly Italy, whose coastal cities served as the mid-point between the trade routes of Europe and Asia.¹ However, map-making in Italy languished at the start of the 1500s (unlike in central Europe), until it was revived by the leading Italian geographer Giacomino Gastaldi in the mid-1500s. Map-making subsequently declined again in the 1800s.²



Giacomo Gastaldi (circa 1500–65) was a Venetian cartographer, astronomer and engineer who was considered one of the most important cartographers of his time. He reintroduced copper engraving for maps, hence creating more detailed maps in the process. Prior to this, maps were printed from woodcuts. His world map, printed in 1546, names the southern portion of the Malay Peninsula as "C. Cin Copula", an early, albeit, incorrect reference to Singapore as a cape.



(Top) Portrait engraving of Dutch cartographer Gerard Mercator, circa 1739. Wikimedia Commons.
(Left) *Terza Tavola*, Giacomo Gastaldi for Giovanni Battista Ramusio (Venice, circa 1563).

Gastaldi's later Southeast Asian map, *Terza Tavola*, again refers to Singapore as a cape (C. de cim copula). The Malay Peninsula is slanted towards the east, with its lower tip (Muar) separated from the mainland. The map, with no title but simply called the "third map" (or "Terza Tavola"), was printed in Giovanni Battista Ramusio's collection of voyages and travels.³

Although an improvement from previous Ptolemaic maps, Gastaldi still refers to Sumatra and Borneo by their Ptolemaic names of Taprobana and Java Menore.

Note: the map is oriented with the south at the top.

The period from 1570 to 1670 was known as the golden age of cartography and the Dutch were the leading map-makers of this era.⁴ Notable Dutch cartographers during this period include Gerard Mercator, Abraham Ortelius, Willem Janszoon Blaeu and Jodocus Hondius.

Although Germany did not dominate map-making for an entire era, unlike the other European countries, German map-makers made important contributions to map-making from the 15th to 18th centuries. With the advances in printing technology in the 16th century, Germany (where the printing press was invented) became an important centre for map-making, far surpassing Italy. German map-makers also created better tools for map surveying. German map-making declined in the 17th century when Dutch map-makers became more prominent, but when the latter slowed down in the 18th century, German map-makers became active again.¹¹

The French and English were not as active in map-making as the Italians, Germans

or Dutch, although they did produce some fine maps of their own. The English started producing better quality and more accurate maps in the 18th and 19th centuries. Two of the key maps on the Singapore and Malacca Straits in the Rare Maps Collection were produced by French and English map-makers.

By the start of the 17th century, Paris had become an important secondary publishing centre, rivalling those in the Netherlands, namely Antwerp and Amsterdam. Many atlases were co-published by the Dutch and French, and Dutch atlases began to be issued with French text.²¹ The development of cartography in the Netherlands had a direct impact on map-making in Germany and France, with the map-makers from the three countries often collaborating with one another.²²

Despite being the first Europeans to go on explorations, the Portuguese and Spanish did not play a significant role in the development of printed cartography. They carefully guarded their maps and charts, as well as

the information collected during their voyages of discovery, particularly the sailing routes to the key trading ports in Asia. However, their manuscript charts "remained the sole cartographical source for the New World and the East Indies" and was the basis for many of the maps created by the other European cartographers during the 16th century.²⁴ The other Europeans managed to smuggle the information out from these secret archives and began printing maps of Southeast Asia based on the new discoveries.

The National Library's collection of rare maps is an important source for the study of early cartography of the region, as well as the development of European mapping of Southeast Asia, a region whose early European names included East Indies, Indiae Orientalis, East Indian Islands and Further India (India Extrema). These maps are also useful for those researching early Malayan cartography as they contain some of the earliest references to Singapore and the Malay Peninsula. ♦



Indiae orientalis, insularumque adiacentium typus, Abraham Ortelius (Antwerp, 1579).



Portrait of Abraham Ortelius by Peter Paul Rubens. Wikimedia Commons.

Abraham Ortelius (1527–98), a leading Flemish cartographer, was a map dealer and publisher. During the 1560s, he collected maps and details of their sources and commissioned new printing plates for them. His 1570 atlas, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (*Theatre of the World*), was hailed as the first comprehensive, modern atlas of the world in which all the maps were of uniform size and format.⁵

Ortelius' map features Southeast Asia, Japan, the Philippines and part of the west coast of America. The map also features the Indonesian Spice Islands, with accompanying text that describes the spices produced. Despite European explorations in the region, Ortelius' map contains a few inaccuracies: Sumatra and Java are depicted as being much larger than they actually are while the Philippines is featured without its northern island of Luzon. Singapore (Cincapura) is identified as a town on the promontory of the Malay Peninsula.

Below Java, at the southern end of the map, a part of Terra Australis Incognita is evident. Labelled as pars conti-

nentis Australis, its northern tip is called Beach, due to 16th-century map-makers misreading Marco Polo's description of Locach, a southern kingdom thought to be filled with gold that he wrongly located below Java. Based on early records, Beach or Locach was probably the name of a place in Cambodia.⁶

First produced in 1570, Ortelius' atlas was reprinted in various European languages.



Nova tabula insularum lavae, Sumatrae, Borneonis et aliarum Malaccam usque, delineata in insula lava, ubi ad vivum designantur vada et brevia scopulique interjacentes descripta / G.M.A.L., Theodore de Bry, after Willem Lodewijcksz (Frankfurt, 1598).

Theodore de Bry (1528–98) was a Flemish engraver, illustrator, printmaker and publisher who was trained as a goldsmith and engraver. De Bry created many fine engravings to illustrate travel books and published several illustrated works (originally in Latin but later translated into German, English and French) that were a useful reference for Europeans about the Americas and the new places they depicted.⁷

He is famous for compiling a well-illustrated collection of voyages and travels to the East and West Indies, which were categorised into two distinct series: the *Grands Voyages*, which started in 1590 and covered America, and the *Petits Voyages*, which began in 1598 and covered Asia and Africa.⁸

De Bry's map is based on Willem Lodewijcksz's 1598 map. Lodewijcksz was part of the first Dutch voyage to Southeast Asia under the command of Cornelis de Houtman from 1595 to 1597.

Lodewijcksz's map charted the Southeast Asian region in detail, including the Malacca and Sunda Straits, and was one of the first maps to focus on the areas around the Malay Peninsula.⁹

While the Malay Peninsula is called Chersonese Aurea, an old Ptolemaic name depicting it as a land of gold, Singapore is once again erroneously identified as a cape at the eastern end of the peninsula. The map also features the northern coast of Java in greater detail.

Interestingly, the map depicts a trans-peninsular waterway bisecting the Malay Peninsula at its southern tip. This river channel with the Muar River at the western end and the Pahang River at the eastern end was used as an overland trade route. Several maps from the 16th century to the second decade of the 17th century also contain this unique feature. De Bry's map clearly marks the rivers on each side as R. Farneso and Muar R.

Lodewijcksz's map was suppressed by Dutch merchants who did not wish to reveal the sailing routes to the lucrative ports of Southeast Asia. But it was published later in the same year by de Bry in *Petits Voyages*.¹⁰



A portrait of Theodore de Bry. Wikimedia Commons.

Sebastian Münster (1489–1552) was a German Professor of Hebrew, a famous mathematician, geographer and a leading map-maker. He is usually regarded as the most important map-maker of the 16th century.

Münster was widely known for *Cosmographia*, first published in 1544, which features several woodcut maps illustrated with vignettes and fanciful creatures.¹² He was also the first to introduce a separate map for each of the four continents – Europe, Africa, Asia and America – known then.¹³

This map was published in Münster's 1540 *Geographia Universalis*, which was based on Ptolemy's seminal work *Geography* but also incorporated new discoveries. Here, unlike earlier maps, Asia is depicted separately

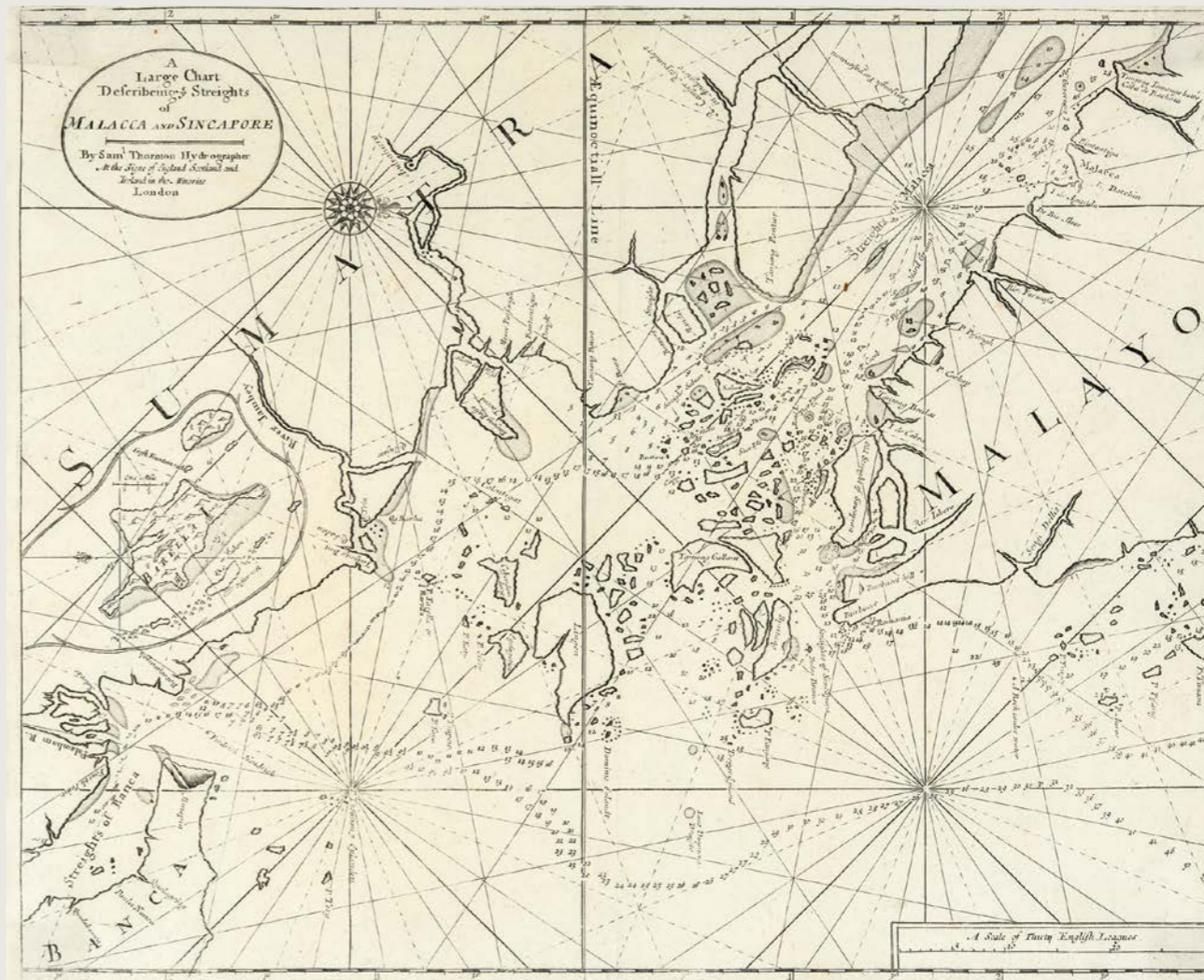
from Southeast Asia and the Molucas (Maluku) is drawn correctly at the west coast of Halmahera. Sumatra is called by both its modern name and its Ptolemaic name of Taprobana.

The shape of the Malay Peninsula is much improved, with only the city of Malacca (Malacca) named.¹⁴ Until the 17th century, most maps named the southern part of the Peninsula as Malacca, an "exaggeration of the real extent of European influence and control".¹⁵ Malacca was strategically located in the middle of important sea routes and the Portuguese took control of it in 1511. By the end of 1500s, Malacca had become one of the key trading ports of the world.¹⁶ Notably, there was no incentive to map the remaining interior of the Malay Peninsula.



(Above) Portrait of Sebastian Münster by Christoph Amberger, c. 1552. Wikimedia Commons.

(Below) *India Extrema XIX nova tabula* by Sebastian Münster (Basle, 1540).



A large chart describing the Straights of Malacca and Singapore, Samuel Thornton (London, circa 1711).



Portrait of Samuel Thornton by Karl Anton Hicckel. Collection of Bank of England.

Samuel Thornton (fl. 1703–39) was an English hydrographer.¹⁷ His father, John Thornton was the official hydrographer to the British East India Company in the 17th century who collaborated with John Seller to produce the first English sea atlas, *The English Pilot*. *The Pilot* was to be produced as four parts, with *The Third Book* concentrating on "Oriental navigation". Eventually titled as *Oriental Navigation*, this book was subsequently completed by John Thornton's son (who shared the same name) in 1703.¹⁸

Samuel Thornton took over his brother's business in 1706 and re-issued the charts under his own name. The above chart is from Samuel Thornton's re-issue of *Oriental Navigation*, which describes the passage through the Singapore Strait clearly. The chart

identifies the island of Singapore as the Old Straights of Sincapura, an indication that the name Singapore or its variant terms in early European sources were more often a reference to the sea passage rather than to the island or city.

European maps and charts of the 16th and 17th centuries tended to call Singapore by various names and depicted it either as a port, or city, an island, one of the four straits, a cape or promontory, or as the entire southern portion of the Malay Peninsula.¹⁹

Thornton's chart, oriented north to the right, is one of the first English charts of Southeast Asia. The map, stretching from the Malacca Strait through the Singapore Strait to the Banka Strait indicates the principal sea routes as well as the soundings (sea depths) of the region.



Carte réduite des détroits de Malaca, Singapour, et du Gouverneur dressée au dépôt des cartes et plans de la marine, Jacques Nicolas Bellin (Paris, 1755).

Jacques Nicolas Bellin (1703–72) was a French royal hydrographer who created maps for several key publications in the 18th century, such as Prévost's *L'Histoire Générale des Voyages* (1747–61) and *Petit Atlas Maritime* (1764). His son (1745–85), who went by the same name, was an engraver based in Paris.²⁰

The Singapore Straits that connected the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea was an important trade route. What was collectively referred to as the Singapore Straits was actually four maritime arter-

ies (namely the Old Strait, New Strait, Governor's Strait and the Johor Strait) that were often called by various names and mistaken for one another.

One of the maps in the collection that perpetuates this confusion is Bellin's map, which depicts the Johor Strait as the Old Strait of Singapore (Vieux Detroit de Singapour). The Johor Strait (Selat Tubrau in Portuguese or Selat Tebrau in Malay) refers to the narrow channel between the Malay Peninsula and Singapore. It was often marked as the "Old Strait of Singapore" in late 17th and 18th century maps. Strangely, Bellin's map shows two islands in the Johor Strait – Salat Buro and Johor Strait was also known

as Salatburo or Salat Tubro.

Bellin's map recommends the sea passage through the Singapore Strait for vessels that could sail through the Old Strait and return via the New Strait. However, Bellin's map erroneously identifies the Old Strait as "Nouveau Detroit de Singapour" (New Strait of Singapore) and the New Strait as "Detroit du Gouverneur" (Governor's Strait).

Bellin's map depicts Singapore island in an unrecognisable shape and calls it "Pulo ou Isle Panjang", one of the early names used for the island. The map also features coastal profiles at its centre.

L'Asie dressée sur les observations de M.rs de l'Académie Royale de Sciences & de Sanson, Nolin, Du Fer, De L'Isle & principalement sur la carte que monsieur N. Witsen Bourgemaistre &c. &c. a donnée au public & sur les memoires les plus recens et mis au jour, Johannes Covens and Cornelis Mortier (Amsterdam, circa 1730).



Covens & Mortier was a successful map printing and publishing firm in Amsterdam, based on the successful business started by Cornelis Mortier's father, Pierre Mortier, in Paris in the late 17th century. The firm re-issued the maps of several European map-makers until its closure in 1866.²³

This wall map shows the trade route from Siam to Batavia and then

to Europe through the Sunda Straits. By the mid-17th century, the Dutch East India Company had established a trading post in Siam. This map has illustrations of ships, animals and an elaborate title cartouche that features the various natives of Asia. Maps in the 18th century, besides being a source of geographical information, were also becoming important as collectors'

items. Hence, the use of decorative features was more prominent during this time.



Notes

- 1 Bagrow, L. (1964). [translated by R. A. Skelton]. *History of cartography*. London: Watts. p. 125.
- 2 Shirley, R. W. (1984). *The mapping of the world: early printed world maps, 1472–1700*. London: Holland Press. p.xxvii–xxviii.
- 3 Suarez, T. (c. 1999). *Early mapping of Southeast Asia*. Hong Kong: Periplus Editions. p.130
- 4 Steffoff, R. (1995). *The British Library companion to maps and mapmaking*. London: British Library. p.115.
- 5 Shirley, p.xxviii.
- 6 (2013). *Mapping Our World: Terra Incognita To Australia*. Canberra: National Library of Australia. p.90
- 7 Speake, J. (2003). (ed.). *Literature of travel and exploration : an encyclopedia*. New York: Fitzroy Dearborn. p.134–136.
- 8 Parry, D. (2005). *The cartography of the East Indian Islands = Insulae Indiae Orientalis*. London: Country Editions. p.87–90; Speake, p.135.
- 9 Suarez, p.180-81
- 10 Parry, p.90
- 11 Steffoff, p.134–6.
- 12 Steffoff, p.136.
- 13 Shirley, p.86–87.

14 Suarez, p.127–129.

15 Fell, R. T. (1991). *Early maps of South-East Asia*. Singapore: Oxford University Press. p.28.

16 Burnet, I. (2011). *Spice Islands*. Kenthurst, N.S.W.: Rosenberg Publishing. Call No.: RSEA 380.141383 BUR

17 Tooley, R. V. (comp.). (1979). *Tooley's dictionary of mapmakers*. Hertfordshire: Map Collector Publications. p.619

18 Suarez, p.209

19 Borschberg, P. (2010). *The Singapore and Melaka Straits : violence, security and diplomacy in the 17th century*. Singapore: NUS Press. p.49.

20 Tooley, p.49.

21 Shirley, p.xxxviii–xxxix.

22 Bagrow, p.132.

23 Tooley, p.135

24 Shirley, p.xxix.

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Bagrow, L. (1964). *History of cartography* (Trans. by R. A. Skelton). London: Watts. Call No.: R 912.94074 MAP
 Borschberg, P. (2010). *The Singapore and Melaka Straits: violence, security and diplomacy in the 17th century*.

Singapore: NUS Press. Call No.: RSING 911.16472 BOR
 Burnet, I. (2011). *Spice Islands*. Kenthurst, N.S.W.:

Rosenberg Publishing. Call No.: RSEA 380.141383 BUR
 Fell, R. T. (1991). *Early maps of South-East Asia*.

Singapore: Oxford University Press. Call no.: RSING 912.59
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National Library of Australia. (2013). *Mapping our world: Terra incognita to Australia*. Canberra ACT: National
 Library of Australia. Call No.: R 912.94074 MAP

Parry, D. (2005). *The cartography of the East Indian Islands = Insulae Indiae Orientalis*. London: Country Editions.
 Call No.: R SEA q912.59 PAR

Shirley, R. W. (1984). *The mapping of the world: Early printed world maps, 1472–1700*. London: Holland Press.

Available at NUS Central Library at Call no. Z6028 Shi
 Speake, J. (Ed.) (2003). *Literature of travel and exploration: An encyclopedia*. New York: Fitzroy Dearborn.

R q910.403 LIT
 Steffoff, R. (1995). *The British Library companion to maps and mapmaking*. London: British Library. Call No.:

R 912.03 STE
 Suarez, T. (c1999). *Early mapping of Southeast Asia*. Hong
 Kong: Periplus Editions Call No.: RSING q912.59 SUA

Tooley, R. V. (comp.). (1979). *Tooley's dictionary of mapmakers*. Hertfordshire: Map Collector Publications.

Available at NUS Central Library at Call No. GA198 Too



Part of the title cartouche depicting Asian peoples taken from the Covens & Mortier's 1730 map pictured on the opposite page.



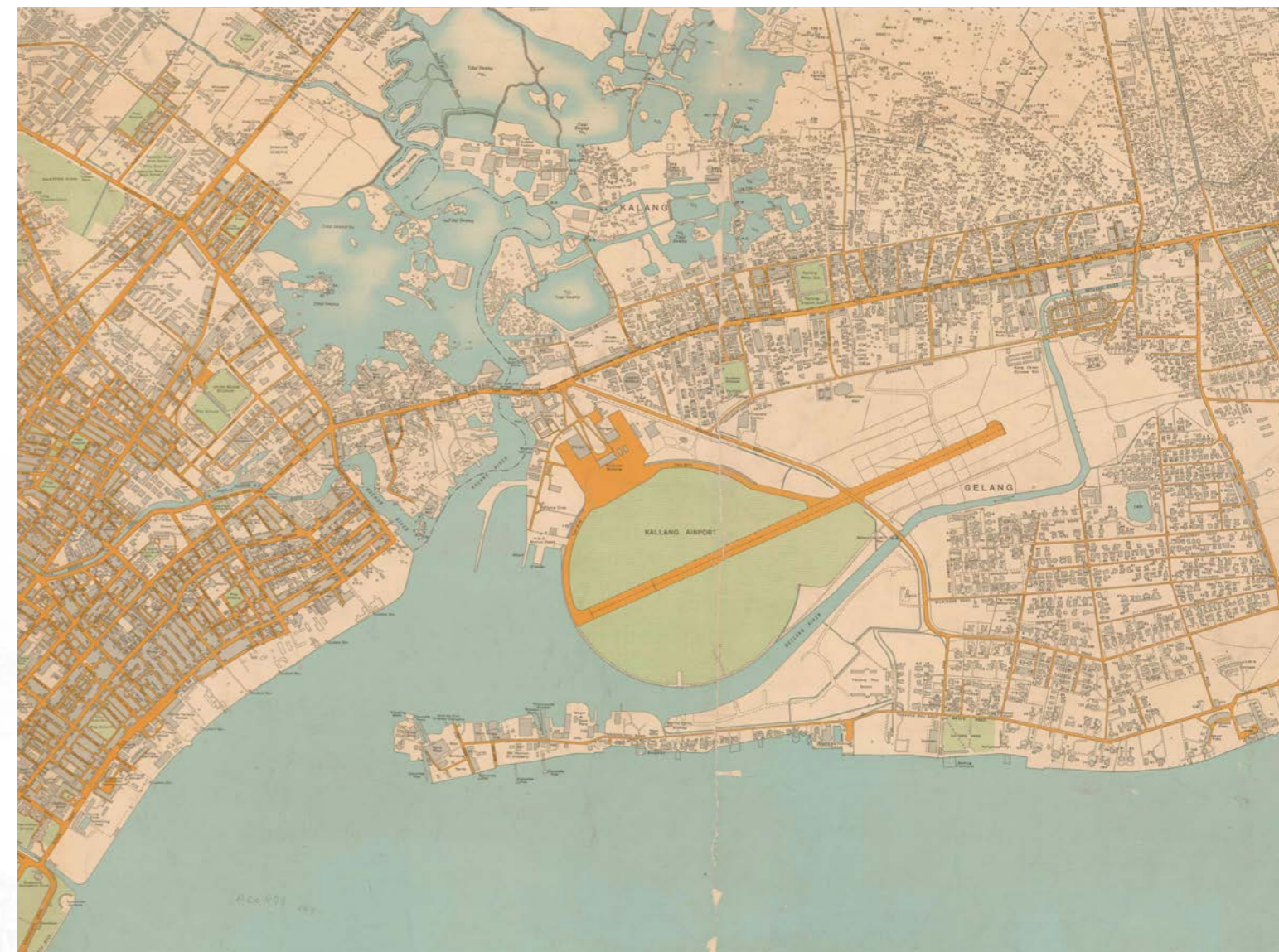
LAY OF THE LAND

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE'S MAP COLLECTION

From Singapore's days as a colony to modern times, maps have been an integral part of the nation's development. **Kevin Khoo** highlights the National Archives of Singapore's 10,000-strong map collection.

Kevin Khoo is an archivist at the National Archives of Singapore. His interests include cultural and social history, comparative religion, philosophy, literature and poetry, economics and archival science.

[Background] Illustration of entrance to Singapore's harbour in 1860. *Nineteenth Century Prints of Singapore* (Plate 37, Notes p.98), National Museum of Singapore, 1987.



Among the various records under the care of the National Archives of Singapore (NAS) is a collection of some 10,000 maps that originate primarily from three government agencies – the Survey Division of the Singapore Land Authority (SLA), whose beginnings trace back to the Straits Settlements Survey Department formed in the mid-19th century; the Singapore Armed Forces Mapping Unit (SAFMU) formed in 1970; and the Maritime Port Authority (MPA) established in 1996 and its predecessor the Port of Singapore Authority (PSA; formed in 1964). The collection also contains copies of maps of Singapore acquired from overseas archives, notably the National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK) and the British Library, as well as maps from various private collectors.

The maps in the NAS collection fall into the following broad categories:

General Reference Map: A section from a six-part large-scale map, "Map of Singapore City, 1954", covering Bugis, Kallang and Geylang. *Survey Department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

GENERAL REFERENCE MAPS

These maps show a variety of different physical features at a given location, such as coastlines, water bodies, vegetation, hills and mountains, roads, commercial, industrial, residential and recreational areas. These maps comprise two types: small-scale, covering large geographical areas such as whole countries or regions, or large-scale, covering a small geographical area but providing more detail on local physical features.¹ The general reference maps in the NAS collection include maps of Asia and Southeast Asia, maps of Singapore town and island, various street maps and district or precinct maps. There are presently around 3,800 general reference maps in the NAS collection.

TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS

Topographic maps are a type of small-scale general reference map that includes accurately measured contour and relief details providing users with a reliable three-dimensional sense of the space being mapped. Such maps typically provide highly detailed information of the local environment and are generally the most comprehensive type of small-scale general reference map available. Singapore's first complete set of topographic maps was published in 1924 by the Survey Department of the Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements and, subsequently, many general reference maps of Singapore have included topographic details. There are presently around 1,300 topographic maps in the NAS collection.

CADASTRAL MAPS

Cadastral maps are drawn up by state land-use authorities to document and demarcate parcels of physical property claimed by different property owners. These maps are used to establish property boundaries and legal claim over property as well as to estimate land values and assess property tax.² As cadastral maps were traditionally used by the government to aid the tax collection process, they were sometimes referred to as “revenue maps”. There are currently about 3,300 cadastral maps in the NAS collection.

HYDROGRAPHIC CHARTS

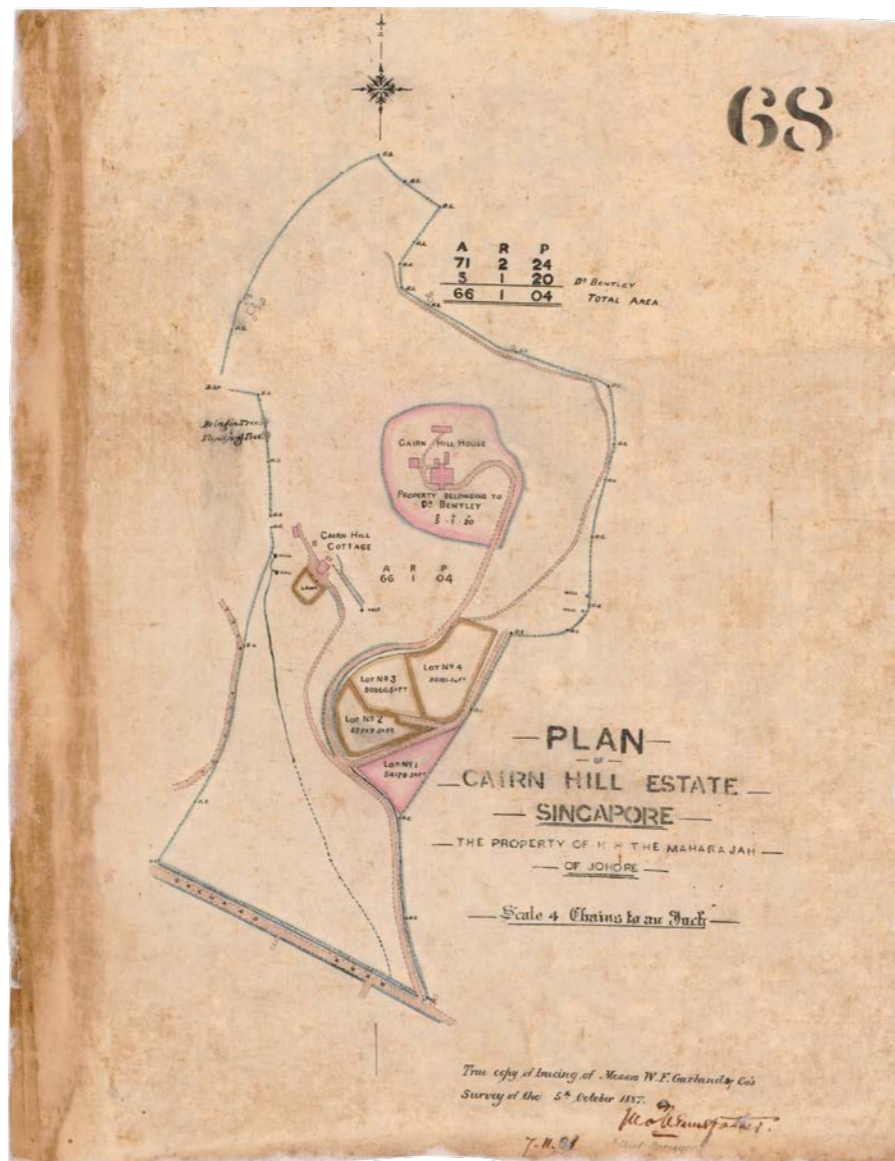
These are sea navigation charts used by mariners to sail through open or near-shore waters. Such charts display features such as soundings (the depth of water at a given location), shoal waters, lights, key landmarks such as lighthouses and buoys, harbour approaches and anchorages, a compass rose to orientate the map and other information to aid navigation. Such maps are termed “charts” as they are not only meant to be looked at, but are also used as working material to be marked up by navigators in the course of their work. There are presently about 700 hydrographic charts in the NAS collection.

THEMATIC MAPS

These are special purpose maps typically overlaid with details specific to the concerns of the user, for example, mining, urban and transportation planning, soil and environmental information, flood and disease control, and military planning. NAS has a small collection of less than a hundred of such maps. However, many more thematic maps can be found embedded within archived government reports, files and publications where they are frequently used as supporting and illustrative documents.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIETY

The vast majority of maps in the NAS collection (numbering over 8,000) are geographic maps of Singapore. These include maps of the island of Singapore and its surrounding waters, and of particular areas and districts of the island, notably the heavily populated town centre as well as outlying precincts like Katong, Jurong and Changi. In addition, the collection contains about 900 maps of Malaya dating to pre-1963. These maps illustrate the Malayan Peninsula, the seas around it and specific places such as the capital Kuala Lumpur and major towns such as Penang, Malacca and Johor. A small number of maps



Cadastral Map: An 1887 map showing the boundaries of the Cairn Hill Estate owned by the Maharaja of Johor. *Survey Department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

of Southeast Asia and wider Asia are also part of this collection.

MAPS SPANNING 190 YEARS: FROM 1819 TO 2009

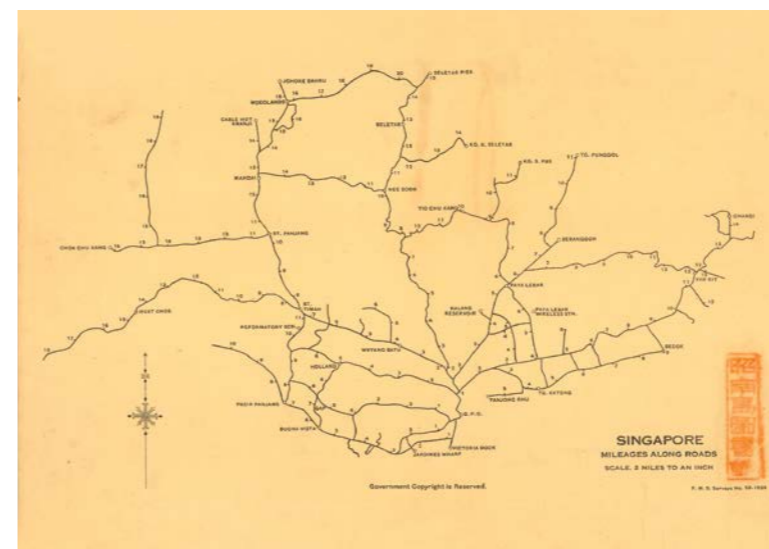
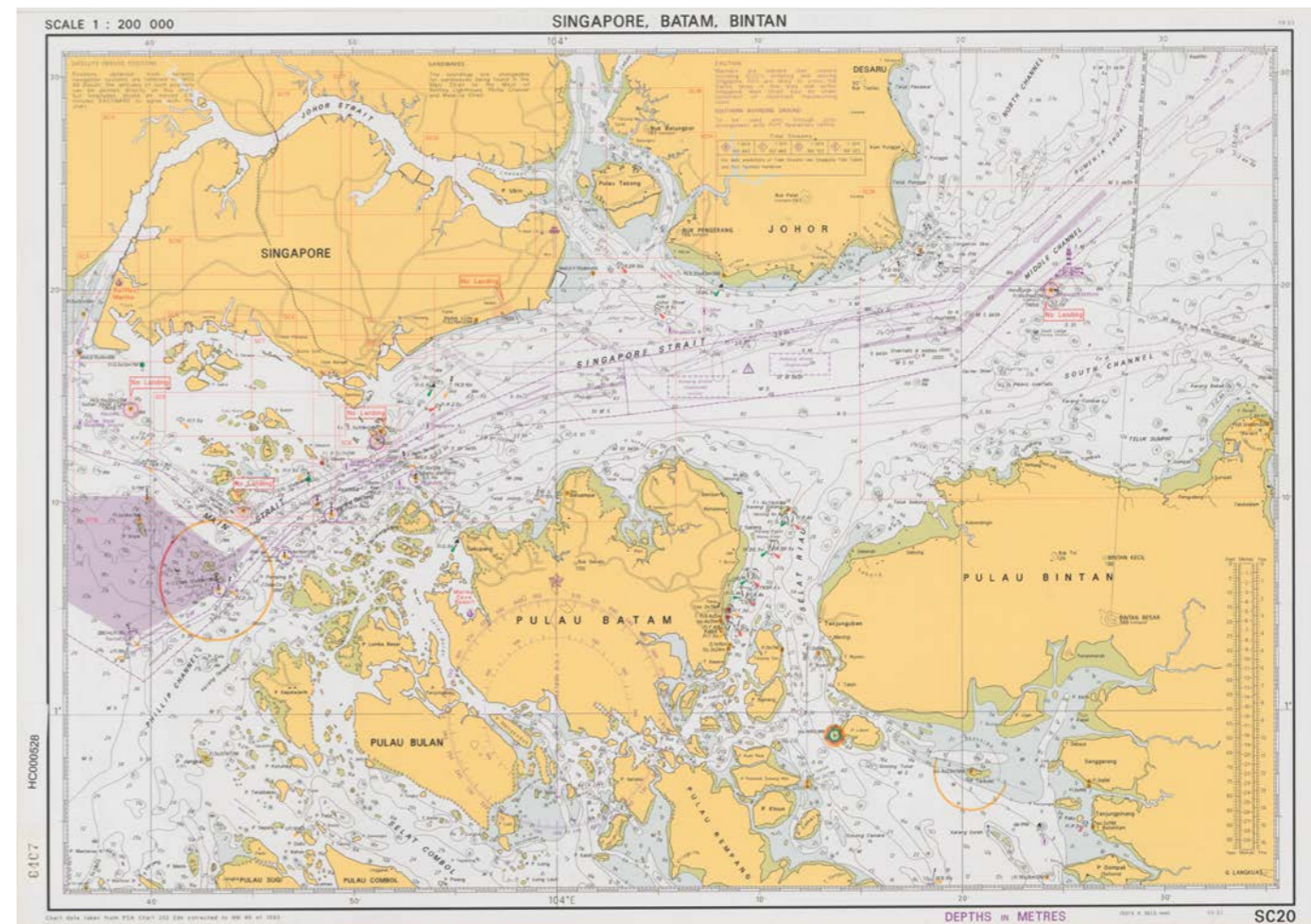
Fewer than 40 maps from the NAS collection are from the pre-1819 period before Singapore was founded. Most of these early maps date from the late 18th century to the early 1800s and are mainly of British as well as Dutch and Portuguese origins.

NAS holds about 190 maps from the early colonial period (1819–1866) when Singapore was administered together with Penang and Malacca as part of the Straits Settlements under the British East India Company and subsequently the British India government based in Calcutta. This period marked the beginning

of more precise mapping of Singapore’s physical environment.³

NAS has about 530 maps spanning the next 50 years of Singapore’s history, starting from 1867 when the Straits Settlements was elevated to a British Crown Colony administered directly by the Colonial Office in London to the end of World War I in 1918. Relatively few maps of Singapore were produced during this period due to limited funding and lack of skilled manpower.⁴

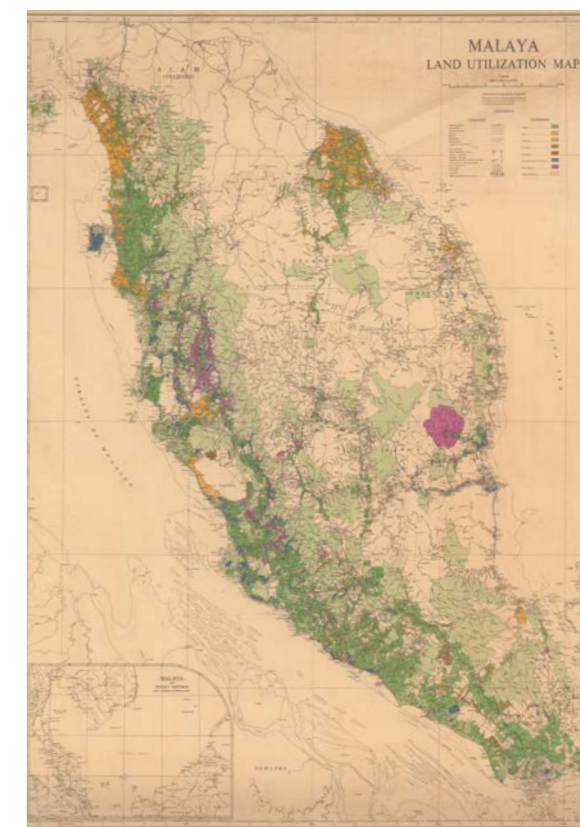
The years 1919 to 1938, between the end of World War I and the outbreak of World War II, was an important period for cartography in Singapore as concerted efforts were made to improve the quality of local maps. NAS has a rich collection of about 1,700 maps covering this period. In 1920, a decision was made to initiate a modern trigonometrical

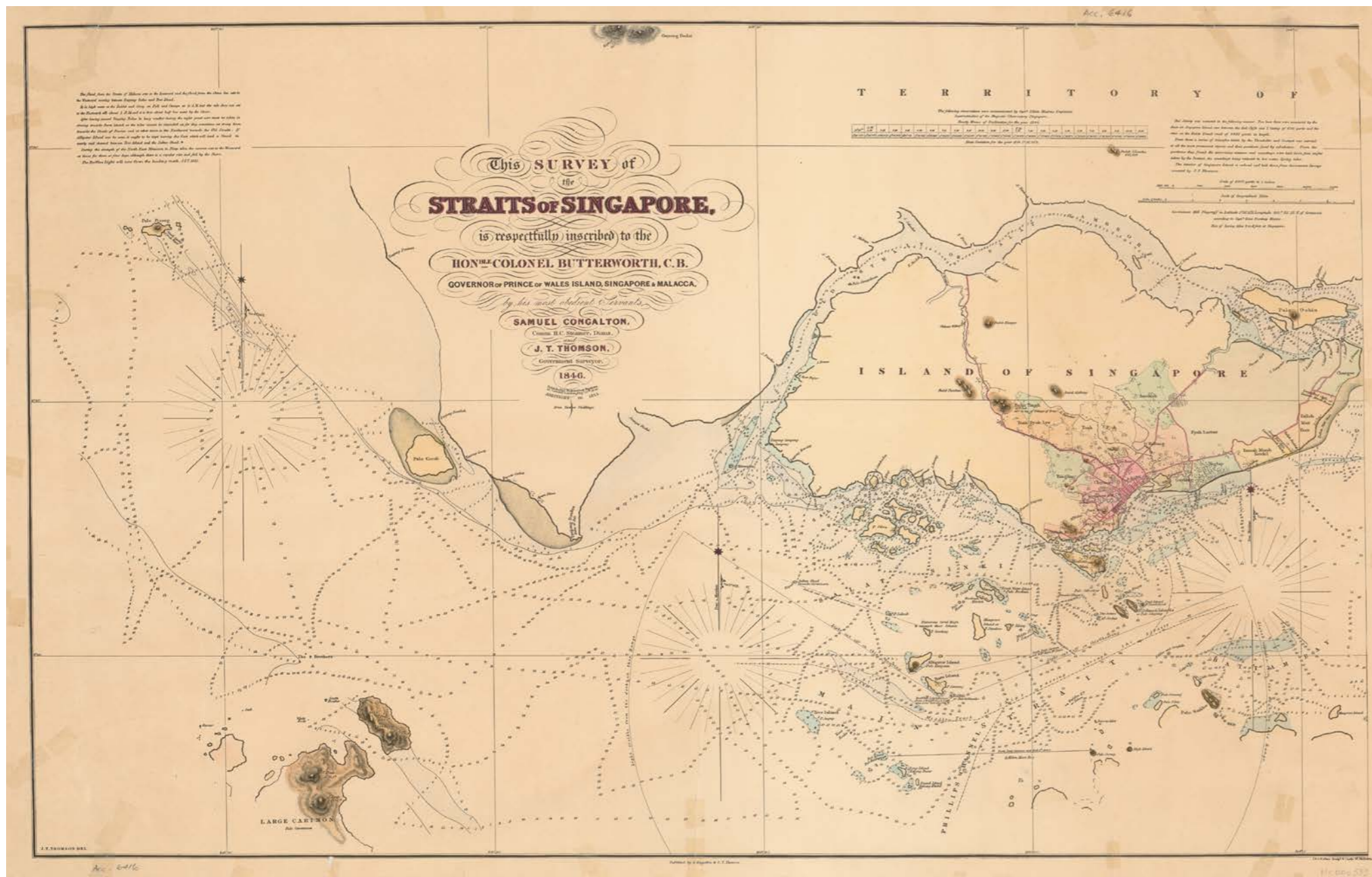


(Top) Hydrographic Chart: A modern hydrographic chart for small-craft navigating the waters around Singapore, Batam and Bintan islands. 1993. *Port of Singapore Authority, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(Above) Thematic Map: “Singapore, Mileages Along Roads” was printed by the Federated Malay States Survey Department in 1936. This map measured the distance of key landmarks and districts across Singapore island, using the General Post Office in the Fullerton Building at Empress Place as its “zero-point”. *Survey Department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(Right) Geographical Map: A 1953 map showing land utilisation on the Malayan Peninsula and Singapore. *Survey Department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*





J.T. Thomson's 1846 Survey Map of the Straits of Singapore showing the western entrance into the straits. *Urban Redevelopment Authority, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

survey of the Straits Settlements that would later enhance the accuracy of subsequent maps. One of the results of this effort was a comprehensive 16-part coloured topographic map of Singapore published in 1924. This was the first proper topographical map of Singapore ever made and represented a considerable improvement in accuracy over previous mapping.⁵

NAS has about 700 maps from the World War II period (1939–1945), covering the tense years following the outbreak of war in Europe, the battles for Malaya and Singapore, and the Japanese Occupation. Highlights of the collection include British topographical maps of Malaya and Singapore

from 1939 that were drafted as part of war preparations. Also of interest are reproduction copies of British and Japanese military maps capturing troop movements during the course of the Malayan and Singapore campaigns, as well as British military planning maps drawn up as part of the Allied effort to recapture Malaya and Singapore. Most of these British military maps were obtained from NAUK and the British Library, while the Japanese maps were either reproduced or acquired from private collections.

NAS has a collection of over 2,200 maps covering the period from the restoration of British rule at the end of World War II to Singapore's emergence as a sovereign

republic. A notable development in the cartography of this period is the introduction of aerial photography, which led to the production of Singapore's first aerial maps in the 1940s. Aerial photography replaced traditional trigonometric surveys of the post-war period as it was a much faster and cost effective way of producing accurate topographic maps.⁶ These aerial photographs are available for viewing in the NAS image database, together with a selection of stitched aerial photomaps of the central parts of Singapore from the NAS map collection.

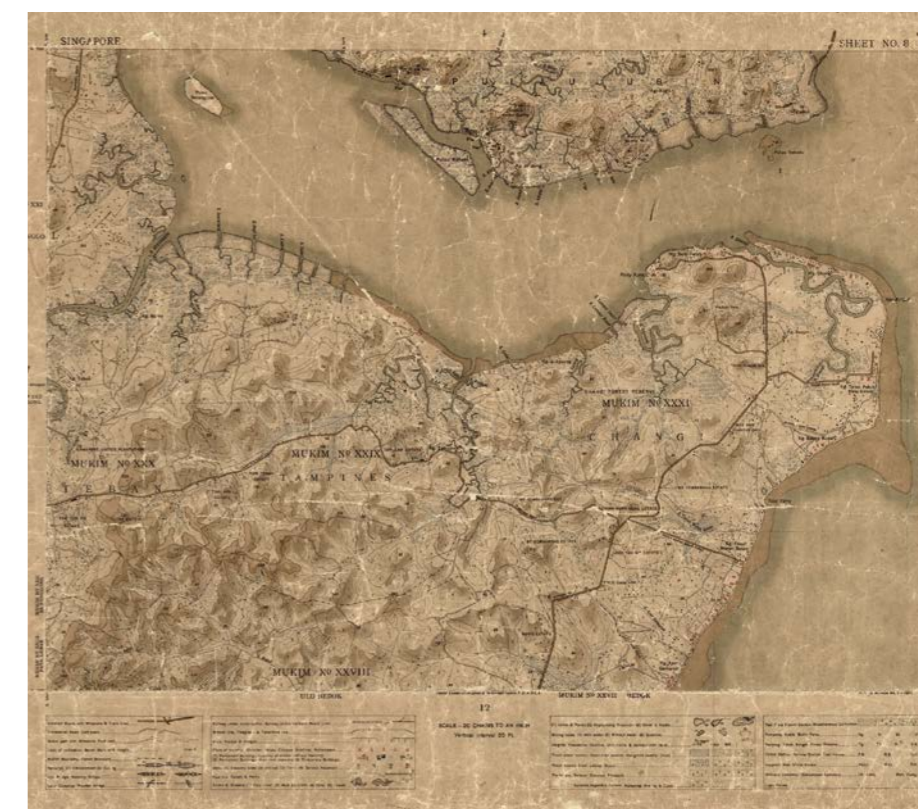
Political changes saw Singapore transform progressively from a British colony into a self-governing and then independent state, leading to the general election to select representatives to Singapore's legislature

in 1948 and the drafting of the first electoral maps. The first urban masterplan maps, which provided comprehensive information of land usage patterns across Singapore, were also published during this period in 1958.⁷

Finally, the NAS collection contains about 4,200 maps published between August 1965 and 2009 – the period when Singapore became a sovereign independent Republic to the date of the latest maps deposited with the NAS. Important developments that took place during this time include the establishment of the SAFMU in 1970, which is part of the Ministry of Defence. SAFMU took over responsibility for the nation's topographic mapping, allowing the Survey Department to concentrate on creating cadastral and other survey maps. Notably, in 1971, SAFMU

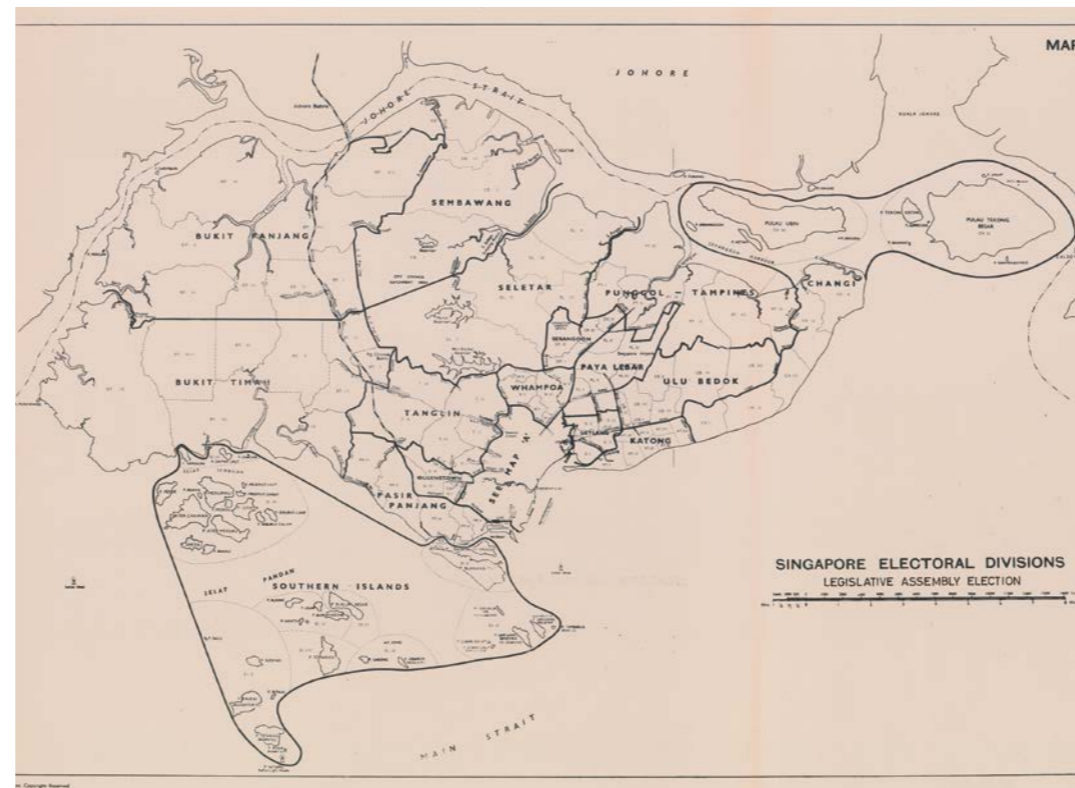
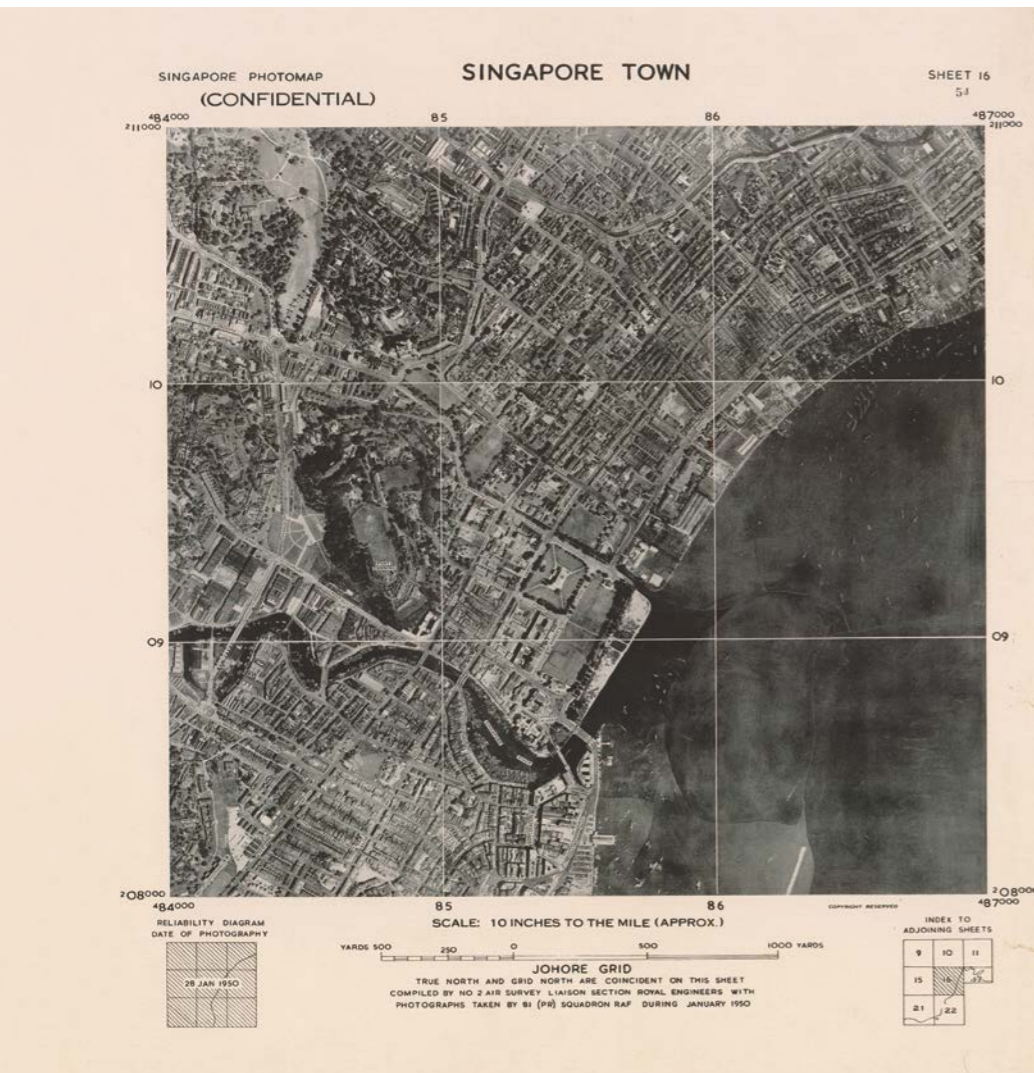
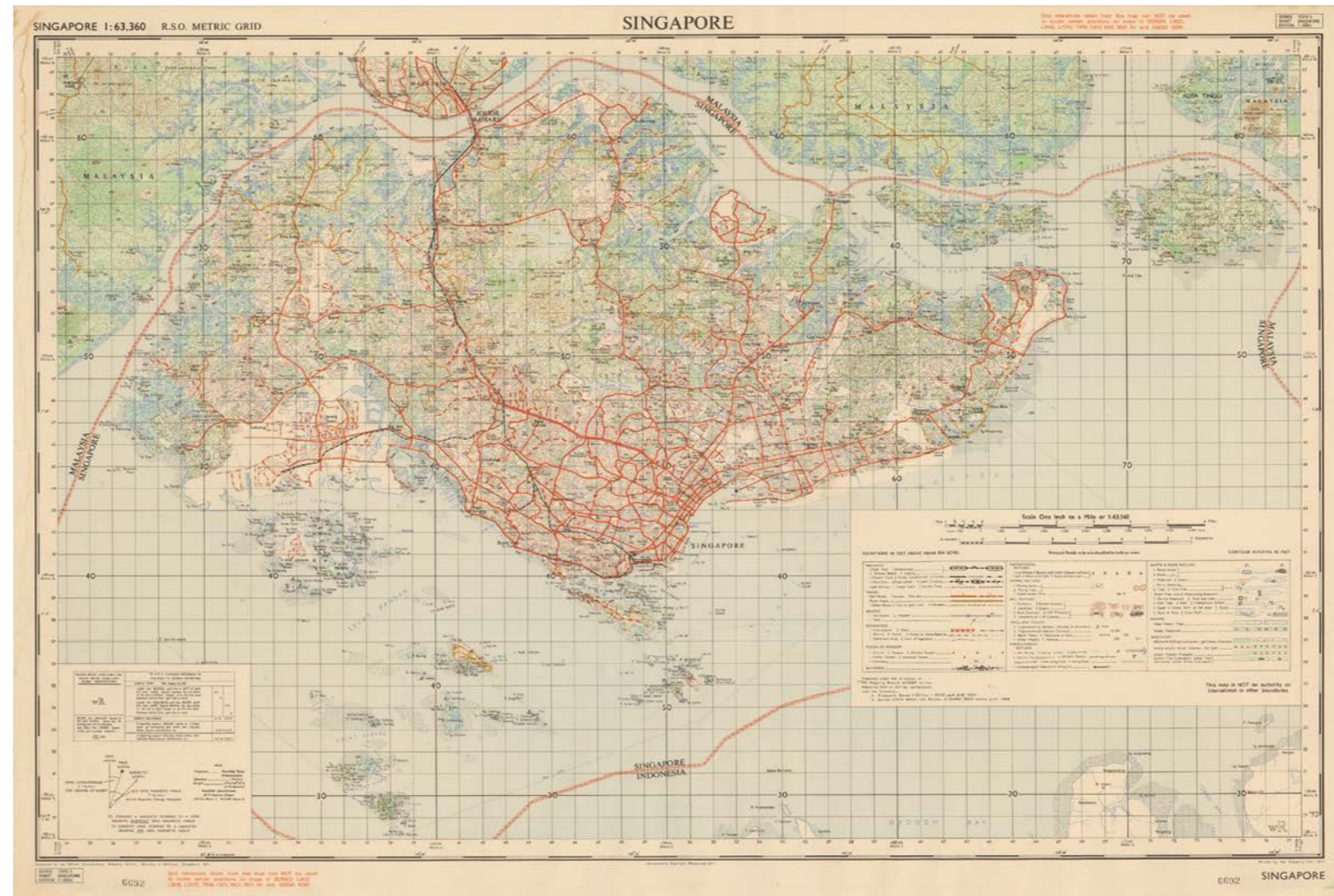
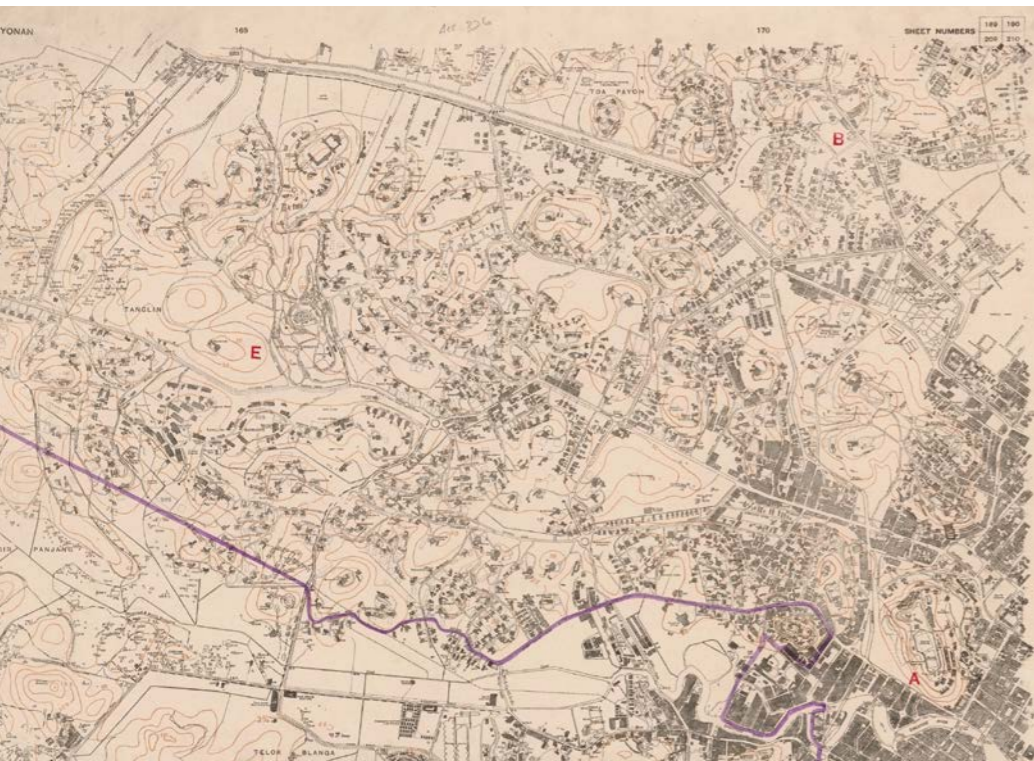


The 1898 "Map of the Island of Singapore and Its Dependencies" is a highly detailed map showing names of major buildings, districts, hills, islands and other landmarks in addition to major transportation arteries around the island at the turn of the 20th century. *Survey Department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*



A segment of the 16-part 1924 topographic map of Singapore island, covering the Tampines, Changi and Punggol regions. *Survey Department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

published the first topographic map created under the Republic of Singapore.⁸ From the 1980s onwards, computerisation and digitisation of mapping emerged as new digital technologies gradually displaced analogue mapping techniques.⁹ The NAS collection also contains a number of modern hydrographic maps created by the MPA and its predecessor the PSA, the most recent of which was published in 2009. ♦



(Top left) A segment of the Singapore Town Plan series map printed by the Japanese in 1943 during the Occupation. The map is labelled "Syonan" on the top left corner and Japanese inscriptions can be seen on the bottom left corner of the map. *Survey Department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(Far left) An aerial map of Singapore town, 1950. These maps were made by stitching together aerial photographs taken by the British airforce's 81 squadron, an air reconnaissance unit based at the Seletar and Tengah airbases between 1947 and 1970. *Survey Department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(Top) The first map produced under the Singapore Armed Forces Mapping Unit was this 1971 1-inch to 1-mile topographic map of Singapore. *Singapore Land Authority, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(Left) An electoral division map for the 1955 Legislative Assembly general election. This was a landmark event in Singapore's political history in which the majority of members in the governing Legislative Assembly would be elected rather than appointed by British colonial authorities. It set the stage for Singapore's achievement of self-government in 1959. *Singapore Land Authority, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

The National Archives of Singapore Map Collection can be viewed and accessed on its public database Archives Online:

http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/maps_building_plans/

The National Archives of Singapore (NAS) is the official custodian of all records of national and historical significance that serve as the corporate and social memory of the Singapore government and its people. The NAS holds possibly the largest collection of Singapore maps, numbering around 10,000. These are available to the public and include an extensive collection of survey and topographic maps dating from the British colonial era to modern times.

Notes

- 1 [ed.] Robinson, Morrison, Muehrcke, Kimmerling and Guptill. *Elements of Cartography (Sixth Edition)*, John Wiley & Sons, 1995, p.12
- 2 Roger J.P. Kain, *The Cadastral Map in the Service of the State*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1992 p.xvi-xiv
- 3 The first map which accurately traced the outline of Singapore island emerged around 1822, sketched by Captain James Franklin, a visiting Bengal military surveyor. Detailed maps of the rapidly developing Singapore town as well as hydrographic charts of its surrounding waters also emerged. Notably the work of the first Government Surveyor of the Straits Settlements, John Turnbull Thomson (1841-1855), see John Hall-Jones and Christopher Hooi, *An Early Surveyor in Singapore: John Turnbull Thomson in Singapore 1841-1853*, National Museum of Singapore, 1979
- 4 Mok Ly Yng, "Mapping Singapore: 1819-2014" in *Visualising Space: Historical Map Collections of National Library and National Archives of Singapore*, National Library Board, 2015
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore, *Introduction to Masterplan*: <http://www.uraw.gov.sg/uol/master-plan.aspx?p1=View-Master-Plan>
- 8 Mok Ly Yng, 'Mapping Singapore: 1819-2014' in *Visualising Space, 2015*
- 9 *Ibid.*

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Kain, R. J. P. (1992). *The Cadastral map in the service of the state*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mok, L. Y. (2015). Mapping Singapore: 1819-2014. In *Visualising space: Historical map collections of National Library and National Archives of Singapore*. Singapore: National Library Board.

Robinson, M., Muehrcke, K., and Guptill, S. C. [Eds.](1995). *Elements of cartography* (6th ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

THE SECRET MAPS OF SINGAPORE

Hidden temples and food haunts are just some of the things found in two psychedelic maps published in the 1980s. **Bonny Tan** explores the origins of these one-of-a-kind maps.

Bonny Tan is a Senior Reference Librarian at the National Library of Singapore. Her interest in the obscure things about Singapore led her to re-examine two little known maps and found herself surprised by their contents.



The Secret Map of Singapore, 1986. All rights reserved. Mowe, Ropion, Hunt, 2014.

The Secret Map of Singapore (1986) and its companion, The Secret Food Map of Singapore (1987), were created by three women whose sense of adventure led them to explore unusual corners of the island. The vividly coloured hand-drawn maps highlight little-known and often forgotten facets of Singapore's culture and flavours – long before it became fashionable for Singaporeans to reconnect with their own heritage. Unlike the staid text-based food guides produced in the 1980s,¹ these map-centric guides provide visual impressions of places by locating them in the physical landscape, in the process giving context and lending immediacy to the everyday activities of the average Singaporean.

COLOURFUL CARTOGRAPHERS

Three firm friends – Rosalind Mowe, Anne Ropion and Elyane Hunt – all saw Singapore with unconventional eyes as they had grown up and lived overseas and were widely travelled. Multilingual and of mixed ancestry, the women met while doing business at Tanglin Shopping Centre: French nationals Anne and Elyane operated Gomp, a shop selling Asian and Middle Eastern antiques,² while Rosalind, the only Singaporean in the trio, had an outlet selling Thai silk.

The women's interest in the unusual and offbeat in Singapore and their love for food were just some of the things that drew them together.³ But they were no passive

observers in a rapidly developing island-city. Their passion for their adopted home and their zeal to show tourists and locals the hidden yet fascinating sights of an unchanged, older Singapore drove them to create these unusual maps.⁴

Elyane took the lead in developing the maps, deciding on the entries and the focus. Besides being conversant in French, Italian and German, Elyane is also fluent in Arabic and was thus able to provide insights to places in Singapore such as Kampong Glam, where the Arabic culture is most vibrant. Her fascination with Peranakan (Straits Chinese) architecture found the group exploring the ornamentation and finer details of traditional houses in neighbourhoods such as Joo Chiat and Geylang.⁵

Rosalind, on the other hand, is of mixed Chinese and Indian heritage. She picked up Cantonese growing up in Hong Kong but is also conversant in Malay. With these linguistic gifts, Rosalind helped the others navigate the local foodways and byways.⁶ Having been a teacher at St Theresa's Convent, teaching maths, literature and English,⁷ Rosalind was likely to have injected an educational touch into the maps.

Their spouses were also drawn into the process, playing important parts in designing and marketing these maps. Anne Ropion's husband, Michel, an engineer by training but an artist at heart, systematically drew the maps by hand. At a time when

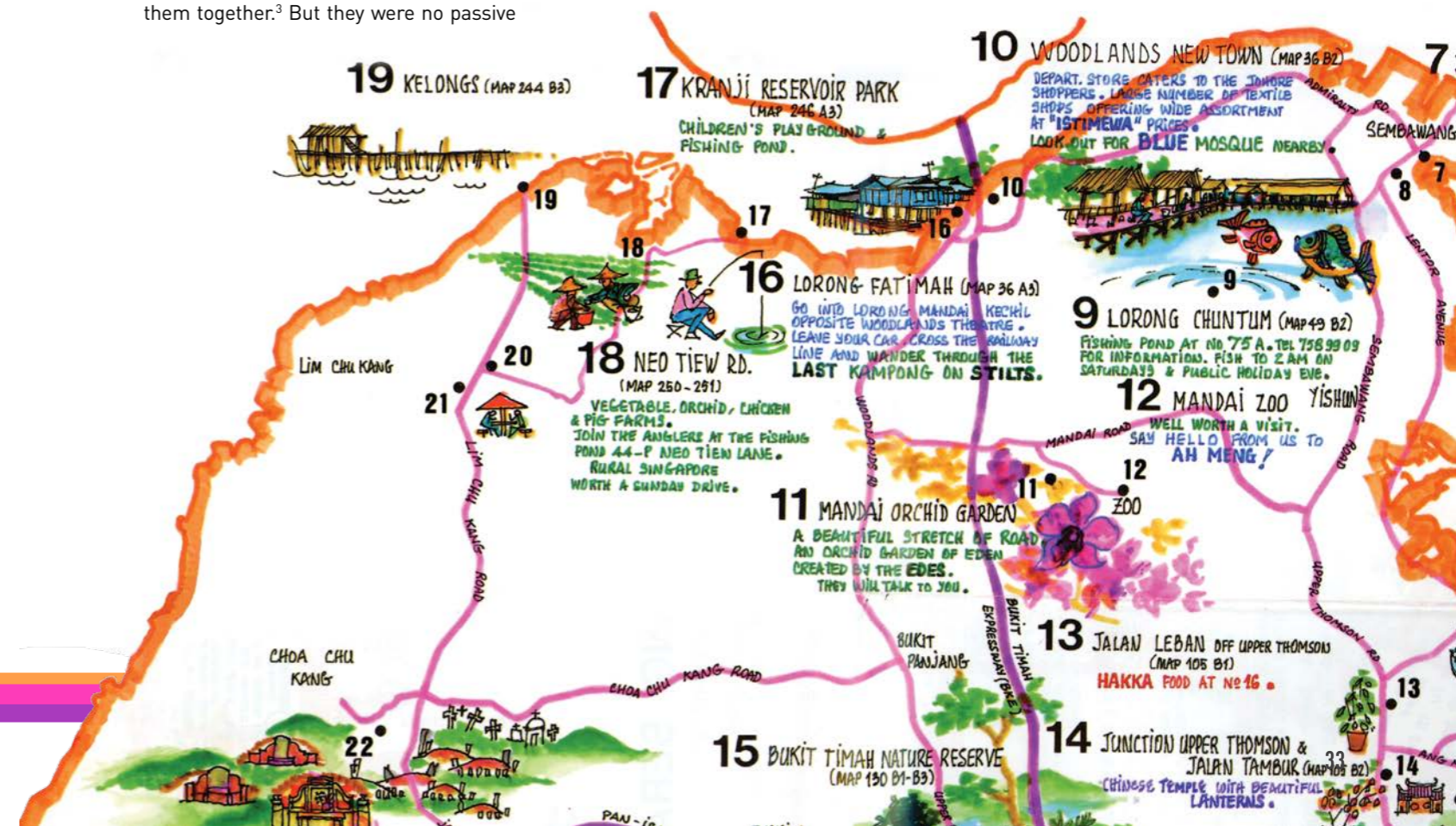
computers had not yet entered the lexicon of map design, this must have been a slow and painstaking process.

But it is not so much the hand-drawn finesse of the map that catches the eye. It is the colours. Bold and bright and bordering on the gaudy, Michel Ropion's use of colours, they say, is a result of his upbringing in Cambodia.⁸ Then working as the Southeast Asia Representative of Bouygues,⁹ he fed his inherent love and talent for the arts by taking time to learn brush strokes, proportion and layout from a Chinese painter in Singapore.¹⁰

Eurasian Patrick Mowe, Rosalind's husband, was at the tail end of his career, heading the MPH group of companies in Singapore and Malaysia, when the maps were published.¹¹ Even so, it is likely that his influence in publishing and distribution helped in promoting the maps to foreign newspapers such as *The New York Times*, which carried brief articles on these maps in 1987 and 1988.

MAPPING OUT SECRET PLACES

The first map, *The Secret Map of Singapore*, released around July 1986, took seven months of research, involving full days of exploration. Michel, working from early evenings and late into the night took another four months to draw and colour the map. The work required frequent on-site verification, resulting in a detailed map that traced unusual sights and



untrodden areas, provided educational but sharp insights and often dispensed useful and sometimes hilarious advice.

The main map is an outline of Singapore that has 93 locations highlighted, from tourist spots to interesting temples and eateries. The map unfolds into nine subsections: Chinatown, Orchard Road, Serangoon Road, Little India, Arab Street, Geylang, Geylang Serai – which includes the Joo Chiat and Katong areas – Holland Village and Toa Payoh.

The bright colours on the map are not merely an element of graphic design. In effect, the colours function as codes for the different interests that a traveller may have – “black for antiques, curios and handicrafts; red for restaurants and coffee shops; green for recommended sightseeing; blue for interesting shops; and purple for the spiritual and the esoteric”.¹² A bright pink highlights a route that is highly recommended. In the subsections, exact locations are indicated by the unit numbers of each outlet so that the map-reader is certain of the exact location. *The Secret Map of Singapore* retailed at S\$4.90 at the time, a bargain considering how much work went into it.

Food outlets and good eats were already highlighted in *The Secret Map of Singapore* and thus the companion map, *The Secret Food Map of Singapore* naturally expanded on the research done previously. The second map was published around May 1987 and reportedly took 14 months to research and produce. The creators claimed to have visited as many as 10,000 outlets and eaten more than 1,000 meals in the course of researching *The Secret Food Map of Singapore*, from exotic Vietnamese and Thai eateries (well, exotic for the time) to humble hawker stalls selling comfort food such as *goreng pisang* (deep fried bananas).¹³ A similar colour coding system was adopted in this map with “red for Chinese food, green for Malay or Nonya food, black for other Asian food and blue for Western food”.¹⁴

A FIRST IN MAPPING

Prior to this, articles about food and places of interest in the newspapers may have had accompanying maps¹⁵ that oftentimes seemed like an afterthought, but there was nothing that showcased local cuisine and traditional crafts in the cartographic manner that these map-guides achieved. Tourist maps of the time usually featured the usual sights and icons, whereas these maps revealed hidden places, including tips on where to sit on benches and “study exceptional style old houses” (answer: “at [the] corner of Lorong 19 and Lorong



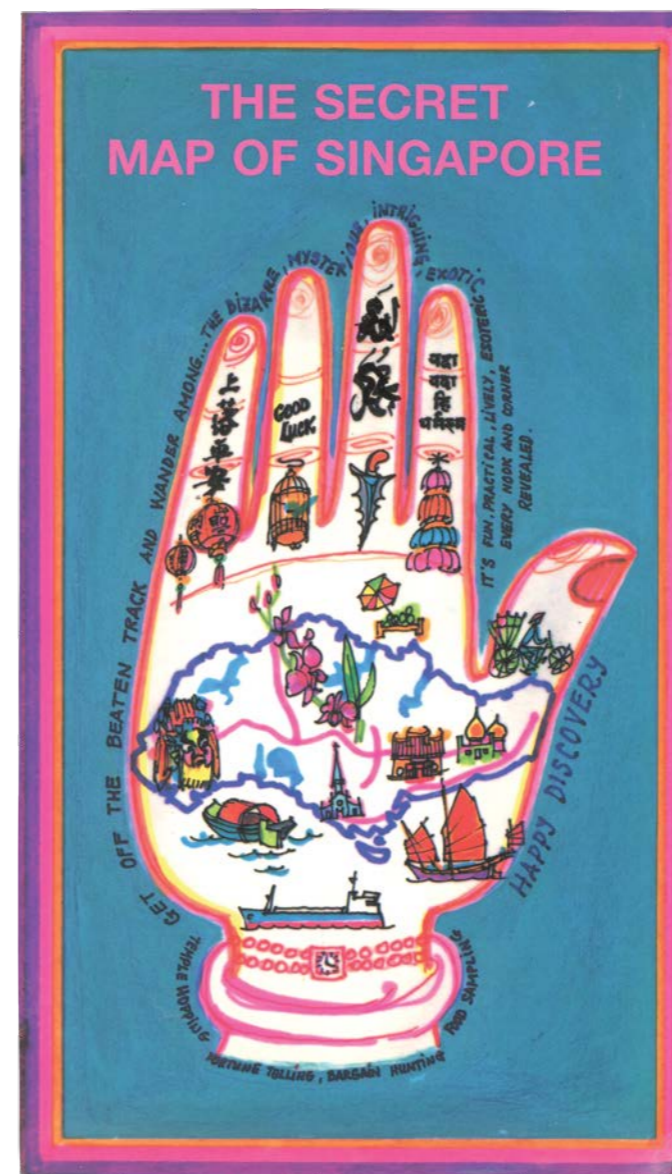
Details of South Bridge Road in Chinatown as seen in *The Secret Map of Singapore*. *The Secret Map of Singapore*. All rights reserved. Mowe, Ropion, Hunt, 2014.



A 1983 photograph of Smith Street, which is part of the Chinatown Conservation Area. *From the Lee Kip Lin Collection*. All rights reserved. Lee Kip Lin and National Library Board, Singapore 2009.



A 1983 photograph of South Bridge Road, between Mosque and Pagoda streets, with Sri Mariamman Temple and Jamae Mosque on the right. *From the Lee Kip Lin Collection*. All rights reserved. Lee Kip Lin and National Library Board, Singapore 2009.



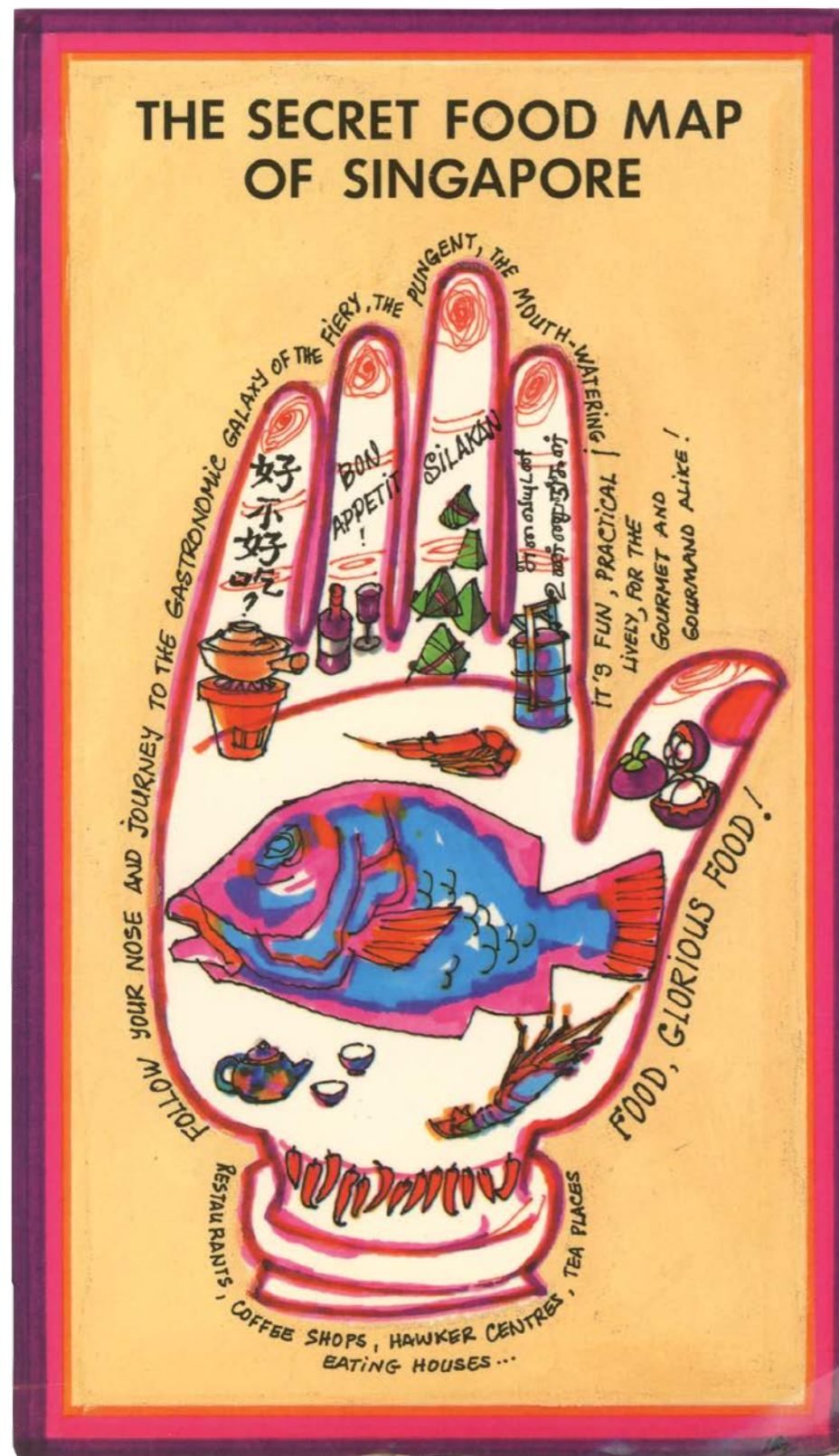
(Top) *The Secret Map of Singapore* was released in 1986. *The Secret Map of Singapore*. All rights reserved. Mowe, Ropion, Hunt, 2014.

(Top right) An elderly lady dictating her letter to a professional letter writer in Kreta Ayer, who set up his makeshift stall along a five-foot way, circa late 1970s. *From the Kouo Shang-Wei Collection* 郭尚慰收集. All rights reserved. Family of Kouo Shang-Wei and National Library Board Singapore 2007.

(Above) Interior of a pre-war coffee shop located on New Bridge Road, taken in 1992. *From the Lee Kip Lin Collection*. All rights reserved. Lee Kip Lin and National Library Board, Singapore 2009.



(Above) The interior of a traditional Chinese medicine shop located on New Bridge Road, taken in 1983. *From the Lee Kip Lin Collection*. All rights reserved. Lee Kip Lin and National Library Board, Singapore 2009.



Bachok" in Geylang) or oddities like where to purchase "Chinese musical instruments, opera costumes and weapons, and Japanese martial art" (answer: on Merchant Road). Even details such as the telephone number of a master *gasing* (spinning top) maker or where to buy mosquito nets were studiously included in the map.

A certain *joie de vivre* comes across in the descriptions of the sights and senses encountered in Singapore. For example *The Secret Food Map* notes that "The last reported tiger was killed in Singapore in 1930. But even if the tiger's days are over, you can still eat snakes, bear's paws, turtles, iguanas, crocodiles, ox testicles, frogs, chicken feet, sea slugs and fish maw" in this city. The maps almost transports one vicariously to places where few tourists venture. Chinatown is described as "still reeking with atmosphere of early immigrants" and Geylang Serai is "reputed to be the refuge of the 'Chinese Mafia'." With tongue-in-cheek humour, the map tries to educate the first-time traveller on the various ways of eating in Singapore: the Chinese, for example, "eat and run!"; when partaking of Malay cuisine, "don't ask for a

knife. Fork and spoon will separate meat from bone!"; at Indian "eating places don't expect a plate! The banana leaf is not a place mat"; and "when eating sushi [at Japanese places], acrobatic skills [are] required."

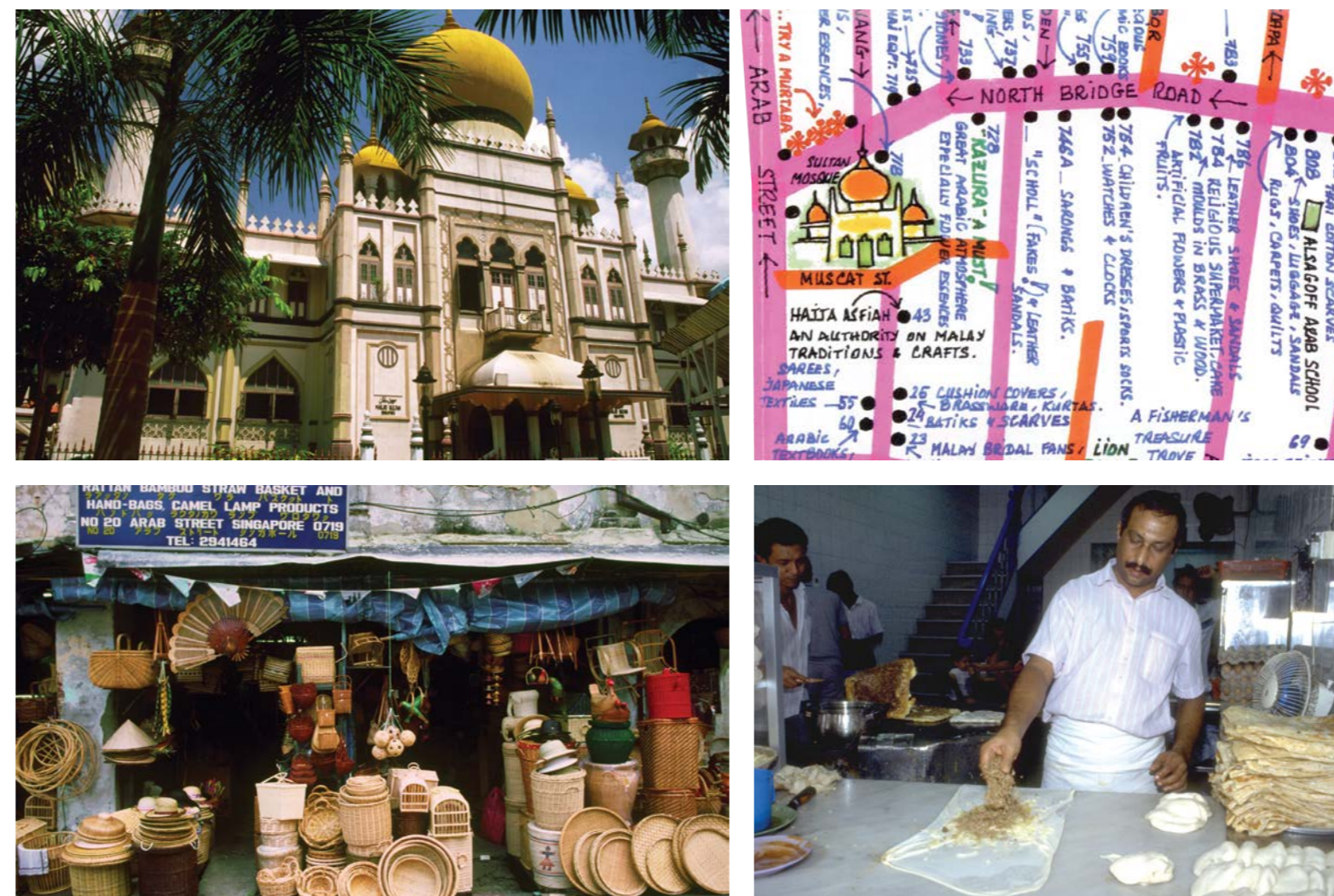
The map creators were especially adept at pointing out spirit houses, temples and traditional places of worship – whether Buddhist, Taoist, Hindu or Islamic. Besides including well-known houses of prayer, *The Secret Map of Singapore* also highlights private homes with interesting altars such as those on Joo Chiat Road or more morbidly, the location of a Chinese undertaker on Jalan Pinang in the Kampong Glam neighbourhood. Simple down-to-earth places such as an Indian laundry shop and a children's bicycle shop did not go unnoticed. High-end eateries such as Shima, a distinguished Japanese restaurant, are highlighted as well as Hainanese-style pseudo-Western restaurants such as Jack's Place. Making no distinction between religion, class or culture, the maps bring together all that make Singapore unique.

For the historian, the maps pinpoint the locations of traditional but now barely

existing activities and outlets in various neighbourhoods. For example "counters for remittance to China in (an) old medical hall" is located at 211 South Bridge Road in the heart of Chinatown, while ready-made *popiah* (spring roll) skins and *pie tee* (crispy dough cups) are prepared at Kway Guan Huat in the Peranakan enclave at 95 Joo Chiat Road. Incredibly, Kway Guan Huat still stands at its original site today, albeit in a more gentrified neighbourhood, and Shima restaurant re-opened in June 2014 at the Goodwood Park Hotel – where it used to be way back in the 1980s.

The Secret Food Map was soon followed by *The Secret Map of Sydney*, which was released in October 1987.¹⁶ *The Secret Map of Singapore* was reprinted in 1990, with research updates by Andrew Blaisdell and Adeline Ropion.¹⁷ Even so, changes to Singapore's landscape were so swift that although only three years had lapsed, the reprinted map was revised with 88 highlights instead of the 93 shown in the original.¹⁸ ♦

Only *The Secret Map of Singapore* is available in the National Library collection.



(Above) *The Secret Food Map of Singapore* was produced in 1987. *The Secret Food Map of Singapore*. All rights reserved. Mowe, Ropion, Hunt, 2014.

(Middle) 1980s photograph of the Sultan Mosque located at 3 Muscat Street. GP Reichelt Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

(Middle right) Details of Kampong Glam as seen in *The Secret Map of Singapore*. *The Secret Map of Singapore*, 1986. All rights reserved. Mowe, Ropion, Hunt, 2014.

(Right) Shop selling rattan-weaved goods at Arab Street in the 1980s. GP Reichelt Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

(Far right) A man making *murtabak* in the Kampong Glam area in 1991. Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

Notes

- 1 These include *Good Food Guide to Singapore* (1971) by Allan Bruce, *Singapore: 101 meals* (1986) by Violet Oon, *Where to Eat and Drink and Entertain* (1986) by Pacific Trade Press and *Good Food in Singapore* (1988/89) by Far East Trade Press.
- 2 De Souza, J., 1981, June 12, *The Straits Times*, p. 10.
- 3 Chua, R., 1986, August 23, *The Straits Times*, p. 1.
- 4 Crossette, B., 1987, January 11, *The New York Times*.
- 5 Chua, R., 1986, August 23, *The Straits Times*, p. 1.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Tee, H. C., 1999, May 7, *The Straits Times*, p. 2.
- 8 Chua, R., 1986, August 23, *The Straits Times*, p. 1.
- 9 The Bouygues Offshore Company based in Paris specialised in the construction of marine structures (Teo, T. W., 1978, June 27, *The Business Times*, p. 5).
- 10 Ropion, M. Background summary. LinkedIn.
- 11 Chuang, P. M., 1987, December 28, *The Business Times*, p. 2.
- 12 Ropion, M.; Hunt, E.; Mowe, R. (1986). *The secret map of Singapore*.
- 13 Ong, S. C., 1987, 28 May, *The Straits Times*, p. 3.
- 14 Ropion, M.; Hunt, E.; Mowe, R. (1986). *The secret map of Singapore*.
- 15 Oon, V., 1980, April 6, *The Straits Times*, p. 3.
- 16 Ong, S. C., 1987, 28 May, *The Straits Times*, p. 3.
- 17 Blaisdell, A. *The Secret Map of Singapore*, 1990.
- 18 *Ibid.*

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- Ong, S. C. [1987, 28 May]. Care for spicy snails and midnight murtabak? *The Straits Times*, p. 3.
- Oon, V. [1980, April 6]. Bon Appetit! *The Straits Times*, p. 3.
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- Ropion, M., Hunt, E., Mowe, R. (1987). *The secret food map of Singapore*. Singapore: s. n.
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- Wong, S.-F. [1988, July 24]. Guides to better eating. *The Straits Times*, p. 8.

ON THE TRAIL OF FRANCIS P. NG AUTHOR OF *F.M.S.R.*

In her effort to republish one of our unknown literary treasures, **Dr Eriko Ogihara-Schuck** tracks down the elusive Francis P. Ng, author of possibly the first notable work of poetry in English by a Singapore writer.

Dr Eriko Ogihara-Schuck, originally from Japan, is a lecturer in American Studies at the Technische Universität Dortmund, Germany. She is the author of *Miyazaki's Animism Abroad: The Reception of Japanese Religious Themes by American and German Audiences* (2014). Motivated by her research on Francis P. Ng, she is launching a larger project on Singapore-US relations in the area of literature and popular culture.

In August 2014, I found myself in Singapore, the country where I came of age as a teenager. Twenty years had passed since I left Singapore to enter college in Japan and then higher degree studies in the United States and Germany. Initially, it felt as if nothing had changed since I left the city. The night sky was still the same over the East Coast, twinkling here and there with the strobe lights of airplanes heading towards Changi Airport. On terra firma, the songs and sounds of the National Day festivities quickly re-absorbed me into this country, exactly the same way they did when I first arrived as a 12-year-old girl in the summer of 1988.

Yet, many things had changed. Unfamiliar apartments and buildings had sprung up everywhere, and new shopping malls and changes inside once familiar buildings generated some anxiety. And there was a definite buzz to the city, with a lot more people than I remembered. I tried to recall and imprint in my memory scenes I was familiar with. But much as I was disturbed about losing my own memory of Singapore, I was equally concerned about the loss of one of Singapore's literary treasures.

I had come back to Singapore to trace the footsteps of Francis P. Ng, a forgotten Singapore poet who disappeared at the outset of the Japanese invasion in 1942. Before arriving in Singapore, I had discovered that Francis P. Ng was a pseudonym for Teo Poh Leng, a local Chinese and the author of *F.M.S.R.* (1937),¹ a poem that

describes a train journey from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur on the Federated Malay States Railways (FMSR). *F.M.S.R.* has been claimed to be the first published book-length English poem by a Singapore author.

T.S. ELIOT AND THE SINGAPORE CONNECTION

F.M.S.R. first came to my attention when I was preparing for a conference presentation on the poet T.S. Eliot (1888–1965), who was born in the United States and emigrated to Britain in 1914 at age 25. Eliot is well known for his modernist masterpiece *The Waste Land* (1922). Beginning with the unconventional phrase, "April is the cruellest month", the poem caused a sensation in the world of Western poetry by introducing new styles of writing and perception. After teaching Eliot in an undergraduate American Studies course in Germany for many years, I wanted to make a scholarly contribution to the study of this poet by exploring the extent of his literary influence in Asia.

I started by researching Eliot's impact on Japanese literature but quickly learned that many scholars had previously worked on this topic. My mind then turned to Singapore, where I had grown up as a teenager. I stumbled upon a Wikipedia entry on Singapore literature, and quite serendipitously, under the section on poetry, I learnt about *F.M.S.R.* being "a pastiche of T.S. Eliot!"² According to Rajeev S. Patke's and Philip Holden's *The Routledge Concise History of Southeast Asian Writing in English* (2009) available on

Google Books, the poem was influenced by *The Waste Land*.³

My curiosity was piqued and I became interested in reading and analysing *F.M.S.R.* partly because no substantial scholarly studies on it existed and I enjoy the challenge of writing about neglected literary treasures. As of today, Holden's three-sentence description of *F.M.S.R.* as "one of the first of many efforts to tropicalize T.S. Eliot"⁴ in *Writing Singapore* (2009) amounts to the longest scholarly comment on the poem. However, I soon found that *F.M.S.R.* is a very difficult book to obtain – aside from the National Library of Singapore, only four other libraries abroad hold the book.⁵ No rare book dealer lists the text in its holdings.

Unable to borrow or obtain a copy of the book, I boarded a plane to London to peruse the poem at the British Library. Flipping through the pages of the faded book, I was moved by the poem's density and innovative use of metaphors and imagery, reminiscent of what is found in Eliot's poetic works. Indeed, *The Waste Land* resonates throughout this poem: while transforming its setting from London to the Malayan Peninsula, *F.M.S.R.* clearly inherits from *The Waste Land* its post-World War I pessimism about human deeds and progress, as well as its lamentation over materialism, urbanisation and industrialisation.

Perhaps even more striking was that *F.M.S.R.* does not simply emulate Eliot's seminal work; by creating its own voice and sound, the poem generates what Teo would have called a "Malayan modernism" – one that differs markedly from Eliot's. Focusing on this distinctive aspect, I crafted a scholarly

paper and presented it at an American Studies conference held in Poland in August 2013.

As *F.M.S.R.* is an "orphan work" – meaning the copyright holder who is able to grant permission for reproduction is unknown – it hindered the usual routine of presenting a paper and developing it into a publishable scholarly article. Unfortunately, the copyright information and details of the author were destroyed when the office of his London publisher, Arthur H Stockwell, was bombed during World War II.⁶ As I could not locate any information about the author, I was unable to track down his family who would have inherited the copyright. Current laws on intellectual property rights state that copyright expires 70 years after the death of the author but, without the necessary biographical information on Teo, there was no way to ascertain when exactly he died, if indeed he is dead.

Then came my Eureka moment. As I started reading the peripheral information added to the poem, I noticed a footnote to Section VII of *F.M.S.R.*, which stated that the section was published as an independent poem titled "The Song of the Night Express" in the 1937 spring issue of *Life and Letters To-day*, a British literary magazine.⁷ Curious to know if Section VII and "The Song" were identical, I decided to seek out "The Song".

The data bore out. In *Life and Letters To-day* was Section VII of *F.M.S.R.*, re-titled as "The Song of the Night Express", which starts with "For he chants of the wheels / Of the wheels revolving, revolving". But I also stumbled upon an unexpected surprise. The poem was attributed not to "Francis P. Ng" but to "Teo Poh Leng".⁸ There was also a short biographical note about Teo, introducing him as having been born in 1912, serving as

(Right) An "S" Class Express engine of the Federated Malay States Railways (FMSR), which was a rail operator that serviced British Malaya in the first half of the 20th century. The poem *F.M.S.R.* (published in 1937) describes a train journey from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur. *Lee Kip Lin Collection*, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

a primary school master in Singapore and having written poems that won the approval of British poet Silvia Townsend Warner and Cornish poet Ronald Bottrall.⁹

Suddenly in the face of precious information I had been unable to gather for half a year, a shiver of excitement pulsed through me. Who exactly was Teo Poh Leng? Why did he publish under a different name? Why did he publish his poem in the United Kingdom? With these questions swirling in my head, I spent countless hours at my desk, trawling the Internet for more details as well as reaching out to various Singaporeans with many inquiries.

PIECING TOGETHER A PUZZLE: TEO'S BIOGRAPHY

Trawling through NewspaperSG, the digital newspaper database of the National Library Board (NLB), Singapore, to locate articles that contain the name Teo Poh Leng, I was able to ascertain that Francis P. Ng was a pseudonym that Teo adopted for *F.M.S.R.* No wonder I could not find anything under Francis P. Ng! While I was still in Germany, I contacted librarian Tim Yap Fuan at the National University of Singapore (NUS), who was able to locate and make available to me pertinent materials from the NUS Central Library.

Now hopeful that more sources about Teo could exist in other Singapore institutions, I decided I had to make a trip here. Shortly after arriving in the city, I met up with Michelle Heng, a librarian at the National Library, who offered to do some "sleuth work" – running around the library and checking shelf after shelf in search of old sources.

Based on various fragmented sources I have been able to gather, thanks to these librarians and various Singapore official records, this is what I have pieced together on the life of Teo Poh Leng.

If the biographical note in *Life and Letters To-day* correctly affirms Teo's birth year as 1912, then he was quite possibly born outside of Singapore. The Immigration & Checkpoints Authority of Singapore conducted a search for a birth certificate based on "Teo Poh Leng", his pseudonym "Francis P. Ng" and his postal address of "700 Serangoon Road" – but no record was found. Neither could the Catholic Chancery archives of Singapore find a baptism record, although in his 20s Teo had been a member of the Catholic Young Men's Association.¹⁰ Perhaps he was born in today's Malaysia; after all in *F.M.S.R.* the traveller describes his journey to Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian capital, as "coming home".¹¹

Evidence shows that Teo studied at St Joseph's Institution (SJI). He took the School



(Top) Serangoon Road, circa 1911. At the time Serangoon Road was serviced by a single tram line running from Mackenzie Road depot to Paya Lebar. Teo very likely lived at 700 Serangoon Road in the early 1930s, today an empty plot of land just in front of the Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital. *Arkshak C Galstaun Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(Above) St Joseph's Institution, circa 1912. Teo studied here and passed his School Certificate Examination in 1929. *Arkshak C Galstaun Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Certificate Examination in 1929.¹² Cambridge examinations records, the only materials pertaining to Teo that SJI still holds, attest that he excelled in English literature.¹³ Teo graduated together with Kenneth Michael Byrne, who later became a member of the first People's Action Party cabinet in 1959.¹⁴

In 1931, two years after a civil service appointment, Teo was admitted to Raffles College at Bukit Timah Road, the precursor of the University of Malaya and NUS.¹⁵ Raffles College had opened only two years before to groom local university-educated school teachers at a time when schools were dominated by British expatriates. Teo entered the college together with Paul Abisheganaden (1914–2011), the first

Singaporean choral and orchestral conductor; Lee Hah Ing (1914–2009), the former principal of Anglo-Chinese School; and Lokman bin Yusof (1914?–1972), the first Lord Mayor of the city of Kuala Lumpur.¹⁶

During his final year at Raffles College, as the editor of *Raffles College Union Magazine*, Teo encountered the Cornish poet Ronald Bottrall (1906–1989).¹⁷ In 1933, Bottrall had arrived in Singapore to become the Johore Professor at Raffles College, where he taught until 1937.¹⁸ The extensive overlaps between the literary texts Bottrall assigned to his students and the authors Teo discussed in the magazine suggest that Teo possibly attended Bottrall's course.¹⁹ According to Rajeev S. Patke, Teo's "Prolegomena

to the Modern Poets" (1936), what he calls a rare up-to-date comprehensive sketch on modernist authors, indeed "owes something to Bottrall".²⁰ Teo's admiration of Bottrall's poems in the same essay suggests that Bottrall had also influenced him as a poet. Interestingly, considering that Bottrall's complete name was Francis James Ronald Bottrall, it is possible that Teo's pseudonym Francis P. Ng for his longest poem *F.M.S.R.* was his way of paying homage to his mentor.

It is highly likely that, upon graduation from Raffles College in 1934, Teo became a school teacher. No record of his school employment has been found but the *Blue Book* notes that he was a civil servant from 1934 to 1939.²¹ *Chorus*, the journal of the Singapore Teachers' Association, affirms that, in 1938, Teo served on the subcommittee of the magazine together with Percival Frank Aroozoo (1900–1969), the former headmaster of Gan Eng Seng School and father of Mrs Hedwig Anuar (1938–), the first Singaporean director of the National Library of Singapore.²² Although publication of the *Blue Book* ceased in 1940 and hence provides no record of Teo's status after 1939, it would be fair to speculate that he was a teacher at least until 1941. In the 1941 issue of *Chorus* I chanced upon Teo's poem "The Spider".²³

TEO'S VISION FOR MALAYAN MODERNISM

Teo's passion for poetry may have started during his years at SJI. At that time poetry was a popular genre taught at Anglophone schools from the primary level.²⁴ Moreover, school magazines gave pupils an opportunity to write and publish their literary works. The old issues of *St Joseph's Magazine*, for

instance, contain literary works, although to a much lesser degree than *The Rafflesian*, the school magazine of Raffles Institution.

The earliest record of Teo's poetry, however, dates from his first year at Raffles College. On 14 September 1931 from the address 700 Serangoon Road (presumably his home and currently a vacant plot of land in front of Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital), Teo mailed four poems to the American poet Harriet Monroe for publication in *Poetry: The Magazine of Verse*, although they went unpublished.²⁵ That was around one year before Teo started writing *F.M.S.R.*

Aside from *F.M.S.R.*, its section titled "The Song of the Night Express" and the 1941 poem "The Spider", Teo also wrote "Time is Past" (1936).²⁶ This poem appeared in *The London Mercury*, a major British literary magazine in the first half of the 20th century that published poems by Robert Frost and W.B. Yeats and was absorbed by *Life and Letters To-day* in 1939.

All these poems commonly engage with the theme of life's journey. *F.M.S.R.*, epitomised by "The Song of the Night Express", is about a train ride and simultaneously the spiritual salvation of the self, with the travelling narrator aiming "to meet flesh of my flesh" neath the station dome²⁷ once he reaches his destination. "Time is Past" is about the journey from birth to death. Starting with "Time was when life began, / When Space was infinite",²⁸ the poem narrates one's childhood, adulthood and afterlife in the light of Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.²⁹ "The Spider" approaches life as a repetitive circle, narrating a spider's weaving of a web as an incessant repetition of creation and destruction.

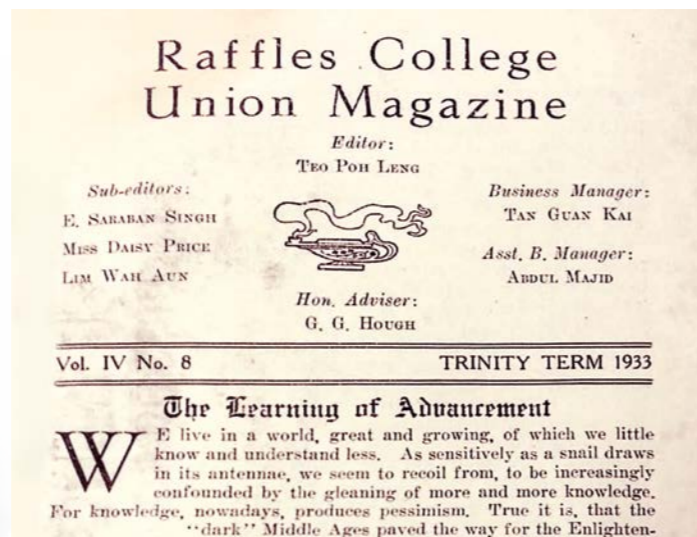


Tanjong Pagar Railway Station on Keppel Road in 1932. This is where trains from Malaya arrived and departed from Singapore. *Paul Yap Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

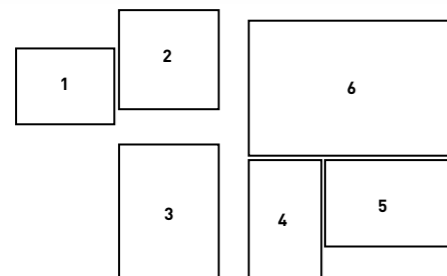
What also unites these poems is their modernist outlook. The poems clearly carry the dark, pessimistic tones of the so-called "Lost Generation" authors who were disillusioned by the unprecedented mass destruction of World War I and became enamoured with the theme of the living dead. From "Singapura Lion-City",³⁰ *F.M.S.R.* laments, "The world is bad, / The world is mad, / The world is sad".³¹ In "Time is Past", the narrator seems to have entered the afterlife as "I move upon an earthless plane, / At last!" yet "perplexing and profound I seem" and this mental state is like "the ravine" which "makes me pale".³² In "The Spider", the narrator deplores his "deathless discipline" of continuously weaving a web only to be blown away as it "deadens me" and "I sigh".³³

Literary articles that Teo contributed to *Raffles College Union Magazine* during and after his college years demonstrate his distrust of contemporary society (yes, even back then) which he called "a wild beast".³⁴ Yet, Teo's poetry was not about passively and helplessly shrinking in the face of this creature. Instead, it was an active response, participating in the "revolution of the arts"³⁵ as led by T.S. Eliot and other modernist poets and artists. Teo both admired and absorbed their attempt to "seek new forms, new rhythms" in order to overcome "a moribund language" and "the fear [of the post-World War I era] that the language is dying".³⁶ The critical approach to contemporary society was part of this novelty: against the backdrop of conventional poetry represented by Percy Bysshe Shelley's definition of poetry as "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best mind",³⁷ Teo called it a "great courage" on the part of modernist poets to try to "record the effects of the mighty march downward of civilisation, the collapse of culture, sometimes within the compass of less than 500 'tabloid' lines".³⁸

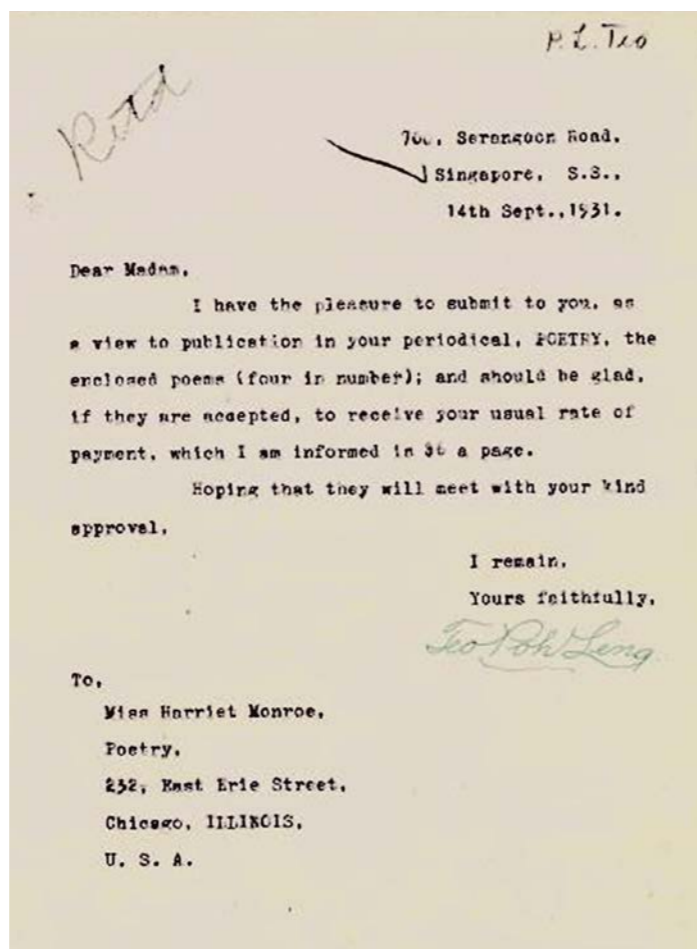
Teo's devotion to this modernist literary enterprise from the British colonial outpost in the tropics entailed a desire for the creation of Malayan art and culture. Lamenting Malaya for being "uncivilised in a cultural sense despite all her externals of civilised life"³⁹ and believing in the ability of artists to "commenc[e] the original outlines" instead of merely "furnishing civilisation",⁴⁰ Teo wrote poems with a strong vision for the advancement of what he would have called the Malayan civilisation at large. And significantly, central to this vision was an amalgamation of the East and West. While emulating Western modernist poets, Teo crafted into his poems the so-called Eastern view of life, seeing life's journey as cyclic rather than linear, surmounting the notion of time, and picturing the encounter of various world and indigenous religions in the setting of the Lion City.



Who exactly was Teo Poh Leng? Why did he publish under a different name?



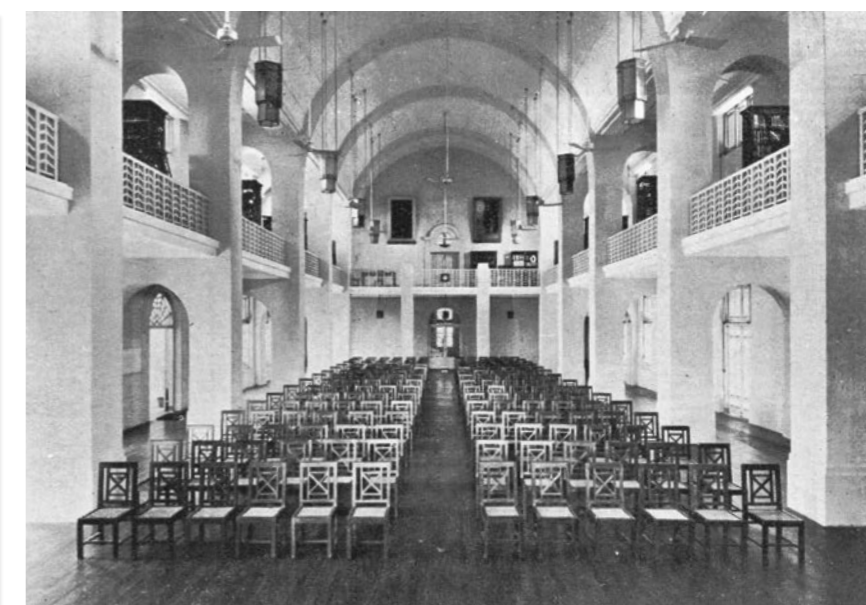
1. A copy of *F.M.S.R.* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Both the poem and the poet influenced Teo Poh Leng to write his poem *F.M.S.R.*, using the pen name Francis P. Ng. *F.M.S.R.* has been claimed to be the first book-length English poem by a Singapore author. National Library of Singapore is one of five libraries in the world that hold this book. *F.M.S.R.*, London: Arthur H Stockwell, 1937; *The Waste Land*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co. All rights reserved, 1997.
2. *Raffles College Union Magazine*, the publication of Raffles College, of which Teo Poh Leng was the editor in 1933. Teo also contributed articles to this magazine. *Raffles College Union Magazine* (1933, Trinity Term). [Vol. 4, No. 8.], p. 1. Courtesy of NUS Central Library.
3. On 14 September 1931, in a letter addressed from 700 Serangoon Road (presumably his residence), Teo Poh Leng posted four poems to American poet Harriet Monroe for publication in *Poetry: The Magazine of Verse*. Unfortunately, his submissions were not accepted. Courtesy of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
4. Section VII of *F.M.S.R.* retitled as "The Song of the Night Express" by Teo Poh Leng, was published in the 1937 spring issue of *Life and Letters To-day*, a British literary magazine. *Life and Letters To-day*, [Vol. 16, No. 7]
5. Oei Tiong Ham Hall at Raffles College, Bukit Timah Road, in 1938. Teo Poh Leng was a student at Raffles College from 1931 to 1934, where he trained to be a teacher. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.
6. A faded graduation photograph of the Raffles College batch of students in 1934. One of the students in this photo is Teo Poh Leng, but he remains unidentified as the author of this article has not been able to track down anyone who can recognise him. Paul Abisheganaden is the eighth from the right in the middle row. *Raffles College Union Magazine* (1934 July). [Vol. 4, No. 10], insert between pp. 42 and 43. Courtesy of NUS Central Library.



THE STAFF AND GRADUATES, 1934.

LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY VOL. 16 NO. 7
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DISAPPEARANCE DURING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

The publication of "The Spider" in 1941 is the last evidence of Teo's life that I have been able to locate. His name does not appear in any later records and all leads from this point on have proved fruitless. *The Register of Graduates* (1963) reports Teo's whereabouts as "missing".⁴¹ The fact that Wee Kwee Hai, a schoolmate of his whose whereabouts is likewise listed as missing but who was later found to be killed during the Japanese Occupation, suggests that Teo may have met a similar fate – or possibly escaped Singapore. After all, as a member of the Straits Chinese British Association (now known as the Peranakan Association Singapore) and a pro-British school teacher having received an English education, he would have been a likely target of invading Japanese forces.⁴²

If so, how and when exactly did he perish during the Japanese Occupation? Was he massacred as part of the Sook Ching purge? Or did he share the same fate as Seow Poh Leng, his older colleague at the Straits Chinese British Association who died on a ship when it was bombed?⁴³ Or did Teo survive the tumultuous year of 1942 only to end up either in Bahau, a newly created settlement for Eurasians and Chinese Catholics (where many perished from disease and malnutrition) or in Endau, a settlement for the Chinese led by Lim Boon Keng, a founding member of the Straits Chinese British Association?

Aside from all the known biographical details about Teo Poh Leng, I was particularly anxious during my visit to Singapore to find out if he had been dead for more than 70 years and if I could get in touch with members of his family. These two pieces of information would have facilitated not just publication of my analytical article, but more importantly, the reprint of *F.M.S.R.*, reinstating its rightful place in the literary history of Singapore and

allowing future generations to access this groundbreaking work.

But so far I have found neither evidence of his death nor record of his family. The incomplete Sook Ching victim list does not contain his name and neither do registers of cemeteries where Catholic Christians might have been buried.⁴⁴ The Catholic Chancery Archives could not locate his death certificate either.⁴⁵ At the National Archives of Singapore (NAS), I could not find Teo's marriage register, which, if he were married, might have included his entire name signed in Chinese characters.

Old documents of the Straits Chinese British Association might have contained his biographical information, but even if that information existed, the association's members would likely have burned them immediately after the Japanese bombing of Singapore on 8 December 1941, fearing that the Japanese might use the documents to target members.⁴⁶ As for old materials stored at Raffles College, the Japanese army would have likely destroyed many records when the college was taken over.

I met or contacted siblings, children and grandchildren of people who knew Teo, hoping that someone would be able to shed light on the writer in his later years. I was especially hoping to hear something positive from the family of Paul Abisheganaden: Teo was well versed in Western classical music and Abisheganaden in literature, even becoming the secretary of the Literary Department of Raffles College at one point.⁴⁷ Moreover, Teo's Christian name was also Paul, suggesting that the two Pauls could have shared a common bond.⁴⁸ Regrettably, Abisheganaden passed away in 2011 and his family has neither heard of Teo nor retained any of Abisheganaden's private records that might have shed light on the elusive Teo.⁴⁹

Teo Poh Leng listed as missing in *The Register of Graduates (1968)* belonging to the University of Malaya's King Edward VII College of Medicine and Raffles College.

The reprinting of *F.M.S.R.* will fill the gap in Singapore's literary past, and in particular, that of English-language literature.

ORPHAN BOOK PROJECT

The death certificate and family records of Teo Poh Leng remain unknown. However, a month after my return to Germany from Singapore, I received a pleasant surprise from the United Kingdom Copyright Enquiries Service – namely, that the UK was to soon launch the Orphan Works Licensing Scheme. As of October 2014, it has become legal to republish an orphan book such as *F.M.S.R.* without permission from copyright holders on condition that a thorough search for its copyright owner has been conducted.⁵⁰

With this news, my laborious and slightly futile one-year search suddenly took on a glimmer of hope. I am now trying to complete my research and work towards republishing this neglected literary treasure. The reprinting of *F.M.S.R.* will fill the gap in Singapore's literary past, and in particular, that of English-language literature – the genre which seems to have lagged behind Chinese- and Malay-language works that

have a more prolific history. Along with Lim Boon Keng's *Tragedies of Eastern Life* (1927), *F.M.S.R.* will take its rightful place among pre-World War II 20th-century English literature from Singapore that Philip Holden, Rajeev S. Patke and John Clammer have analysed. *F.M.S.R.* will also serve as a bridge between post-World War II poetry pioneered by Edwin Thumboo (1933–) and the abundance of poems that poet Alvin Pang (1972–) is currently excavating from 19th-century Singapore school magazines.⁵¹ ♦

If the name Teo Poh Leng is even remotely familiar to you, please contact the author of this article at eriko.ogihara@udo.edu

The National Library Board, Singapore holds two copies of F.M.S.R. which are kept at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library on level 11 of the National Library. A microfilm copy shelved at NL 16347 is available for reference. Note: only four other libraries in the world hold copies of this book.

The writer would like to thank Ruth Chia, Joe Conceicao, Robbie Goh, Philip Holden, Koh Tai Ann, Catherine Lim, Janet Lim, Juliana Lim, Lim Su Min, Ng Ching Huei, Rajeev S. Patke, Valerie Siew, Peggy Tan, Edwin Thumboo, Medona Walter, Wang Gungwu, Richard Angus Whitehead and Ina Zhang Xing Hong – for their inputs in this project, and Harold Johnson for assisting her through the research process.

Notes

- The book actually does not indicate this publication date; it only says that Ng completed the poem between 1932 and 1934 and the preface in 1935 ("Note"). Publication of advertisements and reviews begins in 1937, suggesting that the book was published in that year. See "Poetry review supplement". (1937). *Poetry Review* (Vol. 28), p. xi; "As I was saying". (1937, December 18). *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, p. 8; "Notes of the day". (1937, December 21). *The Straits Times*, p. 12.
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- While I was in Singapore, Alvin Pang shared with me an interesting anecdote about his thrilling encounter with *F.M.S.R.*. Some years before the book was introduced on Wikipedia entry on Singapore literature in 2005, Yenping Yeo, a former NL librarian who was tidying up NL's old collection in the closed stacks, found the book and showed it to him.

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Travelog Melayu

Travelogues, particularly those from yesteryear, serve as important reference documents that capture a slice of history and culture. These writings serve as sources of information about different places, cultures and communities as encountered by writers at different points in time. This article focuses on some of the most popular Malay-language travelogues available in the National Library collection and highlights several well-known accounts from the 19th century to more recent times.

"Bahwa ini peringatan sahaya berlayar dari negeri Singapura dalam kapal Syeikh 'Abdul Karim yang bernama Subla's-salam, yaitu kepada tarikh sanat 1270 tahun, kepada 29 hari bulan Jamadilawal, yaitu kepada tarikh Masehi 1854, yaitu setuju kepada sehari bulan Cina tahun baharu.

Maka dengan tolong Allah dua hari ketiga sampailah ke laut Melaka, tetapi tiada singgah. Maka berlayarlah juga dengan angin utara. Maka diberi Allah tiga hari keempatnya sampailah ke Pulau Pinang, itupun tiadalah juga singgah, lalu juga berlayar. Maka kepada hari Ahad tujuh hari bulan, pada malam pukul sembilan turunlah angin utara kencang terlalu; maka ombak dan gelombang terlalu besar. Maka kapal sebesar itu menjadi seperti kulit sabut di tengah laut, dihempaskan gelombang itu timbul tenggelam. Maka segala peti2 dan barang2 di kapal, yang di kiri datang ke kanan dan yang di kanan ke kiri, sehingga sampailah pada pagi. Maka ada pukul sebelas redahlah angin itu. Maka dilayarkanlah juga, maka sampailah kira2 pukul empat petang bertentangan Pulau Perak. Adapun pulau itu tiadalah sehelai rumput atau pohon2 melainkan batu sahaja bertimbun putih kelihatan dari jauh rupanya seperti perak. Maka sebab itulah dinamakan orang Pulau Perak."

Karya lengkap Abdul Kadir Munsyi Jilid 1 Amin Sweeney Kisah pelayaran Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munsyi dari Singapura sampai ke Mekah.



(Clockwise from top left) *Melawat Negara Tetangga*, *Meninjau Ka-Negara Sham*, *Melawat Ka-Paris*, *Chatetan Ka-Tanah Suchi* and *Kunjongan Ka-Indonesia 1954* were all written by Harun Aminurrashid.

Travelog atau kisah pengembaraan mempunyai peranan yang tersendiri dalam memperkenalkan sesuatu negeri atau tempat asing yang dilawati penulis kepada yang lain. Ia juga boleh menjadi dokumen penting dalam memberikan maklumat tentang budaya dan persekitaran masyarakat yang dikunjungi. Seperti genre-sastera yang lain, travelog Melayu juga mempunyai sumbangan yang tersendiri dalam membantu kita memahami falsafah kehidupan masyarakat Melayu. Oleh itu catatan tentang kehidupan masyarakat yang dilawati, diamati atau dilalui di dalam travelog menjadi rakaman sejarah sosial budaya masyarakat itu sebagai bahan rujukan. Melalui bukunya, *Chatetan Ka Tanah Suchi* (1960), Harun Aminurrashid mengatakan,

Segala apa yang dilihat, didengar dan dirasai, kalau dicatit dengan jujur dan betul, ayat adalah menjadi catitan sejarah yang amat penting, untuk pengetahuan orang-orang yang akan datang. Catitan yang betul akan terus hidup untuk selama-lamanya.

Travelog Melayu telah mula dihasilkan seawal abad ke-19. Antara yang masyhur ialah kisah-kisah pelayaran Abdullah, yang merupakan catatan kembara Abdullah Munsyi di Semenanjung Tanah Melayu seperti Kelantan. Selain dari itu terdapat

juga travelog-travelog Harun Aminurrashid seperti "Chatetan Menjelajah ka-Eropah", "Melawat ka-Paris", "Menggembara ka-Andalusia", "Meninjau ka-Negara Sham", "Melawat Negara Tetangga" dan "Kunjongan ka-Indonesia".

Berdasarkan kepada teks-teks yang ada antara tempat-tempat pengembaraan yang sering dilawati dan ditulis dalam bahasa Melayu sejak abad ke-19 hingga kini banyak meliputi kembara ke negeri-negeri sekitar Nusantara seperti Indonesia, Kelantan dan Terengganu. Bagi catatan pengembaraan sebegini selain dari yang ditulis oleh penulis Melayu, terdapat juga yang ditulis oleh pegawai-pegawai Kolonial yang mencerminkan tanggapan dan pandangan mereka terhadap masyarakat peribumi beserta keadaan alam sekeliling yang mereka lawati.

Terdapat catatan kembara yang menarik ditulis dalam bentuk puisi syair, contohnya "Syair Peri Tuan Raffles Pergi ke Minangkabau" yang telah ditulis pada tahun 1818 [Raimy Che-Ross, 2003]. Permulaa syair ini memberikan pembaca pengenalan tentang siapa Tuan Raffles yang pergi ke Padang dengan diiringi isterinya yakni "Madamnya yang arif budiman". Selain itu bait-bait awal ini juga menyentuh beberapa usahanya untuk merubah dan membuat reformasi sosial seperti membasmi perjudian dan sabung ayam di "Bangkahulu".

Bismillah itu permulaan baca Alhamdulillah puji yang nyata Berkat Muhammad Penghulu kita Hatiku terbuka di dalam dada

Inilah karangan suatu kisah Mengatur nazam syair yang indah Dari kerana berhati susah Kepada Tuan besar disandarkan mudah

Inilah asalnya telah tersurat Pekerjaan Tuan Besar dijadikan Hikayat Di negeri Bangkahulu dibaikinya adat Sabung dan dadu dia-nya hemat

Sedikit lama perantaraan Tuan Besar itu hendak berjalan Serta Madamnya yang arif budiman Ke negeri Padang dia-nya kerjaan

Hatta dengan Takdirullah Pekerjaannya itu dikehendak Allah Akalnya baik tangannya murah Madamnya majlis rupanya indah

Belayarlah Tuan Besar dari Bangkahulu Dengan kapal namanya perahu Serta Madamnya yang baik laku Ke negeri Padang dia-nya rindu

Tuan Besar berjalan meriam berbunyi Di Pulau Tikus kapal menanti Kelasi berdayung tidak berhenti Tiba di kapal di kasi ordi.

Selain itu, terdapat juga catatan perjalanan yang seumpamanya, "Syair Perjalanan Sultan Lingga dan Yang Dipertuan Muda Riau Pergi ke Singapura dan Peri Keindahan Istana Sultan Johor Yang Amat Elok", yang dikarang oleh Hamba Allah yang aat [*sic*] fakir yaitu Khalid Hitam bin Raja Hasan al-Haji Riau dan tercetak di Mathaba'at al-Riauwyah Pulau Penyengat pada tahun 1311 Hijrah atau 1890 Masihi.

Sebagaimana tajuknya, syair ini menceritakan tentang perjalanan Sultan Lingga ke Singapura seperti digambarkan dalam bait-bait berikut:

Syahdan manakala bertemu sempurna ketiga kapal tiadalah landa beriringan di lautan sana tiada didatangi suatu bencana

Hingga sampai pukul empat Singapura telah didapat berlabuhlah kapal Sultan bersifat di laut Teluk Belanga tempat

Waf Borneo konon namanya di situ beratur kapat ketiganya kerana di situ mudah atasnya menaikkan segalanya perempuan ahlinya

Kira-kira hampir pukul lima Engku Khalid turun bersama Tungku Said muda seksama melewati kedatangan Sultan Kusuma

Amtener beberapa pula pegawai Johor kepala mengiringkan kedua Tengku terala pakaian berhias sedikit tak cela

Kemudian dihadirkan ketika itu lima belas kereta bukan suatu beraturlah ia menanti di situ berangkatlah Sultan usul yang tentu

Bersama ayahnda bunda diringkan mereka mana yang ada laki perempuan tua dan muda jalan berlomba kereta kuda

Yang dipertuan raja yang bakti jalan berlomba kereta kuda segala pengiringnya sama menurut beristirahat di sana bersenang hati

Sultan Lingga yang maha mulia di rumah Wan Sharif tempatnya sedia beserta sekalian pengiring dia bersamalah tudia di situ saja

Melainkan Raja Muhammad hakimnya tinggal di kapal kerajaannya Raja Zainal saudara sepupunya di kampung Gelam konon tempatnya

(hlm 10–11)

Benua Eropah juga antara tempat menarik yang menjadi bahan catatan sebilangan travelog Melayu. Antara ciri yang menarik perhatian para penulis catatan-catatan di benua Eropah ialah tentang alam sekitarnya terutama sekali keindahan atau kelainan cuaca empat musim serta ketenangan di kawasan-kawasan pergunungan dan luar kota. Keadaan geografi yang berbeza mungkin telah memberi inspirasi kepada mereka untuk melestarikannya di dalam tulisan. Tidak keterlaluan rasanya apabila catatan-catatan ini menunjukkan sedikit kekaguman terhadap amalan menjaga alam sekitar di sana. Ini adalah antara kesan-kesan lawatan seperti yang tertinta di dalam buku "Mengembara ka-Andalusia" (1964) oleh Harun Aminurrashid.

Pertengahan perjalanan hendak ka-Cordoba itu kita akan menempoh kawasan yang bergunung-gunung, yang ada berbatu, tetapi hampir semua kawasan itu menjadi ladang pokok zaitun. Saya tiada melihat hutan langsung, kalau hendak dikatakan hutan ialah hutan pokok zaitun iaitu ladang zaitun yang sangat elok aturan susunan tanamannya. Mengikut keterangan orang Sepanyol sendiri, ladang zaitun itu telah beratus-ratus tahun lamanya, dan dikatakan ada yang dapat hidup

lebih daripada seribu tahun. Saya lihat lading-ladang zaitun itu, mana-mana yang pokoknya telah rosak atau mati ditanam semula dengan pokok baru. Dengan sebab itu ladang zaitun itu sentiasa penuh.

(Harun Aminurrashid, *Mengembara ka-Andalusia*, hlm 144–145)

Hal yang sama tentang keindahan dan ketenangan tempat yang dilawati terutama di kawasan luar bandar terdapat di dalam travelog "Warkah Eropah" (1991) tulisan A. Samad Said dan "Kembara Sastera" (2012) nukilan Nisah Haron. Melalui pengalaman dan pengamatan mereka, pembaca dapat turut sama merasakan sesuatu yang cantik dan damai yang dikongsi penulis seperti berikut,

Pemandangan di Manchester nampaknya banyak juga yang tenang dan indah. Ada bahagian yang menyamai pemandangan rural di Perancis – barangkali sedikit kurang berwarna-warni. *Landscape* di Perancis, rasanya, lebih banyak yang direncana; *landscape* di Manchester barangkali banyak yang menjadi sendiri. Cuma kambing biri-biri kelihatan lebih sering di sini – terkadang-kadangkala nampak seperti gumpalan kapas yang berselerak di atas hamparan permaidani hijau. Beberapa buah kampung atau pekan yang saya lalui nampaknya agak moden – tidak terasa atau terlihat iklim atau suasana medieval – kuno – seperti desa-desa di Perancis. Ini hanya mata seorang *tourist*.

(Warkah Eropah, A. Samad Said hlm 139).

Sampai di pinggir tasik ini saya sungguh terpegun dan terasa seperti mahu menangis melihat keindahan tempat ini. Sesungguhnya, apabila kita menjaga alam, Tuhan akan balas dengan sebaik-baiknya. Tasiknya dan kawasan bukitnya cantik tidak tergambar oleh kata-kata. Semuanya bagai tidak tersusik oleh tangan manusia. Betapa besarnya wakaf yang telah ditinggalkan oleh pengarang-pengarang seperti Beatrix Potter untuk tempat ini dinikmati oleh generasi hari ini.

(Kembara Sastera, Nisah Haron, hlm 13)

Timur Tengah merupakan sebuah lagi benua yang sering dilawati dan kemudiannya menjadi catatan kembara. Mesir, Syam (Syria), Tunisia dan Maghribi adalah



antara negeri-negeri yang pernah ditulis sebagai travelog.

Paling popular sudah tentu perjalanan setiap Muslim yang digalakkan sekurang-kurangnya sekali seumur hidup iaitu perjalanan agung mengerjakan ibadat Haji. Namun, setiap pahit maung dalam perjalanan, terutama sekali semasa belum terdapat kemudahan moden, seringkali diiringi dengan rasa syukur setiap pengembara, seperti yang diungkapkan oleh Harun Aminurrashid apabila sampai ke kota suci Mekah dan melihat Kaabah,

Setelah selesai makan, kami pun dibawa oleh orang yang menjadi pandu itu masuk ke Masjidil Haram iaitu masuk dari Babus-salam. Tak dapat hendak saya katakan bagaimana detik jantung saya ketika saya memasukkan badan ke dalam masjid yang bersejarah serta terpancip kepada bangunan Ka'abah tersergam hitam empat persegi di tengah-tengah masjid itu. Hanya ucapan Allahu-Akbar, Allahu-Akbar terus terpancip dari mulut saya.

(Chatetan ka-Tanah Suchi, hlm 67)

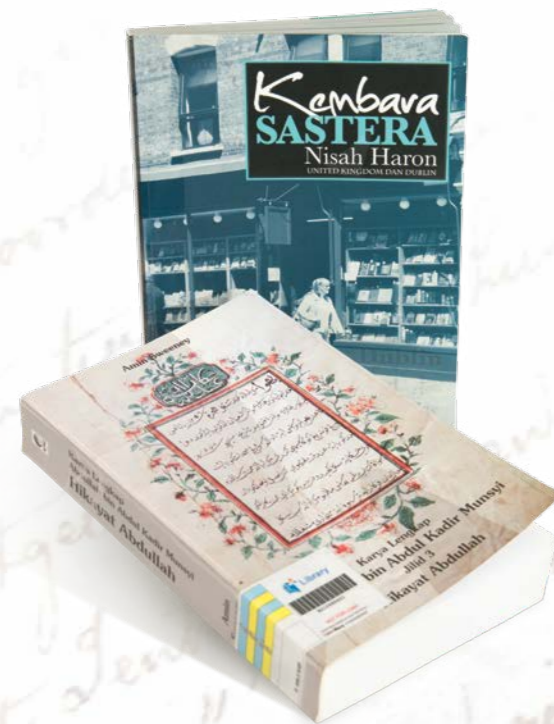
Travelog-Travelog sebegini merupakan catatan perjalanan ilmu dan sering menjadi petunjuk atau panduan kepada pencinta ilmu. Catatan-catatan ini membuka pandangan pembaca kepada keadaan dan persekitaran serta gambaran sosio budaya masyarakat setempat yang dilawati. Selain itu, terdapat juga perbandingan-perbandingan yang diujarkan dan kritikan-kritikan tajam yang menuntut pembaharuan atau saranan perubahan.

Akhir kata, travelog-travelog Melayu yang pernah diterbitkan ini merupakan bahan rujukan penting dalam memperkenalkan masyarakat kepada maklumat di sesuatu tempat asing. Ia merupakan dokumen utama yang merakam peradaban masyarakat di kala ia dikunjungi. Maka seperti genre-genre sastera yang lain, travelog Melayu juga mempunyai sumbangannya yang tersendiri. ♦

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Photograph of Charles Darwin, circa 1854.

DARWIN IN CAMBRIDGE &

Research is still turning up new findings about the lives and science of Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace. Among other things, **Dr John van Wyhe** addresses the misconception that Darwin cheated Wallace of his rightful place in history.

This article is based on the talk "Darwin and Wallace" given by Dr John van Wyhe as part of the National Library's Prominent Speaker Series. Held on 31 July 2014 at the National Library Building, the talk was based on two of Dr van Wyhe's recent books: Charles Darwin in Cambridge: The Most Joyful Years and Dispelling the Darkness: Voyage in the Malay Archipelago and the Discovery of Evolution by Wallace and Darwin.

Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace are best remembered as the co-proposers of the theory of evolution by natural selection. Now, over 150 years later, evolution is the foundation of the life sciences and more. It is no wonder that Darwin and Wallace remain some of the most important figures in the history of science. Yet, despite all that has been written about them over the years, historical research is still turning up surprising new findings about their lives, their science, and how they came to change our understanding of life on earth forever.

Many believe that Wallace has been overlooked and denied his rightful fame for his work on the theory of evolution and that Darwin had perhaps even stolen some of Wallace's ideas and delayed the

publication of Wallace's paper in favour of his own. This is not true and is the subject of my book *Dispelling the Darkness: Voyage in the Malay Archipelago and the Discovery of Evolution by Wallace and Darwin* (2013).¹

Charles Darwin (1809–1882) is one of the most intensely studied scientists in history, and has been for over a century. But one area of his life that has remained comparatively unexamined is his formative years as a student at the University of Cambridge. For the rest of his life Darwin held a particular affection for Cambridge. For a time he even considered a Cambridge professorship as a career. He later sent three of his sons there to be educated. Yet, the traces of what Darwin actually did and experienced as a student in Cambridge have remained undiscovered, and the details of his day-to-day life there are either largely unknown or misunderstood.

WALLACE IN THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO

DARWIN IN CAMBRIDGE

Darwin entered the books as an undergraduate student at Christ's College, Cambridge, on 15 October 1827, but as he had forgotten most of his schoolboy Greek he had to be tutored at home before entering Cambridge. (Why this mattered is explained in *Darwin in Cambridge: The Most Joyful Years*.²) This meant he did not arrive in Cambridge until January 1828 – and by then all the rooms in the college were filled. So he took lodgings above the tobacconist shop across the street. The owner had an arrangement with Christ's College so that its students could rent rooms there, though this sometimes led to complaints. For instance, the shop owner across the street from the tobacconist would complain to the Master of the College that students kept knocking the hats off unwary passers-by along the street by flicking a long horsewhip from their first floor windows.

For many years it has been repeated that Darwin was a theology student at Cambridge. This is not true. There was no such undergraduate degree. Instead, Darwin was registered for an ordinary Bachelor of Arts

[B.A.] degree. It was his intention to become a clergyman, but such training could take place only after receiving the prerequisite B.A. In the end, Darwin never undertook any divinity training.

In November 1828, Darwin moved into a set of rooms in Christ's College, as he later recalled, "in old court, middle stair-case, on right-hand on going into court, up one flight, right-hand door and capital rooms they were." They were indeed comfortable and recently discovered college record books reveal that Darwin's rooms were the most expensive at £4 per quarter. The record books also reveal that his college bills over three years amounted to about £700. This was a princely sum of money at the time.

One of the more surprising findings about Darwin's daily life as a student was the mandatory attendance at the College Chapel. This in itself is no surprise, but what was previously unknown is that Darwin almost certainly took his turn at the medieval brass lectern and read from the Bible to the assembled members of the college. It is a striking and paradoxical image. Charles Darwin has probably been attacked more

Alfred Russel Wallace in Singapore in 1862. Marchant, James ed. 1916. *Alfred Russel Wallace Letters and Reminiscences*.

Dr John van Wyhe is a historian of science at the National University of Singapore who specialises in Darwin and Wallace. For several years a Bye-Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, he is also the Director of Darwin Online and Wallace Online and the author of 10 books and numerous articles on the history of science.



than any other scientist in history as being purportedly irreligious or worse, dangerous to religion. Although Darwin would cease to believe in Christianity shortly after his voyage on HMS *Beagle* (1831–36), he was never an atheist.

Like many young men of his social class, Darwin was passionately dedicated to the sport of shooting birds. When he could not go shooting, he would practise his aim in his comfortable college room. He later recalled in his autobiography:

When at Cambridge I used to practise throwing up my gun to my shoulder before a looking-glass to see that I threw it up straight. Another and better plan was to get a friend to wave about a lighted candle, and then to fire at it with a cap on the nipple, and if the aim was accurate the little puff of air would blow out the candle. The explosion of the cap caused a sharp crack, and I was told that the Tutor of the College remarked, "What an extraordinary

thing it is, Mr Darwin seems to spend hours in cracking a horse-whip in his room, for I often hear the crack when I pass under his windows."³

Not very keen on his official studies, Darwin devoted himself to collecting beetles instead. He soon discovered several novel ways to procure rare and unusual specimens, and had a special cabinet made to house his collection. Darwin sent records of his captures to the well-known entomologist James Stephens who regularly published records of British entomology. These were Darwin's first words in print. So even as an undergraduate, and in a very small way, Darwin had already begun to contribute to science.

In later life Darwin liked to sheepishly recall one of his beetling misadventures: "One day, on tearing off some old bark, I saw two rare beetles and seized one in each hand; then I saw a third and new kind, which I could not bear to lose, so that I popped the one which I held in my right hand into my mouth. Alas it ejected some intensely acrid fluid, which burnt my tongue so that I was forced to spit the beetle out, which was lost, as well as the third one."⁴ One certainly cannot doubt his sincerity as a collector.

Darwin's interests in science became a lifelong passion. He read the scientific travel accounts of the great German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt and dreamed of travelling on a scientific tour of his own.

Darwin became the loyal pupil of John Stevens Henslow, a professor of botany, from whom Darwin learned a great deal about scientific method. The two became such good friends that college dons who had not met Darwin referred to him as "the man who walks with Henslow."⁵ Darwin also studied other branches of natural science in his own time as the university then offered little instruction in science. He eventually learned the basics of a wide range of current fields. In 1831, he successfully completed his exam to gain his B.A. degree. Darwin later recalled, "Upon the whole, the three years I spent at Cambridge were the most joyful of my happy life."⁶ It was Henslow who would shortly thereafter recommend Darwin for the post of naturalist on HMS *Beagle* on a voyage around the world.⁷ The rest, as they say, is history.

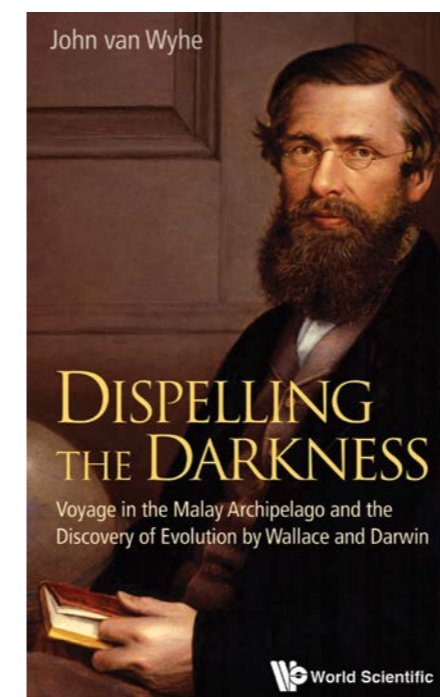
(Top left) A Cambridge graduate in the 1820s sporting the latest fashion – trousers (instead of knee breeches)

(Left) Christ's College, Cambridge, where Darwin spent his undergraduate years.



(Above) Restoration of Darwin's room at Christ's College was completed in 2009. He lived here from 1828–1831.

(Below) *Dispelling the Darkness* uncovers the true story of Darwin and Wallace and the theory of evolution. Published by World Scientific Publishing Co., 2013



IN SEARCH OF THE HISTORICAL WALLACE

For Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913) the picture is quite different. He did not come from a privileged background and although he attended a good school like Darwin's, Wallace never went to university. His family had fallen on hard times. But as there was little science taught at universities anyway, most men of science at the time were largely self-taught. Both were middle-class, Darwin from the higher end of the spectrum, Wallace from the lower.

Darwin's life and work have been intensively studied by historians for over a century. Wallace, on the other hand, like many other scientists of his day, has been the subject of comparatively little historical study. But unlike the thousands of other forgotten scientists of his era, Wallace has become the centre of interest of another group of people – not historians, but enthusiasts.

From the 1960s onward, articles and books about Wallace by popular writers began to appear. From one publication to another, Wallace gradually came to be portrayed as ever more "forgotten", wronged and in need of being reinstated in the annals of history. Many popular writers have even gone so far as to suggest some nefarious skulduggery in the story of Wallace. It is

now commonly suggested that Darwin or his friends treated Wallace unfairly, that he was cheated or robbed of priority or credit for his main discovery. Some writers claim that Darwin lied about when he received Wallace's essay on evolution, or worse, even plagiarised Wallace's work. The reason for their suspicion? In 1858, Wallace, who was living on the island of Ternate in Indonesia, mailed Darwin an outline theory that appeared remarkably similar to the one Darwin had been working on for the last 20 years. Darwin was at that time about two years away from finally completing and publishing in his so-called "big book" on evolution by natural selection.

The effect of this well-meaning posse of Wallace-championing writers and enthusiasts is striking. The public picture of Wallace has been dramatically transformed. Almost all of the main elements that are now stressed about Wallace are actually absent in accounts from his own lifetime or by those who actually knew him.

If Wallace's name is familiar at all to the average reader today, it is usually as a supposedly forgotten underdog. *Wallace? Wasn't he the one who was cheated by Darwin?* The very suggestion that a forgotten man did just as much as the famous Darwin, and ought to be just as famous, instantly

awakens our sympathy. And in some people it triggers resentment against the privileged Darwin who had all the advantages in life, and now all the posthumous fame. Surely this must be unfair? But that depends on getting the facts right.

A candid investigation of the original historical sources from Wallace's time differs strikingly from the modern picture of Wallace as the "hero-on-a-quest but cheated in the end." *Dispelling the Darkness* is an attempt to reveal the historical Wallace as he lived and worked in his original time and context. Based on the most intensive research programme ever undertaken on Wallace in Southeast Asia, the real Wallace and his story turns out to be very different from the heroic version bandied about in recent years. In short, everything you have heard about Wallace is probably wrong.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN THE ARCHIPELAGO?

After a series of underpaying jobs, Wallace set out for the Amazon valley in 1848 to make a living as a commercial specimen collector. (The heroic version has him going instead on a quest to solve the problem of the origin of species.⁸) During his time there, Wallace continued his self-education in science and began to publish a series of scientific papers. As part of his research, he also collected large numbers of insects, birds and mammals. In 1852, Wallace was returning home when disaster struck. The sailing vessel on which he was travelling caught fire and sank in the Atlantic Ocean. Wallace and the crew were rescued and returned safely to England.

Undaunted, Wallace prepared for another collecting expedition, this time to the Malay Archipelago; what is now Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and East Timor. With the help of government money for his ticket, Wallace arrived in the bustling entrepôt of Singapore on 18 April 1854.

Over the next eight years Wallace made dozens of expeditions. His voyage correspondence was recently published, which together with his illuminating book *The Malay Archipelago* (1869), paints a rich picture of the peoples and nature of the 1850s and 1860s.⁹ Ultimately Wallace's collection totalled 125,660 specimens of insects, birds, shells and mammals. In inflated versions of the story, Wallace painstakingly collected all of these specimens himself. But recent historical research has revealed that Wallace employed more than 30 fulltime assistants to aid him in his task, one of whom, Charles Allen and his own assistants, collected about 40,000 specimens.¹⁰ Altogether, Wallace's assistants, particularly a Malay lad named

Ali from Sarawak, probably collected more than half of the total number.

In 1855, while staying in Sarawak, Wallace wrote his first theoretical paper on species: "On the law which has regulated the introduction of new species." In heroic accounts of Wallace, the paper is represented as if it was the first to have outlined the modern theory of evolution minus only the "mechanism" of natural selection.

In fact, the paper's original sources and meanings were quite different, and far more modest. The paper did not even mention that species change. It argued that when new species were created during earth's history, they always appeared in the same place as a similar species. Wallace was only testing the waters, not yet ready to come out of the closet publicly as an advocate of unorthodox views like evolution.

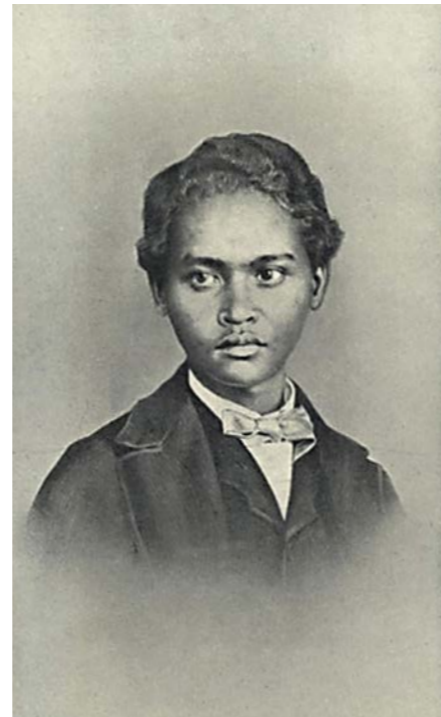
Nevertheless, it is absolutely clear that Wallace privately believed that species evolve. He was not searching for a solution to a problem or mystery. He most certainly was not searching for a "mechanism." This is a modern idea. Wallace was interested in the topic of the gradual change of species over time. He was convinced it was a purely natural, and not a supernatural process, and he planned to write a book on the subject when he returned home.

In 1856, Wallace began to realise that in the west of the Malay Archipelago the species of animals were more Asian in type, while towards the east, the animal species were more Australian. Wallace would eventually divide the archipelago into two biological regions and the line between them, roughly between Bali and Lombok, was named after him – The Wallace line.

ADAPTATION

In 1858, Wallace was living on the tiny volcanic island of Ternate, one of the fabled Spice Islands of Indonesia, just west of New Guinea. He had come to procure the rare and beautiful Birds of Paradise that live only in and around New Guinea. It was on Ternate that Wallace conceived an explanation as to how species come to be adapted to their environments.¹¹ This was a radical departure from his previous thinking. He had never looked for an explanation for adaptation before. Indeed he thought that traditional ideas of species adaptation smacked of shallow and old-fashioned thinking. So what made him change his mind?

The heroic story of Wallace is based on his recollection of what happened many years later, and after he had read Darwin's *Origin of Species*. This is extremely problematic for two reasons. Firstly, retrospective accounts are not the same as contemporary



evidence. Indeed, because historians have found recollections to be so inaccurate and untrustworthy, they are worth very little for understanding what a scientist was really doing many years before. Secondly, Wallace's recollections are tainted by the fact that he had read Darwin and eventually his *Life and Letters* (1887). Therefore, Wallace's stories as an old man are not independent attestations.

In 1858, Wallace elaborated his new ideas in his so-called Ternate essay: "On the tendency of varieties to depart indefinitely from the original type." For many years Wallace's essay was described as espousing exactly the same theory as Darwin's. But the more historians have analysed it, the more clearly it has been revealed to be quite a different theory, but with some basic parallels to Darwin's. Wallace certainly did originate a version of natural selection independently of Darwin.

What happened next has been surrounded by confusion and conspiracy theories for decades. Wallace did not send his essay

to a journal. Instead he sent it to Darwin with the request that, if Darwin thought it suitable, it be forwarded to the great geologist Sir Charles Lyell. Here, the conspiracy theories mount thick and fast. Firstly, it was long claimed that Darwin lied about when he received Wallace's letter. This has now been fully refuted.¹² Secondly, it has been claimed that Darwin might have borrowed from Wallace's essay. There is no evidence for these claims at all.

The remaining conspiracy theories are equally the sort of stories that could only have been told by recent writers quite unfamiliar with Victorian science and society: It is claimed that it was improper to publish Wallace's paper without his explicit permission [false]; that his paper ought to have been, according to the rules of the day, published on its own or at least ahead of anything by Darwin [false]. And so forth.

It would have been perfectly acceptable and normal to send Wallace's essay for publication. But Darwin must have felt awkward about being involved in the matter and asked his colleagues to decide what to do. In the end Lyell and the botanist Joseph Hooker had some unpublished writings by both Darwin and Wallace read together at a meeting of the Linnean Society of London in July 1858. Thus Darwin and Wallace shared the priority equally of first publicising the new idea. It was the first announcement of the modern theory of evolution by natural selection. Retrospectively it was a great event. But short papers do not a revolution make.

The following year, Darwin published a condensed version of his 20 years of work. This was *On the Origin of Species*. It was this book with its masses of new facts and converging forms of evidence which, within 15 years or so, convinced the international scientific community that evolution is a fact. It was the impact of this revolutionary book that shot Darwin to such unrivalled fame and reputation. Wallace became one of Darwin's most ardent friends and supporters. And he always insisted that the theory was mostly Darwin's work.

On his return to Britain in 1862, Wallace was no longer an obscure collector. He had become a well-known player in the scientific community. His reputation was forever linked with Darwin because of his own independent discovery. This no doubt helped the acceptance of Darwin's book. Wallace was a great naturalist and a pioneer of the study of the biodiversity of Southeast Asia. He continues to inspire biologists and conservationists to this day. But he was not a dupe or a victim. Only proper historical method allows us to uncover the truth about the past and dispel the darkness of conspiracy theories or plain wishful thinking. ♦

Notes

- 1 See van Wyhe, J. *Dispelling the Darkness: Voyage in the Malay Archipelago and the Discovery of Evolution by Wallace and Darwin*. (2013). World Scientific Publishing Company.
- 2 See van Wyhe, J. *Darwin in Cambridge: The Joyful Years*. (2014). World Scientific Publishing Company.
- 3 Bartlow, N (ed.) 1958. *The autobiography of Charles Darwin 1809-1882. With the original omissions restored. Edited and with appendix and notes by his grand-daughter Nora Bartlow*. London: Collins. Accessed: <http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?viewtype=text&itemID=F1497&pageseq=1>
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 For many years it was said that Darwin was not really the naturalist, but more of a social companion to the ship's captain. This has recently been refuted, see van Wyhe "my appointment received the sanction of the Admiralty": Why Charles Darwin really was the naturalist on HMS *Beagle*. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*.
- 8 See J. van Wyhe, 2014. A delicate adjustment: Wallace and Bates on the Amazon and "the problem of the origin of species" *Journal of the History of Biology* vol. 47, Issue 4: 627-659.
- 9 Wyhe, John van and Rookmaaker, Kees eds. 2013. *Alfred Russel Wallace: Letters from the Malay Archipelago*. Foreword by Sir David Attenborough. Oxford: OUP. and John van Wyhe ed., *The Annotated Malay Archipelago by Alfred Russel Wallace*. NUS Press, 2015 with additional colour illustrations, an extensive introduction and over 800 explanatory notes.
- 10 See Kees, Rookmaaker & John van Wyhe. 2012. In Wallace's shadow: the forgotten assistant of Alfred Russel Wallace, Charles Allen. *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 85 (2): 17-54.
- 11 For many years it was believed that Wallace was actually on the nearby island of Gilolo, but that mistake has now been laid to rest. See *Dispelling the darkness*, pp. 202-4.
- 12 See *Dispelling the darkness*, pp. 225-6, 358 note 692 and van Wyhe & Rookmaaker. 2012. A new theory to explain the receipt of Wallace's Ternate Essay by Darwin in 1858. *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society* 105 (1): 249-252.

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- John van Wyhe. (2014). *Charles Darwin in Cambridge: The most joyful years*. Singapore; New Jersey: World Scientific. Call No.: 576.82092 VAN

(Top left) Wallace's faithful Malay assistant Ali. **(Left)** The Red Bird of Paradise of New Guinea. This was what Wallace went to search for in 1858 in Ternate, Indonesia.

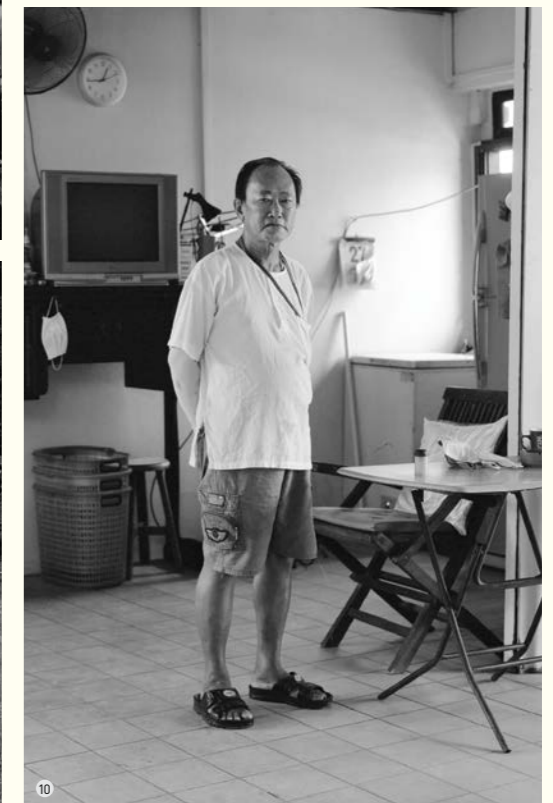


A Nation of Islands



1. Students from the St John's Island English School take a group photograph with their teacher Mr Choo Huay Kim at the same place where they had their flag-raising ceremony every morning in the early 1970s.
2. More than 70 former islanders and their family members returned to the islands of Sekijang Bendera (St John) and Sekijang Pelepah (Lazarus) for a walk down memory lane on Sunday, 9 November 2014. This photograph was taken outside a home that is now used as a chalet for the public.
3. Mdm Bedah bte Din, 76, swims joyfully in the waters off St John Island, once known as Pulau Sekijang Bendera during the recent reunion of former islanders of that cluster.
4. Mustari Dimu (centre), 92, with his son Sardon Mustari (left), 65, and Hazwari Abdul Wahid, 23, at the Da Bo Gong (Tua Pek Kong) Temple on Kusu Island. Photographed near the temple furnace, they help to burn joss paper during the peak season.
5. On St John's Island, Mohamed Sulih Bin Supian – born and bred on the island – and his wife Fuziyah use the space in front of their home to cook rice dumplings known as *ketupat* in preparation for Hari Raya Aidilfitri. He has special permission to live on the island.
6. Mohamed Sulih Bin Supian uses an electric bike to get around the island. Here he and his wife make their way to the St John's Island jetty to visit their children in time for Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebrations.
7. A man returning from his fishing trip on St John's Island.
8. Hashim Daswan, 53, briefs his fellow former islanders during their visit to the southern islands on 9 November 2014.
9. The St John's Island English School football team stand in front of the building where they once studied. This team went on to win the 1972 National Schools football tournament, led by their coach and teacher Choo Huay Kim (standing, far right).
10. Seet Seng Huat is the current caretaker of the Da Bo Gong (Tua Pek Kong) Temple on Kusu Island.

All photos by Edwin Koo.





Zakaria Zainal is an associate photographer for Captured, a creative agency based in Singapore that specialises in delivering visual-centric narratives.

The caretaker of Da Bo Gong (Tua Pek Kong) Temple on Kusu Island – just a 20-minute boat ride from Singapore – stands astride the short flight of stairs leading to the temple's inner prayer sanctum, his eyes fixed on the jetty in the near distance.

It is the start of the ninth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, and thousands of devotees will travel to the island temple seeking blessings from Tua Pek Kong (God of Prosperity) and Guan Yin (Goddess of Mercy).

At the temple, caretaker Seet Seng Huat pauses and nods his head in the direction of a small group of men huddled at the furnace in the temple courtyard. The trio, in long sleeves and biker masks – with only their eyes visible – to protect themselves from the heat and smoke, offer to burn joss paper for devotees in return for a small donation.

Thick smoke billows out steadily from the narrow chimney of the furnace. The requests come thick and fast. As the two men take turns to collect joss paper and throw them into the furnace, the third man – probably the oldest – sits down.

"He comes here every season," Seng Huat says, "and stays for a long time each time he visits." He adds, "I think you should speak to him."

"It has been over 60 years since I first started work here," 91-year-old Mustari Dimu, a former resident of Lazarus Island, says in Malay. And every year since then, Mustari has returned to Kusu for a full month – maintaining his long family tradition and deep friendship with Seet Hock Seng, Seng Huat's late father, the temple's former caretaker.

Such stories are not uncommon in "Island Nation", a documentary project that recounts the stories of Singaporeans who once lived on the

southern islands of Singapore, especially Sisters' Island, Sentosa and Kusu Island.

Although most people think of Singapore as one large island, it actually comprises a number of small islands and islets – more than 60 at one point in time. As Singapore developed over the years, massive reclamation works swallowed up many of these islands and created new ones in the process. A number of these offshore islands, which were inhabited by people, were zoned for specific purposes and their residents relocated to mainland Singapore.

Using photographic stills, videography and archival footage, "Island Nation" is a documentary project that highlights the unique stories of these former islanders and weaves them into the broader Singaporean narrative of nationhood.

LIVING HISTORIES

These islands represent an important part of Singapore's heritage. According to Marcus Ng, researcher and co-curator of the exhibition "Balik Pulau: Stories from Singapore's Islands",¹ these islands represent the southernmost maritime boundary of the nation both physically and politically. "It is space where you are vulnerable because you are surrounded by elements you can't control," he says. "You are reminded that you live on an island."

For Mustari, his involvement started as a young boy when his father, along with his uncles, worked sporadically for Hock Seng's father at the temple. A young Mustari would often accompany his father on his trips to the temple. When Mustari's uncles passed away, he decided to keep the tradition.

These days Mustari waits for a call in early September from Seng Huat. He then packs his clothes, prepares food items such as tea, sugar and biscuits for the month-long stay. In fact, there is even a special locker reserved for him at the temple.

Mustari's story reveals a deep attachment to the islands. "*Dah biasa lah*," he says in Malay, meaning "used to it" referring to the islander's lifestyle.

And he is not alone. Choo Huay Kim, 68, taught at St John's Island English School from 1966 to 1976 – one of the few schools that existed on the Southern Islands. Choo was also an islander – he was born (in 1946) and raised on Pulau Sekijang Bendera, before it became known as St John's Island.

"It was a well-known school, and some call it the Raffles Institution of the Southern Islands," he quips, adding that the primary school only had 100 to 120 students. Posted back to the island to teach, he was also the school's football coach and remembers how the team of 11 boys would squeeze into his modest Volkswagen to attend matches on the mainland.

"I felt for the boys because I was an island boy myself," he says. Choo adds that they never had the things that children on the mainland enjoyed, such as proper facilities for competitive sports.

The bond that the students shared with their teacher as well as their fondness for the old way of life on these islands was evident when some 70 former islanders recently returned to visit their old school on St John's Island, now used as living quarters for foreign workers.

ISLAND LIVING

For many, the excursion to the islands of St John's, Lazarus and Seringat on 9 November 2014 was like a taking a step back into time. The *gotong-royong* (community) spirit was truly alive that day as the former islanders prepared food that everyone could share. Funnily enough, despite the lack of coordination, no two dishes were the same!

A walking tour of the islands became a chance for these folks to make new memories – posing for pictures with their former neighbours and taking photos with their smart phones of landmarks where

they had lived or played – all the while reminiscing about old times.

Those who remembered pointed out landmarks that are now gone, such as a well, now covered up, that used to exist along the newly paved road on Lazarus Island. The football "boys" recalled their training sessions on St John's, running along the beach and up the island's solitary hill.

In the course of working on this project, we realised how interconnected the lives of the former islanders' were and how important these islands still are to them today. Documenting their lives and what they remember of the islands is one way of capturing a slice of life that no longer exists in Singapore. ♦

"Island Nation" is a documentary project by Captured, comprising Edwin Koo, Juliana Tan and Zakaria Zainal, that captures the stories of Singaporeans who once lived on the southern islands of Singapore. The exhibition will take place between April and June 2015 at the National Library Building and is part of Singapore's 50th National Day celebrations. Find out more at: www.facebook.com/islandnationsg. The website www.islandnation.sg will be launched in March 2015.

This project was supported by the Singapore Memory Project's (SMP) *irememberSG* Fund that aims to encourage organisations and individuals to develop content and initiatives that will collect, interpret, contextualise and showcase Singapore memories. The fund has currently stopped accepting applications. For more information, go to: <http://www.iremember.sg/index.php/fund-intro/>

Notes

¹ The exhibition "Balik Pulau: Stories from Singapore's Islands" was held at the National Museum of Singapore from June to August 2014.

(Left) These apartments on Pulau Bukom, probably Singapore's southernmost condominiums, were built for Shell managers who had to stay on the island on standby.

(Middle) Former Sudong islanders Selesa and Latif continue their traditional way of fish-trapping using wire mesh *bubus* (traps), decades after being moved to the mainland.

(Above) An aerial photograph of Pulau Bukom. In the background on the left is Pulau Hantu.

All images by Captured.

Points of Departure

Charting Memories Through Collective Imaginations



School excursion to Changi Point from "Points of Departure" (2014). The original photograph of school boys is in black and white, captioned "Form 4B picnic at Changi date 28 Nov 1957". The artist has overlaid this image onto a more recent shot of Changi Point. © Juria Toramae. All rights reserved.

Juria Toramae is a Singapore-based artist and engineer. Her photographic series "Temporality" debuted at Noise Singapore's The Apprenticeship Programme exhibition in 2013. She is an irememberSG fund recipient for her collaborative project titled "Points of Departure".

When the National Library Board announced its plans to extend its outreach efforts for the Singapore Memory Project (SMP) in 2012,¹ the first question that sprung to my mind was: How can one relate to the shared memories of a place if the place in question no longer exists?

Memory is naturally place-oriented or, at least, place-supported as philosopher Edward S. Casey suggests. Memory is a place where "the past can revive and survive; it is a space for places, meeting them midway in its own preservative powers" – playing a "reservative"² function as Casey describes it.³ Memory also relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording and the visibility of the image, as noted by historian Pierre Nora.⁴ Thus, in the context of Singapore, where landscapes and places change in a heartbeat, it is not surprising, especially in recent times, to see a surge of interest in documenting the present and remembering the past.

MEMORY, PLACE AND ART

This phenomenon of documentation and remembering is evidenced by the proliferation of nostalgia-related blogs and Facebook groups – many of which have matured into participatory archives – where memories are shared openly among members. The most popular, and obvious, way is through the sharing of photographs. A photo has the ability to instantly trigger conversations, recollections and even moods. However, this is also the most disorienting means of sharing memories as it brings to the fore how places have so drastically and irrevocably changed in the last 50 years or so. With this in mind, I wondered: How would the memories found in the participatory archives, including those in the SMP portal, "nurture bonding and rootedness"⁵ (emphasis added) if they were bound to cause disorientation?⁶

In thinking this through, I felt compelled to map these memories according to where they were formed in their present-day locations. I focused on photographs, these artefacts of memory, which had been shared in various participatory archives. I surgically deconstructed each photograph and wove them into a present-day image of their place of memory. The resulting images are imagined narratives depicting ordinary and recurring events in people's lives. It felt like the right thing to do – to compress time, space and memory – in order to discard the disorienting nature of the photographs in question.

This painstaking process ultimately led to a photographic series called "Temporality",⁷ as well as a collaboration based on the same series for an iremembersg-funded project called "Points of Departure"⁸ with Jerome Lim who blogs on *The Long and Winding Road* (www.thelongwindin-groad.wordpress.com).

"Points of Departure" as a collaborative effort is both ambitious and arduous. Unlike "Temporality", it explores memories beyond private photo collections by incorporating content from collective archives, namely the SMP and the National Archives of Singapore (NAS), as well as our own documentation work. It is an attempt to recover memories that are forgotten or unfamiliar, using memories of places as starting points, or as we call it, the "points of departure". It is a re-presentation of the past in reconciliation with the present.

With Jerome exploring text and sound as artefacts of memory, we wove together forgotten tales, personal experiences, soundscapes and oral history interviews, forming new narratives in the process. In this way, we began mapping memories on a much larger scale by creating a body of work that includes a series of photographs, stories and installations to be showcased through an exhibition and a publication.

A CONSTANT OR CHANGING SEA?

The sea has a constant presence in these works and one may question its significance – does it act as a metaphor for change and loss or as a symbol for continuity? The importance of the sea may have greatly receded from our everyday lives, yet it still emerges in many of our everyday conversations. Those who have witnessed Singapore's meteoric rise from a newly independent nation to a modern city-state have many stories to tell, and they have been the source of inspiration to me for both works.

The late poet Margaret Leong, for instance, wrote a number of poems about rustic Singapore from the 1950s to early 1960s in her book *The Ice Ball Man and Other Poems*. Poems such as "Winking Island", "Sea Gypsy", "Malayan Christmas" and "The Junk" are just a few of many that capture scenes of early Singapore as older generations remember them. In "The Junk",⁹ Leong recounts how back in the day,

A Junk must have
A painted eye;
And dragon masts
That dip and fly;
So when it sails
The China Sea,
Spirit and devil
Both will flee.

Chinese junks adorned with painted eyes on their bulwarks once sailed the high seas of the

region, laden with all manner of exotic goods for trade. These days the only painted eyes you will likely see on the water are those on the occasional bumboats that cruise along the Singapore River or modern-day faux junk boats filled with tourists that ply the waters of the Singapore Harbour. In "Temporality", there is an image of a similar junk with painted eyes sailing in the waters of present-day Keppel Channel, but put together from photographs dating from the 1970s.

Likewise, Jerome has diligently captured the Singapore of his younger days on his blog where memories of the sea often surface. In his online post "The Lost Idyllic Coastline of Tanah Merah", he recalls:

...what was once a picturesque and idyllic part of Singapore, that much as we wanted to, we would not be able to venture to any more. Marked by a landscape that would seem out of place in the Singapore of today with its terrain that undulates towards cliffs that overlook the sea, the area was decorated with gorgeous seaside villas and *attap* roofed wooden huts of coastal villages that provided a laid back feel to the surroundings... The Tanah Merah of old was very unlike the Tanah Merah that is associated with the MRT station...¹⁰

Like many Singaporean families in the 1960s, Changi beach is fondly – and frequently – mentioned as a favourite leisure spot of Jerome's parents. "We would spend many Sundays soaking in the sun and sea in the day time, or sitting by the beach, listening to the whisper of the sea breeze in the evenings. It was, in those days, possible to drive right up close to the sand line, find a shady tree to park the car under and lay out a mat right next to the car... What I would often do was sit on the roof of my father's car and enjoy the breeze and rustling of leaves above me. Somehow, this gave me a sense of escape, of being all by myself, on top of the world."¹¹

Jerome's descriptions of rolling hills and coastal villages often remind me of my childhood years in rural Thailand – the hills rising beyond rice fields and rubber plantations, my paternal grandparents' elevated teak wood house that occasionally reeked of dried rubber sheets, and the tropical beach of southern Thailand – a stark contrast to the bouldery coast of Rabat, Morocco, where I spent my teenage years. The latter is where my mother was born – a neglected strip of coast facing the Atlantic Ocean where my young parents frequented, still students at the time, with me in tow – a place where a mix of locals and displaced Asians would forage fresh shellfish for supper.

More memories began to find their way into the present during my sojourns with Ria Tan and friends from the nature enthusiast group Wild

Singapore to the lesser known shores of our outlying islands.¹² I think Pierre Nora was right when he said that people acquire, recall, recognise and localise their memories in society. Working on this project has been a surprising journey into the self.

I must admit that my initial interest in memories was simply due to the desire to immerse myself into the culture of Singapore – a yearning I have had from having lived an itinerant childhood. It was only after reading about conversations on nostalgia-related blogs and sites such as Jerome's *On a Little Street in Singapore*¹³ that I realised how pervasive this sense of disorientation is for many people living in our city. It became acutely noticeable to me thereafter; in the arts, films and news I came into contact with and even in conversations with taxi drivers. It is a sense that I deal with too frequently as an adult third culture kid.¹⁴ It's like being trapped between states of belonging and alienation as poet Boey Kim Cheng so eloquently writes in his book *Between Stations*: "...You become engaged in a kind of research, ransacking your fading archive, probing the memories of those over fifty for clues...You start experiencing reality as imagined, memory as something that writes you, gives you a second chance, and you seek a possible dwelling place between memory and imagination, fact and fiction..."¹⁵ That was the point of departure for me; what began as a humble attempt at acculturation in the end became a long quest for connections.

The idea of the sea being the only permanent feature in our ever-changing geographical landscape was reason enough for me to explore it as a unifying thread for memories. This is a sentiment shared by Jerome too as he often looks at the sea in attempts to discover his own connections with the past.

Through this collaboration, we hope to create a meaningful connection with and between the memories that are very much part of who we are. It is a journey embarked on not by just the two of us but with all the people whose memories are part of the story. ♦

"The Harbour" from "Temporality" (2013). The junk is constructed from a number of images from black and white archival photographs dating from the mid-1970s, which were taken at The New Harbour (present-day Keppel Harbour). It was inspired by Margaret Leong's poem "The Junk". © Juria Toramae. All rights reserved.



"Points of Departure" – an exhibition of photographs, stories and installation art works – brings together the forgotten and the unfamiliar in the hope of making the past less foreign. The exhibition will take place between April and June 2015 at National Library Building and is part of Singapore's 50th National Day celebrations. Find out more at: <http://www.pointsofdeparture.sg> or <https://www.facebook.com/PointsOfDepartureSG>

This project was supported by the Singapore Memory Project's (SMP) irememberSG Fund that aims to encourage organisations and individuals to develop content and initiatives that will collect, interpret, contextualise and showcase Singapore memories. The fund has currently stopped accepting applications. For more information, go to: <http://www.iremember.sg/index.php/fund-intro/>

Notes

- 1 See "NLB to launch initiatives for Singapore Memory Project" published by AsiaOne on 5 Sept 2012: <<http://news.asiaone.com/News/Latest+News/Singapore/Story/A1Story20120905-369727.html#sthash.giwl944.i8hmt1G.dpuf>>
- 2 The adjective "reservative", which Casey notes, is meant to encompass the connotations of "preservation," "reservation," "holding in reserve," and "being reserved," is a coinage by Casey.
- 3 Casey, E. S. 1987. *Remembering: A phenomenological study*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 187.
- 4 Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*". *Representations* No. 26. 1989. 7-25.
- 5 See <<http://www.iremember.sg/index.php/about/>>
- 6 Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Lawrence Wong quoted in "Untidy memories for a loveable Singapore" published by Today on 21 Mar 2013 <<http://www.todayonline.com/commentary/untidy-memories-loveable-singapore?singlepage=true>>
- 7 "Temporality" is a photographic series created during NOISE apprenticeship programme by NAC in 2013. See <<http://toramae.com/series/temporality/>>
- 8 See <<http://pointsofdeparture.sg/>>
- 9 Leong, Margaret. "The Junk" in *The Ice Ball Man and Other Poems*. Singapore: Ethos Books, 2011. 18.
- 10 See <http://thelongwindingroad.wordpress.com/2010/08/16/the-lost-idyllic-coastline-of-tanah-merah/>
- 11 See <http://thelongwindingroad.wordpress.com/2009/10/31/changi-beach/>
- 12 See <http://wildshores.blogspot.sg/2014/05/how-is-kusu-island-doing.html>
- 13 See <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/183252211695508>>
- 14 The term "third culture kid or adult" was first coined by researchers John and Ruth Useem in the 1950s, who used it to describe children who were raised in a culture outside of their parents' culture for a significant part of their development years. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_culture_kid
- 15 Kim Cheng Boey. "Between Stations", *Between Stations*. Australia: Giramondo, 2009. 306.

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- Casey, E. S. (1987). *Remembering: A phenomenological study*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Leong, M. (2011). *The junk, the ice ball man and other poems*. Singapore: Ethos Books.
- Nora, P. (1989). *Between memory and history: Les Lieux de Mémoire. Representations*, 26, 7-25.

musicSG

A Repository of Singapore's Musical Heritage

Joy Loh is an Associate Librarian with the National Library of Singapore and is responsible for the new-look of MusicSG.

MusicSG is a digital archive set up by the National Library Board (NLB) to digitise, archive and provide access to all forms of published music works in Singapore. The scope of MusicSG is broad, comprising music composed or published by Singaporeans, music produced or published in Singapore, as well as any music related to Singapore.

By bringing together content on Singapore music, MusicSG aims to elevate the profile of local music and musicians and provide resources for research and discovery, while contributing to NLB's overarching objective in preserving local history and heritage.

MusicSG relies heavily on the public and music industry players to share and deposit their works in its archive. Having secured permission from the respective copyright holders, the National Library is now able to provide the public with access to a variety of materials in the MusicSG archives, including free music streaming and downloading of non-AV resources such as lyrics and scores.

CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS

MusicSG showcases over 20 genres of music – national campaign songs, local musicals, 新谣 (*xin yao*), rock and pop, and more – from more than 500 musicians across different languages and genres, such as X' Ho, Dick Lee, Iskandar Ismail, Liang Wern Fook, The Quests, Corrinne May, Boh Chit Hee and Pan Xiuqiong. Their recorded works span from the 1950s to the present day.

MusicSG also archives several meaningful local compositions that reflect our nation's short but remarkable history. These songs contain lyrics that relate to the Singapore experience. For example, the Malay folk song "Di Tanjong Katong" reminds us of the time when Tanjong Katong was a coastal stretch overlooking the blue waters of the east coast – until reclamation works pushed out the shoreline in the late 1960s.

Local singer, Nicodemus Lee, performing during MusicSG's post-launch concert held at the National Library.

Other special highlights include the 1967 recording of Singapore's national anthem, recorded just two years after Singapore's Independence, as well as "胶林我们的母亲" ("Rubber Jungle, Our Mother"), the earliest work recorded in MusicSG. This was composed by Boh Chit Hee in 1956, a luminary of the Chinese instrumental music scene in the 1950s and 60s.

As of October 2014, the archive has amassed more than 13,000 music resources, including tracks, scores, lyrics, biographies and videos.

WHAT'S NEW

The MusicSG website was first launched in 2010 but remained relatively low-key until it was revamped in 2014, giving way to a more user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing layout that allowed for more content formats to be displayed. The portal has been redesigned to encourage the continuous discovery of content. To achieve this, social sharing and streaming capabilities as well as improved search functions were added to the new site. The website is also equipped with responsive web design technology, which enables the site to adjust itself according to the device being used, be it a smartphone, computer or tablet, without any loss in functionality.

New highlights include the approximately 260 items that the late local music legend and Cultural



Medallion recipient Iskandar Ismail allowed NLB to digitise for MusicSG in 2013. Handwritten scores of his arrangements of familiar National Day Parade tunes over the years have all been digitised and uploaded onto the portal.

The music scores of past Cultural Medallion winners such as classical musician and conductor Leong Yoon Pin, guitar maestro Alex Abisheganaden and violinist Kam Kee Yong can also be accessed online. In addition, written and video profiles of 13 indie Singaporean solo artistes and groups – including local pop-rock stalwarts Jack & Rai and West Grand Boulevard, as well as the up-and-coming Sam Willows – are also accessible on the site. New research articles, infographics and photographs relating to personalities, organisations and performance venues have also been added to the portal for a more complete experience. Information on music genres ranging from Dikir Barat, Xinyao and Bhangra to heavy metal and rock are all covered, and showcase both famous recording artistes as well as lesser known names.

MUSICSG RE-LOADED

The new MusicSG website was officially launched on 26 September 2014. Called "MusicSG Reloaded", the event was held at the National Library with Guest-of-Honour Minister for Culture, Community and Youth and Second Minister for Communications and Information, Lawrence Wong, and guest performer Corrinne May, who wowed the crowd with her luscious vocals. Guests included the former MusicSG Advisory Committee members, donors, local musicians, including veterans Rufino Soliano, Jacintha Abisheganaden and Marina Xavier, as well as partner organisations. After the launch, contemporary local artistes The Analog Girl, Jack & Rai, ShiGGa Shay and Nicodemus Lee from 迷路兵 (*mi lu bing*) mesmerised crowds at the National Library's plaza for an evening of music and entertainment.

Guest performer Corrinne May presented this custom-designed ukulele to Minister Lawrence Wong at "MusicSG Reloaded".



Here is a step-by-step guide to discovering the new MusicSG.

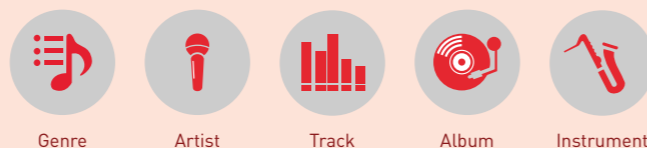
1 Homepage

Visitors to MusicSG can search for a particular topic or check out featured artists, tracks and albums. Those interested in contributing their own content or material can also do so.



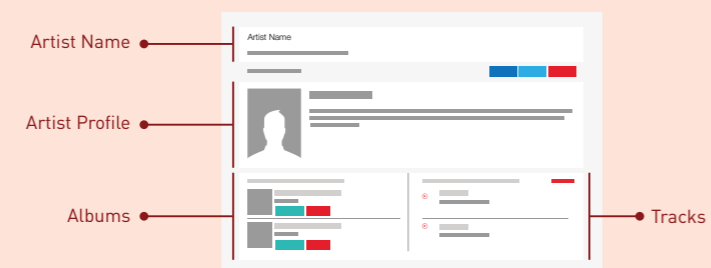
2 Browse the Music

Users can choose to browse the various music genres by clicking on the Music tab. Here, they can select a particular genre or browse through the content via artist, track, album or instrument.



3 Artist, Album and Track Details

Clicking on an artist's profile, album title or track details will enable users to explore related information through steaming music, viewing and downloading album inserts, lyrics and scores. Video interviews with the artists may also be available.



4 Articles

Click on the "Articles" tab to access articles covering subjects such as local music personalities, music history as well as music practices.

- **Musical Practices; Epilogue**
From the book "A Narrative history of music in Singapore 1819 to the present" by Dr Eugene I. Dairianathan
- **Musical Practices; Xinyao**
From the book "A Narrative history of music in Singapore 1819 to the present" by Dr Eugene I. Dairianathan

5 Contribute

Users can contribute their own works to the site, thus building up a greater body of content as well as exposure for local music.

- Music
 - Lyrics
 - Scores
 - Article
 - Other
- Type of content to contribute

STUART PARKIN

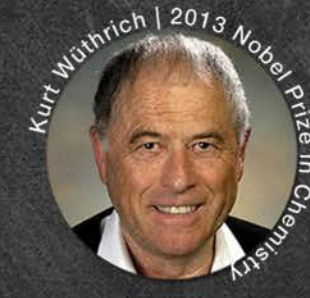
TIM HUNT

KURT WÜTHRICH

MICHAEL LEVITT

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