The Raffles Museum, Singapore, 1823-1960 : performativities of British colonial rule

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SINGAPORE

**THE RAFFLES MUSEUM, SINGAPORE,
1823-1960:
PERFORMATIVITIES OF BRITISH COLONIAL
RULE**

EISELT/ANG CHIN SIEW

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

2019

**The Raffles Museum, Singapore,
1823-1960:
Performativities of British Colonial Rule**

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School of Humanities

A thesis submitted to
Nanyang Technological University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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2019

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The Raffles Museum, Singapore, 1823-1960: Performativities of British Colonial Rule

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an interdisciplinary, humanist-centered examination of the cultural biography of the Raffles Museum, the predecessor of three present-day Singapore museums. Established in 1823 by the proconsul of British Southeast Asia, Thomas Stamford Raffles, the Raffles Museum was a major center for Western natural history and anthropological research, as well as the collecting of and within Southeast Asia from the latter 1800s until the early 1900s. Its site, building, collections, and biography thus document simultaneously, the West in Asia, British colonial politics and strategies in Southeast Asia, as well as Singapore's colonial experience.

This thesis argues against an existing historical positioning of the museum as first, a benign repository; and second, as having been established by Raffles out of a colonial humanitarian dream and vision that was "inconsistent with the [imperial] realities of its time." It asserts that such

a historical position makes no substantive calibration of crucial aspects of the museum's institutional persona: as a Western institution that emerged out of the West, with Western methodologies and praxes, and that was deeply entangled in Western eighteenth/nineteenth-century colonization of the non-West. Most importantly, it ignores the larger questions of British imperial trade, its geopolitics, as well as Raffles's ambitions vis-à-vis this trade. As a result, the Raffles Museum's establishment and function as a British colonial technology of rule has not been completely and properly calibrated and its role in Singapore's colonial experience has been misrepresented.

By making close examinations of Raffles's objectives and the "ongoing historical, political, moral relationships..." that were within the museum, this dissertation demonstrates that contra to such a position, Raffles's establishment of the museum and British colonial utilization of the museum were exactly consistent with the imperial realities of the time. What follows is a corrective to such a reading of the Raffles Museum's history, and by extension, Raffles's political strategies and legacy, as well as Singapore's colonial experience. §

INTRODUCTION: Imperial Realities Denied

Taking possession of the island in 1819 for the British Crown, [Raffles] formulated plans for its development ... this included the establishment of an institution that was designed to provide basic instruction, engage in higher scholarship, gather together information and data on the culture of the peoples and the natural environment and serve as a depository of that information...The original concept from which rose, ultimately, Raffles Institution, most certainly was a dream, an ideal, an experiment, perhaps. It was inconsistent with the realities of the times.

—Eugene Wijesingha. *The Eagle Breeds a Gryphon*

On 1 April 1823, Thomas Stamford Raffles convened a meeting at Residency House, Bukit Larangan, Singapore, to establish a Malay college in Singapore. The meeting set in motion a plan that Raffles already drew up in 1819. At that meeting, Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society suggested that a library and museum be established in conjunction with the college that Raffles proposed. Thus, Raffles's meeting that day established three major civic institutions in Singapore, of which one was a museum.

The Raffles Museum warrants attention because from the mid-1850s until the early 1940s it was a major center for the exploration, ethnographic,

and natural history research, as well as the collecting of and within Southeast Asia. By the early 1900s, the museum had acquired a formidable reputation as a major repository of Southeast Asian collections, particularly of fauna. Its acquisition lists and archives substantiate its historic significance because they list many key figures involved in the ethnographic, anthropological, and historical scholarship during this period.

The museum was sited at various locations in its lifetime. It was not closed, but its holdings were devolved to three major present-day Singapore museums, namely, the National Museum of Singapore (NMS), the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) and the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum (LKCNHM).¹ Each now has custody of the ethnographic, art, and natural history collections that once formed the Raffles Museum's holdings. Its final site is the building that now houses the NMS.

This study covers the biography of the Raffles Museum from 1823 to 1960 during the time it was eponymously known as the Raffles Museum. The choice of 1960 as a cut-off date is one of convenience. 1960 marks the year when the museum was renamed. By then, the three institutions which had operated as two entities — the Raffles Institution as one and the Raffles Museum and Library together as one — were fully functioning as three sepa-

¹ Hereafter, these acronyms will be used in lieu of full names.

rate entities under three separate administrations. They therefore merit individual examinations after 1960.

My thesis centers on the museum, but it is more about the power that established it and that was exercised through it. It asserts that a British colonial agenda to "better package, inferiorize and rule"² determined the museum's institutional *persona*, its founding, spaces, methodologies, and functions.

The Raffles Museum's cultural biography needs to be contextualized within British geopolitics and Raffles's agenda because the public museum of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries played central roles for Western possession of knowledge and power, the two central elements of Western imperial expansionism. It is therefore significant that the Raffles Museum was established by Raffles, who was one of the most active and committed advocates of British imperial expansionism, at the height of Britain's imperial period, and in the heart of its growing Southeast Asian empire.

In diametric opposition, therefore, to a conventional historical position that the museum was established out of a Rafflesian humanitarian vi-

² Cover blurb, author unknown. Cohn, Bernard S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge. The British in India*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton, New Jersey, USA: Princeton UP, 1996).

sion that was "inconsistent with the realities of its time,"³ this dissertation argues that the Raffles Museum's founding, methods, utilization, and function were, in fact, *exactly consistent* with a Rafflesian agenda of imperial expansion and the imperial telos of its era.

This thesis argues that such a historical corrective is necessary because there is a cognitive dissonance present in the historical literature on the museum and Singapore, as well as in how Singaporeans perceive and curate their colonial experience. It suggests that this cognitive dissonance has deep social, cultural, political, and historical implications that affect several issues that confront Singapore today: successful globalization, definitions of heritage, historic preservation, and efforts at building a coherent, credible national narrative and a Singapore-centered historical consciousness. It is also related to choices being made in ecological preservation. Yet, this cognitive dissonance is being perpetuated in several ways by present state and museum policies. These include the state's deliberate scripting of Singapore's history within a meta-narrative of colonial benevolence, the curatorial, historic preservation policies pursued by the state's custodians of history and cultural heritage, as well as the exhibitionary *praxes* of the Raffles Museum's three successors.

³ Wijesingha, E., *The Eagle Breeds a Gryphon. The Story of Raffles Institution, 1823-1985* (Singapore: Pioneer Book Centre, 1989).

By bringing clarity to the Raffles Museum's historic role and function, the thesis hopes to bring new perspectives to the dialogue regarding how Singapore's museums demote or contribute to the development of a Singapore-centered national narrative and history.

Research Mission

My goal in this study is to establish the historic role the Raffles Museum played as one of British colonial "power's staging areas, common carriers, collective assemblies and expressive affects"⁴ in Singapore's colonial experience. More importantly, I seek to understand this colonial experience from the perspective of the populations who lived under *that* power and were defined or limited by its "inexorable logic."⁵

Within this goal, my research has two objectives. The first is to provide evidence that the museum was not the innocent repository that conventional literature suggests but was a site that performed colonialism. I do this through close examinations of the "ongoing historical, political, moral *relationship[s]* (italics original) — a power-charged set of exchanges, of

⁴ Luke, W. Timothy, "Museum Pieces: The Politics of Aesthetics and Knowledge At the Museum." Paper presented at the Third Annual Arlington Humanities Colloquium (University of Texas-Arlington, 1997).

⁵ Denning, Greg, *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty*, Canto (Cambridge, UK; Melbourne, Australia: Cambridge UP, 1994).

push and pull"⁶ — in four specific areas of the museum: its founding, physical and invisible spaces, methods, and function. My analysis here is influenced by Judith Butler's differentiation between performance and performativity. I employ Butler's notion of "performativity" to describe actions that makes something real. Here it was used to demonstrate how colonial actions and systems cannot be regarded as single, visible acts but as both performances and performativities in that they made White social primacy and colonial supremacy "real."⁷

My second objective in this study is to devise a historical analytical perspective that can capably and satisfactorily illustrate such performativities of colonialism in the Raffles Museum. My aim here is to exit the carapace that now effectively and securely circumscribes the history of the Raffles Museum — a Western *and* colonial institution with Western methodologies and ideologies and that was associated with the West's dominance of the non-West — within a Western-constructed curatorial and colonially-biased historical perspective. To this end, I situate the museum's biography within Britain's historical engagements with Asia, British India trade and use of institutions in colonial rule, Raffles's motives, as well as

⁶ James Clifford, "Museums as Contact Zone.," in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (USA: Harvard UP, 1997).

⁷ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* Routledge Classics (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 2.

Victorian perceptions of gender vis-à-vis the colonial space. These were defining factors in Raffles's establishment of the museum and how the museum functioned thereafter. Without calibrating these, it will be judging the museum, as Robinson and Gallagher aptly phrased it, like judging an iceberg only by what is above the water line.⁸

In terms of methodologies, I adopted Igor Kopytoff's model of understanding history through a cultural biography of things.⁹ However, in line with a contemporary museological contention that it is no longer adequate "to define a museum solely by its physical plant and 'real' space exhibitions, programs and projects,"¹⁰ my study will focus on what is below water line, namely, how its *Founding, Spaces, Methods* and *Function* were grounded within British colonial ideologies of supremacy and control.

More importantly, and again in line with contemporary museology's contention that museums "are rather less about collections than we tend to believe [but] are about people...and collections are merely manifestations of

⁸ Gallagher, John and Robinson, Ronald, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review, New Series* VI, no. 1 (1953).

⁹ Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditisation as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai, Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), <http://www.amazon.com/The-Social-Life-Things-Anthropology/dp/0521357268>.

¹⁰ Shelton, Anthony, "Critical Museology. A Manifesto," *Museum Worlds Advances in Research* 1, no. 1 (2013): 7–23.

human desires,"¹¹ I examine the museum from a perspective of desire: Raffles's desire to establish permanent presence, British colonial desires for colonial resources and a distinctive colonizer identity, as well as an indigenous desire to enter prohibited spaces. To achieve this, I shift my analyses deliberately from a chronological documentation to a reading of the narratives in the four areas specified.

My thesis begins with a discussion of the areas in which a contemporary, museal-theorized understanding of the Raffles Museum within Singapore's history is instructive and useful. Museal, used in this thesis in its English meaning, derives from the "the classical notion of "museum." Its field covers the "the creation, development and operation of the museum institution but also reflections on its foundations and issues."¹²

Chapter 2 is a brief résumé of the museum and its cultural, social, political, and scholarship significance as an institution. In Chapter 3 I detail theoretical frameworks, specifically from museology and anthropology, that serve as rationale for a critique of present positions taken on the museum and to make a postcolonial reading of the museum. Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 discuss in sequence the four major areas in which the Raffles Museum

¹¹ Knell, Simon J., MacLeod, Suzanne, and Watson, Sheila, eds., *Museum Revolutions How Museums Change and Are Changed* (Routledge, 2007).

¹² André Desvallées and François Mairesse, eds., *Key Concepts of Museology* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010).

performed colonialism: *Founding*; visible and non-visible *Spaces*; *Methods*; and finally, *Function*. I conclude this dissertation by discussing the relationship between the museum's role as a site of memory and its agency in the development of a historical consciousness and the sovereignty that is at the heart of the Singapore state. §

CHAPTER 1

Contributions: New Ways of Seeing

Colonialism was made possible, and then sustained and strengthened by as much cultural technologies of rule as it was by the more obvious and brutal modes of conquest that first established power on foreign shores...it has not been sufficiently recognized that colonialism itself was a cultural project of control...

—Nicholas Dirks. Introduction, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*

This thesis's contributions lie broadly in four areas.

One, it contributes to Asian museology. It is one of a small number of scholarly studies of an Asian colonial museum by an Asian and from a former colony. Two, it contributes to Singaporean historical scholarship by providing correctives to several historical records on Singapore's colonial past. Three, it contributes to the dialogue on historic preservation and cultural policies as well as biodiversity protection in Singapore. Four and finally, in relation to its first contribution, it introduces a historical analytical methodology with which former colonies can engage with the museums that colonizers established in their territories.

Asian Museology for the Asian Context

Non-Western, formerly colonized territories like Singapore and

several other Southeast Asian nations, this thesis asserts, need new historical and curatorial paradigms for their engagement with the museums that colonizers established in their territories. This need is necessitated by the fact, as Dirks notes in the epigraph, that colonialism itself was a cultural project of control.

Moreover, it has to be recognized that power, especially colonial power, "appears differently at different levels of interaction," and therefore, cannot "simply be read off from ascribed political locations."¹³ In present museology, the vantage view is predominantly the collector's and thereby, that of empire. Thus, for Southeast Asia and former colonies, present methodologies are inadequate for the calibration of such institutions of power, such as the colonial museums that colonizers established.

Specifically, where British colonialism is concerned, the role of the colonial museum in the colonial project is demanded by the large corpus of works that now exist on the British employment of cultural institutions in colonial rule. Besides Cohn's seminal work on their use of language, schools, and ruins, there is Basu's study on their use of education; Cannadine's masterful study of their employment of *Ornamentalism*; Mackenzie's study of their use of the imperial hunt; and Bennett *et al's*

¹³ Clifford, James, "Museums as Contact Zones," in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Harvard, MA: Harvard UP, 1997).

collection of essays on their use of collecting, taxonomy, and anthropology.¹⁴

Suleri's work on colonial *Rhetoric* is not directly related to but revealing of British colonial use of language.

The colonial museum, as an instrument of culture, knowledge and power, is thus the institution that most fits Mary Louise Pratt's erudite description of the "colonial legacy of Euroimperialism, androcentrism and white supremacy in education and official culture."¹⁵ Despite this, the colonial museum has barely been critically theorized as a cultural technology of colonial rule. If studied at all, the colonial museum remains studied within a predominantly Western knowledge system—museology—that has, as Kreps notes, forged very specific ways of seeing, but it is a way of seeing that is difficult to exit or disengage from.¹⁶ An illustration of how the colonial museums work within such a Western prejudice is to be found in how their early collectors are often portrayed as heroes and archeological paragons. Such a view, it will be seen, privileges the West and valorizes the

¹⁴ Cohn, Bernard S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge. The British in India*; Cannadine, David, *Ornamentalism. How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford, UK; United States: Oxford UP, 2001); Basu, Major B.D., *History of Education in India Under the Rule of the East India Company* (Calcutta, India: R. Chatterjee, 1922); MacKenzie, John M., *The Empire of Nature. Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester, USA: Manchester U P, 1988); Tony Bennett, *Collecting, Ordering, Governing: Anthropology, Museums, and Liberal Government* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017); Suleri, Sara, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago, IL, USA: U of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Pratt, Mary Louise, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Taylor and Francis, 2003), https://books.google.com.sg/books?id=EbGalNCw6YIC&source=gbs_navlinks_s&redir_esc=y.

¹⁶ Kreps, Christina, "Non-Western Models of Museums and Curation in Cross-Cultural Perspective," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:101:1-201503055923>.

arrival of the West in the non-West.

Colonial Museums: Valorizing the West Through the Anthropological Encounter

The early collector, often associated with the advent of the West in the Non-west, for example, is valorized within a museum rhetoric that presents the European anthropological encounter with 'otherness' within mythic constructions. The anthropologist or archeologist, the early collector, is often pictured as a scholar venturing:

bravely across the sea or into the jungle to encounter untouched people, there to be stripped of the defensive trappings of civilization and reborn in the study of a simpler culture and returning with a grail of scientific knowledge and a vision of alternative cultural possibility.¹⁷

The encounter is a Euro-, androcentric trope within which the colonial archaeologist, typically a white male adventurer, is seen to travel to exotic places to look for traces of the material culture of the past,¹⁸ but importantly, to have skills that are beyond the common man —

¹⁷ Stocking Jr., George W., "Maclay, Kubary and Manilowski. Archetypes from the Dreamtime of Anthropology," in *Colonial Situations*. 9-11

¹⁸ Bloembergen, Marieke and Eickhoff, Martijn, "The Colonial Archaeological Hero Reconsidered. Post-Colonial Perspectives on the 'Discovery' of the Prehistoric Past of Indonesia," in *Historiographical Approaches to Past Archaeological Research*, ed. Eberhardt, Gisela and Link, Fabian, Topoi, Berlin Studies of the Ancient World (Berlin: Universitaet Berlin und der Humboldt-Universitaet zu Berlin, 2015), <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/miscellanies/topoi-hist/all/PDF/all.pdf>.

intellectually, physically, and emotionally. Thus, the trope not only valorizes the Western man and the West's encounter with the non-West but renders the Other passive in the process.

In Indonesian history, for example, archaeologists and pre-historians, such as Pieter Vincent van Stein Callenfels, Hendrik Robert van Heekeren and Abraham Nicolaas Jan Thomassen à Thuessink van der Hoop, are often presented as having exceptional skills, but more importantly, as heroes who "discovered" Indonesia's pre-history.¹⁹ Of particular relevance to the Raffles Museum here is Pieter van Stein Callenfels, who did much of his work out of the Raffles Museum and who was an influential figure in Southeast Asian archaeology.

Likewise, the ACM describes its early collectors in this heroic mode. Kenson Kwok, director of the ACM in 2009, describes the museum's collectors as "mostly men of independent means in search of knowledge and adventure." He adds:

Some were professional collectors—anthropologists as well as naturalists—whose activities ultimately enriched museum collections in faraway Europe and USA. Others were amateur enthusiasts, the In-

¹⁹ Bloembergen, Marieke and Eickhoff, Martijn.

diana Jones's (sic) and Asterixes of their day.²⁰

This valorization is likewise used by the LKCNHM. While the comments do not refer specifically to colonial collectors but to collectors in general, they nevertheless substantiate the realm of mythical, supranormal commitment and talents within which collectors are portrayed:

Like the Starship Enterprise, they 'explore strange new worlds [and] seek out new life and civilizations,' and 'boldly go where no man has gone before.' Staff of the museum have scaled lofty mountains, traversed headwaters of some of the world's greatest rivers, and plunged into limestone caves cloaked in darkness. Sometimes, they take weeks just to find a particular rare species. Modern naturalists must be more than good scientists; they must be excellent hunters. Tough and adaptable, they must be able to climb, swim and dive.²¹

The mythizing of collecting and colonial collectors are historically significant because they subsume the colonial agenda and political intentions that constituted and informed much of eighteenth/nineteenth-

²⁰ Kwok, Kenson, "Introduction," in *Hunters and Collectors. The Origins of the Southeast Asian Collection at the Asian Civilizations Museum* (Singapore: Asian Civilizations Museum, 2009).

²¹ Ng, Peter, "Foreword," in *Of Whales and Dinosaurs: The Story of Singapore's Natural History Museum* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015), xiv

century anthropology and collecting as well as the roles these collectors played in colonial expansion and politics. They also disguise the temperaments and Western racism that often accompanied these early encounters with otherness. Young, for example, has drawn attention to the "misanthropic and racist outbursts" in his study of Malinowski's diary,²² while Stocking demonstrates that some of the best-known early ethnographers were hardly neutral scholarly observers but active politicians, and in fact, "colonists" in their own right.

Maclay, the Russian who was a regular and frequent visitor to the Raffles Museum, for example, attempted in 1874 to persuade the Dutch Governor to establish a military settlement in New Guinea to "enforce law and order." If this failed, Maclay himself was willing "to return with 'a few dozen Javanese soldiers and one gunboat' provided he was 'given complete independence of action, including the right to decide matters of life and death regarding [his] subordinates and the natives.'" ²³

Maclay's political activities included his consulting with Sir Arthur Gordon, the British High Commissioner of the Western Pacific; Commodore

²² Young, Michael, "Writing His Life Through the Other: The Anthropology of Malinowski," ed. Green, Adam, *Public Domain Review, Online*, n.d., accessed August 30, 2016, <https://publicdomainreview.org/2014/01/22/writing-his-life-through-the-other-the-anthropology-of-malinowski/>.

²³ Stocking Jr., George W., "Maclay, Kubary and Manilowski. Archetypes from the Dreamtime of Anthropology."

John Wilson, British naval commander of the southwest Pacific; and William Mackinnon, one of the key figures of British expansionism in East Africa in London in 1882. He was likewise active in political circles in France and Russia, where he was presented to the tsar and involved in a secret Russian plan for a naval station in southwest Pacific.²⁴ While it needs to be recognized that Maclay lobbied on behalf of the indigenous Papuan and New Guinean, his actions nonetheless were not apolitical, nor was his demand to exercise life-and-death decisions unassuming.

Like Maclay, Johannes Kubary, the Hungarian-Polish ethnographer who collected for the German Godeffroy and Company in Australasia was also politically active and militant. In February 1871, Kubary arrived on the island of Korrer (known also as Koror and Oreor). Seven months after his arrival, Kubary took advantage of local in-fighting among the chiefs and settled on Malakal Island. Informing the assembled chiefs of the island of Korrer that he was "offended" by their manners and customs" and that their "behavior [were] false throughout," Kubary went on to declare political sovereignty:

Those who try to force themselves on me I shall treat them like enemies. Powder and shot I have enough; war I do not fear...I now

²⁴ Stocking Jr., George W. 20-23

forbid every inhabitant to land on Malakal unless he has something useful for me, and no canoe may approach safely at night. That part of Malakal where I live is foreign land, and all your laws and customs end there. But I wish to be just, and to him who is friendly to me I shall be friendly also.²⁵

Kubary's actions were those of a colonial autocrat, in the pattern of James Brooke's in Sarawak and the Clunies-Ross family's in the Cocos-Keeling Islands. Their careers illustrate i) that early ethnographers were certainly neither apolitical nor passive as traditionally portrayed; ii) that it was not uncommon for them to have a personal sense of superiority over the locals to the extent that they saw it as justification for their holding the right over life and death; iii) that their politics were not passive but militarily aggressive and belligerent and were in fact, characteristic of a colonizer.

For Southeast Asia's former colonized territories, the understanding of these early collectors is particularly important because they were directly involved in colonial politics and governance after the 1900s. By then, anthropology was integrated into colonial governmentality as a

²⁵ Stocking Jr., George W.

"scientifically informed" administrative practice, such as in native policies.²⁶

Much of the funding for social anthropology, for instance, were given for practical use, such as development projects in Malaysia and military intelligence in Thailand.²⁷

In Malaysia, the involvement of early anthropologists from its museums had long-term effects. The country's aboriginal relations are largely shaped by two Cambridge-trained anthropologists, the brothers Herbert Deane, known popularly as "Pat," and Richard Noone, both of whom were active in the Perak Museum.

Recruited in 1930 as field ethnographer for the museum in Taiping, Perak, Pat Noone married into and lived among the Temiars, an indigenous people who inhabited the area near the Perak-Kelantan border. In 1936, he succeeded to the position of Curator and later became Acting Director for the museum. Idrus states that Noone had enormous and long-lasting influence over the state's native affairs and relations because his report on the Temiars, entitled "Settlement and Welfare of the Ple-Temiar Senoi of the Perak-Kelantan Watershed," shaped state-aboriginal relations by providing important policy recommendations for many years. In addition, his 1939

²⁶ Bennett, Tony, Dibley, Ben, and Harrison, Rodney, "Introduction: Anthropology, Collecting and Colonial Governmentalities," *History and Anthropology* 25, no. 2 (2014): 137–49.

²⁷ Feuchtwang, Stephan, "The Colonial Formation of British Social Anthropology" (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1972).

Enactment led to the creation of the position of "Protector for Aborigines" and to his appointment to the position.

More importantly, Idrus notes, Pat Noone's influence in Malaysian governance was cemented by his brother Richard, who in 1954 adopted his 1939 Enactment for *his* formulation of the Aborigines Ordinance.²⁸ Thus, the two major policy documents on Malayan aboriginal relations, the Perak Aborigines Enactment of 1939 and the Aborigines Ordinance of 1954, which later became known as the Aboriginal Act, were both conceptualized and crafted by anthropologists.

Not insignificant here too, is the fact that both brothers were directly politically and militarily active, such as in reconnoitering the Thai-Malayan border in preparation for the Anglo-Japanese confrontation during World War II. Richard Noone, however, was more militarily and politically active of the two. Commissioned by Field General Gerald Templar (British High Commissioner, Malaya, 1952-54) in 1953 to recruit Malaya's indigenous peoples into the campaign against the communists, Richard Noone under this commission, founded and commanded the crack aboriginal special forces unit, the *Senoi Praaq*. The unit became a key component of British

²⁸ Idrus, Rusaslina, "The Discourse of Protection and the Orang Asli in Malaysia," *Kajian Malaysia* 29, no. Supp. 1 (2011): 53-74.

anti-Communist strategies, especially in its jungle operations.²⁹

In the same fashion, H.D. Collings, the Raffles Museum's Curator, was involved in aboriginal policy. Museum records show Collings active in projects such as census-taking of aboriginal communities and advocacy against the appointment of a Malay as Protector of Aborigines.³⁰

If archaeologists, anthropologists, and ethnographers were not disinterested and benign scholars, neither were the academic disciplines of eighteenth/nineteenth-century anthropology and ethnography. Ballard, for example, notes the disciplines' culpability in colonial thought. The colonial collecting of the material culture of pygmies, for example, he says, played a subordinate role to these peoples' height in the White anthropological constitution of "pygmyhood." He suggests, in addition, that if "artifact collections provided a useful tool in the production of knowledge about colonial subjects, they did so within a broader context supplied by loosely formulated but nevertheless powerful narratives of racial difference."³¹

This thesis will add to Asian museology by theorizing the Raffles

²⁹ Jumper, Roy D. L., "Malaysia's Senoi Praaq Special Forces," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 13 (2000): 64–93.

³⁰ See Ag. Deputy Chief Secretary, "Request from The Secretariat, Govt. of the Malayan Union," July 23, 1947, MSA 1142/000831, National Archives of Singapore.; Collings, H.D., "Minutes, Correspondence between Raffles Museum and Colonial Secretary," July 31, 1947, MSA 1142 000803, National Archives of Singapore.

³¹ Michael O'Hanlon, "Introduction," in *Hunting the Gatherers. Ethnographic Collectors, Agents and Agency in Melanesia, 1870s-1930s*, ed. Michael O'Hanlon, and Welsch Robert L., vol. 6, 8 vols., *Methodology and History in Anthropology* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000). 5

Museum from the vantage view of Southeast Asia and the colonized: as an artifact of the West in Asia; of Western dominance over the non-West; of White dominance over non-White populations; of Western science over indigenous knowledge, as well as of Western consumption over indigenous production. In doing so, it will both make visible the political and social roles the colonial museum played in the colonial project, and thereby, contribute to a new way of seeing the colonial museum.³²

Colonial Historicization, Correcting Historical Records

As a study of colonial enactment of power, this study's intention is to add to the development of a Singapore-centered history. It seeks to do this by addressing how colonial historical authorship has produced specific narratives and mythologies, and at the same time, silenced crucial aspects of Singapore's colonial experience and social history. Its contribution here is on several levels.

Colonial Patrimony

First and foremost, it addresses the colonial historical patrimony that now frames both the Raffles Museum's and Singapore's histories. Both histories are of specific historical genre, namely colonial history, which

³² I thank my thesis Examiners Two and Three for highlighting the contributions that this thesis has the potential to make but which I myself in the writing of this thesis, did not recognize.

Tarling *et al* and Trocki point out, is by nature partisan in perspective, content, and intent.

In what they choose to include and more importantly, what they *exclude*, colonial histories should more appropriately be regarded as *non-histories* because they characteristically exclude and silence. Korea, for example, is conspicuously absent in Japanese history. When raised, the Chōsen mondai or the Chōsen question is relegated to a foreign history, "usually viewed as part of the revolution of empire as narrated through the acquisition of colonial holdings."³³ Similarly, the histories of Malaya and Singapore have been treated as annexes to British empire histories, and their pre-colonial pasts immediately deleted because colonial documentation usually begins with a discussion of Sino-Indian trade with primacy being given to European actions and activities. What happens consequently, Trocki asserts, is that the experiences of colonized areas are often neglected.³⁴

This silencing has been particularly acute where Singapore is concerned. Silencing of the island's pre-colonial past has been effected by a

³³ Schmid, Andre, "Colonialism and the 'Korea Problem' in the Historiography of Japan: A Review Article," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 4 (November 2000): 951–76.

³⁴ Trocki, Carl A., *Prince of Pirates. The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore 1784-1885* (Singapore: Singapore U Press, under the auspices of the Institute of SE Asian Studies, 1979).13

pegging of its founding to Raffles's arrival and to British colonial intervention.³⁵ Effected with uncommon historical precision to the hour and the date: "the morning of the 29th January 1819" when Raffles landed³⁶ or the "modern history of Singapore dates from "30 January 1819,"³⁷ the pegging makes Singapore's colonial history not only about Europeans but almost exclusively about *one* European — Thomas Stamford Raffles. As Hack notes, in Mary Turnbull's version of Singapore's beginning:

...it is the arrival of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, the East India Company, and the policy of free trade, which is the departure point for the modern state, and for the polyglot mix of immigrants that would evolve into the modern, cosmopolitan nation.³⁸

While the historical pegging of Singapore's history to this date, this time, and this one man chronologically and factually misleads, it has nevertheless, until recently, framed and defined the history of Singapore, and consequently, that of the Raffles Museum, with unshakeable tenacity.

One important consequence is that it positions colonialism's advent

³⁵ Hack, Karl, "Framing Singapore's History," in *Studying Singapore's Past: C.M. Turnbull and the History of Modern Singapore*, ed. Tarling, Nicholas (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012).18

³⁶ Bastin, John, *The Founding of Singapore 1819* (Singapore: National Library Board, Singapore, 2012).40

³⁷ Turnbull, C. M., *A History of Singapore 1819-1975* (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford, New York, Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1980).

³⁸ Hack, Karl, "Framing Singapore's History."19

as benign and progressive, and any or all institutions that were installed as evidence of this benevolence, as well illustrated by current literature on the Raffles Institution, Raffles Museum and Library. The fact that they were established by Raffles who was one of the most "important, energetic and vocal proponent of British expansion in the region,"³⁹ in a region that was becoming increasingly important in British trade and intra-European political rivalry, at a time when British military fiscalism and expansionism were at their heights, have likewise been silenced in these histories.

No less significant historically is the silencing of the indirect paramountcy that Raffles introduced into Southeast Asia or his strategies which are significant in a period when overseas empire "loomed ever larger in the consciousness of the Victorians, until it came to express itself in an ideology, the ideology of imperialism."⁴⁰ Thus the three institutions Raffles established were, to borrow Homi Bhaba's words, colonial signs that have been improperly taken for wonders.

Historicization and British Dominance

Where the historicization of Singapore's past is concerned, silencing

³⁹ Barnard, Timothy P., "The Rafflesia in the Natural and Imperial Imagination of the East India Company in Southeast Asia," in *The East India Company and the Natural World*, ed. Damodaran, Vinita, Anna Winterbottom, and Alan Lester, Palgrave Studies in World Environmental History (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).153

⁴⁰ Evans, Richard, *The Victorians: Time and Space*. Gresham Lectures, *The Victorians* (London: Museum of London, 2010).

has also been effected through the discipline of history and the museum's intellectualism, both of which were staunchly British colonial domains until WWII. All the Raffles Museum's curator- and directorships, for example, from 1849 until the end of Carl Alexander Gibson-Hill's tenure in 1963, were held by Britons.

In addition, the two disciplines with which the museum was closely associated and upon which its intellectualism depended on, i.e., history and anthropology, were likewise British dominated. The history syllabi at the University of Malaya, for example, until Cyril Northcote Parkinson (1909-1993), were about British and European history. Parkinson's recruitment of Mary Turnbull would further entrench British colonial control over Singapore's history because she went on to teach history to "the greatest proportion of independent Singapore's administrators."⁴¹ Turnbull also authored the most widely-used history text for Singapore schools for a long time, a work whose influence warranted a book on its own.⁴² As noted, her work resulted in Singapore's history being uncompromisingly pegged to Raffles's arrival, but also being "monolingual."⁴³

⁴¹ Thum, P.J., "Constance Mary Turnbull, 1927-2008. *An Appreciation*," in *Studying Singapore's Past. C.M. Turnbull and the History of Modern Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012). 8

⁴² Tarling, Nicholas, ed., "Introduction," in *Studying Singapore's Past: C.M. Turnbull and the History of Modern Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012).

⁴³ Thum, P.J., "The Limitations of Monolingual History," in *Studying Singapore's Past. C.M. Turnbull and the History of Modern Singapore*, ed. Tarling, Nicholas (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012).

Colonial historical patrimony over the historicization of Singapore's past was also enacted through the Raffles Museum through close and regular exchanges between the museum's directors, especially Gibson-Hill who was particularly interested in local history, and the major historians of Asia of the day, such as Sir Richard Winstedt, Sir Roland Braddell, and Kennedy G. Tregonning. Thus, British colonial patriarchy over the museum for much of its existence and the study of Singapore's history was profound.

Addressing this colonial historical patriarchy is especially essential for Singapore where historical scholarship has been leached of a critique by an official state policy that privileges a colonial past as well as a general absence of postcoloniality.⁴⁴ They are the causes, in my view, of the cognitive dissonance in Singaporean perceptions of their colonial experience that I end this chapter with. This study can bring clarity to the museum's agency in sustaining such colonial historical patriarchy and provide a corrective to this cognitive dissonance. Here, the Raffles Museum's three successor museums are central because they are the primary sites where the Singaporean encounters the state's history.

⁴⁴ Chua Beng Huat, "Southeast Asia in Postcolonial Studies: An Introduction," *Post Colonial Studies - Special Issue: Southeast Asia's Absence in Post Colonial Studies* 11, no. 3 (September 2008): 231–40.

A major contribution that this study will make is to the historicization of Singapore's past. Singapore's history has been historicized largely within a Rafflesian meta-narrative which on the one hand, exaggerates his role and contribution, and on the other, glosses over British imperial ambitions and strategies of rule. By providing the larger historical contexts to Singapore's and the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library's founding narratives, this study provides a robust critique against these meta-narratives and several correctives to the historical record. For example, one major meta-narrative that surrounds Singapore's past that is directly disproved by the section on *Extraction and Removal* is that the island was nothing until Raffles's arrival:

200 years ago, Singapore was a jungle, an obscure tropical island, barely inhabited...This city state has no natural resources, its land is infertile... Singapore's history can be traced back to the beginnings of a global economy and the ambitions of a maverick British pioneer...Without him, Singapore would have never begun its remarkable journey from mangrove to metropolis.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ "History of Singapore, Part 1," History of Singapore" (Discovery Channel, July 23, 2009),

This meta-narrative pre-emptively denies any imperial agenda or motive, and as this thesis demonstrates, Raffles's actions showed that he himself believed no such thing. His *Minute* records him arguing for the establishment of a college precisely because there were ample resources to be exploited and gained.⁴⁶ To this end, he collaborated with Nathaniel Wallich to establish a spice plantation and an experimental garden in Singapore. Wallich, on his part, urged the establishment of a garden based on his observation of the resources of timbers and plants, including cloves, he noted were available on the island.⁴⁷ The museum's records, especially between 1874 and 1876, show that it was *this potential* that Raffles was interested in and which the museum eventually was used for.

Likewise, this study demonstrates that Raffles's legacy has to be evaluated in terms of his political strategy and British imperial agenda. By contextualizing his establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library within the historical terms of Britain's engagement with Asia and the China trade, the study brings new perspectives to Raffles's historic *persona* as a visionary and as an unusually egalitarian colonial administrator

YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O12Lwol3iaY>.

⁴⁶ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore," 1819.

⁴⁷ Hanitsch, R., "Letters of Nathaniel Wallich Relating to the Establishment of Botanical Gardens in Singapore," *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 65 (December 1913): 39–48.

whose interest was primarily in the population he ruled. This is contradicted, for example, by a close reading of the politics behind his handling of the attack on William Farquhar, the first Resident, in 1823.

On 11 March 1823, a Sayed or Sayid Yasin attacked William Farquhar. There are conflicting accounts as to why Yasin assaulted Farquhar, where this occurred, and who initiated the reprisal on Yasin. One account is that Yasin defaulted on his debt of \$1400 to Pengaran Sharif Omar⁴⁸ who claimed the debt via summons and the case went before Farquhar. Yasin allegedly attacked Farquhar during the attempt to incarcerate him. In any case, the attack brought on immediate retaliation, and Yassin was hacked beyond recognition.

There is a consensus among the accounts that immediate suspicion was that Yasin was in the service of the Temenggong. Krishnan states that Captain Davies repeatedly requested permission from Raffles to bombard the residence of the Temenggong, but Raffles desisted. Raffles's actions within the context of this study's reading, reveals that this was not because Raffles did not regard the incident as a challenge to British authority. Rather, he was unsure at this juncture as to whether the Temenggong was

⁴⁸ Nurfadzilah Yahaya, "Good Friends and Dangerous Enemies: British Images of the Arab Elite in Colonial Singapore (1819-1942)" (National University of Singapore, 2006), http://scholarbank.nus.edu.sg/bitstream/handle/10635/16132/Nurfadzilah_Yahaya.pdf?sequence=1.38

behind the attack. Raffles's reprisal is of interest here because once he was sure that the Temenggong was not involved, it took on a pugnacity that suggests that his political style and governance methods have not been properly deconstructed.

Raffles's employment of stage management and grand-standing is evident for example, the morning after the stabbing. At a gathering attended by "Sultan Husain Shah and the Temenggong with all their ministers and elders, and all the white merchants and thousands of other races...",⁴⁹ Raffles publicly asked the Sultan what penalties for treason were prescribed under traditional Malay customs. When the Sultan replied that it demanded the destruction of the members of the traitor's family as well as of his home, Raffles countered that such a penalty was unjust because the families were innocent. He added that under English law, a traitor was still hanged even when he was dead, but that the EIC provided financial support for the perpetrator's family after his hanging.⁵⁰

Hill's translation of *The Hikayat* records that Raffles then ordered Sayid Yasin's badly mutilated and barely recognizable corpse to be placed on a buffalo cart and to be paraded around the settlement with calls for locals to

⁴⁹ Hill, A. H., trans., "The Hikayat Abdullah," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* XXVIII, no. Part 3 (1955). 153.

⁵⁰ Hill, A. H. 153

come forward to see "the man who committed treason against his ruler, and this is his punishment: though he is dead his body is still condemned to be hanged."⁵¹ Abdullah recorded:

When this was announced all round the Settlement the body was taken to Tanjong Malang, which lies at the end of Teluk Ayer, where it was strung up on a wooden gibbet erected there, placed in the iron frame already mentioned. The body remained there for ten days or a fortnight, until only the bones were left.⁵²

The gibbetting is a lucid example of how Raffles's political, cultural, and spiritual intents have been subsumed under a meta-narrative of altruistic humanitarianism and concern. His actions are indicative of his governance style and methods.

First, as Abdullah noted, Raffles ordered the gibbet the evening *before* he met the Sultan. He personally directed the builders on its design and size and ordered it to be ready by 7.00 a.m. Raffles's asking the Sultan publicly to describe the penalties when he had already ordered the gibbet was thus his employment of public relations and dramaturgy in governance. It was designed to demonstrate the difference between his own and the British

⁵¹ Hill, A. H. 151-154

⁵² Hill, A. H. 154

brand of firm, fair, and compassionate penal system and the Sultan's harsh, despotic, corporeal penalty, which he further underscored by stating that the EIC financially supported the traitor's family even while it meted out capital punishment.⁵³

Second, by characterizing the stabbing as "treason" when there was still a Sultan by whose authority the British were allowed a factory, Raffles claimed an authority that superseded those of the Sultan's. At its very minimum, this was a claim of British extraterritoriality; at its maximum, it made Raffles and/or Farquhar *de facto* rulers.

Third, the gibbeting was political in that it was an exercise of the state's right to "discipline and punish,"⁵⁴ significant not in terms of the violence of the gibbeting but as a demonstration of state power through corporeal inscription. As Foucault asserts, corporeal punishment and its public display were exercises of institutionalized power. Public punishment, thus, was not judicial but political rituals. Even in minor cases, Foucault argues, it belongs "to the ceremonies by which power is manifested."⁵⁵ Raffles's gibbeting was a classic Foucauldian state inscription of power and its ceremonial display that the right to punish and discipline

⁵³ Hill, A. H., 154.

⁵⁴ Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Sheridan, Alan, Second (USA: Random House, 1995).

⁵⁵ Foucault, Michel.47

lay in British hands. It stated, in no uncertain terms, who the ultimate power on the island was.

Fourth, Raffles's display of British power in the gibbetting extended into how the body was retrieved. Abdullah records that the body was "given" to the sultan when "the Sultan asked Mr. Raffles for the corpse."⁵⁶ The fact that Sultan Hussein had to approach Raffles for the corpse again invested the British with an authority that would have been understood within the settlement and beyond.

Fifth and finally, the gibbetting's meanings extended into the religious realm, which again underscored British supremacy. By gibbetting Sayid Yasin, Raffles denied the corpse a Muslim funerary rite, which stipulates that burial should occur as soon as possible after death, usually within twenty-four hours.⁵⁷ In a predominantly Muslim region under Muslim rulership, Raffles's withholding the corpse from this last rite was a clear signal that British authority transcended secularity, an act that also had meanings few local rulers in the region would have missed.

This study will contribute to a new historicization based on new

⁵⁶ Hill, A. H., "The Hikayat Abdullah."

⁵⁷ I would like to acknowledge here within one encompassing but important footnote the scholarship debt I owe Dr. Farish Noor. He drew my attention to this and many other important aspects of Southeast Asian history. Individual acknowledgements of each will not serve the flow of this thesis, nor can they adequately reflect his generosity in sharing his research and wide scholarship. These points are, however, invaluable in understanding the many forms colonial subjugation took.

information that has been produced on Raffles's rule. By assessing the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library as indicators of his political strategies and motives, this study will provide a more updated, holistic reassessment of his governance and address historical records that preemptively discount his and British colonial ambitions.

Colonial Ballast as Heritage and as Prosthetic Memory

In exposing the political, historical, and social ideologies that are embedded in the Raffles Museum and its three successors, this thesis contributes to an understanding of their agencies in the Singaporean historical psyche. As Alison Landsberg suggests, museums are "experiential sites." An encounter within these sites, she contends, produces a "form of public cultural memory, a prosthetic memory that emerges upon an interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past." At the moment of interface, she states,

an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history [wherein] the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's

subjectivity and politics.⁵⁸

In this view, the Raffles Museum, in terms of its very distinctive colonial architecture as well as its collections has agency as experiential sites for Singapore's collective memory. The question that this thesis can help to answer is, what memory is sutured for the Singaporean in the Raffles Museum's physical building, site and its collections? The question is also called for by the fact that all three of the Raffles Museum's successors enlist these collections in their definitions of a Singaporean "past," "heritage" and "legacy."

In his foreword to *One Hundred Years of the National Museum, Singapore, 1887-1987*, former NMS director Richard Poh, for example, testified to the museum's colonial status as well as agency when he said that the NMS had "steadily divested itself of its colonial past" and reoriented itself to preserving the heritage of Singapore. He also noted that the museum's role in preserving that heritage was "pivotal."⁵⁹ Similarly, Peter Ng, the director of LKCNHM characterizes the Raffles Museum's Reference Collection now in his custody as "an invaluable piece of the [Singaporean]

⁵⁸ Landsberg, Alison, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia UP, 2004). 2

⁵⁹ Poh, Richard K. B., "Foreword," in *One Hundred Years of the National Museum, Singapore, 1887-1987* (Singapore: National Museum, Singapore, 1987).

past,"⁶⁰ while the ACM claims its institutional mission to be "devoted to preserving the cultural heritage of Asia, especially the ancestral heritages of Singaporeans."⁶¹ Both the NMS and ACM are literally mnemonic sites because they are located at two locations associated with British colonial rule, Stamford Road and Empress Place, and through their architecture. In any event, all three museums and their collections represent a connection to a colonial past in one or more forms.

In assessing the Raffles Museum's successors' agency in the Singaporean historical psyche, it is relevant that the referents for two of these three definitions of the past are significantly the Raffles Museum's collections. These resulted primarily and directly from colonial collecting, and therefore have ballasts of colonial dominance. The question that they raise in terms of the historical suturing they enact is, if they suture Singaporeans to a colonial past or a post-colonial Singaporean present? More to the point, how do these memories figure or influence the notions of a Singaporean self, an independent sovereignty or heritage? I suggest that used within such definitions of a Singaporean past and heritage, the sites, buildings, programs and collections of all three museums at the moment are

⁶⁰ Ng, Foreword, *Of Whales and Dinosaurs: the Story of Singapore's Natural History Museum*, vii

⁶¹ "Story of Our Museums," Institutional, Asian Civilisations Museum, 2017, <http://acm.org.sg/about-us/story-of-our-museums>.

a cultural, historical, and ideological postcolonial conundrum.

The Slippery Slope of Heritage

Within the broad strokes of historical memory, this study will aid in Singapore's formulation of what constitutes the republic's heritage. Here, the Raffles Museum and its three successors need to be regarded within their agencies as "commemorations, symbols and a host of mnemonic sites and practices" that Low contends are "pertinent towards establishing and maintaining national identities."⁶² The Raffles Museum and its successors are all active institutions in constructing cultural identity, which Hall argues is not "something which already exists" but "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being,'"⁶³ i.e., a process that is continuously developing and changing.

The Raffles Museum's site, building, and collections are problematic in Singapore's process of the state "becoming" Singaporean because they are connotative of fundamental colonial ideologies of illegitimate power and privilege. The LKCNHM, even as the most distanced of the three museums from the Raffles Museum's colonial origins in terms of its site and architecture, is nevertheless connected to colonialism through its

⁶² Low, Kelvin E.Y., *Remembering the Samui Women: Migration and Social Memory in Singapore and China* (Vancouver, Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2014). 7

⁶³ Hall, Stuart, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference.*, ed. Rutherford, Jonathan (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 222–37, <http://sites.middlebury.edu/nydiasporaworkshop/files/2011/04/D-OA-HallStuart-CulturalIdentityandDiaspora.pdf>.

collections' history. This is still embedded within a colonial discourse of a "will to claim the right to take as booty other peoples' lives, other peoples' lands..."⁶⁴ The ACM on the other hand, as Mignolo notes, has successfully co-opted "the master narrative that created the fiction of 'modernity'" and de-Westernized successfully.⁶⁵ It does not mean, however, that the ACM has evolved successfully, again in his phrase, into "a museum of the people, by the people, for the people."⁶⁶

This study will raise questions as to how the collections of the Raffles Museum need to be assessed in terms of the meanings they hold for *Singaporeans* when they are used to define heritage or legacy. It will help bring issues to the table, such as whether the Raffles Museum's natural history collection's scientific value as one of the most complete in Southeast Asia depletes it of its political ballast of colonial ideologies? Or, is calling the ethnographic collection a "heritage" problematic if we consider that much of the material was not only acquired through Western collecting of Others, but also in the course of military violence against indigenous populations? Such violence is implied, for example, in the war coat listed as "a trophy

⁶⁴ Gordimer, Nadine, Foreword, Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. Greenfeld, Howard, 2003. First published 1974 (UK: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2003). 42

⁶⁵ Mignolo, Walter D., "Enacting the Archives, Decentring the Muses. The Museum of Islamic Art in Doha and the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore," *Ibraaz*, November 2013, <https://www.ibraaz.org/essays/77>.

⁶⁶ Mignolo, Walter D.

from the Batang Ai Dayak in March 1903" in the ACM's collection.⁶⁷

By calling attention to these meanings, this study contributes to a theorizing of these collections and add perspectives to the dialogue and debate regarding the historic value of the museum and its collections *within a contemporary Singaporean context*.

An example of an issue to which this study could have been useful would be in the debate regarding Bukit Brown, a Chinese cemetery containing about 100,000 graves, mainly of Chinese immigrants.

In 2011, a decision was made to build an eight-lane highway that bisected the cemetery. The reason cited by the National Heritage Board for reclaiming the land on which Bukit Brown cemetery is located was space. An article from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy demonstrates the spectrum of issues involved.⁶⁸

The question that this study of the Raffles Museum would have posed is one of value: what is the Raffles Museum's, or other colonial structures' historic value, against Bukit Brown's? While the museum represents colonial subjugation, Bukit Brown holds the remains of the early

⁶⁷ Onn, Clement, *Hunters and Collectors. The Origins of the Southeast Asian Collection at the Asian Civilisations Museum* (Singapore: Asian Civilisations Museum, National Heritage Board of Singapore, 2009).

⁶⁸ Leow, Claire, "Bukit Brown: The Polemics of Engagement," Institutional, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, global-is-asian, March 26, 2012, <http://global-is-asian.nus.edu.sg/index.php/bukit-brown-the-polemics-of-engagement/>.

migrants, such as the Chinese coolie whose labors directly built the modern Singapore state. This study's demonstrations of the Raffles Museum's historic enactments of subjugation would have been relevant in terms of the choices made based on considerations of space. It would have asked, what warrants the preservation of one and the destruction of another? More importantly, what are the historical, social, political, and ideological implications of such a choice? Last and by no means less important, it would have asked if the state's preservation policy in this context was directed at Singaporeans or to a colonial past?

I do not claim here that Bukit Brown's history is free of exploitation, such as the merchants' taking advantage of the *sinkeh's*, or that migrant narratives should be the focus of Singapore's historical psyche. All I claim here is that a preservation policy should, and must, account for these narratives and the burden of history that are at the heart of the curation of private, public, and collective memory.

Globalisation

Within this study's evaluation of the Raffles Museum within British colonial thought and rule, the thesis contributes to an understanding of how, collectively, the Raffles Museum and its three successors are a "trajectory of imperialism," the addressing of which Chen Kuan-Hsing proposes is vital and imperative if former colonies are to successfully

globalize. Museums, as this thesis argues, are "a product of colonialism in a postcolonial era."⁶⁹ Along these lines, they are central in Singapore's globalization efforts. As Chen suggests, any effort that former colonies make to globalize without dealing with such trajectories of imperialism makes globalization nothing more than "a disguised reproduction of imperialized conquest."⁷⁰ As we have seen, the Raffles Museum continues to have agency as an imperial trajectory first, as a site of a colonial "prosthetic memory"; and second, as a site from which Singapore's cultural and national identities continue to be formed and/or deformed. It is therefore a trajectory of imperialism that Singapore needs to address if its public subscription to globalization is to be realized.⁷¹

A Policy for the Future

In line with a contemporary historical approach to regard history as a social process and a way of using the past to facilitate a better future, this study can contribute to Singapore's environmental future by offering a historical record of the island's environment. This is an area that is no less

⁶⁹ Bal, Mieke, "Telling, Showing, Showing Off," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 556–94.

⁷⁰ Chen, Kuan-Hsing, "Globalization and Deimperialization," in *Asia as Method* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2010).

⁷¹ Toh Yong Chuan, "Globalisation Can Create Jobs and Raise Salaries for Singaporeans: PM Lee," *The Straits Times*, Singapore, June 10, 2017, Online edition, <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/globalisation-can-create-jobs-and-raise-salaries-for-singaporeans-pm-lee>.

important than the social history in Singapore when we consider the state's rapid and extensive urbanization. Concern over this area has been increasingly vocalized in recent works such as Tai's on the "Peripheral Spaces" of Singapore as cultural heritage⁷² and De Koninck's mapping of Singapore's urban transformations.⁷³ Tai's work in particular, draws attention to the significance of the Raffles Museum and the LKCNHM's natural history collection as sites where the republic's "past experience is encapsulated in its rules so that it acts as a guide to what to expect from the future."⁷⁴

The environmental impacts that were created by colonialism has become an area of active historical scholarship. Studies now focus on how climate, deforestation, and social systems have been affected by plantation establishment and peasants impoverished by installations of fixed land taxes. For Singapore, the impact is seen in an estimate that some ninety percent of island's forest cover was lost in the first fifty years of the nineteenth century.⁷⁵

⁷² Tai Wei Lin, *Cultural Heritage and Peripheral Spaces in Singapore* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

⁷³ De Koninck, Rodolphe, *Singapore's Permanent Territorial Revolution: Fifty Years in Fifty Maps* (Chicago, IL, USA: U of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁷⁴ Douglas, Mary, *How Institutions Think*, First (Syracuse, New York, USA: Syracuse U P, 1986). 48

⁷⁵ O' Dempsey cited in Savage, Victor R., "Nature' Embodied, Transformed and Eradicated in Southeast Asian Development.," in *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Development*,

In this area, the Raffles Museum's *Annual Reports* and archives are valuable, if relentless reminders of the results of centuries of economic botanical and wildlife exploitation and large-scale collecting. The museum's 1898 *Report*, for instance, records several large cats, including a *Felis nebulosa* (Clouded Leopard) killed at Changi.⁷⁶ Its shipping lists likewise, show skulls of elephants⁷⁷ *en route* to Kuala Lumpur. No less revealing is the callousness in a request "for a few Tigers from Sumatra and Java (skins and skulls); and leopards from Java"⁷⁸ and an offer of a "preserved tiger cub."⁷⁹ Arresting in their off-handedness, casualness and pedestrian-ess, the Raffles Museum's fauna collections and records archive the ecological choices made then and that are being made today. Likewise, they are indictments of the paucity of progress made in biodiversity protection. This is substantiated by the latest (2016) campaign launched by the Wildlife Reserves of Singapore.⁸⁰

ed. McGregor, Andrew, Law, Lisa, and Miller, Fiona, 2nd, first edition 1 Nov. 2017 ed. (Routledge, 2018).

⁷⁶ Unknown, "Annual Report" (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum, 1898), National Museum of Singapore.

⁷⁷ "Shipping List, The South British Insurance Co. Ltd., Singapore Branch," November 27, 1947, MSA 1143/001840, National Archives of Singapore.

⁷⁸ Chasen, F.N., "Letter to A. Hoogerwerf, Buitenzorg, Java," November 28, 1939, MSA 1140/001114, 5, 6, National Archives of Singapore.

⁷⁹ Yan Yew Sun, "To Raffles Museum," September 19, 1947, MSA 1153/001066, National Archives of Singapore.

⁸⁰ Wildlife Reserves Singapore, "Change Their Fate – Wildlife Reserves Singapore," The Lucky Ones Die First, accessed June 26, 2016, <http://www.wrs.com.sg/youbuytheydie/>. Wildlife Reserves Singapore, "Change Their Fate –

Museum collections are invaluable as classic illustrations of Charles Taylor's "primacy of instrumental reason," a rationality that places profit above all others.⁸¹ They evidence a period in man's history and sciences when collecting was conducted without impunity or computation of destruction and displacement as a cost item. This study of the Raffles Museum and its collections will call attention to the new moral economy needed in collecting, one that is sensitive and cognizant of the cultural breaches made as well as the cost of extinction. It will, for example, provide a historical view of the role wildlife played in early colonial Singapore and importantly, to how it was depleted. Therefore, while my study is about the past, in line with contemporary historical philosophy, its view is fixed beyond the here and now, or a geographical extent. In this area, I will not only emphasize the museum's role in biodiversity protection but also, in the concluding chapter, a new role for Singapore museums.

Methodology

A last contribution that this thesis will make is to historical analytical methodology. It will demonstrate that present analytical methods cannot

Wildlife Reserves Singapore," *The Lucky Ones Die First*, accessed June 26, 2016, <http://www.wrs.com.sg/youbuytheydie/>.

⁸¹ Taylor, Charles, *Sources of the Self - The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard, MA: Harvard UP, 1989). Online

adequately calibrate an institution as complex as the colonial museum, such as the Raffles Museum. As present literature on the museum shows, a non-museological analysis results in false reading and ignores the rich archival proofs that the Raffles Museum was directly implicated in the "performativities of British colonial rule" from the outset. It also demonstrates that former colonies in Southeast Asia need to view and understand the museums that colonizers established in their territories under new historical paradigms, and curatorially, develop a museology capable of addressing the Western prejudices that now configure their interpretations, representations, and documentations. For former colonies, understanding *how*, *when*, and *where* power was enacted is equally, if not more important than understanding *why* power was enacted because the *why*, in many ways, is self-explanatory.

This study takes a step in this direction. First, it engages the Raffles Museum not as an indigenous institution but as an institution established by British colonizers in Singapore for particular reasons. As such, it provides a corrective to what is essentially a Western analytical discourse by theorizing the Raffles Museum within a *Singapore* context.

Second, it has formulated a methodology that aimed directly at redressing several insufficiencies in present approaches to the study of colonial museums. One of this study's aims was to suggest new historical and curatorial paradigms with which non-Western, former colonies could

engage with the museums that colonizers established in their territories during dominance. A key problem in this area as Mignolo points out, is that "the single story of the museum" is a "Western construct" and the key processes with which the museum represents and constructs its ideologies are embedded not only in "concepts of European narratives" but in European narrativizing.⁸² Thus, in principle, the study's analytical strategy aimed at pushing the boundaries of analyses regarding colonial museums, and generally to "widen the field of discussion, not to set limits in accord with [Western museology's] prevailing authority."⁸³ Within this aim, a conscious and deliberate decision was made to reject a discursive analysis of the Raffles Museum's exhibitions since the exhibition was the museum's primary narrativizing medium.

Third, a discursive analysis on exhibitions was rejected because contemporary museum scholarship has demonstrated that it is "no longer adequate to define a museum solely by its physical plant and 'real' space exhibitions, programs and projects."⁸⁴ This is amply illustrated by the Smithsonian's online publication which shows the range of issues, many of

⁸² Mignolo, Walter D., "Enacting the Archives, Decentering the Muses The Museum of Islamic Art in Doha and the Asian Civilizations Museum in Singapore," *Ibraaz*, no. 006 (November 6, 2013), <https://www.ibraaz.org/essays/77#top>.

⁸³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Reprinted with a new preface, Penguin Modern Classics (London: Penguin Books, 2003), xviii.

⁸⁴ Shelton, Anthony, "Critical Museology. A Manifesto."

which have little to do with exhibitions, being debated at and through museums. An example is the violence inflicted on *orang utans* in the course of palm oil plantation establishment in Aceh.⁸⁵

Fourth and finally, a discursive analysis based on museum collections and displays is neither instructive nor relevant to former colonies because "object-centered projects tend to look at technical development, typologies and the aesthetics qualities of taste and fashion."⁸⁶ It therefore reads the colonial museum within Western consumption at the expense of understanding colonialism as the lived historical experience and therefore would not be commensurate with this particular scholastic goal.

For Singapore, such a methodology is especially necessary because the state's colonial experience has been made historically opaque through a "deliberate and conscious scripting of the state's 'founding' by Raffles as the starting point of Singapore's national history."⁸⁷ Understanding the Raffles Museum in terms of whom it served and how it functioned vis-à-vis those who lived within its ambit of influence will illustrate how these intersect with the development of the development of a Singapore-centered history, a

⁸⁵ "An Orangutan Was Shot 74 Times. She Survived.," *The Smithsonian Magazine*, Online, March 22, 2019, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/orangutan-was-shot-74-times-she-survived-180971780/>.

⁸⁶ Karen Harvey, ed., *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, The Routledge Guides to Using Historical Sources (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁸⁷ Chua Beng Huat, "Southeast Asia in Postcolonial Studies: An Introduction."

national narrative, ideas of sovereignty and as well as historic site preservation policies.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the several areas in which this study can be useful. In dismantling the manners in which the Raffles Museum performed colonialism, the study first and foremost, adds to the limited scholarly works that now theorize the colonial museum. By reading the Raffles Museum from the perspective of the non-West and the vantage point of the colonized, this thesis reveals the "nature and meaning of the imperial enterprise that we did not know or sufficiently appreciate before."⁸⁸ Colonial institutions, first and foremost, were established by colonizers in colonies for specific purposes. The colonial museums the British established British Malaya, as Kathrithamby-Wells notes, were

driven by the single aim of mapping the resources of the empire for the enhancement of material wealth and prestige. Set with metropolitan holdings that evoked pride of empire, the Federated States Museums were intended to encapsulate the natural world as

⁸⁸ Cannadine, David, *Ornamentalism. How the British Saw Their Empire*.xv

national heritage under the trusteeship of Britain.⁸⁹

In addressing a deficit in museum scholarship, the study will, by extension, address a concomitant deficit in the historical calibration of British colonial dominance and of Singapore's colonial experience. For Singapore, the contextualization of the state's cultural institutions within British colonialism is required because its colonial experience was simply very recent, very intense, and very long. In terms of proximity, the historical marker here is 1965 when Singapore became a fully independent sovereign nation; thus, only fifty three years ago. The intensity of the colonial experience is seen in the reality that all major existent systems of education, jurisprudence, governance, culture, and politics in independent Singapore were established by and during colonial rule. They are thus systems installed by a foreign government to serve its rule over a local population. Where longevity is concerned, depending on whether the period of limited self-government is considered as colonization, this experience comprised two-thirds of the island's two-hundred-year (in 2019) existence as a polity. By dismantling the Raffles Museum's systems and history, this study brings clarity to the "economic, social and intellectual consequences of colonialism"

⁸⁹ Kathirithamby-Wells, Jeyamalar, "Peninsular Malaysia in the Context of Natural History and Colonial Science," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 11, no. 1 (June 2009): 337–74.

that former colonies, including Singapore, still wrestle with.⁹⁰

Its commentary on heritage and preservation, for example, will call attention to the viability of emphasizing migrant narratives in historical documentation. As Abraham notes, British colonialism produced the myth of the "enterprising immigrant" vis-à-vis the "indolent native" and this has created a firm Chinese belief that their wealth "are the natural consequence of Chinese industry, thrift and adaptability to modern ways," and that Malay poverty was due to "Malay indolence, thriftlessness and conservatism."⁹¹ As Chapter 6 shows, this myth is deeply entrenched in colonial systems. Such a perspective questions how migrant narratives, which comprise the bulk of present historical material on Singapore's past,⁹² impact the Singaporean psyche. In this role, the Raffles Museum, its successor museums, the various heritage museums as well as public art installations in Singapore play central roles because they are the domiciles of these narratives.⁹³

Along the same lines but in a more graphic manner, the need to

⁹⁰ Gosden, Chris, *Archaeology and Colonialism: Cultural Contact from 5000 BC to the Present*.6

⁹¹ Abraham, Collin E.R., "Racial and Ethnic Manipulation in Colonial Malaya," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 1983).28

⁹² See for example, Low, Kelvin E.Y., *Remembering the Samui Women: Migration and Social Memory in Singapore and China*.

⁹³ Little Day Out, "Thian Hock Keng Mural: An Immigrant's Story," Little Day Out (blog), April 19, 2017, <https://www.littledayout.com/2017/04/19/thian-hock-keng-mural-singapore/>. ; Unknown, "Pioneers: Early Indians in Singapore and Malaya," Institutional, Indian Heritage Center, n.d., <http://indianheritage.org.sg/en/exhibitions/copy%20of%20permanent-exhibition>.

understand Singapore's colonial institutions as "trajectories of imperialism" was made clear in Singapore's 2017 presidential elections. The controversy it was embroiled in, as P.J. Thum points out, was rooted in a colonial racial categorization of the local population into Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others.⁹⁴ Thum's critique of the CMIO categorization as obsolete makes sense in terms of Singapore's national claim to be "one people, one nation, one Singapore"⁹⁵ as well as the increased numbers of Eurasians in the state.⁹⁶ It presses the case for one national identity and one category in this context — Singaporean.

Thum's point that colonial systems and perceptions continue to watermark Singapore's systems, in this case through racial taxonomies, demonstrates the extent to which British colonialism has impacted Singapore, how poorly understood Singapore's colonial experience is, and has been misrepresented. By addressing the politics and colonial agenda that underwrote the Raffles Museum — the most august, one of the oldest, and most durable of British colonial institutions on the island — this study

⁹⁴ Thum, P.J., "New Naratif: The Show with PJ Thum," *Online, New Naratif*, September 9, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdIOk0jXApA>.

⁹⁵ *Lyrics, One People, One Nation, One Singapore*, Song, 1990, <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/music/Media/PDFs/Lyric/3df28aa8-01ee-413c-9b5b-9ff2b732770f.pdf>.

⁹⁶ In 1960, "Others," the population category under which Eurasians were listed, was 29,400. In 2017, the same category showed 128, 013. Source: Dept. of Statistics, Singapore. <https://www.singstat.gov.sg/find-data/search-by-theme/population/population-and-population-structure/latest-data>

provides an insight into these watermarks of colonialism.

It will also address the meta-narratives that surround Singapore's history in significant measure. It exposes the direct conflict created by scripting the state's founding within a Rafflesian meta-narrative and its efforts to develop a national historical consciousness and narrative and its claim of an independent sovereignty. In doing so, it calls attention to the "specific nature of the political, intellectual and administrative ground that has to be negotiated to produce useful points of connection between work in cultural studies and actual cultural policy."⁹⁷

In addition, this thesis will raise awareness of the agency of the colonial museum. It points out that museums are integral components of many former colonies' development of a historical consciousness and identity as custodians and interpreters of history as well as experiential historical sites. Memmi and Hall call attention to the roles museums can play when they assert that colonization inflicts "social and historical mutilation" on colonies, and as a result, colonized peoples are "the last to awaken to national consciousness."⁹⁸ The colonized society, Memmi points out, "does not possess national structures" and therefore "cannot conceive of

⁹⁷ Bennett, Tony. *Culture. A Reformer's Science* (NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1998). 7

⁹⁸ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized.*, trans. Greenfeld, Howard (UK: The Orion Press, Inc., 1965).135, 140

a historical future for itself."⁹⁹ In addition to denying a colony a historical consciousness, colonization also destroys a former colony's cultural identity. A cultural identity, Hall contends, reflects a community's shared historical experiences and cultural codes, and provides it with its sense of being "one people." Colonization, in Memmi's and Hall's views, disfigures and destroys this source of its identity and internalizes one that is not of self and belonging, but of being the *inferior* Other in a dominant discourse.¹⁰⁰

This is particularly relevant to Singapore, where there is, as Chua Beng Huat notes, an ambivalence and nostalgia towards colonialism¹⁰¹ and a cognitive dissonance among Singaporeans in terms of how they view their past, their origins, their colonial experience, and consequently, what constitutes "heritage" and "legacy."

I first noticed it in 2014 on my return to Singapore after twenty four years' abroad. It struck me then that while colonialism's exploitative practices and impact surfaced frequently as a matter of concern in public and private dialogues where I lived in Germany and the United States,¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Memmi, Albert,. 145

¹⁰⁰ Hall, Stuart, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"; Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 127–31.

¹⁰¹ Chua Beng Huat, "Southeast Asia in Postcolonial Studies: An Introduction."

¹⁰² Australia, where I lived for almost three years, offered a different experience. There was a paradoxical ritualistic acknowledgement of aboriginal rights at almost every public event, and at the same time, there was an equally open sentiment in certain factions, such as the descendants of sugar cane plantations and railroads, that aboriginal marginalization

Singaporeans paid comparatively far less attention to its impacts. Colonial subjugative practices were frequently dismissed by explanations of "that's the way it was." This was significant historically because it was an Agathonian¹⁰³ perspective, a view that deemed the colonial past as irredeemable and unalterable. It was a stark contradiction to contemporary historical and museum perspectives that hold that colonialism is neither over nor past but an *unfinished business* that lies at the root of many contemporary historical, social, political, and even physical displacements that former colonized territories struggle with.

The Singaporean ambivalence and apathy towards colonialism was made even more interesting by what at first glance appears to be a parallel, clear, and unabashed passion for aspects of the past, particularly for certain historic sites and architecture.¹⁰⁴ For example, there was deep concern over how "heritage,"¹⁰⁵ namely of colonial buildings, Chinatown shop houses,

under white settlement is "a black armband" interpretation of Australian history.

¹⁰³ Baird, Forrest E., *Philosophic Classics: From Plato to Derrida*, Sixth, Philosophic Classics Series (Abingdon, UK; New York, USA: Routledge, 2016). Agathon the Greek tragic poet (c. 445-c. 400 BC): "One thing alone is denied even to god: to make undone the deeds which have been done."

¹⁰⁴ Yap Li Yin, "Heritage Gems. Preserving the Magic of Colonial-Era. The Raffles Hotel," *The Straits Times*, Singapore, 2017. Toh Wen Li, "Once upon a Glorious Time at the Istana," *The Straits Times*, Singapore, November 2, 2017, Online edition, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/once-upon-a-glorious-time-at-the-istana>.

¹⁰⁵ Tan-Wee Yin Ping, "Letter to Editor, Straits Times," August 11, 2007.; Serena, "Chinatown (Singapore)," April 19, 2012, <http://all-about-chinatown.blogspot.sg>.

Bukit Brown cemetery,¹⁰⁶ and black-and-white houses were lost. Expressed frequently privately and publicly, the dissatisfaction was vocal, even passionate. Again, this was an interesting paradox because the affection and concern expressed were for structures whose social narratives were associated with exploitation and dominance.

It was clearly evident, for example, in how Singaporeans regarded the colonial black-and-white bungalow. As I show under *Delineating Spaces*, these much-loved, extremely valuable real estate pieces were constructed with clear colonial markings to designate the local's place vis-à-vis the colonial elite. Other than the handful of successful merchants, most locals if they had anything to do with these houses, would have been as cooks, amahs, cleaners, the *tukang kebun* (gardener) or *tukang ayer* (water carrier). Entry to the spaces of these residences would have been closed to all non-British persons except a designated few.

Again, this cognitive dissonance was evident where Chinatown shop houses were concerned. There was again, little regard for the exploitive narratives embedded within these sites: as many as eight coolies shared one

¹⁰⁶ I mention Bukit Brown here only to point out the public concern. The cemetery is an interesting historical conundrum. While it is colonial in that it was used during the colonial era and contain remains of colonial migrant labor, its historicity is different from the Raffles Museum. This is not to claim however, that it is free of narratives of exploitation.

room and one piss pot as toilet within their narrow constructions. The social history of the coolies who supplied the muscle for the plantations and docks and whose labor the wealthy Chinese and British merchants astutely secured through a cycle of opium debt¹⁰⁷ had been mysteriously deleted. Internet blogs and online newspaper articles reveal that these structures had been emptied of their historical social meanings and had been recontextualized into objects of nostalgia and romance.¹⁰⁸ It was a non-Singaporean, James Warren, who called historical attention to the coolie's narrative and this underscores the Singaporean dissonance that I am after here.¹⁰⁹

In my view, the Singaporean's simultaneous lack of interest in colonial impacts on the one hand and affection for selected aspects of the past on the other were historically significant because they indicated fissures in the Singaporean historical imaginary. There was a disconnect between the sites' histories i.e., their chronological timelines and their historicities, i.e., their "authenticities" as "testimony to the history" these

¹⁰⁷ Trocki, Carl A., "The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy," in *Singapore: Wealth, Power and the Culture of Control* (Routledge, 2006). 19-23

¹⁰⁸ Yap Li Yin, "Heritage Gems. Preserving the Magic of Colonial-Era Raffles Hotel.," Khalid, Cam, "Black and White House in Singapore/Heritage Bungalows We Love," Honeycombers (blog), accessed April 15, 2018, <https://thehoneycombers.com/singapore/black-and-white-houses-in-singapore/>.

¹⁰⁹ Warren, James Francis, *Rickshaw Coolie: A History of Singapore, 1880-1940* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2003).

sites experienced¹¹⁰ and that importantly, endowed them meanings.

It also suggested that there was a lack of understanding of the multifarious means through which colonial dominance was performed and that there were historical ramifications: certain narratives were sustained and perpetuated while others were deleted. This thesis's historicizing of the Raffles Museum will address such deletions and recontextualizations. It will offer a historical accounting of the cultural and social circumstances under which Singapore's colonial structures were created, and that in turn, they created, and thereby, add to the understanding of colonial spatial constructs.¹¹¹

Last and finally, this thesis will offer suggestions as to how former colonies can retrieve the spaces, histories, and identities that colonization denied or deleted. It will suggest that, rather than as sites of past confrontations, former colonies use their colonial museums as sites of historical authorships, and thereby, with a view to the future. §

¹¹⁰ Arendt, Hannah, ed., "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations. Walter Benjamin, Essays and Reflections*, trans. Zohn, Harry (New York: Schocken Books, in agreement with Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968).

¹¹¹ Edwards, Norman, *The Singapore House and Residential Life, 1819-1939*, first ed 1991 (Singapore: Talisman Publishing, original Oxford UP, 2017).

CHAPTER 2

Biography:

An Institution of the Imperial Season

It was six o'clock one morning in 1823 that all the white men, the Sultan, the Temenggong and the Malays, gathered outside the building...A moment later Mr. Raffles arrived ...He took a golden rupee out of his purse and placed it in the stone. Other white men also put money into it, to a total of some eighty or ninety dollars. A Chinese smith melted some tin and welded a cover on the hole so that nobody could ever open it. Then the stone was placed under the doorway. As the door was raised into position a salute of twelve guns was fired from the hill. After this Mr. Raffles gave a name to the building, 'The Institution.'

— Abdullah bin Kadir, *The Hikayat Abdullah*

In his *Hikayat Abdullah*, Malaccan-born scribe, translator, and Malay language teacher, Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, confirms 1823 as the Raffles Museum's founding year. The museum was located first within the Raffles Institution at Bras Basah Road, relocated twice again and finally, permanently located in the building designed by Henry Edward McCallum in 1887. This is now occupied by the NMS.

All the three institutions established at Raffles's 1 April 1823 meeting

began their institutional lives with the moniker "Singapore," and all three were eponymously renamed: the college as the Raffles Institution in 1868¹¹² and the museum and library as the Raffles Library and Museum on 18 June 1874.¹¹³ Between 1874 and 1957 the Raffles Museum and Library functioned essentially as one entity under a single administration. The two institutions were separated in 1957 through the passages of The Raffles Museum Ordinance or Ordinance 30, which legally constituted the museum as a "separate legal body and institution," and The Raffles Library Ordinance, which legally constituted the Raffles Library from a subscription library into a free public library.¹¹⁴

Since the three institutions were founded as a single entity, they share histories until circa 1874, after which the museum shared historical documentation with the Library till 1957. The changes in names and their shared histories create some confusion, and it is useful to clarify some of the meanings covered by the term the "Raffles Museum."

The term "Raffles Museum" was used to refer to the collecting institution, but at various times, specifically to mean only the museum's

¹¹² Tan, Kevin Y.L., *Of Whales and Dinosaurs: The Story of Singapore's Natural History Museum* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015). 13;

¹¹³ Haviland, H.D., "Annual Report," Annual Report (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum, 1893), National Museum of Singapore.

¹¹⁴ Tan, Kevin Y.L., *Of Whales and Dinosaurs*.121

natural history collections. In addition, early natural history references used "Raffles Museum" but actually meant the museum's Reference Collection, which was only half of the museum's bicameral natural history collection. The other half was the display collection of mammals which the museum exhibited in its galleries, but probably only after 1875 because the 1874 *Annual Report* shows that a natural history museum was still not extant that year.¹¹⁵

Usually accessed only by researchers and scholars for scientific research, the Reference Collection comprised specimens for identification, and was *the* Raffles Museum which became known as a Far East research nexus in the late 1800s till the late 1930s. In the museum's later records the term was more inclusive and was used to mean the institution as well as its collections. In any event, the name "Raffles Museum" could and often meant, simply the building and/or collection sited on Stamford Road.

In this study, three terms are used. By "the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library" I refer to the Raffles Museum's earliest history because the museum then was part of Raffles Institution. I use "the Raffles Museum and Library" to denote that part of the museum's biography (circa 1874 to 1957) when the Raffles Museum and Raffles Library were

¹¹⁵ Randell, in Little, R., "Annual Report, 1874, Library and Museum," Annual Report (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum, April 12, 1875), National Museum of Singapore.

administered as one entity. I use "Raffles Museum" when the discussion refers specifically only to museum, and when the library is not involved. As far as possible, I try to align the museum's chronological developments through these terms. Finally, I use "collections" to refer to the assemblages of natural history or ethnographic artifacts.

Becoming the Raffles Museum

At his meeting on 1 April 1823, Raffles laid out detailed plans for the educational institution. He specified the colleges, the staffing, collected almost \$8,000 (Spanish) as start-up funds and allotted lands at a follow-up meeting. Despite his detailed planning, the construction of the institution and its two adjuncts, the museum and the library, ceased shortly after the laying of the foundation stone. A letter dated 11 December 1824 from the institution's treasurer, A.L. Johnston, reported that "the funds of the Institution in [their] hands [were] all expended..."¹¹⁶

Various reasons have been cited for the depletion of funds. One account attributes it to an underestimation of construction costs by the incumbent Executive Engineer and Surveyor of Public Land, Lieutenant

¹¹⁶ Johnston, A.L., Treasurer, Singapore Institution, "Letter to Maxwell, J.A., Secretary to the Singapore Institution," December 11, 1824, Singapore National Library, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/printheritage/detail/f105e396-d837-47e5-94e9-465f995e8948.aspx?s=Johnston,%20A\L>.

Philip Jackson (1802-1879) who submitted a plan and received a commission to build the college for \$15,000 (Spanish) within twelve months.¹¹⁷ Another account attributes the depletion to poor construction quality and its subsequent rejection by Jackson.¹¹⁸ Whichever the reason, the college Raffles planned stood as an unfinished building for the next fifteen years.

The fifteen-year delay in building the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library is significant in the larger context of Singapore's history because it reflects how colonies were administered and run: ad hoc, on a shoe-string, with trade being paramount in administrative and private agenda. The committee's inability to garner energy and support for the completion of the construction of the college was thus symptomatic of deeper issues related to these colonial interests. From 1823 to 1826, however, the delay was largely due to resistance from the Resident, John Crawfurd; and a detailed discussion of this delay follows under *Performativities of Founding* (Chapter 4).

It would only be on 27 August 1835 that plans for the resumption of construction were taken up again. That day, a committee assembled by a

¹¹⁷ "Singapore Institution, Minutes of Meeting," April 1, 1823, 104, Online, BookSG, National Archives of Singapore, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/printheritage/detail/c862d6a7-03d3-4333-9191-36bb78288b2f.aspx>; Wijeysingha, E., *The Eagle Breeds a Gryphon. The Story of Raffles Institution, 1823-1985*, 33.

¹¹⁸ Cornelius-Takahama, Vernon, "Philip Jackson," 1999, http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_140_2005-01-20.html.

merchant resident in Singapore, Alexander Guthrie, met in the Court House.¹¹⁹ At that meeting, a resolution was passed to modify Raffles's initial plans, and specifically, two points that appeared to have held up the establishment of the college: first, that "no one religion should form the basis of the education provided," and second, that the institution be a school rather than the college planned by the Raffles meeting.

The stipulation of religion, which appears to have prevented local Malay rulers from sending their children, is a topic that cannot be dealt with without dedicated research and closer examination. We can infer however, that the committee modified the original strong evangelical agenda that the founding fathers Robert Morrison, William Wilberforce, and Charles Grant prescribed. The meeting also drew up salaries for teaching staff and resolved to invite the Governor, Recorder, and Resident to preside as patrons. This led to a promise of a monthly government subsidy of \$100, which the committee used to repair the incomplete building. Additional funds for the establishment were also derived from subscriptions and the appropriation of money from The Monument Fund that had been set up to establish some form of a commemoration for Raffles who died on 5 July

¹¹⁹ Wijesingha, E., *The Eagle Breeds a Gryphon*. 58

1826.¹²⁰

By December 1837, the building for Raffles's proposed college was completed and leased out to the Singapore Free School, a school founded by the Reverend F. J. Darrah in 1834. So, while the "college" Raffles envisioned was abandoned, an educational institution was nevertheless operating, and it appears that a library, serving the school, was also functioning soon after.

First Accession

While Raffles's educational institution began operating in 1837, the planned accompanying museum did not. An entity that can be deemed as having performed characteristic museum work, such as collecting and display, emerged only twenty six years after the laying of the foundation stone.

On 26 January 1849, the incumbent Governor, William John Butterworth, informed H.C. Caldwell, the Chairman of the Singapore Library, that "His Highness, Sree Maharajah, the Tamoonggong of Johore" had offered two ancient Achehnese gold coins for display in the Institution's library.¹²¹ The Temenggong had acquired the coins from convicts working on the road to Telok Blangah and it is this accession of the two coins and their display

¹²⁰ Buckley, Charles Burton, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore (With Portraits and Illustrations)*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Singapore: Fraser and Neave, Ltd, 1902). 122-129

¹²¹ "Singapore Library," *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, February 15, 1849, Digitized, Newspapers SG, eresources, National Library Board, Singapore. The name of the Temenggong is not stated but it is probably Temenggong Daing Ibrahim.

that technically qualified a museum as having been established. Even then, while the Raffles Museum was now an "entity," it was no more than a small display in the corner of the library's reading room.

Following the acquisition of the coins, in March 1849, two months after the passing of a resolution to establish a museum by the Managing Committee of the Library, rules for regulation and procurement of contributions for objects were drafted.¹²² Thus, while the Raffles Museum 1823 is officially the museum's founding date since a foundation stone was laid for it that year, it is only in 1849 that an entity performing museum functions can be said to have existed. Calling the Raffles Museum a "museum" at this point of its history may appear to be a highly inadequate glossing of a contemporary public museum, which Dillenburg defines as a "building, place, or institution devoted to the acquisition, conservation, study, exhibition, and educational interpretation of objects having scientific, historical, or artistic value."¹²³ It is however, an appropriate description for the museums of the Raffles Museum's genre and period.

First Functions

There is little information of what happened in the museum between

¹²² Tan, *Of Whales and Dinosaurs*. 9-10

¹²³ Dillenburg, Eugene, "What, If Anything, Is a Museum?," *The Exhibitionist*, no. Spring'11 (n.d.): 8-13.

the accession of the two coins in 1849 and 1874. We can establish with certainty however, that its early work involved providing colonial commercial intelligence. This is evident from a Notice in the 24 May 1850 edition of the *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* which announced that a local committee had been appointed to oversee the collection of objects for the Great Exhibition to be held in London in 1851.¹²⁴ It is also substantiated by the exhibition's *Illustrated Catalogue* and the museum's first *Annual Report* of 1874. There, the Chairman of the Committee, R. Little commented that for:

want of proper accommodation the formation of the Museum and Permanent Exhibition has received scant attention, although many specimens have been obtained, chief amongst these are a collection of woods presented by Mr. J. Meldrum, a collection of stone adzes, arrows &c., from New Guinea from 'H. M.S. Basilisk' and a similar collection of specimens from Borneo.¹²⁵

The *Report* verifies that the museum's existent exhibition *praxis* was related to commercial commodities, such as woods, and that objects were

¹²⁴ "Notice on Great Exhibition, 1851," The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser, May 24, 1850, NL 1587, Newspapers SG, eresources, National Library Board, Singapore.

¹²⁵ Little, R., "Raffles Library and Museum," Annual Report (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum, 1874), National Museum of Singapore.

assembled ad hoc. Raffles's mandate for the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library to serve imperial trade is also seen in the fact that it was trade that provided the impetus to bring the long-dormant plans for the museum to fruition.

The 1874 *Annual Report* stated that Governor Harry Ord had submitted Circular 2 from Lord Kimberley, Secretary of State for the Colonies to the local Legislative Assembly. The circular proposed plans for a "united action on the part of the Colonies, to establish and maintain, at very reasonable cost to each colony, a permanent Exhibition of Colonial Products in connection with the Exhibition Building at South Kensington."¹²⁶ Kimberley's plan was for an Exhibition that was a "collective illustration on an adequate scale of the specific characteristics of all the Colonies." By "characteristics" we can infer Kimberley to mean natural resources available, social demographics, and in all probability, extraction assessments. Stating that a Legislative Council meeting on 4 June 1873 had reached a consensus to support the project, the *Report* shows that the Council Meeting had voted to contribute £404 9s 6d towards the Exhibition.

While we do not know what transpired between 1840 and 1874, the 1874 *Annual Report* provides clear evidence of what *had not* happened. R.

¹²⁶ Little, R.

Little, who authored the report, stated that there was "some little difficulty in drawing up the First Report inasmuch as the Library and Museum having only been in existence a few months."¹²⁷ It also stated that nothing was to be done till the arrival of the new Governor, Sir Andrew Clarke.

Upon Clarke's arrival, the Principal Civil Medical Officer of the Straits Settlements, H. L. Randell, wrote to the colonial secretary on 8 December 1873, requesting him to seek the newly-arrived Governor's opinion on the "desirability...of taking such steps as may be necessary for endeavouring to Establish in Singapore, a Museum for the collection of objects of Natural History."¹²⁸ His letter confirms that the natural history collection the Raffles Museum gained fame for was still not extant in 1874.

Clarke's interest and role in the Raffles Museum's biography is significant in several ways. His support of the Raffles Museum was a performativity of colonialism itself because it was not purely grounded in a diligence to administrative responsibilities. It was in fact, a *hommage* to Raffles, who was one of his three heroes, and to whom he openly referred to as the "illustrious Raffles."¹²⁹ Immediately upon assuming gubernatorial duties,

¹²⁷ Little, R.

¹²⁸ Little, R.

¹²⁹ Daly, D. D., "Surveys and Explorations in the Native States of the Malayan Peninsula, 1875-82," in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, vol. 4, no. 7 (The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), 1882), 410, <https://archive.org/stream/proceedings16keltgoog#page/n432/search/raffles>.

Clarke announced "his intention of following in the footsteps of Sir Stamford Raffles, and [that] he was pleased to do anything in his power to promote the success of an institution founded by that distinguished man."¹³⁰

Like Raffles, Clarke was a "strong imperialist,"¹³¹ and he duplicated Raffles just as Raffles did Hastings and Minto. Each continued and furthered the imperial aims of a predecessor, and therein perhaps, lies the answer to the question of how a small island in Atlantic managed to dominate large swaths of the earth for over four centuries.

In any event, Clarke, who assumed governorship on 4 November 1873, moved the museum forward. He replied to Randell's letter on 1 April 1874, exactly fifty-one years after Raffles's founding meeting, that he was "glad to find some one [sic] moving in this matter" as he had been considering the possible steps for participating in the Permanent Exhibition of colonial products that Kimberley was attempting to organize. He concluded his letter by asking if it was possible to combine a library with the museum.¹³²

In an undated memo, but it would have been almost immediately, the Acting Assistant Colonial Secretary, E. H. Watts, acting on Clarke's behalf, requested R. Little to chair a committee Clarke had formed. The com-

¹³⁰ Vetch, Col. R. H. and Grabam, Lieut.-Gen. Sir Gerald, eds., *Life of Lieut.-General the Hon. Sir Andrew Clarke*, Lon (London: John Murray, 1905), 152.

¹³¹ Vetch, Col. R. H. and Grabam, Lieut.-Gen. Sir Gerald, *Life of Lieut.-General the Hon. Sir Andrew Clarke*.

¹³² Little, R., "Annual Report, 1874, Library and Museum."

mittee was to oversee participation in the Permanent Exhibition in London as well as the establishment of the natural history museum Randell proposed. The members named were Little, W. R. Scott, Major McNair, Randell himself, a Dr. Anderson, the Telegraph Manager Mr. Fisher, Brigade Major Capt. Lloyd, and the Chinese merchant Ho Ah Kay. Eighteen other members were added later to the Committee, of whom one, Tan Kim Ching, was a local.

By 24 April 1824, the committee established was able to hold a Preliminary Meeting at the Raffles Institution, during which they proposed a Permanent Secretary to supervise the Library and Museum. This resulted in the appointment of the museum's first full-time employee, James Collins, who assumed responsibility for three portfolios: as Economic Botanist, Librarian, and Secretary to the committee on 8 May 1874. With that, the Raffles Museum emerged as a functioning, if modest, entity. Collin's arrival saw the museum become active, especially in economic botany. This period was the Raffles Museum's apogee as *the* research and collecting nexus in Southeast Asia.

Historical Significance: Collecting, Research, Exploration, and Historical Agency

One aspect of the Raffles Museum's cultural biography that has received little attention except from Kevin Tan, and only in relation to its natural history collection, is the museum's antiquity. It is impossible to precise-

ly place the Raffles Museum within the chronology of all the museums in the world because many have unrecorded founding dates. However, a chronological bandwidth covering its founding in 1823 to 1849 when the museum made its first accession makes the museum contemporaneous with the Altes Museum, Berlin (established 1830), the Smithsonian (established 1846), Victoria and Albert Museum (established 1852), the American Museum of Natural History (hereafter, AMNH, established 1868), the Chicago Field Museum (established 1893), and the Natural History Museum, London (established 1881). Only two museums precede the Raffles Museum in the Malay/Indonesian Archipelago: the *Amboynsche Rariteit Kamer* in Amboina established by the Dutch merchant botanist, George Eberhard Rumphius (no longer existent, 1662?), which is acknowledged to be the first museum in Southeast Asia, and Museum Nasional Indonesia, founded on 24 April 1778. The other three museums in British Malaya were established later: the Perak Museum in Taiping in 1883, the Sarawak Museum in 1886, and the Selangor Museum in 1906.¹³³

Collecting Center and Assembly Point

By the latter part of the 1800s, the Raffles Museum had emerged as

¹³³ Abu Talib Ahmad, *Museums, History, and Culture in Malaysia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014), 26.

an important center for the exploration, ethnographic and anthropological field research in and of Southeast Asia. Among the earliest to use Singapore in such a fashion was Alfred Russel Wallace.

Arriving in April 1854, Wallace spent some two hundred and twenty-eight days in Singapore out of his eight years in the area.¹³⁴ There is no record of Wallace having had any direct connection to the Raffles Museum itself probably because the museum was not fully or formally functioning as a "museum." However, considering the size of the expatriate community then resident on the island, it is highly probable that Wallace was familiar with residents involved in its collecting or dispatch of artifacts outwards. The extensive collecting, travelling, observing, and thinking about evolution that Wallace undertook during this period resulted in *The Malay Archipelago* (1869). He garnered 110,000 insects, 7,500 shells, 8,050 birds, 410 mammal and reptiles and over 5,000 new species,¹³⁵ reflective of the scale of natural history collecting that was conducted in the area during the period. Under successive curatorships during this period, the Raffles Museum developed into *the* "famed Raffles Museum...repository of some of

¹³⁴ van Wyhe, John, "Wallace in Singapore," Wallace Online (Website), ed 2012, (<http://wallace-online.org/>).

¹³⁵ Beccaloni, George William, "Alfred Russel Wallace and Natural Selection: The Real Story," scholarly, The Alfred Russel Wallace Website, January 12, 2008, <http://wallacefund.info/content/biography-wallace>.

the most significant collections of Southeast Asian fauna in the world..."¹³⁶

Expedition Launch Site and Center

The museum's growth and significance were due to Singapore's centrality in British Southeast Asian politics as well as its proximity to the richness of Southeast Asia's biodiversity and indigenous communities. An infrastructure acquired from a long shipping tradition, together probably with the security represented by a strong British naval and political presence, made Singapore and the Raffles Museum chandling and transit stations, as well as mandatory stops for the career, hobby, or itinerant ethnographer, anthropologist, naturalist, and explorer who travelled to and within Southeast Asia during the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.

The museum's history is thus an important document of the collecting of, and within, Southeast Asia and the immediate areas beyond, like New Guinea. Its archives, for example, are a rich record of the comings-and-goings of many key scholars of the period in the region. Its 1898 *Annual Report* shows that "Professor Haddon with Messers. Seligman and Wray [who] passed through in December on their way from the Torres Straits to

¹³⁶ Stuebing, Robert B., "Faunal Collecting in Southeast Asia: Fundamental Need or Blood Sport," *Raffles Bulletin of Zoology* 46, no. 1 (1998): 1–10.

Borneo."¹³⁷ The gentlemen were Alfred Cort Haddon, Charles Gabriel Seligman and Sidney Ray, whose name appears to have been misspelt as "Wray." The three were members of the five-men Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits in 1898 that also included W. H. R. Rivers as well as Anthony Wilkins.¹³⁸ That particular expedition was a watershed event in anthropological intellectualism and methodology because it marked the "development of British anthropology, a nascent form of the modern school of systematic, scientific, sociologically based fieldwork."¹³⁹ Besides revolutionizing anthropological methodology, the expedition contributed to a "reasoned and equitable response to and understanding of western Melanesia more generally."¹⁴⁰

Likewise, another Cambridge University Expedition (1899-1900) under W. W. Skeat and F. F. Laidlaw was launched from Singapore.¹⁴¹ Yet another and more important one, the 1910 British Ornithological Union

¹³⁷ "Annual Report, 1898, Raffles Museum and Library" (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum, 1898), National Museum of Singapore.

¹³⁸ If this museum entry is not a misspelling of Ray's name, which is most likely because Ray was a member of Haddon's 1898 expedition, then the visitor named was probably Leonard Wray, curator at the Perak Museum from 1883-1908. Wray could have escorted the Haddon group on their visit to the museum.

¹³⁹ George Stocking cited in Edwards, Elizabeth, "Making Histories: The Torres Straits Expedition of 1898," *Pacific Studies* 20, no. 4 (1997), <http://docplayer.net/25146476-Making-histories-the-torres-strait-expedition-of-elizabeth-edwards-pitt-rivers-museum-university-of-oxford.html>.14-15

¹⁴⁰ Denoon cited in Edwards, Elizabeth. Making Histories.

¹⁴¹ Skeat, W. W. and Laidlaw, F. F., "The Cambridge University Expedition to Parts of the Malay Peninsula," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26, no. Pt. 4 (1953).

(BOU) Expedition to New Guinea which Ballard assessed to have "provided science with the first, long-anticipated evidence for Pygmies in New Guinea,"¹⁴² also used Singapore as expedition entry point. C.H.R. Grant, who replaced W. Stalker who drowned shortly after the expedition start, wrote in his report that on receiving the offer of a place on the expedition, he "sent a wire in the affirmative, took a boat to England, and within three weeks of arrival had sailed in a P&O boat for Singapore... [from where he] embarked on a Dutch boat for Aru Islands, and arrived in New Guinea in August 10..."¹⁴³

In 1912, the Raffles Museum was the launch site for yet another British landmark expedition. This was the second British expedition of 1912-1913 to New Guinea and it involved the museum more extensively because its co-explorer was Cecil Boden Kloss. Then with the Federated Malay States (FMS) Museums in Kuala Lumpur, Kloss later became director of the Raffles Museum. Correspondence between Kloss and Wollaston show that they used Singapore and the Raffles Museum as a base for comparing provision, equipment, and service prices. The letters also reveal much about

¹⁴² Ballard, Chris, "Collecting Pygmies: The 'Tapiro' and the British Ornithologists' Union Expedition to Dutch New Guinea, 1910-1911," in *Hunting the Gatherers. Ethnographic Collectors, Agents and Agency in Melanesia, 1870s-1930s*, ed. O'Hanlon, Michael and Robert L. Welsch, vol. 6, 8 vols., *Methodology and History in Anthropology* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000).

¹⁴³ Grant, C. H. B., "The Expedition of the British Ornithological Union 1909-1911," *Ibis* 101, no. 1 (January 1959): 65-70.

the infrastructure that had developed in Singapore for such expeditions.

Wollaston's letter on 9 July 1912, for example, stated that 10 hurricane lamps

ought to be at the Museum with other things...the Sarawak coolies will arrive at Singapore on the 22nd, so they will have only one night to wait, and I have asked Robinson to arrange with the police for this night's lodging. The Borneo Co. will bring them off the Sarawak ship and you [Boden Kloss] must arrange with them about putting the men on the board the Paketvaart on the 23rd.¹⁴⁴

Wollaston's note outlines the infrastructure that had developed on the island to service collecting, research, and exploration. Merchant companies like the Borneo Company, for example, handled the receipt of large equipment, like the boat that Wollaston eventually shipped out from England, as well as for meeting and transfer of coolies. Public organizations, in this case the police, provided lodging for these coolies probably because many were convicts, but more likely because police cells were the only form of accommodation available to coolies. The same letter records Wollaston saying that he was "having his letters sent to the Hongkong and Shanghai

¹⁴⁴ Wollaston, A.F. R., "Letter to C. Boden Kloss," July 9, 1912, Box 6/7, National Archives of Singapore.

Bank," which obviously provided him with *poste restante* services.¹⁴⁵

Other national expeditions likewise used Singapore and the Raffles Museum as expedition launch sites. There are records of Dutch as well as French expeditions but the most noteworthy are the American expeditions because they document the scale and extent of the collecting that Americans undertook in Southeast Asia and underscores my point that the collecting *praxes* during this period was related to Western primacy over the non-West. I want to side-step a little here to discuss American collecting in more detail because it concerns one of the Raffles Museum's major collectors and is also an essential aspect of the region's environmental history and the Raffles Museum's function. These aspects however, comprise a significant lacuna in present literature on the Raffles Museum.

The museum's records show that American expeditions, such as those from the Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) at Harvard, used the Raffles Museum as expedition resource. Harold J. Coolidge Jnr. who was a regular correspondent of Frederick Chasen's (*fl.* 1921-1942), sought Chasen's advice and aid regularly. The scale of American collecting is evidenced in a letter dated 20 July 1937 from Coolidge which reveals that the MCZ had expedition teams working in *three* parts of North Borneo

¹⁴⁵ Wollaston, A.F. R., 9 July, National Archives

simultaneously that year.¹⁴⁶ That same letter asked Chasen if he had any interest in buying a leftover ammunition cache of "3,000 or 4,000 rounds of 10-gauge No. 12 specially loaded for [them] by the Remington Arms Company."

American collecting during that period was also significant in that it was their scale that eventually provoked a change in the Raffles Museum's function. It led to Chasen's activism for wildlife protection in Southeast Asia and a collaborative effort between him and Baas Becking of Buitenzorg to stop the use "of the Dutch East Indies by a great many scientific and pseudo-scientific adventurers as a treasure island..."¹⁴⁷

Chasen's interest in arresting American collecting was evident as early as 17 June 1937 when in a letter to Captain A. Ritchie of the Game Warden's Office, he informed Ritchie that "the Americans have overdone it at last and that [his] latest polish to an old Minute paper has had the effect of totally protecting the *Orang Utan* in Sarawak."¹⁴⁸

Our next record of his attempts to control American collecting is in his correspondence with Baas Becking in Java, who wanted to petition the

¹⁴⁶ Coolidge, Jnr. H. J., "To Chasen, F. N.," July 20, 1937, MSA 1140, National Archives of Singapore.

¹⁴⁷ Becking, Prof. Baas, "To Chasen, F. N.," November 26, 1939, MSA 1141, National Archives of Singapore.

¹⁴⁸ Chasen, F.N., "To Capt. A. Ritchie, Office of the Chief Game Warden, FMS," June 17, 1937, MS 1141/000115, National Archives of Singapore. The widespread slaughter of orang utan is well documented in the Raffles Museums archive. See Fig. 5.

Governor General for legal restrictions to wildlife collecting. Chasen's concern over the scale is evident in his reply to Becking, where he noted that the "Vanderbilt expedition mark[ed] the culminating point of a curve that need[ed] checking."¹⁴⁹ These records from the Raffles Museum are significant as historical records of the nature, extent, and intensity of Western collecting and methods, as well as the provenance and acquisition histories of Western museum natural history collections.

As Document of Eighteenth/Nineteenth-Century Anthropology

As a center for the ethnographic fieldwork that was undertaken in the Indian and Pacific Oceans as well as insular and mainland Southeast Asia during this period, the Raffles Museum is also significant in the intellectual histories of the fledgling disciplines of anthropology and ethnography. Its collections and archives thus reflect the scholarship interests then.

Interest in Papua New Guinean and Malayan Negrito anthropology for example, is evident in the work done by Nikolai Miklouho-

¹⁴⁹ Chasen, F.N., "To Becking, Prof. Baas," December 1, 1939, MSA 1141, National Archives of Singapore. The Vanderbilt Expedition here was most probably the George Vanderbilt Sumatran Expedition of 1936-1939 under the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. While collection figures have been cited, they are from an uncredited source, so they have been left out here.

Maclay,¹⁵⁰ whose visits were frequent enough to qualify him for an honorary membership to the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society which was headquartered at the museum. Minutes of the society's meeting on 28 February 1878 has its President, the Ven. Archdeacon G. F. Hose, voting Maclay, "the distinguished Russian Traveller, who was at present residing in the Settlement, and who was as well known" as an Honorary Member that day.¹⁵¹

Records from the museum show that it functioned as an active, scholarly research resource for archaeology and Asian history well into the 1950s. Among those who corresponded with and consulted the museum were Bernard Pierre Groslier,¹⁵² known for his studies on Angkor Wat, Schuyler van Rensselaer Cammann,¹⁵³ whose work on Qing Dynasty Dragon robes remain among the most definitive in this field, as well as notable scholars of Asian history such as Paul Wheatley, Richard Winstedt, Roland Braddell, Ken Tregonning, Pieter van Stein Callenfels, and Wang Gungwu.

¹⁵⁰ Stocking Jr., George W., "Maclay, Kubary and Manilowski. Archetypes from the Dreamtime of Anthropology."

¹⁵¹ Hose, Archdeacon M. A., "Inaugural Address by the President, Royal Asiatic Society," February 28, 1878, Archive.org, <https://archive.org/stream/journalofstrait121878roya#page/6/mode/2up>.

¹⁵² Moore, Elizabeth, "Bernard Philippe Groslier 1926-1986," *Asian Perspectives* xxvii, no. 2 (87 1986).

¹⁵³ Cammann, Schuyler Van Rensselaer, "Letter," June 5, 1953, Folder 36, Gibson-Hill Collection, unaccessed, Asian Civilisations Museum.

As the center of Southeast Asian natural history and anthropological research, the museum's records also document the caliber and type of research that was conducted in the region between the late 1800s and the 1940s. Registration lists from the museum show that researchers who used the museum include Gustav Heinrich Ralph von Koenigswald, the paleontologist best known for his work on hominids in Java, and H. G. Quaritch-Wales, known for his study of prehistoric communities in Kedah.¹⁵⁴

The museum archives also document the anthropological debates that were circulating within the discipline. An exchange between Chasen, Michael Tweedie and W. A. Mijsberg of the Hoogleraar Medische Hoogeschool in Batavia, for example, evidences the controversy that the human jaw excavated from Guak Kepah in Perak, Malaya, initiated in the scholarship of the time. Mijsberg wrote on 19 February 1938 to say that he understood from the comments in No. 2 and 3 of the *Bulletin of the Raffles Museum* why his paper on the Paleomelanesid jaw had roused interest. It appeared, he said, that there was still doubt regarding the presence of melanesid in early human remains in Malacca and "personally [he was]

¹⁵⁴ "Accession Register, ACM," n.d., National Heritage Board, ref. David Henkel.

only too glad that [he] was able to strengthen [Huxley's] view."¹⁵⁵ While the implications of Mijsberg's comments are outside the academic scope of this thesis, it is clear that they refer to the period's theories regarding migration patterns and the origins of Southeast Asian peoples. More to the point, they demonstrate the Raffles Museum's involvement in central academic interests of the time.

Bioprospecting and Empire

As an institution, the Raffles Museum is significant in imperial and colonial histories as a knowledge center for imperial trade and for the pioneering work on two of British bioprospecting's best known and most impactful successes — gutta percha and rubber. Its function as knowledge center began as early as 1850.

As evidenced from the *Illustrated and Descriptive Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations* of 1851, the museum served as a center for commercial intelligence. In 1874, with the arrival of James Collins as the museum's first full-time employee, the museum became a node in the economic botanical prospecting network that the British established throughout their colonies. These aspects of the museum are dis-

¹⁵⁵ Mijsberg, W. A., "Letter to Michael Tweedie," February 19, 1938, MSA 1140/001846, National Archives of Singapore.

cussed in full in Chapter 7.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the Raffles Museum's significance in terms of its antiquity and its role in eighteenth/nineteenth-century exploration, ethnographic and natural history research and intellectualism. Its founding by Raffles in 1823, and its delayed materialization were symptomatic of British colonial priorities. It materialized only with the arrival of Governor Andrew Clarke in 1874, and then within Clarke's mission to complete Raffles's projects as his personal act of *hommage* to Raffles.

From the 1850s, however, with the development of Singapore as a British Far East naval hub, both island and the museum became important stops for early collectors and naturalists working in the area. They became centers for both fieldwork and expeditions in areas as far south as New Guinea, the Indian Ocean, and both insular and mainland Southeast Asia. By 1874, the museum would be involved in British bioprospecting and became the site for the pioneering work for two major colonial products, gutta percha and rubber. §

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical Frameworks:

The Power of An Institution and An Institution of Power

Institutions systematically direct individual memory and channel our perceptions into forms compatible with the relations they authorize. They fix processes that are essentially dynamic, they hide their influence, and they rouse our emotions to a standardized pitch on standardized issues. Add to all this that they endow ourselves with rightness and send their mutual corroboration cascading through all the levels of our information system. No wonder they easily recruit us into joining their narcissistic self-contemplation.

— Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think*

In her 1986 seminal theorizing of social institutions in *How Institutions Think*, Mary Douglas provides a platform from which the potency of the Raffles Museum as a social institution and an institution of colonial power will be made in this dissertation. Social institutions, Douglas points out, provide the origins of our thought, namely, "the classifications, logical operations, and guiding metaphors" by which the individual decides

what is "common sense and what is nonsensical."¹⁵⁶

No social institution illustrates Douglas's ideas better than the public museum in eighteenth-nineteenth-century empire metropolises. As Robin Boast notes, they were the "premier colonial institutions... that created the ordered representations that contained, objectified, and reduced the colonized world for the paternalistic imperialism that characterized the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."¹⁵⁷ The public museum this thesis asserts, exemplified Douglas's "thinking" institution in that it helped the West to visualize what it thought about itself vis-à-vis the non-West. In colonial peripheries, these thoughts that museums perpetuated would be employed and used in colonial markings of spaces, administration and policy making. It is necessary therefore, that we begin the discussion of the Raffles Museum's role in colonial dominance with a consideration of the cultural potency that is centered at the museum as a social institution.

Thinking, Remembering, Forgetting, Censuring

The public museum's potency as a "thinking" institution is evident for example, in its ability to set agenda. When a subject appears within museum spaces as a theme, it is immediately designated worthy of public

¹⁵⁶ Douglas, Mary, *How Institutions Think*, First (Syracuse, New York, USA: Syracuse U P, 1986).

¹⁵⁷ Boast, Robin, "Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited," *Museum Anthropology* 34, no. 1 (2011): 56–70.

attention and debate. When excluded from museum spaces, a silencing occurs because both awareness and dialogue of that subject are effectively censored out of public attention and consciousness.

Historically therefore, museums are potent mechanisms in collective awareness and memory. Slavery, for example, was not a subject in American museums till as late as 1979. Thus, narratives of slaves and the history of slavery in the United States were effectively censored and silenced until then.¹⁵⁸ Likewise, in a parallel if converse mode, museums in the form of war memorials and living history spaces "think" by bearing witness, by preventing forgetting, as well as to censure. We have many examples of these, including the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide in Phnom Penh, but the one that I am most familiar with is the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial. The memorial fulfils this function of preventing forgetting and censure by its inscription of "Never Again" in five languages on one of its walls. The words are simple but an eloquent and unmistakable censure of German antisemitism and apathy during the Holocaust. In no small way, the artifacts that empires assembled from colonies during colonization of these territories also serve to prevent forgetting. They are reminders of past imperial supremacy and control.

¹⁵⁸ Ruffins, Davis Faith, "Revisiting the Old Plantation," in *Museum Frictions. Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Karp, Ivan et al. (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2007).

It is significant in this context as "thinking" institutions that museums have silenced colonialism. Despite its longevity, scale, obnoxiousness, and enduring effects, with few exceptions, colonialism has not appeared significantly as a theme in museum discourses of both former empire or periphery museums. The few major attempts to deal with colonialism are the Deutsches Historisches Museum 2016 exhibition on German colonialism, Pippa Skontes's critique of Western museum practices' complicity, as Butler calls it, with "colonialism and genocide,"¹⁵⁹ and Musée du quai Branly's 2011 exegesis on the human zoo, *"Exhibitions. L'invention du sauvage."*¹⁶⁰

Likewise, such historical silencing has been effected in the Raffles Museum. There is at present, no extant study that has addressed how locals were disenfranchised at the Raffles Museum and Library under British colonial rule, or how the museum served British colonial bioprospecting, or was utilized for the construction of the colonizer *Homo euopeaus*. Kevin Tan, however, has addressed in part, the colonial use of the Raffles Museum for removal of natural specimens in *Of Whales and Dinosaurs*.

In my view, this silencing of colonialism in current scholarship on the

¹⁵⁹ "Deutsches Historisches Museum: German Colonialism," accessed July 18, 2016, <https://www.dhm.de/en/ausstellungen/preview/german-colonialism.html>.; Butler, Shelley Ruth, "The Politics of Exhibiting Culture: Legacies and Possibilities," *Museum Anthropology* 23, no. 3 (2000): 74–92.

¹⁶⁰ Musée du Quai Branly, "Human Zoos. The Invention of the Savage (Exhibition. L'Invention Du Sauvage" (Exhibition, November 29, 2011), <http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/exhibitions-and-events/at-the-museum/exhibitions/event-details/e/exhibitions-34408/>.

Raffles Museum is the most critical aspect of Singapore's colonial history because it has in turn, silenced the museum's collusion with, and hence culpability, in British colonial processes of dominance, inferiorization, and subjugation. The result is that the scope and tenor of British colonial racism and subjugation have also been censored out of Singapore's colonial experience.

Within these premises of the public museum as an institution that "thinks," and that directs how a society thinks, this chapter will discuss the theoretical frameworks that demonstrate that the museum not only thinks, but specifically, how eighteenth/nineteenth-century thinking regarding the non-West and the possession of their material culture and resources made museum *praxes* "performativities of colonialism."¹⁶¹

I begin by assessing the state of current scholarship on the Raffles Museum and identifying the historical lacunae existent. I then elaborate this by a discussion on how collecting and museums were linked to power and the West's encounter with the non-West. I conclude by discussing the methodology that is suggested by these frameworks, and which I consider as vital for addressing the lacunae identified and for producing a more

¹⁶¹ Gosden, Chris, "On His Todd: Material Culture and Colonialism," in *Hunting the Gatherers. Ethnographic Collectors, Agents and Agency in Melanesia, 1870s-1930s*, ed. O'Hanlon, Michael and Robert L. Welsch, *Methodology and History in Anthropology* 6 (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000).

nuanced and holistic understanding of the Raffles Museum's historical role.

The State of Research

The number of extant works on the Raffles Museum is surprisingly small, and importantly, as one of this thesis's reviewers point out, very little of it is scholarly.¹⁶² At present, the body of literature on the Raffles Museum comprises four books and several "academic exercises" (the National University of Singapore's terminology for an undergraduate honors thesis), and a few journal articles on specific aspects of the Raffles Museum, such as the museum's collectors. The earliest of the four books on the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library is Eugene Wijesingha's history of the Raffles Institution, *The Eagle Breeds a Gryphon: The Story of Raffles Institution, 1823-1985* (first published 1962). Since the museum and library were established as adjuncts to the institution, the founding of the museum and library is covered in this book.

Both Wijesingha's study of the Raffles Institution and Tan's study of the Raffles Museum's Natural History collection are staunchly orthodox treatments of the Raffles Institution's and the Raffles Museum's founding histories. By orthodox I mean that they begin with the premise that Raffles founded the institutions for none other than humanitarian reasons, and that

¹⁶² I thank Examiner I for pointing this out.

they cite the founding as evidence of this humanitarianism and vision. Both works therefore emplot – Hayden White's term for history's fictive narrativising– the founding history of the Raffles Museum within a Rafflesian meta-narrative and trope.¹⁶³

This meta-narrative, Chapter 1 illustrates, dominates much of the historical documentation on Raffles, Singapore, and the Raffles Museum. It is illustrated for example, in Wijeysingha's concession that Raffles was an imperialist and his simultaneous exoneration of Raffles's imperialism with a claim that it was distinctively benevolent. Raffles, he states, stood "apart from the common run of imperialists" in many ways: he not only founded the institutions out of a non-imperialistic agenda that was rare for its time but in equally rare non-colonial spirit, "chose to identify with the ordinary people."¹⁶⁴

There is, in fact, far less evidence of Raffles's identifying with the locals than there is of him hobnobbing with the influential. We know that he had access to top echelons of British India and EIC administrations. No fewer than two governors-general, Minto and Hastings, supported him even when the congeniality of the Raffles-Hastings relationship fluctuated

¹⁶³ White, Hayden, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, US; London, UK: John Hopkins UP, 1973).

¹⁶⁴ Wijeysingha, E., *The Eagle Breeds a Gryphon*. 6

from time to time.

More significant in terms of Raffles's politics and gubernatorial style is his familiarity with the "gentlemen capitalists" who dominated London's trade and effectively, Whitehall. These included William Wilberforce and EIC director Charles Grant whom Raffles involved in the founding of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library as patrons. No less influential was William Marsden, the First Secretary of the Navy, who was a close, lifelong friend. Raffles's social ambit similarly, included major figures of the royal household, such as the Duchess of Somerset and Queen Charlotte, at whose estate he met Lord Amherst. Also noteworthy here is the fact that Raffles, during his time in Southeast Asia, mingled, negotiated, and socialized with local rulers in the region. Why the power, statuses and actions of these rulers have been relegated to the historical back burner is a subject that requires a separate detailed study.

As discussed in Chapter 1, a number of contemporary analyses of Raffles's governance in Java suggest that attributing his establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library to pure humanitarianism is reductionist and simplistic. Bayley, for example, gestures towards this when he notes that Raffles was as ruthless as the Dutch in quelling resistance on

the island.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, Webster notes that despite his widely-acknowledged abhorrence of slavery and subscription to free trade, Raffles used limited forced labor, retained certain Dutch monopolistic systems and sustained imperial control.¹⁶⁶ These assertions question at the very least, the degree and nuance of Raffles's commitment to abolitionism, if not Raffles's humanitarianism itself. Together with eye-witness accounts of his gibbetting of Sayid Yassin in 1823 that is discussed under *Raffles, Meta-narratives and His Legacy*, there is now evidence to suggest that Raffles's actions have to be evaluated more fully.

At the same time, Raffles's humanitarianism cannot be summarily dismissed because as Knapman shows, early British administrators frequently took a paradoxical and contradictory position regarding colonialism.¹⁶⁷ Thus, if there was humanitarianism involved in Raffles's establishing the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library, the probability is that it was more collateral rather than fundamental to his political strategy.

More important historically, however, is that all present literature, namely Liu, Tan, Wijeyasingha, and Rajamogan, read the Raffles Museum's

¹⁶⁵ Bayley cited in Webster, Anthony, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1890* (London, New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), 54.

¹⁶⁶ Webster, Anthony, *Gentlemen Capitalists*. 54

¹⁶⁷ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1870. John Crawford and the Politics of Equality*, Empires in Perspective (New York and London: Routledge, 2017). 27-29

history in isolation. Without the historical contexts within which the British established institutions or considerations of Raffles's political agenda, Raffles's objectives for the three institutions are taken at face value and his imperial agenda within the broader context of British imperial strategy and rule are pre-emptively ruled out.

Until 2016, the only study done on the history of the Raffles Museum — a study of one of its successors, the NMS — was Gretchen Liu's *One Hundred Years of the National Museum, Singapore 1887-1987* (1987). The work, however, is more a coffee-table book than a historical study. It covers major events in the NMS's history and dwells at some length on the shortage of space that plagued the museum from its inception. Liu's point major point is that except for a handful of men from the colonial, and later, republican Singaporean administration, few recognized the value or the nobility of the museum. Such a view fails, as this study proposes, to consider the power of the museum and the British use of institutions in colonial governmentality. As Chapter 7 of this thesis demonstrates, these determined how the Raffles Museum functioned for much of its existence.

A more significant problem is Liu's book is her dating. Using 1887 as the founding date of the NMS is historically misleading because 1887 is not the founding date of the museum itself, but the year the museum moved to

the building Henry McCallum designed.¹⁶⁸ Several other dates make more sense as founding dates, the first of which would be 1823 when Raffles called the meeting and laid the foundation stone for the three institutions. The second would be 1849 when museum made its first acquisition, namely, the two ancient gold coins from the Temenggong, an accession that technically qualified the Raffles Museum as a collecting institution. The third date is one suggested by Tan, and this is 1878 when the museum was legally established under the passage of the Raffles Societies Ordinance.¹⁶⁹ Thus, the book's listing the museum's centenary as 1987 conveys an impression that dates have been manipulated for marketing convenience and that ultimately the book was not meant to document, but to sell. A final issue with this book is that even when Liu uses primary source information, these are used without citations.¹⁷⁰

Clement Onn's *Hunters and Collectors* (2009) focuses on six major collectors in the early days of the Raffles Museum. Onn devotes more space to critical museum issues, such as the motivations behind early collecting and in addition, the very specific nature and characteristics of colonial

¹⁶⁸ Fiona Kerlogue and Horniman Museum and Gardens, eds., *Performing Objects: Museums, Material Culture and Performance in Southeast Asia*, Contributions in Critical Museology and Material Culture (London: Horniman Museum, 2004) This date is also used by Nicole Tarulevicz in her article on NMS in the book. I have not reviewed it because it has several citation errors.

¹⁶⁹ Tan, *Of Whales and Dinosaurs*. 1

¹⁷⁰ See for example, pages 40-42. There are figures for expenditure in 1920, but they are not credited.

collecting. There is, for example, an attempt to address these by curator Heidi Tan, who notes the use of anthropometry by colonial collectors.¹⁷¹ Likewise, her section on "the colonial gaze" is acknowledgement of a need for a nuanced understanding of colonial collecting and collections. However, the categorizing the colonial collections such as those that are now in the Raffles Museum as resulting from "cultural encounters" between the East and West side-steps the asymmetries, and more importantly, the epistemology and often difficult histories contained in many of these encounters. A calibration of these asymmetries is essential when we remember that the Raffles Museum's collection includes artifacts that were acquired in military violence. Inattention to the extractive/political contexts of such object histories silences not only the violence of colonialism but also the histories of these groups.

Of Whales and Dinosaurs by Kevin Tan is to date, the most informative, best-researched, and complete, if sometimes nostalgic, documentation of the Raffles Museum. Although it deals only with the natural history and specifically, the Zoological Reference Collection now in the LKCNHM, Tan traces with success the origins and histories of these collections that once *were* the Raffles Museum. The work offers specifics that

¹⁷¹ Clement Onn, *Hunters and Collectors: The Origins of the Southeast Asian Collection at the Asian Civilisations Museum* (Singapore: Asian Civilisations Museum, 2008). 18

none of the other authors provide, and thus achieves as much as a non-museological methodology allows. However, Tan's viewing the museum as an innocent repository — rather than as an institution of dominance that museums, especially of Raffles Museum's genre and period were — situates his analysis within a Western perspective. This view leads him to a detailed discussion of the Raffles Museum's struggle in getting governmental attention and support in the early 1970s. Here, he asserts, as do Rajamogan and Liu, that the Raffles Museum was neglected and almost abandoned in the immediate post-colonial years.¹⁷² Thus while his documentation here is valuable in that it adds much to our understanding of the chronological biography of the natural history collections, it is a view of museums that is contested by present museology. This asserts that the museum of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was deeply associated with the colonial project and has a historicity of subjugative *praxes*. This position would in fact vindicate the incumbent Minister for Science and Technology, Toh Chin Chye's (*fl.* 1968-1975) dislike or disinterest in the museum¹⁷³ as precocious. It would explain to some degree why the republican government especially between 1970-77 did not know what to do with the Raffles Museum's

¹⁷² Tan, Kevin Y.L., *Of Whales and Dinosaurs: The Story of Singapore's Natural History Museum* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015), xii; Chapters 7-9.

¹⁷³ Tan.125

zoological collection. As Tan notes, the collection was shuttled from one location to another, and brought almost to brink of disposal.¹⁷⁴

Another group of works on the Raffles Museum includes several academic exercises from the NUS and a few fourth-year projects from this university. Several of these deal with scientific collections and three are on social history. The most interesting of these are Fiona Koh's *"Exhibiting history: a Study on the Singapore History Museum"* (2002), Rajamogan's *"The National Museum in historical perspective, 1874-1981"* (1987) and Jackie Yoong's *"Exhibiting History: A study of the Asian Civilisations Museum of Singapore"* (2006).

Of these, Rajamogan's work is the most thorough by far. His 1987 study contains a good account of the founding of the Raffles Museum and includes interviews with two curators, Christopher Hooi and Eric Alfred. He also raises several key issues that prompted my discussion on dissonance. For example, he makes a link between the Raffles Museum with British colonial interests when he notes that the Raffles Museum was closely associated with the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, whose main purpose was "gathering knowledge to further British imperialistic

¹⁷⁴ Tan, Kevin Y.L., *Of Whales and Dinosaurs: The Story of Singapore's Natural History Museum*, 2015 Chapter 7.

ambitions."¹⁷⁵

The last group of works that deal with the Raffles Museum are two articles on the Raffles Museum's collectors: Osbourne's *Early Collectors and Their Impact on the Raffles Museum and Library* and Luyt's *Collectors and Collecting for the Raffles Museum in Singapore: 1920-1940*.¹⁷⁶ These two articles are important in that they exemplify the inability of conventional approaches to calibrate the politics and epistemology of colonial collecting and colonial collections. Both articles offer perspectives on the networks that museology has long recognized, but Osbourne's work is an especially rudimentary reading of eighteenth/nineteenth-century collecting *praxes*.

Osbourne discusses the *ethnographica* collected by several early collectors, including William Louis Abbott, Giovanni Battista Cerruti and P. Pohlig and provides some information on the collections they assembled, but not their provenance or where they ended up. This is thus a failure to address the politics within colonial collecting, and the power inherent in object passages. However, it is Osbourne's statement that the National Heritage Board now has an "extensive collection thanks to Archdeacon

¹⁷⁵ Rajamogan, "The National Museum in Historical Perspective, 1874-1981" (National University of Singapore, 1987), Closed Stack, NUS Y17776.

¹⁷⁶ Osbourne, Meg S., "Early Collectors and Their Impact on the Raffles Museum and Library," *The Heritage Journal* 3 (2008): 1-15.; Luyt, Brendan, "Collectors and Collecting for the Raffles Museum in Singapore: 1920-1940," *Library and Information History* 26, no. 3 (September 2010): 183-95.

Sharp"¹⁷⁷ that is most problematic.

As I show under *The Subtle Art of Collecting*, removals were associated with the West's dominance of the non-West and were enactments of imperial power and privilege. Her crediting the collections to Hose thus positions colonial collecting as benevolent and trivializes in the process, the impact of colonialism as well as the usurpation of cultural ownership that underwrites much of contemporary museum and cultural studies theorizing. It is therefore a dismissal of the losses colonies experienced, their colonial experiences as well as their histories.

Luyt, on the other hand, focuses on the social relations in the collecting networks and exchanges made during director Frederick Chasen's tenure. While he pays attention to the manners in which social relations were maintained through exchanges, the analysis is mono-dimensional because it deals only with one aspect of object circulation.

As I demonstrate in the section *The Origins of Power*, objects were used in diplomacy from the museum's early beginnings as the *studiolo* and Wunderkammer. Object exchanges, their subsequent arrangements (even when they duplicated, or were ostensibly idiosyncratically arranged), were symbolic of the giver-receiver relationship, and thereby, the most important

¹⁷⁷ Osbourne, Meg S., "Early Collectors." 11

political deals brokered and bartered. The "random-ness" of display methodology in Rudolf II's Kunstkammer, for example, — "everything the museum chanced to acquire, including at times several identical versions of the same exhibit — had a role in diplomacy that was stressed in its stately setting."¹⁷⁸

The Raffles Museum's collections likewise, show that its collecting and exchange *praxes* were part of the circulation of power, both locally and in Britain. Part of this was institutional, such in the British Museum having its pick of assemblages, but they were also political privately. The best example of this is Raffles himself, whom as seen under *Administrative Collecting*, frequently used objects as political currency.

Likewise, as the section *The Hunt and Anglo-Malay Relations* shows, objects were used to cement colonial British administrative-local ruler relationships. A letter from an animal merchant, W. L. Basapa, for example, shows Frederick Chasen attempting to secure "whistling teals for H.H. the Rajah of Sarawak's new pond."¹⁷⁹ The Raffles Museum in this case, clearly played a role in fostering colonial relationships by acting as resource for local rulers.

¹⁷⁸ Fucíková, Eliška, "The Collection of Rudolf II at Prague," in *The Origins of Museums. The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth-and-Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. Impey, Oliver and Macgregor, Arthur, 1987th ed. (Oxford, UK; United States: Oxford UP, 1985).

¹⁷⁹ Basapa, W. L., "To Frederick Chasen, Regarding Whistling Teals for Raja of Sarawak," January 30, 1940, MSA 1140/001508, National Archives of Singapore.

What is absent in Luyt's and Osborne's readings is illustrated by Kevin Tan's reading of the Raffles Museum's Zoological Reference Collection. Tan's discussion of the regular and consistent passage of specimens from museums in British Borneo, Malaya, and Singapore to British museums is a particularly astute demonstration of how museums in British Southeast Asia were used as supply centers for British museums and how object removals were institutionalized and formalized. It is therefore, a more satisfactory accounting and more sophisticated reading of the periphery-core colonial relationships embedded in object exchanges and how periphery museums functioned within this relationship.

The second group of literature that this thesis consulted were those on the institutional power of the public museum. These served as a platform for contextualizing the Raffles Museum as an ideological site as well as a site of colonial power.

[Power, Politics, and History: The Cultural Potency of Museums](#)

In recent years, the public museum has garnered considerable academic interest as instruments and sites for power and ideologies. Luke for example, points out that museums are institutional sites of both capitalist and governmental power, and hence, feature high on political agenda and as sites of cultural wars because they have a cultural potency that is matched by few other institutions. Cultural power, he argues, is the "most

potent form of power" because it carries nothing less than the "vital prerogative" of being able "to define reality," and thereby, the meanings with which an individual navigates his or her way around the world. Museums, he points out, are:

ontologies, or definitive foundational expressions of what is 'real,' which they then work to make rational ... Museum sites are ontopes, museum discourse always ontonymic, and museum curators are ontocrats.¹⁸⁰

Donna Haraway, in a work that precedes Luke, provides a concrete illustration of the ideological powers of museums when she demonstrates that notions of man's superiority over wild nature, family values of hearth and completeness, as well as of modern capitalism, all converge in Carl Akeley's crafting of the AMNH's gorilla diorama. The entire diorama she notes, was a composition of a "tale of the commerce of power and knowledge in white and male supremacist monopoly capitalism, fondly named Teddy Bear Patriarchy."¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Luke, W. Timothy, "Museum Pieces: The Politics of Aesthetics and Knowledge At the Museum." 1-7; I understand Luke's use of "ontonymic" to be in the sense of how museum systems are a collection of core concepts, and how these offer meanings to other systems, but also defines how meanings are manufactured.

¹⁸¹ Haraway, Donna, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy," *Social Text* 11 (Winter -85 1984): 21.

Another key work on museum ideological function that is relevant to the analysis done in this thesis is Carol Duncan's *Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship*. Duncan asserts that museums construct political meanings through their presence alone. Western-style art museums, she observes, are generally regarded as "important, even necessary, fixtures of a well-furnished state" and are frequently "deployed as means of signaling to the West that one is a reliable political ally, imbued with proper respect for and adherence to Western symbols and values."¹⁸² Such a view explains why nations, particularly those aspiring to new public images, often build museums to symbolize openness and modernity. One example is China, which alone, *The Economist* reports, opened 451 new museums in 2012, pushing the total of Chinese museums to 3,866 by that year's end.¹⁸³

The Chinese use of museums on the world stage is both testimony of the power of museums as well as of their agencies as historians. As repositories of the phenomenal and astounding archaeological discoveries that have been made since 1949, and that are still being made in China, Chinese museums now manage and spearhead the re-interpretation and re-

¹⁸² Duncan, Carol, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," in *Exhibiting Cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Karp, Ivan and Lavine, Steven D. (Washington, London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

¹⁸³ "Mad About Museums," *The Economist*, December 21, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21591710-china-building-thousands-new-museums-how-will-it-fill-them-mad-about-museums>.

documenting of the country's history. Objects excavated are now employed to substantiate what were once considered legends in the country's past. These substantiations have produced, in turn, new cultural and political meanings for China globally for they testify to the antiquity of Chinese culture and civilization. More importantly, objects challenge existing historical, often Western, interpretations of early Chinese religion, science and technology,¹⁸⁴ thereby demonstrating the political and historical agencies that museums and their collections possess.

In much the same way, the Guggenheim in Bilbao and the new Louvre in Abu Dhabi may be read within Duncan's observation as moves by northern Spain and the Arab peninsula nations to signal, at the very least, their willingness to tolerate, if not whole-heartedly embrace, Western symbols and values. The Museum of Islamic Art in Qatar, for instance, was built with such a purpose in mind. As the Qatar Museum Authority states, it was constructed out of a partial desire to "challenge western perceptions of Muslim societies."¹⁸⁵

The political meanings that are derived from a museum, however, is

¹⁸⁴ Two exemplary works in this area are Zhao, Feng, *Treasures in Silk* (Hangzhou, Hong Kong, PRC: The Costume Squad, 1999) and Barbieri-Low, Anthony J., *Artisans in Late Imperial China* (Washington, USA: U of Washington Press, 2007). Zhao reveals much about Chinese Neolithic religion and Barbieri-Low, the artisans behind the material culture China is so famous for.

¹⁸⁵ Mignolo, Walter D., "Enacting the Archives, Decentering the Muses. The Museum of Islamic Art in Doha and the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore."

only one aspect the institution's cultural potency. It is matched, if not exceeded, by a discursive potency. Museums, Duncan stresses, "do not simply resemble temples architecturally; they *work* like temples."¹⁸⁶ Museum buildings, design, spaces, display, objects and technologies of display, all work in concert to position the knowledge presented within museum spaces as veracious and proven. Information from the museum is seldom questioned because as Duncan notes, they are regarded as a "secular truth," one that is not founded on faith, but that is verifiable and self-evident.

In a historical dissertation such as this, the historical "truths" that museum spaces construct is of primary interest because in this respect, museums have an ability to reframe historical events in a process that is not unlike alchemy. Within museum spaces and exhibition rhetoric, "base objects," namely, objects once used in oppression, are given new historical meanings as artifacts of national pride and achievement. Museum artifacts work through such contextualization to enact and affirm, as Duncan contends, the bond between the citizen and the state. An example of such bonding through object recontextualization is China's 8,000-strong terracotta army of the First Emperor of Qin.

¹⁸⁶ Carol Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Karp Ivan and Lavine Stephen D. (Washington, London, 1991).

One of the most significant historical artifacts of Chinese history, the Qin Dynasty terracotta warriors are generally presented in exhibitions as evidence of ancient Chinese artistic ability and craftsmanship. While such a view cannot be disputed, these warriors, Barbieri-Low demonstrates, have been sanitized of their social history. His study directs attention to three Qin and Han dynastic mass graveyards, the earliest of which lies only one and a half kilometers southwest of the tumulus. The contents of the graveyards which ran in the thousands, in his view, are the remains of the 700,000 lower-class convicts and slaves used from 221 BC in such state projects. These include the necropolis and the nearby A-fang Palace.¹⁸⁷

While the sizes of the graveyards themselves are "staggering," what is more significant historically and in museum exhibitionary discourse and *praxes* is the deletion of the "chilling" nature of the "casual, orderly, bureaucratic disposal of the bodies."¹⁸⁸ By recontextualizing, categorizing and exhibiting the army as "art," the museum's exhibitionary discursive system sanitizes the terracotta army of imperial violence and re-presents it as evidence of ancient Chinese artistic ability and national achievement. Thus, the army and its display on a world stage function to bond China's citizens in

¹⁸⁷ Barbieri-Low, Anthony J., *Artisans in Late Imperial China*. 237. To give perspective to the figure, 700,000 is just shy of the present populations of Sheffield, Tulsa or Fresno.

¹⁸⁸ Barbieri-Low, Anthony J. 237

collective pride. My calling attention to this aspect of museum power is to illustrate that this form of sanitization occurred within the successors of the Raffles Museum, albeit in a different form.

In 2015, the NMS staged a *Treasures of the World Exhibition*.¹⁸⁹ Objects in the exhibition included several articles collected by Stamford Raffles during his tenure in Southeast Asia. These include a Javanese mask, a *kěris* and a scabbard. While I think there is a need to be mindful that many objects were gifts and purchases, and that these should be differentiated against those taken as right, I still want to call attention to the overall discourse of imperial dominance that is within the exhibition.

This exhibition is historically problematic on two levels. One, by characterizing the objects as world treasures but clearly within the rightful possession of the British Museum, the exhibition sanitized these objects of any possible (or probable) culpability in colonial subjugation, and thereby, deleted any subjugative history. Two, if we accept Duncan's proposition that a ritual of citizenship is enacted through such sanitization of objects, then the question that follows is, which bond did the exhibition ritually affirm: the colonial bond between Britain and Singapore, or between Singa-

¹⁸⁹ Media Release, "Discover the Finest Treasures of the World at the National Museum of Singapore, 05 December 2015-03 July 2016" (That National Museum of Singapore, December 2, 2015), http://nationalmuseum.sg/~media/nms/documents/media_release_treasures%20of%20the%20world_20151201.pdf.

pore and its citizens?

The link that I have just made here reflects the relationship between the curatorial practices of the Raffles Museum's three successor museums and the Singapore state narrative. It shows that the Raffles Museum, even when it no longer exists in name or as an entity, continues to have agency in Singapore's programs. At this point, a closer examination of the museum's relationship to power, culture, and constructions of identities as well as a "thinking" institution is useful in explaining its institutional power.

The Modern Museum, Governance, Politics and Regulation

My theorizing of the Raffles Museum, especially its spaces, is situated in the modern European public museum, which became a technology of regulation and was integrated into governance as such during the mid to late nineteenth century.

Social reformers like Sir Henry Cole and James Buckingham regarded museums, libraries, public parks, and galleries as necessary for teaching desired forms of behavior to the working masses that had emerged with urbanization. They considered these institutions to be antidotes for undesirable urban ills, such as habitual patronage of ale-houses.

As Bennett proposes, culture then — defined as certain forms of

behavior, proper forms of address, sartorial and social conventions as well as public manners — became "an object of government."¹⁹⁰ The cultural institutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Western bourgeois public sphere lent themselves as ideal spaces for such inculcation of desired civic behavior because access to them was directly tied to notions of culture and acceptable behavior. Characteristically, the institutions of the era adopted a "subscription to certain rules of discourse (freedom of speech, the rule of reason, etc.)", and concomitant, "a proscription of specific codes of behavior." There was, for example, to be "no swearing, no spitting, no brawling, no eating or drinking, no dirty footwear, no gambling" within these institutions' premises.¹⁹¹ The strategy of expulsion employed against non-conformity with these codes of behavior cleared museum spaces "for polite, cosmopolitan discourse by constructing popular culture as the 'low-Other'", the dirty and the crude outside..."¹⁹² The museum, museologist Stephen Weil observed, was specifically:

created and maintained by the high for the low, by the couth for the uncouth, by the washed for the unwashed, by those who knew for

¹⁹⁰ Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995). 19-58

¹⁹¹ Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum*, 1995). 27

¹⁹² Stallybrass and White cited in Bennett, 27

those who didn't but needed to know and who would come to learn.

The museum was established to 'do'; what was to be 'done' to the public. The museum was a place of inculcation.¹⁹³

Thus, by the mid to late nineteenth century, the museum had emerged as one of "the forms and institutions of high culture" that city and social reformers considered useful for "the governmental task" of "civilizing the population as a whole."¹⁹⁴ Weil's and Bennett's observations of how the Western modern museum operated as a site for inculcation and marking differences provide us with the link between the museum's innate morphology and two fundamental requisites of colonial dominance: first, a social need to separate and differentiate, and thereby visualize an "epistemic place"¹⁹⁵ for both the "high" cultivated colonizer, and the "low, uncouth" colonized Other; and second, a vehicle for the enactment of the main colonial missions of civilizing and pedagogy. It is thus not surprising, or even unexpected, that the Raffles Museum's spaces, methods, and function were all structured along these axes.

Under *Performativity of Space* in Chapter 5, such a segregation

¹⁹³ Weil, Stephen, "The Museum and the Public," in *Making Museums Matter* (Washington, USA: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002).

¹⁹⁴ Bennett, *Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* 17-58

¹⁹⁵ The term comes from Noor, who uses it to describe how colonized natives were assigned place through "epistemic arrests" of their identities as Others and as natives.

between the "high" colonial and "the dirty and the crude" local outside was enacted through the Raffles Museum's visiting hours. Perceptions of differences between the abilities of master and servant were evident in the museum's *Methods* (Chapter 6), while the differentiation between empire and colony was enacted through the museum's *Functions* (Chapter 7). The public museum, however, did not become a site for the marking of differences only in its modern form. Its history reveals that making differentiations visible was a central task that museums and collections fulfilled from its beginnings.

Today, all major genres of the modern museum embrace in degrees the International Council of Museums' (ICOM) egalitarian mission "to be a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, [and] open to the public..."¹⁹⁶ This clear mission for museums to be "in the service of society" and be "*open to the public*" is in fact, a reaction to, and a direct addressing of, the museum's elitist and highly exclusionary morphology. That elitist morphology, cultural theorists like Boast, Dibley, and Bennett argue, is a characteristic facet of the museum *persona*, one that prevents the museum from being able to fully function within an egalitarian ethos.

In his series of works on the public museum, Bennett points out that

¹⁹⁶ International Council of Museums, "'Museum' Definition," undated, ICOM definition of museum.

the museum's political rationality — founded on culture— inevitably endows the museum with a proclivity to differentiate, and therefore, to elitism.¹⁹⁷ The distinctive morphology of the museum to differentiate is traceable to its origins as princely collections, and it is therefore there that our explanations of how the Raffles Museum performed colonial dominance are found.

The Origins of Power: Delineating Difference, Defining Elitism

The prototype of the modern museum is accepted today in museology to be the princely collection of the Renaissance. The *studiolo*, for example, exemplified the elitism embedded in early collecting and collections. Often installed adjacent to the collector's bedchambers, the *studiolo's* concealment in "a nocturnal and saturnine atmosphere" made it intensely private, inaccessible, and thus, exclusive and exclusionary. The act of collecting itself, in addition, articulated exclusion by defining the nobleman¹⁹⁸ and, literally and metaphorically, illustrated the collector's distance from "others" in terms of wealth, power, position, *raffinesse*, taste, and learning. Connotations of elitism, differentiation and power were similarly articulated by the content and

¹⁹⁷ Bennett, Tony, "The Political Rationality of the Museum," ed. The Institute of Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University, *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture* 3, no. 1 (1990), <http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/readingroom/3.1/Bennett.html>.

¹⁹⁸ I use the male pronoun here because the collections I encountered were all male-owned. I do not discount the possibility that there were female-owned collections, only that I did not come across any.

arrangement of these collections. A collection's "arcane arrangement" was meant to be understood by only the collector and it was the collector's individual:

attempt to reappropriate and reassemble all reality in miniature, to constitute a place from the centre of which the prince could symbolically reclaim dominion over the entire natural and artificial world.¹⁹⁹

While the early collection's esoteric meanings spoke to the collector's erudition and the rarity of objects collected spoke to his financial means, these remained no more than articulations of differences. The real modality of power within these collections was access. Exercised as a right to grant or to refuse, access was a direct mechanism of power that was again, exclusive to the collector, and which was granted only to those who shared the collector's social, cultural, political, financial, or intellectual ambit.

What is important here is that throughout the museum's development from the Renaissance through the Baroque period into the eighteen and nineteen centuries, it retained this central core of elitism and political power as well as their attendant exclusive and exclusionary

¹⁹⁹ Olmi, Giuseppe, 5.

competencies.²⁰⁰ Even with the emergence of the public sphere, museum spaces, while theoretically open and accessible to all, remained stubbornly elitist and exclusionary by functioning within specific definitions and logic of gender, culture, or more significantly, *the lack* of culture. In eighteenth-century empire metropolises, Bennett points out, the working classes were allowed into museums "provided they dressed nicely and curbed any tendency towards unseemly conduct."²⁰¹ Women, while allowed, were essentially only tolerated. It was only in the early nineteenth century, with the emergence of notions of female spheres, that women were permitted and then, even encouraged to attend museums. The only reason they were admitted was because museums and libraries were deemed female domains, distinct from the male domains of coffee-houses, academies, and debating societies,²⁰² and therefore considered appropriate.

These notions similarly marked the Raffles Museum's spaces as a designated place of Western refinement and culture. The museum's spaces were appropriated by colonial elites not only to visualize cultural refinement, but also the differences between the cultured, colonizer elite and the low, uncultured, colonized Other.

²⁰⁰ Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, 1995.

²⁰¹ Bennett, Tony. 28

²⁰² Bennett, 29

A final institutional power that museums hold that is pertinent to a study of the Raffles Museum lies in a museum's staple activity: collecting. Collecting, as we have seen in the museum's prototype, was a practice steeped in ideologies of difference. The epistemology of a museum's acquisition *praxis* and collections are therefore significant parts of a museum's *persona*, and it is therefore necessary that we devote some space to the politics within collecting to understand the Raffles Museum's collecting practice as performativities of colonialism.

The Subtle Art of Collecting

Collecting for reasons other than utilitarian purposes, Baudrillard posits, is possession.²⁰³ Possession, unhappily, was what colonialism and imperialism were all about. While collecting was practiced by both Western and non-Western cultures, there was an essential difference between the two: indigenous collecting was generally devoted to their own cultures.²⁰⁴ This is a stark contrast to how and what the West collected, as well as displayed. Colonial collecting, moreover, was particularly pernicious in many ways because it was an amalgam of possession, racism, inferiorization, and dominance; in sum, all the qualities that are regarded

²⁰³ Baudrillard, Jean, "The System of Collecting," in *Cultures of Collecting* (London, UK: Reaktion Books, 2004).

²⁰⁴ Kreps, Christina, "Non-Western Models of Museums and Curation in Cross-Cultural Perspective."

today as infringements of human individuality and rights.

By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in tandem with the development of functional anthropology and the conquest of new territories, the public museum became deeply entangled in Western dominance through its collecting, removal of objects, as well as in terms of how they presented ideas of progress and human hierarchies. Collecting as a discourse of dominance, however, did not start with the colonial project of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its history as an act of possession and as vocabulary of Western dominance began with the West's encounter with the non-West. This was Columbus's encounter with the inhabitants of the Caribbean, and it is significant in that collecting then, was already grounded in racial Otherness, which in turn, influenced how museums and anthropology participated in colonialism.

Collecting the Primitive Other: Dominance and Objects

For five months during his first voyage, Columbus explored Cuba, Santo Domingo and Haiti. His letter to the Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, show that he took gold, birds, plants as well as natives, whose removal Columbus himself stated, was "by force."²⁰⁵ Columbus took between

²⁰⁵ Columbus, Christopher, "Letter to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, English Translation," 1493, GLC01427, Gilder Lehrman Institute.

ten to twenty five islanders, of whom only eight survived.²⁰⁶

Collecting during exploration then was common. Sebastian Cabot, as well as conquistadors like Hernán Cortés, all collected because collections evidenced the wealth that was to be gained from exploration but were used as repayment for, and solicitation of sponsorship. Their collecting of humans, however, is particularly interesting because this has generally been regarded as having been purely motivated by a fascination with racial differences; Columbus's letter to his royal sponsors suggests a little more.

Writing in 1493, Columbus promised Ferdinand and Isabella "as much gold as they have need of, and in addition to spices, mastic and rare aloe-woods, as "many heathen slaves as their majesties may choose to demand."²⁰⁷ His letter reveals two important facets of early collecting. First, that collecting was done out of political expediency, namely, for the treasure that financed early European states.²⁰⁸ This motivation would express itself in colonialism in two main colonial activities — removal and extraction.

Second, the treasure sought included both fauna and slaves, both of which were major items in eighteenth/nineteenth-century trade, economics,

²⁰⁶ "Columbus Reports on His First Voyage, 1493," Educational, Institutional, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, Undated, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/content/columbus-reports-his-first-voyage-1493>.

²⁰⁷ Columbus, Christopher, "Letter to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, English Translation."

²⁰⁸ Johnson, Carina L., "Aztec Regalia and the Reformation of Display," in *Collecting Across Cultures. Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, ed. Bleichmar, Daniela and Mancall, Peter, The Early Modern Americas (Philadelphia, USA: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

and politics. The trade in fauna will be discussed fully under *Objects of Desire*. The collecting of humans and Otherness, on the other hand, was a central part of the empire metropole museums' role in the colonial project.

Conceptualizing the Other

Racial differences, subsequent to the West's encounter with the non-West, provided the basic ideology for the colonial project. Museums were central in the colonial enterprise because their taxonomies placed the natural world within the chain of being and constructed notions about "order and place."²⁰⁹ Equally significant within museum taxonomies was the development that Bennett considers as one of the "most crucial" that emerged during the 1830s and 1840s: a concept of time that allowed the "historicization of other peoples as 'primitive.'"²¹⁰ The mid-nineteenth century thus saw an explosion of racial theory as an "explanation for the differences between humans and race became an elucidation for human relations of dominance and subordination and for many advocates, a means of explaining world events."²¹¹

Here, the public museum's involvement in colonial dominance was in tandem with the main discipline that shaped its intellectualism and col-

²⁰⁹ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in South-East Asia*. 106

²¹⁰ Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. 38-9

²¹¹ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in South-East Asia*. 105

lecting, social anthropology. It is thus not coincidental or insignificant that anthropology — vended as the study of "man" but in fact, often the study of the non-Western man — developed consequent to the West's encounters with and was part of its domination over the non-West. As Prakesh and Arendt notes, the European Empire with two capital E's was simply not "something that happened 'out there'"²¹² but was shaped by notions of racial and class differences, primitivism, and Western racial superiority constructed "inside." What the public museum professed regarding race "inside" was adopted for the justification of empire's activities "outside." Asad Talal notes, for example, that social anthropology:

emerged as a distinctive discipline at the beginning of the colonial era, became a flourishing academic profession towards its close, ... [and] throughout this period its efforts were devoted to a description and analysis — carried out by Europeans, for a European audience — of non-European societies dominated by European power.²¹³

By the early nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, collecting of the material artifacts of Others were themselves "a useful tool in the production of knowledge about colonial subjects...[but] they did so within a

²¹² Arendt, H. cited in Prakash, Gyan, "Who's Afraid of Postcoloniality?" 187

²¹³ Talal, Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, Reprint (London, UK; New Jersey, USA: Ithaca, Humanities Press, 1975).

broader context supplied by loosely formulated but nevertheless powerful narratives of racial difference."²¹⁴ Anthropological fieldwork, such as those conducted in Borneo, Malaya, and Singapore, were similarly "characteristically enacted under an umbrella of European colonial power."²¹⁵

Under colonialism, museum *praxes* and technologies and anthropological science reached its most extreme form as discourses of dominance in the "*Völkerschau*" or human zoo, a genre of exhibition that emerged at the turn-of-the-century.

The Human Zoo: Race and Place in Colonial Politics

Featuring primarily colonized peoples as "objects," the human zoo was a bizarre amalgam of genuine scientific interest, entertainment, and theatricality. Staged in empire capitals from the 1900s till around World War I, human zoos exhibited peoples considered primitive or exotic, and generally from colonies. Ironically, as well as self-tellingly, these exhibitions started with an animal trader, Carl Hagenbeck.

In his autobiography, *Von Tieren und Menschen*, Hagenbeck records that his human exhibitions began as an innocent-enough request from an

²¹⁴ Ballard, Chris, "Collecting Pygmies: The 'Tapiro' and the British Ornithologists' Union Expedition to Dutch New Guinea, 1910-1911." 149

²¹⁵ Stocking, Jr. George W., *Colonial Situations*. 9-11

old friend, the artist Heinrich Leutemann. For a reason Hagenbeck no longer recalled, Leutemann in 1874 requested thirty reindeer from Lapland, telling Hagenbeck at the same time that he thought it a good idea that a Laplander family, complete with their tents, weapons, sledges and household, accompany the herd. That suggestion, Hagenbeck noted, contained the "happy" or "opportune" idea (it is difficult to distinguish which here) of exhibiting humans:

In diesem Vorschlag aber war schon die glückliche Idee der Völker-ausstellungen, die sich in den nächsten Jahren wie eine bunte Kette aneinanderreihen, verborgen. Lappländer und Nubier, Eskimos und Somali, Kalmücken und Indier, [sic] Singhalesen und Hottentotten, die Bewohner der verschiedensten Zonen, ja Antipoden reichten einander in den kommenden Jahren gleichsam die Hände in Ihren Zügen durch die [sic] europäischen Hauptstädten.²¹⁶

Hagenbeck's Laplander Exhibition of 1874 became the template for successive shows in Europe. Four hundred of these were staged in Germany

²¹⁶ Hagenbeck, Carl, *Von Tieren Und Menschen. Erlebnisse Und Erfahrungen von Carl Hagenbeck* (Berlin-ch.: Vita Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1909).80. Nubier is German for Nubians, Kalmücken for Kalmukia. This province in Russia is the only place in Europe where Buddhism is the main religion. For an English translation see Annex A.

alone²¹⁷ but several, such as the 1889 Paris World Exhibition, were also staged in other European metropolises. They were patronized by academia, especially from anthropology, medicine, prehistory, and anatomy because they offered first hand encounters with subjects that were denied by field-work funding and distance. As Dreesbach notes, the collaboration between anthropology/ethnography and museums was so close that it culminated in the establishment of the *Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* in 1869. Its chairman, Rudolf Virchow (1891-1902), was an advocate for studying *Völkerschau* participants.²¹⁸

The racial content in colonialism are however, more evident in the Human Pavilion or *Jinruikan* of the 1903 Fifth Domestic Industrial Exposition in Osaka. The exhibition's racial tenor was obvious from the fact that its exhibits were peoples the Japanese "considered barbaric and primitive, and thus, Japanese and Westerners were exempt."²¹⁹ The exhibition's colonial content, on the other hand, is directly evident in its inclusion of the Ainu.²²⁰

Fushine Kōzō, the Ainu representative, was the first Ainu that many of Japan's imperial subjects encountered as well as the exhibition's main at-

²¹⁷ Dreesbach, Anne, "Colonial Exhibitions: 'Völkerschauen' and the Display of the 'Other,'" ed. Ruth-Elisabeth Mohrmann, trans. Christopher Reid, n.d.

²¹⁸ Dreesbach, Anne. 25

²¹⁹ Ziomek, Kirsten, "The 1903 Human Pavilion: Colonial Realities and Subaltern Subjectivities in Twentieth-Century Japan," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 2 (May 2014): 493–516. " 494

²²⁰ Ziomek, Kirsten.

traction for the estimated 4.3 million, mainly-Japanese, visitors. The exhibition's colonial content is also evidenced in Kōzō using the exhibition to call attention to Japan's refusal to acknowledge the Ainu, within Japanese notions of primitivism, as imperial subjects.

The Osaka Exhibition is significant not only because it underscores the grounding of colonialism in perceptions of "civilized" and racial inferiority, but also because it reflects the role race played in imperial Japan's foreign policy. As Andre Schmid notes, primitivism and establishing parity with the West was central to Japanese colonialism because Japan's strategy was to prove to "Western imperialists through its successful colonizing endeavors that Japan too, belonged in the upper rank of civilized countries."²²¹ The exhibition thus articulated on the one hand, Japan's position on its own state of civilization while on the other, satisfied and justified its colonial ambitions.

Where collecting of primitive peoples were concerned, the Raffles Museum's expedition records reveal that the Museum served as center for such collecting. Miklouho-Maclay, for example, used the Raffles Museum and Singapore as a base from which he researched Malayan Negritos. Alexander Frederick Wollaston, who participated in the 1910 British Ornitholog-

²²¹ Schmid, Andre, "Colonialism and the 'Korea Problem' in the Historiography of Japan: A Review Article." 965, 966

ical Union expedition to New Guinea and led the second British expedition of 1912-13, used the museum to launch his expedition to "collect" Papuan Pygmies. In one of his earliest letters to Kloss, his co-explorer, Wollaston wrote:

I should like to know more about the origins and affinities of the small people. Perhaps you can tell me if any more has been written about them in an intelligible language? I am greatly interested at present in the 'pygmy' races of mankind and am thinking of writing a thesis on the subject for my Cambridge MD which I want to take one of these days.²²²

While Wollaston collected primitivism in terms of studying them and collecting skulls (see *Removal* and *Extraction*), Kloss, who later became director of the Raffles Museum, employed more conventional data-collecting methods. He listed a Flowers craniometer (which he scratched out and changed to "Stanley") under "Anthropological Apparatus" in his expedition packing list, showing clearly that he intended to collect cranial data on pygmies, or at least, Papuans.²²³

²²² Wollaston, A.F., "Letter to Boden-Kloss," June 26, 1911, Gibson-Hill Correspondence, Box 6 Folder 1-15, National Archives of Singapore.

²²³ Boden Kloss, Cecil, "Expedition List," Undated, Gibson-Hill Collection, Box 6,

A more important aspect of the museum's collecting vis-à-vis race is how these perceptions of race were equated with abilities, and thereby, configured their relationships and management strategies over their local expedition staff. As Chapter 6 demonstrates, these perceptions shaped the nuts-and-bolts logistics of their expedition, from the transportation of supplies to the geographical areas from which to source local staff.

*The Colonial Museum: Performances of the "Right to Take Other People's Lives, Other People's Lands..."*²²⁴

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries marked the employment of collecting as an articulation of Western social and political supremacy at its apogee. Museums in colonial peripheries, like the Raffles Museum, were integral nodes in the collecting and movements of artifacts, both natural and man-made. Institutionalized collecting was conducted in colonies by almost all major institutions in the West, such as ethnographical, ornithological, and horticultural societies, universities, as well as professional associations like the Royal College of Surgeons. The College's Collection which comprises "the largest and most geographically varied collection of human skeletal remains in Britain" has a collecting history that dates to the 1700s.²²⁵

National Archives of Singapore.

²²⁴ Gordimer, N. in Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*.⁴²

²²⁵ Fforde, Cressida, "The Royal College of Surgeons of England: A Brief History of Its

Colonial culture, Gosden observes, was highly acquisitive and "profoundly material" and the collections, such as of New Guinea artifacts, he adds, resulted because "the main motive for Europeans going to New Guinea was material: to extract rubber, gold, oil and to make a profit in so doing."²²⁶ Thus, private collecting, similarly, was conducted across all levels and across the board by all sectors of colonial societies. Administrators, traders, missionaries (especially missionaries), colonial armed and service personnel, academics, corporate personnel like bankers and plantation managers, as well as museum officers, all collected avidly.

The colonial era was thus a period of immeasurably active, and often, large movements of objects, resources, as well as peoples. It is estimated that no less than half of the Musée du Quai Branly's 90,000-strong collection was certainly removed under colonial rule because these qualify for repatriation.²²⁷ The collections that are in British museums cannot be estimated because they were from even more colonies and were taken over a longer period.

More important under present definitions of cultural ownership and

Collections and a Catalogue of Some Current Holdings," *World Archaeology Bulletin* 6 (1992): 22–31.

²²⁶ Gosden, Chris, "On His Todd: Material Culture and Colonialism." 232

²²⁷ Adams, Geraldine Kendal, "Macron Report Advocates Permanent Return of Colonial-Era African Objects," *Museums Journal*, November 29, 2018, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/28112018-macron-report-repatriation?utm_campaign=1357589_29112018&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Museums%20Association&dm_i=2VBX,T3IT,6GATJR,300VB,1.

rights is the fact much of these movements of resources and objects, including humans, dead and alive, were generally one-directional — westward — and frequently without assent.²²⁸ The muted voices in these object passages and display constitute a major concern in today's museum philosophy and theory.²²⁹ This is the rationale that underwrites the analyses under *Extraction and Removal*.

Where the Raffles Museum's collecting *praxis* is concerned therefore, the overriding question that this thesis attempts to address is, how an object got from its place of manufacture or origin to its repository because the answer to this reveals how collecting and object dispatch by Raffles Museum were performativities of colonialism.

The literature consulted in this area comprised several compendia on colonial collecting. The first is *The Origins of Museums* edited by Oliver Impey and Arthur Macgregor. The essays within the anthology deal masterfully with the power structures of early museum collecting practices

²²⁸ Clunas, Craig, "China in Britain: The Imperial Collections," in *Colonialism and the Object. Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (London, New York: Routledge, 1998). Barringer, Tim, "The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project," in *Colonialism and the Object. Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*, ed. Barringer, Tim and Flynn, Tom, *Museum Meanings* (Abingdon, UK; New York, USA: Routledge, 1998). Quinnell, Michael, "'Before It Has Become Too Late': The Making and Repatriation of Sir William MacGregor's Official Collection from British New Guinea," in *Hunting the Gatherers. Ethnographic Collectors, Agents and Agency in Melanesia, 1870s-1930s*, ed. O'Hanlon, Michael and Robert L. Welsch, *Methodology and History in Anthropology* 6 (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000).

²²⁹ Graeme Were and J. C. H. King, eds., *Extreme Collecting: Challenging Practices for 21st Century Museums* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

and exhibitionary techniques, but also provide a link to understanding the Raffles Museum in the context of imperial bioprospecting. Other important pieces of work in this area were from the anthologies assembled by Barringer and Flynn on British imperial collections and Bleichmar and Mancall on object movements across the Atlantic.²³⁰ Ratcliff's study of the EIC Museum also added to an understanding of how many objects were accumulated "in the wake of military campaigns, trade missions, or administrative surveys" in the EIC Museum.²³¹ *Hunting the Gatherers*, edited by Michael O'Hanlon and Robert L. Welsch, was useful for understanding British imperial collecting even when it focused on colonial New Guinea. It provided a pattern against which collecting in British Southeast Asia could be compared. Used together, these secondary source materials provided a critical link for tracing how collecting was "diversely implicated in colonial processes more generally, and consequently has the capacity to illuminate both overt and unconsidered features of colonialism."²³² Such unconsidered features of colonialism are revealed for example, in the MacGregor Collection in *Hunting the Gatherers*. MacGregor's collecting is relevant to this

²³⁰ Barringer, Tim and Flynn, Tom, eds., *Colonialism and the Object*, Museum Meanings (London, New York: Routledge, 1998). Bleichmar, Daniela and Mancall, Peter C., eds., *Collecting Across Cultures. Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, The Early Modern Americas (Philadelphia, USA: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

²³¹ Ratcliff, Jessica, "The East India Company, the Company's Museum, and the Political Economy of Natural History in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Isis* 107, no. 3 (2016).

²³² O'Hanlon, "Introduction," 3

study because of its astounding similarity to Raffles's.

Collecting as Colonial Strategy

The MacGregor collection is one of the clearest examples of colonial collections being "supremely political" because it was a "unique nineteenth-century colonial construct" as well as political in its purpose and creation.²³³

Assembled by William MacGregor (1846-1919), the colonial administrator variously of Seychelles, Mauritius, Fiji, New Guinea, Lagos, New Foundland and Queensland, the collection's provenance and custody are relevant to this study in that it demonstrates the manners in which politics and political supremacy are encoded in the collecting of colonial administrators.

MacGregor's collection, Quinnell suggests, was "a crucial instrument through which MacGregor expanded *Pax Britannica*" and the means by which New Guinea was seen and collected. In this context, MacGregor's collecting parallels Raffles's collecting and his establishment of the Raffles Museum because, as this thesis argues, they reflect Raffles's strategies and vision of imperial expansion. They thus establish a consistent use of collecting in imperial politics.

²³³ Quinnell, Michael, "'Before It Has Become Too Late': The Making and Repatriation of Sir William MacGregor's Official Collection from British New Guinea."

Raffles's use of collecting as part of his colonial strategy is clearly stated in the Raffles Museum's founding document, his *Minute for the Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore* of 1819. Here, Raffles categorically outlined the benefits of *Pax Britannica* and British rule: British rule would dispense justice, provide security to persons and property as well as relieve inhabitants of oppression and bring the area "those blessings of freedom and justice for which Britain (she) herself stands so pre-eminent."²³⁴ His collecting, thus, including that of "the scattered literature and traditions of the country"²³⁵ institutionalized collecting for such an extension of *Pax Britannica*.

Raffles preceded MacGregor in time but in many ways, exceeded him in the manners and politics of collecting. Like many colonial administrators, both Raffles and MacGregor actively assembled collections. However, Raffles's collections, unlike MacGregor's, are primarily in the United Kingdom, which in of itself evidences the colonial politics of removal.

Both men collected during their many inspection trips to the various areas they ruled, and their collecting was as much a product of their offices

²³⁴ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore."

²³⁵ Raffles, Thomas Stamford.

as they were of their personal inclinations. Barnard, in his study of the discovery of the gigantic *Rafflesia*, tells us that Raffles collected enthusiastically even after his demotion to Governor of Bencoolen and embraced "expeditions into areas that were little-known to England..."²³⁶ The very presence of prominent colonial administrators such as MacGregor during these inspection-cum-collecting trips, Quinnell suggests, meant that "his parties not only represented the government; they were by their very composition, an expression of colonial and indigenous political relationships perfectly understood by the Papuan villager."²³⁷ As proconsul in the Malay/Indonesian Archipelagos from 1811 and as main strategist for British Southeast Asian policies from 1819 to 1823, Raffles had similar if not even more political profile and influence than MacGregor. It would be reasonable to infer that Raffles's presence in expeditions invoked similar connotations of power and dominance. They are evident, for example, during Raffles's stay between 1810 and 1811 in Malacca.

It became known then that Raffles collected, and locals including the Ruler of Sambas, brought Raffles all manners of animals and plants. Among

²³⁶ Barnard, Timothy P., "The *Rafflesia* in the Natural and Imperial Imagination of the East India Company in Southeast Asia." 156

²³⁷ Quinnell, Michael, "Before It Has Become Too Late: The Making and Repatriation of Sir William MacGregor's Official Collection from British New Guinea," in *Hunting the Gatherers*. 84

the material brought to Raffles were antique manuscripts, the removal of which had long-term historical and cultural significance for Malay literary heritage that did not go unnoticed even then. Abdullah bin Kadir in his *Hikayat* lamented:

There were also people who brought Malay manuscripts and books, I do not remember how many hundreds of texts there were. Almost, it seemed, the whole of Malay literature of the ages, all the property of our forefathers, was sold and taken away from all over the country...this would not have mattered if the books had been printed, but these were all written in longhand and now copies of them are no longer available.²³⁸

A look at the British Library's catalog of the Raffles Collection verifies Abdullah's observations of the cultural and historical significance of these removals. The Collection includes "exquisite illuminated frontispieces" traditionally used in Malay documents, books, and letters to Raffles from local rulers like Sultan Syrarif Kasim of Pontianak and a Trengganu court dance manual compiled by Tengku Ampuan Mariam, a Pahang princess who was consort to Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah of Trengganu (r.

²³⁸ Hill, A. H., "The Hikayat Abdullah." 74

1920-1942).²³⁹

Raffles's incorporation of exploration and collecting into administration and governance is best seen in his work in Java. There, in 1813 he revived and presided over the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences thereby, directly employed academic research of Java's culture and sciences directly into governance.

Another politically significant aspect of Raffles's collecting is that, in the tradition of early princely collectors, he used objects as diplomatic currency. Object exchanges in Raffles's case comprised gifts from local rulers, such as a young elephant and two deer from Sultan Ala' al Din Jawhar al' -Alam of Aceh and two orang utans from the Sultan of Sambas, Abu Bakr Kamalu'd-din for his menagerie in Sumatra.²⁴⁰ Similarly, Raffles gifted Sir Everard Home the head of a young Sumatran elephant in 1822 and a sun bear to the Royal Menagerie in 1824.²⁴¹ The most ostentatious and best known example of Raffles's use of objects in diplomacy and politics is his gift of the tenth-century Sangguran Stone, a monolith with inscriptions on both sides from Ngëndat, Java, to Lord Minto, his mentor and the man

²³⁹ Gallop, Annabel Teh, "Malay Manuscript Art: The British Library Collection," n.d., <https://www.bl.uk/ebli/1991articles/pdf/article12.pdf>.

²⁴⁰ Bastin, John, "Sir Stamford Raffles and the Study of Natural History in Penang, Singapore and Indonesia," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* LXIII, no. Part II (1990): 1–21.

²⁴¹ Grigson, Caroline, *Menagerie. The History of Exotic Animals in England 1100-1837*. 207, 243

who launched his career in 1812. Raffles had Colin Mackenzie move the three -to-four-ton stone to Surabaya from whence it was shipped to Minto in Calcutta.²⁴²

Within political collecting, Raffles's collecting of natural history specimens is equally significant because as the section on *Extraction* and *Removal* shows, *botanica* and wildlife comprised major components of colonial trade. Raffles's natural history collecting was indicative of his personal interest in the subject as well as its economic potential. Natural history collecting came easily to Raffles, whose obsession was with "the natural sciences and the corresponding collection and classification of plants, animals and minerals as well as peoples and cultures..."²⁴³ His natural history interests ranged from geology, ichthyology, entomology to botany, and it saw him collecting avidly and extensively during his governorship of Malacca, Penang and Bencoolen. During his time in these places Raffles dispatched both live and preserved floral and faunal specimens regularly to British museums, such as the British Museum and the EIC Museum at Leadenhall Street, London. His collecting, as the *Hikayat Abdullah* recounts, was far from small-scale and, in fact, verged on the

²⁴² Bastin, John, "Colonel Colin Mackenzie and Javanese Antiquities," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 109, no. 3 (1953): 273–75, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27859832>; Glendinning, Victoria, *Raffles and the Golden Opportunity, 1781-1826* (UK: Profile Books, 2012). 126.

²⁴³ Barnard, Timothy P., "The Rafflesia in the Natural and Imperial Imagination of the East India Company in Southeast Asia," 154.

institutional. He retained four men, each with a specific collecting responsibility:

... one for various kinds of leaves, flowers, fungi, mosses, and so on. Another he told to find worms, grasshoppers, various kinds of butterflies, beetles, and other different insects, cicadas, centipedes, scorpions and the like ... Another man he dispatched with a basket to get coral, various sorts of shells, molluscs, oysters and the like, and also fish. The fourth man went out catching wild animals like birds, jungle fowl, deer and small quadrupeds.²⁴⁴

While both Raffles and MacGregor's collections are important as museum collections *per se* and as documents of colonial collecting, they are more significant in terms of the impacts they exerted on Western imaginaries of the artefacts' countries of origins. Both men collected information on the geographies and histories of the areas they governed. MacGregor wrote *British New Guinea* (1897), while Raffles authored the voluminous *History of Java* in 1817 as well as several natural history articles such as "Some Account of the Dugong."²⁴⁵ MacGregor, Quinnell suggests, "map[ped] out

²⁴⁴ Hill, A. H., "The Hikayat Abdullah."73

²⁴⁵ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Some Account of the Dugong," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 110 (1820): 174–82.

the colony in terms of the artefacts he was collecting" and thereby, "classified" the country and made it "its object."²⁴⁶

Raffles exceeded MacGregor in this area because the gigantic *Rafflesia*, whose discovery is conventionally credited to him, entered the "historical and social imagination of the region. "The plant's "freakish" size and smell, Barnard notes, "exoticized" both the plant and the jungles from which it came."²⁴⁷ In much the same way, Raffles's discussion of the Javanese *candis* in the opening chapters of the second volume of the *History of Java* provided a barometer of civilization in a specific trajectory of intellectualism that prevailed in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was an intellectualism, Sarah Tiffin notes, that equated ruins with civilization, or more precisely, lost civilizations. Raffles's discussion of Javanese ruins used a "favourite *leitmotif* of the period... [that] prompted melancholic and philosophical reflection on the course of empire in which decline was inevitably linked with a society's economic and political condition."²⁴⁸ As the section on *Duplicating Minto, Hastings and Wellesley* demonstrates, this historical modality was one the British used in India.

²⁴⁶ Quinnell, Michael, "Before It Has Become Too Late: The Making and Repatriation of Sir William MacGregor's Official Collection from British New Guinea." 89

²⁴⁷ Barnard, Timothy P., "The *Rafflesia* in the Natural and Imperial Imagination of the East India Company in Southeast Asia." 162

²⁴⁸ Tiffin, Sarah, "Raffles and the Barometer of Civilization: Images and Descriptions of Ruined *Candis* in The History of Java," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 18, no. 03 (July 3, 2008): 341–60.

These political aspects of the Raffles Museum's collecting as a *praxis* illustrates that collecting then, private and institutional, by Raffles or the Raffles Museum's collectors, was not designed to benefit local populations but were intended to "ultimately enrich[ed] museum collections in faraway Europe and USA."²⁴⁹ Its politics and relationship to colonial power and use of colonies as resource are conspicuously absent in current literature on the museum, except in Kevin Tan's work. As such, the NMS's 2015 staging of exhibition of objects that are clearly contextualized as within the ownership of a colony's former colonial masters is historically malicious and indefensible.²⁵⁰ It contradicts a contemporary curatorial ethos that museum curation today is "about cultivating relationships directed towards redressing historical wrongs..."²⁵¹ While only a detailed study of each object's history can establish the strength and caliber of the difficult history²⁵² that may be embedded in each, the exhibition's blanket disregard of possible narratives of dominance silences the Raffles Museum's function under British colonialism as well as British colonial exploitation. It is also a curatorial practice that re-

²⁴⁹ Kwok, Kenson, "Introduction."

²⁵⁰ Media Release, "Discover the Finest Treasures of the World at the National Museum of Singapore, 05 December 2015-03 July 2016."

²⁵¹ Kreps, Christina, "Non-Western Models of Museums and Curation in Cross-Cultural Perspective."

²⁵² Were, Graeme, "Extreme Collecting: Dealing with Difficult Objects," in *Extreme Collecting: Challenging Practices for 21st Century Museums*, ed. Were, Graeme and King, J. C. H. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

tains the NMS as a conduit for colonial historical patriarchy.

British Colonialism and Geopolitics: Institutions as Technologies of Rule

The history of the Raffles Museum is emploted within the history of Singapore and hence, is inseparable from it. They share the same founder, Stamford Raffles, and as this thesis asserts, the museum was founded for the same reason, namely, within Raffles's overarching plan to secure trade and an enhanced British presence in the region. Moreover, both histories are cited as evidence of Raffles's legacy. These narratives pivot on Raffles, his vision, and his political strategies, and thus an examination of the Raffles Museum unavoidably includes examinations of literature on Raffles's and British colonial policies in Southeast Asia and Asia. The final group of literature examined thus covered British colonial strategies, particularly those that involved Raffles's governance style and the eighteenth/nineteenth-century museum's role in the colonial project.

My analysis of the Raffles Museum as a colonial technology of rule drew on literature on British imperial trade, commercial ambitions, military fiscalism, domestic issues, colonial political and social anxieties as well as strategies in India. India was particularly important because it provided Raffles with the precedents in administration.

In the discussion of British geopolitics in Southeast Asia, the key works I drew on were Gallagher's and Robinson's *The Imperialism of Free*

Trade (1953) and *Webster's Gentleman Capitalists* (1998). Gallagher's and Robinson's work provided a compass point for the section on the founding of the museum because it directly questioned conventional accounts of the founding of Singapore. It called attention to the British need for new markets and resources and thereby, suggested that Raffles's establishing a factory and a college in Singapore was far more complex and far more political than the pure altruism that current literature attributes to him. As such, it provided a larger context within which to understand British colonial expansion and a nuanced reading of Raffles's *Minute* of 1819.²⁵³

While Robinson and Gallagher provided a macro view of British imperial strategies, Webster's study of the "gentlemen capitalists" of the EIC gave a micro view of how imperialism functioned at corporate levels. Webster showed that Raffles was directly connected to and operated within the agenda determined at Leadenhall Street and Whitehall. His discussion of their influence, especially of Charles Grant, highlighted the link between this agenda and Raffles's naming Grant and Wilberforce as patrons for the college he founded. However, imperial expansionism and Raffles's role could not be examined solely in terms of the EIC. There was a need to account for the movements of lower-class colonists outwards because this

²⁵³ Gallagher, John and Robinson, Ronald, "The Imperialism of Free Trade."

explained the structures and systems that colonists erected in colonies. Two main works, E. P. Thompson's study of the makings of the English working class (1963) and Dirks's *Scandal of Empire* (2006)²⁵⁴ provided the frameworks for the sections on the Raffles Museum's founding and spaces.

Dirks's work was particularly useful in making visible the colonial intent in social reforms the British undertook in colonies. His discussion of scandal and abolitionism in empire-building directed my reevaluation of Raffles's motives, particularly with regard to his oft-cited championing of abolitionism and his claim of head-hunting in Borneo as fact in his *Minutes* of 1819. Similarly, Susan Steinbach's work on Victorians and Mani Lata's study of the British prohibition of *sati* in India were the frameworks within which I read the Raffles Museum's visible and invisible spaces. Steinbach showed that Victorian views of women and colonial spaces were premised on danger and colonial anxiety, while Mani Lata showed that the typical *sati* was "infantilized." She notes that the widow was often regarded as helpless, victimized, and "as a tender child" despite evidence that most involved were grown women.²⁵⁵ This same perception of women as needing protection, I argue, were instrumental in how colonials used the Raffles

²⁵⁴ Thompson, E.P., *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, New York: Vintage Books, 1963).; Dirks, Nicholas B., *The Scandal of Empire. The Creation of Imperial Britain* (India: Permanent Black, by arrangement with Harvard UP, 2006).

²⁵⁵ Mani, Lata, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley, CA: U of CA Press, 1998).

Museum's visible and invisible spaces.

To establish the role the Raffles Museum played in colonialism, my study drew on three works by Tony Bennett that until today, are cornerstone studies on the eighteenth and nineteenth-century museum: *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (1995), *The Political Rationality of the Museum* (1990) and *Culture: A Reformer's Science* (1998). These provided a platform for my discussion on the Raffles Museum's role as a site for colonial differentiating and exclusionary practices.

For my discussion on the British use of other cultural institutions in colonial rule I drew on several works on British colonialism. Among these were Mackenzie's *The Empire of Nature*, which provided a framework for an analysis of the Raffles Museum's role as a conduit for colonial administrative-Malay royalty relations. An especially useful source on colonial racial ideologies was Richard Evan's series of Gresham College lectures on empire and the Victorians because it explained the racial perceptions that colonial Victorians used to define colonial spaces. The most influential piece of work in British colonial strategies was ultimately Bernard Cohn's study of British colonial India and because the work influenced my analysis on so many levels, it warrants a more detailed commentary.

Cohn's work established the foundations of this study in that it provided the links between the founding of the museum, the British use of

institutions, and the manners in which the Raffles Museum served the imperial agenda. My situating the founding of the Raffles Museum within the British colonial rule was due in large part to Cohn's demonstration that from the eighteenth century onward, European states attempted to "foster official beliefs in how things are and ought to be" through "crucial civilizing institutions" such as schools.²⁵⁶ His work explained why the establishment of educational institutions — recall here that the Raffles Museum was founded as part of a college — became central in imperial strategies as institutions for the production of "moral and productive citizens."²⁵⁷

Most importantly, Cohn's work provided for a close, nuanced reading of Raffles's objectives in his 1819 *Minute*. It showed that all three objectives Raffles listed duplicated British governance in India. Chapter 5 demonstrates how education was directed towards the production of classes of locals who would either be sympathetic to British presence or could support trade or administration. This was a particularly important aspect in Singapore's colonial experience because it produced long-term effects on the Eurasian community that emerged during World War II, a discussion of which is provided in Chapter 6 under the *Caste of the Half-Caste*.

²⁵⁶ Cohn, Bernard S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge. The British in India*.

²⁵⁷ Cohn, Bernard S. 3,4

Drawing on Cohn's and Anderson's²⁵⁸ contention that colonials ruled empire through assembling knowledge of the colonized subject and geography, this study showed that colonial dominance was likewise enacted through colonial administrators categorically perceiving locals as *lacking* knowledge and simultaneously, *denying* them the ability to acquire it. Again, this had tremendous repercussions because it justified systemic White protectionism in colonial employment, an aspect of how colonies were used. Colonies functioned, as this study shows, not only to provide employment for the British aristocracy as Cannadine suggests,²⁵⁹ but also the British working class.

In terms of how colonial systems operated, several pieces of works by Ann Laura Stoler were consulted. A major contention she makes that underlie the analysis of the Raffles Museum's methodology was that colonial systems were influenced by "political energies and expertise, that pulls on some 'social facts' and converts them into qualified knowledge ... while repelling and refusing others."²⁶⁰ Within such a framework, the study showed that the British colonial thought made race "a social fact," whose

²⁵⁸ Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed (London ; New York: Verso, 2006).

²⁵⁹ *Ornamentalism: How The British Saw Their Empire. A Conversation with Maya Jasanoff*, Harvard (Jaipur Literary Festival, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFhjTTWxAs>.

²⁶⁰ Stoler, Ann Laura, *Against the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, New Jersey, USA: Princeton UP, 2009). 22

"qualified knowledge" comprised those of locals as "lazy," liable to fraud, incapable of working unsupervised, unfit for certain positions such as the librarian's, and as suitable only for subordinate positions. Its repulsion of fact included, as Crawford exemplified, any possibility that locals could be trained. These resulted in some areas such as museum work but also printing, education, and tourism being marked as "knowledge areas" and becoming exclusive European if not strictly British domains till the dawn of Singapore's independence.

Methodology: The Parts Below the Waterline

A major argument that I advance in this thesis is that present historical methodologies are inadequate for a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the museum, and especially the colonial museum. As the review of current literature reveals, conventional methodologies create several blind spots regarding the Raffles Museum's institutional history. These are:

1. A lack of accounting for the potency of the cultural power of the public museum as a social institution. The real commodity that museums deal with, Hooper-Greenhill points out, is knowledge.²⁶¹

²⁶¹ Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, The Heritage: Care-Preservation-Management Programme (London, New York: Routledge, 2003), <http://14.139.206.50:8080/jspui/bitstream/1/2452/1/Hooper-Greenhill,%20Eilean%20->

2. A consistent focus on aspects that are quotidian, such as its storage space shortage and problems with dust, at the expense of understanding the epistemology that informed and structured the Raffles Museum and its systems. This resulted in an underestimation of its role and function as a colonial institution.

3. A lack of accounting of its enactment of colonial agenda because a focus on chronology inevitably leads to a focus on the operational problems the museum encountered at each stage of its biography. While the problems the Raffles Museum encountered are essential components of its biography, they are only the struts of its daily but not its ideological work.

4. A failure to account for the historical contexts within which the Raffles Museum was established. These contexts include the historical terms of engagement between Britain and Asia, British trade anxieties and agenda during the 1800s and 1900s as well as Raffles's personal philosophy regarding trade and British presence in Southeast Asia.

5. A failure to pay attention to the manners in which the British employed cultural institutions in colonial governance, several precedents of which were already evident in India.

The lack of calibration of these aspects, as Gallagher and Robinson point out in their analysis of British imperial trade, "is judging an iceberg only from the parts above the water line."²⁶² It has resulted in a misplacement and misunderstanding of the Raffles Museum's historicity, which contrary to its history or chronological narrative, was as a British cultural technology of rule. The need to understand the Raffles Museum by the parts below the waterline succinctly describes the limitations of conventional historical methodologies in understanding the public museum. A brief discussion of museum work here is instructive in understanding why the Raffles Museum cannot be evaluated solely along a conventional timeline.

In a minimalist description, museum work can be said to be the warehousing, preservation, conservation, and storage of rare and valuable man-made or natural objects. Museums, within the definitions of its daily operations, regardless of how glamorous or impressive they appear, are no more than warehouses. Storage, the preservation of objects against decay, and the display of objects, are the specific technical expertise and skill sets of a museum.

In the business of collecting and storage therefore, whether it is in the

²⁶² Gallagher, John and Robinson, Ronald, "The Imperialism of Free Trade."

1800s or 2000s, space, decay, dust, etc. are quotidian constituents of daily museum work. They do not, however, determine a museum's institutional *persona*. These lie in the museum's collecting and exhibitionary *praxes* and rhetoric, and/or its functions, as well as the taxonomies museums employ.

As Conn succinctly points out:

Representation is a political act.

Sponsorship is a political act.

Curation is a political act.

Working in a museum is a political act.²⁶³

Within such a premise, analyses of quotidian problems cannot provide an understanding of a museum as an institution, or how it "thinks." It is therefore the politics behind the Raffles Museum's founding, methods, collecting *praxes* and utilization that my historical methodology engages with.

To achieve a successful calibration of such politics, it was clear that the historical analytical methodology selected had to meet two specific parameters. First, it had to be capable of accounting for the political, social, and economic conditions that determined the Raffles Museum's

²⁶³ Conn, Steven, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (Philadelphia, USA: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), <http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/toc/14657.html>.

establishment, spaces, methods, and function. Second, the methodology had to shift focus from the colonizer to the colonized. As Cohn demonstrates in his study of India, Pratt in her discussion of the Andean native, Guaman Poma's letter to Phillip III, and Clifford in his discussion of native American Tlingit objects, colonial domination and inferiorization can only be understood through a view from below and from the inside.²⁶⁴ In line with this perspective, the methodology I employ evaluates the Raffles Museum in terms of the local experience. Thus, even while British colonial racism is known to have existed, my methodology deliberately directs its analysis towards humanist understanding of colonialism from the view of those who lived under the system, and through this, derive a Singapore-centered historical interpretation and narrative of the state's colonized experience.

The historical approach that Steinbach describes in this chapter's epigraph was adopted because fulfils the thesis's aim to understand the ordinary and prosaic that *was* the colonized experience. It lends itself appropriately to an examination that seeks, as Steinbach says, to read the "conflicting experiences" of the "people of all classes" who lived on the island during the colonial regime, and particularly, under the Western

²⁶⁴ Cohn, Bernard S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge. The British in India.*; Pratt, Mary Louise, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation.*; Clifford, James, "Museums as Contact Zones."

"ideas of race and civilization that emerged between Britain and its empire."

While Steinbach provided the compass direction for the thesis's focus, the model for the construction of the Raffles Museum's biography was that suggested by Appadurai and Kopytoff.²⁶⁵ Such a model of analysis allowed a study of the Raffles Museum in its entirety as object and artifact of Singapore's colonial experience as well as account for the human processes that constructed and used it. However, while I adopt Kopytoff's cultural biography model in broad strokes and in principle, I also shift several loci in my analysis:

- i) I move focus from the British expatriates who operated the museum, such as the directors, curators, and collectors, to the locals who worked in it;
- ii) I shift attention from what is daily museum issues, such as space shortages, preservation against dust and obtaining financial support, collecting networks (which again is the approach current studies have adopted) to the ideologies that informed the opera-

²⁶⁵ Appadurai, Arjun, ed., *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1986), [https://books.google.com.sg/books?id=6JqTcziwKTYC&printsec=copyright#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com.sg/books?id=6JqTcziwKTYC&printsec=copyright#v=onepage&q&f=false;);
Kopytoff, I., "The Cultural Biography of Things. Commoditization as a Process," in *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Appadurai, Arjun (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1986).

tions;

- iii) I shift the reading of the museum from a consumption perspective, namely, Western consumption of Asian *ethnographica* and natural history, to production perspective, i.e., to the museum as a "producer" of artifacts and natural history specimens for imperial museums.

Conclusion

This chapter assessed present literature on the Raffles Museum and identified aspects of the museum's biography that contemporary anthropological, museal, cultural and imperial studies scholarship contend are constitutive of its cultural biography. The survey of literature revealed that while colonialism has been studied, and that while British colonial racism is indeed recognized to have existed, there has been little scholarly attention to colonial institutions, like the Raffles Museum, as technologies of rule and British colonial racism. This study is thus made essential by the dearth in scholarly literature on both the Raffles Museum as an institution as well as its role in this area of British colonial rule.

Contemporary works from these disciplines indicate that the Raffles Museum had to be considered within the three major processes that characterized the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These all emanated from the West and were associated with Western dominance of the non-West.

The first of these processes was what Conn calls the Golden Age of Museums;²⁶⁶ the second, the emergence of modern anthropological fieldwork tradition and ethnography;²⁶⁷ and the last but most significant, what Hyam names the British Imperial Century.²⁶⁸ As such, my argument against the current positioning of the Raffles Museum as purely a repository is that it was an institution of these global process. In addition, I argue that museums have considerable potency as social institutions and posit that they are "thinking institutions" and ideologues. I established likewise that there is a body of scholarship that establishes that the eighteenth/nineteenth-century museum served the colonial cause through its display and collecting *praxes*, both of which characterized the non-West as primitive. This was substantiated with a discussion of a specific genre of colonial exhibitions, the human zoo. Last, I reviewed existing studies that showed the direct relationship between colonial collecting with particular reference to Raffles's collecting as political acts.

The chapter asserts that a new methodology has to be used to evaluate the Raffles Museum because conventional historical analytical methods

²⁶⁶ Conn, Steven, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* Conn identifies the period from 1845 to 1915 as the "First Golden Age of Museums." He contends that the 1990s signaled The Second Golden Age.

²⁶⁷ Stocking, Jr. George W., *Colonial Situations*. 10

²⁶⁸ Hyam, R, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion*, 3rd ed., Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

are incapable of reading the museum below the waterline, where its ideological functioning is located. In sum, the chapter presents the main concepts that underwrite the analyses made on the four areas of the Raffles Museum. §

CHAPTER 4

Performativity in Founding: "Raffles's Child": Fulfilling an Imperial Vision

The seizure of the French and Spanish West Indies, the filibustering expedition to Buenos Aires in 1806, the taking of Java in 1811, were all efforts to break into new regions and to tap new resources by means of political action. But the policy went further than simple house-breaking, for once the door was opened and British imports with their political implications were pouring in, they might stop the door from being shut again. Raffles, for example, temporarily broke the Dutch monopoly of the spice trade in Java and opened the island to free trade. Later, he began the informal British paramountcy over the Malacca trade routes and the Malay peninsula by founding Singapore.

—John Robinson and Ronald Gallagher, *The Imperialism of Free Trade*

There is consensus in imperial and Southeast Asian studies that Raffles founded Singapore as a move to secure long-term British trade interests and presence in the region. Of the four studies on the Raffles Museum, only Wijeysingha relates the founding of the college, museum, and library to Raffles's overall political strategy. However, this is also as far as the link goes. From this point forward, three of the four studies on the Raffles Museum

(Wijesingha, Tan, and Liu) enact a historical recontextualization of Raffles's agenda and thereby, Singapore's colonial history.

First, the tenor and aggressiveness of British "filibustering" and "political housebreaking" that constituted Raffles's arrival are recontextualized in Singapore's history into narratives of a benevolent intervention, as having built a modern port out of nothingness. Second, Raffles's imperial agenda, policies, and imperial gaze, are recontextualized into evidence of his vision. Third and finally, the founding of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library is, consequently, also recontextualized into a Rafflesian meta-narrative of humanitarianism.

This chapter re-examines the founding the college, museum, and library within the context of this historical recontextualization. I begin with an overview of British trade interests and the problems the British faced in the region in the 1800s. Specifically, I look at British anxieties over the flow of opium from India to China and examine the founding of the museum within Raffles's political strategies regarding this trade. I then make a close reading of Raffles's *Minute On the Establishment of a Malay College in Singapore* of 1819 for a discussion of Raffles's motives and strategy. Following this, I discuss the precedents in British India that Raffles adopted and his anxiety over Islam. Finally, I demonstrate that John Crawfurd's resistance to the college was also a performativity of colonialism.

Imperial Trade, Imperial Anxieties

To understand institutions, Ann Laura Stoler asserts, one has to understand whom that institution serves.²⁶⁹ The opening paragraphs of the *Minute* Raffles drafted for the establishment of a college in Singapore show that he categorically and unequivocally intended for the three institutions he established on 1 April 1823 to serve Britain. British relations with the peoples of Southeast Asia, he stated, were based on "... the reciprocal advantages of commerce, and commerce alone "could best promote [Britain's] own interests and their advancement." To this end he stated, a college was necessary so that education could "keep pace with commerce ..."²⁷⁰

To begin, Raffles's imperial gaze was wide. Southeast Asia's potential for expansion, he noted, lay "Within its narrowest limits ... the whole of the vast Archipelago, which stretching from Sumatra and Java to the Islands of the Pacific, and thence to the shores of China and Japan ..."²⁷¹ Raffles, it should be noted, never wavered in his conviction that British presence and trade were mutually dependent. Thus, as early as 1805, soon after his arrival, he already realized that British presence and trade in the

²⁶⁹ Stoler, Ann Laura, *Against the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. 25

²⁷⁰ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore."

²⁷¹ Raffles, Thomas Stamford. 4

Indian Ocean necessitated a secure base in a suitable location.²⁷² To this end, he raised the issue of a British factory several times and as early as 1814 had already suggested establishing factories and consolidating power through on-site residents in the region, but he received no support from Bengal.²⁷³

Raffles tried again in 1817. He suggested to George Canning, then President of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India, the establishment of a base that could provide protection for British commerce and interests, and "more especially for an entrepôt for [British] merchandise."²⁷⁴ Again, he didn't get far. Raffles, however, was a persistent man if nothing else, and managed to push his plans further when Warren Hastings became Governor-General of India.

Hastings, whose dawdling over a base in Penang caused Francis Light to depart "in disgust" in 1772²⁷⁵ was more amenable to suggestions this time around. Raffles visited Hastings between 29 September 1818 and 7 December 1818 and departed India having convinced Hastings that he "had

²⁷² Hall, D.G.E., "From Mergui to Singapore, 1686-1819; A Neglected Chapter in the Naval History of the Indian Ocean," *The Journal of Siam Society* XLI, Part 1 (July 1953), http://www.khamkoo.com/uploads/9/0/0/4/9004485/the_journal_of_the_siam_society_vol._xli_part_1-2_1953.pdf.

²⁷³ Bastin, John, "Sir Stamford Raffles's and John Crawfurd's Ideas of Colonizing the Malay Archipelago," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26, no. 1 (July 1953): 81-85.

²⁷⁴ Bastin, John, *Raffles and Hastings. Private Exchanges Behind the Founding of Singapore* (Singapore: National Library Board, Singapore & John Sturgis Bastin, 2014).13

²⁷⁵ Hall, D.G.E., "From Mergui to Singapore, 1686-1819; A Neglected Chapter in the Naval History of the Indian Ocean."

the right strategy to thwart Dutch ambitions in the East Indies."²⁷⁶ On his departure, Raffles had a memorandum in hand from Hastings that gave him considerable leeway for independent action, but with a caveat that these not antagonize or conflict with the Dutch.

British anxiety over not antagonizing the Dutch was necessitated by their need to have them balance French expansionism both in Europe and Southeast Asia. Between 1795 and 1819 this was concern over Dutch Eastern possessions falling into French hands and British foreign policy required, Webster notes, a "revitalized and strengthened Dutch kingdom to become a buffer against French aggression and territorial ambitions."²⁷⁷ Singapore, even from these early days, was significant as the hub that represented British interests against "the imperial projects of the Netherlands, France, Spain," and later, the United States, Germany and Japan.²⁷⁸

Raffles's founding the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library however, was related to the island's political potential as well as to its value as a trading hub. By 1824, \$6.60 million of the entire British trade of \$9.41 million in the Malacca region went through Singapore.²⁷⁹ Much of this was

²⁷⁶ Tan, Kevin and Lim, Chen Sian, "Raffles' Letters: Intrigues Behind the Founding of Singapore" (Exhibition, August 29, 2012). Letter 1, Raffles to Col. James Young, 12 January 1891

²⁷⁷ Webster, Anthony, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1890*. 53-55

²⁷⁸ Trocki, Carl A., "The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy," 81.

²⁷⁹ Trocki, Carl A., 14.

in opium, guns, and ammunition. Raffles's motives for establishing the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library, as his *Minute* show, were directly related to Singapore's and Southeast Asia's role in the opium trade vis-a-vis China, British control of this trade, and by extension, British political control of the region.

Problems of Control

The trade in Indian opium became important after 1757. Clive's conquest of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey gave the British control of opium production, and under Cornwallis, the trade was effectively put under EIC control.²⁸⁰ Profits from Bengalese opium were the most extensive, and by the early nineteenth century, formed the bulk of British India's economy.²⁸¹ The high value of the trade was, however, matched by high vulnerability. British country *wallahs*, the armed ships that carried the opium gained through EIC auctions in India, despite their superior naval power, had no secure port between Calcutta and Canton.²⁸² Anglo-French hostilities in Eu-

²⁸⁰ Trocki, Carl A., 13.

²⁸¹ Deming, Sarah, "The Economic Importance of Indian Opium and Trade with China on Britain's Economy 1843-1890," ed. Bushey, Glory, Danko, Meredith, and Hansman, Chris, *Economics Working Papers*, No. 25, no. Spring (2011); Trocki, Carl A., "The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy," 13.

²⁸² Trocki, Carl A., "The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy." *The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy*. 13-15; Hall, D.G.E., "From Mergui to Singapore, 1686-1819; A Neglected Chapter in the Naval History of the Indian Ocean."

rope threatened British shipping,²⁸³ and the China passage was a central British commercial and political concern. Raffles in his *Minute* of 1819 addressed this concern when he called attention to the fact that Southeast Asia was strategically located "at the very threshold of China..."²⁸⁴

For Raffles, British trade problems were not limited to passage of opium to China. There were also problems in European control over trade in Singapore, the hub that Raffles considered of paramount importance to trade. European merchants controlled the capital, the "links to the global networks of the British Empire" as well as the flow of capital goods into and out of Singapore, but their control of the trade itself was tenuous.

Europeans could not interact with the locals who assembled the goods because they lacked fluency in local languages and were also not equipped to deal "with the small quantities of goods that were delivered and demanded by local traders."²⁸⁵ Trocki points out that aside from a smattering of Malay, most spoke no local languages, had no proficiency in the vernaculars with which trade on the island was conducted, and apparently, "none of them spoke (let alone read) any Chinese language."²⁸⁶ A lack of local

²⁸³ Webster, Anthony, *Gentlemen Capitalists*. 53-82

²⁸⁴ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore." 11

²⁸⁵ Trocki, Carl A., *The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy*. 1-25

²⁸⁶ Trocki, Carl A. 17

language proficiency thus hampered European entrepreneurial preference to run and operate mines and estates on their own as well as their control over the labor force they used in operations. They found themselves dependent on intermediaries and translators whom they did not trust. Language and a mistrust of translators were problems that the British had already experienced in India, and one that Raffles, as the EIC man-on-the-spot intended to solve. Raffles's second objective for the college to offer language lessons to EIC personnel was thus his solution to this problem.²⁸⁷

In his *Minute*, Raffles's preoccupation with China and the China trade is evident from the frequency of mentions and the considerable space he devoted to the location of Southeast Asia vis-à-vis China. It reveals that his plans were intended to secure control of the trade in the region as well as Singapore, and thereby, secure access to China, a commercial objective that was not new but had a history that dated back to the early British exploration.

China as Mission

Raffles's founding of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library as part of this policy vis-à-vis trade with China gains clarity when it is placed

²⁸⁷ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore."17

within Britain's historical terms of engagement with Asia, and specifically China. This began almost three hundred years before Raffles's arrival as a search to reach China via the Northwest Passage.

Records of early British voyages, such as by Dionyse Settle, show that British interests in Asia were historically formulated within a mission to reach "Cathay" for the resources and wealth that Europeans believed were there. Settle's 1577 account of one such attempt by Captain Martin Frobisher tells us that on Whitsunday, 26 May that year, Frobisher departed on the *Aide* from Blackwall with enough provisions for a year and a half. The expedition's mission was, Settle stated:

the further discovering of the passage to Cathay and other Countries adjacent by West and Northwest navigations, which passage or way is supposed to be on the North and Northwest part of America, and the said America to be an Island environed with the sea, where through our Merchants may have course and recourse with their merchandise, from these our Northernmost parts of Europe, to those Oriental coasts of Asia, in much shorter time, and with greater benefit than any others.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Settle, Dionyse, "A True Report of the Last Voyage into the West and Northwest Regions

The route Frobisher sought was to give the British faster and easier access to the "natural Riches and infinite T[reas]ure, and the great Traffic of rich merchandise that is in those countries of Cathay, China, India, and o[ther] countries thereabouts..."²⁸⁹ Frobisher did not succeed. This would only be achieved shortly after by James Lancaster who commanded the first two English voyages to the area then known as the "East Indies."

Lancaster's first voyage on the *Edward Bonaventure*, the same ship on which he served under Francis Drake, left Plymouth on 10 April 1591. He arrived in Penang in June 1592 and remained there until September, "plundering every vessel he encountered."²⁹⁰ Lancaster returned to England in May 1594 and sailed for the East Indies again in April 1601, this time on the *Red Dragon* and for the EIC. This voyage ended in his establishing a settlement at Bantam, Java, and securing a cargo of pepper.

Both Frobisher's and Lancaster's voyages reveal that British exploration of Asia and Southeast Asia was always for acquisition of resources. The

&c. 1577, *Worthily Achieved by Capt. Frobisher of the Said Voyage the First Finder and General, 1577*," n.d., Exploration, Northwest, National Humanities Center, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/amerbegin/exploration/text3/loksettle.pdf>.

²⁸⁹ Lok, Michael, "On Investing in and Promoting Frobisher's Expeditions," October 28, 1577, Exploration, Northwest, National Humanities Center, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/amerbegin/exploration/text3/text3read.htm>. Lok's listing of "Cathay" separately from "China" is reflective of state of knowledge on Asia in Europe during this time.

²⁹⁰ "Sir James Lancaster," n.d., <https://global.britannica.com/topic/East-India-Company>. ; *Traders: The East India Company and Asia* (National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich, 2017).

voyages were significant for they proved conclusively that Asia was within British naval capabilities but more importantly, that Asia had the potential and opportunities. For the next three-and-a-half centuries, European ambitions to control and acquire such Asian and Southeast Asian trade and resources would not ameliorate but intensify in the course of intra-European political rivalry. It would also underwrite British attempts to establish a base in Southeast Asia.

For the British, Southeast Asia had become crucial in its strategy to contain the French on the one hand and on the other, to sustain the trade that stopped a drain on British specie. The period between 1795 and 1819, as Webster notes, were marked by "dramatic extension of British political control and commercial involvement in the Malay Archipelago."²⁹¹ It also led to several British attempts in the late eighteenth century to establish a base in the region. The locations attempted included Mergui, Negrais, and Syriam in Myanmar; Poulo Kondor in Vietnam; and Balambangan in North Borneo. Each attempt failed because it was "haphazard" as at Syriam, poorly executed as at Negrais, or because the EIC was outwitted by the Dutch as at Rhio.²⁹² British success only came in 1786 with their acquisition of Penang.

²⁹¹ Webster, Anthony, *Gentlemen Capitalists*. 53

²⁹² Hall, D.G.E., "From Mergui to Singapore, 1686-1819; A Neglected Chapter in the Naval History of the Indian Ocean."; Trocki, Carl A., "The Development of Singapore's Colonial

Raffles's plan to establish a factory was thus a continuum of a long-standing British effort. His establishing the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library, however, was his attempt to secure permanent British presence through installation of mechanisms that facilitated administrative control, such as schools.

Failure and Frustration

Southeast Asia was integral to British trade as the source of much of the few goods that the Chinese were interested in: hornbill casques, laka wood, edible birds' nests and *trepang*. Where Europe was concerned, the region also had the "entire pharmacopoeia the British had hoped for and expected...":

betel and gum benjamin; birds' nests, bird of Paradise feathers, and bezoar stones; cloves, camphor, and an almost unending list of dammar, diamonds, dragon's blood gum, ivory, gold dust, nutmeg, mace, pepper, and beeswax.²⁹³

In addition, there was raw material: teak, tin, timber, rice, and rub-

Economy."¹

²⁹³ Tagliacozzo, Eric, "A Necklace of Fins: Marine Goods Trading in Southeast Asia, 1780-1860," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2004): 23-48.

ber.²⁹⁴ Raffles already in 1814 had expressed a view that Southeast Asia was central in this flow of products. Then, he saw Java as "the natural centre of an Empire between China, Eastern Asia, and Europe" and Java's location as "incalculable."²⁹⁵

However, while trade with China increased in significance, access to Qing China, Britain's main opium market, remained intractably unpredictable and restricted. Since the mid 1700s, Qing emperors had actively legislated controls against opium supply and consumption. In 1729 the Yongzheng Emperor decreed prohibition against opium import and sale, and in 1796, the Jiaqing Emperor passed legislation against its smoking. In 1800, legislation was enacted to prohibit opium importation.²⁹⁶ The politics behind the Anglo-Sino trade imbalance and the resultant British gun-boat diplomacy are well-documented. What we need to note here is that Southeast Asia became increasingly crucial in this trade both as source for the produce that the China wanted and its location vis-à-vis these sources, and additionally vis-à-vis China and India.

By the time Raffles drafted his *Minute on the Establishment of a Malay*

²⁹⁴ Webster, Anthony, *Gentlemen Capitalists*. 2,3. Webster lists rubber, but I believe that this came much later, closer towards the turn of the century.

²⁹⁵ Bastin, John, "Sir Stamford Raffles's and John Crawfurd's Ideas of Colonizing the Malay Archipelago."82

²⁹⁶ Unknown, "The Development of the Opium Problem in China," World Drug Report 2008 (United Nations, 2008), https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2008/WDR2008_100years_drug_control_origins.pdf.

College in Singapore in 1819, all the British had to show for about two-and-a-half centuries of effort in accessing "Cathay" (since Frobisher's voyage) was failure at establishing a base in Southeast Asia as well as at diplomacy. The two British diplomatic attempts—the McCartney Embassy to the Qianlong Court in 1793 and the Amherst Embassy to the Jiaqing Court in 1816 —were both abortive. Failure at diplomacy led consequently to British armed diplomacy and military belligerence and two wars, the first between 1839-42 and a second between 1856-60.

Raffles's proposing a college in 1819 suggests his awareness of the consequences of the British failure to gain entry to China. He met Lord Amherst, the head of the 1816 embassy between August to October 1817²⁹⁷ at Frogmore in the Home Park of Windsor Castle very shortly after Amherst's return to England after his failed mission. Raffles is recorded as saying that he talked all evening with Amherst, and thereby saved a thousand pounds which he would have inevitably lost to his hostess, Her Majesty Old Queen Charlotte, whom Raffles said "played for fiercely high stakes."²⁹⁸ His submitting his *Minute* for a college in Singapore in 1819 after the Amherst embassy failure is therefore unlikely to be coincidental.

²⁹⁷ Amherst arrived in China in August 1816 and was ordered to leave almost immediately. However, he only left in January 1817.

²⁹⁸ Glendinning, Victoria, *Raffles and the Golden Opportunity, 1781-1826*.

It also throws into relief Raffles's observation that "Recent events have directed our attention these, and in a particular manner to the Malayan Archipelago, where a vast field of commercial speculation has been opened, the limits of which it is difficult to foresee."²⁹⁹ While it cannot be established with certainty if Raffles meant the failure of the Amherst Mission by "recent events," it can be inferred with confidence that the Amherst mission failure would certainly have been regarded with concern by the EIC who instigated and financed the embassy.³⁰⁰

Interestingly, Raffles displayed in his *Minute* a mainstream British self-confidence in racial and social superiority that the two British embassies to China displayed.³⁰¹ In his *Minute*, Raffles stated that it was essential for Britain to inquire why she, a manufacturing nation, was "compelled to supply this empire [China] with the raw produce of [her] territories." Britain, he advocated, must never want an interest in "the principles and means by which [the Chinese] are thus able to supersede the [British], even with the advantage of [British] unrivaled machinery."³⁰² Raffles's view here revealed

²⁹⁹ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore." 2-3

³⁰⁰ Ellis, Henry, "Journal of the Proceedings of the Late Embassy to China, Comprising a Correct Narrative of the Public Transactions of the Embassy, of the Voyage to and From China" (London, 1817), 48, Archive.org, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.43101/page/n63>.

³⁰¹ Evans, Sir Richard, "Lecture, The Victorians: Empire and Race" (April 11, 2011), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UnvbyHMF8k>.

³⁰² Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay

a patent belief that China's surpassing Britain was an anomaly, an aberration of a norm of Western primacy in the order of things. Colonialism was thus writ large within his formulation of entitlement to resources: "civilized" nations, i.e., Western nations, were entitled to resources of "lesser" i.e., "non-civilized" nations. The fact that the British were the ones who needed access to China (and desperately at that) never interfered with this intrinsic sense of military, social, and economic superiority with which Evans notes the Victorians regarded the rest of the world.³⁰³ This would have partly accounted for the embassies' refusal to accede to the ritualistic *kow tow* that the Qianlong and Jiaqing emperors demanded for audiences and consequently, to the embassies' failures.

Opium and Southeast Asia

Raffles's strategy as outlined in his *Minute* leave little doubt that his founding of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library was to support Anglo-British trade and Singapore's role in that trade, which during his tenure was primarily in opium. His concern in this context is made clear when we note that opium not only kept Britain out of debt but circulated

College at Singapore."13

³⁰³ *Lecture: The Victorians: Empire and Race, The Victorians: Culture and Experience in Britain, Europe and the World, 1815-1914* (Museum of London, 2011), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UnvbyHMF8k>.

within colonial Singapore's social and economic cycles as commodity and as mode of payment. In addition, Southeast Asia had developed into an important secondary opium market and remained as such right into the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁰⁴

As Trocki notes, the Kangxi boom had created a demand for goods that required "colonies of Chinese laborers to produce them."³⁰⁵ By the end of the eighteenth century there were numerous colonies of Chinese working in tin mines in the Malayan Peninsula and Bangka; gold mines in Pontianak, Sambas, and Kelantan; and working in pepper plantations in the Southern Gulf of Thailand, Brunei, and Trengganu, as well as in sugar plantations in Kedah. These colonies were important producers of raw material and coolie labor as well as opium consumers. This coolie population, as will be demonstrated under *Natives and the Fear of Coolies*, is a central narrative in the Raffles Museum's biography.

Like other port cities in Southeast Asia in the early 1800s, Singapore was an opium market. A substantial portion of the Chinese community on the island comprised Chinese coolies who worked the docks, in construction, and in gambier and pepper plantations. Colonial enterprises

³⁰⁴ Webster, Anthony, *Gentlemen Capitalists*. 57

³⁰⁵ Trocki, Carl A., "The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy."10

like plantations, operated "company store" arrangements³⁰⁶ that enclosed the coolie in a cycle that began with the coolie being paid for his labor. This, the coolie remitted often directly back to his employer through his consumption of the opium that his employer supplied and that British colonial merchants shipped in from India. It was a closed system of supply and demand that fueled and sustained Singapore's and British India's early colonial economies. Raffles was thus not only protecting the passage of opium between India and China but keeping the trade alive in the port that he established. This, however, was only a fraction of his overall plan. His *Minute* reveals that his scope for protecting this trade was much more complex because it involved creating a link between Southeast Asia and China through a program of colonizing Southeast Asia with Chinese.

The Rafflesian Solution: A Second China

Raffles's 1819 *Minute* as a manifesto of his political strategies for expansion and governance has been overlooked. The document is revealing not only of Raffles's acumen and political style, but also of how his genius is misunderstood. The men he involved in, as well as his establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library itself, show that Raffles's genius and acumen lay not in his ideas of free trade or a free port, but in being able

³⁰⁶ Trocki, Carl A.23

to conceptualize solutions and assembling the resources for them.

A close reading of this, the three institutions' founding document, verifies that his establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library was only a small part of a simple but far from simplistic strategy to implement British control over the region. In it, Raffles laid out a radical proposal to secure long-term British access to China and control of the region's trade and resources by colonizing Southeast Asia with the Chinese.

Raffles advanced four arguments relating to Southeast Asia's potential. The first was that geographically, it was close to China; second, the region had ample resources for exploitation; third, exploitation of these resources needed Chinese entrepreneurial skills; and fourth, the colonies of Chinese already existent in Southeast Asia were themselves a resource that could be developed. All of these, he suggested, would be useful if the region was colonized by the Chinese.

Colonization by Proxy

Raffles's main arguments centered on Southeast Asia's potential. He noted that Southeast Asia had advantages of not only a well-established system of goods flow, but also location. The "vastness" of Southeast Asia's trade he said, can only be gauged from the extent from which commerce

had still been conducted despite "every disadvantage of monopolizing policy and insecurity of person and property..."³⁰⁷

The region, he pointed out, was ideally located. "Situated between the rich and populous continents of China on the one hand and India on the other..." the region was also important for the produce the demand for which "is unfailing," and "only limited by the extent of the population."³⁰⁸ To this end, a certain population growth to benefit production was required, and this is where, scattered throughout the *Minute*, Raffles suggested a plan to colonize Southeast Asia with the Chinese.

He began by noting that of all of the various peoples in the region, the numbers of Chinese involved in extracting Southeast Asia's resources were considerable:

In the island of Java the number of these settlers is not less than 100,000; a similar number is to be found in Siam: in Borneo they are still more numerous, and they are to be met with in every well regulated state. The valuable Gold Mines of the latter island have offered a powerful inducement to their establishment: they are

³⁰⁷ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore," 11.

³⁰⁸ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore." 10

worked almost exclusively by Chinese... ³⁰⁹

These "numerous Chinese settlers who now form a considerable portion of Southeast Asia's population," Raffles added, "must not be passed over in silence" because they not only worked the mines but "[gave] a stimulus to the industry of its inhabitants."³¹⁰ Goods from the interior, he noted, ultimately ended up with "the Chinese merchant who sends his junks laden with this accumulated produce to be dispersed through the empire of China and furnishes Europeans with the cargoes of their ships." That same channel brought the "manufactures of India and Europe" into circulation in the region. ³¹¹ "When we consider," he said, that the area with its trade channels "are placed at the very threshold of China, a country overflowing with an enterprising and industrious population,"

who are anxious and eager to settle wherever security and protection is afforded, that it is this people who have chiefly contributed to maintain and support the energies of the native population and have diffused the stimulus of their own activity wherever they have settled, and that protection only is wanted to accumulate them in any

³⁰⁹ Raffles, Thomas Stamford. 9

³¹⁰ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, 9.

³¹¹ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, 11.

numbers, to create it may be said *a second China*, the resources and means of this extraordinary Archipelago will appear without limits (italics mine).³¹²

A second China in Southeast Asia, Raffles submitted, offered several benefits. The British would not be "plodding on barren soil" but standing before "the inexhaustible riches of the country that are no less universally admitted."³¹³ These resources, Raffles argued, were best exploited by the Chinese, whom he noted, carried "with them a spirit of enterprize and speculation combined with an industry and prudence that makes them flourish and acquire opulence wherever they settle."³¹⁴ In addition, he said, the Chinese continued to operate in spite of "political restrictions" and "partial exactions."

Besides enterprise and resilience against extractions and restrictions, the Chinese were also better suited for colonization. "Of all the inhabitants of the Archipelago," he stressed, "the Chinese, as well as from assimilating more with the customs of the Europeans than the native Mahomedans as from their habits of obedience and submission to power, are unfirmly found

³¹² Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore." 11

³¹³ Raffles, Thomas Stamford. 22

³¹⁴ Raffles, Thomas Stamford.13

to be the most peaceable and improveable."³¹⁵

Raffles's final argument for colonizing Southeast Asia with the Chinese was that it was favored by climatic conditions. Here he drew on America as illustration. He said,

Borneo and the Eastern Islands may become to China, what America is already to the nations of Europe. The superabundant and overflowing population of China affords an almost inexhaustible source of colonization, while the new and fertile soil of these islands offer the means of immediate and plentiful subsistence to any numbers who may settle in them.³¹⁶

Raffles argued that a congenial climate allowed European colonization of America, and in Southeast Asia "where the climate is at least, as congenial to the Chinese as that of America to Europeans," the results are even more promising. "The wealth of their mines and the extent of their own native population, added to the greater proximity of China" he noted, [were] advantages which were not enjoyed by America, and must contribute to accelerate colonization."³¹⁷

³¹⁵ Raffles, Thomas Stamford. 10

³¹⁶ Raffles, Thomas Stamford. 11

³¹⁷ Raffles, Thomas Stamford. 11

In this grand plan, Raffles was advocating expansionism by proxy. It is reasonable to infer here that while Raffles used "colonization" to describe the deliberate settlement of Chinese in Southeast Asia, he did not mean for the Chinese to "colonize" Southeast Asia under the same terms that the British "colonized" Southeast Asia, i.e., with the same political and social privileges. He certainly meant, however, "colonization" in terms of settling a foreign, Chinese population in Southeast Asia.

Expansionism by proxy was not Raffles's first foray into such a method. In 1813, while he was governor of Java, to ensure the Chinese a supply of tin, Raffles tried to revitalize Bangka as a center for tin production. To this end, he imported 1,600 coolies, thereby increasing the Chinese population on the island by about eighty percent. His scheme was successful enough for it to be continued by the Dutch after they took control in 1816.³¹⁸ Raffles's success with the method was probably why he wanted it as an overall strategy for Southeast Asia.

Raffles's plan to colonize Southeast Asia with Chinese is related to yet another part of Raffles's strategy, one that we have discussed earlier under *China as Mission*. The passage of Indian opium, as we have seen, was a primary concern of British trade at this time. In establishing a second

³¹⁸ Heidhues, Somers cited in Webster, Anthony, *Gentlemen Capitalists*. 55

China, Raffles's plan enhanced the existent link between the Chinese merchants in Southeast Asia and the merchants on mainland China. Importantly, this link was within British territory, and thereby, would have helped securing the passage in no small measure.

Equally important in Raffles's strategy regarding China were the men he enlisted in the project, which constitutes another Rafflesian political strategy that has also been overlooked. Raffles's choice of trustees and patrons, especially Robert Morrison, in the establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library reveals not only an astute employment of influence, but also of financial and political resources.

[The Wise Men of Imperial Trade and Colonial Missions](#)

The men whom Raffles named variously as patrons or trustees at his 1 April 1823 meeting are significant because they were not the garden-variety evangelist or administrator, but personalities whose intellectualism and activism directed the global transformations that took place between the 1700s until the end of the 1800s. The effects of these transformations — abolition of Atlantic slavery, introduction of education for locals as well as British Protestant evangelism in colonies — were long-lasting and permanent. These men formed a formidable coterie whose involvements, I argue, reflect Raffles's imperialist strategies and agenda.

Charles Grant, William Wilberforce, Robert Morrison, William

Marsden, and Nathaniel Wallich represented, even embodied, three major interests in British colonial expansionism: Christian evangelical civilizing, EIC corporate interests, and the use of botany for imperial good. Their involvement therefore defined, from the outset, the Raffles Institution's, Museum and Library's institutional *persona* as a cultural technology of colonial dominance.

Robert Morrison's and William Marsden's roles in Raffles's project are fairly straightforward, and hence, it is more useful if we begin by examining the significance of the involvement of Charles Grant and William Wilberforce.

Transferring Scandal: Abolitionism in the Service of Empire

The involvement of Grant and Wilberforce is significant in British colonial situations³¹⁹ because they played key roles in British colonial evangelism and education of colonized peoples, but also because they irrevocably changed local cultural practices such as of *sati* or widow sacrifice in India. Their philosophies, ideals, and works are essential backstories to understanding British colonial dynamics, and by extension, why Raffles founded a college.

³¹⁹ The term "colonial situation" is used by George Stocking to refer to anthropological situations, but I use it here to refer to the situations in colonies.

It is highly likely that Grant and Wilberforce were not present at the meeting Raffles called on 1 April 1823. Raffles nevertheless institutionalized and ensured their involvement in the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library through a Committee of Cooperation domiciled in London. This committee held direct control over the institutions, for example, by having the vote on expenses of "more than "L500 of the property of the Institution" and the power to investigate "any departures from the principles of the Institution."³²⁰

Named as patrons, Grant's and Wilberforce's involvement in the institutions' founding performed colonialism on several levels. Not only did they represent the civilizing mission and religious ideology that underwrote British colonialism, but missionaries like Grant, Wilberforce, and as we shall see, Robert Morrison, were central actors in British imperial expansion. British colonialism, Evans reminds us,

had a strong moral and religious content: the 'uncivilized' were human souls like any other, who deserved to be rescued and brought to eternal life through Christianity. Fundamentally, native Africans or Polynesians were regarded in much the same way as the French or the Germans; they lay some way back on the road to civilization but

³²⁰ "Singapore Institution, Minutes of Meeting," 60. The "L" probably meant £.

in time, like the British, they would get there.³²¹

Missionaries thus, were integral to the British colonial cause as vanguards of Victorian Christianity's mission towards "the ultimate conversion of the whole of humankind to Christianity." They were, as Evans notes, "among the most celebrated and admired of Victorian heroes."³²²

Abolitionists, in turn, spearheaded the Victorian Christian colonial faction. First founded to work only among settlers, abolitionists were brought into contact with indigenous societies through their anti-slavery campaigns and thereby, "became the main vehicle for education, literary and — as in Livingstone's case, for example — medical care."³²³ The Raffles Institution, Museum and Library in Singapore — financed and patronized by three of the most active, globally influential, and well-known missionaries of the time — were therefore, embodiments of their founders' colonial corporate and religious ideologies, missions, and their enactments. Thus, a closer examination of these main individuals is necessary to illustrate their significance in Raffles's overarching political strategy.

An influential parliamentarian and social reformer, as well as a

³²¹ *Lecture: The Victorians: Empire and Race.*

³²² *Lecture: The Victorians: Empire and Race.*

³²³ *Lecture: The Victorians: Empire and Race.*

director of the EIC and "gentleman capitalist,"³²⁴ Charles Grant's involvement represented the tripartite interests of the British state, British mercantile capitalists, as well as the English Protestant Church in the settlement at Singapore and in the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library. Grant, whom Raffles met between 1816-17, championed all these interests when he defended Raffles's establishment of a factory at Singapore before the House of Lords Committee hearing chaired by Lord Landsdowne. It was Grant's testimony as "such an important spokesman for the East India Company," according to Bastin, that bolstered Raffles against criticism of his actions, because it had "an enormous influence in uniting opinion in commercial and political circles in London in favor of retaining Singapore."³²⁵

William Wilberforce's presence, on the other hand, is more significant in terms of his work in abolitionism and the relationship between empire building and social reform. His activism was particularly influential in colonies because it directly led to the establishment of civic and religious institutions that changed colonized peoples' lives irrevocably.

As the first man to give a major abolition speech in the House of Commons on 12 May 1789, Wilberforce spearheaded the movement to abol-

³²⁴ Webster, Anthony, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1890*.

³²⁵ Note 287, Bastin, John, *Raffles and Hastings. Private Exchanges Singapore*. 214

ish North Atlantic human trafficking. Where colonies were concerned, a major impact was his activism for proselytizing in EIC territories, and hence, the spread of Christian Protestantism.

The EIC prohibited proselytizing in its territories like India, on grounds that it was disruptive.³²⁶ In 1793 Wilberforce attempted to force the EIC to allow proselytizing when the company's charter came up for renewal but failed. In 1813, however, in a broad-based campaign that operated both within and without the House of Commons and that assembled over half a million signatures, together with some "clever strategizing" on Wilberforce's part, Wilberforce's Evangelist movement got the ban on evangelism lifted.³²⁷ The EIC was also forced to agree to establish an ecclesiastical base in Calcutta at the company's expense.³²⁸

Wilberforce's successful introduction of proselytizing into EIC territories led to the laying of the ground work for a Christianity-based, colonial educational system that was installed in many British colonies, including Singapore. His work in this area began in 1792 when he introduced two clauses in the Charter Act of that year to send two schoolmasters to India. He met tremendous opposition because the EIC believed that it was the es-

³²⁶ Dirks, Nicholas B., *The Scandal of Empire*. 23

³²⁷ Copland, Ian, "Christianity as an Arm of Empire: The Ambiguous Case of India under the Company. c 1813-1858," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 4 (December 2006): 1025-54.1031

³²⁸ Mani, Lata, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India*. 133-136

tablishment of schools in their American colonies that led to their loss of the colonies. It was again only in 1813 that the EIC agreed to education on the Indian subcontinent,³²⁹ and the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library stemmed directly from this activism.

Dirk asserts that Wilberforce's role in colonialism is significant in terms of how abolitionism, while reformist in outlook and theory, nevertheless, enabled British empire-building. Wilberforce's involvement in the Raffles Institution vis-à-vis empire is thus particularly interesting in this context.

Dirks asserts that in late eighteenth-century Britain, public and legislative attention and concern were centered on scandals regarding British nabobs' pillaging and plundering of India. Under Edmund Burke's pressure, this concern culminated in the impeachment of Warren Hastings between 1788 and 1795.

Wilberforce's chosen battlefield — slavery — like the excesses of the nabobs, was a contentious issue in empire-building because it questioned its very morals as well as its Christian content and involvement. Reasons for abolition ranged from British complicity in the trade to emancipation as a Christian mission. However, as Dirks notes, the use of slaves in empire-

³²⁹ Basu, Major B.D., *History of Education in India Under the Rule of the East India Company*.

building was widespread and unquestioned till the American Revolution. It was the loss of the American colonies, he contends, that made it clear "that empire itself was imperiled by slavery."³³⁰ Slavery, like the excesses of British nabobs, comprised the moral scandals of empire-building that had to be "expunged from imperial record" not solely for its ideals, but because empire-building was jeopardized.

In the wake of these scandals, British empire-building took on a moral economy that focused not on the scandals of British colonial rule but instead, on the barbaric practices colonized peoples were believed to embrace. "It was no accident," Dirks contends, "that William Wilberforce shifted his attention from slavery to *sati* during the second decade of the nineteenth century, symbolizing the more general displacement of scandal from colonizer to colonized."³³¹ This displacement was likewise evidenced in a simultaneous shift of public interest from scandal at home to the atrocities in colonies, perceived or otherwise, a prime example being the Black Hole of Calcutta. As a result, "the histories of imperial formation shifted in turn from the scandals of Europeans to the scandals that both explained and justified European rule."³³²

³³⁰ Dirks, Nicholas B., *The Scandal of Empire. The Creation of Imperial Britain*. 33

³³¹ Dirks, Nicholas B. 34

³³² Dirks, Nicholas B. 34

This couching of colonialism as requisite for addressing the barbaric customs of non-Western, non-Christian cultures is relevant to the Raffles Museum because Raffles invoked them, albeit indirectly, as reasons for establishing the three institutions. On page 9 of his *Minute on the Establishment of a Malay College in Singapore* he noted for example, that some tribes are "extremely barbarous; and it must be admitted, that the practice of man-hunting, for the purpose of obtaining the heads of the victims, is too frequent throughout." On page 20 again, he spoke of the "barbarous practices alluded to as common among the wilder tribes," such as the Battas, whom he described as a "numerous people having language and written character peculiar to themselves ...[and were] universally addicted to the horrid practice of devouring the flesh of their enemies whom they take in battle; and that many tribes of the Dayaks of Borneo, and the Alfoors of the further East who are addicted to man-hunting..."³³³ Thus, while Raffles couched his reasons for a college in Singapore in terms of its benefits vis-à-vis trade rather than as a call for the colonial virtuous intervention that Wilberforce and Grant personified, he nevertheless presented head-hunting and cannibalism as a reality and fact of common-day Southeast Asian cultural practice. In this example, he employed Wilberforce's shift of scandal in empire to scan-

³³³ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore," 9, 20.

dal of the colonized and promoted these as justifications for British colonial expansion and its civilizing influence.

Robert Morrison and the Grand Object of China

More important and illustrative of Raffles's political technique and how the establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library was a performativity of colonialism is the involvement of the missionary and Sinologue, Robert Morrison.

Victorian colonialism, as Evans notes, comprised a staunch and unshakeable belief that "there might be many stages of social evolution and many seemingly bizarre customs and "superstitions" in the world, but as Brantlinger adds, there was only one "civilization," one path of "progress," and one "true religion."³³⁴ Victorian religiosity and evangelism therefore provided a critical impulse in colonial expansionism, and nowhere is this more evident in the founding of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library. Morrison's financing of the much of the three institutions' establishment costs was a demonstration of both Victorian Christianity's fiscal clout as well as Raffles's seamless employment of this clout in his

³³⁴ Brantlinger, Patrick, "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1965), <http://uwf.edu/dearle/imperialadventure/imperial%20adventure/documents/brantlinger%20victorians%20and%20africans.pdf>. 166

political strategy.

The pioneer of Protestant evangelism in China and author of not the first, but the most widely-used Chinese translation of the Bible, Morrison's "grand object of Christian philanthropy" was China where he died in 1834.³³⁵ In pursuit of this grand evangelist project, Morrison bankrolled Raffles's college up to close to a third of the construction costs that Jackson estimated. His total donation comprised the estimated \$4,000 (Spanish) that was to be derived from the sale of the Anglo-Chinese College in Malacca and a personal donation of \$1,000.³³⁶ His financing of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library merits attention not only as a fusion of the main colonial missions of civilizing, evangelism, and pedagogy, but importantly, as an illustration as to how colonial ideals were brokered and implemented.

Raffles's college, for Morrison, was an opportunity to gain a pioneer proselytizing foothold in a vast and expanding EIC territory, but importantly, also to have proselytizing sanctioned by no one less august than the EIC proconsul himself, Thomas Stamford Raffles. For Raffles, on the other hand, Morrison's arrival in Singapore was, as he called it, an act of Providence. The plans he had submitted plans for a college since 1819 could

³³⁵ "Singapore Institution, Minutes of Meeting." ⁵⁴

³³⁶ "Singapore Institution, Minutes of Meeting."

not be met, as he said, for "political and other circumstances."³³⁷ Morrison's financial support and collaboration offered him a means to finally install what he considered essential for British interests, and in involving Morrison, Grant, and Wilberforce, he enlisted, in Copland's phrase, "Christianity as an arm of empire."³³⁸

Morrison's mandate for the Raffles Institution and the attendant "European Library,...[and] An extensive Museum" were colonial because he intended them as instruments for the civilizing and moral interventions for the populations of Southeast Asia which he made clear in his Suggestions.³³⁹

That colonials viewed locals universally as uncivilized and needing Christian intervention is evident from the period's local newspapers. An editorial dated 1 September 1836 for instance, commented on the Second Report issued by the Singapore Institution, as the Raffles Institution was then known. It stated that the duties of the press were to take "note of the advance of Education, especially at places where efforts [were] made to extend its beneficial influences to the yet untutored and half-civilized classes of mankind."³⁴⁰ The colonial task where the locals were concerned,

³³⁷ "Singapore Institution, Minutes of Meeting," 4.

³³⁸ Copland, Ian, "Christianity as an Arm of Empire: The Ambiguous Case of India under the Company. c 1813-1858."

³³⁹ "Singapore Institution, Minutes of Meeting."

³⁴⁰ "Editorial. The Singapore Institution," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, September 1, 1836.

was clearly not only civilizing them through an inculcation into Western languages, but also into Western religion.

This evangelical mandate for the Raffles Institution however, worked to the detriment of Morrison's mission for some time. The halt in completing the school appears to have been due to local resistance to the Christian content in the institution's curriculum. This is implied in the fact that school construction only successfully resumed when the committee assembled by Alexander Guthrie on 27 August 1835 resolved that "no one religion should form the basis of the education provided."³⁴¹ While it is clear that the evangelical work of the college is related to its founding history, it cannot be covered within this dissertation, but it is certainly a topic that warrants further research.

Two other persons involved in Raffles's establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library who reflected his imperial agenda are William Marsden and Nathaniel Wallich. Wallich will be examined under Function, so for the moment, the discussion will focus on one of Raffles's closest, lifelong friends, William Marsden.

Listed as a trustee of the Malayan College of the Institution at the

³⁴¹ Wijesingha, E., *The Eagle Breeds a Gryphon*. 58

meeting Raffles called on 1 April 1823,³⁴² Marsden was an intellectual as well as political influence on Raffles. His *History of Sumatra* (1793), which he wrote on his return to Britain in 1779, primarily at the urging of Joseph Banks and the members of the Royal Society, established a trajectory of historical study for Raffles's *History of Java* (1817) as well as Crawford's *History of the Indian Archipelago* (1820).³⁴³ While he was not the only influence on Raffles in terms of colonial exploitation through botany (Wallich was also an influence), Marsden was probably the main conduit for Banks's ideas of botany as an imperial tool, which he himself subscribed to and institutionalized.

During his tenure as Secretary to the Admiralty, Marsden subsidized the inclusion of a natural historian on naval vessels and thereby enabled those "with a scientific bent by the early nineteenth century to find work as naturalists, collecting the unique, to be employed upon almost any ship leaving England."³⁴⁴ This consolidated "the influence of Banks in the linking of science with governmental expeditions..."³⁴⁵

Not to be overlooked here is the fact that Singapore was the British

³⁴² Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minutes on the Formation of the Singapore Institution, A.D. 1823." 77

³⁴³ Noor, Farish A., Thesis consultation, July 25, 2018.

³⁴⁴ Barnard, Timothy P., "The Rafflesia in the Natural and Imperial Imagination of the East India Company in Southeast Asia." 153

³⁴⁵ Barnard, Timothy P. 151-154

Far East naval hub. The impact of Marsden's policy on the Raffles Museum's collecting praxis in terms of how it integrated bioprospecting into naval voyages are outside the scope of this study but is another subject that has emerged out of this study as warranting further research.

Counterbalancing Islam

A final political aspect of Raffles's imperial strategy in his establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library has been suggested by two recent pieces of scholarship. This concerns Raffles's first object for the college to educate "the higher order of natives." Gareth Knapman's study on Crawford and Khairudin Aljunied's on Raffles's perception of Malays and their religions raise the possibility that a key motivation for Raffles establishing the three institutions included an intention to counter what Raffles viewed to be Islam's negative influence.

According to Knapman, Raffles's experience in Java convinced him that Islam's introduction into Java "was a backward step for Java" and that the religion had inflicted a "degenerate corruption onto Javanese culture."³⁴⁶ Similarly, Aljunied notes that while originally passive towards Islam, Raffles eventually came to see the religion as having a detrimental

³⁴⁶ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1870. John Crawford and the Politics of Equality*.62

influence on Malays. In this context, a statement Raffles made in his *Minute* is worthy of attention.

Raffles noted that the islanders, meaning the local Malays, turned to "Mussulman teachers" who were "comparatively few and of an inferior order; many of [whom were] little better than manumitted slaves...although they assumed the titles of Seids and Sheiks" for their education. The whole of the Archipelago, he added, was

left open to the views and schemes of these men [who] promise the joys of paradise in recompense for the slight ceremony of circumcision... and in this world the exemption from the pains of slavery to which all unbelievers are liable...³⁴⁷

Raffles's distrust of Islam is unsurprising because until the middle of the eighteenth century, the "Orient" was importantly, "most rigorously understood as applying to the Islamic Orient."³⁴⁸ Islam constituted, Said suggests, Britain's real encounter with the Other because its other major political encounter with the Other was India, which he notes, was never a threat and could therefore be treated "with propriety hauteur – never with

³⁴⁷ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore." 15

³⁴⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 75–76.

the same sense of danger reserved for Islam."³⁴⁹

In Raffles's case, his distrust of Islam was partly due to the influence of his advisor, H. W. Muntinghe, a former President of the High Court of Justice in Batavia, who believed that "European rule could only be asserted amongst the peasants by 'setting aside all dangerous and harmful influences of the Mohammedan government..."³⁵⁰ It was also, for him personally, significant in how he viewed science.

A man of the Enlightenment, Raffles idealized reasoned, evidential knowledge, and particularly, science. Science was also then seen as responsible for having given the West a preeminence in the world. The literature as well as the cartography of the time allowed Europeans to perceive that "the Orient was being outstripped and outdated by Western science."³⁵¹ Islam, in this context, undermined a key Rafflesian strategy because as Aljunied notes, Raffles felt that "science, the key to progress, was missing, or at least, dim and superficial" within Islam.³⁵² As we have seen, Raffles was a hobby naturalist. He was also, like William Marsden, a keen follower of Joseph Banks's philosophy of science, especially botany, for the

³⁴⁹ Said, 75.

³⁵⁰ Aljunied, Syed Muhd Khairudin, "Shades of Alterity. A Study of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles' Discourse on Religions Amongst the Malays." (NUS, 2003). 36

³⁵¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 65.

³⁵² Aljunied, Syed Muhd Khairudin, "Shades of Alterity. A Study of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles' Discourse on Religions Amongst the Malays," 32.

imperial cause. A religion in which "science was missing" would have been counterintuitive and contradictory for Raffles, both personally and politically.

Taken together, these factors indicate that Raffles's founding of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library had a political-religious dimension that has not been adequately calibrated before. They imply that Raffles saw Western, or more specifically, English education of Malays as necessary not only to claim their alliance but also to counterbalance the influence of Islam.

Duplicating Minto, Hastings, and Wellesley

A great deal of clarity regarding Raffles's establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library as a technology of rule is derived when their establishments are contextualized in terms of how education became integrated into colonial rule. Education of colonized populations was originally prohibited by colonists because it was used to designate colonized populations. The education of slaves, for example, was prohibited in the British American colonies and similarly, rejected by the British in the early days of their rule over the subcontinent.³⁵³ Wilberforce's attempt to send two schoolmasters to India in 1792, it should be recalled here, was fiercely opposed by the Court of Proprietors, so much so that the clauses

³⁵³ Basu, Major B.D., *History of Education in India*.

were withdrawn.

In 1813, when the subject of providing instructions to locals was made again, a director of the EIC reminded the Select Committee of the House of Lords that they had committed a folly when they allowed the establishment of schools and colleges in their American colonies and that it "would not do" for the British "to repeat the same act of folly in India ..."³⁵⁴ It was political expediency, Basu contends, that prompted the British to undertake the education of Indians because without it, "it was impossible to get servants for the public services of the State."³⁵⁵ The political expediency that Basu refers to was created by their conquest of Bengal.

Robert Clive's taking of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 left British administrators in "possession of the labour, industry, and manufactures of twenty millions of subjects...", an army of "fifty thousand men," and an annual revenue of four million sterling.³⁵⁶ The motley assembly of ambitious merchants who financed forays into distant lands found themselves sovereigns of an immense territory but whose tax collectors and officers could not communicate with the massive population, and hence could neither administer nor rule the territory taken. British administrative needs in-

³⁵⁴ Basu, Major B.D. 5

³⁵⁵ Basu, Major B.D. 21

³⁵⁶ Dirks, Nicholas B., *The Scandal of Empire*. 17

cluded the organizing and operating an Indian army, negotiation of treaties and alliances with local rulers as well as operating a judiciary.³⁵⁷ More relevant and important, the British found themselves unable to collect the revenues that they were there for in the first place. In sum, administrators found they needed to understand the archaic and complicated languages used in India's judicial and cultural institutions, especially those concerning marriage, land, and taxes. These Indian linguistic and cultural "epistemological spaces" then were in the hands of "a great number of diverse Indian scholars, intellectuals, teachers, scribes, priests, lawyers, officials, merchants, and bankers" who themselves needed to be converted into "instruments of colonial rule."³⁵⁸ The British, as Cohn eruditely phrases it, badly and urgently needed a "command of the languages" in order to command. To this end, the British turned to schools.

British use of educational institutions for colonial governance began with Hastings lobbying for a chair in Persian at Oxford in 1765.³⁵⁹ In 1772, under his policy to rule through a judicial system based on "Indian principles," Hastings installed a program to compile a corpus of Hindu law that could be translated into English for use in the Company courts. Eleven of

³⁵⁷ Cohn, Bernard S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*. 22

³⁵⁸ Cohn, Bernard S. 21

³⁵⁹ Cohn, Bernard S. 24

"the most respectable pandits in Bengal" were commissioned to compile the relevant Shastric literature in Hindu law, and N.B. Halhed was appointed to supervise the compilation and its translation into English.

Halhed, who had limited proficiency in Sanskrit, had to depend on the pandits' Bengali or Hindustani explanations, which were then abstracted into Persian, and finally translated into English by himself.³⁶⁰ The reliance on multiple and various interpreters, such as those attached to the EIC Indian court, proved problematic because their "honesty and competence had to be guaranteed by careful selection and by pay adequate to place them above temptation."³⁶¹ To this end, British India administrators turned to educational institutions as necessary for developing a:

medium of intercourse between the Government and its subjects, between the natives of Europe who [were] to rule, and the inhabitants of India who [were] to obey. In addition, the English needed to know the language to explain the 'benevolent principles' of the legislation which they were 'to enforce.'³⁶²

Hastings's insistence on Indian language proficiency as essential for

³⁶⁰ Cohn, Bernard S., 27–28.

³⁶¹ Cohn, Bernard S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge. The British in India*. 68

³⁶² Cohn, Bernard S. 24, 31

governance was reiterated and reinforced by Lord Wellesley who on 1 January 1800 legislated that:

no civil servant should be nominated to ...offices of trust and responsibility until it shall be ascertained that he was sufficiently acquainted with the law and regulations ...and the several languages, the knowledge of which is required for the due discharge of the respective functions of such offices.³⁶³

Under Wellesley's "imperial vision," the British quest for a language of command saw educational institutions in both British internal and external colonies take on true Althusserian roles for the reproduction of labor. School curricula in Britain were mandated to restructure the training of EIC cadets from being mere "agents of a commercial concern" into "ministers and officers of a powerful sovereign"³⁶⁴ while schools in India were to provide the local staff for administration. This was the mode in which Hastings founded the Calcutta Madrassa in 1780, the Banares Hindoo College was established in 1791 and the Deccan College in Poona in 1821.³⁶⁵

Thus, between the late 1700s and his establishing a factory in

³⁶³ Cohn, Bernard S.38

³⁶⁴ Cohn 49

³⁶⁵ Basu, Major B.D., *History of Education in India*. 21, 22

Singapore in 1819, Raffles already had been presented with several Indian models for using educational institutions as technologies of imperial administration. Wellesley actually provided Raffles with not one but two precedents: one by establishing the College at Fort William, Calcutta, in 1800 and a second by establishing it without authorization. These were, as Cohn states, "symbolic of the wider issues entailed in the establishing of educational institutions under the colonial state."³⁶⁶

The Raffles Museum thus reflects a Rafflesian strategy of duplication of policies set by his mentors. It was Hastings's unconditional support that led to Raffles's establishing of the settlement in Singapore in the first place. In much the same fashion, Minto, Raffles's first superior and mentor and the man who made him conqueror and proconsul of Java at the young age of thirty, also held similar views regarding educational institutions and governance. At his address at the annual prize ceremony at Fort William College in 1808, Minto reminded the graduates that they were to be "employed in the administration of a great and extensive country in which ...the English language [was] not known."³⁶⁷

Raffles's objectives in his *Minute* of 1819 show that they closely followed these Indian models, and that his founding the three institutions

³⁶⁶ Cohn, Bernard S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*. 46-49

³⁶⁷ Cohn, Bernard S. 40

as a move to integrate education and culture into colonial governance has been poorly calibrated. A close reading of these objectives reveal that while they were couched within a rhetoric of humanitarian responsibility, they ultimately addressed trade and governance issues. Hence, they are worthy of a closer reading.

Mandate: "Educate the Sons of the Higher Order of Natives and Others"

This, Raffles's first objective, was patterned after British attempts in both India and the Pacific to educate locals in order to create a class of elites "who could be made to see that they had an interest in the maintenance of British rule."³⁶⁸

British education of scions of local rulers as a political strategy to enhance alliances was not uncommon. In the Pacific, the example is Prince Lee Boo, son of Abba Thule, ruler of a string of Pacific islands which included Palau. Lee Boo was sent to be educated in England on an EIC ship but died on 27 December 1784 of smallpox.³⁶⁹ His visit to England is conventionally presented in colonial histories as a sign of British goodwill and interest in educating locals, a view that is evidenced by the reference made to it by the Reverend R.S. Hutchings at the Raffles Institution's, Museum and Library's

³⁶⁸ Cohn, Bernard S. 20/21

³⁶⁹ "Prince Lee Boo and Rotherhithe," *St. Mary's Rotherhithe*, n.d.

founding meeting on 1 April 1823. Hutchings called Abba Thule's acceptance of English education and his sending of his son to England a "dictate of common sense which directed the mind of Abba Thule."³⁷⁰

In Southeast Asia, the strategy had been used before in Java. Shortly after the conquest of Java (it is not clear whether it was Lord Minto or Raffles who implemented it), "two sons of the Regent of Samarang were sent to Bengal, where they remained for two years." They returned thereafter, "with a general knowledge of the English language," and versed in "the elements of general history, science, and literature."³⁷¹

Raffles's strategy to use this in Singapore is recorded in the *Hikayat*. Abdullah tells us that Raffles approached the Sultan with an offer to send one each of the Sultan's and Temenggong's sons and two or three of the children of the Sultan's cabinet "to the Governor-General in India" so that "they may learn to speak and write English, as well as arithmetic and other subjects. Then they will not grow up in ignorance like the Malays who are not fond of learning."³⁷² According to Abdullah, Raffles promised the Sultan that he would apply to the Governor-General to cover the expenses for the prince as well as "place a fine house at [his] son's disposal and a clever

³⁷⁰ "Minutes on the Formation of the Singapore Institution, A.D. 1823." 60

³⁷¹ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore," 16.

³⁷² Hill, A. H., "The Hikayat Abdullah." 159-163

teacher for his studies." The Sultan refused Raffles's offer but informed him that if there was a school in the Settlement, he would allow his prince to attend.

Raffles's founding a college to educate "the higher order of natives" is thus the implementation of a tried and tested strategy of colonial rule.

Again, Raffles did not intend for his scheme to be restricted to Singapore.

His intention to use it as an overall political strategy for the region is evidenced in his letter to Wilberforce in September 1819. He informed Wilberforce that "the effect of this institution is intended to be felt among the population of not less than thirty millions ... all those countries lying to the east and south of the Ganges."³⁷³

Far more significant in terms of this study's mission to understand the founding of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library within Singapore's colonial experience is the impact this first objective had on colonial Singapore. As we have seen, Raffles's motives for undertaking the education of locals was out of political expediency, as in India. The chapters on *Methodology* and *Function* show that all three institutions operated closely, directly or indirectly, within this overarching Rafflesian principle to support administration or trade. Here, a second statement that Raffles made

³⁷³ Kevin Blackburn, *Education, Industrialization and the End of Empire in Singapore* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 9.

regarding staff and training is more significant because it determined how the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library functioned until after WWII.

The statement that Raffles made in his 1819 *Minute* was that the college he proposed would produce a "a class of intelligent natives, who would be employed as teachers, would always be at the command and disposal of government."³⁷⁴ In this comment, Raffles in actuality, only referred to teachers and in reference to what he saw as the Malay communities' dependence on poorly trained "Mussulman teachers" for their education.

However, this statement would be broadly adopted by the educational and the colonial administrative system. Until close to World War II, schools in Singapore concerned themselves primarily with the production of such "a class of natives who would always be at the command and disposal of government." Their curricula would be directed towards schooling locals in skills that commerce and administration needed: English-language fluency as well as clerical and "commercial" skills like typing, stenography, etc.

The emphasis schools placed on such training is evident, for example, in the 30 April 1914 edition of the *Malaya Tribune's* list of

³⁷⁴ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore."17

successful candidates. The publication of the examination results in the local paper testifies to the public interest in these examinations, but more importantly, that commercial qualifications were sought after. They also show all the major boys' schools of the time — the Raffles and St. Joseph's Institutions, as well as the Anglo-Chinese School — ran commercial classes.³⁷⁵

It is likewise evident in a letter from the Director of Education for the Straits Settlements and the FMS, J. B. Elcum, to the editor of the *Straits Times*. Writing to dispel rumors that the Commercial Class at the Raffles Institution was to be abolished, Elcum's concern was that the misinformation, if left uncorrected, "might do harm."³⁷⁶ We can infer that the harm Elcum feared was a loss of students, implying in turn that providing commercial training was important to the school and the local community. It is also seen in the 1933 report on Native Education by H. A. Wyndham of the Royal Institute where he noted that the training of locals to be clerks in Singapore:

³⁷⁵ "School Notes" (Malaya Tribune, April 30, 1914), NL 2087, National Library Board, Singapore, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Page/maltribune19140430-1.1.9?ST=1&AT=advanced&K=raffles+institution&KA=raffles+institution&DF=30%2F04%2F1914&DT=30%2F04%2F1914&Display=0&NPT=&L=English&CTA=Article%7CLetter&QT=raffles,institution&oref=article>.

³⁷⁶ Elcum, J.B., Director of Education, S.S. and F.M.S., "Letter to the Editor, Straits Times," August 16, 1910, NL 2087, National Library Board, Singapore, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19100816-1.2.76.1?ST=1&AT=advanced&K=raffles+institution&KA=raffles+institution&DF=16%2F08%2F1910&DT=16%2F08%2F1910&Display=0&NPT=&L=English&CTA=Article%7CLetter&QT=raffles,institution&oref=article>.

became the most important function of the English schools. The only object for which nine-tenths of the boys remained at school at all was to acquire sufficient English to become a clerk. The very urgency of the demand for an English education contributed to its inefficiency...³⁷⁷

This objective to create a class of support staff was likewise evident in the administrative system, which strongly promoted and supported clerical careers till 1940. This is seen in a letter from the Senior Inspector of Schools, J. B. Neilson, to the Director of the Museum and Library advertising the Department of Education Employment Bureau's services. Dated 9 May that year, Neilson stated that companies like Asiatic Petroleum, the Chartered Bank, Straits Steamship etc. had consulted his Bureau. His bureau had on its list:

...over a hundred boys with school certificates, of which 15% are Grade 1 and 30%, Grade II. Of these 70% have reached the credit standard in Mathematics, 30% in Art, and about 10% in Science. There are also forty boys with the Junior Certificate. Of the above,

³⁷⁷ Wyndham, H.A., "Native Education. Ceylon, Java, Formosa, the Philippines, French Indo-China, and British Malaya," Study Group Series on Problems of Imperial Trusteeship (Oxford, UK: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1933).203

40% can type, 25% know elementary book-keeping, and 15% can do shorthand.³⁷⁸

The objective to create a class of locals to support colonial administration and trade was further enhanced by a promotion system based on clerical excellence in the civil service. Circular 14 dated 20 February 1946 from the Headquarters of the British Military Administration, for instance, shows that clerical careers were encouraged through "prize appointments" in the colonial administration³⁷⁹ and that as late as 1947, a typewriting bonus of \$100 was offered to "clerks who qualify highest in the typewriting examination."³⁸⁰ Likewise, English language proficiency was encouraged by an offer of bonus to officers or subordinate police officers and constables. We do not know when it was instituted but Circular 147 records that the bonus was only withdrawn on 31 December 1947.³⁸¹

This emphasis on clerical training was importantly, supported and enhanced by a coterminous absence of academic training in school

³⁷⁸ Neilson, J.B., Inspector of Schools, Singapore and Labuan, "Letter to Director, Raffles Museum and Library," May 9, 1940, National Archives, Singapore.

³⁷⁹ Chief Staff Officer, British Military Administration, Singapore Division, "Circular No. 14," February 20, 1946, MSA 1142/000965-5, National Archives of Singapore.

³⁸⁰ Colonial Secretary, "Circular 117, C.C.O. No. 6249/47)," October 23, 1947, MSA 1153/000751, National Archives of Singapore.

³⁸¹ Colonial Secretary, "Circular No. 147 (No. C.S.O. 7365/47)," December 31, 1947, MSA1153/000681, National Archives of Singapore.

curricula. Its absence is evident, for example, in a request dated 4 January 1937 from H. R. Cheeseman, the Inspector of Schools for Singapore and Labuan to Michael Tweedie, then Director of the Raffles Museum, to conduct a class on Malayan Animal Life for teachers. His letter specified clearly that the lesson be *elementary* (italics mine). It should, Cheeseman wrote, "give some elementary knowledge of the animals constantly seen in Malaya." In addition, he said, "Most of the teachers in the class would have no scientific background [,]" and as such, the course should:

contain only the essential minimum of 'scientific classification' and aim at giving teachers knowledge of the life about them, so that they may take in our schools the 'life' part of Nature Study — i.e. birds of Singapore, common small animals, insects, worms etc.³⁸²

This letter verifies that over a hundred and fourteen years after Raffles founded the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library, all three institutions still served his mandate and British colonial trade and administrative needs, and were not meant to improve local education *per se*. Their functions are conclusive evidence that they were established as technologies of rule and the claim that Raffles established them so that "the

³⁸² Cheeseman, H.R., "Letters to Director of The Raffles Museum," January 4, 1937, MSA 1140, National Archives of Singapore.

young men of Singapore and Malaya would be educated not only in their own languages and cultures but also in the best English tradition" is another myth for which the Raffles Museum is locus.³⁸³

Raffles's mandate had several social and racial impacts. First, the lack of academic training left locals perpetually unqualified for senior employment under colonial assessments. The system therefore, automatically designated locals as subordinates. Second, it introduced race into employment practice. Certain positions such as the librarian's position in the Raffles Museum and Library became marked as exclusive White domains. On another level, clerical jobs in the administrative and civil service as well as the banking and commercial sectors became Eurasian domains because of the communities' European language skills and familiarity with European cultures.³⁸⁴ This was to have dire consequences on Eurasian relations with other communities on the island (see the *Caste of the Half-caste* in Chapter 6).

³⁸³ Tan, Kevin Y.L., *Of Whales and Dinosaurs: The Story of Singapore's Natural History Museum*, 2015, 1–2.

³⁸⁴ Rappa, Antonio L., *Saudade*. The Culture and Security of Eurasian Communities in Southeast Asia (Singapore: Ethos Books, co-published with Singapore Management University, 2013).

Mandate: "Afford Instruction in Native Languages to Such of the Company Servants"

Raffles's second objective for the college was for it to "afford the means of instruction in the native languages" to EIC staff and those who desired it.³⁸⁵ Language training, as we have seen, was a strategy the British used in India after the Battle of Plassey. Raffles's objective here directly addressed language problems that were encountered in two major sectors of the settlement, namely, trade and administration, both of which came under his portfolio as proconsul.

As discussed earlier under *Problems of Control*, European merchants who operated trade centered at the island faced several handicaps due to language. Raffles, as *the* key administrator in British Southeast Asia between 1811 and 1823, would have been familiar with these language problems. Moreover, he experienced it himself during his governorship of Java.

Shortly after his appointment, Raffles commissioned Colin Mackenzie to do a land survey of Java. Mackenzie's survey, dependent on a review of Javanese and Dutch records, "was challenged by linguistic hurdles, with all native records needing translation from Javanese to Malay

³⁸⁵ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore."

to Dutch before Mackenzie could look at them."³⁸⁶ Thus, Raffles's mandating the college "To afford the means of instruction in the native languages to such of the Company's servants and others as may desire it"³⁸⁷ was a direct move to provide EIC officers and civil servants, as schools in India did, with the skills required for colonial rule. In Raffles's case, it was additionally to provide merchants — the "others" here — the main players in his main interest, trade, with the skills to enhance their control. This is reflected in the languages he specified the college to teach — "Siamese, Malayan, Bugguese, Javanese and other languages of the archipelago"³⁸⁸ — namely, the popular trade vernaculars of this period in the settlement.

Mandate: "To Collect the Scattered Literature and Traditions of the Country"

Raffles's last and third objective for the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library was for it "to collect the scattered literature and traditions of the country, with whatever may illustrate its laws and customs, and to publish and circulate in a correct form the most important of them."³⁸⁹ Like the first two objectives, this objective was also in concordance with prevalent ideas

³⁸⁶ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1870*. John Crawford and the Politics of Equality.59

³⁸⁷ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore."17

³⁸⁸ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minutes on the Formation of the Singapore Institution, A.D. 1823."97

³⁸⁹ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore."17

of knowledge and governance that were circulating in London and India during the time. It was also well within Hastings's policy to rule India "by Indian principles, particularly in relation to Indian laws."³⁹⁰

Raffles's duplication of India is seen in his citing India as his example outright in his *Minute*. He reminded the EIC Court that in the "vast regions of India," it was the "desire to know the origin and early history of the people, their institutions, laws, and opinion" that:

led to associations expressly directed to this end; while by the application of the information thus obtained to the present circumstances of the country, the spirit and principles of British rule have rapidly augmented the power and increased the resources of the state....³⁹¹

However, this objective is significant in terms of the Raffles Museum's function for it demonstrates a key political instrument in Raffles's political strategy: knowledge. Knowledge, especially of subject peoples, Said points out, was essential in colonial rule because it made their management "easy and profitable" and was thus constitutive of colonial

³⁹⁰ Cohn, Bernard S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*. 26

³⁹¹ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore."2

rule's "increasing profitable dialectic of information and control."³⁹² For the British, Cohn suggests, historical knowledge was particularly important because "In its broadest sense, history was "a zone of debate over the ends and means of their rulership in India."³⁹³ Thus, British colonial administrators like Raffles, John Crawfurd, and William MacGregor were avid historians and collectors as well as conduits of the knowledge of a colonized territory's past, institutions, culture, as well as resources.

In employing history in colonial rule, Raffles employed a *leitmotif* that was also commensurate with that of India: ruins. As Cohn states, ruins were integral to the historical modality with which the British ruled India. Ruins, Cohn points out, were important tools of governance because "Ruins could be dated, inscriptions made to reveal kings' lists," and "texts could be converted into sources for the study of the past."³⁹⁴ Such a historical modality importantly, saw India as having no written history, and hence, as needing the British to provide India with one. It also implied that India had historically and socially fossilized and stagnated.³⁹⁵ In his 1819 *Minute*, Raffles's employment of ruins as a tool of governance is seen in his stating that Southeast Asia was home to:

³⁹² Said, *Orientalism*, 36.

³⁹³ Cohn, Bernard S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge. The British in India*. 5

³⁹⁴ Cohn, Bernard S. 80

³⁹⁵ Cohn, Bernard S. 93

...temples and sculptures which rival in beauty and extent those of continental India, and through the mists of tradition [the historian or antiquarian] will discover the faint light of glories that have past away...[as well as] the languages of singular perfection and richness that are no longer understood except by the learned; in short ... abundant proof of a former higher state of civilization from which they have fallen.³⁹⁶

Raffles's reading of ruins here is not the only example of his employment of historical knowledge in gubernatorial strategy. It is seen also in Java where he revived one of Southeast Asia's oldest research institutions, the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, or the *Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (est. 1778). He assumed presidency of the society in 1813, which as Bloembergen and Eickhoff point out, was motivated by the political events in Europe but also Raffles's own stand that there was a "narrow-minded Dutch policy that denied antiquarians from other nations the opportunity to conduct research in Java."³⁹⁷ Similarly, his commissioning Colin Mackenzie and several other

³⁹⁶ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Minute by Sir T.S. Raffles on The Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore." 12-13

³⁹⁷ Bloembergen, Marieke and Eickhoff, Martjin, "A Wind of Change on Java's Ruined Temples. Archaeological Activities, Imperial Circuits and Heritage Awareness in Java and the

Dutch and British specialists to study Java's ruins testify to his employment of archaeology as "part of the bureaucratic and political reform" of Java.³⁹⁸

Within this evidence, a proposition that Raffles established the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library because he believed that by collecting the scattered literature of these countries British stations "will not only become the centres of commerce and its luxuries, but of refinement and the liberal arts"³⁹⁹ aestheticizes and romanticizes his political technique. His collecting of material artifacts and specimens, as well as his work in archaeological patronage was political in manner and intention and were direct implementations of technologies of rule.

Untrainable Natives: Crawford, Asiatic Stasis and Education

The establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library stands out as a particularly historically interesting and noteworthy illustration of how polarized ideological, political, and administrative positions taken in colonial governance, nevertheless, ultimately ended up as performativities of colonialism.

The founding of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library documents the colonial policies of Stamford Raffles and the second Resident of

Netherlands (1800-1850)," *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 128, no. 1 (2013): 81-104.

³⁹⁸ Bloembergen, Marieke and Eickhoff, Martjin.

³⁹⁹ Lee, Gracie, "Collecting the Scattered Remains: The Raffles Library and Museum," *Biblioasia*, June 2016.

Singapore, John Crawfurd. Raffles established the three institutions within a colonial intention to educate locals in order to advance British control and rule. Crawfurd, on the other hand, opposed Raffles's college because he held a colonial racial ideology that certain races, here the subject races of Asia, were socially and intellectually inferior, and hence, Raffles's college was superfluous. Crawfurd's reasons for why the college, museum, and library *should not* be established and his rejection of Raffles's project were therefore as much a performativity of colonialism as was Raffles's desire to establish them.

John Crawfurd assumed the Residency of Singapore in 1823. Lasting till 1826, his residency goes down in the three institutions' histories as a period fraught with contest and friction between him; the trustees of the institution; Raffles, and Dr. Robert Morrison. The British Governor-General in Bengal and the EIC Court of Directors were involved but since Crawfurd, their proxy, heavily influenced their actions, it is only Crawfurd's views and actions that we need to concern ourselves with in this discussion.

The contest was significant in that it demonstrated the personal and political differences between the two men but more, in that it demonstrated how administrators, especially their personal views, impacted infrastructural development of colonized territories, and thereby, colonized lives.

Crawfurd's role in the history of the Raffles Museum and Library began upon his arrival in Singapore. As related in Chapter 2, the construction

of the college was assigned to the Assistant Engineer, Executive Officer and Surveyor of Public Lands, Lieutenant Philip Jackson. Jackson undertook the construction for \$15,000 and to complete it within twelve months.⁴⁰⁰

As Chapter 2 also shows, the trustees found themselves bankrupt soon after the foundation stone was laid. A partly-legible letter dated 23 July 1823 records the trustees asking Crawford about his recommendation to Bengal that "disbursements in present circumstances should not be made." They also asked Crawford if he "felt it necessary to make any representation to the Supreme Government on the subject of the grants or any particular inconvenience to the public" that would deter these from being confirmed...⁴⁰¹

According to Wijesingha, the trustees showed this draft to Robert Morrison who was coincidentally in Singapore then. He states that a memorandum on 24 July 1823 records Morrison as having met with Crawford, who during the meeting, allegedly informed Morrison then "that he had not written nor did he mean to write to the Bengal Government concerning the

⁴⁰⁰ "Singapore Institution, Minutes of Meeting." 104

⁴⁰¹ Maxwell, J.A. and Trustees of Raffles Institution, "Letter to John Crawford, Resident," July 23, 1823, National Library Board of Singapore. Since the letter is faded, I have in part, cited from Wijesingha, E., *The Eagle Breeds a Gryphon. The Story of Raffles Institution, 1823-1985*. 35 because his reading is probably more accurate, having had the benefit of working with the original rather than a digitized copy of the letter.

Institution."⁴⁰² This led Morrison to advise the trustees against sending Crawfurd the letter and thus, this letter was never sent.⁴⁰³

It cannot be established with certainty if the meeting occurred and if the letter was finally sent. Nonetheless, if the trustees did consult Morrison about approaching Crawfurd, it indicates that they had already either experienced or had knowledge of Crawfurd's opposition and hence, were anxious or wary about dealing with Crawfurd on matters concerning the Raffles Institution.

What can be established with certainty is that the trustees lobbied Crawfurd for both the land and disbursement of the funds that Raffles pledged. A reply from Crawfurd dated 27 October 1824 to the Trustees' letter of "26th Instant" informed them "that since the matter of the donation of \$300 [had] been referred to Bengal, and from there to the Court of Directors...it [became] out of [his] power at present, and more especially so under the existing circumstances of the Settlement to take any further steps in the matter in question."⁴⁰⁴ From that point, the construction of the college appeared to have stalled. Records also show that the inability to complete

⁴⁰² Wijeyesingha, E., *The Eagle Breeds a Gryphon. The Story of Raffles Institution, 1823-1985*. 36-37.

⁴⁰³ Wijeyesingha, E. 37

⁴⁰⁴ Crawfurd, John, "Letter to Maxwell, J.A.," October 27, 1824, Books SG. Raffles Institution, National Library Board, Singapore.

construction of the college, museum and library led to an effort by the administration to reclaim the land in March 1828.⁴⁰⁵

Crawfurd's refusal to disburse the subsidies Raffles pledged led the trustees to petition Robert E. Fullerton, then Governor of the Straits Settlements, towards the end of Crawfurd's Singapore term. Their "Application and Remonstrance of the Trustees of the Singapore Institution...as to Government's Donation withheld by Mr. Crawfurd" dated 30 August 1826 stated that their "funds, are as confined and impeded in their progress as to threaten [the institution's] dissolution, at no distant period..." The Trustees pointed out that they found Crawfurd not to have "made use of his power ceded to him by the Supreme Govt., and [since] that Gentleman ceases to possess any further authority in this Settlement..." they asked Fullerton "to authorize that management of the above named Donations and Subscriptions, as granted by the Honbl. The Court of Directors, should again revert to [them] to whom it was originally consigned, and that the sums specified be paid to [them] ..." ⁴⁰⁶

In view of the fact that the settlement was barely three and a half years old when Crawfurd took office, his objections to a college of the scope

⁴⁰⁵ Secretary to the Governor in Council, "To Trustees of the Singapore Institution," March 10, 1828, NLB, Raffles Institution Archives, NLB.

⁴⁰⁶ Board of Trustees, Raffles Institution, "Letter to Fullerton, R.," August 30, 1826, SG Books, Raffles Institution, National Library Board, Singapore.

Raffles planned were not ill-considered. There was probably a shortage of teaching staff as well as a viable student cohort. It was also understandable in view of his relationship with Raffles.

Crawfurd and Raffles, as the phrase goes, had a history. Their relationship was acrimonious and fractious, the result of a rivalry for Minto's patronage during their times together in Java when Raffles was Lieutenant-Governor and Crawfurd the Resident of Yogyakarta. They conflicted over interpretations of British colonial missions, of Javanese civilization and its history, and consequently, over land tax strategies in Java. It also resulted in each reviewing the other's historical documentation of the areas they administered — Raffles's *History of Java* (1817) Crawfurd's *History of the Indian Archipelago* (1820) — with hostility.⁴⁰⁷

Crawfurd's refusal to disburse the sums were also justified on grounds that he, an incumbent officer, was not obliged to report to Raffles. As a former EIC proconsul, Raffles had little or no direct authority other than informal influence within both EIC and the colonial government hierarchies to instruct Crawfurd. Nevertheless, this was exactly what Raffles did.

He wrote to Crawfurd on 23 January 1824, "requesting" Crawfurd "at

⁴⁰⁷ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1870. John Crawfurd and the Politics of Equality*.43-70

any rate continue to distribute the sum of 300D^r per month or this amount, or as much of it as may be required for the maintenance of the School," and to accept "on [his] personal responsibility and account, if necessary, holding [him] answerable personally to refund whatever amount may be disputed on this amount and not confirmed by the Court of Directors."⁴⁰⁸

Crawfurd was probably offended by Raffles's long-distance meddling and his cautiousness in taking Raffles's offer of financial surety was not unjustified. Raffles was in no position to stand surety for the sums at this time because the years following his return to the Britain in 1823 until his death in 1826 were marked with claims by and against him. He was claiming reimbursement for the losses he suffered on his departure from Bencoolen⁴⁰⁹ as well as his pension, which the EIC Court rejected. In addition, he was facing charges of wrongful dismissal made by the first Resident of Singapore, William Farquhar. Crawfurd probably knew of the political and financial straits Raffles was in with the EIC Court and desired political distance from Raffles. His refusal to support the college thus far, appears to have been directed by policy and pragmatics.

However, a paper Crawfurd presented in 1866 which was published

⁴⁰⁸ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Letter, Raffles to Crawfurd," January 23, 1824.

⁴⁰⁹ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, "Statement on the Services of Sir Stamford Raffles" (Cox and Baylis, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, November 1824), SG Books, National Library Board, Singapore.

in 1867 suggests that his reasons for withholding support for the college were not motivated by pragmatics alone. The paper suggests that Crawford's resistance arose from his personal racial views. These views, I argue, are what defined his resistance to the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library as a performativity of colonialism.

Crawford's views on race, as Knapman points out, were complex and certainly not dichotomous. They also changed during his lifetime. Knapman believes that these views have been misunderstood and consequently dismissed as "inherently unequal, discriminatory and ignorant." At the same time, he concedes that Crawford had long "held that Europeans were superior to all other peoples. . ."⁴¹⁰ and it is this Crawfordian view and position on race vis-à-vis the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library that I want to take up here.

Stasis and Inability to Learn

In *On the Physical and Mental Characteristics of the European and Asiatic Races of Man* that he presented to the Ethnological Society of London in 1866, Crawford articulated clear views on Asian abilities.⁴¹¹ Presented about

⁴¹⁰ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1870. John Crawford and the Politics of Equality*. 220, 221

⁴¹¹ Crawford, John., "On the Physical and Mental Characteristics of the European and Asiatic Races of Man.," *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London* 5 (1867): 58-81.

two years before his death in May 1868, these views may be regarded as Crawford's last stand on racial abilities. They are significant because they illustrate the role colonial racial ideologies played in the founding of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library.

Crawford began his paper by observing that the major European races "may be considered of equal quality..." and that there were no "broad differences between a German and a Spaniard, or between a Slave and an Italian, while virtually the same religious opinions prevail over all the people of Europe..."⁴¹² This, Crawford stated, was not true of Asia. He argued that it was fair to assume that all Asians had "equal antiquity" and "equal opportunity of social advancement since there was no evidence otherwise. He then compared Europeans to the Asian races that had "attained the highest civilization," namely:

the Egyptians [who] are essentially an Asiatic people, although by the accident of geographical position an African one; the Assyrians or Chaldeans, the Persians, the Hindus, the Chinese, the Hindu-Chinese, the Japanese, and the Malays as exemplified by the people

⁴¹² Crawford, John. 58

of Java.⁴¹³

Allowing for conditions of geography which could be "favourable" or "adverse" for social advancement, Crawfurd, a polygenist,⁴¹⁴ concluded that "the amount of civilization must evidently depend wholly on the degree of natural capacity." He argued that except for the Italian peninsula, Europe did not have any civilization comparable in antiquity to the ancient riverine civilizations of Asia. The Asian, whom he called Asiatic, he stated, was "far more precocious than the European, having "emanated" sooner than the European from "savagery and barbarism," but the head start that Asians enjoyed became "nearly stationary."⁴¹⁵

The Japanese, he said, were such "an example of the stationary character of the Eastern races carried to the last extremity." The land, he said, had the same climatic conditions and resources that Britain had, but the Japanese appeared not to have "differed in any appreciable respect" from

⁴¹³ Crawfurd, John. 58

⁴¹⁴ Any discussion of mono and polygenism here would oversimplify what are complex concepts. For the sake of the discussion, it is necessary to clarify that while monogenism contended that all men descended from one source (in the Biblical framework from Adam), polygenism contended that the races of men were primordially distinct and developed in accordance with specific environments. See Stocking, Jr. George W., "The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race," *Modernism/Modernity* 1, no. 1 (January 1994), <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezlibraryproxy1.nu.edu.sg/article/22964>.

⁴¹⁵ Crawfurd, John., "On the Physical and Mental Characteristics of the European and Asiatic Races of Man." 62-66

the time they first made contact with Europeans.⁴¹⁶ This stasis, he suggested, was the cause of European outstripping the Asian:

In understanding, in judgement, in taste, in invention, in reach of imagination, in enterprise, in perseverance, and in the moral sense, the European, placed under equally favourable conditions, is greatly superior to the Asiatic.⁴¹⁷

Crawfurd went on comment on Asian artistic abilities. "Asiatic painting," he said, was "indeed a miserable daubing, of which a village sign-painter in Europe [would] be ashamed," while the musical faculties of the Hindus and Chinese were of "so low a degree as to amount to a physical defect."⁴¹⁸ His evaluation of Asian aesthetic abilities here in fact, was not individual but universal, an observation that Evans makes in his lectures on empire.⁴¹⁹ More significant where the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library are concerned, was Crawfurd's conclusion regarding Asian intellectual and academic aptitudes and potential:

In the seminaries, in which native and European children are

⁴¹⁶ Crawfurd, John., 80.

⁴¹⁷ Crawfurd, John., "On the Physical and Mental Characteristics of the European and Asiatic Races of Man." 60

⁴¹⁸ Crawfurd, John. 66

⁴¹⁹ *Lecture: The Victorians: Empire and Race.*

educated together, it has been found out that the natives advance as rapidly as Europeans, if not indeed more so, up to the age of puberty, after which the equality or superiority of the native ceases, and at eighteen he is left far behind, and never after recovers his lost ground.⁴²⁰

Crawfurd's views of Asians and Asian abilities are clearer in two other comments he made that have been recorded by Charles Buckley, a prominent Singapore resident in the mid-1840s. Buckley stated that Crawfurd, in a report dated 7 February 1826 to the Court of Directors, advised them that his three years in Singapore proved to him that Raffles's "scheme of the Institution had been too extensive a scale for the times, and the means were insufficient to carry out the object."⁴²¹ According to Buckley, Crawfurd stated that "the inhabitants to Singapore were utter strangers to European education and methods of instruction" and recommended that the college be downscaled. More importantly, Buckley records Crawfurd saying that "the chief benefit of instruction in Asiatic languages was to reconcile the natives to European education and accustom [the natives] to regular habits of

⁴²⁰ Crawfurd, John., "On the Physical and Mental Characteristics of the European and Asiatic Races of Man." 60

⁴²¹ Buckley, Charles Burton, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*. 127

subordination and study."⁴²²

In the Crawfurdian race construct and worldview, an education for colonized Asians hardly made sense and it is this Crawfurdian implicit belief in Asian stasis and incapacity to develop after puberty that makes his opposition to Raffles's college a performativity of colonialism.

Conclusion

By examining the political and economic contexts existent during the establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library, as well as British colonial rule of India, this chapter evaluated if current literature's claim that Raffles established the three institutions out of humanitarianism and vision is valid. The short answer is no.

The chapter demonstrated that the objectives Raffles listed for the college he planned were directed towards solving British difficulties in controlling trade that was located in Singapore, the vulnerability of the passage of Indian opium to China and British frustration at gaining access to China. It demonstrated that these objectives were part of his move to establish a mechanism that would make for more efficient exploitation of Southeast Asia's resources as well as secure permanent British control of

⁴²² Buckley, Charles Burton. 127

trade and presence. It was also not novel but a continuum of Britain's historical terms of engagement with Asia, especially China, and Britain's desire to access "the inexhaustible resources" that the British believed were within Asia. Raffles's *Minute* of 1819 shows that his strategy directly plagiarized British India models of using institutions in colonial governance but that it included a radical plan to colonize Southeast Asia with the Chinese.

This disregard of Raffles's imperial agenda has summarily resulted in his apotheosis and exaltation of his historic *persona*, legacy and place in Singapore's history as well as in the Raffles Museum's history by current literature. Noor points out that Raffles's apotheosizing only occurred in the aftermath of the EIC's collapse, with the imposition of direct colonial rule.⁴²³ Such an argument makes sense when we consider that once when British presence became strictly administrative, i.e., without the corporate brand presence of the EIC, *the* brand under which Britain was known for the past centuries, there would have been a need for a new justification for the British presence. Colonial heroes, like Raffles, would have enhanced Britain's ability to impress upon its far-flung colonies the paternal, civilizing, benevolent, and progressive benefits of British colonial rule. Both

⁴²³ Noor, Farish A., Thesis consultation.

Singapore and the Raffles Museum could be seen as evidence of the success of this rhetoric. All literature on the museum cyclically perpetuate this rhetoric by citing their founding histories as evidence of British/Raffles's benevolence.

The chapter also examined Raffles's colonial agenda through the men he involved in the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library's establishment. These were men whose careers exemplified, represented, and even embodied the colonial missions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It showed that the social reforms that these men undertook were themselves, at this point of British imperial history, a dynamic in empire-building. Thus, the involvement of Charles Grant, William Wilberforce, and Robert Morrison needs to be understood within the larger discourse of colonial expansion because these reforms gained traction when "empire itself was imperiled by slavery."⁴²⁴

This chapter concluded that while current literature may have correctly characterized the establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library as having evolved from a Rafflesian dream, the dream was not for providing universal education to colonized peoples as claimed, but a dream of accelerated and protracted British economic and political

⁴²⁴ Dirks, Nicholas B., *The Scandal of Empire*. 33

dominance and exploitation of Southeast Asia. Similarly, while it was true the college *was* an experiment, the experiment was not of free and universal education for locals but of educating locals to meet political expediencies.

Raffles's founding the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library as a humanitarian project with a portion of humanitarianism, however, should not be summarily dismissed. As Knapman notes, colonial administrators of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries often embraced contradictory positions regarding colonialism and native relations. For example, they held that aspects of individual freedom were important for colonial settlements to flourish. Thus, historian-administrators of the period, such as Raffles, called for "a more caring form of colonialism which helped colonized peoples" even while they concurrently devised means to exploit and profit from them.⁴²⁵ Raffles's embracing of ideals of individual freedom, abolitionism and his colonial mission were therefore not mutually exclusive, but complementary. He was able to advocate individual freedom that abolitionism stood for while simultaneously advocating the continuation of a totalizing regime and thereby, their autocratic and subjugative ideologies. The involvements of William Wilberforce and Charles Grant evidence the Janus-like duality of Raffles's brand of colonialism. In sum, these scenarios

⁴²⁵ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in South-East Asia*. 2

demonstrate that Raffles's establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library was *exactly consistent* with the colonial realities of its time. §

CHAPTER 5

Performativity in Space: White Spaces in Savage Places

At its most general perspective, postcolonialism signals a concern with the often ambiguous and contradictory forms of power/knowledge and representation that structured territories, social conventions, and subject positions within the context of colonization ...'spaces of contradiction' should be of particular interest, for the marking of colonial difference depended crucially upon the definition and control of particular types of space ...this 'visualization of difference' was not only a means of defining and appropriating particular kinds of spaces, but also of managing the interpellation of particular kinds of subjects.

—Jeffrey E. Popke. *Managing Colonial Alterity: Narratives of Race, Space and Labor in Durban, 1870-1920*.

Using space to visualize difference was not a colonial invention. Space was used since ancient times for this purpose by both Asian and Western cultures. Chinese Confucianist perceptions of gender, for example, defined the spaces of the traditional Chinese house and sustained its patri-mony. The woman's place and role within Chinese society was expressed through space, which designated her as "*neiren*," literally, the "person in-

side." Ideologies were formalized and institutionalized through space by authoritative texts like Sima Guang's *Family Rituals*, which provided clear principles on how space should be used or divided.⁴²⁶ Thus, regardless of wealth or class, the spaces of homes in late imperial China were clearly and physically demarcated. A few spaces, like the dew platform or *lutai*, were for family events, and thereby, designated cross-gender spaces, but the rest were clearly marked for separate roles. Male spaces comprised the study, which was usually located in the more private area of the house and ideally, to look out to a garden. The space's typical accoutrement of the "four friends" — writing brushes, brush stand, water dropper and inkstone — designated it as male, for the male occupations of calligraphy, contemplation, and study.

Female spaces were likewise separate and sub-divided to reflect separate roles and statuses. Married women were generally quartered on the ground floor while unmarried females were usually housed in the upper floor.⁴²⁷ Again, the space's characteristic small windows specified the use of this space to seclude the unwed Chinese female sequentially; first, from the household's male view, then the public spaces of the house, and finally,

⁴²⁶ Bray, Francesca, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of California Press, 1997).129

⁴²⁷ Bray, Francesca, 59–72, 132–50.

from the public male view and the world.

In the West, spaces were used likewise to differentiate and to mark. The spaces of early churches, for example, delineated the wealthy and politically powerful from the subordinate classes through designated pews, galleries, and private accesses. Space also enforced the ideologies the church propagated, such as the sacrosanctity of life. This is evident in a general prohibition by churches of burial for suicides within consecrated grounds until recently.⁴²⁸

My reading of the Raffles Museum's spaces is located within such ideological uses of space. Its premise is that space is socially constructed and derives meanings and significance from their related human processes and ideologies.⁴²⁹ These processes include those defined by class, religion, and ethnicity, as well as the "spatialized activities"⁴³⁰ of migration and conquest. This chapter looks at the relationship between the Raffles Museum's colonized spaces and colonial ideas of being White and of colonized territories being "savage." It examines how colonialism's fundamental ideology —

⁴²⁸ This denial was only lifted in the UK in 2015. Dougherty, Steve, "Church of England to Allow Full Funerals for Suicides: General Synod Votes to Sweep Away Ban to Signal Its Compassion for the Vulnerable," *Daily Mail*, February 12, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2951586/Church-England-allow-funerals-suicides-General-Synod-votes-sweep-away-ban-signal-compassion-vulnerable.html>.

⁴²⁹ Stock, Paul, "History and the Uses of Space," in *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History*, ed. Stock, Paul, Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁴³⁰ Stock, Paul. 2

of inherent racial differences and asymmetries in abilities, i.e., colonial racism — configured the Raffles Museum's spaces. Specifically, I examine how these spaces' utilizations were performativities of colonialism.

Underpinning the discussion are two conflicting schools of thought regarding race in colonized spaces. The first is Albert Memmi's proposition that racism was "a consubstantial part of colonialism ..."⁴³¹ The second is Gareth Knapman's contradictory position that while racial thought was related to a Late Victorian culture of superiority, colonial racial thinking did not derive from a sense of their cultural or racial superiority, but rather, reflected colonial administrators' attempts to "explain the unexplainable."⁴³²

I begin my discussion with a general outline of the differences that needs to be made between territory and space under the colonial enterprise. This is followed by a discussion of how the elitist origins of the museums endowed its spaces and practices with a morphology that is conducive to articulating and visualizing differences. I then demonstrate how the spaces of the Raffles Museum were used to visualize the differences colonists maintained between themselves and the colonized populations through an analysis of the museum's visiting hours and the careers of two locals.

⁴³¹ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 118

⁴³² Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1870*. John Crawford and the Politics of Equality. 98

Territory versus Space

Both the terms "territory" and "space" involve boundaries, the crossing of these boundaries, the ownership these boundaries defined, and the usurpation of that ownership. However, usurpation of territories or conquest, as Arendt contends, was only a "political device."⁴³³ Appropriated to emphasize racial differences and more importantly, to assign commensurate rights to each racial category, space was one of the most commonly employed and crucial colonial vehicles for marking differences and what Popke calls the "managing of alterity." Apartheid, segregation, and indigenous reservations are thereby illustrative of how space emerged under dominant and colonial regimes as "one of the most important categories of mediation in this process of spatializing and visualizing alterity ..." that was employed to sustain, identify and mark "the range of positions that the 'native' was obliged to occupy."⁴³⁴

The need to visualize difference and alterity, Memmi contends, is fundamental to dominance. Dominance, he argues, only functions when there is first, a perception of a difference between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized; second, a belief that these differences can be

⁴³³ Arendt, Hannah, "Imperialism, Nationalism, Chauvinism," *The Review of Politics* 7, no. 4 (October 1945): 441–463.

⁴³⁴ Prakash, Gyan, "Who's Afraid of Postcoloniality?" 194

exploited; and last, when these "supposed differences" are employed as standards of absolute fact ..." Racism, or a perception of racial differences and the implicit belief in their asymmetries, was thus not, he argues, an "accidental detail" but constituted the basic relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.⁴³⁵ As such, it was the "highest expression of the colonial system and one of the most significant features of the colonialist."⁴³⁶

Such a visualization of alterity, for instance, was evident in both the building and site of the Raffles Museum. It is evident in an appeal dated 19 December 1946 from Michael Tweedie, the first post-War director of the museum, to the Executive Engineer of the colony. Tweedie's appeal was for the Engineer to rescind his order to cut off water supplies to the staff housing located on the museum grounds. The order had been ordered due to the failure "on the part of squatters to pay fees."⁴³⁷

It requires little imagination to visualize the inscription of imperial presence and power that the Raffles Museum's imposing structure made on Singapore's colonized spaces. The disparity between the museum and the shanties located on its precincts spoke to, in no uncertain terms, the relative power positions of the two groups who constructed them and utilized their

⁴³⁵ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 115

⁴³⁶ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 118

⁴³⁷ Director, Raffles Museum and Library, "Memorandum, to the Executive Engineer, South, Singapore," December 19, 1946, MSA 1142/002571, National Archives of Singapore.

spaces (see Figure 4). However, if this colonizer-colonized disparity was made clear by the Raffles's Museum's structure, a more potent, more profound visualization *and* performativity of colonial power would be asserted through its internal spaces. These would be used to visualize the discourses of differences that Memmi and Stoler contend characterized colonial transplanted societies.

Colonial elites, as Stoler notes, expended effort and energy on "forging ...a consensual notion of the *Homo europeaus*,"⁴³⁸ out of an assembly of "unique cultural configurations, homespun creations" of food, dress, morality, etc. in colonized spaces. All were given "new political meanings in the social order of colonial rule" but served specifically:

To cultivate the colonials' differences from the colonized, while maintaining social distinctions among themselves ...colonial projects and the European populations to which they gave rise were based on new constructions of European-ness; they were artificial groupings — demographically, occupationally, and politically distinct.⁴³⁹

The fact that these creations were imaginary and hence, unlike those

⁴³⁸ Stoler and Cooper cited in Popke, E. Jeffrey, "Managing Colonial Alterity: Narratives of Race, Space and Labor in Durban, 1870-1920." 249

⁴³⁹ Stoler, Ann Laura, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 1 (January 1989): 134–61. 137

"at home" was secondary to their functions, which was ultimately to demonstrate, to both resident colonials and colonized peoples within colonies, the demarcations between the We and the They.⁴⁴⁰ More important than differentiations, these demarcations also served to assign specific characteristics *and* entitlements, or their denial thereof, to each group. This included rights to certain areas and/or the prohibition and restriction to others.

Museum spaces, as we have seen under *Frameworks*, have morphologies that from their earliest beginnings, were consistently employed for visualizations of differences, and consequently, hierarchies. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, collecting and the possession of objects, access to collections, as well as the rarity of objects, were all articulations of the social, political, intellectual, and economic differences between the collector, his peers, and his subordinates. This function and competency of social differentiation, it also demonstrated, remained within the modern museum.

Museum Spaces: Articulating Difference

Museum spaces and the museum's potency in articulating differences becomes particularly significant when the museum is recognized as an intersect for colonial race ideologies and Douglas's notion

⁴⁴⁰ Stoler, Ann Laura. 137

of an institution that thinks. Her notion of a "thinking institution" is vividly illustrated by the eighteenth/nineteenth-century museum, which was central in fabricating colonialism's mass consciousness of race, place, and Western primacy. Displays in museums, such as those advocated by Pitt Rivers, promoted "an ethnocentric message of conservative evolutionary gradualism..." and until Franz Boas's intervention in 1900, for example, the AMNH's displays presented human culture within an arrangement that proceeded from "lower savagery" upward through "barbarism" and finally "civilization."⁴⁴¹

The impact of such a "monolithic plod of social evolution from lower to higher forms of culture," Whiteley observes, presented a schema of "universalist progression toward the enlightened state of latter 19th century European and Euro-American 'civilization':

The effect was a triumphalist re-affirmation of the supposed virtues of Manifest Destiny, at this moment of active warfare with Native peoples of the Plains, Southwest, and California. The Museum as nationalist project thus produced and reaffirmed an infamous

⁴⁴¹ Stocking, Jr. George W., ed., *Objects and Others: Essays on Museum and Material Culture*, vol. 3, *History of Anthropology* (Madison, WI, USA; London, UK: U of Wisconsin Press, 1985). 8; Whiteley, Peter M., Curator of North American Ethnology, AMNH, "Commemorating Boas," January 4, 2008.

ideology of expansion, domination and racial hierarchy.⁴⁴²

Conclusions regarding races, especially those of the Non-West, were made through museum collecting and display. Museums like the AMNH, Luke adds, thereby "classified remote societies or distant lands as likely sites for further progressive development."⁴⁴³ By the same token, museum collecting operated historically and importantly, within "the grand project of racial typification: as one among a battery of technologies of knowledge" that were used for "identifying and hierarchically ordering suites of corresponding mental, moral and physical characteristics."⁴⁴⁴ A. H. L. F. Pitt Rivers, whose collection now resides at Oxford University, in this context, compared Irish, Australian Aboriginal, and higher primate skulls and concluded that the Irish race occupied "a low point in hypothetical developmental hierarchy."⁴⁴⁵ Thus, the museum's primary resource, its material artifacts, allowed the West to "appraise from the distance the material attributes of others ..." and then "confidently to link these to non-

⁴⁴² Whiteley, Peter M., Curator of North American Ethnology, AMNH, "Commemorating Boas."

⁴⁴³ Luke, W. Timothy, "Museum Pieces: The Politics of Aesthetics and Knowledge At the Museum." 43

⁴⁴⁴ Coombes, Schildkrout and Keim cited in Ballard, Chris, "Collecting Pygmies: The 'Tapiro' and the British Ornithologists' Union Expedition to Dutch New Guinea, 1910-1911." 127-128

⁴⁴⁵ Chapman, William Ryan, "Arranging Ethnology. A.H.L. F. Pitt Rivers and the Typological Tradition," in *Object and Others. Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. Stocking, Jr. George W., vol. 3, *History of Anthropology* (Madison, WI, USA; London, UK: U of Wisconsin Press, 1989). 28

material attributes, such as of abilities, intelligence and morality and capacity for labor."⁴⁴⁶ In line with these arguments, it would be fair to say that the eighteenth/nineteenth-century Victorian colonial mind was the public museum writ large. The question before us now is, how did such notions of race vis-à-vis abilities configure colonized Singapore's spaces and a colonial institution like the Raffles Museum?

Race in Colonial Singapore

The need to account for race within the Raffles Museum is necessitated by the fact that ideas of race "played an increasing role in nineteenth-century British colonial thought."⁴⁴⁷ As we have seen, ideas of race, such as those of John Crawfurd, impacted the materialization of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library, and hence, education in Singapore. Chapter 6 will show that it influenced methodologies, such as of administration and exploration. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, ideas of race and inherent racial asymmetries, or colonial racism, became increasingly obvious in Malaya and Singapore. Trocki notes that :

At the very time when one of the great goals of British imperialism

⁴⁴⁶ Ballard, Chris, "Collecting Pygmies: The 'Tapiro' and the British Ornithologists' Union Expedition to Dutch New Guinea, 1910-1911." 127-154

⁴⁴⁷ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1870. John Crawfurd and the Politics of Equality.*

was being achieved — that of educating and ‘civilizing’ the natives by which they adopted more and more of the language, culture and practices of Europeans — we find Europeans erecting a color bar and systematically beginning to exclude Asians from their company.⁴⁴⁸

The Chinese, for example, included in the Chamber of Commerce membership during the early part of twentieth century, were excluded by the third quarter.⁴⁴⁹ Trocki’s observations implies that there was a contradiction and paradox between the "civilizing" mission that British colonialism embraced and the color bars they installed. There is, in fact, no paradox here: the same perception of local inferiority that deemed British civilizing influence necessary likewise deemed locals unfit for sharing colonial spaces and thereby, demanded their exclusion from specified colonial domains.

Colonial marking of spaces in colonial Singapore were evident, in both private spaces, such as the colonial domestic household but also in public spaces. In an era without plumbing, running water or flush sanitation, domestic work held far deeper cultural and political meanings than they do today. Domestic work was regarded as unbecoming to the

⁴⁴⁸ Trocki, Carl A., "The Development of Singapore’s Colonial Economy." 46

⁴⁴⁹ Trocki, Carl A. 47

European colonizer while the number of servants kept signified class, status, prestige, racial, and as Chaudhuri points out, sometimes even religious superiority.⁴⁵⁰ These discourses of differentiation and identity were amply evident in one of the most-cherished architectural features of Singapore's past, the colonial black-and-white house.

As discussed in Chapter 1, most, if not all, black-and-white Tudor-style houses had clearly-marked servants' quarters that were located at an appropriate distance from the main house. Access to the main house was limited to select staff members. In addition to access, the duties within these designated European spaces were organized along gender and racial lines. Up to ninety percent of the colonial household staff was male and primarily from the Hainan dialect group. "Cookie and Boy [were] usually Chinese; the Kaboon [sic, was] almost invariably a Tamil; ...the Sais [sic], or chauffer [was] usually Malay."⁴⁵¹ Ballantyne and Law's study of the colonial black-and-white houses demonstrate that their spaces have compelling social narratives regarding colonial anxieties, beliefs, and "interlinked discourses of race and health."⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Chaudhuri, Nurpur, "Memsahibs and Their Servants in Nineteenth-Century India," *Women's History Review* 3, no. 4 (1994).

⁴⁵¹ Loo, Janice, "Mem, Don't Mess with the Cook," *Biblioasia*, September 2016, Online, <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/biblioasia/category/features/page/2/>.

⁴⁵² Ballantyne, Andrew and Law, Andrew, "Genealogy of the Singaporean Black-and-White House," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 32 (2011): 301–13.

Built with different layouts and on spacious grounds, these black-and-white houses were always regarded as exclusive and European. Both the style of the houses and the enclaves' locations were literal and metaphorical expressions of distance and difference. In style, the black-and-white colonial house stood out from local homes, but they also evoked "a British idea of 'home,' one strongly associated with "a nineteenth-century idyll of domesticity" that "flourish even now in Britain and elsewhere."⁴⁵³ The location of these enclaves, usually at least one kilometer from existing settlements, was a colonial defense strategy against the health threats that colonials perceived life in the tropics exposed them to. In addition, it prevented the social intermingling that often ended in interracial marriages.

More than providing health protection, seclusion, and exclusion, the deliberate location of the enclaves away from the main settlements were also for political practicalities. Living together in seclusion made communication easier in times when speed in assembly and a way out was needed, such as during local unrest. Colonial enclaves were thus, expressions of the "epistemic anxieties" that Stoler demonstrates was a constant in colonial life and rule.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵³ Ballantyne, Andrew and Law, Andrew.

⁴⁵⁴ Stoler, Ann Laura, *Against the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*.

The houses themselves though, were revealing of the colonial mentality. The large tracts of land on which the houses were built, their generous gardens and spaces, expressed the "heavily serviced" lifestyle⁴⁵⁵ that colonials advertised as their privilege in the letters and pictures that they sent home. George Francklin Atkinson's *Curry and Rice*, for example, portray life in India as surrounded by a multitude of servants.⁴⁵⁶

Similarly, the public spaces and services in colonized Singapore and Malaya were marked for such differentiations. The Selangor State Railway, for example, was segregated in the mid 1890s with certain cars marked "For Europeans Only." The European Hospital in Malaya similarly provided separate facilities for Europeans until 1931, and the Raffles Hotel was quasi-segregated – locals were allowed in the same dining room as Europeans but not on the dance floor.⁴⁵⁷

What is more significant where Singapore's public colonial spaces were concerned, such as at the Raffles Museum, is that British colonial racism was unique in its tenor, female agency, and common occurrence through all levels of British colonial classes. These unique qualities, central

⁴⁵⁵ Ballantyne, Andrew and Law, Andrew, "Genealogy of the Singaporean Black-and-White House."

⁴⁵⁶ George Francklin Atkinson, *Curry & Rice on Forty Plates, or, the Ingredients of Social Life at "Our Station" in India* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1858).

⁴⁵⁷ Butcher, John G., *The British in Malaya. 1880-1941* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Oxford UP, 1979), 96–126.

to how British colonial dominance in Singapore and the Raffles Museum was enacted have not been addressed until recently.

Three characteristics set British colonial racism apart. The first is that it was more intense. British colonial society, Stoler notes, was more racially rigid and structured compared to places in Java under Dutch colonial administration. Indonesian Deli's "rigid social markings and strict class lines" she asserts, "has been attributed in part to Deli's proximity to the more socially rigid British Straits colonies [Singapore and the Malay Peninsula] and to the large number of British planters in East Sumatra."⁴⁵⁸

A second characteristic of British colonial racism that is relevant to the Raffles Museum is the role women played in its exercise. Female colonialists for instance, were architects of the construction of several microsites of colonial racism, such as the colonial household. Colonial racism intensified with the arrival of White women in colonies not only because their presence in colonies were associated with issues of White female prestige, honor, and consequently, protection, but also because colonial women were "committed to racial segregation for their own reasons" and were "avid racists in their own right."⁴⁵⁹ Percival Spear for

⁴⁵⁸ Bagley cited in Stoler, Ann Laura, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule." 139

⁴⁵⁹ Stoler, Ann Laura. 148, 146

example, observed that colonial women in India maintained and intensified racism by "holding to their insular whims and prejudices."⁴⁶⁰ Nandy likewise asserts that latent scholarship indicates that "white women in India were generally more exclusive and racist" [than white men].⁴⁶¹

The last characteristic of British colonial racism that is relevant to the Raffles Museum was that colonial racism was not limited to specific ranks of colonial elites but "permeated the political strategies of *both* the corporate elite and their less-privileged European class opposition" (*italics original*).⁴⁶²

The Raffles Museum as a Colonized Space

All the characteristics that Stoler identifies as unique to British colonial societies were evident in the Raffles Museum, as illustrated by a letter to museum director Frederick Chasen from a certain Mrs. Mollie Hay. Hay, who was obviously involved in the selling of locally-produced artifacts, complained about the supply of artifacts to Chasen. British entrepreneurs, Hay wrote, were dependent on hawkers as middlemen for artifact supply "because the actual makers of these things have not the

⁴⁶⁰ Spear, Percival cited in Stoler, Ann Laura. 146

⁴⁶¹ Nandy, Ashis, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1983). 9, 10

⁴⁶² Stoler, Ann Laura, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule." 138

brains or education to sell the things themselves direct to us."⁴⁶³ Hay's blanket denigration of local artisans as collectively stupid and uneducated illustrates one, the belligerence of British colonial racism in Singapore; two, that British colonial racism permeated all levels of British colonial structures; and three, that colonial women were active agents of colonial racism.

Colonial markings of political, social, and cultural differences were evident in all the spaces of the three institutions Raffles established. While the college was marked as a site within which locals were to be civilized by an induction into the mysteries of Western science, philosophies, language and religion, the spaces of the Raffles Library were marked for the predominant use of a British elite till 1940. A powerful example of how the Raffles Museum and Library spaces were sites for a performativity of colonialism was through their utilization to maintain what Stoler terms a "European self-image of privilege and rule."⁴⁶⁴

Two pieces of correspondence from the Raffles Library illustrate this. The first is a letter dated 20 September 1945 from E.J. Corner, who was the assistant director of the Botanic Gardens when Singapore fell. Corner, who

⁴⁶³ Hay, Mollie, "Letter to F. N. Chasen," October 28, 1936, MSA 1140/001830, National Archives of Singapore.

⁴⁶⁴ Stoler, Ann Laura, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule." 139

was point man for the Japanese during their administration of the museum during their occupation of Singapore, appears also to have been the point man for the British Military Administration regarding the gardens, museum and library.

Corner's letter was a recommendation for a local, M. J. Chandy, to take over as temporary supervisor for the library. Corner recommended Chandy because he believed Chandy possessed the "education and strength of character to meet almost any situation in which he might be placed by persons attempting to demand books or force access to the library." Corner stressed that it is often overlooked that the "Asiatic 'clerk' generally [had] considerable difficulty in dealing with the European official."⁴⁶⁵

The second document is a memorandum submitted by Corner's candidate, Chandy. It gives us a clearer idea of what Corner meant by the "difficulty" locals encountered when dealing with European officials. Chandy's memorandum was about a card system the library intended to introduce. "Experience has shown," Chandy wrote, "that the majority of the subscribers, especially Europeans, who call in after office hours dislike any delay at the issuing counter." In view of this he suggested that the system be

⁴⁶⁵ Corner, E. J. H., "Memorandum to Acting Director, Raffles Museum and Library on the Appointment of a Librarian at the Raffles Museum & Library," September 20, 1945, MSA 1141/001721-4, National Archives of Singapore.

trialed immediately to give "ample time for research before the arrival of would-be European subscribers with the setting up of the civil government."⁴⁶⁶

Chandy's memorandum reveals several aspects of colonizer-colonized relations within the Raffles Museum and Library's spaces. First, his anxiety was over the same "difficulty" that Corner referred to. This essentially, was over how Europeans "disliked any delays," "demanded books" and "forced access" to the library. Both memoranda reveal therefore, that colonials, but more specifically British colonials, interacted with locals through their expectations of how they *should* be served within spaces they regarded as *their* domain and where *their* privilege was exercised. Part of this sense of entitlement is attributable to the fact that the library was a subscription library. The Raffles Library only became a free library in 1957 through the passage of the National Library Ordinance (No. 31).⁴⁶⁷ Paid subscription, in any context, be it club or association, meant privilege. However, privilege does not explain the "difficulty" that the Asian staff faced. As a series of memoranda show, the library was the domain of the White colonials, whom the museum director noted, did not like sharing

⁴⁶⁶ Chandy, "Memorandum 'The Card System with Reference to the Raffles Library,'" October 30, 1945, MSA 1141/001511-2, National Archives of Singapore.

⁴⁶⁷ "History of the National Library Singapore," The National Library Board Singapore, March 21, 2018, <https://www.nlb.gov.sg/About/HistoryofNationalLibrarySingapore.aspx>.

spaces with the clerical or artisan class (see page 268). Thus, the difficulty experienced in the British subscriber-Asian library clerk relationship was due more to the asymmetries of power positions; i.e., a European elite versus local staff; and politically, colonizer versus colonized.

The fact that both Corner and Chandy stated the difficulty to be an issue suggests that it was an important aspect of the library's daily operations. More importantly, it demonstrates that the library's *praxis* pivoted around service to the European visitor. Such a schema supports Luyt's assertion that while race was not officially used to debar potential users, it must have contributed to keeping non-Europeans users to a minimum.⁴⁶⁸

That race configured the Museum and Library's spaces can also be inferred from a committee memorandum dated 1 February 1933 regarding the inclusion of locals as members of the Museum and Library committee. In clarifying that "there [was] no statutory objection"⁴⁶⁹ to the inclusion of locals in its supervising committee, the memorandum reveals in fact, that there *was* an unwritten and undeclared proviso *not* to include locals within the administration of the museum.

⁴⁶⁸ Luyt, Brendan, "Centres of Calculation and Unruly Colonists: The Colonial Library in Singapore and Its Users, 1874-1900," *Journal of Documentation* 64, no. 3 (2008): 386–96.

⁴⁶⁹ Chasen, F.N., "CSO. Misc. W. 3633/33," February 1, 1934, MSA 1139, National Archives of Singapore.

The British employed these same constructs for political, social and racial supremacy in colonized territories via a range of institutions, such as official celebratory theater, pomp and ceremonies,⁴⁷⁰ to the imperial hunt,⁴⁷¹ to bioprospecting⁴⁷² as well as the use of stereotypes.⁴⁷³ All functioned consistently to articulate and importantly, to impress an overarching sense of imperial supremacy upon colonized populations. The most concrete illustration of how race configured the colonial spaces is in the museum's visiting hours. In this, the colonial categorization of local populations and the regulation of their entry into the museum manifest not only colonial perceptions of women but also of the locals.

The Low Other

On 25 May 1878, the *Straits Times* announced that a new schedule of visiting hours had been effected at the Raffles Museum:

The daily influx of native visitors to the Raffles Museum having reached an extent which almost precludes ladies from entering it, the rule has been adopted of reserving from 10 am to 1.30 pm for natives,

⁴⁷⁰ Cannadine, David, *Ornamentalism. How the British Saw Their Empire*.

⁴⁷¹ MacKenzie, John M., *The Empire of Nature. Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism*.

⁴⁷² Schiebinger, Londa, *Plants and Empire. Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Harvard UP, 2007).

⁴⁷³ Hook, Derek, "The Racial Stereotype, Colonial Discourse, Fetishism, and Racism," *LSE Research Online*, Originally in *Psychoanalytic Review* 92 (2005): 710–34.

coolies etc. and from 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm for European and other respectable visitors and ladies. The intervening half hour is devoted to sweeping and washing the upper floor, as it rapidly becomes covered with mud and dust during forenoon.⁴⁷⁴

The Raffles Museum's assignment of specific visiting hours to groups reveals its colonial racial categorization: ladies, natives, coolies, Europeans, and other "respectable" visitors. Here, the performativity of colonialism within the museum's spaces was on two levels. One, its visiting regulations constituted a segregationist marking of unambiguous racial boundaries between White Europeans, brown coolies, and natives. Two, they distinguish specific groups as acceptable.

While the definitions of what constituted "respectable or disrespectable" in 1878 are unclear, the demarcations made between ladies and the European versus the native versus the coolie are not. This colonial division merits further examination for it indicates the relative positions of these groups in Singapore's colonial hierarchies.

In her study of Victorians, Steinbach provides an explanation as to why the museum segregated colonial "ladies" from natives and coolies. Em-

⁴⁷⁴ "Untitled," *Straits Times*, May 25, 1878, National Library Board of Singapore, Newspapers SG, eresources, National Library Board, Singapore.

pire, she notes, was regarded as "rife with sexual danger from which white men had to protect white women."⁴⁷⁵ Women, she says, were viewed in the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries as helpless, often in the same legal category as children, and needing protection.⁴⁷⁶ The threat from which White women were particularly exposed to in this case was the local brown coolie.

Natives and the Fear of Coolies

The language that the Raffles Museum employed in its racial categorization is directly demonstrative and expressive of colonial perceptions of race, colonial epistemic anxiety, as well as colonial governance strategies.⁴⁷⁷ In its use of "native" the museum reveals two colonial classifications of the local population. In the "influx of natives" the differentiation made is a broad one, namely, between the White European and the primarily non-Western local population. The second "native" however, is more nuanced. "Native" with a capitalized N or "native" was a term used in colonial writings to refer to local communities. In this instance, there is a distinction

⁴⁷⁵ Steinbach, Susie L. *Understanding the Victorians. Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxon, UK; New York, USA: Routledge, 2012). 62

⁴⁷⁶ Steinbach, Susie L., "Ruling the World. Imperialism," in *Understanding the Victorians. Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).136

⁴⁷⁷ Stoler, Ann Laura, *Against the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*.

made between two local population groups, whose differentiation can only be determined by first understanding who colonials called the "coolie."

Coolies merit attention in a study of colonial Singapore for several reasons. The first is because they were the earliest and largest migrant population group. As such, the coolie social history constitutes a major component of Singapore's colonial experience as well as its migrant histories. Second, coolies occupy a central place in the Raffles Museum's history because while the museum regulated the coolie presence within its spaces, it was coolie labor that constructed the first extension of the Raffles Institution and thereby, the museum.⁴⁷⁸ The building that now houses the NMS is thus, an artifact of the Singapore coolie's history. Third, the regulation of coolie presence within the museum's spaces was related to the construction of the colonial European self that Stoler demonstrates to be essential in colonial spaces. Finally, the coolie narrative and identity are embedded in British colonial labor policies and is reflective of how the British used its colonies in Southeast Asia. It is to these labor policies we need to turn for an understanding as to why coolies were singled out as a group for the segregation the Raffles Museum practiced.

⁴⁷⁸ McNair, J.F.A. Major, *Prisoners Their Own Warders. A Record of the Convict Prison at Singapore in the Straits Settlements Established 1825, Discontinued 1873, Together with a Cursory History of the Convict Establishments at Bencoolen, Penang and Malacca from the Year 1797* (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co, 1899).⁴⁵

The coolie community and identity took on specific connotations when major demographic changes occurred due to British labor policies. The first of these was in years shortly after the founding of the settlement. British administrators started importing Indian convicts as construction labor from 1825, first from Bencoolen, the first British Far East convict station. The first batch of convicts consisting of seventy nine men and one woman arrived on 18 April 1825 on the brig, *Horatio*. Six of the male convicts were on short sentence.⁴⁷⁹ Between 1825 and 1878, large numbers of Indian convict laborers were shipped into Singapore from virtually all parts of British India. We can surmise that by "coolie" in its assignment of visiting hours, the museum referred to these convict coolies.

The second of these was a dramatic increase in coolie numbers after 1874 when British Residents were installed in the Malayan states of Negri Sembilan, Selangor, and Perak. This created a demand for construction labor. In the 1880s a second important demographic change occurred when a series of land acquisition legislation was passed. These removed a long-standing hindrance to European acquisition of estate lands and enabled Europeans to buy large tracts and "place them under rubber cultivation using cheap gangs of docile Indian labor delivered by British-managed compa-

⁴⁷⁹ McNair, J.F.A. Major. 38, 39

nies."⁴⁸⁰

Between 1909 and 1940, sixteen million Chinese and Indians are cited by Abraham to have arrived in colonial Malaya. The impact of this influx on demographics is made clearer when we compare this to the United States, which saw nineteen million arrivals during the same period.⁴⁸¹ This influx had enormous, enduring implications for it created a need to explain the "social, economic and political inequalities of races."⁴⁸² The colonial community no longer consisted of a handful of merchants, but an entire community of Europeans in the colonial administrative service, in estate and mine management, shipping and transport, in professional services (doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc.) as well as trade. Explanations, Abraham suggests, were needed for the exemption of the white man from dirty, manual jobs, his higher standard of living, the low wages paid to locals as well as the positions of power that facilitated colonial exploitation. In addition, plantation culture itself is inherently racist.⁴⁸³ The rise of plantations therefore contributed to the emergence of clearer, more strictly observed European/non-European race-based hierarchies. Together, these changes provided the roots for rac-

⁴⁸⁰ Trocki, Carl A., "The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy." 29

⁴⁸¹ Abraham, Collin E.R., "Racial and Ethnic Manipulation in Colonial Malaya." 22

⁴⁸² Abraham, Collin E.R.

⁴⁸³ Thompson, Edgar Tristram, *Plantation Societies, Race Relations, and the South: The Regimentation of Populations. The Selected Papers of Edgar T. Thompson* (Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1975).

ism in modern Malaya.

Like the Indian coolie, the Chinese coolie's arrival in Singapore was also related to plantations. Chinese coolies started arriving in Singapore with the rise of the gambier industry around the 1850s in Singapore and in the region. Gambier (*Uncaria gambir*) and pepper plantations, already existent in Singapore in 1830s, were the main employers of the early Chinese population. Around 1836, Southeast Asia began exporting gambier to Europe for use in leather tanning and wool dyeing and by the 1860s, pepper and gambier plantations covered large portions of the Malay/Indonesian Archipelago. Gambier plantations stretched from Riau in the south through Singapore north to Johore.⁴⁸⁴ The accelerated demand from Europe saw local Chinese entrepreneurs establishing plantations on the island's north and west. Large numbers of Chinese coolies, primarily from Swatow, South China, began arriving in the settlement to work in these plantations.

Arriving on the ticket system, Chinese coolies or "piglets," as they were called by the locals as well as Kloss, the Raffles Museum's director, paid off their passages with free labor for an agreed duration. Coolie ships plied between China and Singapore, ferrying coolie "piglets" from and to estates and tin mines in the region. This meant was that in the early years,

⁴⁸⁴ Trocki, Carl A., "The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy."28

Singapore was a coolie hub, a port town surrounded by settlements of agricultural coolies and planters. By the end of the nineteenth century it was a coolie city, whose bulk of inhabitants were "rickshaw pullers, street vendors, craftsmen, and water carriers."⁴⁸⁵ This coolie population formed the broad, lowest stratum of a rigid colonial population pyramid⁴⁸⁶ whose apex consisted of a British elite. The coolies were this colonial elite's social, political, and cultural Other.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the eighteenth/nineteenth-century museum's spaces in empire metropolises were regarded as places of refinement and culture. The working classes' entry into museums during this period were contingent on their dressing and behaving in prescribed standards. Museum spaces, Bennett points out, even with the emergence of the public sphere, maintained its aura of exclusiveness.⁴⁸⁷ Such a logic demanded that the coolie — the 'low-Other', the dirty and the crude outside,"⁴⁸⁸ who was also the local threat White colonial women required protection from, could not share the same spaces as the White colonial woman. The spaces of the Raffles Museum in this context, performed colonialism by designating, as

⁴⁸⁵ Trocki, Carl A. 4

⁴⁸⁶ Trocki, Carl A. 21, 45

⁴⁸⁷ Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, 1995. 27

⁴⁸⁸ Stallybrass and White cited in Bennett, 27

Prakesh says, a place for a colonized group.⁴⁸⁹ Coterminous, the segregated hours also performed colonialism in a converse role, namely, within the function Stoler proposes, and that is, for the construction and visualization of the elite, European colonizer self.

The Raffles Librarian Position: Protectionism and the Fear of Poor Whites

The segregation that the Raffles Museum practised was not limited to just its physical spaces. A close study of the attempt by a local, Madeline Padma Daniel, to enter the Raffles Museum and Library spaces will reveal that the invisible spaces of the museum and the library were similarly structured to limit local entry and to designate an epistemic place for locals as subordinates. Padma Daniel applied to the Raffles Library at a time when the museum and library were under the same directorship, and hence, when the library's and the museum's spaces were thus essentially one and the same.

Our first evidence that the Raffles Museum and Library spaces were color-coded is a general acceptance among the committee members in charge of the institutions that only a European was adequate and suitable for the librarian position. An undated memo records that committee member C. E. Wurtzburg suggested "that a European lady [should] be

⁴⁸⁹ Prakash, Gyan, "Who's Afraid of Postcoloniality?"

employed at the Issue Desk to superintend the clerical work and "also to attend to the subscriber."⁴⁹⁰ There is no record of Wurtzburg explaining why only a European was suitable for the position, but he obviously believed that only a European could fill the position satisfactorily. It was a perception that not only defined how the librarian was to be selected but was employed throughout the colonial administration. Wurtzburg's view however, was only one aspect of the colonial racial dynamics that structured the institutions' spaces. Padma Daniel's application for an internship and library career provide compelling evidence of such dynamics.

Padma Daniel's narrative began on 11 December 1935 when her father, George Oliver Daniel, secretary to the Bishop of Singapore, wrote to the Director of the Raffles Museum and Library, requesting an unpaid internship for his daughter. Madeline Padma Daniel, who was born on 31 August 1919, had just turned sixteen. She was then sitting for her Cambridge Senior Examination and wanted a library career on completing her schooling. Daniel, whose occupation is listed as "Merchant" on Padma Daniels' birth certificate, informed then director Frederick Chasen that Padma planned to sit for the Elementary Examination of the Library

⁴⁹⁰ Unknown, "Memorandum, The Raffles Library and Museum," MSA 1139, National Archives of Singapore.

Association.⁴⁹¹ The application was obviously rejected because Daniel wrote again on 16 December 1935 to say that he had gone carefully through the Year Book of the Library Association and

cannot find any rule or bye-law which requires a candidate, wishing to sit for their Examinations, to produce evidence of having been trained under a qualified Librarian: but it is assumed that a candidate will usually be employed in a library.⁴⁹²

Daniel's letter makes it clear that eligibility for the examination included employment and experience in a library and that the Raffles Museum and Library rejected her application because the incumbent librarian, Kate Edith Savage-Bailey was clearly not professionally trained or accredited. There is also no documentation of her having any library experience.

Despite her lack of qualifications or any recorded experience, Savage-Bailey, who was appointed on 14 March 1936, retained her position and supervised Padma, who completed the first phase of her professional qualification in 1938, till the outbreak of World War II. The circumstances of

⁴⁹¹ Daniel, Geo. O., "Letter to Director, Raffles Museum and Library Re Internship," December 11, 1935, MSA 1140/0045, National Archives of Singapore.

⁴⁹² Daniel, Geo. O., "To Director, Raffles Museum and Library Re Qualified Librarian," December 16, 1935, MSA 1140, National Archives of Singapore.

her appointment and its longevity starkly contrasted the employment policy that the Raffles Museum and Library adopted for locals. It will also be seen to have been directed by the same Victorian perceptions of colonial spaces and women that structured the museum's visiting hours: colonial spaces as threatening, and women as dependent, domestic, and thereby, vulnerable and needing protection. They were compounded by, as Butcher and Stoler observe, the "particular anathema with which the British regarded poor whites" in Malaya."⁴⁹³

Kate Savage-Bailey was given the position when she was widowed on 1 April 1935 when her husband fell overboard and drowned while attending a farewell party on board a yacht.⁴⁹⁴ The need to provide and protect her — a lone female bereft of male protection and financial support in threatening colonial spaces — is evidenced in a letter dated 20 September 1945 from E.J. Corner. Corner informed the British Military Administration that the librarian position was held by a "European officer, the last person being Mrs. Savage-Bailey (to whom it was offered as a livelihood after the accidental death of her husband in Singapore which left her nearly desti-

⁴⁹³ Butcher, John G., *The British in Malaya. 1880-1941* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Oxford UP, 1979).127-150

⁴⁹⁴ "Tragedy Witnessed by Wife and Daughter," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, April 2, 1935, Newspapers SG.

tute)."⁴⁹⁵

As a colonial widow on her own in dangerous colonial territories, Savage-Bailey was seen to be in danger of becoming a member of the contemptible "poor white." Thus, while the physical spaces of the Raffles Museum and Library were so constructed as to afford White colonial women *physical* protection, its invisible spaces (employment as librarian) were structured to afford the single, White colonial female, like Savage-Bailey, *financial* protection. That the librarian's position was structured along these lines will be seen in its being offered again, on the same compassionate grounds, to another colonial widow on Savage-Bailey's departure.

On 28 August 1946, then Director of the Museum and Library, Michael Tweedie, presented two candidates to the committee as a replacement for Savage-Bailey. Tweedie's notes stated that he preferred the second candidate Mrs. Witte, but "that Mrs. Hatten's application is supported by compassionate grounds."⁴⁹⁶ Mrs. Hatten's application and résumé dated 15 June 1946 clearly pointed out that that she was a war widow and that her daughter was killed in 1937 during an air raid in Shanghai.⁴⁹⁷ Tweedie's offer of the

⁴⁹⁵ Corner, E. J. H., "Memorandum to Acting Director, Raffles Museum and Library on the Appointment of a Librarian at the Raffles Museum & Library." September 20, 1945, National Archives of Singapore.

⁴⁹⁶ Tweedie, Michael, "Memorandum to the Committee on the Appointment of a Temporary Librarian, Raffles Library," August 28, 1946, National Archives, Singapore.

⁴⁹⁷ Hatten, Mrs. O.H.S., "Application for Raffles Librarian Position," June 15, 1946, MSA

post on *compassionate grounds* was shared by an active committee member whose signature is indecipherable. This is seen in his notating against Tweedie's submission:

I agree if Mrs. Witte is sufficiently qualified to take over the more onerous task of a Librarian visualized by the proposal made at yesterday's meeting. If in the negative or if the post is to be temporary, I favour Mrs. Hatten on compassionate grounds.⁴⁹⁸

The Raffles Museum and Library's consistent selection of European candidates, who did not have the qualifications, and purely on compassionate grounds (with widowhood being the operative qualification), to supervise locals who did, marked the invisible spaces of the Raffles Museum as a White colonial widow domain. This color bar in the Museum and Library's employment spaces becomes even clearer when we examine the circumstances under which Padma Daniel was expected to acquire the training that colonial administration demanded. Annex B shows the examination paper she took. It is important here to reiterate here that

1142/000887, National Archives of Singapore.

⁴⁹⁸ "Minute Paper, C.S.O. 1253/46," September 1946, MSA 1142/000880, National Archives of Singapore. The signature, while hard to decipher, appears to be that of Sir Song Ong Siang. If it is, Song's views are not entirely surprising. He was a Cambridge alumnus, a Queen's Scholar, and one of the early class of well-educated locals. He was knighted in 1927.

this paper was for an *elementary* (emphasis mine) librarian qualification.

Padma's exclusion from the spaces of the Raffles Museum and Library began with the content of this examination. We can dismiss the first paper's testing on Johnson, Carlyle, and Swift etc., because even while they were demanding, these works reflect the literary tastes of the time. What we cannot dismiss is the exclusionary nature of the questions in the Second Paper.

The second paper questioned Padma on where she would look in the library catalog for books produced by "The Libraries Department of a Borough Council, a peer of the land or an archbishop of Canterbury." Padma, aged sixteen at the time of her application and resident in a distant colony, would not have known what a Borough Council was, much less who a peer of the land was. As seen under *Founding* in Chapter 5, the local educational and administrative systems emphasized training in clerical skills. Academic curricula, as we have also seen, did not offer much past elementary levels, even for teachers. Padma would therefore, more than likely, not have encountered the literature the examination tested in her secondary schooling. Her only other academic resource was the Raffles Library, which at this period, still functioned as a recreational library for the European residents rather than as a pedagogic support institution. This is verified by a series of memoranda exchanged between the committee members in 1940 which show that a reference section did not exist.

The 1940 memoranda record three committee members, Song Ong Siang, C.H. Withers-Payne, and especially G.L. Peet,⁴⁹⁹ criticizing the library and calling for it to "be conducted primarily for the domiciled population of Singapore and that the pro-European and upper-class bias in the library should be abandoned once and for all."⁵⁰⁰ It also records Peet dismissing the Museum and Library Director's concern over the anticipated dissent from the European community and the *tuan besar* (big boss) with a cryptic "If European 'tuan besars' and their wives object to sharing books with the clerical class or the artisan class in Singapore, let them form their own subscription library and run it themselves." The memoranda verify that as late as 1940, the Raffles Library still functioned as a recreational library for Europeans and was therefore of no help to locals like Padma Daniel. The examination with which a local could enter the Museum's and Library spaces was

⁴⁹⁹ Sir Song Ong Siang, Dr. C.H. Withers-Payne, and George L. Peet were committee members in 1940. A Raffles Institution alumnus, Song was a lawyer, legislator, community leader, and one of the most prominent members of the Straits Chinese community. He co-founded the Singapore Chinese Girls' School and authored *One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore* (1984). He was knighted in 1927. Charles Withers-Payne of the law firm of Drew and Napier was a prominent lawyer. In 1940, when the Colonial Secretary overruled the committee's decision not to renew Savage-Bailey's contract, Withers-Payne and Song resigned in protest (letter to Colonial Sec. 1 November 1940). In 1959, however, he was struck off the Roll of Advocates and Solicitors for misconduct with clients' funds. Payne pleaded for leniency on grounds that internment and poor health had allowed him to lose sight of how funds were managed. George Peet was a journalist with the Straits Times Press. At the outbreak of WWII, he was made Director of Information and was interned during the Occupation. He served as a member of the Royal Asiatic Society Council, on the Court of the University of Malay as well as on the Advisory Committee in the Social Welfare Department. He retired in 1952 after 29 years with the group.

⁵⁰⁰ Peet, G.L., "Attachment B, Committee Correspondence," 1940, MSA 1141/001278-90, National Archives of Singapore.

thus intrinsically exclusionary, but it was an exclusion enforced and supported by existent educational and administrative systems. This system remained in force and spirit until as late as 1948.

On 27 July 1948 Kate Ferguson of the British Council submitted a memorandum on the library's administrative structure. She called for "A trained European Librarian" to be placed in complete charge of administration" for three to five years.⁵⁰¹ Ferguson's specification of a "trained European Librarian" was for the purposes of defining a policy for the library. She recommended at the same time, that two "locally appointed Asians be selected to be trained as Library Assistant," the most promising of whom, be trained in an English Library School after preliminary training." Importantly, Ferguson's recommendations reveals that there is a retention of "European" within her definition for the position. She designates through this, no plan for any Asian to take charge of the library, but clear plans for locals to be assistants.

That Asians were designated subordinates in the Raffles Museum and Library's spaces is substantiated again by Padma Daniel's career. As early as 1938, Padma Daniel had already obtained her elementary librarian qualification, and in 1940 was recorded to be "shortly" sitting for her final

⁵⁰¹ Ferguson, Kate D., Library Adviser, British Council, "Letter, Memoranda to D. K. Daniel, Colonial Secretary's Office," July 27, 1948, 1155, National Archives of Singapore.

examination for the Librarian's Diploma.⁵⁰² A letter dated 7 September 1942 from W.J.K. Stark, the Malayan Representative in Bangalore, India, to Padma reveals that her position in 1942 was still Assistant Librarian.⁵⁰³ There is also no record of her ever being considered for a position other than as an Assistant Librarian. These reveal that the exclusion of locals from the Museum and Library invisible spaces was not an anomaly, or due to poor management, but was systemic.

The administrative spaces of the library remained intractably exclusionary till the 1950s. A letter from Michael Tweedie to the *Malayan Undergrad* in 1952, for example, records that a stringent and drawn-out training was still expected of local applicants. Tweedie stated that there were "certainly prospects for women graduates in Arts" in the Raffles Library which was then "in an active state of expansion." However, his stressing that the post of Assistant Librarian required a university degree and that only "an exceptionally able holder of one of these posts might, after a period of training, become Librarian"⁵⁰⁴ shows that the double standard was still in place. Locals like Padma Daniel, despite the lack of resources for training, were

⁵⁰² Chasen, F.N., "Report to the Committee," January 11, 1940, 1141/001378-80, National Archives of Singapore.

⁵⁰³ Stark, W.J.K., Malayan Representative, Bangalore, India, "To Padma Daniel," September 7, 1942, MSA 1142/001380, National Archives of Singapore.

⁵⁰⁴ Tweedie, Michael, "Letter, Women's Page Editor, The Malayan Undergrad," March 26, 1952, MSA 1142.

still expected to be qualified.

Padma took three years till 1938 to qualify for consideration for a full-time position at the library. Even then, her entry was not achieved without an intra-colonial administrative territorial contest. File C.S.O. 6414/1938 shows that in 1938, upon her qualifying, George Daniel again applied on her behalf for a salaried position.⁵⁰⁵ A note on the file from the colonial secretary has him pointing out her application as an "interesting application and one which merits consideration" to Tweedie. Surprisingly, Tweedie's reply to the Colonial Secretary's recommendation did not reflect any pleasure from having found qualified staff, local or otherwise, which was a complaint that colonial administrators consistently made in their reports. Instead, it truculently retorted that the application was "for the employment by the Raffles Museum and Library and should have been addressed to D.R.M. & L" and "if this [was] done the case [would] be considered on its merits."⁵⁰⁶ Daniel's original application dated 23 August was returned to him by the Colonial Secretary with instructions to refer the matter to the Raffles Museum and Library's committee, which he accordingly did. Tweedie's reply is significant in that it indicates that in

⁵⁰⁵ Daniel, Geo. O., "Letter of Application for Padma Daniel for Full-Time Position as Junior Librarian," September 22, 1938, MSA 1140, National Archives of Singapore.

⁵⁰⁶ Tweedie, Michael, "Minutes CSO 6414/1938," September 3, 1938, MSA 1140, National Archives of Singapore.

addition to being marked socially, and racially, the spaces of the museum and library were also marked administratively by colonial bureaucratic territorialism.

The Raffles Museum and Library spaces remained closed to Singaporeans till after World War II. The first Singaporean appointed to head the library was Hedwig Anwar in 1960. The first local to hold a senior position in the Raffles Museum (later the NMS), Eric Alfred, was appointed Acting Director in 1967.

Padma Daniel's career is an invaluable document of Singapore's colonial experience and an abject lesson in colonial subjugation because it makes colonial subjugation palpable. A litmus test as to whether a color bar marked the spaces of the Raffles Museum and Library could be formulated in one question: would Kate Savage-Bailey, Hilde Witte or O.H.S. Hatten have been appointed if they were *local* widows? In view of the various qualifications Padma held, the highly-probable answer would be no. The double standard shows that the museum and library spaces were sites of the racism that was "virtually built-in and natural product of the colonial encounter...essential to the construction of an otherwise illegitimate and privileged access to property and power."⁵⁰⁷ Race was institutionalized

⁵⁰⁷ Stoler, Ann Laura, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the

through boundaries that were not visible, contestable, or surmountable. It was a colonial logic that did not allow for argument to its nonsensicality, but nevertheless, controlled colonial spaces. This performativity of colonialism through an epistemic fixing of locals as subordinates was also evidenced the career of Abu Bakar Pawanchee.

The Designated Subordinate

One of the most powerful ways in which space served the colonial cause was in its utilization to specify the colonized's place within colonized society.⁵⁰⁸ The Raffles Museum and Library performed colonialism precisely in this manner because within its spaces, even when locals succeeded in entry, their "place" within these spaces were epistemically and structurally fixed — as subordinates. Salary returns for 1941 show Padma Daniel's designation as "Library Assistant"⁵⁰⁹ even after obtaining her qualification. Similarly, salary sheets for November 1946 show that only two officers in the museum and library were locals. This was the archivist who was appointed in 1938 and the ethnographical assistant who was appointed in

Boundaries of Rule."137

⁵⁰⁸ Prakash, Gyan, "Who's Afraid of Postcoloniality?"

⁵⁰⁹ "Salary Returns, Raffles Museum and Library, 1941," September 1941, MSA 1141/000288/9, National Archives of Singapore.

1940.⁵¹⁰ Other locals working in the museum were employed as peons, clerks, and support personnel.

1940 was a watershed year for locals in the history of the Raffles Museum because it marked local entry into the museum's epistemological spaces for the first time. That year, Frederick Chasen created the position of "Temporary Ethnographical Assistant."⁵¹¹ Touted as "an outstanding event and innovation" in the 1940 *Raffles Museum and Library Annual Report*,⁵¹² the appointment of Abu Bakar Pawanchee to that position was certainly innovative. It also provides us with a couple of other landmarks.

Like Padma Daniel, Abu Bakar Pawanchee is an important figure in the museum's history as one of the earliest locals on record to cross the racial boundaries of the Raffles Museum's spaces, and as the first indigenous voice encountered in this dissertation's research. A journal he kept of his duties between 1 December 1945 and 23 April 1946 reveals his responsibilities and work at the museum and how the museum functioned. It also illustrates that his career within the museum was fixed as a subordinate. In this context, two entries in Pawanchee's diary call for

⁵¹⁰ "Raffles Museum and Library Salary Sheets," November 1946, MSA 1139, National Archives of Singapore.

⁵¹¹ Chasen, F.N., "Recommendations for New Appointments," June 18, 1940, MSA 1141, National Archives of Singapore.

⁵¹² Unknown, "Annual Report, Raffles Museum and Library."

attention:

8 Feb. 1946. Read Journal of Anthropological Institute of GB & Ireland. Vol. XXXI

18 Feb. 1946. Read Winstedt's History of Malaya⁵¹³

It would be reasonable to infer from Pawanchee's ability to digest Winstedt and the *Journal of The Anthropological Institute*, regardless of how closely or superficially, that he was academically inclined and possessed a degree of academic aptitude. His journal on the other hand, records his duties as mainly making and typing labels, moving exhibits, i.e., performing mundane tasks.

It needs to be qualified that much of the work within the Raffles Museum at this period of its history related to the installation of exhibits and thus by necessity, involved mundane work like shifting, moving, and labeling. It is therefore to be expected that as an ethnographical assistant, Pawanchee's duties involved such mundane work. What attracts attention, however, is that his duties and responsibilities appeared not to have developed beyond such mundane museum work. There are records of him doing

⁵¹³ Pawanchee, Abu Bakar, Ethnological Asst., Raffles Museum, "Diary," December 1, 1945, National Archives of Singapore.

preparatory work for collecting expeditions like arranging for coolies, etc., and dealing with objects, but these do not clearly show him being involved in core museum work like curation or research. It is only in 1947 that we see Pawanchee involved in an area other than labelling and moving exhibits. That year, he published "An Unusual Kěris Majapahit."⁵¹⁴ Even then, his duties do not appear to have expanded to any significant degree because that same year, he applied for a transfer out of the museum on grounds "that the prospects offered by his present post do not satisfy him."⁵¹⁵ It was only in 1948, eight years after his appointment, that Pawanchee made any headway in his museum career. That year he received a British Council scholarship for a year's training in anthropology at St. John's College, Cambridge.

The reason why Pawanchee's absence in the Raffles Museum's epistemological spaces raises questions is because between the 1920s and the late 1950s there were abundant opportunities for his involvement. The Raffles Museum was then the Southeast Asian hub for researchers like H.D. Collings (active 1934-1950), Pieter Vincent van Stein Callenfels (active 1924 – 1938), R. von Koenigswald (active in Java 1930s – 1942) and H.G. Quaritch Wales (active 1930s-1940s). The extensive and vigorous fieldwork that was

⁵¹⁴ Abu Bakar bin Pawanchee, "An Unusual Kěris Majapahit on JSTOR," accessed June 24, 2016.

⁵¹⁵ Tweedie, Michael, "Memorandum to Colonial Secretary, RM&L 11/47," March 6, 1947, MSA 1153/000122&3, National Archives of Singapore.

done in Perak, Kedah, and Java from the museum throws his absence into relief.

In my view, Pawanchee's career at the Raffles Museum is significant in Singapore's social and colonial history in another aspect, and which historically, is far more important: he is the only local I encountered in my research who expressed an opinion as to how local communities should be viewed by colonials. While there are records of local staff correspondence, these relate almost solely to administrative matters, such as declaration of debt, applications for salary advance etc., Pawanchee's draft is the first colonized voice that appears in the Raffles Museum's archives on a subject that does not concern administration. The document that shows this is a draft of a letter dated 16 June 1948.

Directed to an unnamed individual, and obviously meant to be approved before mailing, the content of the draft is worth noting. In point 2 of this draft, Pawanchee stated

I am especially interested in No. 6 pg. 145 where you give an account of Malay weapons. If I may be allowed, I should like to make a few comments on these. It seems you have used the term "Malay" to cover approximately the Malaysian Archipelago which, I think, is not correct. By "Malays" we refer to some of the people of the Malay Peninsula and of certain parts of the coast of Borneo. The Sumatrans, Ja-

vanese, Balinese, Madurese, etc. are not Malays although they may be called "Malaysians." The term "Malaysian" itself is not satisfactory as it includes the peoples of the Philippines who should be excluded. I am not aware of any suitable term for the people of Malaysian stock. 'Indonesians' have been used by some authorities but this, I am told, is not satisfactory.⁵¹⁶

This draft is the first record of a local addressing colonial perceptions of his ethnicity and constitutes the first colonized voice in the Raffles Museum. In my view, it marks the emergence of a sense of origin and ethnicity that had not been voiced before and therefore, is a text of considerable historical value.

Conclusion

My analysis of the Raffles Museum's spaces was situated within the ideological and human processes that used space to define class, gender, the sacred, and the profane. Using frameworks on how colonization appropriated spaces to assert dominance, the chapter demonstrated that space under colonialism had far more agency and left more enduring and profound impacts. An examination of the Raffles Museum's spaces

⁵¹⁶ Pawanchee, Abu Bakar bin, "Letter," June 16, 1948, MSA 1139, National Archives of Singapore.

demands attention to such ideological uses of space because British colonial rule, Cannadine and Cohn demonstrate, employed appropriation of epistemological and institutional spaces to articulate colonial supremacy. The Indian Durbar is an example of the British colonial appropriation of cultural, social, and political spaces to enact claims to positions within the hierarchies they instituted in colonized spaces.

Space was also culturally colonized by "the export of hierarchy"⁵¹⁷ and this includes British installations of cognitive articles of power, such as portraits of British colonial administrators within them. John Singer Sargent's portrait of Frank Swettenham, for instance, was a "swagger portrait" designed to underwrite Swettenham's status as a "direct representative of the imperial sovereign and the chief executive of the colony."⁵¹⁸ These portraits of Swettenham, Raffles, Pickering, and Clementi were "part of the exercise and maintenance of any leader's power to ensure that his image [was] constantly before the people who count."⁵¹⁹ The significance of these imperial discourses lies in the fact that while Britain may have ceded its rule over Singapore, these portraits have not ceded their cultural or ideological claims or domains. They continue to swagger

⁵¹⁷ Cannadine, David, *Ornamentalism. How the British Saw Their Empire*.

⁵¹⁸ Cannadine, David. 65

⁵¹⁹ Turner cited in Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. 26

relentlessly within the spaces of the NMS as metonyms of imperial power, and in the process, impress upon all who look *up* to them the never-to-be-matched-again power and glory of the British Empire, and importantly, Singapore's umbilical tie to that Empire.

Importantly, where Singapore and its colonial experience are concerned, this chapter's analysis focused on what was *verboden* and what was beyond the colonized reach. The chapter demonstrated that both the visible and invisible spaces of the Raffles Museum performed colonialism by upholding colonial privilege while simultaneously inferiorizing local populations. Its physical spaces, for example, were marked with segregated hours that regulated and controlled categories of population that the British colonizer elite deemed "low" or inferior, namely, the native or coolie.

Likewise, the museum's invisible spaces performed colonialism by enforcing exclusion of locals on several levels. First of these was through a dual standard employment. It demanded qualification and drawn-out training from locals but not from European candidates for employment. Second, even when locals attempted to qualify, the esoteric and provincial content of the examination itself was exclusionary, making it almost impossible for locals to successfully qualify. Third, exclusion of locals from the spaces of the museum and library was sustained by a colonial infrastructure that primarily served colonial interests, this being trade and rule. Schools trained locals in commercial and clerical skills, and the

administrative system promoted clerical careers. The library remained a recreational library and did not develop into a pedagogic support institution till after WWII. The Raffles Museum likewise did not admit any local into its main areas of research and curation till well after 1940. Thus, both Singapore and its colonial institutions performed colonialism through a traditional role that colonies fulfilled, namely, to provide jobs not only for the English aristocracy but also for an "Imperial working class ...which traversed the world."⁵²⁰ In Singapore, this imperial class included planters, merchants, civil servants, administrators of the museum and library as well as the colonial widow.

Using two case studies, that of Padma Daniel and Abu Bakar Pawanchee, I demonstrated that the museum also performed colonialism by sustaining White labor protectionism and assigning an epistemic place for locals as subordinates. These case studies illustrated that even when locals crossed the boundaries into spaces designated as "knowledge" areas and thereby, White domains, they had no vertical mobility and were fixed in subordinate or support positions to colonial staff. Padma Daniel's successful entry into the Raffles Museum and Library's spaces were achievements of

⁵²⁰ *Ornamentalism: How The British Saw Their Empire. A Conversation with Maya Jasanoff, Harvard.*; Hyslop, Jonathan, "The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself 'White': White Labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa Before the First World War," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 4 (December 1999)

historic proportions that are hard to appreciate in an age when gender and human rights form core notions in employment and social vocabularies. Its historic significance is that Singapore's colonial institutions placed and held the local population in imperial servitude. Thus, the institutions that are popularly cited as examples of colonial benevolence and legacies need to be regarded and recalibrated within these functions.

In conclusion, Knapman's view that colonial racial thinking "did not derive from a Late Victorian sense of their cultural or racial superiority but was a "name for the symptoms of what could not be explained by the historical record"⁵²¹ is untenable. It is refuted by ample evidence in the Raffles Museum that demonstrate that perceptions of gender and colonized races were not solutions to questions of human types but were components of a battery of technologies employed for colonial dominance and governance. These perceptions of race and racial hierarchies played key roles in shaping the visible spaces and the invisible spaces of the Raffles Museum. §

⁵²¹ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia*. 98

CHAPTER 6

Performativity in Method: The Anomalous Contours of Master and Subject Abilities

Mutually constituted observations on race and civilisation supplied administrators with a flexible grid for the ordering of colonial subjects, whether through the operation of a census ... for colonial Malaya, or in the generation of stereotypical labels for the evaluation and identification of specific communities as indelibly criminal, potential labourers or military recruits.

—Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard. *Race, Place and Civilisation. Colonial Encounter and Governance in Greater Oceania.*

While there has been always awareness of racial exclusion in Singapore, such as through the existence of the once-exclusively White Singapore Cricket Club during the colonial period, there has been really little attention to what colonial racism actually meant, or what it felt like. In other words, we do not know colonialism as the lived historical experience. This chapter seeks to understand this aspect of Singapore's colonial experience by examining how colonialism's "multiple, often anomalous contours of racial thinking" and belief in the "different capacities of master and subject races" informed Singapore's colonial administrative apparatus and the Raffles

Museum's methodologies.⁵²²

The colonial project, as we have seen under *Spaces* was premised on differences. Notions of differentials between races and abilities made colonial spaces and the colonial situation as Hook says, "like no other." The colonized situation in all its areas — cultural, political, social, and ideological — was therefore one of "extreme asymmetries of power" as well as "radical imbalances of privilege, affluence and possession."⁵²³ The public museum, within the constellation of colonial articulation of differences and supremacy, has a primary position as a social institution. As Chapter 3 shows, the modern museum originated as such a site of privilege, differentiation, and possession. Similarly, as the section on the *Subtle Art of Collecting* will show, museum *praxes* and methodologies since the beginning of early Western exploration, were implicated in the West's racial perceptions of the non-West. As we have also seen, the eighteenth/nineteenth-century museum was the locus from which much of Western perceptions of racial inferiorities in non-Western cultures were formulated into colonial missions. Our discussion of how the Raffles Museum's methodologies were configured by racial perceptions begins with the role race played in British imperial thought.

⁵²² Douglas, Bronwen and Ballard, Chris, "Race, Place and Civilisation. Colonial Encounter and Governance in Greater Oceania," *The Journal of Pacific History* 47, no. 3 (September 2012): 245–62.

⁵²³ Hook, Derek, "The Racial Stereotype, Colonial Discourse, Fetishism, and Racism."

In the 1800s, race was literally not a simple matter of skin color but the definitive, "indestructible stock of ideas, traditions, sentiments, modes of thought, an unconscious inheritance from [their] ancestors..." Each race's "mental, and above all, moral characteristics" were characteristics "upon which argument [had] no effect."⁵²⁴ These perceptions of racial differences, their immutability, but more importantly, their attendant capabilities would play a central role in Western dominance of the non-West.

Race became central in British imperialism due to a paradigmatic shift that occurred during the 1800s in Victorian England. The Indian Mutiny in India of 1857-58, Evans notes, marked a period of reorientation in Victorian concepts of race and empire. It was a new attitude, he adds, that "contained a strong element of racism and the denigration of other cultures and civilizations."⁵²⁵ History textbooks in the 1880s and 1890s, for example, focused on empire, while "criticism of dubious enterprises such as the Chinese Opium Wars or shady characters like the corrupt Indian administrator Warren Hastings now virtually disappeared ... [and] Oriental culture [was] dismissed as ornamental rather than useful."⁵²⁶ The human community, he notes, was no longer regarded as "equal in the sight of God," but now in

⁵²⁴ Lodge, Henry Cabot cited in Stocking, George W. Jr., "The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race."

⁵²⁵ *Lecture: The Victorians: Empire and Race.*

⁵²⁶ Evans, Sir Richard, "Lecture, The Victorians: Empire and Race."

terms that "emphasized racial difference and the alleged racial inferiority of subject peoples."⁵²⁷ Importantly, he adds, British imperialists of the 1880s and 1890s viewed Britain as "destined not only to rule inferior races but also to lead the entire world into the future."⁵²⁸

Central in colonial discourses for perceiving and visualizing Other Inferiority and Otherness is the stereotype. Stereotyping the Other, as Bhaba demonstrates, was "crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchisation."⁵²⁹ These strategies would be evident in the Raffles Museum's as well as in colonial administrative methods.

The stereotypes that appear in the Raffles Museum and British colonial thought in Singapore were underpinned by a foundational, general colonial denial of "good qualities to any people who were non-white."⁵³⁰ The origin of this foundational denial is important because it is traceable to John Crawfurd, the second resident of Singapore — the man who opposed Raffles's establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library as superfluous on the grounds that the Asian was in intellectual and civilizational

⁵²⁷ Porter cited in Evans, *Lecture: The Victorians: Empire and Race*.

⁵²⁸ *Lecture: The Victorians: Empire and Race*.

⁵²⁹ Bhabha, Homi K., "THE OTHER QUESTION. . . Homi K. Bhabha Reconsiders the Stereotype and Colonial Discourse," *Screen* 24, no. 6 (November 1, 1983): 18–36.

⁵³⁰ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1870. John Crawfurd and the Politics of Equality*, 213.

stasis. Crawford's racial views merit close study because they exemplify major theories of race that were in circulation in British administration in Singapore and also because they informed colonial methods of administration in Singapore long after his tenure as Resident.

John Crawford, British Colonial Racism and Thought

John Crawford, Gareth Knapman argues, has been underestimated for his political and scholastic influence on nineteenth-century racial theories and consequently, British colonial policies in Southeast Asia.⁵³¹ He asserts that Crawford was an acknowledged authority on race during his lifetime and that for most of the nineteenth century, Crawford "towered over British colonial policy in South-East Asia, not only as colonial administrator, journalist and professional lobbyist, but also [as] one of the key racial theorists in the British Empire."⁵³²

Crawford's standing in the period's intellectualism and scholarship is evident from the fact that he moved in Charles Darwin's circle and was known in scientific circles of the time. Joseph Dalton Hooker, for example, then director of Kew and Darwin's closest friend, wrote to Darwin on his

⁵³¹ Knapman, Gareth. *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia*.; Wong, Wilbert, "The Doctor Turned Diplomat. John Crawford's Writings on the Malay Peninsula," *Biblioasia*, June 2017.

⁵³² Knapman, Gareth.

return from the British Association for the Advancement of Science Meeting at Bath (14 to 21 September 1864). He informed Darwin that the "great guns" at that meeting were "Crawfurd, Wallace, Bates, a young Milton (a mere boy) and Livingstone." Crawfurd's presentation, Hooker gushed, "caused particular excitement among the audience."⁵³³ Crawfurd's views of race were therefore not the insignificant grouses of a jaded administrator but carried the full weight of a scholar's theorizing that was backed by his field observations as a well-known, published journalist, and his first-hand experience as a veteran colonial administrator.

His contribution to colonial racism and methodologies was his formulation of a colonial binary mindset of racial abilities. According to Ellingsen, Crawfurd impacted colonial racism when he conflated the "noble savage" with the "barbarian."⁵³⁴ The conflation, Ellingsen contends, produced a new ethnology that was reductionist because:

opposition now was simply between 'civilized white society' and all others, while the extension of the scorn that already existed in the "original hyperbolically absurd juxtaposition of 'noble' with 'savage'

⁵³³ Hooker, J.D., "To Charles Darwin," September 19, 1864, Darwin Correspondence Project, University of Cambridge, <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/DCP-LETT-4616.xml>. Hooker's reference is to Crawfurd, Alfred Russel Wallace, Henry Walter Bates, William Wentworth Fitzwilliam (Viscount Milton), and David Livingstone.

⁵³⁴ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia*. 213

translated logically — but with great emotional intensity — into a denial of the possibility of attribution of good qualities to any people who were not white.⁵³⁵

As stated, the denial of the colonized as having any good qualities underpinned much of colonial stereotyping and it is these stereotypes in the Raffles Museum and British colonial methods that we examine in this section. The Raffles Museum's archives reveal that four major stereotypes dominated British colonial thought: i) the lazy native; ii) the native who would not or could not work without European supervision; iii) the untrustworthy native; and iv) and finally, the "half-caste."

The "Lazy" Malay

The "lazy native" was a stereotype that appeared consistently in colonized territories. As Memmi notes, it was used by the French in Tunisia and as Alatas notes, by the British in Java, Sumatra, Singapore and Malaya.⁵³⁶ It is also a stereotype that appears early in the history of British colonialism. Raffles, in his first volume of his *History of Java* already noted

⁵³⁵ Knapman, Gareth. 213

⁵³⁶ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*; Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and Its Functioning in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: F. Cass, 1977).

the prevalence of such a view.⁵³⁷

In his 1977 landmark study, Hussein Alatas argues that in an economy such as colonial capitalism, where production is exclusively for a foreign power, local resistance to such a system and a refusal to participate in its production is easily deemed "laziness."⁵³⁸ Such a reading gains traction from two other aspects of British colonialism. The first is the fundamental need for a justification of its exercise, and the second is the religiosity of Victorian colonialism that has been discussed earlier.

Colonialism, as Memmi argues, functioned on perceptions of differences. In this role, if colonization was to be justified as progressive or beneficial, the only position that would be conducive to the colonizer's presence would be if the colonizer was represented as frugal, hardworking, intent on self-improvement and open to the world. Such a moral construct required that its binary Other, the colonized, regardless of "whatever he may undertake, whatever zeal he may apply, could never be anything but lazy."⁵³⁹

Where religiosity is concerned, as we have also earlier noted, Victorian colonialism had a strong religious content and the positioning of

⁵³⁷ Raffles, Thomas Stamford, *The History of Java*, Second, vol. I (London: John Murray, 1830).

⁵³⁸ Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, 18.

⁵³⁹ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 125

the local as lazy supported a Protestant ethic that "success resulted from perseverance and hard work."⁵⁴⁰

Both these motives are evident, for instance, in the views of Archdeacon Hose, one of the museum's most active collectors. President of the Royal Asiatic Society, Hose made several observations of Malays at his augural address on 28 February 1878 to the society. Hose began impartially enough, by acknowledging that it was not possible to regard Malay peoples as "one and the same." He then compared a "peasant of Malacca or Johor with one of the Boyans...":

The one is lively, courteous, and communicative; the other is dull, boorish, and shy. The one is idle and fond of sport, the other is plodding and methodical; the one is very fond of talking, ...the other has not much to say even to his own people...⁵⁴¹

Hose noted tellingly that another "strange mark of difference between the two is that it is very difficult to persuade the "peasant of the Peninsula ...either to leave his house, or to become a servant." Hose's characterization of "idleness" here reflects Butcher's contention that British

⁵⁴⁰ Stoler, Ann Laura, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule." 140

⁵⁴¹ Hose, Archdeacon M. A., "Inaugural Address by the President, Royal Asiatic Society."

colonists deemed Malays lazy when their initiatives did not elicit the response expected.⁵⁴² In this case, the Malay refusal to take on domestic servitude that the British needed reflected, in the colonial view, an inclination to "idleness."

Malay "laziness" became accepted as fact by colonial administrators who expected it to be factored into colonial systems. This is seen for example, in a letter dated 30 October 1941 from Game Warden Theodore Hubbeck to Frederick Chasen. Hubbeck criticized the National Park as being "to all intents and purposes derelict, except so far as waste of money is concerned which is conducted with great efficiency..." Stating further that a "most idiotic mess was made of the Act by which all the power was put in the hands of Trustees who are really merely patrons," Hubbeck complained that:

Not a soul is now in charge of anything although hundreds of dollars are paid out every month to Malays who don't do a stroke of work although rated as Rangers. Who would expect Malays to work with none in charge?⁵⁴³

⁵⁴² Butcher, John G., *The British in Malaya. 1880-1941*, 52.

⁵⁴³ Hubbeck, Theodore. Chief Game Warden, FMS & SS, "To Frederick Chasen," October 30, 1941, MSA 1141 000800, National Archives of Singapore.

Hose's and Hubbeck's comments demonstrate that the "lazy Malay" stereotype existed in various circles of colonial elites, and more importantly, that colonial management methods were expected to account for a singular racial "fact": Malays were lazy, and that if this is not accounted for, the task was not going to be successfully executed.

No White, No Go

The need to account for local laziness is demonstrated in the correspondence in the Raffles Museum. They show that all sectors and levels of British management and administration were informed by a colonial racial perception that not only Malays, but all locals were lazy and had to be supervised. It translated into a colonial methodology that made European supervision mandatory.

This is seen for example, in a letter from Raffles Museum director Frederick Chasen to T.D. Hughes of the District Judge's Chambers regarding a collecting expedition. It has Chasen informing Hughes that he would "arrange for European supervision" once the archeologist H.D. Collings got the job started.⁵⁴⁴ There is no dispute here that excavation work often required special skills and training but Chasen's unqualified

⁵⁴⁴ Chasen, F.N., "Letter to Hughes, H.D., Judge's Chambers," March 11, 1937, MSA 1140, National Archives of Singapore.

specification of supervision by a "European" rather than "archaeologist" or "curator" demonstrates that the unconscious benchmark used here was race. Likewise, a letter from the Annual Board of Survey that instructed the Director of the Museum to "depute a European Officer" for an exercise on 13 December 1948 shows that race, rather than skill, was the qualification for a task.⁵⁴⁵ There was no explanation needed for why a European supervisor was needed, other than his being European, thereby, testifying to Douglas's and Ballard's contention that abilities of master and subject races were taken for granted in colonial regimes and Stocking's observation that such abilities were "beyond argument."

A far more interesting illustration of this perception in colonial methodologies is a letter from the Surveyor, J. T. Thomson⁵⁴⁶ containing suggestions for a road that was to link Serangoon and Garden Road in the middle of the island to the Old Straits and Seletar in the north east.⁵⁴⁷ Directed to T. Church, the Resident Councillor, Thomson's letter stated that his personal absence resulted in "people consequently being without check [taking] the work as easily as possible..." He suggested employing a

⁵⁴⁵ Colonial Secretary, "Letter to Director of Raffles Museum and Library," December 2, 1948, MSA 1155/000194, National Archives of Singapore.

⁵⁴⁶ The signatory on the letter which is typed, not signed, clearly states "F. T. Thomson." However, the surveyor from 1841-1853 is John Turnbull Thomson. I cannot account for the discrepancy other than the typist mistyped and Thomson did not notice.

⁵⁴⁷ Thomson, F.T., Surveyor, "No. 2 of 1848 to T. Church Esq., Resident Councillor" (Singapore, January 11, 1848), National Archives of Singapore.

"Chinese Tindal" who could control his countrymen with "great patience and firmness" because the Chinese, he stated, frequently combined and walked out *en masse* on "the least ill treatment or harshness of language." When that happened, he added, no other clan will finish the contract. The worst group, Thomson reported, were the Macao Chinese who demanded precise measurements to about 5,000 feet. Once the contract was agreed on, he warned, no divergence can be made "from the original line without exacting extra payment..."⁵⁴⁸

Thomson's letter reveals two important aspects of colonial methodologies. One, it provides dimensions to the enormous challenges faced in early infrastructure construction as well as the tenacity with which colonists, including Raffles, tackled the tasks of empire-building. Thomson's letter, for example, notes that preliminary reconnaissance work alone for a road such as the one he planned involved "walks of 20 & 30 miles thro' jungles and swamps."⁵⁴⁹ This, we should note, was primary jungle, heavy with undergrowth and razor-sharp grasses such as *lalang*. Despite this, Thomson still produced much of the early surveying work in Singapore,

⁵⁴⁸ Thomson, F.T., Surveyor, "No. 2 of 1848 to T. Church Esq., Resident Councillor" (Singapore, January 11, 1848), National Archives of Singapore.

⁵⁴⁹ Thomson, F.T., Surveyor, "No. 2 of 1848."

which he did on horseback.⁵⁵⁰ His surveys were therefore no mean feats under such conditions, and especially when we consider that he was only twenty years old when he started.

Two, and without belittling Thomson's substantial accomplishments in any way, it nevertheless needs to be noted that his comments illustrate the "anomalous contours" of British colonial racial thinking that influenced and configured colonial administrative methods.

Thomson clearly believed that his presence was required to prevent shirking, but his comments regarding the Chinese on the other hand, were a fusion of Crawford's denial of a lack of "positive qualities" in non-Western peoples and the inferiorization that Cohn notes the British adopted in India. This was dominance by consistently and deliberately placing colonized or subject peoples in the wrong.⁵⁵¹

In construction projects such as the one Thomson supervised, the provision of precise measurements would seem reasonable and requisite in view of the threats to health and safety such work involved. British administrative failure to provide precise measurements in this colonial mindset, however, was *not* regarded as a flaw in colonial methodology or

⁵⁵⁰ Sim, Cheryl, "John Turnbull Thomson," in *Infopedia, National Library of Singapore* (Singapore: National Library Board, Singapore, August 7, 2014), http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_818_2005-01-22.html.

⁵⁵¹ Cohn, Bernard S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*.

administration. Like Cohn's Indian servant, the Macao coolie's demand for precision put him in the wrong. Colonial cognitive calisthenics transformed British supervisory failure into a local racial flaw that denied him any positive quality in a Crawfordian framework. Within this construct, the demand became evidence of racial characteristics: of the coolie as intractable, dissentious, and opportunistic, likely to shirk, and thereby, needing the supervision of a Tindal and a European.

The colonial perception of a European as mandatory for performance was also manifest in its converse, namely, that an absence of a European presence was virtual guarantee of failure and malfunction. E.J.H. Corner, who was then the assistant director of the Botanic Gardens, stated in a letter dated 20 September 1945 that he contemplated "the absence of a European Officer in charge of the Gardens with much concern."⁵⁵² He felt that the only Asian who could be given authority was the Assistant Botanist, Dr. C.X. Furtado. However, he felt he could not recommend Furtado because Furtado was physically unfit, managed coolies badly, and most importantly, was "powerless to deal with any urgent matter in the absence of a military or European superior." Corner's explanation here is interesting:

⁵⁵² Corner, E.J.H., "Memorandum to Lt. Col. Archey on the Maintenance of the Botanic Gardens during the Ensuing Months," September 20, 1945, MSA 1141/001833, National Archives of Singapore.

a European was needed because the garden's Asiatic staff "[looked] for a 'white master' or 'orang puteh' and [was] most dissatisfied with anyone else."⁵⁵³

Similarly, the Raffles Museum was seen to be in need of Europeans *per se* to ensure successful administration. Lt. Col. Gilbert Archey, the "Monument Man" appointed in 1944 by the War Office to its Monuments and Fine Arts section, consistently referred to the absence of Europeans as an administrative problem. Archey, perhaps only repeating what resident administrators reported, stated in his 26 September 1945 Report for example, that "the Museum, Library and Botanic Gardens "[were]with one exception completely without European administrative and scientific staff."⁵⁵⁴ In that same report, Archey noted that "From both aspects the Gardens require active maintenance and development (involving the direction and control of a number of workers) which none of the Asiatic staff [were] competent to undertake." The BMA Fortnightly Report No. 2 dated 1 October 1945 likewise states that "one of the most serious difficulties" faced by the administration was a "shortage of European staff on the B.M.A. Establishment" and that arrangements for reinforcements

⁵⁵³ Corner, E.J.H.

⁵⁵⁴ Archey, Lt. Col. G., "Administration of Museums, Libraries and Botanic Gardens," September 26, 1945, MSA 1141/001829-32, National Archives of Singapore.

from Madras were being made.⁵⁵⁵

Like Thomson, Archey deserves credit for the substantial contributions he made to the overall protection of monuments and heritage structures in Southeast Asia during World War II. A non-partisan assessment of the Raffles Museum's methodologies, however, needs nevertheless to consider that Archey, like other colonial administrative staff, viewed European presence as imperative in performance. Thus, while there is no record of either he or Corner expressing the racist views that say, Boden Kloss held, their methods were nonetheless, racially-constructed and premised on the different capacities of master and subject races.

This institutionalization of European presence as a vector of performance within Singapore's colonial administrative apparatus persisted till after World War II. It is only then that a break between race and job performance was made. In a letter dated 10 October 1945, Corner reported that "there [was] no local person capable of acting in the required capacity of Director of Gardens," but importantly, that the garden needed a "competent botanist."⁵⁵⁶ His specification of "botanist" marks for the first time, that job competence was no longer seen as directly related to race but

⁵⁵⁵ Unknown, "Fortnightly Report No. 2," October 1, 1945, MSA 1141/001620-19, National Archives of Singapore.

⁵⁵⁶ Corner, E.J.H., "Letter to Lt. Col. Archey, on Supervision of Botanic Gardens," October 10, 1945, MSA 1141/001823, National Archives of Singapore.

to training and skills.

The Untrustworthy Native

The third colonial stereotype that structured colonial methodologies that is recorded in the Raffles Museum was that locals were devilishly manipulative, covert, and likely to commit fraud. It was a perception that transcended both British colonial ranks and territories, evidenced as early as 1765 in echelons no less powerful than the EIC Court.

When Robert Clive conquered Bengal, he triumphantly informed the EIC Court that he had made them "the Sovereigns of a rich and potent kingdom... not only the collectors but proprietors of the nawab's revenues." The Court's reply was that Englishmen were "unfit to conduct the collection of revenues and to follow the subtle natives through all his arts, to conceal the real value of his country, to perplex and elude the payments."⁵⁵⁷ The EIC Court's view of their legitimacy to the Indian revenues aside, their reply reveals that their misgivings were not about the potential of wealth but the Indian's ability to conceal its value.

In her work on Memsahib-Indian relations, Chaudhuri shows that much of the imageries of colonized peoples were propagated by literature that colonial veterans, and in particular, colonial women produced. She

⁵⁵⁷ Cohn, Bernard S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*. 59

notes, for example, that manuals produced to prepare colonials for life in India depicted Indian domestics, "as criminals who stole and carried diseases to their employers' homes."⁵⁵⁸ These circulated cautionary tales of fraud, in religion and business that created prejudices as well as trust issues that frequently informed colonial interactions with locals.

In the Raffles Museum, this mistrust of locals configured and shaped the staffing and operational methods that Cecil Boden Kloss and A. F. R. Wollaston employed for their 1912 Expedition to the Snow Mountains of New Guinea. It would influence them, but particularly Kloss, in staff selection, computation of transport, as well as in choice of suppliers.

In his letter dated 15 January 1912, Wollaston instructed Kloss to start looking for the boat if he knew "some honest man in Singapore with a knowledge of motor boats..."⁵⁵⁹ Wollaston's fear of fraud in boat building, while totally reasonable in view of the high risks involved in an expedition of a very vast and unknown territory, was not over quality but *honesty*. The perception that locals were likely to deceive, to take advantage, or simply give trouble, was more clearly revealed in Kloss's and Wollaston's management of Dyaks.

⁵⁵⁸ Chaudhuri, Nurpur, "Memsahibs and Their Servants in Nineteenth-Century India." 554

⁵⁵⁹ Wollaston, A.F.R., "Expedition to Snow Mountains Correspondence to Boden Kloss," January 15, 1912.

Writing on 10 October 1911 to Wollaston, Kloss asked, "What part of E. Borneo have you in mind for recruiting Dyaks?" He added that he doubted that "any would go again from the districts whence Lorentz coolies were drawn."⁵⁶⁰ This was because the Lorenz expedition had incurred heavy casualty numbers.⁵⁶¹ Kloss's question, however, reflected the use of race in exploration methods:

I should prefer to have men from two or three distinct places or areas so that in case they gave trouble we could play off one against the other. Have seen something of Dyaks at various times: as a rule they are excellent people to deal with but they are sometimes attacked by fits of cursedness and then are as bad to move as Chinese.⁵⁶²

Kloss's decision to employ different Dayak groups in order to be able to "play off" one against another was not unknown but appears to have been a technique employed early explorers, including the Dutch, Hendrikus Albertus Lorentz. In a later letter dated 26 October 1911, Kloss noted that Lorentz "took some Sudanese in order that he might not be dependent on

⁵⁶⁰ Boden Kloss, Cecil, "To A.F.R. Wollaston," Expedition Correspondence, October 10, 1911, Carl Alexander Gibson-Hill Collection, National Archives of Singapore.

⁵⁶¹ Hendrikus Albertus Lorentz made several expeditions to New Guinea beginning from 1903. The expedition that Kloss referred to here was probably the one in 1909-1910.

⁵⁶² Boden Kloss, Cecil, "To A.F.R. Wollaston."

Dyaks only..." Adding that Lorentz's strategy "was right in principle" but "faulty," Kloss's use of race in exploration is further verified in his offer to "get 40 more from the Dyaks of Sarawak" so that would he and Wollaston would have "at least different tribes to work on."⁵⁶³

Kloss's employment of race in exploration methods extended to his computing their physical abilities in transportation. In a letter dated 11 January 1912, Kloss gave Wollaston his rough estimate for food and its transport:

What I said about 20/30? ration loads is quite correct. A Malay will carry 16 lbs.⁵⁶⁴ Many of the Sarawak Dyaks were good for 55 lbs and their own odds and ends in addition and I have travelled in W. Borneo with 65 lb men. If we get Dutch Borneo Dyaks, and there aren't more than half out of 80 who can carry 20 rations I'm not going to think much of them. This is not up precipices of course.⁵⁶⁵

In a discussion, such as this one, on how the "anomalous contours" of racial thinking configured the Raffles Museum's methodologies, Kloss is both more interesting and worthier of attention than Wollaston. He is

⁵⁶³ Boden-Kloss, Cecil, "Letter to A.F.W. Wollaston," n.d., National Archives, Singapore, C.A. Gibson-Hill Collection, Private Correspondence.

⁵⁶⁴ Kloss's handwriting is illegible here. It is either an exclamation mark (!) or lbs.

⁵⁶⁵ Boden Kloss, Cecil, "Expedition to the Snow Mountains, Correspondence," January 11, 1912, Gibson-Hill Collection, National Archives of Singapore.

directly relevant to this study because he was the director of the Raffles Museum between 1923 and 1932, but more interesting because while he expressed clear, no-holds-barred racism, this racism was contradicted by his actions during the 1912 Expedition.

Kloss's letters, such as the one he wrote to a Singapore boat builder, Graham Hutchinson, peppered with racially specific terms, suggested strong views about race and abilities. For instance, in asking Hutchinson for recommendations as to where he could find an engineer to man the boat they intended to take up the Uakwa River, Kloss stated: "I want to know about a qualified capable Britisher: not about the *Sirani* who runs a little Chinese passenger pig boat."⁵⁶⁶

Kloss's vocabulary, as the previous paragraph shows, often included terms like "piglet" and "half-caste," used dismissively, often bordering on being derogatory. His keen awareness of race vis-à-vis abilities is also revealed in a letter dated 10 February 1912 regarding the third expedition member. Here, Kloss informed Wollaston, without any qualification or explanation, that he didn't want a "half-caste for this billet."⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁶ Boden-Kloss, Cecil, "Letter to Graham Hutchison," October 27, 1911, Carl Alexander Gibson-Hill collection, National Archives of Singapore. *Sirani* was a local term for a Eurasian, although it originally referred only to Portuguese Eurasians. "Piglets": see Trocki, Carl A., *The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy*. 21, 24

⁵⁶⁷ Wollaston, A.F.R. and Boden-Kloss, Cecil, "Correspondence, Snow Mountain Expedition, 1912-13."

While these terms were certainly in common use during his time and did not carry the weight that they do today, we cannot ignore the spirit in which he used them or the shades of British colonial racism they reveal. As shown in his comments on the transportation of supplies, these terms revealed what he "thought" of locals. The fact that other museum officers, like Chasen or Collings, did not employ them indicates that these views were Kloss's individual views. His racism, however, as I stated, were contradicted by his actions, which Wollaston recorded in his diaries on the expedition.

In mid-February 1913 Kloss and Wollaston witnessed an epidemic that killed many Papuans. Kloss found an abandoned two-year-old Papuan girl alive and he carried her "for six hours in one of the net bags he found lying in the hut."⁵⁶⁸ The child died despite his efforts but the incident illustrates the contradictions and complexities of the eighteenth/nineteenth century colonial mind as well as explorer-native racial relations.

The Caste of the Half-caste: The Eurasian and British Colonialism

A last and final stereotype and colonial perception of race that appears in the Raffles Museum is the Eurasian. Wollaston's and Kloss's use

⁵⁶⁸ Wollaston, Mary, ed., "Letters and Diaries of A.F.R. Wollaston" (Cambridge UP, 1933). 147

of "half-caste" calls attention to the one of the most contentious colonial perceptions of race, namely, racial hybridity, and the Eurasian.

Connotative of consanguineous ideologies, the term "half-caste" illustrates that race and race mixtures were paramount in eighteenth/nineteenth-century colonial relations. Mainstream polygenists of the late eighteenth century believed that the qualities of a race were related to certain physical processes, and that some were typical of specific races but exclusive to others. They believed, for example, that the brain sutures of black men closed earlier than white men⁵⁶⁹ and that certain races were threatened with extinction when located to non-compatible climatic environments. Another view, one directly relevant to our discussion, was of racial purity, namely, that only close races were suitable mixtures. Hybridity, it was believed, doomed races to "disease, infertility and early death."⁵⁷⁰ Moreover, it was believed that the "essence" of a race, as manifested in its achievements, was resident in the race's purity which "must be maintained in order to preserve the civilization it created."⁵⁷¹ Thus, loss of racial purity was related to losses of civilizations, and these were irreparable.

⁵⁶⁹ Stocking, George W. Jr., "The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race."

⁵⁷⁰ Luse, Christopher, "Polygenesis and the Defense of Slavery" (Emory University, 2008).

⁵⁷¹ Stocking, Jr. George W., "The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race."

These beliefs were partly the rationales behind legislations regarding miscegenation and the distaste with which interracial liaisons were viewed by colonists, even among colonial staff who were junior. Otto Travers, Raffles's aide-de-camp in Java, for example, stated with no little contempt that William Farquhar, the first Resident of Singapore, refused to hand over the administration of Singapore to him in 1820 because Farquhar recognized that the island offered him ample opportunities "for providing for his large native family."⁵⁷² Travers was referring to Farquhar's Malaccan-born French wife Antoinette Clement and their six children.⁵⁷³ His view of Farquhar's "native family" illustrates prevalent British colonial regard of interracial liaisons as unbecoming and unsavory. Thus, the Eurasian and the Eurasian identity, Yap notes, stood "at the problematic boundaries of racial politics and identity and are therefore vital to our understanding of the tensions of empire."⁵⁷⁴

In the Raffles Museum, perceptions of the Eurasian appear frequently in its exploration records. Both Kloss and Wollaston expressed a

⁵⁷² Bastin, John, ed., *The Journal of Thomas Otto Travers (1813-20)*, Memoirs of the Raffles Museum 4 (Singapore: Authority, 1957). 150

⁵⁷³ Hoh, Anchi, "Founding Singapore: The Story of William Farquhar," *Corners of the World*. International Collections, Library of Congress, n.d., <https://blogs.loc.gov/international-collections/2016/08/founding-singapore-the-story-of-william-farquhar/>.

⁵⁷⁴ Yap, Felicia, "Eurasians in British Asia During the Second World War," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* Series 3, 21, no. 4 (2011): 485–505.

very specific mindset about the Eurasian and as well as the group's place within colonial societies in their correspondence. In the British colonial perception, as Wollaston noted, Eurasians were a "separate caste."⁵⁷⁵ Kloss, as mentioned, unequivocally and without qualification, dismissed a Eurasian as the expedition's third member.

Kloss's rejection of a Eurasian could be due to two reasons, both of which were legitimate expedition concerns. One was practicality. Many Eurasians then were of Dutch or Portuguese descent, and at this time few probably spoke English. Wollaston's concern over this is seen in his letter of 15 January 1912. In it, he specified that "if the engineer was a half-caste, he must read English and speak English and Malay."⁵⁷⁶ Self-evidently, the exploration of a vast and unknown territory required reducing risks, and the risk of misunderstanding required its staff to be at least somewhat fluent in its *lingua franca*, which was English.

Another reason was a wariness over possible Dutch sympathy. As Kloss's correspondence shows, Anglo-Dutch exploration rivalry was very intense, added to which was the fact that the Dutch were not above exploration malfeasance. For example, they deliberately misdirected the

⁵⁷⁵ Wollaston, A.F.R., *Pygmies and Papuans: The Stone Age Today in Dutch New Guinea* (New York: Sturgis & Walton Co, 1912).

⁵⁷⁶ Wollaston, A.F.R., "Expedition to Snow Mountains Correspondence to Boden Kloss," January 15, 1912.

first British expedition to New Guinea in 1910 to the Mimika River, which they knew did not lead to the British goal, the Carstenz Peaks.⁵⁷⁷ It is equally possible that Kloss simply was averse to racial intermingling. This is suggested in his blunt, almost arrogant stating that he did not "want a half-caste for this billet." If so, then his racial views made these a performativity of colonialism.

Wollaston's many observations about Eurasians, on the other hand, provide an insight into British colonial views as well as his own views of this group. Unlike Kloss, he was not a colonial in that he did not live in colonized territories. The fact that his views were similar to Kloss's confirm Stoler's observation that European eighteenth/nineteenth colonial state and administrative encounters with non-Europeans were fraught with racial anxieties,⁵⁷⁸ but that anxieties extended to private encounters as well.

Wollaston first came into contact with Eurasians in East Java during his 1910 expedition to New Guinea with the British Ornithological Union. He noted then that one of features of the Dutch East Indies that "first strikes the attention of an English visitor, is the difference in the relation between

⁵⁷⁷ Ballard, Chris, "A.F.R. Wollaston and the 'Utakwa River Mountain Papuan' Skulls," *The Journal of Pacific History* 36, no. 1 (2001), http://www.jstor.org/stable/25169523?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

⁵⁷⁸ Stoler, Ann Laura, *Against the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*.

Europeans and natives from those which usually obtain in British possessions as shown by the enormous number of half- castes."⁵⁷⁹ He observed at the same time, that there was a "survival of spirit" of certain practices in East Java "that has almost completely disappeared from [British] dominions." When a European walks, he noted:

...or is more usual, drives along the country roads, the natives whom he meets remove their hats from their heads and their loads from their shoulders and crouch humbly by the roadside. Again on the railways, the ticket examiner approaches with a suppliant air and begs to see your ticket, while he holds out his right and for it grasping his right wrist with his left hand.⁵⁸⁰

Here, Wollaston described not only the ritualistic subservience that defined colonizer and colonized relationships, but importantly, that "Nowadays very few privileged natives are allowed to carry the keris ..." This colonial prohibition of the *kěris* has a cultural significance of dominance that deserves some attention.

A double-edged dagger with a wavy blade, the *kěris* is one of the most important material artifacts of the Malay/Indonesian Archipelago,

⁵⁷⁹ Wollaston, A.F.R. 5

⁵⁸⁰ Wollaston, A.F.R., *Pygmies and Papuans: The Stone Age Today in Dutch New Guinea*. 7

both as *pusaka* (heirloom or treasure) and as weapon. Indigenous to the region and believed to possess mystic powers, the *kěris* was used by Malays since the ninth century as an essential symbol of status and ethnicity. A Malay man in the pre-colonial days, for example, if he were not a serf, was despised if did not wear a *kěris*. The *kěris* was used to seal oaths, as well as to symbolize authority, such as to signify permission to unload goods in Aceh.⁵⁸¹ It thus had cultural meanings of ethnicity and power.

The colonial prohibition of the *kěris* among the Javanese was thus, symbolic cultural emasculation and a direct act of colonial dominance. It reveals that colonial subjugation was imposed not only through a physical appropriation of territories, cultural artifacts, and institutions, but also through the *prohibition* of indigenous symbols of ethnicity or power, such as the *kěris*. It also explains the colonial removal of much of colonized communities' institutional and religious regalia. Far more important where British colonialism and Singapore are concerned are Wollaston's observations regarding the Eurasian population size and demography because these illustrate existing British colonial perceptions of racial hybridity.

Wollaston's astonishment of the large numbers of Eurasians in East Java extended to an observation that the Eurasians "do not, as in British In-

⁵⁸¹ Frey, Edward, *The Kris Mystic Weapon of the Malay World*, 3rd ed. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia, 2010). 17-19

dia, form a separate caste, but are regarded as Europeans, and there are many instances of men, having more or less native blood in their veins reaching the highest civilian and military rank."⁵⁸² East Javanese Eurasians, he noted, moved easily within colonial circles in East Java.

It is not possible to tell from Wollaston's observations if he personally considered such British caste-ings of Eurasians legitimate or ethically justified. We do get, however, a clearer idea of his views of race and the Eurasian identity from his correspondence with Kloss, which show that race was certainly a criterion in his staff selection.

In his letter of 15 January 1912, Wollaston informed Kloss that he was having trouble getting the geologist he wanted as a third expedition member. Plan B, he informed Kloss, was "If a perfectly suitable man does not turn up, we will do without him and do the best we can with a white engineer."⁵⁸³ Wollaston does not explain his specification of "white." We can only speculate that this was from a desire to ensure that in a crisis, this key personnel member was someone who could communicate without misunderstanding, whose skills were at least known, and perhaps, whose loyalty will be beyond doubt. In any case, it showed race as a factor in his thinking and method.

⁵⁸² Wollaston, A.F.R., *Pygmies and Papuans: The Stone Age Today in Dutch New Guinea*, 6.

⁵⁸³ Wollaston, A.F.R., "Expedition to Snow Mountains Correspondence to Boden Kloss."

Wollaston's views of the Eurasian is much clearer in his letter dated 9 July 1912 from the *Paketsvaart* while already *en route* to Singapore for the expedition launch. The letter reveals that Wollaston was not immune to colonial stereotyping of Eurasians. In this letter, Wollaston informed Kloss that he had recruited one, George Siddons. Introducing Siddons, Wollaston wrote in parenthesis,

(I think he will do all right. Of his kind he is a very decent specimen. I saw an numerous number of people about the job but this man was one of the two possible ones, and he was recommended to me by 3 different people. He will have a month's wages on Aug. 15th, so don't give him anything if he asks for more. Tell him to wait until he gets to Java).⁵⁸⁴

Wollaston's preemptive instructions "not to give him anything" reveals an assumption that Siddons was liable to dishonesty, a stereotype that we have seen as having existed since Clive's time in India, and in echelons as high as the EIC Court. More significant is Wollaston's assurance to Kloss that Siddons was a "decent specimen" of "his kind." In this, Wollaston regarded the entire Eurasian race *collectively* as a "kind" and

⁵⁸⁴ Wollaston, A.F.R. and Boden-Kloss, Cecil, "Correspondence, Snow Mountain Expedition, 1912-13."

as indecent (whatever "decent" meant in Wollaston's view). Such collectivizing of colonized peoples, Memmi observes, was characteristic of colonial societies and part of the colonial subjugative process : it allowed the colonial to fall back on notions of "They are this. They are all the same."⁵⁸⁵ It was a collective view, Memmi adds, that was a refusal to acknowledge the colonized as an individual.⁵⁸⁶ It was, in this context, a performativity of colonialism.

Wollaston's and Kloss's writings show that while the Eurasian identity was generally problematic in colonial societies, it was more so in British colonial territories. Wollaston's observations substantiate Stoler's point that British colonial society was more rigidly structured than the Dutch. It also revealed that for the British, the Eurasian was not part White or part Asian but specifically *non-White* — *a separate* caste. This particular perception would be especially be important where the Singapore Eurasian was concerned.

Eurasians and British Colonial Problematics

According to Hirschman, cross-racial boundary relations in pre-colonial Southeast Asia may not have been completely or homogenously

⁵⁸⁵ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 129

⁵⁸⁶ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 129

harmonious, but they were relatively openly accepted. The existence of mixed-ethnic communities such as the Straits Chinese Peranakan, comprising local-born Chinese who adopted mixtures of both Malay and Portuguese heritages; the Jawi Peranakans who were Indian-Malays; and the Chinese in Java, many of whom adopted local identities and customs, were evidence of the fluidity of intermarriage and the general acceptance of racial hybridity in the region.⁵⁸⁷ Wollaston's observations of Eurasians in East Java, for example, substantiate this assertion. However, notions of race vis-à-vis racial superiority developed in tandem with the advent of British colonialism, British colonial expansion, and the rise in plantations in the latter 1800s. These processes created a need to differentiate and to categorize racial groups to establish the hierarchies that underpinned a system that functioned on privileges based on race.

In the Raffles Museum archives, the political issue of the Singapore Eurasian is documented in one document, a memorandum dated 6 October 1945 from a Lt. Col. Brasier-Creach. On Page 2, Brasier-Creach asked with an administrative impatience expressed through uppercase punctuation, "Who is responsible for EURASIAN INTERNEES in Bahau?" (punctuation

⁵⁸⁷ Hirschman, Charles, "The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology."

original).⁵⁸⁸ Brasier-Creach's reference is to Eurasians who had been resettled to Bahau, Negri Sembilan, by the Japanese in 1943.

This document is historically significant because it encapsulates the many issues that are discussed in this thesis regarding colonialism, especially those that surrounded race and colonial perceptions of race. It is specifically historically valuable because it records the Singapore Eurasian's colonial experience and thereby, a part of Singapore's social history. Thus, even though this document does not affect the museum's methodologies directly, it is relevant in that it demonstrates the complex dynamics of the Eurasian identity. In addition, within this thesis's overarching mission to understand colonialism from a Singapore perspective and to produce a Singapore-centered history, it should not be ignored for what it reveals about the Singapore Eurasian's colonial experience.

Bahau and the Singapore Eurasian Colonial Experience

Bahau is an important part of Singapore's colonial experience because it was one of two historical events that shaped Anglo-Eurasian perceptions of each other, and also the Singapore Eurasian's relations with other ethnic groups in post-colonial Singapore.

⁵⁸⁸ Brasier-Creach, Lt. Col. E.B., "Report No. 7," October 6, 1945, MSA 1141/001600, National Archives of Singapore.

Known also as Fuji-go, Bahau was significant because it was viewed by some Eurasians as forced — a less cogent argument because members of the Chinese community were likewise moved to Endau — but more because it was a "utopia gone awry." As Fiona Hodgkins notes in recounting her own family's story, Bahau ended up as a dispersal of Singapore's Eurasian community. "There is not a single Eurasian family from living memory," she points out, "who either did not live in Bahau or had friends or relatives or forebears who did."⁵⁸⁹

In 1943, the occupying Japanese with collaboration from local Catholic leaders, decided to resettle the Eurasian community in Singapore to Bahau in the Malayan state of Negri Sembilan, some two hundred miles north of Singapore. Local oral historical accounts assert that under the direction and guidance of Bishop Devals, head of the Catholic diocese in Singapore then, and a Japanese promise of a self-sufficient farming community, some three hundred Eurasian families moved to Bahau.

Reasons for the Eurasians choosing to resettle varied, but the main motive was the awkward position the Eurasians found themselves in during the war. When war broke out, Eurasians were immediately in the center

⁵⁸⁹ Hodgkins, Fiona, "Bahau: A Utopia That Went Awry," *Biblioasia* 12, no. 2 (September 2016), <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/biblioasia/2016/07/11/bahau-a-utopia-that-went-awry/>.

of politics, their loyalties vis-à-vis their dual identities questioned by both Europeans and Asians alike. The Swiss consul in Japanese-occupied Singapore, for instance, noted that "during the war, Eurasians were neither quite one nor the other" and were even seen as a direct threat.⁵⁹⁰ Asians, on the other hand, questioned their loyalty in terms of their stated and obvious identification with Europeans. Under these circumstances, Bahau must have appeared to the Eurasians as a chance to establish, as Hodgkins says, a Eurasian "Utopia." Rappa, on the other hand, contends that Eurasians were forced to relocate through pressure and a lack of options.⁵⁹¹ Either way, the Singapore Eurasian's disillusionment with Bahau and the sense of rejection that it created are to be found within the politics of British colonial rule and the historical association between colonists and the Eurasian which endowed the Eurasian with a specific identity.

Singapore/Malayan Eurasians: The Imperial View

Eurasians are synonymous with the arrival of Westerners in Southeast Asia. *Mestiços* born to Portuguese-Indian, Portuguese-Malay or Portuguese-Chinese couples in Malacca comprised the first generation of locally-born Eurasians in the Malay Peninsula. Later, there was Eurasian migration

⁵⁹⁰ Yap, Felicia, "Eurasians in British Asia During the Second World War."

⁵⁹¹ Rappa, A. "Contested Communities in Southeast Asia: The Law and the Singapore Eurasians," *Journal of Civil and Legal Services* 5, no. 3 (2016).

into Malaya from other colonial hubs, like Goa.⁵⁹² Early British colonial administrators like Francis Light, the founder of Penang, were known to have Eurasian liaisons. Light had five children with a Eurasian *nonya* of Portuguese (some records include Thai) ancestry, Martina Rozells. Similarly, six children were born to the first Resident of Singapore, William Farquhar and his first wife. While these liaisons may be regarded as uncomplimentary to the Asian woman when contextualized within the Asian concubinage system which emerged under colonialism, they nevertheless evidence the long history of Anglo-Eurasian colonial marital relationships.

Originally, white colonists kept clear demarcations between themselves and colonized peoples. In Deli, Sumatra, for example, white planters maintained a policy of not employing Indo-Europeans as clerks and rigidly-stipulated rules regarding marriage existed in both Dutch and British Southeast Asia. Plantations in the Dutch East Indies, for example, often instituted broad prohibitions against marriage.⁵⁹³ In British Malaya, there was similarly, an "unwritten law" that discouraged men from marriage within their first four-year contract and employers' permission was almost sought

⁵⁹² Rappa, Antonio L., *Saudade. The Culture and Security of Eurasian Communities in Southeast Asia*. 46

⁵⁹³ Stoler, Ann Laura, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule."

even when it was not mandatory.⁵⁹⁴ These prohibitions were instituted on several premises, one of which was, as we have seen under *Spaces*, was that empire was considered to be rife with danger. A more practical premise was that marriage was considered expensive for the individual as well as his employer. A married employee, Butcher notes, had the cost of two homes (one in the colony and probably another in the home country), education for children in the home country, home leave etc.⁵⁹⁵

These marriage prohibitions, however, proved hard for colonial enterprises to maintain. To meet the contingencies of colonial bachelor living, Stoler says, companies virtually legislated a broad system of interracial concubinage into existence. In British Malaya likewise, these choices between concubinage households and allowing the setting up of European households were "actively weighed."⁵⁹⁶ The result was that while white colonials considered the Eurasian community that resulted from the concubinage arrangements a "blight," they still maintained Asian concubinage to avoid white men being impoverished through the maintenance of white households.⁵⁹⁷ What this meant was that ultimately, a community of mixed ances-

⁵⁹⁴ Butcher, John G., *The British in Malaya. 1880-1941*, 139.

⁵⁹⁵ Butcher, John G., 137.

⁵⁹⁶ Stoler, Ann Laura, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule."

⁵⁹⁷ Stoler, Ann Laura. 143

tries — but importantly, one with a social imprecations attached, especially in respect to its female population — emerged.

As Wollaston observed, while Eurasians moved with relative ease and mobility within Dutch colonies, they did not have the same liberties in British colonies where they were categorically regarded as non-Europeans and a separate caste.⁵⁹⁸ As such, mainstream British colonial circles in Singapore excluded Eurasians, such as from British social clubs except under very special circumstances. In addition, Rappa contends that Eurasians were assigned only low and middle rank positions in the colonial civil service.⁵⁹⁹ I argue here that British colonial designation of Eurasians to low and middle rank positions was not because of racial hybridity. As the analysis of the Raffles Museum's employment policy illustrates, the British colonial system democratically designated not only Eurasians but *all* locals as subordinates in employment. This is evident, for example in an unwritten understanding in the Malayan civil service that a non-European would never be appointed to higher position than that held by the most junior European in that department.⁶⁰⁰ More specific examples of British discrimination against Eurasians would be the fact that "any European would consider it an indignity to

⁵⁹⁸ Wollaston, A.F.R., *Pygmies and Papuans*. 5-7

⁵⁹⁹ Rappa, Antonio L., *Saudade*. 99

⁶⁰⁰ Butcher, John G., *The British in Malaya. 1880-1941*, 109.

be asked to serve under a Eurasian"⁶⁰¹ as well as the British protest against their co-internment with Eurasians during World War II.

Within the prevalent polygenist tenets that "only viable race mixtures were those between closely related social groups"⁶⁰² Eurasians became the epicenter, conundrum, as well as the grey area between a colonial claim to racial superiority as justification for Western dominance on the one hand, and an inability to sustain the high-ground that such racial purity demanded. Eurasians became the visible testimonies of these colonial moral transgressions and fallibility.

Again, within colonial mental calisthenics, these moral transgressions were not regarded as the colonizer's human flaws but instead, became associated with colonies, whose Eurasian women, Yap states, became associated with (and regarded as the products of) decadent morality."⁶⁰³ As a result, Eurasians came to be viewed in terms of "racial degeneration, impurity, indolence, and abnormality."⁶⁰⁴

British colonial rejection of Eurasians was amply evident in their two Southeast Asian hubs, Hong Kong and Singapore. In Hong Kong, C.G. Alabaster, a Hong Kong Legislative Council member and later attorney-

⁶⁰¹ Butcher, John G., 109.

⁶⁰² Stocking, Jr. George W., "The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race."

⁶⁰³ Yap, Felicia. 489

⁶⁰⁴ Yap, Felicia.

general, still advocated legislating marriages between "certain races as invalid or a punishable offence" as late as 1920.⁶⁰⁵

In Singapore, the existence of the Singapore Recreation Club, founded by Eurasians and located directly opposite the exclusively-White Singapore Cricket Club on the Padang in the center of Singapore, was a physical symbol of British rejection of Eurasians from their society. As Yap wryly observes, "When cricket matches were played, the Europeans and other spectators," including Eurasians, "gathered at opposite ends of the field."⁶⁰⁶

However, Eurasians in pre-War Singapore did not view themselves in the way British colonials viewed them. Their view stemmed from the privileged *economic* (note, not political) position that they enjoyed under colonial rule.

Before World War II, Eurasians enjoyed privileges that other ethnic groups on the island did not. English language proficiency made them the preferred, albeit subordinate, employee choice as clerks and support staff in colonial administration, private enterprises, as well as in missionary establishments. They dominated the preferred white-collar jobs as clerks, teachers, and in communication sectors. As civil servants, they had access, for example, to "good housing facilities and relatively stable incomes, which put

⁶⁰⁵ Yap, Felicia, "Eurasians in British Asia During the Second World War." 487

⁶⁰⁶ Yap, Felicia.

them economically above most Asians."⁶⁰⁷ Unlike other Asian communities, Eurasians were also not confined to designated ethnic enclaves and were able to buy prime locations near European communities. As such, compared to the other communities they were at "the upper end, ...high in society."⁶⁰⁸

This misled Eurasians in colonial Singapore to being "pro-British, pro-English" [and] always associat[ing] themselves with the English, European..."⁶⁰⁹ Eurasian Anglophilism in colonial Singapore manifested itself in an adoption of English lifestyles; English derivatives for their names; English customs, such as Afternoon High Teas and musical soirees; and English sports, such as horse-racing, cricket and rugby. *The Changi Internment Camp* gazettes substantiate that Eurasians saw themselves as members of Singapore's white colonial elite. Eurasian internees, as one edition noted, protested their classification as "Other Nationals" as "unjust" during their internment.⁶¹⁰

The disparity between how British colonizer elites viewed Eurasians and how Eurasians saw themselves was exposed when British colonial elites who had "vigorously defended policies of racial exclusion" were in-

⁶⁰⁷ Pereira, Alexius, *Eurasians, Singapore Chronicles* (Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies, Straits Times Press, 2015). 18

⁶⁰⁸ Mathieu, Harold, cited in Rappa, Antonio L., *Saudade*. 232

⁶⁰⁹ Mathieu, Harold E.A., Interview With A Eurasian, January 17, 1999, cited in Annex A, *Saudade*, Rappa, Antonio.

⁶¹⁰ "Changi Guardian," June 20, 1942, Cambridge University Library, <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-RCMS-00103-00012-00029/1>.

terned with those they sought to exclude at Changi.⁶¹¹ The "unrestrained contempt" with which the British regarded Eurasian women was seen, for example, during the arrival of about three hundred Eurasians in the Sime Road women section in March 1945. It provoked strong reactions from colonial women, including Katherine de Moubray, wife of the British adviser to Trengganu.⁶¹²

Co-internment at Changi during the Japanese Occupation was a politically and socially charged confrontation of colonizer versus colonized as well as pure versus hybrid racial ideologies. For the British colonial female elite, co-internment was several shades of the colonial female hell. There was first, the humiliation that came with the loss of the privileged position that had been an essential part of their colonial status and identity. Second, and far more significant, was their confrontation with the harsh realities of colonial male "transgressions" that they dreaded and were contemptuous of. Local "Keeps" could be ignored in ordinary life but constituted a brutal shock when they and their consequences were present.⁶¹³

For Singapore Eurasians, their rejection during co-internment and Bahau brought home the realities of British colonial racism as well as their

⁶¹¹ Yap, Felicia, "Eurasians in British Asia During the Second World War." 497

⁶¹² Yap, Felicia. 502

⁶¹³ Tompkins, *Three Wasted Years*, cited in Yap, Felicia.

place in British colonial hierarchies. Until then, they firmly believed that British and Allied forces were invincible, and that the British would defend the colony that was their Far East hub.⁶¹⁴ For many, the easy capitulation of Singapore was a disillusionment of British military strength and commitment. More importantly, Eurasians felt that British failure "to defend Malaya in the early 1940s resulted in squalor. Misplaced trust and hope in the British colonial masters had resulted in malnutrition and death at the [hands of the] Japanese Imperial Army..."⁶¹⁵ As Braga-Blake states, "This realization and a feeling that they had been stranded by the British was a major let-down..."⁶¹⁶

British reaction at co-internment and Bahau were turning points in the Singapore Eurasian's social history. It led the community to reflect on their ethnicities, their implied alliances, and after the war, to regard themselves more as Asian than European.

Conclusion

Colonial administrative and the Raffles Museum's methodologies were examined in this chapter. Using primary documents from the museum

⁶¹⁴ Rodrigues, Keith, "Trial and Tribulation: The War Years," in *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*, ed. Braga-Blake, Myrna, Ebert-Oehlers, Ann, and Pereira, Alexius A., World Scientific Series on Singapore's 50 Years of Nation-Building (Singapore 2017).

⁶¹⁵ Photo caption, at Bahau. Rappa, Antonio L., *Saudade*. 208

⁶¹⁶ Braga-Blake *Eurasians*. 22

on exploration and colonial policies, the chapter established that colonial perceptions of race informed the methods the British used in public projects as well as institutions, such as the Raffles Museum. Documents reveal that colonial race perceptions of locals filtered down in time, from the museum's early days to well into World War II. It was also evident in all ranks, from senior administrators like John Crawford, to the rank-and-file administrators such as the Game Warden and construction supervisors.

Key perceptions that colonials employed in their management of locals comprised one that regarded locals as lazy; a second, of locals as unable to work without European supervision; a third as untrustworthy; and finally, a fourth of Eurasians as a caste of non-Whites. The chapter showed that these perceptions translated into colonial systems that viewed European presence as mandatory in all undertakings. In the Raffles Museum, its director, Cecil Boden Kloss, employed it for managing the natives who accompanied him on expeditions. On the other hand, A.F.R. Wollaston's perception of the native as one who was not to be trusted was revealed in his choice of a boat engineer.

The chapter also looked at British colonial racism vis-à-vis their relations with a group that was particularly prominent within British colonial ideologies of race and racial mixtures, i.e., the Eurasian. While Eurasians saw themselves as half-White, British colonialists saw them as non-White. British colonial ostracism of Eurasians was exposed in

Singapore when British colonial elites were interned together with Eurasians at Changi during the Japanese Occupation. Sharing space with the group that symbolized colonial sexual transgressions revealed British anathema against racial hybridity at its most intense, especially, where Eurasian women were concerned.

Understanding how colonialism was performed through the museum's methodologies, especially through its mythical representations of racial characteristics, such as laziness, or inability to meet expected standards, is significant because it still persists, as the thesis's concluding chapter shows, within Singapore's statutory board management.⁶¹⁷ In addition, as Abraham notes, they underlie notions regarding thrift, wealth, and social success that are today associated with certain communities, such as the Chinese. It was a process that led to "an increasing sense of class inequality within the Malay social structure and to a feeling of 'racial' inferiority in relation to the alien non-Malay."⁶¹⁸ It verifies the long-term effects of a colonialism and how they structure Singapore's present day inter-ethnic relationships. §

⁶¹⁷ The myth of the lazy Malay as well as the colonial perception of the inferior local have permeated, in my view, deep in the Singapore psyche. I experienced it first-hand in a class I took at this university in 2014, when a classmate opened a conversation on two occasions saying, "You know how we say the Malays are lazy ...?" Few notice that this is a colonial legacy.

⁶¹⁸ Abraham, Collin E.R., "Racial and Ethnic Manipulation in Colonial Malaya."

CHAPTER 7

Performativity in Function: Triumph and Tragedy

The acquisition of objects from areas of the world which Britain had colonial or proto-colonial political and military interests, and the ordering and displaying of them by a museum which was a department of the British state, formed...a three-dimensional imperial archive, wherein the procession of objects from peripheries to center symbolically enacted the idea of London as heart of the empire.

—Tim Barringer. *The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project*

The objects and collections in many Western museums today are associated with some of the high points and triumphs of eighteenth/ nineteenth-century discovery, exploration, scientific, as well as anthropological intellectualism. Included in the narrative of Western natural history and exploration triumphalism is the Wallace Flycatcher, a specimen from Alfred Wallace's work in Southeast Asia in the Raffles Museum's successor, the LKCNHM.

It is significant historically and curatorially that these collections are mainly in the West, and that they are curated within the paradigms of Western history and Western achievements. It is equally significant in mu-

seum discourse that the contrapuntal national and individual tragedies that underwrote these collections' acquisitions are silenced. Hence, they point to a need for a non-Western, colonized perspective and museology. This thesis's analysis of the Raffles Museum's function is directed towards this end.

My discussion of the Raffles Museum's function through its collecting *praxis* and object passages is premised on several important aspects of Western collecting. These are first, that Western collecting was distinct in that it was primarily the collecting of the non-West. Asians, for example, also collected, but their collecting was primarily of their own indigenous cultures.⁶¹⁹ Second, the West's collecting is associated with its encounter with the non-West and hence, is reflective of its perceptions of this encounter. Third, the bulk of Western museum collections today have lineages traceable to the eighteenth/nineteenth-century exercise of "exorbitant rights" that colonialism claimed.⁶²⁰ These claims of rights included those to resources, labor, and products of colonies, and hence, museum collections directly document this exercise of rights. It also produced the movement of artifacts and specimens from the non-West that Barringer describes in the epigraph. Thus, these passages of objects, specimens, and resources from periphery to

⁶¹⁹ Kreps, Christina, "Non-Western Models of Museums and Curation in Cross-Cultural Perspective."

⁶²⁰ Gordimer cited in Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 53, 42,

core need to be read for the epistemology of "collecting rather than a collection."⁶²¹ The assemblages and importantly, the *lack* thereof, as well as the passage histories of objects, man-made and human, of colonial museums like the Raffles Museum, document therefore, exercises of colonial power.

This section examines the Raffles Museum's object passages within these frameworks as performativities of colonialism. Its discussion is situated within two overriding questions: one, how were object passages effected; and two, who did the museum's collecting and object passages ultimately serve?⁶²²

Removal

The passage of specimens, objects, resources etc., between imperial cores and peripheries took two main forms, namely, either as removal or extraction. While many objects were acquired through consensual trade and exchange, there were equally many that were acquired through civil and military violence, and through assertion of political supremacy. These are the objects that qualify as "removals" and which this section focuses on.

For former colonies, understanding removals is important because it

⁶²¹ Benjamin, Walter, "Unpacking My Library. A Talk About Book Collecting," in *Illuminations*, ed. Arendt, Hannah, trans. Zohn, Harry (New York: Schocken Books, in agreement with Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968).

⁶²² Stoler, Ann Laura, *Against the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. 25

is related to how they were subjugated and whom they served. Their indigenous peoples, for example, were historically collected through their encounters with the West. Columbus and Sebastian Cabot⁶²³ for example, took Native Americans and Africans to Europe. Later anthropologists like A.F.R. Wollaston, likewise, "collected" Pygmies.⁶²⁴ Removals from Southeast Asia were already effected in early European forays into the region, such as by Alfonso D'Albuquerque in 1511. D'Albuquerque's voyage records show that

beyond the island of Java they sailed along by another called Bali: and came also unto others called Avajava, Sambaba, Solor, Galao, Malva, Vitara, Rosalangquin, and Arus, whence they brought delicate birds, which are of great estimation because of their feathers...⁶²⁵

⁶²³ Mancall, Peter, "'Collecting Americans': The Anglo-American Experience from Cabot to NAGPRA," in *Collecting Across Cultures. Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, ed. Bleichmar, Daniela and Mancall, Peter, The Early Modern Americas (Philadelphia, USA: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). 192, 177-192

⁶²⁴ Ballard, Chris, "Collecting Pygmies: The 'Tapiro' and the British Ornithologists' Union Expedition to Dutch New Guinea, 1910-1911."; Ballard, Chris, "A.F.R. Wollaston and the 'Utakwa River Mountain Papuan' Skulls."

⁶²⁵ Galvano, Antony, "An Excellent Treatise of Antony Galvano, Portugal Containing the Most Antient and Modern Discoveries of the World, Especially by Navigation, According to the Course of Times from the Flood, Until the Year of Grace 1555," in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels Consisting of Authentic Writers in Our Own Tongue, Which Have Not before Been Collected in English, or Have Only Been Abridged in Other Collections*, Vol. II (London: Thomas Osborne, 1745).

Removals are also significant in that while they may have been discrete acts, they were conducted continually over very long periods of time and could be large, in size as well as numbers. In terms of numbers, an example from the Raffles Museum is the William Louis Abbott (1860-1936) collection.

One of the Raffles Museum's regular visitors and donors, Abbott was American, and like Wollaston, was not a colonist in that he was neither British nor resident in Singapore. His collecting and collection, nevertheless, are significant illustrations of the Raffles Museum's collecting *praxis* as well as of the epistemology and scale of nineteenth/early twentieth-century Western collecting. The Abbott collection *alone* comprises over 6,000 objects that went to the Smithsonian, the largest single donation of *ethnographica* made to the museum.⁶²⁶

Its impact can be seen from a letter from Chasen in 1936. In that letter, Chasen attempted to stop an American expedition, pointing out that "There must be hundreds of gibbons in American museums especially in the Abbott collection."⁶²⁷ When put together with the number of collectors and the duration of the collecting done in Southeast Asia, the impact of such

⁶²⁶ Onn, Clement. *Hunters and Collectors*: 30

⁶²⁷ Chasen, F.N., "Letter to Theodore Hubbeck, Chief Game Warden, FMS & SS," June 11, 1936, MSA 1139, National Archives of Singapore MSA 1139. 11 June 1936

collecting on the region's heritage and environment becomes clear.

A primary and exceptionally lucid illustration of the size as well as the politics colonial removals entailed is Sōkkuram, a mid-eighth-century Buddhist sculpture that was discovered in a cave on the eastern slope of Mount T'oham in Kyōngju, Korea, in 1909. The Japanese originally intended to remove Sōkkuram, piece by piece, to Japan. Eventually, they decided to restore and leave Sōkkuram in Korea but both the plunder and restoration of this Korean artifact were in line with colonial strategies.

While the intention to remove it was an act of colonial dominance, the decision to restore and leave Sōkkuram in Korea was the new form in which Japan chose to exercise colonial power. The Japanese recognized that colonialism "could not be sustained with just coercive power"⁶²⁸ and changed its policy regarding Sōkkuram to demonstrate its colonial benevolence. In addition, the restoration Japan undertook was to demonstrate Japan's "sophistication and modernity, its mastery of the (Western) disciplines of archaeology, architecture, and art history..." and thereby, Japan's parity with the West. Thus, the understanding of such politics in colonial removals is central to understanding of how colonial hegemony is exercised, retained, and sustained. In the Raffles Museum,

⁶²⁸ Em, Henry H., *The Great Enterprise. Sovereignty and Historiography in Modern Korea* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2013). 87-137

these politics are evidenced in the ornithology collection now at the LKCNHM, the present custodian of the Raffles Museum's natural history collection.

The website notes that colonial directors sent types and duplicates of their collections to the British Museum of Natural History and other museums in Europe and the United States. Dispatch of natural specimens, the website notes, were undertaken because these directors believed that specimens were better preserved in cooler, drier climate, and "more importantly, that the specimens would be more accessible to western scientists."⁶²⁹

The operative words of concern here are "expatriate directors," and "accessible to *western scientists*." Considerations of climatic conditions are certainly valid during a time when conservation methods were far less sophisticated than they are now, but the removal of zoological specimens by *Western* expatriates to *Western* museums, for access by *Western* scientists bear evidence of a collecting epistemology premised on colonial entitlement and legitimacy of cultural ownership.

Such a view of Western entitlement is evident, for example, in

⁶²⁹ "Zoological Reference Collection (ZRC)," Institutional, Lee Kong Chian Museum of Natural History, January 10, 2017, <https://lkcnhm.nus.edu.sg/about/our-collections/zoological-reference-collection-zrc/introduction/>.

Raffles's puzzling and indignation over Britain having to supply raw material to China (see *Founding*) and Paul Turnbull's thorny question as why Western science continues to be prioritized over aboriginal cultural concerns in British collections.⁶³⁰ In this context, the LKCNHM's denial of scientific theft in the Raffles Museum's collections legitimizes, if not valorizes, colonial rights and removal. At the same time, the conversion of a policy of plunder to restoration is likewise evident in Chasen's advocacy of wildlife preservation discussed later in this chapter.

Extraction

In this discussion, extraction refers to the continuous, often large-scale, state-sanctioned, -assisted, or -sponsored passages of goods and resources using local labor, even investment, from colonies to empires. The passage here covers mainly those of goods and resources taken through plantations and mines. In the case of Malaya and Singapore, extraction involved a range of different produce at different times, such as of gambier in the earlier decades of the 1800s, and tin, rubber, and gutta percha in the latter half. An essential part of this passage is the imperial use of colonies as markets for empire products, but this particular passage of goods does not

⁶³⁰ Turnbull, Paul, "Scientific Theft of Remains in Colonial Australia," *Australian Law Review* 92 (2007).

concern us here.

Assembly Node and Enriching Empire Museums

In the Raffles Museum, removal of artifacts and specimens was conducted institutionally and privately. While we know the impact of some private removals, such of Abbott's and Raffles's, many others remain unassessed because their collection histories have not been researched. Our concern here is removal enacted either through right or privilege.

The direct relationship between colonial power and possession of artifacts has been covered in substantial detail under *Frameworks* in Chapter 3. It suffices here to add that removals from the Raffles Museum were effected simply because collections were not intended to remain here but for institutions "at home" or to accompany the collectors "home" when they left at the end of their tours. "Home" where Singapore collectors were concerned was Britain and British collecting institutions, especially the British Museum. Their proprietary entitlement is seen in the exchange between Frederick Chasen and Charles Elton of Oxford University in August 1939.

Elton informed Chasen that he was "quite glad" for Chasen to work on the mammals, provided that the allocation of specimens between

Chasen, the British Museum, and the Sarawak Museum "could be settled satisfactorily."⁶³¹ In his reply, Chasen assured Elton that if the British Museum took *what it wanted*, both he and Banks "[wouldn't] quarrel about what [came their] way" (*italics mine*), thereby confirming that British institutions held rights over removals.⁶³²

The most graphic evidence we have of British propriety rights over Southeast Asian assemblages is the Raffles Museum's ornithology collection. Starting from the 1880s, holotypes and the best bird specimens from the Singapore, Perak, and Selangor museums were routinely dispatched to the British Museum (Natural History) in London, which became effectively, "the central depository for the British Empire's natural history collections."⁶³³ A later section, *Supplying British Museums*, will demonstrate that this right and process of removal was formally institutionalized.

Besides institutional removals through expeditions and formal agreements, removals were also conducted from the Raffles Museum and other museums in British Southeast Asia individually by senior as well as

⁶³¹ Elton, Charles, Bureau of Animal Population, Oxford University, "To Chasen, F.N. Regarding Collection from the Sarawak Expedition," August 17, 1939, MSA 1140, National Archives of Singapore.

⁶³² Chasen, F.N., "Sarawak Expedition, to Charles Elton," September 9, 1939, 1140, National Archives of Singapore. Banks is probably Edward Banks, Curator of Sarawak Museum 1925-1945).

⁶³³ Tan, Kevin Y.L., *Of Whales and Dinosaurs*. 84

the rank-and-file colonial officials. These include those made by museum's founder, Raffles, who took two sculpture heads and other pieces from Borobudur⁶³⁴ as well as the Sangguran stone from Java that he presented Lord Minto. Rank-and-file removals include those made by Gale Sievking, who established the three museums in Kuala Kangsar, Seremban, and Malacca. Sievking, who is known for his work on Gua Cha, a habitation site in a rock shelter on the Nengiri river in Kelantan, according to his colleague Tony Beamish, "left in a shower of sparks, carting off the JL [Johor Lama] hoard entire with him."⁶³⁵ Likewise, Richard Noone, the Cambridge-trained anthropologist at the Perak Museum, removed objects which he donated to Cambridge. This is recorded in a letter from Chasen on 13 January 1939 to the Faculty Board of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge asking, "what Mr. Noone did present" to the university?⁶³⁶ A check into the faculty's Annual Report reveals that Noone donated "Potsherds, stone pounders, etc., from a rock shelter near Sungei Siput, Perak" in 1937. The same report

⁶³⁴ Glendinning, Victoria, *Raffles and the Golden Opportunity*.153, illustration plate no. 20.

⁶³⁵ Beamish, Tony, "Letter to Carl Alexander Gibson-Hill," June 28, 1956, Gibson-Hill Collection, unaccessed, Asian Civilizations Museum. Johore Lama was a village situated on the east bank of the Johore river. It was believed to have existed since the 13th century. Excavations at the site was carried out by H. Quaritch Wales, H.D. Collings as well as Han Wai Toon from the 1930s. See *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28: 2, 1955

⁶³⁶ Chasen, F.N., "To Faculty Board of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge," January 13, 1939, MSA 1141, National Archives of Singapore.

records a substantial accession of Pacific island, Brunei, and Sarawak items from Tom Harrison, probably from the Sarawak Museum.⁶³⁷

Removal was particularly extensive in the collecting expedition boom of the colonial era. "Free-booting, Indiana-style expeditions" that were celebrated in the media⁶³⁸ removed unimaginable quantities of natural history specimens and objects from colony to empire museums, as well as to the private sponsors of expeditions who were generally located in empire metropolises. Wollaston and Kloss, for example, divided their collections from their 1912-1913 expedition to the Snow Mountains of New Guinea between the Dutch and the English. The plants were intended for Kew, while the *ethnographica* was to be split between the Dutch whom Wollaston wanted to thank for their support, and Cambridge, his *alma mater*. There, he noted on 2 February 1912, "they [were] now building a very fine museum of ethnography."⁶³⁹

In tandem with the development of modern anthropological fieldwork, colonial removal included the remains of indigenous communities as well as their living members for displays in human zoos

⁶³⁷ "Annual Report of the Faculty Board of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University" (Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, 1937), MSA 1141, National Archives of Singapore.

⁶³⁸ Luke, W. Timothy, "Museum Pieces: The Politics of Aesthetics and Knowledge At the Museum."

⁶³⁹ Wollaston, A.F.R. and Boden-Kloss, Cecil, "Correspondence, Snow Mountain Expedition, 1912-13."

during the 1800s to the early 1900s. Wollaston, for example, collected four skulls of the Utakwa Mountain Papuan tribesmen during his 1912 Expedition that he undertook with Kloss. These are now at the Natural History Museum in London.⁶⁴⁰

H.D. Collings, the Raffles Museum's Curator of Anthropology (1934-1939) similarly confirmed on 2 March 1936 to Frederick Chasen that he had opened "four graves" in the Sungkai area in Perak.⁶⁴¹ Skeletal remains, specifically a human jaw, were definitely removed from Perak but it is unclear from which vicinity.⁶⁴² Likewise, the museum's acquisition list describes item 36.602 as a human cranium from Tanjong Rawa, Kuala Selinsing, Perak.⁶⁴³

The removal of objects under eighteenth/nineteenth-century colonialism is of particular relevance for a study of museums because they illustrate colonialism's contempt for non-Western cultures and the unscrupulousness of its methods. Not only were humans were collected and exhibited, but collecting methods breached, as Turnbull notes, spiritual

⁶⁴⁰ Ballard, Chris, "A.F.R. Wollaston and the 'Utakwa River Mountain Papuan' Skulls," *The Journal of Pacific History* 36, no. 1 (2001), http://www.jstor.org/stable/25169523?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

⁶⁴¹ Collings, H.D., "Letter to Chasen, F.," March 2, 1936, MSA 1140/000663/4, National Archives of Singapore.

⁶⁴² Chasen, F.N., "Letter to Mijsberg, W.A.," January 18, 1939, MSA 1140/001838, National Archives of Singapore.

⁶⁴³ "Accession List, Raffles Museum," undated, MSA 1140/000588, National Archives of Singapore.

norms, and as Stocking relates, ethical and moral norms.⁶⁴⁴ The Raffles Museum's habitual visitor, Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, for example, attempted to collect the brain of his newly-dead servant, Boy, in a "grisly operation" in fulfilment of a promise to his mentor, Carl Gegenbauer. However, lacking a container large enough for the brain, he removed only Boy's speech apparatus.⁶⁴⁵ For former colonies, these breaches within the collecting *praxes* of colonial museums have to be addressed because they are forms and manners within which they were collected and objectified.

Wildlife: Empire Trade, Science and Amusement

An aspect in colonial collecting that has received little scholastic attention until recently is the removal of wildlife from colonies for trade. A number of studies done on collections such as in the EIC museum at Leadenhall Street and the Rothschilds' museum at Tring, now provide us with new perspectives of imperial trade.

Animals, Ratcliff points out, were part of colonial "scientific practice and the imperial political economy..."⁶⁴⁶ Serpents, she adds, were

⁶⁴⁴ Turnbull, Paul, "Scientific Theft of Remains in Colonial Australia"; Stocking, Jr. George W., "Maclay, Kubary and Malinowski. Archetypes from the Dreamtime of Anthropology," in *Colonial Situations. Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*, ed. Stocking, Jr. George W., vol. 7, 7 vols., History of Anthropology (Madison, WI, USA; London, UK: U of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

⁶⁴⁵ Stocking Jr., George W., "Maclay, Kubary and Manilowski. Archetypes from the Dreamtime of Anthropology."

⁶⁴⁶ Ratcliff, Jessica, "The East India Company, the Company's Museum."

particularly numerous in the EIC Museum in Leadenhall Street. Likewise, Grigson, in her work on exotic animals, notes that not only human but animal trafficking formed important components of the Dutch East and West India Company trades. Trade in animals, she points out, was important enough for the Dutch to maintain special warehouses at the quays in Amsterdam for animals brought in from Batavia.⁶⁴⁷ The EIC, similarly, became involved in the animal trade at the instigation of Lord Salisbury, who asked for a shipment from the only British factory in Southeast Asia at that time, Bantam in Java, in 1607. That year, an application was made to the EIC to allow a man on one of their traders to collect "paratts, munkies, and marmasitts."⁶⁴⁸

The colonial trade in animals is noteworthy for its scale as well as its duration. Conventional studies have only focused on *botanica* such as woods, spices, tea, opium, *trepang*, bird's nests, and silk in colonial trade. New studies such as by Ratcliff, Grigson, Swadling, and Moore show that trade in animals was extensive and lasted long after tea, silk, and opium ceased to be items of demand. Ratcliff's observation regarding the trade in reptiles, for example, is verified by a letter from Chasen dated 7 July 1933 to Theodore Hubbeck, the Game Warden, on legislation for the protection of

⁶⁴⁷ Grigson, Caroline, *Menagerie*. 47

⁶⁴⁸ Grigson, Caroline. 18, 19

reptiles. It shows that the reptile trade lasted well into just before World War II. Legislation, Chasen said, was required for:

Pythons (both species); monitors (all species) and the elephant trunk snake (the water snake): also to prohibit export of their skins (except under license of course). There is no doubt that the monitors are having a very rough time in Johore and elsewhere: wholesale trapping is in progress.⁶⁴⁹

Objects of Desire: Birds

In the discussion of colonial collecting and animal trade, one collection that is an exceptionally lucid illustration of how the Raffles Museum's collecting was a performativity of colonialism is the ornithology collection now at the LKCNHM.

Part of the museum's Zoological Reference Collection, which alone comprises over a million specimens and at least 10,000 species, the ornithological collection merits attention for several reasons. As a collection, it is ranked as world-famous and unique.⁶⁵⁰ Its antiquity also makes it a historical document of the collecting *praxes* and philosophy extant at the museum; in fact, one could argue, of museums in general between the late

⁶⁴⁹ Chasen, F.N., "To Hubbeck, T.R.," July 7, 1933, National Archives of Singapore.

⁶⁵⁰ "Zoological Reference Collection (ZRC)."

1800s and the early 1900s. Additionally, the collection sheds light on Singapore's pre-colonial trade. In my view, the most important historical value the collection possesses is that it provides a before-and-after record of Singapore's environmental history, and thereby, offers directions for Singapore's environmental future. Finally, the ornithology collection also documents colonial life in Singapore, especially of the use of the hunt in colonial relations and as colonial privilege. I shall discuss these aspects in sequence.

Collection Significance

The scientific value of the bird collection at the Raffles Museum can be inferred from the worldwide academic and scientific concern shown during the early 1970s when there was talk of disposing the collection. D. N. F. Hall of the University of Malaya, noted that:

...as the old Raffles Museum, the National Museum in Singapore became world famous. Deposited in it there are very many type specimens from the region, particularly of birds...⁶⁵¹

The collection, as David Wells states, if it were to be reunited with the half that was routinely sent to Tring under colonial administration,

⁶⁵¹ Tan, Kevin Y.L., *Of Whales and Dinosaurs*. 137

would be incomparable in size and content.⁶⁵² Its scientific value is therefore undisputed.

This aside, the LKCNHM ornithology collection is also significant as a historical document of the collecting philosophy that was in place at the Raffles Museum from the late 1800s to post-World War II. It is the result of the work of several ornithologists, both professional and amateur, who held curatorships at the museum. William Ruxton Davison, the museum's first full-time Curator (active 1887-1893), was a professional ornithologist who trained under Allan Octavian Hume in India⁶⁵³ while both Frederick Chasen and Carl Alexander Gibson-Hill were keen ornithologists. Gibson-Hill, especially, produced prolific studies and photography on birds.

Historical Trade

Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his 2016 National Day Rally Speech alluded to the historical narrative in the ornithology collection when he spoke of the efforts the government had made towards creating more green spaces on the island. Lee quipped that "We have hornbills again."⁶⁵⁴ The light-heartedness of Prime Minister Lee's remark, however,

⁶⁵² Wells cited in Tan, *Of Whales and Dinosaurs*.155

⁶⁵³ Tan, Kevin Y.L., *Of Whales and Dinosaurs*. 40

⁶⁵⁴ National Day Rally Speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (Institute of Technical Education College Central, 2016), <http://www.pmo.gov.sg/national-day-rally->

subsumes the historical significance that birds have in Singapore's history which is recalled in the ornithology collection at the LKCNHM.

Birds were among the earliest victims/products/items of Southeast Asian trade. Hornbill casques were a major export item in Singapore's pre-colonial trade⁶⁵⁵ and Wang Dayuan, who is the earliest Chinese source extant on Temasik, "reserved his highest praise" for the ivory from the genera that were found in the region.⁶⁵⁶ Birds were also among the earliest items Europeans collected in their exploration and subsequent conquest of the non-Western world. When *Victoria*, the only ship from Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe returned to Seville on 6 September 1522, five skins of the lesser bird of paradise were included⁶⁵⁷ with its cargo of cloves and nutmegs. Disembowelled and without legs (this is related to how the birds were skinned, but not relevant here), birds of paradise were sought in Europe and traded for hundreds of years. Natalie Lawrence writes:

These dried skins were prepared by hunters in Papua New Guinea,

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⁶⁵⁵ Heng, Derek Thiam Soon, "Temasik as an International and Regional Trading Port in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: A Reconstruction Based on Recent Archaeological Data," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 72, no. 1 (276) (1999): 113–24. National Museum of Singapore, "Singapore History Gallery," September 3, 2016, <http://nationalmuseum.sg/exhibitions/exhibition-list/singapore-history-gallery-2015>.

⁶⁵⁶ Miksic, John N., *Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea*. 285

⁶⁵⁷ Eisler, William, *The Furthest Shore: Images of Terra Australis from the Middle Ages to Captain Cook* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1995). 34

often without legs or wings...The beautiful but strange appearance of these plumed skins contributed to the idea in Europe that the birds never landed, but floated perpetually as dew-drinking, angelic entities. They were called Manucodiata in Europe, derived from the Islamic Malay name, Mamuco diuata (birds of God). This paradisiacal imagery added to the considerable market value of the bird of paradise skins and their desirability for curiosity collections. They were scarce in the early sixteenth century but became increasingly common in European collections over the following century.⁶⁵⁸

Commercial trade in birds according to Grigson, began with consignments of wild canaries from the Canary Islands during the reign of Charles II (1630-1685) when captive-bred birds were imported into England from Germany and Holland. By the sixteenth century, the demand for birds came from the rich who were adorning their gardens with foreign plants and foreign and domestic exotic birds. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, EIC ships "brought birds from India, more parrots, ring-neck parakeets, mynah birds, and the variously-spelled 'amedevats' (small amedavat waxbills that could be taught to sing)..." An advertisement

⁶⁵⁸ Lawrence, Natalie, "Disembodied Birds," *Commodity Histories, Online*, n.d.; Swadling, Pamela, *Plumes of Paradise*.

from 1714, for example, shows the import from Indonesia:

Newly brought over from the East-Indies, a parcel of Ammerdewates of diverse fine colours, and sing very well., two Gavey Birds of several fine colours, the like never brought over before, several of the finest Mackaws of the finest colours as ever was seen...[sic]

The ad went on to advertise parakeets, nightingales, "Cock-a-Tores," Muscovy ducks and East India geese.⁶⁵⁹

Demanded as items of the Western biblical imaginary, as exotic animals, as specimens for natural history museums, and as accessories by milliners, bird trafficking was big colonial business by the eighteenth century. Exotic birds fetched incredible prices and were collected as symbols of wealth and aristocratic privilege. The period between the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries saw widespread collecting of birds for trade and their slaughter for plumage. Clive Moore estimates that approximately 30,000 birds of paradise alone were sold each year in London in the 1900s. The trade reached 80,000 skins in 1913, cleared through the two colonial strongholds in Southeast Asia — Batavia and Singapore.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁹ Grigson, Caroline, *Menagerie. The History of Exotic Animals in England 1100-1837*, 10–49.

⁶⁶⁰ Moore, Clive, *New Guinea: Crossing Boundaries and History* (Honolulu, Hawaii: U of Hawaii Press, 2003.). 114

Van Wyhe's study of Alfred Wallace shows that Wallace participated in this trade. The one last profitable collection for Wallace during his stay in Singapore, he notes, was "the most valuable for he found in the archipelago — two live birds of paradise" for which Wallace was offered a free passage home if he brought living specimens. The free ticket was not immediately available, but Wallace, van Wyhe reminds us, was a "commercial collector." In the end, he made a "whopping \$1,000 for the Zoological Society to bear."⁶⁶¹

Volume II of the 1851 *Catalogue of the Great Exhibition* is particularly informative on the colonial trade in birds and provides details as to where birds and bird products were taken in British colonies. Page 892 of the catalog, for instance, lists "white and black ostrich feathers from Aden," "manufactures of feathers by the natives (and) raw feathers" from East Indies, as well as "Cranes' white feathers from the Arrakan and Tenasserim."⁶⁶² Samples of ostrich feathers were sent as illustration of this "important article for colonial export" from South Africa (page 949-950),⁶⁶³ while the feathers from the Tasmanian sooty petrel for use in pillows,

⁶⁶¹ van Wyhe, John, "Wallace in Singapore," in *Nature Contained. Environmental Histories of Singapore*, ed. Barnard, Timothy P. (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014), 98, 106–7.

⁶⁶² "Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, Vol. 2" (Spicer Brothers, 1851).

⁶⁶³ "Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, Vol. 2" (Spicer Brothers, 1851).

mattresses and bolsters are listed on page 995. A throat ornament of feathers, probably of the black toucan, is listed from British Guiana on page 987.⁶⁶⁴

The archives of the Raffles Museum show that it participated in the trade primarily as a buyer. A G.A.L. de Haan from The Hague wrote, for example, offering to collect birds "from the ornis of Halmaheira and adjacent islands in Moluccas, East Indies" for the museum. Moluccas was a habitat of the bird of paradise and de Haan asked the museum what it was prepared to pay for "small, big and very big skins, limited and extensive series, common and scarce birds."⁶⁶⁵ The letter indicates the extent of bird-collecting in colonial trade as well as the nature of bird collecting itself.

De Haan's specification of rarity and size shows the very specialized nature of bird collecting: the museum could literally "order" a specie or genera as required. The museum's involvement in the bird trade is also seen in its collection of price lists from commercial suppliers like W. F. H. Rosenberg of 91 & 94 Whitchurch Lane, Middlesex. Often totaling ten to twelve pages, Rosenberg offered bird skins from all over the world for

⁶⁶⁴ "Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, Vol. 2."

⁶⁶⁵ de Haan, G. A. L., "To Director of Raffles Museum," May 2, 1948, MSA, National Archives of Singapore.

sale.⁶⁶⁶

The Raffles Museum's archives also show that there was a feather trade located in Singapore and that it was not restricted to Europeans. A letter dated 15 April 1937 from the Registrar-General of Statistics (SS and FMS) shows that both Japanese and Indians were involved in the trade. In the letter, the Registrar informed Frederick Chasen that he was writing under instructions from the Colonial Secretary to seek advice on finding buyers for peacock feathers.⁶⁶⁷ Chasen's recommendation was "Kameya & Co., Japanese Taxidermists and Naturalists, 55 Middle Road," failing which he recommended, "Bombay shops in High Street."⁶⁶⁸

Supplying British Museums

The ornithology collection of the Raffles Museum testifies to its performativity of colonialism as supply station for artifacts, and specifically of birds, to British museums. This was institutionalized through an agreement between the Imperial and the Colonial Governments for the FMS museums to split their accumulated collections between London and British

⁶⁶⁶ "List of Birdskins for Sale, W.F.H. Rosenberg," 1932 1930, National Archives, Singapore.

⁶⁶⁷ Registrar-General of Statistics, S.S. & F.M.S., "No. (5) in D. of S. 164/37 to Director of Museum and Library," April 15, 1937, MSA, National Archives of Singapore.

⁶⁶⁸ Chasen, F.N., "Reply to Registrar-General of Statistics," April 19, 1937, MSA, National Archives of Singapore. Registrar-General of Statistics, S.S. & F.M.S., "No. (5) in D. of S. 164/37 to Director of Museum and Library."

Malaya every five years.⁶⁶⁹ As a result, from the 1870s, beginning with the installation of Leonard Wray as curator in Perak, "small-scale bird specimens from the Peninsular museums" were sent intermittently to London, mainly to the BM, but also to the Rothschild's museum at Tring. Transfers "really got going," Wells notes, under H.C. Robinson. The "really big," as in hundreds, occurred after 1903. This was accessioned into the British Museum in 1906. Two "bigish" transfers were also made in 1908 and 1910:

A second bigish transfer (100-plus skins from various localities, i.e., not biased towards any one expedition, was accessioned in London in 1908. A third really big one (hundreds of skins) reached London in 1910 —again including specimens from various places but mainly a big share of the results of a 1909-1910 Federated Malay States Museum expedition to peninsular Thailand.⁶⁷⁰

Thus, half of the collections remained in Southeast Asia while "the other half [was] sent to London." As mentioned, when and if put together,

⁶⁶⁹ Wells, D. cited in Tan, Kevin Y.L., *Of Whales and Dinosaurs: The Story of Singapore's Natural History Museum*, 2015. 84-85

⁶⁷⁰ Tan, Kevin Y.L., *Of Whales and Dinosaurs*. 84

this collection would be unmatched in scientific value and scope.⁶⁷¹

The Raffles Museum in this instance, and in reality, all the museums in British colonial Southeast Asia, performed colonialism within the scope of rights that British private museums such as Tring, and public museums, especially the British Museum, asserted over assemblages made in British Southeast Asia. Ownership of Southeast Asian bird assemblages was formalized as British property through a right to their collecting as well as through the assemblages themselves.

The Raffles Museum as a Guide to the Future

The importance of the Raffles Museum's ornithology collection lies in Douglas's suggestion that social institutions, such as the Raffles Museum, encapsulates past experience "so that it acts as a guide to what to expect from the future..."⁶⁷² If Prime Minister Lee's quip about hornbills is read in the context Douglas frames and as historical texts, then the faunal collections, but more specifically, the ornithology collection of the Raffles Museum, are invaluable significant historical before-and-after record of Singapore's environmental history and the programs that have been attempted in this area. A letter dated 25 May 1939 from the Honorary Game

⁶⁷¹ Tan, *Of Whales and Dinosaurs*. 155

⁶⁷² Douglas, Mary, *How Institutions Think*. 48

Warden for the Straits Settlements, E. O. Shebbeare, to the Colonial Secretary records for example, that Museum Director, Frederick Chasen, had initiated a move to declare the island a wildlife sanctuary. Chasen, he quoted, assessed the island's ecological value as "the original territory from which many eastern mammals were first described (made known) ...," namely, as a key site for holotypes. The loss of these, he added, meant a loss of a valuable standard of identification.⁶⁷³ More importantly, he cited Chasen's criticism that despite this:

huge numbers of shot guns are licensed every year and these are used indiscriminately in the rural districts. Beautiful birds are shot daily and the few survivors of the interesting forms are fast disappearing. Even the last months made a difference.⁶⁷⁴

Chasen's comments and the Raffles Museum's bird collection are significant here for they reveal how colonial privilege and dominance were maintained through the hunt in colonized Singapore.

⁶⁷³ Shebbeare, E. O., Honorary Chief Game Warden, Straits Settlements, "Letter to the Colonial Secretary, Straits Settlements," May 25, 1939, MSA 1141/001187/8, National Archives of Singapore.

⁶⁷⁴ Shebbeare, E. O., Honorary Chief Game Warden, Straits Settlements.

The Hunt as a Colonial Privilege in Singapore

Hunting has always been associated with power because it was a prerequisite and occupation of the elite. The hunt, John MacKenzie notes, traditionally "constituted propaganda: it showed the emperor, king, or lord exhibiting power, enjoying the privilege that went with it and asserting prestige within territorial bounds."⁶⁷⁵

Under imperialism and colonization, the hunt developed into an articulation of privilege and emerged as an idiom that defined the colonized subject. In colonized Africa, for instance, Europeans became only the group allowed to hunt, and this marking of the hunt as colonial privilege marginalized the indigenous African hunter who was rendered a poacher.

In India, likewise, the British appropriated not only certain types of hunt, such as the Mughal elephant-borne tiger hunt for themselves, but viceroys were chosen as much for their hunting skills as for their political acumen.⁶⁷⁶ Ripon, Dufferin, Curzon, Minto, Irwin, Willingdon, and Linlithgow, MacKenzie points out, were examples of this type of administrators. Hunting in India also "became the chief recreation of military officers and civilian officials, a source of display and a symbolic

⁶⁷⁵ MacKenzie, John M., *The Empire of Nature*. 11,10

⁶⁷⁶ MacKenzie, John M., *The Empire of Nature*. 171. Ripon was viceroy 1880-1884; Dufferin, 1884-1888; Irwin, 1926 to 1931; Willingdon, 1931-1936; Linlithgow, 1938-43.

dominance of the environment."⁶⁷⁷

The ornithology collection of the Raffles Museum evidences this co-opting of the hunt as a privilege. In 1939, museum director Chasen, in the course of his attempting to establish protection for birds on the island, wrote to a resident named "Page," who was said to have such a hunting privilege called a "keep." Chasen's exchange of letters with Page reveals that Page was Richard Page, a lawyer friend of Sir Shenton Thomas, the last Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner of the FMS (1934–1946). Page's letter confirms that he did indeed have a "shoot" which he maintained by "keeping a resident keeper on it from the beginning of September till the end of March."⁶⁷⁸

Of significance historically, is Page's warning to Chasen that the legislation that Chasen sought to introduce to protect the snipe would "cause a little heart-burning among the Military and Air Force people."⁶⁷⁹ That the hunt was a colonial privilege and specifically, a military privilege, is substantiated by numerous offers of bird specimens from residents in the museum archives. The provenance of the Raffles Museum's ornithology collection thus verifies that one, the British enacted colonial dominance over

⁶⁷⁷ MacKenzie, John M. cover

⁶⁷⁸ Page, Richard, "Letter to F. N. Chasen," April 28, 1939, MSA 1141, National Archives of Singapore.

⁶⁷⁹ Page, Richard.

Singapore by certain colonial elites being awarded — though we do not know on what basis — private hunting keeps; two, by British colonials practicing hunting as part of their *persona* as an elite, gentrified class; and three, as in India, as a military privilege until as late as 1939.

The Hunt and Anglo-Malay Relations

The second aspect of how the Raffles Museum's function was a performativity of colonialism is revealed in the role its faunal collections played in colonial politics.

Its acquisition lists show consistent and deliberate attention paid to the titles of royal donors. In his 1877 *Annual Report*, for example, Nicholas Dennys, Acting Librarian and Curator, reported that "HH, the Maharajah of Johore" had donated "1 Tiger, and 1 Crocodile."⁶⁸⁰ Likewise, Dennys recorded donations from the "Maharajah of Johore, H.H." in his 1880 report,⁶⁸¹ although he did not state what the donation was. In 1903, the museum again recorded a donation of a "Tiger and Black Panther, both magnificent specimens, from H.H. Sultan of Johore."⁶⁸² This consistent and

⁶⁸⁰ Dennys, N. B. Dr., "Annual Report for 1877" (Singapore: The Raffles Library and Museum, January 1878), National Museum of Singapore.

⁶⁸¹ Dennys, N. B. Dr., "Annual Report on the Raffles Library and Museum" (Singapore, April 1, 1881), National Museum of Singapore.

⁶⁸² Hanitsch, R., "Annual Report" (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum, 1903), National Museum of Singapore, National Museum of Singapore.

careful attention to Malay royal titles, compared to the manner in which other donations were recorded, are suggestive of the deference the British, accorded, at least publicly, to Malay royalty from whom they derived their authority.

This deference is also evident in the manner in which royal donations were acknowledged during the accessions. Tan gives us a sense of the politics involved in his recounting of one of these accessions. In November 1877, Sultan Abu Bakar donated a python. The accession of the 647 cm snake involved its killing "in the presence of the Maharajah and several leading residents,"⁶⁸³ suggesting that the donation was acknowledged in a public ceremony of near ritualistic pomp.

On the other hand, Malay royal donations were, in similar fashion, traditional demonstrations of aristocratic status and patronage. Many of the larger natural history specimens in the Raffles Museum's collection were animals subdued in royal hunts, expressing in no less significant terms the physical prowess and positions of their donors. The Raffles Museum's fauna collection is, therefore, a political collection, symbolic of British imperial as well as Malay royal power, and of Anglo-Malay relations.

⁶⁸³ Tan, Kevin Y.L., *Of Whales and Dinosaurs*. 22

From Extraction to Advocacy

By the late 1930s, under Chasen's directorship, the Raffles Museum's function underwent a change from a policy of "plunder" to "protection" that is reminiscent of the policy change the Japanese undertook in Korea. This change in the museum's function from collector to conservation advocate calls for a short discussion of Frederick Chasen's directorship of the museum for it signaled a change in its institutional *persona*.

Like Kloss before him, Chasen emerges as a paradoxical figure in the museum's history. His employment and retention of Savage-Bailey speaks to his involvement in the use of the Raffles Museum and Library's invisible spaces in excluding locals. At the same time, it was under his directorship that the first local, Abu Bakar Pawanchee, was appointed to a position of curatorial responsibility. We can only speculate that Chasen was an officer whose policies were not fully autonomous but directed by a committee as well as the colonial office. There is therefore that possibility that they were not reflective of a personal stand but of colonial administration.

Again, where collections are concerned, notes from the LKNHM suggest that Chasen himself participated in colonial removal when he took specimens with him in his flight from the advancing Japanese forces.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸⁴ "Zoological Reference Collection (ZRC)."

Again, the Raffles Museum's archives shows Chasen actively attempting to stop the flow of both objects and specimens from the museum and the extensive wildlife destruction that museum collecting during the 1900s wrought. A memorandum to the FMS Secretary in 1939, for example, records his precocious acknowledging and enforcing material culture ownership principles that constitute much of contemporary heritage and modern museum ethos.

Titled only as Memorandum on (5) and (7) it addressed a request for excavation from Pieter Vincent van Stein Callenfels (1883-1938). In uncharacteristic strong language, Chasen argued that the excavation should be granted only if it is "stated in a most unequivocal manner that the material found during the excavations of the Greater India Research Committee should, firstly, not be removed from the country without written authority..." and that "it must all eventually find a home in one or other of the Malayan museums."⁶⁸⁵ Chasen qualified his stand by stating that this suggestion was not against "mere acquisitiveness" but was based on a common acceptance in museums that collections were invariably dispersed once their collectors lost interest. He added that Malaya "had suffered much in the past through neglect of this principle." Chasen's other attempts to

⁶⁸⁵ Chasen, F.N., "Memorandum on (5) and (7). Fed. Sec.1554/1933;" 1936, MSA 1139, National Archives of Singapore.

stop an outflow of artifacts from the area included, as discussed earlier, an effort to track some, such as those that were removed by Noone.

Likewise, a letter dated 5 May 1937 from Chasen to Capt. Ritchie of the Game Warden's Office reveals the sobriety with which he collected towards the end of his term and life. In the letter, Chasen informed Ritchie that he managed, with "underhanded, snake-like methods...to queer the pitch of two important American expeditions in various parts of Borneo."⁶⁸⁶ They, he stated simply, "wanted to slaughter apes." Admitting that "Tis pleasant work and act[ed] as a balm to [his] exceedingly tender conscience," Chasen admitted that he had "erred much in the past."

These museum records indicate that Chasen realized the destructiveness of existent museum collecting methods and it led him to steer the Raffles Museum from being participant towards being advocate against wildlife removals. As mentioned earlier, he initiated efforts to declare Singapore a wildlife sanctuary, and his contributions in this area includes his taking up a gubernatorial appointment as a member of a committee to look into the Wild Animals and Wild Bird Trade in July 1933.

Chasen's legacy in the Raffles Museum and Singapore lies in his efforts to include locals in the museum's administration, in initiating

⁶⁸⁶ Chasen, F.N., "Letter to Capt. A. Ritchie, Office of the Chief Game Warden, F.M.S."

cultural ownership policies in anthropological collecting, and activism against over-zealous museum collecting. It is difficult to gauge his success in this area, but his work was nonetheless, significant in museum collecting *praxis* as a radical stand for conservation in an age of large-scale collecting.

Colonial Extraction: Fulfilling a Rafflesian Mandate

The Raffles Museum's records reveal that the museum functioned very closely to the mandate and imperial agenda Raffles outlined in his *Minutes* of 1819. This function is related to Raffles's influence as a "historian-administrator" and a "state-scientist."⁶⁸⁷ Raffles's mandate was essential to the Raffles Museum in that he was one of a generation of early EIC administrators/company men who were "not passive or meek agents," but who operated under a "dual mandate": one to serve the state, the other to extend frontiers of knowledge."⁶⁸⁸ His own interest in history and natural history, as well as his administrative responsibilities for trade and exploitation of colonies through Banks's and Marsden's imperial philosophies, all converged on and within the Raffles Museum.

In its early days, as shown in Chapter 2, the museum followed his

⁶⁸⁷ Knapman, Gareth, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia*. 1; Kumar, Deepak, "Botanical Explorations and the East India Company: Revisiting 'Plant Colonialism,'" in *The East India Company and the Natural World*, vol. 2, Palgrave Studies in World Environmental History (UK, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). 19

⁶⁸⁸ Kumar, Deepak, *Botanical Explorations and the East India Company: Revisiting 'Plant Colonialism*. 28

mandate by providing commercial intelligence. From 1874, with the museum's appointment of a government botanist as its first full-time employee, the Raffles Museum directly served Raffles's and the British imperial state's adoption of Joseph Banks's promotion of botany as "a vital component of the imperial state and for the good of society."⁶⁸⁹ It thus institutionalized Banksian principles of colonial exploitation of bioprospecting within the museum. Banks's influence on Raffles, and by extension on the Raffles Museum's function, therefore, merits an elaboration.

Director of the Kew Gardens from 1772, president of the Royal Society from 1778, and member of the Privy Council Committee for trade, Joseph Banks (1743-1820) influenced, if not directed British scientific intellectualism, and consequently, British natural sciences, towards the imperial cause for almost half a century. Banks's influence was everywhere, from making key botanical and scientific appointments to missions that voyages undertook. He was, for example, patron of Captain William Bligh, and it was Banks's interest in securing breadfruit tree stock from the Pacific that led to the voyage of the *HMS Bounty*. Pacific breadfruit was important in empire operations because it was a substitute food for the West Indian

⁶⁸⁹ Barnard, Timothy P. 152

slave populations that British slave owners maintained, and for whom Banks was both agent and lobbyist.

Banks's influence on collecting and voyages was often direct. For example, he involved himself in the configuration of the *Bounty's* spaces even as it lay in London's dockyards. He installed a botanical hot house complete with skylights, scuttles for air, and a stove for heat in its great cabin. These installations relegated Bligh and the ship master to tiny cabins opposite one another in a lobby around the stairs of the ship's rear hatchway, thereby contributing to the famous contentiousness between Bligh and his crew in no small measure.⁶⁹⁰ Likewise, he met with collectors prior to their collecting expeditions and instructed them on proper collection,⁶⁹¹ thereby, personally determining what was collected.

Not to be underestimated in this context was Banks's influence in scientific appointments which saw botanic gardens in peripheries being directly linked to Kew. These include Nathaniel Wallich's appointment to the Superintendency of Calcutta Gardens and a Linnean pupil, J.G. Koenig as "Professor of Botany and Natural History in Madras."⁶⁹² Wallich, in turn,

⁶⁹⁰ Denning, Greg, *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language*.

⁶⁹¹ Barnard, Timothy P., "The Rafflesia in the Natural and Imperial Imagination of the East India Company in Southeast Asia."

⁶⁹² Arnold, David, "Plant Capitalism and Company Science: The Indian Career of Nathaniel Wallich," *Modern Asian Studies* 42, no. 5 (2007): 905; Kathirithamby-Wells, Jeyamalar, "Peninsular Malaysia in the Context of Natural History and Colonial Science."

convinced Raffles to start an Experimental Garden in Singapore and introduced the physician and botanist, William Jacks to Raffles who immediately appointed him as a replacement for Joseph Arnold.⁶⁹³

Raffles's intention to exploit colonies via Banksian principles of bioprospecting is reflected in Wallich's attendance at the Raffles Institution's, Museum and Library's founding meeting and Wallich's work in India. A Dane who was in Serampore, Bengal, when it fell to the British, Wallich (1786-1854) was already an internationally known economic botanist when he arrived in Singapore in 1822 for a period of recuperation. His appointment to the Superintendency of the Calcutta Botanic Gardens, then considered "one of the most prestigious scientific appointments in the extra-European world at the time" was as stated, due to Banks.⁶⁹⁴

Wallich's work in India, his forest schemes, and much of his botany, were staunchly imperial. David Arnold contends that Wallich's programs there need to be seen "as part of an imperial concern with exploiting India's material 'riches' and implementing 'improvement' ideology."⁶⁹⁵ This is substantiated by Wallich's collecting methods. An avid harvester, Wallich

⁶⁹³ Zumbroich, Thomas J. and Chay, Yue Wah, "Singapore's First Spice Plantation and Botanic Garden 1919-1859," *Gardens Bulletin, Singapore* 56, no. 1 (2004): 1-28.

⁶⁹⁴ Arnold, David, "Plant Capitalism and Company Science: The Indian Career of Nathaniel Wallich." 905; "Wallich's role in the discovery of teas in Assam, however, is disputed.

⁶⁹⁵ Arnold, David, "Plant Capitalism and Company Science: The Indian Career of Nathaniel Wallich."

brought one of the largest hauls of dried plants, an immense hoard of 8 to 10,000 species,⁶⁹⁶ to Britain in 1828. This effectively secured Wallich his appointment as Vice President of the Linnean Society in 1849, thereby illustrating the priority the British state and scientific circles assigned to bioprospecting. This collection became the core collection of the Herbarium of the EIC, and is today, still the largest separate herbarium at Kew.⁶⁹⁷

Wallich's imperial bioprospecting included the important discovery of tea plants in India's Assam region — a work that would have had tremendous implications, considering the economic value and belligerent politics that surrounded the beverage — and Indian timbers, which again, was politically as well as economically significant. Timber was a major British bioprospecting interest since it was related to Britain's main military strength, i.e., the navy with which she ruled the empire.

His influence over Raffles in terms of imperial economic botany is evidenced in his correspondence with Raffles. On 2 November 1822, for example, he wrote Raffles, stating that it "was impossible to picture to the mind a situation better calculated in every respect" than a botanical and

⁶⁹⁶ Arnold, David, "Plant Capitalism and Company Science."

⁶⁹⁷ "About Nathaniel Wallich," Institutional, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, undated, <http://www.kew.org/explore-our-collections/correspondence-collections/nathaniel-wallich-collection/about-nathaniel-wallich>.

experimental garden on the island.⁶⁹⁸ The island, he said, was "most favourable for indigenous as well as foreign vegetation" since it was part of "the richest archipelago in the world — its soil yielding to none in fertility, its climate not exceeded by any in uniformity, mildness and salubrity..."⁶⁹⁹ Resources, he stressed, included forests which "fully deserve the trial of an extensive cultivation" and timbers that were fit "for ship and house building and for all purposes of carpentry and joinery..." He also proposed trials of nutmeg and clove because he himself had discovered no less than "five distinct ones in the immediate vicinity of the Cantonments alone."⁷⁰⁰

Wallich's analysis of the botanic potential of the island resulted in Raffles establishing exactly such an Experimental Garden, a project that Wallich advised and collaborated on. That garden, the predecessor of the Singapore Botanic Gardens, would later take up the economic pioneering work done at Raffles Museum by James Collins.

Raffles's establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library, especially the Museum, was in fact, only one of the many ways in which Raffles attempted to exploit colonies through colonial

⁶⁹⁸ Hanitsch, R., "Letters of Nathaniel Wallich Relating to the Establishment of Botanical Gardens in Singapore." Wallich, Nathaniel, "To Stamford Raffles," November 2, 1822, Suzzallo and Allen Libraries Stack, reproduced in *The Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 65. Dec., 1913.

⁶⁹⁹ Hanitsch, R.

⁷⁰⁰ Hanitsch, R. Wallich, Nathaniel, "To Stamford Raffles," November 2, 1822,

bioprospecting. His involvement of Wallich aside, his intention to implement Banksian principles of colonial economical botanical exploitation was evident already in Bencoolen. For one, he assembled intelligence through personal exploration, collecting and documenting the flora and fauna of the areas he governed. These were frequently done with commentaries on their local uses. This is evident for example, in a recent exhibition, *Raffles' Ark Redrawn*, which featured items from the Raffles Family Collection.⁷⁰¹ The natural history drawings Raffles collected were of fruits, herbs, and spices, used by Southeast Asians in cuisine as well as in medication. They included drawings of plants whose "leaves and fibres might be used as fuel, building materials or for handicrafts."⁷⁰²

It is also seen in his ignoring EIC orders during his governorship. British attempts to break Dutch monopoly of Southeast Asia's spice trade began with their occupation of the Moluccas in 1796, which gave them control of spice plant stocks. This led to active British attempts at spice cultivation at Penang and Bencoolen. Between 1800 and 1801, for example, some 30,000 nutmeg seedlings and 31,000 clove plants and seeds were sent

⁷⁰¹ Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, "Raffles' Ark Redrawn: Natural History Drawings Form the Collection of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles" (Edinburgh, Scotland, July 9, 2009), <http://www.rbge.org.uk/the-gardens/edinburgh/inverleith-house/archive/inverleith-house-archive-main-programme/2009/raffles-ark-redrawn>.

⁷⁰² "About the Raffles Collection," Institutional, The British Library, Online Gallery, accessed July 4, 2017, <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/spicetrail/raffles.html>.

from Moluccas to Penang and it saw an extensive plantation established at Ayer Hitam.

In Bencoolen, attempts had been made since the 1770s but these failed. By 1809 however, a significant Company-owned nursery had emerged at Fort Marlborough.⁷⁰³ Upon his appointment to Fort Marlborough in October 1817, Raffles was instructed by the EIC to destroy the nursery because of market glut, but he resisted, choosing instead to sell spice plant stocks to local planters whom he encouraged.

No less strong as evidence of Raffles's commitment to bioprospecting was his attempt to establish a spice plantation in Singapore. When Raffles returned to Singapore in May 1819 for an administrative meeting with William Farquhar, he allegedly gave instructions for a spice plantation to be established on the eastern slope of Fort Canning, which he had designated as a British administrative enclave. He also sent spice plants and cotton seeds from Penang to Singapore.⁷⁰⁴

Raffles's grand strategy of bioprospecting came to fruition with James Collins's arrival as Government Economic Botanist cum Secretary to the Committee cum Librarian, Raffles Library and Museum on 8 May 1874.

⁷⁰³ Zumbroich, Thomas J. and Chay, Yue Wah, "Singapore's First Spice Plantation and Botanic Garden 1919-1859."

⁷⁰⁴ Zumbroich, Thomas J. and Chay, Yue Wah.

This immediately saw the museum involved in the research in two products, both of which became products that changed global systems: the first, the tree that changed the world in one century" — the *Hevea brasiliensis*⁷⁰⁵ — and the second, gutta percha.

Not to be overlooked within British imperial bioprospecting and the Raffles Museum's role in this context is another attendee at the meeting Raffles convened, Dr. William Montgomerie, whom the *Minutes of the Meeting* listed as "Professor of Natural Philosophy" for the institution. Montgomerie who was resident in the settlement from its earliest days, was appointed the colony's magistrate on 6 June 1819, and upon Wallich's departure, the head of the Botanical Experimental Gardens in June 1823.⁷⁰⁶ Unlike the others, his role in British economic botany and exploitation was not official, but his place in imperial history is no less prominent. As the man who introduced gutta percha to the west, Montgomerie indirectly enabled its development as cable insulation material, and as a result, enabled and facilitated British colonial expansion.⁷⁰⁷

I have argued in the chapter on *Founding*, that Raffles established the

⁷⁰⁵ Schultes, Richard E., "The Tree That Changed the World in One Century," *Arnoldia*, 1984, 1984-44-2-the-tree-that-changed-the-world-in-one-century.pdf.

⁷⁰⁶ "William Montgomerie Arrives in Singapore," HistorySG, November 2015, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/fe2e2d8a-0c84-4925-b92b-d2d6df43a038>.

⁷⁰⁷ Hunt, Bruce J., "Insulation for an Empire. Gutta-Percha and the Development of Electrical Measurement in Victorian Britain," in *Royal Society of Arts*, ed. James, Frank A.J. L., 1998, 85–104, http://brucejhunt.blogspot.sg/p/blog-page_9.html.

Raffles Institution, Museum and Library primarily within an, if not *the* overarching mission of protecting British colonial trade and improving access to China. As shown in the same chapter, *botanica* was singularly prominent in the British trade sited in the region, but even more, in Sino-Anglo trade, and thus, influenced British geopolitics vis-à-vis China. Consequently, these are prominent in Raffles's objectives he outlined for the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library. It is therefore mandatory that we examine the Raffles Museum's function in terms of the historical role *botanica* played in British and European imperial trade, politics, and strategies to explain Raffles's strategies.

Botanica: Planting Empire

As "high-value, low bulk media," *botanica* such as aromatic woods and spices were traditional staples of Southeast Asian trade. Traded since pre-modern times with values often equivalent to precious metals, *botanica* "nourished the growth and flowering" of early Southeast Asian states, principally Funan, Srivijaya and Majapahit.⁷⁰⁸

The value of Southeast Asian *botanica* to Europe was in their curative

⁷⁰⁸ Kathirithamby-Wells, Jeyamalar, "Malay-Indonesian Medicine and European Plant Science," in *The East India Company and the Natural World*, ed. Damodaran, Vinita, Anna Winterbottom, and Alan Lester, Palgrave Studies in World Environmental History (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). 196

uses. The ancient Greeks, for example, already knew of the curative properties of Southeast Asian herbs and spices such as pepper, cinnamon, myrrh, and frankincense that they accessed through west Asia.

Theophrastus (c. 371-286 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC) were familiar with them.⁷⁰⁹ *Botanica*, however, did not feature in early direct east-west exchange. It only emerged with the development of a second zone of commerce during the second and third centuries. Centered in the Java Sea region this zone dealt with:

the flow of gharuwood, sandalwood, and spices such as cloves among the Lesser Sunda Islands, the Maluku, the eastern coast of Borneo, Java, and the southern coast of Sumatra. Sited on the northern edge of the Sunda Strait Shelf, it was known to the Chinese as Koying, and was critical in connecting the riches of the Java Sea region with the international route.⁷¹⁰

This second commercial zone brought Southeast Asian *botanica* northwards into commercial circulation and initiated a period of acquisitive Western politics. It resulted in an intricate entanglement of *botanica* in the

⁷⁰⁹ Kathirithamby-Wells, Jeyamalar. 194

⁷¹⁰ Wolters, cited in Hall, Kenneth R., *Maritime Trade and State Development in Early Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, Hawaii: U of Hawaii Press, 1985). 21

history of Southeast Asia whose peoples became regulated and subjected within the process of Western rivalry to control its supply and demand. The trade that had from the seventh to the tenth centuries comprised mainly Middle Easterners and the Chinese who sought the spices and jungle products, had by the fifteenth century involved sailors from the opposite side of the hemisphere who sought these Spice Islands:

They all knew that Southeast Asia was the spice capital of the world [and] From roughly 1000 CE until the eighteenth century, all world trade was more or less governed by the ebb and flow of spices in and out of Southeast Asia.⁷¹¹

This Western pursuit of Southeast Asian *botanica* witnessed "a historic shift towards a more aggressive European intrusion into the Indian Ocean" with the arrival of the Portuguese in Melaka in 1511.⁷¹² Their advent made *botanica* the crux of European "biopower" and "biopolitics."⁷¹³ I use Foucault's term here both to describe how the trade was protected by

⁷¹¹ Reid cited in Hall, Hall, Kenneth R., *A History of Early Southeast Asia. Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 100-1500* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2011). 3

⁷¹² Kathirithamby-Wells, Jeyamalar, "Malay-Indonesian Medicine and European Plant Science."

⁷¹³ Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Hurley, Robert, vol. 1 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

corporeal punishment as well as how eighteenth/nineteenth-century European politics and power revolved around plants, their uses, and control of their sources, supplies and trade.

Plants dictated fiscal and political European policies because by the 1800s, plant trade formed the "cornerstones" of the profits garnered by European enterprise in Southeast Asia,⁷¹⁴ while at the other end of the scale, plant drugs and treatments were items that drained imperial bullions. English physicians, for instance, pressed their patients "not to send to the East Indies for Drugs that they may fetch better out of their own Gardens."⁷¹⁵

Political decisions revolved around plants because they impacted the very operations of empire itself. Imperial economies were dependent on *materia medica* to keep their administrative proxies, armies, plantation crews and operators as well the slave populations that colonists used in plantations in far-flung corners of empires in functional health. Epidemics in the Caribbean, for example, broke out in the 1700s in Barbados. Plantations were threatened by disease as well as high infant mortality.⁷¹⁶

In Southeast Asia, mosquito-borne diseases like malaria and dengue

⁷¹⁴ Barnard, Timothy P., "The Rafflesia in the Natural and Imperial Imagination of the East India Company in Southeast Asia." 147-149

⁷¹⁵ Schiebinger, Londa, *Plants and Empire. Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World*. 74-5

⁷¹⁶ Handler, JS, "Diseases and Medical Disabilities of Enslaved Barbadians from the Seventeenth Century to around 1838," *West Indian Medical Journal* 57, no. 6 (December 2008).

fever were as big a threat to plantations then as they are today. The threat was so large in 1910 that the Royal Society formed a Malaria Committee. Its president, Sir Patrick Mason, when made Advisor to the Colonial Office, steered Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain towards an empire-wide policy to address the disease. This directly led to the establishments of the London School of Tropical Medicine in 1899 and the Institute of Medical Research now in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, as research outpost in 1901.⁷¹⁷

It is thus unsurprising that in an era when health, medicine, trade and empire depended on plants, the great secrets of the colonial trade and empire were those concerning plant uses and sources of supply. The conglomerates that traded in *botanica* during that period, like the EIC and the VOC were unforgiving when their monopolies, intelligence, or supplies of *botanica* were jeopardized. The VOC's penalty for trade espionage, for instance, was Foucauldian biopower in itself: "If anyone [was] caught smuggling ... it always cost[s] him his life, or at least he [was] branded with a red hot iron and imprisoned for life."⁷¹⁸ Thus, the supply and demand of *botanica* and empire politics were closely entangled, and nowhere is this entanglement clearer than in the founding of the settlement at Singapore

⁷¹⁷ Kathirithamby-Wells, Jeyamalar, "Peninsular Malaysia in the Context of Natural History and Colonial Science"; "Institute for Medical Research," Institutional, August 7, 2016, <http://www.imr.gov.my/index.php/en/corporate-info/history>.

⁷¹⁸ Schiebinger, Londa. 92

itself.

Singapore, Trocki points out, was established to facilitate British control over one specific *botanica*, namely, Indian opium.⁷¹⁹ Once opium passed into British hands after the Battle of Plassey, its production and export financed the economies of both British India as well that of Singapore, the base from which the British had begun to exercise political dominance of Southeast Asia and its resources. Colonial administrators like William Farquhar worked to tap the drug's potential by licensing its farming shortly after the founding of the settlement, and for the next eighty six years, opium farms were the colony's main source of revenue — to the tune of thirty five to sixty percent annually.⁷²⁰

Museums for Botanica and Empire

The role museums played in imperial bioprospecting began in the late sixteenth century. The Wunderkammern by then, was no longer the princely display of culture and political power but teaching and research facilities for medical sciences.⁷²¹ As Olmi notes, all four major Italian collections of the late sixteenth century, which were models for other European

⁷¹⁹ Trocki, Carl A., *The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy*. 14

⁷²⁰ Trocki, Carl A. 20

⁷²¹ Olmi, Giuseppe, "Science-Honour-Metaphor: The Italian Cabinets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries."

collections—Francesco Calceolari's in Verona, Ulisse Aldrovandri's in Bologna, Michele Mercati's in Rome and Ferrante Imperato's in Naples—were all connected to pharmacies and medicine. Calceolari and Imperato owned two of the best-known pharmacies in their cities; Aldrovandri was a naturalist, professor of natural philosophy at the University of Bologna and director of its botanic gardens; and Mercati was a physician at the papal court.⁷²²

It is therefore noteworthy that one of the earliest explorers to Southeast Asia and member of the first conquering power in Malaya, the Portuguese Tome Pires, was both an apothecary and a court appointee.⁷²³ Likewise, it is equally noteworthy that the first museum in Southeast Asia, the *Amboynese Raritet Kamer* was founded by a botanist in the service of the VOC. Georg Eberhard Rumpf, better known as Rumphius (1627–1702) cataloged almost 1300 flowering plant species, mostly from the Moluccas but also other parts of Southeast Asia. Published around 1741–1755, his *Herbarium Amboinense*, compiled between 1660 and 1690, still "ranks as a solitary peak in the landscape of 17th century tropical botany" in contemporary botanical canon.⁷²⁴ Its value as a botanical encyclopedia would have been un-

⁷²² Olmi, Giuseppe, "Science-Honour-Metaphor: The Italian Cabinets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries."

⁷²³ Kathirithamby-Wells, Jeyamalar, "Malay-Indonesian Medicine and European Plant Science." 199

⁷²⁴ Baas, Pieter and Veldkamp, Jan Frits, "Dutch Pre-Colonial Botany and Rumphius's Ambonese Herbal," *Alltertonia* 13 (2013): 9–19.

imaginable in seventeenth-century Europe.

Early Function: The Great Exhibition of 1851

Raffles never spelt out specific functions for the museum, for as stated in the *Introduction*, the idea for a museum and library came from Robert Morrison and not Raffles. We do know with certainty, however, that Raffles founded the college for trade, and it follows that the college's two adjunct institutions, the museum and library were thus included in the college's overall mandate. This mandate to serve trade is evident in the museum from the time it began to function as an entity around the 1850s. A Notice in the 24 May 1850 edition of the *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, for instance, announced that

a local committee had been appointed to oversee the collection of "Any Article of Raw Produce, or Manufacture, illustrative of the Manners, and Customs of the People, in the Malayan Archipelago, which parties may be desirous of presenting to the Exhibition to be held in London in 1851..."⁷²⁵

Thus, collecting in early colonial Singapore originated as trade intel-

⁷²⁵ "Notice on Great Exhibition, 1851," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, May 24, 1850, NL 1587, Newspapers SG, eresources, National Library Board, Singapore.

ligence, and specifically, as participation in an exhibition centered on colonial trade, the 1851 Great Exhibition in Crystal Palace.

The exhibition's *Illustrated and Descriptive Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations* offers no definitive evidence that the Raffles Museum directly participated in the collecting of objects.⁷²⁶ This is borne out by the fact that the Museum barely existed as a collection. Its first acquisition of two gold coins was made only in January the previous year.

What the catalog does verify is that *botanica* comprised much of the "raw materials and exotic productions" listed as available from Singapore. Products listed as sourced from Singapore were table rice (pp 871), gamboge (pp 877), rattans (pp 794), nettle fibers of various kinds including pineapple, twine and *tali rami* (probably ramie, pp 884), sago and agar agar (pp 875), *caoutchouc* and gutta percha (pp 876), curative *botanica* such as Borneo camphor (pp 878), nutmeg, mace, pepper and betel nut (pp 874), mangrove bark (pp 881) and other barks including Trap Tree bark (pp 884).⁷²⁷

The museum's functioning as a bioprospecting site was probably

⁷²⁶ In her book, Gretchen Liu cites a newspaper article on items displayed at the museum for the exhibition, as does Kevin Tan. However, the list is untraceable because the source, the 7 May 1850 edition of the Singapore Free Press is unavailable.

⁷²⁷ "Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, Vol. 2."

related to events in an overall interest in economic botany in Britain. By 1847, Sir William Hooker had already opened the first known Museum of Economic Botany at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.⁷²⁸ British interest in using it as part of imperial bioprospecting is evident from the fact that James Collins, its first employee was an economic botanist and came directly to Singapore after India. Collins, already in the first *Annual Report* he authored some ten months after his arrival, emphasized the priority that was to be given to imperial bioprospecting. He pointed out that as "[was] well known to everyone conversant with the Colonial Markets at home,"

there [was] a constant enquiry as to what capabilities of production of fibres, timbers, gums, resins, drugs, &c. these countries possess, and on the possession and development of such capabilities depends the opening up such countries to the beneficial influences of commerce and civilization.⁷²⁹

Collins, far more significantly, stated that "in reference to the increasing the knowledge of, and the probable further development of, the commercial capabilities of the Straits Settlements and the Malayan Peninsula,"

⁷²⁸ Nesbitt, Mark and Cornish, Caroline, "Seeds of Industry and Empire: Economic Botany Collections Between Nature and Culture," *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 29 (March 2016): 53–70.

⁷²⁹ Collins, James, "Annual Report, Raffles Museum and Library" (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum, 1875), National Museum of Singapore.

he desired to follow up on work that he had started elsewhere, namely, "on India Rubber and Gutta Percha."⁷³⁰

The role that Collins and the Raffles Museum played in pioneering two of the most successful colonial products, rubber and gutta percha, have been generally overlooked. As a result, the Raffles Museum's role in colonial exploitation has also been underestimated. Both products were key factors in British imperial expansion in Southeast Asia and Africa, and their commoditization produced some of the most long-term consequences for British colonies on these two continents. Hence, a closer look at their commodity histories is useful in understanding the Raffles Museum's function in imperial bioprospecting.

Gutta Percha: Communications for Empire

The two protagonists in the commodity history of gutta percha, James Collins and William Montgomerie, were both associated with the Raffles Museum. Coincidentally, the first Westerners who first noticed gutta percha were also associated with museums. John Tradescant the younger, whose collection later formed the core collection of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, recorded in his 1656 publication, the *Musaeum Tradescantianum or A Collection of Rarities preserved at South Lambert, neer London*, that among the

⁷³⁰ Collins, James.

things he discovered during his Southeast Asian travel was a "plyable Mazer wood, [that] being warmed in water, will work to any form."⁷³¹ While both father and son Tradescant were the first Westerners to notice gutta percha, they appeared not to have done anything about it or contributed in any way to the substance's commercial development. This only occurred in the 1830s when European residents in the area noticed Malay coachmen using the substance for making whips.⁷³²

Obach, in the Cantor lecture he delivered on 29 November 1897, stated that a sample, a riding whip, was brought to London by one of the earliest Portuguese settlers and landowners in Singapore, Dr. Jose D'Almeida, to London in 1843. This was sent to the Royal Asiatic Society. Separately but concurrently it seems, William Montgomerie sent samples to the Society of Arts through his brother-in-law, H. Gouger, in the summer of that same year. Montgomerie's specimens consisted of:

One bottle of the juice; specimens of thin sheets, resembling scraps of leather; specimens in a spongy mass as it concretes in a vessel; specimens of the substance formed into a mass by agglutinating the

⁷³¹ Obach, Eugene F.A. and Dupré, A., "Cantor Lectures. Gutta Percha," *Journal of the Society for Arts* 46, no. 2353 (December 24, 1897): 97–116.

⁷³² Trocki, Carl A., *The Development of Singapore's Colonial Economy*. 28.

thin sheets by means of hot water.⁷³³

While D'Almeida's submission disappeared into the bureaucratic cracks of the Royal Asiatic Society, Montgomerie's was discussed in three meetings of the Society of Arts: on 30 November 1843, on 23 January 1845, and on 19 March 1845. At this last meeting, the society's secretary, Francis Whishaw, described the specimens and showed a piece of pipe and lathe band he made. These items were subsequently exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851.⁷³⁴ Also present at that meeting was "Mr. (afterwards Sir) William Siemens who:

became acquainted with the new material, which he subsequently sent to his brother Werner in Berlin, to try whether it was suitable for insulating telegraph wires, a proposal which has had far-reaching consequences.⁷³⁵

Between 1845 and its exhibition in 1851, experimentation on gutta percha continued. In 1847, the tree from which the substance was derived was named and illustrated by William Jackson Hooker, director of Kew, and during that same year:

⁷³³ Obach, Eugene F.A. and Dupré, A., "Cantor Lectures. Gutta Percha."

⁷³⁴ Obach, Eugene F.A. and Dupré, A.

⁷³⁵ Obach, Eugene F.A. and Dupré, A.

Dr. Ernst Werner von Siemens, then a lieutenant of artillery in the Prussian army, employed gutta percha for the electrical insulation of subterranean telegraph lines, and designed a machine by means of which wire could be continuously covered with this material.⁷³⁶

Hunt's study of the impact of communications on empire provides us with the dimensions of Collins's and the Raffles Museum's contribution to the imperial enterprise. He states that for several decades after the 1850s, knowledge of solid dielectrics (insulation material) consisted of knowledge of gutta percha, and work by Michael Faraday and Lord Kelvin were all closely tied to the study of gutta percha.⁷³⁷ Success with gutta percha, he concludes, changed the way "commerce and diplomacy was conducted, the way news was disseminated, and not least, the way the British Empire was run."⁷³⁸ Gutta percha, he stresses, impacted global processes because for much of the nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries, global communications networks depended on its supplies. British firms' effective control of the Singapore-based gutta-percha trade reinforced Britain's nearly total domination of the cable industry and gave Britain an advantage that was unmatched, both in its use and its control. Like opium, the gutta percha

⁷³⁶ Obach, Eugene F.A. and Dupré, A.

⁷³⁷ Hunt, Bruce J., "Insulation for an Empire.

⁷³⁸ Hunt, Bruce J. 85

trade was a self-propagating imperial mechanism:

Britain's imperial and commercial power gave it favoured access to Malayan gutta-percha supplies, and so facilitated the construction of a cable network that, in turn, greatly strengthened the Empire and British commerce — including British control of gutta-percha supplies.⁷³⁹

The Raffles Museum's performativity of colonialism in this commodity history was as a direct site for successful colonial exploitation. Its institutional contribution to this exploitation, however, is only now emerging. One area is in environmental degradation. The cost of widespread gutta percha planting was noticed by the man who first saw the potential and advocated its cultivation, James Collins.

Collins noticed that between 1845 and 1847 alone, close to 70,000 trees were cut down and the pressure thereafter was "inexorable."⁷⁴⁰ Boomgaard, in his recent study, points out that gutta percha cultivation inflicted more than environmental damage. He contends that the rise in prices of gutta percha caused rice shortages in Sarawak, the leading

⁷³⁹ Hunt, Bruce J. 86

⁷⁴⁰ Tulley, John, "A Victorian Ecological Disaster: Imperialism, the Telegraph and Gutta-Percha," *Journal of World History* 20, no. 4 (2009).

producer at that time, as lands were appropriated for its cultivation.⁷⁴¹

Gutta percha however, was only one of two products that was developed out of the Raffles Museum. Collins's second product, rubber, would see performativity of colonialism at the Raffles Museum as well. Under colonial cultivation, rubber proved to have equal if not more substantive and long-term impact than gutta percha on the histories of Singapore and Malaya, British imperial history, as well as on colonized populations.

Collins, Rubber and Empire

Collins's work on rubber in the Raffles Museum was a continuation of work he began in India. There, under Clements Robert Markham and Joseph Hooker, Collins wrote the "first comprehensive documentation of information on rubber yielding plants, their location, climatic conditions favouring their growth, extraction methods etc."⁷⁴² It was this report that gave Markham and Hooker the vital documentation for the cultivation of rubber and its domestication. In the Raffles Museum's archives, records of Collins's work on rubber disappears after his 1875 report, suggesting that

⁷⁴¹ Boomgaard, P, *Southeast Asia: An Environmental History, Nature and Human Histories* (Santa Barbara, CA; Denver, CO; London, UK: ABC-CLIO, 2017). 258

⁷⁴² Thomas, K.K., "Role of James Collins in the Development of Rubber [*Hevea Brasiliensis*] Plantation Industry in British India: A Historical Reappraisal," *AGRIS, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN*, 2002.

he was no longer involved. Thomas tells us that the work passed to Henry J. Murton because Collins by then, was struggling with alcoholism.⁷⁴³ Murton, who was only twenty years old at that time, stated with prescience in the museum's 1876 *Annual Report* that the five plants that survived the trip to Singapore "[would] doubtless be of great value when a sufficient stock is raised for distribution for planting in the Malay Peninsula."⁷⁴⁴

According to Paul Wycherley of the Rubber Institute of Malaya, these five plants died, but Murton successfully cultivated twenty two plants sent the following year. In any event, the *Hevea brasiliensis* seedlings, cultivated and nurtured by Murton's successors, and under the methodology of latex collection that Henry Ridley devised, laid the foundation for British colonial rubber industry in Malaya.

Under Ridley, the Director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens from 1888-1911, rubber fulfilled Banks's, Marsden's and Raffles's wildest collective imperial dreams of economic botanical exploitation. As Schultes states, "no single species of plant has, in the short space of 100 years, so utterly altered lifestyles around the globe as *Hevea brasiliensis*...which today is the source of 98 percent of the world's natural rubber."⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴³ Thomas, K.K.

⁷⁴⁴ Murton, H.J., "Annual Report, 1876, Raffles Library and Museum," September 18, 1877.

⁷⁴⁵ Schultes, Richard E., "The Tree That Changed the World in One Century."

Rubber's potential appeared limitless as it was employed in a variety of unpredicted ways, from as insulating material for gaskets to piping; and reached its largest scope with the mass production of the automobile. In a letter he wrote when he was ninety five, Ridley stated that he himself did not foresee the impact and potential of rubber. He had calculated the use of rubber based on its demand for bicycle tires and not the "tyres for motor vehicles as they were hardly invented. . ." He thought, he said, that the car was destined only to be "a rich man's toy."⁷⁴⁶

Collins, like Raffles, ended up as another EIC/British empire history tragedy. Raffles lost four of his five children, and despite his limitless devotion to improving profits for king and company, ended his career being sued by the EIC for money. Collins likewise, received little acknowledgement for his work, and even his bill for the dispatch of the 2000 rubber seeds was rejected by Sir Louis Mallet, who called the bill a "gross attempt to impose on the Secretary of State."⁷⁴⁷ Mallet also resented the £80 Collins claimed for his report for gutta percha, calling it "worthless." Collins was instrumental in two of the British Empire's biggest economic successes and brought untold wealth to British coffers through his work,

⁷⁴⁶ Schultes, Richard E.

⁷⁴⁷ Thomas, K.K., "Role Of James Collins in the Development of Rubber [*Hevea Brasiliensis*] Plantation Industry in British India: A Historical Reappraisal."

but he died, unacknowledged and in poverty, circa 1900 in London.

There is one more tragedy documented in the commodity history of rubber, and it is a more important one because it directly demonstrates again the usefulness of understanding colonialism as the lived historical experience. Under Western colonial production and harvesting, rubber became the colonial exploitation narrative writ large. In Malaya, colonial rubber plantation cultivation exacerbated racism because it imported large numbers of coolie labor.⁷⁴⁸ A far bigger tragedy however, occurred in places like the Amazon and the Congo where empire rivalry of control of rubber production witnessed native populations being subjugated "by rapacious companies" in the collection of "the precious latex":

The automobile craze created a world demand for rubber, and "concessionaire companies used violence to force Africans to collect wild rubber...women and children were held in chains as hostages until they could be redeemed in rubber."⁷⁴⁹

Gutta percha and rubber may have been the Raffles Museum's two best-known successes in British colonial economic botany, but they were not

⁷⁴⁸ Abraham, Collin E.R., "Racial and Ethnic Manipulation in Colonial Malaya."

⁷⁴⁹ Page, Melvin E., *Colonialism: An International Social, Cultural and Political Encyclopedia*, ed. Page, Melvin E., vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, CA; Denver, CO; London, UK: ABC-CLIO, 2003). 510, 140

the only crops the British attempted to cultivate. The museum's annual reports between 1875 and 1876 show the variety of crops the British experimented with in Singapore as well as other colonies. Murton's 1875 *Report* shows that trials were made with Liberian and Cape Coast coffees to test their adaptability for commercial purposes and with the distribution of "Cardamum." In addition, "11 Wardian cases of plants and 10 boxes of epiphytal orchids [had] been dispatched to other botanical establishments." Large quantities of seeds and plants, including a case of gutta percha was likewise sent to Ceylon.

Like Wallich before him, Murton identified timber for exploitation. Pointing to the large tracts of available land that were still covered in grass, he stated that it was "desirable that the present opportunities [should] be used to direct attention to the timber supply of Singapore" and to the cultivation of the *tembusu* (which he called the "tembesoe") and the redwood tree. He submitted that the Garden could thus be rendered useful to the Colony (meaning empire here) by forming nurseries of valuable timber trees as well as for the introduction of exotic species like ebony, teak, and mahogany.⁷⁵⁰ British interest in timber as a colonial resource is verified by a note in the 1877 Directory for the Straits Settlements. It shows T.J.

⁷⁵⁰ Murton, John, "Annual Report, Raffles Library and Museum" 1875 (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum, 1875), National Museum of Singapore.

Keaughran, the editor, noting that sawn timber was up to a value of \$272,221.⁷⁵¹

British interests in imperial economic botany is also evidenced by Murton stating that he intended to commence building an "Economic Garden" within the Botanical Gardens in the Raffles Museum's 1875 Annual Report. The "Economic Garden" he stated, would represent, "systematically arranged, all the plants yielding economic and medicinal products which are amenable to cultivation in this climate."⁷⁵²

As shown earlier, *botanica* as *materia medica* was an essential component of colonial trade and operations, and the British actively experimented with the production and cultivation of this important group of plants in their colonies, such as Peruvian cinchona in India.⁷⁵³ It is therefore not surprising that among the products listed as "forwarded" from Singapore in the Great Exhibition Catalogue was a series of Javanese medicines.⁷⁵⁴

Similarly, Murton, who was the first of many Kew-trained supervisors to manage the "Government Botanic Gardens" as the Botanic Gardens was then known, stated in the Raffles Museum's Report that same year that

⁷⁵¹ "Directory for the Straits Settlements" (Keaughran, T.J., 1879). 10

⁷⁵² Murton, John, "Annual Report, Raffles Library and Museum." 1875

⁷⁵³ Schultes, Richard E., "The Tree That Changed the World in One Century."

⁷⁵⁴ "Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, Vol. 2." 870

he was attempting to cultivate *ipecacuanha*, a South American plant valued as a treatment for dysentery in India. He stated that he was attempting propagation from a few stock plants and that the task was urgent because the stock "of this valuable plant" was disappearing in its native habitat. The economic goal in this instance is revealed in his citing a historical record of the wholesale prices of the drug in London.⁷⁵⁵ Besides *ipecacuanha*, Murton revealed in the following year's report that he also tried to cultivate *Amomum Melegueta*, a plant that is the source of *Grana Paradisi*, a substance used as cattle medicine.⁷⁵⁶

Knowledge Center for British Malaya and Singapore

The commodity histories of rubber and gutta percha illustrate clearly that the Raffles Museum functioned, and very successfully at that, within its Rafflesian mandate for imperial trade and exploitation right into the early 1900s. The pioneering work on rubber undertaken by Collins, Murton, and Ridley resulted in the establishment of large rubber plantations in Malaya at the turn of the nineteenth century. With this came an influx of a new colonial class involved in the production and trade in plantation goods and

⁷⁵⁵ Murton, John, "Annual Report, Raffles Library and Museum" (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum, 1875), National Museum of Singapore. 1875

⁷⁵⁶ Murton, H.J., "Annual Report, Raffles Library and Museum, 1876," Annual Report (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum, September 18, 1877), National Museum of Singapore.

the Raffles Museum's function appeared to have changed with these.

Documents from the museum show that it began to function as resource center now for plantation and colonial private needs. It provided the booming rubber industry, for example, support in terms of pest control. A letter from the Rubber Research Institute of Malaya's entomologist, Vesey Fitzgerald in 1940 asked the museum for an update to Boden Kloss's rodent list of 1909, since "rodent damage" cropped up constantly in his work.⁷⁵⁷ Likewise, the influx of plantation administrators also created attendant needs in other areas, such as in food supply. A letter from the Government Veterinary Hospital in Johore sought help, for example, in identifying Malayan species of snails that were possible hosts to a liver fluke that infested local livestock.⁷⁵⁸ Colonial agencies, like Health services, also turned to the museum. On 25 October 1941 the Municipal Health Office sent specimens of snails that they had recovered for the first time from water meters with a request for help in identifying them for control purposes.⁷⁵⁹ Other agencies included the Directorate of Works at the R.A.F. Station in Kluang, which applied to the museum for charts that could be used to

⁷⁵⁷ Fitzgerald, Vesey, "Letter to Director, Raffles Museum," June 25, 1940, MSA 1141/001358, National Archives of Singapore.

⁷⁵⁸ Government Veterinary Officer, Johore, "Letter to F.N. Chasen," January 14, 1941, MSA 1141, National Archives of Singapore.

⁷⁵⁹ Municipal Health Office, "Letter to F. N. Chasen," October 25, 1941, MSA 1141.

"identify dangerous mosquitoes, poisonous snakes, and—if possible—one depicting poisonous plants" because Air Ministry employees working in swampy jungle environs were susceptible to malaria, snake bites, and plant poisonings.⁷⁶⁰ The Raffles Museum thus functioned as a central site for applied sciences, providing information to administrative and colonial enterprise. This function of providing support to agencies is carried out by the Raffles Museum's successor to this day. Anne Devan-Song *et al*, for example, did their research "using undigested prey items obtained from python faeces or gut content with specimens from the LKCNHM at the National University of Singapore." The study, published in July 2017, focused on the relationship between parasites and rats.⁷⁶¹

In addition to acting as a center for scientific information for both colonial administration and enterprises, the museum also acted as a center of information for colonial residents. C. Haddon-Cave Sheiling at "9 $\frac{1}{2}$ ms. Port Dickson" for example, asked for a recipe for killing ants that was given in a radio broadcast by a museum staff.⁷⁶² Likewise, the King Edward VII

⁷⁶⁰ Resident Engineer, Directorate of Works, RAF Kluang, "Letter to Director, Raffles Museum," June 5, 1940, MSA 1141, National Archives of Singapore.

⁷⁶¹ Devan-Song, Anne et al, "Pythons, Parasites, and Pests: Anthropogenic Impacts on Sarcocystis (Sarcocystidae) Transmission in a Multi-Host System," *Biotropica*, June 15, 2017.

⁷⁶² Unknown, possibly Chasen, "Recipe for C. Haddon-Cave, Port Dickson," December 22, 1954, MSA 1143/000422, National Archives of Singapore.

College of Medicine received assistance in concocting a varnish for the protection of books.⁷⁶³

In the build-up to World War II, the museum functioned as an information center on food. A script that was written probably in early 1940, and probably by Frederick Chasen because it carries his brand of impish humor, showed the museum's colonial function in that the information it provided was specifically for European residents and not the local population. Written in conjunction with an exhibition that the museum staged,⁷⁶⁴ the script educated local colonial residents on edible fishes. It informed them that "The variety of fish that finds its way to most European tables in Singapore is absurdly small" and "many people seem to think that the available supply is limited to *ikan merah*, soles and *ikan kurau*." "Cookie," advised the script, "will of course, usually blandly assert that novelties in the fish line are *tidak manis*⁷⁶⁵ for the cultivated European taste, but his opinion in the matter of cheap produce is biased." The script then added that an "exhibition of common food fishes" available in the Singapore market had been organized "at the top of the main stairs" for "the purpose of

⁷⁶³ Chasen, F.N., "To Roebuck, T., King Edward VII College of Medicine, General Hospital, Singapore," September 20, 1940, National Archives of Singapore.

⁷⁶⁴ Unknown, "Food Fishes Now on View In Museum," *Malaya Tribune*, March 14, 1941, NL 2133, National Library Board, Singapore.

⁷⁶⁵ Translated literally as "not sweet," the meaning here is "tasteless."

encouraging home vegetable gardens, and local food production."⁷⁶⁶

On another important level, the Raffles Museum also functioned to provide intelligence on ethnic group numbers and activities to the Colonial Office in the UK. One example is a circular dated 11 April 1939. Originating from the Colonial Office, the circular asked for a head-count of the number of Sikhs employed at government departments. Checks with the British Military History curator⁷⁶⁷ and the Army History Museum⁷⁶⁸ in London produced no clarification on what motivated such a headcount. Another circular dated 27 November 1945 from the British Military Administration, likewise instructed all heads of departments to "collect as much information as possible about Malays or other Asiatics who were members of the following services at the time when Malaya fell to the Japanese."⁷⁶⁹ Since these documents are of interest here only as illustrations of how the Raffles Museum functioned as an intelligence center for British colonial rule and not how this information was used, the reasons for the racial profiling and headcounts were not pursued further. Nonetheless, their existence underlines this thesis's assertion that the Raffles Museum

⁷⁶⁶ Unknown, "Script, Exhibition on Food Fishes," Unknown, MSA 1141/001130, National Archives of Singapore.

⁷⁶⁷ Palmer, Rob, "Sikh Unrest," July 18, 2016, www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk.

⁷⁶⁸ Massie, Alastair, National Army Museum, "Sikh Unrest, in Reply to 677/1939," July 25, 2016.

⁷⁶⁹ Smallwood, E.M. Maj. for Maj. Gen. CCAO, BMA, "BMA Circular No. 36," November 27, 1945, MSA 1142/001002, National Archives of Singapore.

functioned as part of a larger imperial mechanism of power.

The Raffles Museum continued to function in the supply of intelligence to London till 1947. CSO.10127/47 dated 24 March 1947, issued by the Secretary for Economic Affairs for example, instructed that "In order to keep the Malayan Information Agency fully informed of the latest economic, social and administrative trends of the development in the Colony," all departments were to "forward two copies of any official departmental publications direct to the Malayan Information Agency, Malaya House, 57 Trafalgar Square, London, W.C.2."⁷⁷⁰

Conclusion

The Raffles Museum, this chapter demonstrated, performed colonialism in its function, originally as a source for intelligence for imperial trade as Raffles intended. This was evident in the use of the museum spaces as an exhibition site for products from the area till the 1870s. Using the ornithological collection that is now at LKCNHM, the chapter demonstrated that the museum functioned as a supply site for British museums through regular shipments of artifacts and birds. The museum was, as Ratcliff notes, symbolic of the material relationship between colonies and the imperial

⁷⁷⁰ Secretary for Economic Affairs, Singapore, "CSO.10127/47," March 24, 1947, MSA 1154/001141, National Archives of Singapore.

political economy in terms of how snakes, birds and their parts, as well as other animals from the East were part of the cargoes that EIC collected and shipped to Leadenhall Street and to Britain. Later, the museum again performed colonialism within a Rafflesian mandate and a Banksian philosophy of using botany in the service of empire by functioning as a site for economic botanical research.

By examining the commodity histories of gutta percha and rubber, the chapter showed that museum actively participated in bioprospecting. Its economic botanist, James Collins, pioneered the development of these commodities. In addition, gutta percha which became a key product of late eighteenth and early twentieth-century technology and science, was also introduced to the West by another man whom Raffles invited to his 1 April 1823 meeting, William Montgomery.

The chapter's examinations of the Raffles Museum's functions showed that Raffles's strategy for bioprospecting was in line with a British strategy to control the spice trade, as evidenced in their establishing of spice plantations in Penang and Bencoolen after their conquest of Moluccas. Raffles's contribution to this was his personal exploration of Java, an attempt to maintain a spice plantation in Bencoolen, as well as to establish one in Singapore. It demonstrates that all the functions the Raffles Museum performed were in line with these British needs, and as such, the present position of the Raffles Museum in Singapore's colonial history as an

innocent civic institution has been misrepresented. §

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion: Findings and Implications

Few things bring this grammar [of colonial ideologies and policies] into more visible relief than three institutions of power ... 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*

This epigraph from Anderson encapsulates what a holistic and well-calibrated understanding of the Raffles Museum can contribute to. This study was directed towards such a calibration. So while its subject was the Raffles Museum, its interest was really the power and the ideologies that that established it and was exercised through it. As such, the study also dealt with how that power continues to be legitimized through the Raffles Museum's site, building, collections, and its three successors' curatorial philosophies and exhibitionary *praxes*.

The thesis argued that essential aspects that forged the Raffles Museum's institutional *persona*, its founding, spaces, methods, as well as functions have not been accounted for in present literature on it, and that this

has created a misrepresentation of the museum's historical function and place in Singapore's colonial experience and history. These aspects include, but are not limited to, the museum's morphology, its cultural potency, British geopolitics and military fiscalism, Raffles's own imperial ambitions, as well as British use of institutions in colonial rule.

The thesis rationalized a recalibration of the Raffles Museum within British rule over Singapore and the historical circumstances of its founding on one primary fact: the Raffles Museum was a *museum*—an institution that emanated from the West, with characteristically Western intellectualism, methodologies, and *praxes*, and that was deeply involved with Western dominance of the non-West. In addition, but equally important in this context, is the fact that the museum was established by Stamford Raffles, an acknowledged "important, energetic and vocal proponent of British expansion in the region,"⁷⁷¹ during a period when British military fiscalism was intensifying and extending, and when British political interests in Europe were heavily invested in Asia. These circumstances warranted an analysis of the Raffles Museum as an institution established by the British, in colonized Singapore, for specific motives and reasons.

Drawing on theories from anthropology, political science, cultural

⁷⁷¹ Barnard, Timothy P., "The Rafflesia in the Natural and Imperial Imagination of the East India Company in Southeast Asia." 153

and imperial studies, but predominantly from museology, this study read the Raffles Museum as an artefact of British colonial power but from the vantage view of Singapore's colonial experience.

Summary of Findings

The thesis showed that despite Raffles's frequent citations of humanitarianism as reasons, all three objectives he outlined in his founding document for the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library, his *Minute on the Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore* (1819) were directed at solving trade problems, both on the island and vis-à-vis China, as well as British colonial governance. All three objectives served to first, provide language training to EIC officers and British merchants for enhanced British control; second, to educate locals so that there would be a class of English-educated clerical staff as well as a class of local elites sympathetic to British rule and presence; and third, collect information on history and culture in line with British policies to rule through historical understanding of colonies and colonized cultures.

The thesis also demonstrated that Raffles's establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library was a continuum of a long-established British effort to secure a permanent, stable base in the Malay/Indonesian archipelago that would control the region through trade. Raffles's establishment of the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library was,

it demonstrated, a part of an overarching strategy to secure this permanency. Raffles's actions and political strategy in using institutions in governance, it demonstrated, were duplications of strategies the British used in India since the 1780s.

Thus, all three institutions performed colonialism according to Raffles's overarching imperial mandate. The Raffles Museum's spaces were used in the museum's early days within this mandate to provide commercial intelligence. Its inherent, elitist spatial morphology was co-opted and appropriated by colonists on the island for the construction of the European colonizer self and to designate a place that the colonized local was obliged to occupy. Its visiting hours likewise were used to designate colonial categorizations of gender, race, and class. A parsing of these categorizations revealed that the museum provided definitions of the colonial elite and the local Other.

Likewise, the Raffles Museum, in conjunction with its two sibling institutions, fulfilled Raffles's mandate and colonial agenda by providing a class of locals who would enhance British political control of the region and its trade. The Rafflesian plan to create a class of local staff to support British trade and colonial administration was enforced through an educational curriculum that emphasized clerical training while simultaneously keeping academic training at elementary levels. This was further sustained by an administrative system that encouraged clerical careers through offers of

bonuses and rewards for clerical competency. The library's methods and *praxes* were similarly performativities of colonialism because it mainly served a European elite as a recreational library. The two specific case studies made, that of the librarian and the ethnographic assistant, revealed that colonial educational and administrative systems formed a closely integrated catch-22 system that retained and held locals in subordinate, support positions.

The study also demonstrated that the museum's methods were performativities of colonialism in that they were configured by colonial ideologies of differentials in master and subject race abilities as well as stereotypical views of natives as lazy, untrustworthy, likely to cheat, and incapable of work without European supervision. European presence was regarded as mandatory in all aspects of work, and colonial administrative systems were expected to compute these aspects into their design.

One of the most interesting and noteworthy discoveries this thesis made was that there was no evidence of the resistance that contemporary scholarship contends is constitutive of, and often a reason for, colonial assertions of forms of dominance. It indicated, in fact, where the Raffles Museum and Library were concerned, that colonial dominance was clear-cut and totalizing. The case studies of Padma Daniel and Abu Bakar Pawanchee demonstrated that the barriers colonials constructed for the maintenance of British colonial agenda and privilege were almost

insurmountable and "allowed no argument." It also showed that these barriers were coherently implemented across colonial administration as well as education, and as a result, were effective.

One finding was that when resistance was attempted, such as by the Macao coolies against administrative failure to provide clear instructions, it was recontextualized into problems of local abilities and character. The workers' demand for precise instructions, rather than regarded as necessary for operations, resulted in their being characterized as intractable, uncooperative, and needing more supervision. However, the study did reveal that that colonial thought and action were fraught with contradictions. These include Raffles's Janus-like politics, such as his obvious interest in local history and culture while deeming them inferior to his own; Kloss's racism versus his actions; as well as Thomson's colonial views of locals versus his substantial contributions to Singapore's development.

The absence of local resistance, however, is significant in itself. I can only speculate here with great caution that *perhaps*, resistance may not have been homogenously present in every colonial situation, such as in the case of British colonialism of Singapore. This is an area that requires research specifically devoted to it.

Finally, the study demonstrated that in line with Raffles's mandate and agenda, the museum's function was also a performativity of

colonialism. It was operated as a site for colonial trade intelligence in its early days, and then as a site for British imperial bioprospecting and economic exploitation from 1874. Although the bioprospecting work passed quickly to the Botanic Gardens, the museum nevertheless continued to function within British colonial agenda as a knowledge resource center for British administrative, commercial, and colonial sectors that emerged out of the successful commoditization of the two products that the museum pioneered the research for: gutta percha and rubber.

Most importantly, the study showed that the Raffles Museum's function was mainly a performativity of colonialism in terms of its role as an assembly and dispatch site for British colonial extraction and removal of indigenous knowledge, artifacts, and natural history specimens. Its collecting *praxes* was thus purely within an eighteenth/nineteenth-century practice of collecting as act of Western colonial dominance over the non-West.

Significance of Findings

The need to understand the Raffles Museum's historic role within the context of British colonialism is demanded by the enormity, duration, and proximity of British colonialism in global, as well as Singapore's histories.

At its height, the British empire covered over more than thirty seven million square kilometers, about a quarter of Earth's total land area.⁷⁷²

Without considering Ireland, beginning with Roanoke, Virginia, British colonialism lasted at least four hundred years. Its proximity to the present is 1997, when Hong Kong was ceded back to China. At its peak, British colonialism was therefore *the* European, if not specifically *British Victorian* universe of fiction, imaginary, representation, beliefs, conventions, and characteristic notions of race, gender, and class — and its *system of control* that between 470 and 570 million people lived under. Its tenaciousness and its ever-cyclic reshaping, Asad Talal observes, was not as "a temporary repression of subject populations, but as an irrevocable process of transmutation...a story of change without historical precedent in its speed, global scope and pervasiveness."⁷⁷³

The pervasiveness of colonial systems and thought is precisely what former colonies like Singapore often have to recognize and deal with. This, however, is often impossible because the enactments of colonial subjugation remain opaque. The difficulty involved in discerning such watermarks of

⁷⁷² "British Empire," *New World Encyclopedia*, Online, 2016, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/British_Empire.

⁷⁷³ Talal, Asad, "Afterword: From the History of Colonial Anthropology to the Anthology of Western Hegemony," in *Colonial Situations. Essays on the Conceptualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*, vol. 7, *History of Anthropology* (Madison, WI, USA; London, UK: U of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

colonialism was described recently by historians David Cannadine and Maya Jasanoff in a discussion:

Cannadine: If you said to most people in Britain today, why is it that there so many Indian restaurants in Britain... I think most people wouldn't have an answer to that...they wouldn't know that part of the explanation is that for 200 years or more, the British had this very close and complicated connection with India, and Indian restaurants are one of the latest manifestation of that connection.

Jasanoff: Whereas I think if you ask Indians today why cricket is widespread in India, they would know the answer.⁷⁷⁴

Within this context, it is significant that Singapore's colonial experience lasted one hundred and fifty seven years, two thirds of its two hundred-year existence (in 2019) as a polity. Its proximity to the present is as recent as 1965 or 1959, depending on whether we include the period of limited self-government as colonial rule. Its intensity can be gauged from the fact that the republic's major legal, educational, cultural, and political mechanisms all have origins in, and lineages traceable to British colonial

⁷⁷⁴ JLF 2014: *Ornamentalism. How the British Saw Their Empire, conversation with Maya Jasanoff*, Jaipur Literature Festival (India, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFhfJTTWxAs>.

rule. These institutions were, this study argues, installed by the British colonial authorities for specific reasons. These were generally not designed to serve a local population even when they professed to, but an alien authority and agenda. Thus, understanding colonial institutions, such as the Raffles Museum, is essential to understanding how the "legacy of the 19th century continues to shape us ...[and] the way in which we understand the world around us...."⁷⁷⁵

An example of such shaping, what I call colonial watermarking of systems, surfaced as recently as 2017 in the republic's Presidential elections.⁷⁷⁶ The electoral process was controversial because the election fell to a default win. This was directly due to rotating the presidency among the four major ethnic groups in the nation. The default raised questions as to whether the categorization of the population into Chinese, Malay, Indians, and Others—a categorization left over from British colonial rule — was obsolete but also if this challenged the state's claim to be a meritocracy. More importantly, it turned divisive because the default implied that not the most suitable candidate had won.

Historian P.J. Thum contends that this colonial population taxonomy

⁷⁷⁵ "Shadows of Empires/Inventing Southeast Asia with Dr. Farish Noor."

⁷⁷⁶ Toh, Elgin, "Lessons from the Presidential Election: A Look at 3 Key Issues," *The Straits Times*, Singapore, January 23, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/shedding-light-on-ep-issues>.

that cleanly divided Singapore's local population into Chinese, Malay, Indians, and Others was formulated to facilitate a colonial divide-and-conquer policy.⁷⁷⁷ His analysis of a colonial-divide-and-rule strategy is validated by Chapter 6's demonstration that the technique was commonly employed, even in the Raffles Museum's exploration methodologies.

Another directly relevant example of such colonial markings is also seen in the curatorial policies now adopted by the Raffles Museum's three successors. As Chapter 3 shows, the public museum is a key site from which a community's imaginings of its past, its origins, and its values are suggested, formulated, and visualized. Here, the Raffles Museum has a potent agency as one of the three institutions that Anderson asserts profoundly shaped the colonial and consequently, the national imaginary.⁷⁷⁸

I have mentioned the repercussions of the NMS's staging of *Treasures of the World from the British Museum* in 2015. The fact that the objects within that collection have been renamed and recontextualized as the world's cultural heritage does not, and should not, deplete the narratives of colonial dominance within their biographies. Neither should it exonerate the NHB, as Singapore's national custodian of heritage, of its lack of sensitivity and attention to such politics of dominance, and far more importantly, their con-

⁷⁷⁷ Thum, P.J., "New Naratif: The Show with PJ Thum."

⁷⁷⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

sequences on Singapore's historical consciousness. Less directly, but also in a manner that affirms the disconnect between the NHB's curatorial policies and such colonial watermarkings is the looseness with which the Board defines a "Singapore" heritage, an example of which is its inclusion of Command House in a "Singapore" Heritage Fest.

On 17 February 2016, the NHB called a meeting to plan a tour of the Command house, also known as Flagstaff House, in Kheam Hock Road as part of the year's Heritage Fest. The tour and program at Command House was intended to "familiarize Singaporeans with their history,"⁷⁷⁹ a project that is sound in principle because Command House is undeniably a part of Singapore history. It is the NHB's contextualizing Command House as part of a *Singapore* heritage and celebrating it within a "fest" that is the slippery slope here.

Heritage, in vernacular use, may be defined as "property that descends to an heir," "something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor" or "something possessed as a result of one's natural situation or birth."⁷⁸⁰ Within these broad (and I mean very broad) definitions, Command House is certainly a property passed down and transmitted, but whether it is "pos-

⁷⁷⁹ National Heritage Board, "Singapore Heritage Fest, 2016. Meeting at Command House" (Command House Recce, Command House, February 17, 2017).

⁷⁸⁰ "Heritage," *Merriam-Webster*, n.d., Online, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heritage>.

sessed as a result of one's natural situation or birth" is questionable in terms of Command House's function and association with British colonial subjugation. Defining Command House as a part of Singapore's "heritage" directly positions Singapore's colonial past as desirable and a legacy to be held onto. This clear allegiance to a colonial past raises questions as to how this will affect future generations' ideas of history and an independent sovereignty.

Command House was the residence of the General Commanding Officer of Malaya whose occupants included Lord Louis Mountbatten. A black-and-white colonial house (see pages 242-43), the building was used as the Combined Headquarters of the British Army and Air Force during WW II.⁷⁸¹ The building and its architecture are thus closely associated with British colonial dominance through utility and style. Sometime after independence, Command House was used as a residence by the President and by the Speaker of Parliament. Like the Raffles Museum's site and building, Command House has a burden of history of colonial subjugation. Calling it a part of a "Singaporean" heritage denies and subsumes the site's historicity

⁷⁸¹ Tan, Joanna H.S. and Neo, Tiong Seng, "Command House," Institutional, Singapore Library Board, Singapore Infopedia, 2016, http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1724_2010-11-16.html.

of colonial subjugation that is embedded in both its use and building.⁷⁸²

More importantly, the inclusion of a colonial structure with a history of imperial dominance within a fest valorises and celebrates a subjugated past, and if so, the question that needs to be asked is how this valorisation promotes or subverts Singapore's historical consciousness and a national claim to an independent sovereignty.

These issues of ethnic categorizations that Thum contends disrupted the Presidential elections, together with the looseness with which the current cultural policies define "historic," "heritage," and "history" reiterate Mary Douglas's warning that "When institutions make classifications for us, we seem to lose some independence that we might conceivably have otherwise had."⁷⁸³

Sites like Command House and the Raffles Museum and its three successors, and even the black-and-white houses, embody for Singapore, again to paraphrase Douglas, a paradox in the "judgement of history" as well as Cloonan's "paradox of preservation."⁷⁸⁴ Certain historic sites, Cloonan suggests, are particularly problematic in conservation and

⁷⁸² Edwards, Norman, *The Singapore House and Residential Life, 1819-1939*; Edwards, Elizabeth and Lien, Sigrid, *Uncertain Images: Museums and the Work of Photographs*, 2016th, first printed 2014 ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁷⁸³ Douglas, Mary, *How Institutions Think*. 91

⁷⁸⁴ Cloonan, Michèle V., "The Paradox of Preservation," *Library Trends* 56, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 133–41.

preservation because of their histories. For former colonies, colonial buildings fall into this category because they dominate their city and landscapes. Moreover, few have managed to deal with them successfully because these structures are indestructibly massive and dominant (they were built for that purpose). These structures are culturally and historically lethal because while they represent subjugative histories and colonial discourses of race and imperialism, they are, at the same time, significant generators of employment and tourism income. Curatorially, the narratives of whom they, and by extension, the colony served, are therefore often deleted by their use as galleries, sites of recreation and culture. Thus, they conflict in no small measure with post-colonial developments and processes, such as of sovereignty and deimperialization. In drawing attention to these examples of colonial watermarking, this thesis attempted to illustrate the agency the Raffles Museum and its three successor museums have on the republic's *Weltanschauung*. It asserts that these need more attention because they stand in the way of Singapore's developing a sense of nation and self.

An example of the pervasiveness of the colonial watermarking is the statement the NHB's Chief Executive Officer, Rosa Daniel, issued in September 2016 on the appointment of Kenneth Ting as Director of ACM. In her statement, Daniel stated that Ting's appointment underscored "the confidence we have in our young home-grown leadership taking our

cultural institutions forward..."⁷⁸⁵ Her thinking here reveals a fundamental notion in colonial thought that Memmi points out to, and that is a precept that "This place, the people here, the customs of this country are always inferior — by virtue of an inevitable and pre-established order."⁷⁸⁶ In this differentiating logic, *the colonized* believes himself/herself to be inferior, an identity that was "configured along the lines of an oppositional dialectics between 'us' and 'them'...[and that] tells us how deeply ingrained the compartmentalising and differentiating logic that was installed during the colonial era remains until today."⁷⁸⁷

No less revealing of the colonial *Weltanschauung* is the National Gallery's attempt to stage an "Empire Ball" in 2016.⁷⁸⁸ The Gallery's lack of understanding of colonialism, the NMS's exhibition of empire objects, as well as Daniel's comments, significant in her role as the state's primary custodian of heritage, are all tangible evidence that colonial power does not have to be within a territorial or temporal ascription but can just as easily be

⁷⁸⁵ Devi, Reena, "Kenny Ting Will Take over from Dr. Chong, Who Is Relocating," *Today*, February 3, 2017. <http://www.todayonline.com/entertainment/arts/new-director-asian-civilisations-museum>.

⁷⁸⁶ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 112

⁷⁸⁷ Noor, Farish A., *The Discursive Construction of Southeast Asia in 19th-Century Colonial-Capitalist Discourse*, Asian History (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam UP, 2016). 200

⁷⁸⁸ Huang Lijie, "National Gallery Singapore Drops 'Empire' Theme For Its Gala," *Straits Times*, September 22, 2016, online edition, <https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/national-gallery-singapore-drops-empire-theme-for-its-gala>.

located within a colonized territory, and when internalized by the colonized, extends beyond time. These configure a "hegemonic discourse about heritage which acts to constitute the way we think, talk and write about heritage [and] promotes a certain set of Western elite cultural values as being universally applicable."⁷⁸⁹ They also substantiate Memmi's observation that "oppression is tolerated willy-nilly by the oppressed themselves" and that "the colonized gives his troubled and partial, but undeniable assent" to subjugation.⁷⁹⁰ In sum, they illustrate the incompleteness of colonial project in Singapore and points to a need for Singaporeans to understand oppression and how they continue to be interpellated as subjects.

An observation that Memmi made is relevant here. He contends that a result of colonization is that the colonized "almost never experiences nationality and citizenship, except privately. Nationally and civically, he is only what the colonizer is not."⁷⁹¹ This dissertation thus established, if nothing else, the direct links between the curatorial practices of the state's cultural institutions and its attempts to construct the state's history, national narrative, historical consciousness, and sense of the Singaporean self. The

⁷⁸⁹ Clive Gray, *The Politics of Museums*, New Directions in Cultural Policy Research (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 47.

⁷⁹⁰ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 132

⁷⁹¹ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 140.

institutions colonizers established, Memmi noted, "do not operate directly" for the colonizer. The Raffles Museum and all the other colonial structures Singapore are, in this view, "the heritage of a people handed down."⁷⁹²

This study attempts to demonstrate throughout that these are evidences of what Hayden White calls a "specifically Western prejudice"⁷⁹³ in Singapore's historical documentation and consciousness. The consequences of this prejudice and colonial patrimony via a deep emplotment of Singapore's history in a Rafflesian myth have been assessed exhaustively, for example, by Tarling *et al.* This study shows now that such a prejudice exists within the history of the Raffles Museum and its three successors and how this impacts the state's heritage and historic preservation, as well as the Singapore's identity. It shows that as "witness" to Singapore's colonial experience,⁷⁹⁴ as historical subject, custodian, interpreter, and author, the Raffles Museum continues to exert pressures on Singapore's history by promoting the legitimacy of some ideas of history and sovereignty while denying others.

The study concludes that the notion of sovereignty, as represented in the pledge that school children take every morning at assembly is

⁷⁹² Memmi, Albert, 181, 148.

⁷⁹³ White, Hayden, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, US; London, UK: John Hopkins UP, 1973).

⁷⁹⁴ Benjamin, Walter, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

simultaneously subverted by heritage programs that evidence clear allegiance to a colonial past. These conflict likewise, with the notion of sovereignty that the Singapore state demands its Armed and Air Force personnel defend as duty of birthright.

In Singapore going forward, I submit here that the Raffles Museum's greatest weakness is also its greatest strength. As Edward Said notes, geography and history are man-made.⁷⁹⁵ If we accept in this context, as Memmi and Trouillot contend, that colonization "mutilates," "deforms," as well as silences the histories of colonized peoples because colonization does not allow for a historical consciousness to develop or be sustained,⁷⁹⁶ then the Raffles Museum, its collections and successors can also be, collectively, sites of a historical reclamation.

The Raffles Museum, its collections, and successors should be used to give presence to the colonized experience, such as how locals like Padma Daniel and Abu Bakar Pawanchee were excluded, and to acknowledge the historical presence of the thousands, like the coolie, who were "kept in their place" by colonial systems. Through such a policy, the Raffles Museum and its three successors can function within Singapore's national ambitions as

⁷⁹⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 5.

⁷⁹⁶ Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 140; Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA, USA: Beacon Press, 1995).

contemporary sites of moral rights that is more relevant to a post-colonial Singapore. This includes the right to a history and a voice — as Spivak contends — and a site for denying the colonized subjectivity — as Dibley suggests.⁷⁹⁷ A new curatorial philosophy is required that can provide palpability to colonialism: to what it looked like, felt like, and meant, to those on the receiving end of colonial praxes, and to colonialism as the lived, historical experience. Such a view, I submit, is necessary if the Singaporean is to understand his or her past.

In closing, I turn to Anderson again. His observation that nationalism has lineages to colonial institutions underscores the need to understand colonial institutions, like the Raffles Museum, because :

nation-ness as well as nationalism are cultural artifacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy.⁷⁹⁸

Understanding the Raffles Museum, and all the colonial structures

⁷⁹⁷ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Can the Subaltern Speak? Ref," *First Published, Wedge* (1985), *Reprinted* 1988, 1999, n.d., <https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?UID=19945&rec=true>; Dibley, Ben, "The Museum's Redemption. Contact Zones, Government and the Limits of Reform," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 8, no. 1 (2005): 5–27.

⁷⁹⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4.

that are now in Singapore, therefore, is essential to understanding how they legitimize illegitimate power, but more importantly, how this undermines a sense of history or identity. It is therefore a project that should be not ignored, shunted, or avoided, but given priority. §§

Post Script

At the time of finishing this section on 4 January 2019, two suggestions and contributions that this thesis made had materialized.

In October 2018, the NMS made a major curatorial change when it invited tertiary students to "have their say" in how they wanted to commemorate the bicentenary of Raffles's arrival. The second event took place on 1 January 2019. The ACM announced that its exhibition for the bicentenary will address the fact that "The majority of Singaporeans 'know' Raffles as a mythical, one-dimensional 'founder figure.'" Its planned exhibition, the ACM stated, would be cognizant of recent scholarship that showed that Raffles was not only "a scholar and avid collector of natural and cultural heritage, but also a ruthless statesman and colonial opportunist."⁷⁹⁹ In addition, in an article published on 21 January 2019, Huang Jianli discusses almost all the political, historical and curatorial

⁷⁹⁹ Lim, Adrian, "New Exhibition Seeks to Revisit Raffles' Other Facets," *The Straits Times*, Singapore, January 1, 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/new-exhibition-seeks-to-revisit-raffles-other-facets>.

issues that this thesis raises regarding the curation of the bicentenary of Raffles's arrival.⁸⁰⁰

The moves by the NMS and ACM are especially forward-looking, important historical and curatorial developments because they direct curation to Singaporeans, give Singaporeans authorship of their history, as well as a place at the table regarding how they want their past curated and represented. They also address the fact that the social institutions established by colonizers possess certain preconditions. These ultimately, are the initial but crucial steps towards a Singapore-centered history and a balanced, healthy evaluation of the state's colonized experience. §§

⁸⁰⁰ Huang, Jianli, "Stamford Raffles and the 'Founding' of Singapore: The Politics of Commemoration and Dilemmas of History," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 91, no. Part 2, No. 315 (December 2018): 103–22, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/714377>.

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The list here does not contain all the works that have influenced or been consulted in this dissertation. It lists the major works only to indicate the complexity of the topic that I address in this thesis and the major documents that have been used as reference points and evidence. For instance, it lists only two records of early voyages, even while these are essential to understanding the lineage of political engagements in Western museum collections and collecting *praxes*. Nor have I included analyses of the power of displays, locations and structures of contemporary museums, even while these are central to the museum's power as social institutions and demonstrate their currency. Similarly, theoretical works from museology have been kept to the minimum for the sake of space and to retain a historical focus.

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Annexes

Annex A: Translation of Carl Hagenbeck (By author)

This proposal, however, concealed a happy idea for exhibitions of peoples, that like colorful chain over the following years, followed one another. Laplanders and Nubians, Eskimos and Somalis, Kalmyks and Indians, Sinhalese and Hottentots, the inhabitants of the most diverse zones, even antipodes, reach their hands out to each other in the years to come as they make their processions through the European capitals.

Annex B: Examination Paper for Elementary Examination of the Library Association, held in December 1937.

Detailed in the certification issued to Padma Daniel in February, 1938. Source: NAS

First Paper: Elementary English Literary History (3 hours, for six questions)

1. Write a brief account of the life and works of Thomas Carlyle
2. Give an outline of the life and works of Ben Jonson.
3. Who wrote

Testament of Beauty

Daffodil Fields

Essays in Criticism

Middlemarch

The Romany Rye

Ordeal of Richard Feverel

The Origin of the Species

Quality Street

De Profundis

Esther Waters.

4. Give and outline of the life and works of Jonathan Swift.
5. Name three women novelists of the early Victorian era and under each give a list of her works.
6. What do you know of the novels of Henry Fielding?
7. Write a short essay on Jane Austen on her works.
8. List two important works of the following writers:

George Bernard Shaw

John Galsworthy

John Ruskin

Joseph Conrad

Charles Reade

9. Why has Samuel Richardson so high a place in English literature?

Second Paper: Elementary Classification, Elementary Cataloging and

Accession Methods (One and a half hours, 3 questions)

1. Some libraries use the accession number as the charging symbol, others use the class mark. Which method do you prefer, and why.

2. The choice of a scheme of classification is governed by the rule that it must be based on principles convenient to the users of the library. Discuss this statement in relation to Dewey's classification.
3. Where would you look in your catalog for the entries for books produced by
 - a) Two authors working in collaboration
 - b) The Libraries Department of a Borough Council
 - c) A peer of the land
 - d) An archbishop of Canterbury
 - e) An individual using a pseudonym, but whose real name has been discovered.

Give an example, real or imaginary, of each of the above forms of authorship.

4. What records of its book-stock should a library provide, other than the catalogue?
5. Outline the methods adopted in open access libraries to aid readers in locating the books they require.

Third Paper: Elementary Library Administration (One and a half hours, 3 questions)

1. Where no separate children's room is provided what steps

would you take to control the excessive use of the home reading department by children?

2. Describe the methods used for checking the receipt of periodicals from a newsagent.
3. What methods are adopted in country library practice when making exchanges, to prevent the duplication of books previously sent to the library centres?
4. In several large libraries a book may be issued to a reader from one department (or branch) of the library and returned to another. What machinery is necessary to operate such a system?
5. Compare the merits and demerits of using books bound from the sheets in library binding, and books in publishers' cases, for replacement purposes.⁸⁰¹

⁸⁰¹ Welsford, P.S.J., Secretary, the Library Association, "Certificate, Madeline Daniel," February 1938, MSA 1140, National Archives of Singapore.

Annex C: Illustrations

Figure 1. John Crawfurd (above); Stamford Raffles (below). Source: Reproduced with permission from the National Portrait Gallery.

These photographs capture the disparity in the historic personae of the two administrators. Crawford is seldom portrayed young, even while he was younger than Raffles. Raffles, in contrast, is seldom portrayed old. Raffles's portrait, an oil on canvas dated 1817 by George Francis Joseph, immortalizes him as young, Bryronesque, and connotatively, romantic. Noteworthy in the Raffles portrait are the Buddhist votive tablet, maps and landscape that Joseph used as visual metaphors of Raffles's scholarly interests and Asian experience.

Figure 2. Crawford's letter to the Raffles Institution, Museum and Library trustees refusing to disburse the sums Raffles promised. Reproduced with permission from the Raffles Institution Archives and Museum, Raffles Institution, Singapore.

Figure 3. Raffles's Letter to Crawford, asking him to disburse funds. Reproduced with the permission of Raffles Institution Archives and Museum, Raffles Institution, Singapore.

Figure 4. The Raffles Museum, ca. 1890. It shows the squatter huts that were on the museum's grounds from its early days. Despite its almost ungroomed appearance, the museum's structure contrasts

sharply against the squatter shanty, reflecting the relative power positions between the colonizer and the colonized. Photograph: Courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.

Figure 5. Photograph taken by Cecil Boden Kloss. This is a fascinating example of the epistemology of colonial collecting and colonial racial perceptions. More importantly, the photograph documents the extent and belligerence with which natural history specimens were assembled and dispatched under Western collecting praxis. Photograph: Courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board