Britain's New Form of Imperialism:
Raffles and the Foundation of Singapore

Benjamin Hruska

The founding of Singapore by the British in 1819 had a tremendous impact on the economic and political environments of the region. These transformations brought on changes not only for the small island but also the region. Such forces had great impact upon other European powers trading in the area and had implications for the trading patterns of China and Europe.

Changes in imperialism in the Far East affected more than just one European power becoming more powerful than another. The British imperialism that surfaced differed from that of the other European powers and also from what Britain had done in the past. This change resulted in a more friendly relationship with the natives in the area and a new idea of economic policy that would end the heavy tariff system that had dominated the area in the past. All of these changes can be traced to one individual, Sir Thomas Raffles.

Singapore's strategic location made it a prime site for a harbor. The location made it doubly important since the island is the southernmost portion of Asia. To the east lay the open waters and the South China Sea, which contained all the trade routes to China and Japan. To the west lay the important Straits of Malacca, passed by most vessels headed west to India and Europe. The British did not discover the importance of Singapore and establish a port first; they noted ruins of previous fortifications when they started to build on the island. A legend rooted in Malaysian culture reported an Indianized empire build the first port at Singapore. These stated that a prince, Sir Tri Buana, landed around 1150 on the island. On this initial landing, the group spotted a lion, which in reality was almost surely a tiger. The event inspired the name Singapore: The City of the Lion.[1]

The British did not even hold the claim of being the first European power to try their hands at imperialism in the area. The Portuguese, led by Vasco de Gama, had tried unsuccessfully to subdue Calcutta in 1502. Not deterred, the Portuguese returned to the area, this time attacking Malacca. This attack, led by Albuquerque in 1509, had the same result.[2] However, Albuquerque returned in 1511 with a stronger force of nineteen ships and captured the port of Malacca. From this point on, European powers played a role in the politics of Malaysia.

The Dutch also established ports to increase their trade in the region. The main port for the Dutch laid to the southeast of Malacca, on the island of Java. From here their trade spread rapidly to the ports of China and Japan. This dominance of the islands in the area led to an alliance with some of the natives on the continent of Asia. The state of Johore contained Malacca; the natives here made an alliance with the Dutch against the Portuguese in 1606. This agreement led to the falling of Malacca in 1641, which forced out the Portuguese in Malaysia. This resulted in Dutch dominance of the area, which Holland held on to strongly. This dominance, along with monopolistic trading practices, excluded other European powers and granted the Dutch much wealth.[3]

---

[1] Donald Moore and Joanna Moore, *The First 150 Years of Singapore* (Singapore: Donald Moore Press Ltd., 1969), 18.
[2] A. Cabaton, *Java and the Dutch East Indies* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), 12.
[3] Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia: A study in Direct and Indirect Rule* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), 63, 67.

The British first gained major holdings in the area as a result of a treaty signed with the Dutch in 1788. This treaty formed an alliance against a common threat in the response to a European war. This allowed both Holland and Britain to seize each other's colonies for the duration of the European conflict with a common enemy. With France overrunning Holland, the British took over Malacca and the Dutch East Indies island of Sumatra in 1795. The seizure of the island of Java leads to a topic that must be discussed when considering the formation of Singapore; Sir Thomas Raffles.

Raffles traveled to foreign areas throughout his life. He was born in 1781 on board a ship in the West Indies. Raffles started his carrier with the East India Company at the age of fourteen. Later the company stationed him at Penang. While serving as Assistant Secretary of Government there, Raffles broke away from many of his peers with his interaction with the natives. He studied the local language, Malay, and learned aspects of the local geography and culture of the natives. This curiosity about other areas of the world never left Raffles, as was clearly evident in his later career.

With the domination of Europe by Napoleon, and with Holland occupied by the French, the British seized Dutch colonies. The British authorized the island of Java for seizure in August of 1810. Raffles organized this invasion force, which successfully took Java in 1811.[4] The British introduced numerous liberal reforms to the island, which Raffles oversaw. These reforms resulted in improvements for the natives and yielded knowledge to the world about Java.

One of the first reforms addressed by Raffles in Java involved the labor of the people that lived on the island. Raffles later wrote of the Dutch system of labor being just a step above slavery. He described the Dutch system as having the natives work for no reward.[5] The local native rulers in the area enforced this system imposed by the Dutch. The Dutch tactic required a set amount of product and profit from these native rulers, which could be extracted without any interest from the Dutch on the welfare of the natives. The historian A. Cabaton, in his work on the Dutch East Indies, described the Dutch system as "an armed instrument from extracting wealth".[6]

Raffles's colonial philosophy contrasted with the Dutch view. He believed that a colony should make a profit and add power to the position of the empire, but not at the expense of the native population's right to earn a livelihood. Cabaton described Raffles's opinion that "it was the plain duty of England to give this people a just, humane, and suitable government."[7] Raffles later described forced labor as inhumane, as well as financially unsuccessful. Such labor practices of the Dutch and native leaders only led the workers to "becoming neither productive to themselves nor to the state".[8] Raffles ended forced labor, which resulted in improved living standards for the natives and increased production in the area. An 1817 critique in *Quarterly Review* of Raffles's book *A History of Java* noted his work on labor reform. This review noted the population increase on Java after the changes. A census of the population under the Dutch and British noted the tremendous increase that could not have resulted from reproduction. This increase happened from natives returning to the populated areas who had fled the area during the Dutch occupation.[9]

---

[4] Ibid., 77,78.
[5] Thomas Raffles, *Statement of the Services of Sir Stamford Raffles* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1978), 10.
[6] Cabaton, *Java*, 16.
[7] Ibid., 18.
[8] Raffles, *Statement*, 10.
[9] *Quarterly Review*, vol.17 (London), 1817.

Reforms under Raffles also addressed the legal system in Java. These reforms added a European-style court system in the area. Raffles introduced the concept of trial by a jury to the courts.[10] The British also abolished torture in Java.[11] Raffles's time in Java yielded many reforms for the island, but it also granted Raffles the knowledge to write a two-volume book on the island.

The *Quarterly Review* regarded *A History of Java* as an outstanding work. This work covered topics of Java ranging from botany to the inhabitants and the languages.[12] In addition, Raffles had Java surveyed, resulting in the first maps for the public.[13] Of the Dutch occupation prior to the British landing, Raffles wrote, "although the Dutch possessed Java for nearly two centuries, no scientific map, whatever, was formed on the island".[14] The British interest in areas outside of profit illustrated the differences between British and Dutch colonialism. Having written a two-volume work on Java, Raffles demonstrated his interest in a number of fields outside of profit. He wrote the most passionately on the subject of slavery.

Raffles left no room for doubt on his views on slavery from his writings. Under his direction of Java, an act of Parliament forbade the slave trade; he also required that all slaves had to be registered with the government. Raffles's emotional view of the subject can be seen from the following statement: "Nothing but political circumstances, and the restrictions under which I was placed by a higher authority, prevented me from virtually abolishing for ever this dreadful evil throughout the whole of the Dutch possessions."[15] Raffles rejected the concept of returning Java to the Dutch. His greatest concern centered on the reintroduction of the slave trade.

With the defeat of Napoleon, the British Empire had increased its vast number of overseas possessions. The empire had complete control of Malaysia, Malacca and the Strait of Malacca. The British also had Java, which had a commanding position in the East Indies. Raffles, who had worked so hard in producing this position for the Empire, hoped that it would not be in vain. With the weakened position of all the European powers on the continent as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, Britain found herself in a prime situation at the Congress of Vienna. However, Britain still feared France and desired a strong Holland to counter any aggressive actions from France.[16] Britain and Holland signed a treaty, established by the Convention of London, in August of 1814.[17] This treaty called for the return of all colonies taken over by the British. The nations hoped that this action would improve Holland's position and deter future aggression from France. The Dutch government took possession of Java in 1818 and did not replace the reforms implemented by Raffles.[18] In recognizing Raffles's improvements, and not replacing these, the Dutch paid him a high compliment.

Raffles clearly viewed the competition with the Dutch in Asia as good versus evil. His belief that the British system resulted in humane treatment and profit remained undaunted. Of these differences in governing he wrote: "It was not a simple question of finance, whether the Company was content to lose fifty or eighty thousand a year, and regulate their establishment

---

[10] Raffles, *Statement*, 15.

[11] Cabaton, *Java*, 19.

[12] *Quarterly Review*, vol 17 (London), 1817.

[13] Thomas Raffles, *A History of Java*, vol.1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 5.

[14] Raffles, *Statement*, 14.

[15] Ibid., 16.

[16] Emerson, *Malaysia*, 79,80.

[17] John Baston and Robin W. Winks, *Malaysia: Selected Historical Readings* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966), 131.

[18] Cabaton, *Java*, 20.

accordingly; it was in the principles of government, and the management of the country, that the evil lay."[19]   The moral high ground position of Raffles involved all aspects of society. He criticized what he called "vice" that the Dutch government profited from. These activities included the opium trade and cock-fighting farms, which in his view had no place in organized society. Of cock fighting he wrote that it was "destructive of every principle of good government and social order, and of morals of the people."[20]

British shipping in the East Indies suffered a number of setbacks due to the Dutch reentering the area in 1818. The British ships that called into Dutch ports paid tax. The Dutch navy also harassed these ships in the open sea, which demonstrated another restrictive trade policy by the Dutch.[21] These policies angered Raffles, who envisioned the great wealth that could be made by the British if allowed to trade in the area. He described these restrictive policies as "the sprit of exclusion and encroachment which characterized and animated their rising power".[22]   Actions against the British diminished their commercial and political spheres in the area. Raffles summed up the British position in the East Indies with the following statement: "The Dutch posses the only passes through which ships must sail into this Archipelago, the Straits of Sunda and of Malacca; and the British have not now an inch of ground to stand upon between the Cape of Good Hope and China; nor a single friendly port at which they can water or obtain refreshment."[23] Raffles felt that this portion of the world could yield much profit for the empire, and the actions of the Dutch to exclude them from this frustrated him. He would try to establish a port as a foothold, with the belief that the superior trading practices of the British would lead to success for the empire in the archipelago.

Raffles wrote this opinion in a report to the governor general, the Marquis of Hastings, outlining his feelings about the situation. This report noted the trade practices of the Dutch to exclude the British from the Far East. This report outlined other nations' commercial activities in the area, including those of Russians, French, and Americans. These countries had been increasing their trade in the area and might possibly start a port facility before the British. The report overall called for the formation of a British port. In short, if Britain did not take advantage of the Dutch position, another nation surely would.

Raffles also called for a port to protect the reputation of the British Empire. He feared that British traders on their own would take advantage of the natives, thus endangering future British actions in the region. On this restraint of these traders he wrote: "Our duty to other nations, and to the cause of justice, no less than a regard for our national character, requires that the peaceable natives of the island should not be kept at the mercy of every mercantile adventurer of our own nation."[24]

The best location for the proposed port, in Raffles's opinion, lay somewhere south of the port of Malacca. Raffles informed Hastings of this in a meeting. Hastings authorized Raffles to locate and secure a port for the British East India Company that did not interfere with the Dutch position.[25] Hastings's instructions could be interpreted broadly, which Raffles took full

---

[19] Raffles, *Statement*, 14.

[20] Ibid., 34.

[21][21] *Anglo-Dutch Competition*, http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/singapore, October 30, 2002.

[22] Raffles, *Statement*, 54.

[23] Moore, *First 150*, 8.

[24] Emerson, *Malaysia*, 81.

[25] *Anglo-Dutch Competition*, http//reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/Singapore, October 30, 2002.

advantage of. For the commercial interests of Britain, Raffles could locate any port south of Malacca that would act as a free port for the British.[26]

With the instructions from Hastings, Raffles left India en route to his designation somewhere south of Malacca. On the way he called into the port of Penang. The governor general of Penang, Colonel Bannerman, declined to cooperate with the forming of the port; in fact, the Governor ordered him to wait in Penang until orders from Calcutta could arrive. Raffles ordered his second in command, Colonel William Farquhar, to head south without him. Raffles later left Penang aboard a fishing ship in the cover of darkness. Upon meeting up with Farquhar, the ships headed to the island of Singapore, which Raffles had read about in his studies of Malay.[27]

Once Raffles had arrived at the island of Singapore, he believed this represented the port for the British in the Far East. At the time the island held a small fishing village. The few people that lived on the island were Malays and Chinese. The forested small island had plenty of fresh water for future development. Most importantly for Raffles, the island granted a large harbor with no obstacles for the future port. In terms of geography, the site lay on the route from China to both India and Europe.[28] All of these factors would be reasons for success in the future harbor.

On January 28, 1819, Raffles's expedition ship sailed just off the shore from Singapore. The next day, Raffles and Farquhar landed on Singapore and visited the local leader named Temenggong. While being entertained at the leader's house, Raffles learned what he dreamed he would hear, that no Dutchmen lived on the island.[29] The local leader did not grant the British the right to establish a port, however, as the result of not having the power to do so. Raffles learned the Sultan of Johor possessed this authority. Raffles also learned that the Sultan had recently died, and more importantly, a dispute led to some question as to the proper heir. Raffles learned that the Dutch had already recognized one of the sons; however, he arranged to have a meeting with another one of the sons.[30]

The local chief of Singapore, Temenggpong, did sign a provisional treaty with the British. This allowed them to start the formation of the port while they waited for Tunku Long, the son that Britain would recognize as the Sultan of Johor. It can be speculated that Temenggpong in part signed the treaty out of fear. In the past he had witnessed the British expedition to Java in 1811 that passed by in the Straits of Singapore. The size of the ships and of the fleet had greatly impressed him.[31] So, on the same day Raffles first walked on Singapore, the Union Jack waved above the island.[32]

On February 6, 1819, Britain and their choice of sultan signed the formal treaty. The sultan, who might have believed that he was not the rightful heir, feared the British as much as he did the Dutch. But, since the British promised to protect him and Singapore, he agreed.[33] Raffles's conversation with the sultan can be thanked for the changing of his mind. One observer

---

[26] Moore, *First 150*, 11.

[27] *Raffles Dream*, http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/singapore, November 20, 2002.

[28] *Raffles and Singapore*, http://www.geometry.net/basic_s/singapore_geography_page_no_2.php, November 30, 2002.

[29] Bastin, *Selected Readings*, 132.

[30] *Raffles and Singapore*, http://www.geometry.net/basic_s/singapore_geography_page_no_2.php, November 30, 2002.

[31] C.E. Wurtsburg, *Raffles of the Eastern Isles* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984), 485.

[32] Emerson, *Malaysia*, 82.

[33] *Raffles and Singapore*, http://www.geometry.net/basic_s/ singapore_geography_page_no-2.php, November 30, 2002.

described Raffles as "smiling with infinite charm...his words sweet as a sea of honey...The very stones would have melted on the hearing of his words."[34] Raffles did such a good job persuading Tunku Long that he offered to attack and kill all the Dutch in Rhio to make good his position. Raffles deterred this planned attack by the new sultan.

The grand ceremony made an impression on the locals. The site included all the officers in full uniform and the ships decked with flags. A red carpet led up to a tent, within which were three chairs, the largest being for Raffles and the other two for the Sultan and Farquhar. After the signing, a party took place and gifts were exchanged; the Sultan received a number of things including guns.[35] The historian Maurice Collis described this week of activity by Raffles as "His was a tiny force with which to bring off the greatest political and commercial coup of the century."[36]

The treaty designated the island as under the sphere of British authority.[37] The British maintained and protected Singapore, and the sultan received 5,000 Spanish dollars every year. The local chief of Singapore received 3,000 Spanish dollars annually. Neither of these leaders could allow a foreign power to overtake the island. With the island secured for the British interests, Raffles left the island on February 7, having been there just over a week.[38]

Farquhar remained in charge of the small force on Singapore. His orders included clearing a portion of the island and beginning to construct a fortification, as well as informing all ships that entered the harbor that no duties on goods existed in Singapore. This varied a great deal from the practices of the Dutch, and news of this spread quickly.[39]

Having left Singapore, Raffles returned to Penang, where he quickly wrote a letter to the chief secretary and to the governor general. This letter explained the British title to Singapore and also addressed the question of the heir to the dead sultan. The title ended the Dutch monopoly in the area; now Singapore held the gateway to China, not Malacca. After the sending the letter, Raffles addressed Bannerman, the individual that had ordered him to stay in Penang a few weeks before. By the time Raffles arrived in Penang, so had the Dutch reaction.[40]

The reaction from the Dutch was quite angry, as this flew in the face of their monopoly. For the first few days, it did not look good for the future of the very young British port. The Dutch Governor of Malacca, Thyssen, threatened to attack Singapore and bring Farquhar back in chains.[41] News also reached Penang that both Tunku Long and Temenggong had sent letters out stating that Raffles had them sign the treaty under the threat of force. The Dutch Governor of Malacca and the members of the family of the sultan received these letters. The Dutch also found a British ally in Bannerman, who refused to reinforce Farquhar's position in Singapore.

Raffles refused to enter into the argument. He waited on the only real thing that mattered in the argument, the reactions of Hastings in India and London. If the government stood by Raffles, Singapore had a chance to remain, if it did not the history of Singapore would be extremely short. Bannerman also wrote to Hastings and accused Raffles of insubordination.

---

[34] Maurice Collis, *Raffles* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 147.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Collis, *Raffles*, 146.
[37] John Cameron, *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1865), 11.
[38] Collis, *Raffles*, 148,150.
[39] *Raffles Dream*, http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/singapore, November 20, 2002.
[40] Collis, *Raffles*, 152, 153.
[41] Raymond Flower, *Raffles: The Story of Singapore* (Beckenham, Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1984), 28.

Bannerman concluded the Dutch had recognized the proper sultan and that the British claim did not stand on its own.[42]

With the Dutch and British communicating over the issue, the Dutch came away with the impression of numbered days for Singapore. Bannerman, who believed what he wrote, told the Dutch that once the British government learned what Raffles had done they would nullify his actions. The Dutch falsely believed that once Hastings heard of the issue he would negate Raffles's actions. With this notion, the Dutch halted their attack.[43] Farquhar, with only 340 men, and no supplies from Bannerman, faced considerably worse odds if the Dutch attacked.[44]

While the question of the legality of Singapore played itself out, the city grew at a tremendous rate, in large part due to free trade. The definition of free trade in the late eighteenth century meant that any government or person could do business in a port and not pay a tariff. The Dutch in their system heavily taxed non-Dutch ships, thus they protected their source of profit. The *Quarterly Review* stated that Dutch trading practices "are rapidly falling into their old state of misgovernment, and have it in contemplation not only to forbid all foreigners from frequenting the ports of Java; but, under some antiquated treaties, to prohibit the sovereigns of several of the great islands of the archipelago from admitting foreign ships into their ports, and to compel then to trade exclusively with themselves."[45]

Rupert Emerson, in his study on the rule of Malaysia, noted the very liberal economic view of Raffles in formulating a free port in Singapore. Emerson rightly stated that Raffles's view on a colony predated some of the Manchester school of economic thought. This belief system centered around free enterprise and free trade. This view rejected the notion of what previous Dutch and British colonies had been in the past. The concept of bribing and harassing the natives would no longer be acceptable. This economic theory called for the end of feudal type systems of government and their replacement by colonial rule that remained consistent with the concept of rule of law. Of Raffles and free trade Emerson wrote, "he was prepared to stamp out short-sighted attempts at a quick turnover through exclusion."[46] Raffles himself wrote that Singapore should remain a free port and "that no sinister, no sordid view, no considerations either of political importance or pecuniary advantage should interfere with the broad and liberal principles on which the British interests have been established."[47]

Singapore's economic impact could be felt in the area by the neighboring ports. The other British port of Penang suffered as a result of the better-situated Singapore. Singapore attracted local traders because of the free trade, and this had a negative impact on the Dutch port of Batavia.[48] The information about Singapore spread fast; within two months of its founding over one hundred trading vessels were anchored in the harbor. When Raffles visited Singapore again some four months after he left, the island had almost five thousand residents, including Chinese, Arabs, and Indians.[49]

Raffles later wrote in his *Statement of Services* about the geographical advantage of Singapore. In these writings he focused on the native traders, who represented the majority, instead of the Europeans. He wrote that all the traders traveling from areas like Siam and China

---

[42] Collis, *Raffles*, 153.

[43] Ibid., 154.

[44] Flower, *The Story of Singapore*, 28.

[45] *Quarterly Review*, vol. 17 (London), 1817.

[46] Emerson, *Malaysia*, 85.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Barbara Andaya and Leonard Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 111.

[49] *Raffles Dream*, http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/singapore, October 20, 2002.

had to pass through the Strait of Singapore on the way to Dutch locations. Raffles rightly stated that if the traders received a better deal in Singapore, they would not pass by but would do business there.

In the statement, Raffles backed up his claims with real numbers. In the first two years, 2,800 vessels entered the harbor. Only 383 sailed from Europe, meaning that the vast majority of these vessels were Asian. Trade expanded so quickly that by 1823 more than 150,000 tons of shipping had passed into the harbor, which amounted to over thirteen million Spanish dollars.[50] The port of Singapore grew at a fast rate in part because of more efficient operating costs than other ports. The annual cost to the British East India Company to maintain Singapore hovered near 14,000 pounds, whereas the British port at Bencoolen cost the company almost 100,000 pounds annually.[51]

Raffles believed that the British needed to give the people of Singapore more than simply a way to earn money, though. He started a movement that is still productive today. In the autobiography of Abdullah Kadir, who witnessed the formation of Singapore, he noted a meeting called by Raffles. With the sultan and Temenggong also in attendance, Raffles addressed a subject he deeply believed in. He spoke of this project affecting their children and grandchildren, and they also spoke of death, believing that future generations would someday judge them all. Then Raffles made a statement that in other portions of the world even in the next century would have seemed radical: "It is my intention to build a place of learning for all races where they may study their respective languages under their own teachers, and those branches of knowledge which will be of greatest benefit to each of them: not religious studies, but literature, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, and the like."[52] This imperialist called for schools that not only taught in the native language, but also called for schools free from religion. Even more radical, he said that the students would not pay the teachers. The teachers would be paid by the state, which meant the British port would have free schooling.

Raffles did not just talk about a concept and then let it pass. After his speech he started a list of contributions. He started the list with 2,000 pounds from the British East India Company and also 2,000 from himself. Then he asked the Sultan what he could donate for the school that would benefit the Malays more than the English. Using these tactics that earned the British the port of Singapore, Raffles earned some 17,000 pounds for the projected school. After the meeting Raffles and a few of the men walked around town and located a site of the school.[53]

Raffles believed that the Empire had the obligation to bring justice and Western civilization to the people in the colonies. He did not do this out of malice; he did this with the belief that his system was superior and the way of the future. In his statement on the formation of the Malay College in Singapore he mentioned this obligation. Education protected trade. If the uneducated were not given a chance to make money then evil activities would result, there by threatening the trade that earned them money.

In Raffles' statement on the formation of the college, he demonstrated his sense of history. He knew that all great empires ended and the same would take place with the British. Considering that the Empire had not reached its peak in power this was quite a remarkable statement:

---

[50] Raffles, *Statement*, 55, 56.

[51] Ibid.,67.

[52] Abdullah Kadir, *The Hikayat Abdullah*, trans. A. Hill (Kuala Lumpar: Oxford University Press, 1970), 180.

[53] Ibid., 181.

[T]hese monuments of her virtue will endure when her triumphs have became an empty name. Let it be still the boast of Britain to write her name in characters of light; let her not be remembered as the tempest whose course was desolation, but as a gale of spring, reviving the slumbering seeds of mind, and calling then to life from the winter of oppression."[54]

In one of Raffles's final acts he proclaimed certain rights that protected everyone. Proclaimed on June 26, 1823, the rights included equality of the law, the right to a fair trial, and the voice of public opinion. The rights also went as far as to recognize the native institutions of religion and inheritance.[55] For this time, these were extremely liberal laws and a great deal different from those of the Dutch.

Slowness of communication allowed Singapore to exist. The news of the founding took weeks to reach Calcutta, and months to reach the decision-making governments in Europe. While this time lapsed, the port of Singapore grew to an immense size.[56] Upon returning to Singapore after a few months, Raffles wrote that his free port would "destroy the spell of the Dutch monopoly; and what Malta is in the West, that may Singapore become in the East".[57]

The *Calcutta Journal* wrote of the founding on March 19. This article was reprinted in *The London Times* on September 7, 1819, some six months after the founding. It praised the location of the port that offered "protection of our China and Country trade".[58] It also supported the move against the Dutch and their exclusion tactics in the area and predicted that the future port would grow at a rapid rate. The work also noted the return of the East Indian colonies to the Dutch and a subsequent return to their restrictive trade practices: "The spell of Dutch monopoly, so justly reviled and detested, and which had nearly been again established, has been dissolved by the ethereal touch of that wand broke in pieces the confederacy".[59]

The formation of Singapore caused a problem for the members of the Secretary of the Colonies in London. A member of the British East India Company had established a port recognizing another sultan. This presented the government with a problematic question. *The Times* praised the event and copied the entire reaction of the *Calcutta Journal*. The government in London had a different view; it had treaties to live up to. However, with the commercial implication understood by the businessmen and traders of England, the reaction of Whitehall changed.[60]

With the economic realities facing the British government they recognized the right of Singapore to exist. This matter did not end until the Treaty of London in 1824. The treaty called for the Dutch to recognize Singapore and also give up their position in Malacca. In return, the British empire would hand over its settlements in Sumatra. This would clearly divide the spheres of influence as the British held colonies on the Asian mainland and the Dutch in the East Indies.[61]

The treaty also contained measures introduced by Raffles to stop these types of disputes. With the clearly defined spheres in the Far East, none of the powers could interfere with each

---

[54] Emerson, *Malaysia*, 87.

[55] Ibid., 85.

[56] Andaya, *The History of Malaysia*, 110.

[57] Moore, *The First 150*, 48.

[58] *The London Times*, 7 September 1819.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Flower, *The Story of Singapore*, 29.

[61] Bastin, *Selected Readings*, 134.

other's territory. Also, agents in the area could not start new settlements. This authorization could only be given from the home governments back in Europe.[62]

In a few years the success of Singapore became evident. Twenty years after the founding it had grown to an amazing size. The population included Indians and Arabs from the Middle East, Armenians and Chinese from different ends of Asia; European residents included people of English and Jewish backgrounds. The diversity came from the main industry of the area, shipping. Most of the vessels that docked in Singapore remained Asian and these called from the ports of Calcutta and Madras. However, by this time, vessels from Europe were not that all uncommon.[63]

Raffles's impact on imperialism has two main components. First, he changed the very definition of imperialism, not only for Britain but also for Europe. This change yielded much better living conditions for the natives in the area under his control, as seen in the reforms he enacted on Java during the five years he managed the island. These reforms improved the relationship with the natives and increased production. Secondly, his formation of a free port at Singapore welcomed a turning point in the imperial history of both Britain and Holland. This action led to British power increasing in the region and Dutch power decreasing. Free trade enabled Singapore to become a major economic force. This demonstrated the economic power in this area. Singapore shipped massive amounts of goods, while producing very few herself.

---

[62] Emerson, *Malaysia*, 84.
[63] Joanna Moore, *Malaya and Singapore* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 38.