

2H.1 Founding of Singapore



For these History content notes, they will be packaged nicely into three main categories for easy use of statistics and explanations.

Colonisation in Southeast Asia by the West

1) Trade/Profit ("Gold")

- Increase in demand of exotic items
 - Spices (e.g. pepper, nutmeg, cinnamon)
 - Found in Southeast Asia (East Indies); Spice Islands
 - Extremely popular in the West
 - China Trade (e.g. tea, silk, porcelain)
 - Such exotic items found could only be found in China and were very popular in the West
 - Southeast Asia was almost a necessary stopover point for merchant ships travelling from Europe to China and vice-versa
- Industrialisation (this is only in the later half of 1800s)
 - Rubber (automobiles: tyres)
 - Malay Archipelago and Vietnam had land and suitable climate for rubber plantations (and cheaper labour)
 - Tin (plate and cans)
 - Tin mines could be found at Malay Archipelago, e.g. Perak, and had been producing tin for quite some time
- Being in control of the trade such materials was necessary for the Western Powers as these natural resources could be found in abundance (therefore cheaper) and thus by selling them back to Europe, great amounts of profit could be made.

2) Pride ("Glory")

- Empire Building
 - Supporting and strengthening own homelands
 - Profits generated through trade in Asia could be used to developed their own countries
- Rivalry and Competition with Other European Powers
 - "Land grabbing" to secure territories due to their strategic locations
 - This was evident in Africa, America and now Southeast Asia
 - Strategic locations could limit trade and spheres of influence of other European Powers
 - For example, Singapore breaking Dutch monopoly
 - Superiority and national pride for countries with more colonies

- Having more colonies were necessary for the pride of the European nations as well as to undermine other Powers, so as to help develop their own homelands (which of utmost importance, because better homeland is another reason to be proud) through obtaining riches and profits.

3) Religion (“God”)

- White Man’s Burden
 - Viewed themselves as superior race as compared to Asians
 - Responsibility of West to teach the uncivilised East
 - Through colonising them, Powers developed the colonies, such as building ports, warehouses and providing education.
- Monopoly of Natives
 - Native traders would prefer to trade amongst themselves instead of with the Western merchants
 - These traders were mostly Muslim and religion was the key reason as to why they did not want to trade with Europeans.
 - Thus by advocating Christianity and converting the Muslim traders, the European merchants would no longer be limited.
- Advocating of Christianity was to make trading easier for the European merchants, such as converting the Muslim traders to make them trade with the West, as well as developing the “uncivilised” colonies, in order to turn them into ports for trade to be facilitated, so that the West can earn profits through the taxes on entrepot trade and calling at their ports

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Colonisation of Singapore by British

1) Combat Dutch monopoly

- Disadvantaged by Dutch Monopoly
 - British had a late start at Southeast Asia
 - Spent most of the 17th and 18th century in India
 - Whereas Dutch spent that time in Southeast Asia
 - Control over both trade routes
 - Malacca close to Straits of Melaka
 - Malacca was “abandoned” in an attempt to force traders to call at Batavia, so the harbour was not cleared, the facilities (such as warehouses) were not maintained, so merchants had no choice but to go to Batavia.
 - Batavia close to Sunda Straits
 - Dutch headquarters at Southeast Asia

- High tariffs imposed on British ships
 - To make British goods less attractive in comparison to Dutch ones
 - British could not trade profitably anymore
 - Free trade policy in Singapore solved this issue too
- Singapore has a strategic location
 - Entrance of Straits of Melaka
 - Right smack in the centre of Southeast Asia
- Reason why British were even concerned with combatting the Dutch monopoly was because they were unable to trade nor profit properly in the region anymore due to the high tariffs imposed.

2) Trade/Profit

- Singapore allowed British a platform to trade and profit
 - Ships indulging in China trade (tea) had to pass through Southeast Asia
 - Southeast Asia was a stopover point to refuel and engage in entrepot trade.
 - Facilities, such as warehouses, were set up at Singapore to encourage entrepot trade
 - Southeast Asia itself had natural resources too
 - Spices, i.e. cinnamon, nutmeg
 - British could also profit from Singapore by collecting taxes from merchants who call there.

3) Failure of Other Ports

- Inability to attract traders due to location
 - Penang
 - Too far north from Straits of Melaka
 - Too much time wasted deviating from trade route
 - Not many traders attracted there, so entrepot trade was minimal
 - Thus even less reason to visit
 - Therefore it failed.
 - Bencoolen
 - Wrong side of Sumatra -> Not even along the trade route
 - Not many traders attracted there, so entrepot trade was minimal -> Thus even less reason to visit
 - Therefore it failed.
 - Therefore British had to look for a better port -> Singapore

- Convenient location right smack in the middle of Southeast Asia
- Deviation from trade route is minimal
- The other ports failed in terms of attracting traders and generating profits for the British, thus profits and trade are actually the most important factor for the setting up of Singapore due to the fact that Singapore could achieve that and generate revenue for the British

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Reasons for British Intervention in the Malay Archipelago

1) Tin (“Gold”)

- Industrial Revolution in Britain was happening
 - Specifically, rubber and tin were most coveted.
 - Rubber for tyres (not relevant though)
 - Tin for the canning industry
- Malaya had plenty of tin mines
 - Perak
 - Selangor
 - Sungei Ujong
 - Negri Sembilan
- To keep up with demand of tin, more (and cheap) tin had to be found – Malaya
- Social and Political Issues in Malaya were affecting the amount of tin being extracted, which was affecting the development of Britain which was undergoing the Industrial Revolution (demand of tin was high).
- Thus it can be said that tin was the main reason that the British intervened so that the tin supply would be stabilised and can then fulfil the high demand in Britain (again link back to Industrial Revolution). It must be noted that the already high demand in tin was further increased with the lack of supply, which caused the demand to further skyrocket.

2) Need for social stability (“God”)

- Civil wars were happening
 - Perak
 - War between the two secret societies (Larut Wars)
 - Ghee Hins and Sai Hans
 - Tin miners were Chinese due to their intelligence and efficiency

- Rivalry was intense and war took for nearly four years and even the Sultans and Malay chiefs took sides, worsening the situation
- Thus, the amount of tin that was being extracted dropped while the demand for tin did not.

- Sultans could not guarantee safety in the mines nor offer protection to the miners.
- People did not dare work in the mines in fear for their safety.
- Tin prices skyrocketed and the British wanted tin due to Industrial Revolution

▪ Succession Dispute

- *refer to the chart*
- Basically the royal hierarchy is such that when the Sultan dies, all the other positions are *supposed* to move up by one position but clearly this did not happen for some of them.

Council of Chiefs: powerful – could leave out unsuitable candidate	Sultan an old man with experience of government	Raja Muda	Raja Benda-hara	Raja Di-hilir son of Sultan
1841-57	Abdullah	Ja'afar	Ali	Yusof*
1857-65 Abdullah died	Ja'afar	Ali	Ismail* Yusof, Abdullah's son, bypassed	Abdullah
1865-71 Ja'afar died	Ali	Abdullah* skipped one post	Ismail remained in the same position	* Contenders to throne when Ali died

- When Ali died, Abdullah was in Southern Perak and was not at his deathbed, so Ismail was made Sultan

- Ismail was also easier to be controlled by the Malay Chiefs

- Abdullah was unhappy and wrote to the British to garner help for himself
 - He also made Yusof the Raja Muda to gain support.
- British recognised him as Sultan but Ismail did not care; thus Perak was split into two
 - Northern Perak – Ismail
 - Southern Perak – Abdullah

- British stepped in due to the presence of tin and because political circumstances and issues were arising such that the supply of tin was being compromised. For the succession dispute, if the British did not step in and this dispute caused a civil war, the supply of tin would be affected and demand by the British which was undergoing the Industrial Revolution could not be satisfied. The inability to satisfy this demand would also further increase the demand for tin in Britain.

3) Fear of intervention by other colonial powers ("Glory")

- Other colonial powers were becoming more powerful
 - i.e. Germany (they were colonising aggressively)
 - had just defeated French
- Malay states were "free" and not colonised by any power
- Wanting to maintain their sphere of influence in Malay Archipelago

4) Opening of Suez Canal ("Glory")

- Less travelling time due to shorter distances
- European countries and merchants literally flooded to Southeast Asia
 - French went to Siam
 - Dutch went to Aceh
 - Germans went to Malaya (attempts)
- To protect trade route along Straits of Melaka
 - Reduce competition
 - i.e. might as well keep it for myself to avoid others from coming into the region
 - Afraid to lose foothold in the region

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