Origins: From Temasek to the Free Port (c. 1330–1866)

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- **c. 1330**: The merchant-traveller Wang Dayuan sails through the Nanyang. His *Daoyi Zhilüe*, usually dated to 1349, describes the settlement of Danmaxi (Temasek).[1]
- **1365**: The Javanese court poem *Nagarakretagama* lists Tumasik among the vassals of Majapahit.[2]
- **c. 1398**: The ruler of Singapura flees north and founds a new settlement at Malacca.[3]
- **1407–1411**: Admiral Zheng He makes the first of his visits to Malacca in 1407. Parameswara travels to the Ming court with a delegation of 540 people in 1411.[4]
- **15 August 1511**: A Portuguese force under Afonso de Albuquerque captures Malacca.[5]
- **1528**: Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah II establishes the sultanate of Johor, which claims the inheritance of Malacca.[6]
- **1613**: The Portuguese burn a settlement at the mouth of the Singapore River.[7]

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- **1619**: The Dutch East India Company, founded in 1602, establishes its Asian headquarters at Batavia.[8]
- **January 1641**: Dutch and Johor forces capture Malacca from the Portuguese.[9]
- **1786**: Francis Light acquires Penang from the sultan of Kedah for the East India Company.[10]
- **1811**: The Temenggong Abdul Rahman moves his residence to the Singapore River.[11]
- **1818**: Malacca returns to the Dutch in September. Lord Hastings agrees in the same year to fund an expedition to establish a new British base in the region.[12]
- **28–29 January 1819**: Raffles lands on St John's Island and reaches the Singapore River the next day.[13]
- **6 February 1819**: The treaty with Sultan Hussein and the Temenggong gives the East India Company the right to establish a factory. The date counts as the founding of modern Singapore.[14]
- **1819**: The Hokkien Cho Kah Koon, the oldest recorded Chinese clan association, is founded. Two Arab merchants from Palembang settle in the town in the same year.[15]
- **10 June 1819**: Raffles writes to Colonel Addenbrooke that "one Free Port in these seas must eventually destroy the spell of Dutch monopoly".[16]
- **1820**: The Ghee Hin Kongsi, the earliest secret society in Singapore, appears in the records. In May, Farquhar establishes the first police force.[17]
- **1821**: Alexander Guthrie arrives in Singapore. The firm that becomes Guthrie & Co. grows from his branch.[18]
- **1823**: Raffles issues regulations on land, the market and the administration of justice. A hill is levelled to reclaim Commercial Square, later Raffles Place. Farquhar is removed on 1 May and succeeded by John Crawfurd.[19]
- **January 1824**: The first census counts 10,683 inhabitants, among them 4,580 Malays, 3,317 Chinese and 1,925 Bugis.[20]

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- **17 March 1824**: The Anglo-Dutch Treaty is signed in London. It divides the Johor-Riau world along the Singapore Strait.[21]
- **2 August 1824**: John Crawfurd's Treaty of Friendship and Alliance cedes the island in full sovereignty to the East India Company.[22]
- **1825**: Trade reaches 22 million dollars on one count and 12.3 million dollars on Wong Lin Ken's series. Some 120 Bugis ships call at the port.[23]
- **1826**: Penang, Malacca and Singapore are combined into the Straits Settlements.[24]
- **27 November 1826**: The Second Charter of Justice establishes the Court of Judicature of Prince of Wales Island, Singapore and Malacca. The courts later read it as receiving the law of England into the Settlements.[25]
- **1829–1834**: The great agency houses of Calcutta collapse in a credit crisis.[26]
- **1832**: The seat of government of the Straits Settlements moves from Penang to Singapore.[27]
- **1833**: The Government of India Act ends the Company's monopoly of the China trade. Guthrie & Co. adopts its name.[28]
- **1835**: Press restrictions are lifted and merchants found the *Singapore Free Press*.[29]
- **1837**: The merchants found the Singapore Chamber of Commerce. Admiralty jurisdiction is added to the court.[30]
- **1840**: The Hokkien Huay Kuan is formed. The Singapore branch of the Union Bank of Calcutta issues the first banknote bearing the name Singapore. Behn, Meyer & Co. is founded on 1 November.[31]
- **1841–1842**: The junk trade peaks at 18,400 tons of arrivals. By 1865–1866 the figure has fallen to 3,280 tons.[32]
- **1845**: The P&O opens a steamship service through Singapore carrying mail and passengers between India and China.[33]
- **1846**: The Bank of Western India, later the Oriental Bank Corporation, opens branches in Singapore and Hong Kong.[34]

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- **1852**: The P&O moves its coaling station from the Singapore River to the New Harbour.[35]
- **May 1854**: The Hokkien–Teochew riots, the most serious of the century, cost hundreds of lives.[36]
- **12 August 1855**: The Third Charter of Justice reorganises the Court of Judicature into two divisions.[37]
- **1855–1856**: The Mercantile Bank establishes itself in Singapore. The sources diverge on the exact date.[38]
- **October 1857**: Most of the European community signs a petition to Parliament for direct Crown rule.[39]
- **1858**: Control of land grants passes from the East India Company to the Crown.[40]
- **1859**: The Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China opens an agency in Singapore, upgraded to a branch in 1861. The first telegraph cable to Singapore fails after a few days.[41]
- **1865**: HSBC opens in Hong Kong on 3 March and begins business in Singapore through an agency.[42]
- **10 May 1866**: The failure of Overend, Gurney & Co. starts a crash that closes the Singapore branch of the Asiatic Banking Corporation.[43]

Notes

1. Wang Dayuan, *Daoyi Zhilüe*; on the dating, see Chapter A.I. ↩
2. Wikipedia, "Temasek" (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.I. ↩
3. Wikipedia, "Malacca Sultanate" (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.I. ↩
4. Wikipedia, "Malacca Sultanate" (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.I. ↩

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5. Wikipedia, “Malacca Sultanate” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.I. ↩
6. Wikipedia, “Johor Sultanate” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.I. ↩
7. Wikipedia, “Temasek” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.I. ↩
8. See Chapter A.I and the literature cited there. ↩
9. Wikipedia, “Johor Sultanate” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.I. ↩
10. See Chapter A.I. ↩
11. Wikipedia, “Founding years of modern Singapore” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.I. ↩
12. Wikipedia, “William Farquhar” and “Founding years of modern Singapore” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.II. ↩
13. Wikipedia, “Founding years of modern Singapore” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.II. ↩
14. Wikipedia, “1819 Singapore Treaty” and “Founding years of modern Singapore” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.II. ↩
15. Kua Bak Lim, “Of blood and geography”, *Culturepaedia*; Wikipedia, “Arab Singaporeans”; see Chapters A.IV and A.V. ↩
16. Raffles to Colonel Addenbrooke, 10 June 1819; see Chapter A.II. ↩
17. “Heaven, Earth and Brotherhood”, *BiblioAsia*; Wikipedia, “William Farquhar”; see Chapters A.II and A.V. ↩
18. Wikipedia, “Guthrie (company)” (accessed November 2026); see Chapter B.II. ↩
19. Wikipedia, “Jackson Plan” and “William Farquhar”; see Chapter A.II. ↩
20. National Library Board Singapore, “First census of Singapore is taken”; see Chapter A.II. ↩
21. Wikipedia, “Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.III. ↩

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22. Wikipedia, “Founding years of modern Singapore” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.III. ↩
23. Wikipedia, “Founding years of modern Singapore”; Wong Lin Ken, “Singapore: Its Growth as an Entrepot Port, 1819–1941”; NLB, “Bugis trade”; see Chapters A.II and A.IV. ↩
24. Wikipedia, “Straits Settlements” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.III. ↩
25. Supreme Court of Singapore, “Celebrating 200 years of upholding the Rule of Law”; see Chapter A.III. ↩
26. Borscheid and Haueter, “Institutional Transfer”; see Chapter B.II. ↩
27. Wikipedia, “Straits Settlements” (accessed September 2026); see Chapter A.III. ↩
28. Wikipedia, “Charter Act of 1813”; AIM25, “Guthrie & Co”; see Chapters A.II and B.II. ↩
29. “The First Newspaper”, *BiblioAsia*, vol. 11, issue 4; see Chapter A.IV. ↩
30. On the Chamber, NLB Infopedia (founding in February 1837); on admiralty jurisdiction, Kevin Y.L. Tan, “The Second Charter”; see Chapters A.III and A.IV. ↩
31. Wikipedia, “Thian Hock Keng”, “Straits dollar” and “Behn Meyer”; see Chapters A.V, B.II and B.IV. ↩
32. Kua Bak Lim, “Winds of trade”, *Culturepaedia*; see Chapter A.IV. ↩
33. Library of Congress Country Studies, *Singapore*, “Colonial Singapore”; see Chapter B.V. ↩
34. Wikipedia, “Oriental Bank Corporation” (accessed November 2026); see Chapter B.II. ↩
35. Wee Beng Geok, “The Story of Two Shipyards”, *BiblioAsia*; see Chapter B.V. ↩
36. Wikipedia, “Secret societies in Singapore”; see Chapter A.V. ↩

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37. Supreme Court of Singapore, "Celebrating 200 years of upholding the Rule of Law"; see Chapter A.III. ↩
38. Ong Eng Chuan, "Money Lending: A Short History", *BiblioAsia*; see Chapter B.II. ↩
39. Wikipedia, "Transfer of the Straits Settlements" (accessed October 2026); see Chapter B.I. ↩
40. B.L. Chua, "Land Registration in Singapore and the Federation of Malaya"; see Chapter A.III. ↩
41. Wikipedia, "Standard Chartered Singapore"; Ulrich Speidel, "A short history of Singapore's role in the cable world"; see Chapters B.II and B.V. ↩
42. Wikipedia, "HSBC"; HSBC Singapore, "HSBC in Singapore"; see Chapter B.II. ↩
43. Wikipedia, "Agra Bank"; "A Brief History of Banks in the Straits Settlements and Malaysia"; see Chapter B.II. ↩

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