The Treaties of 1824 and the Legal Foundations of British Singapore: summary

Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland and Germany),
Solicitor (England & Wales and Hong Kong)
Of Counsel, KGP Legal LLC
alexander.ressos@kgplegal.com.sg
www.ressos.com.sg

The Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 17 March 1824 ended the Dutch objection to British Singapore, exchanged Bencoolen for Malacca and drew a border through the Singapore Strait that still separates Singapore and Malaysia from Indonesia. The Treaty of Friendship and Alliance of 2 August 1824 completed the transfer of the island to the East India Company in exchange for payments to the sultan and the Temenggong, whose political role declined rapidly thereafter. The Second Charter of Justice of 27 November 1826 gave the Straits Settlements a common court and became the vehicle for the reception of English law, qualified by regard for the religions, manners and customs of the inhabitants and supplemented in 1878 by the continuing reception of English commercial law. The Application of English Law Act 1993 closed the colonial chapter of reception by fixing the common law as it stood on 12 November 1993 and limiting English statutes to a closed list. The development of land title from the Company's leases through deeds registration in

© 2026 Dr Alexander Ressos. General information only, not legal, tax or investment advice. No client relationship is created. All Singapore law advice is provided by a duly licensed and regulated firm of Singapore advocates and solicitors only on the basis of an express written letter of engagement. More information at SingaporeIQ.com and ressos.com.sg.

1886 to the Torrens system of 1956 completed the legal foundations – a clear sovereign, a court, a known law and secure property – on which the financial centre was built.

Disclaimer

This article is provided for general information only. It is based on publicly available sources as at its date of publication. These sources have not been independently verified against licences, regulatory registers or the records of the entities concerned. It is not legal, tax, financial or investment advice. Nor is it a recommendation to invest in, transact with or use the services of any entity mentioned. Law and regulation change frequently, so the content may be incomplete or outdated. To the fullest extent permitted by law, Dr Alexander Ressos and the publisher of SingaporeIQ exclude all liability for loss or damage arising from the use of or reliance on this article. Readers should obtain advice on their specific circumstances before acting or refraining from action.

Names and trademarks of the entities discussed belong to their owners and are used for identification only. Their mention implies no endorsement, affiliation or allegation of wrongdoing. All Singapore law advice is provided by a duly licensed and regulated firm of Singapore advocates and solicitors only on the basis of an express written letter of engagement. Corrections and updates: contact@ressos.com.

© 2026 Dr Alexander Ressos. This article may be quoted with attribution to SingaporeIQ (SingaporeIQ.com). Reproduction in full and any commercial use require prior written consent. The Legal Terms at https://singaporeiq.com/legal-terms apply.

Author contact: Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP · contact@ressos.com