

The Ancient History of Singapore

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THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF SINGAPORE

BRIAN E. COLLESS

It seems fitting that, on the occasion of the commemoration of the founding of modern Singapore 150 years ago, we should look further back than the year 1819 and see whether another examination of ancient documents can bring to light new data on the early history of Singapore. Accordingly it is here submitted that a previously unrecognised reference to Singapore, under another name of course, is to be found in a well-known Indian document written nearly 950 years ago. Such a discovery gives immediate rise to further speculation regarding the possibility that this island was also known to Chinese and Arab geographers and merchants as an important trading centre and possibly known as such as early as the second century of the Christian era.

It is interesting to note that at the time of Singapore's centenary celebrations in 1919 G. Rouffaer commenced work on a gigantic study, in which he sought, among many other things, to push the known history of Singapore well back into the first millennium of our era, by establishing the equation "Mahasin=Hasin=Toemasik=Singhapoera".¹ Rouffaer has thereby bequeathed us a collection of important texts and materials together with some interesting suggestions about the early history of Singapore and Johore; but unfortunately he made a number of errors in the identification of certain toponyms, such as Langkasuka, which he would not have made if only he had been able to consult Paul Wheatley's magnificent handbook of Malayan historical geography, *The Golden Khersonese*, not published until exactly forty years later, in 1961, but now freely available to us to assist in correcting older discredited opinions. At the same time there are some important points concerning Singapore that have been missed by Rouffaer and Wheatley also, which will be presented here for consideration. We shall consider these under three main headings, according to the historical period to which they belong, namely *Majapahit* (14th century), *Srivijaya* (before 1300), and *Funan* (before 550).

(1) THE MAJAPAHIT PERIOD

As is well-known, Singapore was formerly called Tumasik or

1. G. P. Rouffaer, "Was Malaka emporium voor 1400 A.D., genaamd Malajoer? En waar lag Woerawari, Mā-hasin, Langka, Batoesawar?", *Bijdragen Kon. Inst.*, 77 (1921), 1-174; 359-569.

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Temasek, a name included in the list of Majapahit dependencies in the fourteenth century. From the same period we have a Chinese description of the island and its trade, in the *Tao-i Chih-lioh*, compiled in 1349 by Wang Ta-yüan, who had personally visited the trading kingdoms of the South Seas. The texts relative to Malaya and Singapore have already been presented and analysed by Wheatley (81-86; 303-305). On the one hand we are told of "Dragon-Teeth Strait" (*Lung-ya-men*), identified as the Keppel Harbour passage between the south coast of Singapore Island and Pulau Blakang Mati. Here lived and roved the notorious "*Tan-ma-hsi* (Temasek) barbarians", the Orang Laut of the region. The most striking feature of this description is the statement that "the natives and the Chinese dwell side by side", which seems to be *the first record of a Chinese community in Malaya*.

On the other hand we have an important description of *Pan-tsu*, which was wrongly taken by Rouffaer to be Bintan (Rouffaer, 156, No. 44). This was an unfortunate choice, since his case for the antiquity of Singapore was thereby weakened considerably. As it is a vital link in the chain of reasoning to be constructed here, Wang Ta-yüan's account of *Pan-tsu* is reproduced here in Wheatley's translation (Wheatley, 83):

This locality is the hill behind *Lung-ya-men*. It resembles a truncated coil. It rises to a hollow summit (surrounded by) interconnected terraces, so that the people's dwellings encircle it. The soil is poor and grain scarce. The climate is irregular, for there is heavy rain in summer, when it is rather cool. By custom and disposition (the people) are honest. They wear their hair short, with turbans of gold-brocaded satin, and red oiled-cloths (covering) their bodies. They boil sea-water to obtain salt and ferment rice to make spirits called *ming-chia*. They are under a chieftain. Indigenous products include very fine hornbill casques, lakawood of moderate quality, and cotton. The goods used in trading are green cottons, lengths of iron, cotton prints of local manufacture, *ch'ih chin* (half-tael coins), porcelain-ware, iron pots, and such like.

As Wheatley observes, the hill behind *Lung-ya-men* or Keppel Harbour can only be the eminence that dominates Singapore City, namely Fort Canning Hill. The building operations of recent times have changed the face of this landmark, but we are fortunate in having John Crawfurd's description of the ruins of ancient Singapore, now readily accessible in Wheatley's indispensable manual (120-122). Crawfurd speaks of the remains of an extensive wall and a moat and then goes on to describe the features of the hill:

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After being cleared by us of the extensive forest which covered it, it is now clothed with a fine grassy sward, and forms the principal beauty of the new settlement. The greater part of the west and northern side of the mountain is covered with the remains of foundations of buildings, some composed of baked brick of good quality. Among these ruins, the most distinguished are those seated on a square terrace of about forty feet to a side, near the summit of the hill. . . . Another terrace, on the north declivity of the hill, nearly of the same size, is said to have been the burying-place of Iskander Shah, King of Singapore.

Crawfurd made this examination of the site early in 1822. He also mentions a stone monument inscribed with Majapahit characters but in an unidentified language (Rouffaer, 35-67; 370-372; 404-406). Chinese coins, the oldest from about the middle of the tenth century, are also mentioned by Crawfurd, but unfortunately these are unreliable for dating purposes.

Nevertheless, it will now be submitted that this hill was in fact occupied at that time and that Singapore was part of the Srivijayan commercial empire. To this end the evidence of the Tanjore inscription will be invoked, together with Arab and Chinese documents.

(2) THE SRIVIJAYAN PERIOD

(a) THE TANJORE INSCRIPTION

This Tamil *prasasti*, which is inscribed on the south wall of the Rajarajesvara temple in Tanjore and which records the Cola raids on the empire of Srivijaya early in the eleventh century (c. A.D. 1025), has often been studied. Wheatley (199-203) has an analysis of this document in which nine of the places are positively identified, leaving four still in doubt. The established identifications are: *Srivijaya* = Palembang; *Pannai* = Pane, on the east coast of Sumatra opposite Klang; *Malaiyur* = Jambi; *Ilangasoka* = Langkasuka, shown by Wheatley to have been in the Patani region on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula; *Talaittakolam* = Ptolemy's *Takola*, and, we may add, the Chinese *Ko-ku-lo* and the Arab *Qaqullah*, located at present-day Takuapa, more particularly on Kakhao Island; *Madamalingam* = Tambralinga, almost certainly located at Ligor; *Ilamuri-desam* = Marco Polo's *Lambri* in the north of Sumatra; *Nakkavaram* = the Nicobar Islands; *Kadaram* = Kedah.

The unidentified places are *Mappappalam*, *Mayirudingam*, *Mevilimbangan*, and *Valaippanduru*. The first of these, (*Map)pappala(m)*, corresponds in my view to the *P'an-p'an* of the Chinese histories and to the *Fawfal* of Ibn Sa'id, located at Kra, for Ibn Sa'id places it

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north of *Qaqullah*(Takuapa) and the River *Taragha*(Trang). The full argument is presented elsewhere.² It would also appear that *Mayirudingam* represents Trang or else some kingdom along the transpeninsular route of the Trang River, for it certainly corresponds to Chao Ju-kua's *Jih-lo-t'ing*, located in the general area of Grahi and Ligor. This Chinese form led Rouffaer(76ff.), as also Gerini before him, to identify this place with Jelutong, the region around the River Jelutong, east of Singapore in Johore. This is highly unlikely and it is not even mentioned by Wheatley, but it was the best Rouffaer could do to get Singapore into the Tanjore inscription.

It is important to remember that according to the legends of the *Sejarah Melayu* Raja Shulan of Negapatam was said to have attacked Gangga Nagara, situated "at Dinding on the other side of the Perak River" (possibly corresponding to Ptolemy's *Konkonagara*); then he moved on to Ganggayu, a fort up the Johore River, thought to be on the Lenggiu, a tributary of that river; finally he occupied Temasek. It has often been asserted that this is a memory of Rajendra's Cola raids; if so we might expect to find mention of these places in the Tanjore inscription. The unidentified *Mevilimbangam* might be Gangga Nagara in Perak. I notice that there is a Belimbing on the Pergau, a tributary of the Kelantan River in Kelantan not far from the border of Perak; there is also a *Bilimbim* inland from Malacca on Eredia's map of the Malacca district (1613). Rouffaer suggested *Mevilimbangam* as Dinding (or perhaps Bruas or Klang, he added), but *Valaippanduru* he identified with Pandurang or Phanrang in Champa. Ironically Rouffaer thereby sent into exile the very reference to Singapore that he was seeking. It has always been a puzzle why *Panduru* was prefixed with *Valai*, and it has been suggested that it represented the Cham *palei*, meaning "village" (perhaps influenced by Tamil *valai*, meaning "fortress") to go with the identification Phanrang.

If we accept the hypothesis that the Tamil form *Panduru* (giving it a more exact transliteration for purposes of comparison) corresponds to Wang Ta-yüan's *Pan-tsu*, with its rampart and ditch running down to the sea, the description "fortress", instead of an honorific *Maha-* or *Sri*, becomes intelligible. The Tamil and Chinese forms are perhaps representations of Malay *Panchur* (*Pantjoer*). In

2. For a discussion of this and many other new interpretations taken for granted throughout this study see B. E. Colless, "Persian Merchants and Missionaries in Medieval Malaya", to appear in *JMBRAS*, 1969, Part I; "The Early Western Ports of the Malay Peninsula", to appear in the *Journal of Tropical Geography*, 29 (1969). It should be noted that D. G. E. Hall (*History of South-East Asia*, 2nd Edn, 59) includes, apparently erroneously, "Tumasik the old name for Singapore Island" in his list of places in the Tanjore inscription that can be identified.

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this regard we may note anyway that Rouffaer (424f.) gives notes on a place of that name in D. F. A. Hervey's description of his trip up the Johore River in 1879. On one occasion Hervey wrote concerning Panchur (sited on Rouffaer's map just past Johore Lama): "Panchur itself is said to owe its name to an ivory conduit made by a former Raja to bring water to a pond in which he and his household might disport themselves". On another occasion he wrote: "At Panchur, where I also touched on my way down the river, the high bank . . . is *the site of an old fort*, traces of where the guns were placed are still visible, but part of the site is now used as a burial ground". This is rather striking: perhaps this Panchur was *Panduru* and perhaps also *Pan-tsu*. But there is another Panchur mentioned by Rouffaer (378-381), namely *Pantjoer Larangan*, likewise a bathing-place for the Sultan's wives: this Panchur was on the Singapore hill, itself once known as Bukit Larangan, as well as Bukit Bandera, Government Hill, Fort Canning Hill, and Singapore Hill (Rouffaer, 373).

One difficulty with the equation *Panduru* = *Panchur* = *Pan-tsu* is the Chinese transcription, for whereas initial or medial *r* is regularly represented by *l*, final *r* is usually signified by *-n*. Possibly we might compare, however, the name *Sawar*, to be mentioned below, which is also written *Sawa*. (But the Ming History has *Pan-tsu-eul*).

The arguments presented are not conclusive, but we shall continue with the working hypothesis that Singapore was a centre of trade in the eleventh century and turn to the Arab accounts of the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago to see whether Singapore is hiding there under one of the many unidentified place-names.

(b) THE ARAB GEOGRAPHERS

Wheatley (216-232) gives information from Arabic sources on six places thought to be on or near the Peninsula. These are (1) *Kalah*, for which Wheatley suggests Mergui, but which is seen quite clearly to be Klang in the Malacca Strait when compared with the Chinese evidence relating to *Ko-lo*, also called *Ku-lei* etc.; (2) *Qaqullah*, for which Wheatley can offer no definite suggestion, but which is to be equated with *Takkola* and identified with Takuapa and Kakhao Island off the mouth of the Takuapa River, as stated above; (3) *Panhang* (wrongly written *Fanjab* and the like by Arab scribes), which is obviously Pahang; (4) *Tiyumah*, which is clearly Pulau Tioman near Pahang; (5) *Sanfin*, which is unidentified, but which may be the place known to the Chinese as *Chan-pin*, located between Coromandel and *Ku-lo* (*Klang*) and therefore not Singapore; the only possibility left is *Māyt*, also called *Mayd* or *Mand* by some writers.

Mayt was close to *Jaba*, i.e. Sumatra, and one day's sailing to the

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south of Tioman Island, according to Ibn Khurdadhbih, writing in about A.D. 850. This certainly fits Singapore's position. For Buzurg (date unknown) *Mayt* lay between Champa and Srivijaya, and it produced gold, cotton, and honey. The later books of Idrisi (12th century) and Ibn Sa'id (13th century) are very instructive. Each writer has two separate accounts in his works, doubtless because each has borrowed from various sources without realising that *Mayt*, *Mayd*, and *Mand* were only variants of the same place-name.

Idrisi has *Mayt* as a dependency of the king of Jaba (*Srivijaya*), situated one day from Pulau Tioman, and producing coconuts, bananas, sugar-cane and rice.

Ibn Sa'id says that *Mayd* is north of the island *Muja*, from which it is separated by a channel some half a degree in width. The inhabitants take honey and wax to China. The Indian Ocean ends here and the Encircling Ocean begins. Travellers sometimes reach thus far, but then turn away in order to reach *al-Jawa* (Sumatra). (This may be interpreted as saying that the Arabs' normal sailing route lay along the Malayan side of the Malacca Strait as far as Singapore, then they crossed over to the Sumatran shore on their way to Srivijaya). At the place where the two seas meet is the River *Khumdan*, which usually means Changan in China, but might mean Kuantan in this context. Elsewhere he speaks of the Island of *Mand* and also *Bintan* (Ferrand, 343f.)³, which is obviously the large island of that name at the eastern end of the Straits of Singapore, one of the complex of three large islands, namely Singapore, Batam (south of Singapore), and Bintan (east of Batam). Now, combining Ibn Sa'id's two accounts we have *Bintan* and *Muja*, with *Mayt* north of *Muja*. It is thus highly likely that *Mayt* is Singapore, that *Muja* is Batam, and that *Bintan* is of course Bintan. In Idrisi's other account (Ferrand, 189-191) there is a similar group of three islands, namely *Muja*, *Suma*, and *Mayd*, of which *Suma* is the largest and is situated two days from *Muja* (Batam) and four days from *Mayd* (Singapore). *Suma* must therefore be an alternative name for Bintan.

Idrisi's statement concerning *Mayd* is important, in that it seems to explain how the Chinese community of Singapore came to be settled there:

"It contains a great number of towns, is vaster and more fertile than *Muja* (Batam), and its inhabitants are more like the Chinese than are the other peoples of the countries neighbouring on China It is there that Chinese ships coming from the islands of China meet and stop; this is the island they head for and this is the point from which they set out to go elsewhere."

3. G. Ferrand, *Relations de voyages et textes géographiques arabes, persans et turcs. . . .*, 2 tomes (Paris 1913-4).

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Perhaps we have here an indication that by the eleventh century the situation described by Wang Ta-yüan in the fourteenth century was already established, "the natives and the Chinese dwell side by side". It should be noted also that the first Arab reference to *Mayt* comes from the middle of the ninth century.

Wheatley points out that *Mayt* should be compared with a place mentioned by Fei Hsin (15th century), namely *Ma-i-tung*, which also produced cotton and sugar-cane. This point will have to be followed up, but on the matter of cotton, because attempts to introduce it to the Peninsula and the Riau-Lingga have failed in modern times and it is today only cultivated in Java and South Sumatra, Wheatley is dubious about this detail. Yet it is surprising to note that the only reference to cotton in Ferrand's index is to the Buzurg description of *Mayt*. It is also striking to note that the indigenous products of *Pan-tsu* were supposed to include cotton (a commodity also mentioned in connection with *Hsia-lai-wu*, which, situated "below *Ku-lei*" or Klang, is necessarily either Selangor or Sungei Ujong). All these coincidences seem to compel us to the conclusion that *Mayt* is Singapore.

There remains the account of Ibn Yunus, quoting Khwarizmi on *Maydh*, also called *Kul*, watered by a river and containing three villages. For *Kul* some texts have *Krk* or *Knk*. These may be attempts to reproduce Kalang, the name of a river and a town in Singapore according to Rouffaer's map, while *Kul* may indicate Cape Gul in the south west corner of the island. Then again, there may be a connection with the Galuh discussed by Rouffaer (96f., 114-116, etc.). But what of the name *Mayt*? This paragraph is already thick with stabs in the dark, but the suggestion is offered that it represents all the Arabs and Persians could remember of the name Pulau Blakang Mati, but I have no idea how long that name has been attached to this island.

(c) THE CHINESE RECORDS

Before attempting to identify Singapore in the earlier Chinese historical and geographical literature, we should first establish what the Chinese knew about the southern point of the Peninsula during the Srivijayan era. One source of information is Chia Tan's sailing itinerary of about A.D. 800, preserved in the T'ang history (Wheatley, 56f.)⁴. Here is the relevant portion of the route, from Pulo Condore off the coast of Vietnam:

After five days' journey one reaches a strait, which the foreigners call *chih* (*selat*?) and which is 100 *li* from south to north.

4. See also O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce. A study of the origins of Srivijaya* (Ithaca, New York 1967), 187 f.

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On its northern shore is the kingdom of *Lo-yüeh*; on its southern shore is the kingdom of *Fo-shih* (Srivijaya). Some four or five days' journey over the sea eastward from *Fo-shih* is the kingdom of *Ho-ling* (Java), the largest island in the south. Then emerging from the strait, in three days one reaches the kingdom of *Ko-ko-seng-chih* (somewhere on the east coast of Sumatra. Siak?).

The strait mentioned is the Singapore Strait, so we would expect *Lo-yüeh*, on its northern shore, to be located in Johore, probably on the Johore River. Wheatley (59,157) states that beads indicating early settlements have been found at Kota Tinggi and Johore Lama, but he does not mention Moens' very credible identification of *Lo-yüeh* with *Seluyut*, the name given to a stream and to Bukit Seluyut on the Johore River between Kota Tinggi and Johore Lama. The T'ang history also records that *Lo-yüeh* was 5,000 *li* (emend to 50 *li*) inland, and that traders passing back and forth were accustomed to meet there. This statement resembles the Arab statement that *Mayt* was the meeting place for Chinese ships.

But can we find a reference to Singapore itself from this period? Rouffaer (67-75) suggested it was *Mo-ho-hsin* island, found in I-Tsing's list of "islands", or major kingdoms (*chou*), in the South Seas in the late seventh century (Wheatley, 54; Wolters, 199 ff.):

An enumeration from the west. There is *P'o-lu-shih* (Barus), *Mo-lo-yu* (Malayu, Jambi), which is now *Shih-li-fo-shih* (Srivijaya), *Mo-ho-hsin*, *Ho-ling* (Java), *Tan-tan*, *P'ên*, *P'ên*, *P'oli*, *Chüeh-lun*, *Fo-shih-pu-lo* (Vijayapura in western Borneo), *O-shan*, and *Mo-chia-man*. There are also some small *chou*, which cannot all be recorded.

In Wolters' opinion all these places are situated in the Indonesian Archipelago, and in this interpretation *Mo-ho-hsin* cannot be Singapore. But if I-Tsing names "Barus" (which has been shown by Wolters to be distinct from the Barus on the west coast of Sumatra) on the north-east coast of Sumatra, why should he not include some of the kingdoms on the lower regions of the Malay Peninsula too? Thus *Tan-tan* has to be squeezed into a somewhat overcrowded Java in Wolters' scheme, but it has been taken by Wheatley and others to have been situated on one of the *kualas* on the lower east coast of the Peninsula. My suggestion is to see in *Tan-tan* a transliteration of *Kuantan*. Wolters himself notes a case where the name *Tan-tan* designated a place on the Malay Peninsula: "in the 1785 addition to the *Wên hsiên t'ung k'ao* the section on Johore states that Trengganu, *Tan-tan* and Pahang, all on the southern Malay Peninsula, were dependencies of Johore" (Wolters, 203). To my mind this is a clear reference to Kuantan, and even though the transliteration is faulty it is quite intelligible.

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Tan-tan is preceded by *Mo-ho-hsin* and *Ho-ling* and followed by *P'ên-p'ên*. This last name could conceivably be the same as *P'an-p'an* (Pappala, *i.e.* Kra), but this is really too far north for this list and if we accepted it we would have to find a reason for the omission of Langkasuka and other east Malayan kingdoms. Rather the suggestion Pembuan on Borneo's southern coast for both *P'ên-p'ên* and *Pu-p'en* (mentioned elsewhere by I-Tsing as being north of *Ho-ling*) is much more acceptable. Finally *P'o-li* is also placed by Wolters on Java; but it is a perfect transliteration of Bali, and Wolters' reason for neglecting this is not clear, but he has no reference to Bali in his index. In any case the remaining toponyms in the list refer to Borneo and the rest of the Archipelago, probably including the Philippines. Thus my interpretation sees I-Tsing moving across the map from west to east naming the various South Sea countries of importance, not confining himself to the southernmost parts of the Java Sea, as in Wolters' interpretation, but moving from south to north and back again as he moves from west to east, thereby including the Malay Peninsula's southern portion.

On this interpretation of I-Tsing's list there is no serious impediment in the way of the suggestion that *Mo-ho-hsin* was Singapore, or else a kingdom on the Johore River. This neatly fills the apparent gap in I-Tsing's writings, where apparently nothing corresponding to *Lo-yüeh* in the extreme south of the Peninsula is found.

But what is the meaning of the name *Mo-ho-hsin*? Rouffaer (67-75) connected it with *Hasin*, found in the famous Airlangga inscription of the early eleventh century, which he interprets as meaning "Salt-city" or "Sea-city". One cannot help asking, however, whether it might not represent *Mahacina*, "Greater China". The Arabs and Persians considered that India stretched from the borders of Persia to Kalah (Klang) and, loosely speaking, after Kalah came China. Thus Yaqut places Klang "at the beginning of India, on the edge of China". The name *Masin* seems to be the Arabic and Syriac form of *Mahacina*, but as far as I can see at the moment its appearance in these languages is rather late and when it is used it is not certain that it includes any country below Indochina. The 16th-century navigator al-Mahri has in his manual a "section on the sea routes of China" (*al-sin wa-ma'l-sin*) Wheatley, 234, 237), which commences at Singapura. (At that time the lower Malay Peninsula was included in the term "the Siamese mainland".)

It would be foolhardy to go further and suggest that Singapore was called "Greater China" because a Chinese colony was established there as early as the seventh century. Nevertheless we shall see whether the equation *Mo-ho-hsin* = *Mahacina* can stand up to the critical scrutiny of other scholars. In any case we need to keep in

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mind the important point concerning Singapore in the Srivijayan period: it was an important meeting place for the Chinese (as also Seluyut on the Johore River), and Arab observers thought that the people of this island (*Mayt*) resembled the Chinese more than any other peoples along the route to China.

(3) THE FUNAN PERIOD

In his chapter on rumour and report about the Malay Peninsula in the third century of the Christian calendar, Wheatley (14-25) looks at the names of kingdoms that probably belonged on the Peninsula. From the *T'ai-p'ing Yü Lan* we can extract the following names of kingdoms situated across the bay from Funan in Indochina to as much as 3,000 *li* southwards: *Tien-sun* (on the northern part of the isthmus), *Pi-sung*, *Tu-k'un*, *Pan-tou* (or *Pien-tou*), *Chü-li*, with *Ko-ying* situated one month's journey south of this last named place.

The full argument for the synthesis of this material will be presented elsewhere in the context of a wider study on the significance of the Malay Peninsula in the Funan and Srivijaya periods. It is here submitted, however, that the picture of the Golden Khersonese presented in Ptolemy's *Geographia* is quite coherent and compatible with the early Chinese evidence from the third century. This statement contradicts recent assertions that deny a second-century date to Ptolemy's South-East Asian data. The fact is that Ptolemy's place-names find more coincidences with the Chinese forms from the third century than from any other period. Here is a brief outline of the synthesis of the Chinese and Ptolemaic accounts:

- (1) *Besunga*, in lower Burma, corresponds to *Pi-sung*.
- (2) *Beroba*, a port on the isthmus, corresponds in position, though not in name to *Tien-sun*.
- (3) *Takola* is Chinese *Tu-k'un* (presumably a transcription of the *takur* mentioned by Wheatley, 271), later called *Kakula* by the Arabs and the Chinese, and situated at modern Takuapa.
- (4) *Kalonka*, placed on the same latitude as the *Khrysoanas* River along which gold was doubtless transported from the inland to the coast on the Malacca Strait, is to be compared with *Ko-ying*, which was known as a source of gold (Wolters, 60) and, in my view is to be identified with Klang.
- (5) *Kolé* was the main city on the east coast and corresponds to *Chü-li*, which was situated near a large headland jutting out into the sea, and for this and other reasons is to be located at Ligor.
- (6) *Sabara* is the important place for our present purpose. (The other towns may be dismissed from this discussion with a

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tentative identification each: *Konkonagara* is the Gangga Nagara of the *Malay Annals*, *Palanda* is a Greek attempt to pronounce *Pahang*, while *Tharra* might be Trengganu). *Sabara* was an emporium on the southern tip of the Golden Khersonese, and Wheatley allows the possibility that it was Singapore (151 f.).

It would certainly seem that we should connect *Sabara* (or *Sabana*) with either Singapore or one of the sites up the Johore River. In this latter region we have already placed *Lo-yüeh* on the Seluyut River, a tributary of the Johore, between Kota Tinggi and Johore Lama, and we have noted that there is a place Panchur in the same area. It is now time to notice that Rouffaer places *Batu Sawar* (or *Batu Sawa*) and *Kota Sabrang* on his map between Kota Tinggi and Seluyut. He discusses these names from the *Sejarah Melayu* at great length (436-495), but he does not identify Ptolemy's *Sabara* with either. Rather he leans towards the name *Sabang*, the name of the Strait (*Sabam* to the Portuguese) between Sumatra's eastern shore and Pulau Kundur, while not excluding the possibility that *Sabara* is Singapore (98).

The significant point is that in the time of Ptolemy in the second century there was an important trading centre in the extreme south of the Malay Peninsula. And the only name left on the Chinese list to couple with *Sabara* is *Pan-tou*. One can hardly overlook the fact that this looks remarkably like the *Panduru* and *Pan-tsu* of a much later age. Was the fort on the hill on Singapore Island already in the second century the centre of a kingdom trading with India and Persia on the one side and with Indochina on the other side?

Whatever the precise answer to that question, the picture built up by Wheatley of the early historical geography of the Peninsula is in need of radical alteration. Wheatley found it impossible to fit Ptolemy's picture into his own frame, because, it needs to be pointed out, his synthesis was constructed on a faulty basis, namely the hypothesis that there was no important trading centre on the lower Malayan coast until Malacca was founded (159,232,303). In this opinion he has been followed by Wolters, and so the picture of early Malay history presented by these two scholars is somewhat distorted. It needs to be realised that since the second century at least there has been a Malayan emporium inside the Malacca Strait as well as at either end: Klang was flourishing as a trading kingdom and guarding the narrowest stretch of the Strait more than a thousand years before Malacca took up this role, while Takola at the northern entrance and Singapore-Johore in the south beckoned to ships using the Straits and solicited their trade.⁵

5. See note 2 above.