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# MAPS AS SPRINGBOARDS TO LEARNING HISTORY

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Maps are useful sources of information and valuable aids to instruction. They show what a place or an area looks like. Topographic maps can be used to examine the relationship between topography, patterns of settlement and lines of transport. Census maps can be used to determine trends and patterns, in population while historical maps constitute important aids to the study and analysis of border disputes, military campaigns, political situations and landscape changes.

How do maps serve as springboards to historical enquiry? Basically, maps present information in a compact, visual, and hence easily communicable, form. It makes more sense, for example, to explain events such as troop movements or growth patterns using a map rather than describing them solely with words. Maps with some relief details help to broaden pupils' understanding as they show the role geography plays in shaping an event. For instance, it can be very easily understood why the early settlements were confined to the coastal plain and mouths of rivers when one examines the relief features, the coastal configuration and the vegetation depicted on old maps of Singapore. Certainly, helping pupils to infer from map details is a **pupil-centred** activity which engages pupils in the basic skills of historical research – that of sifting evidence and coming to a considered conclusion.

The exercises below show how maps can be put to good use to facilitate and broaden pupils' understanding of a historical event. These exercises also illustrate in a concrete way the concept of change and continuity in history. A study of the maps can reveal how the cultural and physical landscapes of Singapore have developed and changed over time.

## The Changing Landscape of Singapore

### ***A Map Study***

1. Examine the map in Figure 1, which shows the town of Singapore and its environs in 1822.
  - (a) Briefly describe the location and distribution of settlements in 1822.
  - (b) Why were the settlements mainly located along the coast and rivers? Why was the interior uninhabited?
  - (c) Why did Raffles select the Singapore River as the site for a settlement?
  - (d) What evidence suggests that parts of the coast were uninhabitable?
  
2. Look carefully at the map in Figure 2 which shows the town of Singapore and its environs in 1835.
  - (a) Based on map evidence what changes do you see in
    - i) the pattern of settlement
    - ii) the transport pattern
    - iii) the natural vegetation
  - (b) In which direction has the settlement grown?
  - (c) In 1835, Bukit Larangan was shown on the map as Government Hill
    - i) what does the change in name suggests?
    - ii) what were the events leading to this?
  - (d) The map shows a number of crops under cultivation.
    - i) where and why were they cultivated?
    - ii) what impact did the cultivation of crops have on the natural vegetation?





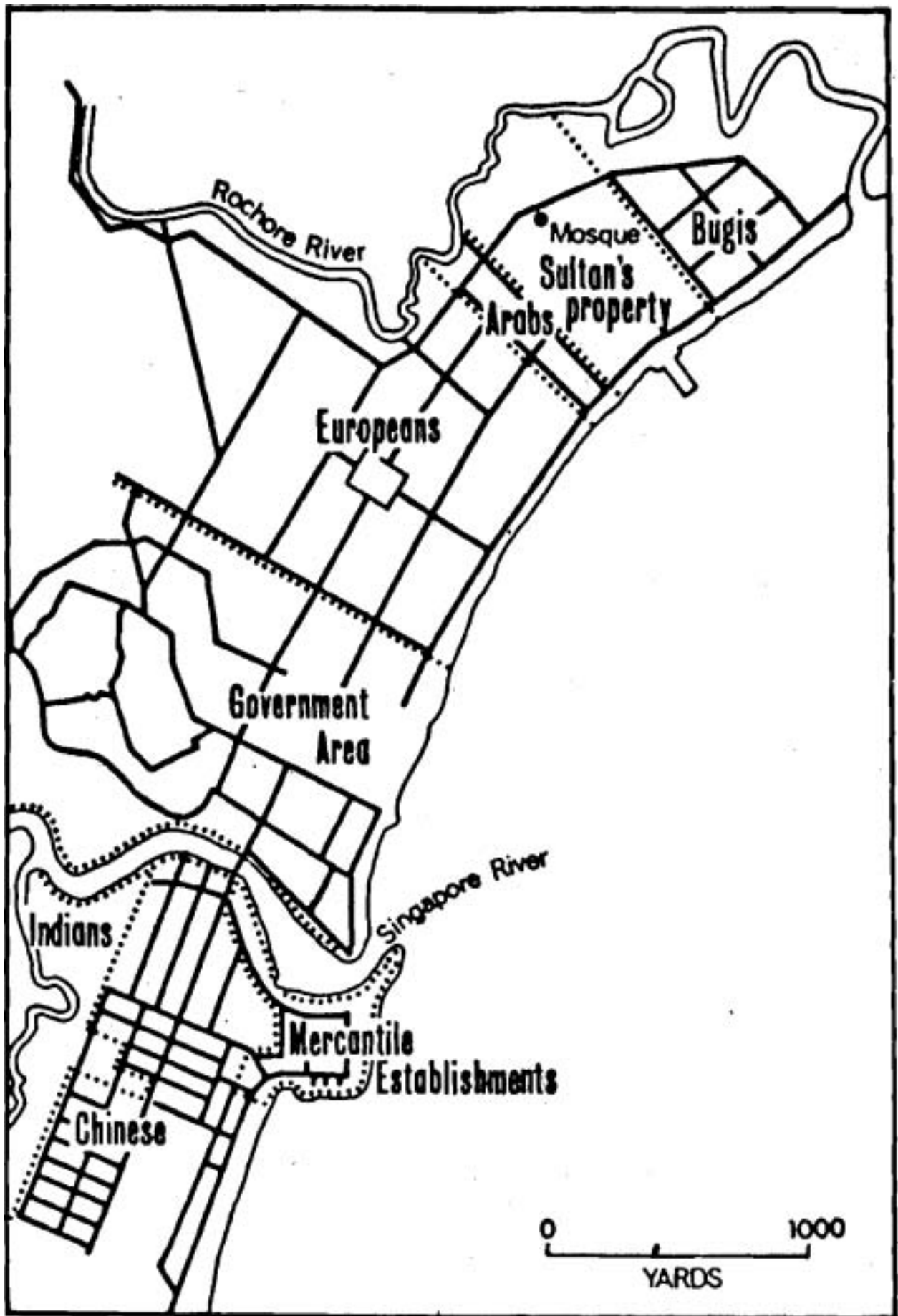


Figure 3

Figure 3 shows the proposed racial groupings in Singapore city in 1828"

- (a) where were the Arabs and **Bugis** located?
- (b) why were the Chinese and Indians given a location on the south bank of the river?
- (c) when Raffles drew up plans for the town of Singapore he gave specific instructions to Col. Farquhar that the "whole space included within the old lines and the Singapore River is to be considered as cantonments". What is a cantonment? In what ways was the area specified by Raffles advantageous for cantonments?
- (d) Examine a map of Singapore city today. What features of the old settlement as envisaged by Raffles still remain?

\* When Sir Stamford Raffles founded Singapore in 1819, he established a plan for the town which was designed partly for aesthetic effect but primarily for order and control by grouping the different communities in specified areas under their own headmen.

The left bank of the Singapore **River** and the plain **was to** be reserved for the cantonment and official quarter together with the land on the opposite bank at the river mouth. The Europeans town was to be laid out east of the cantonment and all Chinese were to settle on the right bank of the river.

Thus from the commencement of British rule, Singapore was destined not only to be a commercial centre but in the limited sense of the word, a planned city.