

## **TRADE, ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND ASSIMILATION IN THE PORTUGUESE-CREOLE COMMUNITY IN THE MELAKA-SINGAPORE REGION, 1780-1840**

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### **Abstract**

The story of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese/Portuguese Eurasian community in Singapore and Malaysia saw increasing voice (albeit in different intensity) on both sides of the border to assert their identities. While the theories and modelings of mixed race and related studies for contemporary society have made great strides in progress, similar paradigms are not always been applied to the study of communities in history. Past paradigms (involving theory of tribe) have been applied to the study of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities in Southeast Asia, such as by L. Andaya, focuses to some extent on the attributes (traits/outcome) of the community. This paper induces a few perspectives about the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities in the Singapore-Melaka region which showed them to locate themselves in more than one strata of society. At the extreme, certain sub-groups could even hold more than one identity. With the sub-group affiliated with the Dutch, which was most well-supported in evidence, the traits were maintained implicitly and explicitly in the families through the women married into them as well as the posts held under the Dutch cum indigenous colonial administration. With the transition into the British era, Portuguese/mixed Portuguese sub-communities embraced Anglicized influence in Melaka and Singapore while the lower sub-groups were very likely indigenized further. The political economy of the Dutch (and British) activities in the East Indies impacted directly to mold the traits and behaviors of the Portuguese / mixed Portuguese sub-communities; influencing at times to some extent on the faith and religious aspect of these sub-communities. The formative influences of the 1780-1840 that the Dutch and British colonial authorities left behind set the tone of the development of these sub-communities in the next hundred years or so.



### Keywords

Mixed race (studies), mixed/creole Portuguese, transitional period 18-19th century, tribe theory, Melaka (Malacca), Singapore, Dutch/British colonial period in Malaya

### Resumo

A história da comunidade portuguesa/mista portuguesa/portuguesa euroasiática em Singapura e na Malásia viu aumentar as vozes (embora em intensidade diferente) em ambos os lados da fronteira para afirmarem as suas identidades. Embora as teorias e modelos de raça mista e estudos relacionados para a sociedade contemporânea tenham feito grandes progressos, paradigmas semelhantes nem sempre são aplicados ao estudo das comunidades na história. Paradigmas anteriores (envolvendo a teoria da tribo) foram aplicados ao estudo das comunidades portuguesas / portuguesas mistas no Sudeste Asiático, tal como por L. Andaya, que se concentra até certo ponto nos atributos (características/resultados) da comunidade. Este artigo induz algumas perspectivas sobre as comunidades portuguesas / mistas portuguesas na região Singapura-Malaca que mostraram que se localizam em mais do que um estrato da sociedade. No extremo, certos subgrupos poderiam até ter mais do que uma identidade. Com o subgrupo afiliado aos holandeses, que foi mais bem apoiado em evidências, as características foram mantidas implícita e explicitamente nas famílias através das mulheres que as obtiveram através do seu casamento, bem como os cargos ocupados sob a administração colonial holandesa e indígena. Com a transição para a era britânica, as subcomunidades portuguesas/mistas portuguesas abraçaram a influência anglicizada em Malaka e Singapura, enquanto os subgrupos inferiores foram muito provavelmente ainda mais indigenizados. A economia política das actividades holandesas (e britânicas) nas Índias Orientais teve um impacto directo na formação dos traços e comportamentos das subcomunidades portuguesas/mistas portuguesas; influenciando, por vezes, até certo ponto, a fé e os aspectos religiosos destas subcomunidades. As influências formativas de 1780-1840 que as autoridades coloniais holandesas e britânicas deixaram para trás definiram o tom do desenvolvimento destas subcomunidades nos próximos cem anos ou mais.

### Palavras-chave

Raça mista (estudos), português misto/crioulo, período de transição do século XVIII-XIX, teoria das tribos, Malaca, Singapura, período colonial holandês/britânico na Malásia

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### **Introduction and brief literature review**

The contemporary situation in the last two decades in Singapore and Malaysia has (re-)surfaced the issues of the Eurasian sub-communities in these respective societies. In Malaysia as in Singapore, the attempt of these sub-communities to assert their identities was needed to engage the local and national politics of the day. The forces of market, post-colonial and globalization propensities have also elicited new stresses and awareness that generated decentralized tendencies that lend a hand to the survival (and/or revival) of the sub-communities. The contemporary issues, not surprisingly, raises the awareness that certain developments in historical societies; albeit fueled by more traditional forces-in-operation, manifested similar and dissimilar trajectories with later societies in which the Eurasian communities were a part of. A recent work by Brenda Yeoh *et al.* (2019) on the Eurasian community in parts of Southeast Asia revealed about the perceptions of individuals of the community in the post-colonial and post-independence context. The comprehensive literature survey of the subject-matter probed the mixed-race studies temporally and spatially, this diversely defined community had to negotiate with power relations as well as (new) processes of globalization in order to forge their identity and survival. Further in terms of spatial survey, the mixed race (mestiço) studies in South America are highlighted because it is 'most' sophisticated being performed there. On Southeast Asia, the works of G.L. Chew and Z.L. Rocha for instance are highlighted how marriages, colonial legacies, development of languages (etc.) created sublime if not obvious differentiation between the mixed race and other segments of the community. Embedded in the researches and multi-perspectival approaches is the canvassing (not exclusively) for the historical angle, in particular in G.L. Chew's *A sociolinguistic history of identities in Singapore*; advocating for a 'middle path' (between essentialism and constructivism that "allowed for participation of human beings in the dynamics of history" (Chew, 2013: 10). Specifically on historical Southeast Asia, Brenda Yeoh *et al.* pointed out the research on mixed-race is 'most sophisticated'



in Dutch or French colonial studies<sup>1</sup>. It is noted that mixed-race studies are more multi-perspectival, often including a historical angle. The coverage on the different (niche) geographical areas continues to be uneven. This is affirmed to some extent in, for instance, in P. Havik and M. Newitt edited *Creole societies in the Portuguese colonial empire*, which did not feature any chapter on Southeast Asia despite coverage on varied regions around the world (Havik and Newitt, 2015). Historical/colonial studies on communities in Malaya is still relatively lacking compared to studies on the East Indies. Focusing the (literature) survey on the (early) modern periods in Southeast Asia, there existed limited but specific studies such as by J. Villiers (1986), R. Daus (1989), R. Fernando (2004), J. Taylor (2005), N. Hussein (2006), S. Bosma and Raben (2008), Halikowski-Smith (2011) and D. De Witt (2012). The brief listing revealed several trends about the sub-field of mixed-race studies linking specifically to 'Eurasians' in the Archipelagic (in particular, Singapore-Malaya) region. i) Research done in the 1980s on the Portuguese in Southeast Asia focused on the 'formal' jurisdiction of the group in the region (specifically Melaka) and its associated (historical) phase in the 15-16th century period. At the same time, Daus' work (1989) also shed light on some traits and developments of the Eurasian community in Melaka (and the region); this community appeared to have evolved into broad sub-classes. ii) In the post-2000 period, Hussein's work added intricate details to the Portuguese mixed-race community in Melaka while Fernando's article (2004) made particular note about the broader petty and diverse trading community that peruse the Malacca Straits. De Witt's article in 2012 made refinements to the understanding of the community in Melaka in the areas such as the mutual perception of status, the intermediary status of the Portuguese Eurasians (etc.). iii) On the Dutch or French colonial studies that Brenda Yeoh et al. pointed out to be potentially contributive to modern studies, these were usually located in the period of high imperialism although there were some allusions to the early modern period. Further, Halikowski-Smith's work (2011), although focusing on early modern Siam (Ayuthaya), made the connection to archipelagic (Portuguese) diaspora (from Makassar). Some take-aways from Dutch studies relating to the period under investigation were: the Dutch (and the British during the 1811-16 interregnum) attempted to modify the customs and traits of the Portuguese mixed-race community (apparently without too much success). The underclass, involving those who resisted the colonial reforms, also most likely belonged to the marginalized sub-groups. A paradigm that was adopted to analyze the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese sub-groups in Southeast Asia (Halikowski-Smith 2011, earlier in Andaya & Andaya 1995) was the modeling of the tribe. With the loss and passing of the Portuguese Melaka in the 17th century, the adoption of the modeling of the tribe to examine the Portuguese in Southeast Asia was an apt fit for a collection of sub-communities that continued to keep-up certain aspects of Iberian customs and cultural characteristics. The progress of historiography on the theory of the tribe and mixed-race studies, in conjunction with issues arising in contemporary society in the associated

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<sup>1</sup> Yeoh's study naturally focused on the evolution of 'race' in the Dutch and French (colonial) studies because these two colonial states had been most proactive in applying 19th-century ethnology in the governance of their colonies. Early definitions of a 'race' referred to a division in humankind based on differences in origins, (geographical) distribution and distinctive (biological) characteristics. A mixed race sub-group arose when the different racial groups interbred and evolved along a path of hybridity.



(Eurasian) communities in Singapore-Melaka, are gradually compelling a re-look of these communities; in particular, of their developments in the past.

A plausible hypothesis that can undergird this paper which professes to re-explore and examine the Portuguese-creole communities in the Melaka-Singapore region in the historical period (1780-1840) is: The surviving Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities in Southeast Asia continued to keep-up some/certain aspects of Portuguese culture inherited from shades of community life lived prior (when the Portuguese held power in Melaka). With sub-groups devolving into intrinsically identifiable assemblage of people, whether permanently settled in a place or forming part of the larger sojourning network, the description of these sub-groups could take on a more complex and diverse picture, in line with more advanced/late work done on tribe theory and mixed-race studies. More importantly, the transition of the sub-groups in a period of changing hegemonies (in particular, 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries) gave rise to an amalgamated but less-than-unitary set of cultural characteristics/identities that would define the evolutionary path of the mixed Portuguese / Eurasian communities in the next hundred years or more in the Singapore-Melaka region (broadly speaking, peninsular Southeast Asia).

The focus of this paper is directed to the discussion of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities in Melaka in the long period after the fall of Melaka (17<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> century), and by extension of the close lineage links between this settlement (Melaka) and Singapore, similarly communities in Singapore in the immediate period following its founding (1819). In terms of the structure of this paper, the lines of probing and investigation approach the research along three strands of inquiry in the main body (of the paper). First, the authors will re-visit the argument fielded by L. Andaya and probe into the sub-groups and characteristics mooted by the eminent Southeast Asian scholar. Second, the authors will probe into the Portuguese / mixed Portuguese sub-groups that existed in the Singapore-Melaka region and the identities (tagging with the associated traits/characteristics) which they existed in. Third, the authors will attempt to make an analysis and explanation on the evolved form of the sub-communities from the perspective of the changing Dutch-British political economy, their attitude towards religion and their broader environmental background. The limits of the analytical approach undertaken in this paper may be briefly broached: evidence for the communities-in-investigation (especially the minority or marginalized groups) in the early modern transitioning into the modern period is fairly limited. Therefore, this paper hopes to utilize extant sources, including secondary ones, and attempt a re-look of these. In the process, some degree of theorizing may be merited.

### **Issues of ethnic diversity and framework**

L. Andaya (1995) referred specifically to four relatively diverse sub-groups across the East Indies region (*casados*, native Christians, *Marijkers*, and *Pampangers*) who were married Portuguese (descended from Albuquerque's initiative) or were converted locals, Indian slaves as well as Filipino mercenaries. Andaya posited that these sub-communities were linked by a set of common traits (creole language, Catholic religion and European dress) inherited from their Portuguese heritage. The sources of Portuguese/mixed Portuguese cultural presence and perpetuation in Southeast Asia depended to some extent on the maintenance of the mixed (including the slave) population. Later scholars such as Stefan Halikowaski-Smith (2011) drew upon the paradigm of the tribe for his



work on the Portuguese community in Ayuthaya and explored the static and transitional aspects of their traits. The Portuguese community in Ayuthaya was bolstered partly from sub-communities from the other parts of archipelagic Southeast Asia. The idea of the 'tribe', as used in these works, referred to a group or groups of people, likely of the same ethnicity, maintaining activities (political, economic etc.) at the most basic level of societal organization. Apart from the main thesis, Andaya also conjectures that the identity of the creole groups attenuated (or was weakened) at the beginning of the 19th century; arising from the loss of traits that members in the group usually practiced. This, according to Andaya, arose when the Dutch shifted their favor and needs towards the native slave population in substitution for the mixed Portuguese ones. This resulted in the reduced need for the use of the language and Portuguese-styled dressing; which eventually spelt the demise of the Portuguese community (tribe) in the region. Even if Catholicism continued to be practiced, the catechism and mass were conducted in the native Malay language (!) (Andaya, 1995: 138-42).

We can take a closer look at the groups mooted by Andaya to probe the general characteristics of mixed Portuguese or creole groups and whether these typified the sub-groups inhabiting in the Singapore-Melaka region. Of the four sub-groups [*Casados*, *Mardijkers* (ex-slaves / later members Tugu community), native Christians (Maluku), *Pampangers* (Luzon / Maluku)] discussed by Andaya, the *casados*, followed by the native Christians and ex-slaves, had the most potential of embracing the creole Portuguese characteristics. The *Pampangers*, while they were employed by the Portuguese (or Spanish), were also likely to adopt some of these characteristics. *Casados* most likely inhabited in the established colony-settlements of the *Estado da Índia*. A. Theodoro de Matos has prior distinguished between formal and informal Portuguese colonies in the East although in light of contemporary paradigms, the path of inquiry might align better with reality if one does not over-stress on the boundaries between the two types of settlements. Amongst the traits highlighted for discussion in connection with the sub-community (language, religion and dress), the *casados* (and to some extent, the native Christians and ex-slaves) were most likely to embrace these traits in the 'formally-occupied' ports/enclaves (such as Melaka and Timor) in Southeast Asia. Across Archipelagic Southeast Asia, different places and settlements had received Portuguese injection in resources and manpower from the 16th century. While Melaka, and later Timor, was 'formally' conquered, one could locate several *feitorias* (factories) in Banda, Makassar, Martaban and Tenasserim as well as a variety of *fortalezas* (fortresses) in the other islands, such as in the Spice islands (Villiers, 1986: 52). There, the broader typification discussed by Fernando probably better described the itinerant, sojourning and settled mixed Portuguese sub-groups in the region. Even in the formally conquered Timor, 'miscegenated Portuguese', known as *topasses*, who although had been typified to dress in *chapeu* and partial European dressing, comprised of Portuguese, Florenese, Timorese, Indians, Dutch deserters (etc.) in reality. The implication was that the Portuguese mixed communities in the different parts of Southeast Asia, not least in the Singapore-Melaka region, was likely to be diverse in composition (Jesus Espada, 2003: 163-71).

Of the other sub-groups discussed by Andaya, native Indian Christians in the Bengal sea had been known by certain family names, which were Portuguese-sounding. Specifically, the portrait of Portuguese /mixed Portuguese individuals from a locality in Hughli in the



17<sup>th</sup> century wore a short-top headgear, linen shirt, doublet (or jerkins) and breeches mimicking the European fashion of the different periods (Halikowski-Smith, 2011: 232). These individuals and sub-groups frequently sailed across the Bengal sea and traded in Southeast Asia.

Andaya had acknowledged the importance of Melaka in the 16-17<sup>th</sup> century. Transitioning from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the trade and port (of Melaka) was 'still important' in the 1780-90s, this (trade) suffered to some extent in the 1820s as the port became a feeder facility to Singapore. There has been a conjecture that other than the limited presence in Melaka (in the 18<sup>th</sup> century), the diaspora of the mixed Portuguese people between the different (British) settlements only amounted to 'a trickle' because Portuguese / mixed Portuguese had been gravitating to and residing in mainland as well as outside Southeast Asia (Fernando, 2004; Fernando, 2006)<sup>2</sup>. Those who settled in Melaka and those who perused the port from outside constituted two rather distinct sub-groups, probably overlapped by peddler-type individuals from the bazaar. The ex-slaves (or *Mardijkers*), exemplified by the Tugu people in Batavia, usually wore a hat, spoke some degree of creole Portuguese, and attended church as well as relished or kept-up with some musical activities (kroncong Tugu) and festive observations (rabo-rabo). Dutch rule in Batavia, typified by a highly privilege-based colonial society in addition to Governor-generals who were keen to promote Dutch values and urban culture in the society they governed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century marginalized this mixed-race group; leading to a deterioration of the identifiable traits over time.

The mercenaries (*Pampangers*), discussed by Andaya, and who were recruited and deployed by the Portuguese and Spanish, appeared to originate from Luzon in the Philippines and likely to be Christianized. The attainment of the Iberians in war and weaponry reached its prime in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, this manifested in the form of a vibrant mercenary market in mainland Southeast Asia. The availability of the excess military labor arose partly from the diaspora that resulted from the fall of Melaka and other places in Southeast Asia where the Portuguese had been ousted from. At the tail-end period of the early modern era transitioning into the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1780-1820), native

<sup>2</sup> Discussion with Dr Radin Fernando, a specialist on Southeast Asia on the early modern trade of the region, revealed that other than the (stabilized) presence in Melaka in 18<sup>th</sup> century (referring to the diasporic trickle of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese in the Dutch and British colonial settlements), the group was more gravitated to and resided in greater numbers on the mainland (Southeast Asia). Mainland Southeast Asia was a highly commercialized place in the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, whether referring to Burma during the Taungoo period, Siam under the Ayuthaya dynasty, or the increasingly assertive Nguyen-controlled Cochin China, although incessant wars also occurred between these entities (most notably between the first two). The fall of the Taungoo and Ayuthaya kingdoms and the re-constitution of these states under the Konbaung and Chakri dynasties in 1752 and 1782 respectively were registered in primary and secondary sources to be difficult periods for the Portuguese or their mixed compatriots in terms of opportunities in commerce or military labor hire. In terms of the religious influence that the Portuguese had on mainland Southeast Asia via the Padroado (royal patronage) and the Company of Jesus, these saw the most progress in two 'provinces' instituted by the Company which also oversaw activities in Ayuthaya. Despite the numerically smaller group in Cochin China relative to that in Tonkin, this group saw 'more steady' development. However, all these came to an end with the suppression of the Jesuits and the Tayson revolt in the 1770s. The most probable draw for the remnant Portuguese not coming down to archipelagic Southeast Asia was the availability of the overland routes across the mainland amidst the instability occurring in the different periods. A number of these routes not surprisingly stretched across the narrowest part of the Siam-Malay peninsula to link up to the Gulf of Siam; where ports (such as Bangkok and Saigon) along the inner lining of the Siamese gulf and coasts of Cochin China were revived or become prosperous in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese sub-communities were 'comfortably' settled in Penang at the northern end of the Malay Peninsula when the settlement and port was founded there.



rulers in Asia who possessed the wealth and resources preferred to hire French trainers and mercenaries and Iberian employability as mercenary was diminished. A caricature of Portuguese mixed-race mercenary from Pagan in Burma in the late 18th century revealed a dwindling hire donning an unconventional headgear, doublet and breeches (the last worn without any stocking; in addition to the dispensation with footwear) (see picture 1 in Appendices). To assess the arguments fielded by Andaya, in particular, the extent to which they depicted the Portuguese / mixed Portuguese communities in Melaka (and by extension, in Singapore) from 17th – early 19th century: i) The different sub-groups discussed represented the archetypes of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese groups (tagged to the associated traits) in Southeast Asia. Of the four groups highlighted, three of these groups could lend a hand to describe the groupings found in post-1641 Melaka to some degree. ii) Andaya also pegged the survival of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities in Southeast Asia to the injection of creole members from the slave communities in particular. Accordingly, the fading of the mixed Portuguese community was the result of the diminution of the slave community; replaced by (a preference) for the native slave labor. The traits of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities survived in the later part of the 19th century because there was a ‘revival’ in these communities in the Melaka-Singapore region (Pereira, 2015). iii) Andaya’s utilization of the model of the ‘tribe’ highlighted the social/primal/intrinsic characteristics of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities. There is room for the conception of the modeling to incorporate more sophisticated theoretical development (of the tribe) as well as perspectives from other subject disciplines.

The modeling of the ‘tribe’, applied in L. Andaya and S. Halikowski-Smith’s works, can be perceived along a more malleable scale of social traits and/or combined with more modern theories/paradigms to arrive at a more holistic and realistic view of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese sub-groups in Singapore-Melaka history. A key agenda that arises is whether, and to what extent, a coherent framework can be crafted to describe mixed-race groups. Contemporary works such as that of C. Chivallon (2008) has attempted to map a typology of the theories and modeling that have engaged the ‘notion of creolization’. There existed different quadrants of theories that emphasize the ‘process’, ‘outcome’ (product) or a mixed of both in terms of the mixed-race developments. In the discourse, the hybrid/postmodern diaspora model stresses on the process (in line with the thrust of cultural studies) while the classical/continuity model stresses on the manifested traits (or outcome/product) of the mixed-race community. In-between, there are anti-classical and/or Caribbean models which stress on variant aspects of ‘performative creoleness’ (which could in turn be process- or outcome-based, depending on whether the attention is on the performative traits or their deconstruction)<sup>3</sup>. Andaya’s identification of the primal characteristics (language, religion and dress) can correspond to the concrete aspects of the ‘performative creoleness’, of the different mixed Portuguese sub-groups in Southeast Asia (*casados*, native Christians, *Marijkers*, and *Pampangers*). In modellings of neo-tribalism, advocacy is made for the conception of the ‘tribe’ to be beyond the traditional hierarchical association with more primal societal traits (Vorobjovas-Pinta, 2021). To be sure, Andaya also accounted for

<sup>3</sup> ‘Performative creoleness’ refers to something representational and semiotic (eg. a trait, which can be encapsulated in signs and symbols); that can be observed in a language or culture (etc.) associated with a group.





why the traits associated with the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities were able to be sustained before the 19th century (and why these faded afterwards). The schema might be applied more intently to niche sub-groups operating in the Singapore-Melaka regions. Portuguese/mixed-race persons pegging to a scale of social-economic stratification, for instance, might be linked to the diverse (economic) activities undertaken by people from this sub-group in the formal and informal world; and even eclectic sub-groups such as the Sephardic Portuguese might be incorporated in the related analytical discussion. Hence, more modern works, advocating for diverse contemporary manifestations of the mixed-race (or specifically, Eurasian) sub-groups, not only confer a multi-perspectival angle to the study of mixed-race (Portuguese) sub-groups in Singapore-Melaka settlements but unravel more about the processes of their development in historical time.

Apart from the association between certain cultural traits and the creole Portuguese group, one might observe that the maintenance of cultural traits in the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese sub-groups in Singapore-Melaka regions (themselves far from being homogenous) was contingent upon the group undertaking or collaborating in economic activities linked (or not linked) to the hegemonic group. The incorporation of additional variables such as their economic preoccupation, in combination with more contemporary modeling and/or conditions of historicity, could give rise to a more sophisticated picture of the grouping(s) (i.e., a picture that combines economic and cultural indicators). A preliminary conjecture may in fact be laid down at this point; to be taken up in discussion and verified in the next section. Groups on opposite ends of the societal spectrum – those who drew closer in economic collaboration with the hegemonic group (whether with the Dutch/British in Melaka or with the British in Singapore) and those who stayed at arm's length from the hegemonic group - exhibited their own tendencies to be reinforced or ramified/divested in the traits they practiced (Shils, 1981)<sup>4</sup>. Generally, all sub-groups were affected to some extent as the hegemonic powers (gradually) imposed their controls in the settlements discussed (Melaka and Singapore). Those who drew nearer to the Dutch (or British) became more Dutchified or Anglicized<sup>5</sup>, those who were little affiliated to the hegemonies-in-power and were marginalized became more indigenously miscegenated although Fernando (2004) reminded us that there was some aversion to this trend. It appeared that the sub-groups in the middling of the scale of sub-communities residing or sojourning, for instance, in Melaka had the most chance of

<sup>4</sup> The conflicts of tradition are manifested in: i) ramification – refers to a tradition breaking-up into parts (and continuing in some ways); ii) diverstiture (disaggregation) – a tradition evolving new facets while retaining aspects of the primary custom or practice; iii) attenuation – diminution of a tradition through conscious or unconscious interference; iv) dissolution (and resurgence) – death of a tradition or revival after its disappearance.

<sup>5</sup> The mixed Portuguese who trailed the British in the region had begun to adapt to the Anglicized culture in a number of ways: i) although "it was easy for Eurasians to pass as Europeans", there was some differentiation with Portuguese/mixed Portuguese dressing compared to British style; [...] (refer pictures in Appendices). They also adopted other British daily practices and customs; ii) In terms of language, there was increasing preference for English vis-à-vis creole Portuguese; iii) There was also a beginning tendency for Portuguese/mixed Portuguese to alter family names or nationality in order to facilitate their daily activities and trades. In Penang (British Straits Settlement) in the Malay Peninsula, Europeans or mixed Europeans wore a tricom with an even narrower brim. They wore a vest with long or no sleeves and their trousers stretched to the ankles fitted with shoes (rather than boots, with no apparent stocking on the outside). This represented as an initial part to the 'more stable' identity formed in the 'Golden age'.



preserving their identities although this would again be mediated by the larger environment (Singapore or Melaka) in operation.

### **Survey of Portuguese/creole sub-communities in Melaka-Singapore**

The transitional period (1780-1830) signaled a shift in the broader climate of trade and colonial interference along the Straits of Melaka. The resulting change in the pattern of commerce and activities heralded to some extent a new mode of affairs for the colonial and indigenous players in the region (British-Dutch rivalry, experimentation of free port system etc.). The nature of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese community in Melaka was in part a function of the interaction with external arrivals (in particular, traders) as well as the measures enacted by the colonizers governing the settlement. The link between the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese and trading community in Melaka was interceded by the matrimony of mixed Portuguese women to (Dutch) burghers (Hussein, 2007: 273-80, 287-90). R. Fernando has written in some detail on the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese (Fernando termed the latter as Luso-Asian) and made the observations that: i) case study personages (from the earlier part of 18th century) showed them to be making different self-identifications (such as 'burgher', 'Marijker' and 'black') in the harbormaster's records of Melaka when they visited the port at different times (Fernando, 2004)<sup>6</sup>. ii) Fernando made careful distinction between the Portuguese and mixed Portuguese (Luso-Asians), highlighting that the former was found in fewer numbers than the latter in the Straits of Melaka. iii) The malleability in identities was linked to the 'assimilative process' that had been deemed to have 'completed' by the 18th century. It was also likely that historical actors manifested different identities at different times in order to facilitate their trades. Mixed Portuguese persons underwent miscegenation in a couple of ways: i) Portuguese persons marrying indigenous women; ii) non-Portuguese persons embracing the Catholic faith, claiming a lineage that involved some element of Portuguese ancestry. Going into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the sub-communities in Melaka interacted with Straits (Penang and Singapore) and other urban (for instance, Kuala Lumpur) settlements, few mercantile persons (of Portuguese origins) were arriving in Melaka. The reduction of interaction with fresh input and influence from Iberia potentially left remnant mixed Portuguese culture in a stasis although it continued to evolve vis-a-vis the cultures of the other sub-communities. The remnant Portuguese persons in Southeast Asian archipelago (specifically Singapore-Melaka region) attempted to maintain their identity by marrying fellow Portuguese or other European families where possible.

Although L. Andaya has highlighted culturally or socially-related traits (language, religion and dress), broader economic (occupational) trait might be considered as a contributory input and characteristic of the Portuguese / mixed Portuguese sub-communities. The line of inquiry taken out so far appeared to reinforce the observation that the sub-communities under investigation were likely to conserve or divest (or abrogate) with the cultural/social traits associated with them. The Portuguese/mixed Portuguese sub-communities in Melaka were far from being homogenous; one can detect more than one segment in this community, for instance: i) members of the community who sought Dutch employment or acted as intermediaries for them; ii) mixed Portuguese women

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<sup>6</sup> A regular trader by a Portuguese-sounding name 'Joseph de Andrade' appeared to have retrograded in the identity status, from Portuguese to burgher, and even black (or *maardijker*).



who were married to Dutch colonial officials or merchants/burghers; iii) segments of the community which sought their own livelihood at arms-length from the colonizers (etc.). Tombstones from the St. Peter's church as well as collaborative evidence from other sources revealed how families which possessed more Portuguese-sounding names or how certain families of Dutch origins took in mixed Portuguese women in marriage or fielded a (mixed Portuguese) family member working in the Dutch colonial administration. Of the families which had Portuguese-sounding names: there were the Pereira. In connection to the period investigated in this paper, tombstones in St. Peter's Church (Melaka) revealed about Francisco E. Pereira's first son (who died as a baby; himself born in Melaka in 1833); as well as a certain José Almeida Pereira. There were also the Souza (see diagram 1 in Appendices). The first generation of the family to have their tombstones located in St Peter's were born in the 1780s (Manoel Francisco de Souza and siblings). Dr Manoel Francisco's activities appeared to be focused in Penang where he advised Francis Light and finally retired in Melaka. The offspring of Manoel Francisco (João Manuel) appeared to have constituted a major out-branch.

Of the Dutch families in Melaka which had mixed Portuguese elements: First, there were the Hendriks, although it was unclear how far the Dutch descent Hendriks family's history went back to in Dutch Melaka, there was a certain Jacob Hendriks born around 1790 who served as a clerk, coroner and interpreter from 1820 to 1831, and married to Johanna Catharina Alwis (b. 1789) in Melaka. Her surname suggests that she was probably an Asian but was a Christian and followed the local Portuguese culture. She died in 1826 and was buried in the (Roman Catholic) St. Peter's Church. One of Jacob's daughter (Petronella Catharina Hendriks) was also married in 1837 to João Manoel de Souza, a Portuguese Eurasian from the town (Christiaans, 1818-1825; geneanet.org). Then, there were the Minjoots. The Minjoot family of Melaka was said to be descended from their progenitor named Bastiaan Minjoot (sometimes also written as Mejooldt and Majoor) who came from South Holland and married to a Portuguese Eurasian lady by the name of Miguela de Costa (with several children). When the preacher Johannes Theodorus van der Werth of the new Dutch Reformed Church arrived at Melaka in 1762, he found that members of the Dutch Reformed Church did not understand Dutch and engaged Cornelis Minjoot (son of Bastiaan Minjoot) as a Portuguese language teacher there. The offspring of Bastiaan Minjoot down the line, going, for instance, into fourth generation and British times (after 1824), were married regularly to Eurasian ladies in Melaka (Christiaans, 1818-1825; British Library; Geneanet; Geni). Whether under the Dutch or British periods, the Minjoot family, drawing upon a list of Portuguese who served as daily watchmen in the districts of Tranquerah, Bunga Raya or Banda Hilir in Melaka in 1825, fielded names such as Marcelino Minjoot, Adrian Minjoot, Jacob Minjoot, Federick Minjoot, Frans Minjoot and Cornelis Minjoot (for Bunga Raya) as well as Miquel Minjoot and Ignasio Minjoot (for Banda Hilir) (Christiaans, 1818-1825; British Library; Geneanet; Geni). Third, there were the Spykermans. The Spykerman family name was originally spelled as Spijkerman. The first Spijkerman who arrived in Asia in the year 1739 was Johannes Spijkerman and they had four children. One of the children (Jan Spijkerman) married a certain Johanna Correa (in 1768). Their children were also married to persons with Portuguese-sounding names (for instance, Manoel Francisco de Souza, Theodosa Menesa (also Theodora Menezes)) (Christiaans, 1818-1825; Geneanet; Geni). Fourth, there were the Thomazios (previously spelled as Tomasius). The first Tomasius in Melaka was Jan Christoffel Tomasius, who



originated from the town of Maastricht, now located in the province of Limburg in the Netherlands. While he was in Melaka, he was married to a Portuguese Eurasian lady by the name of Elisabeth Nonnes. The Tomasius family not only absorbed mixed Portuguese women in marriages but also extended in influence to important local sources of power (for instance, the Koeks) (Christiaans, 1818-1825). Yet other families that could be traced from the cemetery of St. Peter's church were: on the Velges, Maria Laseroe (Lázaro), the wife of Abraham António Velge (1775-1856), who was president of the Dutch court of justice of Melaka, was laid in St. Peter's. From the Lázaro family, the tombstone of Silvestre Lázaro (1786-1855) was located in St. Peter's; his siblings, born from the similar period in the 1780s, were also found there but there was no revelation of their vocations or activities. Some of Silvestre's descendants appeared to have shifted to Singapore later after the fourth generation (1890s). Finally, from the Leynard family, the tombstone of Henry J. Leynard is traced from 1829 (Teixeira, 1963). Some of the descendants only made their mark in Kuala Lumpur at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century as the city became more prominent in the 1890s.

Referring to the limited statistics over the long haul in the Appendices, while the population of Melaka grew in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century (for instance, 9000+ in 1750 and 19000+ in 1817 compared to around 4-5000 in the 17<sup>th</sup> century), the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese population had remained stable slightly before or after 1500 (see table 2 in Appendices). This implied that the population increase in Melaka over time came from the other ethnic groups (most notably, the Malays) although up to the 1820s, the birth rate of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese sub-community had always had a slight edge over the mortality rate. In the different areas where Portuguese/mixed Portuguese resided, there was a sharp decline in the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese sub-communities in Bukit Cina and Bungaraya while the numbers remained dynamic in the main Melaka town, Tranquerah and Banda Hilir. While the lands were bought over by Chinese in the more affluent suburbs (eg. Bukit Cina), parts of Banda Hilir (and its inhabitants) were by contrast gradually being povertized. The productivity of lands in the suburbs had suffered from stagnancy during the Dutch period. The British administrators who took-over the town from 1824 had hoped to replace the Dutch (permanent) lease system with a more decentralized system where licenses were managed by local leaders (penghulus) and landowners. Although there was some progress in the size of the acreage cultivated towards the mid-19th century, this was achieved under a challenging environment (poor irrigation system, resistance from the locals etc.). Mixed Portuguese who owned lands there and who were marginalized were likely to be divested with their properties. The stasis that set-in for sub-groups which were marginalized, whether in Malaya or Singapore, rendered social groups in this strata similar characteristics notwithstanding the immediate difference in time and space. The mixed Portuguese had been living by the sea since the Portuguese times in the 17th century. It is still a part of some members of the creole or mixed Portuguese community in the modern day. Men went fishing to supplement their livelihood. They usually went out in small wooden perahus or pushed through the shallows and coastal waters. Specific sources have identified the location of dwelling of the less well-endowed sub-group to be located in places outside the Melaka town (for instance, at Tanquerah, from the beach to Bandar Hilir, as well as Bungaraya) while the more privileged sub-group were located in the western suburb of kampong



Serani at Jalan Portugis (within the fortified old town) (Daus, 1989: 16; Hussein, 2007: 199-200; Wikimedia commons AMH-6618-NA)<sup>7</sup>.

To surmise the discussion at this point, there was: first, a diverse mixed Portuguese trading community that was moving to some extent between port-settlements in the Straits region and facilitating the import/re-export trade of Melaka. This by no means was homogenous and the itinerant group probably interacted with the local population to some extent and the change in its characteristics was reflected in part the broader trend. Of the selected sub-communities discussed, families with Portuguese-sounding names or originated from Dutch ancestry fielded members who sought Dutch employment and acted as intermediaries for them or took mixed Portuguese women as spouses. Mixed Portuguese sub-groups in the middling scale of status or which were marginalized to some extent had some chance of preserving the traits in language and religion because the transitions over the 18th to 19<sup>th</sup> century forced them to huddle closer. This, in addition to the increasing degree of religious freedom (beyond the initial period) granted by the colonial authorities, permitted Portuguese/mixed Portuguese to revive their faith. In terms of the identities assumed and their associated traits, Havik and Newitt (2015) have reminded readers to better appreciate the process of creolization and syncretism when perceiving creole communities as these evolved a path of distinctive (if complex) rather than a amalgamated diluted culture(s) (Havik and Newitt, 2015). Indeed, other Europeans (other than Dutch and English, French and even Germans) were arriving and contributing to the diversity in the European/mixed European community Melaka by 1825 (Lim and Jorge, 2006: 230). The language appeared to be preserved but saw increased English (and probably native) 'interference' in its usage (Arkib Negara, Melaka, church books, church meeting 19 April 1820, church meeting 7 June 1820). There was also possible intermingling in marriage union between mixed Portuguese/Eurasian sub-community with other (for instance, Chinese/Peranakan) sub-communities; seen in mutual borrowing of words in the Kristang and Peranakan languages as well as costume in womenfolk in the community (see table 4 in Appendices). Beyond this, there was relatively little evidence for dressing (apart from sporadic references to Portuguese/mix Portuguese dressing in India or British/European dressing in Penang) (see pictures 2 and 3 in Appendices).

The diversity and complexity in the identities of Portuguese/mixed Portuguese was demonstrated further from the varied case studies of sub-groups which travelled and/or eventually resided in Singapore. From M. Teixeira's survey of the tombstones at fort Canning, a number of observations can be made (see also diagram 3 in Appendices). There were families, such as the Almeida and Silva (see Appendices), which came from Macau to Singapore. Members from the Almeida family congregated around the second generation before and in the immediate period after Singapore's founding. The Macanese continued to migrate to Singapore up to the 1860s. There were Portuguese and/or mixed Portuguese personages such as the Jeremias who were engaged in the informal economy

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<sup>7</sup> Further discussion with Dennis De Witt affirmed that in the olden days, Eurasians lived in Kampung Serani and it was located within the fortified old town of Malacca. There were also Eurasians living at Tranquerah, outside the town ramparts. During British times, the main concentration of Eurasians was at Tranquerah in the north and at Banda Hilir in the south. There were also smaller groups of Eurasians living around just outside the town, such as at Bukit Cina, Bungaraya and Pengkalan Rama. See map of Malacca and environs AMH-6618-NA, [Wikimedia commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AMH-6618-NA\\_Map\\_of\\_Malacca\\_and\\_environs.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AMH-6618-NA_Map_of_Malacca_and_environs.jpg).



(illicit trade from Diamond harbor) and shifted to areas that were not fully controlled by the colonial powers (such as Kedah and Ambon) as the British increased their presence in the Bay of Bengal after 1760 and encroached on the coasts of Burma in the early 1800s (Subrahmanyam, 2012). There were also Portuguese who came from Brazil such as the Farrão. The liberalization of trade by the Portuguese Crown in the 18<sup>th</sup> century prohibiting trade exchanges between Brazil and the Indian Ocean as well as developments of the north American hemisphere not only brought more Americans to the East but also some Portuguese from there (Brazil became independent in 1822). They traded in the East Indies and Indochina especially in the newly erected colonies such as Penang where the priests also partook in local politics (Blusse, 2008). The Portuguese/mixed Portuguese also followed the British to newly established settlements and ports. There were, for instance, the Reutens (marriage with Pinto family who was appointed to pirate-enforcing duties), who came from Penang to Singapore (Teixeira, 1963: 321-22)<sup>8</sup>; the Leicesters (for instance, Edward Banaby Leicester arriving in Singapore in 1827), who came from Bencoolen and Penang; as well as the Rodrigues and Velges who came from Melaka. Portuguese persons and families (such as Jeremias, Farrão, Reutens, Leicesters) who were affiliated more intently with the European stock transited from Penang to Singapore and/or were involved in a variety of mercantile, ecclesiastical, security activities. From the letters of Pope, traders of the Portuguese, Armenian as well as a host and overlap of these and other ethnic origins, who were operating from Calcutta (and Madras), relied on a 'special' relationship with the British traded legitimately or illegitimately across the eastern Indian ocean with settlements in the East Indies (Bulley, 1992: 25 and 40).

Havik and Newitt's (2015) urging for a more nuanced appreciation of creolization evolving a path of distinctive, complex and multifaceted culture should take on a stronger argument in this essay. The degree of (further) miscegenation between early Eurasians and individuals of indigenous ethnic or diverse European origins was even more highlighted in Singapore. In this respect, one should not forget the Sephardic Portuguese, who although not part of mainstream Portuguese, should perhaps be considered to be part of the, if eclectic, Portuguese diasporic out-groups. In the colonies, many New Christians, assuming they were converted, moved to the New World, with a fair number going to the East (Eastern Sephardim). With the Inquisition conducted periodically (also) in the East (especially in Goa and Melaka), the drive to reform the colonized communities attained a certain degree of intensity (for instance, undertaken by Jesuit priest Francis Xavier). It is here that the continuity of the (Portuguese) Jewish community between the era of Portuguese Melaka and post-1641 Melaka was most fragmented. Although the website of the 'Singapore Jews' indicated the 'first Jews were of Baghdadi origins [and they were large enough to form a synagogue', another '(virtual) Jewish world' website credited the same group as being from Sephardic origins (Fernando, 2004; Bieder and Lau, 2007).<sup>9</sup> Regardless of their origins, the overlapping traits that this sub-group had

<sup>8</sup> Teixeira highlighted 2 instances of the Pinto (Painter), who were affiliated with the Reutens, themselves involved in appointment(s) in the marine service, leading schooners against pirates in the Straits of Melaka.

<sup>9</sup> Refer also to websites *Singapore Jews* (<http://singaporejews.com>) on the Jews in Singapore. The Jews were only classified in the (Newbold and Braddell) census from 1830. Fernando pointed out that a regular visitor to the port of Melaka by the name of 'Issac Abraham' was identified as a 'black' and 'burgher' at different times; there was some likelihood that he was also of Sephardic origins.



with the Portuguese creole community included language (early modern form of Portuguese) and religion (New Christian conversion). The creole Portuguese (Kristang) in Melaka bore resemblance to early modern Portuguese. New Christian Sephardim who did not revert to Judaism was likely to follow the other mixed-race to embrace the Reformed Church in the East Indies.

Apart from the argument on diversity, the economic function(s) undertaken by the group was a key indicator of the community preserving or divesting with a cultural/social trait. In the context of the accelerated commercial developments in Singapore at the beginning of the 19th century, Portuguese/mixed Portuguese who possessed some wealth and enterprising spirit ventured to set-up business proprietorships in the town. Highlighting the case study of the Velges, other than helming prestigious posts in Melaka, one of the children of Abraham António Velge, Jan Hendrik Velge (also known as John Henry Velge) was skipper of a private ship and worked as a warehouse keeper in Riau between 1824 and 1826. He married in Semarang (Indonesia) in 1830. John Henry Velge founded the firm 'Velge Brothers' in Singapore. He also acted for the Portuguese Mission Church as an agent for their properties in Singapore. The firm in Singapore found itself in trouble and went into insolvency; bankrupting John Henry in the process (Christiaans, 1818-1825; Geneanet; Geni). In his position as lay administrator for the Portuguese Mission, he became the center of attention as accusations of fraud, mismanagement and slander were brought against him. It was said that John Henry, who lived in a big house at Beach Road, was good friends with Dr. Jose d'Almeida from Macau, who also lived at Beach Road (see diagram 2 in Appendices). Both their homes were the center of Singapore's social scene with frequent social gatherings and dances. John Henry returned to Melaka and retired there in the latter years. John Henry's friend, Jose d'Almeida, who was a medical doctor on a Portuguese warship, took a decision to settle in Singapore while sailing through the region. Jose initially set-up a dispensary in Singapore and after a bout of agency work, he went on to set up a trading firm, Jose d'Almeida & Co., in 1825 which was renamed Jose d'Almeida & Son when his son joined the company. By the time Jose d'Almeida died in 1850, the company had grown to become one of the largest and most respected firms in the settlement (Ong, 2019). The Velge and Almeida families represented the sub-strata in the newly-formed straits society that would be most aligned with the new (British) colonizer in Singapore. Of particular interest, the Velges provided service to the Portuguese Mission, then nominally under the Diocese of Melaka which was either vacated or supervised by the Holy See. It might be noted from the sideline that mixed Portuguese in Singapore were likely to attend, apart from the Catholic churches, the other congregations such as the St. Andrew Cathedral (which was Anglican in affiliation) (Lim and Neo, 2021)<sup>10</sup>. The Almeida represented a facet of the very limited (fresh) injection of 'Portuguese-ness' in the region. They, together with the Velges, were conceived more along the economic line of division (even) in early Singapore rather than along lines of cultural traits. In any case, mixed Portuguese ladies who were married to Dutch officials in Melaka appeared, according to a contemporary account, might continue

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<sup>10</sup> Portuguese priest Francisco da Silva Pinto e Maia who arrived in 1825 conducted mass in a friend's house until the construction of a chapel on Beach road in 1833. The Cathedral of good shepherd (Singapore) was founded in 1832. In the later period, the St. Joseph church appeared to serve the religious needs of the Eurasian community while the Cathedral of good shepherd served the needs of the European community-at-large. See 'St. Joseph church' and 'St. Andrews cathedral' hosted by Singapore Infopedia.



to face a certain degree of discrimination in the 18th – early 19th century (Hussein, 2007: 280)<sup>11</sup>.

Examining the limited statistics for the period after 1824-30 in the Appendices, the influx of the Portuguese/mixed (Eurasian) sub-groups were noted to fluctuate between 2 to over 70 per cent (see table 3 in Appendices). The magnitude of the shifts, which appeared considerable, was limited in absolute figures; compared to more substantial changes in numbers that the Chinese community experienced. Summing-up on the relatively diverse sub-communities surveyed in Singapore, the sub-groups did trace from very different backgrounds; which came from the Straits Settlements, Malaya and the larger archipelago, as well as from regions farther away such as India and Brazil. Considerations could even be made for sub-groups which overlapped with other minority sub-groups, such as the Jews and the Armenians. Early Portuguese/Eurasian pioneers from the Almeida and Velge families, riding the wave of economic boom in Singapore as well as acting as agents for the Portuguese Mission (religious establishment), helped sustain the traits of the mixed-race community although there were also greater propensities for the sub-groups on the island to miscegenate as well as devolve into sub-stratums of the colonial society. Specifically, the language was likely to be more miscegenated in Singapore, compared to developments in Melaka, given a more diverse and mixed pattern of lineage evolving there. Second, the religion also appeared to be preserved in the community to some extent, witnessed by the chapel (St. Joseph) set-up along Beach road although Portuguese/mixed Portuguese were more susceptible to the different Christian traditions as they became English-speaking towards mid-(19<sup>th</sup>)century.

### **Accounting for the evolved pattern/traits of communities in region-of-study**

The previous section has shown the diversity that was existing in the Portuguese / mixed Portuguese sub-communities in the Singapore-Melaka region. The different sub-groups were involved in the different loci of (economic) activities although (only) the activities that were linked with the colonial hegemonies in governance were relatively more evident. This section will extend the inquiry of the economic paradigm to look at the larger environment of trade and the political economy of the Dutch and the British in the Singapore-Melaka region to see how these had affected the evolution and trajectories of the Portuguese / mixed Portuguese sub-communities in the region during the transition from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. Other than the economic factor, the paper will also discuss 'religion' in context of the Dutch and British colonial policies as this input has always loomed large in Portuguese historical studies. Re-connecting to Chivallon's (2008) typology, if Andaya's approach is focused on the outcome (or product/traits), this section of the paper can focus more on the 'process' to account for the interjecting forces and factors that molded the sub-communities under research.

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<sup>11</sup> A certain engineer captain Walter C. Lennon stated in his account and journal that the Governor of Melaka (1788-95) might not have been offered the government house as evidence probably because of his wife who was likely to be a Portuguese-Eurasian. Although she had not been out of Melaka, she appeared, to Lennon, to be affable, well-dressed and -bred. It might be noted further, although not stated in Hussein's Trade and society in the straits of Melaka, that the governor's wife was actually the natural sister of Adriaan Koek.





Survey studies have pegged the Portuguese diasporic figures to be not more than 10,000 across the four centuries (before 20th century) of the Portuguese abroad. The numbers might have fluctuated in the different centuries although the proportion leaving for Asia dwindled from the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Boxer, 1970). Up till the 17<sup>th</sup> century, prestigious nobility and second- or later-born from nobility families continued to be dispatched to the East to take-up functionary roles in the *Estado da Índia* ((Portuguese) State of India). With the fall of Melaka (in Southeast Asia) in 1641, sub-groups could be detected flowing out to Macau, mainland Southeast Asia (specifically Ayuthaya) as well as to the Archipelagic islands (such as Benjamasin in Borneo and Makassar in Celebes). Portuguese who remained in Asia 'married' (*casavam/casado*) and consolidated their resources/positions in settlements still governed by the Portuguese (such as Macau) (Subrahmanyam, 2012; Clarence-Smith, 1985). Those who settled in or moved about between places not under Portuguese control became more adaptable and enterprising although without the support of raw/coercive power, they were generally weaker in their interactions with fellow European or indigenous powers (Sim, 2014). Remnant mixed Portuguese traders, who were indigenized (/assimilated) to some extent and could field a variety of identities, served in the function of the intra-regional (Southeast Asia) petty traders. The trade between the Bay of Bengal and the coast of China was a brisk one for half a century between 1780-1830. This commerce was partaken by European, indigenous and creole traders. Portuguese and English competition for the opium trade during the period under discussion is fairly obvious in the documents of the archives. There was, for instance, the Rosa family which featured family members as participants in the Straits of Melaka in legitimate and illegitimate trade. Letters from a naturalized Portuguese Armenian also revealed that (remote branches of) the Rosa family continued to be involved as business associates in the Asian trade (AHU cx. 20 no. 33; cx. 30 no. 74; cx. 46 no. 1; AM, serie III 04-01; serie III 26-01)<sup>12</sup>. In the 1780s-90s, Melaka was "still an important port" (Hussein, 2007: 35). The Portuguese group still registered a compatible number of arrivals with the English in the 1760s (13 vs 17) but began to pale from the competition from 1770 (20 vs 40) but managed to increase its activities up till 1785 registering 36 vessels (a number comparable to that managed by the burghers at 37) (see table 1 in Appendices) (Bulley, 1992: 90). Trade revolving around Melaka was largely based on intra-Southeast Asia exchanges although through the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the port's trade was diminishing in volume, vis-à-vis a rising Penang and later, an even more rapidly ascending Singapore.

As more studies on globalization in historical time scale emerged, the issue(s) of whether the activities of colonial powers constituted as the dominant force or merely a subset of larger forces-at-work was also located at the center of discussion. A 2019 (re-)edition of a work on the British empire and century for instance made distinction between imperialism (empire) and globalization (Parsons, 2019). A feature of globalization, regardless of the propagating push or pull factors, was the increasing migration, movement and miscegenation of people in the (final phase of the) early modern period. Tracing the increased British activities from the Bay of Bengal to Singapore (the most southern point of the Asian continent) in the transition from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries –

<sup>12</sup> A number of members in the Rosa family in the generation of the 1780-1820 were preoccupied with vocations such as in the military and charity house (misericordia). The links of the Rosas to the Armenian Matheus Joannes can be located in his outstanding obligations.



seen in their annexation of Calcutta, the intervention in Burma, the setting-up of Straits Settlements – a host of people, including the Portuguese, trailed the British in places that witnessed their intervention. In Melaka for instance, part of this flow of people might be related to British-induced policies that encouraged certain ethnic sub-groups (for instance, Chinese laborers) to follow their ventures in the region, the other sub-groups (such as petty traders) were likely to be part of the indigenous and/or generic regional network and traffic (Rappa, 2013: 87 and 197-220)<sup>13</sup>.

Owing to the hostile nature of the takeover in 1641, the immediate measures undertaken by the Dutch attempted to suppress and regulate the remnant mixed Portuguese in the settlement of Melaka; these measures were relaxed gradually afterwards in the 150 years that followed. Although British measures in Melaka were not as harsh, they hoped to impress on the inhabitants that new colonizers had taken over the town. Both the Dutch and British utilized the mixed Portuguese communities to some extent although sub-groups which could not engage the needs of the new authorities became marginalized (Turnbull, 1983). In Archipelagic Southeast Asia, the manipulation of the religion appeared to be 'more obvious' in the Dutch compared to the British colonial measures. Although creolized Portuguese-at-large were supposed to have assimilated to some extent, this evolved along the paths of an upper and lower classes in the port-settlements (of Melaka and Singapore). The Dutch had at various points attempted to influence the traits and customs of this mixed-race class. With the group that had seeped into some degree of marginalized profession and poverty, there was some aversion to indigenization. Meanwhile, the upper class strove to draw nearer to the reigning (Dutch or English) colonial culture. Hence, being in the upper or lower classes could lead to erosion of the identified Portuguese traits. The woman folk in the creole-affiliated families, apart from religion and festivals, were most likely to contribute to the day-to-day maintenance of creole customs.

How unique was the British colonial model compared to the Dutch? While comparative works may be available to compare the Dutch and British (early) imperialism, this is not always undertaken with enough specificity in relation to the contexts of Southeast Asia or (minority) sub-groups under rule in the colonies. Dutch style of administration and rule in Melaka took the approach of the council-kapitan system. Extending from the Portuguese period, the areas organized prior (Banda Hilir, Tranquerah etc.) were inherited to some extent in the Dutch period although according to N. Hussein, the ward for the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese did not have its superintendent until 1780 probably because "they were a weaker sub-community" (Hussein, 2007: 200 and 202). The general picture of weakness was not consistent across different parts of the settlement. In the sub-district of the town (Herenstraat), there was Portuguese-European (Quintiliano de Graca) presiding presumably over the European / Eurasian area aside from the Dutch-burgher (Joost Keok) and Chinese captains. A relatively limited tax was imposed on the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese compared to the Chinese or Malays/Kelings (Hussein, 2007: 214). Elsewhere in the suburbs of Melaka, the Malays and Portuguese/mixed Portuguese were also portrayed to inhabit in greater numbers compared to the Chinese and Dutch. The Dutch appeared to rely on the Eurasians to fill

<sup>13</sup> The mixed Portuguese in Melaka married with (free) Dutch burghers to some extent. The mixed Portuguese were not always Catholics and 'their dance' was not always embraced by the other sub-groups.



the middle and lower ranking posts in the colonial administration. They were also “employed as night watchmen, a position of some importance with regards to the security of the fortress”. The Dutch had gradually focused their trade and economic focus in Batavia even before their conquest of Melaka in 1641. The impact was that Melaka became “lifeless and [dull]” with “[its] streets deserted, houses abandoned and shops shut” over the long haul from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to 1822 (De Witt, 2008: 84).

The British approach (after 1824) by contrast hoped to ‘broaden’ jurisdiction to a wider group of representatives (including appointing pengulus in the countryside). Melaka, Penang and Singapore were raised briefly to the status of the Presidency between 1826-30 (before reverting to a Residency). Cross-referencing developments in the other Straits Settlements (Penang and Singapore) and across time (to the 1860-80s), the continued limitations (port and suburb agricultural lands) faced by Melaka relegated the port-town to a ‘mediocre’ status. The implication of this was – although the British (also) favored Eurasians in the nascent British colonial civil service, members of the sub-communities faced limited opportunities for progression (notwithstanding the ability of the group to adapt); this was verified by the fact that plans for reviving or expanding the administration and security of the town was shelved time and again (Turnbull, 1983: 262). Hence, the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese in the town of Melaka huddled amongst themselves and grew steadily from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century (compared to the other ethnic sub-groups). Also, as discussed in the earlier section, the volume of migrants moving from Melaka to Singapore appeared to be a limited stream, rather than an exodus.

During the take-over of Melaka in 1641, the highly capitalistic VOC had the economic and pragmatic concerns of the conquered settlement at the center of their attention. Hence, the language and religious policies erected were reasonably ‘generous’ towards the remnant Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities in the city. It should also be noted that the tolerant language policy was to serve the agenda of the Dutch Reformed clergy as well (who were to preach the new religion in a familiar language). Although the Catholics in Melaka did not take-up the Dutch proposal to surrender, no punitive measure was undertaken against them although some (religious) restrictions were embedded in their execution (Borschberg, 2010)<sup>14</sup>. Amongst the diasporas that fled the city, the bishops of Melaka went over to Timor (an adjunct of Macau) with the last appointee affirmed by the Portuguese metropole government and the Holy See in 1783. Arising from the cooperation occurring between Portugal and Holland during the War of Spanish Succession, the Dutch permitted the grant of a piece of land (from a convert) for the St. Peter’s church to be built in 1710 and the Archdiocese ‘delegated the Catholics [there] to the Vicar of the church’ (Teixeira, 1963: 7-8). In the long interval of the Dutch rule, it was understood that the (remaining) Catholic clergy were reluctant to turn “their allegiance to the Dutch because of the conflict of interest that such an oath would inevitably entail” although a priest (Father Manuel Teixeira) was “always stationed in Melaka, who came from Macau or Goa to attend to the spiritual needs of the faithful”

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<sup>14</sup> The practical consideration was – the church and monasteries of Melaka possessed “buildings, orchards, estates (including real estate in urban areas) as well as ecclesiastical treasures”. The Dutch appeared to have a much more ‘liberal’ policy towards religion, as reported by a special commissioner who provided alternative inputs to the management of Melaka after its conquest (in 1641).



(Borschberg, 2010: 113; Teixeira, 1963: 7). Overall, the part of the population who intermarried or drew closer to the Dutch lost 'a little more' of their traits. Although Dutch policies became more benign over time, the sidelining of Melaka (in the Dutch and British periods) ironically limited opportunities for development for the mixed Portuguese group in the town. The British interregnum in Melaka by contrast appeared to make a more obvious distinction between the different (secular versus religious) spheres of jurisdiction and tended to rely on missionary activities advocating for an educational agenda in swaying its subject populace. Whether in Melaka or Singapore, converting to the religion of the new colonial authorities could serve as an alternative to survival, even if the move compromised aspects of the traits of the community. There appeared to be a certain degree of desire to retain their faith in Melaka relative to Singapore in the periods of transition.

Towards the end of the century (1890s), both the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities in Melaka and Singapore were revived, albeit to a different extent in both places. The precursor of the state of the communities could be found in the early part of the (19<sup>th</sup>) century where the diversity and traditional characteristics were manifested simultaneously in the sub-groups individually in each place. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, on top of being engaged in business, Portuguese/mixed Portuguese (or Eurasian) sub-groups began to fill many intermediate and more specialized posts in the British colonial civil service (formed from mid-century) and associated professional positions that arose (for instance, teachers, doctors, nurses). In Singapore, although the upper echelons of the Eurasian population were blooming (approximating to what M. Braga-Blake hailed as 'a golden age'), those located down the scale continued and managed to preserve aspects of their traits. Nevertheless, differentiations continued to exist in the communities in Melaka and Singapore. Linking-up with Andaya's observation that there was a shift in the preference in the type of slaves (which eventually led to the diminution of the mixed Portuguese traits and culture in the Dutch East Indies), the impetus of the British in the disuse of slaves in this part of Southeast Asia impacted on the characteristics of the communities further. The British declaration of the abolition of slavery was made in 1834, there had been, in the meantime, an aversion to (any form) of slavery practiced by the indigenous rulers in the British-native encounters<sup>15</sup>. The instance of the Naning revolt (1831 - 1832) was at least connected in part to the reaction to the eradication (without compensation) of the bond- and debt-slavery that transpired as part of local custom and life. Although the slaves constituted a 'sizeable' part of the mixed Portuguese community, the abolition of the custom seemed to have a relatively benign effect in Melaka or even Batavia (Kehoe, 2015; Choudhury, 2014). The ample room for business and trade as well as the relatively liberal atmosphere in the Melaka-Singapore region permitted the different mixed Portuguese sub-groups to survive better. By contrast, the Tugu and associated sub-groups in the lower strata did not fare as well in the Dutch colonial areas (Daus, 1989; Pereira, 2015). While diversity undergirded both British settlements, the availability of opportunities and the propensity for change was much greater in Singapore compared to Melaka arising from more rapid developments in the former.

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<sup>15</sup> On 6 December 1819, being the birthday of the then crown prince, and future king William II of the Netherlands, Jan S. Timmerman Thyssen (Dutch Governor of Malacca 1818-1822) made a speech announcing plans for the abolition of slavery in the colony of Malacca. Clearly, plans to abolish slavery had begun earlier - before the British takeover.



### **Some conclusions**

The story of the Portuguese/mixed and Portuguese/Eurasian community in Singapore and Malaysia saw an increasing voice (albeit in different intensity) on both sides of the border to assert their identities. While the theories and modellings of mixed race and related studies for contemporary society have made great strides in progress, similar paradigms are not always been applied to the study of communities in history. Past paradigm (involving theory of tribe) has been applied to the study of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities in Southeast Asia, such as by L. Andaya, focuses to some extent on the attributes (traits/outcome) of the community. This paper induces a few perspectives about the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese communities in the Singapore-Melaka region which showed them to locate themselves in more than one strata of society. At the extreme, certain sub-groups could even hold more than one identity. With the sub-group affiliated with the Dutch, which was most well-supported in evidence, the traits were maintained implicitly and explicitly in the families through the women married into them as well as the posts held under the Dutch cum indigenous colonial administration. With the transition into the British era, Portuguese/mixed Portuguese sub-communities embraced Anglicized influence in Melaka and Singapore while the lower sub-groups were very likely indigenized further. The political economy of the Dutch (and British) activities in the East Indies impacted directly to mold the traits and behaviors of the Portuguese/mixed Portuguese sub-communities; influencing at times to some extent on the faith and religious aspect of these sub-communities. The formative influences of the 1780-1840 that the Dutch and British colonial authorities left behind set the tone of the development of these sub-communities in the next hundred years or so. Perhaps the conditions affecting the sub-community to keep or discard certain cultural practices may be (crudely) encapsulated by a mixed Portuguese (Kristang) saying "Cuma galinya kereh pusah obu. Ngka sabeh ki kereh pegah, ki kereh lagah" (Portuguese - Como uma galinha que quer botar ovas. Não sei o que quer segurar, ou o que quer deixar ir) (Marbeck, 2004: 71).



## Appendices

**Table 1 - Ship arrivals to Melaka in designated years**

Nationality	1761	1785
Malay	54	242
Chinese	55	170
Dutch	4	-
Burgher	11	2
English	17	37
Portuguese	13	36

Source: Table adapted from Fernando, R. & Reid, A. (1996), Shipping on Melaka and Singapore as an index of growth, 1760-1840. *South Asia*, vol. XIX, p. 70 (table 3).

**Table 2 - Population of the town of Melaka 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries**

Year	Portuguese-Eurasian (including European)	Malay	Chinese	Total population
1675	1463	597	160	5324
1766	1668	3135	1390	7216
1817	1667	13988	1006	19647
1826	2236	16121	4125	28447
1829	500	1900	3900	7200

Source: Hussein, N. (2007). *Trade and society in the Straits of Melaka, 1780-1830*. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, pp. 164, 166 and 176.

**Table 3 - Population of Singapore 1824-30**

Year	Europeans	Native Christians	Indo-Britons	Total population
1824	74	74	-	10683
1825	84	132	-	11851
1826	111	206	-	12907
1827	87	188	-	13725
1828	108	193	-	14885
1829	122	272	-	17664
1830	92	345	29	16634

Source: R.S. Braddell, et al. (1991). *One hundred years of Singapore*, vol. 1. OUP, pp. 355-56.

**Table 4 - Borrowing between Baba and Kristang words**

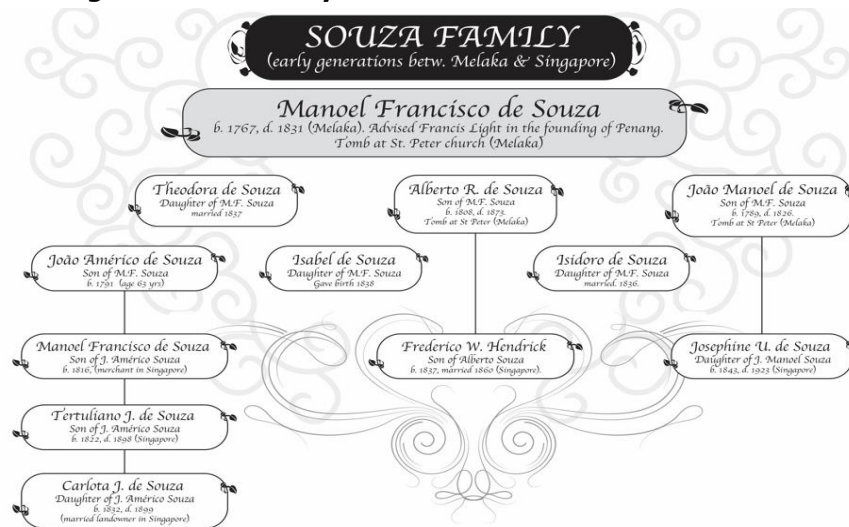
S/N0	Baba Malay	Kristang	Portuguese	English
1	Gereja	Greza	Igreja	Church
2	Minggu	Dominggu	Domingo	Sunday
3	Pesta	Festa	Festa	Celebration
4	Sekolah	Skola	Escola	School
5	Tempu	Tempu	Tempo	Time
6	Oloji	Olozi	Relógio	Clock
7	Almari	Almari	Armário	Cupboard
8	Buyong	Buyong	Boiã	Pot
9	Garfu	Garfu	Garfo	Fork



10	Meja	Mesa	Mesa	Table
11	Sabun	Sabang	Sabão	Soap
12	Bolu	Bolu	Bolo	Cake
13	Tempura	Tempura	Tempero	Gravy
14	Pau	Pang	Pão	Bread
15	Kobis	Kobis	Couve	Cabbage

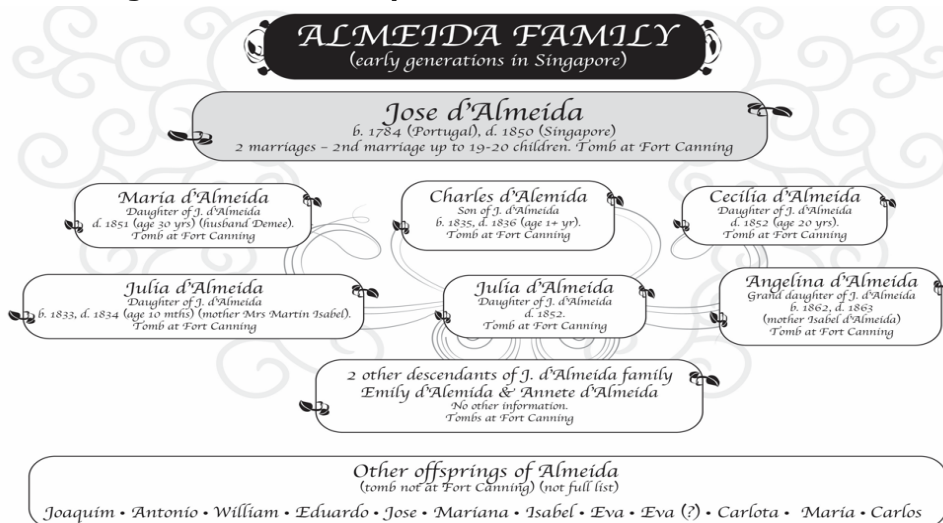
Source: Peranakan Association Singapore (2006). *Being Baba: Selected articles from the Peranakan magazine*, Epigram.

**Diagram 1 - Lineage of Souza family**



Source: Information consolidated from Teixeira, M. (1963). *The Portuguese missions in Malacca and Singapore*. Agencia Geral do Ultramar, pp. 287-305.

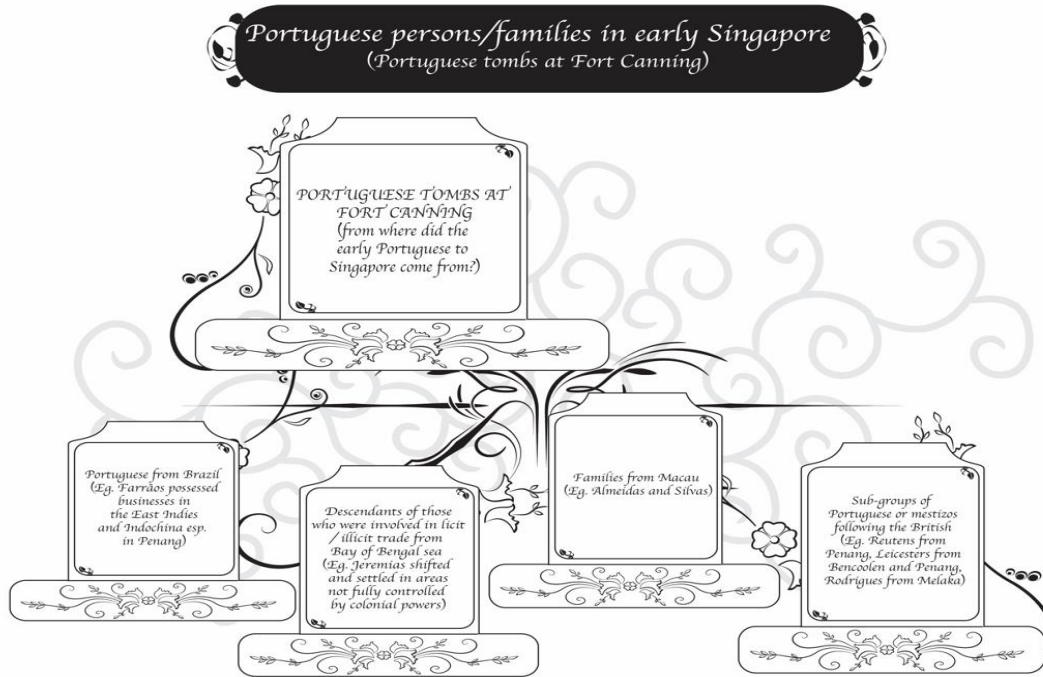
**Diagram 2 - Lineage of Almeida family**



Source: Information consolidated from Teixeira M. (1963). *The Portuguese missions in Malacca and Singapore*. Agência Geral do Ultramar, pp. 249-84.



**Diagram 3 - Deceased in grave slabs in Fort Canning cemetery**



Information consolidated from Teixeira, M. (1693). *The Portuguese missions in Malacca and Singapore*. Agência Geral do Ultramar, pp. 285-412; original: Padshanama, Hughli (1632).

**Picture 1 - Dressing of Eurasian mercenary in (mainland) Southeast Asia**



Source: Halikowski-Smith, S. (2011). *Creolization and diaspora in the Portuguese Indies* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 242; original: Ananda ok-Kyaung, Bagan (1785).



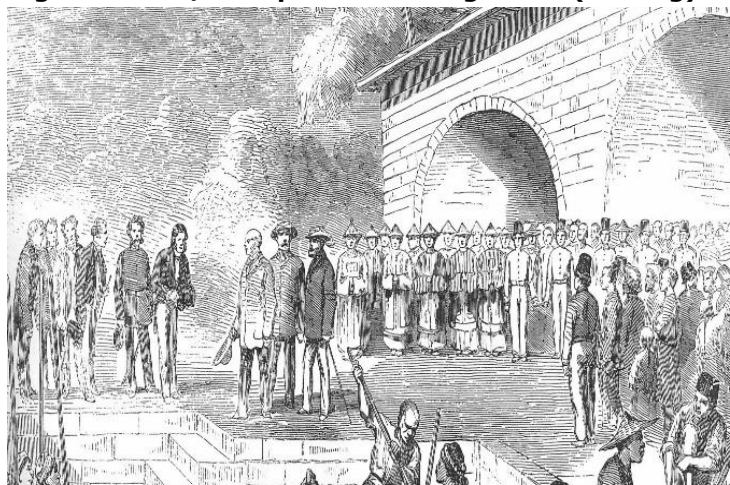


**Picture 2 - Dressing of Portuguese / mixed Portuguese in Bengal (India)**



Source: Halikowski-Smith, S. (2011). *Creolization and diaspora in the Portuguese Indies*. Brill, 2011), p. 232; original: Padshanama fol. 32.

**Picture 3 - Dressing of British / Europeans in Georgetown (Penang)**



Source: Tate, D.J. (1989). *Straits Affairs: The Malay world and Singapore*. John Nicholson Ltd., p. 43.

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