

## When was Melaka founded and was it known earlier by another name? Exploring the debate between Gabriel Ferrand and Gerret Pieter Rouffaer, 1918–21, and its long echo in historiography

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*A century ago, research on the Malay world was experiencing major breakthroughs on several fronts, but the greatest achievement at the time was without doubt George Coedès' 'rediscovery', based on Asian sources, of a forgotten kingdom named Srivijaya. His book, published in 1918, saw a wave of publications follow in its wake. Sources were trawled in the hope of finding answers to unresolved issues and unidentified place names. Attention invariably also fell on Melaka. In a long article published by the French academic and diplomat Gabriel Ferrand in the same year, the question of Melaka's founding date came under the spotlight. What do the different surviving sources tell us? What about Gaspar Correia's claim that Melaka was a thriving port city for centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese? Was the city — just as in the case of Temasek (Singapore) — known by a different name in earlier times? Ferrand's publication provoked a response from the Dutch academic Gerret Pieter Rouffaer, director of the KITLV. What he planned to be a 20-odd page response to Ferrand swelled into a multifaceted argument running into hundreds of pages. The debate between Ferrand and Rouffaer that touched on Melaka and Temasek-Singapura's early history probably eluded most of their academic contemporaries who were not proficient in both Dutch and French, especially in the English-speaking world. The present article reconstructs the main points of this debate together with their echo in historiography. It makes a contribution to the ongoing discourses, especially in Malaysia, concerning the founding date of Melaka.*

In the opening lines of his article 'Malacca's Early Kings and the Reception of Islam', published in the *Journal of Southeast Asian History (JSEAH)* in 1964, Christopher H. Wake so aptly observed: 'The sources on the early history of

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Malacca are so meagre, and often so contradictory, that not only is the detail in some doubt, but the whole framework of events rests on uncertain foundations.<sup>1</sup> It is almost impossible to disentangle fact from legend, and what appear at first glance to be reliable testimonies — such as the stories of Melaka's founding encountered in the *Suma Oriental* of Tomé Pires, the Portuguese chronicles, or much later in the writings of Manuel Godinho de Erédia — represent the collective social memories of Portugal's Asian subjects in Melaka after 1511.<sup>2</sup> Similar problems arise with the *Sulalat-us-Salatin*, or *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals), which reflect the collective memories of the Johor court, recorded in its most immediately recognisable and iconic form (Ms. Raffles 18) in or around 1612.<sup>3</sup> To what extent can we accept these memories laid down in the *Sejarah Melayu* as historical evidence? And with reference to the core topic of this article, what about the date of Melaka's founding alleged to have taken place around the year 1250? It was almost a decade ago that a group of Malaysian researchers published an exposé on Melaka, in which they have sought to date its founding to the mid-thirteenth century, and specifically to the year 1262.<sup>4</sup> The booklet broadly aligns the founding narrative with the claims of the *Sejarah Melayu* (with a difference of nine years between them). The authors, moreover, ignored and glossed over a debate surrounding Melaka's founding date which had taken place about a century ago. One of the reasons for this is surely connected to accessibility: this debate that took place a century ago was conducted in languages other than English and Malay. For the benefit of readers who are not proficient in French, Dutch and German, this article outlines the Ferrand–Rouffaer debate and traces its long echo in the relevant English-language research published since the early 1920s to about the year 1980.<sup>5</sup>

1 Christopher H. Wake, 'Malacca's early kings and the reception of Islam', *Journal of Southeast Asian History (JSEAH)* 5, 2 (1964): 104–28.

2 Tomé Pires, *Suma Oriental. An account of the East from the Red Sea to Japan. Written in Malacca and India in 1512–1515*, tr. and ed. Armando Cortesão, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944); a later Portuguese-language edition had addressed some textual issues contained in the 1944 transcription and translation: *A Suma Oriental de Tomé Pires e o Livro de Francisco Rodrigues*, ed. A. Cortesão (Coimbra: Por Ordem da Universidade, 1978). The latest full-text annotated edition is now also the most authoritative: T. Pires, *Suma Oriental*, ed. R.M. Loureiro (Macau: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau; Fundação Jorge Álvares; Fundação Macau, 2017).

3 For the text, see: Cheah Boon Kheng, ed., *Sejarah Melayu. The Malay Annals. Raffles ms. 18*, new romanised ed., 3 vols. (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society [MBRAS], 1998). Concerning the genesis, revision and background to the c.1612 text, see Cheah Boon Kheng and P. Borschberg, 'Raja Bongsu, penulis dan penaung *Sejarah Melayu/Sulalat us-Salatin*: Peranan dan nasib malangnya seorang Putera Johor (1571–1623)', *Seminar 400 tahun Sulalat-us-Salatin* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2013); P. Borschberg, 'Left holding the bag: The Johor–VOC alliance and the Twelve Years' Truce (1606–1613)', in *The Twelve Years Truce (1609): Peace, truce, war and law in the Low Countries at the turn of the 17th century*, ed. Randall Lesaffer (Leiden: Brill-Nijhoff, 2014), pp. 89–120.

4 Abdul Rahman b. Ismail, Abdullah Zakariah b. Ghazali and Zulkanain b. Abdul Rahman, *Penemuan tarikh baru pengasasan empayar kerajaan Melayu Melaka 1262* (Melaka: Institut Kajian Sejarah dan Patriotisme Malaysia, 2012).

5 A range of Asian and European language materials were used for the following recent publications that focus on Singapore but also touch on Melaka: Kwa Chong Guan, Derek Heng, Peter Borschberg and Tan Tai Yong, *Seven hundred years: A history of Singapore* (Singapore: National Library Board; Marshall Cavendish, 2019). Also Kwa Chong Guan and P. Borschberg, eds., *Studying Singapore before 1800* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2018), [hereafter cited as KBSS], Kwa Chong Guan, *Pre-colonial*

### The debate between Ferrand and Rouffaer: Context and origins

The present article makes a contribution toward the historiography surrounding the founding date of Melaka, and specifically addresses the debate and academic exchange during the early 1920s between two of Europe's leading scholars of (Southeast) Asia: the French academic and diplomat Gabriel Ferrand and the director of the Netherlands Institute for Language, Literature and Ethnology (KITLV, today's Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies) Gerret Pieter Rouffaer. This debate and academic exchange would reverberate for years, and arguably into the 1960s when Wake penned his article in *JSEAH*. A glimpse at his notes, as well as an errata page published in 1965, reveals that he knew of the writings by both Ferrand and Rouffaer, but like others in the English-speaking world, it is questionable how closely he had read them, and also whether he was sufficiently familiar with the context in which these pieces had been written and debated.<sup>6</sup>

In order to gain fuller appreciation for the spirit of the time as well as the issues raised, this article will first say a few words about the academic milieu of the period c.1875–1925 and will then turn to explore the Ferrand–Rouffaer debate by focusing on Melaka's possible founding dates. In a third and final step the article will trace the long echoes of the debate in Southeast Asia's English-language-oriented academia up until the late 1950s and '60s. With this programme in mind, let us now make a few observations about the big picture.

### 1918, Srivijaya and all that

In 1918, Gabriel Ferrand published a long article in the *Journal Asiatique* bearing the title: *Malaka, le Malayu et Malayur* (Melaka, Malayu and Malayur), a piece that was in the same year also published separately as a book of about 200 pages.<sup>7</sup> The year is not inconsequential: the long article (and book) appeared in print toward the end of the First World War, in other words roughly the same time when George Coedès also published his landmark piece on Srivijaya.<sup>8</sup> Ferrand himself would follow up four years later with an article on Srivijaya of his own, but unlike Coedès' *royaume* (kingdom), Ferrand now spoke of Srivijaya in terms of an empire, as the title of his publication intimates.<sup>9</sup> From today's standpoint, the idea of an empire seems exaggerated. Today, the German academic Hermann Kulke deems Srivijaya to have been a network or federation of polities not unlike the Hanseatic League of the European Middle Ages.<sup>10</sup>

*Singapore* (Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies; Straits Times Press, 2017); John Norman Miksic, *Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea, 1300–1800* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013).

6 'Errata to C.H. Wake: Malacca's early kings and the reception of Islam', *JSEAH* 6, 1 (1965): 107.

7 G. Ferrand, *Malaka, le Malayu et Malayur*, reprint from *JA* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1918) [hereafter FMMM]. For the rest of this article, the original spelling found in the writings of Ferrand and Rouffaer will be retained in order to remind readers that this is a discussion about the historic use of place names, and an expression of a certain period in time.

8 G. Coedès, 'Le royaume de Çrivijaya', *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient (BEFEO)* 18, 6 (1918): 1–36.

9 G. Ferrand, *L'Empire Sumatranais de Çrivijaya*, reprint from *JA* (Paris: Geuthner, 1922).

10 Hermann Kulke, *Kings and cults: State formation and legitimation in India and Southeast Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1993). For different views on Srivijaya up until the end of the 1980s, see Pierre-Yves Manguin, *A bibliography of Sriwijayan studies*, Collection de Textes et Documents Nourantariens, vol. VIII (Jakarta: École française de l'Extrême-Orient, 1989).

One should bear in mind that ‘Srivijaya’ did not suddenly appear out of nowhere: it had featured in discussions about ancient toponyms at least since the 1870s. Around 1900, academics sought to connect historical place names across time and languages. Not surprisingly, the toponyms familiar from Ptolemaic geography came under the spotlight, such as notably by Col. Gerolamo Emilio Gerini in his *Researches on Ptolemy’s Geography of Eastern Asia* (1909).<sup>11</sup> Coedès had also trawled ancient European geographies and made connections with Asian toponyms in his first major publication *Textes d’auteurs grecs et latins relatifs à l’Extrême-Orient depuis le IV.e siècle av. J.C. jusqu’au XIV.e siècle* (Texts by Greek and Latin Authors Touching on the Far East between the Fourth Century B.C. to the Fourteenth Century), in 1910.<sup>12</sup> The assumption underlying all these explorations is that place names encountered in Greco-Roman texts could be reliably associated with toponyms mentioned in Asian epigraphy and classical texts.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, scholars were also working with Chinese materials and making connections between place names along supposed or presumed phonetic similarities. Working on the Chinese sources were scholars like the French Sinologist Paul Pelliot, who in an article published in 1903 uncovered what he considered to be the forgotten emporium and kingdom of Funan. In the following year, 1904, he also published his *Deux itinéraires de Chine en Inde à la fin du VIII.e siècle* (Two Itineraries from China to India from the End of the Eighth Century).<sup>14</sup> Taken together these two articles contributed toward establishing a methodological and analytical framework by which Chinese toponyms could be studied and restored. Around this time, Friedrich Hirth and William W. Rockhill produced their annotated English translation with commentary of Chau Ju-kua (趙汝适, Chao Rugua) published in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1911.<sup>15</sup> Gabriel Ferrand, moreover, studied toponyms encountered in Arabic language materials.<sup>16</sup> The framework(s) developed for identifying and

11 Gerolamo Emilio Gerini, *Researches on Ptolemy’s Geography of Eastern Asia* (London: Royal Asiatic Society and Royal Geographical Society, 1909).

12 First edition printed by Leroux in Paris, 1910. See G. Coedès, *Textes d’auteurs grecs et latins relatifs à l’Extrême-Orient depuis le IV.e siècle av. J.C. jusqu’au XIV.e siècle*, repr. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977).

13 See also KBSS, p. 6.

14 Paul Pelliot, ‘Le Fou-Nan’, *BEFEO* 3 (1903): 248–303; Pelliot, ‘Deux itinéraires de Chine en Inde à la fin du VIII.ème siècle’, *BEFEO* 4 (1904): 321–48. On the role of Pelliot, see Kwa Chong Guan in his *Introduction*, KBSS, p. 6.

15 Friedrich Hirth and William Woodville Rockhill, *Chau Ju-kua: His work on the Chinese and Arab trade in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, entitled Chu-fan-chi* (St. Petersburg: Printing Office of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1911).

16 For some of Ferrand’s other works from around this period, see for example, his *Relations des voyages et textes géographiques Arabes, Persans, et Turks relatifs à l’Extrême-Orient*, 2 vols. (Paris: Leroux, 1912–13); Ferrand, ‘À propos d’une carte javanaise du XV.e siècle’, *Journal Asiatique* (JA) 11 (1918): 158–70; Ferrand, *Le K’oen-Louen et les anciennes navigations interocéaniques dans les Mers du Sud* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1919); Ferrand, ed., *Voyage du marchand Sulayman en Inde et en Chine* (Paris: Éditions Bossard, 1922); Ferrand, ‘L’élément persan dans les textes nautiques arabes des XV.e et XVI.e siècles’, *JA* 204 (1924): 193–257; Ferrand, ed., *Instructions nautiques et routiers arabes et portugais des XV.e et XVI.e siècles* (Paris: n.p., 1921–28); Ferrand, *Introduction à l’astronomie nautiques des Arabes* (Paris: Geuthner, 1928); Ferrand, *Quatre textes épigraphiques Malayo-Sanskrits de Sumatra et de Bangka* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1932); Ferrand, *Le Wakwak, est-il le Japon?* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1932).

discussing historical toponyms also helped Ferrand and Coedès in their research on Melaka and Srivijaya, respectively.

'Rediscovering' Srivijaya was thus no accident and in line with the spirit and analytical frameworks at the time. The Dutch Sinologist W.P. Groeneveldt and especially also Pelliot wrote about *Shih-li-fo-shih* (Srivijaya) that was known from Chinese sources, but it was Coedès who successfully made a connection between *Shih-li-fo-shih* and the Arabic toponym *Sribuza* (as earlier transliterated by Ferrand in 1913).<sup>17</sup> Kwa Chong Guan describes Coedès' contribution as having 'colligated fragmentary and elliptical Malay and Tamil epigraphy as well as Chinese and Arabic texts in order to reconstruct the forgotten trading emporium of Srivijaya'.<sup>18</sup> It was this association of geographical terms from different languages within an established and accepted framework of analysis that brought the kingdom of Srivijaya back from oblivion. In his 1979 article 'Studying Srivijaya' Oliver Wolters observed: 'It was Coedès, however, and not Pelliot, who introduced Srivijaya to the scholarly world'.<sup>19</sup> But there is more: colonial administrators in the age of imperialism were seeking to get to grips with the complexities of peoples, cultures, languages, and geographies of the vast lands that had come under their direct and indirect rule. To this end, they relied on the knowledge transcribed from local sources, translated, and processed by learned societies that are associated today with colonialism in Asia: in Britain the Royal Asiatic, Royal Geographical and Hakluyt Societies; in the Netherlands and its colonies the KITLV, the Linschoten Vereeniging (Linschoten Society, a Dutch counterpart to Britain's Hakluyt Society) and the Bataviaasch Genootschap der Kunsten (Batavian Society for the Arts), as well as France's École française d'Extrême-Orient (French School of the Far East).

Scholars in this period viewed the march of time in Southeast Asia through the prism of progressive decay. The kingdoms and empires of the past, and in any case before the advent of European colonialism around 1500, were often framed as culturally more noble and pure. Scholars, moreover, used linguistic categories to engage in a process of racial mapping, as Anthony Milner has observed in his survey chapter 'Southeast Asian Historical Writing'.<sup>20</sup>

The early twentieth century, therefore, was a time when academics were making connections between place names across different languages, and this had been made possible by advances in epigraphy as well as in transcribing and translating sources both from European as well as Asian languages. Pelliot, moreover, was the 'first to make a connection between *Tan-ma-hsi* (淡馬錫 or *Danmaxi*) and Javanese references and to Tumasik (or Temasek) as well as link these to Singapore' in his

17 Willem Pieter Groeneveldt, 'Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca, compiled from Chinese sources', *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 39, 1 (1876); Pelliot, 'Deux itinéraires'; Oliver W. Wolters, 'Studying Srivijaya', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS)* 52, 2 (1979): 2.

18 KBSS, pp. 5–6.

19 Wolters, 'Studying Srivijaya', p. 5. The article is reproduced in Craig J. Reynolds, ed., *Early Southeast Asia: Selected essays* (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asian Program, Cornell University, 2008), pp. 77–108.

20 Anthony C. Milner, 'Southeast Asian historical writing', in *The Oxford history of historical writing*, ed. Daniel Woolf; vol. 4, 1800–1945, ed. Stuart McIntyre, Jan Manguashca and Attila Pók (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 537–58.

mentioned study *Deux itinéraires* published in 1904.<sup>21</sup> Tumasik is a place name known from the fourteenth-century Majapahit epic *Nagarakrtagama* and the Chinese equivalent and counterpart, *Tan-ma-hsi*, is found in sources of the Song and early Ming dynasties.<sup>22</sup> It was thus only a matter of time before scholars would also begin to place other historic trading cities of the Straits region, the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra — such as Melaka — under the spotlight and try to link these toponyms with other place names from the classical texts written in Asian and European languages. As it happened, the spotlight fell on Melaka in the same year that Coedès published his study on Srivijaya: 1918.

### Ferrand: Melaka and the records known in 1918

It was in this spirit of drawing on documentary publications and attempting to make connections between place names across different languages that Ferrand published his *Malaka, le Malayu et Malayur*. It offers a collection of testimonies touching on Melaka excerpted and translated from different languages, both Asian and European. Added to these are three appendices on the ‘Island of Ghur’ (Taiwan), the ‘Island of Fariyuk’, and ‘Losak’, as well as some ‘additional notes’ and ‘addenda’.<sup>23</sup> This publication is not easily read and processed, so the average reader picking up this publication for the first time might feel overwhelmed.

The short preface of one-and-a-half pages opens with a reference to Sir Henry Yule, a British imperial official, co-author of *Hobson-Jobson* and editor of *Cathay and the Way Thither*.<sup>24</sup> Ferrand stakes out the issues at hand:

Having summarised the information given on this subject by [François] Valentyn, [João de] Barros and [Diogo do] Couto, [Henry] Yule says it would appear that we are right to conclude with confidence that Malaka was founded by a prince whose son reigned and who visited the court of China in 1411. In 1874 [Pieter Anton] Tiele also wrote: ‘The town of Melaka was founded around 1400 by Javanese emigrés from Palembang’. Thirteen years later, Mr C. Otto Blagden, using the *Commentaries* of d’Albuquerque, the *Ming-Shi* and the *Sejarah Melayu* arrived at the identical conclusion.<sup>25</sup> In his *Deux*

21 KBSS, p. 6; Pelliot, ‘Deux itinéraires’.

22 Concerning the association of these Malay and Chinese toponyms relating to ancient Singapore, see the contributions by Roland Braddell, Hsü Yün-T’siao and Brian Colless in KBSS, pp. 27–65. Also Miksic, *Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea* and Lim Tse Siang, ‘14th century Singapore: The Temasek paradigm’ (MA diss., National University of Singapore, 2012). See further Derek Heng, ‘Temasik in the 13th and 14th centuries’, *JMBRAS* 72, 1 (1999): 113–24, esp. pp. 116–18; D. Heng, ‘Reconstructing Banzu, a fourteenth century port settlement in Singapore’, *JMBRAS* 75, 2 (2002): 69–90; and D. Heng, *Sino-Malay trade and diplomacy from the tenth through the fourteenth century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009). Add to these Johannes L. Kurz, ‘Deconstructing Banzu and Longyamen: The *Daoyi zhilüe* (1349) in the new early history of Singapore’, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft (ZDMG)* 169, 2 (2019): 455–80.

23 FMMM, appendix I, pp. 174–81; appendix II, pp. 181–2; appendix III, 182–93, ‘note additionnelle’, pp. 193–8; ‘addenda’, pp. 198–202.

24 Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: A glossary of colloquial Anglo-Indian words and phrases*, repr. (Sittingbourne: Linguasia, 1994[1886]); H. Yule, ed. and tr., *Cathay and the way thither, being a collection of medieval notices of China*, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1876). Citation from FMMM, p. 1.

25 The publication by Charles Otto Blagden in question here is most likely his ‘Medieval chronology of Malacca’, in *Actes du Onzième Congrès International des Orientalistes*, ed. M.E. Sènant (Paris: Imprimerie

*itinéraires de Chine en Inde a la fin du VIII.ème siècle* (Two Itineraries from China to India at the end of the eighth century), Mr [Paul] Pelliot recalled the works of Yule, Tiele and Blagden, and considered the question to be 'definitively' settled in the sense provided by this latest sage: 'Malacca was founded in the final quarter of the fourteenth century'.<sup>26</sup>

From the way Ferrand arranges these citations, it seems that he is not convinced that Melaka's dating had been 'settled' as alleged by Pelliot. Ferrand explains that he had put all relevant materials together into this book with the aim of stimulating 'a fresh discussion'.<sup>27</sup> What he does not immediately reveal is that he has made connections between some toponyms and postulates that Melaka was known in earlier times by a different name. If it was indeed known in earlier times by a different name, what would that have been? The title of the publication intimates Ferrand's answer: *Malayu(r)* or *Malaiur*.

### Berthold Laufer's review

In the following year 1919, the anthropologist and Asia scholar Berthold Laufer published a review of about three-and-a-half pages of Ferrand's piece.<sup>28</sup> In it, Laufer showers Ferrand with compliments, and praises him as someone who 'stands in the foreground of Malayan scholars, and commands a unique knowledge of Malayan and other Oriental languages, coupled with a long and wide experience of Madagascar and almost all parts of the globe'.<sup>29</sup> Judging by the surviving correspondence examined by the German Sinologist and librarian Hartmut Walravens, the two men, Laufer and Ferrand, were friends over several years.<sup>30</sup> Laufer concurred with Ferrand that to place Melaka's founding in the final quarter of the fourteenth century remained unsatisfactory. In order to stimulate a fresh discussion on the subject, Ferrand had placed the known body of evidence on the table. In Laufer's words:

While the main object of his present publication is to solve the mystery of Malaka, the treatment of the subject is so thorough and circumstantial that it grows into a fundamental contribution to early Malayan history. He [Ferrand] gives a long and almost complete series of Chinese, Arabic, Portuguese and Dutch texts relating to the ancient history of Malaka and has provided them with elaborate and illuminating commentary. His study

Nationale, 1899), II, pp. 239–53, or possibly also his later 'Notes on Malay history', *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JSBRAS)* 53 (1909): 143–9. For the significance of this publication see also Richard O. Winstedt, 'The Malay founder of medieval Malacca', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (BSOAS)* 12, 3–4 (1948): 726–9.

26 The final quarter of the fourteenth century is mentioned as the founding date of Melaka, among others, by Richard James Wilkinson who also served as administrator and Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements, 1911–16. See: R.J. Wilkinson, *Papers on Malay subjects, R.J. Wilkinson, 1907–1916*, ed. Peter L. Burns (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 35. This approximate dating corresponds to an attack by the Majapahit kingdom on Singapore, and the founding of Melaka is explained in terms of the subsequent influx of refugees from Singapore. See also his *History of the Peninsular Malays with chapters on Perak and Selangor* (Singapore: Kelly and Walsh, 1920).

27 FMMM, p. 2.

28 Berthold Laufer, 'Malaka, le Malayu et Malayur by Gabriel Ferrand', *American Anthropologist*, NS, 21, 3 (1921): 308–11. Laufer was originally from Cologne, Germany.

29 Laufer, 'Malaka', p. 308.

30 H. Walravens, 'Zwei Briefe Berthold Laufers an Gabriel Ferrand (1864–1935)', *ZDMG* 160, 2 (2010): 303–8.

belongs to the class of those aptly characterised by the French as ‘bien documenté’ [thoroughly documented] and ‘très nourri’ [lit. well-nourished, here: richly supported with documentation]. ....<sup>31</sup>

The entire work is replete with substantial information and novel suggestions which open a wide perspective for future research. I only wish M. Ferrand might also have given us his opinion in regard to the alleged Ptolemaic allusions to Malayan names — thus Perimula taken for the site of the city of Malaka by L. Contzen (*Die Portugiesen auf Malacca*, p. 4, Bonn, 1906) and the Maleu Kolon discussed by Yule (*Hobson-Jobson*, p. 545) and Gerini.<sup>32</sup>

As Laufer concedes: ‘A cogent date for the foundation of Malaka does not immediately result from any document at our disposal’ in Ferrand’s publication.<sup>33</sup> The Portuguese documents in particular vary greatly in their estimates for the city’s founding, ranging from the eighth century in Gaspar Correia’s *Lendas da Índia* (Legends of India, c.1550) to the fourteenth century in Pires, Erédia and others.<sup>34</sup> Of special interest to the present study is also the following view: ‘The date 1253 given in the Malayan Chronicle *Sedjarah Malayu* (written in 1612) seems to be the most reasonable, and this is also the one adopted by the Hollander Valentyn.’<sup>35</sup>

It is here, at this juncture, that the musings on *Malayu* and *Malaiur* and their connection to Melaka come into play. Laufer describes the situation thus: ‘In order to arrive at a more satisfactory solution to the problem M. Ferrand studies at close range what is known of the Malayan settlements named “Malayu”, one of which was situated on Sumatra and the other on Malaka’,<sup>36</sup> whereby the latter toponym is to be understood as the Malay Peninsula in general, as was the convention in earlier times. Laufer continues: ‘M. Ferrand demonstrates and decisively with great acumen that the *Mo-lo-yu* and *Ma-li-yu’r* of the *Yuen-che* (Yüan Annals) and the *Malaiur* visited about 1293 and briefly referenced by Marco Polo as “a fine and noble city” are identical and occupied

31 Laufer, ‘Malaka’, pp. 308, 311.

32 Ibid., p. 311; Leopold Contzen, *Die Portugiesen auf Malaka. Beiträge zur portugiesischen Kolonialgeschichte in Ostasien* (Bonn: Königliches Gymnasium, 1904); Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*; Gerini, *Researches on Ptolemy’s Geography*.

33 Laufer, ‘Malaka’, p. 309.

34 For Erédia, see M. Godinho de Erédia, *Malaca l’Inde Méridionale e le Cathay: Manuscrit original autographe de Godinho de Eredia appartenant à la Bibliothèque Royale de Bruxelles*, tr. M.L. Janssen (Bruxelles: Librairie Européenne C. Muquardt, 1882); A.L. Caminha, *Ordenações da Índia do Senhor Rei D. Manoel, etc.* (Lisbon: Na Impressão Regia, 1807) [This source contains the original Portuguese-language edition of Erédia’s ‘Informação da Aurea Chersoneso’ on pp. 67–120]; also Erédia, *Informação da Aurea Quersoneso, ou Península, e das Ilhas Auríferas, Carbúculas e Aromáticas*, ed. R.M. Loureiro (Macau: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2008). Concerning the work of Correia, see his *Lendas da Índia*, ed. R.J. de Lima Felner, 7 vols. (Lisbon: Academia Real das Ciências, 1858–66) as well as the relevant excerpts touching on Melaka both in Portuguese and English translation in Manuel J. Pintado, ed. and tr., *Portuguese documents on Malacca*, I, 1509–1511 (Kuala Lumpur: National Archives of Malaysia, 1993).

35 Laufer, ‘Malaka’, p. 309. Reference to Valentyn (or Valentijn) highlights the discussion in François Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën, Vervattende Een Naauwkeurige en Uitvoerige Verhandeling van Nederlands Mogentheid in de Gewesten, etc.*, 5 parts in 8 vols. (Dordrecht and Amsterdam: Johannes van Braam and Gerard Onder de Linden, 1724–26). An English translation of the passages on Melaka is found in D.F.A. Hervey, ‘François Valentyn’s account of Malacca’, *JSBRAS* 16, 1 (1885): 289–301 and 22 (1890): 225–46.

36 Laufer, ‘Malaka’, p. 309. See esp. also FMMM, pp. 91–8.



the same site as the city of Malaka.<sup>37</sup> There follow some reflections on the etymological origin of the name ‘Malaka’ and the probable meaning of the name ‘Melayu’.

In sum, Laufer provides a very useful summary of the main arguments advanced by Ferrand. Despite some quibbles of little consequence, Laufer thinks very highly of this publication and shares Ferrand’s main conclusions. But Laufer’s positive verdict was not universally shared among scholars, and this was especially true of Ferrand’s association of Melaka with Marco Polo’s Malayur.

### Krom’s obituary-biography of Rouffaer

In 1928 the Dutch academic Nicolaas Johannes Krom, published an obituary of his colleague Gerret Pieter Rouffaer in the *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Contributions toward the Study of Language, Literature and Ethnology of the Dutch Indies) entitled ‘Herdenkingen van Dr. G.P. Rouffaer’ (Commemorating Dr G.P. Rouffaer).<sup>38</sup> Like Rouffaer, Krom was a historian of Indonesian antiquity and is remembered today for his scholarly contributions such as *De Sumatraansche Periode van Javaansche Geschiedenis* (The Sumatran Period of Javanese History), his inaugural lecture at Leiden University (on 3 December 1919); as well as two seminal books *Beschrijving van Barabudur* (Description of Borobudur) and *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis* (Hindu-Javanese History).<sup>39</sup> Krom’s 1928 article published over two issues of the journal is hardly an obituary; it’s a full-fledged biography of a man who served as the KITLV’s director and played a crucial role in building up the institute’s collection of books, manuscripts and photographs. The long article together with a bibliography of Rouffaer’s works covers almost 150 pages. In detailing Rouffaer’s life and works Krom divulges important information for this article: Rouffaer invested a lot of energy in responding to Ferrand on the topic of Melaka’s founding – and more.

What does Krom tell his readers? After publishing a couple of shorter articles in the *Bijdragen* in its 1918 issue, Rouffaer’s attention was drawn to an offprint publication by Gabriel Ferrand entitled *Malaka, le Malayu et Malayur*.<sup>40</sup> Rouffaer concurred with Ferrand that between 800 and 1400 CE there had been two different places called *Malayu(r)*, but this is where their agreement ended. Rouffaer resolved to pen a short piece — 20 pages or so. But once he began to immerse himself in the materials — the history of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula — ‘one thing led to another’, as Krom puts it, ‘and in the end the 20 pages became 420’.<sup>41</sup> Rouffaer’s long article was published in two parts in the *Bijdragen* in 1921 and is entitled: ‘Was Malaka emporium vóór 1400 A.D. genaamd Malajoer? En waar lag Woerawari, Ma-Hasin, Langka, Batoesawar?’ (Was Melaka an emporium before 1400 A.D. named Malaiur? And where were Wurawari, Ma-Hasin, Langka and Batusawar located?)

37 Laufer, ‘Malaka’, p. 309.

38 Nicolaas Johannes Krom, ‘Herdenking van Dr. G.P. Rouffaer’, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië (BKI)* 84, 2–3 (1928): 163–250, 1–6, 251–99.

39 N.J. Krom, *De Sumatraansche Periode van Javaansche Geschiedenis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1919); N.J. Krom and T. van Erp, *Beschrijving van Barabudur. I. Archaeologische Beschrijving* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1920); Krom, *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis*, 2nd rev. edn (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1931).

40 Krom, ‘Herdenking’, p. 275.

41 *Ibid.*

Preparing this long article came at a high personal cost.<sup>42</sup> At the time of writing it, Rouffaer was suffering from poor health and was preoccupied with many other commitments to the KITLV, the Linschoten Vereeniging, the Vrienden der Aziatische kunst (Friends of Asian Art) as well as seeing the late Hendrik Kern's *Verspreide Geschriften* (Collected Works) through the press. In view of the many corrections, amendments and revisions made on the long article, Krom concedes, it is surprising Rouffaer's study was ever published. 'All in all,' Krom concludes, 'it is certainly an article with extraordinary qualities, one of the sorts that Rouffaer himself would have called "bold"<sup>43</sup> and then clarifies:

The dismissive refutation of Ferrand which indeed remains within twenty pages as [originally] planned, naturally leads to the question when Melaka was founded, and that question can only be answered by taking into account all the old reports about the southern half of the Malay Peninsula, foremost however about Singapore which is referenced in the stories about Melaka. An important source might have been the Singapore stone inscriptions that has been lost, and an expansive account has been added about this stone and its destruction.<sup>44</sup> There is no point here in tracing how the different place names mentioned in the title are brought into relation with ancient Malay history.<sup>45</sup>

Rouffaer found Singapore to have had such a key role in Melaka's genesis that it would be futile to separate the two. He was convinced that there could be no reliable appraisal of Melaka's founding without keeping the story of Temasek/Singapura in clear view.

### Rouffaer's '20-odd pages'

As Krom intimates, Rouffaer had intended to answer Ferrand in some 20 pages. But given the materials he was bringing into view and the complexity of the argument he was developing, the article began to swell beyond its planned scope. It is still possible to identify the 20-page response at the beginning of the 1921 article and thus to reconstruct what shape Rouffaer's initial answer to Ferrand had looked like. The piece opens by referencing two publications in French from the year 1918: Coedès' and Ferrand's. Rouffaer surprisingly does not dwell on Coedès' piece on the 'rediscovery' of Srivijaya. He accepts its main conclusions as 'irrefutable' and then proceeds to summarise the main points advanced by Coedès in a little more than one page, highlighting the Dutch intellectual contribution to Coedès' article via W.P. Groeneveldt, J.L.A.

42 G.P. Rouffaer, 'Was Malaka Emporium vóór 1400 A. D. genaamd Malajoer? En waar lag Woerawari, Ma-Hasin, Langka, Batoesawar?', *BKI* 77 (1921): 1–174, 359–604 [Source hereafter RWME]. Sections of the article pertaining to Batu Sawar have been translated and included in KBSS, pp. 81–117. The first part of the article was reviewed in 1922 by R.O. Winstedt in 'The early history of Singapore, Johore and Melaka: An outline of a paper by Gerrit Pieter Rouffaer', *JSBRAS* 86 (1922): 257–60; reprinted in KBSS, pp. 118–21.

43 Krom, 'Herdenking', p. 278.

44 Rouffaer's exposé on the Singapore Stone arguably remains the most comprehensive and authoritative to date. It can be found in RWME, I, pp. 34–67. This is followed by a discussion on whether Singapore existed and was known by another name before the year 900 AD, *ibid.*, pp. 67–72, and between 900–1200 AD, pp. 72–5.

45 Krom, 'Herdenking', p. 278.

Brandes and Hendrik Kern.<sup>46</sup> Toward the end of page 2, Rouffaer moves on to discuss Ferrand: 'Just as surprising as the study by Mr. Coedès is the one by Ferrand.'<sup>47</sup> By associating Melaka and Malayu(r), Rouffaer claims, Ferrand has advanced 'the most surprising new arguments' and with his conclusion 'overturns all the accepted facts, not just about the founding of Melaka, but also regarding Malay migrations to the peninsula'.<sup>48</sup>

In writing the commentaries to the texts he was presenting to his readers for consideration, Ferrand asks whether Melaka was known before c.1400 by a different name. He concludes that it was earlier known as Malayu or Malayur (with the latter simply representing a Tamil variant of the name).<sup>49</sup> Ferrand mulls over key terms and toponyms, and concludes that there were two places named Malayu(r): the first is known from the Tanjore inscription (c.1030 CE), which Rouffaer identified as Jambi in an earlier publication.<sup>50</sup> Ferrand acknowledges Rouffaer's research on this subject, and the latter also has no problems with this.<sup>51</sup> Rouffaer does, however, have a problem with the second place name, Malayu(r), which is known from Marco Polo.

Ferrand's understanding of the second Malayu(r) or Malaiur, and especially its location, was influenced by another place name: Pentam.<sup>52</sup> Add to this the distance provided in Marco Polo: '60 miles and 30 more',<sup>53</sup> as well as the claim by the Portuguese chronicler Gaspar Correia that Melaka served as a trading emporium since the eighth century.<sup>54</sup> Ferrand solves key pieces in this puzzle: Pentam is identified as Bintan (Riau);<sup>55</sup> and Malayur is Melaka, because the distances mentioned by Polo are about right. Also the name Malayur, Ferrand contends, refers to a polity, and Polo refers to the port of this polity.<sup>56</sup> Malayur is described by Polo to have been a trading city where spices could be obtained — so was Melaka; and Melaka was known as a city of Malays, a point that Brás de Albuquerque confirms.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, Polo's Malayur — Ferrand concluded — must be the earlier name for

46 RWME, I, at p. 2.

47 Ibid., p. 2.

48 Ibid., pp. 4–5.

49 FMMM, esp. pp. 131 et seq.

50 RWME, I, pp. 11, 16. See also *ibid.*, pp. 71–2. See also Rouffaer's additional discussion of the Tanjore inscription, *ibid.*, pp. 76–86.

51 FMMM, p. 95; RWME, I, p. 3.

52 FMMM, p. 140; RWME, I, p. 8. Concerning the identification of Pentam, see Colin Jack Hinton, 'Marco Polo in Southeast Asia: A preliminary essay in reconstruction', *JSEAH* 5, 2 (1964): 84–5; see also his discussion of Malaiur, *ibid.*, pp. 86–7.

53 FMMM, pp. 140, 147; RWME, I, p. 4.

54 FMMM, pp. 52–6, 155; RWME, I, pp. 4–5, 7.

55 FMMM, pp. 142, 147. The identification of Marco Polo's Pentan or Pentam as Bintan was common since at least the seventeenth century. See the dictionary and glossary entries in Pierre d'Avity, *Le monde, ou la description générale de ses quatre parties* (Paris: Chez Denys Bechet et Louis Billaine, 1660), p. 886; Antoine-Augustin Bruzen de la Martinière, *Le Grand Dictionnaire Géographique et Critique*, 6 vols. (The Hague: Chez P. Gosse, R.C. Alberts, P. de Hondt, 1726–39), II, p. 291; Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses, Vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, 64 vols., Leipzig and Halle 1732–54, vol. III, col. 1265–6.

56 FMMM, pp. 153, 159.

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 25–38, 149–50.

Melaka, and all that dovetails with what Correia claims.<sup>58</sup> Additional deliberations follow regarding *Ma-la-yu* and *Ma-li-yu-eul* of the late thirteenth century that are known from the Yüan chronicle *Yuen-che*.<sup>59</sup>

This is a summary of Ferrand's core argument. But it could not pass muster with a stickler for detail like Rouffaer. Questioning the validity of just one of Ferrand's premises is capable of bringing down the whole argument, and that is exactly what Rouffaer did: he denies that Pentan was Bintan;<sup>60</sup> and he also reminds that the name Malayur was of Tamil and not Malay origin.<sup>61</sup> While Rouffaer agrees that there were two separate places known by the name Malayur (which he references as 'Old' and 'New' Malayur),<sup>62</sup> the two Malayurs in question were Jambi and Palembang, not Jambi and Melaka as Ferrand claims. Then there is the issue of the Chinese toponym *Ma-li-yu-eul* mentioned by Pelliot in *Deux itinéraires*. Pelliot notes that this name probably referred to the inhabitants of Polo's Malayur, and concludes: 'I admit that the Malayur of Marco Polo, the *Mo-la-yeou* or *Mal-li-yu-eul* of the Chinese, [and] the Malayu(r) of the Javanese were nothing else than Palembang on Sumatra.'<sup>63</sup> But the oldest verifiable reference to Melaka as *Moa-la-ka* dates from the year 1403 and can be found in Groeneveldt's *Notes* published in 1876.<sup>64</sup>

Rouffaer also highlights noteworthy absences: if we assume that Melaka existed but was known by a different name before 1400, why then is it not mentioned in the text of Odoric of Pordenone who spent some time sojourning in northern Sumatra during the early fourteenth century?<sup>65</sup> In a similar vein, why does Ibn Battuta not mention it? Why would the Majapahit *Nagarakrtagama* recounting the campaigns of Hayam Wuruk name the whole of the Malay Peninsula as 'Pahang' if Malayu(r) (here supposedly Melaka) was already a great trading city for centuries?<sup>66</sup> 'The only reasonable way to ascertain at least the *existence* of a place named Melaka before 1400, is to *search for that name* in reliable, and preferably mutually independent data of the fourteenth century or earlier.'<sup>67</sup> Rouffaer claims that he had found what he was looking for: in the Javanese as well as Siamese sources of the mid-fourteenth century. He encountered references to Melaka by its own name and not some 'alias' (*schuilnaam*).<sup>68</sup>

Based on the sources at hand, Rouffaer then identifies three possible windows for Melaka's founding date (excluding Correia's unreliable testimony) and his position can be summarised as follows:<sup>69</sup>

58 Ibid., pp. 53, 139–63, esp. 153; RWME, I, p. 11.

59 FMMM, pp. 153–4.

60 RWME, I, pp. 8–9.

61 RWME, I, p. 16.

62 Ibid., p. 17.

63 Ibid., p. 10.

64 The matter is also discussed in Gustave Schlegel, 'Geographical notes XV. Moan-la-ka, Malacca', *T'oung Pao* 10, 5 (1899): 470–78. Similarly, see also Schlegel, 'Geographical notes VIII: Pa-hoang, Pang-k'ang, Pang-hang, Pahang or Panggang', *T'oung Pao* 10 (1899): 39–46; and also 'Geographical notes XVI: The old states in the island of Sumatra', *T'oung Pao* 2 (1901): 107–38, 167–82, 329–77.

65 Concerning this source by Odoric of Pordenone and its value for the study of historical Southeast Asia, see L. Bressan, 'Odoric of Pordenone (1265–1331): His vision of China and South-East Asia and his contribution to relations between Asia and Europe', *JMBRAS* 70, 2 (1997): 1–23, esp. 16–21.

66 FMMM, pp. 158–9; RWME, I, pp. 5, 20.

67 RWME, I, p. 21.

68 Ibid., p. 23.

69 Ibid., p. 24.

- A) Around the middle of the thirteenth century. Testimonies supporting this date are François Valentyn (who confesses on the opening page of his *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* [New and Old East Indies] that he owned a copy of the *Sulalat-us Salatin* or Malay Annals which forms the basis of this dating) as well as the Portuguese chronicler João de Barros.<sup>70</sup>
- B) In the second half of the 1300s: this dating is mentioned by the Portuguese chronicler Diogo do Couto. The specific dates mentioned are c.1350 and c.1384.<sup>71</sup>
- C) The early 1400s: this is found in the Ming Chinese sources and is also mentioned by Manuel Godinho de Erédia (specifically the year 1411), Brás de Albuquerque (1421), as well as Ludovico de Varthema (1425).<sup>72</sup>

Tomé Pires is not mentioned as a source on the history of Melaka because Rouffaer's article predates the 1944 edition and translation of his *Suma Oriental* prepared by Armando Cortesão by more than two decades.<sup>73</sup>

Which window for the dating is chosen also depends on how one appraises Melaka's relations with medieval Temasek/Singapura. As Krom also highlights, Rouffaer made it a cornerstone of his argument that the story of Melaka's founding is historically intertwined with the fate of Singapore.<sup>74</sup> This assumes the following form: Rouffaer highlights that each of the accounts touching on the founding of Melaka share a four or five-step migration pattern: 1) Palembang/Tumapel; 2) Singapore; 3) Muar; 4) Bertam/Melaka.<sup>75</sup> Another theme shared by all the accounts concerns the fugitive or emigré prince who seized power in a coup d'état and ruled Temasek/Singapura until expelled by force; Muar became his interim location before moving on and founding Melaka.

Having established this migration pattern, Rouffaer then proceeds to discuss the story of Temasek/Singapura, starting with the Singapore Stone, destroyed in 1839, as well as the different attempts undertaken to study, identify and decipher its now lost text.<sup>76</sup> This is as far as Rouffaer's long article is of direct interest to the present exposé.

70 FMMM, p. 153; RWME, I, p. 24; also: João de Barros and Diogo do Couto, *Da Ásia. Dos feitos que os Portuguezes fizeram no conquista, e descubrimento das terras e mares do Oriente*, 24 vols. (Lisbon: Na Regia Officina Typographia, 1777–8); Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*; Hervey, 'François Valentyn's account of Malacca'. Following this date in later times is notably Frank Swettenham in his *British Malaya: An account of the origin and progress of British influence in Malaya*, rev. ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1948 [1907]). Netscher provided the date 1249 for 'Sri Iskandar Shah, founder of Malacca', in E. Netscher, *De Nederlanders in Djohor en Siak* (Batavia: Bruining & Wijt, 1870), p. 2.

71 RWME, I, p. 24. Broadly following this dating are Wilkinson, 'The Malacca Sultanate', *JBRAS* 61 (1612): 67–71, and later Walter Linehan, 'The kings of 14th century Singapore', *JMBRAS* 42, 1 (1969): 53–62. The specific date provided in the latter, p. 56, is the year 1393.

72 RWME, I, pp. 24–5; Erédia, 'Eredia's Description of Malacca, Meridional India and Cathay', ed. and tr. J.V.G. Mills, *JMBRAS* 8, 1 (1930): 14, 35 (referencing the year 1411) and 229 (for the year 1398). The year 1411 is also indicated on a map of Portuguese Melaka and its surroundings preserved in the National Library of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro. See Armando Cortesão and Avelino Teixeira da Mota, *Portugaliae Monumenta Cartographica*, 9 vols. (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1987), vol. IV, plate 411B. Also Brás de Albuquerque, *The commentaries of the great A. Dalboquerque, second viceroy of India*, tr. Walter de Gray Birch, 4 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1875–95); Ludovico de Varthema, *The itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna from 1502 to 1508*, tr. and ed. J. Winter Jones (London: Argonaut, 1928).

73 Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, ed. Cortesão (1944).

74 RWME, I, pp. 26ff.

75 Ibid., pp. 27–9.

76 Ibid., pp. 35–67.

### Winstedt's 1922 summary

Rouffaer's reply to Ferrand was not ignored in scholarly circles. But the debate and exchange of ideas admittedly was taking place in two languages that many in the English-speaking world were not able to read. It should not surprise that shortly after publishing the first segment of his long article in 1921, Richard O. Winstedt penned a short, three-page summary review to draw attention to its existence. This was then published the following year with the title: 'The Early History of Singapore, Johore and Melaka. An Outline of a Paper by Gerrit Pieter Rouffaer'.<sup>77</sup>

Winstedt hardly needs special introduction here: he studied at Oxford and became a colonial administrator. Before retiring in 1935 from the Malayan Civil Service, he played a role in education as President of Raffles College, Director of Education for Singapore and the Federated Malay States (1924–31) and later served as General Advisor to the State of Johore (1931–35). Hereafter he pursued a career as a lecturer in Malay language and literature, and intermittently between 1943 and 1961 was president of the Royal Asiatic Society in London.<sup>78</sup> He excelled not only as a scholar of Malay language and literature, but also as an historian of British Malaya and Malayan antiquities. As is known, Winstedt could read Dutch and, according to Pieter Voorhoeve, held Dutch scholarship in the highest esteem.<sup>79</sup> Winstedt paid attention to works published in the Netherlands or the Dutch East Indies and referenced them in his own books and articles.

In his 1922 summary review, Winstedt stresses that the first portion of Rouffaer's reply to Ferrand deserves attention from serious scholars. His opening lines are worth reproducing in full here:

In the *Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Deel 77), 1921, G.P. Rouffaer, who first identified *tanah Melayu* as the basin of the Jambi, has published a startling paper on the geography of the Malayan Peninsula. It is probable that his surmises as to the situation of Langkasuka and several other theories will not be accepted, but his paper should be in the hands of every serious student of Peninsular history.

Rouffaer brushes aside G. Ferrand's recent theory (*Journal Asiatique*, 1918) that Melaka existed, as the unreliable Gaspar Correia wrote, for 700 years before the coming of the Portuguese, under the name *Malayu*, Marco Polo's *Malayur*. *Malayur* is only a Tamil form of *Malayu*, the original home of the Malays in Jambi. Would Fra Odorigo van Pordenone (Friar Odoric) and Ibn Batutah have been silent over the existence of such an early Melaka? Would the *Nagarakertagama* (1365 CE), recording the conquests of Hayam Wuruk, the famous ruler of Majapahit, have then referred to the Peninsula simply as Pahang?<sup>80</sup>

77 Winstedt, 'The early history of Singapore, Johore and Melaka'.

78 C.C. Brown, 'Sir Richard Winstedt, KBE, CMG, D.Litt, MA, Hon. LLD (Malaya), FBA', *BSOAS* 26, 3 (1963): 497; Lord Milverton and M.C. May, 'Sir Richard Winstedt', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (JRAS)* 3–4 (1963): 125–9; H.L. Shorto, 'Sir Richard Winstedt', *JRAS* 1–2 (1967): 58–9; E.C.G. Barrett, 'Obituary: Sir Richard Winstedt', *BSOAS* 30, 1 (1967): 272–5.

79 Pieter Voorhoeve, 'In memoriam Sir Richard Winstedt', *BKI* 122, 4 (1966): 413–15.

80 Winstedt, 'The early history of Singapore, Johore and Melaka', p. 257.

Winstedt provides a rather dense but critical summary of the article via Melaka's founding date. He also touches on issues relating to Singapore but does not reference Sumatra at all. Winstedt closes his observations with the sentence: 'Such in briefest outline is Rouffaer's paper, which fills 174 pages and is to be continued further.'<sup>81</sup>

Winstedt's summary was to have a profound impact on the way that scholars who were not proficient in Dutch and French would frame and grasp the issues at hand. Two points are worth highlighting: first, they understood the problem surrounding Melaka's founding dates via Winstedt's reading of Rouffaer, with hardly any reference to Ferrand's 1918 publication.

Second, the title of Winstedt's summary-review admittedly skews the focus and objective of Rouffaer's original publication. As Krom also highlights in his obituary, Rouffaer did not think it advisable to consider the story of Melaka's founding without also taking the stories of Singapore and the royal migrations (i.e. Parameswara or Iskandar Shah) into account.<sup>82</sup> Winstedt, on the other hand, formulates the title of his article in such a way that Singapore, and not Melaka, appears to be the focus of Rouffaer's article.

Third, Rouffaer's article is written in a style that is not easily understood. Winstedt's emphasis on the unreliability of Correia as well as the noteworthy absences — Odoric of Pordenone, Ibn Battuta, and the *Nagarakrtagama* — raise the question of whether Winstedt fully grasped the complexity of Rouffaer's arguments. Anyone who has seen the original Dutch text will appreciate that it is multi-layered and challenging.

Fourth, Winstedt was distrustful of the Chinese sources, a point that Oliver Wolters also highlighted when he claims that Winstedt 'had a low opinion of Chinese records'.<sup>83</sup>

How Winstedt broadly assessed the Ferrand–Rouffaer debate transpires from his book *A History of Malaya*, first published as a long article in the *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* in 1935.<sup>84</sup> In chapter 3, 'The Malay Empire of Malacca', in a section subtitled 'The Quest for a Settlement', Winstedt opens his discussion with the now familiar observation: 'One writer has postulated an earlier Malayu near Malacca, because the *Yuan-che* chronicle in 1295 records that the Siamese had long fought with the Malays and because [Brás] d'Albuquerque remarks that the Siamese no longer sent ships to Malacca by reason of their constant wars with the "Malayos".'<sup>85</sup> Not only does Winstedt not mention Ferrand by name here, he dismisses Ferrand's position in the next sentence: 'The new version of Marco Polo seems to put Malayu in 1292 at Singapore, if it were anywhere by the Malay Peninsula.'<sup>86</sup> Winstedt does not preclude the possibility that

81 Ibid., p. 260.

82 Some accounts think Iskandar Shah to be the son of Parameswara; others think Iskandar Shah to be the name taken on by Parameswara after converting to Islam. On this problem see Cheah Boon Kheng, 'The rise and fall of the great Melaka Empire: Moral judgement in Tun Bambang's "Sejarah Melayu"', *JMBRAS* 71, 2 (1998): 104–21; also the conclusion of Wang Gungwu from consulting the Chinese sources in Wang G.W., 'The first three rulers of Malacca', *JMBRAS* 41, 1 (1968): 11–22.

83 Oliver W. Wolters, *The fall of Srivijaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 110.

84 Richard O. Winstedt, 'A history of Malaya', *JMBRAS* 13, 1 (1935): iii–270.

85 Ibid., p. 37.

86 Ibid., p. 37.

Melaka may have existed in earlier times, and if this be the case it would not have been the significant trading post Ferrand surmises it to have been. He then draws on Rouffaer to strengthen his point: 'But evidently still a small fishing-village Malacca is not noticed by Marco Polo in 1292, or Fra Odorico de Pordenone in 1323 or Ibn Battuta in 1345 or in the Javanese work, the *Nagarakrtagama* in 1365.'<sup>87</sup> What follows aligns with Rouffaer's advice: the story of Melaka's founding should be considered alongside and not separated from the story of Temasek/Singapura. Winstedt thus argues: 'Sometime after 1360, however, when Majapahit had destroyed Singapore, Malacca must have grown populous with the advent of its refugees under Parameswara their chief. Godinho de Eredia gives 1398 as the date of its foundation.'<sup>88</sup> In Winstedt's short writeup, surprisingly no mention is made of Eredia's other suggested date for the founding of Melaka (namely 1411), nor does he mention the year 1403 known from the Chinese sources. He does not even list the mid-1200s provided by the *Malay Annals*. In other words what Winstedt presents to his readers is a selection of the evidence, without explicitly referencing Rouffaer, Ferrand, or indeed any other broadly contemporary historians like Pelliot or Coedès. All those names are admittedly found in the endnotes. One thing, however, stands out: Winstedt appears to have heeded Rouffaer's advice when deliberating the date(s) of Melaka's founding. But it should be noted here that this advice could be reconciled with his own, and the British colonial, vision for Malaya.

### The long echo

Reconstructing the histories of Southeast Asia from epigraphy and texts, including significantly Ptolemy's *Geography*, was practised both before and after the Ferrand–Rouffaer debate, not least in British Malaya. One thinks here for example of Roland Braddell's article, published in 1935 in the *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, entitled: 'An Introduction to the Ancient Times in the Malay Peninsula and the Straits of Malacca', as well as his 'Notes on Ancient Times in Malaya' published in 1947.<sup>89</sup> As Kwa Chong Guan has observed, Braddell relied on the geographical expressions from 'Graeco-Roman, Chinese and Indian texts relating to Southeast Asia' and 'followed the French and the Dutch scholars in tracing shifts' of the emporia over time that were mentioned in these sources.<sup>90</sup> Braddell also employed a method of associating toponyms that had been tried and tested in the study of the Southeast Asian emporia and kingdoms such as Funan and Srivijaya.<sup>91</sup> He drew on Ferrand's *Malaka, Malayu et Malayur* without, however, referencing Rouffaer's 1921 article. In the second part of his exposé, Braddell reveals his interest in what Ferrand had to say about Marco Polo's return voyage by sea, but

87 Ibid., pp. 37–8.

88 Ibid., p. 38.

89 Roland Braddell, 'An introduction to the study of ancient times on the Malay Peninsula and the Straits of Malacca', *JMBRAS* 13, 2 (1935): 70–109; a second instalment of this long article appeared as: 'Notes on ancient times in Malaya (continued)', *JMBRAS* 23, 1 (1950): 1–36. MBRAS later published a reprint collection of Braddell's articles as a separate volume. This bears the title: *The study of ancient times in the Malay Peninsula and the Straits of Melaka*, MBRAS repr. no. 7 (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 1980).

90 KBSS, p. 5.

91 Ibid., p. 6.



he remains silent on the possible identification of Melaka with Malayur, a point that had been a central contention of Ferrand's publication.

Earlier, Frank Swettenham had published his landmark study entitled *British Malaya* (1907), and alongside Winstedt's *A History of Malaya* (1935), they became the standard reference works for readers interested in Malayan history in the first half of the twentieth century. Swettenham's focus is of course not on Malayan antiquity, but rather on the formation of a British colonial administrative unit on the Peninsula during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He advances the case for a politically, culturally and economically united Peninsula under British protection. In historically justifying his modern administrative construct, Swettenham also identifies a predecessor polity at Melaka, but without emphasising its roots on Sumatra.<sup>92</sup> To this end, he relies on the *Malay Annals* for ascertaining the founding date of Melaka, namely sometime after the attack by the 'Raja of Majapahit' on Singapore in 1252. He explains: 'A few escaped from the city [of Singapura] and the island, and after wandering through the Peninsula, settled at Malacca, where they founded a new city, from which their descendants were driven by Albuquerque and the Portuguese in 1511.'<sup>93</sup> The Ferrand–Rouffaer debate is not referenced in later editions of *British Malaya*, nor does Swettenham acknowledge dates or windows provided either by Winstedt or Wilkinson, or indeed any of the other possible dates raised in the discussions surrounding Melaka's founding. As Milner observes:

With the creation of 'British Malaya' as a peninsular administrative unit, and as the leaders of the new independent state of 'Malaya' sought historical justification for their nation-building, the profiling of Melaka gained added rationale. It was certainly heralded in early British histories, such as those of Swettenham (1907), Wilkinson (1908), and Winstedt (1928), and a recent study of Malay historiography has noted how in an independent Malaysia the "Melaka sultanate" became 'an important component of the new history syllabus'.<sup>94</sup>

The 1920s through to the mid-1940s saw two more important publications appear in print that discuss and contextualise the founding of Melaka. First, Krom's *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis* that was first published in 1926 and revised in 1931. Krom directly references the Ferrand–Rouffaer debate by elaborating on some core themes that should already be familiar: First, Ferrand's claim that Melaka was known before 1400 by a different name; second, the existence of different places named Malayu(r), namely one on Sumatra and the other one on the peninsula; and third, Ferrand's referencing of the chronicler Correia that Melaka had been a prospering trading city for centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese. 'The untenability of Ferrand's views,' Krom attests, 'and the little trust that Correia deserves, have been in our view convincingly established by Rouffaer.' A few lines further down he

92 Concerning Swettenham's vision for British Malaya, see esp. H.S. Barlow, *Swettenham* (Kuala Lumpur: Southdene, 1995).

93 Frank A. Swettenham, *British Malaya* (London: J. Lane, 1929), p. 14.

94 Anthony C. Milner, 'Historians writing nations: Malaysian contests', in *Nation-building: Five Southeast Asian histories*, ed. Wang Gungwu (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), p. 140. Concerning the formation of a distinctly peninsular as opposed to an archipelagic Malay identity around the early to mid-twentieth century, see also Milner, *The Malays* (Oxford: Wiley, 2011), pp. 122–7.

added: 'Rouffaer did more than to refute the opinion of Ferrand; he sought to construct the early history of Melaka after carefully considering all of the available facts, and in this regard he has certainly succeeded.'<sup>95</sup>

The second study worth considering here is by Coedès and entitled in the French original as *Histoire ancienne des États hindouisés d'Extrême-Orient*, later translated into English as *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*.<sup>96</sup> In the final chapter that is based on a revised and updated text, Coedès places the founding of Melaka around the year 1400. A scrutiny of the footnotes reveals a set of familiar names: Blagden, Ferrand, Rouffaer, Wilkinson, as well as Krom, Pelliot, von Stein Callenfels and Winstedt. But there is one more name that now moves to the forefront of attention: Paul Wheatley.<sup>97</sup>

In the 1950s, Paul Wheatley joined the Geography Department at the University of Malaya campus in Singapore. He drew on the works of Braddell, first in penning a review of Braddell's *Study of Ancient Times*, and later with his *Belated Comments on Sir Roland Braddell's Study of Ancient Times in the Malay Peninsula* (1955), *The Golden Chersonese* (1955), *The Golden Khersonese: Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula before AD 1500* (1961), as well as his *Impressions of the Malay Peninsula* (1964).<sup>98</sup> Wheatley was joined in Singapore by Gerald Tibbetts who worked at the library of the University of Singapore between 1953 and 1956 and there began studying the texts of medieval rutters (navigational instructions often enriched with commercial information) in Arabic.<sup>99</sup> In 1952, Wheatley extended his research on the toponyms of Ptolemaic antiquity to include ancient Chinese place names. The latter were the focus of research conducted at the time by Hsü Yün-T'siao (Xu Yunqiao), co-founder of the South Seas Society in Singapore.<sup>100</sup>

95 Krom, *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis*, pp. 435–6.

96 G. Coedès, *Histoire ancienne des États hindouisés d'Extrême-Orient* (Hanoi: Imprimerie d'Extrême Orient, 1944); G. Coedès, *The Indianized states of Southeast Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella and tr. Sue Brown Cowing (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 1968).

97 Coedès, *The Indianized states of Southeast Asia*, pp. 369 nn89, 91.

98 Paul Wheatley, 'Belated comments on Sir Roland Braddell's Study of Ancient Times in the Malay Peninsula', *JMBRAS* 28, 1 (1955): 78–98; Wheatley, 'The Golden Chersonese', *Transactions and Papers (Institute of British Geographers)* 21 (1955): 61–78; Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1961); Wheatley, *Impressions of the Malay Peninsula in ancient times* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1964).

99 See: G.R. Tibbetts, 'Early Muslim traders in Southeast Asia', *JMBRAS* 30, 1 (1957): 1–45 (this publication cross-references several works of Ferrand); Tibbetts, *The navigational theory of the Arabs in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries* (Coimbra and Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1969); Tibbetts, *Arab navigation in the Indian Ocean before the coming of the Portuguese ...* (London: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1971); Tibbetts, *A study of the Arabic texts containing material on South-East Asia* (London and Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979). Concerning Tibbetts's career, see H.R.J. Davies, 'Obituary: Gerald Randall Tibbetts', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd series, 10, 3 (2000): 363–6.

100 Hsü Yün-T'siao, 'Notes on the Malay Peninsula in ancient voyages', *Journal of the South Seas Society* 5, 2 (1948): 1–16; Hsü, 'Notes on the study of ancient Malaya', *Eastern Horizon* 2, 6 (1962): 18–22; Hsü, 'Singapore in the remote past', *JMBRAS* 45, 1 (1972): 1–9 (repr. in KBSS, pp. 43–52). P. Wheatley, 'Chinese sources of the historical geography of Malaya before A.D. 1500', *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography* 9 (1956): 71–8; his other articles from around this period include: P. Wheatley, 'The Golden Chersonese'; and Wheatley, 'Belated comments on Sir Roland Braddell's studies'. For an appraisal of Wheatley's contributions to the historical geography of Singapore and the

At the opening of chapter 20 of his *Golden Khersonese*, published in 1961, Wheatley shows his familiarity with the earlier debate(s) about Melaka's founding and lays out the proposed dates complete with names:

Ancient authors were widely at variance in their dating of the foundation of Malacca. The earliest date assigned to this event was the eighth century of Gaspar Correia, who was notoriously inaccurate when reporting at second hand. João de Barros, an unusually conscientious and discriminating historian proposed the first half of the thirteenth century, Valentijn 1251 or 1253 and Diogo do Couto the first half of the fourteenth century. Eredia, a scholar of honest intent who lived in Malacca some two centuries after the event, placed the founding of the city in 1411, while finally the son of Afonso de Albuquerque, the conqueror of Malacca, basing his account on original documents, fixed the date at c.1420. Among the modern scholars, only Gabriel Ferrand has attempted to substantiate Correia's claim for an eighth-century foundation, and his arguments have been effectively refuted by Rouffaer. The great Malay Scholar, Otto Blagden, proposed the last quarter of the fourteenth century, while most recent authors have favoured the turn of the century.<sup>101</sup>

These few lines sum up the debate up until the early 1960s, but unlike earlier authors writing on the subject, Wheatley claims that Rouffaer had 'effectively refuted' Ferrand's postulations. It is noteworthy, however, that Wheatley approaches Melaka's dating from a different angle in his next book, *Impressions of the Malay Peninsula*.<sup>102</sup> In his chapter 'The Century of Melaka', he avoids the various temporal windows, date range, and the Ferrand-Rouffaer debate altogether and (not unlike Blagden, von Stein Callenfels and Winstedt before him) concentrates on Melaka's dynastic succession.<sup>103</sup> He now simply states that Melaka had been founded 'before 1403', a position which he repeated later in a two-volume set co-edited with Kernial Singh Sandhu entitled *Melaka: The Transformation of a Malay Capital, c.1400–1980* published in 1983.<sup>104</sup> The new focus on dynastic succession and royal lineage rather than dates may be in response to Rouffaer's advice that the history of Melaka's founding should not be disassociated from the story of Temasek/Singapura and the interrelated pattern of migrations between both places.

From here onwards the discussions on Melaka's beginnings take another trajectory: the objective is no longer to discuss and debate contradictory datings, but to focus instead on the Temasek/Singapura–Melaka story, and specifically the issue of dynastic succession. This is not only the position assumed, for example, by Wang Gungwu in his article 'The First Three Rulers of Malacca' (1968), but also by Oliver Wolters in his classic study *The Fall of Srivijaya* (1970). Here Wang cites

Malayan region, see his obituary by Brian J.L. Berry and Donald C. Dahmann, 'In memoriam: Paul Wheatley, 1921–1999'; *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91, 4 (2001): 734–47.

101 Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, pp. 306–7.

102 Wheatley, *Impressions*, p. 120.

103 See Blagden, 'Medieval chronology of Malacca'; and P.V. von Stein Callenfels, 'The founder of Malacca'; *JMBRAS* 15, 2 (1937): 160–66. Callenfels claims that Parameswara had founded Melaka slightly before 1403 (*ibid.*, p. 164). See also Winstedt, 'The Malay founder of medieval Malacca', pp. 726–9.

104 Kernial Singh Sandhu and Paul Wheatley, eds., *Melaka: The transformation of a Malay capital, c.1400–1980*, 2 vols. (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1983).

Parameswara as Melaka's dynastic founder, and discusses him via the Chinese sources.<sup>105</sup> A similar approach is taken by M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs in her study *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (1964). In her opening chapter on the 'Rise of Malacca' she broadly places its founding around the beginning of the 1400s and does so mainly with reference to the story of Parameswara as well as the familiar testimonies from Chinese sources. Although she references both the works of Ferrand and Rouffaer in the bibliography, she does not mention the debate between the two over the founding of Melaka.<sup>106</sup> Christopher Wake in his 1983 chapter 'Malay Historical Tradition and the Politics of Islamisation' avoids the Ferrand–Rouffaer exchange altogether, even though he references and cites from Ferrand's 1918 publication.<sup>107</sup>

This section on the long echo closes by taking a look at the textbook *Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei* by Joginder Singh Jessy originally published in 1961. This publication merits attention not because it represents a breakthrough in terms of original research, but rather because this book was

prescribed for pupils who take history as one of their subjects for the Malaysian Certificate of Education and the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate examinations. The main aim of this book, which covers the compulsory section of the paper, is to prepare pupils for the above with this aim in view. At the same time, due consideration has to be given to meet the requirements of the general reader, who is anxious to read about the histories of these three countries.

As a result, Jessy became the standard dating accepted and examined in schools in Malaysia and (as will be seen shortly) also in Singapore. The section touching on the possible founding dates of Melaka identifies the different temporal windows along with arguments that are familiar from both Rouffaer's long article and Wheatley's *Golden Khersonese*. The section from this schoolbook is worth citing in full here as it not only echoes the Ferrand–Rouffaer debate, but also its reception by Winstedt and Wheatley. It also reiterates the notable absences mentioned by Rouffaer and repeated by Winstedt:

There has been much controversy regarding the exact dates of the founding of Malacca. The Portuguese writer, Tomé Pires, who was in Malacca from 1512 to 1515, tells us that Malacca was founded about one hundred years before its capture by his countrymen. Another Portuguese, de Barros, dates its founding nearly two hundred and fifty years earlier, while the confusion is multiplied by a statement of Gaspar Correia, that Malacca had been in existence nearly seven centuries before the Portuguese conquest. The general absence of dates in the *Malay Annals* or *Sejarah Melayu* does not help us fix the date with any measure of certainty.

105 Wang Gungwu, 'The first three rulers of Malacca'; Wolters, *The fall of Srivijaya*, pp. 108–13. This position arguably echoes the thrust of the *Sejarah Melayu*, said to be based on a 'family hikayat' ('king list') and thus focuses on the genealogy of Singapore's and Melaka's royal line. On this point see also the partial translation of Rouffaer's article, 'Was Melaka ...' in KBSS, p. 108.

106 M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian trade and European influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), pp. 28–32.

107 C.H. Wake, 'Malay historical tradition and the politics of Islamisation', in Sandhu and Wheatley, *Melaka*, I, pp. 126–61. Ferrand's book is referenced in this chapter (pp. 156 n28, 157 nn37–8, 159 n82).

Some authors claim that Malacca was founded in the 13th century. If this is true, it is strange that Marco Polo, who passed through the Straits of Malacca in 1292, on his way home from China makes no mention of it. It is scarcely possible that Marco Polo, who describes the northeast coast of Sumatra in great detail would have failed to mention Malacca, if it had existed at the time. We may conclude, therefore, that Malacca was not founded until later.<sup>108</sup>

A few lines farther below, the school text then recounts the story of Temasek/Singapura and Parameswara. As has been seen, this not only heeded Rouffaer's advice, it also follows the footsteps of writers from the 1960s — Wheatley, Wang, Wolters, Wake and others who approached Melaka's founding via the dynastic succession of its rulers. Jessy wrote:

Although conflicting dates are given by Portuguese and other writers, all agree that it was Parameswara who founded Malacca. Perhaps the story of Parameswara will help us find out when this event took place.<sup>109</sup>

In this set textbook for schools, Melaka exerted such influence over the Peninsula that it served as a primordial, nation-building polity that is paralleled 'by Majapahit in Indonesian history'. It became the beacon of a golden era that left an enduring imprint on peninsular rulers in later centuries. But, as Milner cautions, 'For [Jessy] Melaka is only central to the story of "old" Malaya. As we have seen the "foundations of modern Malaya" are presented as a largely British story' much along the vein envisioned by Swettenham and Winstedt.<sup>110</sup>

Two decades after Jessy, Huang Chai Lean in the *History of Singapore and Malaysia, 1400–1965* would take a substantially similar position by again identifying three windows for the founding of Melaka based on surviving Malay, Portuguese and Chinese sources.<sup>111</sup> This would remain the familiar pattern in the school textbooks for the rest of the twentieth century and arguably beyond. Referencing the story of Parameswara, and a date around 1400, became the preferred one over the alternatives discussed by Ferrand, Rouffaer and those who followed them.

### Some conclusions

This essay reconstructs a twentieth-century debate surrounding Melaka's founding. As has been seen, the trigger for this debate and exchange of ideas was the 1918 piece by Gabriel Ferrand entitled *Malaka, Malayu et Malayur* in which he postulated the existence of an older Melaka which had been mentioned by Marco Polo and was known by the name *Malayur*. Gerret Pieter Rouffaer answered Ferrand in a long

108 Joginder Singh Jessy, *Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, 1400–1965* (Kuala Lumpur: Longman, 1972), pp. 24–5. Concerning the significance of Joginder Singh Jessy in Malaysian historiography, see Milner, 'Historians writing nations', pp. 139–41.

109 Jessy, *Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei*, pp. 25–6.

110 Milner, 'Historians writing nations', p. 130.

111 Huang Chai Lean, *History of Malaysia and Singapore, 1400–1964* (Singapore: Pan Pacific, 1982), p. 13. The discourses by Chen Dasheng (alias Tan Ta Seng), Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, Pierre-Yves Manguin and Geoff Wade, for example, belong to a later reception and discussion of the Chinese source materials. Suffice it to acknowledge their existence here, and to remind that they fall outside the time frame covered by this article.

article published over two issues in 1921. In the world of English-speaking academia, the debate was chiefly grasped and understood via Richard Winstedt, but later also Paul Wheatley and others. By the 1960s and '70s, discussions about the dating of Melaka were supplanted by discourses on the succession of Melaka's early rulers.

Wheatley contended that Rouffaer had successfully rebuffed Ferrand's hypothesis of an earlier Melaka known as *Malayu(r)*. But Rouffaer had done more than that. Aware that there were different possible windows for Melaka's founding, he advised readers the following: in order to ascertain the approximate date of Melaka's (re-)founding, one should not separate the story of Melaka from the story of Temasek/Singapura, including the migratory patterns of leaders like Parameswara.

There are, however, some issues here: the continental European scholars such as the Dutch, French and Germans always examined Malay antiquities as a world straddling both sides of the Singapore and Melaka Straits. That pattern continued well into the twentieth century and the period of decolonisation. The same view, however, was not taken by the British, who began to focus their studies on the Peninsular Malays. Swettenham and Winstedt offer specific examples of this British peninsular focus.

Then there is the issue of methodology: much of what is taken for granted today is based on a methodological approach developed at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries — in other words over a century ago. How viable are the conclusions it offers in the light of recent archaeological discoveries as well as the availability of additional early texts? It is known that Melaka and Marco Polo's Malayur cannot possibly be identical as Ferrand postulated and Rouffaer had refuted. What holds true for Melaka also holds true for other places: How valid, for example, is the association made on the basis of similarities in sound and pronunciation like Temasek and Tan-ma-hsi, or Banzu and Pancur? What the Ferrand–Rouffaer episode demonstrates is that drawing conclusions based on supposed similarities in sound or pronunciation can be misleading and fallacious.

As this author can attest from his own working experience, pinning down a place name in the early colonial European sources (including cartography) is both challenging and frequently inconclusive. What does a given place name exactly refer to? 'Malacca' (with its different spellings) can refer to a settlement or city, a river, a city with a hinterland, a polity, the adjacent straits, the whole of the Malay Peninsula or any combination of these. The case of 'Singapura' has proven to be just as challenging: Was it a settlement, and island, one of three straits, a mountain ridge, a promontory or a hinterland?<sup>112</sup> If the European sources already pose such serious problems, how much more challenging will it be to decode the meaning from pre-colonial Asian sources, written in different languages and scripts, that are often elliptical and fragmentary at best?<sup>113</sup> The final word has not been spoken on these matters, and the debate continues.

112 P. Borschberg, 'Singapura in early modern cartography: A sea of challenges', *Visualising Space: Maps of Singapore and the region. Collections from the National Archives and National Library of Singapore* (Singapore: National Library Board, 2015), pp. 6–33; P. Borschberg and Benjamin J.Q. Khoo, 'Singapore as a port city, c.1290–1819: Evidence, frameworks and challenges', *JMBRAS* 91, 1 (2018): 1–27.

113 With reference to the so-called 'Zheng He navigational chart', an overview of some of the serious challenges facing scholars can be found in the recent article by Roderich Ptak, 'Selected problems concerning the "Zheng He Map": Questions without answers', *Journal of Asian History* 53, 2 (2019): 179–220.