



The  
“Earliest”  
and “Firsts”

A Selection from the Treasures of the  
National Library of Singapore

**THE RARE MATERIALS COLLECTION**

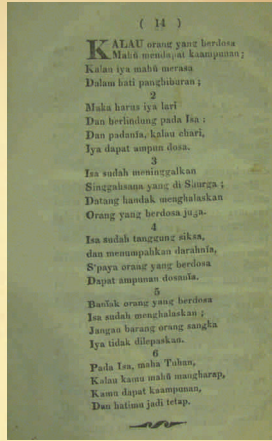
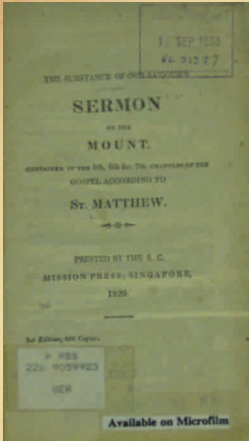
at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library forms part of the National Library’s invaluable research materials on Singapore and Southeast Asia. Majority of the items in the collection were inherited by the National Library from its predecessors, the Singapore Library (1830s – 1870s), and later the Raffles Library (1880s – 1950s). Others were acquired from various sources. Over the years, the Rare Materials Collection gradually accumulated a sizeable collection of early printings on Singapore and Southeast Asia. Majority of them are 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century publications and many were issued by Singapore’s earliest printing presses. Featured below is a selection of some early and significant titles in the history of books and printing in Singapore.

by **AZIZAH SIDEK**

Principal Librarian,  
Lee Kong Chian Reference Library,  
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**ONG ENG CHUAN**

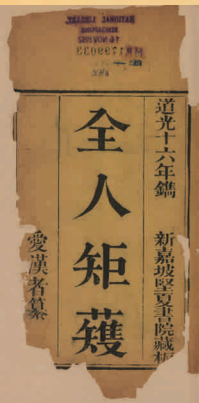
Associate Librarian,  
Lee Kong Chian Reference Library,  
National Library



**The substance of our saviour's Sermon on the Mount contained in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> & c. 7<sup>th</sup> chapters of the gospel according to St. Matthew. (1829). Singapore: Printed by the S.C. Mission Press. Microfilm no.: NL21277**

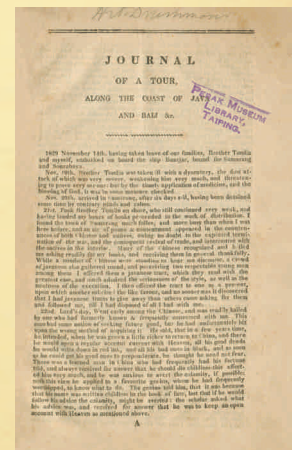
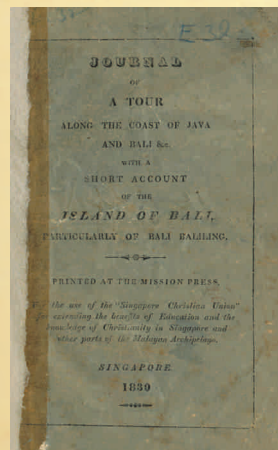
This is the Malay version of the Sermon on the Mount and the earliest surviving Malay book in the Collection. Printed in an edition of 500 copies.

This is the earliest local English publication in the Collection. It was written by Walter Henry Medhurst (1796-1857), a Christian missionary to China who, before arriving in China, went to Malacca to work as a printer at the London Missionary Society's station there and later engaged in missionary work in Penang and Batavia. On 14 November 1829, he embarked on a journey along the north-east coast of Java to the island of Bali, returning to his station on the 24 January 1830. He printed his account of the journey in Singapore in 1830, with a caption on the cover stating that it was "for the use of the 'Singapore Christian Union' for extending the benefits of education and the knowledge of Christianity in Singapore and other parts of the Malayan Archipelago". The book contains a wealth of information on the place and people along the journey. A section in the book, entitled "Short Account of the Island of Bali. Particularly of Bali Baling" was subsequently reprinted in other publications, including J. R. Moor's *Notices of the Indian Archipelago and Adjacent Countries...* (1837).

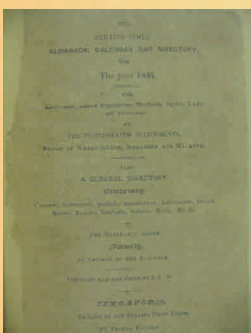


全人矩矱, or *The Perfect Man's Model*, is one of Singapore's earliest Chinese imprints. It was written by Karl Friedrich August Gutzlaff (1803-1851), a German Lutheran missionary to China, who came to Singapore briefly in 1828 and 1829. The book contains a treatise on the teachings of the Holy Scripture on unfeigned virtue; spiritual instruction; the Saviour; explanation of the law; theory of prayer; and the doctrine of Jesus true and self evident.

**爱汉者. (1836). 全人矩矱: [5卷]. 新加坡: 坚夏书院. Microfilm no.: NL 25707**

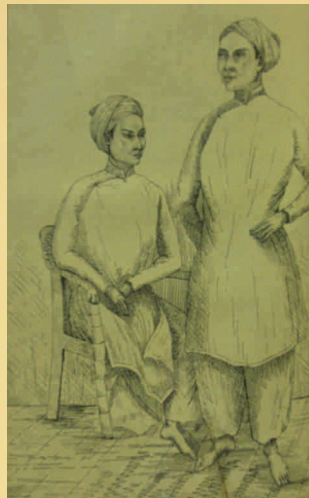
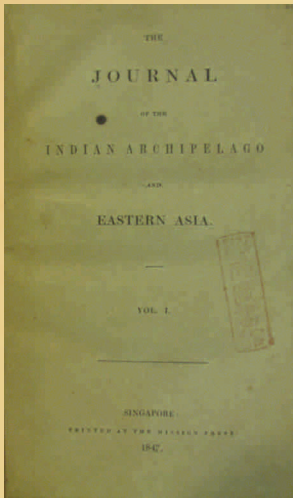


**Journal of a tour along the coast of Java and Bali etc, with a short account of the island of Bali particularly of Bali Baling. (1830). Singapore: Printed at the Mission Press. Microfilm no: NL5827**



The first and extremely valuable set of directory (equivalent to the current *Buku Merah* or *Times Business Directory*). It was published under various titles such as *Straits Times Almanack, Calendar and Directory* (1846-47); *Royal Almanack and Directory* (1859-64); *Straits Calendar and Directory* (1865-1869). This directory is an excellent source of references to search for past residents in Singapore. It lists the names of principal residents as well as their professions.

**Singapore almanack and directory. (1846-1869). Singapore: Straits Times Press. Microfilm nos.: NL2363 (1846-1863); NL17512 (1864-1866); NL2362 (1867-1869)**



This is the first scientific scholarly journal published in Singapore. Better known as *Logan's Journal*, after the editor, James R. Logan, a lawyer and journalist who lived in Penang and Singapore for 30 years. Logan was a man of varied interests. Besides law and journalism, he also contributed many of the articles in the journal on geology, commerce, geography and ethnology.

*Logan's Journal* is an invaluable research work on Singapore and the region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It contains articles on ethnology geography, geology, history and the literature of the archipelago. The articles relating to Singapore provide a glimpse of Singapore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as Logan's article on the geology of Singapore; an article on the medical topography of Singapore by Dr R. Little, a medical practitioner; and an article on the Chinese in Singapore by Seah Eu Chin, a wealthy businessman

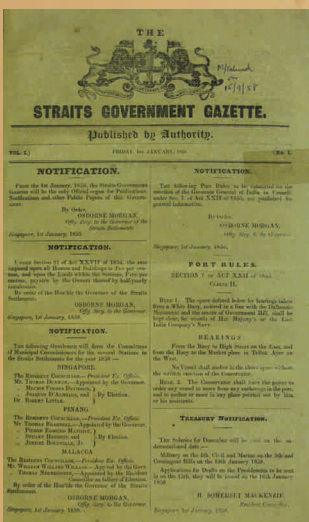
**The journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia. (1847-1855). Singapore: J. R. Logan, 1847-1855. Microfilm nos.: NL25704 (Index), NL1889 (v. 1-3), NL25790 (v. 2), NL1890 (v. 3-6), NL1891 (v. 6-9).**

and scholar. Describing the various occupations of the Chinese settlers on the colony, Seah wrote:

“The different trades and professions are school-masters, writers, cashiers, shopkeepers, apothecaries, coffin-makers, goldsmiths, silversmiths, tinsmiths, dyers, tailors, barbers, shoe-makers, basket-makers, fishermen, sawyers, boat-builders, cabinet-makers, architects, masons, lime and brick burners, sailors, ferrymen, sago manufacturers, distillers of spirits, cultivators and manufacturers of *gambier* and of sugar, cultivators of pepper and nutmegs, vendors of cakes and fruits, porters, play-actors, fortune-tellers, idle vagabonds – who save no work and of whom there are not a few – beggars, and nightly, there are those villains, the thieves.”

An index of the articles in the journal was compiled by N. B. Denny and published in the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, no.18 December 1886.

The earliest official gazette was published in 1858, the year in which the East India Company territories were transferred to the British Crown. There have been four main series of Gazettes relating to Singapore as follows:



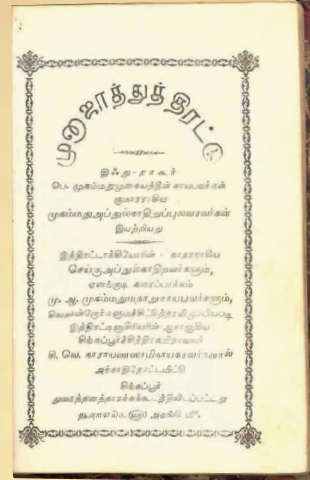
- Straits Government Gazette, 1858-1867
- Straits Settlements Government Gazette, 1867-1942
- British Military Administration Malaya Gazette. Singapore Division. Nov 1945-Apr 1946
- Colony of Singapore Government Gazette. 1946-1959
- State of Singapore Government Gazette, Jun 1959-Aug 1965
- Singapore Government Gazette. Aug 1965-Nov 1965
- Republic of Singapore Government Gazette. Dec 1965 to date

**Straits Settlements. (1858-1867). Straits Government Gazette. Singapore: Mission Press. Microfilm no.: NL994 (1858-59), NL1003-NL1009 (1859-67)**



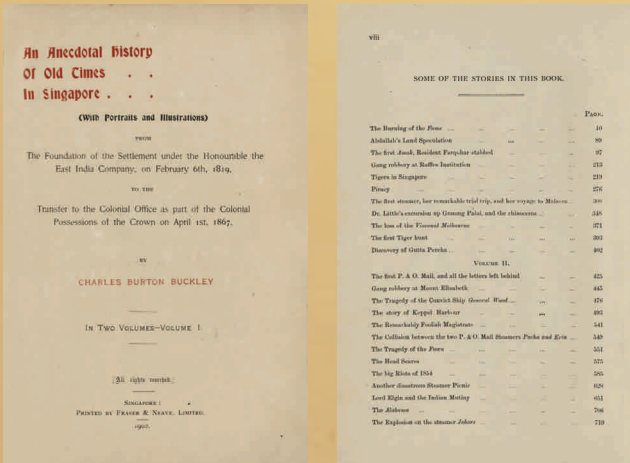
**Cermin mata bagi segala orang yang menuntut pengetahuan.** (1859). [Singapore : s.n.].  
Microfilm no.: NL25723

A quarterly journal, compiled by Benjamin Peach Keasberry, a missionary who arrived in Singapore in 1839. It is one of the first Malay journals published, carrying a mixture of Christian tracts, moral teachings, general knowledge and original writings of Munshi Abdullah, written in Jawi.



முகம்மது அப்துல் காதிரு, நாகூர், புலவர்  
**முனாஜாத்துத் திரட்டு**. சிங்கப்பூர் :  
**J. Paton Government Printer, 1872.**  
Call no.: 894.81114 MUH

This is the oldest Tamil rare book with the Library. It contains a collection of poems in praise of Muslim saints, including one poem on Sikandar Sahib who was entombed in Fort Canning.



**Buckley, C. B. (1902). An anecdotal history of old times in Singapore: (with portraits and illustrations) from the foundation of the settlements under the Honourable the East India Company, on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1819, to the transfer of the Colonial Office as part of the colonial possessions of the Crown on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1867.** Singapore: Printed by Fraser & Neave,  
Microfilm no.: NL269

This title has been digitised and is accessible at <http://sgebooks.nl.sg/>  
The 1965 reprint edition is available at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library. The 1984 reprint edition is available at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, Bukit Merah Community Library, Central Lending Library, Cheng San Community Library, Marine Parade Community Library and Woodlands Regional Library.

First published account of Singapore's early history, it describes the early years of Singapore from the founding of the settlement by the East India Company up to its transfer to direct rule under the Colonial Office in London in 1867. This book contains a compilation of a series of articles which Buckley wrote and published in the weekly Singapore Free Press newspaper. Some interesting accounts include the burning of the Fame (the ship which was hired to bring Raffles back to England); the first tiger hunt in Singapore; the big riots of 1854; the story of Keppel Harbour; and the visit of the Alabama, the American warship which called at Singapore in 1863. As pointed out scholars such as C. A. Gibson-Hill, the book has its limitations as a serious work of historical scholarship. However, it provides an interesting account of the life, people and events in Singapore's early history and is now a standard reference for the study of British Singapore's early history.