

HE WHO
IS MADE
LORD

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HE WHO IS MADE LORD

*Empire, class and race
in postwar Singapore*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMCJA	All-Malaya Council of Joint Action
ARTIS	<i>Angkatan Revolusi Tentera Islam Singapura</i> , or the Revolutionary Muslim Army of Singapore
COI	Commission of Inquiry
FMS	Federated Malay States
ISC	Internal Security Council
J.M.N.	<i>Johan Mangku Negara</i>
KMS	<i>Kesatuan Melayu Singapura</i> , or Singapore Malay Union
MBE	Member of the Order of the British Empire
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
PAP	People's Action Party
PMIP	Pan-Malayan Islamic Party
PUTERA	Pusat Tenaga Rakyat, or Centre of People's Power
S.M.N.	<i>Seri Maharaja Mangku Negara</i>
SLAD	Singapore Legislative Assembly Debates
SPA	Singapore People's Alliance
SS	Straits Settlements
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
WWII	Second World War

PREFACE

The study of Malay political culture has always fascinated me. This is somewhat an awkward situation: the rajas, along with their attendant pomp and pageantry, kindle and tickle the imagination of this individual of middle-class background who has spent almost his entire life in a republic. As I have come to comprehend, the notion of hierarchy, subordination and deference occurs everywhere and subjects everyone, from the family institution to the grandest platforms of international politics. Such is the condition of human society.

When I was a student in the Departments of History and Malay Studies at the National University of Singapore (NUS), I had the opportunity to critically explore this human condition. I delved into research on the political culture in Singapore and Malaysia, unpacking the creative efforts to resurrect precolonial *kerajaan* elements to serve the interests of imperial and post-imperial regimes. This led to an earlier iteration of this book in the form of my Master of Arts thesis in 2019. That year also coincided with two milestone anniversaries in Singapore: the bicentennial commemoration of the island's "founding" by Sir Stamford Raffles and the 60-year mark of the PAP's rise to power. Officials urged Singaporeans to treat 2019 as an opportune moment to assess the nation's journey and contemplate on its future. The thesis was a response to those calls.

Since then, the thesis has been augmented, enhanced and refined into this monograph, having benefitted from further research undertaken during my time as a PhD candidate in History at the University of Cambridge. Recent historiographical debates on decolonization and the Commonwealth have also enriched this project. With these additions, this book has become more than just an account of Singapore's national history—it is a critical analysis of international hierarchies, class divisions and racial inequalities during the global age of decolonization. These issues continue to haunt contemporary life today, and thus this book contains the reflections of one historian about his own present.

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This book is an outcome of half a decade's worth of conceptualization, research and writing. It has had various incarnations as I encountered different institutional contexts, research communities and ways of looking at the world.

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I too owe as much to Dr Kelvin Lawrence from the NUS Department of History. Till today, he remains my greatest intellectual influence. The meagre skills I hone as a historian are made better because of his guidance and critique. His artfulness, honesty and humane sensibilities are qualities which I aspire to have. I am happy that our professional ties have transformed into a friendship which I hope will endure. Thanks to him, I can now only see shades of grey.

This book came to see the light of day because of scholarship funding offered by the Tun Dato' Cheng-Lock Tan Fund and by the NUS Department of Malay Studies. My stint as a Research Associate

in the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute has indeed been formative for my worldview as a Singaporean academic. I truly enjoyed the institute's homely environment, but I would like to mention by name Mr Choi Shing-Kwok, Director and Chief Executive Officer, and Dr Benjamin Loh, my former supervisor. The team at ISEAS Publishing, particularly Mr Ng Kok Kiong, has shown excellence, commitment and professionalism in assisting me with the publication and review process. Due to the team's tireless labour, the entire experience of publishing this monograph has been nothing but smooth.

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I must specifically mention A/P Albert Lau, whom I consider to be the greatest Singaporean historian of all time. His undergraduate classes were the reason I developed a research interest in Singaporean and Malaysian history in the first place. His precision, persuasive ability and calibre as a scholar command my eternal admiration—not to mention the fact that he is a generous person of the most pleasant demeanour. Thank you, Prof.

I am truly fortunate to have met outstanding scholars who have challenged me intellectually during my time as a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge. They include Dr Michael Edwards, Dr Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz, Dr Malika Leuzinger, Nicholas Sy and Veronica

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