

1825 Manuscript Map of Singapore, British Library Collection

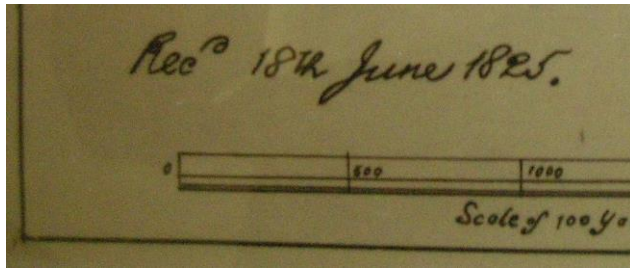
British Library Indian Office Records IOR/X/3346.

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The provenance of the map is unidentified. According to Chen Sian Lim this is because at some point the British Library separated maps from their original folder, which had other documents from the same source, without recording the original source. So, unless one comes across some correspondence which refers directly to the map in some unequivocal manner, it seems unlikely that we will ever know who the original author was ...

The complete map ...





The bottom left hand corner of the map bears the inscription: "Rec^d 18th June 1825".

What is "Rec^d" an abbreviation for? 'Received' or 'Recorded'?

Despite the June 1825 inscription, I think it likely that the map was compiled at an earlier date for the following reasons ...

- The first bridge across the river – Jackson's Bridge a.k.a. Presentment Bridge – which joined up North and South Bridge Road, which was completed in 1823 is not shown.
- I think by 1825, some evidence of Raffles' proposed grid plan for the streets of the settlement, as determined by his ordinances of 4 November 1822, would be apparent.
- It shows the low eminence on the seaward side of what would become Raffles Place which was used to consolidate marshy land south of the river under Raffles' personal supervision on his third visit 1822/23; this would not have been there in 1825.
- It shows the flagstaff on Fort Canning, but not Raffles' bungalow, the building of which commenced in December 1822, and was completed in January the following year.



This would seem to suggest that "Recd" stands for "received", the map depicting the settlement as it was two or three years earlier. But the hand that inscribed "Recd" seems to be the same as the hand that wrote out the place names and labels for topographical features. Why should this be so? Perhaps the map was originally drawn in pencil and was then inked over and coloured in by the recipient, who then put the date that he received/completed the map in the bottom left-hand corner.

Also, if the map was sent from Singapore to a recipient in England who received it in June 1925, this would mean that the map would most likely have been despatched sometime earlier that year, given the sailing times between Singapore and the UK. If it was compiled shortly before it was dispatched, the map would be an anachronistic for the reasons stated above. So how did the map come to be? Might Farquhar have had the map drawn up, perhaps to send to Raffles in Bencoolen before his final visit in 1822/182, but it was never sent? Or rather sent at a later date, and to England, perhaps with an accompanying note to explain that this was how Singapore looked a few years back, but was greatly changed now!