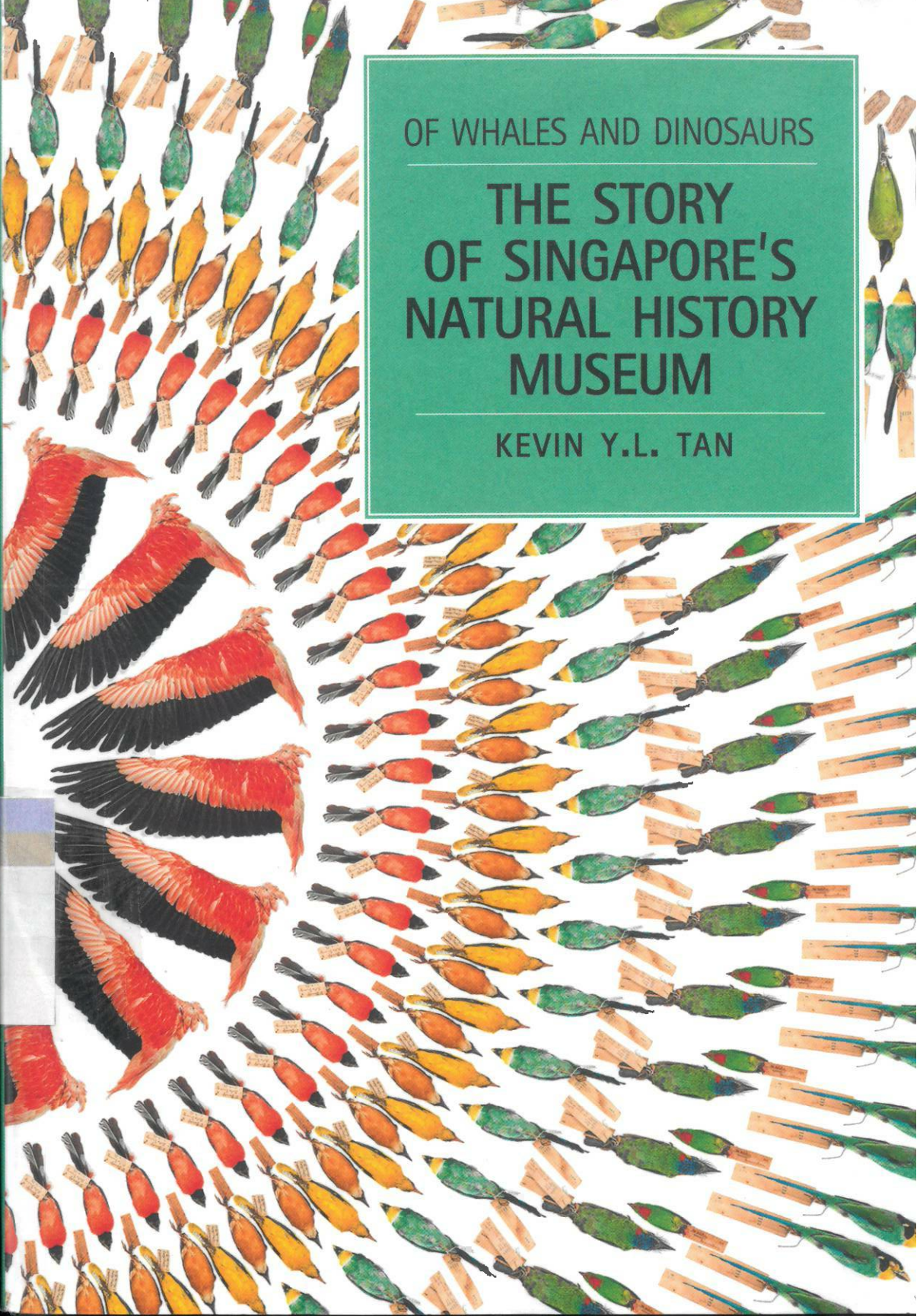




OF WHALES AND DINOSAURS

THE STORY OF SINGAPORE'S NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

KEVIN Y.L. TAN

OF WHALES AND DINOSAURS

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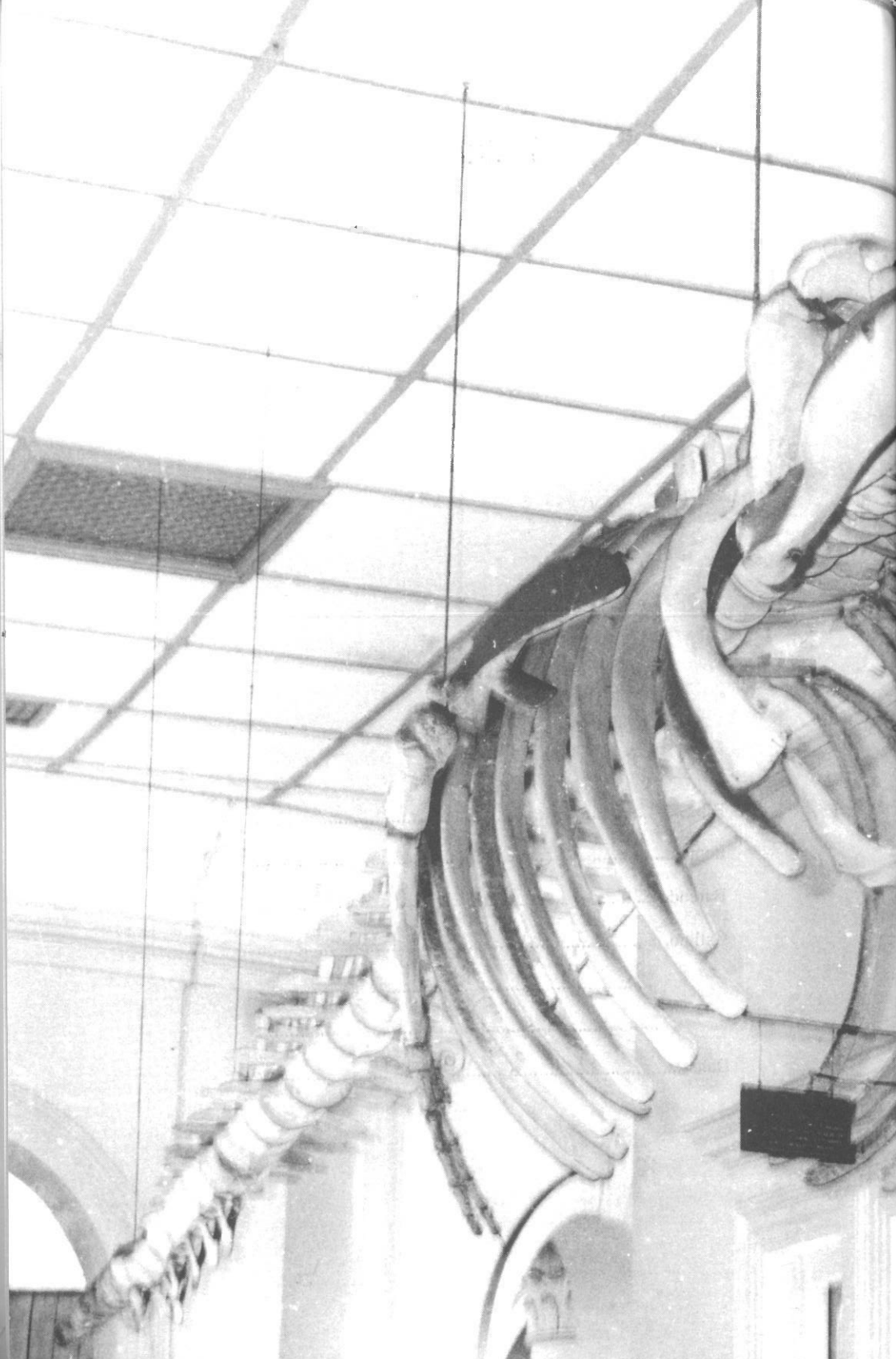
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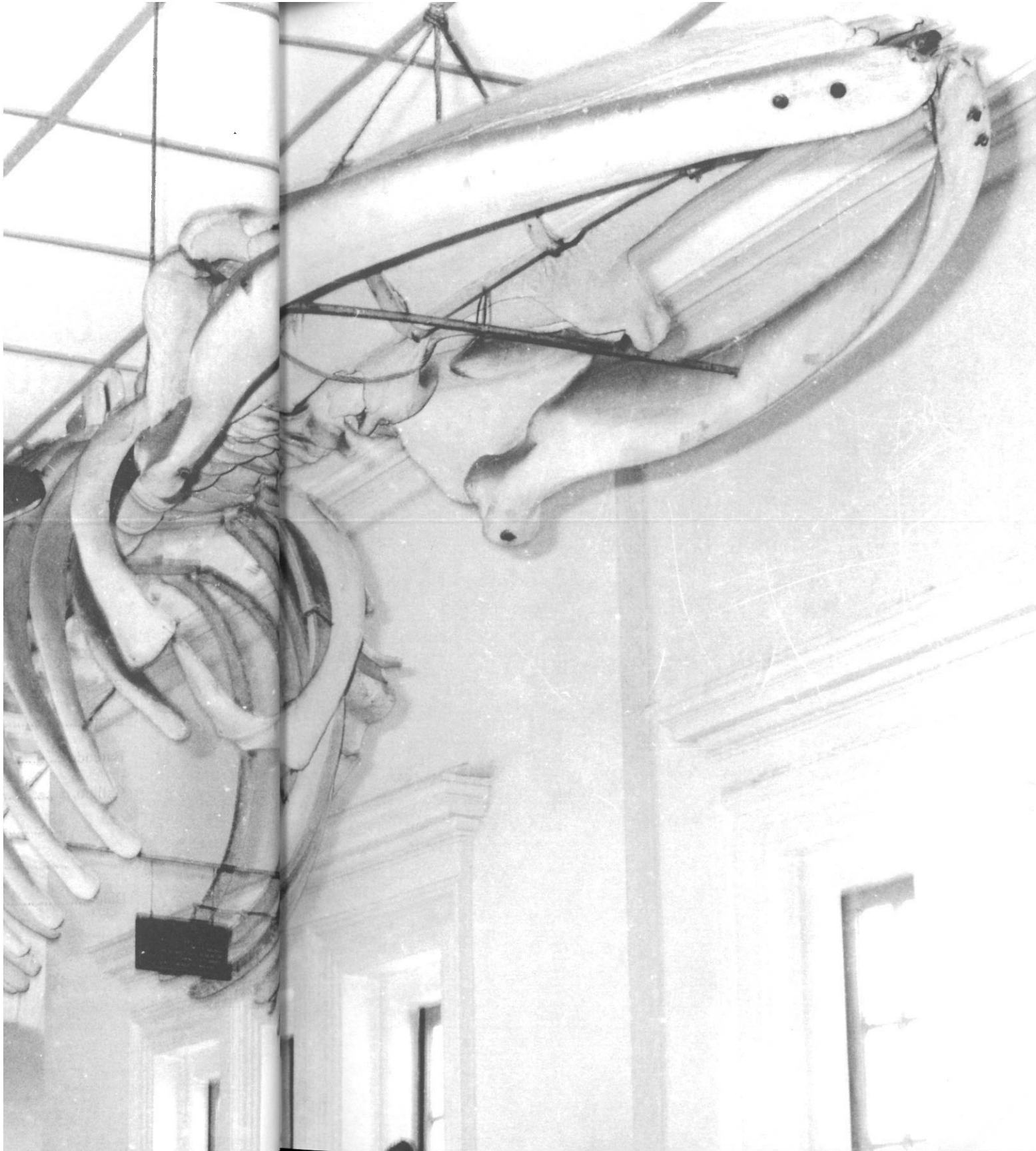
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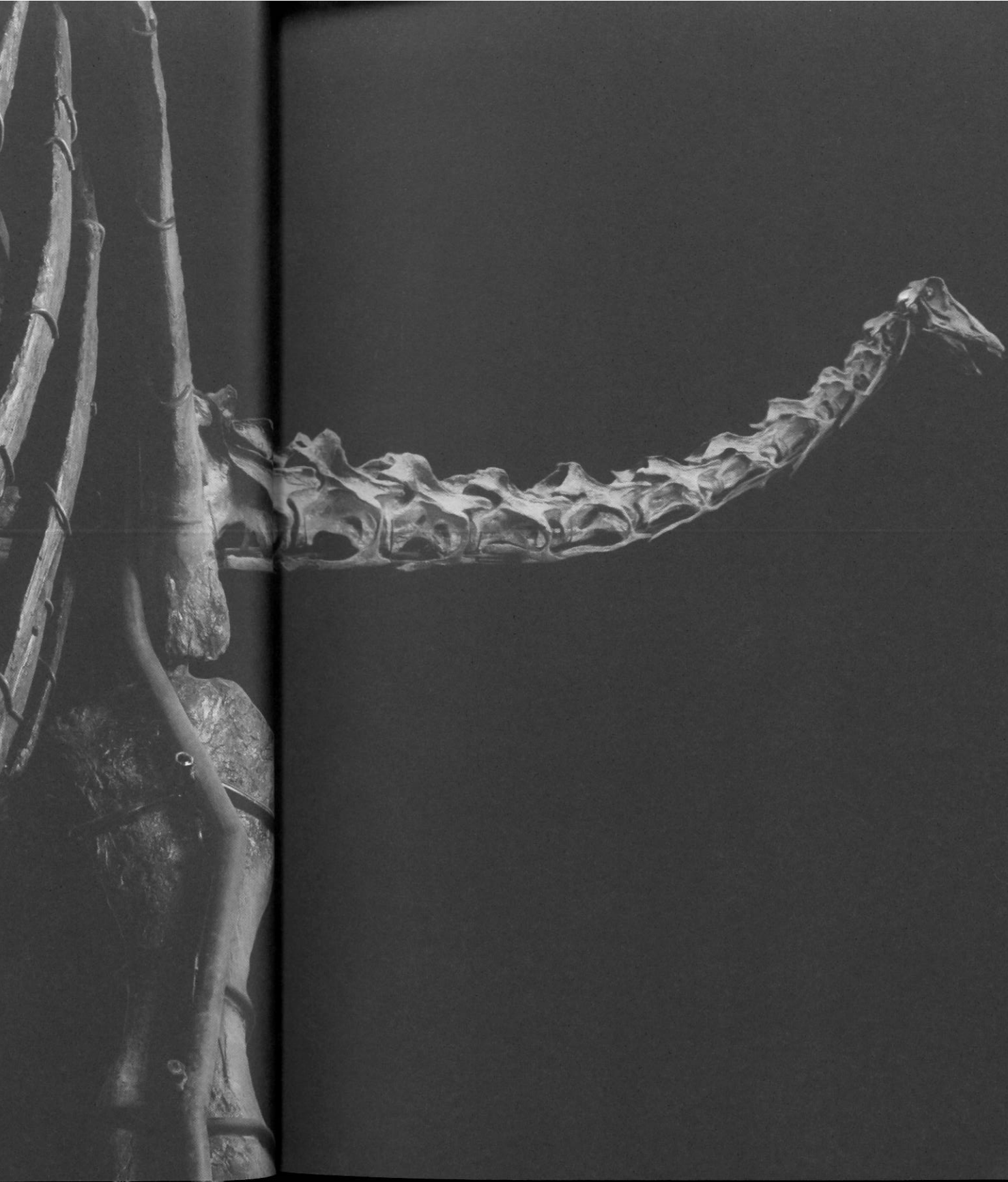


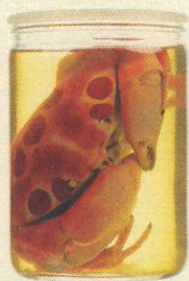
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Kevin Y. L. Tan
February 2015

PROLOGUE

by Peter K. L. Ng

Why a Natural History Museum?

Originally *musæum* had two definitions. It was most traditionally the place consecrated to the Muses (*locus musts sacer*), a mythological setting inhabited by the nine goddesses of poetry, music, and the liberal arts ... More specifically, *musæum* referred to the famous library at Alexandria which served as a research centre and congregating point for the scholars of the classical world.

—“The Museum: Its Classical Etymology
And Renaissance Genealogy,” Paula Findlen

In 1972, Singapore nearly lost an invaluable piece of the past when its natural history collection was under threat. The collection had for many years formed the core of the only omnibus museum in Singapore: the Raffles Museum, later the National Museum. It is particularly fitting that in its Golden Anniversary—when there are museums for just about everything from art to sports and even toys—Singapore will see this collection housed in the new Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, an independent institution dedicated to natural history.

Like all museums, a natural history museum has three primary missions: to build collections, facilitate research, and educate. However, it differs from all other museums in one major respect: its subjects are not the products of human endeavours but of evolution. They are the products of a billion years of unrelenting and merciless natural selection at work. The natural history museums of old were

happy to display taxidermised and mounted specimens of all kinds—a zoo of the dead. Collectors of nature assembled strange plants and animals to excite and arouse the curiosity of scholars and the public alike. At that point, visitors were content just to be awed by these dead but wonderful specimens.

That was Raffles' vision when he mooted the idea of a museum in Singapore. Formally established as the Raffles Library and Museum in 1878, Singapore's natural history museum began life at Stamford Road in 1887 exhibiting preserved animal specimens from Southeast Asia. Although the original Raffles Museum had a strong zoological slant, it also featured exhibits of early human culture, anthropology and geology.

At around the same time the old Raffles Museum was set up, its two famous "brothers" were also established in the region: the Sarawak Museum in 1888 (also started by the British) and the Museum Zoologicum Bogoriense (or Bogor Museum) in Java in 1894 (by the Dutch). The Sarawak Museum's original building in Kuching is still intact and being used; but there are ambitious plans to grow it. The Bogor Museum is a huge institution with millions of specimens and hundreds of researchers, beautifully nestled in the grounds of the famous Bogor Botanic Gardens; and with modern storage and research facilities in Cibinong, just outside Bogor. This trio are the earliest museums of their kind in Southeast Asia.

The natural history museum as an institution became more sophisticated as the scientific field advanced. It took men like Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace to ask deeper, more probing questions. (A historically valuable flycatcher contributed by Wallace is now held in the museum, *see* p. 28.) The most powerful was the simplest: why are there so many species? Out of this question came the field of evolutionary biology, a discipline that asks profound questions: how life has changed, why it has changed, and how it affects things around it.

Today, natural history museums hold specimens that are a splendid testimony to the myriad forms of life on Earth. The preserved tissues, dehydrated DNA and shrivelled biostructures are the result of millions of years of evolution; of success reinforced by the cauldron of natural selection. They are a library of information past and present: what works, what does not, a beacon to our own future. We have much to learn from the dead. The millions of specimens in the world's museums are raw material for evolutionary scientists and naturalists.

A key part of this legacy and repository—more than 500,000 specimens—is in Singapore's natural history museum. Some specimens housed here are so valuable that they must be guarded jealously.

In a few very rare instances, uncommon specimens may need to be sacrificed. The museum had a unique three-eyed crab—an anomaly of nature and the only one on the planet. However, to understand how it became so odd, a renowned German developmental evolutionary biologist had to section it. The crab is now in the museum in a box of a dozen slides. Unless specimens are used, they have no place in a modern natural history museum.

While historians may be interested in the Wallace specimen and the layman fascinated by anomalies, scientists and researchers are excited by what seems more prosaic: type specimens. A holotype is *the* specimen used by the original scientist to name and describe a particular species and serves as the ultimate representative of the species. When anyone had doubts, queries or debates on the validity of a species, what its name should be etc., they make a decision based on the holotype. Equally important are paratypes, or specimens used at the same time as the holotype to name a species.

Natural historians hunt down strange and new species, new ecosystems, and unexpected adaptations. Like the *Starship Enterprise*, they 'explore strange new worlds [and] seek out new life and new civilizations,' and 'boldly go where no man has gone before.' Staff of the museum have scaled lofty mountains, traversed headwaters of some of the world's greatest rivers, and plunged into limestone caves cloaked in darkness. Sometimes, they take weeks just to find a particular rare species. Modern naturalists must be more than good scientists; they must be excellent hunters. Tough and adaptable, they must be able to climb, swim and dive. It is hard work just to find and get the specimens, then collate the associated data (provenance, habitat, ecology, photographs, DNA etc.) needed for subsequent research. Today, naturalists need to handle and study animals or plants 'in the flesh'. The Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum considers as its prized assets its over 11,000 type specimens representing over 1,240 species and subspecies from throughout the region.

But the fates of natural history museums are not always in the hands of scientists. As Singapore entered the 1970s, the government did not see any reason to keep the zoological collection as economic development and industrialisation took centre-stage. Had it not been for the unstinting efforts of a few stout-hearted individuals, this collection—the largest collection of Southeast Asian animals—might well have been lost, its existence forgotten. Thanks to the vision, fortitude and efforts of past directors of the old Raffles Museum, three of whom I had the privilege to know and work with—Michael Tweedie, Eric Alfred and Yang Chang Man—Singapore has managed to retain its natural history treasures. The museum morphed into the

Zoological Reference Collection in the 1970s and the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research in 1998, all the while still focused on regional natural history and improving its collections.

The Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum today is truly built on the foundations laid by others and is committed to continue studying the biodiversity of Southeast Asia. But all their sweat will be in vain if there is no future for the next generation of scientist-naturalists in Singapore. Biodiversity research is ultimately a global challenge. Communities and individuals in the field must include Singaporeans who will help safeguard the collections, advance the research and take education to new heights; those from the region who will use their experiences to help their own countries; and international researchers who will use their connections to bring the scientist-educator-manager closer together.

There are other important natural museums in the region: the National Museum of the Philippines in Manila (1901); the Sabah Museum in Kota Kinabalu (1965); and the National Science Museum outside Bangkok (1995). There are also a large number of state, university or research institute-based and even private museums with key specimens. The Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum stands out in not only being a museum of Singapore's biodiversity, but also as a one-stop facility for the study of the region's richness. This is a matter of great pride and importance because at the end of the day, biodiversity science is not and cannot be restricted and confined by geopolitical boundaries.

The potential for education and enthusing the public about natural history is also enormous. Firstly, since most people already have a general interest in nature—and can appreciate a beautiful flower, gasp at the sheer size of a dinosaur, and shudder at a fearsome crocodile—natural history museums cut through culture, language and nationality to attract visitors. The second level of interest is practical: thousands of students at local tertiary institutions are exposed to the natural sciences each year and the museum's specimens are an invaluable resource for young researchers and professional scientists interested in the biodiversity of Southeast Asia.

Finally, the collection fuels the sheer passion that many Singaporean 'citizen scientists' have for natural history. Such amateurs draw on natural history and reference the museum's material for their studies, pursuing this not for fame or fortune but for pure enjoyment and the desire to make a difference in local and regional conservation. Some individuals may even become world-renowned authorities in their interest areas! The continuing expeditions, surveys and excellent network of collaborators in the region mean that young scientists and

natural historians have a wonderful chance to experience many new ecosystems, and all manner of strange plants and animals.

That this wonderful *grande dame* of museums is now reestablished as the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, with its original mandate for research and education, is a fantastic thing in itself. But a natural history museum is also a sign that the nation has come of age in its fiftieth anniversary: we have managed to carve up a space in pragmatic Singapore, and in our lives, for something as ethereal as nature and heritage. The myriad variety of life forms are found, preserved and catalogued not because they have commercial value. In fact, the specimens can be considered worthless in terms of monetary value. But from a scientific and educational perspective, these specimens are priceless.

At the same time, viewing these exhibits—many specimens that are long dead and no longer with us—is a form of time travel. Plants and animals that lived in our country's youth were eradicated without a second thought. In fact, up to a third of the species that were found in Singapore are now extinct. Their preserved bodies remind us of their previous presence, our ecological folly, and mistakes we should never repeat. In short, a museum is a reflection of our past, a vessel for our memories, and a reminder of what we are. If 'what's past is prologue', then what is to come will surely be exciting for all of us.

PREFACE

From the Raffles Museum to the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum

1874–2014

THIS IS THE story of the Zoological Collection that lies at the core of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum. Over the years, this very special and historic collection has been known by different names. It originated from the Singapore Museum—renamed ‘Raffles Museum’ in 1874 and ‘National Museum’ in 1960—an omnibus museum with collections of natural history, anthropology and art. In 1972, after it split from the National Museum, it was often referred to as the ‘Raffles Collection’ or the ‘Raffles Natural History Collection.’ After it became safely ensconced in the Department of Zoology at the National University of Singapore, it became known as the Zoological Reference Collection, and from 1998, formed the core of the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research at the National University of Singapore.

The history of this collection goes back to the formation of the Singapore Museum in 1849. This story inevitably overlaps with the histories of many other institutions of Singapore life. These other stories provide the necessary background to our story but are only tangentially important to the story of how this collection came to be, grew, struggled, and ultimately found a permanent home in the new Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum.

Because of the way the collection has been displayed and discussed, people are confused about what it refers to exactly. Part of the reason stems from the fact that the Zoological Collection is made of two types of specimens and is actually in two parts—the mounted specimens

(the display collection) and the scientific specimens (the reference collection). Most people who have visited the old Raffles Museum or National Museum prior to 1972 will remember the many animal exhibits—the overarching mounted whale skeleton, tigers, crocodiles, insects, etc.—that were scattered throughout the various galleries of the museum. While these exhibits were the most famous and visible signs of the museum's zoological collection, they were only part of the display collection. These specimens were mounted and prepared for exhibition and sought to give visitors an idea of what such an animal or bird might look like in real life. They were not meant for scientific study. Over the years, the museum obtained, taxidermised, exhibited and discarded thousands of such mounted exhibits. They were visually impressive and provided the visitor with the most palpable experience, but were generally of little scientific interest to the scientists.

Scientists and zoologists are far more interested in the specimens in the reference collection because of the raw data they could potentially extract from their examination. Better yet if these specimens were holotypes (the very first specimens used to describe new species) or paratypes (specimens of types other than the holotype). Reference collections of any museum or scientific institution are hardly ever put on display as reference specimens were preserved as skins, skulls or kept in bottles with formalin or alcohol. Indeed, curators fear that specimens that are too heavily exposed, handled, or displayed may deteriorate beyond repair and lose their scientific value. It was no different with the Raffles Zoological Reference Collection. Most of the time, they lay quietly hidden in boxes, cabinets and drawers in the storerooms deep in the recesses of the museum or at the bottom of display cabinets. When the reference collection was cleaved from the National Museum's general inventory in 1972, no one had any idea exactly how large this collection was. The fact that it took the staff almost a year to list and move the collection should give some idea on the huge amount of scientific material that had been accumulating at the museum since 1849.

The relative invisibility of the reference collection and its esoteric appeal to scientists and higher-level students of science meant that the general public had no particular affinity for it. And as will be seen in the accounts that follow, and especially of efforts to save the collection, journalists happily juxtapose the specimens in the reference collection with the display collection only because the latter are so much more instantly recognisable and hence lovable. Few members of the public have seen the thousands of bird skins in the reference collection. And even if they had, they are not likely to feel the same way they do about them as they do about the display

specimens. The much lamented whale skeleton, which the Science Centre gave to the Muzium Negara in 1974, still haunts the minds of those who saw it. This lack of visibility does not, however, make the story any less compelling. The Zoological Reference Collection is the closest thing Singapore has to a national treasure.

This book starts off with an account of the founding of the Singapore Library and Museum, and how it grew and was transformed into the Raffles Museum and Library. These early years—from 1849 to the 1920s—were crucial for the formation of the institution and the creation of a museum-going culture amongst the local inhabitants in Singapore. In these years, the display specimens took pride of place in the museum; everyday, people would trample through the museum to be awed by them. The reference collection, however, only really got started in the 1920s with the curatorial careers of three remarkable zoologists—Herbert Christopher Robinson, Cecil Boden Kloss and Frederick Nutter Chasen—who were the giants of the field in the inter-war years (1919–42). It was Robinson and Kloss who arranged for the enormous mammal and bird reference collections of the Selangor Museum to be exchanged with the entomological collection of the Raffles Museum in 1927; this established the Raffles Museum as the leading reference collection in the region.

However, it was the first two decades of Singapore's independence that proved to be the toughest years for the museum and for the collection. It was then abandoned by the Singapore Government in 1972 because it was considered irrelevant and had little to contribute the all-important nation-building processes of the time. For years, it lingered, forgotten by Singaporeans. These were precarious decades for the collection and the fact that they survived, and continued to be cared for in the midst of the most appalling conditions, highlights the heroic efforts of the few individuals who saved Singapore's natural history heritage from oblivion. Indeed, had it not been for the dedication and tenacity of a few stalwarts who really understood the value of the collection, it would have been lost forever. A large part of this book is dedicated to those who worked tirelessly to keep the collection in Singapore and intact.

A Rafflesian

The story of the
founding of the
Raffles Museum
and Library
as established

Temenggong Ibrahim's Coins and the Founding of the Raffles Museum

IN 1987, SINGAPORE'S National Museum celebrated its centenary with an art exhibition and a whole host of other events. A limited edition \$5 coin was struck, and a three-stamp first-day cover was issued to commemorate the centenary. The natural conclusion would have been that the museum must have been founded in 1887. It was not.

Its history goes back almost forty years earlier when the Singapore governor presented two ancient Achinese coins—given by Temenggong Daing Ibrahim—to the Singapore Library. And if we are to consider its very genesis, the idea of establishing a museum in Singapore goes back to 1823 when Sir Stamford Thomas Raffles himself founded the Singapore Institution. Legally, the museum was established by the passage of the Raffles Societies Ordinance in 1878.¹ Thus, the anniversary celebrated in 1987 was merely the centenary of the National Museum building on Stamford Road, not of the museum itself.

A Rafflesian Dream

The story of the National Museum and its collection begins with the inception of the Singapore Institution in 1823. Sir Thomas Stamford Bingley Raffles (1781–1826) was a visionary and a dreamer. One of his abiding dreams for Singapore was that an educational institution be established in which young men of Singapore and Malaya would

be educated not only in their own languages and cultures but also in the best English tradition. In *Minute on the Establishment of a Malay College in Singapore*,² he envisioned a full-fledged college, with departments of Chinese, Malay and Siamese, alongside that of English, to prepare young men to be future leaders of Singapore. And among other things, this college would have a splendid library and museum. Given that Singapore was such a small settlement where even basic formal education was non-existent, it was an ambitious but unrealistic plan.

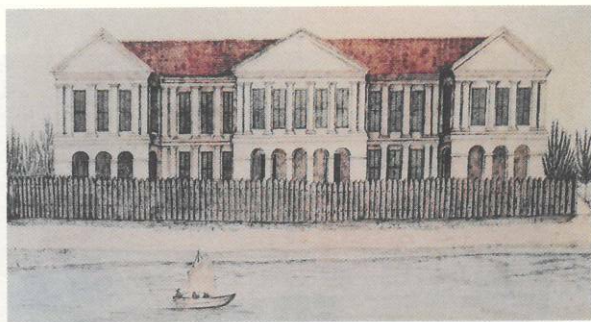
During his last visit to Singapore in 1823, Raffles convened a meeting to establish an educational institution along the lines of his vision. Among those present at the meeting, held on 1 April 1823, were Raffles; his good friend, Dr Robert Morrison; Reverend Robert Sparke Hutchings (the chaplain of Penang and founder of Penang Free School); Sultan Hussein; and Temenggong Abdul Rahman. Raffles donated \$2,000 (Spanish dollars) and subscribed \$4,000 on behalf of the East India Company. His wife Sophia gave \$400 while Dr Morrison contributed \$1,200. The Resident, Lieutenant Colonel William Farquhar, Sultan Hussein and Temenggong Abdul Rahman each contributed \$1,000. In all, \$17,495 was collected at that first meeting. A Board of Trustees headed by Raffles was constituted.

The trustees resolved to erect a building on a site at Bras Basah Road as the premises for the new Singapore Institution. Lieutenant Philip Jackson (1802–79), who was then Executive Engineer and Surveyor of Public Land, told the Board of Trustees that he could complete the building within 12 months for \$15,000 (Spanish dollars). On 5 June 1823, the foundation stone for the Singapore Institution was laid. Despite the auspicious start for the Institution, the road ahead was fraught with troubles. By December 1823, the Trustees and Lieutenant Jackson had run out of money to complete the building. Funds from the proposed sale of Dr Morrison's Anglo-Malay College in Malacca did not materialise. The building remained unfinished for the next 15 years. In the meantime, Raffles had died in 1826, his dreams of a great institution of learning in Singapore unfulfilled.

A Fresh Start

In 1836, a new Committee of Trustees engaged Irish architect George Drumgold Coleman—who was also Superintendent of Public Works—to complete the building and add a new wing to it for \$5,700. Both were completed by December 1838. The new wing, which had been added towards the Stamford Road end of the compound, had three classrooms

on the ground floor and three on the upper level. This would later serve as the boarding house of the school. When these works were completed, the committee commissioned a third wing to be built (this is the one closest to Bras Basah Road). At a meeting of the trustees of the Singapore Institution in May 1836, it was decided that they would establish an elementary school instead of a tertiary institution, which was Raffles's original plan. This was a much more realistic and practical plan since it was what the fledgling settlement most urgently needed.



1.1 The earliest known drawing (1841) of the Singapore Institution, a pencil-and-ink and watercolour sketch by J. A. Marsh

The buildings were only occupied in December 1837, when students of the Singapore Institution Free School moved in. They were later joined by the Singapore Free School. Reverend Fred J. Darrah, Chaplain of the Mission Chapel in Singapore, had established Singapore's first functioning school when he founded the Singapore Free School on 1 August 1834. It was organised under the auspices of the Singapore School Society and initially had 46 students. This number swelled to 75 within two months. Before moving into the Stamford Road premises, it occupied an attap-roofed building in High Street, near the junction with River Valley Road. In addition to transforming the Singapore Institution into an elementary school, the Trustees also proposed

...to appropriate one of the upper rooms, as a Library and Museum, and where all meetings of the Committee, or of the Trustees may be held. To form the Library and Museum, donations of books should be forthwith solicited—as also specimens of the Natural History of the Archipelago and the countries in our vicinity. If only a little zeal be displayed in accomplishing these two desirable objects, collections would soon be made, which would form perhaps some of the principal attractions of the Institution after its completion.¹¹

It is interesting that although the Committee of Trustees had jettisoned Raffles's original plan, it maintained the desire for a library and museum. Plans were drawn up for such a library in 1841 but we have no record as to whether it was actually furnished and stocked with books. Indeed, it was not till January 1845 that a private library, called the Singapore Library, was officially established. William Napier (1804–79), Singapore's first law agent, chaired the meeting and made 'a handsome donation of more than a hundred volumes, consisting of



1.2 Portrait by George Francis Joseph (1817) of Raffles after he was knighted by the Prince Regent

Raffles the Naturalist³

Other than founding of Singapore in 1819, Raffles also founded the Zoological Society of London,⁴ a few months before his death in 1826. Natural history had long been one of Raffles' abiding interests. Recounting Raffles' early life, Lady Sophia Raffles wrote: 'As a school-boy, his garden was his delight; to this was added a love of animals, which was perhaps unequalled.'⁵

As an adult, Raffles was only able to indulge in his passion for natural history after he left London for Penang. It was recorded that while he was in Penang between 1805 and 1810, he kept 'a number of animals in cages, including a siamang.'⁶ In 1811, while in Malacca preparing for the invasion of Java, Raffles reportedly employed four men to search for natural history specimens for him. Abullah bin Abdul Kadir (more famously known as Munshi Abdullah) wrote this about Raffles' deep interest in natural history:

He kept four persons on wages, each in his peculiar department: one to go to the forests in search of various kinds of leaves, flowers, fungi, pulp, and such like products. Another he sent to collect all kinds of flies, grasshoppers, centipedes, bees, scorpions, giving him pins in a box to put through the creatures. Another he sent with a basket to seek for coral, shells, oysters, mussels, cockles, and such like: also fishes of various species: and yet another to collect animals, such as birds, jungle fowl, deer, stags, mousedeer and so forth. Then he had a large book with thick paper, whose use was for the keeping of the leaves and the flowers. And, when he could not put them there, he had a Chinese Macao painter, who was good at painting fruit and flowers to the life, these he sent him to copy. Again he kept a barrel of arrack or brandy, and when he got snakes, scorpions, centipedes and other such like, he would put them in till they were dead, before putting them in bottles. This occupation astonished the people of Malacca, and many profited from going in search of the living creatures that exist in the sky and the earth, sea or land, town or country.⁷

During the time he was in Malacca, Raffles engaged in a contest with Major William Farquhar to discover new animal species.⁸ Farquhar, who had been in the Straits for far longer than Raffles had, discovered the Malayan Tapir (*Tapirus indicus*) and the bearcat or binturong (*Arctictis binturong*). Raffles claimed to have already known of these mammals earlier and tried to have his description published and Farquhar's withdrawn. In the case of the tapir, a five-year delay in publication meant Farquhar lost out to a young French zoologist Fierre Diard, who published his description a year earlier; however, he generously stated that Farquhar had discovered the species.

Later, when Raffles was Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen, he had a Malayan Sun Bear (*Helarctos malayanus*) which 'was brought up in the nursery with his children and was allowed to sit at his table where it showed a marked taste for champagne.'⁹ Indeed it was Raffles who first described this species of bear in 1821.

Raffles' deep interest in natural history was heightened by his interactions with some of the leading natural scientists then studying the region. One of the first was the American naturalist Thomas Horsfield whom Raffles first met at Solo (modern day Surakarta) towards the end of 1811. At the time, Horsfield already spent a decade researching the natural history of Java under the Dutch colonial administration. Raffles was anxious to secure from Horsfield his collection of insects, mammalia and birds for the East India Company in London. Raffles succeeded and deposited the collection in the Company's museum in London.



1.3 Plate from Thomas Horsfield's *Zoological Researches in Java* (1822). The Green Broadbill (*Calyptoptena viridis*), now extinct on the island, was described by Raffles when he was in Singapore in 1822.

tions under Raffles' patronage. According to Bastin, the two Frenchmen failed to honour an agreement to publish their discoveries in England, and this 'forced Raffles to seize their collections and undertake a scientific description of them himself.'¹⁰ Raffles prepared a *Descriptive Catalogue* to accompany the collection which he shipped to London in 1820. Although the collections were essentially those assembled by Diard and Duvaucel, and the catalogue itself largely the work of William Jack, it established Raffles's reputation as a zoologist.

During Raffles' last visit to Singapore in 1822-3, he met up with Wallich, who was on the island on sick leave. Raffles joined him in botanical excursions on the island and was encouraged by Wallich to establish a botanical garden in Singapore. This he did by allocating a piece of land on Government Hill (later Fort Canning) for this purpose. Raffles returned to Bencoolen in July 1823 with 'a variety of natural history collections from Singapore' and other from Sumatra. Alas, this material was all to perish in the tragic fire that engulfed his vessel *Fame*, in February 1824.

Bastin tells us that Raffles' interest in natural history straddled its whole range from geology, to ichthyology and entomology. The curtailment of his political activity following the establishment of the settlement in Singapore in 1819 were perhaps, Bastin says, 'the happiest period of Raffles' life when, after assiduous study and close associations with a number of naturalists over many years, he enjoyed the necessary leisure to engage in natural history research for himself.'

According to John Bastin, Raffles' interest in natural history intensified during his 1816-17 visit to London where he met with London's leading naturalists, including Sir Joshua Banks and Dr Joseph Arnold. Together with the latter, Raffles later discovered the world's biggest flower, the carnivorous *Rafflesia* (*Rafflesia arnoldi*) in 1818. Alas, life was very hard for naturalists in the tropics and Arnold died only four months after arriving in Sumatra. After failing to persuade the Company to send a replacement, Raffles met Dr William Jack through Dr Nathaniel Wallich, the Danish superintendent of the Botanic Garden in Calcutta who was also surgeon and botanist. Jack was a talented naturalist and although he too, died prematurely, aged 27, in 1822.

Raffles also employed two French zoologists, Pierre-Médard Diard and Alfred Duvaucel, who amassed a large zoological collection.



Rafflesia Arnoldii

1.4 The *Rafflesia arnoldii*, the world's biggest flower, which is named in honour of Raffles and his friend Joseph Arnold (1782–1818) even though it was first discovered by French explorer Louis Auguste Deschamps (1765–1842) in Java in 1797. Raffles and Arnold collected a specimen of this plant in Sumatra in 1818.