

## CAMPUS Asia Field Study: Photo Journal

The CAMPUS Asia Field Study in Singapore was a three-day exploration of how a modern city-state balances its complex history with forward-thinking social programs. As a student interested in transnational history, I went into this trip wanting to see how the various layers of Singapore, colonial, multicultural, and modern interact in everyday life. Through visits to NTU and the Peranakan Museum, as well as informal walks through the city's ethnic districts, I was able to observe how Singapore manages its identity as a multinational hub.

### Day 1

Our first day began early with our arrival at Changi Airport. We first visited Merlion Park with the whole group. It is the classic Singapore photo spot, featuring the famous Merlion statue looking out toward Marina Bay Sands.



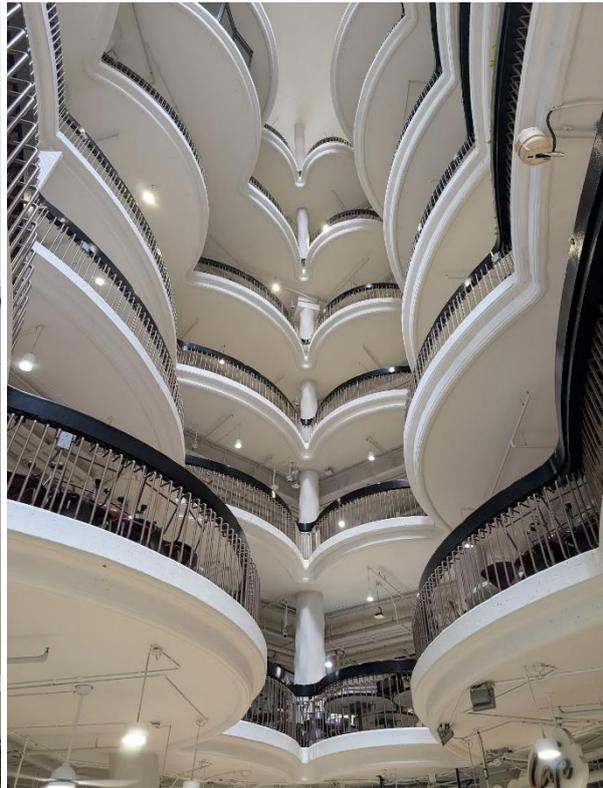
The real highlight of the morning was the visit to Dignity Kitchen. This was my first experience with this type of social enterprise, and we were lucky enough to have the founder and staff explain their mission to us. Instead of just giving aid, their goal is to educate and empower. They teach people with disabilities how to cook and manage a business so they can be independent. We also learned some basic sign language to communicate and order our food; which we had our lunch there. It felt great to see that

the facility is open to the public; normal people just walk in, have a meal, and support the project naturally.



During the breaks and afternoon, I was also able to explore Little India, Arab Street, and Chinatown. Walking from a mosque to a Hindu temple within a few blocks was a visual crash course in Singapore's diversity. I noticed that these three streets and the big metropolitan area are so close to each other, yet they feel so different. This proximity creates a very exotic and interesting vibe that feels uniquely "Singaporean," where tradition and modernity coexist side by side.

## Day 2



Day 2 was centered around our visit to Nanyang Technological University (NTU). We attended two lectures that offered very different perspectives. The first was on economics, but the second one, which focused on the untold stories of Japanese occupation in Malaya and Singapore was the one I found most informative.

We were able to hear and see the visuals of the Sook Ching massacre. As someone who loves to study history, it was intense to hear the voices and see the images of the survivors. It moved the topic from textbook history to a very harsh reality. At the end, the lecturer gave out "banana notes" (the currency used during the occupation) as a gift for all of us. Holding a piece of paper that represented such a traumatic and unstable time in Singapore's history was a powerful moment.

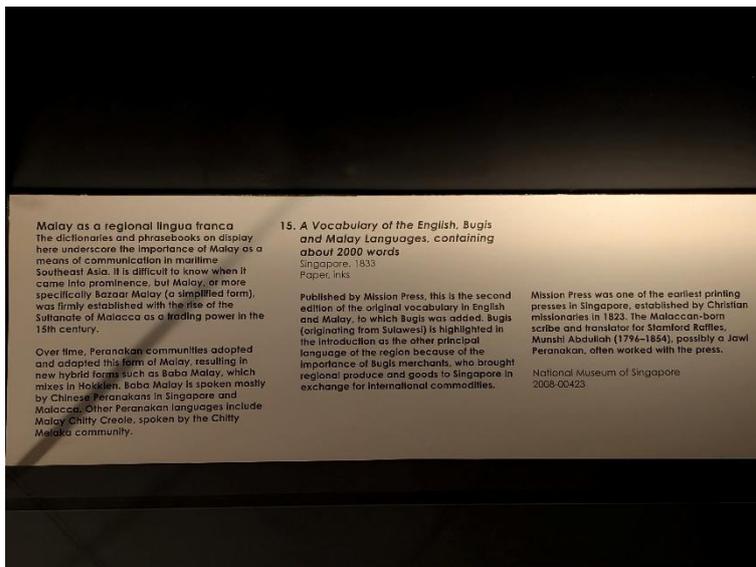
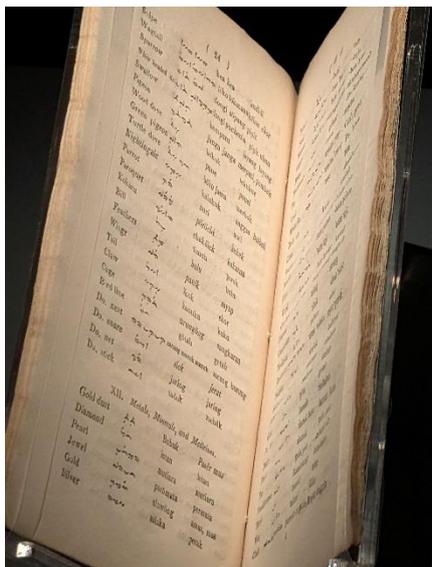


After the lectures and a tour of the campus by the volunteer students, we came back and had our individual studies. For dinner, I went out for Bak Kut The, which became my favorite food during the whole trip! After a long day of heavy historical topics and walking, it was just a warm, hearty meal that hit the spot.

### Day 3

Our final day started at the Singapore City Gallery. I was genuinely impressed by the giant architectural models of the city. Seeing the town planning and housing layouts helped me understand how Singapore manages to fit so many people and cultures into such a small space.

The most important part of the trip for me was the Peranakan Museum. For those who don't know, Peranakan refers to a person of mixed cultures, mainly Chinese, Malay, and some Indian. I wanted to spend a large chunk of my journal on this because it perfectly captures the "mix" of culture in Singapore. The Peranakan community is a fusion of Chinese, Malay, and other influences, and seeing this in person was fascinating.



I was particularly interested in the linguistic side of their history. I saw a Malay-English dictionary and phrasebook on display, which really caught my attention. In a country that is trying to form a unified identity out of many different groups, language is the most important tool. These books showed a community that was literally merging languages to communicate and thrive in a multinational environment. The way that it's not just about one culture replacing another, but about the creation of a third culture that is entirely unique got me thinking about further about the contemporary situation with immigrants in a lot of countries.



I finished the trip with a visit to the Old Hill Street Police Station and finally the infamous marina sands bay and Gardens by the Bay. Watching the light show at the Supertree Grove was a great way to end the study; it felt like looking into the future of the city we had just spent three days studying.

### **Conclusion**

This field study provided a once in a lifetime opportunity to engage with social issues in Asia. I learned that building an inclusive society requires both careful planning and an open mind. This experience has motivated me to think more deeply about how we can respect our differences while working together for a better future. I am also truly grateful to the professors and the group members for making this trip so rewarding.