

Identitas or Sameness

凹峰 or

Concave Peak

Yuan dynasty traveler 汪大渊 Wang Dayuan mentioned 凹峰, or Concave Peak, in his chronicles on the islands of Southeast Asia, 岛夷志略 Islands of the Barbarians, (1349). A description rather than an actual name, it is believed to reference Fort Canning Hill.

Hill of Singhapura

"Hill of Singhapura" was pinpointed as the burial ground of Sri Tri-buana, the legendary founder of Singapore. [The Malay Annals, trans. John Leyden (Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821) 48.] Sri Tri-buana is also known as Iskandar Shah in his latter years. Keramat Iskandar Shah, purportedly his tombstone, can be found on the eastern slope of the hill today.

Bukit Larangan or Forbidden Hill

When the English arrived onto the Singapore coast in 1819, the hill is known as Bukit Larangan, or Forbidden Hill, amongst the locals, as documented by Munshi Abdullah in the 1840s. [Hamzah Hamdani ed., Hikayat Abdullah (PTS Publications & Distributors Sdn. Bhd., 2007) 157.]

Accursed Hill

Probably a variant translation of Bukit Larangan. [R.O. Winstedt, "Gold Ornaments dug up at Fort Canning, Singapore," Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS) 6(4) 1928: 1.]

The Hill

"In 1823 it was simply known as 'Bukit Larangan' or, in English, 'The Hill'..." [Captain H. F. Pearson, "Singapore from the Sea, June 1823," JMBRAS 26(1) 1953: 43.] Bukit Larangan should be translated as the Forbidden Hill. Could it be that to the English, who did not pay heed to the taboo, it was simply the definitive hill on the island, and hence they called it The Hill?

Singapore Hill

"We have lately built a small bungalow on Singapore Hill, where, though the height is inconsiderable, we find a great difference of climate. Nothing can be more interesting and beautiful than the view from this spot." Sir T. S. Raffles wrote to Marsden in 1823. [Lady Sophia Raffles, Memoirs of the life and public services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles... (John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1830) 535.]

Hill at the back of the town
Earl, in his account of Singapore, named other hills (Bukit Timah), villages (Campong Glam) and even roads (Circular). However, he had no name for Fort Canning Hill and instead identified it by way of its prominent location. [George Windsor Earl, The Eastern Seas or Voyages and Adventures in the Indian Archipelago in 1832-33-34 ... (W.M. Hallen and Co., 1837) 349.]

Government Hill
The Government House was built on the hill in 1822, and with that it became known as Government Hill to the English. [Cornelius-Takahama and Vernon, "Fort Canning Park" Singapore Infopedia 14 Oct. 1997 http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_8_2004-12-10.html]

Fort Canning Hill
In 1859, Government House was demolished and in its place a fort was built and completed in 1861. It was named after Viscount Charles John Canning, Governor-General and First Viceroy of India (1856-1862). ["Around Fort Canning Hill in the 19th Century" National Library Board, 2003 http://econtent.elibraryhub.com/SHC/NLBHB/SS/SingaporeStory/Around_FORT%20CANNING_19th_Century.pdf]

Bukit Bendera or Flag Hill
Singapore's first British resident, William Farquhar, erected the flagstaff on the hill at his first ascent. The locals started to identify the hill by the communication signal planted on its crown. [A.A. Hill trans., "The Founding of Singapore described by 'Munshi Abdullah'" JMBRAS 28(1) 1955: 192.]

Bukit Tuan Bonham or Sir Bonham's Hill
Sir Samuel George Bonham was the Governor of Singapore from 1836 to 1848. To the Malays, the hill was Bukit Tuan Bonham or Sir Bonham's Hill. [Cornelius-Takahama and Vernon.]

Hill of History
Since the 1980s, there has been a concerted effort by the government to remodel the hill. Though this article published in the national newspapers noted that Fort Canning Hill is "popularly known as the Hill of History", to the best of the INSITU team's knowledge, this epithet it yet to become a familiar one for the public. ["A walk in the park, a step back in time," The Straits Times 22 Feb. 2002: 14.]