

Singapore

ASIA'S TINY TIGER

by ROBERT W. BONE

EVERY TRAVELLER ARRIVES AT A NEW DESTINATION WITH SOME PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS. I ONCE HAD SINGAPORE PEGGED AS A SORT OF SUPER-CROWDED NEW YORK CITY WITH JINRIKSHAS (TWO-WHEELED DRAWN CARRIAGES, JAPANESE FOR RICKSHAWS) NAVIGATING PRECARIOUSLY ALONG THE WRONG SIDE OF THE ROAD.

I first arrived in 1966, less than a year after Singapore achieved independence, and found that nothing could be further from the truth. It turned out to be one of the most attractive metropolitan areas I had ever seen — not just in Asia, but anywhere in the world. This is even truer today.

When Sir Stamford Raffles of the British East India Company founded a trading post in 1819, the area was covered by rainforest. Jungle has since been replaced by a gleaming "jungle" of towers, as nearly all 660 square kilometres of this tropical island, situated at the tip of the Malay Peninsula, has been urbanized.

In recognition of Sir Stamford, two prominent statues, known affectionately as the "white Raffles" (marble) and the "black Raffles" (bronze) are located near the point where he first stepped ashore.

