"Erased Place Names" and Nation-building: A Case Study of Singaporean Toponyms[*]

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Abstract

As a case study from the viewpoint of critical toponymics and document analysis, this paper examines Singaporean "erased place names" (EPNs), which have been deleted or renamed since the 1960s. Rather than the existing places names that most critical toponymic scholars focus on, this study emphasizes the significance of EPNs in place-name politics. Moreover, unlike Yeoh (1996), who demonstrated the connection between Singaporean decolonization and nation-building through national toponymic policies, this paper examines Singaporean nation-building on the basis of the EPNs that scholars may have overlooked or neglected.

The results show that EPNs in Singapore have not simply been erased; the reuses of specific terms have modified their toponymic forms to enable their revival in the contested cultural politics of everyday life. Because of the reuse of specific terms, old ethnic memories have been transformed and merged into new local and regional histories and have afforded new mixed, regional, and cross-ethnic memories.

Key words: erased place names, toponymic landscapes, cultural politics, nation-building, Singapore

I. Introduction

1. Place-Naming Motivations

Swanepoel's (2009: 103) observation about erased and existing place names is indeed occurring around the world. Especially after a major change in political atmosphere, the new regime tends to implement a new place-name system to break with the past and advocate new ideologies (Yeoh 1996; Faraco and Murphy 1997; Azaryahu and Golan 2001; Light, Nicolae, and Suditu 2002; Gill 2005). Indeed, after its independence, such a succession of new place names replacing old ones occurred in Singapore's toponymic politics.

Singapore, a former British colony, gained autonomy in 1959, and independence in 1963 by joining the newly created Federation of Malaysia. Almost immediately, Singapore seceded from the Federation to obtain complete national independence in 1965. After severe changes in its political situation, Singapore's cultural landscapes also underwent major changes. Beginning in the 1960s, old landscapes constructed in colonial days were eradicated and replaced by high-rise buildings through government-driven landscape transformation. The government's ideological purpose for this trend of modernization and urbanization was to intervene in landscape succession to imbue the process with a specific national meaning. Such landscape and spatial politics exist on various spatial scales (Yeh 2012). Similar to settlement landscapes in Singapore, toponymic landscapes have experienced dramatic changes; many settlement and street names have been erased since the 1960s. According to Yeoh (1996), under the toponymic policies for Singaporean nation-building, the new street names had characteristics of Malayanized, numerical, multiracial, dialectal, pinyinized, and bilingual forms from different periods.

Place names, textually marked in the cultural landscape, are significant in cultural landscape study in geography and are a focus of historical and cultural geographers. To geographers, place names are

temporal and spatial impressions produced by people after they perceive their surroundings; they are products of human–land interaction, and investigating place names often reveals past natural or artificial environments. Place names can be not only evidence of things that have disappeared or changed but also projections of people's ideologies. According to Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu (2010, 457–58), place names are important in "creating and maintaining emotional attachments to places," but they are also very political, often used as a "mechanism for naturalizing hegemonic power structures."

Regarding research on Singaporean place names, Yeoh published articles in 1992 and 1996.[1] The 1992 article revealed two competing sets of street names in colonial Singapore, the official, municipal street names and the unofficial street names originating among the immigrant Asian communities. The European colonists named Singaporean streets based on their perception of the landscape order and urban function; the unofficial street names were usually based on the immigrant Asian communities' conventions and parameters, and were used in people's daily lives. By examining the broader social and economic context, Yeoh's 1996 article attempted to explain the post-independence formation and reflection of place names within Singaporean landscapes. She showed that the Singaporean government adopted various principles for naming places to improve national identity, retaining various street names and naming others at different stages. But imbuing street names with Singaporean nationalism was not a smooth process; it reflected the contradictions and the vacillating policies within the Singaporean nation-building process. Yeoh's abovementioned studies illustrated that both street names and naming policies can reflect a colonial regime or a framework of nation-building.

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[1] On the basis of these articles, Yeoh (2003) re-explored the coexisting sets of official and local toponymic systems of the municipal authority of Singapore and the Asian communities (Yeoh 2003: 219–242).

Therefore, Singaporean street names could be deemed a spatial representation of political ideologies.

Similar to Addleton (1987); Yeoh (1996); Faraco and Murphy (1997); Light, Nicolae, and Suditu (2002); and Bigon (2008) et al., most scholars have concentrated on places that have been renamed or newly named by a regime. These scholars then elaborated on the political ideologies within the toponymic landscapes. However, some researchers have tried to highlight the more "banal" names' significance. As Rose-Redwood and Alderman (2011: 3) indicated, "critical place-name scholars have typically focused on the most dramatic political conflicts over place naming while ignoring those namescapes that present themselves as apparently beyond contestation due to their utter banality." For instance, Champoux (2012) argued that Canada used Inuit oral toponyms to name the High Arctic to assert Canadian Arctic sovereignty; the banal aboriginal toponyms became part of the Canadian national and political language. Moreover, unlike recent landscape work on the topic of presence, Wylie (2009) focused on the motif of absence within landscapes in his case study of Mullion Cove, southwest England. From another perspective, if place names have, like palimpsests, been replaced for nation-building, what type of place names were erased during the post-colonial period? Moreover, what do they mean for Singaporean nation-building?

2. Aims and Methodology

Due to the need for greater attention to material geographies (Jackson 2000; Blunt and McEwan 2002, 2; Cook and Harrison 2003), I chose toponymic landscapes as the research medium for this study, which explores the role of erased place names (EPNs) in Singaporean nation-building since the 1960s from the viewpoint of critical toponymy. Thus, this study explains changing place-names according

to the political and social contexts. It is deemed that EPNs were not simply erased by the Singapore government, but their specific terms were reused to name "new" places and attach new local and regional memories to them; such new place names actively embody Singaporean nationalism and provide materials for the government to build a multi-ethnic Singapore.

Through this article, I contribute the following observations: unlike most critical toponymy scholars' concentration on new or renamed places, I emphasize that EPNs have significance in place-name politics. Yeoh (1996) revealed toponymic policies' function during Singaporean decolonization and nation-building; however, this article examines Singaporean nation-building through the EPNs neglected by critical toponymy scholars. This study first combines a quantitative and historical approach to present the changes in Singaporean toponyms since the 1960s; it then critically argues the meaning of these changes. Document analysis demonstrates the issue, with two primary types of materials: (1) Singapore street directories that contain indices and distribution maps for place names and (2) microforms of The Straits Times, containing articles about place names.

This article first reviews the concepts of toponyms, place, and postcolonial nation-building, before briefly discussing the toponymic policies of post-colonial Singapore. Next, it presents quantitative data on EPNs since the 1960s and discusses the relationship between EPNs and toponymic policies. Finally, it generalizes the role of EPNs in Singaporean nation-building.

3. Conceptualizing Toponymic Landscapes, Place, and Post-colonial Nation-building

A place name, textually marked in space, is an element of cultural landscapes. Previously, scholars focused on toponymic origins and taxonomies, ignoring the cultural politics responsible for place names.

However, in the 1980s, scholars began examining the interactions of context, power, and society within place-name politics. Thereafter, toponymic research became a critical issue (Kearns and Berg 2009: 155; Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 2010: 455–56). Because of place names' universal and widespread distribution, Alderman (2002a, 2002b) observed that place names have always been cultural arenas where different powers compete for representation in people's everyday lives. Critical Toponymies, edited by Berg and Vuolteenaho (2009), has especially helped us understand the contested politics and power relations in geographical naming.

Since antiquity, traditional societies have named places according to their natural or cultural environment. Place names were a representation, a melange of the local people's emotions, memories, and histories associated with places. However, Azaryahu and Golan (2001: 181) argued, "Naming is not a mere linguistic gesture but often evinces specific power relations." In contrast to traditional society, the modern state, which has assumed naming power for public space, often uses nomenclature to advocate specific ideologies, thus embedding the place names with political meanings. As Scott states, "The builders of the modern nation-state do not merely describe, observe, and map; they strive to shape a people and landscape that will fit their techniques of observation" (1998: 82). Therefore, how the polity intervenes in the naming of public space has interested many scholars. Among these, Faraco and Murphy (1997) studied street names in Spanish Andalusian towns. Light, Nicolae, and Suditu (2002) focused on street names in Bucharest, Romania from 1948 to 1965. Bigon (2008) studied place names in colonial Dakar, Senegal. Although these case studies were conducted under different political systems, they suggested that the authorities often advocated political ideologies and regulated the relationships between the people and the government through naming and renaming. Therefore, place names

have become a spatial representation of political ideologies.

Since different regimes use toponymic naming systems to achieve political goals, the toponymic systems are likely to change along with a transition of regimes. For example, Gill (2005) found that place names associated with the former Soviet regime or communism had been renamed in post-Soviet Moscow. Even in the Pamir Mountains, far from the center of political power, Horsman (2006) discovered that old place names were erased as a new regime came into power. Especially during a post-colonial era, a new nation-state uses erasure and renaming to frame a new national identity. As a form of decolonization after its independence, the Pakistani government removed many place names associated with British rule (Addleton 1987). Additionally, Yeoh (1996) indicated that the Singapore government renamed some colonial locations under the framework of nation-building. Although these researchers reveal that changes of toponymic systems always occur with a succession of regimes, they also reveal that not all place names are cleansed even when broad gaps exist between the old and new regimes' political systems and ideologies.

As previously mentioned, the modern state has assumed the power of naming and renaming public spaces for its people. However, this does not imply that the government meets no resistance to renaming; people do not submissively forsake existing place names. For example, from within the colonial context of Western countries, the aborigines in Hawaii; Aotearoa, New Zealand; and Manankurra, Australia strived to preserve their original place names to oppose conquest and preserve memories, emotions, and cultural identity (see Herman 1999; Kearns and Berg 2009; Kearney and Bradley 2009). In the modern state, place names remain a contested arena where the government and people each struggle to produce their representation of perception. Two examples are the renaming of New York's Sixth Avenue and South Africa's administrative capital (Rose-Redwood

2008; Swanepoel 2009).

Blunt and McEwan (2002: 1–6) indicate the importance of rethinking the ongoing, post-colonial struggle over geography. If place names are a powerful means for advocating political ideologies and regulations, and if all place names are not changed or removed after regime transitions, then it is worth considering what types of place names were changed or removed during the post-colonial period in Singapore. What role do EPNs play in nation-building and the new social and cultural production of place? Was there resistance to the erasing of place names in Singapore?

II. Toponymic Policies in Singapore since the 1960s

After independence, the Singapore government implemented policies to forge Singaporean national identity in different eras, through school and language education, public housing, national service, the maintenance of religious harmony, and shared values (Yeh 2012: 11). Likewise, Singapore's toponymic policies since the 1960s have been used not only to control the national space but also as an important medium for nation-building by the government. However, the effort has been inconsistent. During different administrations, the authorities responsible for street naming and toponymic policy repeatedly changed.

1. Changes of Authority for Place Names

As Randall observed (2001: 65), "The newly independent countries are intensely occupied with creating their national institutions and reestablishing their economies, and a major task has been to establish agencies responsible for names". In 1967, the Singapore government delegated the Advisory Committee on the Naming of Roads and Streets (later renamed the Street and Building Names Advisory Committee) under the Minister of Finance to oversee the naming of

streets. In 1968, the Committee on Street Names was formed and in 1978, it was renamed the Advisory Committee on Street Names. As an important socio-political task, this committee approved the Chinese translations for new street names in 1995. Because in 1996, the Minister of Finance was empowered to approve building and estate names, the committee was renamed the Advisory Committee on Street, Building, and Estate Names. In 2003, the Street and Building Names Board was established within the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore to consider and approve the naming and renaming of buildings, estates, and streets proposed by building owners and developers. The Urban Redevelopment Authority assumed the secretariat function of the board to enable itself to further augment the urban heritage of key places in Singapore through the naming of buildings and streets (National Library 2011: 92–94).

Although in different periods, committees on naming were under the Minister of Finance or the Urban Redevelopment Authority, the committee members were required to follow the national framework in naming, renaming, or considering names. This can be proved by the implementations of toponymic policies.

2. Toponymic Policies in Different Periods

In addition to the changes in naming authorities, toponymic policies had varying characteristics in different periods, even though they were consistently used as a tool for nation-building. In fact, toponymic policies rapidly underwent various stages: Malayanized street names, numerical forms, authorized Chinese translations of street names, and the multi-ethnic street names in the 1960s, when Singapore became independent. According to Yeoh, such conditions reflected the uneven process of mapping nationalist ideologies onto Singapore's place names (1996: 305).

In the 1960s, decolonization and building links with Malaya were

important elements of the toponymic policies implemented in Singapore. However, these elements existed before Singapore achieved autonomy. On May 20, 1958, Mayor Ong Eng Guan predicted, "When Singapore achieves independence, most of its roads will be given new Malayan names" (Straits Times 1958). In addition, official documents from the self-government period reveal that the relevant departmental chiefs had indicated that names related to British royalty, colonialism or elitism should be abolished and that their subordinates had proposed new names (National Archives of Singapore 1961b [H. B. 1076/11/54]). After independence, place names were decolonized: a headline in The Straits Times read, "OUT: SNOB NAMES." The article reported the Finance Minister S. Rawaswamy stating that the former practice of using names associated with royalty, colonialism, or snobbery for new streets in Singapore had been discontinued (Straits Times 1966). In March 1967, a Malayanized naming principle was adopted, substituting the old colonial names with "local" place names (Yeoh 1996: 301–302). To facilitate nation-building, the chosen Malayanized place names were associated with the natural environment, such as local flora, fauna, and topography. For instance, Jalan Jati and Jalan Derum were named after trees; Jalan Layang-Layang and Jalan Chiak Padi were named after birds; Jalan Keli was named after fish; Jalan Anak Bukit and Jalan Tanah Rata means a small hill and the flat land respectively.[2] By eschewing Malayan history, stories, and legends, the chosen names emphasize links with the natural environment, not the Malay culture.

The government's idea of nation-building, as revealed by various toponymic policies during the 1960s, indicated that Singapore wished to show loyalty to Malaya in the initial days after the Singapore–Malaysia separation (Yeoh 1996: 301). In addition, to manage the national space, the government wanted to name streets

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[2] "Jalan" is a Malay word which means a road or a street.

numerically such as Lorong 1 Toa Payoh, Lorong 2 Toa Payoh or Lorong 101 Changi because this carried no racial connotations. [3] Moreover, these two toponymic policies—an authorized Chinese translation of street names in 1967 and the multi-ethnic street names in 1968—revealed that an additional goal of nation-building was to eliminate multiracial heterogeneities by merging races and constructing four main ethnic groups. Both the pinyinization of Chinese place names in the 1980s and bilingualism of place names in the 1990s occurred under this goal by pigeonholing the citizens into four main ethnic groups. The Singapore government implemented the pinyinization to rename the Romanized dialect names in Hanyu Pinyin; for example, the Nee Soon was renamed Yishun. Bilingualism of place names means to put up bilingual road signs in some historical districts. For example, the road signs in Chinatown must be marked in English and Chinese; the road signs in Little India must carry English and Tamil names. Furthermore, ceasing the pinyinization of Chinese place names and implementing bilingualism indicated that in the early 1980s, the Singaporean government's concept of nation-building gradually incorporated multiculturalism and consideration for traditional society into its policies. Thus, the government tolerated place names' retaining their original ethnic and cultural characteristics.

By the various toponymic policies implemented by the Singapore government, we can see that as an emerging post-colonial country and government, the Singapore government is learning by doing, rather than reaching the goal in one step. Besides, it must be clarified that those new place names created by the toponymic policies since the 1960s do not mean that they have very different characteristics from the old place names. Conversely, although the Singapore government selected a certain principle as the basis for renaming place names, the new place names and the old ones often have the

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[3] "Lorong" is a Malay word which means a lane or a path.

same characteristics, such as Malay Flora and Fauna, and numerical forms. It is for this reason that we should pay attention to the sense of place and memory within a place name, rather than the difference of characteristics between EPN and newly named place names when we examine the significance of EPNs in this paper.

III.   Erased Place Names in the Post-colonial Period

To examine the quantitative change of EPNs in Singapore since the 1960s, three types of place names—street names, rural settlement names, and bridge names—were selected as analytic indicators. The composition of a place name contains a specific term and the generic term, both considered in the calculation of EPNs. On the significance of names, each EPN is considered the carrier of collective memory within a particular space. The analytic starting point is the documented year 1962, which reveals place-name conditions in the late colonial period; the analytic end point is the documented year 2011. Six documented years, 1962, 1971, 1981, 1988, 2000, and 2011, at intervals of approximately ten years, are selected for the analytic base data. These years reveal the detailed changing conditions of EPNs in Singapore during the past 50 years.[4]   The results are elucidated in the following section and Figures 1 and 2.
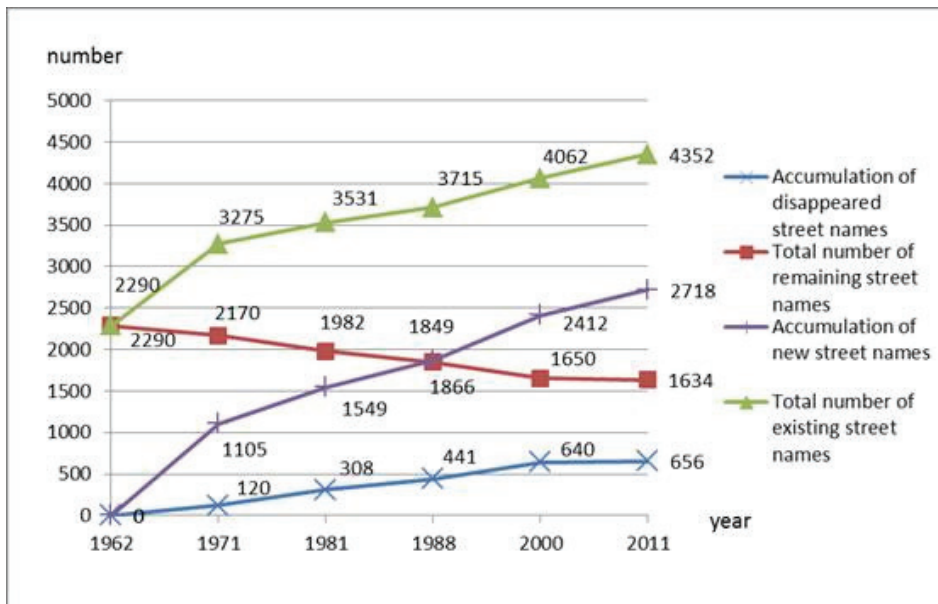
1.   Erasing Street Names

Late colonial Singapore's urban areas were densely developed and contained an advanced network of roads. Main arteries led from downtown toward the east, northeast, north, northwest, and west; the island's entire road system was constructed by connecting these

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[4] These six pieces of data include the documented years of 1962 (seventh edition, 1964), 1971 (tenth edition, 1972), 1981 (thirteenth edition, 1981), 1988 (fifteenth edition, 1988), 2000 (twentieth edition, 2000), and 2011 (published in 2012); except for the data of documented year 2011, published by Mighty Minds, all were published by the related Singapore governmental departments.

arteries via various small roads (Singapore map in Li 1959). The street directory of documented year 1962 contains 2,290 street names. Utilizing these street names as a pre-independence profile shows the cumulative number of erased street names steadily rising from 1962 to 2000, after which the rise has been slower (Figure 1). From 1962 to 2011, 656 street names were erased. With the increase in erased street names, the pre-independence profile of 2,290 street names has correspondingly declined, and the end-point profile in 2011 remained at 1,634 street names.

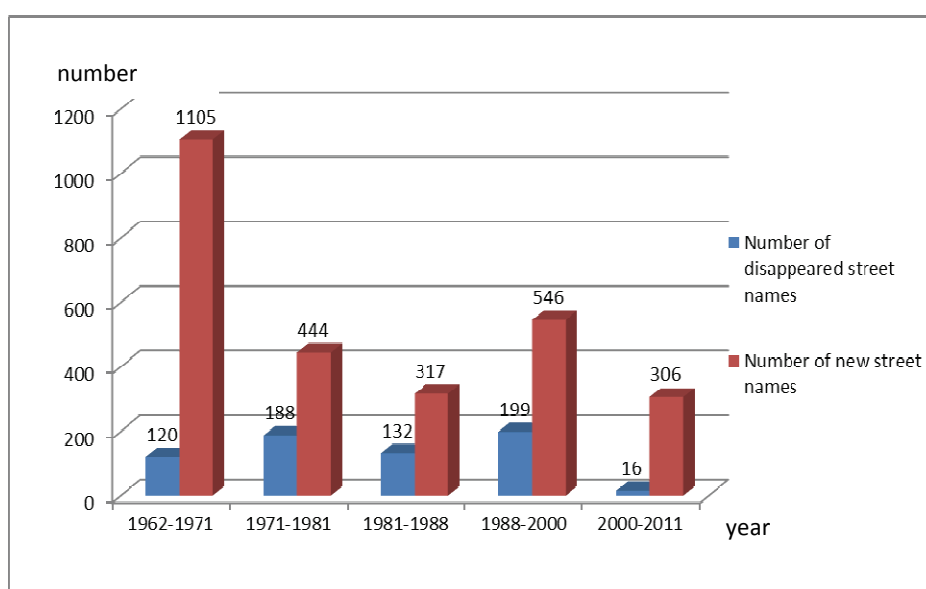## Figure 1. Changes in Street Names in Singapore

Source: The diagram is produced by the author.
Note: Based on statistics from various Singapore street directories.

In each documented period of 1962–1971, 1971–1981, 1981–1988, and 1988–2000, between 120 and 199 street names were erased (see Figure 2). From 2000 to 2011, street names were erased more slowly—only 16 disappeared. Interestingly, the greatest number of erasures did not occur during the period immediately following

independence (1962–1971), but 188 erasures occurred from 1971 to 1981, and 199 from 1988 to 2000. These figures contrast with Gill (2005), who shows that in Moscow, place names were quickly replaced during the early days of the post-Soviet regime. As Figure 2 illustrates, the EPN profile does not reveal a sudden, then steady, trend of change in Singapore after independence.

Figure 2.   Number of Changed Street Names in Singapore


Source: The diagram is produced by the author.
Note: Based on statistics from various Singapore street directories.

Thus, the disappearance of Singaporean street names was prevalent before 2000; since then, it has not been as apparent. Some street names were erased through urban planning for redevelopment, but a few were renamed. Furthermore, if we mark the erased street names on a map (as in Map 1), their spatial distribution indicates more erased street names in the downtown than rural areas. In fact, most of the erased street names downtown congregated around the

mouth of the Singapore River. This spatial distribution is not caused as much by the distance from the political power core, the city center, as by the distribution of the transportation system. Singapore originated near the mouth of the Singapore River; thus, the population and establishments were densest there, and the geographical distribution of erased street names seems to reflect local development. If we examine De Koninck's map of the Singapore population distribution in 1957 (see Map 2), we see that the spatial distribution of erased street names is consistent with the population distribution of colonial Singapore.
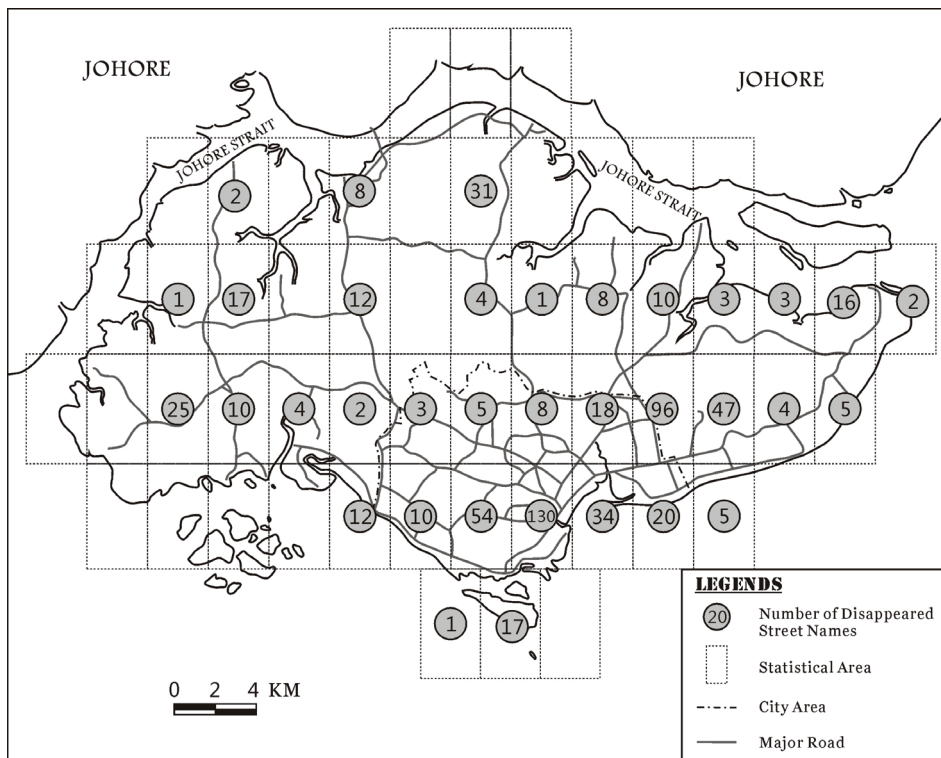
Map 1.   Distribution of Erased Street Names in Singapore

Source: Statistics are produced by the author.
Note: Because of the confidentiality of certain data, the map does not reveal 22 erased street names on the Naval Base, one in Pulau Ubin, and five in Pulau Tekong.
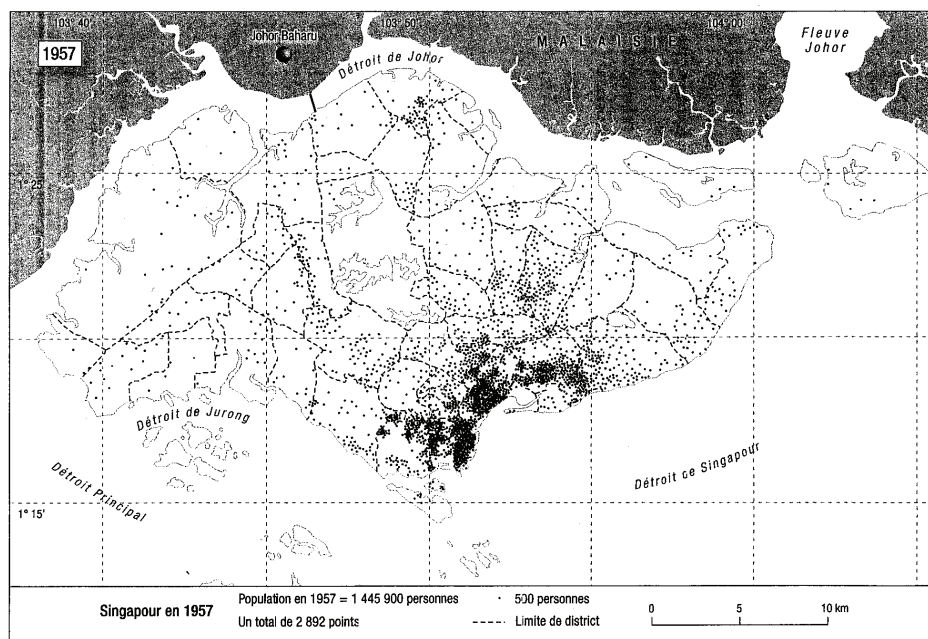
Map 2.   Distribution of Singaporean population in 1957

Source: De Koninck (2006: 80).

2.   Erased Rural Settlement Names

The erasure of rural settlement names in Singapore generally accompanies the removal of rural landscapes, and thus, is not simply because of renaming. Since the Singapore government established the Housing and Development Board in 1960 to manage public housing projects, rural areas have gradually been demolished due to land acquisition, buildup of public housing, and exercised urban planning. In the process of modernization, rural settlements' names were almost all gone.

The street directory of documented year 1962 originally contained 96 rural settlement names, which were mainly located at the periphery of the urban area or along the main roads, as depicted in Map 3.[5]   Only

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[5] Although we used only the 96 rural settlement names recorded in the street directory of documented year 1962 to examine changes in disappeared

five rural settlement names disappeared from 1962 to 1971; forty were deleted from 1971 to 1981; and sixteen from 1981 to 1988. Although we lack data for rural settlement names after 1988, an article in The Straits Times titled "A place and lifestyle trapped in time" reported that Kampong Lorong Buangkok might be the last rural settlement in Singapore (Straits Times 1999).[6] Therefore, nearly all rural settlements on Singapore Island may be considered to have disappeared by 1999. Similar to the erased street names, the rural settlement names did not vanish immediately after Singapore's independence.

3. Erased Bridge Names

The street directory of documented year 1962 shows 11 main bridges in colonial Singapore. Six bridges, the Anderson, Cavenagh, Clemenceau, Coleman, Elgin, and Ord, were over the Singapore River; the Crawford and Victoria Bridges were over the Rochor River; the Stevens Bridge was over the Rochor Canal; the Merdeka Bridge was over the Kallang River; and the Stamford Bridge was over the Stamford Canal. Even though these bridges were located in the political power core—the urban area—the street directories of documented years 1971 and 1981 show that the Singapore government had not renamed them in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the 1980s, the Stamford Canal, which ran parallel to Stamford and Orchard Roads, was removed because of a road widening and pedestrian mall project (Straits Times 1984). Hence, the Stamford Bridge was dismantled and the bridge name was erased. The Stevens

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place names, more rural settlement names existed in Singapore in 1962. For example, Savage and Yeoh noted that more than 120 kampongs were eradicated from 1969 to 1989 (2004, 23). This may be because certain small settlements were not recorded in the street directory; on the other hand, the people may have resettled to other rural land as their land was levied by the government, resulting in an increase in the number of rural settlements during the 1960s and 1970s.

[6] Kampong Lorong Buangkok was not recorded in the street directory of documented year 1962.

Bridge appears to have been demolished because of a bridge widening project in 1987–1988 (Straits Times 1987d), and its name was not recorded in later street directories.

Except for the Merdeka Bridge, named for "independence" in Malay, those important bridges, built in colonial times, were named after generals, officials, policemen, bridge designers, the French prime minister who once visited Singapore, and the Queen of England. Thus, bridge names have strong colonial implications. However, the Singapore government did not rename those bridges in the post-colonial period; only the dismantling of the Stamford and Stevens Bridges during the 1980s made their names disappear (see Map 3).
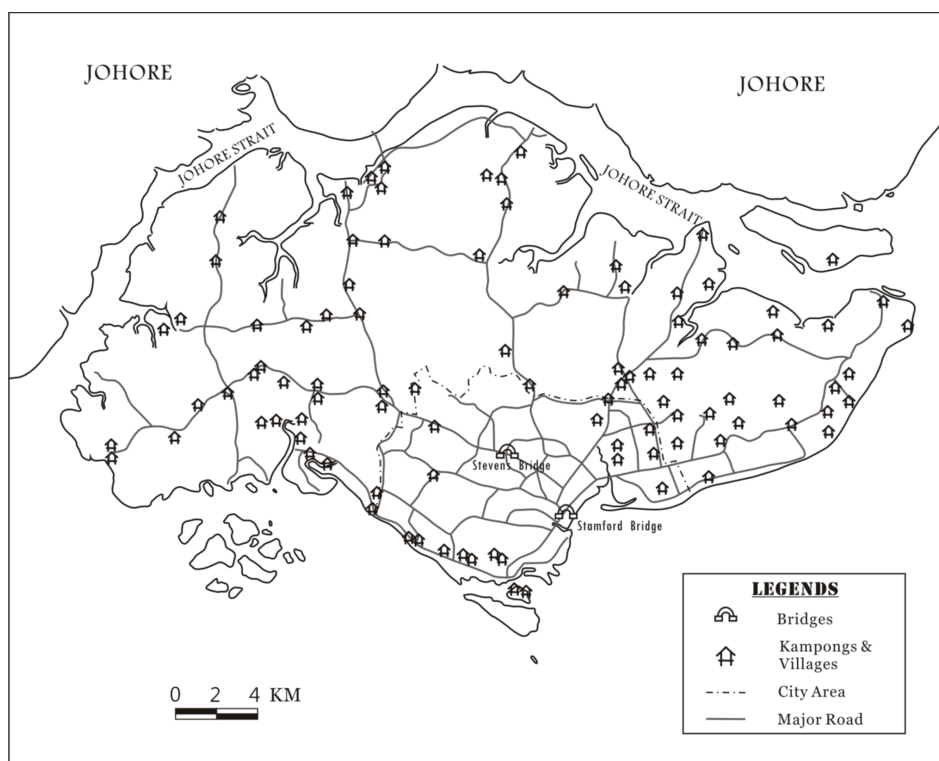
Map 3. Distribution of Erased Rural Settlement Names and Erased Bridge Names in Singapore

Source: The map is drawn by the author.

IV. Dialogue of Erased Place Names and Toponymic Policies

According to the EPNs analyzed above, of the 2,290 street names in 1962, 656 had been erased by 2011, while 1,634 remained; all the 96 rural settlement names from 1962 had disappeared; of the eleven bridge names, only two were pruned, and nine remained. So what were those EPNs? Why did they disappear? What roles did the EPNs play in Singaporean nation-building? How do people respond when a place name is threatened?

To answer these questions, we examine the EPNs according to their nomenclature from the perspectives of decolonization and nation-building. Then, we elucidate and understand the people's feelings about the erasure of place names.

1. Decolonizing Policies for Nomenclature and Erased Place Names

Savage and Yeoh (2004) divided modern Singaporean street nomenclature into seven classes including: (1) colonial names, (2) names of Asian persons, (3) names associated with different racial groups or multiracial communities, (4) descriptive names, (5) Malayanized names, (6) numerical names, and (7) specially "themed" names (Savage and Yeoh 2004, 8-9). Focusing on the change of old street names, we reclassify the 1962 Singaporean street names into four primary categories: colonial, local, numbered, and other to examine the implementation of decolonizing policies; the categories of "colonial" and "local" can be subdivided further, as illustrated in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, it is difficult to determine what kind of subcategories of street names were deliberately removed, but it still shows us some information. Comparing the street names of 1962 to those erased by 1971, 1981, 1988, 2000, and 2011, we find that the local, not colonial, street names have been mostly expunged. An exception is

the "other" category, which is not strongly related to nation-building. The colonial street names of 1962 constitute 32.74% of all street names. However, erased colonial street names as of 2011 account for only 17.38%. Thus, colonial street names do not appear to have been eradicated immediately after the country's independence. The percentage of erased local street names has always been significantly larger than the erased colonial street names. Thus, although for nation-building, the Singapore government adopted decolonization as one part of place-name policies, the colonial street names in fact were not removed as frequently as the names in other categories. The colonial street names, from the study's starting point of 1962 to its ending point of 2011, were reduced by only 15.2%. Furthermore, urban planning rather than decolonizing policies demolished entire rural settlements, along with their names. Finally, bridge names were not influenced by the decolonizing policies for nomenclature.

Although official documents from 1965 are not available for public consultation, the case of Queenstown exemplifies the implementation of early nomenclature decolonizing policies. In Queenstown, in 1961–1962, new roads required names; this caused an argument about street naming and renaming within the relevant government departments. If the officials employed the old naming policy, the new roads would be named after the original Commonwealth Avenue and Queensway and adopt the generic British terms *drive*, *close*, *crescent*, or *lane*. But according to the place-naming policy of the time, names were not to be British, which would demonstrate a guilty loyalty to the colonizers, but Malayan. During the official naming discussions, it was suggested that not only new road names but also entire roads in Queenstown should be renamed after Malayan fishes, and generic British terms such as drive and crescent should be replaced by the corresponding Malay words. Furthermore, an official highlighted a fundamental question: if whole roads should be renamed, then

Queenstown should be renamed Malaysia Town, and other estates with colonial names, such as Princess Estate and Duchess Estate, should be renamed Singapore Estate and Federation Estate. These arguments were terminated by the relevant ministers' discussions; they decided that although the policy was to cease colonial naming, the original place names in Queenstown did not need to be changed. Thus, the Malayanized naming principle was not implemented in Queenstown, and the new roads followed the old naming principle of being named after the Commonwealth and Queen of England (National Archives of Singapore 1961b [1076/11/54]). In the case of Queenstown, although toponymic policy required decolonization and Malayanization, the naming practice was consistent with other roads in the area and conformed to the name of Queenstown, thus increasing the number of colonial street names.

How do we interpret this phenomenon, then? If we return to the early history of the founding of Singapore, we can find decolonization was not the primary concern of the government at that time. Singapore could not survive in the Federation of Malaysia and was expelled due to the complicated causes of highly discordant opinions on economic, racial and political issues (Fletcher 1969; Sopiee 1976: 183–229). Since the separation of Singapore and Malaysia in 1965, the Singaporean government has had to urgently address the difficulties of national survival. The main concerns were showing and keeping a friendly attitude toward the surrounding Malay world, as well as toward the original colonial mother country, Britain, and even other, more distant countries to "find a place" for Singapore, and in the meantime dealing with the problems of the national economy and security (Wilson 1972; Chan 1969). Besides, British colonial place names are a part of Singapore's history; the names have positive meanings regarding the entry of immigrants (especially the Chinese) and the beginnings of social and economic development. Moreover, as

compared with other Southeast Asian colonies, colonial Singapore did not suffer a tense relationship between the local people and colonists, so decolonizing for nation-building does not seem to have been as important as in other post-colonial countries.

Table 1.　Categories of Erased Street Names

Categories		In 1962			Erased (as of 1971)			Erased (as of 1981)		
		Number		Percentage	Number		Percentage	Number		Percentage
Colonial	Person	380		16.59	15		12.50	24		7.79
	Environment*	64		2.79	6		5.00	9		2.92
	Place Name	266	750	11.62 32.74	6	27	5.00 22.50	11	45	3.57 14.61
	Flora & Fauna	31		1.35	0		0.00	1		0.32
	Ideology**	9		0.39	0		0.00	0		0.00
Local	Person	303		13.23	14		11.67	26		8.44
	Environment*	295		12.89	12		10.00	32		10.39
	Place Name	60		2.62	8		6.67	13		4.22
	Flora & Fauna	225	973	9.83 42.5	4	40	3.33 33.33	39	114	12.66 37.01
	Ideology**	72		3.14	0		0.00	2		0.65
	Racial Group	18		0.79	2		1.67	2		0.65
Numbered	Number & Order	97		4.24	1		0.83	11		3.57
Others	Other & Unknown	470		20.52	52		43.33	138		44.81
Total		2290		100	120		100.00	308		100.00

Table 1. Categories of Erased Street Names (continued)

Categories		Erased (as of 1988)				Erased (as of 2000)				Erased (as of 2011)			
		Number		Percentage		Number		Percentage		Number		Percentage	
Colonial	Person	34		7.71		71		11.09		62		9.45	
	Environment*	9		2.04		13		2.03		13		1.98	
	Place Name	13	58	2.95	13.15	26	113	4.06	17.66	36	114	5.49	17.38
	Flora & Fauna**	1		0.23		2		0.31		2		0.30	
	Ideology***	1		0.23		1		0.16		1		0.15	
Local	Person	34		7.71		50		7.81		56		8.54	
	Environment*	46		10.43		72		11.25		77		11.74	
	Place Name	19		4.31		25		3.91		26		3.96	
	Flora & Fauna**	50	170	11.34	38.55	61	228	9.53	35.63	63	242	9.60	36.89
	Ideology***	18		4.08		19		2.97		19		2.90	
	Racial Group	3		0.68		1		0.16		1		0.15	
Numbered	Number & Order	23		5.22		24		3.75		24		3.66	
Others	Other & Unknown	190		43.08		275		42.97		276		42.07	
Total		441		100.00		640		100.00		656		100.00	

Source: The table is produced by the author.

2. Nation-building and Erased Place Names

With regard to the nation-building toponymic policies of Malayanizing, numbering, and multi-ethnicizing street names, each was short-term and not comprehensively implemented. Therefore,

Singaporean toponymic policies have been subject to the practical limits of time and space and should not be taken as universal or general.

Why were names from every category in the erased names catalog (see Table 1) scraped from Singapore's daily landscapes? Is Singapore like the Spanish Andalusian town of Almonte, which emphasized national consistency in street naming by removing place names reflecting regional or local characteristics that were accused of weakening national unity during General Franco's dictatorship from 1936 to 1975 (Faraco and Murphy 1997)? Those old bridges with colonial names in Singapore were not renamed by the government; projects of urban planning caused the dismantling of the Stamford and Stevens Bridges in the 1980s. The 96 erased rural settlements were influenced not by the renaming policy, but by land acquisition, urban planning, and public housing projects, that is, by the succession of landscapes and modernization projects. Although the actual number of street names pruned through renaming remains unknown, if the survey is based exclusively on *Toponymics: A Study of Singapore Street Names* (Savage and Yeoh 2004), more than 310 road names were expunged. Furthermore, it can be presumed that urban planning significantly influenced the erasure of street names.

Thus, most place names—from all categories—disappeared due to the process of urban planning. Does this imply that the Singapore government utilized urban planning, i.e., the breakup of racial enclaves though public housing projects, to forcefully eliminate place names representing racial enclaves, local history, emotion, and memories (Yeh 2012)? What role have EPNs actually played in Singaporean nation-building?

I believe that erasure of place names for Singaporean nation-building is not as simple as deleting local history and emotion within the toponymic landscapes; the EPNs positively affected

Singaporean nation-building and the social and cultural production of place. Although the names of two colonially named bridges no longer exist, their specific terms continue in other place-name forms. The Stamford Bridge was demolished, but the names Stamford Road and Stamford Canal have been used since the colonial period. While the Stevens Bridge has been razed, not only has the term Stevens been in continuous use since the colonial period, as in Stevens Road, but also two new names with British generic terms, Stevens Close and Stevens Drive, have been added.[7]   The racial enclaves are rural settlements that the Singapore government most wished to disintegrate for nation-building. But even though the 96 rural settlement names ceased to exist by 2011, at least 56 specific terms have remained or been transformed into the names of roads or estates, with some being expanded by attaching a number. For instance, the specific term of Ama Keng Village still survives through the Ama Keng Road; Choa Chu Kang Village not only exists through the Choa Chu Kang Road but also has been amplified to more than 30 new street names such as Choa Chu Kang Avenue 1, Choa Chu Kang Drive, and Choa Chu Kang Terrace. Like the erased bridge and rural settlement names, many specific terms of erased street names have been retained or expanded into other types of road names. Although some place names have been completely expunged from Singaporean daily life, specific terms have frequently been retained or extended in toponymic landscapes.

Similarly, the increased use of specific terms occurs not only with the old place names but also with new, specific terms created after independence. Based on Figures 1 and 2, the increasing rate and

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[7] Naming roads with the same specific terms always causes confusion and problems with mail delivery. Although the Singapore government considered this issue and named a new road Jalan Merpati instead of Aljunied Avenue in MacPherson Road Estate in 1961a (H. B. 1126/11/56), the naming of roads with the same specific terms in the same area has continued since the 1960s.

number of new street names exceeds that of erased street names. Besides being named after a new specific term, many new streets have adopted specific terms from colonial times. Because the EPNs were retained or amplified through toponymic forms, they have returned to the process of social and cultural production. This process might enlarge the space affected by a name: new local emotions and memories generated by new, diverse residents in the changing residential landscapes would be added to the old ones. Even regional identity, generated by the amplification of specific terms, accumulates onto the place names. Like Foote's concept of symbolic accretion, that is, the attachment of commemorative elements to existing memorials (1997, 231–32), we discovered that a place name not only represents an ethnicity or group but also appends new local and regional emotions and history under the ideology of nation-building. Such "new" place names transform their original, local memories into usable nutrients for Singaporean nation-building.

3.   People's Resistance to the Erasure of Place Names

Although in modern times, governments control the naming and renaming of public space, many people still express opinions on toponymic matters. The obvious cases are Palestine, Northern Ireland, and Pretoria, South Africa (Cohen and Kliot 1992; Nash 1999; Swanepoel 2009). People are not passive in naming politics; they actively participate in and may struggle against official policies.

The Singapore government adopted various toponymic naming principles for nation-building, but this process met with resistance from local residents. Indeed, people have always conveyed their feelings and suggested place names to the government, especially in cases of renaming. We can grasp this process from the following examples of colonial place names: (1) In the initial days of independence, when the government insisted on renaming colonial

streets for Lorong 1, 2, and so forth within Clementi Park, named after a colonial governor-general, the homeowners and tenants strenuously protested about the inconvenience of changing addresses and the negative connotations of the word *Lorong* (Straits Times 1967). Moreover, they appealed for the streets to be named after Clementi instead (Straits Times 1968). (2) When the Shell Company leased Raffles Tower, people were against its renaming to Shell Tower, since the name Raffles Tower reflected the pride of Singaporeans experiencing the growth of a modern metropolis and provided a vital link between their Singaporean heritage and their future (Straits Times 1982). (3) Opposing views and severe disputes arose when the Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong appealed to change the names of roads named after minor colonial officials, with whom most Singaporeans could not identify, and rename them after people who had contributed to Singapore in modern times (Straits Times 2006a). Opponents to this plan argued that the names should not be changed for various reasons: people's customs and habits, the expenses of renaming, the local contributions of the colonists, emotions attached to old place names, and historical meanings. They argued that if the government wanted to commemorate prominent Singaporeans, it should name only new roads, public buildings, and structures after them (Straits Times 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e, 2006f, 2007).

To obtain an explanation for the difficulty in decolonizing place names, the circumstances in Singapore may be compared to those in another country. In post-colonial times, Senegal's capital city, Dakar, changed some French colonial street names under the ideology of nationalism. Ironically, the people still continued using the colonial place names in their daily lives (Bigon 2008: 496). In 2005 South Africa's capital Pretoria was officially renamed Tshwane to show a break with the old colonial days, but some people resisted the renaming. Those people deemed Tshwane to have a bad meaning, as

small monkey, and felt the renaming cost a lot; they thought that the original name, Pretoria, was part of their heritage and identity (Swanepoel 2009: 100). Pakistan, formerly a British colony like Singapore, renamed many streets in the process of decolonization after its independence; however, people had become accustomed to the colonial names, and insisted that the new ones were too lengthy (Addleton 1987: 38). Therefore, even though a place was named by colonists, people became familiar with and attached memories to it. Thus, the positive local sentiment represented by the name might be significantly greater than the memories of negative colonial ideology.

In addition, the people resisted name changes for other reasons. Instead of the old dialect names from the 1980s, the government applied the Hanyu Pinyin system to street and place names. This raised another severe debate on the spread of pinyinization. For example, when the government decided to rename Seletar (New Town) Shilida, there were appeals to retain the original name, based on arguments that the history of the word Seletar should be linked with Malay, not Chinese (Straits Times 1981). It was also suggested that the Housing and Development Board return some Hanyu Pinyin names to their earlier forms, as it was difficult for non-Chinese Singaporeans to pronounce these names (Straits Times 1987a). Furthermore, people believed that certain famous places should revert from their Hanyu Pinyin names to their prominent, old names (Straits Times 1987b). The government was also urged to change the name of Yishun New Town back to Nee Soon New Town to appropriately honor the distinguished Singaporean Lim Nee Soon (Straits Times 1987e). People constantly expressed their objections to the marketplace Tekka being renamed Zhujiao because the new name was difficult to read and pronounce, and seemed to erase the famous market's history (Straits Times 1987c).

Thus, in addition to the inconvenience and cost of changing

addresses, people urged the government to preserve old place names for their historical meanings and values. Furthermore, the examples of Yishun New Town and renaming roads originally named after minor colonial officials suggest that when opposing toponymic nationalism advocated by the government, Singaporeans do not oppose nationalism. Instead, they translate nationalism from a local viewpoint and pragmatically merge local and national histories. Regardless of whether the government adopts people's suggestions, both these expressions of toponymic nationalism—renaming and retaining old names—are constantly struggling, and "one Singapore" has been constructed out of this struggle of cultural politics.

V. Conclusion

Miller (1969: 251) believes that "the study of place names indicates that they are a geographic expression of cultural processes that are still dynamic". Naming a place is a process for the people to tame the space; conversely, a place name also becomes a medium for the space to regulate the people. For the people, every place name represents the collective life and memory of their group; for the nation, place names may become a means for the government's constructing various national symbols.

This study argues that if the naming and renaming of places involves symbols and meanings, the EPNs are similarly important as newly selected place names; they are worthy of close attention in terms of cultural politics. The function of new place names in political ideology is familiar to critical toponymic researchers, but this paper indicates that, at least in the case of Singapore, the EPNs have not simply been pruned. Because the specific terms of many EPNs are retained in other toponymic forms, they survive in people's daily lives, and they will continue struggling and contesting erasure from within the cultural politics of place names.

Decolonization and nation-building have been the twin cores of toponymic policies during Singapore's post-colonial period, and the Singapore government has shown a strong intention to construct a national identity through toponymic policies. However, place names have obviously not been entirely decolonized. The EPNs not only contain colonial names but also every other category of name. In fact, most colonial names continue to be used. People gradually attach their emotions and memories to the colonial place names and consider them according to built-up local meanings rather than colonial ideology.

In contrast to the expectation that place names would be extensively removed immediately after a regime change, especially in urban areas at the core of political power (Gill 2005; Horsman 2006), the Singapore government did not erase toponymic landscapes to clarify its ideologies as a newly built (post-colonial) nation during the early days of its independence. Nearly fifty years after independence, the temporal and spatial distribution of EPNs shows a consistent trend of change with the cultural landscapes. EPNs have considerable relevance to the succession of landscapes in the urbanization or modernization process. For Singaporean nation-building, unlike some new place names, EPNs do not carry strong meanings for nation-building, as they are transformed into other toponymic types, retained, and amplified in use. Old place names, even the colonial ones, can serve as nutrients for nation-building and be preserved as valuable historical and cultural aspects of the nation.

Swanepoel (2009: 103) predicts that old names will disappear from use if not from memory. But as Amery and Williams's study on Kaurna toponyms for the Adelaide Plain in South Australia shows that "The best way to ensure the reinstatement of Kaurna names, where these are known, is for us to simply begin to use them in our teaching programs, our writings and in our everyday conversations,

and to familiarize the public with these sites and their history" (2002: 265). In other words, the best way to preserve place names is to keep them alive in everyday life. In this study, although some place names have been erased from Singaporean cultural politics during the process of urban planning, the specific terms of most EPNs have been retained and transformed into other place-name forms in the toponymic landscapes. Considering Foote's (1997) concept of symbolic accretion or Dwyer's (2004: 421) extending the concept of allied and antithetical accretions, which refer to the subjunction of coherent discourse and contradicted argument, respectively, preserving the specific terms ensures that they gain new local, regional, and cross-ethnic memories. As the erasure of old place names accompanies the renovation of landscapes and resettlement of population (Yeh 2012), the old ethnic and local collective memories are gradually integrated and obscured. Through this process, place names have afforded a new, mixed, regional, and cross-ethnic memory for Singaporean nation-building and have often been reactivated in the contested politics of everyday life.

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「被刮除的地名」與國族建構：
新加坡地名的個案研究

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摘要

　　本文以個案研究方式，透過批判地名學的研究觀點與文獻分析法，檢視新加坡自 1960 年代以來遭到刪除或是更名而消失的「被刮除的地名」，在國族建構中扮演的角色。研究結果顯示，被刮除的地名並非僅遭到擦去而消失；國家對於地名專名的重新使用，改變了地名的樣式，並使得它們重新復甦在日常生活的文化政治中。由於對於地名專名的重新利用，新加坡舊有的族群記憶被轉化並且整併進新的地方與區域歷史之中，提供國族建構一種混合的、區域的以及跨族群的記憶。

關鍵詞：被刮除的地名、地名景觀、文化政治、國族建構、新加坡