Rising of the Phoenix: Mitigating Political Risk through Knowledge Management—Behn, Meyer & Co., 1840–1959

SHAKILA YACOB

This article examines how a German firm in the Malay Peninsula—Behn, Meyer & Co.—capitalized on its knowledge management to overcome political risks during the period from 1840 until 1959. During the two world wars, all assets and properties of the Behn Meyer firm were systematically expropriated because of the introduction of the Alien Enemies (Winding Up) Act of 1914 and the subsequent imposition of a ten-year ban by the British colonial administration in the Malay Peninsula. However, Behn Meyer's resilience and flexible outlook, as demonstrated by its management of political risks during these tumultuous periods, enabled it to rebuild its business interests and reestablish a foothold in postcolonial Malaysia and the region. This article argues that Behn Meyer displayed an exemplary business strategy, utilized its understanding of the geopolitics of the area, and leveraged its local and international networks to ensure its survival and longevity in the most tumultuous period in the history of the world.

doi:10.1017/eso.2017.72

Shakila Yacob is a professor at the Department of History, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences and executive director at the International Institute of Public Policy & Management (INPUMA), University of Malaya. She is also the director of the Center for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya. This article was written with the assistance of Grant UM.0000026/HRU.RG.HE. Contact: Department of History, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Phone: (603)79675562; e-mail: shakila@um.edu.my.

I would like to thank the editor and two reviewers for their patience and valuable feedback. My utmost gratitude goes to Dr. Dirk Lorenz-Meyer, J. M. Friele, Ruhaya Muhammad, and Dr. Fritz Kleinsteuber for their input on the firm. Acknowledgment is also due to Mark Casson, Stephen Morgan, Bernardo Bátiz-Lazo, and Geoffrey Jones, who provided critical insights into the preliminary discussions and early drafts of this paper.

Introduction

> The Penang Swimming Club has rescinded the exclusion rule, and thus decided to re-admit Germans—a sensible decision which it is hoped other clubs will copy. It is not the British way to bear grudge indefinitely, or to visit on individual petty punishment, additional to that—usually severe enough—inflicted on nations who happen to have been defeated in war. Surely small British communities in a country like this do not arrogate to themselves the right to take up an attitude different from that of the Imperial Government.[1]

Long after the World War I, the Germans faced an extremely hostile environment in colonial Malaya.[2] The Anglo–German rivalry did not dissipate with the defeat of the Germans in this war, which had included conflicts in the Asia–Pacific.[3] Indeed, the Germans had to relinquish their territories and colonies in East Africa and Papua New Guinea (as it is now known) to the British. They also lost much of their economic and industrial potency under the austere terms of the Versailles Treaty. However, despite suffering from the harsh consequences of the war, German business interests remained intact. The reversal of proprietorship and compensation for the losses of overseas businesses also mitigated the severity of the situation. Nonetheless, the conditions under which German businesses had to operate in British-dominated areas were permanently transformed. Additionally, despite the longevity of their presence in Malaya, German businesses continued to suffer a loss of prestige because of the chronic and deep-seated suspicions of British colonial administrators.

German merchant firms had prospered in Singapore (commonly known as the St. Thomas of East India) since 1841.[4] These merchant firms actively participated in the import–export business between Asia and Europe.[5] German products became popular in Malay; consequently,

1. "Germans in Malaya," *Malayan Saturday Post,* March 31, 1928, 20.

2. Malaya refers to the Straits Settlements (comprised of Penang [1786], Singapore [1819], and Melaka [1824]) and other states in the Malay Peninsula until 1948, when the Federation of Malaya excluded Singapore. From 1948, Singapore remained a crown colony until the formation of Malaysia in 1963, which included the latter (subsequently expulsed in 1965) Sarawak and Sabah.

3. This Anglo–German rivalry could also be seen in another British colony: India. See Lubinski, "Liability of Foreignness."

4. Smidt, *Patriotische Mahnungen*, 54.

5. There were fifteen German merchants firms in Singapore by the 1860s. Successful German businesses included Behn Meyer (1840); Rautenberg, Schmidt & Co. (1849), which expanded in 1878 by taking over ten new European agencies; Zapp, Bauer & Co. (1854); Heiber, Katz & Co. (1867), which was reestablished in 1878 as Katz Bros., Brinkman, Kumpers & Co. (1867); and E. H. Hinnekindt (1868). Bogaars, "Effect of the Opening of the Suez Canal," 111, 111n, and 114.

in 1887, many such products were being labeled "Made in Germany." By the late 1890s, German businesses represented a formidable form of competition to the British. Like their British counterparts, German merchant firms began to expand into shipping and insurance. In 1890, the year of Behn Meyer's jubilee celebration, numerous "competing Englishmen" in Singapore and Britain complained about the rapid growth of trade between Singapore and Hamburg.[6] However, a sense of rivalry among merchants was familiar, and these complaints were dismissed because of Singapore's "fair trade" practices.[7] London also rejected calls for trade protection, choosing instead to preserve Singapore's status as a free port.[8] By 1909 German firms had outmaneuvered the British firm.[9] "If English manufacturers have been beaten in some classes of goods it is either because in these matters Germany had natural advantages (such as cheap labor and inherited aptitude) or else because English manufacturers were for the time being slack themselves in adjusting to the needs of our trade."[10]

World War I obliterated Germany's position in Malaya. The Alien Enemies (Winding Up) Ordinance of 1914 officially terminated all German businesses in the country. Initially, this ordinance was loosely applied, as the trade restrictions would also have adversely affected the British economy. Thus, excepting German-based companies, business initially continued "as usual."[11] However, the rule against "trading with the enemy" became stricter as the war progressed. Notable measures included requirements for certificates of origin, statutory blacklists, and a ban on trade with neutral countries. It was not long before all German and German-linked businesses were expropriated and subsequently eliminated from competition.[12]

After World War II, German firms experienced similar political and economic repercussions. The returning British government imposed a ten-year ban on German businesses. However, somewhat

6. "Germans in Singapore," *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, November 5, 1890, 6.

7. Sir Frank Swettenham, the high commissioner for the Federated Malay States, in 1901 failed in his attempt to obstruct German shipping when he proposed a bill confining the coastal trade of the Malay Peninsula to British vessels. This bill would have violated the established British navigation and commerce treaties with countries that enjoyed most favored nation treatment, such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Greece, and some Latin American countries. *The Straits Budget*, March 11, 1909, and February 16, 1917.

8. Department of State, Despatches from United States Consuls in Singapore, 1833–1906, American Consulate General, Singapore, October 15, 1901, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

9. Khoo, *More than Merchants,* 66–69.

10. "Germans in Singapore," *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, November 5, 1890, 6.

11. Dejung and Zangger, "British Wartime Protectionism," 207.

12. "Alien Enemies," *The Straits Times*, December 7, 1914, 3. "Liquidation of Enemies Firms," *The Straits Times*, November 11, 1914, 6.

intriguingly, amid all the political upheaval, Behn Meyer, a German family merchant firm, founded in Singapore in 1840, managed to survive and build a strong economic presence in colonial Malaya and postcolonial Malaysia. Of the German firms in Singapore, it was Behn Meyer that successfully capitalized on its intra-Asian and Asian–European connections. Unlike other German trading firms (e.g., Katz Brothers Ltd.; Huttenbach Brothers; Schiffmann, Heer, & Co.; and Schmidt, Kustermann, & Co.) that disappeared from the markets post-WWII for various reasons, Behn Meyer and a few other German trading houses (e.g., Jebsen & Jessen) survived and succeeded.[13]

This article sheds light on the interactions between European companies and overseas territories. Specifically, it shows how such companies successfully managed political risks, uncertainty, and change. This article also explores contemporary literature on knowledge management (KM) and political risks. As early entrepreneurs in British, French, Dutch, and American colonies in Southeast Asia, the German merchants displayed ingenuity and commercial shrewdness, and consequently, benefited from the opportunities present in those areas. Their business acumen, trading diligence, and regional knowledge helped them to make valuable ties with indigenous traders and their German principals (i.e., manufacturers), which in turn enabled them to expand their businesses.[14]

German firms, such as Behn Meyer, were robust in their staffing policies. This approach ultimately gave them a key competitive advantage. Their inclusive staffing policies took advantage of the local diverse groups in Malaya. For example, they were able to gain access to the knowledge of the local staff members, who were aware of the business and cultural practices in the area. Such knowledge made it easy for the German firms to accommodate these practices, and enabled them to gradually supersede the control the British had over shipping and insurance businesses. During this period, the higher management positions in the business hierarchy were primarily held by Germans, Swiss, or Austrians. This practice was also typical among British firms; however, German businesses were more open to indigenous business cultures than the British businesses in the region. German firms hired locals to serve as trading agents, customs agents, billing agents, and clerks.[15] Unlike British salesmen,

13. Kellenbenz, "German Trade Relations," 148.

14. The term indigenous, used interchangeably with natives or locals in this article, refers not only to the Bumiputeras (Malays and indigenous groups) but also to Indians and Chinese who lived in the region.

15. *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, December 23, 1904. This government gazette listed the names of employees in the various German companies established in the Straits Settlements.

who were socially separated from the locals with their "sit-and-wait attitude" in elegant showrooms and offices, German salesmen worked closely with local staff and traders while working in the field, or servicing the market and maintaining customer relations. Consequently, German businesses became much more popular among the natives. German business adopted a similar approach throughout the Far East, including in China. The high performance of German manufacturers (as compared with British) in China may be attributed to their having a "practical knowledge of the market" that was "indispensable to success."[16] German firms also made inroads in Far East trade. By 1875 they had sixty-five firms operating in various sectors.[17]

German–British relations in the Malayan colony fluctuated significantly in this period. Despite the British colonial government's policy reversals (i.e., from free trade to discriminatory war policies) and the ten-year ban after WWII, Behn Meyer continued its presence in the region. This article argues that two main factors enabled Behn Meyer to successfully manage the political risks and ensure its longevity in the region. First, Behn Meyer had tacit knowledge of the areas in which it operated in both Southeast Asia and Europe. Second, its existing architecture of internal and external relationships was robust, which contributed to its knowledge portfolio.

This article begins by exploring the dynamics of KM as a tool for risk mitigation and recent theories of political risks. It then briefly narrates the early years of the establishment of Behn Meyer, leading up to the onset of WWI, and considers the various challenges the firm faced and its response to these hurdles, most notably in relation to the Alien Enemies (Winding Up) Act of 1914. It also considers the activities and barriers faced by the firm during WWI, the interwar years, and the period from 1941 to 1959. Following this, it analyzes the business strategy Behn Meyer adopted to manage the political risks during the two world wars, its efforts at "reconstruction," and the roles of the firm's leading players. Finally, this article draws on central theoretical propositions related to the management of knowledge and political risks, and the effects that such propositions had on the firm.

Knowledge Management as a Tool for Risk Alleviation

KM refers to any set of practices used by an organization to identify, manage, disseminate, and share the knowledge, information, resources,

16. "Trade Expansion in China: A Comparison of British and German Methods, *The Board of Trade Journal*, Vol. XCI, Commercial Department of the Board of Trade (ed.), 1915 (London: H.M. Stationery Office), 391–394, TNA.

17. Ahrens, "Von der Franzosenzeit," 445.

relationships, and networks embodied in individuals or within the organization's processes.[18] KM is central to organizational performance,[19] and to a company's prosperity and survival over the long term.[20] Knowledge is not only a valuable asset but also is a source of competitive advantage to organizations.[21] Knowledge may be explicit or tacit. Tacit knowledge includes knowledge that is not easily transferable, such as intuitions, impressions, and emotional and cultural knowledge.[22] This research adopted a holistic concept of KM and did not limit it to information or data management. Casson, who views the economy "as an information system," contends "better information leads to better decisions" and a "better use of resources."[23] KM also involves an ability to create and use knowledge effectively. Thus, effective KM requires the systematic transformation of tacit knowledge into organizational knowledge.

Effective KM allows firms to exploit their competitive advantages, which then may generate sustainable and creative innovations that are crucial to longevity. Business theorists and management scholars strongly support strategic KM, arguing that it leads to sustainable competitive advantages, increases profits and efficiency, and reduces costs.[24] An organizational capability to integrate knowledge, including "understanding[s] of politics, knowledge management and strategy," by continuously assessing the internal structure and location of decision making can provide firms' foreign operations with important competitive advantages.[25] Continuity in the decision-making processes of firms is very important, particularly during times of crisis. Employing a diverse, stable, and loyal staff also lessens potential knowledge losses and sustains business continuity. This management process, known today as "business continuity management," includes the early detection of potential threats and the implementation of policies to mitigate these threats, allows firms to continue

18. Barney, "Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage"; Karkoulian, Messarra, McCarthy, "Intriguing Art of Knowledge Management."

19. Bosua and Ventikachalam, "Aligning Strategies and Processes in Knowledge Management."

20. Teece, Pisano, and Shuen, "Dynamic Capabilities"; see also Kamhawi, "Knowledge Management Fishbone."

21. Plessis, "Drivers of Knowledge Management"; Srivastava, "Resource-Based View and Marketing"; Wiig, "Knowledge Management," 20.

22. Jones and Leonard, "Tacit Knowledge to Organizational Knowledge," 27.

23. Casson, *Information and Organisation*, 3–6.

24. Grant, "Dynamically Competitive Environments"; Spender and Grant, "Knowledge and the Firm"; Nonaka, "Dynamic Theory of Organizational Knowledge"; Sveiby, *New Organizational Wealth*; McElroy, "New Knowledge Management." See also Davenport and Prusak, *Working Knowledge*.

25. Grant, "Knowledge-Based Theory of the Firm." See also van Wyck, "Political Sources of International Business Risk," 114.

to operate under adverse conditions, and "safeguar[d] the interests of [their] key stakeholders, reputation[s], brand[s] and value-creating activities."[26]

According to Jones, the specialized knowledge of markets, products, and relationships represented a source of ownership advantage for British merchant firms.[27] Historical changes in trading firms have been associated with a capability to improve the coordination and flow of information.[28] Thus, managing knowledge within a solid organizational structure is vital if firms are to sustain their performance. KM was particularly important to trading firms, such as Behn Meyer, which had to respond to state expropriation during the two world wars.

In strategic management studies, traditional theories of political risk—bargaining power approach and the governmental institutions approach—have been criticized for their lack of suitability in understanding "complex and interconnected" sectors, including the trading sector. Both these approaches fail to highlight the importance of cultural and intellectual factors in sustaining firms' activities in their home and host countries.[29] Conversely, while the legitimacy-based view (LBV) of political risk argues that firms must build legitimacy to reduce and overcome political risks, it fails to take into account the hostile perceptions of governments toward individuals and enemy firms during wartime. In applying the LBV of political risks to the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) experience during World War I, Smith acknowledged the limitations of the LBV.[30] Further, Stevens and colleagues noted that the LBV failed to consider the effects of cultural dynamism, particularly during wartimes.[31] Other scholars have noted that the importance of a firm's national identity may increase significantly during times of war, but may not represent a significant issue during peacetime.[32]

Extensive research has been conducted on how firms counter and mitigate political risk,[33] and business historians have discussed the

26. Business Continuity Management, "The Concept and Context of BCM," http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/news/businessContinuity/The-concept-and-context-of-business-continuity-management-by-Phil-Woods.pdf

27. Jones, *Merchants to Multinationals*, 6–8.

28. Muller and Ojala, *Information* Flows, 121.

29. Smith, "LBV Perspective," 27.

30. Ibid.

31. Stevens, Xie, and Peng, "Legitimacy-Based View of Political Risk."

32. Jones, *Multinationals and Global Capitalism*, 282; Jones, "Nationality and Multinationals," 9–12; Saideman and Ayres, *For Kin or Country*; Saideman, *Ties That Divide*.

33. Casson and da Silva Lopes ("Foreign Direct Investment") provides a rich source of references on multinationals and political risks.

various strategies adopted by firms—ranging from building strong managerial structures, to creating local identities, and to support a political coup in a bid to topple "hostile" foreign governments.[34] Businesses are often wary about abrupt or punctuated changes that are the result of adverse business climates.[35] Different actors in firms may be fundamental in defining the approaches adopted by firms to cope with political risks.

As the above discussion shows, the existing body of knowledge on risk management has rarely examined the relationship between political risks and KM. This article attempts to show how Behn Meyer survived in a politically hostile environment in colonial Malaya and postcolonial Malaysia by leveraging its sophisticated KM system.

Behn Meyer: The Early Years

Behn Meyer's beginnings date back to the childhood of the founders, Theodor August Behn Jr. and Valentin Lorenz-Meyer. The pair met at a private boarding school and became lifelong friends. Behn's apprenticeship at a commercial agency house allowed him to access its German and English correspondence.[36] Behn selected Singapore—the first free trade port in Southeast Asia and the Far East—because of its strategic location and liberal trade policies.[37] Lorenz-Meyer soon joined Behn in Singapore, and Behn Meyer was officially inaugurated in 1840. Arnold Otto Meyer, Lorenz-Meyer's younger brother, joined the firm in 1848. He went on to establish Arnold Otto Meyer Co. (AOM) in Hamburg in 1857, and shortly thereafter opened a branch in England that served as a British agent for Behn Meyer. This new set-up reinforced Behn Meyer's import–export business, as it granted the company better access to credit and English goods.[38]

Behn Meyer initially traded Asian products (e.g., coconut oil, copra, pepper, as well as camphor, rattan, and rice, and later tin) in the lucrative European market.[39] However, over time, as demand for European-manufactured goods grew, Behn Meyer began to supply the colonial markets. Unlike those at British firms, the senior members

34. Kobrak, Hansen, and Kopper, "Business, Political Risk, and Historians"; Kobrak and Wustenhagen, "International Investment and Nazi Politics"; Kobrin, "Political Risks"; Wilkins, "Multinationals and Dictatorship," 3–38; van der Putten, "*Corporate Behaviour*."

35. Moran, *International Political Risk Management,* 213–214.

36. Helfferich, *Behn, Meyer & Co.*, Vol. 1, 50.

37. "The Hungry Forties," *The Straits Times*, September 16, 1957, 8.

38. Bell, "Anglophilia," 72–73.

39. Sieveking, "Die kaiserliche," 179n.

of Behn Meyer were heavily involved in the commercial and public life of Singapore. Behn was a committee member of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce in 1848, 1850, and 1851, and served as municipal commissioner in 1851.[40] Arnold Meyer founded the Teutonia Club, a German club in Singapore in 1856,[41] and his son, Eduard Lorenz-Meyer, was one of the founding members of German Asia-Pacific Business Association (OAV), established in 1900.[42] Hans Becker, another popular figure, was appointed as a member of the Tanjong Pagar Docks Board and the Singapore Chamber of Commerce. Becker also served as the chairman of Singapore Oil Mills, as well as the German Teutonia Club, and was a member of the British Singapore Club.[43] The Germans were also quick to embrace and participate in British cultural institutions upon arriving in Singapore. Notably, Schramm commented that a sense of shared heritage made it easier for Germans to socialize with the English than other Europeans, most notably the French. The Meyers were Hamburg Anglophiles.[44]

Behn Meyer's knowledge of the region's strategic position in the global trading routes enabled the firm to weather the worldwide recession of 1857–1858. Arnold Meyer, with his determination and entrepreneurial spirit, also played a key role in battling the global crisis, realigning the firm's business arrangements with banks and trading firms, and using both his and Behn Meyer's trade networks in Europe and Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia. Arnold Meyer also became partners with Johannes Mooyer, to whom he provided a nineteen-page document with specific "instructions" on conducting business when Mooyer set sail for Singapore. These instructions outlined the business activities of the Behn Meyer and AOM and detailed their vast networks of buyers and suppliers.[45] In a short period, Behn Meyer leveraged its ownership and locational advantages to become one of the largest import–export firms trading between Europe and the Far East. The firm expanded its businesses in the East to Surabaya, Bangkok, Saigon, Manila, Canton, Shanghai, and Hong Kong; it also expanded in Europe.

40. *Economic Bulletin,* Singapore International Chamber of Commerce, October 31, 1973.

41. "Death of Mr. A. O. Meyer," *The Straits Times*, March 14, 1913, 9. See also "The Hungry Forties," *The Straits Times*, September 16, 1957, 8; "Token of German Gratitude: A Gift to the Cathedral," *The Straits Times*, April 12, 1947, 8; "Germans in Singapore," *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, November 5, 1890, 6.

42. E-mail correspondence with Daniel Marek, Regional Manager ASEAN, OAV-German Asia Pacific Business Association, January 17, 2017.

43. It is interesting to note that Behn Meyer was one of the oldest members of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce. "Mr. Hans Becker," *The Straits Times*, July 15, 1913, 9.

44. Ibid. 417.

45. Helfferich, *Behn, Meyer & Co.*, Vol. I, 125–133.

The early years saw frequent changes in partnerships; however, Lorenz-Meyer remained the primary stakeholder in Behn Meyer. The Lorenz-Meyer family served as the primary contributor of the firm's knowledge capital, not only during the initial stage but also during the later phases of development. Despite the dissolution of the nine-year-old original partnership in December 1849, the Behn Meyer firm survived by forging new alliances. By 1851 a new partnership was formed by Friedrich Albert Schreiber (who had joined the firm as a clerk in 1841), Arnold Meyer, and August Behn. Behn returned to Hamburg in 1852.[46]

A few key figures were responsible for the significant progress of Behn Meyer during the initial phase. Arnold Meyer steered the firm through several early crises, while Adolf Lapse and Franz Heinrich Witthoefft (who joined the firm in 1893 and 1896, respectively) directed its expansion.[47] In addition to laying a strong foundation of knowledge capital in the firm, these key leaders empowered a new generation of employees by implementing an apprenticeship system. For example, in 1890, when Behn Meyer acquired Friedrich & Co., a German tin-smelting firm, they hired Eugen Engler, a Swiss national who had worked for Behn Meyer in Singapore since 1883, to manage the Penang office. Hermann Jessen, another Hamburg-trained staff member, joined the Penang branch in 1901 and became an export manager in 1905.[48] Such practices were common to the German business culture of the time, which was characterized by the hiring of young, commercially trained staff members who were willing to travel to the East and serve in the firm's subsidiaries. Staff members served their apprenticeships at the headquarters and would later move around the firm's subsidiaries in Southeast Asia.[49] The rigorous apprenticeship system and the practice of rotational appointments, which involved significant travel between Hamburg and Asia and within Asia itself, led Behn Meyer to hire predominantly male staff. This paternalistic institutional arrangement was typical of German businesses, and likely benefited the firm.[50]

46. Siddique, "Early German Commercial Relations to Singapore," 173.

47. CO 273/421, "Java Agency of Behn Meyer," Straits Settlements, Vols. 3–4, 1915, Arkib Negara Malaysia (National Archives of Kuala Lumpur; ANM); see also, CO 273/420, "Firm of Behn, Meyer & Co.," Straits Settlements, Vols. 14-1, 1914–1915, ANM.

48. Khoo, *More than Merchants*, 120.

49. Interview with Dr. Dirk Lorenz-Meyer, director and board member of Behn Meyer Holding AG, Hamburg, Germany, July 29, 2017, and October 3, 2017. See also, "Hamburger Modell, Mehr Bewerber als Platze," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, February 6–7, 1993.

50. Interviews with Lorenz-Meyer; interviews with Juergen Herbert Friele, former director and consultant of the Behn Meyer Group, July 20, 2017; January 12, 2017; and August 16, 2010. Friele also kindly shared company bulletins from c.1973, 1977, and 1986.

The internalization of expert knowledge allowed employees to make informed decisions and efficiently exploit the opportunities with which they were presented.

By 1899 Behn Meyer had secured the agencies of several renowned shipping lines, including two of the principal shipping companies operating in Germany—Norddeutshcher Lloyd (NDL) and Hamburg-Amerika—and the German Australian Steamship Company.[51] From Malaya, the firm quickly expanded into the Philippines, opening a branch in Manila in 1900 and a branch in Sandakan, North Borneo, in 1901.[52]

In December 1905 Behn Meyer was incorporated under the laws of the Straits Settlements, where its registered office was located and domiciled.[53] Like other foreign-owned firms registered in the Straits Settlements, Behn Meyer was "legally British." In 1906 AOM became the principal shareholder of the Behn Meyer group of companies in Southeast Asia when the control of the firm shifted from Singapore to Hamburg. That same year, a limited company headquartered in Singapore was formed as a subsidiary of AOM Hamburg.[54]

In 1907 Behn Meyer successfully opened a branch in Bangkok. Two years later, Katz and Bros. (Katz) opened a business in Bangkok.[55] The two "British" companies, domiciled in Singapore, sought similar advantages in Bangkok. However, the British legation in Bangkok refused to grant "the privileges enjoyed by British nationals in Bangkok to the Germans," because unlike Singapore, Siam was an extraterritorial country.[56] Over time, the shipping lines allowed Behn Meyer to build reliable networks in the region so that it could successfully serve the Asian, Southeast Asian, and European markets.[57]

51. A heavily subsidized German syndicate, NDL bought their fleets from Messrs. Alfred Holt & Company and the Scottish Oriental. Wannamethee, "Anglo-Siamese Economic Relations," 71; Helfferich, *Behn, Meyer & Co.*, Vol. II, 120–121; Campo, *Engines of Empire*.

52. Tareq Abd, "Anglo–German Rivalry," 58–68.

53. CO 848/33, No. C 11173/5130/18, Foreign Office, Straits Settlement: Liquidation of Behn Meyer and Co. Ltd., September 1933–June 1934, January 3, 1934.

54. Helfferich, *Behn, Meyer & Co.*, Vol. II, 43–44, TNA.

55. "Herman Katz, a naturalised British subject," September 16, 1920, CO 273/501, Straits Settlements 1920, Vol. 4 (August to October 1920). See also, "Katz Brothers Ltd. Shares of Herman Katz, deceased," CO 273/501, Straits Settlements 1920, Vol. 4 (August to October 1920), August 10, 1920; "German Assets," CO 273/501, Straits Settlements 1920, Vol. 4 (August to October 1920), August 31, 1920, TNA.

56. Wannamethee, "Anglo-Siamese Economic Relations," 114–115.

57. Behn, Meyer & Co. as agents for the Hamburg Amerika Line carried advertisements in local newspapers, stating that their steamers "maintain a regular service between Hamburg, Bremen, Antwerp and Rotterdam, and the Straits, China and Japan." Page 4, advertisements, *The Straits Times*, June 3, 1909, 4.

In 1871 Behn Meyer, which had blazed a trail for German companies seeking trading opportunities overseas, hosted a consulate of the North German Federation and later a consulate of the Second Reich under Bismarck, the "Iron Chancellor." It was normal for European companies to act as consular representatives in Southeast Asia and Asia.[58] The governments in the Southeast Asian region appointed well-connected and knowledgeable Germans to act as consuls. For example, Alfred De Windt Neubronner was the consul general of Siam in Penang from 1844 until 1915. He was mainly appointed because of his "authority on subjects connected with the Kingdom of White Elephant," as well as his ability to speak Siamese.[59] The appointment was indicative of the German tradition of immersion into local communities. It also provided advantages in business knowledge, important contacts, and, in this case, allowed the trade of tin between Penang and southern Siam.[60] Behn Meyer was particularly valued for its knowledge portfolio of the local region, as this also served the interests of the German Empire. Over time, its owners became consuls; for example, Behn served as a consul in Singapore for the Hanseatic cities of Hamburg, Bremen, and Luebeck from 1844 to 1851;[61] and Kellinghusen (from another founding family of the firm) was appointed as the first consul of Hamburg at the Federation of Malaya in 1959. Behn Meyer's "dual" role of serving the German Empire and expanding its commercial activities enabled it to maintain its business conglomerate in the East.

Similar to the practice of some British firms, the tradition of engaging with the locals was seen in German and Swiss–German businesses. As noted above, Behn Meyer hired local (that is, Chinese) clerks and cashiers shortly after its founding. Some of these Chinese staff also served as compradors (or middlemen), providing much-needed

58. Some Swiss companies—Diethelm, for example—also chose to be under the protection of the German Reich before World War I. Dejung and Zangger, "British Wartime Protectionism," 207.

59. King Rama V noted that it is vital for the government "to employ a foreign official who can tackle any problem with the British rulers without the barrier of language," especially when trade between Penang Port and Southern Thailand was at its peak. Obituary of Alfred De Windt Neubronner, *Straits Chronicle*, October 26, 1915, 4. See also Khoo, *More than Merchants*, 76–77; Wright and Cartwright, *Twentieth-Century Impressions*, 751.

60. It is interesting to note than Herrmann Jensen, who had served as the export manager with Behn, Meyer & Co. in Penang, was hired as the managing director by the Chinese tin smelting company, Eastern Smelting Company. He was instrumental in facilitating exports of tin by Behn Meyer & Co. to Europe and the United States. See Brown, *Chinese Business Enterprise*, 60. See also Wong, *Penang Chinese Commerce*, 122.

61. Sieveking, "Die Anfänge des Hauses Behn-Meyer & Co. in Singapore," 205–207.

information on the ground.[62] Indeed, Behn Meyer went a step further from even German firms by hiring Muslim clerks as early as 1904.[63] In his memoir, Adolf Schoenberg, who had joined Behn Meyer in Singapore in 1902, described the robust multicultural environment of Behn Meyer. He noted that the firm employed "Europeans and Asians of all races, languages and customs," and described a "medley of Asians: Chinese, Klings, Malays, Chetties" mingling at the Straits office. He also compared the Singapore office to the "quiet offices at home," and noted how "young Germans, right from the beginning, ha[d] to look after a number of Chinese clerks."[64] Company photographs of Behn Meyer in Singapore, Penang, and its various subsidiaries in Java, and Bangkok depicted seated German bosses mixed in freely with local staff in a less racially or hierarchically stratified manner (see Figures 1 and 2). The German clubs were also opened to the locals; for instance, a 1929 photo of the Behn Meyer Sports Club in Surabaya, Java, show an interesting mix of German and local club members (see Figure 3).[65]

The German merchants also enjoyed close relationships with local traders, mainly Chinese traders, who played a prominent role in Malayan trade. As local and Western scholars alike have argued,

Figure 1 Staff of Behn, Meyer & Co., Singapore, 1895.

Source: Courtesy of Behn Meyer Group.

62. Ibid.141. See also Allen and Donnithorne, *Western Enterprise*, 205–208; Jones, *Merchants to Multinationals*, 223.

63. For example, Abdullasah Merican was listed as a clerk with Behn Meyer & Co. in the *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, December 23, 1904, ANM.

64. Helfferich, *Behn, Meyer & Co.*, Vol. II, 88.

65. Ibid. 119, 128, 144.

Figure 2 Staff of Behn, Meyer & Co., Representative Office, Siam, 1907.
Source: Courtesy of Behn Meyer Group.

the German merchants received the support of Chinese intermediaries and the Indian Chettiars (i.e., moneylenders) because of their readiness to provide a system of long-term credit, which the British merchant firms were forced to adopt to remain competitive.[66] The Chinese also preferred German to English vessels, as the German masters were more accommodating.[67] In 1894 Behn Meyer introduced its elephant trademark in five different languages to reach out to the different ethnic groups of traders in the Southeast Asian region (see Figure 4). In the region, a number of European firms, including British, had similar trademarks.[68]

Trade rivalries did exist between the German and British business communities; however, Behn Meyer was highly regarded by some of its British trading counterparts due to its longevity and reputation. Along with Boustead, Adamson Gilfillan, Patersons Simons, and the Borneo Co., Behn Meyer was one of the five merchant houses to benefit from the secret rebate provided by the Singapore shipping conference established in 1905.[69] These merchant houses managed to secure

66. Hai Ding, "Sino–British Mercantile Relations," 247–266; Siang, *One Hundred Years*; Wong, "Trade of Singapore," 163; Turnbull, *Straits Settlements*, 181–182; Huff, *Economic Growth of Singapore,* 265. See also Helfferich, *Behn, Meyer & Co.*, Vol. II, 86, 122.

67. Wong, "Trade of Singapore," 167–168.

68. Khoo, *More than Merchants*, 98.

69. The shipping conference formed one of the collusive agreements among ship owners to fight competition. In the Singapore conference, ship owners gave a secret rebate to trading houses to encourage them to join the conference system. For details, see Hai Ding, "Early Shipping Conference," 56–57; see also "Shipping Rings," *Singapore Free Press*, October 2, 1908, 5.

Figure 3 Behn, Meyer & Co., Sports Club, Surabaya, Java, 1929.
Source: Courtesy of Behn Meyer Group.

a significant share of Singapore export trade, and would later capture the Siamese, Burmese, and Dutch East Indies markets. A public outcry led to the abolition of the shipping conference in 1911. However, by then the shipping conference had successfully secured its prominent position in Singapore's export trade.[70] By 1914 Behn Meyer had eleven branches in Asia and Southeast Asia.[71]

Thus, in the early years, Behn Meyer laid the foundations for a resilient organizational culture based on investment in strong leadership. It implemented an efficient apprenticeship system to overcome a lack of local organizational and technological capabilities, built stable franchises, and diversified into several areas of business typified by other trading companies, mainly British, operating in the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

World War I and the Interwar Years: A Story of Disguise

By the time World War I broke out, Behn Meyer was one of the most prominent firms in the region, with extensive interests in shipping, insurance, plantations, and tin. In the initial phase of the war, British authorities did not attempt to curtail the firm's business activities. Indeed, the British community was respectful of the Germans, many of whom had joined British clubs. In his memoir, Adolf Schoenberg expressed his surprise when British members "completely unknown to [him], had voted" for him to become a member of

70. Hyde, *Far Eastern Trade*; Huff, *Economic Growth of Singapore*.
71. Bogaars, "Opening of the Suez Canal," 111–114.

Figure 4 Behn Meyer's elephant trademark, introduced in 1894 in five different local languages: English, Jawi (Malay), Chinese, Tamil, and Siamese. The elephant, a common local sight in Malaya and Siam, symbolizes longevity, persistence, and steadiness.

Source: Courtesy of Behn Meyer Group.

the Singapore Club on the "exact day war was declared on France and Russia."[72]

However, in October 1914 the British government and the community's view of the firm as a legitimate entity changed when a German ship escaped following an attack on a Russian ship at Penang Harbor.[73] August Diehn, the manager of Behn Meyer, was suspected of guiding the German ship and was later arrested.[74] Subsequently, Behn Meyer was branded "not only … a German trading concern but … a German

72. Helfferich, *Behn, Meyer & Co.*, Vol. II, 123.

73. "The Emden's Raid in Penang," *The Singapore Free Press*, March 12, 1934, 3. 3; Khoo, *More than Merchants*, 89–90.

74. Helfferich, *Behn, Meyer & Co.*, Vol. II, 124.

political agency."[75] As German patriotism and nationalism rose in response to World War I, the Germans, including the Hamburgers, turned Anglophobic in relation to their political and economic relations.[76] Germans firms began to *Tarnung*—cloak or camouflage—their businesses to minimize risks.[77] They used "independent or neutral entities," including Dutch, American, and Swedish entities, to offset political restrictions and sustain their businesses. Some even renamed their companies.[78] Many acts of cloaking were undertaken without government assistance.[79] Behn Meyer adopted similar strategies to reduce their political risks. The court found against Stonebridge Manufacturing Co. of Colne and Manchester for "trading with the enemy."[80] Stonebridge used AOM's agents in Amsterdam and a Chinese dealer to ship goods to the Java agency of Behn Meyer. In court, it was contended that the letters between the two firms were evidence of friendly relations and represented a renewal ties following the end of the war.[81] Cloaking required a strong bond between collaborators and an understanding of the dynamics of the region in which the firms were operating. The elements of "familiarity and trust" were vital in sustaining these relationships, and Behn Meyer was able to exploit its competitive advantages.

Following the enactment of the Alien Enemies (Winding Act) Ordinance of 1914, all German and German-related businesses were closed, and the British auctioned off confiscated assets. German trade in the Straits Settlements suffered drastically because of these restrictions and embargoes. By 1915 the Singapore Chamber of Commerce had expelled all members from German firms, including Behn Meyer, along with Deutsche Asiatic Bank; R. Forweg, Franzen, & Co.; Kumpers & Co.; Rautenberg, Schmidt, & Co.; Siemens Bros.; and Dynamo Works Ltd.[82]

75. "German Business," *The Straits Times*, March 6, 1917, 6.

76. Bell, "Anglophilia," 515.

77. According to Kobrak and Wustenhagen, Tarnung was undertaken by German firms that were economically motivated to alleviate political risks. Kobrak and Wustenhagen, "International Investment and Nazi Politics," 400, 407. See also Wilkins, *History of Foreign Investment*; Aalders and Wiebes, *Art of Cloaking*; Jones and Lubinski, "Managing Political Risks."

78. Wilkins, *History of Foreign Investment*; Aalders and Wiebes, *Art of Cloaking*; Jones and Lubinski, "Managing Political Risks."

79. Kobrak and Wustenhagen, "International Investment and Nazi Politics," 400–403.

80. CO 273/433, "Goods for Java Agency of Behn Meyer & Co.," Straits Settlements, Vol. 14, December 21, 1915; letter to Stonebridge Manufacturing Co., December 23, 1915; letter from Undersecretary of State to Foreign Office, December 20, 1915, TNA.

81. Ibid.

82. Hai Ding, *History of Straits Settlements Foreign Trade,* 37, 37n.

The political climate became more hostile for Behn Meyer when, on the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly, the governor of the Straits Settlements amended the Alien Enemies Ordinance. Under the ordinance, "alien enemy" referred to any entity whose country of origin was at war with Britain, and trade was defined to encompass every type of business, occupation, and work. An "enemy firm" was defined as one in which one-third or more of the issued share capital or of the directorate was held by an individual, by proxy, or by the subject of or resident of a country at war with Britain, irrespective of whether the firm was British registered.[83]

In January 1915 a liquidator was appointed to Behn Meyer under the Alien Enemies Ordinance.[84] Local newspapers, such as *The Straits Times* and *The Singapore Free Press*, advertised the sale of land and houses, as well as the auctions of other real estate.[85] The British ban on trading with Germany also affected German operations in Siam and China, and German branches in Bangkok experienced similar difficulties. As the situation worsened, Behn Meyer in Hamburg decided to sell its shares and transfer its assets to its former employees of Swiss origins: Engler and Menzi. This strategy used Swiss directors as shareholders; however, it also "landed [Behn Meyer] on the [British] blacklist" for firms.[86]

In 1915 Behn Meyer was expelled from the Penang Chamber of Commerce, and its Singapore manager, Adolf Schonberg, was accused of aiding and abetting the German war effort. As a company that had been incorporated into the crown colonies of the Straits Settlements, and in which German nationals held and controlled the majority of the share capital, Behn Meyer was considered to hold only nominal British nationality. In relation to the British-held or cobelligerent territories, Behn Meyer suffered a loss of approximately 12 million gold marks (the German currency at the time).[87]

World War I abruptly ended the era of "economic cosmopolitanism," and national affiliation became a point of contention for German firms.[88] Jones contends that before 1914, governments were not concerned with the nationality of firms. He further argues that some companies

83. "Alien Enemies: Winding Up of Their Trade Affairs," *The Straits Times*, December 7, 1914, 3.

84. Foreign Office, January 3, 1934.

85. The *Singapore Free Press,* June 28, 1915; *Mercantile Advertiser* (1884–1942), August 7, 1915, 8.

86. Dejung and Zangger, "British Wartime Protectionism," 203.

87. The British offered to pay compensation, but this took the form of government bonds and was never repaid due to the Japanese occupation, which incidentally coincided with the maturity period. Interviews with Friele.

88. Dejung and Zangger, "British Wartime Protectionism," 182.

might have several nationalities depending on the different interpretations of the host government in relation to the nationality of the founders or shareholders, the location of the headquarters, and a firm's area of operation.[89] In this instance, German firms operating in the United States were targeted. American courts also considered the issue of corporate nationality, but their rulings differed from those of the House of Lords in Britain. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the "the status of a corporation is not fixed by the stockholders' nationality and since the plaintiff was an American corporation, the seizure of its property was unlawful. The prescribed plan was to seize the shares of stock when enemy owned rather than to take over the corporate property."[90]

In accordance with this decision, in 1925 the U.S. Supreme Court set judicial precedent when it ruled that Behn Meyer's assets (held by its branch in the Philippines) should be returned to their rightful owner(s). The Court noted that while the majority of its shareholders were Germans, the firm was located in the Straits Settlements, a British colony.[91] However, despite the U.S. ruling, the British confiscated and eliminated German businesses in Malaya and Singapore. Additionally, many loyal naturalized Germans were branded as "Germanophiles" and accused of trading with the enemy without any evidence.[92]

Like other German firms in the Straits Settlements, Behn Meyer was blocked from operating in the region. However, the firm managed to circumvent the political and legal obstacles, and overcame its financial difficulties by forging new partnerships and consolidating its position in the neighboring, but neutral, Dutch East Indies. Due to its long presence in the region, Behn Meyer was able to set up a new company—Behn, Meyer, & Co. Handels Maatschappij—under Dutch East Indies law to avoid expropriation. Registered in Batavia, the company appointed a Dutch director. However, this clever "cloaking" strategy did not deter the British colonial administration from attempting to restrict Behn Meyer's activities in Dutch-controlled Batavia (Jakarta).[93] For example, despite registering itself as a different company under Dutch laws, Bantam (Java) Rubber Estates Ltd.

89. Jones, *Multinationals and Global Capitalism*, 282; Jones, "Nationality and Multinationals," 9–12. See also Lubinski, "Liability of Foreignness," 4.

90. *Michigan Law Review*, 468–469.

91. Ibid.

92. CO 273/436, Scriven Brothers to War Office, August 6, 1915; CO 273/434, M. Myers to Board of Trade, February 23, 1915, TNA.

93. CO 56276, "Chinese as Cloaks for Enemy Traders," Foreign Trade Department, November 24, 1916, Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States, Vol. 13, TNA.

(an agency under Behn Meyer) was prevented from selling rubber to Germany and Austria.[94]

Another controversial episode began when the firm was accused of provoking the Singapore Mutiny in February 1915,[95] during which some prisoners, including Behn Meyer staff, managed to flee to Sumatra.[96] According to the *London and China Express,* a private investigation in Singapore showed that the mutiny, involving the Fifth Light Infantry (composed of Indian Muslims), was a conspiracy hatched by the Germans.[97]

Behn Meyer was accused of exploiting harmonious relations to incite the mutiny.[98] To further complicate matters, some German detainees escaped from the Tanglin Prison in the aftermath of the mutiny. The crewmembers of the *SMS Emden* were among the first detainees to be let out by the mutineers.[99] Not all of the German detainees at Tanglin Prison escaped, and many eventually surrendered; however, three escapees—August Diehn, Adolf Schoenberg, and O. Elmenhorst (who was rearrested in Singapore)—were Behn Meyer employees. Diehn and Schoenberg fled to Sumatra and continued Behn Meyer's business operations in the Dutch East Indies.[100] Diehn, the chief of Behn Meyer and the consul to Surabaya, and an employee named Merker were all listed by the British as active conspirators.[101]

In *The Lights of Singapore,* Roland Braddell rebutted the accusation that Behn Meyer was involved in the mutiny. Braddell, who was also party to the court proceedings in the aftermath of the incident and privy to confidential information about the revolt, stated unequivocally that any rumors about the German connection were baseless and unsubstantiated.[102] According to Braddell, British India was the

94. CO 273/420, telegram from Arthur Young, governor, Straits Settlements to Colonial Secretary, 1914–15, January 16, 1915, ANM.

95. Tarling, "Singapore Mutiny of 1915," 30, 44.

96. "Memories of Singapore Mutiny," *Singapore Daily News*, November 24, 1932, 6.

97. Even in the United States, there were allegations by the British and U.S. governments of an Indo–German conspiracy in California during the World War I to support the Ghadr Movement in India. Plowman, in his study, argues that there were Irish factors in this conspiracy that the British and U.S. governments chose to ignore. Plowman, "Anglo–Irish Factors," xiii.

98. Untitled, *The Straits Times*, June 7, 1915, 8. See also, "Singapore Mutiny: Alleged Bribes by German Prisoners," *The Straits Times*, May 22, 1915, 9.

99. CO 273/420, "Disturbances at Singapore: Conduct of German Prisoners," March 2, 1915, ANM.

100. CO 273/420, "Riot at Singapore," Straits Settlements, March 3, 1915, ANM.

101. Diehn was alleged to be an arch-conspirator and carried a wireless installation that could transmit messages. CO 273/433, "German Pests in Dutch East Indies," Straits Settlements, Vol. 14, December 21, 1915, TNA.

102. See Brown and Brown, *Singapore Mutiny*.

center of the rebellion.[103] However, the issue continued to be debated in prominent newspapers in Singapore until 1935. Due to the extensive media trials, many were convinced of a German connection to the mutiny.[104] These accusations were somewhat allayed when Hermann Jenssen wrote his account of the escape from Tanglin Prison, which was printed in a Malayan newspaper.[105]

In 1919 AOM opened an office in Amsterdam to capitalize on Dutch neutrality. By 1922 the two branches, one each in Singapore and Penang, were managed by J. Rijk, a senior clerk at Behn Meyer's subsidiary in Surabaya. Heinz Witthoeff (the son of Franz Heinrich Witthoeff, mentioned earlier) joined him when the constraints imposed on Germans were lifted.[106] The tacit knowledge of these employees played a determining role in ensuring the firm's survival and continuity. They returned to Southeast Asia after being interned, imprisoned, and expelled. Their years of service, willingness to begin again in Southeast Asia, and in-depth knowledge of the region allowed them to assess the business situation and make strategic decisions for Behn Meyer.

World War I compelled Behn Meyer to readapt its business activities and patterns. Before 1914 exports from Malaya and Singapore included commodity products and tin, and imports largely included finished goods. As the war continued, small industries grew in response to demand for raw materials. Seeing a business opportunity, Behn Meyer adjusted to the market conditions by using its knowledge of the local economy.

Behn Meyer also leveraged its business networks with its German principals. They took over franchises for chemical materials, dyes, and fertilizers from I. G. Farben. Behn Meyer also had several agency agreements (e.g., with Humboldt-Deutz Motoren A. G., Demag A. G., Beiersdorf Ltd., and I. G. Farben) to provide the necessary reconstruction materials, and it had other agencies manufacture Agfa photographic materials, perfume, and Bayer pharmaceutical products.[107]

Germans were subsequently permitted to return to Malaya because of improved relations between Britain and Germany. During the postwar years, the firm acted to secure new supply sources. Consequently, a "Japanese division" was established. Behn Meyer resumed trading from its Singapore and Penang offices, as well as in China.[108] The firm, however, had to reduce its shipping and insurance activities.

103. Braddell, *Lights of Singapore*.
104. Brown and Brown, "Singapore Mutiny," 6.
105. "German Prisoners' Escape from Singapore during the Mutiny," *The Straits Times*, May 30, 1935, 13.
106. Helfferich, *Behn Meyer & Co.*, Vol. II, 145.
107. Khoo, *More than Merchants*, 98.
108. Helfferich, *Behn, Meyer & Co.*, Vol. II, 146.

Except for its shipping assets, it failed to secure any of its confiscated assets; yet, despite losing almost all its shipping agencies, the Straits Java Trading Co., in Penang, acquired shipping agencies for the Hamburg-Amerika Line and German-Australia Line. Huff noted that it was implausible that German shipping interests would be rehabilitated, as many companies' assets had been auctioned off as "enemy property,"[109] and there were lengthy debates on how to dispose of German assets.[110] The termination of German competition, and the agreements between the two leading British and Dutch shipping companies enabled the British to establish a monopoly over shipping activities in Malaya. Britain maintained its share in the global shipping industry throughout the two world wars,[111] a goal shared by the British Board of Trade and some British business communities.[112]

In 1936 the directors of Behn Meyer applied to the colonial administration in Singapore to change the name of Straits Java Trading Co. to its original name in the Straits Settlements Registrar of Companies. The firm hoped to use its original name to commemorate the centenary of its 1840 founding.[113] It also sought to increase its visibility by organizing marketing exhibitions in Singapore. Aware of the importance of forging ties with Chinese businesses, the Straits Java Trading Co. organized a marketing exhibition and invited both the Singapore Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.[114] By 1938 both the Singaporean and Penang branches had impressive agencies listed under various categories of its import, technical, pharmaceutical/chemical, shipping, and insurance departments in the Singapore and Malayan Directory.[115]

The political risks of the war did not significantly disrupt Behn Meyer's prospects in the region, and following the war the firm endeavored to regain its original position and reestablish its presence. Behn Meyer's resilient organizational culture enabled it to be innovative in how it faced adversity. It quickly leveraged its business linkages to create new entities and diversified into new markets by establishing new franchises.

109. Huff, *Economic Growth of Singapore*, 127.

110. For example, when Herman Katz (the owner of Katz Bros. Ltd.) died, there were some correspondences between the Custodian of Enemy Property and the Public Trustees of London on the proper method to deal with the shares under the provisions of the Treaty of Peace. CO 273/501, Straits Settlements 1920, Vol. 4 (August to October 1920): "Katz Brothers Ltd. Shares of Herman Katz, deceased" (August 10, 1920), and "German Assets" (August 31, 1920), "Shares of Late H. Katz."

111. Ibid.

112. Moazzin, "From Globalization to Liquidation."

113. "Big Singapore Firm Maybe Revived," *The Straits Times*, August 9, 1936, 15; "Notes of the Day," *The Straits Times*, April 20, 1936, 10.

114. "Chinese to see German Products," *The Straits Times*, March 13, 1936, 13.

115. *The Singapore and Malayan Directory,* 1938, ANM.

Political Risks in the Pre- and Post-World War II Periods

In the years before World War II, Behn Meyer reestablished its operations in Malaya, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines, and China. The Dutch were not a neutral party in the war but a cobelligerent of the British and an ally against the Germans. The Third Reich invaded the Netherlands, as it was perceived as a buffer country for France, Germany's archrival and nemesis in Europe. Once again, Behn Meyer lost all of its assets and business possessions in Malaya and Singapore. Only its parent company in Hamburg remained intact throughout the war.

To provide British businesses with a head start in Malaya, the British imposed a ten-year restriction on German companies that prevented them from immediately resuming business in Malaya and Singapore at the end of the World War I. The onset of the Cold War in 1949 did not change the British colonial government's treatment of German firms. However, Behn Meyer's foresight, visionary focus, and intuitive understanding of politics enabled it to negotiate a "gentleman's agreement" in Hamburg with its "old" European partner, the British trading house Paterson, Simons, & Co., a company that had also been a member of the shipping conference in Singapore in the late 1890s. By 1948 Paterson, Simons, & Co. began to administer Behn Meyer and the Straits Java Trading Co. Most prewar German principals of manufactured goods agreed to be represented by Paterson, Simons, & Co. The AOM paid them a hefty commission annually for twice the number of years it held prewar agencies.[116] This created a mutually beneficial situation for the two companies: Behn Meyer was able to maintain its business and agencies, and Paterson, Simons, & Co. received a commission that exceeded its expectations.

In 1955 German companies were once again allowed to operate in Malaya and Singapore. Behn Meyer was relentless in its resolve to reinstate its prewar organizational structures, including its original name. In May 1955, Georg von Daggenhausen, who had been assigned to the office of Paterson, Simons, & Co. in Singapore in 1949, became Behn Meyer's managing director. Behn Meyer opened branches in Penang and Kuala Lumpur. By 1958 it had successfully regained its status as a renowned trading firm in the region. Experienced personnel were posted from Hamburg to reestablish the firm in Singapore and Malaysia. Among them were numerous loyal veteran employees, including Manfred G. Schwencke, Heinz H. Waetcke, Alfred Peter Otto Thomas, and Juergen Herbert Friele.[117] These four individuals

116. Interviews with Friele; Kleinsteuber, *Merchants Beyond the Seas*, 333.

117. Company bulletins: *Warta bm News*, January–March 1985, 1; *Warta bm News*, April–June 1985, 1.

were instrumental in building the firm's capabilities and resources. The firm adeptly responded to the situation in postcolonial Malaysia by diversifying its activities to include fertilizer distribution, and the manufacture of agrochemicals, polymers, industrial chemical products, paper, and machinery. In December 1959, Behn, Meyer, & Co. Ltd. was reconstituted as Behn, Meyer, & Co. (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd. (private limited), and Malaysia became the headquarters of Behn Meyer in the Southeast Asian region.

Knowledge Management and Organizational Survival: The Behn Meyer Case

This article has shown the significance of KM in building the organizational resilience firms require if they are to survive in highly political risk environments. As discussed earlier, a number of scholars and recent research have suggested that firms must be knowledge-driven to gain a competitive advantage. Thus, the importance of Behn Meyer's knowledge workers in keeping the firm afloat should not be discounted. Most of its core workers, such as partners, directors, and shareholders based in Malaya and Hamburg, had been associated with the firm for more than three decades. These workers displayed remarkable loyalty to the firm and perpetuated a strong culture of knowledge sharing and KM, which are two salient features that have been continuously emphasized in the firm's brochures over the years.

Further, as Grant asserts, the role of hierarchy and the location of decision making are two critical factors in integrating knowledge. These have been linked to the organizational structures of this family firm, and were based on a unique system in which partners actively served in managerial positions and as members of the board of directors, eventually becoming the "knowledge reservoirs" that ensured the resilience, continuity, and longevity of the firm.[118] This system of checks and balances involved core families over four generations—the Lorenz-Meyer (founding) family, and the Schoenberg, Kellinghusen, and Witthoeff families. Other business partners came from outside these families. Over the years, numerous family members held the positions of partners, shareholders, directors, and chairpersons.[119]

As required under German law, the firm also had a supervisory advisory board that comprised chairpersons, retired bankers, and auditors, each of whom were elected as members of the board by the

118. Becerra-Fernandez, Gonzalez, and Sabherwal, *Knowledge Management*, 24.
119. Interviews with Friele; interviews with Lorenz-Meyer.

shareholders.[120] The advisory board and the board of directors oversaw the decisions of the parent company and its affiliates in Southeast Asia. The process for appointing a partner was rigorous, and the advisory board appointed only the most qualified candidates, regardless of their family background. The accumulation and consolidation of business knowledge within these families primarily occurred because of the invaluable apprenticeship system adopted by the German merchant community at the time.[121]

Behn Meyer also developed special written and unwritten institutional arrangements and practices (e.g., training and rotating employees between the headquarters in Hamburg and the subsidiaries in Southeast Asia) that enabled them to navigate hostile environments. The partners also frequently traveled from Hamburg to attend board meetings at different branches and to ensure the smooth flow of information between the parent company and its affiliates.[122] The "on-the-ground" training, loyalty, and resilience of the firm's knowledge workers enabled them to ingeniously circumvent various restrictions. This traditional German dual system of theory and practical work, known as *Lehrlingsausbildung* (apprenticeship training), included an entire system.[123] Apprentices who had been trained in commercial aspects of the job in Hamburg were sent to Southeast Asia as managers, where they disseminated the company culture and the German way of doing business to local employees.[124] This approach differed from that of some British trading and plantation firms, which, according to Jones and White, were reluctant to provide management opportunities because of their "innate conservatism" and a "short sighted degree of prejudice."[125] As early as 1952, AOM emphasized the importance of training local staff for future trade and investment opportunities, stating: "One should not overlook the fact that such an organization must provide training and career development opportunities to local staff members, partly to ensure the nationalist tendencies of young overseas countries to impose limits and sanctions against 'foreign' trade."[126] Job rotations in the parent company and its affiliates were used to reduce staff turnover and ensure loyalty. It also ensured that

120. Interview with P. J. Schoenberg, partner and shareholder of Behn Meyer Holding AG, February 23, 2011; interviews with Friele.

121. Yacob, "Transgenerational Renewal," 1179.

122. Interview with Ruhaya Muhammad, managing director of Behn Meyer Malaysia and board member of Behn Meyer Holding AG, July 28, 2017. Muhammad was the first woman and Malay-Muslim to be appointed by the company.

123. E-mail correspondences with Dr. Fritz Kleinsteuber (author), July 28, 2017.

124. Interviews with Lorenz-Meyer.

125. Jones, *Merchants to Multinationals*, 225; White, *British Business*, 72–77.

126. Kleinsteuber, *Merchants of the Seas*, 575–576.

the knowledge held by individuals would be shared and integrated among employees at various levels. These practices acknowledged the importance of trust and competence within the firm, and created a "common culture" that was underpinned by "high trust." According to Casson, this also improved the "clarity of communication," reduced information costs, and made it easier for the firm "to coordinate its innovations."[127] Long-term staff members were also presented with opportunities to serve Singaporean society by engaging with different civic and economic organizations (see Table 1).

Before World War I, the British government viewed Behn Meyer as legitimate, largely due to the Meyer's commitment to public life and active participation in his civic duties. As a respected, legitimate, Straits-born "British" firm, Behn Meyer enjoyed enduring relations with its British merchant counterparts. However, with Germany on the wrong side of both world wars, the firm quickly lost its legitimacy with the British government. The British government was quick to link founder nationalities with their firms, and viewed the Germans

Table 1 Staff loyalty and job rotation

Employee	Position	Years of Service
Hans Becker	Behn Meyer Shipping Dept. (1858); first general manager (1906–1913) (Singapore); member, Tanjong Pagar Docks Board and Singapore Chambers of Commerce; chairman of Singapore Oil Mills.	25
W. A. L. Schaub	Straits Java Trading Company (14 years in Batavia, 11 years in Singapore); president, Singapore Rotary Club; founder and president, Singapore Urban Co-operative Union.	25
Heinz Horst Waetcke	Arnold Otto Meyer (AOM) (1949), later Behn, Meyer & Co.; managing director, Behn, Meyer & Co. (1973–1981).	32
H. J. Bartels-Troje	Apprentice at AOM (1912); Bangkok branch clerk (1914); interned in Siam and then India, and returned to Germany (1919); clerk at AOM, Amsterdam, named deputy, appointed partner (1929); head, Behn, Meyer & Co, Handel, Mij, Surabaya (1930); eastern director, Behn Meyer & Co; also served as German consul (Surabaya).	50
Georg von Daggenhausen	Apprentice at AOM (1925); Straits Java Trading Co. (1930–1939); Paterson, Simons & Co. (1949); managing director (1955–1967) (Singapore and Kuala Lumpur) and Hamburg (1967–1975).	50

Sources: Kleinsteuber, *Merchants Beyond the Seas*; Helfferich, *Behn, Meyer & Co*., Vol. II, 126, 147; *Morning Tribune*, *Straits Times Weekly*, *Straits Times*, Singapore; *Warta bm News*, January–March 1985 and April–June 1985, Malaysia.

127. Casson, *Information and Organisation*, 67–68.

as barbaric Huns.[128] Nevertheless, British firms often continued to trade with enemy firms, irrespective of their nationalities.[129] This is unsurprising, as during war, national sentiments often fluctuate and different parties (e.g., governments, other stakeholders) often hold fluid perceptions about nationalism and corporate legitimacy.

For German merchant firms, however, such as Behn Meyer, caught in two world wars and labeled as enemy firms, legitimacy did not provide consolation or lead to positive treatment from the British government. Indeed, the home government's blanket ruling—the Alien Enemies (Winding Up) Ordinance of 1914—adversely affected German firms' intra-Asian and intercontinental maritime trade networks. However, Behn Meyer managed to sustain its trading activities, which can be attributed to its creative and innovative business strategies, and its willingness to transfer, share, and integrate its expert knowledge of the region.

Concluding Remarks

Behn Meyer's entrepreneurs successfully built the firm's organizational capabilities to generate and integrate the knowledge required to understand the dynamics of the local environment of the Southeast Asian region. The firm's present management shares the vision and outlook of its predecessors and the founders, and it uses its entrepreneurial capabilities to ensure continuity in knowledge accumulation. Familiarity with, and knowledge of the region, the market, the German manufacturers, and the geography ensured the continuous generation of new knowledge and the continued success in managing in the region and markets.

In retrospect, a combination of factors differentiated Behn Meyer from other firms that disappeared from the region. One such factor was Behn Meyer's greater understanding for the indigenous cultures of the region, which created new opportunities for the company in a hostile political climate. An understanding of knowledge sharing in different cultural settings within the multiple geographies of Asia and Europe allowed Behn Meyer to outshine its British competitors, which eventually withdrew from the region.

Although Behn Meyer had taken a gradualist approach to localization of management in the 1980s, moving forward the firm has vigorously capitalized on the potential of diversity. This article has shown how multicultural firms like Behn Meyer outperformed ethnocentric

128. Cannadine, *Undivided Past*.
129. Ibid.

companies, which aptly describes the British companies during the colonial period. Undoubtedly, the key factors that allowed this German firm to survive multiple setbacks were its skill, ability, and knowledge in managing sets of diverse parties, including the British government, British merchant firms, and, in particular, indigenous communities.

Current management research points to the importance of inclusivity and "identity diversity" of gender and race in managing successful firms. This "diversity bonus" led to an increase in performance of the firm as problem solving and innovation efforts improved.[130] Today, Behn Meyer's current board of directors comprises seven board members with a dominant Asian share: four Asians and three Germans. This includes two female members (29 percent), a local Malaysian member, and a member of the Kellinghusen family. In addition to board diversity, there is now 100 percent local management, including female directors who manage their own organizations throughout Southeast Asia. Once a traditionally paternalistic German trading house, Behn Meyer used KM to transform itself into a modern corporation that today has solid Asian roots, growing gender parity in management, and a bright future.

This article laid the foundation to show how a company succeeded in an unfamiliar environment through cultural adaptation, which is often overlooked as a major contributing factor in organizational performance. Behn Meyer's multicultural approach warrants future research into how other international firms have succeeded in adopting and adapting to the cultural diversity in Malaysia and elsewhere. It would also be valuable for future researchers to develop practical managerial approaches to intercultural management by developing case studies from practitioners' perspectives to illustrate how to best manage diversity on a broad scale among varying contexts.

Bibliography of Works Cited

Books

Aalders, Gerard, and CeesWiebes. *The Art of Cloaking Ownership: The Secret Collaboration and the Protection of the German War Industry by the Neutrals: The Case of Sweden*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996.

Ahrens, Gerhad. "Von der Franzosenzeit bis zur Verabschiedung der neuen Verfassung 1806–60." In *Geschichte der Stadt und ihrer Bewohner*, edited by Werner Jochmann and Hans-Dieter Loose, 415–490. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1982.

130. Page, *Diversity Bonus*.

Allen, G. C., and Audrey G Donnithorne. *Western Enterprise in Far Eastern Economic Development*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954.

Braddell, Roland. *The Lights of Singapore*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Becerra-Fernandez, I., A. Gonzalez, and R. Sabherwal. *Knowledge Management: Challenges, Solutions, and Technologies*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2004.

Brown, Mary, and Edwin A. Brown. *Singapore Mutiny: A Colonial Couple's Stirring Account of Combat and Survival in the 1915: Singapore Mutiny*. Singapore: Monsoon Books Private Ltd., 2017.

Brown, Rajeswary Ampalavanar. *Chinese Business Enterprise.* London: Routledge, 1996.

Campo, Joseph Norbert Frans Marie. *Engines of Empire: Steam Shipping and State Formation in Colonial Indonesia*. Hilversum, the Netherlands: Verloren, 2002.

Cannadine, D. *The Undivided Past: History Beyond Our Differences*. London: Penguin, 2013.

Casson, M. *Information and Organisation: A New Perspective on the Theory of the Firm*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Davenport, T. H., and L. Prusak. *Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage What They Know*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1998.

Hai Ding, Chiang. *A History of Straits Settlements Foreign Trade 1870–1915*. Singapore: National Museum of Singapore, 1978.

Helfferich, Emil. *Behn, Meyer & Co.—Arnold Otto Meyer*. Vols. I and II. Hamburg: Hans Christian Verlag, 1981.

Huff, W. G. *The Economic Growth of Singapore: Trade and Development in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Hyde, Francis. *Far Eastern Trade 1860–1914*. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1973.

Jones, Geoffrey. *Merchants to Multinationals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

———. *Multinationals and Global Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Khoo, Salma Nasution. *More than Merchants: A History of the German-speaking Community in Penang, 1800–1940s*. Penang, Malaysia: Areca Books, 2006.

Kleinsteuber, Fritz. *Merchants Beyond the Seas: The Story of Behn Meyer*. Hamburg: Behn, Meyer & Co., 2017.

McElroy, Mark W. *The New Knowledge Management: Complexity, Learning, and Sustainable Innovation*. Newton, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2002.

Moran, T. H. *International Political Risk Management: Exploring New Frontiers*, Washington, DC: IBRD, 2001.

Muller, L. and Jari Ojala. *Information Flows: New Approaches in the Historical Study of Business Information*. Helsinki: SKS, Finnish Literature Society, 2007.

Page, Scott E. *The Diversity Bonus: How Great Teams Pay Off in the Knowledge Economy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.

Schramm, P. E. *Deutschland und Ubersee: der deutsche Handel mit den anderen Kontinenten, insbesondere Afrika, von Karl V. bis zu Bismark*, 1950.

Siang, Song Ong. *One Hundred Years History of the Chinese in Singapore*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Saideman, S. M. *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Saideman, S. M., and R. W Ayres. *For Kin or Country: Xenophobia, Nationalism, and War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008

Smidt, H., ed. *Patriotische Mahnungen und Rückblicke Präsidialreden des Bürgermeisters Johann Smidt bei Einführung neuerwählter Rathmänner und Bürgermeister 1821 bis 1857; hrsg. zum Säcularfeste seines Geburtstages (den 5. November 1773)*. Bremen: Karl Tannen, 1873.

Sveiby, Karl Erik. *The New Organisational Wealth: Managing and Measuring Knowledge-Based Assets*. San Francisco: Berret-Koehler, 1997.

Turnbull, C. M. *The Straits Settlements (1826–1867): Indian Presidency to Crown Colony*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1972.

van der Putten, Frans-Paul. *Corporate Behaviour and Political Risk: Dutch Companies in China, 1903–194*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2001.

White, N. J. *British Business in Post-colonial Malaysia, 1957–70: Neo-colonialism or disengagement?* London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.

Wiig, Karl M. "Knowledge Management: An Emerging Discipline Rooted in a Long History." In *Knowledge Horizons: The Present and the Promise of Knowledge Management*, edited by C. Després and D Chauvel, 2–22. Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006.

Wilkins, Mira. *The History of Foreign Investment in the United States, 1914–1945*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Wong, Yee Tuan. *Penang Chinese Commerce in the 19th Century: The Rise and Fall of the Big Five*. Singapore: ISEAS, 2015.

Wright, Arnold, and H. A. Cartwright. *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries, and Resources*. London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, Ltd., 1908.

Articles, Chapters in Books, Dissertations, and Proceedings

Barney, J. B. "Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage." *Journal of Management* 17 (1991): 99–120.

Bogaars, George. "The Effect of the Opening of the Suez Canal on the Trade and Development of Singapore." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 38 (1955): 99–143.

Bell, Andrew Francis. "Anglophilia: The Hamburg Bourgeoisie and the Importation of English Middle Class Culture in the Wilhelmine Era." Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2001.

Bosua, R., and K. Ventikachalam. "Aligning Strategies and Processes in Knowledge Management: A Framework." *Journal of Knowledge Management* 17 (2013): 331–346.

Bucheli, Marcelo, and Ruth Aguilera. "Political Survival, Energy Policies, and Multinational Corporations: A Historical Study for Standard Oil of New Jersey in Columbia, Mexico, and Venezuela in the Twentieth Century." *Management International Review* 50 (2010): 347–378.

———. "Multinational Corporations, Business Groups, and Economic Nationalism: Standard Oil (New Jersey), Royal Dutch Shell and Energy Politics in Chile, 1913–2005." *Enterprise and Society* 11 (2010): 350–399.

Cushman, J. W. "The Khaw Group: Chinese Business in Early Twentieth Century Penang." In Vol. 4, *Chinese Business Enterprise*, edited by R. A. Brown. London: Routledge, 1996.

Casson, Mark, and Teresa da Silva Lopes. "Foreign Direct Investment in High-Risk Environments: A Historical Perspective." *Business History* 55, no. 3 (2013): 375–404.

Hai Ding, Chiang. "The Early Shipping Conference System of Singapore, 1897–1911." *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 10, no. 1 (1969): 50–68.

———. "Sino–British Mercantile Relations in Singapore's Entrepôt Trade, 1870–1915." In *Studies in the Social History of China and Southeast Asia: Essays in Memory of Victor Purcell*, edited by J. Chenand and N. Tarling, 247–266. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Dejung, Christof, and Andreas Zangger. "British Wartime Protectionism and Swiss Trading Companies in Asia." *Past and Present* 207 (2010): 181–213.

Grant, R. M. "Prospering in Dynamically Competitive Environments: Organizational Capability as Knowledge Integration." *Organization Science* 7 (1996): 375–387.

———. "Toward a Knowledge-Based Theory of the Firm." *Strategic Management Journal* 17 (1996): 109–122.

Helmich, D. L., and W. Brown. "Successor Type and Organizational Change in the Corporate Enterprise." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17 (1972): 371–381.

Janz, Brian D., and Pattarawan Prasarnphanich. "Understanding the Antecedents of Effective Knowledge Management: The Importance of a Knowledge-Centred Culture." *Decision Sciences* 34 (2003): 351–384.

Jones, Geoffrey. "Nationality and Multinationals in Historical Perspective." Harvard Business School Working Paper 06-052, Harvard University, 2005.

Jones, Geoffrey, and Christina Lubinski. "Managing Political Risk in Global Business: Beiersdorf, 1914–1990." *Enterprise & Society* 13 (2012): 85–119.

Jones, Kiku, and Lori N. K. Leonard. "From Tacit Knowledge to Organizational Knowledge for Successful KM." In *Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning*, edited by W. R. King, 27–39. Annals of Information Systems 4, 2009. http://www.uky.edu/~gmswan3/575/From_Tacit_to_OK.pdf

Kamhawi, E. M. "Knowledge Management Fishbone: A Standard Framework of Organisational Enablers." *Journal of Knowledge Management* 16 (2012): 808–828.

Karkoulian, S., L. C. Messarra, and R. McCarthy. "The Intriguing Art of Knowledge Management and Its Relation to Learning Organizations." *Journal of Knowledge Management* 17 (2013): 511–526.

Kellenbenz, Hermann. "German Trade Relations with the Indian Ocean from the End of the Eighteenth Century to 1870." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 13 (1982): 133–152.

Kobrak, Christopher, and Jana Wustenhagen. "International Investment and Nazi Politics: the Cloaking of German Assets Abroad, 1936–45." *Business History* 48, no. 3 (2006): 399–427.

Kobrak, Christopher, and Jana Wustenhagen, Per H. Hansen, and Christopher Kopper. "Business, Political Risk, and Historians in the Twentieth Century." In *European Business, Dictatorship, and Political Risk, 1920–45*, edited by Christopher Kobrak and Per H. Hansen, 3–21. New York: Berghahn Books, 2004.

Kobrin, Stephen J. "Political Risk: A Review and Reconsideration." *Journal of International Business Studies* 10 (1979): 67–80.

Loree, David, Hari Bapuji, and Mary Crossan. "Relying on external Knowledge for Competitive Advantage: Why It Might Not Work." *Ivey Business* Online, May–June 2011. http://www.iveybusinessjournal.com/topics/the-organization/relying-on-external-knowledge-for-competitive-advantage-why-it-might-not-work.

Lubinski, Christina. "Liability of Foreignness in Historical Context: German Business in Pre-independence India (180–1940)." *Enterprise and Society* 15 (2014): 722–758.

Michigan Law Review. "Corporations: Property of Domestic Corporation Whose Shares Are Owned by Alien Enemies as Enemy Owned Property." *Michigan Law Review* (April 1929): 468–469.

Nonaka, Ikujiro "A Dynamic Theory of Organizational Knowledge Creation." *Organization Science* 5 (1994): 14–37.

Moazzin, Ghassan. "From Globalization to Liquidation: The Deutsch–Asiatische Bank and the First World War in China." *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, E-journal no. 16 (September 2015). https://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/e-journal/articles/moazzin_0.pdf

Plessis, M. D. "Drivers of Knowledge Management in the Corporate Environment." *International Journal of Information Management* 25 (2005): 193–202.

Plowman, Matthew Erin. "The Anglo-Irish Factors in the Indo-German Conspiracy in San Francisco During WWI, 1913–1921." Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1999.

Siddique, Sharon. "Early German Commercial Relations to Singapore: Behn, Meyer & Co., Singapore—Arnold Otto Meyer, Hamburg." In *Southeast Asia and the Germans*, 173. Tubingen-Basle: Horst Erdmann Verlag, 1977.

Sieveking, H. "Die Anfänge des Hauses Behn-Meyer & Co. in Singapore 1840—1856." *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 35, no. 2/3 (1942): 179–211.

———. "Die Kaiserliche Flagge auf den Nikobaren." *Ostasiatische Rundschau* no. 5/6 (1940): 111–122.

———. "Das Haus Behn-Meyer & Co. in Singapore unter der Leitung Arnold Otto Meyers während der Krise von 1857 und in neuem Aufstieg." *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 36 (1944): 121–143.

Smith, Andrew. "An LBV Perspective on Political Risk Management in a Multinational Bank during the First World War." *Multinational Business Review* 24 (2016): 25–46.

Spender, J. C., and R. M. Grant. "Knowledge and the Firm: Overview." *Strategic Management Journal* 17 (1996): 5–9.

Srivastava, R. K. "The Resource-Based View and Marketing: The Role of Market-Based Assets in Gaining Competitive Advantage." *Journal of Management* 27 (2001): 777–802.

Stevens, C. E., En Xie, and Mike W Peng. "Toward a Legitimacy-Based View of Political Risk: The Case of Google and Yahoo in China." *Strategic Management Journal* 37 (2016): 945–963.

Tarling, Nicholas. "'The Merest Pustule': The Singapore Mutiny of 1915." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 55 (1982): 26–59.

Tareq, Abd, El-Hamid Ahmed Amin. "Anglo–German Rivalry in the Malay Peninsula and Siam, 1870–1909." Ph.D. diss., University of Malaya, 1995.

Teece, D.F., G. Pisano, and A. Shuen. "Dynamic Capabilities and Strategic Management. Strategic." *Strategic Management Journal* 18 (1997): 509–533.

van Wyck, Jay. "Political Sources of International Business Risk: An Interdisciplinary Framework." *Journal of International Business Research* 9 (2010): 103–119.

Wannamethee, Peter Sek. "Anglo-Siamese Economic Relations: British Trade, Capital and Enterprise in Siam, 1856–1914." Ph.D. diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, 1969.

Wilkins, Mira. "Multinationals and Dictatorship. Europe in the 1930s and Early 1940s Century." In *European Business, Dictatorship, and Political Risk, 1920–45*, edited by Christopher Kobrak and Per H. Hansen, 22–38. New York: Berghahn Books, 2004.

Wong, Lin Ken. "The Trade of Singapore, 1819–1869." *Journal of Malayan Branch of Royal Asiatic Society* 33 (1960): 167–168.

Yacob, Shakila. "Trans-Generational Renewal as Managerial Succession: The Behn Meyer Story (1840–2000)." *Business History* 57 (2012): 1166–1185.

Newspapers

Hamburger Abendblatt
Malayan Saturday Post
Mercantile Advertiser
Singapore News Daily
Straits Budget
Straits Chronicle
Straits Settlements Government Gazette
The Singapore Free Press
The Straits Times
The Straits Times Weekly Issue

Archival Sources

Arkib Negara Malaysia (The National Archives, Malaysia) (ANM), Kuala Lumpur.
The National Archives (TNA), London.
U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.