自由港原則：向所有旗幟開放

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自由港的理念

對新加坡影響最深遠的決定，是把它定為自由港。各國船隻均可駛入港口，卸貨裝貨後離去，無須就所買賣的貨物繳付關稅。新加坡被禁止透過港口稅費取得收入。[1]

萊佛士視自由港為對抗荷蘭體制的武器。在同一封1819年6月10日的信中，他寫道：「這片海域中的一個自由港，終必打破荷蘭壟斷的魔咒；馬耳他在西方的地位，新加坡亦可在東方取得。」[2]英國在拿破崙戰爭期間取得馬耳他，作為地中海的海軍基地和貿易站。這項比較顯示萊佛士如何看待這個據點：它是海洋帝國的一個戰略據點，以開放吸引貿易，以英國的力量保護貿易。

自由港原則取材自當時在英國日益流行的思想。亞當·斯密對重商主義的批判於1776年出版。此後，英國製造商和商人日益要求自由進入市場。希望終結公司對華壟斷的私人商人，亦採用同樣的論據。在亞洲各港口，自由港具有實際意義：它取消了荷蘭、西班牙及亞洲統治者所徵收、推高貿易成本的稅費和限制。[3]

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不徵關稅的收入：餉碼

一個不徵關稅的據點仍然需要收入。它須支付行政、警隊和公共工程的開支，因為加爾各答的公司期望它自負盈虧。法夸爾採用、其繼任者加以發展的答案，就是餉碼制度。政府通常以拍賣方式，把經營某些業務的專營權——鴉片銷售、酒類銷售，以及在萊佛士禁止之前的賭博——出售予私人承辦商即餉碼商；他們為牌照支付一筆固定款項，再從顧客身上收回。[4]

特別是鴉片餉碼，在19世紀大部分時間裏成為新加坡殖民政府最重要的收入來源。鴉片餉碼由華商財團承辦，他們利用所得利潤累積財富和影響力。餉碼把殖民地的財政與其本身勞動人口的鴉片消費捆綁在一起。[5]換言之，自由港與課稅並無矛盾，只是以特定方式分配稅負：貿易免稅，消費——尤其是鴉片消費——則承擔政府開支。

常見誤解

自由港有時被理解為不徵稅的據點。早期新加坡對貿易不徵關稅，但透過鴉片、酒類以及（至1823年為止的）賭博的牌照和餉碼取得收入。這項選擇有利於商人，並把財政負擔轉嫁至消費者，而他們當中許多是貧窮的勞工。現代新加坡的財政模式對商業和資本徵收低稅，並從消費和國有資產取得可觀收入，其淵源可謂源遠流長。

自由港與法治

自由港為商人提供的不只是免稅。它提供一個擁有海軍的歐洲強國的保護、可預見的行政，以及日益完善、能強制執行合約和財產權的法院制度。萊佛士1823年的規例訂明了土地登記、市場運作的規則，以及由從商界選出的裁判官執行司法的安排。[6]

自由貿易與法律保障的結合，正是上一章在海峽成功港口中所識別的制度模式的核心：保護、可預見性和適中的通行代價。蘇丹時代的馬六甲三者兼備。葡萄牙和荷蘭統治下的馬六甲以及荷蘭控制下的廖內，則以武力提高通

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行代價。英國治下的新加坡提供保護和可預見性，而貿易本身的代價為零。研究新加坡轉口貿易的歷史學家黃麟根（Wong Lin Ken）總結指，新加坡能抵禦荷蘭的競爭，是因為"it had a headstart, and, what was more important, it had no governmental interference in trade"（它起步較早，更重要的是政府不干預貿易）。[7]

新加坡與荷蘭體制的比較

群島上荷蘭與英國體制的對比不應過分誇大。荷蘭人有時亦設有自由港，而英國人則在別處實施壟斷，尤其是在印度的鴉片。然而，在1820年代的海峽，這種對比是真實存在的，亞洲商人亦有此感受。來自蘇拉威西的武吉士商人、來自廈門和廣州的中式帆船商人，以及來自巨港的阿拉伯商人，都從親身經驗中了解荷蘭的稅費和限制，因而選擇了讓他們免受這些負擔的新加坡。[8]

這項比較預示了一個貫穿金融中心後來歷史的主題。新加坡一再提供比競爭對手更開放、更可預見或成本更低的制度來吸引業務，同時維持秩序井然、守法合規的聲譽。開放與誠信之間的平衡，以及開放所帶來的聲譽風險，將在本書E及H部分探討。

註釋

1. Wikipedia, "Founding years of modern Singapore"（2026年9月瀏覽）：新加坡被建立為"a free port"，不得透過港口稅費取得收入。 ↩
2. 萊佛士致Addenbrooke上校，1819年6月10日，引自"Letters and Correspondences of Raffles", *The History Makers*（samhistmakers），2026年9月瀏覽。 ↩
3. 關於1810及1820年代自由貿易思想對英國亞洲政策的影響，以及檳城和新加坡的自由港模式，參見Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay*

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World 1780–1824，以及Wong Lin Ken, "Singapore: Its Growth as an Entrepot Port, 1819–1941", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*。 ↩

4. Wikipedia, "Founding years of modern Singapore"（2026年9月瀏覽）：法夸爾訴諸"selling licenses for gambling and the sale of opium"；Wikipedia, "Stamford Raffles"（2026年9月瀏覽）：1823年萊佛士"imposed heavy taxation on what he considered social evils such as drunkenness and opium smoking"。 ↩
5. 關於鴉片餉碼作為殖民地新加坡的主要收入來源及華人財團的角色，參見Carl A. Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800–1910*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1990。 ↩
6. 萊佛士1823年的規例，包括從商人中委任裁判官以及有關土地和市場的規則，概述於C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore 1819–2005*, Singapore, NUS Press, 2009，第1章。 ↩
7. Wong Lin Ken, "Singapore: Its Growth as an Entrepot Port, 1819–1941", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*，經Cambridge Core瀏覽，2026年9月。 ↩
8. 關於1820年代武吉士人和中式帆船商人捨荷蘭港口而選擇新加坡，參見National Library Board Singapore, Infopedia, "Bugis trade"，以及Wong Lin Ken, "Singapore: Its Growth as an Entrepot Port, 1819–1941"。 ↩

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