
THE JAPANESE



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PREFACE

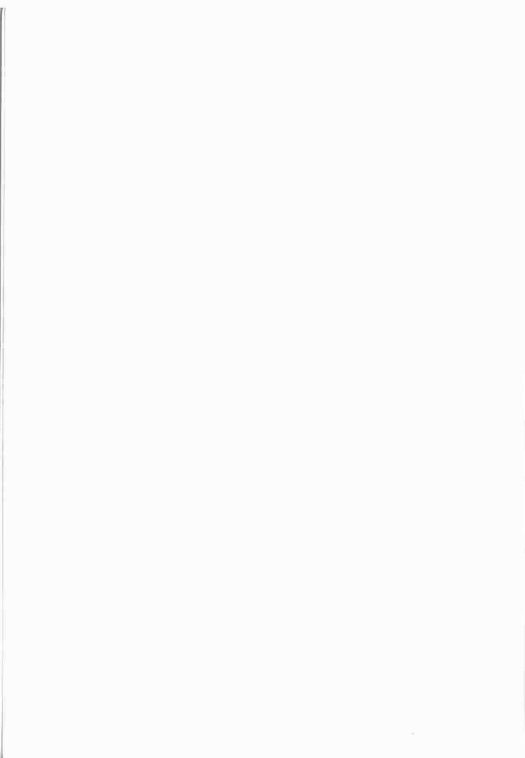
Our country is well known as a country which was colonized. The colonialists had brought about some good and bad effects to the people of Malaysia today.

Besides that, there are immigrants of various races who have now become part of the people of this country.

These impact of colonialism and the migration of people of various races have made Malaysia unique.

This historical series is published to help students of primary and lower secondary schools to enhance their understanding of the history of our country.

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THE JAPANESE

Do you know which country is called the Land of the Rising Sun? It is Japan. Japan is situated in the region of the Pacific Ocean. The capital city of Japan is Tokyo.

By 1900, Japan had become a progressive industrial nation. Japan was the most industrialised country in the East. Therefore, Japan needed a lot of raw materials. These raw materials included rubber, tin, petroleum and others.

Countries in Southeast Asia were rich in these raw materials. For instance, Indonesia had petro-

leum and tin, whereas the Malay Peninsula was rich in tin and rubber. Therefore, in occupying Southeast Asia, Japan would be able to possess these raw materials easily.

Japan would not need to import raw materials from other countries. Japan did not want to depend on other countries for the supply of raw materials.

Japan had her own purpose for invading other Asian countries. They wanted to free Southeast Asia from Western colonization. Malaya, Burma and Brunei were under the British. Indonesia was the colonial territory of the Dutch. The Philippines was under the rule of the United States of America.

Japan had become a powerful military nation. The Japanese defeated the Russian in 1905. This was the first time a country from the East had defeated a Western country.

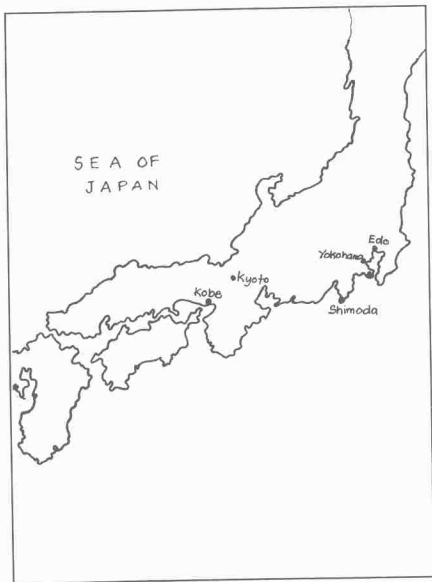
The Japanese believed that it was their duty

to free the countries of Southeast Asia from the oppression of their Western Colonial powers. The countries of Southeast Asia needed freedom and could form their own governments.

To achieve this purpose, Japan spread the propaganda which called for "Asia for the Asians". Japan promised to free the countries of Southeast Asia from their Western colonial powers. Japan would help to develop the economy of these countries.

Therefore, Japan started the "Great East Asia Common Prosperity Sphere Circle". The purpose was to establish economic cooperations among the countries of Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia would become a great market for Japan. The people of Southeast Asia would enjoy better lives.

In the 1930's, the Japanese government was controlled by the militarists. The Japanese generals had their own ambitions for Southeast Asia.



Map of Japan

Officers of the Japanese navy and army had become a powerful armed force.

In 1931, Japan occupied Manchuria. The success in occupying Manchuria raised their prestige.

The Japanese armed forces hated the politicians because they were too passive. In 1936, the militarists made a decision to overthrow the politicians in power.

A new government was formed. The government was mostly represented by military officers. These new leaders were strong supporters of Hitler. Hitler was the leader of the German government.

Japan later joined the Axis forces which comprised Germany and Italy. They aimed to rule the whole world.

With the formation of the new government, the Japanese became more aggressive. Japan

planned to expand her empire by occupying other countries, just like what the Germans had done.

The Germans occupied the European countries. The countries of Southeast Asia became the target of the Japanese ambition.

To fulfill her ambition, Japan joined in the Second World War on 8 December 1941. The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour in Hawaii. Simultaneous attacks were carried out on the Malay Peninsula on the same day.

The attack on the Malay Peninsula was carried out from the Japanese military bases in Indochina north of the Malay Peninsula. The Japanese army first landed on Pantai Sabak, near Kota Bharu, Kelantan. They wanted to capture the British air base in Pengkalan Chepa.

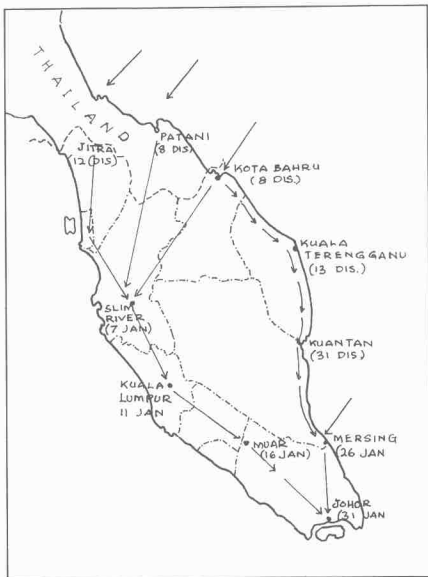
The British military defence in the northern Malay Peninsula was very weak. They were defenceless against the advance of the Japanese

army. The British made their preparation in Singapore. They had expected the Japanese to attack from the south.

The British army had to retreat. They hoped to counterattack from some strategic locations. Unfortunately, they were unable to do so. They were unable to stop the Japanese army from advancing. The Japanese were too brave. They advanced continuously to the south in hot pursuit of the British army.

At the time the Japanese landed in Kota Bharu, there were two British warships in Singapore called the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales*. The British had dispatched these two warships to the northern Malay Peninsula. They wanted to stop the landing of the Japanese army.

However, the Japanese army was more skillful and efficient. The Japanese bombers detected the two British warships. Both ships were attacked when they were sailing off the coast of Kuantan,



The Japanese attack

Pahang. Fierce fighting caused the sinking of both the British warships.

This happened two days after the Japanese had landed in Kota Bharu. The sinking of the two British warships dampened the spirit of the British. Hundreds of British soldiers were killed.

The Japanese army continued to advance and occupy the states in southern Malay Peninsula. They advanced rapidly along roads and tracks in the jungle. They used the bicycles confiscated from the local people.

There were also Malayan Japanese who gave assistance to the Japanese army. These Japanese had stayed for a long period in Malaya.

A troop of Japanese army succeeded in capturing Pulau Pinang on 17 December 1941, after occupying Alor Setar. Pulau Pinang was a British stronghold in Malaya.



The Japanese soldiers using bicycles during the attack ✓

The capturing of Pulau Pinang was carried out using small boats which were confiscated at the Pulau Pinang harbour. These boats were also used for landing in the southern part of Malaya.

The Japanese army killed many British soldiers. They trapped the British soldiers who tried to retreat to the south.

The Japanese army captured Ipoh on 27 December 1941. Bit by bit the British territory was occupied by the Japanese.

To stop the advancement of the Japanese army to Kuala Lumpur, the British engaged the service of a troop of Indian soldiers. As a result, a fierce battle erupted at Slim River. The Indian soldiers were defeated. Kuala Lumpur fell into the hands of the Japanese on 11 January 1942.

To avoid heavy attacks from the Japanese army, the British retreated to Johor. On 14 January 1942, the Australian army managed to

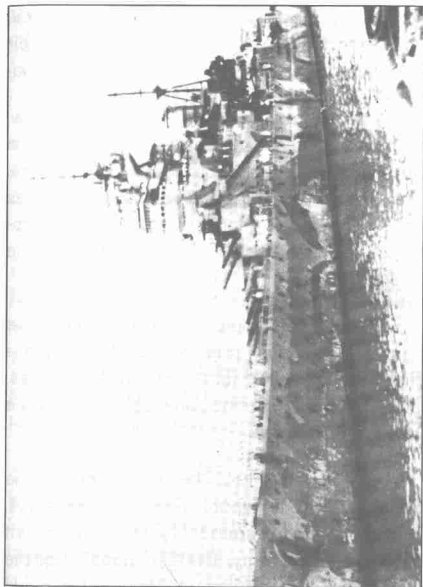
defeat a troop of the Japanese army at Gemas, Johor.

The victory was shortlived because the Japanese reinforcement army had landed in Mersing and Batu Pahat. This forced the Australian army to retreat.

On 31 January 1942, the British and her allies had to retreat to Singapore. The Japanese army had become more vicious and occupied the whole Malay Peninsula. The British stockade in Singapore was separated by the Straits of Teberau. Therefore, it made the British felt quite safe.

However, the Japanese army was determined to defeat the British wherever they were. Air strikes that were launched by the Japanese paralysed the British and reinforcement from her allies could not reach them.

The British had positioned their cannons and weapons at the southern part of Malaya. They



The British Warship

had expected the Japanese to attack from the sea. Their expectation was totally miscalculated. Their weapons could not be used to defend the Japanese invasion from Johor.

The next step taken by the Japanese was to stop the water supply from Johor to Singapore. The British were trapped as Singapore was dependent on Johor for her water supply. Therefore, the British position in Singapore became weaker.

A fierce battle erupted between the Japanese army and the British allied forces. The Japanese army was too strong for the British allied forces. On 8 February 1942, the Japanese occupied the whole of Singapore.

On 15 February 1942, the Commandant of the British army in Singapore, Lieutenant General A. E. Percival, had to surrender to the Commandant of the Japanese army. The Commandant of the Japanese army, Lieutenant General Tomoyuki

Yamashita, was better known as the "Malayan Tiger".

The Japanese succeeded in occupying the whole of Malaya in just less than two and a half months. This showed how fast the Japanese invasion was. Why had it been so easy for the Japanese to capture Malaya?

The weak British military defence was the main reason. They were not prepared because they had not expected the Japanese to invade Malaya so rapidly.

The British also did not have enough soldiers to defend Malaya. Their soldiers comprised of British, Australian and Indian soldiers.

Besides that, they did not had high morale for going into a war. Their weapons were also insufficient. Most of the British soldiers were inexperienced in warfare.

The British had made a mistake in planning out their strategies. They had expected the Japanese army to attack Malaya by sea from the south. Therefore, they had strengthened their defence only in Singapore.

Unexpectedly, the Japanese army had invaded from the north. British soldiers in the north had been unable to stop the advancement of the Japanese army.

The British navy and air force had been weak. Although they had possessed many war planes, most of them were old and out of date. These planes were not as fast as the Japanese planes, *Zero Fighters*.

The British had only two warships, the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales*. Unfortunately, these two warships had been sunk by the Japanese bombers. The sinking of these ships had dampened the fighting spirit of the British army.

On the Japanese side, they had been more experienced. Soldiers that had been sent to Malaya were specially selected for the job. They had been trained to fight in the jungle.

With these reasons, the Japanese soldiers were able to defeat the British soldiers easily. The Japanese soldiers were very loyal to their Emperor and country. The Japanese soldiers also had high morale. They were determined to capture Malaya and Singapore.

The propaganda "Asia for the Asians" which was carried by them was welcomed by the local people. Propaganda meant spreading the good deeds of the Japanese.

The people in Southeast Asia believed that the Japanese would free them from the oppression of the Western colonial powers. Therefore, they had given their cooperation to the Japanese army. They had shown the way to the Japanese army.



Japanese soldiers

When they had ruled over Malaya, the Japanese did not keep their word to the people of Malaya. Before that, they had promised to free Malaya from the British oppressor.

The Japanese turned Malaya into part of their colonial territory. All the promises were not meant to be kept. They were just to ease the process of occupation of Malaya.

Japan carried out military administration in Malaya. Civilian administration was not practised because Japan was still at war.

Malaya was ruled by the 25th Battalion of the Japanese army under the leadership of General Hitoshi Mishioeda. The administrative centre was in Singapore. Singapore was known as "Syonan" or the Southern Light.

Other states were turned into protectorates. The northern states of Malaya, namely Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu were handed



One of the Japanese soldiers

over to Siam. According to the treaty with Siam, Japan would return these states to Siam if they offered their assistance to the Japanese during the invasion on Malaya. These states were taken by the British in 1909.

Japan's major goal was to carry out a standardized and an integrated administration over Malaya. State Legislative Council was set up in every state. Membership of the council was opened to all local citizens.

Territorial Governor or the Japanese Mayor was the president of the council. The sultan of the state was the vice president. The council commenced meeting whenever it was called by the president.

During the early stages of the Japanese occupation in Malaya, the status of the Malay rulers was not clear. Then, the Japanese agreed to restore the status of the Malay rulers as the sovereign state sultans. The decision was made

during a meeting held on 20 and 21 January 1943.

This was done by the Japanese to gather direct support from the Malays for their administration. They knew that if the Malays were to oppose the Japanese rule, Japan's position would not be safe.

Japan believed that the Malays had their rights on Malaya. Other races were considered as immigrants. Because the Japanese had restored the sovereignty of the Malay rulers, they did not face much problem with the Malays. The Malay rulers and Malays started to support the Japanese.

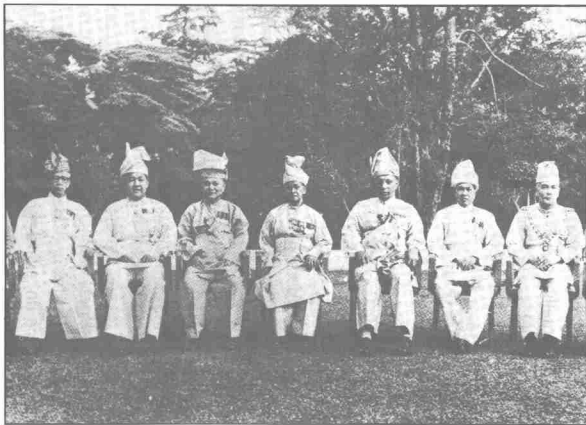
The Malays were fighting to oppose the British. This was supported by the Japanese. Therefore, the Malays liked the Japanese. The Malays were recruited to serve in the Japanese government. On the whole, the Japanese did not act cruel or harsh towards the Malays.

For internal security, the Japanese set up military intelligence units, namely the Tekikan, Military Police and Toko. Of these, the Military Police was the most feared by the public.

The task of the Military Police was to spy on the people to find out if there were people who were plotting against the Japanese occupation in Malaya. It was considered an offence under the Japanese laws for the people to listen to the radio.

The membership of this unit was opened to all races. However, most of its members were Malays. They were called the Japanese "running dogs". They had the authority to question and punish those people who were believed to have opposed the Japanese government.

Army troops were set up too. These troops comprised local men who were streamed into the Giyugun, Boetai and Heinas. With the military intelligence units and the army troops, the Japanese government was able to control opposition



The Sultans sovereignty was maintained

from the people of Malaya.

The economy of the country fell apart during the Japanese occupation. This caused great sufferings to the people. The rubber and tin industries were in a slump.

Before retreating, the British destroyed all the equipment for tin mining and rubber processing. As a result, the rubber and tin industries were abandoned totally.

The British had done this to stop the Japanese from benefiting from these natural resources.

With this action of the British, Malaya was unable to export her commodities as she used to. Trading activities at the ports of Pulau Pinang, Singapore and Kelang stopped. Cargo ships were stopped by the British navy. Rice from Burma was unable to be imported.

Malaya also experienced an inflation. The

Japanese government started printing her own money. These bank notes were known as the Banana Tree bank notes. The uncontrolled distribution of the Banana Tree bank notes caused the prices of things to increase.

The people lost confidence in the Japanese bank notes. Towards the end of The Second World War the amount of the Japanese bank notes had increased from \$200 million before the war to \$400 million.

As a result, the Japanese currency rate fell tremendously. The Japanese currency had become a useless currency.

Food was not enough. The people of Malaya were forced to plant sweet potato, tapioca and yam. Thousands of acres of rubber trees were chopped down to turn the estates into agricultural land. As a result, many people in Malaya lost their jobs.

The Japanese government gathered youths of all races to be sent to Burma. They were forced to become labourers for the building of a railway. The railway became known as the Death Railway because many people died there.

The health of the people was in an appalling state. Precautions were not taken against the spreading of diseases. The medical supply brought by the Japanese army was just enough for their own use.

The shortage of nutritious food caused many people to suffer from all kinds of sickness. Many people died, especially the children.

The running of schools was taken over by the Japanese. English, Chinese and Tamil medium schools were abolished. These schools were substituted with Japanese schools. These schools used the Japanese language or Nippongo.

The Japanese national anthem, Kimigaya, was



Tapioca – the main food during Japanese occupation ✓

made compulsory to be sung in schools. School children were taught to love Japan.

For adults who did not want to learn the Japanese language, technical, business, agricultural, and fishery schools were set up. Several navy and army troops were set up to train the local youths. They were given the chance of serving in the Japanese armed forces.

The Japanese treated the people of Malaya differently according to their race. The Chinese suffered the most. This was because Japan had been at war with China since 1937. The Japanese accused the Chinese in Malaya of offering assistance to China in the war against Japan.

The Japanese suspected every Chinese of opposing Japan. Thousands of Chinese were killed because they were accused of plotting against the Japanese. Many Chinese were sent to the Thai-Burmese border to build the Death Railway.

However, towards the end of the Japanese rule, they changed their attitudes toward the Chinese. They realized the important roles played by the Chinese in the economic sector of Malaya. The Chinese were hardworking tin miners. They were also succesful traders.

The Japanese took a few steps to regain the trust of the Chinese. In October 1943, Japan abolished the registration laws requiring the Chinese to register themselves with the government. Chinese were also selected to serve in the Japanese government.

Soon the Chinese started to trust the Japanese. They toned down their opposition against the Japanese government.

The Indians were given better treatment. This was because Japan wanted the assistance from the Indians to drive away the British in India. The Indians were fighting against the British in India.

To achieve this objective, Japan set up the Indian League of Independence and the Indian National Army. Both of these organizations were under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose.

Although the Indians were given good treatment, there were still a number of Indians who were also sent to the Thai-Burmese border to build the Death Railway. As a matter of fact, the Japanese treated everyone cruelly.

Later, the Indians started to hate the Japanese and no longer trusted them. The Indians joined the anti-Japanese movements together with the Malays and the Chinese. They set up the MPAJA or Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army to fight against the Japanese.

The Japanese treated the Malays better because they needed the cooperation of the Malays. Japan hoped to gain the Malays trust by spreading anti-Chinese propaganda.

Although they were given good treatment, the Malays started to doubt Japan's intentions. They had to suffer like the other races because of shortages in food, clothing and medication. The cruelty of the Japanese occupation was felt by all races.

Riches and luxuries that were promised by the Japanese had not materialized. On the other hand, they only experienced suffering, hunger and fear. The Malays were disappointed and they also joined the anti-Japanese movements together with the Chinese and the Indians.

The Japanese occupation of Malaya which lasted three and a half year had left its mark on the people of Malaya. Japan which was hoped to bring freedom, had brought suffering on them instead.

However, there was some good from all these for the people of Malaya. The Japanese occupation had raised the nationalism spirit of the people of Malaya, especially the Malays.

Before the Second World War, the Malays were not at all active in the nation's politics. They just let the British ruled over them. They just followed the instructions by the British.

The Japanese rule had awakened and given an experience to the Malays. They gained the confidence that they were able to rule Malaya themselves.

They also wanted to defend their rights. The Japanese said that Malaya belonged to the people of Malaya and not the British.

The nationalism spirit was clearly noted when the Malays set up the UMNO party and several other parties. They opposed the returning of the British after the war. Then, they proclaimed independence from the British.

The Japanese occupation had also caused the Communist Party of Malaya to move actively. Before the invasion of the Japanese, the Com-

munist Party of Malaya (CPM) was not very active. The Communist Party of Malaya was banned by the British since 1927. Communists were considered a threat to the British government.

During the Japanese occupation, the British wanted to defeat the Japanese. The British made a pact with the communists. Therefore, the Communist Party of Malaya received assistance from the British.

The British provided them with weapons and military training, they could fight against the Japanese.

The British ruled Malaya again after the war. The communists felt cheated. In the end, the communists rebelled against the British in 1948.

These were some effects of the Japanese occupation in Malaya. On the whole, the Japanese occupation had brought suffering and hardship to the people of Malaya.

However, a new community was born. They had confidence. They did not want to be ruled by the British. They hated the British. In the end, our country achieved independence on 31 August 1957, ten years after the Japanese occupation.