
The History of the Look-to-the-East Idea in Social During the Era of Japanese Occupation in Malaya (1941-1945)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the existence of Look-To-The-East idea in Malaya during Japanese occupation era between 1941 and 1945. During this period, the field of journalism and press have been dominated by the Japanese administration or Malayan Military Administration (MMA). Mass communication mediums such as newspapers and magazines have been used as propaganda tools by MMA. Their main purpose was to dominate the field of journalism and press printing to gather people's support in their war campaigns. The government also exploited newspapers and magazines to obtain cooperation from people in all plans they wished to implement. To dominate the field of journalism, MMA had instructed that all efforts related to the publication must obtain prior authorization. Although the printed media in Malaya then was made the propaganda tool by the Japanese administrators, the Look-To-The-East idea was propagated through various newspapers and magazines such as *Berita Malai*, *Malai Sinpo*, *Semangat Asia*, *Suara Timur* and *Fajar Asia*. This study explores the existence of the Look-To-The-East idea that can be found in *Malai Sinpo* newspaper and *Semangat Asia* magazine. It can be divided into politics, social, culture and arts, language, economy, youth, women, family, religion and education areas. This study is centralized upon and focuses on only the social area.

Keywords: Malai Sinpo, Semangat Asia, Social, Japan, Look-To-The-East Idea, Malaya.

Introduction

Touching on Japan as a guide to the Malay community during the Japanese occupation era, there were thirty eight studies that cited this issue briefly, among the important one are Muhammad Sa'id bin Haji Sulaiman in his book *Semangat Nippon Yang Sebenarnya Diuraikan*, Muhd. Yusof Ibrahim in an article entitled *Pensejarahan Melayu dalam Zaman*

Pendudukan Jepun (1942-1945), Ishak Saat in an article entitled *Peranan Politik Akhbar Suara Rakyat 1945-48*, Mahani Musa in an article entitled *Sumbangan Wanita Melayu Dalam Kegiatan Persuratkhabaran dan Majalah di Malaysia, Tahun 1920-an 1960-an*, Noraini binti Muhammad in her thesis *Majalah Semangat Asia* and Shaharom Husain in his

book *Memoir Shaharom Husain: Selingkar Kenangan Abadi*. This study will give new insights, by gathering all the primary sources for the social area that are available in *Malai Sinpo* newspaper and *Semangat Asia* magazine that led to the formation of the Look-To-The-East idea. The methodology used is based on the observation method of the resources available in libraries and the National Archives of Malaysia. This leads to the reason why this study is important since there were no previous study has been conducted to unearth the existence of the Look-To-The-East idea in *Malai Sinpo* newspaper and *Semangat Asia* magazine. Thus, this is the first study of its kind.

Semangat Asia was first published on 18 January 1943 by Malai Shinbun Sha (Malay Journalism Office), 146 Cecil Street, Singapore. *Semangat Asia* contain Roman alphabet and this newspaper contains page number that is not fixed to each of its publication. It is not more than 34 pages and not less than 28 pages including the advertisements. The price is 15 cents for number 1 to 6 and has increased to 25 cents for number 8 to 12. Its subscription price for a year is two ringgit. This magazine is a monthly pictorial Roman alphabet Malay language magazine. Among the authors are Ishak Haji Muhammad (Pak Sako), Abdullah Kamel and Abdul Samad Ismail. *Semangat Asia* managed to be published by 17 editions from Volume 1 (numbers 1 to 10) in 1943 and Volume 2 (numbers 1 to 4) in 1944. *Semangat Asia* distributed around all bookstores and journalism representatives in Malaya. The purpose of *Semangat Asia* publication is to introduce Japan to the residents of Malaya and Sumatra because before the Japanese occupation, only a few of them knows Japan. *Semangat Asia* is also intended to instill the spirit of brotherhood and the close relations between the Asian races,

expanding the use of the Japanese and Malay languages, the development of Malay culture and arts and provide a wider reading to all the Malays who are in the city and in the countryside through language and method that are easy to understand. Due to Malaya and Sumatra has been consolidated its administration by the Japanese, the relationship between residents of these regions become more close and strong than ever. *Semangat Asia* expected to paved road leading to this purpose. The publisher and the author of *Semangat Asia* also hoped that the press, members of the literary and intellectual people in Sumatra and Malaya will offer help in meeting the goals of its publication. *Malai Sinpo* printed and published by Syonan Sinbun-Kai in 25, Pudu Road, Kuala Lumpur from 1 January 1943 to 31 August 1945. Its editor is Francis Cooray, a Ceylonese journalist in Kuala Lumpur. At this time also, the Axis powers in the Second World War, namely Germany, Italy and Japan were at the peak. *Malai Sinpo* is a daily newspaper published daily except Sunday. The total of its page is between 1 to 3 pages, English language and were priced at 10 cents. Most of its articles are related to the Second World War progress, putting the spirit of fraternity and the close relations between the Asian races, explained the policies of the Japanese authorities in Malaya and expanding the usage of Japanese language.

Malai Sinpo is also a propaganda newspaper to get sympathy to Japanese culture and religion and its army who was already conquered Manchuria and almost the entire of Southeast Asia. *Malai Sinpo* also published for the Malays reading in Sumatra since Malaya and Sumatra have been consolidated its administration by Japan. In the author first article on 1 January 1943, *Malai Sinpo* rejected the interpretation of press freedom as

understood previously. According to them, the slogan of press freedom does not have meaning at that time if the word freedom means unrestricted license to say anything. In the New Orders that created by Japan, public opinion does not exist separately from the opinion of the country. Newspaper can not exist as a separate country.

Lessons learned from the Look-To-The-East idea in Social Area

Semangat Asia in article 'Waktu Tokyo' specify a new changes brought by the Japanese in Malaya, Sumatra and other areas in the South Pacific is Tokyo Time. Tokyo Time is faster one hour and a half from the old time set by British, based on Greenwich Time. This changes train residents to wake up earlier than 8 am following the old time and get many other benefits. In the evening when they finished work at 5 or 5: 30 pm by Tokyo Time, people still have a lot of free time to take a break, playing, watch a movie, read a book or gardening. As Tokyo Time train people to sleep quickly, it also removes nocturnal habits and morning sleep. *Semangat Asia* in article 'Jika Tuan Naik Kretapi' sees the proper manners and politeness as practised by the Japanese while in the train. Later in the article 'Kewajiban Pemuda2 Malai', *Semangat Asia* says Japan believed Malays will heed to become soldiers, whether army, navy and air soldiers to defend the country. The Malays should be aware that they actually have to set up the task to control the homeland and to protect its security, in accordance with their position as the native.

Semangat Asia in article 'Malai Baru' as well as *Malai Sinpo* in article 'Asians Being Awakened Great Heritage: Methodical and Gradual Advance of Malai Towards Prosperity', article 'Malai A Strong Advance Base To-Day: Noteworthy Progress By Military Administration' and article

'Economic Development of Malai: Manufacturing Centre of Greater East Asia' calls the Malays to work with Japan in the development of Malaya. Chichiro Tsutsi in article 'Melayu Tidak Malas' state the British deliberately encourage laziness attitude at the Malays, so they can bring in foreign labour to carry out all types of economic activities. In ancient times the Malays are very diligent and work hard until at one point, almost the entire Southern region has been dominated by them. Under the administration of Japan, they encourage the Malays to undertake their farms so they do not have to rely on food items from outside again. As a result, Malaya experience quick changes in economics and politics. Atamelayu in article 'Anak2 Melayu Yang Telah Ke-Nippon' state after Malaya having closely friendship with Japan, it is the time for the exchange of culture and knowledge. The parties visit from Malaya to Japan at this time divided into two groups. The first is to teach Malay language. It started with a visit by Abdul Hamid bin Husein departing to Japan in 1908 (2568) to become the first Malay teacher in Foreign Languages School in Tokyo. Then because of the importance of health, he was forced to return back to Malaya to work with Kelantan Government. Ibrahim bin Ahmad from Singapore took over the Malay Department on 28 August 1909 (2569). At the end of 1910 he returned briefly to Malaya, and then back again by bringing his wife named Rukiah binti Abdullah. This woman is the first Malayan woman came to Japan, after the Royal Highness Sultanah of Johor. Ibrahim bin Ahmad died on 28 May 1912 (2572) and buried at Zoshigaya cemetery, Tokyo. Ahmad bin Ambak took over the Malay Department from mid-1912 until 1914 (2574). But then he died upon returning to Singapore. Bachik bin Wanchik becomes a Malay teacher in Japan starting from April 1914. He was the longest Malay teacher settled in Japan, from

the years 1914 until 1938 (2574 until 2598). At first he taught in Foreign Languages School in Tokyo, but after his return from Malaya in 1922, he moved to teach at the school of Foreign Languages in Osaka. On 14 March 1938 he was (at the time known as Prof. Bachik) return to his homeland in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Since that time he still helped Japanese efforts in his state, though his age getting older. Ibrahim bin Bachik who is the son of Prof. Bachik replaces his position as a Malay teacher in Tokyo in 1922, when his father moved to Osaka. Abdul Rani bin Haji Abdullah from Perak became a Malay teacher in 1925 to replace Ibrahim bin Bachik until 1932. At this time the Malay Department in Tokyo held by young Indonesian youths from Jawa, namely Purwadarminta and Sudjono. H.M. Idress became a Malay teacher in Kumamoto at the end of December 1942 (2602). He and his wife became Professor of Malay language in Japan. His wife, Bahriah Idress also received the title of Professor with her husband. She was the first Professor of Malay language from the Malay women. The results of their efforts in that long time payoffs when many Japanese individuals who came to Malaya in this war already understand and know how to speak Malay.

In the second party, the Malays visiting Japan to learn and expand their knowledge. There are some who come just to expand the view, instead of entering school. For example in 1934 Daud bin Muhammad Shah and Hamzah bin Abdullah has visited Japan with the aim to broaden their views. After that comes Dato' Setia Raja, Undang Rembau and Tengku Ahmad, son of Sultan of Selangor to Japan in different times. On 8 December 1939 Dato' Onn bin Jafar with his wife, Yahya bin Jaafar and Muhammad traveled to Japan on the way home from San Francisco, United States of America. The first Indonesian Malay that was born in Japan is Abdur Rahim namely son of Tuan Ibrahim bin Ahmad.

From the results of Prof. Bachik marriage with his Japanese wife who then named Zainab, born Malay childrens whose names are Abdul Manaf, Hafsa, Kasim dan Muhammad. The delegation to Japan with the intention of learning first flew on 15 December 1942 (2602), consists of 4 men and 2 women. They are Ungku Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Hamid, Ungku Abdul Hamid bin Abdul Majid, Wan Abdul Hamid bin M. Saleh, Ungku Muhsin bin Muhammad, Salehah binti H. Bakri dan Rosna Mahyudin. *Semangat Asia* in article 'Menyusun Masharakat Baru' urged the Malays to unite in facing the hardships and obstacles in setting up new Malaya. The Malays must also understand the meaning of East Asia War and the purpose of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Later in the article 'Jika Ada Kemahuan Dan Tenaga...', article 'Mara Terus', article 'Pati Uchapan P.M. Tojo' and article 'Jika Memberi Lebeh Akan Mendapat Lebeh Pula', *Semangat Asia* said the British and Dutch ruler only give priority to their profits only and kill all the wishes and ambitions of the Malays, while the Japanese ruler is opening an ample opportunity for the Malays to showing their knowledge and cleverness for the common good.

Semangat Asia in article 'Mari Bersenam Bersama2' and article 'Malai Sekarang' invites the Malays to exercise through Japanese body training named Radio Taiso. Exercise is seen not only makes body healthy, but also give a longer life. *Semangat Asia* quote from *Malai Sinpo* in article 'Aneka Warta' state the Muslims in Pulau Pinang and Seberang Perai proposing to collect a sum of money of about \$ 10,000 to be donated to the injured Japanese military personnel. There is also a collection of donations from the Chinese community in Malaya touched by *Malai Sinpo* in article 'For The Defence of Malai: Malacca Chinese Donate About \$3 ½ Million'. Professor Hadji Ideriess in article 'Semangat Nippon' states that if the history of the world see again, then we will find the government

names which has served as the world power in the past such as Babylon, Persian, Greek, Egyptian, Roman and others there is no age as older as the Japanese Government. Japan was able to defend its position until many centuries because of its good government policy and the enthusiasm spirit of its people. While the Western races still in darkness and backwardness, the Japanese already have a complete and proper government and life. In the 7th century the Japanese already have their history writing namely "Nippon Shoki" which proved that the integration and their very strong national spirit already formed a very important event. The Samurai during the Tokugawa era are high educated, urbane and has good mysticism nature. During the Tokugawa era, schools either primary, secondary until the highest were built up. Among the most famous history literature at this time was "Dai Nippon Shi" (Romance of the Nippon) compiled and composed under Mitsukuni Tokugawa, the grandson of Ieyasu Tokugawa. The Samurai getting trust from the Emperor of Japan to continue government affairs, economic and various fields of knowledge. Not less than 250 years the Tokugawa era run with inspiring the Japanese enthusiasm spirit. H. M. Ishak in article 'Mengajar Bangsa Dengan Perbuatan: Tauladan Mansor Bin Haji Bakri' state not long after Singapore surrendered, Mansor has established a Voluntary Team of Johor Youth to continue to work with the Malayan Military Administration. As the head of the Young Forces of Johor, Mansor have worked hard to explain the purpose of the Greater East Asia War to the community. He also called on his people to give full support to the government, encourage the public to farming, rising up the production of food products and take part in economic and business activities. All this efforts raises a good effect, with his name became famous and has appeared on the front page of the newspapers. *Semangat Asia* in article 'P.M. Tojo-Sultan2 Melayu',

Semangat Asia quote from *Berita Malai* in article 'Aneka Warta' and *Malai Sinpo* in article 'Premier Meets Sultans of Malai' peel the speech of Sultan Ibrahim from Johor on behalf of Malaya Sultans when they all met with Prime Minister Tojo on 5 July 1943 in Singapore during his trip to the Southern Region. Tojo's visit also touched by *Malai Sinpo* in article 'Premier Tojo Arrives in Syonan', article 'Premier Explains Purpose of Visit to South' and article 'Premier Tojo Reports to The Cabinet: Moved by Sincere Cooperation of People of Southern Regions'. In his speech, Sultan Ibrahim said the Malays will stand firm and loyal under the leadership of Japan which was able to eliminate the Western powers from East Asia and now are building and establish a new Asia. Hence the Malays with a unanimously heart will work together to achieve success in the construction of the new Asia. *Semangat Asia* quote from *Berita Malai* in article 'Aneka Warta' state at the invitation of the Japanese government, a group of visitors from Malaya and Sumatra has been visiting Japan to look at the current state of war there. The delegation from Sumatra led by M. Sjafe'i while the delegation from Malaya led by Ibrahim Yaakob. Ibrahim Yaakob views regarding Japan after that trip has been touched in article 'Pendapatan Dari Nippon'. His views aims to remake the Malays become one race with soul and energy like the Japanese. The visitors' delegation visit from Indonesia and Malaya to Japan in other times also touched by *Malai Sinpo* in article 'Indonesian Party Arrives in Nippon: Impressed by Astounding Growth of Country', article 'Malai Visitor Gives His Impressions of Nippon: Land of Exquisite Beauty and Excessive Enchantment', article 'To Further Mutual Understanding: Nippon Will Invite Leaders and Students From South', article 'Students Graduate in Nippon-Go: Malai Heads Honours Lost of Five' and

article 'Leaders of New Malai: Four Youths Going to Nippon'.

Malai Sinpo in article 'Last of English in Malai: Only Nippon and Axis Productions in Future' state to exterminate the Western influence and instill the East culture loving nature, British and American films will be banned in Malaya and replaced by Japanese films. A. Samad Ismail in article 'Kewajiban Film2 Nippon: Mengenalkan Nippon Kepada Kita, Mendalamkan Fahaman "Tertib Baharu" and 'Memulehkan Smangat Asia', *Semangat Asia* in article 'Haha Kogusa' as well as Malai Sinpo in article 'Successful Cinema Experiment: Malai Dialogue in Nippon Film', article 'Nippon No Haha: An Inspiring Film: Depicts A Mother's Loving Kindness', article 'A Musical Film With A Moral: "Hoho Emi No Kuni" At The Nippon Gekizyo' and article 'Wagaya No Kaze: Film Depicting The Spirit To Serve'discuss the advantages of Japanese films.

Conclusion

Putting Japan as an example and a role model can be viewed as a form of Look-To-The-East idea that has been initiated since the beginning of the 20th century. It was the Kaum Muda who initiated it through the publication of *al-Imam* magazine in July 1906 and subsequently, this idea was expanded by other newspapers and magazines during the British colonial era. After Japan had successfully driven the British out of Malaya, the Look-To-The-East idea was still continued by the Japanese government during the Second World War through the publication of *Malai Sinpo* newspaper and *Semangat Asia* magazine. *Malai Sinpo* and *Semangat Asia* were also published for the reading of the Malays in Indonesia, making use of the standardized Malay language in the paper for the Malays in Malaya and Indonesia. Although there are various areas can be found in *Malai Sinpo* and *Semangat Asia*, this paper only deals with social area.

Look-To-The-East idea adopted in the Malay community life at this time comprised of various aspects. For example, the introduction of Tokyo Time, proper manners and urbane of the Japanese in the train, the duty of the Malays to guard the homeland and protect its security, cooperating with Japan in Malaya's development, undertake the land so don't have to depend on food items from outside again, cultural exchange and knowledge, the Malays are given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and cleverness, Radio Taiso and advantages of Japanese films.

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