

## **Japanese Occupation And Malayan Literary Works.**

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### **Abstract**

This is a preliminary observation of some of the impacts of the Japanese Occupation in Malayan literature, based on the poems, short stories and novels available at the time writing this paper. It begins with the warm welcome from the Malays, but great fears from the Chinese to the Japanese Occupation force. . The Malays saw the arrival of Japanese army to fight the British as the first step towards freedom and independence. During the Japanese Occupation, literary activity almost came to a halt, except some poems, short stories in the Malay language published Japanese owned newspapers and magazines which act as Japanese propaganda and some underground publications from *Mahua* writers. Only after the war, there was a spurt of writings in Malay, Chinese and English languages retelling the true colors of Japanese wartime brutality and atrocities. Now, the unpleasant memories of Japanese occupation can be recalled from the literary works, photographs, records and reports, left behind, reluctantly or willingly. Though these accounts of suffering and hardships are no different from other war situations, it is not only interesting to know what is its impact on the literary development then and later on, but also more importantly to understand the lesson that this event holds for the Malays, Chinese and Indians in a multiracial community. One important point is that writers, in their different capacities, did help in promoting patriotism and fanning anti-Japanese occupation. More importantly, the Japanese military victory over the British armed forces play an important role as a catalyst in ending Western colonial rule in post-war Southeast Asia and other changes in the Malayan literary works.

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Japanese Occupation in Peninsular Malaya began on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941 after Japanese Occupation force launched its attacks on Kota Baharu, preceded by her attack on the US naval base in Pearl Harbour. With the surrender of Singapore ten weeks later, on 15 February 1942, Malaya and Singapore, previously as one British colony, were occupied by the Japanese. The latter set out immediately to establish control over almost all aspects of life, including literary writings, for three-and-a-half years. In the beginning, Japanese was welcomed by the Malays as they came with power, vigor, and promise of freedom for them who had been under Western colonial powers since 16<sup>th</sup> century and hoped life will be better off under the Japanese. Such a euphemism was shared by Mochtar Lubis (1992: 87) who wrote that

“To welcome the Japanese troops, the Indonesians had already hoisted the Indonesian national red-and-white flag. The whole city looked festive. The main roads of the city on which the Japanese troops were expected to march to the city center were already full with people.”

But, the Chinese response to the Japanese army was different. Because of Japanese invasion of China, the Chinese population in Malaya viewed Japanese as enemy. Conflict between the two was great, and resentment intense.

1.2 As the war progressed, Malayan and Singaporean economy stagnated, inflation spiraled, people suffered and experienced severe control as almost every adult was required to carry numerous documents at all times, including work pass, work badge, arm-band, ration card, tickets for food, vehicle pass and radio pass and death sentences were meted out to those who were anti-Japanese. Japanese language was taught, while the use of the English was banned. *Kempeitai*, the sullen-looking Japanese military police, was most feared because of their brutality. The victimization grew in intensity by the days. Though there was widespread resentment, but afraid of a violent Japanese reaction, the people remained quiet. Due to tight control of publications and strict censorship, coupled with various social, economic, political difficulties and with added psychological pressures, literary productivity was greatly reduced during Japanese Occupation. In other word, Japanese Occupation drove many active writers of pre-war years into inactivity. This paper is merely a preliminary survey of a body of literary works in Malay, English and Chinese languages published in Malaya and Singapore on Japanese Occupation and available to me at the time of writing. Though these accounts of suffering, hardships, fears, reprisals, terror, atrocities, resistance, resentment, massacre, looting, burning, prosecution, rape and violence are no different from other war situations, it is not only important to know what is its impact on the literary development then and later on, but also more importantly to understand the lesson that this event holds for the Malays, Chinese and Indians in a multiracial community. One important point is that writers, in their different capacities, did help in promoting patriotism and fanning anti-Japanese occupation. .

## **2. Malay Literary Writings**

2.1 After the beginning of their occupation, the Japanese had ceaselessly trumpeted such lofty sounding slogans as “Greater Asian Co-prosperity Sphere” and “Asia for Asia” designed to instill love for Japanese and hatred against the Europeans, and promise freedom and independence. Japanese propaganda also emphasized the rare qualities of Japanese spirit, the thoroughness of Japanese patriotism, the supremacy of Japanese Armed Forces, the efficiency of Japanese light and heavy industries, the vastness of Japanese material resources, the capabilities of Japanese organizing skill, and the Japanese cooperation to free peoples of Southeast Asia from European colonization (Chin 1946:151). Such propaganda must have filled the hearts of young people with great happiness, satisfaction and anxiety and made them believed in the Japanese as Asian new power. But Mochtar Lubis (2000: 88) was different and wrote “I told myself not to accept the Japanese at the face value of their public statements about their intentions with our country and people”. Nevertheless, young Malay writers, including Masuri S.N., coming of age then, must have been very happy with the

collapse of the British colonial regime. Under the spell of the Japanese propaganda, young patriotic writers, including Rasyid Manggis, Bahtiar Effendi, Docotr Gaus, Zuber Salam, Tharuddin Ahmad, Nuraini, Zainal Abidin Ahmad, Masuri S. N. and Adi Satria enlightened themselves and produced works expressing their love of nation, their fight against the West colonizers, their dream of independence and their struggle for a better future. Wanted to achieve the collective-dreams, they kept the light of struggle burning by writing poems praising the Japanese and encouraging more people to join hands with the Japanese to free the nation from Western colonial rule (Ali Haji Ahmad 1974). They called for unity of the peoples and Asian unification through the Japanese to get back the political power. In a way, Masuri S. N., and other nationalist and patriotic wartime poets were the spokesmen of the Malay community (Sahlan 2004: 146).

2.2 All that happened in Singapore, renamed as *Syonan*, meaning light of the South, the center of Malay literary movement, thus began a new era of literary writing (Syed Husin Ali 19 &...; Ismail Hussein 1965), after British surrendered it to the Japanese on 15 February, 1942. It was not a coincidence that the Japanese made Singapore center of literary activity. It had remained as center of transportation, banking, administration and education. To rejuvenate interest in literary writing, literary columns were provided in *Semangat Asia*, *Fajar Asia* and *Berita Malai*, the Japanese propaganda newspapers and magazines. Li Chuan Siu (1978: 33) noted that *Berita Malai* (since 29 August 1944), a weekly paper, had a column called *Ruangan Kesusasteraan* on the Tuesdays. The inaugural issue of the column published a *sajak* from Zubir Salam, attached with the following brief announcement:

“Ruangan ini juga dibuka untuk para pembaca kita sekali seminggu tiap-tiap hari Selasa ini. Dari itu, cubalah kirim gubahan tuan-tuan untuk menghiasi Ruangan Kesusasteraan kita ini. Rebutlah peluang yang tengah dibuka oleh Berita Maia ini. Kirimlah karangan tuan itu kepada Berita Malai bahagian Ruangan Kesuasteraan. (Li 1978: 34)

In other words, the Japanese, who recognized the power of newspapers for propaganda purposes and for building the *shinchitsujo* (New World Order), had direct control over the publication and circulation of literary works. All publications came under the control of one of the “*kaishas*” or official Japanese occupation government monopolies. Western publications were banned. The campaign was *Nipponization*, carried out in intensity. The above-mentioned newspapers glorified Japan and all her greatness! The main objective of the newspapers was to murder British and Americans – foes of Japan. Through the creative talents of the local writers in extolling the virtues of Japan, Japanese rule was transformed into glorious myths. Here we face the differences in literature in connection with pre-war, during the war and post-war days. In theme, the stories have developed from romantically feudal to nationalism and realistic social comment, followed by a trend towards the more personal themes, releasing anger and hatred of the Japanese Occupation. For the first time, Malaysians saw political propaganda openly and also for the first time, censorship was imposed openly in Malaya and Singapore. With that, the once free and flourishing media was stifled, and the volume of literary production was in no way comparable to pre and post-war years. During the period of Japanese Occupation, publishing poems (*sajak*) and short stories in support of Japanese

propaganda on “Asia for Asia” and “ Asia Raya” became the cherished values and a new way of life.

2.3 It was mainly through the above-mentioned literary columns that we saw the emergence of new writers, besides some old guards who kept on writing, including Abdul Samad Ismail, who was the editor in *Berita Malai* and *Semangat Asia*, and the others, graduate teachers from the Sultan Idris Teachers Training College in Tanjung Malim. Amid the new writers was Masuri S. N., then aged 17 years old. He responded with the Japanese call by sending two *sajak*: *Rose Kupunya* and *Bunga Sakura*, romantic in mood and patriotic in spirit. They were published in *Berita Malai* on 5 September 1944, as quoted below:

#### BUNGA SAKURA

Baik di gunung, di kampong, di tanah lapang,  
Sayup hingga penghabisan mata memandang,  
Bunga Sakura makmur berkembang,  
Jadi lambang semangat berjuang.

...

Disinari matahari pagi,  
Indah berseri menawan hati  
Ah! Bunga Sakura pujaan perwira,  
berkembang semerbak ke mana-mana

#### ROSE KUPUNYA

Rose berkembang,  
memerah garang,  
jadi pujaan,  
setiap insan

....

Jiwa pahlawan,  
memandang kembang,  
ingin berjuang,  
membela watan

Harum tak terkira,  
runtuk menyesal,  
bagaikan satria,  
pulang ke asal

Soon after, he published another *sajak*, quoted below, in *Berita Malai* 12 Sep 1944, also echoing the Japanese propaganda:

#### PERAJURIT NEGARA

Berbaris berjejer, hebat bergaya,  
Pergi bertempur, penuh darua,

enyerah raga dengan sukarela,  
mencipta bahagia Asia Raya

Dengan semangat yang menyala-nyala,  
tujuan hati tetaplh satu,  
menghancurkan leburkan penganiaya,  
pihak sekutu dirangkum tentu

Berjuang, berjuanglah Perajurit Negara,  
Tunjukkan keperwiraan bangsa Asia,  
Sanggup membela, turut bertempur,  
Haram menyerah tak pernah undur.

Jangan bimbang, janganlah  
walang, teruskan menggempur pihak Sekutu,  
Bunga pujaanmu, mekar berkembang,  
Menanti pulangmu sarat merindu

The above *sajak* praised the bravery of soldiers who were willing to die for the country, and which made exclusively for distribution was directed at the Malays to die, to cooperate with the Japanese.

2.4 Masuri S. N, later on grew into a seminal figure in the Malay literature. Besides being the most prolific *sajak* writer in the 1950s and 1960s, he was also a symbol of nationalist writer. Best known for his *sajak*, he wrote nationalist *sajak* pushing nationalist movement to a greater height. He called for unity, cooperation, support and endurance, a reassurance of a bright future. That is a reiteration of political power. Such a poem injects a serum of courage, physically and mentally. In *Membela Nusa*, he became very spirited in the struggle with the support of the Japanese military. Like other nationalist-writers, Masuri S.N. became fiery in showing his love for the country and told of his ever-willing sacrifice in the following quotation:

Kanda berjuang, di medan perang,  
dinda bela, medan belakag,  
raskan dekat, dinda di sini,  
walau nyata, berjauh diri...

Jangan dinda, menjadi bimbang,  
teruskan membina, garis belakang,  
kanda kan nati menjelang pulang,  
pabila uai, menang berperang....

Willingness to take risks should not be considered the only reason for the wide participation of Masuri SN and others in the literary work. He expressed his dream, enthusiasm and belief in the Japanese liberation army explicitly in another *sajak*, quoted below, called *Marilah Bersatu*:

Marlah bersatu, wahai rakan,  
menyerah tenagha mengatur barisan,

besar kecil, tua muda sekalian,  
bersatu teguh, menjadi ikatan.

Segala kerja sama dibuat,  
berat ringgan sama dipikul,  
jangan pilih pangkat darjat,  
bekerjasama mengayun cangkul.

Bukan masanya berpecah belah,  
satu ke barat, satu ke timur,  
tenaga semua perlu tersimpul,  
Agar Asia Menjadi makmur,

Wahai saudara bangsa Asia,  
tetapkan hati, mengadap derita,  
awal bermula, azab sengsara,  
kelak betukar bahagia raya.

Likewise, Bakhtiar Effendi (1943) in *Fajar Asia* wrote:

Wahai Asia janganlah bercerai,  
Ikatan kuat sebagairantai,  
sehidup semati jangan berderai,  
memasuki giyugun atau Giyu Tai.

Reasons for Masuri's stand, for instance, are not difficult to find. Years of grueling hardship during the British rule made Malays eagerly welcome the Japanese. Consequently, young and patriotic Malay writers expressed their optimism in poems published in *Berita Malai*, *Semangat Asia*, *Sinaran Matahari*, *Suara Timur*, *Matahari Memancar* and *Fajar Asia*. They looked at Tokyo as torch of freedom and center of prosperity, and the Japanese, fighter for democracy. They saw their future and prosperity in Japanese army who promised to wrestle colonial power from the Whites to be given back to them.. The Japanese portrayed themselves as new power in Asia, not as aggressor, but liberator. In assessing Masuri S. N., Sahlan (2004:145) remarked that Masuri's poems were of the highest spirit and motivation for the betterment of life and struggle as reflected in *Bunga Sakura* (5 Sep 1944), *Perajurit Negara* (12 Sep 1944), *Majulah Perang* (3 Oct 1944), *Marilah Bersatu* (31 Oct 1944), *Korban Sejati* (Berita Malaya, 26 Dec 1944), *Bakti Putera Timur* (12 Dec 1945) and *Kepada Perajurit Tanahair* (4 Jun 1945)

2.5 But, as years went by, it became clear that hopes for a better life under Japanese rule had evaporated. Malays were in a awkward predicament too, like the Chinese who were seen as the direct enemy of the Japanese, or of being pro British or being uncooperative with the Japanese, received cruel treatment. They were kicked, arrested, slapped, detained and charged by *Kempeitai*. Thus, Li Chuan Siu (1978: 36) was uncertain whether *Perajurit Negara* was referring to PETA (Pembela Tanah Air), showing patriotism fighting against the British. For more examples of the poems by other writers, including M Kidin, Ibrahim Ali, Husbana, Surapati, Muhammad Hassan Abdul Wahab, Ninu al-

Muari and Bachtiar Effendi in this period, refer to Li Chuan Siu (1978). Besides *sajak*, there were 21 short stories in *Semangat Asia*, contributed by Abdullah Kamel, Thaharuddin A, Zuhara, Nadzri Zainuddin and two Japanese, Toshihiko Takeda and Tsuneo Tomonaga (Li Chuan Siu 1978: 53). Consisting mainly of three pages in length, Li had the following comments:

“sangat sederhana plotnya, Bahasanya pun belum sempurna keindahannya dan isinya kurang dapat memberikan kesan yang mendalam bagi pembaca yang kurang menguasai rasa bahasa dan isi yang tersirat yang kita jumpai dalam kalimat-kalimat yang bersifat sinis. Mungkin kerana penulisnya masih amat muda, jadi gubahannya belum mata benar, tetapi ada unsure realistic di dalamnya” (1978: 54-5)

On Japanese Occupation, A Samad Ismail in his short story *Ubi Kayu* (*Semangat Asia* volume 2 no. 3, Mac 1944) told the hardship endured by the people::

“Masa itu semua orang kasihkan ubi kayu; kepit, junjung dan julang ubi kayu; tak ada lain yang dicakapkan melainkan ubi kayu; di dapiur, di trem, di majlis, kawin... asyik ubi kayu dan ubi kayu: hingga mimpi pun perkataan Ubi kayu sudah habis....”

In short, due to the war, Malays also grew tapioca, bananas and sweet potatoes for food. They have to make many things and survived with substitutes including making soap from coconut oil. Many people suffered from beri-beri, due to lack of good food. They rarely had meat. Night time was always shrouded in darkness, as no lights were allowed. People tended to talk in whispers. Plain-clothes detectives were everywhere. People lived in fear as they never knew whether they were the men *Kempetai* were looking for. All this proved that their support for the Japanese had been a miscalculation. The hardships they endured were very much the reverse of what had been expected.

2.6 In other literary scene, Abdul Rahim Kajai (1894-1943) was made chief editor of *Berita Malai* under Malai Sinbun Sha in Singapore 1943. He was assisted by Ishak Haji Muhammad, Abdul Samad Ismail and others. Malai Sinbun Sha published the magazine *Semangat Asia* managed by Ishak Haji Muhammad and Abdullah Kamel. Later on, *Fajar Asia*, another magazine, was published by Sinsei Malai Kensetsu Sha, with Zainal Abidin Ahmad as the editor. *Semangat Asia* and *Fajar Asia* were filled with *sajak* from writers from Sumatera, while *Berita Malai* published mostly *sajak* from Malay writers. During the Japanese Occupation, works by Ishak Haji Muhammad, Abdul Samad Ismail and Abdullah Sidek appeared in *Semangat Asia*, *Fajar Asia* and *Berita Malai* calculated to rally the readers behind the Japanese war effort. Due to strict censorship, writers had to hide their resentment of the Japanese. Refer to Li (1978: 53-65) for further information on the short stories written by Toshihiko Takeda, A. Kamel, Thaharuddin A, A. K., Tsuneo Tomonaga, Nadzri Zainuddin, Zuhara, Adullah Sidik, Pena Baru and La M. Daeng Mattoling in *Fajar Asia*, *Matahari Memancar*, *Semangat Asia*, *Cermin Hidup*, from 1943-44. Poetry and short stories were the two main forms of literary expression in the otherwise “dark age” of the Japanese Occupation. In poetry, there was a change in form from *pantun* and *syair* to *sajak*, while in theme, there was a shift from romantic and legendary mood to nationalism and realistic social comment, followed by a trend towards the more personal themes as the

Malay writers not only endured the hardship, but also witnessed the Japanese showed their true colors by torturing and slaughtering the people. More importantly, the “lethargic” literary activity during the Japanese occupation was merely a temporary phenomenon. When the situation had settled down, more Malay writers began to write and publish more openly on Japanese brutality during their occupation, the dominant theme in literary works after Japanese occupation. One of them is Ahmad Murad’s *Nyawa di Hujung Pedang* (1946). Representing the typical anti-Japanese sentiments, *Nyawa Di Hujung Pedang* told a young man’s betrayal by his best friend and how he escaped Japanese execution when the war ended abruptly. Besides showing the cruelty of Kempeitai in torturing the Malays in Perak, it glorified the bravery in facing the hardship. Though presented in a semi-fictional form, many of the Japanese names in Murad’s novel are real. Besides *Nyawa di Hujung Pedang* and *Zain Zawiyah* (1948) by Ahmad Murad, there are other Malay novels on the torture and hardship endured by the Malays under the Japanese Occupation. *Di Bawah Alunan Ombak* (1961) by Abdul Rashid Ngah, *Hati dan Hasrat* (1966) by Kala Dewata, *Salina* (1961), *Sungai Mengalir Lesu* (1967), *Di Hadapan Pulau* (1978) and *Keledang* (1979) by A Samad Said, Harun Aminurrashid’s *Siapakah Yang Bersalah* (1949) and *Sebelum Ajal* (1949) and *Pahlawan Rimba Malaya* (1946) by Keris Mas have all depicted the aspirations of their protagonists to free themselves from the Japanese Kempetai. These uniformed sullen-looking Japanese soldiers, marching with riffles slung on their shoulders, would strike anyone they disliked, or did not show respect to them and made people unsure of their safety. With the defeat of the Japanese in 1945 and seeds of nationalism sown by Japanese propaganda, the call for independence from the British increased as expressed by Ishak Haji Muhammad in *Putera Gunung Tahan* (1937) and *Anak Mat Lela Gila* (1941). Related to that, *Mari Kita Berjuang* (1941) by Abdullah Sidek advocated self-reliance and cooperative, another example of writing longing for independence.

2.7 The mode from euphoria to disillusion described in this part of the paper can be summed up by quoting Mochtar Lubis’ reaction to the Japanese Occupation:

“At the beginning, some writers were very much impressed and taken in by Japanese propaganda, and produced some writings supporting the Japanese war. They were so impressed by Japanese slogans such as Asia for the Asian People, Hakko Inchiu (The Whole World One House or Family), which soon enough were exposed as empty balloons by the bad behavior of the Japanese themselves. They fell back to their original nationalist idealism, and many writers started to write to give stronger expression of their love to their own country... But they still had to write most carefully in order not to provoke a swift and terrible Japanese reaction”. (2000: 90)

One obvious impact from the Japanese Occupation is writers not only helped to promote patriotic feeling in their works during the Japanese Occupation, but also fanned anti-Japanese sentiment after the war. For more information on the development, research by A. Wahab Ali (1983), Hashm Awang (1969), Ismail Hussein (1965) and Syed Hussin Ali (1960) may be useful. Though it is debatable whether these literary works can be collectively called as Resistance Literature (Yeo & Ng 2000: 107) as shown by Mahua

(Malayan Chinese) writers accounting the hardship the Chinese population endured during the same period, these writers were vocal Malayan intelligentsia..

### 3. *Mahua* literature

3.1 *Mahua* literature (Malayan and now Malaysian Chinese-language literature) first appeared in 1919, spurred on by the Wusi Movement in China. Following the Japanese invasion of China in July 1937, not only many Chinese in Singapore and Malaya made donations for the war against the Japanese, but also some *Mahua* writers turned away from the pursuit of local color in the writing, and expressed their patriotic feeling towards China. Chinese anti-Japanese movement also took place in boycotts, strikes, recruiting volunteers, guerilla warfare and intelligence work. After the fall of Singapore, some *Mahua* writers either returned to China or joined the underground forces elsewhere to fight the Japanese. *Mahua* literature focused particularly on China's resistance to Japan. *Mahua* literary movement was then led by 郁达夫 (Yu Dafu), 胡愈之 (Hu Yuzhi), 张楚琨 (Zhang Chukun) and 王任叔 (Wang Renshu) who had certainly played a role in anti-Japanese movement aimed at removing the anti-Japanese "intellectuals" among the Chinese population in Malaya and Singapore (Yeo & Ng (2000: 113). Many *Mahua* writers were detained and tortured by the Japanese and survived to tell us the story. These works are reminiscent of the cruelty of the Japanese and the great misery they brought to the people. Many changed their names, fled and even committed suicides and killed. They include 铁抗, 王君实, 詹熹, 陈培青, 萧扬 and 戴清. The Chinese were tortured because the community contributed to anti-Japanese war and fought the Japanese together with British, Indian and Australian troops, causing great loss to the Japanese army. Many Chinese were anti-Japanese due to historical reason, Sino-Japanese War in China. Thus, the Japanese have been keeping the Chinese community under surveillance since before the war. Arrests began soon after the conquest. Individuals active in salvation movement were regarded as enemies and treated with hostility. Japanese crushed the organized armed resistance in the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army in Malaya, KMT-organised Fuxiang She and Jizhong and banned all political parties. Those who experienced harassment found it psychologically unsettling. The massacres of Chinese, better known as the *sook ching*, meaning purification, or in Japanese, the *shuku sei* operation with some 50,000 Chinese in Singapore and Malaya killed in these operations, besides numerous inhumane and indiscriminate murders of Chinese on the beaches, in rubber plantations, in the jungle, accused of fighting against the Japanese as volunteers and collaborated with anti-Japanese guerillas. All these factors contributed to Chinese active participation in anti-Japanese. Days by days, living condition of the people worsened. Chinese were outwardly respectful and submissive, but inwardly not. For survival, Chinese turned to farming, planting tapioca, banana and vegetable. Chinese traditional share in literary movement was curtailed due also to various regulations. Various kinds of torture were told in *檳城大检举及日寇毒刑* by 方念祖 (Fang Nianzu) *余哀 Ai* by 林参天 (Lin Cantian), *牺牲者的治疗* by 殷枝阳 (Yin Zhiyang) and *暴日在霹雳之残杀* by 廖良貽 (Liao Lingyi).

3.2. In 苗秀 (Miaoxiu)'s work, 火浪 (Waves of Fire), there was a scene which described the aftermath of an air raid by the Japanese bombers (Yeo and Ng 2000: 109). In 复仇 (Revenge), Qiu Tuan depicted the cruelty of the Japanese and the destruction of the invasion. The description of the consequence of the bombing in 复仇 and 火浪 was similar and had incited great hatred towards the Japanese terrorizing the Chinese people with kicks, slaps, rape, burning, piercing finger nails with nails, forcing in water, stripping, hanging, squatting under the scorching sun, kidnapping, murdering and so on.. These various forms of torture, persecution, oppression and harsh treatment to extract confession from the Chinese people were comparable to that found in *Nyawa Di Hujung Pedang* and many others by the Malay writers discussed earlier and also other short stories and novels in English, to be discussed later. Below is quoted a poem 诗琴 by 戴清才 on the sufferings during the Japanese Occupation:

虽说诗琴  
如今是在黑色的册子里  
第一次被记下罪行  
可是正为着它  
我将加倍勇敢地继续我的行吟  
  
.....浑浊的年代  
那暗示着灾害与放逐的日子呵  
我没有感觉到仓惶  
一颗跳动的心  
永伴着一群劳苦兄弟的呼吸起伏  
诗琴是我的生命  
为着它  
今天  
我勇敢地向压迫者  
想丑恶的椰林宣誓战斗.....

Source: Jiang Ming Hui. *Ma hua wen xue guo ji xue shu yan tao hui lun wen ji Petaling Jaya*: Ma Lai Xi Ya liu Tai xiao you hui lian he hui zong hui, 1999.

In short, the Japanese Occupation was a dark and fearful period for the people in Malaya and Singapore then. These accounts are quite representative of the writers not only as individuals, but also representing the different ethnic communities in Malaya and

Singapore. In short, the repressive measures from the Japanese against the people not only led to the formation of various resistance movements, including the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army, but also the outpouring of vehement and strong anti-Japanese sentiments in the underground poems and short stories during the war and openly after the war. It is these literary works that expressed clearly the collective emotions of the Malays and Chinese in Malaya and Singapore, and of peoples throughout the world fighting colonialism and independence and freedom.

3.3 Studying *Mahua* literary movement, Yeo and Ng (2000: 114) noted that there was an unparalleled development in the literature, in terms of quantity and quality, five years before the war. In the period of 1937 – 42, there were 29 Chinese magazines and newspapers; but there were only two newspapers during Japanese Occupation. The defeat of the Japanese brought a renaissance of journals, and magazines and an upsurge of Chinese writers and their works. Literary works, including poems and short stories, written after the war, remembering fellow authors exiled or killed and depicting Chinese population undergoing hardship during the war are in abundance. See the following charts:

Item	Publications	Year	Frequency	Imprint	Category	Publisher
1 .	彼南日报	1942	日报	檳城	新闻 报纸	日军宣传工具
2 .	吡叻新报	1942	-	怡保	新闻 报纸	日军宣传工具
3 .	兴亚日报	1942	日报	吉隆坡	新闻 报纸	日军宣传工具
4 .	马加拉周报	沦陷期间	周刊	马六甲	新闻 报纸	日军宣传工具
5 .	北马战线	沦陷期间	不定期	吡叻	抗日 油印	抗日地下报刊
6 .	打日本	沦陷期间	不定期	柔佛南部	抗日 油印	抗日地下报刊
7 .	大众报	沦陷期间	不定期	柔佛北部	抗日 油印	抗日地下报刊
8 .	大众报	沦陷期间	不定期	森美兰	抗日 油印	抗日地下报刊
9 .	大众报	沦陷期间	不定期	雪兰莪	抗日 油印	抗日地下报刊
10 .	公道报	沦陷期间	不定期	檳城	抗日 油印	抗日地下报刊
11 .	抗建报	沦陷期间	不定期	柔佛南部	抗日	抗日地下报刊

					油印	
12 .	抗日先锋报	沦陷期间	不定期	雪兰莪	抗日 油印	抗日地下报刊
13 .	抗日新闻	沦陷期间	不定期	柔佛北部	抗日 油印	抗日地下报刊
14 .	群众报	沦陷期间	不定期	柔佛南部	抗日 油印	抗日地下报刊
15 .	人道报	沦陷期间	不定期	吡叻	抗日 油印	抗日地下报刊
16 .	人民报	沦陷期间	不定期	彭亨	抗日 油印	抗日地下报刊

Source: Lin Shui Hao ... [et al.]. *Ma Lai Xi Ya hua ren shi xin bian*. Kuala Lumpur: Ma Lai Xi Ya zhong hua da hui tang, 1998

A better picture of *Mahua* publications before, during and after the Japanese Occupation: 华族侨民报刊时期四阶段报刊类别统计 (1889-1957) is shown below:

时期 类别	报纸			期刊												不 详	总 数
	日 报	非 日 报	不 详	综 合	文 艺	教 育	宗 教	医 药	娱 乐	体 育	商 业	农 业	画 报	其 他	不 详		
1889-1919	6	3	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
1920-1941	22	12	5	24	2	4	1	2	-	-	-	1	2	1	5	1 8	99
1942-1945 (至 8 月止)	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 2	16
1945 (9 月) – 1957	9	11	12	14	12	3	2	2	5	1	2	-	-	1	4	0	78
总数	39	27	21	39	14	8	3	4	5	1	2	1	2	2	9	3 0	207
	87			90												3 0	207

Source: Lin Shui Hao ... [et al.]. *Ma Lai Xi Ya hua ren shi xin bian*. Kuala Lumpur: Ma Lai Xi Ya zhong hua da hui tang, 1998

3.4 What effect has Japanese Occupation on *Mahua* literary movement? There were two opposite movements in *Mahua* literature before the Sino-Japanese war, 1926-1937. One advocated local identity, or Nanyanization or Nativization, while the other continued to have identity with China. The former called for *Mahua* writers to write on the life of other local ethnic groups, besides those of early Chinese immigrants, aimed at “establishing a tradition of itself, and not just a continuous imitation of Chinese literature” (Yeo & Ng (2000: 106). The pro-China movement, reinforced by Chinese

writers, including Yu Dafu, who had fled China after the Kuomintang-Communist split in 1927 in China, wrote about events in China and their feelings towards China. But Mahua poetry from the end of the 1930s until the 1950s focused on the importance of independence, condemning terrorism, fanning patriotism and national defense. By reconstructing tales on anti-Japanese sentiments, Chinese hardships, loss of assets, relatives and properties, *Mahua* writers and the Chinese population in Malaya and Singapore had realized their dependence on the land they were living in and stopped to regard Malaya and Singapore second hometown. With the independence movement gathering pace, *Mahua* writers believed that literature should reflect the reality of the land that they were living in. This led to development of *Mahua* patriotic literature in the 1950s (Yeo & Ng 2000: 115). To that, Cheah (2000: 28-9) added that Japanese Occupation not only promoted Malay nationalism as part of their plans to remove British from Malaya, but also contributed to the awakening of three undercurrents of political consciousness among the Chinese community: nationalism, communism and loyalty to Malaya. And for the first time the Chinese community had to make a commitment to defend Malaya, their families, properties and rights, something they had not been asked to do before the war. In short, to the writers, regardless of ethnic origins, the word patriotic means love for the country they live in. Collectively, they hoped that colonialism would end sooner. This patriotic feeling is evidenced too in the English literary works to be discussed in the next section.

#### 4. English Literary works

4.1 Resistance to Japanese Occupation was crushed cruelly. The closer to the end of the war, the stronger was the Japanese voice promising independence and freedom. The Japanese also began to entice young peoples into military training through such organizations as Heiho (auxiliary troops) and Romusha (coolies companies). Many young people joined PETA (Pembela Tanah Air-Defenders of the Homeland), who, after the Japanese surrendered, had organized armed groups to capture weapons from Japanese garrisons, or negotiated for the surrender of Japanese weapons and ammunition. After the war, more and more poems and short stories have reconstructed the untold hardships and sufferings that kept up the spirit of the people and their faith that the reign of terror would not last. These stories carry one clear message: foreign rule is not welcome. The few accounts which were representative of more individual sufferings by writers in the English language at the hands of the Japanese soldiers after the war include:

- a. Sybil Karthigasu's *No Dream of Mercy*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1954
- b. Tan Soon Lip's *Kempeitai Kindness*. Singapore: Malayan Law Journal, 1946
- c. N. I. Low's *When Singapore as Syonanto*. Singapore: Eastern University Press, 1973
- d. Chin Kee Onn's *Malaya Upside Down*. Singapore: Jitts & Co. 1964.
- e. Lim Thean Soo's *Sailboat*. SINGA Singapore: Ministry of Culture. (June 1981). 2.
- f. Lim Thean Soo's *Southward Lies the Fortress*. Singapore: Educational Publications Bureau, 1971
- g. Lim Thean Soo's *Major Arigator*. Singapore: Ministry of Culture. (December 1987) 7.

h. Lim Thean Soo's *The Parting Gift and other stories*. Singapore: Sri Keseva, 1981.

4.2 Tan Thoon Lip told the world how he was tortured by the *Kempeitai* in Singapore, while Kathigasu's story was directed his attacks on Sergeant Eiko Yashimura, the head of the *Kempeitai* in Ipoh, who was brought to trial on 10 February 1946 before the Perak War Crime Tribunal, comparable to that reconstructed by Ahmad Murad's in *Nyawa Di Hujung Pedang*. Yoshimura was subsequently convicted for brutally ill-treating civilians in his custody, among whom was Sybil Karthigasu and hanged. These stories about the life in occupied Malaya and Singapore are a timely reminder that people's memories of a reign of terror of war can never be erased from history. These accounts came about because what one chooses/ tries to forget, another chooses to remember.

4.3 One of the reasons so many works on Japanese Occupation have been published after the war is because the past does come back to us voluntarily, reminding us not to forsake it. Vivid recall is therefore an important ingredient in the post-war writings. Recall can be both an unconscious and a conscious one, triggered off by obsessive memories, or stimulated by an event, a photograph, or a person. All these can trigger off a chain reaction bringing the writers back to the past, and into the history (Yeo 1981: 52). This reasoning may sum up the impulse and motives behind the writing of some of works referred to. That is how Lim accounted the fall of Singapore in the form of a novel entitled *Southward Lies The Fortress* (1971). Whether historical accuracy can be matched by maps, government and press reports and other documentation is a different matter. The vivid and successful stretches of writing from his own experience and eyewitnesses make the book worth reading. The recall and memory are used again in Lim's short story *The Parting Gift* (1981) on how the Japanese past lives in the present in the form of a rare coin given by an Englishman to his loyal Chinese employee. In the story, the coin serves as a symbol of the English-Asian trust that existed before and during the war (Yeo (1981: 53). In another story, *Mr Arigator* (1987), Lim tells the story of a Singaporean who is troubled by researchers who question his evidence which sent a Japanese spy to death at a war-crimes trial and ends with the evidence being supported by the son of the condemned man. The protagonist in the story is the familiar figure of the man haunted by memories of the Japanese occupation (Yeo 1981: 51-54). In other words, for Lim Thean Soo, the Japanese occupation of Singapore from roughly early 1942 to late 1945 was an unshakeable past to which he regularly returns in his writing, fuelled by first-hand experience. Besides *Malaya Upside Down* (1964), Chin Kee Onn produced other novels about the Japanese Occupation and the ensuing communist insurgency. In *Silent Army* (1952), he gave a first-hand account of life under the Japanese and recorded the disillusionment with the tyrannical and inhumane treatment under the omnipresent *Kompeitai*, war lords, strutting around the villages and towns, terrorizing the innocent people and hacking them to death with machetes. Villages were torched and turned into a howling wilderness. These victims are remembered either as nameless martyrs, heroes or victims of Japanese wartime atrocities. They were among thousand of wartime victims who could not survive the war to tell their story. No matter what it is, wartime ghosts still haunted those survived and lived through the Japanese occupation until today

4.4 Sybil Karthigasu, Tan Soon Lip, Lim Thean Soo, like Ahmnad Murad and the others are the writers who have emerged victors and are strong enough to tell their side of the stories. Some have fictionalized some of the facts; while the others tried to write the stories, history and semi-autobiographies with candour and accuracy. But, there were thousands of victims who suffered during the Japanese Occupation, but did not tell their story. They could be like Mochtar Lubis (2000: 91) who wrote:

“I did not write much about the years of the Japanese occupation, because each time I remember those years, a red dark flaming anger consumed my heart and mind. Only during these past few years have I felt able to stand at some distance from those terrible years. Perhaps the time has now come for Indonesian and other writers to write about those terrible human experiences, and to heal our own wounds and, perhaps, also the wounds of many Japanese. I have met many young Japanese who were not even born yet to experience the war but were wounded after learning the terrible acts their own people had perpetrated against other human beings in Asia and The Pacific.”

Until today, apart from wartime records and archive, the main source of the story from the Japanese Occupation is the experience and memory of tortures and atrocities in the hands of Japanese wartime officials. They are all the bitter memories which have come to haunt the post-war survivors. But, not all Japanese soldiers were bad. In *Extraordinary Adventures of an Ordinary Man* (1977), Thio Chan Bee recalled a kind Japanese, Mamoru Shinozaki, his former student, risking his life to help many people from being arrested and detained by the dreaded military police, the Kempeitai. Another Japanese student he had taught in pre-war days, Joseph Nanao Tsutada, returned to Singapore with the Japanese Army invading Singapore, had issued a protection certificate to Thio to give him protection from Japanese atrocities. Apart from resistance and resentment from all sides, history and writers have never been kind to aggressors and tyrants (Cheah (2000)). Some Japanese soldiers were in fact forced to act brutally as remarked by Mochtar Lubis (2000: 88):

“The Japanese soldiers ... so young, so small, so dirty, and so tired. They carried their long rifles with fixed bayonets, which made them look much shorter. Some of them rode on bicycles. They smelled very bad after marching and fighting for weeks without taking a bath.”

4.5 *In Southward Lies the Fortress* (1971), Lim explains that his book is a historical account of the siege of Singapore in novel form. He goes on to say that

“That ‘I’ in this book is not myself, although there might possibly have been intrusions of my personality here and there into the account. The narrator is in fact a composite of volunteers, whose varied accounts I have blended together as those of a single person. I have also used the unconventional style of writing, where necessary, to heighten effect or dramatize events. It is some kind of autobiography. In this sense we can say that to a certain extent, they are necessarily the autobiography of the authors at a certain level and in a specific situation.”

No matter what the justification given by the authors for their writing, their works have also conveyed the moral outrage that the writers felt against their Japanese tormentors.

## 5. Conclusion

5.1 Japanese Occupation had adversely effected literary activity with its production dwindled under various forms of restrictions and control. Thus, in the immediate years after the defeat of the Japanese in 1945, there was a spate of literary works in Malay, Chinese and English languages. More than 40 magazines and newspapers in Malay language appeared mainly in Singapore, with many of them including short stories (Syed Hussin Ali 1953; Ismail Hussein 1956; Hashim Awang 1969 & Ali Haji Ahmad 1974). Thematically, patriotism was most popular and covered 65% of the total of 55 poems published in 1942-44 in *Berita Malai*, 50% in *Fajar Asia* and 48% in *Semangat Asia*. Was it not that the Japanese Occupation provide the spurt and impetus for the nationalistic, patriotic feelings and national dignity? Had the Japanese Occupation inspired anti-colonial spirit too? Was it not that with independence came the search for a sense of belonging which are the pervasive themes in *Mahua* creative writings too? Was there any new literary pattern, theme and other opportunities under Japanese rule? Was it not that a sizeable audience for this new literature emerged after the war? No matter what the answers, it is certainly very interesting to observe the changes that the Japanese Occupation had brought to Malayan literature. Before the war, Malay literary movement was dominated by teacher-writers from Sultan Idris Teacher's Training College in Tanjung Malim, while *Mahua* literary movement was dominated by writers from China. The writers in former group wrote more on melancholic love in a subtle way, not on nationalism and struggle for independence after the war. They were very attached to *hikayat*, *pantun*, *syair* and *gurindam*. In the short period of Japanese rule, young and nationalistic Malay writers joined hands with the others in pushing for freedom and independence, after hundreds of years under European rule. Aspiration for independence among the Malay population was certainly boosted by the Japanese occupation. Their voice for freedom and independence gathered force, and has become stronger after Japanese left in 1945, as reflected in poems by Masuri S. N and Usman Awang. Ali Haji Ahmad (1974:54) noted that of the total 274 poems published in 1947 to 1949 in *Mingguan Hiburan*, *Majalah Kencana*, *Majalah Mastika* and *Mingguan Malaysia*, 39.8% were on struggle for independence and 13.7% called for political, economic and social changes. Malay literature, especially poetry writing, underwent changes from the earlier period in that they were more direct in expressing their feelings and intention. Muhammad Haji Salleh (1970:46) described Malay literature in Japanese occupation as "a new period in the development of modern Malay poetry". To that, Sahlan (2004: 150) added that the year 1940s was the beginning of a new era, both in politics and literature.

5.2 Literary output during the Japanese Occupation was modest as many writers had dropped their pens. They were the outspoken champion of democracy in difficult years. The narratives started with the difficult decision by the writers who had ultimately overcome their fear to write. After the war, Chinese and English language publishing companies had re-established quickly (Lin Shui Hao 1998). Now, 60 years later, there are many memoirs on Japanese Occupation based on recollections of individual or tales narrated or witnessed by the individual writers. They have the right to write their tales in whatever form as they are also the judges and historical actors. We salute them not only for their tasks in retelling of wartime stories, but also fighting the war all over in their

heads. To them, it is their suffering and inhumanity that stands out. So, the themes of hope, suffering, fear and terror dominate most of these memoirs. Through the events narrated in story form cannot be regarded as true or history, these literary accounts may be used to update oral history accounts, documents and photographs about the Japanese Occupation of Malaya and Singapore.

5.3 Lastly, there has been another shift in the orientation in Malayan literature after the Japanese Occupation. The replacement of an European power by an Asian power was not only a shock to the people in Malaya, but also sown the seed of national and personal self-confidence and self-awareness. Before the Japanese Occupation, Malay literary works, for instance, was romantic and sentimental in mood. This had proved quite inadequate for the young writers like Masuri S. N and his gang in *ASAS 50*, who came of age in the mid 1940s, to deal with the facts of life and free to record events, experiment and reflect on life around them. They identified themselves with the political and cultural changes taking place around them. They immersed in the chaos where everything was inextricably intertwined, including nationalism and humanism. Their horizons were no longer limited to colonial borders. They were free to claim the world as their own. They helped to set both the stage and the rules for the development of national freedom. They were part of the history. They were full-fledged members of international community. They were proud, brave and defiant writers, and have suffered in various ways under the Japanese Occupation. They wrote and subtly drew attention to both local as well as international nationalist movement in Malaya and Singapore. Thus, in Malay literature, the free form poetry *sajak* which began to emerge during the Japanese Occupation had ousted the traditional forms (*pantun* and *syair*) which predominated in pre-war verse. In *Mahua* literature, the dominant theme was the feeling of solidarity against the Japanese and the need to defend and protect Malaya as homeland. More and more *Mahua* writers were nationalists and freedom fighters, openly expressing their wish and longing for freedom. To a certain extent, literature in the Japanese Occupation inspired courage, imbibed new value, presented a new way of perceiving the world, enhanced the dignity of human, and took as its main focus of interest the role of the individual as a principle actor in the history of humankind. They were individual writers contributing to their collective dreams.

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