

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF MALAYSIANS TOWARD JAPAN SINCE WORLD WAR TWO*

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Malaysians underwent bitter experiences during the Japanese Occupation of Malaya. These bitter memories, especially among the Chinese community, and survivors of the infamous 'Death Railway' project drawn from all ethnic groups, has negatively coloured the perception of Malaysians toward Japan. After the war, the independent government of Malaysia led by Tunku Abdul Rahman moved quickly to heal these wounds. While the people at large did not share his enthusiasm, relations at an official level was 'normalised' on terms, some feel, that were unfavourable to Malaysia. This momentum at the official level gained and culminated in the "Look East Policy" under premier Mahathir. This paper argues that while memories of Japanese-inflicted hardships are dying, people in general do not necessarily share the official enthusiasm with respect to Japan. Their attitude, even if no longer negative, is best described as being ambivalent.

Rakyat Malaysia telah mengalami pengalaman pahit di zaman Pendudukan Jepun. Kenangan-kenangan pahit ini, terutamanya di kalangan masyarakat Cina, serta bekas-bekas buruh "Keretapi Mau" yang terdiri daripada berbagai kelompok bangsa, turut mencorakkan persepsi negatif rakyat Malaysia terhadap Jepun. Selepas perang tamat, kerajaan Malaya merdeka pimpinan Tunku Abdul Rahman bertindak cepat bagi mengubati luka-luka ini. Dengan segera beliau memulihkan hubungan dengan Jepun walaupun usaha sedemikian dipandang sepi oleh rakyat. Usaha kerajaan ke arah ini mencapai puncaknya dengan "Dasar Pandang ke Timur" yang dilaksanakan oleh Perdana Menteri Dr. Mahathir. Esei ini mencadangkan, walaupun kenangan-

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kenangan pahit akibat Pendudukan Jepun kini semakin pudar, secara umum rakyat Malaysia tidak semestinya mempunyai sikap yang sama terhadap Jepun seperti yang dipegang pemerintah. Sikap mereka, walaupun tidak lagi senegatif dahulu, lebih bersifat berbelah bagi.

INTRODUCTION

In the first week of March 1999 vessels of Japan's Self Defense Forces (SDF) entered Malaysian waters for a goodwill visit. Other than a brief flash on prime time television not much publicity was provided by the local print and electronic media. Public reaction of Malaysians, if anything, was muted. The generation of Malaysians born after the occupation had ended would certainly find nothing sinister in watching Japanese naval vessels docking at Port Klang.¹ This was in contrast to the reactions to a similar visit by the Japanese navy to Penang way back in July 1963. Some Malaysians reacted vigorously then (Mohd Samsuddin, 1995), while to others it brought back fond memories (Abu Talib Ahmad, 1999a).

An eminent Malaysian scholar (Lee 1985; 1997) has identified three phases in the perceptions of Malaysians towards Japan, beginning with the negative view of Japan, followed by the phase of fascination of the Japanese model, and

¹ In an August 1999 survey conducted on 61 students from the School of Humanities and the School of Education, of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), respondents were asked to comment on the visitation of Japanese warship to Port Klang which is Malaysia's premier port. Of the 61 only 2, for some inexplicable reason, failed to fill in this part. As for the rest, their comments are tabulated below.

Choices/Respondents

1. Same as the visit of any other warships	33
2. Rekindled the negative side of the occupation period	29
3. Organise an anti-Japanese protest	1
4. Not impressed with its significance	9

However there were a few respondents who had picked two choices in varying combinations with six picking 1 and 2; two respondents picking 1 and 4 and one picking 2 and 3.

currently, a reappraisal of this model.² This argument might be a correct general assessment of Malaysians, in particular the political and business elites. However, there is always a group, albeit a small one (and their numbers dwindling over the years), who could never be reconciled to the changing times or to the "popular mood" such as one Chinese gentleman in Penang who still refuses to use any Japanese products. They remain unknown unless "uncovered" by those who have the interest to look them up, as well as the patience to listen to what they have to say, about the Japanese occupation and Japan. Hence, the muted public response to the visit of the SDF ships is perhaps reflective of a national ambivalence towards Japan.

Malaysia-Japan economic and other types of relations, since 1945 had undergone tremendous changes (Jomo, 1985; Harun, 1982; Mohd Samsuddin, 1995; Ahmad Ali Seman, 1996; Md Ali Hassan, 1998). Since the 1960s, Japanese tourists have also been coming here in ever increasing numbers (Tam, 1996/97; Badaruddin Mohamed, 2000). At the same time, more and more Malaysians, in particular, students, have been going to Japan after 1981 when the "Look East Policy" was formally launched. There are also efforts by both sides to promote each other's culture, including popular culture, through various avenues such as the media, exhibitions and the translations of books relating to both countries (Abu Talib Ahmad, 2000; The Japan Foundation, 1996). In the 1950s, Japan was viewed by the West, within Japan, and the region, as being indispensable to the economic well being of Southeast Asia. Over the years, this view has never been modified, and within the region, has assumed greater urgency during the recent economic and financial turmoil. However, from the Japanese side, the importance of Southeast Asia has been relegated to a much lower position than, say, Latin America or even Eastern Europe.

² A more recent discussion on the Japanese model took place at an international conference organized by MAJAS (Malaysian Association of Japanese Studies) entitled "International Conference on the Japanese Model" which was held in Kuala Lumpur between 29-30 March 2000. Some of the more interesting papers include "Administrative reform of the Japanese model" by Lesley Conners, "What Model?" by Rawdon Dalrymple, "The Philippine experience: The relevance of the Japanese model" by Wilfrido V Villacorta, "'Deconstructing 'Japanisation' - Reflections from the 'Learn from Japan' campaign in Singapore" by Thang Leng Leng & S K Gan, "Rethinking 'The Japanese model': The case study of work ethics in American and Japanese companies operating in Indonesia" by Bakhtiar Alam, and "Malaysia-Japan relations: Perceptions of Japan in the post-1981 period" by Khadijah Md Khalid.

In tandem with the increasing importance of Malaysia-Japan relations one often gets the idea that the perceptions of Malaysians towards Japan had undergone equally significant changes especially since 1981. Both conscious and unconscious efforts of the central government bureaucracy, as well as those of the various states within the federation, to de-emphasize the negative impact of the occupation is evident from the non-committal stand on a number of issues like the history textbook controversy,³ the issue of a Japanese apology and the question of compensation to Malaysians who were forced to become sex slaves of the Japanese imperial army (comfort women). In reality it is difficult to quantify the changes that have taken place regarding the perceptions of Malaysians towards Japan without conducting a proper survey of those who have lived through this period. In the 1970s a survey conducted on a limited segment of the local population seemed to indicate some changes in the attitudes of Malaysians towards the Japanese economic presence. This essay examines the perceptions of Malaysians towards Japan between 1945-1999 and tries to determine what changes have taken place. The discussion is divided into 3 sections, namely (1) the legacy of the occupation and the period of building of linkages, (2) bilateral economic relations, 1957-99 and (3) perceptions of Malaysians towards Japan for the period 1957-1999. The source materials consulted include oral history, official documents and various secondary accounts, as well as a survey conducted on a small number of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) students in August 1999. Penang and, to a certain extent, the northern region of the Malay peninsula are given central focus mainly due to the nature of source materials consulted which includes the *Straits Echo and Pinang Gazette* (henceforth cited as *Straits Echo*) published in Penang, and the *Malaya Tribune* which was published in Ipoh.

THE LEGACY OF THE OCCUPATION AND THE REBUILDING OF LINKAGES

In the immediate post 1945 period and until the 1960s, there was a deep feeling of resentment towards Japan although at the official or government level this might not have been the case. This strong anti-Japanese perception found

³ In Japanese history textbooks for secondary schools, the wartime period including Japanese aggression in the Asian continent had been glossed over. As a result, passages discussing the war in China as a Japanese "invasion", for instance, had been watered down by rewording the development as an "advance". Similarly the "invasion" of Southeast Asia had been replaced by "advance" in Southeast Asia in approved history textbooks. (Shimizu, 1984; Murakami, 1984).

In the immediate post 1945 period and until the 1960s, there was a deep feeling of resentment towards Japan although at the official or government level this might not have been the case. This strong anti-Japanese perception found expression in the popular literature, films, memoirs and the keen public interest in the trials of alleged collaborators and Japanese war criminals. There was also much public interest in acts of heroism and valour of locals against the Japanese. The direct consequence of all these was that the negative perceptions towards Tokyo continued to prevail in a marked manner until the 1960s. By the 1960s, Malaysians as well as Japanese scholars, for the first time, sought to relate the development of post-war Malay nationalism to the Japanese period and the turbulent 1930s (Soenarno, 1960; Zainal Abidin, 1971; Halimah, 1975; Itagaki, 1962; Akashi, 1969; Abu Talib Ahmad, 1999b). This was a significant shift in perceptions although, for the Chinese community, the issue kept on simmering for a much longer period and with greater intensity (Yeo & Ng, 1999). In fact, the 1966 settlement of the "blood debt issue"⁴ was done amidst the strong objections of the Chinese community.

Public Perceptions of Japan in the Immediate Post-war Period Gleaned from Popular Literature, Films and Memoirs

The popular literature, memoirs, and films do provide an invaluable insight on the perceptions of Malaysians towards the Japanese from the mid and late 1940s until independence (Merdeka). This literary genre seemed to be very popular for the pre-Merdeka generation than for the post-Merdeka generations. Examples of such popular accounts, which were published immediately after the war, are Ahmad Murad (1986), Chin (1976), Gurchan Singh (1982), and Karthigasu (1983). *Sargeant Hassan* represents an example of the film category.

Ahmad Murad (1986) originally won first prize in a story writing competition organised by the Malayan Information Department in 1946. It was published in 1946 and was reprinted 7 times until 1967. The book describes the treachery among friends who originated from the same village with Yazid being betrayed to the Japanese military by his friend Said and subsequently suffering torture by the *Kempeitai* (military police). Ahmad Murad provides sordid details of *Kempeitai* atrocities and, being an editor of the wartime *Perak Shimbun*, was able to capture the mood of the time based on what he saw around him in Ipoh at that time.

⁴ See subsequent discussion

tribulations, written without frills and veneers. It is neither fiction nor propaganda, but a plain testimony of events that happened. Only the most important features are recorded and only a bird's eye view is given". The book was very well received by the Malayan public for it was printed twice in the year it first appeared (1946).

Gurchan Singh (1982) detailed exploits of a lone Malayan's anti-Japanese resistance in the Kuala Lumpur area was first published in London in 1949. The Malayan edition was published in 1958. However the exploits of the book's central figure, Gurchan Singh, was already known as he was included in a school textbook entitled *Heroes of Malaya*, widely used in Malayan schools in the 1950s. According to Gilbert Khoo, the book details the courageous resistance of one man who managed to create havoc among the Japanese by "issuing pamphlets signed 'Singa' containing counter propaganda to help keep up the morale of a brutalised people. His propaganda sheet spread the truth [sic] about the war situation as (broadcast by) the Allied radio. He extolled the virtue of resisting the enemy and pronounced (that) the time of deliverance (was) near, to raise dying hopes...He blew up petrol wagons and organized sabotage of railway communications. He was such a scourge that the Japanese put their considerable resources to hunt him down - and they nearly got him." While the case of Gurchan Singh is certainly exceptional, there must be hundreds of Malaysians in the 1950s who were "heroes" in their own right as they too had resisted the Japanese. Most of them however remained unknown to the public at large. At a later date a number of them did put in print their wartime experiences (Asmadi, n.d; Ismail Babu, 1990; Ibrahim Ismail, 1984; Oral History Committee, 1991a, 1991b), although these books remained relatively unknown among the general readers.

Karthigasu (1983) was first published in Singapore in 1954 and has been revised since then. The book documented sordid details of the torture and brutalities perpetrated by the Ipoh *Kempeitai*, in particular one of its officer by the name of Eiko Yoshimura, and recalled a woman's brave struggle for humanity, justice and sanity. Karthigasu was arrested by the *Kempeitai* on allegations of abetting the anti-Japanese guerillas in the Papan-Batu Gajah area. While in *Kempeitai* custody, she was repeatedly tortured, put under solitary confinement and made to witness the beating up of her husband and later, the stringing up of her 6-year old daughter. Karthigasu was sentenced to life imprisonment while her husband got 15 years. As a result of the injuries from the tortures, Karthigasu was paralysed and unable to walk. After the war, she was brought to England for medical treatment but died soon after of acute septicaemia.

It was in this mood that a movie by the country's most well known film director P. Ramlee was screened in 1958. *Sergeant Hassan* (Hassan the Sergeant), with Ramlee himself in the main starring role, was set in the late 1930s and the 1940s in Jasin and nearby Port Dickson. It depicted friendship, loyalty and self-sacrifice for the nation and race. It also portrayed the anti-Japanese resistance mounted by a non-commissioned officer (Hassan, of course) from the Malay Regiment and how in the end the forces of good (Hassan) triumphed over evil (Japanese and their local collaborators).

The Japanese occupation memoirs of Malaysians published after Merdeka provide a diversity of viewpoints. Some of them provide a lengthy description of the period, its significance for their writers and how they coped with the rule of the *samurai* (Tan 1986; Abdul Aziz Zakaria, 1989; Shaw, 1977). Others treat it with disdain and regret the discomforts they and their families had to endure (Zabha, 1976; Tan, 1991). There are also memoirs which give a lengthy treatment to cruelties perpetrated by the Japanese and their cronies and the hardships Malaysians had to endure (Ahmad Meah Baba Ahmed, 1992; Mohd Yusoff Haji Ahmad, 1983).

Generally it is difficult to find a favourable portrayal of either the occupation period or the Japanese in these memoirs. However, the memoirs of Tun Hamdan Sheikh Tahir and Tan Sri Ibrahim Ismail are notable exceptions. Hamdan's autobiography published in 1999 by the Malaysian Historical Society, titled the Japanese period as "The Tapioca Period" in reference to the prevailing hardships. Yet Hamdan accepts the importance of this period on his career development. He was equally fascinated with the way of doing things as espoused by his Japanese teachers, especially at the Shonan Koa Kunrenjo (Singapore East Asia Training Institute). Both the Certificates of Completion and of Merit that he had received from this institute are appended in the text, perhaps as a mark of pride of being trained in the Japanese educational system.

Tan Sri Ibrahim Ismail, who retired in 1977 as the highest ranking military officer in the land, had his memoirs on the war against Japan and his role in Force 136 published in 1984. In his memoirs Ibrahim describes his arrest in Terengganu, subsequent imprisonment in Taiping and the ordeal under the *Kempeitai*. Yet, after the war, he managed to look up a few of his former captors during an official visit to Tokyo in 1975. The blossoming of friendship between a former prisoner and his captors is rare indeed. On reading the memoirs one is struck by the fact that Ibrahim harbours no malice towards them. On the other hand, he actually assisted two Japanese widows to locate the sites of their husbands' graves in the Kuala Lumpur area (Ibrahim Ismail, 1984).

If Hamdan and Ibrahim viewed the Japanese in a positive manner there are many others who harbour a burning resentment towards the Japanese and their local collaborators. More than 50 years after the event there are Malaysians who talk with anger towards Japan and what had transpired during the occupation years. Many bemoan the loss of immediate family members during that turbulent period. Although there are younger generation Malaysians who have sung praises of the positive impact of the occupation (Teh, 1995), an increasing number of students who have studied the oral sources have become more critical on such issues like reparation, compensation, the comfort women issue and the issue of a Japanese apology to war victims (Abu Talib Ahmad, 1999b).

Actual Public Attitudes as Indicated from Reportage about Receptions and Reactions to War Crime Trials and Collaboration

Three events that took place in late 1945 underscored the actual ill-feelings toward the Japanese in Malaya. The first took place on the day of the Japanese surrender and it involved the burning of Japanese textbooks by jubilant Chinese youth in Taiping. The second was the quick removal of Japanese signboards in Malaya such as occurred in Alor Setar at the end of September (British Military Administration 1945/54). Equally significant is the third event, which was the destruction of a Japanese monument⁴ in Alor Setar, which took place at the end of October (*The Straits Echo*, 20 October 1945).

By 1946 the anti-Japanese sentiment expressed itself in the form of intense public interests in the so-called collaborators. Earlier, during the brief Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA)⁶ interlude, this group of Malayan collaborators were swiftly dealt with by numerous kangaroo courts – as reflected by the character Said in *Nyawa di Hujung Pedang* mentioned earlier – that later ended in violent racial bloodbath in various parts of the peninsula (Cheah, 1983; Hamdan, 1995). For these collaborators, the return of British rule might have been a welcome respite from MPAJA reprisals, although for many of them

⁴ The monument was constructed on a pillbox besides an important bridge on the Alor Setar-Penang trunk road on which was placed a disabled British light tank. On top of this tank was perched a motor cycle belonging to the Japanese suicide squad which tried unsuccessfully to retake the bridge before it was blown up by British-Indian soldiers. The machine bore a Japanese flag and was facing towards Penang.

⁶ The Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army or MPAJA was an anti-Japanese resistance group which was initially trained by British officers. The Malayan Communist Party formed the major component of the MPAJA and it was a predominantly Chinese outfit.

life under British Military Administration (BMA) rule was equally uncertain and unpalatable. The BMA did not have a ready-made policy towards collaborators. When one took form, its implementation was seriously flawed. Many others, notably those in the civil service, were suspended for a few months, which was financially ruinous in the immediate post-war period. One such case was Abdul Manan Nordin, a senior officer in the Penang Survey Department during the war (Jabatan Ukur Pulau Pinang, 35/45). Abdul Manan, however, fared better compared to some 385 Malaysians of differing ethnic and social backgrounds who were detained for as long as two years on charges of collaboration. By October 1945, 96 such individuals in Penang had their names published as collaborators and labeled ignominiously as alleged quislings (*The Straits Echo*, 10 October 1945). By early February 1946, some of them had their names officially cleared by special magistrates such as the eight prominent community leaders namely Heah Joo Seang, Simon Barnabas, Percy Ang, Tan Gim Kheng, Alfred Peterson, Ooi Gim Guan, T. de Cunha and Mohamad Abdul Rahman (*The Malaya Tribune*, 14 February 1945). Similar developments took place in other parts of Malaya as in Taiping where eight prominent locals, namely, the Rev. N. G. Manickam, Lila Ram, Ramli, Mohd Isa Sulaiman (the last two were former Kesatuan Melayu Muda or Young Malay Association members and part of the *jikeidan* or volunteer corp), Shaikh Abdullah Abu Bakar, Lebai Puteh, Abdullah Mat Kasir and Aziz Haji Ismail were given official clearance (*The Sunday Tribune*, 17 February 1946).

Apparently Malaysians viewed this development in a very negative light, as there were cases of those who had been cleared being subjected to malicious whispering campaigns that drew strong comments from local BMA officials. This group also found considerable difficulty in being reinstated into their former jobs. The Kedah archives holds a few cases of individuals who had appealed for reinstatement and had to wait an unduly long time to get a decision. There were unfortunate cases of those who were detained committing suicide while in detention, perhaps due to the stigma of being labeled a "quisling". One such case involved Raja Sulaiman Raja Mohamed, a scion of the Selangor royal family who served as district magistrate in Klang during the war (*The Malaya Tribune*, 24 January 1946).

As seen from contemporary newspaper accounts, the Malayan public followed keenly these trials and the official treatment meted to collaborators. The first of these trials was held in January 1946 in Singapore (where most of the trials were held), followed by other states on the peninsula. These trials were handled by various courts including special magistrate courts. Malaysians were interested to know the fate of their torturers and whether they were being meted just and adequate punishment. According to a retired civil servant who used to attend

these trials in Penang, there was always keen competition for space in the public gallery especially when it involved a Japanese *Kempeitai* officer.

However, attempts to try those alleged to have committed acts of disloyalty to the colonial government were fraught with legal loopholes. There was also the difficulty of proving in open court that the defendants had indeed collaborated with the enemy. To solve this problem, collaborators were tried under the various provisions of the Penal Code, in particular, under the section of causing voluntary hurt to other civilians (Pejabat Penasihat Undang-Undang 4/46). However, prosecution was slow. Quite often the defendant was let off the hook resulting in strong popular indignation in the local press. These trials also smacked of racism when white judges and white prosecutors were pitted against the locals (or even the Japanese war criminals) being defended by Asian lawyers who were mainly of South Asian extraction.

In Penang, the first trial was held in February 1946, involving a wartime police inspector by the name of Carlyne da Silva who was charged with using physical torture to extract information between August – December 1943 and January – August 1944. *The Straits Echo* took note of the large crowd coming to this trial for both the morning and afternoon sessions for the two-week trial, in particular, among the Eurasian community. Similar interests were reported at the Balik Pulau district court during the trial of a Chinese man on charges of collaborating with the Japanese. In Perak, the case of Raja Omar created considerable excitement among locals. Raja Omar, the former district officer of Kinta district, was charged for sedition based on the utterances that he had allegedly made in February 1942 at the Supreme Court premises belittling the British might after the fall of Singapore.

However, the progress of the trials was slow and quite often not all defendants were found guilty as charged. It was not clear what happened to Carlyne da Silva after almost 2 weeks of trial, but the fate of many others were as varied as the charges levelled at them. On January 26, Abu Bakar, a former *Kempeitai* agent was sentenced to three years rigorous labour on charges of torturing five other Malays and delivering them to his Japanese superior (*The Sunday Tribune*, 26 January 1946). The case of one D. M. Suppiah, a sub-inspector during Japanese rule, on charges of causing grievous hurt was discontinued due to lack of evidence. Similarly, Dr J. J. Simpson of Kampar was acquitted by the court on allegation of collaboration due to the lack of evidence (*The Sunday Tribune*, 27 January 1946; *The Malaya Tribune*, 8 February 1946). Raja Omar was found guilty and subsequently sentenced to 6 months of hard labour while Wong Bek Kooi, a former police officer, was sentenced to 6 years jail for using criminal force to extract confession from prisoners. More unfortunate was Che

Abdullah Haji Shaikh Hassan, a *penghulu* (head of a cluster of villages) from Kelang, who was sentenced to death for the crime of pointing out British soldiers to the conquering Japanese in early 1942. These convictions are rather exceptional, and probably meant to impress Malaysians of the idea of the British justice, for in the end most of the 385 Malaysians detained in various parts of the country were released. Only a selected few were actually punished for the crime of collaboration, and sometimes the wrong man was made the scapegoat (Abdullah Hussain, 1982). In a stinging editorial *The Straits Echo*, dated March 1, 1946, voiced its displeasure at the inconsistent official policy and argued that those who did derive benefits from collaboration should be brought to court.

Partly in response to these criticisms other groups of collaborators were subsequently arraigned in court, as was the case of a group of Penangites. By December 1946 their cases were disposed off by the special court with eight of them convicted as charged, while four others had their cases withdrawn and discharged not amounting to an acquittal. For those convicted the court meted out the following: Bhag Singh was sentenced to 9 months rigorous imprisonment for each of the two charges with the sentences to run concurrently; a fine of RM 150 for Shaikh Mohamed for causing grievous hurt under section 325 of the Penal Code; Ng Teng Soo was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment; Bakar bin Dollah was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment for each of the two charges that was leveled against him and ordered to pay RM 300 compensation on each charge or 3 months rigorous imprisonment in default; Ahmad Che Teh was sentenced to 6 months and 12 months rigorous imprisonment with the sentences to run consecutively; and Liew Ah Piang was sentenced to 12 months rigorous imprisonment and ordered to pay RM500 compensation to one Tan Choon Hong or 6 months rigorous imprisonment in default (Pejabat Penasihat Undang-Undang 4/46).

As an extension of the intense anti-Japanese sentiment, there was considerable public interest in trials involving Japanese military officers. The first of such trials was held in Singapore in January-February 1946 involving mostly *Kempeitai* officers and personnel. In that first trial, which was given wide coverage by the local press such as *The Straits Echo*, two Japanese officers, namely Nakamura Kamiyoshi and Corporal Hamada were found guilty – the former for maltreating Indian POWs in Singapore and the latter for hanging six civilians in Kuala Kubu Baru in April 1944 – and subsequently hanged. In the same month, in Kuala Lumpur, one Sergeant Yamamoto was found guilty by a military court and sentenced to death by hanging, which took place in March at the infamous Pudu jail. Similar public interest was observable in the trials of Japanese *Kempeitai* officer Eiko Yoshimura that started in Ipoh in mid-February 1946 and held at the town hall. His every entry and exit from the temporary

court premise was greeted by boisterous jeers from Ipoh residents who attended the trial in full force. Yoshimura managed to hold on to his professed innocence for a day. On the second day he pleaded guilty. Despite an eloquent performance by the defence lawyer, Captain Roy Chaudry, the former "King of Ipoh" was sentenced to death by hanging. Ipoh residents believed he got what he deserved and a small deputation subsequently approached the court president and offered to build a public gallow as they felt the execution should be made public (*The Malaya Tribune*, 18 February 1946; 20 February 1946; 1 March 1946). The offer however was firmly and politely rejected and Yoshimura was later hanged at the Taiping prison.

How far these trials were reformatory in intent or mere acts of vengeance is difficult to determine. Immediately after the surrender, Japanese soldiers were held in detention centers such as Bentong and Sungai Petani prior to their repatriation to Japan. For the 1945-47 period there was no reported cases of these soldiers being manhandled in a vengeful manner by locals as they were given ample protection by British soldiers. They might have been "punished in other ways" such as a reduction in rice ration⁷ which was sensible as Malaya then was experiencing severe rice shortages, or made to contribute their labour in ways deemed suitable for the particular locality they were in. In the case of those held at the Army Concentration area at the Sungai Petani airport, they were used as labour corps at the Destitute Concentration center near Jitra, clearing up the place, cleaning building, digging latrines and undertaking road improvements (Salmah Ismail, 1999). In Jelebu, some 80 of them were made to clear the district's main town of Titi of rubbish that had accumulated during the previous years of Japanese rule, as well as to clean the town's public latrines and drains (Mohd Yusoff Haji Ahmad, 1983). For those detained in Taiping (by late December 1945, there were close to 7,000 of them), the POWs were divided into labour battalions which were deployed in places such as Hadyai, Sungai Petani, Taiping, Bidor and as far as Kelantan and Pahang (*The Malaya Tribune*, 20 December 1945).

Elsewhere, locals did try to get their hands on the Japanese in a vengeful manner. In one case a group of *Kempeitai* officers (63 of them to be exact) were made to march from Sungai Petani to the Taiping prison, a distance of some 133-km, which they traversed in 4 days. It must have been hard for these men to

⁷ Initially the POWs were given 14 ounces daily but this was reduced to 10 and 6 ounces in rice deficit areas. By early 1946 the amount was further reduced to 4 ounces per man daily, although this shortfall was compensated by other substitutes.

do so under the tropical sun. Harder still was the reception they received from locals along the way as described by a local reporter, which is quoted below:

"In every town and village through which the prisoners were marched men of the Royal Sussex Regiment forming the escort were given a great welcome by the population. In one village the people (had) to be prevented from mobbing some of the Japs and showed their contempt for them in no uncertain terms. In one of the villages, one of the natives asked if he could have permission to throw stones... [Sic]" (*The Straits Echo*, 12 October 1945).

By the time of Merdeka there was much evidence of a deep seated anti-Japanese feeling among Malaysians from various strata and ethnic groups, especially among those who had been at the receiving ends of various forms of Japanese atrocities during the occupation (Tunku Abdul Rahman, 1977; Mat Zin Mat Kib, 1988). The anti-Japanese mood also expressed itself in another peculiar way, namely, Malaysians taking great pride in whatever roles they had played in resisting the Japanese. On the other hand, those who collaborated with the Japanese regime, even as lower ranking administrators, sought to down play these "unavoidable" actions (Abu Talib Ahmad, 1999b). Others like Mohd Yusoff Ahmad, who was tortured and interrogated by the *Kempeitai* while serving as the district officer of Jasin, made no secret of his hatred of the Japanese and as a nation found "them of an unpleasant character to deal with" (Mohd Yusoff Haji Ahmad, 1983).

BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS, 1957-99

Before the "Look East" Period, 1957-80

After 1957, the Tunku administration laid the foundation for better diplomatic and economic relations during a particularly difficult time. Anti-Japanese feelings were intense among Malaysians (and later Malaysians), especially within the Chinese community. Normalisation of relations was a slow process that had begun well before Merdeka. While the majority of Japanese nationals had been repatriated to Japan after the war, there were reports that some had made official applications in the late 1940s seeking permission to remain in Malaya. The local press, including the Malay press, viewed such prospects with alarm and urged the colonial government to reject the applications. The colonial government also viewed coldly attempts made in early 1950s by certain Japanese economic interests to resurrect their pre-war business in Penang. Yet, trade never stopped between the two countries. In 1956, Japan's exports to Malaysia stood at

US\$79 million while imports was US\$96 million (*The Straits Echo*, 31 August 1957) and these figures increased substantially in the 1960s.

During 1957, at an official level, efforts to improve bilateral relations increased. In March, K. Matsumura, a personal representative of Prime Minister Kishi, arrived in Kuala Lumpur and was well received by Malayan officials (Mohd Samsuddin, 1995). In August of the same year, a five-men delegation from Japan, represented by senior members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), came to Kuala Lumpur for the Merdeka celebrations. They too were well treated and accorded the same status as the other state guests. In the same month Tokyo expressed its intention to improve trade relations and to increase investment in such areas as iron ore, manganese and fishery (*The Straits Echo*, 31 August 1957).

By September 1957, a Japanese embassy was established in Kuala Lumpur and in November, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi came to Kuala Lumpur, the first official visit by a Japanese prime minister since the end of the war. Tunku Abdul Rahman provides interesting insights of this state visit in his memoirs amidst the background of the strong anti-Japanese feeling (Tunku Abdul Rahman, 1977). Contemporary newspaper accounts reported no cases of adverse reactions towards the Japanese. If there were any protests these were never reported by the editors. On the other hand, the press carried much on the positive side of the visit and Kishi's reiteration of Japan's readiness to assist Malayan development was given prominence. There were a few pictures thrown in such as Kishi laying a wreath at the cenotaph (aided by T. Mori, the principal of the Kuala Lumpur Methodist Boys School), Kishi and entourage being entertained by the famed Kasma Booty cultural troupe and Kishi lighting the Tunku's cigarette. Kishi also visited and exchanged gifts with the Sultan of Selangor, who had been deposed by the Japanese during the early phase of the occupation. Earlier the Japanese premier had expressed a profound apology to the perhaps bemused Sultan. This was a precursor to many more apologies from other Japanese national leaders (*The Malay Mail*, 5 November 1957; 25 November 1957; 26 November 1957).

In May 1958, the Tunku returned the visit with a small high level delegation. The joint communiqué issued at the end of this visit stated that "the two Prime ministers had discussed ways and means of promoting and of expanding trade and commerce between Japan and the Federation of Malaya. They also expressed their agreed desire that Japan would help to contribute to the economic development of the Federation of Malaya through the investment of Japanese capital and the export of capital goods necessary for such development. In turn, the Federation of Malaya would co-operate with Japan by offering her a market for Japanese industrial products, so that the two

countries might establish closer economic relations." (Maresyiya Yonin Shogai Koku Homon, 1958). However, it was only in 1960 that both countries managed to agree on a commercial treaty that facilitated the normalization of trade relations.

Smooth bilateral relations did not ensue until the issue of wartime reparations (or the "blood debt" issue) was finally settled in the mid-1960s. In October 1963 the Sato Cabinet dispatched a Foreign Ministry delegation to discuss reparation but the Malayan government rejected the sum offered by the Japanese. It was not until October 1966 that the issue was finally settled, despite the strong anti-Japanese feeling prevailing among the Chinese population and among the former "death railway" labourers of various ethnic origins. In retrospect, the reparation settlement of RM 50 million was far below the amount paid to other Southeast Asian countries similarly brutalized by the Japanese imperial army. Half of the amount was to be paid in cash and the other half disbursed in the form of technical assistance and loans which included two ships that would later form the nucleus of the national shipping carrier, Malaysian International Shipping Corporation (MISC). Besides settling the reparation issue, Tokyo also played a crucial role as mediator in mending the rifts between Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta and Manila, following the formation of Malaysia in 1963. Thus, by the mid-60s there was already a perceptible change in the official view towards Japan. In fact, political leaders like the Tunku had begun to urge Japan to play a leading role in the development of the region (Mohd Samsuddin, 1995).

The improvement in state-to-state relations was reflected clearly in bilateral trade. In the field of trade, from 1957 onwards Japan remained an important trading partner of Malaysia. Between 1957-60 Tokyo was the 4th largest buyer of Malaysian goods and the 5th largest supplier of imports and continued to improve her position in the coming years. The May 1960 Commercial Treaty managed to strengthen bilateral trade. Among others, the treaty provides for mutual "most favoured nation clause," exchange control, immigration, shipping and a safeguard against dumping of Japanese products. Its immediate impact was to allow the entry of Malaysian canned pineapples and 35 categories of sawn timber into the Japanese market. Trade relations increased further after 1966 as the following selected figures indicate.

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Table 1: Malaysia-Japan Trade (in US 1000 dollars)

	Exports	Imports
1965	74,572	262,546
1966	89,390	307,136
1970	166,464	419,895
1973	447,865	776,251
1974	707,906	978,975
1976	703,964	1,362,231
1977	863,354	1,560,634
1978	1,157,077	1,899,773
1979	1,506,952	3,257,714

Source: Mehmet, 1990

During the Tunku administration, Japanese investment trickled in slowly to Malaya. By 1980, Japanese investment in Malaysia was only 5.9% (with accumulated total of US\$ 506 million) of her total investment in Asia while Indonesia managed to garner 45%, Singapore 9.2%, Hong Kong 10.9% and the Philippines 6.2% (Md Ali Hassan, 1982). As shown by the following data, Japanese investment surged only during the period 1972-74, in response to the favourable packages offered by the Razak administration and the heightened pace of industrialization.

Table 2: Japanese Companies in Malaysia as at the End of 1979

Year	No. of Companies	Capital (in 1000 US\$)
1950-57	2	7,105
1959-66	17	135,314
1967-69	21	77,165
1970-71	17	75,917
1972	11	65,579
1973	36	322,563
1974	19	68,732
1975-77	13	28,701
1978	2	338,000
1979	6	19,375
Total	144	1,148,721

Source: Mehmet, 1990

Thus, regardless of what public perceptions might have been during this period, 'official' perceptions had changed clearly on an economic basis. This was

further strengthened in the subsequent period that saw the birth of the "Look East Policy".

The "Look East" Period, 1981-99

A very important push in Malaysia-Japan relations came with the "Look East Policy" initiated under the Mahathir administration in 1981. In fact, this policy and the personal relationship between the Malaysian premier and Japanese corporate and political leaders changed Malaysia-Japan relations considerably. Many also believed that the perceptions of Malaysia towards Japan were influenced favourably. Much has been written on this policy and the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) has posted the policy on its website. There are many arguments in favour as well as against this policy. Briefly, the Prime Minister defined the Look East Policy in the following terms (Mahathir Mohammed, 1985):

"Look East," means emulating the rapidly developing countries of the East in the effort to develop Malaysia. Matters deserving attention are diligence and discipline in work, loyalty to the nation and to the enterprise or business where the worker is employed, priority of group over individual interests, emphasis on productivity and high quality, upgrading efficiency, narrowing differentials and gaps between executives and workers, management system which concentrate on long term achievement and not solely on increases of dividends or staff income in the short term, and other factors which can contribute to progress for our country.

"Looking East" does not mean begging from the East or shifting the responsibility of developing Malaysia to them. Responsibility towards our country is our own and not that of others. Looking East also does not mean buying all goods from or granting all contracts to companies of the East, unless their offer is best.

The "Look East Policy" comprised 6 basic components, namely the Academic Education Program (AEP), Technical Education Program (TEP), Japanese Language Program for Malaysian Teachers (JLPMT), Industrial and Technical Training Program (ITTP), Short Term Training for Malaysian Executives (STME) and Business Management Training and Attachment Program with Japanese Companies (BMT). Some of the programs such as AEP began in 1990, while others began later in 1993. According to the JETRO website, as of 1997, some 5,204 Malaysians were involved with the various programs under

the Look East Policy with the most number in the ITPT component (2,730), followed by the AEP component (1,310). This is certainly a significant jump from the pre-1968 total of 436. These impressive numbers indicate success which was due to the commitment of both the Malaysian and the Japanese governments, as well as the Japanese private sector in providing training opportunities to churn craftsmen with higher grades of skill and so forth (Saravanamuthu, 1985).

There is much support for this policy within the country, in particular the media and notably *The New Straits Times*. Perhaps the book entitled, *Pandang ke Timur: Mengapa Jepun jadi Pilihan*, written by Harun Che Su is reflective of such support. Harun began his argument by highlighting the decline of the West, in particular Britain, which he believed was "a dead nation" in its development (sic?) as evidence by its declining economy, shrinking importance in international trade, the greater incidence of strikes and riots, the attitudes of its youth with its welfare mentality, and a refusal to work and other related social ills (Harun Che Su, 1982). Harun also mentions Britain's "shabby treatment of its former colony" in financial matters as well as London's efforts to raise fees for foreign students in Britain which incidentally affected Malaysians the most.

For Harun, the turn towards the East i.e. Japan and Korea, was quite natural as "both are not only developed nations but its people possessed certain traits and characteristics worth emulating, namely diligence and the spirit to make continued improvements to strengthen their nations". Like many Malaysians, Harun was really impressed at the rapid rise of Japan after the destruction of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the continuous Allied bombings before 1945. To him, this was only possible due to the "diligence and hard work of the Japanese people who have long been imbued with such cultural traits." As a result of the high technological achievements, according to Harun, the Japanese were able to produce high quality goods that are much in demand internationally. For him both Korea and Japan served as catalysts for the surrounding countries as well as models for emerging developing nations. Both are still able to preserve intrinsic eastern values despite their rapid modernization which impressed Harun. While Harun agreed that it is difficult to emulate the Japanese, he did not think the task was impossible.

On the other hand, the "Look East Policy" is not short of its detractors. This includes a prominent Malay corporate figure who had expressed qualified reservations on imbibing Japanese work ethics. More vehement criticisms came from intellectuals like Kua Kia Soong and Chandra Muzaffar. Kua, for instance, criticized the "Look East Policy" for its erroneous portrayal of Japan as model

of development which highlighted Japan as peopled by selfless workers and selfless bosses (Kua, 1985). Chandra, on the other hand, has shown the portrayal of the Japanese work ethic as the "cure all" a mere myth. Instead, he suggested that the Japanese success is attributable to other aspects including the country's leadership, the country's non-dependence on external assistance and the benefits derived from advances in Western technology (Chandra, 1985a). Chandra also had some unkind words for Japanese unionism (in-house union) with negative aspects such as: (1) only 25% of labour benefits from lifelong employment, (2) the firing of workers in larger numbers, (3) the gross discrimination of women workers, and (4) the health and safety of members not being given much attention (Chandra, 1985b). Undeniably, there are inherent flaws in the "Look East Policy". A more worthy attempt to study a nation is to look at its culture and long history rather than the current emphasis on technology which was actually imported from the West. Any attempt to study Japan and its "modernization" should begin with how the Japanese "borrowed and learnt from China" between the 7th - 10th centuries through the efforts of Japanese students. Some had lived as long as 30 years in China in order to comprehend China's superior culture and its "high level technology" (Abu Talib Ahmad, 1992). As the Japanese had shown in their long history, any attempt to "copy others" must begin with efforts to understand the culture and history of those being copied.

Whatever the pros and cons of the "Look East Policy", it signalled the rapid increase in all forms of economic relations between Malaysia and Japan. Mention has already been made of the significant increase in the number of Malaysians being trained in Japan as well as the flow of tourists into each other's country. Equally impressive was the expansion of bilateral trade for the period 1990-95 which is tabulated below (in million of US dollars).⁸

Year	Exports	Imports
1990	4,663	7,027
1991	5,396	9,560
1992	5,329	10,219
1993	5,825	11,937
1994	7,195	16,323
1995	9,380	21,236

Equally significant is the flow of Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the 1986-1994 period which is tabulated in Table 5 below. The Yen Credit was utilized for a variety of projects such as a highway toll system.

⁸ I wish to thank Dr. Md Ali Hassan who provided these figures.

construction of transmission and power plants, railway improvement projects, poverty eradication projects, the promotion of small and medium scale industries, facilities for the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) teaching hospital at Cheras, and projects relating to the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). On the other hand, the grant assistance covered the supply of various equipments for a variety of projects (such as audio-visual equipment, musical instruments, video dubbing and video editing equipments) as well as the improvement of the Japanese Language Centre at the University of Malaya.

Table 5: Flow of Japan's ODA to Malaysia. 1986-94⁹ (in US\$ million)

Year	Yen Credit	Grant Assistance	Technical Assistance	Total
1986	125.74	9.35	44.19	179.28
1987		4.41	42.96	47.37
1988	787.87	3.97	49.85	841.69
1989	512.60	3.66	45.61	661.89
1990		10.46	45.88	56.34
1991		5.77	43.00	48.77
1992	629.31	0.78	43.46	673.65
1993	538.70	1.30	45.40	585.40
1994	615.18	1.03	49.11	665.32
Total	6,463.37	109.98	666.34	7,230.69

The other equally important issue is that the Japanese occupation has always been incorporated as part of the history text books for the Malaysian school curriculum, although at various times the emphasis has differed. In one of the texts used prior to 1990, there was a chapter devoted to this period which dealt with the rise of Japanese militarism, conquest on the Asian continent, Japanese rule and atrocities, economic and social hardships and Japanese policies towards the major ethnic groups in Malaya, namely Malays, Chinese and Indians. The MPAJA was also given ample coverage, in contrast to the text-book used after 1990 (Cheah, 1999)

In the post-1990 period, the coverage of the Japanese occupation focused primarily on "how our country [Malaysia] fell to the Japanese; on the nature of Japanese administration, the hard and difficult life (then), and the spread of

⁹ The figures are in million US \$ and calculated from ODA Annual Reports for 1990, 1991 and 1994. Again, I wish to thank Dr. Md Ali Hassan who had provided these figures.

national consciousness." (Sabihah Osman, 1996). The chapter, 19 pages in length, is divided into 12 parts as follows: The Rising Sun chasing its ambition, Our country fell to the Japanese, Japanese administration in our Country, Education under Japanese rule, Japanese economic policy, the hard life under Japanese administration, The Rising Sun forments nationalism, the peoples' reaction, the Struggle of Force 136, the impact of Japanese occupation in neighbouring countries and "the Sun" sets. Some of the section are quite long while others are just 2-3 short paragraphs. The MPAJA is given a 2 sentence treatment while the exploits of the Kinabalu guerillas and the Malay resistance group, which was part of Force 136, got a wider coverage. To facilitate digestion among students, a chronology of the important dates/events were given and the book is replete with interesting photographs.

PERCEPTIONS OF MALAYSIANS TOWARDS JAPAN, 1957-99

Undoubtedly, the perceptions of Malaysians towards Japan have changed considerably since the "Look East Policy" came into effect. But have these changed from being anti-Japan to pro-Japan or have they simply become neutral? Quite often the following are cited as evidence of such changes: the current interest in the Japanese language (among the Malaysian public and students in higher institutions of learning), the increasing number of Japanese television programs that are being shown here, the increasing number of citizens of both countries visiting one another, the local fascination with the annual Bon Odori festivities, local interests in things Japanese (such as food, popular culture or books) and the popularity of Japanese comics, translated both into Bahasa Malaysia and Chinese, among Malaysian children.

As mentioned earlier, only a comprehensive survey of Malaysians, especially those who had survived the wartime period, would show clearly whether there are indeed changes in their perceptions towards Japan. Lacking that, the survey of 61 students mentioned earlier could served as a rough indicator of change. To begin with, the students were asked to comment on the "Look East Policy" and their views are tabulated below. It is also significant to note that they were asked to write down their views regarding this policy in a separate section of the survey which the majority did in equally positive tone.

Japan as a Model for Malaysia's Development

	Choices/respondents
Agreeable	45
Disagree	5
No specific view	4
Malaysia did not need such a model	7

As for the students' perceptions of Japan, these are tabulated below in order of their preferences (with each student allowed to make more than one choice).

	Choices
A high technology nation	58
Powerful economic nation	49
Need for Japan to assist Asian LDCs	47
Fear of Japanese militarism	10
Japan too close with USA/Europe	10

Equally interesting are the students' views regarding the nature of future Malaysia-Japan relations which are tabulated below. The respondents were given the option of picking more than one choice. While the majority of them looked optimistically toward the future, a significant number felt that Japan should not dismiss the occupation period as irrelevant in bilateral ties.

	Choices
Continue existing bilateral ties (economy, trade and cultural)	5
Japan should be a member of East Asia Economic Group	35
Increased participation in international affairs	26
The need always to take into account the 1942-45 period when making decisions affecting Malaysia	21
Forget the wartime period and the need to usher in a new era in bilateral relations	17

This group of students, mainly from the School of Humanities and the School of Education, is an interesting lot. Their knowledge regarding Japan was gained while they were in school, through the media and from certain courses they had enrolled in the university. Yet their knowledge about Japan was only marginally more than that of the average Malaysian. They were also very much unaware of (or perhaps, unconcerned with) the Japanese cultural presence on or off campus. Regarding the USM Japanese Language Society (Nihongo no Kai), for instance, of the 61 respondents, 23 claimed they have never heard of this society while another 24 professed interest in such activities but were unable to

take part in it due to a host of reasons including the demanding academic life. Fifteen respondents knew of their friends who were involved in the Nihongo no Kai. However, only three of the 61 respondents were actually involved. Student disinterest on campus societies is an endemic problem and symptomatic of a general student disinterest in matters other than lectures and tutorials. This group of students were also ill-informed about the Japanese cultural presence on and off campus such as the Japan Festival 1999. Of the 61 respondents, 19 claimed that they have never heard of this Festival, while 35 of them had heard or knew about this cultural event. Another 10, professed no interest in the matter. Of the 61, however, only 3 actually have ever participated in any cultural events associated with the Japan Festival 1999.

Regarding the pursuance of a post-graduate education in Japan which is fully funded by the government (both Malaysian and Japanese), a majority of the students surveyed (33 respondents) answered in the affirmative while another 25 professed no interest in the matter. Significantly, only one respondent indicated an interest to undertake a similar course either in the United Kingdom or the USA while another 2 failed to indicate any preferences. In this particular section none of the respondents indicate any awareness of the difficulty of studying the Japanese language, the peculiar nature of the Japanese educational system or the possible problems of living in Japan. In the field of vocation this group of students was certainly less choosy with 46 of them being agreeable to working with a Japanese firm provided the pay was good. Only 15 respondents professed no interest in the matter. One of the main reasons indicated by the latter group was the fear of compliance with the Japanese work ethics, although recent studies on the adaptability of Malay-Muslim workers in Japanese firms (Smith, 2000) had shown that this fear is illusory.

With regards to original writings on Japan by Malaysians, the situation does not quite reflect the "current interest" in Japan at the official level or otherwise. Other than books for language study, there is a dearth of original works on Japan written by Malaysian academics/writers. There are only a few short studies that discuss various aspects of Japanese modernization and Japan's association with the "Look East Policy" (Abu Talib Ahmad, 1992; Lee, 1997; Harun Che Su, 1982; Saravannamuthu, 1991). There are also very little in depth studies on Japanese culture by Malaysians except on the *Noh* drama (Rahimah Bujang, 1996) and the *haiku* poetry (Mohamad Affandi Hassan, 1994). It appears that Japanese history is much more attractive to Malaysian academics/writers although the available studies thus far lack in depth analysis mainly due to the kind of sources cited by its authors (Muhd Yusoff Ibrahim, 1972; Rajendran, 1988; Mohd Nor Othman, 1979; Abu Yazid Abidin, 1979). In the field of translations there are a wider variety of books on Japan, despite the

predominance of translations from the English originals (Passin, 1989; Moritani, 1989; Norman, 1991; Itasaka, 1995; Fukutake, 1985; Ishikawa 1988; Ishi, 1993; Ishida, 1986; Minami 1989; Tazawa, 1987; Vogel, 1994). Thus far, there is only a single title which has been translated from the Japanese original into Bahasa Malaysia (Ariyoshi, 1999). This highly commendable task was undertaken by a UKM language teacher who was trained at Waseda University. Recently, a prominent Indonesian scholar who had taught at the Department of East Asian Studies in the University of Malaya translated 2 books by the controversial Japanese writer Sakaiya Taichi from Japanese into Bahasa Malaysia.

The other equally pertinent question is how far Malaysians actually read these books on Japan. Mention has been made earlier of the poor reception among local undergraduates of books pertaining to the occupation period. From the student survey pertaining to their reading habits which is tabulated below, even the more contemporary books on Japan, some of which had been noted earlier, enjoyed a similar fate.

	N (%)	H (%)	S (%)	R (%)
Rajendran (history)	18 (29.5)	10 (16.4)	6 (9.8)	27 (44.3)
Storry (history)	26 (42.6)	11 (18)	6 (9.8)	18 (29.5)
Norman (politics)	28 (45.7)	13 (21.3)	9 (14.8)	11 (18)
Ariyoshi (novel)	31 (50.8)	23 (37.7)	4 (6.5)	3 (4.9)
Yoshihara (economy)	34 (55.7)	16 (26.2)	7 (11.5)	4 (6.6)
Moritani (technology)	35 (57.4)	12 (19.7)	12 (19.7)	2 (3.2)
Rahmah Bujang (drama)	48 (57.4)	7 (11.5)	1 (1.6)	5 (8.2)

N = Have never heard of the book

H = Have heard of the book

S = Have seen the book

R = Have read the book

The survey results indicate an interesting phenomenon with books on Japanese history enjoying more readership compared with the other types of books, including those that dwelt on the Japanese economy and technology. The least read book is about Japanese drama (Noh). This is not surprising given the academic background of this particular group of students – all of them were history majors. One may argue that these results do not quite reflect the actual situation among Malaysians outside the ivory tower. A better indicator would be the actual figures as issued by the publishers. It is worth noting that between

1980-82, Storry was printed twice (approximately 6,000 copies): in the survey it only enjoyed 29.5 readership and is second in the list.

Undeniably there are changes in the perceptions of Malaysians towards Japan although these might not be entirely complete. This incomplete nature is indicated by the problematical issue relating to the setting up of Japanese Studies Departments in public universities in the country. The idea of setting up a Japanese Studies Department was first mooted some 20 years ago but it was vetoed as there was deep apprehensions within the universities and the education ministry regarding "Japanese intentions". Ten years ago the situation improved a little and as a result Japanese Studies was established at the University of Malaya but located within the Department of East Asian Studies. As it is Malaysia remains one of the few countries in the region that is still without a Japanese Studies Department; the Department of East Asian Studies is actually composed of three major programs: the Japan Program, Korea Program and the China Program with each offering courses both at the major and minor levels. At UKM there is a minor program in Japanese language with courses relating to *Nihon-go* (Japanese language) as well as various aspects of Japan, in particular, literature, culture and so forth which is offered to the interested students. According to a UKM staff this package is popular among the undergraduates. And so is a similar package which was introduced by the Language Centre in USM some years ago.

There is also another type of minor program which will be offered from June 2000 to USM students. This program is supported mainly by those who were trained in Japan either at the MA or Ph.D levels or both. Besides the *Nihon-go* component, this package would also includes courses on Japanese history, politics, literature and culture (with students only required to enroll for any three of these courses). It is still too early to predict the receptions to this minor program although, in the student survey among first year undergraduates conducted in August 1999, there was overwhelming support for it. In the past, there was scepticism within the university and government bureaucracy towards the setting up of a Japanese Studies Department (Abu Talib Ahmad, 1994). It is difficult to say whether such skepticism has diminished entirely. It is equally difficult to speculate when a department of Japanese Studies could be set up in this country although the minor package relating to Japanese studies discussed earlier is not quite a Japanese Studies Department that many seem to be suspicious about.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The essay began with a discussion on the negative views of Japan and the Japanese held by Malaysians from the late 1940s until the mid-1960s. At the official level this negative aspects had always been downplayed beginning with the Tunku administration and more so during the current Mahathir administration. As Japan is currently viewed in favourable light within official circles, its image also has undergone much change in the official mind. Among the Malaysian public there has been change in the perceptions of Japan and sufficient evidence exists to support such a hypothesis. However, it is also clear that such changes have taken place merely at the *tatemaie* (on the surface) level. Among many of those who had survived the Japanese period there is persistent animosity towards Japan. It is also obvious that there is criticism of Japan among the younger generation, the generation who only heard of Japanese atrocities from their grandparents, from books and magazines or through living and studying in Japan (Goh, 1991). While there is an increasing craze in things Japanese such as comics and food, and more Malaysians, mainly Chinese, have joined Japanese clubs such as those found in Penang or Kuala Lumpur, the war or the atrocities is never forgotten. This is manifested by the demand made by the various Chinese associations for a RM 500 million compensation for the forced payment of RM50 million that the Chinese community had to make during the war, or the less publicized demands of former "death railway" labourers and families of former labourers, for fair restitution which were first made in the early 1960s. While Malaysians paid very little interests in celebrating the end of the war, the 50th anniversary of the end of war was marked with a small conference organized by the History Department at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. In this conference there was much discussion about the occupation period as well as its significance. In the last 5 years the National Archives of Malaysia has organized two public discussions on the wartime period. One was held in Kuala Lumpur and the other in Penang. In both sessions the panelists were made up of those who had survived the occupation. These lively sessions were very well attended, especially by secondary school students. In contrast with the official policy stance on the matter, the memory of the war is still very much alive among certain segments of the Malaysian public, not just among academics and the small group of students who enroll in courses that discuss the Japanese occupation. On balance, one observes a could-not-care-less attitude about Japan among the local population. In other words ambivalence is perhaps the best description of the present Malaysian attitude towards Japan.

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