Japanese Economic Interest in Malaya and Japan-Malaya Relations in Historical Perspective

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This article will discuss Japanese-Malayan historical relations before and during World War II. In doing so, I will attempt to trace Malayan-Japanese relations and Japanese orientation towards Malaya until the end of World War II.

The objectives of this article are:

First, to prove that Japan had an economic interest in Malaya before World War II.

Second, to establish the historical pattern of Japanese interests in Malaya and Japanese involvement prior to World War II in the inter-war years.

Third, to present some new findings about Japanese involvement in Malaya based on declassified British Military Intelligence Reports on Malaya.

The Impetus of Pre-World War II Malayan-Japanese Relations

Malayan contacts with Japan were carried out by Western powers before the Japanese closed their doors to foreigners in the period 1637-1868. The basic aims of this contact were trade and control of the trade routes.

Albert Hyma states that:

> The only foreign merchants who had visited Japan regularly were the Portuguese. They carried on their trade between the ports of Lisbon, Goa, Malacca, Macao and Nagasaki and elsewhere. They had made great profit, but they were not in the position to fill the demand of the whole of Japan for foreign products.[1]

Besides this indirect contact of Japan with Malaya, Japan also showed interest to trade directly with Malaya, by sending its official trading ship "Goshun-Sen".[2] However, this ship visited Malacca only a few times in a year.

Malayan-Japanese relations were given greater impetus with the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), which was the period of the foundation of a modern state in Japan. E.H. Norman points out that,

> it [the Meiji reform movement for establishing a modern state] was carried out under the brilliant leadership of samurai-bureaucrats who, in the teeth of opposition directed against them, even by members of their own class, wisely pursued the path of internal reconstruction. The military bureaucrats were the spear point of advance, the vanguard of modernization in the establishment of a modern state in Japan.[3]

Capital formation as well as capital accumulation for the Japanese industries were carried out by policies of (a) taxation and credit creation, (b) oppression and exploitation of working masses, and (c) Japanese success in avoiding being taken over by foreign capital.[4]

In 1873, the Meiji regime passed new land tax legislation which "revised the land tax system from a harvest tax assessed as a portion of the harvest in rice, or its equivalent in money, to a land value tax assessed as a proportion of the land value".[5] In this way, legislation made possible "a revolutionary transfer of income from the Tokugawa ruling class to the landowners and later the government also introduced the certification of the land. By this policy, the government wanted to transfer the land to the mass of landlords or private owners."[6]

The transfer of the land to private ownership was supported by the deflationary policy of the 1880's which resulted in some 368,000 peasant proprietors being dispossessed for failure to pay tax. The value of the land sold or confiscated was twenty-seven times the total of the debt. "As a result of land-reforms, not only the landowners were enriched, but also the government was able to collect land tax as much as possible. Between the period of 1871 and 1875, the land tax revenues accounted for between 85 and 93.2 percent of the total government tax revenue."[7]

This money, as well as daimyo pensions and government bonds transferred to landowners, not only transformed the landlords into stockholders and bankers but also supplied the money for industrial projects as stated below:

> These bonds not only secured the bad debts due the Chonin, but supplied the bond holders with funds for investing in industrial projects or in land. This settlement had the effect of converting the greatest landlords and users into stockholder and bankers.[8]

The other policy used by the regime for capital formation and accumulation was the exploitation of the workers. Exploitation of the workers during this time was characterized by low wages and long hours. Tables 1 and 2 show us that "the wages of skilled workers were lower than those of artisans and even below those of day labourers. The level of wages paid to male workers were more than those wages paid to female workers which also indicates the exploitation of female workers."[9]

Japanese capital formation also stemmed from the Japanese success in avoiding being taken over by foreign capital. In the 1870's, the Japanese government pursued a policy of discouraging foreign investment and of buying back foreign-owned capital equipment and repaying foreign loans. As stated below:

> From about 1872, the government tried to push Dutch and British-Hong Kong (Jardines) interest out of the Tokoshima coal mine, which was eventually repurchased by Mitsubishi only in 1881. In 1875, Mitsubishi was granted a government loan to but out the American Pacific Steam Ship company's Tokyo-Shanghai route: In 1877 and 1880, the British and French-owned postal services were nationalized and by the beginning of the 1880's, Japan had cleared itself of foreign capital.[10]

As explained above, one of the major policies of the Meiji period was nationalization of industries which was aimed at decreasing or eliminating foreign ownership in Japan's economy. The external manifestation of such a policy was direct competition with Western powers such as the British in Malaya, as will be explained later in this article. Another aspect of the Meiji period which had an impact on Southeast Asia was its industrialization. This policy was implemented in stages.[11] Industrialization progressed from a non-heavy industry base to a second stage of general expansion of heavy industry around the time of the Russo-Japanese War. It was at this stage when there was a big boom in manufacturing and mining that the Japanese started to show an interest in Malaya.

As seen from the above discussion, the nationalization as well as industrialization policy of Japan was aimed at protecting the economy from the onslaught of foreign powers. Because of Japan's wish to become an industrialized state and at the same time to protect the economy from foreign control, Japanese policy necessarily had to be anti-Western. Furthermore, Japan's lack of natural resources as well as her need for markets for her products caused Japan to expand in Southeast Asia including Malaya.

After the Meiji regime opened Japan's doors to the external world, the first Japanese came to Malaya and this flow continued throughout the Meiji period, at the end of which the Japanese population in Malaya amounted to around 4,000.[12]

Japanese Settlement in Malaya

The development of the Japanese community in Malaya can be traced in Tables 3, 4 and 5. An interesting aspect is the female-male ratio as seen in Tables 4 and 5. The preponderance of women in the Japanese population particularly before 1911 was because "most of the women were prostitutes who were victims of the Japanese yellow slave trade. Lured away by vagabond sailors, they came mainly from Kyushu."[13] Reginald Sanderson expressed the fact in the following manner:

> There are a few Japanese merchants and commercial men of acknowledged standing but for the most part, the Land of the Rising Sun is represented by an undesirable class.[14]

It is ironic to note that but for the presence of Western colonialism, such a class of Japanese would not have found its way to Malaya.

As illustrated in Tables 3 and 4, Singapore was the main center for the Japanese population and as pointed out by Yuen, it was also the center for the yellow slave trade. According to her, "the slave traders (yellow slave traders) avoided immigration controls by smuggling their victims into Singapore which became a main distributing center."[15]

However, before 1909, the Japanese lacked any real economic interest in Malaya. For example, in 1897, although the Sultan of Johore offered a ninety-nine year lease of a thousand acres to a Japanese on favourable terms, the offer was refused.

It was in the period between 1909-1912 during the rubber boom that the Japanese were beginning to look at the opportunity of rubber planting in Malaya.[16] Japanese rubber plantations were established in almost every Malay state. Table 6 indicates their sizes. Johore, notably, had not only the largest total area of rubber estates, but also was highest among all states in planted area and latex yield. The growth of the Japanese rubber plantations in Johore was paralleled by an increase of Japanese people in that state from 173 in 1911 to 1,287 in 1921.

One reason why the Japanese did not invest overseas till the turn of the century was that,

> Japan lacked confidence before the Sino-Japanese War (1874-1895) and Russo-Japan War (1905). After these Wars, Japanese started to invest abroad. The victories gave Japan's Industrial Revolution a tremendous impetus which spilled over to Korea, Taiwan and later to the Southeast including Malaya.[17]

Japanese industrial demand for steel caused some Japanese to look for iron-ore investments as well. The Japanese were the only foreigners attracted to iron-mining in Malaya.[18] Trengganu and Kelantan became important states because of iron-ore. The growth of the Japanese population in Kelantan and Trengganu accompanied the growth of the Japanese iron-ore interest in these two states. Before iron-mining was started in Trengganu, there were 180 Japanese in this state. By the eve of World War II, there were 537 Japanese. In this period, the Japanese were mostly in Trengganu while fewer were in Kelantan. It was only during the latter half of the 1930's that the Japanese population in Kelantan rose from 64 to 117 in 1938, paralleling an increasing trend of the mining of iron deposits there.

In the Federated Malay States, the Japanese were involved in shop-keeping, watch-repairing, laundry and hair-dressing, whereas in Johore, Trengganu and Kelantan they dealt with rubber and mining basically. In Singapore, however, the Japanese were interested in the growing entrepot trade. One of the Japanese consulates endeavoured to stimulate Japanese economic interest by setting up a commercial showroom to advertise Japanese goods.[19]

The Japanese community in Malaya found it necessary to set up an association to keep themselves together and preserve their rights. In 1905, the first Japanese Association was founded in Singapore and spread to all the Malay states. "The Association saw itself as a self-governing community fighting the economic battle for Japanese superiority in the Southeast."[20]

Police intelligence records reveal that:

> the Association was organized along fairly detailed lines with the office-bearers designated as Prime Minister, Ministers, vice-Ministers and Secretaries. Together, they made up the cabinet for 'Singapore village'. Their 'portfolios' covered a wide range and included those of

> Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Excise, Agriculture, Education, Graveyard and Imperial Affairs. The designation of responsibilities along such a grandiose scale might be dismissed as a piece of comic opera if not for the official standing the Association had with the Japanese consulate and the high positions which certain office-bearers had with the Tokyo Government. One of the office-bearers who was also the president of the Commercial Museum had once served a acting envoy to Siam.[21]

As can be argued from the foregoing discussion, we must reject any hypothesis which states that the Japanese had no economic interest in Malaya before 1936.[22] In fact, because of the significance of this economic interest, it would be supported by the Japanese government indirectly or directly later. We may say that Japanese interest in Malaya was sparked by the rubber boom between 1909 and 1912 and spread to other fields like the mining industries.

The Japanese Association in Malaya functioned not only as a social club which satisfied its members' needs, but also served the Japanese population in Malaya at large. Singapore was the main center of social discourse for the Japanese. In 1919 they published their own newspaper *Nanyo-Nich-Nich Shimbun* with the objective "to promote pan-Asiatic sentiments and promote Japanese colonization."[23] Its role was elaborated further in 1926 in the following terms:

> Occupying an independent position as pressman in a corner of Southern Asia, we have struggled against great odds for the last 10 years in order to promote the common welfare of all Asiatics, for we cherish the true meaning of a common brotherhood ... For the last 10 years, we made it our business to be the faithful guides of the overseas Japanese in Southeast [Asia] and also to be their obedient servants .... the number of steady Japanese who were prepared to establish a second Japan in a foreign land will increase, and we will assist them in the advance already made.[24]

The Growth of Japanese Interests in Rubber, Iron and Trade

By 1919, as shown in Table 6, more than a hundred thousand acres of land in Malaya were Japanese rubber plantations. Thus economic interests of the Japanese in Malaya started with buying land for rubber planting, while their counterparts at home were entering the rubber trade by manufacturing bicycle tires and rubber shoes.

Because of this rising Japanese economic interest in Malaya, the Rubber Growers' Association, which represented British rubber interests in Malaya connived with the Secretary of State for Colonies to enact the Rubber Land Enactment, which was aimed at restricting the Japanese economic advance.

The legislation prohibited the alienation of rubber land exceeding 50 acres, except to British subjects and subjects of Malay rulers, companies registered in the British dominions and in the Malay states, and others who had been residents in Malaya for at least seven years and intended to continue staying there. However, transactions were allowed between persons of the same nationality. Thus under this regulation British economic supremacy was assured, as British subjects were allowed to acquire more land, and the status quo of non-British control of the industry was maintained, since foreigners could only make land transactions with people of the same nationality.[25]

The Japanese strongly protested against this restriction, because among the foreigners the Japanese were hit hardest by this enactment. Japanese reaction to the regulation was immense and strong.[26]

The Japanese Planters' Association sent a telegram to the Japanese Ambassador in London to protest on their behalf against the restriction.[27] At the local level, the Japanese Consul to the High Commissioner of the Malay States lodged a protest. In Tokyo the government was pressured by various groups to take action against the limitation imposed on their rubber activities. The pressure on the government came especially from Japanese businessmen like F. Khora, an influential man enjoying close cooperation with the ruling cabinet, who was interested in rubber planting in Malaya. He probably influenced the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs to convey to the British Ambassador the "unfavourable impression produced not only in the press but in important circles by the restriction."[28] According to the British Commercial Attaché in Tokyo, many businessmen who had interests in Malaya protested against the land regulations, inviting the press to the meeting and thus pressuring their government to take steps towards the abolition of the legislation.[29]

In 1925-1926, the increasing war production created a new rubber boom. According to local intelligence reports, there were several attempts to preserve the Japanese rubber interests in Malaya. Nanyo Kyokai (South Sea Association) called on the Japanese government to assist Japanese planters in the South Seas by granting liberal loans at a low rate of interest and it also advised the planters to extend their operations to Sumatra, Borneo, New Guinea, Siam and Indo-China.[30]

Following this, some influential Japanese set up a company with a capital of 10 million yen to prevent the estates of their compatriots from being sold to foreigners. In Tokyo the Department of Finance also considered the establishment of a loan fund providing financial assistance to Japanese rubber planters to maintain and develop their estates. But, in spite of all these efforts, Japanese enthusiasm in rubber planting was not as keen as during the initial prosperous years of this industry.[31] After the Rubber Land Enactment had been passed, the acreage owned by Japanese in the 1930's was about half of that in 1917.

The Japanese were the only ones dealing with iron-ore in Malaya, and iron-mining played a leading role not only in the subsequent development of Malaysia's iron-mining industry, but also in the development of the Japanese steel industry.

It was the iron-mining industry that emerged as a post-World War I phenomenon, developed and monopolized by Japanese capital.[32] The Japanese Hiroichimo Ishihoza started iron-mining in Malaya in 1920, which marks the beginning of the industry in Malaya.[33] He came to Malaya to invest in rubber estates in 1916. His interest in iron-mining was awakened by a Chinese who mentioned the existence of iron deposits. In 1917, when the restriction on rubber land transactions was implemented by the British, Hiroichimo Ishihoza turned his attention to iron.

After a good quality of haematite ore with an iron content of 65% had been found in Johore, the Japanese also extended their interest to other states like Trengganu, Kelantan and Pahang. However, the heamatite ore found in those states was of a lower grade than Johore ore. Almost all iron-ore deposits were located in the Unfederated Malay States and were exploited by the Japanese.

Exploitation of iron deposits in Johore was due to the fact that it was a less developed state in the peninsula and the British administration was more willing to welcome any economic activity that would increase the state's revenue. The iron mining in Johore owned by Ishihoza Sangyo Koshi Ltd. (I.S.K.) enjoyed a good reputation with the treasury. Within a year of the opening of the mines, it had exported 75,250 tons of iron, bringing in $ 73,140 in export duty as a new source of revenue to the state. Table 7 shows that between 1921 and 1922 the export duty earned by tin decreased by $ 15,053 while iron brought in an additional $ 37,117. It was not only because of the revenue contribution to the state but also because of the additional employment that the state welcomed Japanese iron mining investments.[34]

In 1936, Trengganu attracted iron mine investors, because the output of Trengganu's iron mines almost doubled that of Johore's. Between 1925 and 1930 the two iron mines operating in the state were the I.S.K. Mines in Muchong Satahun near Kemaman and the Kuhoza Iron Mine in Bukit Besi near Dungun. From 1925 to 1930 the annual output had never been more than 100,000 tons. However, when the property was taken over by the Nippon Mining Company (N.M.C.) in 1930, the total output of the state rose from 87,364 tons in 1930 to 798,109 tons in 1931.[35]

In 1935, when iron was discovered in Temangen District, Kelantan profited from the full impact of investors. Mining here was granted to private enterprises, three of which were Japanese. The Japanese enterprises were warmly welcomed in Kelantan by the administration head, the British advisor, who expected great returns for Kelantan's revenue, and he did his utmost to cooperate with the investors. A case in point was the Southern Mining Company's application for the installation of telegraph lines from the mines office to other offices and working-places. Although the lines were expensive and difficult to maintain, the British administration head agreed:

> In principle the S.M. Co. is investing considerably high capital in this country and, as soon as exports start, they will be making large contributions to the revenue of the state and the Federated Malay States Railways... I am not anxious to seek small profits or to be obstructive in any way. I would request you to adopt an attitude as helpful towards the company, as is consistent with the proper working of the Posts and Telegraph lines... I'm particularly anxious from the revenue point of view to see the company develop its workings as quickly as possible.[36]

The contributions from the mines to the total Kelantan revenue increased from 0,65% in 1936 to 1.15% in 1937 and 1.7% in 1938. This increase was mainly due to the export of iron-ore to Japan.[37]

The first shipment of 49,223 tons was made in 1937, earning a revenue of about $ 200,000 in export duty for the state. New sources of income were welcomed by the government because of their contribution to the development of the Unfederated Malay States.[38] Only the Japanese exploited the deposits, since others such as the Europeans and Chinese were either preoccupied with mining tin or for other reasons were averse to iron-mining. The Japanese were particularly motivated to take up iron-

mining. Japan had an insatiable need for iron and although her production grew over the years, imports also greatly increased; in 1929 she still produced only three-fifths of her requirement - about the same proportion as at the beginning of the decade.[39]

> The Japanese were thus spurred to meet their country's needs, and with momentum provided by such favourable conditions as the laissez-faire attitude of the local authorities, the proximity of Malaya to Japan and the good quality ore, they were determined to scale the heights and plumb the depths for the ore.[40]

Iron was not only a new asset to the Malay states but in Johore and Trengganu it also became one of the chief revenue earners. If the indirect revenue derived from iron-mining is also considered then the Japanese contribution to the development of these states becomes all the more significant. Duties imposed on various items for consumption by the mines and their labour forces were sources of such indirect income. Their importance was aptly summed up by E.W. Pepys, General Advisor of Johore: "It does not seem possible to estimate the actual monetary effect to Johore State of all this but the total amount cannot be insignificant."[41]

Japanese iron-mining in Malaya certainly contributed constructively to the development of both the land and the economy of the states concerned. All the ore mined and produced by the Japanese in Malaya was exported almost exclusively to Japan. As Sir Lewis Fermor observed: "The operating companies appear almost without exception to be branches of or affiliated to enterprises with their headquarters in Japan."[42]

Being mainly financed by Japanese capital and managed by Japanese personnel, it was natural that the ore produced was also exclusively consumed by the Japanese iron and steel industry. Thus monopolized, Malaya's iron resources definitely assumed prime importance in the Japanese market. This was especially so when we consider that together with China, Malaya supplied 90% of the ore needed for the blast furnaces. Johore supplied 40% of Japan's iron consumption in 1928. About a decade later, in 1937, Trengganu, Kelantan and Pahang were producing 2.5 million tons or about half of Japan's iron ore imports. It is therefore clearly evident that Malaya's iron resources were of integral importance to the Japanese steel industry.[43]

By the end of the 1930's, the Japanese had become a great trading nation, after the U.S.A., the United Kingdom and Germany. She exported raw silk, canned fish, tea and pottery to the U.S.A. and other capital goods

and machinery to Manchuria and China. Textiles and miscellaneous consumption goods were exported to continental Asia and Southeast Asia, where people had low purchasing power. The devaluation of the yen in 1934 caused a reduction in the price of Japanese goods which therefore became more competitive vis-a-vis Western products. In fact, the value of her trade with Malaya was at its peak in the late 1930's, though its value was less than Malayan trade with the U.S., U.K., Dutch East Indies and Siam. However, Japanese commercial thrusts did make an impact on the Malayan market due to cheaper Japanese products like textiles. For example, the British firm Dunlop and Company complained to their headquarters, "no trade coming in. Japan has great advantage in the East over English manufacturers. Consider Japanese competition will be worse than German ever was. The only hope is that Japanese goods will prove not to be of such quality."[44]

The reason why the Japanese overtook English products was not only because of cheap labour, but also because of the proximity. Yuen stated that "it was difficult to match Japan's cheap transport cost. Freight costs to Singapore were so much cheaper from Japan than from London."[45]

Because of the effects of the economic depression (1929-1931) and the general world movement towards economic autarchy, the textile quota system was introduced in Malaya in the latter half of the 1930's by the British. The quota system was very specific and limited in nature. It was specifically directed at one country - Japan and limited to a particular section of the import trade - piecemeal textiles.[46]

The quotas were unpopular. Japanese products were highly popular because of their low prices. This and other factors including the decline in the purchasing power of the Malayan consumers from $ 1,052 million in 1926 to $ 362 million in 1933 rendered the great increase of Japanese imports in 1933 possible. Moreover the Japanese had cheaper methods of distribution than the British or other European manufacturers. Japanese exporters sold directly to local Chinese importers, thus eliminating the cost incurred by the European manufacturers who dealt with middlemen, the local European merchants.[47]

Other factors reduced the import and sale of Japanese goods, for example the anti-Japanese boycott carried out by the Chinese. The Chinese boycott of Japanese goods which was provoked by the Tsinan Incident (1928) and the Mukden Incident (1931) drastically reduced Japan's trade in cotton piece goods. The Trade Commissioner after examining the trade figures from January 1931 to March 1932 drew the con-

clusion: "The boycott has effectively kept Japanese piece goods off the markets as far as consumption by Chinese is concerned."[48] Because the Chinese refused to deal in Japanese goods, this created a vacuum for Indians to begin bringing in these goods in increasing quantities.[49] Later anti-Japanese boycotts were provoked by the Sino-Japanese War (1937). It was the Sino-Japanese War that caused Japanese goods to suffer a drastic setback as shown in Table 8.

Japan counterbalanced the loss sustained in cotton piece goods trade with a gain in ready-made goods. Prior to the imposition of quotas, articles such as shirts, coats, mosquito nets, etc. were imported piecemeal and made up by tailors in Malaya. The shift to the trade in ready-made goods manifested itself in 1936, when there was an annual increase of 37% in the imports of ready-made cotton goods in Malaya, the bulk of which came from Japan.[50] However, these Japanese goods suffered a drastic setback in the years following the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War because of the anti-Japanese boycotts, described as being of a hitherto unparallelled intensity.

In 1938 the amount of imports from Japan was the smallest of the preceding ten years. Although there were other factors responsible for this decline too, the boycotts were the main contributing cause. The setback in demand for rubber and tin during that year led to a decline in the consumption of textiles. Stocks left over from 1937 also served to reduce imports. The Federated Malay States Chambers of Commerce noted that "with the exception of a small trade done by certain Indian dealers it can be said that the imports of Japanese goods ceased entirely".[51]

However, Japanese ready-made goods continued to trickle in via Hong Kong. These goods were made by Indian firms in Hong Kong and sent to Indian firms in Malaya. These were then quite successful in using this system as a ruse to overcome the quotas and the boycotts in Malaya. Consequently, "whilst boycotts of Japanese textiles by Chinese dealers continued, appreciable quantities of these textiles continued to be imported under disguise by other nationals".[52] Nevertheless,

> A comparison between the effects of quotas and the anti-Japanese boycotts would show greater effectiveness of the latter. As seen earlier, the 1928 and 1931 boycotts hit at the most vulnerable spot - the demand rather than at the supply end which the quotas attempted to do. This is a clear indication of the popularity of Japanese goods at the grassroots level. If the Chinese dealers were not willing to handle Japanese products for patriotic reasons, there was an ever-ready re-

> placement in the Indian dealers. The Chinese consumer may be restrained by political sentiments from buying Japanese goods but political sentiments wore thin after some time. This was especially the case because compared to the dearer foreign goods, Japanese low-priced manufactures were readily available.[53]

Yuen concluded that:

> Though no strong ostensible links can be traced between Japanese commercial expansion and the later political advance into Malaya, these trading enterprises helped to broaden the vision of the expansionists. They saw Malaya not only as an invaluable supplier of raw materials but also as an important market for her manufactured products. The restriction imposed by the British must have impressed upon them the advantages of being a colonial power free to act as it chooses, and the prominent role of the Chinese must have caused envy in their eyes.[54]

The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Project and Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945

The idea of the co-prosperity sphere was stated in secret resolutions concerning the strengthening of the Japanese-German-Italian Axis, which was approved by a four-minister conference on 6 September, 1939. The co-prosperity area was defined as an "imperial bloc (Lebensraum) for the construction of a new order in Greater East Asia including Japan, Manchukuo and China as its core, the former germanated Islands, French Indo-China and French insular possessions in the Pacific, Thailand, British Malaya, British Borneo, the Netherlands East Indies, Burma, Australia, New Zealand, India and other areas."[55]

"The Principle of Economic Policy Towards the South" clearly gave first priority to securing resources, namely that "along with emphasis on satisfying the demand for essential resources and thereby contributing to the immediate war effort, [there] were also plans to establish a system of self-sufficiency for the Greater Asian co-prosperity sphere, in order to rapidly complete the strengthening of the economic power of the empire."[56]

The Japanese invasion of Malaya was sudden, brutal and efficient. The British repeatedly suffered serious reverses as the Japanese pressed rapidly down the Malayan Peninsula to Singapore. The whole of Malaya and Singapore capitulated within only 70 days. On 15 February, 1942, the British were forced to disarm and suspend resistance due to lack of food supply and loss of military power. Lieutenant General Percival handed Singapore into the hands of General Yamashita at Bukit Timah and thus began the historical reign of Japan over Malaya.

Japanese administration policy in Malaya constrasted sharply with that in so-called Independent Burma, Siam, Indo-China, and the Philippines. No place was given to Malaya in the Assembly of Greater East Asia Nations held in Tokyo in November 1943, because the basic policy was to keep Malaya as a Japanese stronghold and a permanent colony for exploitation by Japanese immigrants.[57]

Singapore became both the army headquarters and a center of the Military Administration. In March 1942, Japanese governors were appointed in each of the Malay States and also in Penang (Province Wellesley came under the government of Penang) and Malacca, but Singapore was given a mayor.[58]

The Sultans started to act as advisors to the Japanese governors, a reversal of the former regime. The Military Administration put an end to the federal system. Apart from these changes, Japan found it politically convenient to retain the former administrative structure rather than disrupt the country by a sudden change-over to a complete hierarchy. The Military Administration maintained its control through various bureaus and associations for the purpose stated above.

Singapore's municipality was divided into five main branches, viz. the departments for general affairs, welfare, economy, enterprises or public works, and police.

The Japanese colonial scheme and administration for Malaya did not call for a puppet regime such as in Burma and the Philippines, though the Sultans, members of the ruling houses, and community leaders were used to bolster the administration. But continued resistance especially from Chungking adherents, communists and natives made it necessary for the Japanese to make the leaders responsible for the actions of their people against Japan.[59]

The Sultans were told that the Japanese government would protect their lives, property and religious rights and provide them with an income not less than that received from the British. They were told to take the

initiative to establish peace and order and put the people's minds at ease.[60] The masses were promised protection commensurate with their cooperation with the Japanese. It is interesting to note here that according to British Intelligence Reports, apart from the Sultans and a handful of Malay leaders, the so-called Malay leaders under the Japanese were men who were either of no importance at all or men with a real or fancied grievance against the former regime. Amongst the Sultans, one who came close to the general conception of a puppet was the Sultan of Selangor, Musa Edin. He was considered unsuitable by the British for the responsibilities of a Sultan but instead he was installed by the Japanese.[61]

Periodic meetings were held between the Chief of the Military Administration and the Sultans, who were also invited to Singapore during Tojo' visit. The Sultans seemed to have been relegated into the background of Malay political life; sons of the Sultans were amongst the officials selected for indoctrination in Japanese methods of government. Members of the ruling house were represented in the Regional Councils. Many of them had served in the State and Federal Councils during the British regime. The Regional Councils were set up

(i) as a sop to the people who were denied the so-called independence accorded to other countries within the Greater East Asia Military;
(ii) to gain sympathy and cooperation from the different communities;
(iii) to sound out public opinion and probe into possible subversive activities;
(iv) to take the place of the abolished Executive, Federal and State Legislative Councils under the British system.[62]

In December 1943, Regional Councils were usually described as advisory consultative organs and State Councils were also set up. Representatives of all communities were selected by the governors of the provinces and the mayor of Singapore. Appointments were honorary with limited terms of office, which could be extended by re-appointment. Governors and mayor were ex-officio chairmen of the Councils and in the States the Sultans were vice-chairmen. No Japanese, apart from the governors and mayor, could sit in these Councils. The first meeting of the Singapore Council was held in January 1943, the second meeting in August 1944.[63]

In 1943, a joint communique between Japan and Siam announced that the four northern states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu were to be ceded to Siam. The treaty transferring the states was signed in Bangkok on 20 August, 1943. These states were formally handed over on 19 October, 1943.[64]

Japanese respect for Siam's history and traditions was the reason given for the cession of the states. An attempt was made to nullify Malay resentment by appeals "to sacrifice parochial affiliations based on religion and culture and foster the more important all-embracing loyalty to the sphere of pan-Asianism."[65] Lâter the Siamese High Command announced that each state would have an administrator who would have the power to choose whatever method of government seemed suitable to him but that he would be advised by the chief administrator, local army commanders, and administrative advisors, and the chief of the armed police force. So Japanese liaison officers were appointed to the four states and the Emperor of Japan conferred a minor Japanese Order of Merit on the Sultans in recognition of their service to the Japanese Military Administration; by December 1943 the Siamese government was making arrangements to transfer the states back to their Sultans, but the Siamese Military Administrators would remain as their advisors.[66]

The new administrative system was similar to the British pre-War period administrative system in Malaya. As stated in an Intelligence Report:

> With the arrival of the Japanese, there was at first considerable talk of some form of local government and an individual ... was actually reported to have been appointed Lt. Governor of Penang. The government of Malaya is now a Military Administration governed from Singapore, with Lt. Governors in the various states. In fact, it seems probable that the British form of government is being carried out more or less in its old form with the British Advisors replaced by Japanese Lt. Governors and the Malay Sultans permitted to function as before as regards to religion and Malay custom.[67]

The Japanese established the Military Administration in Malaya and also set up or sponsored some associations in Malaya. The basic aim of these associations as stated in British Intelligence Reports were the following:[68]

(i) ...to strengthen the military domination and defence structure. For this purpose, these associations are sponsored: Auxiliary Police Corps; Peace Preservation Corps (Neighbourhood Association); Self-Defence (or Civil Defence) Corps; Heiho; Malay Volunteer Army; Malay Volunteer Corps; Japanese Residents' Association; the Southern Development National Service Association.

(ii) ... harness the different communities: Chinese Merchants' Associations; Overseas Chinese Association; Malay Welfare Association; Arab Welfare Association; European Welfare Association; Youth Corps; Women's Association.

(iii) ... encourage anti-British feeling: The Indian Independence League; Indian National Army; Provisional Government of India.
(iv) ... disseminate Japanese language and culture: "Speak Japanese" Association; Music Association; Physical Culture Association; Sports Association and Showmen's Association.
(v) ... promote Japanese propaganda: Singapore Newspaper Association; Volunteer Publicity Corps.
(vi) ... present the case for Japan's religious and cultural toleration: Methodist Conference; Muslim Religious Councils; Roman Catholic Agricultural Settlement; Malay Language Research Association.

Education Policy

After the establishment and reorganization of the Malayan administrative system, the Japanese set up an education policy and implemented it. The education policy reflected Japan's objectives in East Asia including Malaya. Japan's objective according to an Intelligence Report was to follow up her military conquests with a cultural subjugation of the conquered people. The policy also aimed at providing the various races of East Asia with the Japanese language and Japanese "culture" as the binding link. Thus, in the long run, East Asia could become "a continent of subject peoples equipped with the right moral qualities and having a common cultural orientation towards the ruler country, Japan."[69] In the occupied countries like Malaya, Japanese educational policy can be considered to be two-edged. "It must win allegiance to Japanese ideas and at the same time cut into the cultural influence and goodwill left behind by the former administration."[70]

Japan's overall policy was to mould the people of Malaya so that they would fit into the grandiose scheme of *Hakko Ichiu* "eight corners under one roof with the Emperor as the keystone"; to carry out this aim, Japan attempted to

(i) destroy all British and European influence and language;
(ii) make the Japanese language the lingua franca;
(iii) enforce Emperor worship and control all forms of religions for their gradual assimilation by Shinto;
(iv) discipline the people and reduce them to the level of chattels.

The Military Administration declared that it was its purpose to wipe out all British influence. The fall of Singapore isolated Malaya from all outside European influence except from German and Italian. To make the isolation complete, listening to outside broadcasts was forbidden. All Europeans, even from Axis and neutral states, were frowned upon and the Military Administration announced that it was its purpose to get rid of the 500 Axis and neutrals citizens who were in Singapore at the time of the occupation.

Financial Policy

Throughout the duration of the Japanese occupation, great amounts of money were syphoned off by the Japanese Military Administration. This was made possible through the issuing of military army notes, the formation of banks, the control over money-lending business, the organization of official lotteries, and various forms of taxation.

The Japanese Military Administration enforced coercive measures to ensure the cooperation of the local people. The refusal to accept Japanese notes was made a punishable offence. Within the two months between the outbreak of the War and the fall of Singapore, 65 million dollars worth of Japanese notes went into circulation. The injection of unnumbered Japanese yen worsened inflation; so realizing that the matter would endanger them, too, the Japanese halved the circulation of 285 million military notes in February 1942.

The Japanese also introduced the Deposits Post Office which was another apparatus for syphoning money and property from the people. It collected $ 7 million during the period from 1942 to 1945. No matter how uncooperative the people were, the Japanese succeeded in making them deposit their money through various channels and programmes.

Banking was set up with the same profit-making motives. In March 1942 both the Yokohama Specie Bank and the Bank of Taiwan began operating. The Japanese forcibly bought up six Chinese operating banks and gained a 20 million dollar loan from them. The People's Bank with branches all over Malaya alone rounded up a capital of $ 2,800,000. Further development of banks like the Japanese South Development Bank and the Merchant Treasury permitted them to control the profitable money-lending business.

The official lottery was another lucrative business. First launched in 1942, it made a 200% profit out of a million dollar worth of lottery tickets. These tickets were sold at every possible outlet. The second, launched in 1943, yielded a lump profit of 3 million dollars. Insurance monopolies by Shonan (later, Malayan) Property Insurance Control made just as much profit. By the end of 1943, their liabilities amounted to 640 million yen with premiums worth 1,660,000 yen.

All money collected was used to finance the Japanese administration, especially military expenditure. To sum up, Japan took a great deal from the people of Malaya to support her troops there and for export back to Japan. The Japanese, however, managed affairs, so that far from seeming debtors they appear the creditors.

Economic and Industrial Policy[71]

The Malayan economy during the Japanese Occupation was supposedly "reconstructed to become a self-sufficient industrial center." In fact, Japan's primary concern was to exploit Malayan resources to meet the demands of industries back home. The ruined and stagnant Malayan pre-War economy was cajoled into production. For the control of the Malayan economy, certain financial as well as industrial policies were carried out in Malaya. The declared policy of the Malayan Military Administration (MMA) was "the return of strategic materials to Japan" and "the development of self-sufficiency" by increased production, especially of food. To facilitate the MMA's policy of exporting strategic materials to Japan, Malaya's mining industries were expanded. Below is an account of policies with regard to all the important industrial and agricultural commodities.

A five-year plan was passed to develop the iron, manganese and bauxite industries. Before the War, such industries were run by the Japanese in the states of Johore, Perak and Trengganu and the ore was shipped to Japan as described earlier. By 1944 iron and manganese production was over 2,000,000 tons and bauxite reached 55,000 tons per year. The mainstay of the iron industry were four large iron foundries in Johore, Dungun (Trengganu), Ipoh and Taiping (Perak) which were run on charcoal to smelt the iron ore which was then shipped as pig-iron for final processing in Japan. In April 1944, special types of blast furnaces were built. The Nippon Steel Manufacturing Company, the Nippon Steel Tube

Manufacturing Company, and the Osaka Special Steel Company, with the cooperation of the Toikoku Steel Manufacturing Company, were entrusted with the task of developing the steel industry. During the early part of 1944 large consignments of machinery, bound for Batu Arang, were shipped to Kuala Lumpur by Mitsubishi. There was only one coal mine in Malaya - the Batu Arang Coal Mine, owned by Malayan Collieries Ltd. in the State of Selangor. However, because the coal found there was useless for coking, a really modern iron industry could not be established.

Bauxite was mined in Johore and Bintan, worked by the Japanese and mostly shipped back to Japan. In March 1944, the Japanese started a large aluminium factory on Riau Island south of Singapore. The factory was operated by about 200-300 Japanese and over 1,000 Malays. The bauxite from Johore was probably shipped to Riau.

Of all the existing sectors, tin and rubber suffered most due to the War. At the beginning of the MMA, tin mining activities were heavily reduced, as the Japanese found stocks and shipped them to Japan. Malaya's pre-War export of 800,000 tons of tin oversupplied the need of Japan's import of 50,000 - 60,000 tons which brought down the price causing many mines to close.

Later, in spite of the fact that Japan started getting her supply of tin from Thailand, there was a revival of the tin industry with smelting being carried out at the Eastern Smelting Co. on Penang Island. This was a logical occurrence as most of the tin ore available was in Northern Malaya, and the Penang Smelting Works was also suitably close for smelting ores from Thailand.

The War had excluded Malaya from her European markets and the Japanese found themselves with an abundance of rubber for which there was little or no market. The reorganization of "enemy-owned" rubber plantations by the Japanese, in which 40% of the plantations covering 1,620,000 acres were allotted to rubber growers for cultivation and came under direct military control, did not help matters. Whatever the organization, exports and internal consumption were not enough to keep the industry going, with prices fluctuating between 13 to 20 ct./lb. Prices stood so low that many plantations considered it not worthwhile to tap and had to close down. The rubber industry programme of the Japanese benefited only companies like Tankhee Co., Firestone Goodyear Plants, and Singapore Rubberworks (a Dutch company with a factory at Bukit Timah Road which manufactured all kinds of rubber goods), because these companies were taken over by the Yokohama Rubber Company and were expanded.

There was little mention of gold mining during the Japanese Occupation, but it can be assumed that this Malayan source of wealth was fully exploited by the Japanese. The Raub Australia Gold Mining Co. mined gold from lode formations at Raub in Pahang and production averaged 40,000 ounces annually. In September 1942, 7 Japanese directors were appointed in Singapore for the opening of "certain gold mines".

Malaya's forest reserves were indiscriminately reduced. The pre-Occupation policy had been to ensure a sustained yield of timber but the Japanese programme (to feed Japan's needs in the shipbuilding and charcoal industries) were carried out without any heed of reforestation. Shipbuilding industries were established in Japanese-occupied countries within the Co-Prosperity Sphere as well as in Malaya. Penang Island was one such shipbuilding center. As for the charcoal industry, it was a purely domestic one, but it too led to indiscriminate felling of timber.

The virtual stopping of imports from other countries brought suffering, rationing of food, especially rice, and other necessities in Malaya. When the Japanese occupied Malaya, there was a year's stock of rice, but much of this was shipped away. Within weeks there was a shortage and labourers were offering their services for a bowl of rice. The Japanese used compulsion to spur the people to grow more food. Rice areas the owning of which was regarded as the inalienable right of the Malays were given to all races. By September 1944, the MMA admitted that food production was still a major problem and that the people had found it difficult to achieve self-sufficiency even with rice-rationing plans. The people of Malaya were encouraged to eat substitutes instead, e.g. tapioca and sweet patatoes.

Under the Japanese Occupation, Malaya was cut off from meat supplies, and fish became almost the sole "meat" of the people. To expand the fishing industry, fishermen were taught Japanese methods of fishing. All catches were sold through officially appointed guilds only. New fish ponds were started in the interior. A factory was set up on Pangkor Island to can surplus fish. However, the fishing grounds of Malaya were not very productive and as the Japanese are fish-eaters and eat most of their fish raw, the best of the catch would always go to them.

The coconut industry also gained in importance in Japanese-occupied Malaya due to a shortage of oil and the drive for self-sufficiency in daily necessities. Next to rice, coconut had always played an important part in the domestic economy. The Japanese introduced strict rationing of coconut oil as it was also used as a lubricant for aeroplanes. Only in April 1944

the people of Singapore were given extra rations of coconut oil as a special gesture to mark the occasion of the Emperor's birthday. Domestic consumption of coconut and its oil were discouraged. All coconut extraction plants were in the hands of the Japanese and special factories were set up.

Whatever was to be the eventual outcome of the Japanese industrial policy, the immediate effect of industrialization and the expansion of manufacturing only was an increased importation of Japanese machinery into Malaya. Despite grandiose schemes, the expectations of high production of food and manufactured goods were not fulfilled. The industrialization programme of the Japanese only made the numerous Japanese organizations prosper.

Conclusion

Malayan-Japanese relations prior to Meiji basically were trade relations. These were carried out mainly by Western powers, whose aim was to control the trade routes from Nagasaki to Europe. However, there was also direct contact between Malaya and Japan through the Japanese ship "Goshun-Sen".

During the Meiji period (1868-1912), social and financial reforms were carried out to lift the Japanese economy from the agrarian to the industrial level by speeding up capital accumulation and its transfer toward industrial investments. There was also a policy of establishing heavy industry which was arms-oriented.

These policies brought the Japanese in competition with the Western powers, and later on competition turned into conflict. The Japanese arrival as well as expansion in Malaya started during the Meiji period. This expansion was to be seen in the presence of a Japanese community in Malaya as well as their investments in rubber and iron. The Japanese government directly supported the Japanese community in Malaya by way of economic assistance.

Japanese products found a market in Malaya after World War I owing to the disruption of trade relations between Malaya and the West caused by that War. Japanese products soon became competitive with British goods which resulted in a quota system imposed upon Japanese goods, especially textiles. Because of this, Chinese boycotts against Japanese products were supported by the British government.

Japanese early imperialism became more mature and overt through The Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Project. Not only the strategic importance of Malaya for Japan but its economic importance as well became the determinants of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya in 1942. Because of the importance of Malaya to the Japanese, Malaya was placed in Group A in the Co-Prosperity Project. As noted, the policy towards Group A countries involved strong measures to acquire needed resources and to prevent their outflow from the country. In other words, the basic policy was the establishment of a small Japan in Malaya, as indicated by Japanese administrative, educational and economic policies during the Occupation period. By these policies the Japanese aim was to keep Malaya a permanent colony and to exploit Malayan natural resources to serve the industrial needs of Japan.

Sources:

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5) Ibid., p.5.
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25) Ibid., p.31-32.
26) Ibid., p.30.
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32) Yuen, ibid., p.48.
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37) Ibid.
38) Ibid.
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42) Ibid., p.74.
43) Ibid., p.74-75.
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45) Ibid., p.86.
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59) Ibid., part (B) passim. Note: Chung King adherents were Chinese supporters of Chiang Kai Sek.

60) Ibid., part (A).
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62) Ibid., part (B).
63) Ibid.
64) Ibid.
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Table 1:
Daily Wages of Workers in 1885

	Male		Female
Carpenters	22.7	Weaving	7.5
Day labourers	15.7	Silk-spinning	11.3
Day farm labour	15.1	Day farm labour	9.7
Tokyo Munitions Factory	52.1	Tomioko Textiles	7.2
Yokosuka Shipbuilding	31.0	Private Factories	8.3
Private Factories	17.3		

Source: Rodosho 1957, p.13, in: Hugh, Patrick, (ed.), *Japanese Industrialization and its Social Consequences*, University of California Press, 1976.

Table 2:
The Daily Wages of Factory Workers in 1900, 1903 and 1906 (in sen)

Occupation	1900	1903	1906
Textiles workers	25.0	27.0	-
Workers in rolling stock	45.0	51.0	53.0
Typesetters	35.0	41.0	49.0
Carpenters	81.3	85.0	97.5
Plasterers	89.0	88.8	95.8
Day labourers	45.2	52.5	47.5

Source: Rodosho, 1957, p.31, in: Hugh, Patrick, (ed.), *Japanese Industralization and its Social Consequences*, University of California Press, 1976, p.25.

Table 3:
Distribution of the Japanese Population in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States, 1891 to 1911

Sex	Singapore	Penang	Malacca	Perak	Selangor	Negeri Sembilan	Pahang
				1891			
Male	58	1	2	4	8	2	n.a.
Female	229	20	15	28	60	12	n.a.
TOTAL	287	21	17	32	68	14	6
				1901			
Male	188	26	10	23	47	15	2
Female	578	212	10	175	186	41	46
TOTAL	766	238	20	198	233	56	48
				1911			
Male	514	n.a.	n.a.	125	116	71	25
Female	913	n.a.	n.a.	629	579	262	222
TOTAL	1427	266	92	754	695	333	247

Sources: Merewether, E.M., *Report on the Census of the Straits Settlements taken on 5th April 1891*, passim;
Hare, George T., *Federated Malay States, Census of the Population 1901*, passim;
Pountney, A.M., *The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911*, passim; and,
Nathan, J.E., *The Census of British Malaya, 1921*, passim.

Table 4:
Increase of Male and Female Japanese in Malaya From 1911 to 1921

State or Settlement	Percentage of Japanese	Male	Percentage of Japanese	Female
Singapore	36	61	64	39
Penang	16	49	84	51
Malacca	12	38	88	62
Straits Settlements	32	60	66	40
Perak	17	34	83	66
Selangor	17	35	83	65
Negeri Sembilan	21	44	79	56
Pahang	10	22	90	78
Federated Malay States	17	36	83	64
Johore	66	68	34	32

Source: Nathan, J.E., *The Census of British Malaya 1921*, p.90.

Table 5:
Japanese Population in the "Federated Malay States" 1891-1931

Males	14	87	337	757	533
Females	100	448	1,692	1,321	790
Total	120	535	2,029	2,078	1,323
Percentage Total	88	84	83	64	60

Sources: F.M.S. 1901 Census, Perak Table 1, Selangor Table 1, Negeri Sembilan Table 1, Pahang Table 1; F.M.S. 1911 Census, Table 33; British Malaya 1921 Census, Table 16; British Malaya 1931 Census, Table 70.

Note: The Census gives no data on the sex of the six Japanese living in Pahang in 1891.

Table 6:
Japanese Rubber Estates in Malaya, 1919

Japanese-owned estate (1919)	Total Area Acres	Planted Area Acres	Latex Yield lbs.	Commencement of business
Straits Settlements	2,648*	2,260	549,894	1913
Nissin Gomu	1,412	983	230,644	1913
Johore	96,449*	65,823	8,782,286	
Nitto Gomu	17,227	5,590	547,376	1919
Pahang Gomu	9,937	5,552	856,452	1911
Sangyo Kosi (Batu Pahat)	13,697	9,718	1,809,911	1908
Nangko Syokusan	8,807	6,684	670,742	1911
Sango Kosi (Pengerang)	7,848	5,963	868,903	1906
Negeri Sembilan	7,303*	6,518	1,273,937	
Malai Gomu	2,323	2,323	380,437	1912
Sendi & Co.	1,648	1,548	180,000	1920
Selangor	4,033*	3,787	249,050	
Matuda-Sanziro	631	631	108,200	1911
Perak	1,170*	1,146	233,473	
Mizukami-Syotaro	153	143	23,000	1911
Pahang	327*	294	26,620	
Kaneko-Turu	24	24	-	1915
Trengganu	20,844*	120	-	
Malai-Gomu	3,194	100	-	1917
Kedah & Perlis	331*	282	18,800	
Okano-Sizu	105	105	5,000	1918

The Figures marked with an asterisk (*) give the total acreage of rubber estates under Japanese ownership in the various states. The table also indicates the size of the main Japanese estates in each state.

Source: Yuen Choy Leng, *Expansion of Japanese Interest in Malaya 1900-1941*, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1973, p.11.

Table 7:
Export Duty of Tin and Iron in Johore, 1921 and 1922

Mineral	Export Duty ($) 1921	1922	Difference
Tin	190,925	175,872	- 15,053
Iron	74,250	111,367	+ 37,117

Source: Yuen Choy Leng, *Expansion of Japanese Interest in Malaya 1900-1941*, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1973, p.52.

Table 8:
Value in Japanese Yen (Millions) of Goods Moving from Japan to Malaya 1937-1939

January	4.7	1.2	1.0
February	5.3	1.2	0.9
March	8.3	1.9	2.0
April	7.1	1.8	1.6
May	8.5	2.2	2.0
June	9.0	2.6	2.2
July	8.8	2.0	1.8
August	5.7	1.8	2.0
September	4.3	2.1	2.0
October	4.1	1.7	2.3
November	3.2	2.1	2.0
December	3.4	2.5	2.8

Source: Yoji Akashi, *The Nanyang Chinese National Movement, 1937-1941*, Kansas, 1970, p.147.